

## Interwar Crossroads: Entangled Histories of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World between the World Wars

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Leon Julius Biela, Anna Bundt (eds.)

# INTERWAR CROSSROADS

Entangled Histories of the Middle Eastern and  
North Atlantic World between the World Wars



[transcript] Global and Colonial History

Leon Julius Biela, Anna Bundt (eds.)  
Interwar Crossroads

## Editorial

Since national histories have been discredited as the only legitimate way to write history, global history has been gaining momentum. Global history, however, is not merely »history outside Europe«; and global is more than »around the world«. Global history means historiography that tries to overcome Eurocentric perspectives and to focus on global complexity and interrelations. Thus, global historians tend to study topics such as colonialism, migration, trade, international cooperation, slavery, tourism, imperialism, globalization, knowledge transfers, etc.

The book series **Global and Colonial History** offers a common forum to discuss cutting-edge research on these issues. We consider colonial and imperial history to be a central part of global history because it is exemplary of this historiography as a history of interrelations and because it challenges past and present power structures and hegemonic discourses on a methodological level.

**Leon Julius Biela** is a graduate student of modern history at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. From 2019 to 2021, he was a fellow of the Honours Programme for Future Researchers at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, with a research project on arms trade control in the interwar Gulf region in the context of British imperialism, liberal internationalism, and the interwar years disarmament efforts. His research interests are focused on the international history of the 20th century, particularly the interwar years and the Cold War.

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Leon Julius Biela, Anna Bundt (eds.)

## **Interwar Crossroads**

Entangled Histories of the Middle Eastern  
and North Atlantic World between the World Wars

**[transcript]**

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## Acknowledgments

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This volume grew largely out of the contributions to the international workshop *At the Crossroads – The Middle Eastern and the North Atlantic World During the Interwar Years*, which was held online in the fall of 2021. The background of both this workshop and the book, which was planned from the outset as the product of this event, was the desire to bring together innovative research on the history of the Middle East and the North Atlantic World and thus to stimulate this field of research and enrich it with new perspectives. By highlighting the research findings of graduate and doctoral students, the volume seeks to generate more visibility for the significant contributions to the field made by early career researchers. This also fits into the larger framework of the project: It was created in the context of the Honours Programme at Friedrich Schiller University Jena, which supports young researchers in the early stages of their academic careers. We were both members of this program and were therefore fortunate to be given the chance to take advantage of its funding opportunities to produce this volume.

Our first thanks thus go to the Honours Programme of Friedrich Schiller University Jena for supporting this project, for funding the volume and for the trust placed in us. Special thanks go to the coordinator of the Honours Programme, Dr. Annika Bartsch, who supported our project from its conception and was always available with advice and support. We would also like to thank transcript, the publisher of this book, and in particular Dr. Mirjam Galley, who provided us with helpful, friendly, and competent support. We would also like to thank those who provided advice during the various phases of the project, especially Dr. Franziska Schedewie, Dr. Daniel Stahl, Dr. Dennis Dierks, and Dr. Kathleen G. Donohue. Special thanks also go to our kind and understanding language editor, Graeme Currie, who contributed much to the volume with his competent, thoughtful, and creative editing. Our greatest thanks, however, go to all the workshop participants and authors for the stimulating discussions and exciting texts. We also sincerely thank those who unfortunately were unable to contribute a text in the end for their efforts and willingness to contribute.

*Leon Julius Biela und Anna Bundt  
Freiburg im Breisgau and Jena, 4 July 2022*



# Introduction

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*Anna Bundt & Leon Julius Biela*

In the English language, “crossroads” has multiple meanings. It can refer to an intersection, a place where two streets meet, and thus where people, ideas, worldviews, and goods come into contact or pass each other on the way to their destinations. It can also describe a pivotal situation, a significant point in time, in which a fateful decision has to be formulated, a path has to be chosen, a choice crucial for the future has to be made.

This volume plays on these two meanings of “crossroads”. It seeks to demonstrate that for the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World, the interwar years were full of “crossroads” in both meanings of the term. In the first sense of the term, the interwar years saw the advent of many new crossroads as places to meet, as well as the expansion of existing ones. The multitude of complex encounters, entanglements, exchanges, and connections in the years between the World Wars makes observing these crossroads central to understanding not only the histories of the Middle East or the North Atlantic but also their common history in its global context. At the same time, the interwar years were a formative era for both the Middle East and the North Atlantic – and, again, also for their common history as well as the global processes that informed it. The significant influence that these years had on the future entailed an abundance of “crossroads” in the second meaning of the term. This brings the two dimensions of “interwar crossroads” together: If the interwar years were so important for the history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World and the multiple entanglements, connections, mutual transfers, and exchanges were so important for the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World during the interwar years, it is necessary and fruitful to study them together, to focus on the entangled histories of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World during the interbellum period. This is why “interwar crossroads” serves as the two-dimensional central theme of this volume.

## Relevant Fields of Research

In following this approach, this volume builds on several existing fields of research that have previously taken similar approaches, dealt with similar themes, or contributed groundwork to the topic of this volume. At the same time, each of these fields has its limitations, set by its, methodical, thematic, or spatial approach. Most of the existing research on both the North Atlantic and the Middle East has remained within the confines of national histories, often taking the borders of contemporary states as spatial and methodological boundaries for historical inquiry. While these works provide crucial empirical historical knowledge, their explanatory force is of course limited by their approach. By imposing hard borders where there were only highly permeable ones or, in the spatial consciousness of historical actors, none at all, this approach neglects processes and interactions that cross these boundaries or influence the subject of research from beyond them.<sup>1</sup>

In particular for the interwar history of the Middle East and North Atlantic, there is a second well-established and highly relevant strand of historical inquiry focusing on the reach of North Atlantic imperial powers into the Middle East (a concept that was created only by and through this imperial incursion). From this perspective, the interwar period in the Middle East is frequently seen through the lens of the Great War and the many consequences arising from it, most prominently the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the imperial powers. These works have contributed a plethora of insights to this volume's topic, as imperialism was a formative force for the history of the interwar years, shaping the history of the mandated, colonized, and otherwise controlled territories as well as of the North Atlantic metropolises.<sup>2</sup> At

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1 For general reflections on this issue see, for instance, David Thelen: "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History", in: *The Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999), 965–975; Christopher A. Bayly et al.: "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History", in: *American Historical Review* 111:5 (2006), 144–1464; Sebastian Conrad: *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 2–5.

On the Middle East in particular, see Cyrus Schayegh: "The many worlds of 'Abud Yasin; or, what narcotics trafficking in the interwar Middle East can tell us about territorialization", in: *American Historical Review* 116:2 (2011), 273–306, here 274–277, 305.

2 For examples, see David Fromkin: *A Peace to End All Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Holt, 1989); D.K. Fieldhouse: *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); James Barr: *A Line in the Sand. Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011); T.G. Fraser: *The First World War and its Aftermath. The Shaping of the Middle East* (London: Gingko Library, 2015); Laura Robson: *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

In some analyses, the history of the North Atlantic appears somewhat detached from imperialism on the ground in the Middle East. It is the merit of works inspired by approaches from cultural history and new imperial history to have connected the events in the Middle East to



the same time, however, while focusing on the imperial powers' policies and activities, this imperialism-centered approach frequently entails an emphasis on unidirectional transfers and top-down histories. Imperial histories that focus on the activities of imperial actors and present imperialism as the almost universal root cause of past and present developments and conflicts run the risk of denying the agency of non-imperial actors. This perspective places the Middle East in a passive role vis-à-vis the North Atlantic, and thus subliminally presents the latter as the originator of all kinds of exports to the Middle East, thereby creating a dualist image with clear role assignments.<sup>3</sup> This is why it is important to study imperialism without neglecting the local, global, and regional contingencies, processes, continuities, forces, and agencies it encountered. Similarly, research on the international system, newer international histories, and attempts to examine events and processes with global implications from a global point of view are also valuable for this volume's topic, especially those works that focus on the interwar years. All too often, however, the call to de-center history and "provincialize Europe",<sup>4</sup> which is already more than two decades old, is not realized consistently, and works on the interwar period's international history frequently put vastly more emphasis on the North Atlantic than on the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, however, many more nuanced works have emerged at the intersections of new imperial history, new international history, and Middle East studies providing new and innovative perspectives and thematic approaches to the fields outlined above and especially on the interwar years.<sup>6</sup>

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the cultural frameworks, discourses, and processes in the metropolises. See, for instance, Priya Sati: *Spies in Arabia. The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

- 3 This is exemplarily illustrated by the titles of books such as Walter Reid: *Empire of Sand. How Britain Made the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011); Bernard Lewis: *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 4 Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000). This call has been debated widely, see, for example, Carola Dietze: "Toward a History on Equal Terms: A Discussion of 'Provincializing Europe'", in: *History and Theory* 47:1 (2008), 69–84; and Chakrabarty's response: Dipesh Chakrabarty: "In Defense of 'Provincializing Europe': A Response to Carola Dietze", in: *History and Theory* 47:1 (2008), 85–96; Natalie Zemon Davis: "Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World", in: *History and Theory* 50:2 (2011), 188–202.
- 5 See, for example, Piers Brendon: *The Dark Valley. A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York: Knopf, 2000); Robert Boyce: *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Richard Overy: *The Inter-War Crisis*, third edition (London: Routledge, 2016). Also, significantly more studies exist on the international history of Europe than on the Middle East during the interwar period.
- 6 For an overview see Simon Jackson: "From Beirut to Berlin (via Geneva): The New International History, Middle East Studies and the League of Nations", in: *Contemporary European History* 27:4 (2018), 708–726.

Two additional fields of historical inquiry have contributed to this volume's topic. In the first instance, histories of religions and religious groups in the North Atlantic, mostly Muslims but also groups like Sephardic Jews, have assembled stories of how actors from the Middle East and elsewhere have influenced the intellectual life, religious landscape, and much more within the North Atlantic. Some of these have explicitly focused on the interwar years.<sup>7</sup> While these works have contributed important insights to this volume's field of interest, they remain committed to a perspective focused on one religious community (as diverse this community might have been) in just the North Atlantic and therefore do not have the same comprehensive approach to a de-centered entangled history that this volume promotes. Second, many important works have been published in global history and closely related fields. Case studies situating their subject in global contexts and interrelations have provided valuable examples of the many ways the Middle East and the North Atlantic were connected.<sup>8</sup> Approaches that take either the Middle East, the North Atlantic, or parts of either as units of analysis and systematically place them in a global context, such as several recent edited volumes committed to the "Global Middle East", have similarly provided fruitful approaches, while centering on one of these spatial units.<sup>9</sup>

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- 7 See, for example, Götz Nordbruch/Umar Ryad (eds.): *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe. Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Bekim Agai/Umar Ryad/Mehdi Sajid (eds.): *Muslims in Interwar Europe. A Transcultural Historical Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Nathalie Clayer/Eric Germain (eds.): *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (London: Hurst, 2008); Sina Rauschenbach/Jonathan Schorsch (eds.): *The Sephardic Atlantic. Colonial Histories and Postcolonial Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
- 8 See, for example, Sevket Pamuk/Jeffrey Williamson (eds.): *The Mediterranean Response to Globalization before 1950* (London: Routledge, 2000); Cyrus Schayegh: "The many worlds of 'Abud Yasin"; Liat Kozma: *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017); Cyrus Schayegh: "Imperial and Transnational Developmentalisms: Middle Eastern Interplays, 1880s–1960s", in: Stephen J. Macekura/Erez Manela (eds.): *The Development Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 61–82; Deniz Kuru/Hazal Papuççular (eds.): *The Turkish Connection. Global Intellectual Histories of the Late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022).
- 9 See, for example, the *Journal of Levantine Studies* 10:1 (2020), which is dedicated to the topic "Beyond Connectivity: The Middle East in Global History", edited by On Barak and Haggai Ram; Liat Kozma/Cyrus Schayegh/Avner Wishnitzer (eds.): *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Allen James Fromherz (ed.): *The Gulf in World History. Arabia at the Global Crossroads* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018). Some studies of the Ottoman Empire also place it within global interconnections. See, for example, Suraiya Faroqhi: *The Ottoman Empire and the World around It* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Karen Barkey: *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); M. Erdem Kabadayı/Kate Elizabeth Creasey: "Working in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey: Ottoman and Turkish Labor History within a Global Perspective", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82

In addition to the fields outlined above, there are many other publications and research projects that present different ways of approaching the historical interconnectedness of the Middle East and the North Atlantic. One group of works focuses on contemporary history viewed through the lens of current (geo)political issues.<sup>10</sup> Other projects and publications examine the activities and experiences of actors from the Middle East in the North Atlantic and vice versa, or trace the mutual reception of philosophy, religion, and ideas.<sup>11</sup> Many studies have stressed the interconnectedness and relations between empires, states, and other polities of the North Atlantic and the Middle East<sup>12</sup> or highlight the flow of objects, people, and ideas between them. At the same time, some of these research projects are not only turning to and developing new fields and topics of research but are also pursuing innovations of new and established methods and theories.<sup>13</sup>

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(2012), 187–200; Pascal Firges/Tobias Graf/Christian Roth: *Well-connected Domains. Towards an Entangled Ottoman History* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

- 10 See, for example, B.A. Roberson (ed.): *The Middle East and Europe. The Power Deficit* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998); Samir Amin/Ali El Kenz: *Europe and the Arab world. Patterns and Prospects for the New Relationship* (New York/London: Zed Books 2005); Meir Litvak (ed.): *Middle Eastern Societies and the West: Accommodation or Clash of Civilizations?* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2006); David Lesch (ed.): *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* (New York: Avalon, 2007).
- 11 See, for example, Abbas Amanat/Magnus Bernhardsson (eds.): *U.S.-Middle East Historical Encounters. A Critical Survey* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Laura Nader: *Culture and Dignity: Dialogues Between the Middle East and the West* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Angelika Neuwirth (ed.): *Europa im Nahen Osten – Der Nahe Osten in Europa* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010); Albert Hourani: *Europe and the Middle East* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).
- 12 Many scholars have thematized the interconnectedness of polities of the Middle East and North Atlantic, not just in modern and contemporary history but also before, including Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000); Edmund Herzig/Willem Floor (eds.): *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*; Firges et al. (eds.), *Well-Connected Domains*.
- 13 See, for example, the work undertaken within the DFG priority program *Transottomanica* and the research projects affiliated with it: Stefan Rohdewald/Stephan Conermann/Albrecht Fuess (eds.): *Transottomanica – Osteuropäisch-osmanisch-persische Mobilitätsdynamiken. Perspektiven und Forschungsstand* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019); Evelin Dierauff et al. (eds.): *Knowledge on the Move in a Transottoman Perspective. Dynamics of Intellectual Exchange from the Fifteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021); Arkadiusz Christoph Blaszczyk/Robert Born/Florian Riedler (eds.): *Transottoman Matters. Objects Moving through Time, Space, and Meaning* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022). See also the works cited in footnote 9.

## Goals and Premises

The forgoing outline of relevant fields of research is by no means complete. Many more works and subject areas can be drawn upon to approach the entangled histories of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World in the interwar years. Still, the outline testifies to a dynamic field of research, in which many approaches are employed. Several of these have foregrounded the interconnectedness of the Middle East and the North Atlantic and placed the idea of entanglement at the heart of their analysis. Yet much remains to be done to advance perspectives that think the North Atlantic and the Middle East together and to reach a comprehensive understanding of their intertwined histories. This volume seeks to contribute to such efforts toward a de-centered entangled history of the Middle East and the North Atlantic and enrich this dynamic field of research by employing the framework of “interwar crossroads” and building on the following premises:

(1) This volume takes the call for de-centering history seriously. It has no focus on either the North Atlantic or the Middle East. Instead, its contributions amount to what can be called an entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World (more on this concept below). Taking up ideas and suggestions from various historiographical currents, the volume examines processes and discourses that involve actors from both the Middle East and the North Atlantic. While drawing on the historiographical approach of Entangled History, this book does not seek to present an Entangled History in a narrow sense.<sup>14</sup> While Entangled History almost exclusively deals with entanglements on a transnational level, this volume takes into account entanglements, connections, exchanges, and transfers on various levels. It furthermore does not treat its subjects of inquiry as determined by these entanglements, nor does it simply assume their importance, but always critically asks whether, how, and how far such entanglements informed and shaped specific historical contexts. In the context of this volume and the approach and viewpoint taken here, the use of the term “entangled history” seeks to express that there are no histories of the Middle East and North Atlantic as separate units of analysis; rather, they are so densely interwoven that certain historical contexts only become visible and understandable by thinking them as one framework of analysis and taking those interwoven connections into account.

This volume, therefore, strongly argues that the connections, mutual transfers, and exchanges are crucial to understanding the histories of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World. It seeks to pursue this argument without undervaluing the

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14 On Entangled History, see Michael Werner/Bénédicte Zimmermann: “Beyond Comparison. Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity”, in: *History and Theory* 45:2 (2006), 30–50; Margrit Pernau: “Whither Conceptual History? From National to Entangled History”, in: *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 7:1 (2012), 1–11; Conrad, *What is Global History*, 41–42, 44–48.

importance of local actors, contingencies, and continuities. Thus, it examines in a careful and nuanced way how specific historical contexts were influenced by or connected to transnational, transregional, and global processes, institutions, and discourses, and how exactly these processes, institutions, and discourses were appropriated, amended, shaped, or rejected by the actors involved. From this point of view, national borders, considered as essentialized categories, must be overcome, while at the same time the analysis must remain aware of how (globally circulating) ideas of national or other socio-spatial entities shaped the actions of historical actors, thus structuring historical realities and developing historical efficacy.<sup>15</sup> Efforts to control new movements, mobilities, and modes of exchange on the part of the imperial powers, and the hurdles and inhibitive mobility regimes that this entailed also developed such efficacy and therefore have to be part of this book's analysis. The same applies to restrictions connected to categories such as race, class, and gender, and the experiences of those subject to them.<sup>16</sup> This volume is thus the attempt to develop a history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World with a consistent focus on reciprocal and mutual entanglements, while at the same time maintaining an openness that does not make those entanglements absolute and critically reflecting upon their significance. The entanglements, relations, connections, and exchanges are not analyzed by and for themselves but understood within and brought into dialogue with their local and global contexts.

(2) The volume is committed to presenting new perspectives. While this should be the aim of almost all historical research, for this volume, it is a principal concern to present topics and arguments that have not yet received much scholarly consideration, or develop innovative perspectives and new interpretations of familiar and partly well-researched topics. Thus, the volume not only demonstrates that its approach can be pursued by re-reading and re-analyzing familiar subjects under new premises, and that the field of research in which it is situated is still dynamic and open to innovation, it also seeks to encourage such innovation by contributing and enriching diverse scholarly debates.

(3) The volume presents a variety of methodological approaches and is inherently interdisciplinary. This interdisciplinarity is the logical result of the volume's goals and the two preceding premises. All too often, however, such interdisciplinarity fails to reach its full potential in anthologies with a historical focus that promise

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15 On this, see, for example, Conrad, *What is Global History*, 135; Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation", 1463.

16 On the importance of taking into account differing access to mobility see, for instance, Jordi Tejel/Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (eds.): *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918–1946* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022); Nina Click Schiller/Noel B. Salazar: "Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe", in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39:2 (2013), 183–200.

to pursue it, or is confined to certain closely related disciplines. The current volume not only draws on a variety of approaches from the theoretical and methodical toolbox of the discipline of history, e.g., international history, global intellectual history, new imperial history, gender history, microhistory, and many more, but also turns towards other disciplines such as architecture, comparative political science, and translation studies. This helps to generate a broader and more multi-layered analysis, offering new methodological means for nuanced analysis and contextualization of entanglements and their significance. Piecing together a fragmented collection of approaches, methods, and topics within the framework of “interwar crossroads” ultimately allows for a more comprehensive take on the entangled histories of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World.

(4) The volume focuses on the interwar years. It is one of the main arguments of this book and its “interwar crossroads” framework that the interwar years were a formative period within world history, and especially for the entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World. The interwar years have long been considered as exactly what the term “interwar” suggests, a post-war period in which its own transformation into a new pre-war period was already determined. More recent historiographical approaches, though, emphasize not only the undetermined and open character of the interbellum period but also its character as a period of time on its own right and with great significance for subsequent history.<sup>17</sup> Such a view of this period becomes even more visible when the focus on the North Atlantic is left behind. Jürgen Osterhammel, for instance, sees the interwar years as a time of worldwide reorientation, a “hinge period” (*Schanierperiode*) between a long 19th and a short 20th century.<sup>18</sup> In their edited volume, Sönke Kunkel and Christoph Meyer emphasize the global significance of the 1920s and 1930s as an era in which many historical developments aligned and global constellations were reconfigured, terming them the “departure to the postcolonial era.”<sup>19</sup> While such a term runs the risk of undervaluing longer continuities, it is right in stressing the significance of the interwar

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17 For reflections on the significance of the interwar years see, for example, as well as the works cited below, Dominique Kalifa: “L’entre-deux-guerres n’aura pas lieu”, in: *Littérature* 193 (2019), 101–113; Horst Möller: *Europa zwischen den Weltkriegen* (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 117–120. For works more concerned with the historical analysis of some of the interbellum period’s formative features, see footnote 23. Taking the World Wars as definitive historical caesuras is criticized by Lucian George: “Periodization Challenges and Challenging Periodization. Interdisciplinary Reflections”, in: Lucian George/Jade McGlynn (eds.): *Rethinking Period Boundaries. New Approaches to Continuity and Discontinuity in Modern European History and Culture* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 1–3, here 8.

18 Jürgen Osterhammel: *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: C.H. Beck, 2009), 1300.

19 Sönke Kunkel/Christoph Meyer (eds.): *Aufbruch ins postkoloniale Zeitalter. Globalisierung und die außereuropäische Welt in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2012).

years for many anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements and therefore for the history of almost the entire world from the end of the Second World War to the present day, as many recent publications have underscored.<sup>20</sup> Kunkel and Meyer further argue that the period should be understood as a constitutive phase of experiments in which problems, solutions, approaches, and practices of the 20th century, often responding simultaneously to both local and global experiences, have been caused, tested, rejected, and invented, thereby stressing long-term dynamics and continuities and laying important foundations for the future.<sup>21</sup>

And indeed, the interwar years were shaped by a vast set of distinctive processes and events that had lasting effects on legal, political, and social orders as well as on peoples' lives around the globe. Starting from the first attempt to create a truly global order of lasting peace,<sup>22</sup> in the interwar years imaginaries of space and distance shifted; new types of mass media changed the way politics and society worked and were experienced. Mass participation created new demands. New products and consumer habits became available. New and old visions of modernity came together to create novel concepts from the arts to rurality. The establishment of communist governments fueled the global competition of ideologies and utopias. Democracies were founded and destroyed. The nation state became the predominant unit of political organization but competed with other concepts of space and territory. Empires were simultaneously extended and challenged. New political entities were created, causing new currents of migration and displacement. Cooperation between governments and civil-society groups within international and transnational organizations flourished. A new kind of internationalism brought about significant advances

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- 20 Besides the volume edited by Kunkel and Meyer, see, for example, Michele Louro: *Comrades Against Imperialism. Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Michael Goebel: *Anti-Imperial Metropolis. Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Tim Harper: *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021); Erez Manela: *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007). On how the League of Nations facilitated the crisis of empire, see Susan Pedersen: *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- 21 Sönke Kunkel/Christoph Meyer: "Dimensionen des Aufbruchs: Die 1920er und 1930er Jahre in globaler Perspektive", in: Sönke Kunkel/Christoph Meyer (eds.): *Aufbruch ins postkoloniale Zeitalter. Globalisierung und die außereuropäische Welt in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2012), 7–36.
- 22 For global perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and its consequences see, for example, Jörn Leonhard: *Der Überforderte Frieden: Versailles und die Welt 1918–1923* (München: C.H. Beck, 2018); Urs Matthias Zachmann (ed.): *Asia After Versailles. Asian Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and the Interwar Order, 1919–33* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Marcus Payk/Roberta Pergher (eds.): *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Politics after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

in global governance. The crisis and ultimate survival of capitalism engendered new concepts of welfare, of the state's role in the economy, of the usefulness of state planning and the technical forgeability of society. Almost all these processes, discourses, and experiences were not confined to certain spaces but were more or less global, affecting all parts of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World. This highlights the lasting importance of these years, which does not merely derive from the wars that frame them.<sup>23</sup>

By laying the focus on the interwar years, this volume seeks to analyze how some of these processes, discourses, and experiences shaped the entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World. It seeks to demonstrate how the analysis of the interwar years under the premises and principles outlined above entails a deepened understanding of this entangled history, encouraging further research on this period and especially its lasting importance. At the same time, by de-centering the historical focus, the volume also contributes to efforts that go beyond conceptualizations of the interwar years, together with the World Wars, as a single "Age of Catastrophe" and towards a multi-faceted understanding of this period.<sup>24</sup>

## Temporal and Spatial Organization

While centering on the interwar years as globally formative in their own right, this volume does not regard the interbellum period as one, clearly defined period of

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23 For examples of studies emphasizing the global historical significance of the interwar years from various perspectives, see Kunkel/Meyer, "Dimensionen des Aufbruchs"; Adam Tooze: *The Deluge. The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order* (London: Allen Lane, 2014); Daniel Laqua: "What is interesting about the interwar period?", in: *Exploring and Teaching Twentieth-Century History* (Winter 2019), 18–21; Richard Carr/Bradley Hart: *The Global 1920s: Politics, Economics and Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Marc Matera/Susan Kent: *The Global 1930s: The International Decade* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Daniel Gorman: *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jens Hacke: "Zwischenkriegszeit", in: Michael Festl (ed.): *Handbuch Liberalismus* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 2021), 425–432. The importance of the interwar years for the history of the Middle East is highlighted by Schayegh, "The many worlds of 'Abud Yasin", 305–306; Cyrus Schayegh: *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 8–13. See also the works cited in footnotes 7 and 20.

24 Eric Hobsbawm: *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994). In the introduction, he describes the years from 1914 to the end of the Second World War as an "Age of Catastrophe" for the society of the (western) civilization of the 19th century. Part One – "The Age of Catastrophe" – takes up this understanding. Since Edward Hallett Carr's seminal book, there has been a long line of studies and textbooks interpreting the interwar period as a single crisis. See, for instance, Edward Hallett Carr: *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939, An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1939); Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*; Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis*.



time. While for many Western Europeans this period might have lasted from 1918 to 1939, the many ends of World War One and continuities of violence after its formal armistices on one side, and the gradual geographical expansion of World War Two on the other side render the beginning and the end of the interwar period somewhat vague.<sup>25</sup> The interwar period had different temporal configurations depending on the space under consideration. At the same time, just as the processes taking place during the interbellum period were global, the two World Wars that delimited it had worldwide effects and consequences and therefore marked caesuras for the entire Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World.<sup>26</sup> Thus, despite the vagueness of its limits, the interwar years ultimately still mark a definable period that lends itself as a temporal framework of analysis. The World Wars should, however, not be understood as all-encompassing breaks. As Kozma, Schayegh, and Wishnitzer observe of the “Global Middle East”, important processes and historical trajectories were effective before and beyond these caesuras.<sup>27</sup> The interwar historical contexts analyzed in this volume took place within the framework of earlier developments and – this is one of the book’s arguments – had impacts long after the Second World War’s guns had fallen silent. Furthermore, some of the immediate contexts analyzed here had been formed before the First World War or subsisted even after the Second. Thus, while it focusses on the interwar years, this volume treats its delimitations not only as shifting but also as open and permeable for longer continuities. Consequently, the temporal organization of the various contributions is conditioned by their spatial and historical focus.

Not only the temporal, but also the spatial categories and organization of this volume deserve further explanation. Rather than employing conventional terms to delineate its spatial unit of analysis, this volume proposes the *North Atlantic and Middle Eastern World* as a spatial-analytical concept. By using this term, the volume seeks to emphasize the de-centering historical focus and to turn away from essentializing

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- 25 For reflections on an alternative periodization of the First World War in the Middle East see, for example, Jonathan Wyrzten: “Relational History, the Long Great War, and the Making of the Modern Middle East”, in: Natana DeLong-Bas (ed.): *Islam, Revival & Reform. Redefining Tradition for the Twenty-First Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2022), 141–159. On the continuities of War after 1917/18 in Eastern Europe, see, for instance, Jochen Böhrler/Włodzimierz Borodziej/Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.): *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe’s First World War* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).
- 26 On the globality of World War One, see, for example, Jörn Leonhard: *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (München: C.H. Beck, 2014); Jay Winter (ed.): *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume I: Global War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- 27 Liat Kozma/Cyrus Schayegh/Avner Wishnitzer: “Introduction”, in: Liat Kozma/Cyrus Schayegh/Avner Wishnitzer (eds.): *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 1–15, here 4–5.

terms such as ‘the East’/‘the Orient’ and ‘the West’, which are culturally discursive constructions that assume an “other” and create the notion of a clear and irreconcilable divide, dichotomy and opposition between two seemingly clearly defined, monolithic, unchanged and natural regions. Within the intellectual framework of this divide, these terms not only refer to geographical spaces but are temporalized and spatialized concepts that have come to designate spaces – both clearly delimited and yet remaining vague – with a “clear ideological edge through the polarized opposition to distinct antonyms.”<sup>28</sup> In this, “the West” is stylized as the cultural superior, inherently possessing seemingly universal values of progress and modernity. These conceptualizations have been rightly criticized and reflected by many scholars since Edward Said’s seminal study *Orientalism* was published more than four decades ago.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, sparked by postcolonial theory and fields such as subaltern studies, new terminologies and concepts have been introduced to talk and write about these spatial units or to create new spatial frameworks of analysis.<sup>30</sup> Such thoughts have been taken up in the ‘global’, ‘transnational’, and ‘spatial’ turns that inspired much new research and both theoretical and conceptual considerations about these units.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, many geographical terms and spatial units of analysis used today remain burdened by their historical genealogy and still perpetuate such constructed divides and dichotomies. This is particularly true of the term “Middle East”. By now, many studies have explored its historical origins and pointed out how this term was the product of the imperial imagination, and ultimately established itself during the First World War and the period under consideration here.<sup>32</sup> The imperial

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28 Riccardo Bavaj: “The West’: A Conceptual Exploration”, in: *European History Online*, 21 November 2011, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/bavajr-2011-en> (accessed 2 July 2022).

29 Edward Said: *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979). Part of this critical reflection was to re-orient the “orientalist gaze” that by Said observed, and this has been taken up in several works since. See, for example, Susannah Heschel/Umar Ryad (eds.): *The Muslim Reception of European Orientalism. Reversing the Gaze* (London/New York: Routledge, 2019); Hamid Dabashi: *Reversing the Colonial Gaze. Persian Travelers Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

30 See, for example, Nile Green: “Rethinking the ‘Middle East’ after the Oceanic Turn”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34:3 (2014), 556–564; Nile Green: “The View from the Edge: The Indian Ocean’s Middle East”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48 (2016), 746–749.

31 See, for instance, among others Schayegh, *The Middle East*; Dierauff et al. (eds.): *Knowledge on the Move*.

32 See, for example, James Renton: “Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917–1918”, in: *The Historical Journal* 50:3 (2007), 645–667; Schayegh, *The Middle East*; Osamah F. Khalil: “The Crossroads of the World: U.S. and British Foreign Policy Doctrines and the Construct of the Middle East, 1902–2007”, in: *Diplomatic History* 38:2 (2014), 299–344; Thomas Scheffler: “‘Fertile Crescent’, ‘Orient’, ‘Middle East’: The Changing Mental Maps of Southwest Asia”, in: *European Review of History* 10:2 (2003), 253–272.

origins of “Middle East”, its arbitrariness as one of the mental maps projected upon Southwest Asia, the monolithic and essentialized region it suggests, and the orientalist notions to which it is connected on one side, and the heuristic and methodological need for spatial units for historical analysis, the continuing presence of this term in academic, public, and political discourse as well as its use in many languages on the other side, have created an ongoing scholarly debate about whether the concept “Middle East” should be used and what exactly it should designate.<sup>33</sup> Although “Middle East” has this difficult conceptual history and must necessarily be reflected upon critically, it still serves as an effective spatial-analytic concept for many studies.

The problem of suggesting an essentialized, hermetically delineated entity applies, to a certain degree, to any concept of a (world) region.<sup>34</sup> When space is understood as relational and created by social interactions, however, regions undoubtedly exist as clusters and agglomerations within this relational space. These clusters lead to patterns of similarities and shared paths of development.<sup>35</sup> Regions are therefore still useful categories for historical analysis, provided there is congruency between the posited region and the cluster of relations that are the subject of the given research interest. Thus, to avoid treating regions as essential “container” spaces and imposing them on a historical context in a way that undermines analytical efficacy, the spatial framework of any historical study should be thoroughly reflected upon and adapted for each study depending on the kinds of relations and clusters analyzed. In practice, this self-reflective approach often hits a wall when, especially in larger projects such as anthologies, overarching and comprehensive units of space are to be used. Ultimately, moreover, all spatial-analytical concepts remain subject to the tension between the heuristic need to categorize space in order to make it

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33 This debate has been on-going for many decades, see, for instance, Roderic H. Davison: “Where Is the Middle East?”, in: *Foreign Affairs* 38 (1959/60), 665–675; Nikki R. Keddie: “Is There a Middle East?”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4:3 (1973), 255–271. For a more recent contribution on this debate, see Michael E. Bonine/Abbas Amanat/Michael Ezekiel Gasper (eds.): *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

34 Christian Büschges: “Global History and the History of World Regions. An Inventory of German-Language Research”, in: *Comparativ* 29:2 (2019), 7–19, here 11–12.

35 Some insightful observations on the concept of ‘region’ in relation to the Middle East can be found in Cyrus Schayegh: “Regions and Global History: An Arab-Iranian Case Study and Three Observations”, in: *Journal of Levantine Studies* 10:1 (2020), 25–44. For exemplary studies of the more general interdisciplinary conceptualizations of ‘regions’ see Anssi Paasi: “From Bounded Spaces to Relational Social Constructs. Conceptualisation of the Region in Geography”, in: Paul Kohlenberg/Nadine Godehardt, Nadine (eds.): *The Multidimensionality of Regions in World Politics* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2021), 17–35; Krisztina Varró/Arnoud Legendijk: “Conceptualizing the Region – In What Sense Relational?”, in: *Regional Studies* 47:1 (2013), 18–28; see also the contributions in *European Review of History* 10:2 (2003).

accessible for research and the inadequacy and historical conditionality of such categories.

With the concept of the *Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World*, the volume suggests a reaction to this tension. The term Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World is lexically as well as conceptually multi-layered and includes at least three dimensions: (1) Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World can suggest a denotation of each region separately. Such an understanding, of a Middle Eastern World and a North Atlantic World, uses the term “world” to indicate the vast inner variety and diversity of both the Middle East and the North Atlantic, thus highlighting the inadequacy of treating them as essentialized and homogenous entities. (2) Understanding the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World as one, joint world stresses the dense entanglement and interconnectedness of the two socio-spatial units. Such a perspective suggests that, because it is marked by such a density of relations and interconnections, certain historical processes and contexts can only be explained if viewed through a lens that sees the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World as one historical region and unit of analysis. (3) The term can also be read in a way that the Middle East and the North Atlantic, taken together or separately, are specific parts of one, larger world. This dimension of the concept emphasizes how they are deeply immersed in global processes that go beyond both national and supposed regional borders.

The term Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World is thus deliberately ambiguous and multi-layered to allow for different spatial notions, perspectives, and analytical units. Each of these dimensions can include international, transnational, and transregional approaches as well as studies presenting local cases against the background of processes spanning the Middle East and the North Atlantic as separate or converged spatial units of analysis. While the above-described heuristic needs and limitations make it sometimes necessary to write about the Middle East and the North Atlantic or to use other spatial denominations, we use the overarching concept of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World to encompass all of these spatial denominations and perspectives while at the same time drawing attention to the fact that the spatial conceptualizations of both historical actors and analytical approaches can vary, shift, overlap, and change depending on the specific context.

By proposing the analytical framework of “interwar crossroads” and the multi-layered spatial concept of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World, the present volume seeks to offer new ways of thinking about the Middle East and North Atlantic and to highlight little known or unknown aspects of their entangled histories. It emphasizes the interwar years as a formative period, without undervaluing continuities or constructing new historical determinisms. It stresses the importance of processes of exchange, mutual transfers, entanglement, and interconnection of the interwar years, while consistently taking into account the significance of continuities, contingencies, and the agency of historical actors. Despite understanding the interwar years as an era of intensified interconnectedness, the contributions do

not tell a story of progressively increasing and all-encompassing entanglement, exchange, globalization, or mobility but present a more complex, nuanced, and differentiated view of how such processes of growing interconnectedness were accompanied and challenged by countervailing trends, how mobility and immobility, de-territorialization and re-territorialization, globalization and moments of de-globalization,<sup>36</sup> connection and disconnection, the establishment of new borders and the persistence of old ones all happened simultaneously and were all significant for the entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World.

## Contributions

Taking up one of the main themes of this volume, **Felicitas Remer's** chapter on the evolution of the national idea and its ultimate culmination in the practice of territorial partition in early 20th century Palestine seeks to overcome the historiographical emphasis on imperial intrusion and the accompanying notion of the unidirectional transfer of ideas. Instead, by bringing together research on ethnonational separatism and partition and the approach of global intellectual history, the chapter argues that the consolidation of the national idea in Palestine involved interaction between global and local forces that cannot be reduced to the imperial encounter with Britain during the Mandate period. Focusing on the case study of Jaffa-Tel Aviv as a microcosm of a larger set of processes connected to the national idea and its specific forms of spatialization, the chapter analyzes local papers, considering how “a growing but uneven consciousness, among both Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs, of the de-territorializing influences of increased mobility and global integration caused a turn towards localized, reterritorialized forms of attachment.” From this perspective, the establishment of the British Mandate was not a decisive break with existing trends but operated within dynamics, realities, and discourses that already existed and were being shaped by the experience of the global. These same forces simultaneously influenced British perspectives and decision-making. Since the Mandate government possessed the political power to order local socio-spatial organization, however, it played a decisive role in nation-building and the creation of ethnonational separatism and served as a mediator and arbiter of globalization in Palestine and especially Jaffa-Tel Aviv.

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36 While some studies picture the interwar years as period of de-globalization (see, for example, Harold James: *The End of Globalization. Lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis*), Kunkel and Meyer consider this interpretation to be a myth based on a narrow understanding of globalization (Kunkel/Meyer, “Dimensionen des Aufbruchs”, 9–10).

Through this perspective, Felicitas Remer's chapter stresses the importance of developing a more complex understanding of the circulation of ideas by emphasizing the necessity of taking into account the continuity of local trends and agency as well as the global and transregional processes that inform them. In a certain sense, the two following chapters are variations of this theme. **Joseph Leidy** analyzes the Village Welfare Service (VWS), a youth volunteer movement based at the American University of Beirut in the 1930s and 1940s. His chapter situates the VWS at the intersection of overlapping Lebanese and American mobilities, contending that the Service's transnational social and institutional contexts gave rise to a vision of rural service *by* and *for* young people that appealed beyond the immediate realm of American missionary education. He traces how the actors behind the VWS discussed, amended, appropriated, and rejected transnational discourses on youth, modernity, and rurality. This connected them to the North Atlantic and other parts of the globe, and they went on to develop their own understanding of rural modernity. The chapter then sheds light on the conceptual afterlife of these visions in the 1940s, when Afif Tannous, a crucial figure in the history of the VWS, began a career in international development in the United States and introduced the ideas that emerged in the VWS into post-war developmentalism. The chapter suggests that, in this way, the VWS's tethering of youth to the question of rural revitalization was a preview of the developmentalism of the mid-20th century. By tracing youth as a border object between the local middle-class and American proto-developmental projects, the chapter demonstrates that the VWS reflected entangled imaginaries of elite-led social change clustered around youth as an ideal bearer of developmental energy and expertise.

The chapter by **Thomas E. Jakob** offers a different perspective on the transnational circulation of concepts by posing the question of why the notions of organized labor held by communist organizations and groups from the Europe and the Soviet Union failed to spread to Lebanon during the French Mandate. By employing the method of single-case analysis from comparative political science, the chapter identifies several reasons why communists were not successful in establishing their concept of organized labor in interwar Lebanon in any lasting way. On one side, it points to the Mandatory Power's anti-communist policies and the absence of extended international support from other actors such as the International Labor Organization, which also failed to gain a foothold in Lebanon. On the other side, the chapter also identifies the strong nationalist current, which was also anti-colonialist and therefore shared a key appeal with communism, as well as the resilience of the Ottoman guild system in Lebanon's mutualist unions as pivotal factors for the communist organizations' failure to successfully introduce their ideas of organized labor. Thus, the chapter draws attention to the insights that can be obtained by thinking about how and why certain kinds of intended organizational and conceptional connections failed to materialize and plans to spread certain ideas were unsuccessful.

While Thomas E. Jacob's chapter analyzes the shortcomings of interwar communist internationalism, **Leon Julius Biela's** chapter turns to interwar internationalism as it was embodied in the League of Nations. The chapter takes the international regulation of arms traffic in the Persian Gulf on arms-control conferences under the auspices of the League, which largely emerged from imperialist ideas of how to stabilize the empires after the Great War, as a case study. It first describes how arms-traffic control in the Gulf was shifted to the international level by the British, who sought to obtain international sanctioning of their imperial practices of control. The chapter then traces how Iranian diplomats seized on this decision and linked the issue of arms-traffic control with questions of sovereignty in order to promote their anti-imperial agenda of erasing structural inequalities in the international system and pushing back British influence in the Gulf. Hence, while the League and the international system of the interwar years were largely conceived by empires, the Iranians turned international arms-traffic discussions into an opportunity to openly challenge imperial visions of order and to prevent their codification in international law. While the conferences ultimately failed to produce an arms-traffic convention and the British imperial power was still able to wield a decisive influence, the chapter argues that the Iranians were successful in opening new spaces for the contestation of imperialism, shifting international discourse on arms control in the Gulf from the rhetoric of a 'civilizing mission' to discussing the relation of imperialism and sovereignty, and pushing the British into an increasingly weak position on the international stage. In this way, the chapter advocates a different perspective on interwar internationalism's and the League's role in the entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World that understands them not only as imperial instruments but is also aware of moments of anti-imperial appropriation.

Where Leon Julius Biela understands international arms-traffic conferences as institutionalized spaces of international exchanges open to appropriation by less powerful actors, **Semih Gökatalay's** chapter makes a similar argument focusing on the World's Fairs of 1933/34 in Chicago and 1939/40 in New York as spaces of connection, international exchange, and transnational networking. The chapter's analysis of the role of post-Ottoman diasporas in these World's Fairs draws attention to how these spaces could be appropriated by groups who were marginalized in other contexts. The chapter argues that the post-Ottoman diasporas in the United States used the Fairs as a unique means of negotiating their identity between the cultural heritage of their countries of origins and the will and expectation to integrate into American society. By using the Fairs as opportunities to present their native cultures, the diasporas and particularly their leaders sought to appropriate this framework to dispel negative stereotypes and to situate themselves as part of larger American society. Furthermore, despite the diversity of the post-Ottoman diaspora communities, their shared experiences at the Fairs were an avenue to foster inter-diaspora contacts and a heightened sense of unity among post-Ottoman diasporas.

Finally, the Fairs, in which diasporas sometimes had to represent their country of origin on their own, sometimes in cooperation with the respective governments, offered a new forum for the creation of contacts and connections between the diasporas and their post-Ottoman countries of origin and gave the diasporas significant influence over how these countries were represented. The chapter also traces how all these processes were influenced not only by intra- and inter-diaspora dynamics, inequalities based on class and race, and the organizational framework of the fairs, but also the political developments in the diaspora's countries of origins.

**Anna-Elisabeth Hampel's** chapter, too, focuses on processes and means of self-representation of Middle Eastern diasporas living in the North Atlantic. Analyzing Muslim Journals of Weimar-era Berlin and taking up approaches from translation studies, the chapter argues that for Muslims from the Middle East and other places living in Berlin, multiple forms of translation were a key instrument in the pursuit of self-representation and the negotiation of their relationship with "Europe". In these journals, produced for and in collaboration with a European non-Muslim audience, Muslims helped to shape the discourse on the relationship of "Islam" and "Europe" and on how Islam was to be understood and lived in the modern, globalized world formed by imperialism. They had to defend themselves against European epistemic logics, prejudices, and narratives of superiority while meeting the standards set by "the West" for the legitimization of political demands. Translation was thus a "difficult balancing act of engaging with the logics and categories of a hierarchized discourse in order to simultaneously question and overcome them," with "Europe" as a partner for dialogue but not a central reference point, making it, therefore, too simplified to situate the journals' discourses as either conformist or resistant. The chapter emphasizes the significance of translations as a central – even if unconscious – part and means of this discourse. The journals' multilingualism was always accompanied by processes of selection and omission in conscious or unconscious alignment with the translator's agenda, legitimization strategies, and the assumed expectations of the target audience, which reflected the ambivalence of the Muslim journals' discourse but also testified to well-functioning networks between the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and beyond. Thus, the chapter's approach sheds light not only on a further form of networks and entanglements between Europe and the Middle East in the interwar years but also on how Middle Eastern actors in Europe helped to shape contemporary imaginations of these regions and their relation.

From a different angle, **César Jaquier's** chapter also illuminates contemporary imaginations, perceptions, and experiences of the spaces of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World. Drawing on microhistorical approaches to mobility and connectivity, César Jaquier's chapter offers new insights into the transregional connections that developed between London and Baghdad in the 1920s and 1930s by examining the journeys of Yusuf Ghanima and Freya Stark. Instead of focusing primarily on the transport system that placed these two cities within nine days of travel in the



interwar years, the chapter foregrounds the experience of these two travelers as they journeyed through the spaces in between. Their travel narratives, examined alongside other sources, expose how they became aware of and reshaped their perceptions of space, distance, and alterity. Their travel accounts also reveal the coexistence of different forms of mobility along the same routes and demonstrate that people on the move enjoyed different travel conditions and different treatment by states, based on social, racial, and gender categories that underpinned different mobility regimes. In examining the travel experience of Yusuf Ghanima and Freya Stark, the chapter contributes to moving beyond the sometimes overly simplistic narrative of accelerated mobility and increased connectivity put forward in global history and mobility studies.

While this volume seeks to move beyond simplified narratives of the European powers' imperial intrusion into the Middle East during the interwar years as the sole force of transfer and the spread of ideas and concepts, it remains pivotal for an entangled history of the Middle Eastern and North Atlantic World to understand how the ordering power of imperialism interacted with local agency. The last two chapters of the volume thus center on European imperialism in the interwar Middle East, while questioning common narratives about its role and stressing perspectives and agencies marginalized by imperialism and its historiography.

Written from the perspective of architectural history, **Margaret Freeman's** chapter focuses on "architecture as a key pillar in Mandate Britain's strategy for control of the 'desert periphery' of Transjordan and Iraq and its nomadic inhabitants." Seeing themselves in an imperial tradition stretching back to the Roman Empire, British administrators sought to imitate what they understood as their imperial predecessors' strategic approach to desert control through architecture. Going beyond the narrative of top-down mechanisms of imperial control, however, the chapter sheds light on Bedouin contributions to the built environments of the desert regions the British sought to control. It highlights the role of Bedouins as builders and patrons of architecture, thereby offering new insights into their history as well as the architectural history of the region and the nature and extent of British imperial desert control. By setting this focus, the chapter complicates simplified notions of nomadic peoples and lifeways as being opposed to the construction and use of permanent architecture – notions that were solidified and perpetuated by British Mandate officials, who arrived in the mandates with such notions already entrenched. The chapter argues that for them, based on a vision of architecture as an expression of imperial ideology, a matter of strategic importance, and a tool to subjugate nomadic people, it was both politically expedient and symbolically significant to lay sole claim to the desert's built heritage and imperial legacies. By analyzing how these ideas, informed and mutually reinforced by decision-making in the field, were reaffirmed in the publications and presentations these officials produced for the British public, the chapter scrutinizes how notions about the

Bedouins that still circulate in the North Atlantic World and elsewhere were shaped by externally constructed narratives and orientalist myths. Shedding light on the complexities of Bedouin relationships with both imperial actors and “imperial” architecture during the Mandate period and understanding the built environment of the deserts during the interwar years as shaped by both Bedouin and imperial actors, ideas, and concepts, the chapter helps to overcome notions of the Bedouin and their relationship to architecture that prevail to this day.

The chapter by **Katie Laird** also reflects critically upon narratives that were shaped by interwar imperialism and remain relevant up to today. The chapter restores historical depth to the phenomenon of “honor crimes”, which, in the current political discourse, continue to be presented as some kind of contemporary and essential “Middle Eastern” or “Muslim” problem, by analyzing the British Mandate’s authorities’ legal approach to them in interwar Palestine. Taking the observation that British Mandate officials systematically downplayed “honor crimes” and commuted the sentences of “honor killers”, while simultaneously upholding death sentences for murderers with other motives as a starting point, the chapter locates the reason for this British leniency toward “honor crimes” in interwar Palestine in the British concept of masculinity that had been forming since the late 18th century. This concept was centered on the ability of men to protect women, whose femininity was constructed around moral purity and innocent fragility, from other masculinities perceived as subordinate. Thus, British officials sought to demonstrate to the public at home and to the world the need for their control over other masculinities and therefore the Mandate’s population by rhetorically condemning and stressing the brutality of ‘honor crimes’ and the need to protect women. At the same time, their concepts of masculinity and femininity led British officials and judges to showing tacit tolerance for the killing of women whom they perceived as threats to their own masculinity. Based on the analysis of multiple ‘honor killing’ cases from different court levels as well as the private correspondences of judges, the chapter argues that, from the British officials’ perspective, “to allow Palestinian women [...] to disobey their own fathers and brothers and husbands would set a precedent that could ultimately destabilize the dominant masculinity” to which they laid claim. Hence, by defining when the alleged “bad character” of a woman could mitigate a murder, the British officials made themselves the “ultimate arbiters of what constituted acceptable femininity”, thus stabilizing their notion of gender hierarchies and masculinity.

# Hotels, Immigrant Houses, and Special Neighborhoods

## Global Mobility, Nation Formation, and Ethnonational Partition in Jaffa-Tel Aviv, ca. 1908–1927

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*Felicitas Remer*

The interwar period – coinciding largely with British mandatory rule – was key to the idea of the ‘nation’ taking hold in Palestine. The rather vague concept of the nation is invoked here deliberately to signify both the nation as an imagined community of people and as a socio-spatial unit of political identification that replaced empire, but continued to coexist and compete with other geographical scales, such as the region and the city, but also the globe.<sup>1</sup> Thus understood, the idea of the nation is a conceptual prerequisite for related and more strictly defined terms such as nationality, nationalism, and the nation-state. The existing historiography of the encounter between the North Atlantic region and the Middle East during the interwar period has strongly emphasized the transfer of the nation-state into the partitioned Ottoman territories in the aftermath of the First World War.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the case of Israel-Palestine has received the most scholarly attention, no doubt because – as the hyphenated expression indicates – the absence of a state for the Palestinian nation and long-lasting violent national conflict most clearly betray the grievous consequences of British imperial intervention. It is thus also the clearest case in point for a narrative that constructs the import of the national idea into the ex-Ottoman territories as an original sin, causing a seemingly perpetual spiral of sectarian conflict and national strife or even ethnic cleansing, forced population transfers, and territorial partition along ethnoreligious lines. It thus obliterated, the story goes, non-national modes of conviviality that had existed in Ottoman Palestine, where

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1 For the nation as an imagined community, see Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). For the nation as a spatial scale in the Middle East, see Cyrus Schayegh: *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 1–26.

2 See, for instance, James Barr: *A Line in the Sand. Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011); David Fromkin: *A Peace to End All Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Holt, 1989).

until nationalism transformed “permeable boundaries [...] into rigidly patrolled national cages”<sup>3</sup> members of all three monotheistic religions had “lived side by side in plural, multifaced coexistence.”<sup>4</sup>

This narrative contains some obvious nostalgia, which is perhaps more concerned with the present than with historical accuracy, yet it also reiterates another problematic paradigm at work in research on the relationship between the Middle East and the North Atlantic:<sup>5</sup> The model of the imperial diffusion of ideas, which denies the colonized actors intellectual independence and agency and reduces them to passive objects of an all-powerful, imperial encroachment. As Baruch Kimmerling expressed it in the case of the Palestinians: “If one wants to single out one major factor that shaped and built the Palestinian collective identity and made the Palestinians into a people [...] we can point to the role of the British Mandatory power.”<sup>6</sup> Beyond the reproduction of the ideological perspective of the colonizer, another problem with this approach lies in its historical oversimplification, because it limits itself to a generalizing answer to the question of ‘what’ happened, but rarely initiates in-depth or locally anchored studies of the precise ‘how, when, and why’ particular ideas such as the nation took hold in places far removed from their alleged geographical origins. However, in seeking to overcome, as this volume does, the one-dimensional historiographical emphasis on imperial intrusion and the unidirectional transfer of ideas in favor of showcasing the more varied and complex encounters and exchanges between both regions, it is essential to develop alternative perspectives.

This chapter therefore attempts to provide a new angle on both the evolution of the national idea and its ultimate culmination in the fateful practice of territorial partition along religious, ethnic, and national lines in early 20th century Palestine. It seeks to reorient our point of view by zooming out and comprehensively engaging existing literatures on the global history of the universalization of the national idea, nation formation, and ethnonational partition, on the one hand, and zooming into the local, urban history of Jaffa-Tel Aviv, on the other. By bringing into conversation the scholarship on ethnonational separatism and partition and the approach of

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3 Mark Mazower: *Salonica. City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), 22–23.

4 Mark Levene: “Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters. European Nation-State Building and Its Toxic Legacies”, in: Amos Goldberg/Bashir Bashir (eds.): *The Holocaust and the Nakba. A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 45–65, here 61.

5 Will Hanley: “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies”, in: *History Compass* 6:5 (2008), 1346–1367.

6 Baruch Kimmerling: “The Formation of Palestinian Collective Identities: The Ottoman and Mandatory Periods”, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 36:2 (2000), 48–81, here 64.

global intellectual history, I show that the consolidation of the national idea in Palestine cannot be explained without paying attention to the mutual co-constitution of modern globalization and nation formation, and that it involved an interaction between global and local forces that cannot be reduced to the imperial encounter with Britain during the Mandate period.<sup>7</sup> In a second step, the application of these findings is tested on the case of Jaffa-Tel Aviv. Jaffa-Tel Aviv presents an ideal setting, not only because it was a site where interactions between the global and the local were particularly strong. What is more, Jaffa-Tel Aviv presents a microcosm of a larger set of processes, since it is commonly assumed that Tel Aviv introduced the national idea and its specific forms of spatialization into the previously non-national environment of Ottoman Jaffa and that this led, ultimately, to the de facto partition of both cities along ethnonational lines.<sup>8</sup>

Using a close reading of the local Arabic and Hebrew press of the period between 1908 and the 1920s, this chapter therefore proceeds to ask how the national idea arrived in Jaffa-Tel Aviv and how exactly this led to the separation of the two cities. With regard to the Hebrew press, it draws most substantially on the Jaffa section of the Jerusalemite Sephardi newspaper *ha-Herut* and the Labor Zionist paper *ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir*, which was published in Jaffa. They are chosen not only because of their extensive coverage of Jaffa and Tel Aviv, but also because they represent two opposite ends of the Palestinian Jewish and Zionist ideological spectrum, with *ha-Herut* being published by Palestinian-born Sephardi Jews and *ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir* representing the voice of Labor Zionist immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. The study of the Arabic press must by necessity remain limited to the Christian Orthodox newspaper *Filastin*, which was published in Jaffa from 1911 onwards and soon turned into Palestine's most widely read Arabic newspaper. It is, unfortunately, the only newspaper continuously covering both the period under study and Jaffa specifically that is still available to historians.

The lens of the urban press, the perspectives and everyday experiences reflected in it, as a view 'from below', sheds light on how a growing but uneven consciousness, among both Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs, of the deterritorializing influences of increased mobility and global integration caused a turn towards localized, reterritorialized forms of attachment – such as Zionism, Arab nationalism, Palestinianism, and Ottomanism – and that this was already manifest during the final years of Ottoman rule. Increased mobility and migration had changed not only debates on local attachment, identity, and communal belonging, but had already be-

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7 See Antony C. Hopkins: "Introduction: Interactions between the Universal and the Local", in: Antony C. Hopkins (ed.): *Global History. Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1–38, here 11.

8 Mark LeVine: *Overthrowing Geography. Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

gun to have a momentous impact on the spatial configurations of the city and its intra-urban boundaries. Tel Aviv, which was incorporating into itself the European Jewish experience of being an ‘uprooted’ minority in an increasingly ethnically defined majority nation, had already begun to separate itself from its mother city Jaffa.

The advent of the British Mandate did not constitute an immediate or radical break with this existing trend, but rather, as an imperial actor, it operated within that same dynamic. Existing realities, discourses, and agency – ‘local’ vis-à-vis the new British rulers, yet already conditioned by an experience of the global – thus influenced both British perspectives on Palestine and its decision-making. British imperialism, then, did not act as an all-powerful diffusor of ideas or the exclusive channel through which Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs engaged with globally circulating concepts. The British Mandate government did, however, hold the political power to order and regulate both deterritorializing processes – for instance migration and mobility – and reterritorializing processes, such as urban border-drawing, town planning, and housing construction.

### **Literatures in Conversation: Imperialism, “Lausanne Wisdom”, and the Global Intellectual History of the Nation**

Due to the dwindling feasibility of the two-state solution, hopes for peaceful coexistence in Israel-Palestine are increasingly placed in alternative models – models that fundamentally challenge the dominant assumptions about the nexus between state, nation, territory, and sovereignty that has shaped the post-World War I international order. Scholars are attempting to recast concepts of political liberation and self-determination “away from the telos of the nation-state” and, importantly, transcending the notion of territorial and demographic partition.<sup>9</sup>

This line of political thought opens a space of historical inquiry: How and why did it come to pass that the notion of national partition become the single most obvious means of solving intercommunal conflict? And, more fundamentally, when and how exactly did the nation become the dominant framework when thinking about identity and politics in the first place? For both of these questions, broader historiographies exist into which the Israeli-Palestinian case has so far rarely been or only just begun to be included – likely out of fear that such a contextualization would run

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9 Leila Farsakh: “Introduction: The Struggle for Self-Determination and the Palestinian Quest for Statehood”, in: Leila Farsakh (ed.): *Rethinking Statehood in Palestine. Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 1–25, here 2. On Post-Zionism see, for instance, Uri Ram: “National, Ethnic or Civic? Contesting Paradigms of Memory, Identity and Culture in Israel”, in: *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19 (2000), 405–422.

the risk of denying it its complex singularity. Yet whether one is looking for possible courses of action in the present or for historical depth and accuracy, if this hesitance leads to a perpetuation of the paradigm of imperial diffusion, which denies agency to the local communities, it is doing us a disservice.

No matter how integral a part of the conventional wisdom of conflict resolution partition might be today, it was not the only, logical, or inevitable trajectory for most of the actors involved during the British Mandate. The British treated Palestine as a single polity; its draft constitution included the country's different communities equally, recognized Arabic, Hebrew, and English as official languages, and issued a single nationality to all of Palestine's inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> While territorial separatism had been an aspect of Practical Zionist strategy from its inception, and partition or cantonization had been discussed in conversations between Zionist leaders and among British officials from at least 1929 onwards, it was only in 1937 that it was first raised in the official, public debate by the proposal of the Peel Commission.<sup>11</sup> Zionist leaders accepted the idea of partition in principle and convinced the 20th Zionist congress to agree to the proposal as a basis for future negotiations.<sup>12</sup> Bi-nationalism, however, continued to influence future visions of a shared state outside the Zionist mainstream between the 1920s and 1940s.<sup>13</sup> The Arab Higher Committee, in turn, condemned the Peel proposal in 1937, and the Palestinian intellectual and political leadership continued to reject partition or any other form of Zionist sovereignty over Palestine as a violation of their rights well into the 1970s.<sup>14</sup>

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- 10 Leila Farsakh: "Alternatives to Partition in Palestine. Rearticulating the State-Nation Nexus", in: Leila Farsakh (ed.): *Rethinking Statehood in Palestine. Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 173–191, here 174–175. For more detail on the Mandate's nationality law, see Lauren Banko: *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). On the institutionalization of communal difference by the Mandate government, see Leila Farsakh: *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).
- 11 Palestine Royal Commission: *Report presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July, 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), 380–393. On deliberations on partition prior to 1937, see Penny Sinanoglou: "British Plans for the Partition of Palestine, 1929–1938", in: *The Historical Journal* 52:1 (2009), 131–152; Gideon Biger: "The Partition Plans for Palestine – 1930–1947", in: *Israel Studies* 26:3 (2021), 24–45.
- 12 Benny Morris: *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 60–64; T.G. Fraser: "A Crisis of Leadership: Weizmann and the Zionist Reactions to the Peel Commission's Proposals, 1937–38", in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:4 (1988), 657–680.
- 13 Shalom Ratsabi: *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom, 1925–1933* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Adi Gordon: "Rejecting Partition: The Imported Lessons of Palestine's Bi-national Zionists", in: Laura Robson/Arie Dubnov (eds.): *Partitions. A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 175–202.
- 14 Laura Robson: *States of Separation. Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 119; Joel Beinin: "Arab Liberal Intellectuals and

The genesis of the partition proposal cannot be understood without contextualizing it within what Mark Levene has called “Lausanne wisdom”.<sup>15</sup> What this expression refers to is a new logic of internationally legitimized and formalized ethnonational separatism that emerged out of the post-World War I peace treaties and was decisive in shaping the post-war world order. Arising out of the experience of the mass displacements and genocidal atrocities shaping the collapse of the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian Empires, “Lausanne wisdom” entailed that nation-states had to be ethnically, religiously, and linguistically homogenous in order to prevent conflict and sustain political stability, and that the measures of forced population transfers and partitions – the “unmixing of peoples” – provided legitimate means to achieve this homogeneity.<sup>16</sup> The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which concluded the war between Greece and Turkey and provided for the Greek-Turkish population exchange, entailing the movement of about 1.5 million people, formalized the “state-authorized expurgation of ethnoreligious difference.” It was cited as a precedent in the partition proposal of the Peel Commission.<sup>17</sup> The League of Nations and its minorities treaties, on the other hand, were designed to protect and monitor the treatment of minorities in ethnically and religiously mixed territories such as those formerly belonging to the Ottoman Empire. Yet, as Laura Robson has recently argued, they not only legally enshrined certain principles regarding the question of the treatment of national, ethnic, or religious minorities by majority societies but simultaneously reformulated older principles justifying imperial intervention.<sup>18</sup>

This new international order, and the League of Nations overseeing it, were doubtlessly shaped decisively by imperialism. However, characterizing the circulation of the idea of ethnonational partition as a process of genesis, dissemination, and transformation, as much of the literature does, runs the risk of reiterating

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the Partition of Palestine”, in: Laura Robson/Arie Dubnov (eds.): *Partitions. A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 203–223.

15 Levene, “Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters”, 56.

16 See the contributions by Panikos Panayi, Ian Talbot, Mark Levene and Matthew Frank in Panikos Panayi/Pippa Virdee (eds.): *Refugees and the End of Empire. Imperial Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

17 Renée Hirschon: “‘Unmixing Peoples’ in the Aegean Region”, in: Renée Hirschon (ed.): *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the Consequences of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 3–12; Levene: “Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters”, 46. See also Asli İğsiz: *Humanism in Ruins. Entangled Legacies of the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

18 Laura Robson: “Capitulations Redux: The Imperial Genealogy of the Post-World War I ‘Minority Regimes’”, in: *The American Historical Review* 126:3 (2021), 978–1000. See also Susan Pedersen: *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).



the outdated paradigm of a powerful, linear imperial diffusion.<sup>19</sup> What is more, by positing the Zionist movement as one of the causes of this “dissemination” rather than an outcome, it fails to grasp the complex routes by which ethnonationalist separatism travelled – it was, after all, the ethnonationalism of the European heartlands that posited European Jews as a minority within a majority nation, defined by blood and ancestry, that sparked the Zionist movement.<sup>20</sup> As Jacqueline Rose puts it: “Israel inscribes at its heart the very version of nationhood from which the Jewish people had to flee.”<sup>21</sup> Mark Levene therefore stresses that contextualizing the case of Israel-Palestine within this “Lausanne wisdom” makes it “more understandable within a wider process of historical development heralding the genocidal birth pangs of the contemporary international nation-state system.” In other words, he understands Zionism itself, which regarded nation-state formation as a process of Jewish “normalization” and a means to shed the Jewish minority status and thus solve the “Jewish question”, to have been conditioned by that same emerging international order premised on ethnonational separatism.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to differentiate, therefore, between understanding the emergence of this new global order as premised on imperial diffusion or grasping it as a complex process, in which certain concepts and ideas became universalized on a global scale. An in-depth inquiry into this process of the universalization of ideas, which the field of global intellectual history has tasked itself with, allows, crucially, for the distinctiveness of non-European thought and thus for local intellectual agency. The simplifying model of imperial diffusion, understood by global intellectual history to be the “colonist’s model”, is countered by two basic claims. *First*, that it disregards the complex local intellectual genealogies already in place and interacting with newly arriving ideas, and that even these “local” genealogies of thought had already been impacted by global connections – unless one supposes an essential “epistemic frontier” separating the West from the rest prior to the 19th century. *Second*, that even concepts that seemingly originated in Europe and were inextricably tied to Europe’s own local intellectual history were conditioned by global interactions, and thus have their own global history and cannot be understood to

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19 For this understanding, see Laura Robson/Arie Dubnov: “Introduction. Drawing the Line, Writing Beyond It: Toward a Transnational History of Partitions”, in: Laura Robson/Arie Dubnov (eds.): *Partitions. A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 1–27, here 26.

20 See Gerard Delanty: “Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism: The Paradox of Modernity”, in: Gerard Delanty/Krishan Kumar (eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2006), 357–368, here 361–363.

21 Jacqueline Rose: *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 83.

22 Levene, “Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters”, 47, 59.

be exclusively local in their context of origin.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, imperialism is denied its function as the sole mediating force through which locals experienced and grappled with global interconnection, making room for more nuanced and complex accounts of the interplay between local intellectual traditions and globally circulating ideas.

The global universalization of the concepts of the nation, nationalism, and the nation-state has perhaps received most scholarly attention with regard to this issue.<sup>24</sup> The work of Benedict Anderson, whose understanding of nations as imagined communities has become conventional wisdom, considered nationalism to be “modular” and thus “available for pirating”. He thereby claimed that European nationalism could simply be adopted, mimicked, and transplanted to different localities in the world – implying both a hierarchical order between origin and copy and a linear, teleological process of diffusion.<sup>25</sup> This view has been subject to profound criticism, especially for its tendency to homogenize the particularities of various nationalist movements.<sup>26</sup> Much attention has also been given to non-Western imaginings of alternative world orders that were developed in the context of decolonization and transcended the framework of a global system of nation-states.<sup>27</sup>

The most detailed and elaborate critique stems from Manu Goswami, who seeks to develop an alternative to Anderson’s modularity, paying tribute to both the specific and particularist content of different nationalist movements without losing sight of “the transnational and global production of the local.” She insists that the nation form became “transposable” towards the late 19th century not least because of the lure of its doubled character: Nationalisms, she elaborates, developed at once

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- 23 Andrew Sartori: “Intellectual History and Global History”, in: Richard Whatmore/Brian Young (eds.): *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), 201–212. See also Andrew Sartori/Samuel Moyn: “Approaches to Global Intellectual History”, in: Andrew Sartori/Samuel Moyn (eds.): *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 3–30.
- 24 See Sophie-Jung Kim/Alastair McClure/Joseph McQuade: “Making and Unmaking the Nation in World History: Introduction”, in: *History Compass* 15:2 (2017), 1–9.
- 25 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4; Manu Goswami: “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism”, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:4 (2002), 770–799, here 779.
- 26 See, for instance, John Breuilly: “Reflections on Nationalism”, in: *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 15:1 (1985), 65–75; Prasenjit Duara: *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Partha Chatterjee: *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 27 See, for instance, Cemil Aydin: *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia. Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Frederick Cooper: *Citizenship between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Algeria, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). See more broadly Adom Getachew: *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

into the most accepted means to express local particularisms in their specific content – while embracing an outward, global universalism in their abstract form. In her words, “nationalist claims of particularity and the imagined singularity of national formations only become intelligible against and within a global grid of formally similar nations and nation-states.”<sup>28</sup> Against the backdrop of the deterritorializing influences of imperial and capitalist expansion, nations thus presented “still points in a turning world.”<sup>29</sup> By positing such a new global space-time and the desire to assert local, collective identity against this as one of the foundations of nation formation – both in Europe and elsewhere – Goswami echoes global intellectual history’s approach of capturing the global circulation of ideas without reducing it to imperial diffusion. In this light, European imperialism appears as a crucial driver of capitalist and imperial expansion, though not as the blueprint for nation formation around the globe, because the same context of modern globalization had itself conditioned European nation formation.<sup>30</sup>

While today, then, globalizing processes are ironically often regarded as eroding the nation as a unit of identity and the nation-state as a political framework of sovereignty, their very emergence was in fact historically deeply intertwined. Global flows of capital, goods, people, and ideas, rather than merely making borders permeable, identities more flexible and flattening the world into a “global village”, simultaneously entailed counter-processes creating new and redefined borders and identities. Globalization thus rescaled the world territorially rather than merely compressing it into one single whole. Accordingly, globalization is much more accurately understood as a process of continuous deterritorializations and reterritorializations, interacting closely with each other.<sup>31</sup> Often those sites where the deterritorializing influences of globalization were experienced most intensely were also the arenas where redefinitions of often rigid spatial and territorial borders and cultural or social boundaries emerged most clearly. Such sites, where flows, connections, and networks become most tangible and new forms of their regulation, ordering, and assertions of particularism occur most vividly, such as

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28 Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form”, 785.

29 Ibid., 789, quoting Stuart Hall: “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity”, in: Anthony D. King (ed.): *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1997), 19–40, here 22.

30 Paul James: “Theorizing Nation Formation in the Context of Imperialism and Globalism”, in: Gerard Delanty/Krishan Kumar (eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, 369–381, here 374–376.

31 Matthias Middell/Katja Naumann: “Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to Critical Junctures of Globalization”, in: *Journal of Global History* 5:1 (2010), 149–170.

metropolises, international conference venues, or port cities, have been theorized by global historians as “portals of globalization”.<sup>32</sup>

### Late Ottoman Jaffa as a “Portal of Globalization”: Mobility, Migration, and Urban Separatism

At the turn of the 20th century, Jaffa was Palestine’s most globalized, diverse, and mobile city. Despite its relatively small size, it was Palestine’s second largest town and its most important port – second only to Beirut in the whole region. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it had developed into a regional hub of international trade and commerce, with imports through Jaffa port increasing almost tenfold and exports almost fivefold in the years between 1875 and 1913.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, with international travel becoming cheaper, safer, and hence more available, Palestine became an attractive destination for the “modern tourist pilgrim”.<sup>34</sup> Travelers from England, the United States, Germany, Argentina, India, or Japan arrived at Jaffa port and continued their journeys from there, transforming the city into a center of tourism, full of facilities such as hotels, restaurants, and branches of travel agencies.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from trade and tourism, however, Jaffa also evolved into the ‘gateway’ of migration to and from Palestine. The biggest group of migrants was, without a doubt, European Jews of the Second Aliyah, with the local Socialist Zionist newspaper *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir* reporting 4553 new arrivals and 2169 departures between February of 1913 and March of 1914.<sup>36</sup> On the eve of World War I, already about 44 percent of Jaffa’s Jews had immigrated from outside of Palestine.<sup>37</sup> In addition,

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32 Ibid., 153, 162–163; Claudia Baumann/Antje Dietze/Megan Maruschke: “Portals of Globalization – An Introduction”, in: *Comparativ* 27:3/4 (2017), 7–20.

33 Haim Gerber: “Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Palestine: The Role of Foreign Trade”, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 18:3 (1982), 250–264, here 258–259. For detailed accounts of imports and exports between 1885 and 1913, see the tables in Shmuel Avitzur: *Namal Yafo be-Ge’uto u-bi-Shki’ato* (Tel Aviv: Avshalom Institute, 1972), 41, 47.

34 Kobi Cohen-Hattab/Yossi Katz: “The Attraction of Palestine: Tourism in the Years 1850–1948”, in: *Journal of Historical Geography* 27:2 (2001), 166–177, here 169; Doron Bar/Kobi Cohen-Hattab: “A New Kind of Pilgrimage: The Modern Tourist Pilgrim of Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Palestine”, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 39:2 (2003), 131–148, here 134.

35 “Mawsim al-Siah fi Filastin [The Tourist Season in Palestine]”, *Filastin*, 29 June 1912, 3.

36 “Ha-Shavu’a [The Week]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 13 May 1913, 21; “ha-Shavu’a [The Week]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 20 June 1913, 16; “ha-Shavu’a [The Week]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 21 November 1913, 2; “mi-Haye’i Yafo [From Life in Jaffa]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 15 May 1914, 14; Ruth Kark: *Jaffa. A City in Evolution, 1799–1917* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsvi, 1990), 144.

37 Ruth Kark: *Jaffa. A City in Evolution, 1799–1917* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsvi, 1990), 144.

young men from Afghanistan and Morocco had begun to work as guards in the citrus orchards surrounding the city.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, after the Young Turk government lifted restrictions on international emigration from the Ottoman Empire in 1908, Jaffa port also became the point of passage for those Palestinians who emigrated to the Americas as part of what has become known as the Syrian emigration.<sup>39</sup>

In line with the model of “portals of globalization”, however, this experience of increased mobility and global integration not only led to more flexibility or fluidity in terms of the communal organization or the narratives of belonging available to Jaffa’s residents. It also sparked a process of redefining and redrawing urban boundaries – between the city’s various ethnoreligious communities and their spatial organizations in the urban landscape. Before the First World War, Jaffa was a mixed city, whose inhabitants – Christian and Muslim Arabs as well as Jews – fostered close economic, social, and cultural contacts. In recent years, historical scholarship has done important work to excavate the many instances of friendly neighborly relations, shared holidays and public celebrations, mixed schools, and business cooperation between Arabs and Jews. They have rediscovered Jaffa and other late Ottoman cities as worlds where identities were multilayered and liminal, not yet subjected to the rigid boundaries of the nation, describing them as cosmopolitan or “Levantine”.<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding these findings, however, an analysis of the local press also reveals strong anxieties concerning Jaffa’s increasingly mobile and diverse population, which in many cases led to the sharpening and redefinition of existing communal boundaries in increasingly national terms.

While the Arab-Christian newspaper *Filastin* took pride in Jaffa’s economic status and demanded funds for the expansion of the local port from the Ottoman government on several occasions, the issue of migration became a central theme in the newspaper between 1911 and 1914.<sup>41</sup> Initially, its primary concern was the emigration

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38 “Al-Magharibah wa-l-Afghan [The Moroccans and the Afghans]”, *Filastin*, 13 November 1912, 3; Evelin Dierauff: “Global Migration into Late Ottoman Jaffa as Reflected in the Arab-Palestinian Newspaper *Filastin* (1911–1913)”, in: Cyrus Schayegh/ Liat Kozma/Avner Wishnitzer (eds.): *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality, and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 165–174, here 168–169.

39 Kemal H. Karpat: “The Ottoman Migration to America, 1860–1914”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17:2 (1985), 175–209, here 180; David Gutman: “Travel Documents, Mobility Control, and the Ottoman State in an Age of Global Migration, 1880–1915”, in: *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3:2 (2016), 347–368, here 364.

40 LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*; Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common. Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Abigail Jacobson: “Alternative Voices in Late Ottoman Palestine. A Historical Note”, in: *Jerusalem Quarterly* 21 (2004), 41–48; Adam LeBor: *City of Oranges. An Intimate History of Arabs and Jews in Jaffa* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

41 “Marfa’ Yafa [Jaffa Port]”, *Filastin*, 7 October 1911, 3; “Ila Ruhi Bey Khalidi [To Ruhi Bey Khalidi]”, *Filastin*, 27 December 1911, 3; “Ila Hafiz Bey Sa’id [To Hafiz Bey Sa’id]”, *Filastin*, 3 January 1912,

of large numbers of Palestinians through Jaffa port to the Americas. It regularly informed its readers about Ottoman travel regulations.<sup>42</sup> More importantly, however, it regularly warned its readers of the dire travel conditions for migrants to the Americas as well as the dangers of fraud and human trafficking, dedicating long editorials to the topic and publishing open letters by migrants recounting the stories of their misery and disappointment and how they wished to return to Palestine but lacked the financial means for the return journey – a clear attempt to deter others from pursuing the same endeavor.<sup>43</sup>

The issue increasingly became a “patriotic” (*waṭānī*) one: On the one hand, many articles lamented the fact that the emigrants left behind their families and their rootedness in their homeland – reminding them of their obligation to send remittances to their relatives at home.<sup>44</sup> On the other, the newspaper itself, which had subscribers in the Americas, constituted an important means to retain close ties with the emigrants in the *maḥjar* (diaspora). It stressed that as long as remittances were being sent, emigration could be an act of patriotism and proudly reported on instances of Syrian political loyalty overseas, especially during the Ottoman Empire’s war with Italy between 1911 and 1912.<sup>45</sup>

Without a doubt, the emergence of a Palestinian diaspora overseas was one crucial factor in creating a consciousness of being Palestinian or Syrian, and this dynamic would intensify throughout the interwar years.<sup>46</sup> Yet, at this point, attachment to the geographical units of Palestine and Syria, alongside Ottoman patriotism, appeared as loyalties that were easy to reconcile. While parts of the

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3; “Risa’il felah [Letters of a Peasant]”, *Filastin*, 6 January 1912, 1; “Nurid Marfa’ [We Want a Port]”, *Filastin*, 6 August 1913, 1.

42 “Qanun al-Basabot al-Jadid [The New Passport Law]”, *Filastin*, 13 September 1911, 3; “Qanun al-Basabot al-Jadid [The New Passport Law]”, *Filastin*, 23 September 1911, 4.

43 “Zafra min Liverpool [A Sigh from Liverpool]”, *Filastin*, 23 July 1913, 1–2; “Arhamhum Yarhamkum Allah [God Have Mercy on Them]”, *Filastin*, 15 October 1913, 1; “Darra al-Milh ‘ala al-Jurh [Salt in the Wound]”, *Filastin*, 25 November 1911, 1; “Fi Sabil al-Muhajira [Concerning Emigration]”, *Filastin*, 15 October 1913, 4; “An al-Muhajira [About Emigration]”, *Filastin*, 24 January 1912, 1–2; Isa al-Isa: “Kalima fi al-Muhajira [A Word on Migration]”, *Filastin*, 21 September 1912, 1; “Al-Muhajir Yantazallamu [The Migrant Complains]”, *Filastin*, 15 January 1913, 2.

44 “An al-Muhajira [About the Migration]”; Gibran Matar: “Kalima ila al-Muhajirin [A Word to the Emigrants]”, *Filastin*, 25 May 1912, 3.

45 “Aqwal al-Suhuf [Newspaper Statements]”, *Filastin*, 3 April 1912, 3; “Al-Muhajirun wa-Ikhlasuhum [The Migrants and Their Loyalty]”, *Filastin*, 26 June 1912, 3.

46 For the role of the American diasporas in Syrian and Lebanese nationalist activism, however, see Stacy Fahrenthold: “Transnational Modes and Media: The Syrian Press in the Mahjar and Emigrant Activism during World War I”, in: *Mashriq & Mahjar* 1:1 (2013), 30–54; Stacy Fahrenthold: *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Palestinian urban elite supported the nascent project of Arab nationalism, including its demands for Ottoman decentralization, and opposed the Young Turk regime's Turkification policies, the majority, including *Filastin's* editors, remained firmly loyal to the Ottoman Empire and specifically to its emergent "imperial citizenship project".<sup>47</sup> The last years of Ottoman rule were, then, a time when political loyalties and frameworks of identification in Palestine were in flux and often overlapping, where being Ottoman and Arab, Palestinian, Muslim, Christian, or Jew was easy to reconcile. Nonetheless, new and redefined forms of local and particular attachment, such as Arab nationalism, Zionism, Palestinianism, or Ottomanism, were on the rise – albeit without universally agreed upon boundaries and without being understood as mutually exclusive.

Yet when it came to the issue of Ottoman migration restrictions, *Filastin* took on a decidedly local, Palestinian perspective, and the parliamentary representatives of the Jerusalem district, which encompassed the *qadā'* (sub-district) of Jaffa, Ruhi al-Khalidi, and Sa'īd al-Husayni, were often called upon to lobby for Palestine's interests in the Ottoman capital. In 1908, the new Young Turk regime had granted all Ottoman citizens freedom of mobility. Already in 1910, however, the subsequent increase in emigration and the loss of military aged men had prompted the government to partially revoke this policy.<sup>48</sup> *Filastin's* articles criticized the inefficiency of the Empire's new regulations, arguing that in order to stem emigration flows it was much more important to improve Palestine's living conditions, lower taxes, and invest in economic development, so that the poor would no longer be compelled to seek a better future elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> In *Filastin's* discourse, then, there was an inextricable link between the issues of increased emigration and mobility and their deterritorializing influences – and the theme of local attachment, patriotism, and local economic development.

It was also in the context of migration regulation and local economic development that the topic of the Palestinian emigration became connected to increasing apprehension towards growing Zionist immigration from Europe. Indeed, within

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47 Michelle Campos: *Ottoman Brothers. Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). On the emergence of the Palestinian national movement out of this context, see Rashid Khalidi: *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern Nationalist Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Yehoshua Porath: *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (London: Cass, 1974). On *Filastin* specifically, see Evelin Dierauff, *Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine. Debates on Ethno-Confessional Relations and Identity in the Arab Palestinian Newspaper Filastin (1911–1914)* (Cöttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 94–105.

48 Gutman, "Travel Documents", 363–368.

49 "Al-Muhajira [Emigration]", *Filastin*, 21 September 1912, 1–2; "Arhamhum Yarhamkum Allah [God Have Mercy on Them]", *Filastin*, 15 October 1913, 1; Al-Muhajira 'and al-'Arab [Emigration Among the Arabs]", *Filastin*, 26 July 1913, 1–2.

just over three years of its publication before the outbreak of the First World War, *Filastin's* attitude towards Zionism underwent a decisive change – from a neutral or even cautiously positive stance to staunch opposition.<sup>50</sup> In Jaffa, the large number of new Jewish arrivals from Europe were made responsible for the starkly rising costs of living, which were interpreted as one of the causes of Arab emigration. While Jewish immigration had facilitated commercial progress and economic prosperity, which *Filastin* applauded, the newspaper also accused the Jews of having separated their economic life from that of the Arab population. “We see that our immigrant Israelite brothers have established for themselves special neighborhoods, special markets and special conventions.” While for Jews, then, expenses and income had increased equally, the Arab population had not shared in the new profits, but nonetheless suffered from heightened costs of everyday commodities.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, the combination of increased Jewish immigration and growing Palestinian Arab emigration appeared as a daunting prospect, and *Filastin* began voicing fears that it would be the Zionists rather than the “sons of the homeland” who would build and construct Palestine, taking over the lands deserted by the emigrants.<sup>52</sup> The newly instated Ottoman passport regulations became subject to criticism not only because of their inefficiency, but also because of their effect on regulating and policing Arab migration – while allowing the misuse of the so-called “red note”, a three-month residence permit given to Jewish immigrants upon arrival in Palestine. Describing the scenes unfolding at Jaffa port and comparing the treatment of Zionist arrivals and Palestinian returnees, *Filastin* concluded: “Whereas you see the Zionist immigrants entering safely, you will find the indigenous (*waṭānī*) migrants, for their part, subjected to contempt, ill-treatment and severe scrutiny.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, alongside several local controversies – regarding, for instance land sales or the mutual exclusion of the Jewish and Arab Muslim and Christian communities from employment or education – concerns about Zionist immigration vis-à-vis Palestinian emigration and the emergence of separate economies proved crucial in making *Filastin's* editors perceive Zionism as a “danger” (*khaṭar*). In the process, the terminology differentiating *ṣahyūniyyūn* (“Zionists”, as political movement) from *isrā’īliyyūn* (“Israelites”, bearing a solely religious connotation) and *yahūd* (“Jews”, implying a layer of racial and national identification in Arabic) became less and less distinct.<sup>54</sup> In other words, Jewish immigration from Europe and local economic and

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50 Samuel Beška: “Filastin’s Changing Attitude toward Zionism before World War I”, in: *Jerusalem Quarterly* 72 (2017), 86–101.

51 Isa al-Isa: “Al-Muhajirin wa-Ghala’ al-Ma’isha [The Immigrants and the Cost of Living]”, *Filastin*, 29 May 1912, 1.

52 “Arhamhum Yarhamkum Allah [God Have Mercy on Them]”, *Filastin*, 15 October 1913, 1.

53 “Rifqan b-il-Muhajirin [Mercy on the Emigrants]”, *Filastin*, 25 October 1913, 3.

54 Beška, “Filastin’s Changing Attitude”, 98.



communal separatism also gradually led *Filastin* to view the Jews as a national community rather than as a religious group. What is more, their national character was conceptually distinct from indigenous forms of local attachment, the terms *qawmī* and *waṭanī* being used to signify this difference. Warning of Jewish mass immigration, a 1913 editorial in *Filastin* warned that the “national life” (*al-ḥayah al-qawmiyya*) of the immigrants would cause the “imminent death of the [Palestinian] patriots” (*waṭaniyyūn*).<sup>55</sup>

On the one hand, then, in the years between 1908 and 1914, the Ottoman imperial framework remained firmly in place, and alternative, nationalized forms of local attachment did not yet appear to present insurmountable obstacles to this imperial project. On the other hand, however, the interplay between the experiences of local political representation within the framework of the Ottoman constitution, the Syrian emigration, Jewish immigration, and Zionist separatism had already gradually begun to spark assertions of an identification with the geographical unit of Palestine as such. Ottoman Palestine thus underwent a dynamic process of rescaling identities and geographical and political frameworks of attachment in light of the deterritorializing experiences of geopolitical upheaval and mobility, migration, and global integration. The outcome of this process was unclear yet, but it would continue to gain traction in the following years and especially in the wake of the empire’s collapse.

The epitome of Jewish immigration and communal separatism, and one of the “special neighborhoods” *Filastin* lamented above, was Tel Aviv. It had been founded in 1909 at the initiative of some of Jaffa’s leading Jews as an attempt precisely to tackle the problems of increased immigration and high living costs. Housing shortages, overcrowding, and the poor quality of the apartments and perceived lack of hygiene and orderliness in Jaffa had been Tel Aviv’s founders’ main arguments when lobbying for support from the World Zionist Organization (WZO).<sup>56</sup> Alongside unemployment, lack of proper housing was seen as one of the main reasons for Zionist return migration to Europe through Jaffa port – an issue that caused widespread concern in the Hebrew press.<sup>57</sup> The port city was a point of passage for many Jewish emigrants from all over Palestine, and this function as a gateway and the “mobile” image it endowed the city with were bemoaned in the press: “In recent days, the exodus has increased to the extreme, different people of different types [...]. The migration frenzy stretches to all four corners of the world, some to Australia, some to America and

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55 Al-Watani: “Al-Khatar al-Sahyuni [The Zionist Danger]”, *Filastin*, 27 December 1913, 1–2.

56 Arthur Ruppin: *Briefe, Tagebücher, Erinnerungen*, edited by Shlomo Krolik (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1985), 216.

57 “Le-Havatat ha-Matsav [For the Improvement of the Situation]”, *ha-Herut*, 8 May 1911, 3; “Yafo [Jaffa]”, *ha-Herut*, 19 May 1911, 3; “Yafo [Jaffa]”, *ha-Herut*, 30 June 1911, 3; “Yafo [Jaffa]”, *ha-Herut*, 16 August 1911, 3.

even to Russia [...]. The talk of the day in Jaffa is ‘when and where will you travel?’, as the Jerusalemite *ha-Herut* reported. The Labor Zionist newspaper *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir* even went as far as describing Jaffa as a “hotel” for those Jewish arrivals who had not found the means to settle permanently yet or who were planning their departure.<sup>58</sup>

Increased mobility and migration thus also caused concern throughout the Hebrew press, and there was likewise closely tied to the desire to foster local attachment, patriotism, and Zionist nationalism – in other words, to reterritorialize the Jewish immigrants upon their arrival in ‘Eretz Israel’. Tel Aviv, besides remedying housing and employment shortages, was also founded with the concrete intention of permanently settling and thus firmly rooting the Jewish migrants in Palestine. This much deeper desire inscribed in the process of Tel Aviv’s foundation and urban development is best expressed by an article that appeared in one of the first issues of *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, when Tel Aviv was still known as “Ahuzat Bayit” (lit. “housing estate” or “homestead”):

There are new ghettos for Israel everywhere. There is neither a shortage of building associations conspiring to [profit from] speculation, but our country is one in the movement of ‘Ahuzat Bayit’. This is the desire of the people of Israel [*bnei ha-arets*] to attain a home, in a worldly homestead [*la’ahuz ba-bait, be-ahuzat olamit*]. This is the feeling that we are building here no temporary apartment, no ‘place to stay the night,’ but a permanent apartment *for generations*. [...] The ‘millennial’ wanderer slowly, slowly removes his satchel from his shoulder and tries to stand on his land, in his home.<sup>59</sup>

Condensed in this quote is the rich Zionist intellectual tradition of thinking about exile, uprootedness, and the city in their interconnection – and the special place Tel Aviv, as the first Hebrew city, occupies within it. Whether in the thought of Max Nordau, the creator of the concept of “muscular Judaism”, or Aharon D. Gordon, one of the intellectual leaders of the Second Aliyah, ruralism and agriculturalism, physically working the soil, were seen as the essence of the redemption (*ge’ula*) of both the land and the people of Israel.<sup>60</sup> The city and urban life, in turn, and especially the European ghetto, epitomized exile, the dwelling space of the overly intellectual, uprooted, weak, even physically and mentally degenerated urban Jew, a *luftmensch*. For many Zionists, therefore, the negation of exile (*shlilat ha-galut*) necessarily also en-

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58 Avi-Ephraim: “Korespondatsiyot [Correspondences]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 31 August 1908, 13–14.

59 Even Binyamin: “Min ha-Ereg [From the Construction]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 23 October 1907, 14; emphasis in the original.

60 See, for instance, Aharon D. Gordon: *Ha-Uma ve-ha-Avoda* [The Nation and Labor] (Tel Aviv: Haifa Labor Council and the Zionist Library, 1957), 466; Max Nordau: *Degeneration* (London: William Heinemann, 1895), 35.

tailed the negation of the city and urban life.<sup>61</sup> In Palestine, where the great majority of Jews lived in cities, the conditions of European exile appeared to be reproduced by the mixed, mobile, Levantine cities, and the Jews inhabiting them were regarded as cosmopolitan strangers to the country, who, instead of establishing authentically Jewish environments, blended in with Levantine urban culture.<sup>62</sup>

The urban history of Tel Aviv, and the urban discourses, imaginings, and myths surrounding it, can only be understood against this backdrop. Its planning and building were defined by a search for a new Hebrew urbanism that could overcome the images of both the European and the Palestinian city. Tel Aviv, from the outset, functioned as an urban flagship for the Zionist project and as such its urban image and appearance became subject to a previously unknown degree of regulation and control.<sup>63</sup> Planned according to the progressive town planning scheme of a garden city, Tel Aviv sought to mitigate the urban shapes modern capitalism had created in Europe and retain a degree of pastoralism and attachment to nature for its residents.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, rectangular planning, detached houses, wide streets, and sanitation were meant to introduce the ideas of European modern urban order and distinguish Tel Aviv from its Palestinian surroundings. Most importantly perhaps, Tel Aviv was to be built by Jewish workers, a proof of Jewish strength and revival, thus negating the European exile and giving it a thoroughly Zionist national character: “Its population will be 100 percent Hebrew, Hebrew will be spoken there, where purity and cleanliness will reign and where we will not follow the ways of the gentiles”, as one advertisement put it.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the new suburb was praised by the Hebrew press for its beauty and order, and it was viewed as the crown jewel of the new *Yishuv* and an instance of Zionist pioneering – a place where immigrants settled for good, and became, once again, firmly attached to the

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61 See Joachim Schlör: *Das Ich der Stadt. Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität, 1822–1936* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Erik Cohen: *The City in Zionist Ideology* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, 1970); S. Ilan Troen: *Imagining Zion. Dreams, Designs, and Realities in a Century of Jewish Settlement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

62 Ernst Müller: “Eindrücke von Stadt und Land in Palästina [Impressions from Town and Country in Palestine]”, *Die Welt*, 5 February 1909, 123; LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*, 156.

63 As Barbara E. Mann has pointed out, “Tel Aviv began to construct for itself a coherent narrative describing and explaining the meaning of its origins to its citizens”, creating an image for itself “as a kind of artifact to be studied and explored by its residents” (Barbara E. Mann: *A Place in History. Modernism, Tel Aviv, and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 78, 88).

64 See, for instance, Tal Alon-Mozes: “Rural Ethos and Modern Development: The Emergence of the First Hebrew Town in Modern Palestine”, in: *Planning Perspectives* 26:2 (2011), 283–300.

65 “Prospectus of the Ahuzat Bayit Society”, as quoted in: Ilan Shchori: *Halom she-Hafakh le-Krakh. Tel Aviv, Leyida ve-Tsmiha. Ha-Ir she-Holid Medina* [From Dream to City. Tel Aviv, Its Beginnings and Growth. The City That Gave Birth to a State] (Tel Aviv: Avivim, 1990), 23.

local.<sup>66</sup> Its aim was to re-root the migrants in the soil and to create an independent and sovereign Hebrew polity with proto-national citizens via urbanism, and one necessary precondition for this was its separation from its mother town, Jaffa.<sup>67</sup>

Tel Aviv's separatist aspirations did not go unnoticed by Jaffa's Muslim and Christian Arab population. Throughout September 1911, the pages of the Jerusalemite Sephardi newspaper *ha-Herut* were filled with debates sparked by an open letter presumably sent by a Muslim Arab resident of Jaffa. Hafiz Ben Omar accused the Tel Aviv Town Committee, which functioned much like a municipal government in the suburb, of boycotting local Arab labor in the building of the Nahalat Binyamin neighborhood. He called the boycott a "first sign of war" and directly connected it to Jewish immigration from Russia through Jaffa port, pointing out, "it would be enough if the Arabs would not let guests of this kind off the ship, and then we will see how strong the power of Tel Aviv's people will be."<sup>68</sup> In October 1913, an open letter sent to *Filastin* by "a patriot" (*waṭanī*) warned of a separate judicial system being established in Tel Aviv in shape of the Jewish communal courts.<sup>69</sup> Around the same time, *Filastin* provided the platform for debates over whether the Netter Agricultural School, run by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, excluded non-Jewish students – counter to Ottoman law.<sup>70</sup> By March 1914, suspicion of Tel Avivian separatism ran high, and a comparatively small incident led to an uproar not only in the local but also in the regional press. A Jewish resident of Tel Aviv was attacked and lightly injured with a knife by an Arab, the reason for this being unclear to the press. The crowd that had gathered at the scene stopped the Arab culprit and detained him in the Hebrew Gymnasium of Tel Aviv until the police arrived and transported him to Jaffa's government house. This temporary seizure of executive power by Tel Aviv's residents for the first time caused the widespread and explicit accusation that Tel Aviv had erected a "government within a government" for itself.<sup>71</sup>

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66 For instance, Ben Avraham: "Ahuzat Bayit be-Yafo [Ahuzat Bayit in Jaffa]", *ha-Herut*, 25 June 1909, 3; A. Raznik: "Yafo [Jaffa]", *ha-Herut*, 16 July 1909, 4; "Ha-Yishuv be-Erets Yisra'el bi-Shnat 1910 [The Settlement in Eretz Israel in the Year 1910]", *ha-Olam*, 26 January 1911, 3–5.

67 Yael Allweil: *Homeland. Zionism as a Housing Regime, 1860–2011* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 76.

68 Hafiz Ben Omar, "Dvarim ha-Ra'uyim Lehishame'a [Things That Are Worth Being Heard]", *ha-Herut*, 13 September 1911, 3.

69 "Al-Mahakim al-Sahyuniyya [Zionist Courts]", *Filastin*, 22 October 1913, 3.

70 "Madrasat Netter al-Zara'iyya [The Netter Agricultural School]", *Filastin*, 4 September 1912, 1; "Ghayrna Yatakallamu [Others Speak]", *Filastin*, 25 September 1912, 3; "Madrasat Netter [The Netter School]", *Filastin*, 2 October 1912, 1–2; "Madrasat Netter al-Zara'iyya [The Netter Agricultural School]", *Filastin*, 5 October 1912, 3.

71 The debate is summarized in a review of the Arabic press: "Ba-Itonut ha-Aravit [In the Arabic Press]", *ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir*, 16 March 1914, 11–14. On *Filastin's* observations of Tel Avivian separatism, see also Ilan Pappé: "The Framing of the Question of Palestine by the Early Palestinian

Already before the First World War, then, globalization and migration led to a strengthening and a redefinition of existing forms of local attachment and reterritorialization in Jaffa-Tel Aviv. In the Arabic press, existing local attachment to the geographical unit of Palestine, evident already in *Filastin's* choice of name, was fortified by local representation in the Ottoman parliament as well as the experiences of Palestinian emigration to the Americas and Jewish immigration, and thus constructed between the global and the local. The terms *waṭan* (homeland), *waṭaniyya* (patriotism) and *waṭanī* (patriot) were used with increasing frequency in the press, but could refer to Palestine, Greater Syria, or the Ottoman Empire as a whole. Yet voices demanding the Ottoman government improve local conditions and take care of local Palestinian interests grew louder. Zionist immigrants increasingly appeared as strangers who did not adapt to and integrate into local society but instead formed a separate milieu. In turn, as the Hebrew press shows, the Jewish immigrants of the Second Aliyah were infused with national aspirations and the desire to reterritorialize and settle permanently in Palestine after the experience of exile, minority status, and migration. The planning and building of Tel Aviv were pervaded by the desires to remedy the precarious conditions Jews had experienced in East and Central Europe, and its new Hebrew urbanism was thus premised on the notion of ethnonational separatism. In spatial terms, this meant that years before the territory of the Israeli nation-state was defined by partition, Jewish immigrants in Palestine strove to construct and delimit a national, Hebrew urban environment, thus beginning to reconfigure the socio-spatial makeup of late Ottoman Jaffa.

## **Urban Disengagement and Partition under British Rule: The First Hebrew City as a Laboratory for National Independence**

In 1917, a single document altered Palestine's existing discourse on the nation and the national unequivocally. The Balfour Declaration and its central statement that "his Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object" is regarded as the foundational document of the later Israeli state. From a broader perspective, however, the Balfour Declaration was also a crucial part of a global moment of national definition and demands for national self-determination sparked by the upheavals of the First World War and the transition

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Press: Zionist Settler-Colonialism and the Newspaper *Filastin*, 1912–1922", in: *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* 14:1 (2015), 59–81, here 68–73.

from empire to nation – “what it meant to be a nation” at the end of World War I was unclear and up for debate among the imperial policy-makers.<sup>72</sup>

The very same question was also debated in Palestine itself, and the Balfour Declaration introduced a new vocabulary into the discourses surrounding collective identities, communal relations, and belonging that had been underway since the last years of Ottoman rule. Opposition and protest were ubiquitous in the Palestinian press. When Winston Churchill, the newly appointed British Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited Jaffa in 1921, increasing tensions took on a distinctly local and urban shape: *Filastin* called its readers to a mass protest, and, after this was prohibited by the British government, asked Jaffa’s residents and shopkeepers to boycott the visit, printing the English words “down with the Balfour Declaration” and “down with the Jewish national home” in bold, capitalized letters.<sup>73</sup> The Arabic translation of the “national home for the Jewish people,” *al-waṭan al-yahūdī al-qawmī*, contained both the concept of *waṭan* and that of *qawm*, whose congruence in this expression implied that the Palestinian homeland (*waṭan*) was being promised to the Jewish nation (*qawm*).<sup>74</sup>

When, only about two months after the local boycott of Churchill’s reception, the “Jaffa riots” between Jews and Arabs broke out in the mixed neighborhood of Manshiyyah, which lay at the border between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, leaving 48 Arabs and 47 Jews dead, it seemed clear to the British administrators that the Balfour Declaration and its implications for Jewish immigration lay at the root of the conflict. In fact, Palestine’s Muslim-Christian Associations had already made it clear in 1919 that the Balfour Declaration had transformed the situation into a zero-sum conflict between homeland and exile: “We will push the Zionists into the sea – or they will send us back into the desert.”<sup>75</sup> In 1921, Jaffa’s Arab rioters directly targeted a symbol of Jewish immigration, the building known as “Immigrant House”, which provided shelter to new arrivals and lay in Jaffa’s mixed Muslim-Christian neighborhood of Ajami. “It would have been wise, perhaps, to have found room for it in Tel Aviv, which is an exclusively Jewish quarter”, the report of the British commission of inquiry later admitted. It thus demonstrated the new government’s understanding that Tel Aviv, rather than mixed Jaffa, was the appropriate location for the new Jewish immigrants

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72 Maryanne A. Rhett: *The Global History of the Balfour Declaration. Declared Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3–5.

73 “Al-Muzahara al-Samita wa-l-Ihtijajat [The Silent Demonstration and the Protests]”, *Filastin*, 30 March 1921, 1–2.

74 For one of the first usages in *Filastin*, see “Nahum Sokolov [Nahum Sokolov]”, *Filastin*, 26 March 1921, 3.

75 Report on evidence given to the American Section of the Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates for Turkey, June 1919, Central Zionist Archives L4/794.

to settle – prefiguring later convictions that only partition could lead to a peaceful solution of the conflict.<sup>76</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the riots, British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel wrote a gloss of the Declaration. He noted that “it is possible that the translation of the English words ‘the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine’ into Arabic does not express their true meaning” – attributing the protests to mere mistranslation. Their true meaning, according to Samuel, was

that the Jews, a people who are scattered throughout the world, but whose hearts are always turned to Palestine, should be enabled to found here their home, and that some among them [...] should come to Palestine in order to help by their resources and efforts to develop the country to the advantage of all its inhabitants.<sup>77</sup>

Significantly, this rephrasing did not contain the word “national” but simply spoke of a “home” (nonetheless translated in *Filastin* as *waṭan*) for the Jewish people. It emphasized, on the other hand, the Jewish right to reterritorialize in Palestine after having lived “scattered” throughout the world.

This watered-down version of the Declaration’s text did little to appease *Filastin*’s editors. Refuting the claim that their opposition was only caused by mistranslation, the editors clarified that the true meaning of the Declaration was revealed not in its wording, but in British policies, and it listed precisely those that to them constituted the very essence of a Jewish national home in Palestine: The British consultations with the Zionist Commission, the recognition of Hebrew as an official language in Palestine, the facilitation of Jewish immigration while stemming regional migration flows from Syria, financial support that only benefited the economic endeavors of the Jewish immigrants, and the Municipal Law, which favored Jewish local governmental institutions. “Do not all of these things [...] indicate the true meaning of the national home in all languages of the world?” the editors asked.<sup>78</sup>

Such questions were indeed perennial features of *Filastin*’s approach to migration and the nation throughout the Ottoman and British Mandate eras: Just as in late Ottoman times, it was Jewish immigration, combined with the perceived preferential treatment of strangers vis-à-vis locals as well as economic, social, and cultural separatism of the immigrants and the first stirrings of local self-government

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76 *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto. Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, October, 1921* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1921), 26; Tom Segev: *One, Palestine, Complete. Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 173–190. In addition, immigration was temporarily suspended after the riots and the 1922 White Paper confirmed that it needed to be limited in accordance with the economic absorptive capacity of the country.

77 “Hawl al-khitab al-Mandub al-Sami [About the High Commissioner’s Speech]”, *Filastin*, 11 June 1921, 1.

78 Ibid.

that lay at the heart of *Filastin's* understanding of the Jews as a 'national' community. Now, however, there was one crucial addition – British imperial partiality towards Zionism vis-à-vis Palestinian nationalism. Wartime promises of support for an Arab state, *Filastin* often stressed, had been betrayed by the British to the benefit of the "foreigner" (*al-ajnabī*) and the "intruder" (*al-dakhīl*) – two designations that were now increasingly replacing the previously common and more neutral term "Zionist immigrants" (*al-muhājirūn al-ṣahyūnīyyūn*).<sup>79</sup> In turn, this perceived alliance between the British administration and the Jewish immigrants was confirmed by the reception of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate by Palestine's Jewish community – and Tel Aviv's residents specifically: Churchill's arrival, while boycotted by Jaffa's Arab Palestinians, who closed their shops on the city's main commercial artery, Bustrus Street, was celebrated by the Jews of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. On Bustrus Street and Sderot Binyamin (today's Rothschild Boulevard), Jewish shop owners and tenants decorated lanterns, balustrades, windows, and shop fronts with double national flags – the British on the one side and the Zionist flag on the other.<sup>80</sup>

Due in part to its vagueness, the Balfour Declaration provided but little concrete direction for British policy in Palestine. One aim of the British administration was, however, Palestine's colonial development, and the enlargement of municipal powers as nuclei of self-government in Palestine, was viewed as a crucial step in this direction. As Anat Kidron observed for the case of Haifa, the British had "a certain blindness" to the fact that this agenda often led to the preferential treatment of Jews, especially in shared urban spaces: "The Zionist movement shared the desire for modern European development with the British administration, but made modernity a national symbol." Hence, the developmental cooperation of the British with the Zionist economic and institutional establishment ultimately also helped to "establish the notion of a 'national home'."<sup>81</sup> A similar argument can be made for the case of Jaffa-Tel Aviv, where British policies supported the growth and increased independence of Tel Aviv vis-à-vis Jaffa by way of immigration, as well as the reterritorialization and 'nationalization' of those immigrants and the new Hebrew city. This also implied, probably unintentionally, the disengagement of the two cities and a process of urban partition along ethnonational lines before the tools of partition and transfer entered official discourses on British Palestine policies.

Yet British policies were largely influenced if not determined by the preexisting realities encountered and interpreted by local officials. British government reports

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79 "Hadith Qadim wa-Biyan Jadid [Old Talk and a New Statement]", *Filastin*, 9 March 1921, 1.

80 "Ha-Vezir Churchill ve-Bnei Leayah be-Yafo [Secretary Churchill and His Delegation in Jaffa]", *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 1 April 1921, 3.

81 Anat Kidron: "When Colonialism and Nationalism Meet – But Speak a Different Language: The Case of Haifa during the British Mandate", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 2020 (e-publication, ahead of print), 1–21, here 20–21.



demonstrate that Jaffa and Tel Aviv were understood as two distinct and separate urban units, one an “Oriental city” and the other of European appearance – as had been the explicit agenda of Tel Aviv’s founders. To British eyes, Jaffa’s old town was “a labyrinth of narrow streets, winding among masses of picturesque old buildings, [lying] close packed behind the quay[.]” And while the Muslim-Christian Ajami quarter seemed “modern” to British observers, “Tel Aviv [was] a well-built quarter with a town hall and a municipality of its own, and is not unlike a small modern Continental suburb”, separated from Jaffa by a “sandy space”.<sup>82</sup> In other words, then, the founders’ aim to clearly demarcate and delimit Tel Aviv from Jaffa, to establish a base for urban self-rule, and to create a proto-national urban environment fell on very fertile ground with the British administrators.

Tel Aviv’s efforts to achieve greater governmental autonomy came into full force in the aftermath of the war. As early as 1919, articles began to appear in the Hebrew press arguing for the municipal separation of Tel Aviv from Jaffa. The coexistence of the Jewish Town Committee of Jaffa (*va’ad ha-’ir*), which represented Jaffa’s Jews within the governing structure of that municipality, and the Tel Aviv Committee (*va’ad Tel Aviv*), which considered itself the municipal government of Tel Aviv, was deemed inefficient and a double burden to Tel Aviv’s residents – who were taxed both by the municipality of Jaffa and the Tel Aviv Committee.<sup>83</sup> It was argued that the Town Committee should pull out of Jaffa’s municipal affairs in favor of a purely Hebrew municipality because the former did too little for the benefit of Tel Aviv’s residents. Going much further, an article in *Do’ar ha-Yom* even stressed that while the modernization brought by the Jewish immigrants was, in principle, intended to benefit all of Palestine’s population, it was not the *Yishuv*’s objective to build modern urban quarters, educational institutions, and the like for everyone. Rather, these were explicitly part of the project of building a Jewish national home and thus required separation from the country’s other communities.<sup>84</sup>

Press debates over this issue intensified over the course of 1920 and early 1921, and Tel Aviv’s first mayor, Meir Dizengoff, brought up the issue directly with Herbert Samuel on the occasion of the latter’s visit to Tel Aviv in June 1920.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, British recognition of Tel Aviv’s “unique nature and wishes to make its independent development” led the High Commissioner to abide by the suburb’s demands and endow it with the status of an independent township with the right to determine its

82 *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry*, 18.

83 M. Gatz, “Tel Aviv le-Yuval Shnat ha-Eser [Tel Aviv at its Tenth Jubilee]”, *Do’ar ha-Yom*, 14 December 1919, 2.

84 Id., “Iriya ‘Ivrit [A Hebrew Municipality]”, *Do’ar Ha-Yom*, 8 January 1920, 2.

85 “Ha-Natsiv ha-’Elion be-Yafo [The High Commissioner in Jaffa]”, *Do’ar ha-Yom*, 30 July 1920, 3; David Izmujiik: “Tel Aviv – ‘Iriya [Tel Aviv – Municipality]”, *ha-Arets*, 21 November 1920, 2; “Be-’Ed u-ke-Neged Tel Aviv ‘Iriya [For and Against Tel Aviv Municipality]”, *ha-Arets*, 1 December 1920, 2.

own budget, collect taxes, raise loans, make contracts, and pass by-laws in May 1921 – at exactly the same time as the Jaffa riots. Whether there was any direct connection between the two events remains unclear, yet doubtlessly the status as an independent township, and the powers thereby gained, strengthened existing animosities between Jaffa and Tel Aviv.<sup>86</sup> To *Filastin*, Tel Aviv now symbolized the status of Jewish immigrants as foreigners and intruders and their ambitions for self-rule and national autonomy more clearly than ever, and the paper did not miss an opportunity to criticize the workings of Tel Aviv’s “municipal government”. It claimed, for instance, that residents of Tel Aviv and Manshiyyeh had petitioned the Tel Aviv Committee to not be included under its jurisdiction out of fear of the exorbitant taxes it was administering, mocking “how poor would Palestine be if it came under Zionist rule?”<sup>87</sup>

Even though, from 1921 onwards, the Tel Aviv Town Committee was regularly referred to as a “municipality” in Arabic (*baladīyya*), Hebrew (*iriyah*), and British sources, it actually gained this official status only in 1934. Nonetheless, the Tel Aviv Township Order, one of the first enacted by the newly instated British Mandate, had far-reaching consequences. It was due to the autonomy granted by the Order that Tel Aviv became known as the “laboratory of independence”; as others have argued, it was by no means a coincidence that the foundation of the state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948 in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the Order gave Tel Aviv a unique status: Throughout all of Palestine, it was the only purely Jewish township, yet until 1926 residents of Tel Aviv still had the special privilege of being eligible to vote in Jaffa’s municipal elections, despite the fact that they were not taxed by that city.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the Order very much corroborated and confirmed Tel Aviv’s special status as a Hebrew city. Not least because of its autonomy, Tel Aviv developed into the center of the *Yishuv* throughout the early 1920s and housed its most important political and civic institutions – as its founders had already intended in late Ottoman times.

The significance of the 1921 Tel Aviv Township Order must also be understood in connection with increased Jewish immigration and planned urban expansion. While, by the end of 1909, Tel Aviv had only been home to some 500 people, by 1925 its population had risen to 34,200, and by spring 1934 it had doubled again to 72,000.

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86 Herbert Samuel: “Tel Aviv Township Order”, *Palestine Gazette*, 1 June 1921, 5–6; Tamir Goren: “Tel Aviv and the Question of Separation from Jaffa, 1921–1936”, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 52:3 (2016), 473–487, here 474; Segev, *One Palestine*, 173–190.

87 “Baladiyyat Tel Aviv [Tel Aviv Municipality]”, *Filastin*, 29 April 1921, 5.

88 Ita Heinze-Greenberg: *Europa in Palästina. Die Architekten des zionistischen Projekts 1902–1923* (Zürich: CTA, 2011), 107.

89 Samuel, “Tel Aviv Township”, 6.

Its built area had increased seventy-fold in the meantime.<sup>90</sup> With this rapid urban growth, which went hand in hand with rising land prices, poor workers and immigrants erected overcrowded quarters of makeshift housing such as tents or wooden barracks throughout the city, which were perceived as a threat to the clean, modern, and progressive image of the city and its function as a symbol for the nation that was to be built.<sup>91</sup> It caused a “hunger for land”, as members of the Tel Aviv Committee called it, a dire need for ordered urban expansion by the means of town planning. Jaffa had been declared a town-planning area by the High Commissioner in 1921, and the status of independent township was decisive in increasing the power of its local town-planning commission to expropriate lands for the construction of roads and housing.<sup>92</sup>

As a consequence, land purchases, planning and construction increased, and European standards of modern town planning and architecture became another means of demarcating the Hebrew city of Tel Aviv from Jaffa and constructing it as an ideal Hebrew nation-space.<sup>93</sup> In 1925, the Scottish architect Patrick Geddes, who had been hired by the Tel Aviv Committee, presented his master plan for the expansion of the city northwards.<sup>94</sup> The building area of the Geddes Plan eventually became what is today known as Tel Aviv’s “White City” – a dense conglomeration of residential buildings in the architecture of the International Style, which scholars agree served

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- 90 Yossi Katz/Liora Bigon: “Urban Development and the ‘Garden City’: Examples from the Late Ottoman Empire and the Late British Mandate”, in: Yossi Katz/Liora Bigon (eds.): *Garden Cities and Colonial Planning. Transnationality and Urban Ideas in Africa and Palestine* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 144–166, here 149–150; Yossi Katz: “Ideology and Urban Development: Zionism and the Origins of Tel Aviv, 1906–1914”, in: *Journal of Historical Geography* 12:4 (1986), 402–424, here 415–416; Walter Preuss: “Tel Aviv – 25 Jahre Alt [Tel Aviv – 25 Years Old]”, in: *Palästina* 17:6/7 (1934), 217–233, here 217; 222.
- 91 A Citizen: “Mi-Hayyei Yafo [From Life in Jaffa]”, *ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir*, 18 September 1921, 19–21; “Yafo Yom Yom – Binyanim [Jaffa Everyday – Buildings]”, *Do’ar ha-Yom*, 8 August 1919, 4; Ish Gamzu: “Yafo Yom Yom. Le-she’elat Shakhar ha-Dirot [Jaffa Everyday. On the Question of Rents]”, *Do’ar ha-Yom*, 19 August 1919, 3; “Le-She’elat ha-Dirot be-Yafo [On the Apartment Question in Jaffa]”, *Do’ar ha-Yom*, 1 September 1919, 2; Abraham Granovsky: *Land Problems in Palestine* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1926), 5–6; Alfred Bonnè: “Das Wohnungsbauproblem in Palästina”, in: *Palästina* 17:10 (1934), 401–412; Allweil, *Homeland*, 116–17.
- 92 Mark LeVine: “Conquest through Town Planning: The Case of Tel Aviv, 1921–48”, in: *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17:4 (1998), 36–52, here 39–41.
- 93 For the concept of the nation-space, see Joanna C. Long: “Rooting Diaspora, Reviving the Nation: Zionist Landscapes in Palestine-Israel”, in: *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34:1 (2009), 61–77, here 61.
- 94 See Volker Welter: “The 1925 Master Plan for Tel-Aviv by Patrick Geddes”, in: *Israel Studies* 14:3 (2009), 94–119; Noah Hysler Rubin: “The Celebration, Condemnation and Reinterpretation of the Geddes Plan, 1925: The Dynamic Planning History of Tel Aviv”, in: *Urban History* 40:1 (2013), 114–135.

as a national Hebrew building style not least because of its negation of the 'Orient'.<sup>95</sup> In the 1920s, then, the immigration, municipal, and town-planning policies of the British Mandate saw Tel Aviv flourishing as a modern Hebrew metropolis, housing thousands of new Jewish immigrants. Politically, it had become all but autonomous from its mother city of Jaffa, and its development had often occurred at the latter's expense.

By early 1929, revisionist Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky was able to comment, echoing and yet not fully endorsing "Lausanne wisdom",

Tel Aviv is an example and a lesson as to how two nationalities, destined to live in one and the same country, can and should dwell side by side without stepping on each other's toes. This is, perhaps, the most "discussed" feature of Tel Aviv; to me, the most valuable. Two men of different habits may keep friendly for ever if each one has his own apartment, provided the walls are of sufficient thickness; but they are bound to lose their tempers if forced to room together. The rule should not be extended so as to cover whole countries or districts; but within the limits of one village or township, racial homogeneity is a great asset of peace.<sup>96</sup>

Later that year, after another outbreak of violence, as British officials observed, "Jewish shopkeepers moved from Jaffa to Tel Aviv. In every respect the schism between the two peoples was now open and undisguised[.]" In 1937, by the time of the Peel Commission's report, the partition of Jaffa and Tel Aviv and the conflicts at their border were cited by the British officials as further proof of the necessity of partition on a country-wide level.<sup>97</sup>

The case of Jaffa-Tel Aviv shows that the role of the British Mandate in the nationalization of Palestine (and later Israel) was much more complex than the narrative of a forceful imperial transfer of a North Atlantic concept into the Middle East would have it. When the British Mandate gained power in Palestine, it did not encounter an empty, malleable space but was confronted with preexisting local realities. British imperialism was not and did not suddenly turn into the only channel through which either Jewish Zionists or Palestinian Arabs conceived of their local and global surroundings or their own specific places within them. Rather, as shown above, even before the war, globalization had gone hand in hand with a large degree of localization, i.e., the strengthening of attachment to the geographical units of Palestine and Greater Syria. In addition, the Zionist movement, premised on the European 'minority experience' and its xenophobic ethnonationalism, had already begun to enforce the principle of the nation in its spatial politics at the local level. This resulted

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95 Alona Nitzan-Shifan: "Contested Zionism – Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", in: *Architectural History* 39 (1996), 147–180.

96 Ze'ev Jabotinsky: "The Meaning of Tel Aviv", *The Palestine Bulletin*, 8 April 1929, 2.

97 *Palestine Royal Commission*, 70.

in a simmering conflict over incompatible forms of (re-)territorialization caused by different aspects of geopolitical upheaval and global integration. With the establishment of the Mandate, however, the British gained much of the authority to privilege one competing form of reterritorialization over another, and British policies regulating migration, urban planning, and construction supported and exacerbated the partition of both cities and what some scholars call Tel Aviv's "conquest of Jaffa".<sup>98</sup>

From a global perspective, this privileging of Zionist forms and claims of reterritorialization by the Mandate is paralleled by the Mandate's restrictive policies concerning the naturalization of members of the Palestinian diaspora. In late January of 1926, Tel Aviv and other cities throughout Palestine opened their first "naturalization offices".<sup>99</sup> Article 7 of the Mandate had obligated the British to enact a nationality law in Palestine, and the Palestinian Citizenship Order in Council came into force on 1 August 1925. As had been stipulated by the Treaty of Lausanne, it provided that all those who had been "habitually residents" of what was to become Palestine would "become ipso facto" nationals of that territory. Immigrants, in turn, were allowed to naturalize after having permanently resided in Palestine for the relatively short period of two years.<sup>100</sup> The Hebrew press provided its readers with detailed information on how to naturalize and called them to do so at one of the offices.<sup>101</sup> Throughout the Arabic press, however, the Palestinian Citizenship Order again raised the issue of the Palestinian emigration and the diaspora in the Americas: By 1927, it had become clear that for many of the Palestinians living abroad, it was impossible to naturalize under the conditions laid out by the British administration.<sup>102</sup>

Again, *Filastin* began to publish open letters by emigrants, only that this time they were not narrating the risky and often grievous migration experience – but rather their failures to naturalize as Palestinians despite having been born there, having family there, and owning property lying within its territory.

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98 LeVine, "Conquest through Town Planning"; LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*.

99 "Le-Tsumat Lev ha-Mit'azrachim [To the Attention of Those Who Naturalize]", *Davar*, 27 January 1926, 1.

100 M.P.A. Hankey: "Palestinian Citizenship Order 1925", *Palestine Gazette*, 16 September 1925, 460–466; "The Palestine Mandate", in: *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/palmanda.asp#art7](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp#art7) (accessed 6 August 2021); Mutaz M. Qafisheh: *The International Law Foundations of Palestinian Nationality. A Legal Examination of Nationality in Palestine under Britain's Rule* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008), 45–75.

101 M. Rosental Ben-Shalom: "Pkudat ha-Hit'azrachut ha-Erets Yisr'elit (Sof) [The Erets-Israeli Citizenship Order (End)]", *ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir*, 4 December 1925, 9–11; "Hora'ot la-Hit'azrachut [Instructions for Naturalization]", *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 7 March 1926, 4.

102 Nadim Bawalsa: "Legislating Exclusion: Palestinian Migrants and Interwar Citizenship", in: *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46:2 (2017), 44–59. See also Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*.

The strange thing is that every Jew of whichever previous nationality [...] receives naturalization as soon as he sets his foot in our country, but the native of Palestine [...] is considered non-Palestinian and is eligible for the “award” of Palestinian citizenship only under preconditions and restrictions.<sup>103</sup>

Just as when it addressed the unequal treatment of Jewish immigrants and returning Palestinian migrants at Jaffa port during the period of late Ottoman rule, the Jaffan newspaper *Filastin* contrasted Jewish and Arab access to reterritorialization under the new regime that ordered it, criticizing the privileges Jewish migrants enjoyed over Palestinian Arabs. What is more, the above excerpt from an open letter from an emigrant residing in Mexico demonstrates Palestinian resistance to the regime itself and the fact that the British were the ones invested with the imperial power to “award” Palestinian nationality.

## Conclusion

By taking a large step back and engaging with the rich literatures on the intellectual history of ethnonational partition and the global intellectual history of the nation, this chapter has aimed to draw attention to the limits of the paradigm of imperial diffusion. I have argued that neither global nation formation nor the emergence of ethnonational separatism and ultimately partition are adequately grasped by the assumption that these were disseminated by imperial powers from the core to the periphery. Rather, they constituted new forms of reterritorialization in face of the deterritorializing impacts of increasing globalization, and thus stemmed from an interaction between local and global forces that was not exclusively shaped by the imperial encounter. New forms of localized attachment, bounded identities, and their spatializations had already begun to emerge in Jaffa-Tel Aviv at the close of Ottoman rule – both in the shape of an emerging sense of Palestinian Arab *waṭanīyya* and in the shape of Zionism’s ethnonational separatism, most clearly embodied in Tel Aviv, which was itself conditioned by the experience of exile and of minority status in majority societies increasingly defined in ethnonational terms.

Interestingly, Palestinian forms of local attachment and identity were linguistically distinguished from the threat of the Zionist claims to the land, with the Zionist immigrants increasingly being understood as a *qawmī* community undermining the interests of the *waṭan*. Neither term, *waṭanīyya* or *qawmīyya*, was entirely new at the time. Nowadays, both would be translated as “nationalism” but for the period under study *qawmīyya* is mostly rendered as “nationalism” while *waṭanīyya* is translated as

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103 “Mushkilat Jansiyat al-Muhajirin [The Problem of the Emigrants’ Nationality]”, *Filastin*, 23 April 1927, 1; Abdullah Abu Shawaria: “Mushkilat al-Jansiyya al-Filastiniyya [The Problem of the Palestinian Nationality]”, *Filastin*, 30 August 1927, 2.

“patriotism”.<sup>104</sup> This distinction is, as others have pointed out, flawed, because it implies a conceptual distinction stemming from European languages that is unlikely to reflect local conceptual realities. In addition, *waṭaniyya* was used much more widely than *qawmīyya* by many Arabic-speaking national movements without this implying that they were patriotic rather than nationalist in character.<sup>105</sup> The distinction made in *Filastin*’s usage at the time nonetheless appears to be meaningful, both because of the systematic way the terms are used and in view of their respective etymologies. Whereas *qawm* derives from the Bedouin term for a group that a person is born into and thus denotes loyalty to the nation as a people, *waṭan*, the homeland, is defined first and foremost by being a person’s place of habitation, and thus carries spatial and geographical connotations. Historically, it was most often used to differentiate residents from aliens (*ajnabī*). By the late 19th century, however, its meaning also began to incorporate the dimension of an aboriginal homeland, fatherland or *patrie*, and was thus ethnicized.<sup>106</sup>

Recognizing the Zionist movement’s national aspirations, the Arabic press referred to them as *qawmī* – as the term *watanī* was reserved for the patriotic/nationalist movement of the (original), locally attached residents of Palestine and thus stood in conceptual opposition to the Zionist movement. While this does not necessarily mean that Palestinian Arab nationalism may not also have been understood as *qawmī*, it proves beyond doubt that Zionism and *waṭaniyya* appeared to be mutually exclusive concepts to contributors to the Arab press. In Zionist discourse, meanwhile, while it was common to refer to its own movement as national (*le’umi*, a term that also derives from the idea of a nation as a people, *uma*), when the emergent ‘Arab question’ was addressed, it was rarely spoken of using the same vocabulary. Rather than designating it as a *le’umi*/national movement, it was referred to as the

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104 From the mid-20th century onwards, *waṭaniyya* was also used to refer to individual nation-state nationalism in the Arab Middle East, while *qawmīyya* designated (pan-)Arab nationalism. See Geoffrey D. Schad: “Competing Forms of Globalization in the Middle East: From the Empire to the Nation-State, 1918–1967”, in: Antony G. Hopkins (ed.): *Global History. Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 191–228, here 204–205.

105 Eliezer Tauber: *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 245–246.

106 Ami Ayalon: *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East. The Evolution of Modern Political Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 52–53. In Butrus al-Bustani’s well-known dictionary *Muḥit al-Muḥit* (Beirut: s.n., 1867–1870), *waṭan* is defined as the place in which a person dwells, regardless of whether they were born in it. The dictionary does not include an entry for *waṭaniyya*. There is an entry, however, for *qawm*, as a group of people, and a short one for *qawmīyya*. See also Brigit Schaebler: “Writing the Nation in the Arabic-Speaking World, Nationally and Transnationally”, in: Stefan Berger (ed.): *Writing the Nation. A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 179–196. For a good overview of the usages of *qawm* and *waṭan* by Arab intellectuals throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, see also Sylvia G. Haim: “Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism”, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 4:2/3 (1955), 124–149.

Arab or the Palestinian movement and the Arabs' strong attachment to their homeland (*moleadet*) was often emphasized with concern.<sup>107</sup>

The way the two national movements perceived each other involved a complex negotiation of their different relationships with mobility and rootedness, de- and reterritorialization, and implicitly addressed the ongoing process of a rescaling of belonging and their differing positions within it. Zionism, having emerged out of the context of European ethnonationalism, incorporated many of the ideal-type, defining elements of nationalist movements, including the ambition to ultimately make an ethnically homogenous nation and congruent state.<sup>108</sup> Palestinian Arab *waṭaniyya*, on the other hand, its geographical boundaries remaining as yet unclear, and not (yet) explicitly calling for a Palestinian state congruent with a Palestinian nation, does not match neatly with European-centered definitions of nationalism. For long, this has led to debates over the movement's authenticity. Yet Palestinian Arab *waṭaniyya* undoubtedly constituted an authentic form of a redefined, localized attachment that had emerged in the face of experiences or fears of deterritorialization. Transcending the modular model of nationalism and replacing it with the notion of a transposable nation form, *waṭaniyya* appears as a possible alternative version of the nation form rather than a radical alternative to it. In this light, it becomes obvious how the notion of nationalism's modularity and the tradition of doubting the Palestinian movement's authenticity are discursively intertwined and how both of them, in fact, obscure Palestinian intellectual agency.

The growing tensions among the residents of both Jaffa and Tel Aviv can therefore be interpreted as a competition between two nation forms within the space of a single city: One based on a lived rootedness in place, albeit gradually redefining the boundaries of collective, national (*waṭani*) identity when faced with deterritorialization in the shape of both globalization and Jewish immigration; the other based in an understanding of existing national (*qawmī/le'umi*) unity and the ambition to recover that aboriginal rootedness after having undergone a profound experience of uprooting, deterritorialization, and exclusion. Returning to Goswami's claim that it was the doubled character of the nation form that accounted for its global lure, Palestinian *waṭaniyya* can be understood as a form of reterritorialization whose particular, internal, local content appeared obvious and authentic but whose abstract, outward, universal form was still under negotiation – leaving open the questions of state and territory, for instance. The Zionist movement, by contrast, had consciously

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107 See, for instance, Moshe Smilansky: "Mi-'Inyanei ha-Yishuv [From the Concerns of the Settlement]", *ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir*, 5 January 1908, 5–10, reacting to the famous article published by Yitshak Epstein: "She'ela Ne'elma [A Hidden Question]", *ha-Shiloah* (July–December, 1907), 17 and putting into doubt this paradigm of the Arabs' attachment to their homeland, referencing the Syrian emigration.

108 Ernest Gellner: *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1–3.



adopted the universal, outward shape of a nationalist movement out of the desire to 'normalize' their status, yet was still engaged in the endeavor to fill this abstract form with concrete, localized content – making the creation of an authentic, national Hebrew character a precarious and shaky endeavor and thus premising it on separatism and exclusion.

The arrival of the British, therefore, did not herald the beginnings of thinking about the nation, nationalism, or ethnonational separatism in Palestine. Rather, with the establishment of the Mandate, the doors were opened for British imperialism to regulate both deterritorializing and reterritorializing processes. In other words, the British government now held the power to interfere in the already ongoing conflict between competing forms of reterritorialization and versions of the nation form, and it used this power – partly intentionally, partly compelled by existing realities – to privilege Tel Aviv vis-à-vis Jaffa.

This was not only a result of the British commitment to the establishment of a Jewish national home and the facilitation of Jewish immigration. Its primary cause was rather British complicity with the very form of reterritorialization and spatial organization epitomized by Tel Aviv, which appeared to be in line with globally spreading, modern, and progressive urban and territorial orders as well as British efforts towards colonial modernization. It was, however, based on the exclusion of the local Arab population, to whom the British de facto denied the status of a nation by speaking only of the "civil and religious rights" of Palestine's "non-Jewish communities" in the Balfour Declaration. The power to "award" nation status and, by extension, nationality now lay with the British Empire, as the criticism contained in the letter from the Palestinian emigrant in Mexico highlighted. British imperialism thus played a decisive role in nation formation and the creation of ethnonational separatism in Palestine, but it did not serve as the decisive vehicle to 'export' these ideas. Rather, the British Mandate government, by regulating migration and citizenship as well as local socio-spatial organization, served as a mediator and arbiter of globalization in Jaffa-Tel Aviv. It ruled, in other words, over who had access to and was included in a universalizing global regime of mobility and settlement, of national territorialization and, not least, its highly localized, in this case urban, materialization.



# From Their Classes to the Masses

## Youth Volunteerism and Rural Welfare in Interwar Lebanon and Syria

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Joseph Leidy

The Village Welfare Service (VWS) was founded at the American University of Beirut in 1933 to spur educated young people to contribute to rural progress. This “message [*risāla*] of the educated youth to the *fallāḥ*”, as the organization’s motto had it, brought students to rural villages in Lebanon and Syria as volunteers. The Service’s “Village Welfare Song” celebrated the departing volunteers: “We are coming from our classes, / We are going to the masses [...] We bring them science with its truth, with its truth / We bring the power of our youth, of our youth.”<sup>1</sup> The “Farewell Village Song”, on the other hand, announced their return: “We ride our donkeys to cities that are far / Wherever useless students are [...] To the pupils who are loafing with no toil, no toil [...] We bear the light of re-al [sic] truth, rural truth.”<sup>2</sup> To the Service, educated youth was as much an object of reform as its subject. Together, the two songs envisioned educated youth as the protagonists in a mission to advance rural welfare and spread an ethic of rural service. Established as an “experiment in constructive citizenship” that would bring about a “national resurgence by way of the reformation of rural life,”<sup>3</sup> the VWS would encourage the “educated youth of the country to live up to the highest ideals of life, and [train] them to apply those ideals in national constructive action.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, the VWS placed educated young people’s expertise and attitudes at the heart of a project of rural revitalization.

The interwar Middle East witnessed a succession of new organizations like the VWS that identified young people as a transformative force. Scholars have placed this phenomenon in several historiographical contexts. Debates about Middle Eastern fascisms have animated one set of studies. This research suggests that some

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- 1 “Village Welfare Song”, Special Collections and Archives, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (SCA), Students 30s, Box 11, File 1.
  - 2 “Farewell Village Song”, SCA, Village Welfare Service Yearbook 1939–1940.
  - 3 “Third Annual Report of Village Welfare Service of the American University of Beirut 1935”, SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, File 1.
  - 4 Draft Constitution of the Village Welfare Service, SCA, AA 4:3.

youth-identified nationalists, scout troops, and colored-shirt paramilitaries in the region appropriated practices from European counterparts but largely eschewed fascist ideology.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the symbolism of youth resonated across the ideological spectrum; in Syria, for example, Akram Hourani, later leader of the Arab Socialist Party, founded the Youth Party in Hama in 1938, while the Azhar-educated Mustafa Sibai established the Young Men of Muhammad in Damascus in 1941, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>6</sup> Several studies account for this interwar affinity for youth as an expression of a burgeoning mass politics in which young, middle-class men rose to political prominence in urban spaces and reading publics.<sup>7</sup> Youth-identified political parties mobilized these means, sometimes to oppose and sometimes to support the late Ottoman-era urban elites or 'notables' who dominated interwar nationalist politics. Other works focus on interwar discourses on youth, which associated adolescence with both nationalist vigor and deviant disruption.<sup>8</sup> These latter works describe young people's performances of national identity through sartorial choices, athletic displays, and more and discuss the gender and class anxieties that prompted elite attempts to discipline youth subjectivities.

The case of the VWS offers a chance to synthesize the mass-political and performative-discursive approaches to youth in the interwar Middle East. The Service sought to develop a hybrid technical-cultural expertise on rural societies, drawn from transnational sources, and to train young volunteers to employ it. On the

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- 5 See, for example, Israel Gershoni/James Jankowski: *Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Dictatorship versus Democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Jennifer Dueck: "Uniforms and Salutes: Fascism and Youth Policies in Syria and Lebanon under French Rule", in: Samir Khalaf/Roseanne Khalaf (eds.): *Arab Youth: Social Mobilization in Times of Risk* (London: Saqi Books, 2011).
  - 6 Elizabeth Thompson: *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 207–238; Sami Moubayed: *Steel & Silk: Men and Women Who Shaped Syria 1900–2000* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2006), 340.
  - 7 Charles Anderson: *From Petition to Confrontation: The Palestinian National Movement and the Rise of Mass Politics, 1929–1939* (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2013); Dylan Baun: *Winning Lebanon: Youth Politics, Populism and the Production of Sectarian Violence, 1920–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Earlier works in this vein include Elizabeth Thompson: *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Keith Watenpaugh: *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
  - 8 Omnia El Shakry: "Youth as Peril and Promise: The Emergence of Adolescent Psychology in Postwar Egypt", in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43:4 (2011), 591–610; Wilson Chacko Jacob: *Working out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Lucie Ryzova: *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Sara Pursley: *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

one hand, this project represented the articulation of transnational middle-class practices and institutions with local political dynamics. While the VWS emerged from American schools, later support from the Syrian government suggests it intersected with wider attempts to mediate between rural and urban constituencies. These efforts can be seen as a furtive bid to fold a network of rural welfare activities undertaken by private institutions into the expanding semi-privatized governmental services of Syria and Lebanon's "colonial welfare state[s]" under mandatory rule.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the notion of an "educated youth" devoted to rural service implied that the VWS was seeking to both mobilize and reform youth subjectivities. Its summer camps facilitated the performance of youth volunteerism as a modernizing spark in rural communities, while also striving to carefully regulate how the volunteers interacted with villagers and one another. The VWS's appeal lay at the intersection of this management of educated young people's practices and attitudes and its capacity to articulate the figure of educated youth with other sociopolitical forces, suggesting that a full account of the political efficacy of youth in the interwar period must account for both its popular politics and its discursive elaboration.

The "educated youth" of the VWS was a vehicle for middle-class ambitions, a project to reform the peasantry and its volunteers alike that sparked regional political interest. As the first section below indicates, the Service's beginnings can be traced to coalescing transnational interest in rural issues among alumni, students, and professors at American missionary schools in interwar Lebanon. The second section details how the model of summer-camp volunteerism and the ordered social life of the camps formalized the conceptual pairing of the collective enthusiasm and expertise of educated youth with a culturally authentic rural renewal. Summer-camp operations contracted with the onset of World War II, but, as detailed in the third section, VWS leader Afif Tannous's post-war career in U.S. developmental aid points to the enduring resonance of the "message of the educated youth to the *fallāh*" in a developmentalism guided by social science.

## Rural Service and Expertise in the Interwar American Mission

Founded by the American Protestant Syria Mission in 1866 and 1927, respectively, the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the American Junior College (AJC) in Beirut furnished the immediate context for the VWS. Financially supported by the philanthropy of northeastern American industrial capital, American missionary schools had long served to satisfy local social and governmental demand for technical training and professional licensure. AUB graduates became, for example, Ottoman military medical staff, officials in the British administration in Sudan, and Iraqi sec-

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9 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 6–7.

ondary-school teachers.<sup>10</sup> This transnational accommodation between missionary education and local state-building projects, however, had produced few conversions. With little to show after nearly a century of proselytizing, AUB and AJC reconceptualized their educational objectives in the interwar period. These decades saw the two institutions, like their counterparts in Egypt, “[moving] toward an understanding of mission that utterly rejected polemic and emphasized social service.”<sup>11</sup> In this context, a notion of specifically rural service emerged in the early 1930s, bolstered by funding from American charitable foundations. For AUB alumni and AJC students, the prospect of improving rural life heralded a chance to realize social and professional ambitions. Professors and missionaries, meanwhile, sought to reform their contributions to local communities by developing a rural practice in their respective fields, drawing on financial support from foundations and the transnational circulation of ideas about rural modernity. At the intersection of American capital and local educational priorities, then, rural service and expertise acquired a discursive cachet and institutional foothold that proved foundational to the VWS.

Early murmurs of interest in rural service are evident in the early 1930s correspondence of a cohort of late 1920s AUB graduates, including future VWS director Afif Tannous and Aleppo camp director Zekin Shakhashiri. Most had found employment in the interlocking networks of British imperialism and American foundation activity. Afif Tannous, for example, worked for the British administration in Khartoum, before joining rural education and agricultural extension programs supported by the Near East Foundation (NEF) in Mandate Palestine.<sup>12</sup> Charles Malik, a future VWS committee member, worked for a Rockefeller Foundation project in Egypt.<sup>13</sup> Evangelos Stephanou and Shukri Shammas, who had also worked for the British in Sudan, were both employees of the foreign-owned Iraqi Petroleum Company in Damascus and Homs, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Exchanges between these friends

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- 10 Henry Gorman: “American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire’s Service, 1820–1919”, in: *Diplomatic History* 43:3 (2019), 544–568; Hilary Falb Kalisman: *Schooling the State: Educators in Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan: c. 1890–c. 1960* (PhD dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2015); Heather Sharkey: *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 75.
- 11 Heather Sharkey: *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 127–128. See also Ellen Fleischmann: “Under an American Roof: The Beginnings of the American Junior College for Women in Beirut”, in: *The Arab Studies Journal* 17:1 (2009), 62–84, here 73; Betty Anderson: *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 71–73.
- 12 Afif Tannous: *Village Roots and Beyond: Memoirs of Afif I. Tannous: Written at Intervals between 1972 and 1985* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2004), 123–135.
- 13 Shakhashiri to Malik, 21 August 1931, Charles Habib Malik Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (CHMP), Box 43, Folder 2.
- 14 Evangelos to Malik, 19 May 1934, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 5; Tannous to Shammas, 6 May 1936, SCA, AA 4:3; Malik to Stephanou, 20 September 1931, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 4.

exuded dissatisfaction and found them lamenting their lack of meaningful contributions to the greater good. As Stephanou wrote to Malik in one early 1930s postcard, for example: “Here we are getting older and older and what have we done yet? We ought to unite and work united.”<sup>15</sup> Malik, Tannous, and Stephanou directed their frustrations into plans that recalled shared experiences as AUB students, particularly the service-oriented “village deputations” of the ecumenical Brotherhood Society at AUB led by Professor Laurens Seelye.<sup>16</sup> Malik suggested rural summer conferences to discuss philosophical and political topics.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Tannous and Stephanou circulated plans to form utopian rural communities that would function as models for villages in the region.<sup>18</sup> Tannous, for example, imagined a communal farm led by Malik, Stephanou, Shakhashiri, and himself, which would “ultimately [...] become a dynamic center of rural reconstruction.” The farm was inspired by Harold Studley Gray, an American pacifist, conscientious objector, and missionary who later founded a cooperative farm in Michigan in response to the Great Depression, and with whom Tannous felt he shared a dedication to the “rural environment with its simplicity” and the “freedom of thought and action” that agricultural self-sufficiency would provide.<sup>19</sup> The rural visions of these AUB graduates combined nostalgia for the idealism of their student years and a distaste for urban ‘civilization’. Their aspirations set the stage for a conception of the VWS summer camps as a transformative retreat into rural space.

At AUB, meanwhile, the emergence of social-scientific rural-studies programs in the late 1920s and early 1930s, fueled by donations from American foundations, provided the institutional context for the VWS. A 1927 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to develop social-science teaching and research led to the hiring of sociology professor Stuart Dodd, another executive committee member of the VWS. Equally important to the Service was the 1930 establishment of the Institute of Rural Life (IRL) at AUB, with financial support from the NEF. The IRL soon hired UC-Berkeley-trained agriculture specialist Halim Najjar as its director of

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15 Evangelos to Malik, undated, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 4.

16 Malik describes one such “very sweet experience” of a “week [of service] on a Brotherhood Deputation to a distant ignorant village” in the summer after his graduation (Malik to Evangelos, 28 April 1928, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 2). See also the mention of “Mashtat Hasn Deputation” in the January 31st entry in Malik Appointment Book for 1928–29, CHMP, Box 258, Folder 11, and Malik’s retrospective praise for these deputations in a recommendation for Seelye in Malik to Dickerson, 19 December 1958, CHMP, Box 43, Folder 1.

17 Malik to Stephanou, Tannous, Shammās, Levi, Asadollah, Abazoglu, Hadidian, and Shakhashiri, 13 November 1930, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 3.

18 Evangelos to Malik, 15 August 1931, CHMP, Box 44, Folder 4.

19 Malik, Tannous, Stephanou, Shakhashiri to “Character Bad”, 30 December 1934, CHMP, Box 48, Folder 2. See also Patricia Appelbaum: *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture Between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 10–24.

agricultural work and Tannous as its director of social work; they were the likely architects of the VWS agricultural and recreational programs, respectively. The involvement of both foundations reflected a shift in American humanitarian efforts from emergency charitable giving during World War I towards proto-developmental projects in the interwar period. The sum effect of this influx of support was that AUB was able to position itself as a center of research and social service from which this new approach to philanthropy could be executed in the region.<sup>20</sup> Combining AUB's emphases on service and social science, Dodd would soon be "taking groups of students to the villages during the vacations to make surveys and to conduct controlled experiments" in a prelude to the VWS's summer activities.<sup>21</sup>

A contemporary AUB civics textbook reveals how a service ethic and the transnational circulation of rural expertise aligned for undergraduates. Dodd wrote the first edition of *Social Relations in the Near East* to accompany first-year civics courses in 1931. Malik, Tannous, and Najjar each contributed chapters urging students to take responsibility for the improvement of rural life.<sup>22</sup> Scientific improvements to peasants' hygienic and agricultural practices would guide such efforts. A list of "literature for village work" prepared separately by Dodd points to the social-scientific and practical bodies of specifically rural knowledge that influenced *Social Relations*. It included works on Danish cooperatives, "rural reconstruction" in the British Raj, American 4H Clubs, and rural education in the U.S., Iraq, and China from American teaching colleges.<sup>23</sup> Equally, however, the rural chapters in *Social Relations* suggested that this scientific modernity would have to accommodate itself to rural life, arguing that, in order to be accepted by peasants, village welfare projects had to reflect cultural as well as technical knowledge. Malik argued, for example, that concepts of hygiene were best conveyed to villagers in rural terms, with germs as invisible *jinn* spirits and antiseptic as a protective *kohl*, a cosmetic thought by villagers to be curative.<sup>24</sup> This paternalism reflected a preference at the core of Dodd's assemblage of

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20 Keith Watenpugh: *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 189–191; Cyrus Schayegh: "The Interwar Germination of Development and Modernization Theory and Practice: Politics, Institution Building, and Knowledge Production between the Rockefeller Foundation and the American University of Beirut", in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41:4 (2015), 649–684; Stuart Dodd: "The village welfare service in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine", in: *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 32:1 (1945), 87–90.

21 Dodd, "The village welfare service", 87.

22 Charles Malik: "Village Welfare", in: Stuart Dodd (ed.): *Social Relations in the Near East: A Civics Textbook of Readings and Projects for College Freshmen* (Beirut: American Press, 1931); Halim Najjar: "Agriculture", and Afif Tannous: "Village Problems", in: Stuart Dodd (ed.): *Social Relations in the Near East: A Textbook in Citizenship prepared for the Freshmen at the American University of Beirut* (Beirut: American Press, 1940).

23 "Literature for Village Work", SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–40.

24 *Ibid.*, 582–583.



rural expertise, and later in the VWS, as discussed below, for so-called rural methods that would preserve what was perceived as the authenticity of rural life against modernizing transformations.

The more immediate inspiration for the VWS's volunteer summer camps were projects organized by the American Junior College, the Mission's recently established college for women. The AJC held the first self-described volunteer rural service camp in the summer of 1932 in Bint Jbeil, which was later credited with inspiring the VWS. This summer camp appears to have emerged in large part from the initiative of AJC students. As early as the summer vacation of 1929, according to an AJC annual report, an AJC student "organized the idle in her village and started oriental rug-making on a small scale", while another "organized a health school" for the children in her village in what may have been templates for the first camp.<sup>25</sup> Participation in such projects reflected AJC students' appropriation of the College's and Mission's pedagogy of service. Accused in an anonymous 1936 report of reinforcing a tendency to "concentrate [...] money and personnel in Beirut" in missionary educational institutions, administrators at the AJC may have been eager to "justify [the college's existence] by producing real home missionaries" with an orientation towards village welfare.<sup>26</sup> For the young women of the AJC, meanwhile, the summer camps presented an opportunity to put the skills in hygiene and childcare they had learned from their courses into practice for both altruistic and professional purposes. As one alumnus of the College who was "doing constructive village work" reported in 1934: "I am here a doctor and nurse! I keep eyedrops, iodine, quinine, ointments, and first aid necessities, and I am treating the village on the whole."<sup>27</sup> Both institutional and individual interests in rural development thus validated rural volunteering.

These factors provide the backdrop to the 1933 conference on "rural conditions", attended by both students and faculty of AUB and AJC, which led to the formation of the VWS.<sup>28</sup> Retrospective accounts by Dodd, Tannous, and in VWS annual reports are vague on the Service's foundation, saying little more than that students and faculty at the two schools with an interest in rural welfare gathered at the conference and decided to form the organization. A 1932 set of "tentative proposals for village work of volunteer students in the summer" compiled by Dodd after a meeting at AUB seems to have been an effort to coordinate AUB, AJC, IRL, and Mission

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25 Annual Report 28–29, in: Junior College Reports, 1926–1964, Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) 115-3-4.

26 "Criticisms of Junior College for Women", date likely 1936, in: Junior College minutes, 1934–1943, PHS 115-3-6.

27 Annual Report 33–34, in: Junior College Reports, 1926–1964, PHS 115-3-4. See also Fleischmann, "Under an American Roof", 74.

28 "Third Annual Report [...]", SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

rural activities.<sup>29</sup> The Service's eventual coalescence from this conjuncture of forces within American educational institutions in interwar Lebanon confirms the appeal of rural welfare projects within a broader shift towards a more ecumenical, service-oriented missionary presence in the Middle East. Student and alumni aspirations and transnational institutional transformations thus combined to give the notion of “village welfare” its discursive and material underpinning. Attempts to improve village life along these lines demanded not only rural expertise but also the cultivation of a rural service ethic among educated youth. As the next section describes, the work of translating modernity into a rural context as a volunteer was equally about shaping the educated young subject. As Najjar would later argue in an undated VWS report,

the energies of the educated youth must find a channel for self expression. [...] This aimless expression of the spirit of youth should be well harnessed [sic] and utilized to the best advantage. It should be directed towards a worthwhile ideal in life. What is more worthy of the efforts of the educated youth of this country than the masses of the population who have been for ages maltreated, neglected and usurped – masses of people on the farms who have been suppressed and exploited?<sup>30</sup>

Youth too, in other words, would be reformed by rural welfare work. More specifically, spending the summer in rural service would “habituate city youth to [a] democratic and athletic life in which order and work reign.”<sup>31</sup> As it grew in the 1930s, the VWS would attempt to create this order through its summer camps and extend it beyond American missionary networks.

## Ordering Rural Leisure in the VWS Summer Camps

In an editorial in Beirut's *Le Jour* in 1935, banker and statesman Michel Chiha praised the merits of the summer vacation. According to Chiha, the summer vacation gave “future doctors, lawyers, and engineers” a much-needed “direct and salutary contact with the old Lebanese soil.”<sup>32</sup> “Without [vacations]”, argued Chiha, “the majority of

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29 Stuart Dodd: “Tentative Proposals for Village Work of Volunteer Students in the Summer”, undated, PHS 115–16–18.

30 Halim Najjar: “The Village Welfare Service”, undated, SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

31 “Risālat al-shabāb al-muthaqaf ilā al-fallāḥ [Fifth Annual Report]”, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

32 Michel Chiha: “La jeunesse libanaise et les vacances: La reprise de contact avec la terre et l'action individuelle”, *Le Jour*, 9 August 1935. Thank you to Janina Santer for alerting me to this piece.

our students would be, from a spiritual and national point of view, rootless [*déracinés*].” Chiha’s editorial captures some of the currents that shaped the VWS and its camps. Volunteering for the VWS would provide a summer’s “direct and salutary contact” with rural life. Forgoing visits to home cities and villages, or more desirable vacations in the breezy resort towns of Mount Lebanon, VWS student volunteers made their way to Lebanon’s peripheral Biqā’ and ‘Akkār areas and the countryside of Damascus and Aleppo. The camps they joined there were a staging ground for visits to villages and an ordered space to facilitate the development of the character of the youth. Both camp organizers and volunteers, however, recognized that summer was still a vacation from school. The VWS camps thus attempted to cultivate certain leisure practices among the “educated youth” that comprised its volunteers. In the organization of the camps and in interactions with villagers and rural youth, the Service encouraged volunteers to orient their leisure time and their competences towards the realization of an improved yet authentic rural life to be shared by middle-class youth and peasants alike.

Arrangements for the camps began on AUB’s campus each spring, as Tannous and others reached out to secondary-school and university students, as well as recent alumni and families with AUB connections, to find both new and returning volunteers for two-week sessions in July and August. A VWS executive committee, composed of employees of the Institute of Rural Life and AUB faculty members, selected camp directors and made arrangements for the location of each camp. On the whole, the governance of the Service seems to have been relatively ad hoc. Tannous, Najjar, Dodd, and longtime chemistry professor Harold Close played important roles early on. By the end of the 1930s, a wider range of Lebanese professors and instructors at AUB and other Mission schools had become involved, including Tannous’s contemporaries such as historian Constantine Zurayk (B.A. 1928), philosopher Charles Malik (1927), and commerce instructor Shawki Dandashi (1927), as well as younger figures such as elementary school teacher Shafik Jeha (1933) and ethics instructor Munir Saadeh (1930). For camp directors, the executive committee seems to have had a particular preference for doctors like Shakhshiri and medical students such as Rassem Zauk (M.D. 1939) and Khalid al-Muti’ (B.A. in Medicine, 1938). As for the location of camps, the Mission’s networks of contacts and converts in rural areas likely facilitated the siting of future VWS summer camps in villages in the Biqā’ Valley and ‘Akkār, as well as separate AJC summer work in villages in the Masyaf district near Hama.<sup>33</sup>

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33 Shannon to Greenslade, 25 July 1935, in: Junior College minutes, 1934–1943, PHS 115-3-6; “Report on Rural Work, 1937”, in: Rural Mission Work, 1935–1956, PHS 115–16–19; Shannon to Nicol with enclosed report by Stuart Dodd on “Tentative VWS Plans for 1934”, in: Junior College minutes, 1934–1943, PHS 115-3-6.

Reports, inventories, and schedules hint at the ordered leisure sought by summer camp directors. An Aleppo branch camp featured a group of tents, including a director's residence, a kitchen tent, and a meeting tent, arranged in a semi-circle around a flagpole. A nearby stream provided water, which a volunteer retrieved daily with the help of "the camp's donkey", but a car also gave the camp access to ice and other supplies.<sup>34</sup> Inventories of camp equipment from the Biqā' and 'Akkār list beds and cots, tin or brass tubs for cleaning and transporting water, cutlery, lamps, and more. The inventories also include recreational items, such as a volleyball net, megaphone, Victrola record player, and playing cards.<sup>35</sup> Daily schedules organized both work and leisure: Service projects in the morning, discussion over lunch, a few free hours before "organized athletic games for boys from the villages" and educational events such as night school for villagers or lectures in the evenings after dinner.<sup>36</sup> Discipline was to be strict, with fines for tardiness and one report suggesting that "the laws [of the camps] must be military or at least semi-military [...] each volunteer should understand that he has volunteered of his own will and that he must sacrifice for the sake of the high ideal."<sup>37</sup> Camp by-laws hinted at the daily efforts that went into maintaining this order, forbidding students from wearing pajamas at meals and insisting that students keep their beds tidy and the camp clean. "This place is a[n official] site [*maq'ad*] and not a bedroom", the by-laws reminded the volunteers.<sup>38</sup> Overall, however, an accommodation between service work and summer diversion seems to have characterized the volunteers' experience, belying the severity of the camp motto, "work and order [*al-'amal wa-al-nizām*]".<sup>39</sup>

The camps also claimed to offer a regulated sociability that would nurture the Service's "national constructive action". Advocates emphasized the coeducational, non-sectarian, and apolitical character of the camps, in which a "strong consciousness of the necessity of this kind of work for the uplift of the villagers" led to "cooperation in spite of individual, racial, mental[,] age and sex differences."<sup>40</sup> In a letter thanking the Syrian Relief Association in Boston for its donation to the VWS, AUB president Bayard Dodge proudly reported that a summer camp in Damascus witnessed "the first time [in the region] that Christians and Moslems have worked to-

34 "Taqrīr 'ām 'an a'māl mashrū' in 'āsh al-qurā' fara' Ḥalab", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

35 "INVENTORY OF EQUIPMENT: VWS Camp, Akkar", undated; "An Inventory of VWS Equipment stored at [T]alabaya for 1937", undated, SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

36 "A Day s [sic] Program at the Camp", undated; "Daily Programme", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

37 "VWS Akkar Jibrayil [Report]", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

38 "Qawanīn al-mukhayyam", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

39 "Risālat al-shabāb al-Muthaqaf ilā al-fallāḥ [Fifth Annual Report]", SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

40 "Suggested Plans", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

gether, and men and women together have taken part in public service.”<sup>41</sup> Tannous would later describe the summer camps in similar terms, adding that the camps had a patriotic “spirit of Arab nationalism in its broad and liberal sense” with the strict prohibition of any formal political activity or party “propaganda”.<sup>42</sup> Gendered anxieties about cohabitation in the camps, meanwhile, were addressed by the presence of a married couple as chaperones to create a “homelike” or “family atmosphere”.<sup>43</sup> This aspect of the camp environment nonetheless seems to have appealed to students. As one annual report put it, “the volunteers included young women as well as young men, and consequently the social life at the camp became a distinctive feature of the experiment.”<sup>44</sup> Notably, a number of the female volunteers in the summer of 1937, such as Alice Kandaleft and Rose Ghreib, would become leading figures in the Lebanese and Syrian women’s movements.<sup>45</sup> The participation of these and other female students reflected efforts to cultivate respectable coeducational sociability in the camps.

The work of situating youth sensibilities in rural space continued in the volunteers’ welfare projects with villagers. VWS volunteers made daily rounds to surrounding villages, offering everything from literacy instruction to new agricultural techniques and American livestock breeds including Jersey cattle and Leghorn chickens.<sup>46</sup> These activities solicited both technical and cultural expertise on the part of VWS volunteers. Consider, for example, a handwritten scripted “dialogue between a volunteer and a *fallāh*”, perhaps performed by students at a “Rural Day” VWS fundraiser at AUB, used as a volunteer training tool, or written by a student in a civics course, in which a volunteer and a villager discuss local water sources. The volunteer explains why spring water is healthier than the river water they are first offered:

I didn’t mean to say that spring water is honey and the valley water is yogurt [*laban*, i.e. categorically different] [...]. I only meant to say that spring water is far better than the valley water because it is cleaner. It is as if you went to the market and bought two shirts, one is worn and one new [...]. One is dirty because someone else used it, while the second is new and clean because it has not been used: just so

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41 Dodge to Syrian Relief Association, 2 August 1938, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

42 Afif Tannous: “Rural Problems and Village Welfare in the Middle East”, in: *Rural Sociology* 8 (1943), 269–280, here 278.

43 Dorman to Najjar, 9 June 1938, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39; Form Letter, undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

44 “Third Annual Report [...]”, SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

45 “Non-AUB Volunteers of VWS Summer of 1937”, undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38. Thank you to Nova Robinson for drawing my attention to this fact.

46 Tannous, “Rural Problems and Village Welfare in the Middle East”, 277.

with the water. Spring water is new and clear and valley water is dirty and not clean.<sup>47</sup>

As the dialogue continues, the volunteer is often tested by the *fallāh*'s skepticism before the latter's ultimate acquiescence. The dialogue depicts an encounter between a resourceful and resolute young volunteer and the stubborn ignorance of a villager; the volunteer's resort to analogy and their determination reflects the VWS's efforts to cultivate cultural aptitudes and positive character traits among educated youth. A VWS report affirmed that the best volunteers exhibited "perseverance" and were able to "[bear] the attacks and grumblings of the villagers patiently and with good spirit."<sup>48</sup> Similarly, when villagers in 'Akkār rejected a VWS proposal to build a new water pump, the volunteers initiated a "strong campaign" to convince the villagers of the pump's hygienic value. The "campaign" leveraged access to medical expertise by having a local doctor certify the uncleanness of the water and the camp doctor give out free treatment, taking advantage of the fact that "doctors held a high position in the hearts of the village people." Male volunteers, meanwhile, appealed to village men through norms of hospitality, arguing that it was a "dishonor [*'ayb*] for the village people to abandon [...] its guests who wanted only the best for them" and that it behooved a "distinguished [*wajīh*] man like himself to support the Service." In each of these cases, student volunteers were charged with marshalling local culture to overcome resistance and thus exercise both their technical and cultural proficiencies.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to hygienic interventions, the VWS also encouraged athletic activities such as team sports and scouting as a basis for their envisioned improvements in rural society. Such work was premised on similar grounds to the summer camps themselves. Just as the volunteers were to practice new forms of leisure, sociability, and expertise, the village children and youth would adopt recreational habits that would instill cooperative sensibilities. The VWS prioritized the introduction of "organized athletic games for boys from the villages", and particularly team sports.<sup>50</sup> Instructing the local boys in such activities, one report suggested, helped to train villagers to "grow within [themselves] the spirit of cooperation and order and make them stronger in their bodies in the spirit of complete manliness [*rujūla*]."<sup>51</sup> Team sports also had the merit of replacing what the VWS saw as the chaotic play of local youth. One report described teaching baseball in Biqā' Valley villages, arguing

47 "Muḥāwara bayn mutaṭawa' wa fallāh", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–40.

48 "Suggested Plans", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

49 "al-Taqrīr al-sanawī al-rābi' li-mashrū' in 'āsh al-qurā fi al-jāmi'a al-amrikiyya fi Bayrūt", SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

50 Abdul-Wahhab Rifa'i: "Report [on] Sport activities in Jibrayil VWS Camp 1937", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

51 "al-'Amal al-thaqāfi [report]", undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

that “[baseball] served our purpose which was to replace the untidy and rather mischievous games that occupied their *leise* [sic] time.”<sup>52</sup> The curriculum of a “Rural Problems” course at AUB also noted the existence of “defficiencies [sic] in rural play” and suggested “improvements” including the introduction of football, basketball, volleyball, and track and field. The curriculum, however, also suggested “choosing an old native sport, classifying it [and] modifying it” with the goal of making it “obey the rules of sports” and conform to a “spirit of sportsmanship.”<sup>53</sup> Here too, the VWS encouraged its volunteers to appropriate and reform local cultural phenomena. In a similar vein, VWS scouting troops sought to eliminate rivalries among village boys. According to Khalid al-Muti’, VWS scout leader in the *Biqā’*, the aims of scouting were “to create [a] sense of order in [local boys]” and, with the “thoughtful arrangement of the groups”, to “cut away the sense of hatred among the boys coming from different villages.”<sup>54</sup> Both al-Muti’ and his counterpart in ‘Akkār, Muhammad Rifaat Dalati, proudly reported the success of scout gatherings in soothing tensions between boys from neighboring villages.<sup>55</sup> Team sports and scouting were thus to serve as paradigms for what the VWS understood to be new attitudes and relationships.

VWS athletic programs reflected the centrality of young people’s recreational habits to the Service’s vision of a rural modernity. The example of the construction of a swimming pool in the ‘Akkar village of Jibrail, as described in a VWS annual report, is instructive. After cleaning the spring in the village, “a further suggestion was made to build a swimming pool near to the spring, thus adding a very attractive feature to the life of both the volunteers and the young men and children of the surrounding villages. When the idea was proposed the young men of the village were enthusiastic.” The completed swimming pool, although it “appear[ed] to be somewhat of a luxury for a village,” served a greater purpose than mere recreation to the VWS leadership. Not only did the pool “suggest the advantage of hygienic habits,” but it created the conditions for an indispensable attitudinal shift:

The great need of the villagers in this district is a spiritual one [...] There is a lack of the energy and ambition which is so necessary if they are to improve their economic status. Furthermore, their lives are culturally starved and must be dull and monotonous. What a challenging situation! How can we stimulate them as a group to want a richer and more abundant life? We feel that we must appeal to the

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52 “Report on the V.S.W. [sic] Work During Summer 1944”, undated, SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

53 “Outline of the Rural Problems Course”, undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–40.

54 Khalid al-Muti’: “Recreation in the Rural Camps”, undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

55 Khalid al-Muti’: “Report about scouting – Miksi, Beka’a”, 25 July 1939, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–30; Muḥammad Rifa’at Dalāti and [illegible]: “al-Ḥaraka al-kashfiyya fī qaḍā’ ‘Akkār”, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

young men and get them interested first. Athletics is one way to appeal to young men – hence our athletic field and the swimming pool. This will bring them to the camp and the spring daily, and the rest of the village will come along to watch. What could be more natural than that the spring should be the center of interest for the whole village and a meeting place for the near-by villages?<sup>56</sup>

This portrayal of the swimming pool's impact epitomized VWS efforts to inspire a desire for progress in young villagers who were otherwise perceived as anarchic, passive, or both. From the camp leaders' perspective, Jibrail's new spring, swimming pool, and athletic fields together would encourage a healthful and active rural life. This "spiritual" transformation in rural young people paralleled the rural service ethic of the student volunteers, which was also considered a remedy for misdirected "energies".

By the late 1930s, expansion beyond Lebanon and beyond missionary networks, particularly the establishment of VWS branches in Aleppo and Damascus, suggested ambitions of a large-scale regional adoption of the VWS model of rural revival.<sup>57</sup> The practice of the summer camps and the discursive pairing of youth and peasantry appears to have appealed broadly, as indicated by a request for materials from AUB's Institute of Rural Life sent by a bookstore owner in Tartus, who had started an "organization of active young men to travel about the farms and villages investigating the situation of the *fallāḥ* and serving him."<sup>58</sup> Beyond new volunteers and camps, the most consequential evidence of increased attention to the VWS was financial assistance from the Syrian government, which contributed 1000 pounds in 1938 to the Aleppo and Damascus camps, 3000 in 1939, and "two thousand dollars" to support the publication of a VWS literacy primer for elder villagers.<sup>59</sup> Syrian political interest in the VWS is evident in a pamphlet by Tannous, which included a photograph of National Bloc notables Jamil Mardam Bey, Abd al-Rahman al-Kayyali, and Shukri al-Quwatli with Alice Kandaleft and a group of village children during a "full day" visit to a VWS camp. Equally striking is Tannous's description of "around ten of the best Muslim girls of Damascus from the al-Bakri, al-Tarzi, Mardam, al-Jaza'iri, 'Ayyad, and al-Rayyis families" who "unveiled [...] and went out to work in those villages among the women and children" with the VWS, recalling the VWS's emphasis on its coeducational volunteers.<sup>60</sup> Backing for the VWS paralleled Syrian elites'

56 "Third Annual Report [...]", SCA, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

57 Halim Najjar: "The Village Welfare Service", undated, Students 30s, Box 11, Folder 1.

58 Juha [?] to Institute of Rural Life, 25 January 1939, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

59 "Taqrīr 'ām 'an a'māl mashrū' in 'āsh al-qurā fara' Ḥalab", undated; Dodge to Barakat, 2 August 1938, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39; Halim Najjar: "Institute of Rural Life [...] Annual Narrative Report", 30 June 1939, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–1940; Afif Tannous: *Mashrū' in 'āsh al-qurā fī al-aqṭār al-'arabiyya* (New York[?]: al-Jāmi'a al-'arabiyya [?], undated), 41.

60 Tannous, *Mashrū' in 'āsh al-qurā*, 43–44, 54–55.



broader efforts to cultivate ties to middle-class figures and institutions, in this case via the rural expertise of educated, young, middle-class men and women.<sup>61</sup> National Bloc figures may also have agreed with the AUB professor and Arab nationalist intellectual Constantine Zurayk, who contrasted VWS youth volunteerism with humanitarian charity in a chapter of *al-Wa'ī al-qawmī* (“On National Awakening”, 1939) and depicted it as “unifying national work in which every individual desire dissolves and every partisan tendency vanishes.”<sup>62</sup> In this vein, the VWS may have appeared to interwar notables as a means to reframe their contested paternalistic rule and direct the political activity of educated youth towards non-partisan expression in rural service.<sup>63</sup>

The movement’s growth, however, triggered hesitation at AUB. At a 1938 VWS conference, for example, prominent figures within the VWS debated the extent to which their project should or should not be described as “national work” [*al-‘amal al-qawmī*]. Some, including Zurayk, contended that the VWS program necessarily had to instill an Arab national conscious in the peasantry as part of the work of rural revival. To others, however, it was imperative that a project sponsored by the university remain apolitical.<sup>64</sup> The conference also heralded a more professionalized service model that limited reliance on the voluntary and amateur participation of students. After the conference, AUB commerce instructor Albert Badre underlined the necessity of such changes in a report criticizing the camps, which he found to be too full of lowerclassmen to achieve much of substance. His recommendations, which were adopted shortly afterwards by the AUB’s VWS executive committee, proposed a year-round concentration of expert intervention in a “Rural Center”.<sup>65</sup> Halim Najjar elaborated that, after the conference, “the camps [were] to be used as training centers” while “actual rural reform [was] to be conducted during the whole year.”<sup>66</sup> Besides entrusting village welfare to specialists instead of student volunteers, these changes would also address concerns expressed by camp directors in the *Biqā’* and *‘Akkār* in previous years that student “outings” and other activities had “given the camp the reputation of a summer resort.”<sup>67</sup> Starting in 1940, the VWS also appears

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61 Keith Watenpugh: “Middle-Class Modernity and the Persistence of the Politics of Notables in Inter-War Syria”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35:2 (2003), 257–286.

62 Constantine Zurayk: *al-Wa'ī al-qawmī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār al-Makshūf, 1939), 105.

63 On the contested paternalism of the interwar period, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*.

64 “Mu’tamar mashrū’ in’āsh al-qurā fī Jdita”, September 1938, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39.

65 Albert Badre: “Report to VWS Executive Committee”, 18 February 1939, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1938–39 and AA 4:3.

66 Halim Najjar: “Institute of Rural Life [...] Annual Narrative Report”, 30 June 1939, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–1940.

67 “Directors [sic] notes from Shtaura camp”, undated; “VWS Akkar Jibrayil [Report]”, undated, SCA, VWS Yearbook 1937–38.

to have encouraged individual students to pursue summer projects in their home villages as a substitute for the collective experience of the camps.<sup>68</sup> While the Service's summer-camp model for rural welfare had garnered regional attention, ambivalence towards nationalist politics, calls for greater expertise, and skepticism about the emphasis on leisure jointly precipitated a contraction in its scope.

## Rural Modernity from the VWS to International Developmentalism

The VWS project rested conceptually on a mutuality between educated youth and rural society. The invigorating presence of young people was intended to translate modern advances into a rural vernacular and inspire a "spiritual" motivation for progress. Equally, the educated youth would benefit from the authenticating effects of rural service and the managed environment of the camps. For both youth and villagers, then, the summer camp model promised a delicate initiation into modernity. This underlying imperative of a "selective acculturation" was an enduring tenet in the thought of Afif Tannous (1905–1998).<sup>69</sup> Tannous's education and work at AUB and his access to American missionary networks allowed him to establish himself as an expert in rural affairs, beginning with NEF-sponsored rural education work in Palestine, continuing with roles in the VWS and IRL, and culminating in his 1940 Ph.D. in "rural sociology" at Cornell University. Even after starting what would become a decades-long career at the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Tannous remained a dedicated advocate of the Service, portraying it as a model for developmental intervention in several publications. As his attention turned to larger regional development projects in the Arab world, his work continued to insist on the need to mediate development through local culture, transplanting the concerns that animated the notion of youth-led rural development to the burgeoning practice of administering developmental aid. Tannous's post-war advocacy for a culturally sensitive social science to guide development thus built on his experiences with the VWS, which had similarly sought to make its volunteers conduits for rural transformation.

Foundational to Tannous's thought was his claim to unique epistemological access to village culture. His 1940 dissertation at Cornell University, where he was supported in part by a scholarship facilitated by Neale Alter, a rural missionary in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s, combined an intimate familiarity with his own home vil-

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68 Zakhour to Najjar, 14 June 1940; Dodd to Zakhour, 19 June 1940; "List of Volunteers", SCA, VWS Yearbook 1939–40.

69 Afif Tannous: "The Arab Village Community of the Middle East", in: *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (1942), 523–543, here 543.

lage, Bishmizzin in northern Lebanon, with social-scientific methods.<sup>70</sup> The introduction presented a conception of the Middle Eastern village as a discrete unit of social life, a notion that Tannous had been developing since at least a 1935 article during his time with the VWS.<sup>71</sup> To Tannous, the village constituted a material and spiritual unity, producing both the biological and symbolic means by which its residents lived and expressed all meaning. Tannous legitimated his claims by referencing his “intimate contact with [Bishmizzin’s] life during the past twenty-five years” and his familiarity with “the subtleties and complexities of its cultural and social organization.”<sup>72</sup> Simultaneously, Tannous believed that he had “been away enough from the village and comparatively free from entanglements in its affairs, so that he was able to examine it with a reasonable degree of objectivity.”<sup>73</sup> He situated his doctoral research in this balance between intimacy and detachment with a methodological argument about the limits of quantitative knowledge in sociological inquiry. The “rigorously quantitative method of science” was of limited use “in the realm of social phenomena,” according to Tannous.<sup>74</sup> Inspired by the University of Chicago philosopher and sociologist George Herbert Mead, Tannous conceived of society as a “human organism” seeking “relative equilibrium” on the basis of “past experience” in response to various environmental stimuli.<sup>75</sup> In this understanding, the social body sought to restore its coherence in response to disruption. This process required qualitative investigation, especially in the case of “such a village community as the one under study where life is integrated to [such] a high degree [...] that no sharp lines can be drawn between the various aspects of its life.”<sup>76</sup> His “participating neutrality” put him in a position to employ sociological categories while grasping the constitutive unity behind them.<sup>77</sup>

Tannous’s conception of the village as an “integrated” social unit set the stage for an emphasis on the fragility of village life in modernity. A series of 1940s articles in sociology journals based on his dissertation research found Tannous developing an understanding of change as an external threat to the internal coherence of village communities. His articles identified the silk industry, emigration, and missionary education as historical intrusions that had jeopardized Bishmizzin’s ability to structure meaning for its inhabitants. Tannous described the silk industry as an

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70 Tannous, *Village Roots and Beyond*, 159.

71 Afif Tannous: “The Village Teacher and Rural Reconstruction in Palestine”, in: *Open Court* (October 1935), 236–244, here 237.

72 Afif Tannous: *Trends of Social and Cultural Change in Bishmizzin, an Arab Village of North Lebanon* (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1940), 5.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*, 15.

75 *Ibid.*, 6–7.

76 *Ibid.*, 18.

77 *Ibid.*, 39.

interruption to Bishmizzīn's classless society: "With the advent of the silk factory, [the village's] harmony began to show some signs of disruption and social stratification became evident."<sup>78</sup> Missionary education was equally unsettling. "It widened the horizon of village life," argued Tannous, "but the horizon was widened to an extent that was conducive to the destruction of the community integrity."<sup>79</sup> Individual aspirations empowered by cash from silk production or kindled by new educational opportunities threatened to weaken the bonds of communal membership. Emigration encapsulated these deleterious consequences of modernity for the close-knit character of village life. "Before the American World (the world of free individualism) was discovered by Bishmizzeen," suggested Tannous, "social control [had] never assumed an extreme character, and individual frustration [had] never been an acute problem." With the option of emigration, "an outlet, an escape was provided" which threatened to dissolve communal integrity.<sup>80</sup> Individual frustrations previously muted by the village's monopoly on meaning now found new avenues to sew division. To Tannous, then, the stability of rural society depended on maintaining distance from the individualistic tendencies of modernity. These convictions reflected Tannous's promotion in the 1930s of "a type of education suited to the actual conditions of the rural community," as he wrote in *Social Relations*. He believed a tailored pedagogy would not disturb rural integrity, an approach the VWS had attempted to put into practice through its methods for teaching hygiene and recreation.<sup>81</sup>

The prospect of rural cultural dislocation shaped Tannous's views on developmental interventions in the rural Middle East and led him to stress collaboration with certain rural elites. Tannous felt that in villages "local leadership and government [...] reflect[ed] the authority and interests of the community. Leaders develop gradually and spontaneously."<sup>82</sup> Elsewhere, he added that village "leadership is not a birth privilege; it is rather achieved by those who measure up to standards."<sup>83</sup> The notion of village leadership emerging "gradually and spontaneously" suggests that Tannous saw it as meritocratic and representative. Tannous's understanding of traditional leadership fueled his belief that aid should be administered with the cooperation of such elites, convinced that only local leaders had the necessary legitimacy to sway rural communities to participate in development projects. His experiences

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78 Afif Tannous: "Social Change in an Arab Village", in: *American Sociological Review* 6:5 (1941), 650–662, here 656.

79 Afif Tannous: "Missionary Education in Lebanon: A Study in Acculturation", in: *Social Forces* 21 (1942), 338–343, here 342.

80 Afif Tannous: "Emigration, a Force of Social Change in an Arab Village", in: *Rural Sociology* 7 (1942), 62–74, here 65–66.

81 Tannous, "The Village Teacher and Rural Reconstruction in Palestine", 237.

82 Tannous, "The Arab Village Community of the Middle East", 542.

83 Afif Tannous: "Extension Work among the Arab Fellahin", in: *Applied Anthropology* 3:3 (1944), 1–12, here 3.

with the VWS campaign to persuade the villagers in 'Akkār and his exposure to "the philosophy of [U.S. agricultural] 'extension' with its emphasis upon the [...] voluntary participation of the people in the process of rural development" at Cornell underlay this determination. In a 1954 article on community development, Tannous contended that the "stimulation" of an "adequate" leadership in developing communities would be easy where "tribal groups have not yet succumbed to disorganizing factors." "Outstanding individuals", Tannous noted of such cases, "grow into positions of leadership almost imperceptibly, through a long-time process of seasoning and selection. Such leaders truly represent the collective will and the traditional pattern of life of the group, and are trusted and followed when they pioneer in new endeavors."<sup>84</sup> Tannous also endorsed collaboration with landowning elites, believing that "enlightened elements [could be found] not only among the intellectuals and professional groups, but also among the tribal chiefs and large landowners" of the Middle East.<sup>85</sup> Such optimism may have derived from Tannous's experiences with the VWS, as indicated by his praise for a camp outside Damascus, where the local "feudal lord amazed [the volunteers] one day by appearing with his wife at the camp and requesting them to show him how to improve conditions in his villages."<sup>86</sup>

Tannous's open disposition towards such figures contrasted with his opposition to post-war urban nationalist elites. He argued in 1955 that the "critical issue" after independence was "how to change from the old form of leadership into the new, which emanates from the people and is fully identified with their needs and aspirations."<sup>87</sup> Yet, in many ways, Tannous's temporal schema reversed "old" and "new", for it was in fact the (supposedly "modern") nationalist leadership that represented the historical distance between elite and populace, whereas Tannous's image of the ideal "new" leadership resembled his description of traditional rural leaders who "emanate[d] from the people". Contemporary nationalist politicians, on the other hand, had abandoned communal sociality. To Tannous, social atomization and this estrangement of leadership were linked: "Previous to the advent of the national-political movement, leadership in the village was simple, direct and its significance limited. Leadership statuses were, for the most part, assigned by the village culture structure, rather than achieved by individual effort." However, when "the old leadership pattern of the village was disrupted [...] leadership became mostly an achieved

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84 Afif Tannous: "Assumptions and Implications of 'Community Development' in Underdeveloped Countries", in: *Human Organization* 13:3 (1954), 2–4, here 4.

85 Afif Tannous: "Land Reform: Key to the Development and Stability of the Arab World", in: *Middle East Journal* 5 (1951), 1–20, here 17.

86 Tannous, "Rural Problems and Village Welfare in the Middle East", 280.

87 Afif Tannous: "Dilemma of the Elite in Arab Society", in: *Human Organization* 14:3 (1955), 11–15, here 12.

status rather than an assigned one,” based on connections to central government.<sup>88</sup> Behind this notion of a shift from “assigned” to “achieved” leadership lay Tannous’s wariness of individual ambition and his contention that only “the village culture structure” could designate leaders who authentically represented village interests. Alienated “national-political” leadership thus fit into Tannous’s tableau of village integrity disrupted by urban modernity. In Tannous’s view, nationalist ideology also defied the temporality of traditional leadership, which could only gradually emerge from collective life. “The prevailing spirit of nationalism,” argued Tannous, “[was] impatient with [the] slow process [required for community development]; it is often eager to get things done and to attain nationally tangible results in the shortest time possible, regardless of the method adopted.”<sup>89</sup> Nationalism, in other words, would rush development to its detriment, becoming an agent of disruptive modernity rather than the “selective acculturation” to which Tannous, as both a VWS leader and a developmental expert, aspired. No wonder, then, that Tannous mused about “the selection of leaders assigned to village development work be[ing] restricted to those with village background and connections.”<sup>90</sup> Development projects led by the agendas of ambitious nationalist elites, he feared, threatened to displace traditional leadership and cultural structures.

In a 1951 article entitled “Positive Role of the Social Scientist in the Point Four Program”, Tannous combined his beliefs about cultural integrity, developmental expertise, and communal leadership. The article envisioned a crucial role for social science in facilitating the delivery of post-war aid to the developing world. Social scientists, Tannous contended, could mediate the transformations enabled by developmental aid. They would evaluate and alter projects conceived by technical experts so as to protect the integrity of communal life in recipient societies. “There is essential need,” Tannous asserted, “for the social scientist to be actively implicated in the program from the beginning. Otherwise, any project of technical aid will run a grave risk of being disrupted, and possibly wrecked, by the ignored forces of local culture.”<sup>91</sup> These ranged from what Tannous called Muslims’ “irritable and short-tempered [...] Ramadan Personality” while fasting, to tribal responses to agricultural settlement, of which he asked rhetorically:<sup>92</sup>

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88 Tannous, *Trends of Social and Cultural Change in Bishmizzeen, an Arab Village of North Lebanon*, 248–249.

89 Afif Tannous: “Technical Exchange and Cultural Values: Case of the Middle East”, in: *Rural Sociology* (1955), 76–79, here 77.

90 Tannous, “Assumptions and Implications of ‘Community Development’ in Underdeveloped Countries”, 4.

91 Afif Tannous: “Positive Role of the Social Scientist in the Point Four Program”, in: *The Scientific Monthly* 72:1 (1951), 42–49, here 43.

92 *Ibid.*, 48–49. Tannous’s musings on “Ramadan Personality” are echoed in Tannous, “Technical Exchange and Cultural Values”.

How far and how rapidly could the tribal community be transformed into an agricultural community, and by what techniques and methods? What are the chances that such transformation will result in deterioration of health and morale, and in general disorganization? [...] Will such a program ultimately result in transforming the tribal chief, a democratic leader in the nomadic setting, into a feudal lord, and his tribesmen into landless sharecroppers?<sup>93</sup>

As Tannous's concern for the loss of the "democratic leader in the nomadic setting" makes clear, developmental intervention had to tread lightly. Much as VWS volunteers sought to carefully introduce modern hygiene and recreation into village life, Tannous argued that the social scientist would "select and give expression to those fundamental values that make up the core of the American culture, and of the democratic way of life as a whole [and] interpret them in terms of the other culture participating in the aid program."<sup>94</sup> Tannous asserted that the social scientist would have to carry out a monumental and culturally informed act of translation. Social scientists were thus to be indispensable to post-war American developmental aspirations, agents of a colossal effort to introduce modernity in terms that would not unsettle local cultural stability that, for Tannous, had begun in VWS summer camps.

## Conclusion

In summer excursions from AUB "classes" to "the masses", the VWS charted a trajectory that linked the behavior and attitudes of educated youth to the wider success of rural modernization. The VWS had emerged through the efforts of a combination of disaffected AUB alumni, budding AJC professionals, American foundations, social scientists, and, of course, the summer-camp volunteers themselves. The introduction of rural welfare as an object of expertise and focus of a youth-service ethic gave this ensemble an organizing principle and laid the groundwork for its campaign to reform educated youth and rural life in one stroke. The summer camps put this dual mission to work. Organizers sought to provide the volunteers with a well-ordered experience, one that would infuse summer vacation with purpose and make hygienic and recreational interventions the seeds of a local will to progress. Through such mechanisms, the VWS summer camps provided a stage on which the discursive figures of the educated youth and peasantry could be synthesized, affirming the underlying belief that modernization in both groups was necessary and desirable but needed to be submitted to a verifying procedure in which the authenticity of each would be protected. Anxieties about each of these two groups becoming

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93 Ibid., 44.

94 Ibid., 47.

“rootless”, to use Chiha’s term, suffused the summer camps. Both educated young people and villagers had to perform modernity without becoming unmoored from culturally authentic rural modes of being. In sum, the Service’s efforts to bring students into rural space and to provide the conditions for a renewal of village life can be understood as attempts to modernize at a pace set by expertise, both technical and cultural.

The case of the VWS also expands our understanding of the breadth of the interwar discourse on youth in the Middle East. Ambiguously nationalistic but stubbornly apolitical, the Service represented a proto-developmental manifestation of middle-class political identification with youth. Tannous would recall that members of youth-identified nationalist political parties participated in the summer camps, an unsurprising fact given the common base of recruitment among AUB students in Beirut.<sup>95</sup> Unlike many such groups, however, the VWS did not oppose notable elites.<sup>96</sup> In its openness to support from National Bloc politicians in Syria, the VWS resembled the situation of the interwar Aleppan middle class, where “members of the *a’yan* [...] increasingly drew on the literary skill, linguistic ability, communal identity, and legal training of a group of young, Western-educated, middle-class men in their opposition to the French Mandate.”<sup>97</sup> The task of rural revitalization, of course, necessitated a different skill set, one which VWS organizers and volunteers mobilized through their access to a transnational network of missionary institutions, American foundations, and social-scientific knowledge. The summer camps did, however, offer a non-sectarian, coeducational “communal identity” for educated young people willing to sublimate their leisure time to higher ends and develop a practice of rural intervention in hygiene, literacy, agriculture, and more. The trajectory of the VWS also suggests that the middle-class mobilizations channeled through the figure of youth provided not only a means of confirming or contesting notable rule in urban contexts, but also an avenue for the extension of welfare services and political networks into rural areas in the interwar period. Zurayk’s insistence on differentiating “social projects” like the VWS from paternalistic charity hinted at a model of service provision as “popular efforts emanating from the heart of the nation” carried out by an educated youth dedicated to something more than mere “political independence”.<sup>98</sup> National Bloc support for the VWS thus represents a rural historiographical counterpart to the largely urban political projects that pushed interwar Syrian and Lebanese politics “beyond elite

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95 Tannous, “Rural Problems and Village Welfare in the Middle East”, 278.

96 Baun, *Winning Lebanon*, 5–6.

97 Watenpugh, “Middle-Class Modernity”, 259.

98 Zurayk, *al-Wa’i al-qawmi*, 101, 103.



nationalists' focus on independence," including the women's, workers', and Islamic popular movements alongside middle-class political activities.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, the VWS can be situated not only in the conjunctural politics of the interwar period, but also in a longer trajectory of elite subject-formation equally inflected by the figure of youth. By encouraging its volunteers to thinking of themselves as mediators between a scientific modernity and rural cultural integrity, the VWS project resonated with what Lucie Ryzova has described of the young Egyptian *efendi*, who excelled in "code switching" between modern and traditional idioms and markers in "a performance of identity according to the contingencies of context."<sup>100</sup> In 19th- and 20th-century Middle Eastern societies negotiating the terms of modernization in a global context of European imperialism, positive invocations of youth often implicitly rested on this capacity to navigate different cultural registers. Negative portrayals of youth, on the other hand, raised the specter of a superficial adoption of Western civilization and a selfish abandonment of local cultural forms. These included such figures as the 19th-century young Europhile fop "imitating the behaviors, accessories and clothes, prodigal customs of the Franks that they themselves refuse to appreciate [...] unaware of [their] own true nature and failing to preserve [their] nation" or the interwar Iraqi *efendi* who in British imperial eyes was "young, loud, self-centered and self-seeking, and overly influenced by a half-formed understanding of European politics and culture."<sup>101</sup> VWS disdain for "city youths" and "useless students" reiterated this discursive differentiation between youth as "peril" and as "promise" in a new context.<sup>102</sup> Tannous's post-war writings echoed these patterns by anticipating the dissolution of traditional forms of leadership by brash urban nationalists or ill-informed technical experts who lacked the VWS volunteers' and social scientists' sensitivities. In this way, the VWS's conception of youth reframed broader processes of nationalist subject-formation, making its young volunteers the vehicle for a performance of the expertise to manage the material and cultural disjunctures of a colonial modernity.

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99 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 70.

100 Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya*, 61. See also the discussion of the "neglect-moderation-excess paradigm" in Michael Gasper: *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 218–225.

101 M. Alper Yalçinkaya: *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 120; Toby Dodge: *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 71.

102 El Shakry, "Youth as Peril and Promise".



## A Clash of Concepts

# Communist Agitation and Organized Labor in Lebanon during the French Mandate

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Thomas E. Jakob

When votes in the first elections held in an independent Lebanon were counted in 1943, it quickly became clear that all four candidates of the Communist Party of Lebanon (CPSL) had failed. For an attentive reader of the history of the Levant, this may at first seem strange: After all, the Communists were strongly involved in the independence movement, were able to accumulate symbolic capital during this period, and were quite moderate in their demands. Only a year later, the then chairman, Khalid Bakdash, summed up the position of the CPSL once again:

All we demand is the implementation of some democratic reforms the masses agree on. And it is not part of our program to expropriate the national capital or the local industrialists. We assure the national owners of capital and the national industrial owners that we will not regard national manufacturing with envy and hate, on the contrary, we hope for its blossoming and development.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for this defeat are certainly multiple and include the amended electoral law of 1934, in which list voting was abolished,<sup>2</sup> as well as the dominance of local notables (*zu'ama*) in the power structure of the country.<sup>3</sup> It may even be that progressive voters in 1943 proved reluctant to trust a party that had flirted with France via

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1 Translation by the author from: Walid Dhu: "Al-Haraka Al-'Umaliya Wa an-Naqabiya Fi Lubnan: Tarikh Min an-Nidhalat Wa Al-Intisarat [Workers' and Trade Union Movement in Lebanon: A History of Struggles and Victories]", in: *Al-Thawra Al-Da'ima* 3 (2013), 12–39, here 14–15, who quotes Khalid Bakdash from Tony Cliff: *International Struggle and the Marxist Tradition* (London: Bookmarks, 2001) without page reference. Another English instance can be found in Tareq Y. Ismael: *The Communist Movement in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 2004), 18, where the Beirut-based Communist magazine *Al-Sha'ab* from 9 May 1943 is mentioned as the source.

2 Iliya Harik: "Voting Participation and Political Integration in Lebanon 1943–1974", *Middle Eastern Studies* 16:1 (1980), 27–48; Decree No. 2/LR, 2 January 1934; Decree No. 95/LR, 4 May 1934.

3 Kais M. Firro: *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), esp. chapter 4.

the Popular Front. The very idea of Communism had certainly been damaged internationally by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.<sup>4</sup> While most of these explanations focus on the period after 1936, this chapter scrutinizes the two decades before, especially the period between 1925 and 1936.

This chapter argues that, although the formation of trade unions was an essential part of the strategy of the CPSL, as it was for the Soviet Comintern and the left-wing international French trade union federations with which the CPSL was allied, the Communist movement failed to build a sustainable ideological and institutionalized base among Lebanese workers and the Lebanese population during that particular window of opportunity. More precisely, it failed in exporting its version of organized labor into the country.

Considering labor unions as institutions in the field of organized labor, it becomes evident that organized labor in Lebanon and Syria had traditional origins that differed from the models developed in Europe. Unions in the Levant crossed paths with Communist ideology, yet ultimately took a different direction than the Communist forces had hoped for. Labor unions, even more than political parties, proved not only to be a pivotal part of the Communist strategy of pursuing world revolution, but also turned out to be a contested and bumpy terrain. As organized labor is much older than the Communist ideology, the new current had to try to enforce organizational and institutional change upon existing forms of professional organization – and mindsets – in order to form ‘red’ trade unions.

### The method: A configuration of variables for a single case study

By scrutinizing these forms of institutional change,<sup>5</sup> this chapter identifies different factors or variables, while assuming a model of multiple conjunctural causation in which variables are strongly interwoven and build on, reinforce, enable, and favor each other. This kind of method takes an unusual approach and incorporates elements from case-study research and comparative research. In a sample with  $n=1$ , a configuration in which a Boolean *and* connection is postulated is formed using a combination of variables. In that way, it is stressed that, for the time being, facing little systematization in the field, we must assume that all the factors are only necessary but not yet sufficient conditions. Unlike conventional methods of comparative

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4 Julián Vadillo Muñoz: “The Lebanese Communist Party: Continuity Against All Odds”, in: Laura Feliu/Ferran Izquierdo-Brichs (eds.): *Communist Parties in the Middle East 100 Years of History* (London: Routledge, 2020), 97.

5 For a more comprehensive overview of the research agenda with a dominant emphasis on how institutions emerge from and are embedded in concrete temporal processes, see Kathleen Thelen: “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics”, in: *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:1 (1999), 369–404, or, more recently, John L. Campbell: *Institutional Change and Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

social science, the validity of this configuration is not to be proven via comparison with other cases, but by causal inference and elaborated internal connections between the variables, as practiced in Case Study Research (CSR) or case-oriented research.<sup>6</sup> The study stops one step short of a comparative configurational analysis and remains a heuristic single case analysis. Additionally, and consequently, the study does not use previously undisclosed sources but seeks to give a systematic corset to previously used literature and material.

This framework lends itself to the study, as most of the literature on the Communist movement and especially on trade unions in the interwar years, consists of atheoretical and interpretative case studies, which do not lend themselves to generalization; indeed, no significant variable-driven attempts at generalization have yet been made.<sup>7</sup> The choice of a case in which a particular outcome was possible – yet was not realized – is a contribution to the collective endeavor of science.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the study aims at laying cornerstones for a more systematic study of Communism and organized labor in the historical Middle East.

The structure of the study is determined by methodological considerations. In order to create a solid background of knowledge to build on, the first part of the chapter introduces the reader to the world of the left spectrum from 1919 onwards, i.e., at the start of the century of internationalization of organized labor, at least in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Building on this, the guild dispositive<sup>10</sup> is introduced as the first variable. It shows how organized labor was traditionally lived in the Levant and what residues of this persisted into the middle of the 20th century. It also shows that although the Communist movement was active in and had contacts with the world of organized labor, the degree of actual control over these organizations was low. In the following part, the rise of the Nationalist current as an alternative in the field of anti-colonialism is introduced as another variable. Increased self-confidence of non-Communist

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- 6 Charles Ragin: *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (University of California Press, 1987), esp. chapter 3.
- 7 For a comprehensive distinction between different kinds of case studies and the critique of their ontologies, see Attilia Ruzzene: *Using Case Studies in the Social Sciences. Methods, Inferences, Purposes* (PhD dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2014), esp. chapter 1.
- 8 James Mahoney/Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research", in: *American Political Science Review* 98:4 (2004), 653–669.
- 9 Stefano Bellucci/Holger Weiss: "1919 and the Century of Labour Internationalisation", in: Stefano Bellucci/Holger Weiss (eds.): *The Internationalisation of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers' Movements and the ILO Since 1919* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 1–19.
- 10 Loosely based on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, I define a dispositive as knowledge and institutionalized techniques that emerged in the past from necessities or junctures, and which still shape the contemporary view of decisions about economic governance and norms of conduct. For a deeper dive into the history and use of the term, see Sverre Raffnsøe/Marius Gudmand-Høyer/Morten S. Thaning: "Foucault's Dispositive: The Perspicacity of Dispositive Analytics in Organizational Research", *Organization* 23:2 (2016), 272–298.

forces through partial political successes such as the tram boycott in Beirut, as well as the Bolshevization of the CPSL at the expense of grassroots activists (which could also be regarded as a variable in itself), led organized labor increasingly away from the Communist spectrum. The third variable, the role of the French mandate and its measures in the field of labor politics, also explains much of the impediments faced by the Communist current. Three factors are scrutinized: Labor legislation, the attempts to cut ties between leftist political activists and international organizations, and the establishment of counter-institutions. Eventually, an atmosphere of inhibition about international solidarity, in which it became clear that the grassroots of the workers' movement in France showed no sympathy for putting more resources into distant, anti-colonial struggles, builds another variable.

### One framework touching multiple discussions

This hypothesis touches upon at least three major discussions in the field. First, it backs Franz Borkenau's often criticized 1938 observation that the Middle East and the Arab region seemed "immune towards the attempts of the international Communist movement to penetrate its sociological structures."<sup>11</sup> By diving deeper into these sociological structures mentioned by Borkenau, the chapter finds that there were indeed reasons for the weakness of the Communists among the workers' movement, rooted in Levantine dispositives of organized labor, which can be traced even into the late 1930s.

Second, this chapter aims at reassessing much of the existing literature on organized labor in the Levant, which can often be characterized by a certain posthumous mythologizing of its emergence and alleged strength, as Longuenesse has already argued for Syria.<sup>12</sup> Literature about organized labor in Arab countries is often published by authors and institutions that are close to the remnants of Communist groups – and often a hard core left over from previously thriving organizations.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Franz Borkenau: *The Communist International* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, n.d.), 295; reinforced in Fredrik Petersson: *'We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers.'* Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925–1933 (PhD dissertation, Åbo Akademi University, 2013), 82; criticized by Sana Tannoury-Karam: "Long Live the Revolutionary Alliance Against Imperialism: Interwar Antilmperialism and the Arab Levant", in: Heather Streets-Salter et al. (eds.): *The League Against Imperialism. Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 623–648.

12 Elisabeth Longuenesse: "Labor in Syria: The Emergence of New Identities", in: Ellis Goldberg (ed.): *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 99–130.

13 See, for instance, Dhu, "Al-Haraka Al-'Umaliya Wa an-Naqabiya Fi Lubnan"; Tareq Y. Ismael/Jaqueline S. Ismael: *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Fawwaz Traboulsi: *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

They tend towards the merely descriptive, sometimes glorify their subject and often seem uninterested in “infer[ing] beyond the immediate data to something broader that is not directly observed,” which many consider the central feature of modern social science.<sup>14</sup>

This also holds true for Jaques Couland, who has produced the most seminal and comprehensive work on syndicalism in Lebanon and who was an active member of the *Parti Communiste Francais* (PCF) until his death in May 2021. His writings became the major source of information on trade unionism in Lebanon in the interwar years and also found their way into the reappraisal and documentation in recent Arab publications on the topic.<sup>15</sup> Although it draws on many of Couland’s writings as well as the sources he used, this chapter provides a more systematic, variable-based approach to deriving causal effects from the data in a framework that makes the research more transparent and replicable.<sup>16</sup>

Third, Communist movements and trade unions in the Middle East have so far not been affected by the discussions between traditionalists, revisionists, and post-revisionists of Cold War history. In the field of Communist party politics and trade unionism, post-revisionists, in particular, have argued with respect to the cases of the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, that the role of Moscow’s interventions in the local Communist branches – beginning already in the interwar period – has been exaggerated in the literature, albeit while acknowledging Russia’s limited influence.<sup>17</sup> Little effort has been made to scrutinize the role of organized labor in Lebanon in a post-revisionist manner that explores both local conditions and external influences at a time when new concepts of economic organization and organized labor from the outside were coming into contact with structures that had evolved within the country. From a rather traditionalist position, Louis Massignon had stated that, since 1917, ancient Muslim guilds had developed into labor unions and were tending to become dependent on the Third International. This statement,

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14 Gary King/Robert O. Keohane/Sidney Verba: *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

15 See, for instance, Muhammad Wahabi Djama’hi: *Al-Naqabat Al-'Umaliya Fi Lubnan. Nashatha, Tatawrha Wa Nizamha Al-Qanuni* [Workers’ Unions in Lebanon. Their Emergence, Development, and Legal Regimes] (Beirut: Manshurat Zin Al-Huquqiya, 2019); Antoine Messara (ed.): *Al-Naqabat Wa Al-Hay'at Al-Mihnia Fi Lubnan: Mubadara Wa Musharaka Fi Al-Tanmia Wa Al-Sha'an Al-'Aam* [The Trade Unions and the Organs of Professions in Lebanon: Initiative and Involvement in Public Affairs] (Amman: Al-Mu'assa al-lubnaniya lil-salam al-ahli al-da'im, 1999).

16 King/Keohane/Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 8.

17 Andrew Thorpe: “Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920–43”, in: *The English Historical Review* 113 (June 1998), 637–662; John Manley: “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928–1935”, in: *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005), 9–49; Bryan D. Palmer: “How Can We Write Better Histories of Communism?”, in: *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (2019), 199–232.

which was later criticized by Baer in passing<sup>18</sup> shall be refuted completely by means of this chapter. While the chapter finds that the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon did indeed take place, it argues that the workers' movement was not affected in a lasting manner. Besides the local structures of organized labor, the reaction of the French Mandate, shaped by anti-Communism and the willingness to domesticate and eradicate organized labor, also prevented a deeper Communist penetration of the workforce.

Having said this, Lebanon is a particularly worthwhile case to use in studying these topics and as a contribution to the aforementioned discussions, as it did appear at first to undergo a seemingly radical turn in terms of the organization of the workforce. When it came under the French Mandate in 1920, the country lacked a significant industrial sector and labor-related associations were set up according to the old Ottoman Guild model. Some fifteen years later, the country witnessed large-scale and comparatively well-organized labor protests, which were often planned and coordinated by anti-colonial and Nationalist forces and local organizations. These protests placed the French Mandate under pressure and were eventually a key reason for the concessions made in the Franco-Syrian and Franco-Lebanese treaties of 1936.

### **A split based on theory: Labor internationalization and the ascendance of the Comintern**

While the Levant was becoming the target of the great powers' mandate ambitions after the First World War, tectonic shifts in the perception and role of organized labor were occurring in Europe. This included an unprecedented level of network-building and internationalization; the century of internationally organized labor had just begun. In this politically volatile and innovative time, individuals, parties, peoples and states – of which many became mandatory powers – were confronted with profound questions towards which they had to orient and finally position themselves. It quickly became clear that the Soviet Comintern, in particular, wanted to take up the fight for the hearts and minds of the working class throughout the world. Many European governments, as well as more moderate left forces organized in the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Amsterdam International, adopted moderate to reactionary tones.

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18 Gabriel Baer: "Guilds in Middle Eastern History", in: Michael Cook (ed.): *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 30.



## Moscow or Amsterdam? Organized labor goes international

After the Second International – arguably the most important international leftist organization in Europe – had been paralyzed and eventually imploded during World War I, the question arose as to how the internationalization of Marxist organization in Europe should proceed. Concerning the failure of the Second International, some blamed communication problems and travel restrictions, other voices, especially from Russia, blamed the “scandalous betrayal by a majority of the official Social Democratic Parties,”<sup>19</sup> which had often supported their governments despite the latter’s pro-war policies. Indeed, the Russian Revolution had straightforwardly hit the fault-line between moderate and radical forces, creating severe fissures throughout the movement. The founding of the third international, or Communist International (Comintern) in March 1919, the reorganization of the Second International under Social Democratic leadership in summer 1920, and the establishment of the International Working Union of Socialist Parties (Vienna Union) in February 1921 openly sealed the definitive split within the once cooperative Marxist movement. When the last two founded the Labor and Socialist International (LSI) in 1923, the bipolarity of international Marxist oriented currents was finally established.

These developments had repercussions for the international trade union movement. In meetings in February 1919 and July 1920, the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) was resuscitated – with a stronger role for the British and French organizations. As before the war, it was still dominated by social-democratic currents.<sup>20</sup> Russian trade unions were also invited, but only responded by attacking the initiative.<sup>21</sup> With most of the trade unions in Russia under their control, the new Soviet leaders viewed them as a pivotal pillar for achieving their ideological aims. However, as early as January 1918, the Russian Trade Union Congress found that the “Russian Trade Union Movement cannot fulfill its gigantic task without entering into the closest association with the international trade union movement.” But in the perception of the Comintern leaders and leading Bolsheviks, the most dangerous enemy of the Comintern was neither the League of Nations nor the Second International, but the IFTU. In their thinking, this “Amsterdam International”, as it was also called due to the location of its founding conference it held from 26 July until 4 August 1919, was the only body outside the Comintern that was

19 Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin: *The collapse of the Second International* (Glasgow: The Socialist Labour Press, 1922), 9.

20 For an elaborate account of the re-foundation of the IFTU, see Geert Van Goethem: *The Amsterdam International. The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913–1945* (London: Routledge, 2017), 13–19.

21 Stefano Bellucci: “The Ascent of African Labour Internationalism: Trade Unions, Cold War Politics and the ILO, 1919–1960”, in: Stefano Bellucci/Holger Weiss (eds.): *The Internationalisation of the Labour Question* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 6.

capable of mobilizing mass support.<sup>22</sup> As a consequence, the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU) was founded in Moscow in 1921.

For the Soviet Union and the Comintern, trade unions became the battleground on which they wanted to overpower the “reformist” tendencies. The Amsterdam International was very aware of that strategy. Consequently, and keeping that attitude during the entire interwar period, the IFTU declared as early as May 1921 that membership of the RILU and the IFTU was mutually exclusive.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between the Comintern and the RILU, on the one side, and the ILO, IFTU, and League of Nations, on the other, remained frosty throughout the twenties – and the race for predominance among the workers of the world had only just begun.

### The Comintern’s overall strategy towards the “East”

The Soviet leaders, however, had their problems in setting up connections to the Levant. Nevertheless, in contrast to the IFTU and the LSI, the Bolshevik leadership showed considerable interest in the global spread of Communist ideas early on, including to the “East” or “Orient”, which was a very broad concept in those days, covering everything from the Levant to Japan.

Shortly after the October Revolution, an “appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East” was drafted by Stalin, then Commissar of Nationalities, and also signed by Lenin. It emphasized anti-colonialism, declared all international agreements between European powers concerning the East for void, and – long before the Wilsonian credo – promoted the self-determination of nations.<sup>24</sup> In September 1920, the Congress of the Peoples of the East was held under the auspices of the Comintern in Baku. The invitation was published in *Izvestia*, the mouthpiece of the Bolsheviks, on 3 July of the same year, directly addressed the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup>

However, besides some utterances of good will and the call for a “holy war” against imperialism, the congress blatantly showed how weak the Soviet connec-

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22 Reiner Tosstorff: *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) 1920–1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 52, 92.

23 Edward Hallett Carr: *Socialism in one country 1924–1926* (London: Macmillan Press, 1964), 526.

24 Council of People’s Commissars: “Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East”, *Izvestia*, 7 December 1917, 1–2.

25 The wording was: “Peasants of Syria and Arabia: the English and French have promised you independence, have occupied your country, they are dictating their laws to you, and you, after liberation from the Turkish Sultan and his government, have now been made slaves of the governments of Paris and London, which differ from the Sultan’s only in that they held you down more firmly and plunder you more severely.” (Mohammed Nuri El-Amin: “The role of International Communism in the Muslim world and in Egypt and the Sudan”, in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23:1 (1996), 29–53, note 9 quoting *Izvestia* (3 July 1920)).

tions in the region still were. None of the Arab visitors (of which the official records counted only three, though some participants did not specify their nationality in the survey) is noted to have played a decisive role in the congress,<sup>26</sup> and eventually, Vice-Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Karl Radek – an intimate of Lenin’s – took charge of criticizing the behavior of Britain and France in Syria.<sup>27</sup>

This poor performance was no coincidence. After the 1917 revolution, many of Russian Empire’s experts on the Orient had been marginalized, and knowledge about the region was still scarce among the cadres of the party.<sup>28</sup> Realizing the need for a deeper understanding of the region, the All-Russian Scientific Association of Oriental Studies within the Commissariat of Nationalities was founded in December 1921. Its “New Orientalism” focused on researching the interests of the laboring masses in the colonies as a means of eventually winning the leadership in potential revolutionary struggles.<sup>29</sup> On a more practical level, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East was established the same year to train Communists in the anti-colonial movements.

## Reality beyond theory: Organized labor in Lebanese history

By the late 1920s, both the trade union movement and the Communist movement lagged behind what local organizers – and observers from the Comintern – had hoped to achieve in the Levant. At the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions in 1928, the resolution on Syria noted that trade union organizations were scarcely present in the desired form. At the same time, however, it was also noted that – in Syria, unlike in other Middle Eastern countries – labor organizations outside the Marxist spectrum were also scarce and, if they existed, underdeveloped.<sup>30</sup> Such an assessment is better understood if we recall that the definition of organized labor or labor unions is quite specific in the ideological jargon of the

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26 Enver Pasha, whose appearance at the congress was highly controversial in any case, claimed to be the representative of revolutionary organizations of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli, Egypt, Arabia, and India. This, however, turned out to be a fiction designed to gain allies for his fight against Mustafa Kemal.

27 *Congress of the Peoples of the East. Baku September 1920. Stenographic Report* (London: New Park Publications, 1920), 41–42.

28 Mikhail Rodionov: “Profiles under pressure. Orientalists in Petrograd/Leningrad, 1918–1956”, in: Micheal Kemper/Stephan Conermann (eds.): *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies* (London: Routledge, 2011), 47–57.

29 Craig Brandist: “Marxism, early Soviet oriental studies and the problem of ‘power/knowledge’”, in: *International Politics* 55 (2018), 809–811.

30 Jaques Couland: *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1964), 152.

young Bolsheviks and did not cover forms of professional organization in the Levant. Thus, I argue in this section that a structural remainder, a dispositive, remained rooted in Lebanese society and inhibited the spread of Communist ideas among its workers organizations.

### The dispositive of the Guilds

Depending on the definition, workplace or craft organization has a history that dates back to the 9th century in the Middle East.<sup>31</sup> A conglomeration of profession-based organizations working to improve the position of their members is today grouped together under the diffuse term “guild”. This term includes corporations known as *ḥirfa/ḥiraf*, *ṣinf/aṣnâf*, *mihna/mihan*, or the youth organizations called *futuwwa*.<sup>32</sup> Each of these bodies had a system of initiation and a concern for training and teaching, for passing on their ideology and each organization had internal systems of secrecy and discipline. Nonetheless, the nature, organization, first appearance, and especially the independence of guilds is historically contested. For instance, some authors found examples suggesting that these organizations were politically autonomous by exploring literature about the *hisba* (a market inspection)<sup>33</sup> others claimed that market inspectors (*muhtasibs*) regulated the markets with the help of *ʿarifs* from different professions, but that these *ʿarifs* were only agents for policing and not true representatives of their professions.<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, at the end of the 19th century, three major organizational features of the remaining guild organizations in the Levant can be determined as constituting a dispositive distinct from what would become the dominant current of organized labor in Europe. First, they encompassed nearly all members of a trade, from the apprentice and simple worker to the owners of private shops or manufactories. Issues between masters and workers could be addressed in special committees, and the organizations provided a possibility for upward mobility within a hierarchical bureaucratic structure. Second, mechanisms of labor action were known, however, these mechanisms were invoked against the outside and not within the craft. Guilds, often represented by the *sheikh al-kar* (guild master), entered negotiations and me-

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31 Louis Massignon: “Les corps de métier et la cite islamique”, in: *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 28 (1920), 473–489.

32 Abbas Hamdani: “The Rasa’il Ikhwan Al-Safa’ and the Controversy about the Origin of Craft Guilds in Early Medieval Islam”, in: Nelly Hanna (ed.): *Money, Land, and Trade. An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2002), 51–65, here 61.

33 E. Ashtor-Strauss: “L’administration urbaine en Syrie medievale”, in: *Rivista Deli Studi Orientali* 31 (1959), 711–728.

34 Samuel Miklos Stern: “The Constitution of the Islamic City”, in: Albert Hourani/Samuel Miklos Stern (eds.): *The Islamic City. A Colloquium* (Oxford: Brune Cassier, 1970), 25–50.

diation over disputes between customers and guild members.<sup>35</sup> If that mediation failed, it could be ordered that that particular customer should be excluded from using any service provided by the guild's members until the dispute had been solved in a satisfactory manner. Third, the power that emerged out of this collective action and the hierarchical structure made it possible for the organizations to exert political influence and propose policies to the ruling elite. Conversely, local notables had a long-term interest in staying in good standing with the guilds and their leadership, and in drawing them to their side in political and administrative matters. The ruling Ottoman elites had even been known to support and instrumentalize socio-economic grievances and labor struggles: Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was well-known for his authoritarian rule, in fact supported the workers' strike against the French port administration in the Port of Beirut in the early 1890s. He also used strikes in tobacco facilities owned by the international Régie consortium across the empire to secure loyalty from the workers.<sup>36</sup>

Looking across the Levant of the early 1920s, the classical guilds had been severely weakened by the influx of cheap imported goods and by Ottoman policies and legislation or had disappeared completely in their traditional form. But some form of organizing along professional lines remained, and mutual-aid associations emerged. Although these have been considered forerunners of labor unions,<sup>37</sup> they had little in common with workers-only unions of the kind promoted by the Red International of Labor Unions, for instance. Such associations were indigenous initiatives and tended to be instituted in a top-down manner, often with the leadership of intellectuals. A good example is the Workers' Union in Zahlé. It was institutionalized openly in 1923 and was instigated by the journalist Shukri Ghanim and the publisher Ibrahim Al-Rai.<sup>38</sup> These organizations included employers and employees without distinction. Furthermore, journalists, poets, and local notables were also often members. Such mutual-aid associations heavily outnumbered orthodox Marxist organizations.<sup>39</sup>

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35 Muhannad Moubaydin: *Sheikh Al-Kar. Al-Sulta Wa-Al-Suq Wa-Al-Nas Fi Dimashq Al-Uthmaniyya* [Master of Crafts. The Authorities, the Marked, and the People in Ottoman Damascus] (Al-Rayyan: Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press, 2018).

36 Can Nacar: "Labor activism and the state in the Ottoman tobacco industry", in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46:3 (2014), 533–551.

37 Couland, *Le Movement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 91–96.

38 Djan Bakhash: "'Zahle al-fataa' wa-al-'amal al-niqabi ['Young Zahle' and Trade Union Work]", in: Antoine Messara (ed.): *Al-Naqabat Wa Al-Hay'iat Al-Mihnia Fi Lubnan: Mubadara Wa Musharaka Fi Al-Tanmia Wa Al-Sha'an Al-'Aam* [The Trade Unions and the Organs of Professions in Lebanon: Initiative and Involvement in Public Affairs] (Amman: Al-Mu'assa al-lubnaniya lil-salam al-ahli al-da'im, 1999), 105–106.

39 In the remainder of the text, unions comprising employers and employees are labeled *mutualist unions*.

## A union is not a labor union: Levantine organized labor and the Communist Party

In 1924, aided by the Palestinian Communist party, on whose behalf Joseph Berger visited Beirut, Yusuf Yazbek, Fuad Shimali and a dozen intimates formed the Lebanese Peoples' Party (*Hizb al-Sha'ab al-Lubnani*, hereafter LPP).<sup>40</sup> A Commission for Union Organization (*al-Lajnah al-Naqabiyah al-'Uliya*; CUO) was also established in 1925. Eventually the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (CPSL) was formed, absorbing the LPP, and it was admitted to the Comintern at its Sixth Congress in 1928 in the presence of its leader, Fuad Shimali, who was urged to put more effort into the formation of trade unions in the country.<sup>41</sup>

Back in Lebanon, Shimali soon became a pivotal figure in the setting up of the Tobacco Union of Bikfaya, which would become an important ally of the Communist Party. He had gathered experience organizing labor in Egypt, where he was a militant member of the Communist Party – which had been affiliated with the Comintern since 1922 – and of the General Confederation of Workers of Alexandria which, as Egypt's leading trade union organization, was affiliated to the Red International of Labor Unions. The tobacco union, set up in the factories of the French dominated Régie, is claimed as the first workers-only union in Lebanon.

Beyond that union, the CPSL claimed relations with 12 associations (railway workers, tailors, hairdressers, carpenters, tramway workers, chefs and housekeepers, musicians, construction workers, weavers, coachmen and drivers, shoemakers, and teachers) though there is no evidence that these organizations had a workers-only approach. Couland labels them “formal associations (*associations formelles*)”.<sup>42</sup> However, if they were legal, there were two possibilities: Either they came under the 1909 Ottoman Law of Associations – which would have made them rather mutual aid associations – or they came under the Ottoman Law of Professional Organizations of 1912 – which would make them professional associations, including all levels of hierarchies of a profession. However, as these laws were rarely enforceable in the late Ottoman period, few craft organizations – whether closer to the guild ideal or that of a Western union – adhered to the requirements of the law. Many organizations lacked written rules or any legal status until the late 1930s.<sup>43</sup>

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40 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 105.

41 *Ibid.*, 148–149.

42 Jaques Couland: “Mouvement Syndical En Situation Coloniale : Le Cas Du Liban”, in : *Le Mouvement Social* 59 (1969), 57–76.

43 Geoffrey D. Schad: “Colonial Corporatism in the French Mandated States: Labor, Capital, the Mandatory Power, and the 1935 Syrian Law of Associations”, in: *Revue Des Mondes Musulmanes Et de La Mediterranee* 105 (2005), 5–32.

Moreover, it seems reasonable to assume that these organizations were aware of how much political weight they possessed, and used this to search for the best deal, changing partners as necessary. As a consequence, while they had links with the Communists, they were probably not under their influence. An intuitive example is the above-mentioned driver's association – which actually consisted of a motley assembly of garage owners, repair staff, drivers, and vehicle owners. The association was politically close to the industrialist Henri Fir'awn, who also became their honorary president in 1930. He managed to establish trust, for instance, by offering reasonably priced insurance against car accidents, and Fir'awn and the union leadership exchanged favors.<sup>44</sup> These organizations did not obey the Communist Party or their ideology, and Communist figures were not exclusively recognized as negotiators and spokespersons. For instance, the Nationalist Yusuf Al-Sawda was the leading spokesman and mediator during the strike of streetcar and electricity workers that was joined by seven other professions in 1925.<sup>45</sup> We can conclude that the nature of organized labor in the Levant, where a guild dispositive was involved, hampered the spread of Communist influence during the interwar period.

## The Nationalist current as a competitor in anti-colonialism

Besides the often-persistent traditional forms of organized labor, the rise of Nationalism as alternative to Communism for those who sought to push the anti-colonial struggle posed a problem for the Communist tendency. This variable is interconnected with the guild dispositive, as workers' organizations tended to choose allies freely, even if much of the existing literature suggests that they were affiliated to the Communists. The burgeoning Nationalist movement was probably the biggest beneficiary there, especially after it discovered organized labor as a means of mobilizing against the French mandate. The Communists, in turn, did not agitate aggressively against the merger of Nationalist forces and organized labor due to Comintern policy, which allowed and welcomed nationalist agitation as a means of weakening imperialist rule.

The boycott of the Beirut tramway lines in 1931 was the first time that the city's workers managed to present a united front and coordinate collective action, and unrest quickly spread all over the region, including to the cities of Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus. However, though some unions, including the typographers' union, were

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44 Thomas A Pianka: *An Appraisal of the Labour Movement in Lebanon* (PhD dissertation, American University of Beirut, 1963).

45 Carla Eddé: "La mobilisation populaire á Beyrouth á l'époque du mandat (1918–1943) : L'apprentissage progressif de la participation", in : Nadine Méchouchy/Peter Sluglett (eds.) : *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspective* (Leiden : Brill, 2004), 623–648, here 628.

decisive to the protests, the main organizational efforts were not made by the Communists and their allies. An independent boycott committee was set up, which was not organized along trade lines, but around the confessional urban communities. The immediate, direct, and powerful impact of these self-organization measures surprised even their initiators. Committees developed strategies, communications and propaganda were quickly developed and distributed (especially with the help of the typographers' union), and internal security forces were even formed to maintain the pacifist character of the protests.<sup>46</sup> This experience led various actors from the non-Communist spectrum, who increasingly saw organized labor as a means of putting pressure on the mandate power, to take a greater interest in sustainable organizing and mobilization. The anti-colonial Nationalist current, especially around Riad-Al-Sulh, gained influence and attractiveness and became a real alternative to the Communists in the field of anti-colonialism.<sup>47</sup>

### The policy of soft indoctrination and Lebanese organized labor

The tramway boycott and the increase in unofficial strikes sparked new interest in labor organization, and more associations were founded as a consequence. While the Red International of Labor Union's 1924 call for more trade unions went largely unheeded, the organization of workers increased markedly across a broad spectrum from Nationalism to Communism in the 1930s. In particular, professional white-collar associations of physicians, pharmacists, and lawyers, which tended to display Nationalist inclinations, emerged in 1934.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, during this period, the Communists and Nationalists began to collaborate in several sectors, with the former following Moscow's recommendations and relinquishing many of the goals of orthodox Marxism. For instance, the official lists of demands issued in the course of labor protests in the tobacco sector – which were also supported by trade unions and the Communist Party – stressed the right of Lebanese Capital to invest in the monopoly.<sup>49</sup> In 1931, the Syrian Lebanese Communist Party and the Palestinian Communists held a joint congress to adopt a resolution in accordance with the theses of the 6th Comintern World Congress (July–September 1928).<sup>50</sup> These theses included the division of countries into three categories, of which Lebanon would fall into the third, the colonial countries, which displayed a certain degree of industrialization but were yet not ready for the dictatorship of the proletariat. To achieve the

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46 Ibid., 633–634.

47 Pianka, "An Appraisal of the Labour Movement in Lebanon".

48 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 222.

49 Dhu, "Al-Haraka Al-'Umaliya Wa an-Naqabiya Fi Lubnan", 15.

50 Taline Minassian Ter : *Colporteurs du Comintern. L'Union soviétique et les minorités au Moyen-Orient* (Paris : Presse de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1997), 167.



latter, these countries had to pass first through a stage of a bourgeois-democratic revolution that would eventually lead to a social revolution.<sup>51</sup>

The degree of organization was given another push by the formation of a committee of trade union centers in 1936. Led by the prominent typographer Mustafa Al-Aris, who had recently finished a two-year prison sentence, the committee became a pillar of resistance to the Mandate. The committee was open to sharing its knowledge and to connecting and coordinating the existing workers organizations within a revolutionary and Marxist-inspired framework. Mutualist and Nationalist unions could therefore seize the opportunity to join or cooperate.<sup>52</sup> This was the result of discussions that had already taken place in the Soviet Union before the founding of the Red International of Labor Unions and was actually aimed at dealing with social-democratic trade unions. Unionists worldwide were encouraged to stay in their existing trade unions, even if these were led by reformists, and were urged to refrain from forming their own, purely Communist counter-unions. The idea was to drag the existing and nascent union organizations – which represented a great step forward by their sheer existence according to Lenin – into the Communist spectrum.

### The typographers' association: Communist influence, yet not revolutionary

An example of how these infiltration tactics worked out can be observed in the case of the typographers' association. Originating in a form that resembled the Ottoman guild model, the association grew increasingly professional throughout the 1920s, becoming an important opponent of the French mandatory power and its policies. Indeed, when France took over the Mandate of Syria and Lebanon in 1919, civil society was ready to hit the ground running: Spurred by the 1909 Law of Associations, the printing of all kinds of media flourished and became an important means of communication for the young civil society, but also for the administration, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals from all the many communities. In the next 22 years, the French authorities would register 401 associations in and around Beirut compared to 31 registered associations in total under Ottoman rule before the war, and 338 in the rest of Lebanon.<sup>53</sup>

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51 Jay Lovestone: "The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International", in: *The Communist* 7 (1928), 663–664.

52 Couland mentions rather casually in passing that the licensed workers' organizations in the committee's network were often on the mutualist or nationalist spectrum. He writes that the committee managed to coordinate all licensed labor organizations – yet up to 1936, it was only mutualist organizations that had received a license. His fixation on the typographers is also noteworthy here (Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 221–231).

53 Elizabeth Thompson: *Colonial Citizens. Republican rights, paternal privilege, and gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 91.

The typographers' association grew in importance against the backdrop of this flourishing civil society and with the introduction of bureaucratization. After it had repeatedly objected to the mandate leadership regarding the increasing number of bans on magazines, newspapers, and journals, the decisive break came in 1930: When no concrete result was achieved in negotiations, even though the association had access to a number of prominent MPs and ministers, the radical wing led by Muhi ad-Din al-Kuza gained the upper hand in the elections to the leadership bodies.<sup>54</sup> The typographers' union would thus become one of the closest allies of the Communists and is often used as an example of Communist influence in the young trade union movement. This was particularly true in the time of activity of Mustafa Al-Aris. He was a member of the CPSL, chairman of the CUU, and would later become Lebanon's delegate at the World Trade Union Federation (WFTU).<sup>55</sup>

Nonetheless, although the association was visible, First, there is little evidence that it had a significant impact on Lebanese society as a whole. The union had some 400 members in a country of approximately 800,000 inhabitants with an illiteracy rate of about 50% (about 70% of them Muslims).<sup>56</sup> Bearing that in mind and recalling that the first important Communist figures were well educated members of the upper strata of society – something that also applies to the trade union movement generally – it is clear that Communism and workers-only unionism remained an intellectual matter – and of interest largely to intellectuals.

Second, even if it can be argued that there were revolutionary elements inside the association, reformist or even just pragmatic currents also played a decisive role. Against that background, a member of the CPSL complained at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1935:

In preparing the typographers' strike in 1933, we tried to send a list of 15 demands, whereas there were only three demands which interested the workers: freedom for their dissolved trade-union, eight hours of work, and regular payment of salaries. It is true that we succeeded in submitting our list to a vote in the strike meetings, but in practice, it was only on the basis of the three demands that the workers struggled for ten days.<sup>57</sup>

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54 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 169–180.

55 Couland, "Mouvement Syndical En Situation Coloniale", 67, note 13.

56 Hasan Qubaysi: "The State and Public Education in Lebanon", in: M. Bashur (ed.): *Al-Dawla Wa Al-t'alim Fi Lubnan* [The State and Education in Lebanon] (Beirut: Lebanese Association for Higher Educational Studies, 1999).

57 Report on the Syrian Communist Party, supposedly delivered at the Congress' 10th session, as a continuation of the discussion of the reports by Pieck, "On the activity of the Executive Committee of the Communist International", and by Angaretis, "On the activity of the International Control Commission". As the reports of smaller parties were not included in the final reports, it does not appear in most collections about the Congress. An original can be

Hence, although the leadership of the typographers' union cooperated with the Communist party, the members displayed limited interest in their ideology. Similar to other professional associations, they benefited from the experience of the Communist Party, but considered this only one opportunity for cooperation among many with other political players. Even the anti-colonial attitude that had fascinated intellectuals such as Yazbek could also be found among Nationalists, especially after the success of the Beirut tramway boycott. Ties between the typographers and Nationalist leaders also grew stronger, as seen, for instance, in the fact that the Nationalist leader Riyadh Al-Sulh wrote the opening article for the third issue of the important workers' magazine *Al-Waqtah*. Moreover, the appeal of workers-only unionism remained limited, and mutual-aid associations and associations of the old Ottoman guild type still made up more than 80% of workers' organizations in Damascus of 1937.<sup>58</sup> Often organized in a hierarchical and traditional manner, and with links to local notables, these organizations were closer to the Nationalist current than to the kind of red, workers-only union desired by the Comintern.

### The positive and negative repercussions of Bolshevization

The organizational skills that made the Commission for Union Organization an interesting platform and partner for all politically active members of Lebanese society were also a result of the professionalization of the party. Just as France feared, this went hand in hand with a greater influence on the part of Moscow. The insights of the "New Orientalism" and Moscow's collected experiences supporting Communist organizations in colonized countries had produced significant knowledge about the region and its internal dynamics. The Bolshevik leadership was increasingly eager to use that knowledge as a resource in attempts to subordinate independence movements across the colonial world to its foreign policy.<sup>59</sup>

From the late 1920s, we find evidence that the CPSL became more dependent on Moscow and indeed came increasingly under its control, just as much of the traditionalist literature would suggest. The influx of money from the Comintern solidarity funds and the Red International of Labor Unions played their role in strengthening organizational structures and building capacity. Comintern influence also started to become visible in terms of personnel decisions: Yusuf Yazbek was expelled from the CPSL in 1926, allegedly on the urging of Elias Teper, an influential pro-Moscow leader of the Communist Party of Palestine, in order to change the leadership from the intellectual Yazbek to the worker Shimali. Shimali,

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found in: Stanford Libraries, Hoover Archives, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State (RGANI), Fond 494, Opis' 1, delo 186.

58 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 102.

59 Brandist, "Marxism, early Soviet oriental studies".

who was crucial for setting up first ties to the Comintern, was ousted by Khalid Bakdash in 1932. The latter had joined the Party in 1930 at the age of 18, was recruited by agents of the Comintern at the University of Damascus, and graduated from the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in 1934. His ascendancy to Secretary-General of the CPSL was accompanied by serious accusations against Shimali, with Bakdash stating among other things that the other was an agent of the French police. The policy of proximity to the Soviet Union – and hence to the policies of Stalin – that followed in the era of Bakdash's leadership would make his companion Rafiq Rida attack the Communist Party after World War II as a “satellite of a foreign power”.<sup>60</sup> The tone did indeed become overwhelmingly pro-Moscow and pro-Stalin. Addressing Stalin as “great comrade, beloved leader of the world proletariat”, the CPSL sent a telegram from a meeting in Damascus on 6 November 1937 stating:

On the victories won by the USSR during the 20 years under Your wise leadership, a leadership of genius, [the meeting] sends You, who laid the first mighty cornerstone in the cause of freeing all the oppressed peoples of the world, heartfelt greetings and their most sincere and warm wishes. [...] We wish You, our dear and great comrade, long life, so that you may lead the land of the Soviets to Communism and help the working masses of the entire world to free themselves from capitalist exploitation, fascist barbarism, and the imperialist yoke.<sup>61</sup>

This turn towards Moscow had some repercussions. With the ouster of Shimali, the party lost a central figure for the workers' movement who had set up the first workers-only unions. Moreover, with the ouster of Yazbek, a founding father of the party, the CPSL lost an important and well-connected contact among the Lebanese intellectuals. Hence, by focusing on the Communist agenda and as a result of Comintern's influence, the CPSL cut ties with grass-root activists who were initially attracted by Communism due to its anti-imperial rhetoric. In the 1980s, Yazbek stated with hindsight that the fascination of young intellectuals of his generation for the Soviet Union had anti-imperialism as its main cause and that it “must be understood against the background of the early 1920s with the West in occupation of the Arab lands and the Soviet Union a revolutionary state extending its hand to the rest of the oppressed world.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Yazbek and Shimali were two of the members of

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60 Michael W. Suleiman: “The Lebanese Communist Party”, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 3:2 (1967), 134–59, note 16.

61 Fridrikh I. Firsov/Harvey Klehr/John Earl Haynes: *Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933–1943* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 10.

62 Ismael/Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon*, 12.

the five-person internal trade union committee of the CPSL and thus responsible for links to the world of organized labor.<sup>63</sup>

The Nationalist current was often supported by notables and a large part of the intelligentsia. Less comprehensive and ideologically overloaded than its Communist counterparts, it also had a clear anti-colonial agenda and prominent leaders in Europe. It provided fierce competition for the Communists, which can also be seen in party figures. As all parties appear to exaggerate equally, the comparison of their claimed membership numbers is an interesting indicator of influence. The increase of CPSL members from 2000 in 1939 to about 10,000 in 1944 is impressive. Still, in contrast to the membership of the Syrian Nationalist Party (44,000), the Phalangists (35,000), and even the Sunni-dominated Najjada (13,000),<sup>64</sup> the Communists' numbers appear somewhat less spectacular.

### **The strategy of the French Mandate: To domesticate, cull and isolate organized labor**

Besides the guild dispositive and competition from the Nationalist current in the fields of both unionization and anti-colonialism, the Communists – and organized labor – also struggled with the French Mandate authorities. Their harsh measures were part of a general mindset, as Anti-Communism was integral to the political culture of the late Third Republic and made its mark in colonial policy.<sup>65</sup> They also have to be understood against the backdrop of the concept of the *Mission Civilisatrice*, which was well described by, of all people, left-wing deputy Leon Blum:

The thought of France, the French civilization, it is by other means that we want to see spreading in the world. [...] We admit that there can be not only a right, but a duty of the so-called superior races, [...] to attract to themselves the races which have not reached the same degree of culture and civilization. [...] and to make them benefit by a kind of duty, solidarity and human protection of what they themselves have been able to conquer by the effort of science, industry and thought.<sup>66</sup>

The will to guide, protect, and “educate” colonial peoples and teach them the benefits of Western civilization was an important factor in understanding the thinking of

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63 Jehan Saleh: *The Making of a Resistance Identity: Communism and the Lebanese Shi'a 1943–1990* (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2015), 147.

64 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 234–35.

65 Martin Thomas: “Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat, 1919–1930”, in: *Journal of Modern History* 77:4 (2005), 917–955, here 919.

66 Translation by the author: Chambre des députés: 12<sup>e</sup> Législature – Session Ordinaire de 1925, 2<sup>e</sup> Séance du 9 Juillet 1925, *Journal Officiel de la République française*, 10 July 1925, 3316.

large sections of the French public. The diligent, at times military pursuit of the *Mission Civilisatrice* – itself a discriminatory concept that legitimizes exploitation – in combination with other racist attitudes had real impacts that would directly affect the work of the Communist parties in Lebanon and other Mandates and colonies. Large sections of French politics and society simply did not trust the colonial peoples to organize themselves independently. The mandate power and its leaders were therefore inclined to suspect emerging Nationalist organizations of either Communist control or Communist influence. This was perpetuated, as the French secret police (*Sûreté générale*), which provided the model for establishing secret police corps in the colonies, was headed from 1924 by a determined anti-Communist in Jean Chiappe. As a result, the power of popular nationalism was grossly underestimated and the dominance of Communist ideology overestimated to the same degree.<sup>67</sup> True, the Communists in Lebanon became very visible during the Syrian uprising by enticing French soldiers and local volunteers/recruits to rebel against their commanders and to refuse to fight in Syria<sup>68</sup> – which encouraged *Sûreté* officials to conflate anti-colonialism with Communist influence even more.<sup>69</sup>

But focusing on the Communists and no other indigenous forces was based on a misconception. By 1925, the Communist Party of Lebanon had about 20 members<sup>70</sup> and barely any international contacts. At that time, the clandestine Jewish-Palestinian party remained the only palpable Communist force in the region and gave as much assistance to cells in Syria and Lebanon as its resources would allow – which did not amount to much. At a secret meeting in Tel Aviv in 1927, after four years of affiliation, the party's chairman, Haim Auerbach, noted the difference between expectations and reality regarding Comintern support:

We were the only Communist front in the Arab Orient and in the absence of anybody else we had to pay attention to every question. All the duties in relation to the revolution fell on our shoulders. [...] We were not glad of our relations with the International; no replies were regularly made to our letters, no decisions were regularly passed in regard to the matters affecting us and we used to receive very small assistance.<sup>71</sup>

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67 Thomas, "Albert Sarraut", 933–935.

68 Tannoury-Karam, "Long Live the Revolutionary Alliance Against Imperialism", 116.

69 Thomas, "Albert Sarraut", 934.

70 Aleksandr B. Rezikov: "The Strategy and Tactics of the Communist International in the National and Colonial Question", in: Rostislav Ulyanovsky (ed.): *Comintern and the East: Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements* (London: Routledge, 2011), 158.

71 Haim Auerbach cited by John Batatu: "Some Preliminary Observations on the Beginnings of Communism in the Arab East", in: Jaan Pennar (ed.): *Islam and Communism: A Conference Sponsored by the Institute for the Study of the USSR at the Carnegie International Center, New York City, June 25, 1960* (München: Institut zur Erforschung der UdSSR e.V., 1960), 46–69, here 57.

The (mis-)perception of anti-colonialism as an exclusively Communist endeavor tied up much of the resources of the French authorities and helped the spread of Nationalist ideologies rather than Communist ideas among politically active progressive workers. But the French Mandate also attempted to limit and control organized labor in general, especially because strikes and boycotts proved costly. The French authorities therefore pursued a threefold strategy: Seeking to limit the scope for organized labor as much as possible by means of specially created laws, targeting the international contacts of the Communist movement, and simultaneously creating mandate-friendly counter-institutions.

### Labor legislation as a strategic pillar against a labor movement

Alongside security measures and surveillance, the Mandate also attempted to suppress the emergence of a strong workers movement by legislative means. Although the International Labor Organization became a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission, and although its first president, Albert Thomas, stated that Syrian labor conditions were rapidly approaching the level of industrial countries and thus that solutions implemented in industrial countries should be applied here as well, the Mandate refrained from reforming labor legislation. The Ottoman laws of association of 1909 and of professional associations of 1912 – which were tailored for mutualist associations that included both employers and employees – remained in force.

In 1924, the French authorities even refused to enact reforms – actually demanded by the International Labor Organization – concerning working-hours legislation, occupational accidents, and measures against unemployment. The official reasoning behind the refusal was claimed to be the potential risk of abuse and the need to avoid jeopardizing the economic development of the region.<sup>72</sup> In 1927, the Lebanese government was dominated by pro-French delegates, who rejected a proposal to hold employers responsible for particular occupational accidents because, as it was argued, such a law would harm nascent industries.<sup>73</sup> This reasoning was used recurrently until the end of the French Mandate, and influenced, for instance, the Mandate's opposition to Syria's Legislative Decree No. 152 of 18 September 1935. During that period, approximately one quarter of Lebanon's workforce was employed in the industrial sector,<sup>74</sup> but reports to the League of Nations stated that the establishment of social protection laws would equal to "arm workers against their employers".<sup>75</sup> However, the decree was far from

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72 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 79.

73 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 63.

74 *Ibid.*, 101.

75 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 244.

being as progressive as particularly the Communist sections of the labor movement would have liked. Indeed, the decree did not include the formation of workers-only unions but promoted a concept that was close to that of the old guilds. Members had to practice the same crafts in a given district (Article 3), while there could be only one association for any trade in a district, and no association was allowed to extend its activity beyond its own province (Article 4).<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, the French administration responsible for Beirut and Mount Lebanon also criticized the 1935 law on the ground that it would destroy the old corporations and ensure preponderance of workers.<sup>77</sup> This can be read as based on fear of harming important allies who drew their own political support from professional organizations. These ties were particularly important, as a second tactic consisted of creating a bulwark in the form of counter-institutions. This targeted Nationalists, in particular, who knew how to mobilize workers – or how to profit from workers' protests – but was also aimed at a perceived Communist threat. Part of this strategy took the form of legislation: Although the Ottoman laws lagged behind what either the Comintern or the International Labor Organization recommended, in 1926, they were kept and even amended further to give the Mandate the power to dissolve any union that was not organized according to the stipulations of the Ottoman laws.<sup>78</sup>

### Limiting contacts to international organizations

Aware of the dangers that could arise from a mobilized – and probably indoctrinated – labor movement, the Mandate implemented a policy of repression, education, and restriction. Contact with internationally organized labor was one factor that often boosted the young leftist movement. The formation of the first union committee in 1925, for instance, was suggested by – among others – André Hercllet, one of the United General Confederation of Labor (CGTU)<sup>79</sup> leaders and a functionary of the RILU, who had made a brief trip to Beirut shortly before.<sup>80</sup>

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76 For a detailed discussion of the Syrian law, see Schad, "Colonial Corporatism".

77 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 244.

78 Pianka, "An Appraisal of the Labour Movement in Lebanon", 80.

79 The Comintern-affiliated United General Confederation of Labor (*Confédération générale du travail unitaire*) was initially a pacifistic and revolutionary minority that had split from the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) in 1922. The split was a result of differences among reformist socialists, anarchists, and communists that occurred in the early years of the French Communist Party (*Partie Communiste Française*; PCF), which was founded in 1920. The PCF itself was a splinter group of the French Section of the Workers' International (*Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*; SFIO), which had been founded in 1905 and had always remained close to the orbit and policies of the Second International.

80 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 121.



The French Communist Party had become increasingly active in national liberation matters and backed the first North African Congress, which was held in Paris in 1924.<sup>81</sup> The CGTU also participated in the anti-colonial struggle in North Africa, in line with the theses and program of the Comintern and Red International of Labor Unions. The infrastructures and traces the CGTU left behind would later help to form the powerful *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algerien* (UGTA), which was to play a decisive role in Algeria's war of independence.

The French authorities were eager to limit contact with these organizations, which were subject to the maximum level of surveillance in the motherland. This was particularly true during the critical time of the 1925–1927 Syrian uprising – which was indeed when the connection between the *Parti Communiste Français* and the CPSL was established for the first time. In clandestine meetings between the young CPSL and the Communist Party of Palestine (CPP), it was decided to immediately send Abu Zayyam to Paris, Berlin, and Moscow to demand that the relevant Communist parties and the Comintern provide support in the form of weapons, personnel, money, and public relations.<sup>82</sup>

The CPSL attempted to act as a middleman between the PCF and the rebels under Sultan Atrash in Syria, but this plan was thwarted by the close monitoring of the mandate power. In January 1926, Yusuf Yazbek was intending to transmit documents and information on the revolt that he had obtained from his close friend Ali Nassir al-Din to Paris in an effort to gain support from the French Communist Party and Shakib Arslan. However, before his journey, he was incarcerated by the French authorities. His arrest alongside other prominent figures of the Communist and Nationalist movements not only prevented the flow of information and resources between French leftist groups and leftist groups in the Levant, it also stopped Yazbek and Shimali from attending the first meeting of the League against Imperialism (LAI) in Brussels in 1927.<sup>83</sup> The close surveillance and detention of prominent figures from the Communist movement was also used in other cases, continuously and in a needle-like manner, to prevent contact with international networks. When Shimali, Mayodan, and Bakdash attempted to join the Sixth CGTU Congress in November 1931, they were denied exit from the mandate territory. Mustafa Al-Aris, the prominent leader of the typewriters union who had also actively entertained international contacts, also spend most of the first part of the 1930s in prison.

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81 Jaan Pennar: "The Arabs, Marxism, and Moscow. A historical survey", in: *Middle East Journal* 22:4 (1968), 433–447, here 438.

82 Tannoury-Karam, "Long Live the Revolutionary Alliance Against Imperialism", 116.

83 For the background of the LAI, see the penultimate section of this chapter.

## The establishment of counter-institutions

The impediments to international contacts set up by the Mandate were accompanied domestically by a struggle over interpretive hegemony and predominance in the trade union sector. These measures can best be understood against the background of French economic policy. When France was granted the mandate over Syria and Lebanon in 1920, it had already invested in infrastructure and set up business connections within the country. As early as January 1919, the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles had hosted a well-attended conference on the future of Syria.<sup>84</sup> One strategy of the mandatory power was to make the country economically profitable as soon as possible.

Lebanon's Maronite Christian families were expected to play a pivotal role in that. Under Ottoman legislation, Christians were not allowed to occupy a range of professions in crafts and public administration and had often become skilled and successful merchants as a result. Facing uncertainty and perceiving other ethnic and confessional groups as a threat, the Maronites and other minorities in Greater Lebanon were eager to collaborate with the new Mandatory power. In 1921, the General Workers Party of Greater Lebanon (*Hizb al-'Ummal al-'Am fi Lubnan al-Kabir*; GW-PGL) was founded and broadly promoted by the French authorities. It resulted from an initiative of a General Workers Union (*Ittihad al-'Umal al-'Am*).<sup>85</sup>

But this organization was not what a contemporary European would have considered to be a trade union. First, in line with Lebanese or Ottoman traditions and laws, it included both employers and employees. Because the official text of the Mandate stipulated the development of an "organic law", which was to include local legislation as much as possible, much of Ottoman legislation was still in force – and would remain in force until the end of the mandatory era. In this context, Ottoman Law No. 8, issued on 27 April 1912, addressed the establishment of professional associations in general, and mainly revamped and democratized the structures of the few remaining guilds. It did not, however, allow for workers-only professional associations.

Second, the membership fees of five francs for passive and 15 francs for active membership of the GW-PGL were beyond the reach of most simple workers. As a consequence, the organization consisted mostly of notables, lawyers, physicians, and merchants, and the membership base did not significantly extend beyond Christian and bourgeois circles within the capital.

At the same time the mandatory power sought to limit opportunities to organize in a legal manner and restricted the freedom of movement of pivotal figures of the

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84 Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban 1919–1946*, 67.

85 *Ibid.*, 83–85.

workers' movement outside the designated framework. In 1930, revolutionary propaganda was punished with five years of forced labor. In 1931, public meetings were banned, and a year later the provision of premises for conspiratorial meetings was also made a punishable offense by Decree 41/L. As almost none of the workers' associations was technically legal, that decision affected the bulk of organized labor. In 1933, the powerful typographers' association was banned.

The old organizational forms of organized labor were also attacked. Decree 284/LR of December 1934 limited associations of working men to persons practicing the same or similar trades.<sup>86</sup> This was a direct attack on many workers' organizations that emerged out of local mutual aid associations with a broad local base, such as the workers' solidarity association in Zahlé. Moreover, the Mandatory power tried to steer the emergence of new organizations by implementing a policy of selective licensing and capacity-building favoring societal currents that were supportive to the mandate and eager to establish counter-organizations to the Nationalist and Communist unions. In this context, the authorities were especially supportive of labor organizations founded along sectarian lines such as the Christian Union of Employees of Trade and Industry (*al-Djama'iya al-Misihiya al-Mustakhdam al-Tidjara wa-al-Sana'iya*).<sup>87</sup>

## Internationally organized labor and the boundaries of solidarity

One final variable that may be invoked, especially in comparison with other countries, concerns the increasing weakness of international forces in Europe in terms of their capacity to promote the emergence of workers' organizations.<sup>88</sup> The failure of the Comintern and its affiliated organizations to penetrate the trade union landscape to gain momentum for a worldwide revolution was also apparent in other countries. A leading force against any kind of unity between the Red International of Labor Unions and the International Federation of Trade Unions were the German trade unions, which rejected all overtures.<sup>89</sup> While European trade unions in the core lands of the Amsterdam International did gain a voice inside the International Labor Organization, for organized labor in the Mandates, such options did not exist. Moreover, international solidarity on the anti-colonial spectrum soon reached its

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86 Pianka, "An Appraisal of the Labour Movement in Lebanon", 81.

87 Dhu, "Al-Haraka Al-'Umalia Wa an-Naqabiya Fi Lubnan", 16.

88 Vivid examples which might give a good comparison are Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. For Algeria and the role of internationally organized labor in a historical perspective, see e.g., René Gallissot: "Syndicalisme Ouvrier Et Question Nationale En Algérie: Les Positions de La C.G.T.U. Dans Les Années 1930–1935", in: *Le Mouvement Social* 66 (1969), 3–9, here 3.

89 Tosstorf, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 609–673.

limits, as the socio-economic and socio-political problems of the European continent remained in the foreground and grew constantly more important.

### **High hopes, sobering performance: The International Labor Organization and the colonial clause**

After World War I, the forces that were less close to the radical Marxists and more skeptical about the October Revolution had also managed to put the issue of workers' representation on the international agenda. The foundation of the International Labor Organization in Paris in February 1919 had already been a central demand of those currents that also were the driving force behind the foundation – and reawakening – of the International Federation of Trade Unions. The ILO was set up as a permanent institution of the League of Nations and aimed at “securing world peace on the basis of social justice,” according to its constitution, which is annexed to the Versailles Treaty as Chapter 13.

Nevertheless, two features of the ILO were constantly under attack, especially from the Soviet side: First, it was evolutionary and reformist rather than a revolutionary organization. From the very beginning, it had a tripartite structure, in which delegations to the annual international labor conferences (the organization's policy-making body) were composed of two government representatives, one representative of employers, and one trade-union representative. The organization's executive also followed this tripartite pattern. Second, the organization was accused of actively contributing to upholding the status quo of the mandates and colonies. According to Article 421 of the Treaty of Versailles, mandatory powers were to ensure that ILO conventions were in force and respected in all their territories – except where “the Convention is inapplicable owing to the local conditions or subject to such modifications as may be necessary to adapt the Convention to local conditions.” Although this “colonial clause” – whose basic tone was very redolent of the *Mission Civilisatrice* mindset – disappointed some members of the IFTU, the federation nonetheless constantly stressed its support for the organization. This, of course, made the rhetoric of Comintern functionaries against the trinity of the Amsterdam International, IFTU, and League of Nations even sharper.

Despite the colonial clause, the hope of spreading organized labor – albeit more along social democratic lines – to non-European regions was long maintained. At the 1921 International Labor Conference, it was agreed that the countries under mandate were probably the ones where the ILO could “accomplish work of the most importance and the greatest urgency” as “labor is unorganized and the workers defenseless.”<sup>90</sup> In 1929, however, a resolution was adopted that urged the office in

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90 Susan Zimmermann: “Special Circumstances’ in Geneva: The ILO and the world of non-metropolitan labour in the interwar years”, in: Jasmien van Daele et al. (eds.): *ILO Histories*.

Geneva to focus more on the collection of data about organized labor. It was a result of the observation of just how few delegates from the non-metropolitan world were attending the International Labour Congress.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, while the ILO Bureau of Statistics had significantly increased its capabilities to collect economic data, information about labor organizations – and their representatives – remained scarce. This resulted in an underrepresentation of non-European emissaries. As a consequence, the ILO agenda tended to focus on Europe – and therefore also mostly on the countries that had sent the greatest numbers of delegates – as that was the way they could get the most credit from their direct clientele.

In the meantime, the topic of anti-colonialism had also triggered discussions among the followers of the Amsterdam International, though there was little will or ability in that organization to engage or even adopt a united position. At the Fourth International IFTU Congress in August 1927, the British President of the IFTU, A.A. Purcell, publicly accused the IFTU Secretariat of focusing too much on the ILO and on Europe. Among other shortcomings, in Purcell's view, too little attention had been paid to important issues such as the expansion of the trade union movement in Asia and Africa. He also attacked the federation's anti-Russian stance, which he considered a serious mistake.<sup>92</sup> Yet many delegates did not see the need to foster the development of trade union structures in regions under mandate rule, frequently also referring to the leadership role that the ILO was supposed to take. But the effectiveness of the ILO was largely thwarted by the colonial clause, and the organization was unable to fulfill many of its self-proclaimed initial goals.

### Anti-colonialism, the Rif Crisis, and the limits of solidarity

The so-called 'colonial question' led to numerous divisions inside the French Socialist spectrum. It revolved around the matter of when and how colonized territories should be granted independence and integrated into international solidarity networks. These discussions were carried out against the backdrop of Marxian dialectics and modernization theory, which in certain circumstances considered states to be either not yet ready for proletarian revolution, or not yet ready for administrative self-determination per se.

As far as the French Socialists and their trade union movement are concerned, it can be argued that "two socialisms, two unionisms and perhaps even

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*Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 221–250, here 228.

91 Ibid., 244.

92 Patrick Pasture: "The interwar origins of international labour's European commitment (1919–1934)", in: *Contemporary European History* 10:2 (2001), 221–237, here 228–229.

two communisms"<sup>93</sup> existed. The 1913 French Section of the Workers' International Congress in Brest had already shown how little coherence there was on the colonial question among French socialists at that time: While Édouard Vaillant and Alexandre Desrousseaux called for complete withdrawal from the colonies, Francis de Pressensé argued that French socialism should return to the old policies of gradual assimilation and autonomy, as they were best suited to peoples who were "still in an infantile period" of their development.<sup>94</sup> Both the currents that remained inside the SFIO after the split of 1920 as well as the CGT adhered to that reasoning during the time of the Mandate. The CGT started to form trade unions in regions under French administration in North Africa, but these unions consisted almost exclusively of civil servants or European employees and were, thus, regarded as "French".<sup>95</sup>

While one group of socialists supported the restrictive policies towards organized labor in the colonies and the Levant, the more progressive side around the *Parti Communiste Français* soon realized that agitation in the colonies would be limited by growing unwillingness to support such measures on the part of French society, and especially in the French trade union movement.

This split was mercilessly exposed during the Rif Crisis, especially at its peak in 1925, and was particularly evident in the United General Confederation of Labor, where the fear of losing even more members to the already numerically superior CGT – if the domestic economy was no longer to be the number one priority – dominated among the delegates. United General Confederation of Labor leaders met four times to assess the prospects for an anti-war general strike as called by the PCF in late 1925, but the member unions' willingness to support this diminished. Moreover, the union federation was already pursuing an expensive project in North Africa, where it had managed to become the dominant union federation among the local population in Algeria.

Information about the problems the French working class had in following calls for an anti-imperialist struggle soon arrived in the Soviet Union. Joany Berlioz, the Paris representative of the Red International of Labor Unions, wrote in a review of the whole anti-war campaign to Moscow that the evacuation and fraternization slogans alienated many workers, reduced the influence of the SFIO left, and thus lent strength to conservative currents. In fact, these conservative forces were dominant within the SFIO: For example, the spokesman of the Moroccan SFIO section, Emile Kahn, warned that the withdrawal of French troops from the protectorate would lead

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93 René Gallissot: "Présentation : Question coloniale, question nationale", in : *Le Mouvement Social* 78 (1972), 3–5.

94 Daniel Gaido/Manuel Quiroga: "Marxism in the Age of Imperialism – the Second International", in: Alex Callinicos/Stathis Kouvelakis/Lucia Pradella (eds.): *Routledge Handbook of Marxism and Post-Marxism* (London: Routledge, 2020), 51–65, 57.

95 Bellucci, "The Ascent of African Labour Internationalism", 355.

to a massacre of Europeans. Moreover, Kahn also claimed that Muslims only understood violence and that the insurgents would therefore interpret any offer of negotiation or any other conciliatory gesture as a sign of weakness. Thus, in his highly pessimistic report, Berlioz went on to give the damning assessment that the anti-war campaign had failed because the French workers “despised” the Arabs and Rifian Berbers, as a result of which no solidarity could be expected.<sup>96</sup>

In neighboring Germany, events in Syria caused the organization Workers International Relief (*Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*) to plan a campaign “Against Atrocities in Syria”. This was based on successful aspects of the previous “Hands off China” campaign, such as petitioning government agencies, collecting signatures and money, and holding both public demonstrations and international congresses. Although cooperation with the Amsterdam International had failed, the “Hands off China” campaign had been very successful in spreading knowledge about anti-imperialism and in mobilizing activists, especially in Germany. Internationally, too, declarations of solidarity were issued across Europe and even the United States.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, it had successfully attracted the attention of the Comintern.

Nonetheless, just like the *Parti Communiste Français*, the “Against Atrocities in Syria”-Committee failed to gain a foothold in the Levant. The committee eventually merged into the League Against Imperialism, founded in 1927, which aimed to promote anti-colonial work in a non-aligned manner across the left spectrum. Although this attempt was promising at first, there was a split in 1929, when representatives from the Amsterdam International and the International Federation of Trade Unions felt that Moscow’s influence was too strong. As a result, most of their representatives left the league, including prominent individuals such as Edo Fimmen, who was IFTU president until 1923. The LAI continued its work until the mid-1930s, with an Executive Committee that also included Shimali.<sup>98</sup> However, its importance was marginal.

## Concluding remarks and outlook

The “Theses on the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions” issued as a resolution at the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921 warned that the representatives of bourgeois nationalism were eager to disguise their own interests as class-interests, thus diverting the proletarian unions

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96 David H. Slavin: “The French Left and the Rif War, 1924–25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism”, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 26:1 (1991), 5–32, here 22–25.

97 Petersson, *Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern*, 74–78.

98 *Ibid.*, 354.

from the immediate tasks of organizing along class lines and stalling progress towards the proletarian revolution.<sup>99</sup>

Yet even if there is an element of truth in this statement, things were probably more complicated. What in Communist terms is labeled bourgeoisie nationalism surely played a role. But after all, the forms of organized labor in the 1920s and 1930s in Lebanon and in European countries were worlds apart. Mutualist unions that echoed the dispositive of ancient guilds prevailed, and the main appeal of the Bolshevik ideology, its anti-colonialism, was soon also offered by Nationalists, bourgeois and local notables. Moreover, this current had fewer problems with the old form of organized labor. The Bolshevization of the Communist cells and parties in the region, which excluded grass-roots activists, certainly played into the hands of the Nationalist currents. However, this very Bolshevization was also an alarm signal for the French mandate power, which spent considerable resources on hindering the development, spread, and networking of the new ideology. This form of anti-Communism was the result of thinking rooted in a sense of racial superiority and an accompanying disbelief in the organizational capacity of the colonial peoples. Boosted by the inability of the International Labor Organization and the anti-colonial movement to actually gain a foothold in the region and spread their versions of organized labor, Communist influence and institutional change in organized labor was severely limited. Formalizing that variable-outcome relation, the following configuration can be established:

- Presence of Guild Dispositive (AND)
- Presence of Emerging Nationalist Current (AND)
- Presence of Anti-Communist Focus of Mandatory Power (AND)
- Absence of Extended International Support
- → Weakness of Communist Influence in Organized Labor

Future research can build upon this configuration and challenge, amend, refute, or confirm the variables and their interconnectedness. In comparison with other countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in Europe, many questions may arise against the background of that configuration. Can it be concluded that the role of the adversary, played in other countries rather by social-democratic labor organizations, was played in Lebanon by the mutualist associations which still carried much of a guild dispositive inside of them? Is that a reason, why the collaboration in the field of organized labor in North Africa seems to have been more successful? Are the local notables in Lebanon and their connection to Nationalism comparable at any level to other Middle Eastern or European countries? Are there dif-

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99 John Riddell (ed.): *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 953–965.



ferences between countries under the French and the British mandates, e.g., Iraq or Jordan? And how did connections between international organized labor and these other countries develop? Many questions remain, which shows that the more systematic approach taken in this chapter yields more scientifically falsifiable hypotheses for theory building than much of the rather descriptive and ideology-bound literature in the field up to now.



## Contesting Imperialism in Geneva

### Interwar Arms-Traffic Conferences and the Anglo-Iranian Confrontation

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Leon Julius Biela

Confronted with the horrors of modern warfare, the question of how to reorganize the system of international politics in a way that would safeguard a lasting peace took center stage in the deliberations and negotiations on a post-war order during and after the First World War. Against this backdrop, the idea of the League of Nations emerged from the multitude of ideas on establishing some form of institutionalized society of states that could embody, supervise, and moderate this reorganization. Eventually, in 1919, the League's Covenant was incorporated into the Paris Peace Settlements as part of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>1</sup> For a long time, the League's work has mainly been evaluated against its main objective: Preventing another large-scale war, especially among the states of Europe. From this perspective, many scholars have judged the League to have been a failure. Over the last decades, a more comprehensive picture of the ways the League and its mission shaped the international system has emerged. For instance, much attention has been paid to its lasting impact on technical cooperation between states.<sup>2</sup> Yet, many aspects of the League's

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- 1 This is of course a very abridged account of the creation of the League. For more extensive ones, see, for instance, Peter Yearwood: *Guarantee of Peace. The League of Nations in British Policy 1914–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Zara Steiner: *The Lights that Failed. European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 15–386, esp. 349–386; Frank Walters: *A History of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 15–65; Ruth Henig: *The Peace that Never Was. A History of the League of Nations* (London: Haus, 2019), 1–48.
  - 2 See, for instance, Patricia Clavin: *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Magaly Rodríguez García/Davide Rodogno/Liat Kozma (eds.): *The League of Nations' Work on Social Issues* (Geneva: United Nations Publications 2016). For historiographical surveys, see the influential Susan Pedersen: "Back to the League of Nations", in: *The American Historical Review* 112:4 (2007), 1091–1117. Or, more recent, José Antonio Sánchez Román: "La Sociedad de Naciones en su centenario: Un campo historiográfico en expansión", in: *Historia y Política* 45 (2021), 325–355.

significance within the histories of internationalism, international relations, global governance, and so forth remain to be explored.

Only recently, exhaustive work has been done on the role of the League in the increasing antagonism between imperialism and anti-imperialism within the international system. Much of this research has convincingly revealed the League's dense entanglement with imperialist ideas, visions of order, and practices and has shown how the League served to maintain an international order dominated by imperialism. As Mark Mazower and others have argued, for many of the British intellectual pioneers and architects of the League, the British Empire not only acted as the structural model for the organization of the League, but the latter was also meant to stabilize imperialism after the turbulence of the war and to secure British interests in the long term.<sup>3</sup> The significance of this "imperial internationalism" for League politics and vice versa was particularly visible in the transfer of control of the former German colonies and Ottoman provinces under the Mandate system, which most clearly bore the marks of the League's conception as the brainchild of both Wilsonianism and imperialism. Recent studies have pointed out that the internationalization of imperial rule through the Mandates was conceptualized as a form of updating and securing imperial rule. It did so by side-stepping criticisms of imperialism and preserving the ideas of 'civilizational hierarchies', which were crucial for the rationale of imperialism and now baked into the League's ideological foundations.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the entire structure of the League, which was centered around a Council in which the imperial powers had permanent seats and an administration largely staffed by European (and often colonialist) states, revealed its imperial origins.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Mark Mazower: *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 28–103; Mark Mazower: *Governing the World. The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2012), 128–135. See also other works like Jeanne Morefield: *Covenants Without Swords. Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005).

4 Sean Andrew Wempe: "A League to Preserve Empires: Understanding the Mandates System and Avenues for Further Scholarly Inquiry", in: *The American Historical Review* 124:5 (2019), 1723–1731; Michael Callahan: *Mandates and Empire. The League of Nations in Africa 1914–1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008); Antony Anghie: *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), 115–195; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo: "A League of Empires: Imperial Political Imagination and Interwar Internationalisms", in: Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo/José Pedro Monteiro (eds.): *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 87–126; Florian Wagner: "Naturism, the Permanent Mandates Commission, and the denial of the violent Nature of Colonialism", in: Haakon Ikonoumou/ Karen Gram-Skjoldager (eds.): *The League of Nations. Perspectives from the Present* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2019), 78–89.

5 Megan Donaldson: "The League of Nations, Ethiopia, and the Making of States", in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 11:1 (2020),

Some scholarly works have argued, however, that despite of all of this, the League was more than an instrument of empire. Most prominently, Susan Pedersen, in her seminal study of the Mandate system, has argued that the internationalization of imperialism unintendedly created a new way of talking about the empires and their future. Thus, the League “helped to make the end of empire imaginable.”<sup>6</sup> Pedersen further argues that “the League’s own character and practices – its legalism, proceduralism and ‘publicness’ – tended to amplify rather than to abate imperial contestation.”<sup>7</sup> By this, she implies that not only in the Mandate system the League’s form of internationalism and its formal characteristics entailed dynamics that turned it into an arena for the contestation of imperial order. Within the field of international legal history, in which the imperial origins of international law have been firmly established,<sup>8</sup> Arnulf Becker Lorca has emphasized the various forms in which “semi-peripheral actors”, that is actors from non-imperial and non-European but not colonized societies, appropriated and influenced discourses and norm-setting of international law, mostly to secure the sovereign equality of their states vis-à-vis the imperial powers of the North Atlantic. The League forms a significant part of his argumentation since it, on the one hand, undertook international norm-setting in a formerly unknown breadth of policy fields and, on the other, enabled new institutionalized forms of participation in this norm-setting processes for “semi-peripherals”.<sup>9</sup> Taken together, these studies paint an ambiguous picture of the League’s relation with imperialism.

Drawing on these works, this chapter understands the League as well as the wider system of international conferences and meetings that took place under its auspices and procedural rules as an arena in which international norms were discussed, negotiated, and determined. In this novel kind of arena, interests and actors from around the globe could meet and compete, including actors from both the North Atlantic and Middle East. It was novel because it gave all polities accepted as

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6–31, here 18; Thomas Grant: “The League of Nations as a Universal Organization”, in: Michel Erpelding/Burkhard Hess/Hélène Ruiz Fabri (eds.): *Peace Through Law. The Versailles Peace Treaty and Dispute Settlement After World War I* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019), 65–84, here 81.

6 Susan Pedersen: *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), quote from 406.

7 Susan Pedersen: “Empires, States and the League of Nations”, in: Glenda Sluga/Patricia Clavin (eds.): *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 113–138, here 116.

8 See, for instance, Anghie, *Imperialism*; Martti Koskenniemi: *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations. The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 98–178; Jennifer Pitts: *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

9 Arnulf Becker Lorca: *Mestizo International Law. A Global Intellectual History 1842–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), 221–304.

members the status of formal sovereign equality and the same formal, legal, and procedural position when it came to discussing and voting on international issues, and this in an institutionalized way not comparable with the participation of non-North Atlantic polities in pre-war international conferences. Following Pedersen's remarks on the League's "legalism, proceduralism and 'publicness'", this chapter will argue that the formal characteristics of the League system indeed opened up new spaces for imperial contestation. It is well known that many non-European member polities attached high expectations to the formal principles of the League when it was founded, hoping that it would provide them with new means to assert their own independence and sovereignty vis-à-vis the imperial powers.<sup>10</sup> Little is known, however, about how these hopes translated into concrete policies and to which degree these policies could use the League system's characteristics to confront the imperial order, which was ultimately also entrenched in the League's own ideological foundations. Exploring these kinds of questions promises new insights into how the League helped to shape a changing international system.

Several publications have already approached these questions. In brief case studies drawing on the rich scholarship on Latin American states' relations to the League, José Antonio Sánchez Román has examined how those states used several technical conferences under the auspices of the League to strengthen their sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> Most recently, Daniel Stahl has shown how the El Salvadorian delegate to the arms traffic conferences under the auspices of the League sought to limit the United States government's abilities to use the supply of arms to certain factions within Latin American states as an instrument of imperialism.<sup>12</sup> This chapter takes up these approaches by concentrating on the politics of the Iranian and British delegations in the arms traffic conferences.<sup>13</sup> Yet it does not focus on the question of

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10 See, for instance, Stefan Hell: *Siam and the League of Nations. Modernization, Sovereignty and Multilateral Diplomacy, 1920–1940* (Bangkok: River Books, 2010), 38–39; Harumi Goto-Shibata: *The League of Nations and the East Asian Imperial Order, 1920–1946* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 10; José Antonio Sánchez Román: "From the Tigris to the Amazon: Peripheral expertise, impossible cooperation and economic multilateralism at the League of Nations, 1920–1946", in: Simon Jackson/Alanna O'Malley (eds.): *The Institution of International Order. From the League of Nations to the United Nations* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2018), 42–64, here 43–44.

11 Sánchez Román, "From the Tigris to the Amazon".

12 Daniel Stahl: "Confronting US Imperialism with International Law. Central America and the Arms Trade of the Inter-war Period", in: *Journal of Modern European History* 19:4 (2021), 489–509.

13 For the politics of Iran in the League of Nations, see Mostafa Mesbah Zadeh: *La Politique de l'Iran dans la Société des Nations. La Conception Iranienne de L'Organisation de la Paix* (Aix-en-Provence: Paul Robaud, 1936); Walters, *League of Nations*, 739–742. There also some contributions written in Persian on the topic. See, for instance, the following article and the references mentioned in Sirous Mohebbi/Saeede-Sadat Ahmadi: "Attitudes of Governmen-

regulating the arms traffic in a narrow sense. As David Stone noted in his appraisal of one of these conferences, fundamental questions about the relation between the empires' claim to power and the interest of non-imperial states to protect their sovereignty emerged in these negotiations.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this chapter takes a closer look at the visions of international and regional order as well as concepts of sovereignty touched upon by the issues discussed at the conferences. It traces how both the Iranian and the British sides sought to influence the conferences' norm-setting to promote their own agendas and thus turned the conference rooms of Geneva into an unexpected theatre of confrontation between British imperialism and Iranian nationalism over influence in the Persian Gulf.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on inter-imperial agreements as precedents, the British introduced the idea of arms trade conventions with special regulations for the Persian Gulf to consolidate their imperial influence there. The Iranians, however, attempted to thwart these British efforts by utilizing the conferences and their multilateral, public framework to contest British imperialism in favor of their own nationalist claims for influence in the region. By connecting the histories of the Gulf Region and internationalism, this chapter unravels the complex entanglements of regional conflicts, national interests, the interplay of imperialism and anti-imperialism, and a new kind of internationalism. By doing so, it presents a new case study that can shed more light on how the procedural framework of the League's system created new opportunities for actors from recognized states outside the North Atlantic to contest imperial visions of order and their translation into international norms.

## The Imperial Peace of Saint Germain

Several studies have shown that arms control in the imperial periphery, while frequently framed as part of a 'humanitarian' mission, was intended to stabilize and safeguard the imperial order by denying its opponents access to arms.<sup>16</sup> With the

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tal Elites League of Nations and the Iran's National Interest", in: *Iranian Research Letter of International Politics* 6:1 (2017/18), 185–218.

14 David Stone: "Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade", in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000), 213–230.

15 On the Anglo-Iranian confrontation, see the recent study by Chelsi Mueller: "The Persian Gulf, 1919–39: Changes, Challenges, and Transitions", in: *Journal of Arabian Studies* 8:2 (2018), 259–274. In this chapter, the term "Persian Gulf" refers to both the Persian Gulf in a narrow sense and to the adjoining Gulf of Oman.

16 See, for example, Jonathan Grant: *Rulers, Guns, and Money. The Global Arms Trade in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Emrys Chew: *Arming the Periphery. The Arms Trade in the Indian Ocean during the Age of Global Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012); Sokhna Sané: *Le contrôle de la circulation des armes à feu en Afrique occidentale française,*

Brussels Act of 1890, this strategy had become part of inter-imperial talks and agreements, which were continued in the interwar years.<sup>17</sup> While historians have long tended to assess arms-control projects originating in the League context exclusively in terms of great-power disarmament, more recent studies have clearly carved out how the imperial powers connected these projects with their strategy of preserving arms control as an instrument of imperial rule by promoting its codification in international law.<sup>18</sup> This imperial interest was a significant factor for the convening of conferences on which international regulation of the arms traffic was discussed that took place in Saint Germain in 1919 as well as in Geneva in 1925 and 1932–33, the latter two under the auspices of the League but not as part of it.<sup>19</sup>

The driving force behind the convening of the first of these conferences in Saint Germain was the British government.<sup>20</sup> As early as 1917 a subcommittee of its Committee of Imperial Defence assessed that the masses of arms produced for the ongoing war could after its end find their way into the hands of “native races”, meaning groups opposed to the imperial order and particularly to colonial rule, which was to be prevented for the sake of imperial security.<sup>21</sup> The Gulf Region figured prominently in the subcommittee’s risk assessment since at the turn of the century, large numbers of arms had found their way from there to the Indian border regions, where they were used against British troops. Reacting to this threat, the British were able to eliminate most of this traffic by imposing a naval blockade and other strict mea-

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1834–1958 (Dakar: Karthala, 2008). For a recent overview, see Felix Brahm/Daniel Stahl: “Arms Regimes across the Empires”, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 19:4 (2021), 411–415.

17 On the Brussels Act, see Felix Brahm: “Banning the sale of modern firearms in Africa: On the origins of the Brussels Conference Act of 1890”, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 19:4 (2021), 436–447; Chew, *Arming the Periphery*, 23–27.

18 Some examples of these recent studies are Stahl, “Confronting US Imperialism”; Leon Julius Biela: “Disarming the Periphery. Inter-war Arms Control, British Imperialism, and the Persian Gulf”, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 19:4 (2021), 469–448; Daniel Stahl, “The Decolonization of the Arms Trade. Britain and the Regulation of Exports to the Middle East”, in: *History of Global Arms Transfer* 7:1 (2019), 3–19; Andrew Webster: “The League of Nations, Disarmament and Internationalism”, in: Glenda Sluga/Patricia Clavin (eds.): *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 139–169, here 155–156.

19 For overviews on these conferences, see Andrew Webster: “From Versailles to Geneva: The Many Forms of Interwar Disarmament”, in: *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29:2 (2006), 225–246, here 233–242; Stone, “Imperialism”, 222–230.

20 Stahl, “Decolonization”, 5–6.

21 Simon Ball: “Britain and the Decline of the International Control of Small Arms in the Twentieth Century”, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 47:4 (2012), 812–837, here 819–823; Stahl, “Decolonization”, 4–5. See also Committee of Imperial Defence: Report of Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic, 10 March 1917, The National Archives (TNA), CAB 29/1.



asures in the Gulf Region in the years before the war.<sup>22</sup> Yet a lasting sense of insecurity and anxiety about a possible recrudescence of the arms trade remained and deeply influenced British arms-control policy in the Gulf during the interwar years.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the subcommittee, supported by the colonial government of India, advised a continuation of strict controls in the Gulf, for instance through permanent naval patrols.<sup>24</sup>

Another recommendation of the subcommittee was to secure the cooperation of the other powers in the British project of preventing an uncontrolled arms trade to and within the imperial sphere of influence by obtaining an arms-traffic convention in the context of the peace negotiations.<sup>25</sup> Modeled after the Brussels Act, the British vision of an arms-traffic convention included provisions for zones in which especially strict regulations would apply, which were to be under international control by the contracting powers. These zones were of central interest for British imperial officials since they were designed to comprise the colonies and other parts of the imperial sphere of influence, thereby helping to suppress the uncontrolled arms trade there. The subcommittee had initially recommended leaving the Gulf Region outside of these zones of international control, favoring a continuation of unilateral British control instead. This would have underscored the British imperial claim to exclusive power in the Gulf, which was perceived in London as 'British Lake'. In preliminary talks with the French, however, British officials quickly noticed that granting the Gulf Region a special status would entail a line of similar exceptions made by other powers and thus endanger the whole idea of the zones.<sup>26</sup> To avert this, the British began to advocate for an inclusion of the Gulf Region in the zones, now being called "Prohibited Areas". This policy shift was eased, on the one hand, by the interest in

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22 On the arms trade and British control measures in the Gulf before the First World War, see Robert Crews: "Trafficking in Evil? The Global Arms Trade and the Politics of Disorder", in: James Gelvin/Nile Green (eds.): *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 121–142; Simon Ball: "The Battle of Dubai: Firearms on Britain's Arabian Frontier, 1906–1915", in: Giacomo Macola (ed.): *A Cultural History of Firearms in the Age of Empire* (Farnham: Routledge, 2013), 165–190; Guillemette Crouzet: "Arms Trafficking and the Globalization of the Persian Gulf in the Late Nineteenth Century", in: *Journal of Levantine Studies* 10:1 (2020), 69–89.

23 Biela, "Disarming the Periphery", 479.

24 Committee of Imperial Defence: Report of Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic, 10 April 1917, 4, TNA CAB 29/1; Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India to Edwin Montagu (Secretary of State for India), 21 December 1917, 2, British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR) L/PS/10/672, 257r–258r.

25 Ball, "Britain and the Decline", 821.

26 Committee of Imperial Defence: Report of Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic. Appendix IV: Fourth and Fifth Meetings held at the India Office on the 12th and 26th February 1917, 10 April 1917, 2, TNA CAB 29/1; Foreign Office to Sir R. Hingaité (Cairo), 22 December 1919, IOR/L/PS/10/672, 246r–248r; Copy of Minute 1. From War Cabinet, 542, 6 March 1919, *Ibid.*, 160r–160v.

preventing traders from other European states from subverting the British system of controls, as French arms dealers had done before the war, much to the British officials' chagrin, and, on the other, by the idea of obtaining international sanction for the established practice of British arms controls in the Gulf.<sup>27</sup> This orientation toward internationally codifying the control of arms traffic as an instrument to maintain the imperial order also meant that arms-traffic controls in the Gulf would irreversibly shift from being nothing more than a unilateral British practice to a subject of international talks.

Due to the interest of the other imperial powers, particularly the French, in arms control as an instrument of safeguarding imperial rule, the British were successful in putting the issue on the agenda of the peace negotiations in Paris.<sup>28</sup> The negotiation of an arms-traffic convention, which took place during the summer of 1919 in Saint Germain and was attended by delegates from around the world (though the conference was dominated by imperial powers, delegates from countries such as China, Siam, and Bolivia were present, too), was largely based on British drafts. These placed the Persian Gulf along with the entire Arabian Peninsula and the territory of Iran inside the "Prohibited Areas".<sup>29</sup> The Iranian delegates themselves were not admitted to take part in these negotiations, since the British had succeeded in barring them from official participation in the entire Peace Conference, despite Iranian requests to be included and American support for these requests.<sup>30</sup> When the British delegate was absent at the second meeting of the conference, the American delegate, Hornbeck, pointed out this somewhat peculiar situation by explaining that it was "difficult to impose a special regime on independent states like Persia or the

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27 Shuckburgh, India Office, to Admiralty, 20 January 1921, BL IOR/L/PS/10/674, 6v; India Office Memorandum Arms traffic in the Persian Gulf, 1908–1928, 8 October 1928, BL IOR/L/PS/18/B410, 4.

28 Stahl "Decolonization", 5; Arms Traffic: F.O. Memo, 22 February 1919, BL IOR/L/PS/10/672, 215r–217r.

29 Procès-Verbal N° 1, Séance du 8 Juillet, Annex I: Projet de convention relative au contrôle du commerce des armes et des munitions, in: Commission pour la révision des actes généraux de Berlin et de Bruxelles, Procès-Verbaux et Rapport de la Commission, 11–16, here 12, US National Archives, RG 256, Pub M820, Roll 180.

30 Oliver Bast: "Putting the Record Straight: Vosuq al-Dowleh's Foreign Policy in 1918/19", in: Touraj Atabaki/Erik Zürcher (eds.): *Men of Order. Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris 2004), 260–281. On Iranian diplomacy in the context of the Peace Conference, see Oliver Bast: "La mission persane à la Conférence de Paix en 1919: Une nouvelle interprétation", in: Oliver Bast (ed.): *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 2002), 375–425; Philip Henning Grobrien: "Iran and imperial nationalism in 1919", in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 57:2 (2021), 292–309. The British explained their position in terms of Iran's formal neutrality during the war (which was somewhat cynical considering the massive destruction the war caused in Iran), their deeper motivation, however, lay in the British Iran-policy of the time (see below).

Hedjaz without their consent.”<sup>31</sup> However, these kinds of objections with reference to formal sovereignty were abandoned before the next session, not to be mentioned again, prompting an assumption of British lobbying behind the scenes.<sup>32</sup>

The British treatment of Iran in Paris and its suburbs in 1919 fit into British Iran policy of the time, which would have been hard to reconcile with multilateral negotiations. During the war, Britain and Russia had occupied vast parts of formally neutral Iran. After the fall of the czarist government, Britain remained as the only imperial power in Iran. Lord Curzon, former viceroy of India and now British foreign secretary, saw this situation as a window of opportunity to realize his long-cherished vision of transforming Iran into a dependent buffer-state in the *cordon sanitaire* around India.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, in 1919, he had an Anglo-Iranian treaty negotiated, which would have enshrined Britain’s control over Iran. The treaty, however, failed due to strong resentment among the Iranian public and the British government’s unwillingness to shoulder the costs of a continued military presence in Iran.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Lord Curzon’s support for Iranian membership of the League was motivated by the intent to at least safeguard from the ambitions of the emerging Soviet Union the territorial integrity of an Iran that still appeared to be susceptible to British influence.<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of Iranian territory within the “Prohibited Areas” of the arms-traffic convention was pushed through by the British for the same reasons. By establishing an additional obstacle for the arms trade to and in Iran, the British sought not only to prevent Iranian territory from becoming again a highway for the arms trade to the borders of India. They moreover aimed to prevent the uncontrolled influx of arms from fueling internal conflicts. British officials feared that this would facilitate Bolshevik infiltration, impede the British exercise of influence, and endanger imperial interests in the country, especially the strategically important oil fields of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Hence, an influx of arms – particularly the many left over from the Middle Eastern theatre of the World War – seemed anything but

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31 Procès-Verbal N° 2, Séance du 9 Juillet 1919, in: Commission pour la révision des actes généraux de Berlin et de Bruxelles, Procès-Verbaux et Rapport de la Commission, 35–39, here 36, US National Archives, RG 256, Pub M820, Roll 180. Translation by the author, French original: “difficile d’imposer un régime spécial, sans leur consentement, à des états indépendants comme la Perse ou le Hedjaz.”

32 Ibid., 40–43.

33 Houshang Sabahi: *British Policy in Persia 1918–1925* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 2–8; Yann Richard: *Iran. A Social and Political History since the Qajars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2019), 133; Grobien, “Imperial nationalism”, 296.

34 Ervand Abrahamian: *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 61–62; Sabahi, *British Policy*, 53–58.

35 Timothy Nunan: “Persian Visions of Nationalism and Inter-Nationalism in a World at War”, in: Marcus Payk/Roberta Pergher (eds.): *Beyond Versailles. Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Politics after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2019), 189–214, here 204.

desirable to British officials. This twofold goal of safeguarding the distribution of power on which the regional imperial order rested and the prevention of arms from reaching other parts of the Empire was the underlying rationale for British efforts to control the trade in arms in the entire Gulf Region.<sup>36</sup>

The Convention of Saint Germain was signed after only six days of negotiations on 8 September 1919. It included Iran and the Persian Gulf in the “Prohibited Areas”, and thus, from the British perspective, was an important instrument for their own imperial ambitions in the region. However, it soon became clear that it would not come into effect, since the necessary number of ratifications could not be reached due to the American withdrawal from the League and the Convention. Yet, in 1920, France, Japan, Belgium, Italy, and Great Britain – all of them imperial powers – agreed to act in accordance with the Convention, though only with respect to the “Areas”.<sup>37</sup> This agreement, which confined arms-control efforts to the colonies and other parts of the imperial spheres of influence, vividly demonstrated whose and which interests were decisive. It revealed how deeply the Convention – and especially its notion of “Areas” – was entangled with the fundamentally racist concept of ‘hierarchies of civilization’. The ‘peace’ it purported to produce was nothing more than an ‘imperial peace’ with all its oppressive consequences.<sup>38</sup>

This was not only laid bare by the very existence of the concept of “Areas” but also by the provisions regarding the so-called “Native Vessels”. This term referred to maritime vessels under 500t originating from the coasts adjacent to the maritime parts of the “Areas”. In the practice of control, all vessels were to be deemed “Native Vessels” when it could be assumed that they originated from the adjacent coasts based on their appearance and style of build. The Convention subjected “Native Vessels” to stricter regulations. Most importantly, they were not allowed to carry arms consignments internationally or outside of the immediate vicinity of their home polity’s coasts at all. Additionally, “Native Vessels” under the flag of a contracting state could be stopped at any time by the navy of any contracting power to check that the flag it was flying was being used legitimately and could be escorted to nearest port of the vessel’s state of origin in case of the unlawful use of a national flag or any suspicion that the vessel might be engaged in the arms trade. Moreover, the Convention limited the possibilities of “Native Vessels” flying a contracting power’s flag.<sup>39</sup>

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36 Biela, “Disarming the Periphery”, 475–478.

37 Stone, “Imperialism and Sovereignty”, 218; Stahl, “Decolonization”, 7–9; Ball, “Decline”, 822–823. See also Seymour, Foreign Office, to Admiralty, 30 December 1920, BL IOR/L/PS/12/4094, 266v.

38 Brahm/Stahl, “Arms Regimes”, 413; Stahl, “Decolonization”, 6; Biela, “Disarming the Periphery”, 474.

39 Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition, Signed in Saint Germain on September 10th, 1919, Art. 12–16. See also the respective provisions in the succeeding convention: Convention for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms and Ammu-

All of this was of major advantage for British control of the arms trade in the Gulf since it significantly limited the possibility of arms traders circumventing and subverting the British controls by flying the flag of another European power. Because of this, as well as the public commitment of other major imperial powers to strict arms controls and the further diplomatic options to proceed against violations of this commitment, British officials were generally satisfied with the Saint Germain Convention, despite its non-ratification, as well as with the subsequent 1920 Agreement and deemed them highly valuable for imperial security.<sup>40</sup>

In this way, the British chose the path of internationalization of arms-traffic control in the Gulf to safeguard and enhance its usability in maintaining the imperial order by obtaining its sanctioning under international law. This is not only a further example of the entanglement of international law and imperialism.<sup>41</sup> It furthermore reveals another imperialist thread in the fabric of the League. Since the League was commissioned by article 23d of its Covenant with the supervision of the trade in arms and munitions, its Secretariat undertook great efforts to convince more countries to ratify the Convention.<sup>42</sup> For the British, the internationalization of arms control in the Gulf, to which previously hardly any attention had been paid outside of its regional context, was to have profound consequences as soon as the international framework had changed. In 1919, Iran did not possess a potent central government, nor was the League's institutional framework established yet.<sup>43</sup> As a non-imperial power from outside the North Atlantic world and under heavy British influence, it was not taken seriously. In 1929, an internal memorandum from the India Office retrospectively pointed out with reference to Iran that "the Convention of 1919 was drawn up at a time when it was considered unnecessary to take serious account of her."<sup>44</sup> Since this had changed by the time the next arms-traffic conference was convened, arms-traffic control in the Gulf constitutes a fruitful case study to analyze the consequences of internationalization processes under the formal ramifications of the League's system for the contestability of the imperial order.

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tion and in Implements of War, Signed in Geneva on 17 June 1925, Annex II. Paragraph 5 (2) states explicitly: "Any vessel which presents the appearance of native build and rig may be presumed to be a native vessel."

- 40 Biela, "Disarming the Periphery", 482. See also Arms traffic in the Persian Gulf, 1908–1928, memorandum by John Laithwaite, India Office, 8 December 1928: BL IOR/L/PS/18/B410, 4; India Office (presumably J. Laithwaite), Note explaining the object of the British draft Art. 10 of the Draft Revised Arms Traffic Convention, 20 August 1924, BL IOR/L/PS/10/673, 24r–28r.
- 41 Stahl, "Decolonization", 4.
- 42 Ibid., 3; Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty", 218–219; Webster, "From Versailles to Geneva", 234–235.
- 43 On the condition of Iran in 1919, see Abrahamadin, *Modern Iran*, 62; Richard, *Iran*, 157.
- 44 Memorandum: Arms traffic in the Persian Gulf, John Gilbert Laithwaite, India Office, 30 July 1929, BL IOR/L/PS/12/4094, 216r–218v.

## Iranian Nationalism and Arms-Traffic Control

In 1917/18 Iran experienced its own kind of “Wilsonian Moment”.<sup>45</sup> There was animated discussion of the US president’s ideas for a post-war order among Iranian government officials and intellectuals and they became a projection surface for the Iranian desire for disengagement from all kinds of imperial control.<sup>46</sup> This pursuit was deeply embedded in Iranian nationalism. Whereas Iran could look back on a long history of empire, during the 19th century, it fell almost entirely under British and Russian influence.<sup>47</sup> This led to an increasing sense of humiliation, which climaxed during Iran’s wartime occupation, entailing battles between Entente and Ottoman troops on Iranian soil that caused devastation and famine.<sup>48</sup> Because of this long continuity of opposition against any form of imperial control, dependencies, and unequal treatment, Iranians paid great attention to Wilson’s announcement that after the war a society of states should be established, whose tasks would include among others the protection of the integrity and sovereignty of smaller states.<sup>49</sup> Already before the peace conference, the Iranians attached to this rather vague vision of the League far-reaching hopes that they could achieve their goal of real independence through this organization by becoming an equal member of the global peace order.<sup>50</sup> These hopes were very similar to the expectations of other polities in similar circumstances.<sup>51</sup>

In the years after the Peace Conference and the failed Anglo-Iranian Treaty, Iranian politics experienced sweeping change with the withdrawal of British troops and the meteoric rise of Reza Khan (after 1925 Reza Shah), who succeeded in establishing a stable and potent central government, gradually breaking the power of regional potentates, and extending his rule to all of Iran after his coup d’état of 1921.<sup>52</sup> His

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45 The term was introduced by Erez Manela: *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Manela’s book does not mention Iran.

46 Li-Chiao Chen: “The Signing of the Sino-Iranian Treaty of 1920”, in: *Iranian Studies* 52:5/6 (2019), 991–1008, here 995; Michael Axworthy: *Empire of Mind. A History of Iran* (New York: Penguin, 2008); 215; Grobien, “Imperial Nationalism”, 294. Nunan, “Persian Visions”, 197–199, emphasizes the similarly interested reception of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty’s implications.

47 Abrahamadin, *Modern Iran*, 36–39; Axworthy, *Empire of Mind*, 192–197.

48 Abrahamadin, *Modern Iran*, 60; Richard, *Iran*, 139–140.

49 Bast, “Putting the Record Straight”, 262; Richard, *Iran*, 144.

50 Besides the works mentioned in the previous footnote, see Axworthy, *Empire of Mind*, 215; Grobien, “Imperial Nationalism”, 292, 305f.

51 See, for instance, Hell, *Siam and the League of Nations*, 38–39; Goto-Shibata, *East Asian Imperial Order*, 10; Chen, “Sino-Iranian Treaty”, 996; Sánchez Román, “From the Tigris to the Amazon”, 43–44.

52 Abrahamadin, *Modern Iran*, 65.

successes led to a dynamization of Iranian nationalism, which he took up and fueled, molding it into a cohesive element of Iranian society that formed the ideological base of his rule.<sup>53</sup> For this restrengthened nationalism, connecting to the Iranian imperial past, or rather a glorified version of it, was crucial. This entailed a belief in a historical mission to restore Iran's position as dominant regional power and the 'lost frontiers' of the old Iranian Empire. The Persian Gulf, in particular, came to the fore as a space to fulfill these ambitions. Its waters, however, were still firmly in the grip of the British Empire, which was now subject to fierce rhetorical attack by Iranian nationalist intellectuals and the press, who deemed the British presence in the region a historical injustice and illegitimate vis-à-vis the Iranian ambitions.<sup>54</sup>

This intensified the anti-British thrust of Iranian nationalism and heavily influenced the foreign policy of Reza Khan's government. With recourse to the hopes attached to the post-war peace order, the Iranians sought to use the international stage to stand up for their national independence.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, after the ousting of much of the British influence from Iran's territory (which never reached completion – for instance, much of the oil fields remained under British control), the government now aimed to eliminate expressions of British imperial dominance in a broader sense by replacing the British order in the Gulf with a political structure dominated by Iran.<sup>56</sup> The Iranian government subsequently claimed sovereignty over a number of islands in the Gulf, interfered with the British administration of travel, and sought to assume other administrative and policing tasks. This inevitably led Iran into conflict with the British Empire, for which the Gulf was of paramount strategic importance due to its location between Europe and the Raj, as well as because of the burgeoning oil production. For British officials, a withdrawal from the Gulf remained unthinkable.<sup>57</sup>

Against this backdrop, after the official founding of the League in 1920, the Saint Germain Convention quickly caught the Iranians' attention. While the Iranian delegate to the League had later signaled his acquiescence to the Convention, it was

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53 Chelsi Mueller: "Nationalist representations of the Persian Gulf under Reza Shah Pahlavi", in: Meir Litvak (ed.): *Constructing Nationalism in Iran. From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 117–129, here 121; Richard, *Iran*, 139–140.

54 Chelsi Mueller: *The Origins of the Arab-Iranian Conflict. Nationalism and Sovereignty in the Gulf between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 78–82; Mueller, "Nationalist Representations". For examples, see British Legation Tehran, Extracts from Persian Press, 23 September 1930, BL IOR/L/PS/10/1045, 302–310.

55 Mueller, *Arab-Iranian Conflict*, 130–131.

56 Chelsi Mueller: "Anglo-Iranian Treaty Negotiations: Reza Shah, Teymurtash and the British Government, 1927–32", in: *Iranian Studies* 49:4 (2016), 577–592, here 583; Axworthy, *Empire of Mind*, 215.

57 Mueller, "Persian Gulf".

never confirmed by the Iranian government or ratified by the Iranian parliament.<sup>58</sup> In 1923, Iran officially declared its opposition to the Convention. The Iranian delegate at the League, Prince Arfa ed-Dowleh, a career diplomat from old Qajar aristocracy who had represented his country for decades in various capitals, submitted a complaint to the president of the League's Council in which he emphasized Iran's commitment to arms control but stated "that Persia was never consulted and that she cannot recognise the validity of any document which disposes of her sovereign rights without her assent."<sup>59</sup> He deemed Iran's inclusion in the "Prohibited Areas", in particular, irreconcilable with the League's principles of sovereign equality, since it placed Iran under different regulations than the other members of the League and requested that Iran be excluded from the "Areas". His complaint was sympathetically received by the Council, which agreed with the rapporteur, Antonio Salandra, in commending the Iranian commitment to arms control and expressing hope that an amicable solution soon be found for this issue. Encouraged by this, the Iranian delegation resubmitted the complaint in similar words to the Secretary General in the following year.<sup>60</sup> The Iranian pursuit of a revision of Saint Germain was facilitated by other events. In late 1923, the League began to promote and prepare for another conference, not formally part of it but held under its auspices, which was expected to produce a new convention that would be ratifiable for the United States.<sup>61</sup>

For the Iranian government, this was good news. It posed an opportunity to replace Saint Germain with a convention more acceptable to the Iranians. This is why Arfa ed-Dowleh repeatedly emphasized in the preliminary talks that the new convention should not be modeled after the old one.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, the British officials feared the disadvantages of a new convention. They consequently advocated for transferring as much of the 1919 Convention as possible.<sup>63</sup> Given these contrary positions, when in early 1925 final preparations were made for the new conference, which was to take place in Geneva in the early summer, a showdown between British imperialism and Iranian nationalism was in the making. This conflict was, unlike

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58 Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty", 224.

59 Letter from His Highness, the Prince Arfa-ed-Dowleh to the President of the Council of the League of Nations (Translation), 18 September 1923, BL IOR/L/PS/12/4094, 263r–264r.

60 League of Nations, Traffic in Arms and Ammunition, Request by the Persian Government. Report by Mr. Salandra, Adopted by the Council, 26 September 1923, BL IOR/L/PS/12/4094, 260r–262r; League of Nations. Letter From the Persian Delegate Concerning the Convention of St. Germain to the Secretary General, 4 February 1924, *Ibid.*, 257r–258r.

61 Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty", 220.

62 Sub-Commission of the Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments. Procés Verbal of the second meeting, 24 March 1924, League of Nations Archive (LNA) R 242, Dossier 39570.

63 Stahl, "Decolonization", 8. See also Memorandum for Lord Robert Cecil, 30 November 1923, TNA FO 371/8422.



the conflict over arms control in Latin America analyzed by Daniel Stahl, not about arms control itself.<sup>64</sup> Rather, the Iranian desire for strict control was as strong as that of the British. For Reza Khan's project of consolidating the rule of his central government, the disarmament of the semi-autonomous communities of Southern Iran that opposed it was of crucial importance.<sup>65</sup> Against this background, preventing the disarmed groups from restocking their arms and munitions by suppressing the small stream of arms trafficking across the Gulf was imperative.<sup>66</sup> The Anglo-Iranian conflict looming over the approaching conference in Geneva was thus about more fundamental issues than arms control itself.

## Showdown in Geneva

When the second postwar arms-traffic conference started in May 1925, both the British and Iranian delegations lost no time in making their cases. The British brought along their own draft of a convention based on the Saint Germain Convention, which competed with the official draft of the League's Temporary Mixed Committee.<sup>67</sup> The Iranian delegates circulated a dossier with all their arguments against the Saint Germain Convention in general and against the inclusion of Iran and the Persian Gulf in the "Prohibited Areas" in particular, which, at the instigation of the British officials, had been euphemistically rebranded "Special Zones".<sup>68</sup> Iran was represented by General Habibullah Khan, a dedicated advocate of Iranian nationalism and protégé of Reza Khan, and Arfa ed-Dowleh.<sup>69</sup> The British delegation was headed by Lord Onslow, who was somewhat upstaged by Percy Cox, representing the colonial government of India. Cox had formerly served in various positions as a British official in the Middle East and had been, most notably,

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64 Stahl, "Confronting US Imperialism".

65 Richard, *Iran*, 167–168; Abrahamadin, *Modern Iran*, 92.

66 Trott (Acting Military Attaché), Intelligence Summary No. 4 for the period ending 25 February 1933, 26 February 1933, in: Robert Burrell/ Robert Jarman (eds.): *Iran Political Diaries, Volume 9: 1927–1930* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1997), 380. See also Mueller, *Arab-Iranian Conflict*, 107, 120–121.

67 Minute by the Secretary of State respecting the Arms Traffic Conference, FO, 28 April 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 545r.

68 Verbatim Report of the Second Plenary Meeting of the Conference on the Control of the International Trade in Arms, munitions and Implements of War, 5 May 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675,472r–477r.

69 R. Clive: Notes on Leading Personalities in Persia for 1927, in: Robert Burrell/ Robert Jarman (eds.): *Iran Political Diaries, Volume 8: 1924–1926* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1997), 73–86; Michael Noel-Clarke: "Introduction", in: Prince Arfa ed-Dowleh: *Memories of a Bygone Age. Qajar Persia and Imperial Russia 1853–1902*, translated and edited by Michael Noel-Clarke (London: Gingko Library, 2016), XVII–XXII.

an outspoken supporter of a strong British presence in Iran. It was he who had been commissioned by Lord Curzon with negotiating the failed 1919 Anglo-Iranian agreement.<sup>70</sup>

Even before the conference had really begun, the Iranians had already achieved a first victory. In internal deliberations, British officials concerned with the matter had concluded that the insistence on the inclusion of Iran in the “Zones”, although advisable and desirable for imperial security, would most likely not be viable in light of the Iranian protests to the League and the sympathy for these protests among other powers that London did not wish to alienate. They therefore decided to give up the demand that Iranian territory be included in the “Zones”.<sup>71</sup> How correct this assessment was is revealed, for instance, by the instructions to the US delegation issued by the Secretary of State, which explicitly stated not to support another British attempt to include Iran in the “Zones”.<sup>72</sup> While in 1919, nothing would have dissuaded the British negotiators from demanding the inclusion of Iranian territory in the “Areas”, the relatively unresisting abandonment of this demand in 1925 hinted that something had changed. Through their protest notes and appeals to the League, Iranian diplomats took advantage of the ‘publicness’ provided by the League and put Britain under pressure in a way that had previously been unimaginable. On the downside, however, British officials tied their retreat to the demand that Iran would introduce strict arms-control legislation.<sup>73</sup> This did not bother the Iranians much, since arms-control laws in Iran had a long tradition, dating back to the late 19th century.<sup>74</sup> Yet, the new British demand introduced a conditionality to the acceptance of Iran’s territorial sovereignty in this matter, thereby implying the continuance of uneven sovereignties, even on a formal level, within the League and casting a shadow of ambiguity over Iran’s success.<sup>75</sup>

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70 Sabahi, *British Policy*, 42–43, 66. If not explicitly stated otherwise, the use of “British delegation” includes both the delegation from Great Britain and from British India, who acted jointly most of the time. On the relationship of India and Britain in the League, see Joseph McQuade: “Beyond an Imperial Foreign Policy? India at the League of Nations, 1919–1946”, in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48:2 (2020), 263–295.

71 Percy Loraine, H.M. Minister in Tehran, to Austen Chamberlain, 7 May 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 390r–391r; Memorandum of India’s desiderata regarding Arms Traffic Convention, 19 February 1925, *Ibid.*, 596r–601r.

72 The Secretary of State to the American Delegation, 16 April 1925, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States 1925*, Vol. 1, Document 31.

73 Minute for Secretary of State, 28 April 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 1096; Geneva Delegation to Hirzel, India Office, 11 May 1925, *Ibid.*, 1096.

74 Reza Khan, President of the Council of Ministers, to Percy Loraine, H.M. Minister in Tehran, 30 April 1925, *Ibid.*, 392r–393r.

75 Similar arguments are made with regard to Ethiopia in: Donaldson, “Making of States”; Rose Parfitt: *The Process of International Legal Reproduction. Inequality, Historiography, Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 62–63.

Despite the British concessions, two other points of contention emerged: First, whether the high seas (that is the waters outside the three-mile zone of territorial waters) of the Persian Gulf should be part of a “Special Maritime Zone” to which particularly strict regulations would apply. Second, whether Iranian maritime vessels under 500t should be classified as “Native Vessels” and therefore be subject to controls by navy ships of the other contracting powers along the lines provided by the Saint Germain Convention. While the British advocated an affirmative answer in both points, the Iranian delegates took an adversarial stance. These points might seem like merely technical issues of arms control, but they were the expression of fundamentally different and competing conceptions of sovereignty and international order. Ultimately, in the framework of the conference, which was shaped by the League system’s “legalism, proceduralism and ‘publicness’”, nothing short of the future of imperialism in the Persian Gulf was negotiated.<sup>76</sup>

From the beginning, it was clear to all delegations that the question of including the Persian Gulf in the “Zones” would be one of the most difficult issues to solve. The chairman assigned the determination of the delimitation of the “Zones” to the Geographical Committee, which decided to wait for the opinion of the Technical, Military, Naval, and Air Committee on the matter.<sup>77</sup> Here, the Iranian delegates were able to achieve another unexpected success. Despite fierce protests by the British delegations, who denied the competence of the Technical Committee and pointed to the past usefulness of naval control for the maintenance of “law and order” (meaning the imperial peace), the Technical Committee criticized the concept of “Special Maritime Zones” in its entirety and recommended leaving Iranian ships out of the category of “Native Vessels”.<sup>78</sup> This was a first warning to the British delegates that their imperial interests would not be asserted as easily as they were used to. Accordingly, when the Geographical Committee formed a Sub-Committee to discuss the “Special Maritime Zones” and the report of the Technical Committee, British delegates successfully threw their entire diplomatic weight behind the rejection of the

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76 The essential confrontation of imperialism and the sovereignty of smaller states at the conference was first pointed out by David Stone. He also mentions the conflict of the Iranian and British delegations, though without providing a comprehensive analysis (see Stone, “Imperialism and Sovereignty”, 224–226). Quoted is: Pedersen, “Empires, States, and the League”, 116.

77 Stone, “Imperialism and Sovereignty”, 225. The Committees and their composition were determined right at the start of the conference and voted on by all delegations. Final votes were made in the General Committee, which included delegates from all participating states. The creation of several committees to discuss specific areas befitted more powerful states with more diplomatic personnel, who were thus able to participate in all of them.

78 Report of the Naval Sub-Committee to the Military Naval and Air Technical Committee, 30 May 1925, LNA, Repertoire General, R 233, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276.

report and the inclusion of the Gulf. After lengthy discussions, the Sub-Committee voted for an inclusion of the Gulf's waters in the "Zones". Despite a statement of protest added to the Sub-Committee's report by the Iranian delegates, on 3 June the entire Geographical Committee followed the Sub-Committee's line. The Iranians announced that they would raise the issue again in the General Committee.<sup>79</sup>

The issue of the Iranian vessels' classification was also discussed in the Geographical Committee. In the vote regarding this issue on the morning of 8 June, the Iranians were successful again. They rallied four other votes for a proposal that added stipulations to the Convention's draft providing that ships under the Iranian flag would be exempted from the "Native Vessels" clauses. For their part, the British and British-Indian delegations were joined only by the Italians in their rejection of this proposal. The Iranians were supported by Turkey and China, who shared the Iranian anti-imperial sentiment and frequently formed a voting bloc with Iran, indicating a form of politics of anti-imperial solidarity among some of the non-imperial, non-European League members.<sup>80</sup> More surprisingly, however, the Iranians were also joined by the Portuguese and Belgian delegates. This, as well as the great number of abstentions and the lack of support for the British was an unmistakable sign that many delegations might not have been ready to openly confront Britain but did not have much sympathy either. Neither Lord Onslow's loud protest that this decision would destroy the very core of the Convention (a further hint to what the Convention was really about), nor Cox's announcement that India would not accept a convention on these lines could change this situation.<sup>81</sup> The British delegates were forced to compromise. After informal talks with the Americans and French, they launched a proposal that extended the rights of control to all vessels under 500t, making the category of "Native Vessels" obsolete.<sup>82</sup> The Iranian delegates pointed out that this was still discriminatory toward Iranian ships since, of all contracting powers, only Iran would have significant numbers of ships below 500t in the Gulf. Nonetheless, without the category of "Native Vessels", they were more inclined to this compromise. Without new instructions from their government, however, they

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79 Draft Report submitted to the Geographical Committee by the Sub-Committee on Special Maritime Zones, 3 June 1925, 5–6, LNA, Repertoire General, R 233, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276; Report of the Geographical Committee on Chapters III and V of the Draft Convention, 9 June 1925, 4, LNA, Repertoire General, R 234, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276; Percy Cox, Report on the Eighth Meeting of the Geographical Committee, 4 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 496.

80 Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty", 225. On the Sino-Iranian cooperation in the League, see Chen, "Sino-Iranian Treaty", 1002–1003.

81 Arms Traffic Conference, Meeting of the Geographical Committee on 8 June 1925, Report by Percy Cox, 8 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 253r–254r. See also: Zadeh, *La Politique de l'Iran*, 154–155.

82 Meeting of Indian and British Delegations, 8 June 1925, Report by Percy Cox, 8 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 256r.

were not ready to take a position and absented themselves from the final vote in which the British proposal was unanimously adopted.<sup>83</sup>

From this point on, events got out of hand for the Iranian delegates. Not only did none of their instructions state how to deal with the new British proposals or which compromise would be acceptable, they furthermore noticed that General Habibullah had received slightly different instructions from the Ministry of War than Arfa ed-Dowleh had received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the delegates contacted their superiors to request new instructions. In Tehran, however, the Prime Minister was absent, and the cabinet did not venture to provide new instructions without his confirmation. Hence, Arfa and Habibullah had little choice but to proceed on the lines of the demands of their original instructions without making too many concessions.<sup>85</sup> The first blow came in the meeting of the General Committee on 11 June in which Cox and Onslow formed a coalition of imperial powers and polities in relations of dependency to Britain<sup>86</sup> for the inclusion of the Persian Gulf in the “Special Maritime Zones” against Iran, Turkey, and China. It was again remarkable just how many delegations did not attend (21, among them the Americans “on principle”) or abstained (eleven).<sup>87</sup> The potential sympathy for the Iranian position among these delegations was at this point not large enough to risk antagonizing Britain, one of the most powerful participants in the conference and crucial for its success.

A second setback was delivered by the committee tasked with drafting a final version of the Convention’s text based on the votes of the other committees, and in which the Iranian delegation was not represented. The Drafting Committee could not agree on a final version of the stipulations for the “Special Maritime Zones”, since some delegations, including the American, protested the British compromise that stipulated the control of all ships under 500t. The question was thus referred back to the Geographical Committee. The latter hastily formed a Sub-Committee to discuss the question – again not including the Iranian delegation – which, also on 11 June, concluded that only by abandoning the British compromise and reinstating the former provisions regarding “Native Vessels” could the reservations of the Drafting Committee be dispelled. The complete Geographical Committee, which was no-

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83 Report of the Geographical Committee on Chapters III and V of the Draft Convention, 9.06.1925, 5–6, LNA, Repertoire General, R 234, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276; Meeting of the Geographical Committee, 8 June – Afternoon, Report by Percy Cox, 9 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 257r–261r.

84 Sir P. Cox to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, India Office, London, 4 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 306r.

85 Percy Loraine: Annual Report on Persia for 1925, 25–26, Robert Burrell/ Robert Jarman (eds.): *Iran Political Diaries, Volume 7: 1924–1926* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1997), 355–440.

86 Britain, British-India, Irish Free State, Canada, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and France.

87 International Arms Traffic Conference, Geneva, May–June 1925. Report by the Delegates for India, 30, BL IOR/R/15/1/748, 45r–61v.

ticeably tired of this controversial issue and anxious to bring its work to a conclusion, voted to proceed along the lines suggested by the Sub-Committee. The Iranians protested at this hurried and untransparent procedure but it fell on deaf ears.<sup>88</sup>

A final, rather symbolical confrontation between the two delegations took place at one of the last sessions of the General Committee on 15 June. Addressing the Iranian delegates' protests and demands to reverse the latest decisions, Cox delivered a remarkably emotive speech in which he explained, stressing his experience in the region, that the Gulf was a "hotbed" of arms trafficking, the strict regulation of which would be in the interest not only of the Indian but of all delegations. He supported these claims with exaggerated numbers<sup>89</sup> and finally attempted to convince the Iranians with the racist argument that individuals of "Arab blood", who were "natural" pirates and traffickers, were Iranian citizens too. This would render checks on vessels under the Iranian flag necessary.<sup>90</sup> In the style of the rhetoric of the 'White man's burden', Cox sought to frame arms control as part of a 'civilizing mission', giving an impression of the extent to which debates in the League system were imbued by concepts of racial hierarchization. Ignoring Cox's elaborations, in a resigned speech, Habibullah Khan stated that the Iranian delegation saw no possibility anymore to make the Convention's text acceptable to Iran and announced the Iranian delegation's withdrawal from the conference.<sup>91</sup> Lord Onslow started a final attempt to find a compromise by suggesting a new category of "Local Vessels" for Iranian ships and boats. Even before it could be considered by the Iranian delegation, this proposal was torpedoed by Percy Cox, who stated that he saw no reason to categorize Arabs and Iranians differently.<sup>92</sup>

After the Iranians' withdrawal, the General Committee approved the vote of the Geographical Committee and the text of the Convention was signed by the remaining delegates on 17 June. Both the British and the Iranian delegation held the other responsible for the failure to reach a compromise. In his final speech, General Habibullah Khan emphasized: "If they would be a little less unyielding,

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88 Ibid.; "Persia to Protest Search of Ships", *The Evening Star*, 16 June 1925.

89 Cox supported his argument with the claim that 12,000 rifles were seized in the Persian Gulf in a period of just six months. This number seems very high for 1925 and is not supported by any other reports of the time, which provide significantly lower numbers of seized contraband arms (Biela, "Disarming the Periphery", 479–480). However, it is likely that Cox just took numbers from the years before the war, when these numbers had been higher.

90 Speech of Percy Cox, in: General Committee, Verbatim Report of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, 15 June 1925, 4–7, LNA, Repertoire General, R 253, 43073, 43921.

91 Speech of Habibullah Kahn, in: General Committee, *Ibid.*, 9–10.

92 Lord Onslow to FO, 15 June 1925, BL IOR/LP/S/10/675, 390r; International Arms Traffic Conference, Geneva, May–June 1925. Report by the Delegates for India, 31–32, BL IOR/R/15/1/748, 45F–61v.

a little less drastic, we would be delighted to collaborate.”<sup>93</sup> In his final report to the Government of India and the India Office, Percy Cox declared the “ignorance, unintelligence, and obstinacy”<sup>94</sup> of the Iranian delegation responsible. After the conference, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs approached the British legation in Tehran and submitted a new proposal for a compromise, which was, owing to the anti-imperial tenor of Iranian public opinion, close to the original Iranian position. While the British legation was positive that a compromise could be reached, the proposal was rejected by Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, who initiated a counterproposal which was in turn entirely unacceptable to the Iranians.<sup>95</sup>

## Contesting Imperialism

As already mentioned, the conflict between the British and the Iranian delegation was essentially a confrontation of two different concepts of sovereignty and international order. The allegation of a violation of sovereignty was at the center of the Iranian delegates’ rhetoric during the conference. To counteract these accusations and to show that the Iranians were at fault, British negotiators repeatedly emphasized that the Convention would not infringe on any Iranian sovereign rights. After the Iranian protests prior the conference and bearing in mind the unpleasant international backlash against the Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919, which was deemed contrary to the principles of a new world order particularly in US-government circles and in the French press, giving assurances that none of Iran’s formal rights guaranteed under the League’s principles would be infringed upon appeared particularly important to the British.<sup>96</sup> In this matter, they could refer to an assessment of the conference’s Legal Committee, which had confirmed that the “Zones” would not extend into the three-mile-zone of territorial waters and that all “Native Vessels” would be treated equally, regardless of whether they had hoisted the British or Iranian flag.<sup>97</sup> This moved Percy Cox to accuse the Iranians of a lack of understanding of international law.<sup>98</sup>

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93 Speech of Habibullah Kahn, in: General Committee, Verbatim Report of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, 15 June 1925, 9–10, here 10, LNA, Repertoire General, R 253, 43073, 43921.

94 International Arms Traffic Conference, Geneva, May–June 1925. Report by the Delegates for India, 29, BL IOR/R/15/1/748, 45r–61v.

95 Percy Loraine, H.M. Minister in Tehran, to Foreign Office, 31 July 1925, BL IOR/LP/S/10/675, 54r–55r; Villiers, Foreign Office, to Admiralty, 14 August 1925, *Ibid.*, 56r–57r.

96 On the international backlash 1919, see Homa Katouzian: *Iranian History and Politics. The dialectic of State and Society* (London/New York: Routledge 2003), 167–176.

97 Sir P. Cox to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, India Office, London, 4 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 306r.

98 Meeting of the Geographical Committee, Report by Percy Cox, 3 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 243r.

This perspective ignored, however, that the Iranian position was based on a wholly different, less legalistic understanding of the concept of sovereignty. While the British operated with a narrow concept focused on the formal rights of a state over its own territory, the Iranians professed a more holistic understanding centered on equality. This understanding was already implied in the Iranian expectations as expressed on the founding of the League, which encompassed not only protection from future occupation but also equality within the state system, since lasting protection from imperial influence and thereby true sovereignty could only be achieved in a system based on equality.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, in his opening statement at the beginning of the conference, Arfa ed-Dowleh stated that Iran attached “supreme importance” to the general principle of the League that all members were to be treated with “absolutely impartial equality”.<sup>100</sup> As he later explained, this meant that “The Persian Delegation cannot accept any provision likely to be derogatory to Persia’s rights, or likely to prevent Persia from enjoying the same rights of navigation as those enjoyed by the Great Powers in their own waters.”<sup>101</sup>

The Iranian delegation pointed out that the inclusion of the Gulf in the maritime “Special Zones” rendered Iran the only contracting power besides Egypt, which was still under heavy British influence, to directly border such a “Zone”, which thereby turned all its maritime vessels under 500t into “Native Vessels”. From the Iranian perspective, this special position constituted a continuation of *de facto* Iranian inequality vis-à-vis other states. Moreover, it would give British gunships the right to interfere with Iranian trade by stopping Iranian merchant vessels. For its part, Iran would have no reciprocal possibility of exercising these rights due to the lack of any ships under 500t flying a British flag in the Gulf. The Iranians argued that while the British would never accept ships from another power stopping and controlling their own vessels in the English Channel, they were, at the same time, unrelenting in claiming this right in the Gulf. Thus, the “Native Vessel” classification meant not only an unequal status for Iranian ships and boats, but it furthermore gave other powers rights and possibilities unattainable for Iran. For the Iranian delegates, this structural inequality amounted to nothing less than the violation of the principle of sovereign equality.<sup>102</sup>

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99 See the second section. See also: Zadeh, *La Politique de l'Iran*, 156–159.

100 Verbatim Report of the Second Plenary Meeting of the Conference on the Control of the International Trade in Arms, Munitions and Implements of War, 8 May 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 472r–477r.

101 Draft Report submitted to the Geographical Committee by the Sub-Committee on Special Maritime Zones, 3 June 1925, 5–6, LNA, Repertoire General, R 233, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276.

102 During the conference, the Iranian delegates explained their position multiple times. See among others: Statement of the Persian Delegates, in: Report of the Geographical Committee on Chapters III and V of the Draft Convention, 9 June 1925, 4, LNA, Repertoire General, R 234, Dossier 32639, Doc. 44276; Verbatim Report of the Second Plenary Meeting of the Con-



There were further reasons for Iranian opposition to the British position and to the final text of the Convention. Against the backdrop of previous occupation, the Iranian government assigned a high value to Iran's defense capability, making the unhampered import of arms a sensitive topic. This fueled the anxiety that the Convention would give Britain the opportunity to potentially interfere with these imports.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the Iranians deemed the Convention a privileging and validation of the British position as the regulatory power in the Gulf, since it confirmed and sanctioned the British practices of control. This was not compatible with Iranian nationalism's aspiration to an Iranian sphere of influence in the Gulf.<sup>104</sup> This aspiration was the reason for Iranians repeatedly referring to large areas of the Gulf's waters as "territorial waters" of Iran, which was refuted by Percy Cox with legal arguments.<sup>105</sup> This Iranian terminology was, however, the expression of the idea that the Gulf was part of a historically established and legitimate Iranian sphere. One of the consequences of this idea was the Iranian drive to take over the policing and administrative tasks carried out by the British in the Gulf, for instance quarantine administration, lighting and buoying, or the suppression of trafficking and the control of the trade in arms.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately, these aspirations meant the replacement of large parts of the imperial order in the Gulf by regional, Iran-dominated security and administrative structures. The Iranian attempt to alter the Arms Traffic Convention was therefore not only an attempt to counter structural inequalities in the international system and to make a stand for the Iranian concept of sovereignty, but also a concrete tactic to limit and push back the British spaces of action in the Gulf in favor of their own vision of regional order. Percy Cox reacted to this with the patronizing comment that the Iranian position was merely based on "sentiment, and, gentlemen, we cannot frame an Arms Traffic Convention on a basis of sentiment."<sup>107</sup>

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ference on the Control [...], 8 May 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 472r–477r. Arfa's statements on the Iranian withdrawal toward the press are reported in: "Persia to Protest Search of Ships", *The Evening Star*, 16 June 1925. Summaries of the Iranian position are provided in: Telegram of Prince Arfa, attached to: Williams to Indian Office, 14 August 1925, in: Anita Burdett/Angela Seay (eds.): *Iran in the Persian Gulf, Volume 3: 1919–1932* (Slough: Archive Editions, 2000), 176; Persian Government: "Convention for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms and Ammunitions and in Implements of War. Memorandum", in: *League of Nations – Official Journal* 12:8 (1931), 1583–1585. See also: Zadeh, *La Politique de l'Iran*, 156; Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty", 224–226.

- 103 Loraine to Foreign Office, 12 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 410. On the importance of arms imports for Iran, see Zadeh, *La Politique de l'Iran*, 144–145.
- 104 Mueller, "Anglo-Iranian Treaty Negotiations", 588. See also the second section.
- 105 Meeting of the Geographical Committee (Sub-Committee), 3rd June, Afternoon, Report by Percy Cox, 3 June 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/10/675, 243r.
- 106 Mueller, *Arab-Iranian Conflict*, 63–64, 107.
- 107 Speech of Percy Cox, in: General Committee, Verbatim Report of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, 15 June 1925, 4–7, LNA, Répertoire General, R 253, 43073, 43921.

On a deeper level, his notion of only applying this to the Iranian vision of dominance in a new regional order but somehow not to the British imperial claim to power reveals not only how irrevocably his mindset was shaped by imperialist ideas of 'civilizational hierarchies' but also a certain degree of helplessness in how he dealt with Iranian aspirations in the context of a changing international system.

All of this leads straight to the ambivalent tensions at the heart of the League system, which was shaped by the synchronicity of the persistence of imperial order and its ideological foundations based on an alleged 'civilizational hierarchy,' on the one side, and new spaces for contesting this order, on the other.<sup>108</sup> Marcus Payk argues, with regard to the Paris Peace Conference, that its foundation on legality made an international order of formally sovereign and equal states necessary.<sup>109</sup> Others argue that the formal and legalistic admission criteria of the League heralded a departure within the international system from an exclusive club of self-proclaimed 'civilized' states toward an international order more inclusive of all polities, as long as they were organized as states.<sup>110</sup> Undoubtedly, the League meant an expansion of participation in the 'international community' of non-North Atlantic polities, if accepted as members. Thomas Grant asserts that "it was a momentous step to affirm sovereign equality in a general political organ of the international community."<sup>111</sup> The fundamentally different position of Iran and its increased scope of action at the 1925 arms-traffic conference when compared with the conference of 1919 underscores this. Yet, it is only half of the story. The world was still structured by empires, and even the League was knitted from imperialist threads. The conditionality of the repeal of Britain's demand to include Iran in the "Zones", the kind of rhetoric employed by Percy Cox, and, most importantly, the structural inequality that imperial actors sought to enshrine in the Arms Traffic Convention bore witness to this. This British effort to maintain a more subtle structural inequality in the Convention despite formally accepting Iranian sovereignty, a 'sovereignty safe for empire',<sup>112</sup> was an attempt to was an attempt to navigate the changing system, preserve a hierarchical structure within the 'society of states' during the moment in which the League system made the complete exclusion of states like Iran based on an alleged failure to meet the 'standard of civilization' impossible. The refusal to relent to this British strategy and insistence on ending all kinds of structural inequality was what made Iranian politics at the conference decidedly anti-imperial. The Iranian strategy at the

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108 This ambivalence is emphasized, too, by McQuade, "India at the League", 288; Donaldson, "Making of States", 18; Nunan, "Persian Visions", 204–205.

109 Marcus Payk: *Frieden durch Recht? Der Aufstieg des modernen Völkerrechts und der Friedensschluss nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 610.

110 Donaldson, "Making of States"; Becker Lorca, *Mestizo International Law*, 263.

111 Grant, "The League of Nations", 72.

112 Pedersen calls the independence of Iraq in 1932 "independence safe for empire" (Pedersen, *Guardians*, 261).

conference not only threatened British dominance in the Gulf, but it also challenged the foundations of imperial visions of order.

At the arms-traffic conference of 1925, the Iranian anti-imperial agenda met a procedural framework that provided new institutionalized possibilities of participation in international norm-setting and thereby opened spaces to pursue this anti-imperial agenda. We have seen how the Iranians used these spaces to achieve an arms-traffic convention that would enshrine equality and further Iranian goals in the Persian Gulf. One could, however, argue that this agenda, these spaces, and the Iranian strategy ultimately remained irrelevant, since it was the British delegates who carried the day and achieved a convention that met their goals. This line of thought, however, would be somewhat short-sighted. The British victory was pyrrhic at best since its rules would not apply to Iranian vessels as Iran was not a signatory party to the Convention. What is more, if recounting the course of the conference has shown anything, then that is how uncertain its outcome was. The ability of the British to assert their agenda was far from granted, and during some parts of the negotiations, a compromise seemed much more likely. There was often no significant support for the British position at all. In the end, a series of unfortunate circumstances thwarted the Iranian prospects of achieving their goals. But the fact that parts of an anti-imperial agenda came close to significantly influencing the results of an international norm-setting exercise illustrates how the League system heightened the fragility of imperial self-empowerment.

This impression is affirmed by viewing the conference at the level of discourse as well as by evaluating the conference's reception. Percy Cox's rhetoric framed the issue of arms control in the Gulf as necessary to bring peace and order to the "backward" people of the Gulf. This fit into his personal history, as he was, as Priya Satia noted, among those British officials that created a new conception of the 'Middle East' as a space prone to violence during the World War, which allowed the British to rationalize and legitimize their expansion of power in the region.<sup>113</sup> Cox wanted to discuss the issue within an ideologically imperialist framework of thought, according to which arms control was – like the imperial order itself – for the greater good and benefit of everyone. In doing so, he took up the rhetoric that empires have always employed to justify the suppression of the arms trade.<sup>114</sup>

The Iranians, however, shifted the discussion from this imperialist discourse toward questions of sovereignty and the limits of imperial power. Thanks to the publicness embedded in the League system, the Iranian cause and the reasons for their withdrawal reached audiences around the globe and all over the North Atlantic

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113 Priya Satia: *Spies in Arabia. The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27–28, 37–40.

114 See, for instance, Brahm, "Brussels Act", 444.

through reports in the press.<sup>115</sup> Both *Reuters* and *Associated Press* reported on the conference and issued reports on the Iranian point of view, which thus found its way even into regional newspapers.<sup>116</sup> While the British press extensively recounted the arguments of Onslow and Cox, many Swiss and US-American newspapers gave more room to the Iranian position. Leftist papers such as the German social-democratic *Vorwärts* explicitly connected the Iranian withdrawal from the conference to the British insistence on imperialist structures.<sup>117</sup> A Soviet official even published an article in the US *Daily Worker*, in which he equated the 1925 convention with the 1919 convention and denounced both as mere instruments of imperialism.<sup>118</sup> In Germany, the national-liberal local paper *Karlsruher Tageblatt* reported on the arms-traffic conference that Iran felt its “sovereignty grossly flouted” and commented:

Formally, all members of the League of Nations are among themselves equal and sovereign states. It is already known that this equality is not true in material terms [...] yet one did believe it would be possible to suppose that the formal juridical equality would be retained. Now, this is not true.<sup>119</sup>

Surprisingly, even the *Correspondencia Militar*, a newspaper close to the Spanish Military, expressed a similar opinion:

In seeking to establish these zones, there was great struggle between England and Persia and Egypt, it was consoling for equality-loving countries such as Spain to see the mighty Albion and some of its feudal countries on an equal level, a

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115 For examples, see “The Arms Conference”, *The Irish Times*, 16 June 1925, 8; “Persia to Protest Search of Ships. Blames Britain for Arms Traffic Agreement Imposing Supervision on Vessels”, *The Evening Star* (Washington D.C.), 16 June 1925; “Arms Traffic at Geneva”, *New York Times*, 17 June 1925; “Scene at Arms Conference. Persia and Control of the Gulf. General Walks Out”, *Daily Herald*, 16 June 1925, 8; “Arms Traffic Conference: Persian Delegate Withdraws”, *The Times*, 16 June 1925, 15; “Völkerbund: Konferenz für die Kontrolle des Waffenhandels”, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 16 June 1925; “Die Waffenhandelskonferenz: Persien verläßt die Konferenz”, *Der Bund* (Berne), 16 June 1925.

116 For a *Reuters* report, see: “Arms Conference. Dispute over Persian Gulf Regulations”, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 June 1925, 7.

117 “Gegen den Giftkrieg. Der Genfer Verbotsentwurf”, *Vorwärts*, 17 June 1925, 1. See also: “Persia’s Discontent against British Imperialism Increased by League’s Arms Recision”, *The Daily Worker*, 30 June 1925, 4.

118 “The Geneva Conference on the Question of Commerce in Arms”, *The Daily Worker, Special Magazine Supplement*, 5 September 1925, 1.

119 “Die Hilfesuchenden”, *Karlsruher Tageblatt*, 21 September 1925, 1. Translation by the author; German Original: “Souveränität gröblich mißachtet” and “Formell sind alle Völkerbundsmitglieder unter sich gleichberechtigte souveräne Staaten. Man wußte ja, daß diese Gleichberechtigung in materieller Hinsicht nicht zutraf [...] aber man hatte doch geglaubt, annehmen zu dürfen, die formell juristische Gleichberechtigung werde gewahrt. Das trifft nun nicht zu.”

disconcerting spectacle for diplomats who in the course of their careers had not breathed the atmosphere of the League of Nations.<sup>120</sup>

Hence, the Iranians were successful in influencing the international talks on arms control in the Gulf. Instead of discussing the Gulf as an ‘uncivilized’ space in dire need of the ‘humanitarian’ act of arms control, international publics now rather considered it in terms of whether the Iranian claims of violated sovereignty were legitimate. Susan Pedersen has argued of the Mandate system that its internationalization of imperial rule created talk about how this rule should be and thereby facilitated thoughts about alternative futures.<sup>121</sup> This case study shows a similar phenomenon. The internationalization of arms control in the Gulf under the principles of the League system allowed Iran to generate publicity for its cause, inscribing it into a discourse on the limits of imperialism and the meaning of sovereignty. The conversation was shifted from the alleged benefits of empire to its legitimacy. What is more, by asserting another vision of regional order, the Iranians introduced a non-imperial conception of the future of the Gulf to the international stage, where the notion of the Gulf as ‘British Lake’ had before largely remained unquestioned.<sup>122</sup>

While the Iranian anti-imperial agenda at the Geneva Conference undoubtedly posed a challenge to the foundations of the imperial order as such, it remained rooted in particularistic Iranian regional interests. Thus, it can hardly be seen as driven by the goal of bringing down imperialism and its ideological foundations entirely. The Iranian insistence on full sovereign equality among the members of the League did challenge European conceptions of ‘civilizational hierarchies’ but did not reject it. Like many other non-European members of the League, the Iranians did not oppose the idea of ‘civilized’ and ‘non-civilized’ peoples, they just drew the line between them differently than most of their European counterparts.<sup>123</sup> One of the reasons why the Iranians perceived the Convention as humiliating was because it placed them on the ‘non-civilized’ side. Arfa ed-Dowleh rejected the inclusion of Iranian vessels in the “Native Vessel” category because in this category they would

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120 “Charlas Internacionales : La Conferencia del tráfico de armas y municiones”, *La Correspondencia Militar*, 8 September 1925, 1. Translation by the author; Spanish Original: “Al procurar establecer esas zonas hubo gran lucha de Inglaterra con Persia y Egipto, siendo consolador para los países amantes de la igualdad, como España, ver en un plan de igualdad la poderosa Albión y algunos países feudalaríos suyos, espectáculos desconcertantes para los diplomáticos que en el curso de su carrera no habían respirado el ambiente de la Sociedad de las Naciones.”

121 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 4.

122 On this notion: Mueller, “Nationalist Representations”, 124.

123 Grobien, “Imperial Nationalism”, 299–301. On other League members: Stahl, “Confronting US Imperialism”, 499; Hell, *Siam and the League*, 200–212; Sánchez Román, “From the Tigris to the Amazon”, 52–53.

be put on the same level as “crafts belonging to a colonial or mandated people.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, in this case, contesting universal visions of imperial order was the result of particularistic interests. There are, however, other instances suggesting that Iranian diplomats were influenced by a broader conception of anti-imperialism. Arfa ed-Dowleh, for example, also undertook efforts to ensure that subaltern groups who sought to be heard by the League, but were rejected by the Secretariat and other delegations, would get a chance to present their cause.<sup>125</sup> The Iran-Turkey-China voting block at the conference as well as the security pact between Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan, which was established in the context of the League in the late 1930s, signaled forms of non-imperial cooperation within the League system.<sup>126</sup>

### Helpless Imperialists

The British did not gain much from their success in pushing through their version of an arms traffic convention. Like its predecessor, the Geneva Convention did not obtain enough ratifications to come into force. What is more, the publicity created by Iranian diplomacy had lasting effects by placing significant and sustained pressure on British officials which limited their actions in any future negotiations. Under the eyes of an observant public, it was no longer possible to simply ignore Iranian interests. This situation placed the British officials in a rather difficult spot, since they were by no means ready to give up their practice of control in the Gulf, which became ever more important with every newly discovered oil field. In 1929–30, the relevant departments therefore decided to continue this practice, since it was deemed crucial for the suppression of arms trafficking in the Gulf and thus for imperial security.<sup>127</sup> Yet Iranian diplomacy had, at the same time, infused a growing sense of fragility in the British. Whereas, before the war, no British official convinced by the self-proclaimed ‘civilizing mission’ would have spared a single thought on this matter, now the British sense that the controls in the Gulf were justified was weighed against their actual legal framework. The results were sobering. John Gilbert Laith-

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124 Telegram of Prince Arfa, attached to: Williams to IO, 14 August 1925, in: Burdett/Seay, *Iran in the Persian Gulf*, 176.

125 Becker Lorca, *Mestizo International Law*, 261, 284–285.

126 On the security pact, see Amit Bein: *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East. International Relations in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 82–88.

127 Instructions regarding Slave and Arms Trade in the Persian Gulf, 1930, BL IOR/L/PS/12/4094, 16r–21v; Draft Record of an interdepartmental meeting to consider the instructions regarding the search by His Majesty’s ships of Arabian, Persian and Iraqi vessels for slaves and arms, 24 April 1930, *ibid.*, 127r–145r.

waite of the India Office's Legal Department concluded: "Our legal basis is extremely sketchy."<sup>128</sup>

This created an uncomfortable situation for the British officials when a new arms-traffic conference, this time in the context of a general Disarmament Conference, was prepared for 1932/33, which would inevitably bring the issue again on the international agenda. At this moment, the British policy on arms control in the Gulf imploded. For the first time, the Foreign Office now suggested to consider models other than a "Special Maritime Zone", arguing that it would be impossible to achieve Iranian accession to a convention that included the "Zones".<sup>129</sup> For the Admiralty, such a strategy was unthinkable. Its representatives reasoned:

If these clauses [regarding the "Special Zones"] were now to be definitely rejected at Geneva, My Lords think it probable that the Navy would find that its powers of supervision in these waters [the Persian Gulf] in peace time would rapidly disappear. [...] Their formal cancellation, which will no doubt be well advertised by Persia, would be such a complete break with the past that our rights, based mainly on custom, would almost certainly be challenged.<sup>130</sup>

These differing positions caused an insurmountable deadlock in the British government, leaving it somewhat helpless with the new arms-traffic conference approaching. Edward Hallett Carr, head of the British delegation at the conference, became increasingly unnerved about this deadlock and commented: "If we are satisfied (as I gather we are) with the practical, though illegal, status quo, surely our best course is to "sit tight" and say as little as possible since any controversy one way or the other must tend ipso facto to disturb it."<sup>131</sup> This non-strategy was the only one left to a British Empire cornered by Iranian diplomacy and clinging to an illegal practice. No other statement summarizes so precisely the ambivalence between continuing imperial self-empowerment in the Gulf, on the one side, and the fragility inflicted by the Iranians, on the other.

Yet once again, the circumstances came to the aid of the British officials. Before the issue of the Persian Gulf could be negotiated, the conference foundered on other problems.<sup>132</sup> During the eventually aborted conference, the Iranian government had

128 Memorandum by John Gilbert Laithwaite, 9 December 1932, BL IOR/L/PS/12/2182, 439r–441r. See also Phillips, Admiralty, to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 11 January 1933, *ibid.*, 349r–360r.

129 Notes of a Meeting Held at the Foreign Office on 20 January 1933, to Consider the Arms Traffic Convention of 1925, BL IOR/L/PS/12/2182, 287r–296r; Foreign Office to Carr, 2 March 1933, *ibid.*, 237r–238r.

130 Phillips for the Lords of the Admiralty an Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 11 January 1933, *ibid.*, 349r–360r.

131 Carr to Warner (FO), 5 December 1932, *ibid.*, 369r–370r.

132 Webster, "From Versailles to Geneva", 242–243.

offered to negotiate a bilateral agreement on arms control with the British. After the failure of the conference, the Iranians kept pressing for such negotiations.<sup>133</sup> While the British officials would have rather continued to 'sit tight', the Iranian diplomacy had ensured that no reaction was not an option. The British Legate in Iran warned that the parallel conflict between Iran and Britain over oil concessions for the *Anglo-Persian Oil Company* had created a "bad atmosphere in Geneva" and that "a refusal to act with the Persians over an issue to which they attach the utmost importance from the angle of national status could easily be represented as a clear and deliberate attempt to bully."<sup>134</sup> The Foreign Office's George Rendel complained that "certain League circles, which were always inclined to be prejudiced in favour of the smaller power" would always accuse Britain of "adopting an obstructive and bullying attitude" toward Iran and thus narrow the British scope of action.<sup>135</sup> Yet, reacting to the Iranian proposals was not easy for a British administration that had, by this time, sunk into complete discord over the issue.<sup>136</sup> The helplessness in dealing with the Iranians that this produced left only one path open for the British officials. From an increasingly weak position, the British officials adopted an obstructive attitude, which was successful, again, only because of aiding circumstances.<sup>137</sup> Amidst the turbulence and lack of continuity of personnel in Iranian foreign policy following the political downfall and death of its central figure, Teymourtash, the arms-traffic issue faded into the background and did not reemerge until the British occupation during the Second World War.

## Conclusion

In his book *No Enchanted Palace*, Mark Mazower insinuates that the imperial powers fell victim to their own strategy of internationalization, since the League of Nations,

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133 Rendel, Foreign Office, to Hoare, H.M. Minister in Tehran, 26 April 1933, BL IOR/L/PS/12/2182, 185r–192r.

134 Hoare, H.M. Minister in Tehran, to Rendel, FO, 8 April 1933, *Ibid.*, 182r–184r. On the *Anglo-Persian* affair, see Peter Beck: "The Anglo-Persian Oil Dispute 1932–33", in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 9:4 (1974), 123–151.

135 George Rendel in: Record of a Meeting held to consider proposals put forward by the Persian Minister at Berne for a Solution of the Problem of Arms Traffic Control in the Persian Gulf, 27 April 1933, BL IOR/L/PS/12/2182, 127r–145r.

136 Record of a Meeting held to consider proposals put forward by the Persian Minister at Berne for a Solution of the Problem of Arms Traffic Control in the Persian Gulf, 27 April 1933, *Ibid.*, 127r–145r; Persia and Arms Traffic Convention. Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty Bolton Eyres-Monsell, 26 May 1933, TNA CAB 24/241/23; Persia and Arms Traffic Convention. Memorandum by Foreign Secretary John Simon, 23 May 1933, TNA CAB 24/241/16.

137 Rendel, Foreign Office, to Under-Secretary of State, India Office, 20 July 1934, BL IOR/L/PS/12/2193, 34r–38r.



conceived as a support for imperialism, was transformed into the United Nations, which offered a unique arena for the contestation of an imperial world order during the process of decolonization.<sup>138</sup> Pedersen suggests a similar thesis, which instead already attributes the unintended creation of space for the contestation of imperialism to the League itself.<sup>139</sup> This chapter has presented a case study that underscores this argument. It has shown how Great Britain sought to internationalize the issue of arms control in the Gulf to ensure inter-imperial cooperation on this matter and obtain sanction for their already established control practices under international law. These largely successful efforts brought about the Saint Germain Convention of 1919, through which Britain, among other things, aimed to safeguard the use of arms control as instrument for maintaining the imperial order in the Gulf. In contrast, the Iranian Government under Reza Khan was interested in restricting the British ability to carry out controls, which were perceived as the epitome of the continued British imperial presence in the Gulf, itself now being increasingly conceived of as an Iranian sphere of influence. Meanwhile, the Iranian government had developed hopes that the newly established League would help Iran to secure full sovereignty in the sense of ending all inequalities vis-à-vis the imperial powers. Hence, Iranian diplomats took advantage of the internationalization of the issue and attempted to use the “legalism, proceduralism and ‘publicness’” of the largely British-constructed League system, which formed the framework of the arms-traffic conference of 1925 and its run-up, to press for a convention that would limit the British scope for action with regard to naval controls in the Gulf, would include no structural inequalities for Iran, and would therefore respect the Iranian vision of true sovereign equality in every regard.

Despite the ultimate British success at the 1925 Geneva Conference, the Iranian strategy yielded profound consequences that resulted in a picture substantially different from the situation in 1919. First, Iran secured the exclusion of its territory from the “Special Zones”. At the Geneva Conference, the outcome of events remained open-ended for a long time, and the British did not enjoy overwhelming dominance during the negotiations. The Iranian appeals and protests created international publicity for the issue, which shifted the related discourse from the alleged necessities of a ‘civilizing mission’ to the question of the limits of imperialism and the meaning of sovereignty. The publicity created by the League system had altered the rules of the game by creating new spaces for Iran to claim and defend the formal territorial sovereignty guaranteed by the League’s principles. In the end, moreover, all of this caused significant discord within the British administration, which simultaneously felt pressured by a world public sensitized for the issue and the perceived need for strict-but-illegal arms controls for the sake of imperial security. When the question

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138 Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 29.

139 Pedersen, “Empires, States, and the League”, 116; Pedersen, *Guardians*, 13.

of a convention was raised again and the Iranians subsequently pressed for a bilateral agreement, the Empire could agree on nothing more than to sit the issue out, adopt a somewhat obstructive attitude, and hope for the best.

This case study has presented a further instance of how the character of the League system amplified imperial contestation. While the inherently anti-imperial pursuit of an Iranian sphere of influence in the Gulf was a crucial part of Iranian nationalism, the Iranian state lacked the economic or military means to thwart British imperialism on site in the Gulf. At Geneva, however, the Iranians were able to use the multilateral framework of the conference to challenge the British vision of an arms-traffic convention Arms Trade Convention, which would have safeguarded the British powerbase in the Gulf and reified the political inequality between the British Empire and Iran. That Iranian diplomats were able to challenge a major imperialist power in this way stands in remarkable contrast to the pre-war world and even to 1919. While Britain could still rely on the imperialist foundations of the international system, imperial solidarity, and its diplomatic weight, the consequences of the internationalization of arms control in the Gulf and the lack of support for the British position vividly demonstrated that the League had created a framework in which the will of the imperial power would at least not automatically surpass the interests of the smaller power every time. Hence, this chapter argues that we indeed, in Susan Pedersen's words "miss much if we treat the League only as imperialism's handmaiden."<sup>140</sup> Under the procedural framework of the League system, the internationalization of policy issues entailed a dynamic that created points of leverage for actors such as Iran to promote anti-imperialist agendas and thus unsettle the imperial practice of self-assertion and self-empowerment. Only by shifting focus to consider these dynamics, actors, and agendas, can we reach a comprehensive understanding of the League system's lasting significance.

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140 Pedersen: "Empires, States and the League", 116.

# Post-Ottoman Diasporas, Identity Formation, and American World's Fairs in the Interwar Period

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Semih Gökatalay

This chapter explicates relations among and within US-based diasporas from the post-Ottoman countries through the world's fairs of the interwar period. While sub-groups under the 'post-Ottoman' umbrella included vastly different ethnic and religious groups, their representation at the fairs was similar not only because of the proximity of their cultures but also because they shared the purpose of using these fairs as avenues of negotiation and identity formation. Consequently, this study accommodates interconnected stories of the post-Ottoman diasporas instead of the sum of individual cases because different diasporas replicated the patchwork quilt of post-Ottoman representation and came together to form a broader shared culture at world's fairs.

I employ the term "diaspora" based on the work of scholars of diaspora culture and politics. Diaspora includes not only those who were "born outside a host state" but also "subsequent generations that maintain strong ties to the country of origin."<sup>1</sup> An overwhelming majority of members of the (post-) Ottoman diasporas migrated to the United States before the partition of the Ottoman Empire, and the rest were born to immigrant parents. The number of newcomers remained very low in the interwar period because of legal barriers to migration from the region.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, those who played a central role in exhibiting their culture at the fairs were predominantly foreign-born naturalized citizens and their second-generation descendants. Although these diasporas included all people with a migration background from the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, this study is interested in those of their members who identified with the culture of their ancestors and remained within

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1 David Carment/Ariane Sadjed: "Introduction: Coming to Terms with Diaspora Cooperation", in: David Carment/Ariane Sadjed (eds.): *Diaspora as Cultures of Cooperation: Global and Local Perspectives* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1–26.

2 For details for these barriers, see Robert L. Fleegler: *Ellis Island Nation: Immigration Policy and American Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 17–34.

the social structures and institutions of their various ethnic communities, because these were in the forefront of representation of diasporas at the fairs.

I consult primary sources to offer a novel and nuanced interpretation of the nexus between post-Ottoman diasporas and the American world's fairs. Special collections in archives and libraries in host cities contain valuable information, not readily available elsewhere, about correspondence between fair managers and diaspora leaders, as well as communication between home countries and diaspora groups on the preparation of exhibits, special days, and pavilions. Official magazines and publications provide insights into the composition of national committees and reveal details of the expectations, speeches, and writings of diasporas. The third empirical backbone of the study is American periodicals, especially those in host cities. Since diaspora leaders attached special value to the impression they made on the public, press accounts demonstrate the extent to which diasporas were able to influence opinion in the United States. Local and national papers further published interviews with those who spearheaded the organization of national days and exhibits.<sup>3</sup> Newspapers and journals from home countries complemented their American counterparts, though their focus on official representations means they provide limited information about the role of diasporas. Finally, novels and memoirs by diaspora members who witnessed these fairs firsthand shed additional light on the topic.

Building on this extensive research, this chapter argues that the world's fairs became an international platform for post-Ottoman American elites to foster a sense of unity within the diaspora, interact with their home countries, fraternize with other diasporic communities, compel their compatriots to see their culture through immigrant eyes, negotiate their place and better integrate within American society, preserve their native culture, and honor their heritage. Negotiating a new identity for diasporas had three aspects: preserving their native culture in the United States; catching up with political currents in their home countries, especially emergent nationalism; and searching for a place within American society. These were catalysts for the stimulation of a novel identity that blended old and new cultures. This identity was the set of beliefs, public expressions, qualities, and traditions that characterized diaspora leaders. The contrary trends – the preservation of native cultures and Americanization – exhibited themselves in the panoply of communal activities, events, and gatherings held at the fairs, from folk and music festivals to restaurants and beauty pageants.

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3 Although diaspora groups had published a number of periodicals in the United States prior to the 1930s, the Great Depression led to the bankruptcy of many of them (Gregory J. Shibley: "The Business Saga of New York's Syrian World, 1926–1935", in: *New York History* 96:2 (2015), 197–216, here 216). That is why I could consult diaspora papers only to a limited extent in this study.

This interdisciplinary survey draws from anthropology, history, and sociology, as well as diaspora, identity, and migration studies. It differs from most similar studies in both geographic and thematic focus by uniting two strands of historical inquiry: The background and development of diasporas from the Ottoman Empire and its successor states and the cultural appraisal of world's fairs. Traditional studies of diasporas have focused on specific ethnic groups and explored the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of their integration into the American society,<sup>4</sup> such as the preservation of native cultures and the well-being of diaspora communities.<sup>5</sup> A growing number of recent scholarly works provide rich evidence of the significance of the global political context, as well as transnational exchanges between diasporas and home countries.<sup>6</sup> The transnational identity of diasporas further helped revisionist studies challenge long-held scholarly interpretations of immigrants and diasporas that relied on state-centric formulations, moving beyond perspectives that were “constrained by the borders of the nation-state.”<sup>7</sup> The present article echoes the growing recognition of the transnational approach and deals with several diaspora communities, instead of one ethnic group, through the prism of world's fairs.

By introducing these international commercial events into the narrative of diasporas, I hope to produce a common history of the diasporas of former Ottoman countries. I do not offer a comprehensive history of these diasporas. I rather present an interpretation of a seminal period of their history and seek to explain how diasporas viewed themselves by way of identifying with their heritage, how they came to

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- 4 Phillip Hitti: *The Syrians in America* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924); Habib Ibrahim Katibah (ed.): *Arabic-Speaking Americans* (New York: Institute of Arab American Affairs, 1946); Elaine C. Hagopian/Ann Paden (eds.): *The Arab Americans: Studies in Assimilation* (Wilmette: Medina University Press International, 1969); Mary Sengstock: *Chaldean Americans: Changing Conceptions of Ethnic Identity* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1982).
  - 5 Sameer Y. Abraham/Nabeel Abraham (eds.): *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983); Alixa Naff: *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985); Elizabeth Boosahda: *Arab-American Faces and Voices: Origins of an Immigrant Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Akram Fouad Khater: “Becoming ‘Syrian’ in America: A Global Geography of Ethnicity and Nation”, in: *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14:2–3 (2005), 299–331.
  - 6 Reem Bailony: “Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public: The Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt”, in: *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies* 1:1 (2013); Bryan A. Garrett: “Otherness and Belonging in ‘Democratic Empires’: The Syrian Diaspora And Transatlantic Discourses Of Identity, 1890s–1930s” (PhD dissertation, The University of Texas at Arlington, 2016); Stacy D. Fahrenthold: *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
  - 7 Nina Glick Schiller: “A Global Perspective on Migration and Development”, in: Nina Glick Schiller/Thomas Faist (eds.): *Migration, Development, and Transnationalization* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 22–62, here 27.

occupy the center stage of the representation of their native culture, and what types of cultural and social references these community members built their identity upon at the fairs.

This chapter further situates world's fairs within the context of broader cultural representations of the post-Ottoman countries and contributes to the scholarly understanding of these gatherings as sites of cultural analysis. A plethora of academic studies have contributed immeasurably to the understanding of cultural and diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the West through world's fairs.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have particularly been interested in Orientalism, with specific references to the commodification of the exotic "East", the sexualization and objectification of Middle Eastern women through dances and other show performances, and the depiction of the "Orient" as an uncivilized place, unchanged for centuries.<sup>9</sup> Historians have further explored the self-portrayal of Ottomans through Islamic architecture and symbols, as well as Ottoman attempts to better demonstrate their empire's potential role in the world community.<sup>10</sup> Despite the popularity of studies about the world's fairs and the Ottoman Empire, there is still a lack of attention to the role of diasporas in representing their native cultures both in the waning decades of the empire and the post-imperial era.

Likewise, although historians have provided in-depth accounts of world's fairs prior to the First World War, relatively little has been written about the representation of the post-Ottoman countries in universal expositions in the interwar period. Extant studies have mostly focused on individual countries and the representation of the region by the governments of home countries.<sup>11</sup> I intend to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the common experience of post-Ottoman diasporas and assembling the history of individual communities at the Chicago World's Fair of 1933–34 and the New York World's Fair of 1939–1940.

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- 8 Eric M. Davis: "Representations of the Middle East at American Worlds' Fairs 1876–1904", in: Abbas Amanat/Magnus T. Bernhardsson (eds.): *The United States and the Middle East: Cultural Encounters* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2002), 324–81.
- 9 Charles A. Kennedy: "When Cairo Met Main Street: Little Egypt, Salome Dancers, and the World's Fairs of 1893 and 1904", in Michael Saffle (ed.): *Music and Culture in America, 1961–1918* (New York: Garland, 1998), 271–98; István Ormos: "The Cairo Street at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893", in: Nabila Oulebsir/Mercedes Volait (eds.): *L'Orientalisme architectural entre imaginaires et savoirs* (Paris: Picard, 2009), 195–214.
- 10 Zeynep Çelik: *Displaying the Orient – Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Selim Deringil: *The Well-Protected Domains – Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 1999).
- 11 James L. Gelvin: "Zionism and the Representation of 'Jewish Palestine' at the New York World's Fair, 1939–1940", in: *The International History Review* 22:1 (2000), 37–64; Asher Kaufman: "'Too Much French, but a Swell Exhibit': Representing Lebanon at the New York World's Fair 1939–1940", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35:1 (2008), 59–77.

There are specific reasons behind the choice of Chicago and New York. Both fairs can be considered a watershed in the history of the world's fairs. The United States hosted a number of world's fairs before the First World War. In the 1920s, however, European countries took the lead when it came to international commercial meetings.<sup>12</sup> Only with the Chicago and New York Fairs was the United States able to return to its "former prominence in the exhibition world."<sup>13</sup>

Diasporas played a key role in the representation of their home countries at these two fairs. Although official pavilions had historically played a more important role than non-official pavilions and commercial displays at international gatherings, the latter began to supersede the former starting with the Chicago and New York fairs.<sup>14</sup> In the absence of official participation for most post-Ottoman countries, diasporas came to prominence, especially at the Chicago Fair. Those who migrated from the Ottoman Empire and its successor states were only one out of the multiplicity of diasporas who sought to make the best impression of their respective culture. For example, German, Irish, and Italian diasporas made efforts to portray their heritage in Chicago.<sup>15</sup> The involvement of these diasporas at universal expositions and fairs dated back to the 19th century.<sup>16</sup> Compared to them, the efforts of post-Ottoman diaspora leaders to play a key role in fairs had remained relatively limited prior to the interwar years.

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12 Robert W. Rydell: "World Fairs and Museums", in: Sharon Macdonald (ed.): *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 135–151, here 136.

13 Kenneth W. Luckhurst: *The Story of Exhibitions* (London: The Studio Publications, 1951), 161.

14 Burton Benedict: "The Anthropology of World's Fairs", in: Burton Benedict, Marjorie Dobkin et al. (eds.): *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915* (Berkeley: Scholar Press, 1983), 1–65, here 26; Larry Zim/Mel Lerner/Herbert Rolfes: *The World of Tomorrow: The 1939 New York World's Fair* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 10–11.

15 Charles Fanning: "Dueling Cultures: Ireland and Irish America at the Chicago World's Fairs of 1933 and 1934", in: *New Hibernia Review* 15:3 (2011), 94–110; Andrew C. Herman: "Fascists at the Fair: Political Resistance at the 1933–1934 Chicago World's Fair", in: *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33:2 (2020), 198–215.

16 Regina Donlon: *German and Irish Immigrants in the Midwestern United States, 1850–1900* (Cham: Springer International, 2018), 187–188, 197.

Table 1 Post-Ottoman Diasporas in Illinois and Chicago (1930)<sup>17</sup>

Country of Birth	Native of Foreign or Mixed Parentage, by Country of Birth of Parents		Foreign-Born by Country of Birth		Total Diaspora Population	
	Illinois	Chicago	Illinois	Chicago	Illinois	Chicago
Yugoslavia	33,998	15,090	28,173	16,183	62,171	31,273
Greece	15,858	11,569	20,003	14,815	35,861	26,384
Romania	11,704	9375	13,172	11,033	24,876	20,408
Palestine and Syria	1814	846	1551	904	3365	1750
Turkey	1183	916	2147	1647	3330	2563

Table 2 Post-Ottoman Diasporas in New York State and City (1930)<sup>18</sup>

Country of Birth	Native of Foreign or Mixed Parentage, by Country of Birth of Parents		Foreign-Born by Country of Birth		Total Diaspora Population	
	New York State	New York City	New York State	New York City	New York State	New York City
Romania	51,048	46,729	51,014	46,750	102,062	93,479
Greece	21,188	16,651	33,337	27,182	54,525	43,833
Turkey	11,129	9563	17,523	15,115	28,652	24,678
Palestine and Syria	12,951	7197	13,024	8696	25,975	15,893
Yugoslavia	8259	4184	10,917	6450	19,176	10,634

17 *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 Volume 3, Part 1* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 639–640, 643–644. These numbers include only counties, cities, and villages of 10,000 or more residents. The fifth and sixth columns were prepared by the author.

18 *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 Volume 4* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 299, 301, 303. These numbers include only counties, cities, and villages of 10,000 or more residents. The fifth and sixth columns were prepared by the author.



Even though these diasporas were dispersed throughout the country, the host cities and neighboring regions had heavy concentrations (Tables 1 and 2).<sup>19</sup> Participation reflected demographic trends. For example, although the lower density of Romanian Americans in Illinois limited their representation at the Chicago Fair, they came to occupy a more prominent place at the New York Fair.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, unlike the European world's fairs, which were managed by a partnership of private and public enterprises, American fairs were run by private entrepreneurs. Organizers aimed to make these fairs a financial success by enticing millions of visitors and inviting a variety of foreign countries and ethnic groups helped to enhance the appeal of the fairs. Fair promoters therefore encouraged the broader representation of post-Ottoman countries and their diasporas. Members of the fairs' organizing committees approached diaspora leaders and arranged for the representation of their cultures, especially when the governments of their home countries decided not to attend officially.

Although the historical contexts of these two fairs were different, their function from the perspective of diasporas was virtually identical: Both helped them to display their native culture and negotiate their place in American society. Accordingly, the following sections are presented thematically, not chronologically. The second section explores the historical background of migration from the Ottoman Empire and its successor states to the United States. In this section, there is an emphasis on the role of international exhibitions in the emergence and growth of diasporas, because the world's fairs accelerated immigration to the United States from the Balkans and the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> The third section unpacks special challenges that US-based diasporas encountered before and during the fairs, since both events took place against a backdrop of deepening gloom over the international economy and global politics. Section four treats the fairs as a communication channel that enabled diasporas to cultivate closer relations with both their old and new countries. The last section looks at the many-sided involvement of diasporas in exhibiting their native cultures at the fairs.

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19 Kathleen Benson/Philip M. Kayal (eds.): *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York and Syracuse University Press, 2002).

20 "Rumanian Day", *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 May 1939, 11.

21 Louise Seymour Houghton: "Syrians in the United States I: Sources and Settlement", in: *The Survey* 26 (1911), 480–495, here 483; Rifat N. Bali: *Anadolu'dan Yeni Dünya'ya Amerika'ya İlk Göç Eden Türklerin Yaşam Öyküleri* [From Anatolia to the New World: The Life Stories of the First Turks who Migrated to America] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004), 57–81.

## The Historical Background of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Migration to the United States

The representation of post-Ottoman diasporas at the fairs was closely tied to the historical context in which the growth of diasporas in the United States took place. Although the number of Ottoman immigrants was low in the mid-19th century, immigration accelerated in the closing decade.<sup>22</sup> Economic distress, ethnic violence, and political turmoil in the Balkans and the Middle East combined to drive a growing number of people to the New World in the 1890s.<sup>23</sup> Despite the attempts of local officials to restrict emigration,<sup>24</sup> a significant number of people from the Ottoman Empire and its successor states left their homes to make a living in the United States. New communities from the region bloomed across the country in the decades that followed.<sup>25</sup> Some of the immigrants, especially Muslims, returned to their home countries, while others chose to stay.<sup>26</sup> While diaspora organizations helped non-Muslim Ottomans preserve their identities, the lower numbers of Muslims led to the gradual weakening of their identity,<sup>27</sup> a major factor that adversely affected the presence of Muslims at the fairs. Table 3 demonstrates the country of origins for post-Ottoman diasporas in the interwar era. Greeks, Romanians, and Yugoslavs were more heavily represented than Muslim Arabs and Turks at the fairs because the former groups made up a much larger share of the U.S. population.

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- 22 Alixa Naff: "Lebanese Immigration into the United States: 1880 to the Present", in: Albert Hourani/Nadim Shehadi (eds.): *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I. B. Tauris, 1992), 141–165, here 144; Akram Fouad Khater: *Inventing Home – Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 48.
- 23 Rifat N. Bali: "From Anatolia to the New World: The First Anatolian Immigrants to America", in: Deniz Balgamiş/Kemal H. Karpat (eds.): *Turkish Migration to the United States: from Ottoman Times to the Present* (Madison: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008), 57–74, here 58.
- 24 David Gutman: *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885–1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 4.
- 25 Mehmet Uğur Ekinci: "Reflections of the First Muslim Immigration to America in Ottoman Documents", in: Deniz Balgamiş/Kemal H. Karpat (eds.): *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman Times to the Present* (Madison: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008), 45–56, here 51.
- 26 Kohei Hashimoto: "Lebanese Population Movement 1920–1939: Towards a Study", in: Albert Hourani/Nadim Shehadi (eds.): *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I. B. Tauris, 1992), 65–107, here 66.
- 27 Nedim İpek/K. Tuncer Çağlayan: "The Emigration from the Ottoman Empire to America", in: Deniz Balgamiş/Kemal H. Karpat (eds.): *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman Times to the Present* (Madison: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008), 29–43, here 43.

Table 3 Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Americans from the post-Ottoman Countries (1920, 1930)<sup>28</sup>

Country of Origin	1920	1930
Yugoslavia	169,439	211,416
Greece	175,976	174,526
Romania	102,823	146,393
Syria	51,901	57,227
Turkey	16,303	48,911
Bulgaria	10,477	9399
Albania	5608	8814
Palestine	3203	6137

When a particular diaspora was small, the official participation of their home countries made possible the representation of their native cultures at fairs. Politically independent countries, such as Albania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, took part in at least one fair, giving a chance for their diasporas to represent their culture.<sup>29</sup> The diasporas of politically dependent countries, however, could not enjoy the same privilege. For example, the Syrian government intended to erect a national building at the New York Fair.<sup>30</sup> Yet, because of tension between Syrian nationalists and the French, the Syrian parliament refused to vote for funds, which led to the cancellation of the Syrian plans.<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that these diasporas could not represent their culture and celebrate their heritage in the United States. Instead, they continued to do so through festivals in different parts of the country,<sup>32</sup> if not at the world's fairs. Nevertheless, their small numbers in the United States and the reluctance of home countries to attend precluded them from negotiating their identities at the world's

28 *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 Volume 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 232. These numbers do not reveal ethnicity. There were many Armenians and Greeks who originated from modern Turkey. At the time of the New York Fair, for example, the number of Turks in New York amounted to 5000 (M. Hulusi Aydınoğlu: "Amerika Mektupları 3" [Letters from America 3], *Muğla'da Halk*, 26 August 1939, 2) although the number of people whose roots were in Turkey was much higher.

29 "fi Majlis al-Nuwab" [in the Parliament], *al-Ahram*, 2 November 1937, 7.

30 "Min Dimashq" [From Damascus], *al-Difa*, 21 October 1938, 5.

31 Reports on Foreign Government Participation, 25 January 1939, 17–20, The New York Public Library: New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division (NYPL).

32 "2,000 Lebanese Folk", *Daily Boston Globe*, 22 July 1934, sec. A, 26.

fairs. For example, Palestinian Arabs maintained a small but well-established presence in host cities. While Jewish diasporas from Eastern and Central Europe helped Palestinian Jews to represent 'Jewish' Palestine at both fairs, Arabs from Palestine could not find any way to participate on these occasions. Arab newspapers in Palestine complained that only the 'Jewish' part of their country was represented.<sup>33</sup>

International developments began to play a predominant role in the formation of new identities for both Muslims and non-Muslims who had come from the Balkans and the Middle East in the interwar years. American officials and public figures had labeled a variety of ethnic and religious groups from the Ottoman Empire using the overarching category 'Ottomans' and 'Turks' before the First World War. This was also very much the way various immigrants from the Ottoman Empire portrayed themselves. For example, many Anatolian Greeks in the United States continued to cast themselves as Ottomans despite the attempts of Greek nationalists to instill a sense of ethnic identity.<sup>34</sup> Relations between immigrants and their home countries showed signs of deterioration with the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>35</sup> Immigrants still maintained their contact with the region during the war,<sup>36</sup> but after the Ottoman Empire dissolved into independent nations and mandates, their public perception and self-portrayal experienced important changes during the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of new states deeply transformed the self-identification of diasporas.

Domestically, the 1924 Immigration Act sharply decreased the number of immigrants from post-Ottoman countries who could settle in the United States. For example, it restricted the number of people who could migrate from both Lebanon and Syria per year to 123.<sup>38</sup> The Act further led the United States to deport a small

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33 "tamsil Filastin" [Palestinian Representation], *Filastin*, 7 March 1933, 6; "fi Mar'id Shikaghu al-'Alami" [at the Chicago World's Fair], *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, 21 June 1933, 1.

34 Yannis G.S. Papadopoulos: "Ottoman, Anatolian, Greek, yet above All American: Evolving Identifications and Cultural Appropriations", in: *Immigrants & Minorities* (2022), 1–48, here 31.

35 Michael W. Suleiman: "The Arab Community in the United States: A Comparison of Lebanese and Non-Lebanese", in: Albert Hourani/Nadim Shehadi (eds.): *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I. B. Tauris, 1992), 189–207, here 192.

36 Birol Akgün: "The Turkish Diaspora in the United States and its Role in Promoting Turkish-American Relation", in: *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 31 (2000), 99–117, here 105; Simon Jackson: "Diaspora Politics and Developmental Empire: The Syro-Lebanese at the League of Nations", in: *Arab Studies Journal* 21:1 (2013), 166–190.

37 Suad Joseph: "Arab American Women: Intersectional Genealogies and Trajectories", in: Michael W. Suleiman/Suad Joseph/Louise Cainkar (eds.): *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 1–17, here 2.

38 Samir Khalaf: "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before World War I", in: Eric J. Hooglund (ed.): *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking*

number of former Ottoman subjects.<sup>39</sup> The United States and local governments expected diasporas to passively accept the identities assigned to them by the states.<sup>40</sup>

While devoting considerable effort to fitting into their new country, many immigrants began to jostle for position and influence, opened their own businesses, formed business associations, and experienced upward social mobility.<sup>41</sup> A novel diasporic culture flourished accordingly.<sup>42</sup> As Elo and Minto-Coy put it, a “diaspora is not some static post-migration social network, instead, it involves a multitude of actor types, agencies, and contexts.”<sup>43</sup> The relative power and agency of diasporas, however, varied broadly along class lines. Generally, diaspora leaders played a more crucial role in shaping the representation of their communities and creating and sustaining their sense of collective identity at fairs than did the lower classes. The primacy of elites for diaspora politics was intimately linked to their perception in American society. Social disparities and class biases manifested in immigration laws as well. Wealthy immigrants were treated more respectfully by American officials than people from humble backgrounds.<sup>44</sup> Elites adjusted better and were able to profit from integration.<sup>45</sup> Elites also exercised more agency in portraying their

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*Immigrants to the United States before 1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 17–35, here 19.

- 39 Chris Gratien/Emily K. Pope-Obeda: “Ottoman Migrants, US Deportation Law, and Statelessness during the Interwar Era”, in: *Mashriq & Mahjar* 5:2 (2018).
- 40 Chris Gratien/Emily K. Pope-Obeda: “The Second Exchange: Ottoman Greeks and the American Deportation State during the 1930s”, in: *Journal of Migration History* 6:1 (2020), 104–128; Stacy D. Fahrenthold: “‘Claimed by Turkey as Subjects’: Ottoman Migrants, Foreign Passports, and Syrian Nationality in the Americas, 1915–1925”, in: Lâle Can et al. (eds.): *The “Subjects” of Ottoman International Law* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 216–237.
- 41 Joseph S. Roucek: “The Yugoslav Immigrants in America”, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 40:5 (1935), 602–611, here 603; Khalaf, “Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration”, 24; Ann Flesor Beck: *Sweet Greeks: First-Generation Immigrant Confectioners in the Heartland* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021).
- 42 Işıl Acehan: “Conflict and Cooperation: Diverse Ottoman Ethnic Groups in Peabody, Massachusetts”, in: Deniz Balgamiş/Kemal H. Karpat (eds.): *Turkish Migration to the United States: from Ottoman Times to the Present* (Madison: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008), 75–86, here 86.
- 43 Maria Elo/Indiana Minto-Coy: “The Concept of Diaspora from the Perspective of International Business and Economy: An Introduction to the Book”, in: Maria Elo/Indiana Minto-Coy (eds.): *Diaspora Networks in International Business: Perspectives for Understanding and Managing Diaspora Business and Resources* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 1–14, here 6.
- 44 Anna Pegler-Gordon: *Closing the Golden Door: Asian Migration and the Hidden History of Exclusion at Ellis Island* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 48.
- 45 Shanthy Robertson and Rosie Roberts: “Migrants ‘in-between’: Rethinking Privilege and Social Mobility in Middle-class Migration”, in: Shanthy Robertson/Rosie Roberts (eds.): *Rethinking Privilege and Social Mobility in Middle-class Migration: Migrants In-between* (London: Routledge, 2022), 1–26, here 17.

native cultures.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, most studies on diasporas have focused on “self-made” immigrants “who moved up the socio-economic ladder to achieve success, the ‘American dream’” instead of socially excluded people.<sup>47</sup> The self-portrayal of diasporas at the fairs was emblematic of elite-dominated history.

The world’s fairs not only reflected class differences but contributed to social stratification, since they offered an unrivaled opportunity to meet other members of their own diasporas and to acquire customers. By strengthening the diasporas’ common identity and seizing the economic opportunities of the fairs, diaspora elites consolidated their power in their communities. The consumption of goods from home countries represents a key point of contact between diasporas and their countries of origin.<sup>48</sup> As Volery has noted, diaspora members constituted the customer base for ethnic businesses.<sup>49</sup> Transnational entrepreneurs benefited from the transfer of these commodities most because the construction of national pavilions and stands and the exhibition of imported items at fairs served vested interests and powerful elites.<sup>50</sup> From a practical perspective, the consolidation of diasporas through fairs raised the demand for the goods and products that these businessmen sold.

Marketing these items can also be considered part of the consumer culture that was developing in the United States during this period. Though it had a history reaching back to the late 19th century, consumerism reached full force in the prosperous economy of the 1920s. With the expansion of advertising, the capitalist classes encouraged adults and children alike to raise their consumption.<sup>51</sup> This movement was centered on gendered expectations and social norms. For example,

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46 Khachig Tölölyan: “Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation”, in: *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9:1 (2000), 107–136, here 110.

47 Thomas W. Gallant: “Tales from the Dark Side: Transnational Migration, the Underworld and the ‘Other’ Greeks of the Diaspora”, in: Dimitris Tziouvas (ed.): *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 17–29, here 27.

48 Manuel Orozco/Julia Yansura: “A Taste of Home: The Nostalgia Trade and Migrant Economic Transnationalism”, in: Maria Elo/Indiana Minto-Coy (eds.): *Diaspora Networks in International Business: Perspectives for Understanding and Managing Diaspora Business and Resources* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 79–102, here 79.

49 Thierry Volery: “Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Framework”, in: Léo-Paul Dana (ed.): *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship: A Co-evolutionary View on Resource Management* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008), 30–41, here 31.

50 “Transnational Entrepreneurs (TEs) are immigrants who are engaged in border crossing business activities involving their country of origin and destination” (Ricard Zapata-Barrero/Shahamak Rezaei: “Diaspora Governance and Transnational Entrepreneurship: The Rise of an Emerging Social Global Pattern in Migration Studies”, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46:10 (2020), 1959–1973, here 1959).

51 Lisa Jacobson: *Children and Consumer Culture in American Society: A Historical Handbook and Guide* (Westport: Greenwood, 2008), 4.

men's magazines constructed a novel version of manhood via masculine images and promoted "Mr. Consumer" as a powerful role model for men to emulate.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, advertising campaigns targeted women through the idealized image of feminine beauty.<sup>53</sup> As discussed below, this particular vision of gender segregation had implications for the male-dominated representation of post-Ottoman diasporas and the use of girls to promote exhibits and items at pavilions and stands.

The consumerist spirit of the 1920s was intertwined with the sense of national identity in myriad ways. By equating consumption with citizenship, the power of patriotism became a strong motivating force that encouraged Americans to consume.<sup>54</sup> Although these slogans rallied around inclusive, all-class citizenship, consumerism did not thoroughly translate into rising opportunities for the working classes, who developed their own culture of consumption.<sup>55</sup> This was especially the case for ethnic communities, whose integration into consumer culture was far from complete.<sup>56</sup> The nexus between material culture and citizenship thus varied across different diasporas. Immigrants from Western Europe sat at the apex of a hierarchical system and played an integral role in reconfiguring consumption patterns, commercial design, and marketing methods.<sup>57</sup> Other groups, such as African Americans, were not left out entirely, with racialized campaigns marketing specific products for them.<sup>58</sup> Within the confinement of systematic racism, they created their own culture of consumerism.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the patriotic sentiments that were geared to rebuilding and consolidating citizenship through consumerism

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- 52 Tom Pendergast: *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900–1950* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 111.
- 53 Liette Gidlow: *The Big Vote: Gender, Consumer Culture, and the Politics of Exclusion, 1890s–1920s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 163–174.
- 54 Charles McGovern: *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 63.
- 55 Jean-Christophe Agnew: "Coming up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective", in: John Brewer/Roy Porter (eds.): *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1994), 19–39, here 27.
- 56 James R. Barrett: "Americanization from the Bottom up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880–1930", in: *The Journal of American History* 79:3 (1992), 996–1020, here 1020.
- 57 Jan Logemann: "European Imports? European Immigrants and the Transformation of American Consumer Culture from the 1920s to the 1960s", in: *German Historical Institute Bulletin* 52 (2013), 113–133, here 115.
- 58 James C. Davis: *Commerce in Color: Race, Consumer Culture, and American Literature, 1893–1933* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 210–211.
- 59 Paul R. Mullins: "Race and the Genteel Consumer: Class and African-American Consumption, 1850–1930", in: *Historical Archaeology* 33:1 (1999), 22–38, here 35; Erin D. Chapman: *Prove it on me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81.

had their own limitations, a key point that affected the integration of post-Ottoman diasporas into American society through consumerism in general and world's fairs in particular.

The vital link between consumerism and citizenship changed considerably during the Great Depression, which exercised a profound influence on the representation of diasporas at the two fairs under consideration. The immediate effect of the economic crisis on consumerism was negative.<sup>60</sup> Low-income neighborhoods were mired in poverty, and their residents, with less money to spend, formulated new patterns of consumer behavior.<sup>61</sup> After President Franklin D. Roosevelt aimed to reflate the economy through the New Deal in 1933, hard-pressed sectors began to enjoy a revival, and domestic demand rose. A new understanding of consumerism came to life, accordingly.<sup>62</sup> It had far-reaching effects on architecture and industrial design,<sup>63</sup> as well as the conceptualization of more inclusive citizenship.<sup>64</sup> Both the Chicago and New York World's Fairs reflected the momentum of New Deal consumerism by promoting a utopian vision of technology and encouraging optimism.<sup>65</sup> Businessmen and other community leaders from post-Ottoman diasporas sought to seize the resulting opportunities by encouraging the consumption of their products by other members of their groups and marketing their commodities to other visitors within the schema of standardized American consumer culture. This profit-making motivation made them the driving force behind the representation of post-Ottoman countries and their diasporas at both fairs.

Trade events also shaped the public perception of diasporas. A historical appraisal of American fairs prior to the 1930s has illustrated the stereotyped portrayal of the Ottoman Empire and post-Ottoman countries, which was colored by West-

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60 Douglas J. Goodman: *Consumer Culture: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 157–158; Johannes Malkmes: *American Consumer Culture and its Society: From F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920s Modernism to Bret Easton Ellis' 1980s Blank Fiction* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2011), 31–33.

61 Ronald Paul Hill/Elizabeth C. Hirschman/John F. Bauman: "Consumer Survival during the Great Depression: Reports from the Field", in: *Journal of Macromarketing* 17:1 (1997), 107–127, here 108.

62 Rita Barnard: *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance: Kenneth Fearing, Nathanael West, and Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 24.

63 Jeffrey L. Meikle: *Twentieth-Century Limited: Industrial Design in America 1925–1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 69; Gabrielle Esperdy: *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 144.

64 Stefano Luconi: "Italian Americans, the New Deal State, and the Making of Citizen Consumers", in: Simone Cinotto (ed.): *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 137–147.

65 Meikle, *Twentieth-Century Limited*, 189–210.



ern values and the cultural attitudes of European imperialism.<sup>66</sup> As in the late Ottoman Empire, certain businessmen who had originated from the Middle East continued to impose their own Orientalist interpretations on the displays for commercial purposes. Their understanding of Orientalism differed from prevailing ideas about “Oriental countries” in the public imagination because it sought to dismiss negative perceptions.

They nevertheless made efforts to commercialize exoticism. The most notable example was the Oriental Exposition in New York that took place between 12 December 1927, and 7 January 1928. Ralph M. Saliba, who was a native of Ottoman Syria and a real estate speculator in Birmingham, Alabama, organized the exposition. He spent \$80,000 to publicize his project, contacting officials in the ‘Oriental’ countries to facilitate the transfer of local products.<sup>67</sup> The exposition featured exhibits from almost all countries in the Middle East, such as filigree and jewelry from Egypt and brass and woodwork from Damascus.<sup>68</sup> Its stated objective was to accomplish “goodwill and understanding” between the East and the West because Saliba thought that people in the West were “ignorant” of the East. The exposition provided the reproduction of “life, manners, customs, and art products”. Crowds of visitors flocked to the exposition, and merchants from the participant countries sold their products, albeit on a limited scale.<sup>69</sup> Although it was not a success from a financial point of view, with Saliba losing \$100,000,<sup>70</sup> the visitors considered it “a social and moral success”.<sup>71</sup> Oriental music, cuisine, and dancing girls entertained visitors.<sup>72</sup> The Orientalist depiction of the Middle East at exhibitions and fairs did not cease in this period. Though the intention of people like Saliba was to provide a better grasp of the ‘Orient’, they still reproduced stereotypes through the commodification of Oriental cultures, which contributed to the image of post-Ottoman diasporas as outsiders.

Alongside business concerns, this persistence also stemmed from the ways diasporas perceived their old countries, which complicated their intended refutation of Orientalist stereotypes prevalent in the United States. As with other immigrants perceived as ‘Oriental’, such as those from East and South Asia, post-Ottoman diasporas were viewed through the lenses of Orientalism by the society at large.<sup>73</sup> The understanding that diasporas had of their ancestral countries involved similar stereo-

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66 Julia Phillips Cohen: “Oriental by Design: Ottoman Jews, Imperial Style, and the Performance of Heritage”, in: *American Historical Review* 119:2 (2014) 364–398.

67 “East and West”, *South China Morning Post*, 10 March 1928, 16.

68 “Oriental Exposition”, *The Billboard*, 7 January 1928, 70.

69 “Uniting East And West”, *The China Press*, 16 March 1928, 12.

70 “Outdoors”, *Variety*, 11 January 1928, 57.

71 “Syrian”, *The China Weekly Review*, 10 March 1928, 49.

72 “Oriental Exposition in America”, *The Palestine Bulletin*, 14 March 1928, 2.

73 Charlotte Karem Albrecht: “An Archive of Difference: Syrian Women, the Peddling Economy, and US Social Welfare, 1880–1935”, in: Michael W. Suleiman/Suad Joseph/Louise Cainkar

typing, with the addition of an emotional component. When they visited their countries of origin, diasporas articulated “a poetics of nostalgia”.<sup>74</sup> This nostalgic perception of home countries was a result of “a collective memory and myth about the homeland” that occupied diaspora imagination. Diaspora groups have a tendency to idealize their “real or imagined ancestral home”.<sup>75</sup> Despite this romanticized remembrance, diasporas, especially second-generation migrants, were aware of the social and cultural differences between their new homes and their countries of origin, not only because of their own experiences but also because of popular perceptions of their countries of origin in destination countries.<sup>76</sup>

Fairs offered diaspora leaders an opportunity to refute Orientalist stereotypes. Although the perception of these diasporas as strangers loomed large in the American imagination, in part because of the world’s fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, diasporas engaged in the world’s fairs between the wars all the more actively and focused all of their energy on burnishing their image. Since the views of the rest of American society and of foreign spectators were built on a priori beliefs and prejudices, diaspora leaders sought to claim space at world’s fairs that drew millions of visitors and succeeded in using these events to present a more positive image. Certainly, fairs were one part of the wider battle to alter the perception of the post-Ottoman countries and their people as backward, timeless, and unchanged.<sup>77</sup> In this regard, fairs were not hermetically sealed off from other avenues of representation, which included literature and the mass media and entertainment sectors.<sup>78</sup> As the next sections discuss, governments and diaspora groups agreed in the need to represent the Balkans and the Middle East in a modern and non-Orientalist fashion.

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(eds.): *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 134–165, here 162.

- 74 Martha Klironomos: “The Topos of Home in New Greek-American Writing”, in: Dimitris Tziouvas (ed.): *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 239–255, here 252.
- 75 Robin Cohen: *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008), 17.
- 76 Armand Gutierrez: “Being Filipino without the Philippines: Second-Generation Filipino American Ethnic Identification”, in: Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (ed.): *Filipino American Transnational Activism: Diasporic Politics Among the Second Generation* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 26–53, here 27–28.
- 77 On the struggles of diasporas to integrate into the American society, see Sarah M. A. Gualtieri: *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian-American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 52–80.
- 78 Jack G. Shaheen: *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), 8–39.

## Challenges

As they dealt with ethnic and racial stereotyping and sought to represent their cultures appropriately, post-Ottoman Americans had to overcome several challenges that economic, cultural, and political differences had brought about. As Devi Mays has compellingly demonstrated, “originating in the same empire or sharing the same religious ascription did not mean that all those of Ottoman or even Ottoman Jewish provenance saw themselves as belonging to the same diaspora, despite Ottoman attempts to create a shared identification.”<sup>79</sup> The most potent challenge was the diversity of languages. Just as a shared language might foster a sense of affinity within an ethnic group, linguistic barriers contributed to the lack of unity within the diaspora in other cases. Even the Jews of the same part of the empire did not speak the same language.<sup>80</sup> Chaldeans had closer relations with Arabic-speaking Christians than Syriac- and Persian-speaking Assyrians, although they shared “liturgical and ecclesial language and territorial history” with the latter.<sup>81</sup>

These diasporas were further fragmented along religious lines. Even if they spoke the same language, as in the case of Yugoslav Americans, religion could still cause tension.<sup>82</sup> Like religion, the importance of familial ties for diasporas contributed to this diversity.<sup>83</sup> Their heterogeneity extended beyond ethnic and religious identity, as exemplified by ideology.<sup>84</sup> In addition to American politics, they engaged with the politics of their home countries.

Fairs not only reflected such divisions but also inflamed struggles in certain instances. Socialist workers organized a protest during the Bulgarian national anthem on Bulgarian Day in 1933. They displayed a large red flag with the caption “Long Live Soviet Bulgaria” and threw thousands of leaflets from surrounding buildings that illustrated the disdain the workers had for fascism. Two workers were arrested but later released. This incident showed how class interests could easily supersede ethnic group interests. But while politics polarized Bulgarian Americans between their collective ethnic identity and ideology, it strengthened inter-diaspora relations, since

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79 Devi Mays: *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 14.

80 Marcia Hadad Ikononopoulos: “The Romaniote Jewish Community of New York”, in: *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 23/24 (2006), 141–168, here 147.

81 Yasmeen Hanoosh: *The Chaldeans: Politics and Identity in Iraq and the American Diaspora* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2019), 114.

82 Ivan Mladineo: *The American Yugoslavs* (Detroit: s.n., 1934), 63.

83 Michael W. Suleiman: “Early Arab-Americans: The Search for Identity”, in: Eric J. Hooglund (ed.): *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States Before 1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 37–53, here 41; Boosahda, *Arab-American Faces and Voices*, 18.

84 Mladineo, *The American Yugoslavs*, 64–65.

Greek workers acted out of solidarity with anti-fascist demonstrations by their Bulgarian comrades.<sup>85</sup> This series of intense conflicts demonstrated the attempts of the working classes, particularly politically conscious segments, to challenge the dominance of elite groups in determining the representation of diaspora cultures in the public eye.

Armenian Americans were another politically divided group. While one group defended the freedom of Armenia from the Soviet Union, others tried to nurture good relations with the Soviet cadre. In July 1933, Archbishop Leon Tourian, the Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Western World, was scheduled to deliver a speech for the Armenian Day at the Chicago Fair. Dashnaks, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, held protests since he was not an adversary of the Soviets. They replaced the flag of Soviet Armenia with that of Republican Armenia. To protest their actions, the Archbishop refused to give his address.<sup>86</sup> Tensions turned into a “riot”, and thousands in attendance overturned their chairs and fought against their ethnic fellows.<sup>87</sup> All these events increased the schism in the Armenian Church.<sup>88</sup> The Dashnak-led campaign against Tourian reached full force, and a group of Dashnaks killed him in December. His assassination was an outstanding example of how political differences thwarted efforts to create stronger bonds among diaspora members through fairs.

His murder further proves the importance of class differences in terms of the adaptation of immigrants to their new society. While many wealthy diaspora members associated themselves with centrism as a strategy of ideological adaptation and faced less prejudice in political circles in the United States, many of the poverty-stricken masses gravitated toward left-wing ideologies and were exposed to “state repression and exclusionary immigration statutes.”<sup>89</sup> The rift between different groups within a given diaspora community, such as Armenians and Bulgarians, points to tensions between diaspora leaders and sections of the lower classes.

Circumstances beyond the control of diasporas severely affected their representation as well. For example, the last-minute decision of the management of the New York fair to open national restaurants decreased the quality of service, particularly in the early days of the fair in 1939. Moreover, when the fair’s plumbers went on strike, the Albanian pavilion could not get gas for a time on its opening day, which limited the variety of options for spectators to eat. According to a correspondent of the *New*

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85 “Red Flag”, *The Daily Worker*, 5 August 1933, 6.

86 “Legal Brief”, *News-Week*, 21 July 1934, 34.

87 “Rioting”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 July 1933, 5.

88 “Five of Armenian Secret Society”, *Indianapolis Star*, 27 December 1933, 11.

89 Kenyon Zimmer: *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 156.

*York Herald Tribune*, having “meager menus”, the Albanian restaurant could not respond to the demand and was “unable to serve anything more exotic than broiled lamb chops.”<sup>90</sup>

Political developments paralleled managerial issues and curtailed the historical agency of diasporas. The Italian invasion of Albania delayed shipments of Albanian exhibits to New York and postponed the formal opening in 1939.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, the Italian pavilion featured a new section of exhibits about Albania where the following words of Benito Mussolini were read: “A new era for the Albanian people who have entered as equals into the imperial community.”<sup>92</sup> Italy even claimed to represent Albania within its pavilion. Likewise, because of the diplomatic crisis between the Soviet Union and Romania as well as the latter’s territorial losses, Romania was full of discontent, which significantly downsized the scale of its presence at the fair. Although the Romanian pavilion remained open, the restaurant was shut down.<sup>93</sup> These examples demonstrated that the decisions of the fairs’ managers and the actions of foreign powers undermined all the efforts of diasporas to exercise their agency at the fairs.

## The Fairs as a Channel of Dialogue between Diasporas and their New and Old Countries

Despite all these challenges, the fairs nonetheless functioned as a fulcrum for diasporas to communicate with their countries of origin, the rest of the post-Ottoman diasporas, and other segments of American society.<sup>94</sup> The degree of communication between diasporas and home countries largely depended on whether or not the governments of these countries officially participated in the fairs. The organizers of the Chicago Fair sent delegations to different parts of the world, including countries in the Balkans and the Middle East.<sup>95</sup> The Great Depression curbed international trade and plunged the region into an economic crisis. As it was intensely challenging for governments to take part in the fair, the organizers turned to diasporas. Although diasporas were “enthusiastic” about erecting national pavilions, sponsoring a pavilion

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90 “Fair Cafes”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 May 1939, 2.

91 “Outdoor Style”, *Women’s Wear Daily*, 11 May 1939, 32.

92 “Italy Re-enters Fair”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 May 1940, 20.

93 “Fair Attendance”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 August 1940, 36.

94 They were not alone in this. New York Russians listened to Soviet music for the first time thanks to Soviet participation in the New York Fair (Natalie K. Zelensky: *Performing Tsarist Russia in New York: Music, Émigrés, and the American Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 111–112).

95 London Office – Cole, Henry, 4 August 1931; 28 April 1932, 1, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections & University Archives (SCUA).

was not easy without government support.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, diaspora groups, especially businessmen, attempted to open pavilions.<sup>97</sup> Romanian Americans even suggested the formation of a company to raise money for a Romanian pavilion.<sup>98</sup> The Greeks of Chicago and surrounding cities financed a pavilion for their representation.<sup>99</sup> Although the Greek government sent a number of art pieces to be displayed in Chicago, the pavilion had to rely on the generosity of Greek Americans. The Greek colony in Chicago worked for weeks for its inauguration.<sup>100</sup> Other US-based diaspora groups could not afford pavilions but arranged a series of days and programs of events within the format of the fair.<sup>101</sup>

Official participation was far more common in 1939, when most Balkan and Middle Eastern groups were officially represented. Indeed, Lebanon participated in an international fair as a politically independent entity for the first time.<sup>102</sup> Armenians did not have a national pavilion, but Soviet Armenia was represented as part of the Soviet Pavilion. They, nonetheless, organized national days and festivals. Palestine was another country that was not officially represented, but the Jewish Agency for Palestine, other Zionist organizations, and Jewish communities in the United States secured one spot for the Jewish Palestinian Pavilion, which excluded the Arab communities of the country.<sup>103</sup> The variation of representation of post-Ottoman societies and discourses from home countries demonstrated the importance of transnational factors in determining the power of diasporas over their self-portrayal.

With or without a formal presence, community leaders, together with diaspora clubs and societies,<sup>104</sup> tried to expand diaspora support for fair-related projects at both fairs. They focused on making diaspora groups more aware of the cultural and social benefits of the fairs for the communities. On behalf of their diasporas, they met fair officials and local political authorities. As discussed below, they wielded serious power over the representation of their cultures even where there was also official participation.

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96 Foreign Participation, 21 February 1931, 1–2, SCUA.

97 Foreign Exhibits – Correspondence, 12 May 1933, 1, SCUA.

98 Foreign Participation, 21 February 1931, 50–56, SCUA.

99 Exhibits – International Participation, 23 March 1934, 1, SCUA.

100 Earl Mullin: “100,100”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 June 1934, 6; Sterling North: *Seven against the Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 219.

101 “Century of Progress”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 July 1933, 7.

102 Asher Kaufman: *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 153–154.

103 “Senior Hadassah”, *The American Jewish World*, 2 June 1939, 12. For further details, see Gelvin, “Zionism and the Representation of Jewish Palestine”, 37–64.

104 On the connecting role of diaspora institutions, see David Leblang/Jenny Glazier: “Diaspora Engagement Strategies: Theory and Case Study Evidence”, in: Liam Kennedy (ed.): *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 34–47, here 37.

The fairs increased contacts between diaspora groups and their countries of origin in a variety of ways.<sup>105</sup> Despite cultural assimilation, “homeland” still stands as “an important site for identity formation and subjectivity” for immigrants and resonates with their descendants.<sup>106</sup> Undoubtedly, their relations with ancestral homes varied in intensity and structure. While certain diasporas established close ties with their home countries, others did not have frequent contacts.<sup>107</sup> The world’s fairs were considering increased contacts between home countries and diasporas in both cases. One way was through the dissemination of information about native cultures and contemporary politics via national pavilions. These enabled both diasporas and other visitors to follow the news abroad.<sup>108</sup> The pavilions served “as a barometer” of international events, including the assassination of Romanian Prime Minister Armand Călinescu.<sup>109</sup> The demand for such news increased as the Second World War intensified.<sup>110</sup>

Ambassadors to the United States and diaspora leaders also acted as intermediaries. The ambassadors made frequent trips to the fairgrounds and host cities to supervise preparations and gave dedication speeches on the opening of national pavilions.<sup>111</sup> Diasporas honored the leaders of their home countries with special programs.<sup>112</sup> Civic and military dignitaries from the Balkans and the Middle East came to the United States for fairs and met diaspora leaders, who gave a rapturous welcome to their visiting countrymen.<sup>113</sup> From the perspectives of these dignitaries, building a bridge between themselves and diasporas could generate income for the home countries via tourism. As “informal economic diplomats”, diaspora leaders

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105 Bali, *Anadolu'dan Yeni Dünya'ya*, 342.

106 Robyn Magalit Rodriguez: “Introduction”, in: Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (ed.): *Filipino American Transnational Activism: Diasporic Politics Among the Second Generation* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1–25, here 2.

107 Elie Chrysostome/Jean-Marie Nkongolo-Bakenda: “Diaspora and International Business in the Homeland: From Impact of Remittances to Determinants of Entrepreneurship and Research Agenda”, in: Maria Elo and Indianna Minto-Coy (eds.): *Diaspora Networks in International Business: Perspectives for Understanding and Managing Diaspora Business and Resources* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 17–40, here 25.

108 “Fair Injects Carnival Spirit”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 September 1939, 11.

109 Sidney Shalett: “362,522”, *New York Times*, 25 September 1939, 1.

110 “Fair Sets Mark for Attendance”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 June 1940, 17; Robert S. Bird: “Fair’s Crowd”, *New York Times*, 28 June 1940, 23.

111 “Features for the Week”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 September 1933, sec. D, 5; Earl Mullin: “Fair Attendance”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 October 1934, 17.

112 “al-tariq alladhi” [The Way that], *al-Ahram*, 21 August 1933, 3; Earl Mullin: “Fair Record”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 September 1933, 2.

113 “fi Wizarat al-Kharijiyah” [in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *al-Ahram*, 2 June 1933, 7; “Prime Minister”, *The Washington Post*, 15 August 1933, 7; “Amerika’da Türk Günü” [Turkish Day in America], *Türk Sözü*, 25 July 1939, 3.

have the capacity to facilitate the transfer of goods and knowledge between their host and origin countries.<sup>114</sup> Accordingly, the guests called for the diasporas to visit their old countries.

The post-Ottoman governments wanted to build a modern and friendly image of their countries in the United States with the help of diasporas.<sup>115</sup> Recent scholarship has reinforced the role of diasporas in disseminating messages about their home countries in their countries of destination because “public diplomacy is not solely the purview of the state.”<sup>116</sup> One can see the individual and collective efforts of diasporas to promote positive views about their countries of origin in the United States via media outlets and publications since the early days of the interwar period.<sup>117</sup> The transfer of money and investment by diasporas benefited home countries.<sup>118</sup> Of course, the purposes of diasporas and the governments of home countries may not align perfectly. The main concern of diasporas is the well-being of their families and relatives, not the interests of their nations.<sup>119</sup> Even when diasporas do not collaborate with state authorities, they can easily “help the homeland advance its goals in the host nation.”<sup>120</sup> This was nowhere more evident than at the fairs, since the diasporas were always concerned to portray their cultures in a positive light, which state officials in home countries welcomed.

The coming of non-diplomatic visitors from the Balkans and the Middle East to fairs was another channel of dialogue. Some of them arrived in the United States

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- 114 Michaella Vanore: “Diasporas as Actors of Economic Diplomacy”, in: Liam Kennedy (ed.): *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 156–168, here 157.
- 115 Elpida Vogli: “The Making of Greece abroad: Continuity and Change in the Modern Diaspora Politics of a ‘Historical’ Irredentist Homeland”, in: *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17:1 (2011), 14–33, here 22–23.
- 116 Vanessa Bravo/Maria De Moya: “Introduction: Diasporas from Latin America and Their Role in Public Diplomacy”, in: Vanessa Bravo/Maria De Moya (eds.): *Latin American Diasporas in Public Diplomacy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 1–24, here 3.
- 117 Ḥannā Şalāḥ: *Filastīn wa tajdīd ḥayātihā: kitāb jāmi‘ li-mabāḥith tārikhiyah wa ‘umrāniyah wa ijtimā‘iyah wa siyāsīyah ‘an Filastīn* [Palestine and its Rejuvenation: A Comprehensive Book for Historical, Civil, Social, and Political Discussions on Palestine] (New York: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Tijāriyah al-Sūriyah al-Amrikiyah, 1919), 165.
- 118 Pablo S. Bose: “Diaspora, Development, and the Reshaping of Homelands in an Evolving World”, in: Ajaya K. Sahoo (ed.): *Routledge Handbook of Asian Diaspora and Development* (London: Routledge, 2021), 95–106, here 98.
- 119 Joaquin Jay Gonzalez/Ador Revelar Torneo: “Diaspora Diplomacy: Weapon of Mass Dispersion”, in: Ajaya K. Sahoo (ed.): *Routledge Handbook of Asian Diaspora and Development* (London: Routledge, 2021), 253–267, here 259.
- 120 Maria De Moya/Vanessa Bravo: “Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Future Research”, in: Vanessa Bravo/Maria de Moya (eds.): *Latin American Diasporas in Public Diplomacy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 311–324, here 315.



through societies and tourist companies,<sup>121</sup> others came individually. One potential barrier for an average visitor was the high cost of the voyage. For example, a tour from Tel Aviv to the New York World's Fair in 1939 cost \$245 (\$4899 in 2021), \$180 (\$3599 in 2021), and \$135 (\$2699 in 2021) for the first, second, and third-class tickets, respectively.<sup>122</sup> The second challenge for foreigners was the length of time for which a tourist visa was valid. If the visa expired, they had to send their application for an extension to the immigration commissioner at the port of arrival. With a valid passport, an extension was not difficult to obtain.<sup>123</sup> But, for those who arrived in cities other than Chicago and New York, the process was expensive and time-consuming. Although the exact number of individual visitors was unknown, the applications for the Immigrants' Protective League pertaining to the world's fairs indicated the existence of individuals from the post-Ottoman countries who wanted to prolong their sojourns. For example, the League received around 300 applications from 1932 to 1933, which included two Greeks, two Yugoslavs, and two Romanians.<sup>124</sup> Such individuals generally stayed with their relatives, who were naturalized citizens.<sup>125</sup> The relatively low number of people who came from home countries further increased the importance of diaspora leaders representing their native cultures at the fairs.

The fairs also strengthened ties between diasporas and the United States. The presence of the post-Ottoman nations not only meant that fairs had more people of Balkan and Middle Eastern heritage but also that other groups grew better acquainted with them. Both the Chicago and New York fairs ran under the motto of the integration of immigrant communities into American society. The organizers wanted to display the "cultural contributions of immigrant races to American civilization."<sup>126</sup> The one at New York underlined this theme even more by focusing on "amity among races and nationalities."<sup>127</sup> Political authorities expected the immigrants not only to "honor their old countries" but also "to blazon their record of achievement in the new." President Franklin D. Roosevelt acknowledged in his speech in Chicago that the U.S. population hailed from many different cultural and

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121 "Visit to World's Fair", *The Palestine Post*, 4 June 1939, 6.

122 *The Palestine Post*, 18 May 1939, 5.

123 Immigration and Refugee Services of America Division of the Foreign Language Press – Press Releases, 8 April 1939, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota (IHRCA): IHRCA1013, Box 21, Folder 3, Index No. 4748.

124 Mrs. Kenneth F. Rich, World's Fair Report, November 1933, 5–6, SCUA: MSIPL 67, Box 11, Folder 146, Series 1.

125 *Ibid.*, 12. There must have been many more individuals who attended the fair on tourist visas but did not consult the League.

126 Immigration and Refugee Services of America Division of the Foreign Language Press – Press Releases, 29 April 1940, 1, IHRCA: IHRCA1013, Box 21, Folder 5, Index No. 4866.

127 "Amity", *The Sentinel*, 4 May 1939, 40.

ethnic backgrounds across the world.<sup>128</sup> The Mayor of New York City, Fiorello La Guardia, was another top-level politician who attended most opening days and gave speeches to honor immigrant communities.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, radio broadcasts focused on “the contributions of various immigrant groups to the building of America.”<sup>130</sup>

This prevailing rhetoric of inclusion was the direct outcome of the American social and political landscapes in the 1930s. The anti-immigration movement had gained momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and eventually culminated in the enactment of restrictive policies in the 1920s. While this hostile atmosphere sustained the demographic preponderance of white ethnic groups, who formed a numerical majority in the country, those from other backgrounds were clearly discriminated against.<sup>131</sup> The latter were often blamed for stealing Americans’ jobs, spreading diseases, and involvement in organized crime.<sup>132</sup> One major reason for this was the perceived difference between the “East” and the “West”, with the former being assumed incompatible with “Western civilization”.<sup>133</sup> Nonetheless, the low level of immigration of the following decade brought “a quasi-mystical belief in the US as a melting pot” for immigrants.<sup>134</sup>

The actions and speeches of high-ranking politicians, such as Roosevelt and La Guardia, at the fairs were emblematic of this belief. Presenting an image of the United States as a place of plurality, for example at fairs, had also practical outcomes, such as winning the endorsement of diasporas in future elections. Moreover, as Cull has argued, the governments of host countries try to give peaceful political messages to other countries via the latter’s diasporas.<sup>135</sup> Considering the peaceful themes of the fairs and the intention of American politicians to use these spectacles as a tool of public diplomacy, it is safe to argue that post-Ottoman diasporas served the United States government in generating a favorable opinion of their country abroad.

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128 “Emigrants Honor ‘The Old Country’”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 June 1933, 5.

129 *Messenger d’Athènes*, 9 June 1939, 1. He spoke in Croatian in the Yugoslav Pavilion (“France and British Empire”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May 1939, 6).

130 American Jewish Committee Archives (AJC Archives), Report of Radio Activities for Month of April, 1939, 28 April 1939, 3.

131 Margaret Sands Orchowski: *The Law that Changed the Face of America: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 33.

132 Adam Goodman: *The Deportation Machine: America’s Long History of Expelling Immigrants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 41.

133 Lon Kurashige: *Two Faces of Exclusion: The Untold History of Anti-Asian Racism in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), xi.

134 “Shannon Latkin Anderson: *Immigration, Assimilation, and the Cultural Construction of American National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2.

135 Nicholas J. Cull: “Diasporas and Public Diplomacy: From History to Policy”, in: Liam Kennedy (ed.): *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 7–18, here 10.

In response to these inclusive messages, post-Ottoman Americans promoted the idea that they were an integral part of the United States, even if many of them did not hold U.S. citizenship at birth. They made efforts to construct and define their historical experiences and draw a 'patriotic' image of themselves as communities who served the United States in various ways. The pivotal role of war veterans on Yugoslav Day in 1933 reflected this striving for acceptance.<sup>136</sup> In 1934, Captain Louis Cukela and J.A. Mandusic, two Yugoslav-Americans who had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, were honored before their fellow Yugoslav-Americans.<sup>137</sup> The contribution of these communities to their new country and their enrichment of the American culture were commonly repeated themes of the national pavilions and days.<sup>138</sup> A special section of the Yugoslav pavilion in New York displayed the part immigrant Yugoslavs had played in the United States.<sup>139</sup> Greek Americans likewise propagated their contributions "to uphold the traditions of democracy" in the country.<sup>140</sup>

Religious activities were another instance in which certain immigrants were included in the broader category of "American". A number of immigrants from the Balkans and the Middle East lost their connections with the churches of their native lands and attended American denominations.<sup>141</sup> Others established their own churches in towns with sizeable diasporas, and religion became an important factor in binding diasporas.<sup>142</sup> Diaspora leaders, particularly businessmen, sponsored the erection of new churches in the New World.<sup>143</sup> The relations between new churches and religious authorities in the home countries "established fresh relationships and new levels of connectivity between" diaspora groups in the United States and their old countries.<sup>144</sup> The fairs showed the paramount role that diasporas assigned to religion in preserving their identities. In New York, "the prayer for peace", which was a multinational event, attracted hundreds of religious representatives from Catholic,

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136 Earl Mullin: "Fair Dedicates", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 July 1933, 5.

137 Events – National Days, 1934, 29 July 1934, SCUA.

138 "Marks Hellenic Day", *New York Times*, 9 September 1940, 34.

139 "Outdoor Style", *Women's Wear Daily*, 11 May 1939, 32.

140 "Hellenic Day", *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 September 1940, 13.

141 Naff, "Lebanese Immigration into the United States", 151.

142 Philip M. Kayal/Joseph M. Kayal: *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975).

143 Vassilis Kardasis/Gelina Harlaftis: "Anazitóntas tis Chóres tis Epangélias: O apódimos Ellinismós apo ta méssa tou 19<sup>ou</sup> aióna os ton V' Pankósmio Pólemo" [Seeking the Land of Promise: Greek Diaspora from the mid-19th century to World War II], in: Iōannēs K. Chasiōtēs/Olga Katsiardē-Hering/Eurydikē A. Ampatzē (eds.): *Oi Éllines sti Diasporá 150s–210s ai* [The Greeks in Diaspora 15th–21st Century] (Athens: Voulē tōn Hellēnōn, 2006), 53–74, here 65.

144 Malcolm Campbell: *Ireland's Farthest Shores: Mobility, Migration, and Settlement in the Pacific World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022), 140.

Protestant, and Jewish backgrounds.<sup>145</sup> Although followers of Orthodox Christianity and Islam were excluded, diasporas nevertheless used religion to prove their Americanness at other times.<sup>146</sup> Bishop Kallistos and Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Church were among the religious leaders who led ceremonies and gave messages in line with the patriotic themes of the fairs.<sup>147</sup>

A variety of exhibits highlighted post-Ottoman diaspora experiences, and diasporas used their prominent members to prove that they had successfully become part of the 'American dream'. Diaspora leaders promoted famous historical figures as symbols of their identity and pride. For example, Yugoslav exhibits highlighted the contributions of Yugoslav-American scientists, including Michael Pupin and Nikola Tesla, to the United States and Western civilization.<sup>148</sup> Celebrities of Balkan and Middle Eastern descent were invited to attend fairs as representatives of their communities. In return, some powerful voices in entertainment lent their support to the diaspora's representation in the hope of publicizing the pavilions and special events.<sup>149</sup> During the observance of Armenian Day in 1933, Armenian opera stars participated in concerts.<sup>150</sup> Their Bulgarian counterparts performed songs for Bulgarian Day. Georges Enescu, a Romania-born composer, led the New York Philharmonic on Romanian Day at the New York World's Fair in 1939.<sup>151</sup> Academics and other well educated people gave speeches on folklore, history, and language, introducing their heritage to the American public.<sup>152</sup> With such success stories and special events and by honoring distinguished members of their communities, diasporas tried to advance a view of post-Ottoman diasporas as hardworking and 'civilized' citizens to supplant previous stereotypes.

The role of these diasporas is connected to the larger story of racialization in American society. As Gowricharn has written: "Integration cannot be defined without reference to the prevailing ideology of the host society."<sup>153</sup> The assumed superiority of Anglo-Saxon (or Nordic) people dominated the cultural and social debates

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145 "Jews, Christians Pray for Peace", *The American Jewish World*, 13 September 1940, 14.

146 "The Fair Today", *New York Times*, 23 July 1939, 28.

147 "Thousands", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 October 1933, 11; "The Fair Today", *New York Times*, 7 October 1939, 12.

148 "Outdoor Style", *Women's Wear Daily*, 11 May 1939, 32.

149 Lucius Beede: "This New York", *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 August 1939, 12; "The Fair", *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 August 1939, 26.

150 Mullin, "Fair Dedications", 5.

151 "Music", *The Victoria Daily Times*, 15 July 1939, 23.

152 Mullin, "Fair Attendance", 17.

153 Ruben Gowricharn: "Introduction: The Politics of Integration in Indian Diaspora Societies", in: Ruben Gowricharn (ed.): *Political Integration in Indian Diaspora Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1–14, here 1.

in this period. Immigrants and their descendants from other backgrounds were depicted as enemies who threatened the survival of “American” values.<sup>154</sup> “Whiteness”, combined with “class prejudice”, marked the distinction between Americans of European ancestry and other populations. “Civilization and white racial identity” were integral to the national sovereignty of the United States from the perspective of political elites, which heavily influenced migration policies and attitudes toward immigrants.<sup>155</sup> If one imagines a racial spectrum between those of “Anglo privilege” and “populations with African heritage”,<sup>156</sup> post-Ottoman diasporas were placed between these groups. “Whiteness” as a socially constructed category was not limited to racial appearance. Instead, a variety of “geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious factors” defined its borders. The construction of a concept of whiteness for post-Ottoman diasporas was not straightforward. It was a set of overlapping and contested perspectives and perceptions rather than a linear scale.<sup>157</sup>

The attempts of post-Ottoman Americans to be included in the society at large via fairs thus reflected their desire to be considered “white”. As Karen Brodtkin persuasively observed, there is “a conceptual distinction between ethnoracial assignment and ethnoracial identity.” While the former is constructed by political elites through the manipulation of public opinion, the latter is the self-identification of ethnic groups. The construction of ethnoracial identity takes place within the confinement of ethnoracial assignment.<sup>158</sup> Arab Christians exemplified this tension between ethnoracial assignment and identity. Early immigrants with Arab Christian backgrounds “sought to claim a space within white American culture

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154 Anderson, *Immigration*, 78.

155 Patrick Manning/Tiffany Trimmer: *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 166.

156 Bruce B. Lawrence: *New Faiths, Old Fears: Muslims and Other Asian Immigrants in American Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 10.

157 Andrew Shryock/Nabeel Abraham: “On Margins and Mainstreams”, in: Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock (eds.): *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 15–35, here 16–17; Jen’nan Ghazal Read: *Culture, Class, and Work Among Arab-American Women* (New York: LFB, 2004), 1; Sawsan Abdulrahim: “‘Whiteness’ and the Arab Immigrant Experience”, in: Nadine Naber/Amaney Jamal (eds.): *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 131–146; Earlene Craver: “On the Boundary of White: The Cartozian Naturalization Case and the Armenians, 1923–1925”, in: *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28:2 (2009), 30–56; John Tehranian: *Whitewashed: America’s Invisible Middle Eastern Minority* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

158 Karen Brodtkin: *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 3.

through strategies of assimilation and strategic deployment of exoticism.<sup>159</sup> While Christianity made them closer to whiteness, they faced different levels of constraint on the grounds of their Arab and Middle Eastern origins.<sup>160</sup>

Figure 1 Group of Yugoslavian Visitors at the Chicago Fair.



As the activities of diasporas at fairs suggest, community leaders did not readily accept their exclusion as non-white people. Traditional accounts of diasporas and their assimilation to countries of destination ruled out the role of ethnic communities in shaping their identity. Recent scholarship has pointed out the active agency diasporas have in the negotiation of a new identity.<sup>161</sup> Women played a role in this

159 Lisa Suhair Majaj: "Arab-Americans and the Meanings of Race", in: Amritjit Singh/Peter Schmidt (eds.): *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 320–337, here 323.

160 Majaj, "Arab-Americans and the Meanings of Race", 332; Randa A. Kayyali: "Race, Religion and Identity: Arab Christians in the United States", in: *Culture and Religion* 19:1 (2018), 1–19, here 1.

161 Richard Alba/Victor Nee: *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.

process alongside men. The number of female immigrants from the Balkans and the Middle East remained low before the First World War, especially for Muslim groups, which diminished their involvement in the public sphere.<sup>162</sup> The gradual weakening of old identities as a result of immersion in American culture brought greater public visibility to women in the 1930s.<sup>163</sup> Fairs became a meeting place for women and men alike where they attempted to cross the racial line, even if they could not achieve whiteness (Figure 1).

## Exhibiting Native Cultures

As they worked to prove their American identity, diasporas also tried to introduce as much as they could of their native culture into exhibits and events. They curated a variety of exhibits and organized events to help spectators gain a better understanding of their culture. Table 4 details major exhibits by national pavilions at the New York World's Fair. In addition to products and artworks, the pavilions offered books with pictures and informative articles about the nature and beauties of the home countries for adults and children.<sup>164</sup>

Music was one of the chief means used to represent native cultures and had a central place in the construction of the diasporas' "self-image".<sup>165</sup> Diasporas placed great importance on native musical instruments, which was exemplified by the widespread use of instruments, such as the shepherd's flute in performances at the fairs. The stress on so-called national instruments – though many instruments' sound and structure were in fact very similar – reflected the increasing nationalist

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162 Michael W. Suleiman: "A Brief History of Arab American Women, 1890s to World War II", in Michael W. Suleiman/Suad Joseph/Louise Cainkar (eds.): *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 21–52, here 22.

163 Suleiman: "A Brief History of Arab American Women", 47; Amy E. Rowe: "'Keeping Us Lebanese': The Role of Unmarried Daughters of Ottoman-Era Lebanese Immigrants in New England", in: Michael W. Suleiman/Suad Joseph/ and Louise Cainkar (eds.): *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 84–113, here 87.

164 Mary Gould Davis, June 1934, 2, SCUA.

165 Stathis Gauntlett: "The Diaspora Sings Back: Rebetika Down Under", in: Dimitris Tziouvas (ed.): *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 271–284, here 272. On the crucial role of music as a marker of identity for these diaspora groups, see Anne K. Rasmussen: "Made in America: Historical and Contemporary Recordings of Middle Eastern Music in the United States", in: *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 31:2 (1997), 158–62; Silvia Angelique Alajaji: *Music and the Armenian Diaspora: Searching for Home in Exile* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Beau Bothwell: "'For Thee America! For Thee Syria?': Alexander Maloof, Orientalist Music, and the Politics of the Syrian Mahjar", in: *Journal of the Society for American Music* 14:4 (2020), 383–418.

spirit in the world in the 1930s.<sup>166</sup> Just as political elites tried to construct their national identities in the Balkans and the Middle East, diasporas in the United States claimed to possess distinctive cultural traditions.<sup>167</sup> Nation-building in home countries politicized diasporas abroad.<sup>168</sup>

Table 4 Notable Exhibits at the New York World's Fair (1939–1940)<sup>169</sup>

Country	Exhibits
Albania	Embroideries, furs, hides, wool, minerals, semi-precious stones, dairy products, rugs, perfumes, silverware, and refined oils
Greece	Glass, fruit, furniture, honey, marble, pottery, rugs, and silks
Lebanon	Native jewelry and silverware
Romania	Textiles, ceramics, handicraft works, rugs, furniture, painting, sculpture, and cultural exhibits
Turkey	Copper and brass bowls, fabrics, fruit, jugs, hand-worked metals, leather work, native perfumes, tobacco, and woven rugs.
Yugoslavia	Peasant art, natural resources and their exploitation, industry, and architecture

Next to music, dance formed another avenue of representation.<sup>170</sup> Post-Ottoman diasporas, without exception, performed traditional dances at the fairs. In certain cases, they offered open classes to teach spectators the basic principles of each dance.<sup>171</sup> Although dance brought together men and women, children and adults, alike, girls in national costume formed the heart of dance performances. The girls not only represented their respective cultures but also occasionally helped exhibitors promote their products, as shown by the use of dancing girls by the Iraqi pavilion.<sup>172</sup>

166 On diasporic nationalism, see Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 113–134.

167 Their definition of nationalism evolved over time in line with political developments in home countries. For example, see Laurel Wigle/Sameer Abraham: “Arab Nationalism in America: The Dearborn Arab Community”, in: David W. Hartman (ed.): *Immigrants and Migrants: The Detroit Ethnic Experience* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 279–302.

168 Steven B. Miles: *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 137.

169 “The Exhibits”, *New York Times*, 30 April 1939, 17–18.

170 The representative role of dance was not limited to post-Ottoman diasporas. For example, see George Dorris: “The Polish Ballet at the New York World's Fair, June 1939”, in: *Dance Chronicle* 27:2 (2004), 217–234.

171 “Program for Today”, *New York Times*, 13 September 1940, 25.

172 “The Fair Today”, *New York Times*, 19 September 1939, 34.



As with music, the various dances were very similar: The Lebanese *dabke*, Bulgarian *horó*, Turkish *horón*, Greek *horos*, Armenian *kochari*, and Yugoslav *kolo* could all be seen.<sup>173</sup> The importance of dance performances mainly stemmed from their 'collective' characteristics. They brought together thousands of members of diasporas as both performers and spectators. For instance, representatives of Greek societies performed folk dances before an audience of 2000 people on Hellenic Day in 1939.<sup>174</sup> The unifying role of dance was particularly important for ethnic groups whose culture was not represented by a government. In such cases, community leaders took the lead and organized a dance festival at the fair, which reminded the celebrants of their community's heritage. For example, the Armenian Glee Club presented Armenian folk songs in 1939, and Margaret Valian, an Armenian-American dancer, performed a solo dance.<sup>175</sup> The gathering of huge crowds at the dance festivals was also used to hold weddings.<sup>176</sup> These collective activities and events provided diaspora leaders with arenas to promote a cohesive image of their communities, at least rhetorically.

Dance and musical societies of diasporas also took part in community events such as folk festivals. This means of celebrating and preserving ethnic identities in the United States dated back to the 19th century,<sup>177</sup> and participation increased during the interwar period. For example, the Folk Festival Council of New York organized folk festivals in 1934, attracting thousands of men and women of Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Jewish, and Yugoslav descent. The world's fairs provided a large and popular stage for post-Ottoman diasporas to show off their folk culture, and there was great interest in the folk festivals held at the Chicago fair.<sup>178</sup> A similar festival in New York in 1939 featured 29 ethnic groups, including Bulgarian, Greek, Jewish, Romanian, Serbian, and Slovenian performers.<sup>179</sup>

The preparations for these collective performances increased collaboration within diaspora communities. To develop coordination and have a good connection with the other dancers, the performers needed to practice for weeks. Visitors were impressed: According to *The New York Times*, Egyptians, Greeks, and Turks "caught the eye as they passed in a variety of nation[al] costumes" during a parade at the

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173 *Chicago: A Century of Progress, 1833–1933* (Chicago: Marquette, 1933), 93.

174 "Exposition", *New York Times*, 21 July 1939, 10.

175 "Singing to Follow Orchestral Music", *Detroit Free Press*, 9 August 1939, 3.

176 "Century of Progress", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 July 1933, 7.

177 Kathleen Neils Conzen: "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth Century German America on Parade", in: Werner Sollors (ed.): *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 44–76; Donlon, *German and Irish Immigrants*, 124.

178 Immigration and Refugee Services of America Division of the Foreign Language Press – Press Releases, 9 May 1934, 1, IHRCA: IHRC1013, Box 21, Folder 4, Index No. 3701.

179 M.L.: "Dance", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 May 1939, 10.

New York Fair in 1939.<sup>180</sup> The cumulative effects of these activities demonstrated the success of diaspora leaders in claiming public attention.

*Table 5 The Seating Capacity of National Restaurants (1939)<sup>181</sup>*

Country	Capacity	Country	Capacity	Country	Capacity
Switzerland	618	Sweden	372	Japan	100
Belgium	617	Albania	300	Turkey	100
France	600	Brazil	300	Hungary	70
Poland	520	Portugal	200	Argentina	60
Romania	500	Norway	170	Finland	60
Great Britain	428	Denmark	125	Chile	30
Italy	400				

Like music and dance, special restaurants became a pivotal part of the diaspora representation that gave all visitors a chance to taste the enormous variety of “genuine” dishes of the Balkans and the Middle East.<sup>182</sup> Some of the nations had restaurants with varying seating capacities in the international area (Table 5). Others, such as Yugoslavia, opened restaurants as part of the official pavilions.<sup>183</sup> Iraq opened a “typical Arabian Restaurant”.<sup>184</sup> Cafe Tel Aviv, as the fair’s only kosher restaurant, offered “Palestinian specials” to visitors.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, there were scores of American restaurants and refreshment stands in and around the fairgrounds, some of which were owned by the naturalized citizens of post-Ottoman countries.

In addition to their importance for representation, restaurants yielded a profit for their owners. They brought cooks to New York. Romanian chefs from Casa Capşa, a historical restaurant in Bucharest, came to New York for the Romanian restaurant.<sup>186</sup> The personal chef of the late Kemal Atatürk supervised the Turkish restau-

180 “Crowds”, *New York Times*, 1 May 1939, 1–2.

181 Documents Relating to Construction Progress, 1937–1939, 162, NYPL.

182 Reports on Foreign Government Participation, 24 February 1939, 3, NYPL. For relations between culture and food at these two fairs, see: Elizabeth Badger: *The World’s Fare: Food and Culture at American World Fairs from 1893–1939* (Master’s Thesis, Western Washington University, 2012), 54–78.

183 Documents relating to the Czechoslovakia Pavilion, 10 May 1939, NYPL.

184 Facts about the New York World’s Fair 1940, 6, NYPL.

185 David Hillel Gelernter: 1939, *The Lost World of the Fair* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 299.

186 Local unions and workers felt threatened by foreign employees and opposed the arrival of such skilled people to do specialized jobs (“Foreign Nations”, *New York Times*, 8 June 1939, 1).

rant. The managers of the pavilions and restaurants brought wine and caviar by ship or airplane. Musicians and dancers often enlivened restaurant atmospheres to attract more visitors.<sup>187</sup> Waitresses in national costumes served the specialties. While offering foods of central importance to the diet of the Balkans and the Middle East, the restaurants also served American and French dishes.<sup>188</sup> Primary accounts indicate that these restaurants proved very popular with both those of post-Ottoman descent and other spectators.<sup>189</sup>

By competing to attract diners, ethnic and national restaurants drew together the different diaspora groups, undermining the nationalist claims of community and political leaders. While visiting national restaurants, journalist Richard W. Dunlap heard people speaking Arabic, Greek, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish.<sup>190</sup> Another account stated that Greeks, Turks, and Yugoslavs dominated the Albanian restaurant on its opening day.<sup>191</sup> In effect, the restaurants cemented the bonds of friendship even between people whose common history was full of conflicts. For example, many Armenians enjoyed dishes and drinks in the Turkish restaurant, although the Turkish delegation had feared an attack on the Turkish pavilion by Armenian Americans in 1939.<sup>192</sup>

The desire of diasporas to demonstrate their pride in their respective identity found its perfect form of expression in the arrangement of special days and events. These were funded through the sale of tickets to diaspora members. In 1933, 28 different nationalities organized special days.<sup>193</sup> There were special days for Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Palestinian, and Yugoslav Americans.<sup>194</sup> In 1934, Albanian, Greek, Palestinian, and Yugoslav Americans continued to arrange national days. The number of days and events by post-Ottoman diasporas significantly increased in 1939, which saw the celebrations of Iraqi, Albanian, Jewish Palestinian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Armenian-American, Hellenic, Lebanese, Yugoslav, and Turkish days.<sup>195</sup> These days were visited by thousands of people from around the United States who wished to express attachment to their own identity.

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187 "Fair will Prove Promised Land for Gourmets", *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 April 1939, 5.

188 "The Exhibits", *New York Times*, 30 April 1939, 17–18.

189 August Loeb: "Menus", *New York Times*, 28 May 1939, sec. XX, 3.

190 Richard W. Dunlap: "Prospective Travelers", *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 July 1939, sec. D, 12.

191 "Fair Cafes", *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 May 1939, 2.

192 Neşet Halil: "Günün Meseleleri" [Issues of the Day], *Tan*, 9 June 1939, 3; N. H. Atay: "Amerika'da Türkiye'ye Hasret Türkiye'liler" [Those from Turkey in America Longing for Turkey], *Ulus*, 31 July 1939, 5; Vedat Nedim Tör: *Yıllar Böyle Geçti: Anılar* [The Years Passed like this: Memories] (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1976), 45. Tör was the general commissioner of the Turkish pavilion at the fair in 1939.

193 "Keeping in Step with a Century of Progress", *The Billboard*, 21 January 1933, 31, 36.

194 *Chicago: A Century of Progress*, 153–158.

195 Promotion Stories, 22 May 1934, 3–4, SCUA.

There were stark contrasts among social classes in terms of the opportunity to make this kind of pilgrimage. The cost of visiting the fair from other parts of the country was far beyond what a working-class person could afford. For example, to visit the New York World's Fair from Chicago, the cost for a single person was \$38.90 (about \$777 in 2021 terms) and \$74.95 (about \$1499 in 2021) for a five- and eight-day tour, respectively.<sup>196</sup> Generally speaking, it was the wealthy members of diasporas and community leaders from other states that attended national days and events, and thus dominated the representation of diasporas.<sup>197</sup>

Together with the residents of the host cities, these visitors filled the fairgrounds and waved the flags of the United States and their home countries.<sup>198</sup> Special programs included military spectacles; songs, music, and dance; a parade in native costumes; athletic contests; fireworks; motorboat races and many other attractions. The most interesting activity was arguably the beauty contest by the Yugoslavs in 1933 (Figure 2). Yugoslav Americans all around the United States cast their votes to select "Miss Yugoslavia to reign as queen over the official Yugoslav day." Radmila J. Govedarica, a 19-year-old who lived in Chicago, was the winner.<sup>199</sup>

Such beauty contests can be evaluated within the broader context of diaspora identity construction.<sup>200</sup> On the one hand, the beauty of the winners was seen as representing their countries and cultures of origin. On the other hand, since the beauty contest was conducted among Yugoslav *Americans* on American soil, which made the winners not only Yugoslav but American beauties as well, the contest established a distance between the diasporas and their roots. Such competitions were a clear sign of the formation of a novel identity that was the admixture of new and old cultures.<sup>201</sup>

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196 *The Sentinel*, 8 June 1939, 15; *The American Jewish World*, 28 June 1940, 2. The GDP per capita in the United States was \$710.82 in 1939 and \$775.69 in 1940. In other words, someone with average income had to give approximately her one-tenth of their annual earnings for an eight-day tour.

197 "Greek Day", *World's Fair News*, 3 September 1933, 1.

198 "Nevyork Sergisi" [New York Fair], *Anadolu*, 25 July 1939, 9.

199 "Century of Progress", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 June 1933, 7.

200 Lon Kurashige: "The Problem of Biculturalism: Japanese American Identity and Festival before World War II", in: *The Journal of American History* 86:4 (2000), 1632–1654, here 1644.

201 For details about this concept, see Vanita Reddy: *Fashioning Diaspora: Beauty, Femininity, and South Asian American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016), 4.

Figure 2 Yugoslav winners of a beauty contest at the Chicago World's Fair (1933).



Since this hybrid identity was symbolized by the youth, it was younger generations that became the main target audience of special days and events at the fairs. Although post-Ottoman Americans were mostly immigrants, there were many among them who were born in the United States to immigrant parents (Tables 1 and 2). Though “the Americanized children” of foreign-born families took a close interest in the native cultures of their families, their knowledge of the Balkans and the Middle East was naturally limited.<sup>202</sup> In many regards, the fairs introduced young members of the diasporas to their ancestral countries. Parents brought their children to the fairgrounds with the hope of preserving their traditions by reconnecting the youth to their cultural heritage. Young people formed the backbone of parades and other collective activities.<sup>203</sup> In the words of Israel Goldstein, who delivered a speech at the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, youth was “a crucial test of

202 Naff, “Lebanese Immigration into the United States”, 160.

203 Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Turkish Republican Archives) (BCA), 30.1.0.0.5.22.7, 11 April 1939, 2.

national self-hood.”<sup>204</sup> A wide range of activities and spectacles enabled the transmission of the culture of their parent’s home countries to younger generations.

If the celebration of native cultures was one pillar of representation, the mixture of old and new cultures was another. Diasporas amalgamated their own culture with modern and Western elements at the fairs,<sup>205</sup> further proving their dual ambition to be included in American society while preserving their native cultures. On Greek Day in 1934, there was classical ballet and Greek music by Giorgos Grachis, a renowned luthier and the president of the Association of Greek Musicians of the United States, and his orchestra.<sup>206</sup> In 1939, a concert at the formal opening of the Romanian Pavilion, which was sponsored by the Romanian government, included a variety of Romanian music.<sup>207</sup> That same year, Turkish Day witnessed a violin recital and native Turkish folk dances.<sup>208</sup> During Armenian Day at both fairs, performers sang a variety of opera and folk songs.<sup>209</sup> In addition to the modernized version of folk music, performers played and sang a variety of American songs.<sup>210</sup> Just as the performance of native music was related to the representative of their identity, the inclusion of Western music in the concert repertoires reflected their aim of being included in the American society.<sup>211</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of the world’s fairs at Chicago and New York in the identity formation of post-Ottoman diasporas in the United States in the 1930s. Each group had a lineage that originated in the same region, but they did not form cohesive communities, because they were divided by factors such as age, class, profession, ethnicity, ideology, language, and religion. This diversity had implications when it came to their representations at fairs. Even so, fairs became a unique means for immigrants and their descendants to come together and have a common set of experiences. Diaspora leaders used the fairs to call for unity between scattered communities. Especially those with higher income levels and more formal education and those who had pursued distinguished careers in arts, academia, and business came

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204 Israel Goldstein: *Toward a Solution* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1940), 223.

205 Olin Downes: “Music of Rumania”, *New York Times*, 6 May 1939, 23.

206 Mullin, “100,100”, 6.

207 “Complete Program”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 May 1939, 10.

208 “Fair’s Tribute Paid to Turkey on Peace Ideals”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 July 1939, 22.

209 Mullin, “Fair Record”, 2; “Program for Today”, *New York Times*, 15 September 1940, 47.

210 Mullin, “2,000 Shriners Stage Colorful Parade at Fair”, 5.

211 The use of music “as part of a strategic intraethnic self-promotion” at these fairs was not unique to post-Ottoman diasporas (Derek Vaillant: *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873–1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 53–54).

to the fore. Challenges posed by the governments, colonialism, fair managers, and ideological conflicts notwithstanding, one can see the role of fairs in encouraging unity among diasporas.

The diasporas had two distinct yet interconnected aims: The desire for integration into American society was coupled with a wish to retain their native cultures. Since many did not see their native and American identities as being mutually exclusive, they created exhibits and staged massed choirs, folk festivals, and parades for large audiences to amplify the representation of their dual identities and dispel stereotypes about their native cultures. The restaurants and pavilions were a means for foreign nationals and immigrant communities to sample the best of their national cuisines and music. Enthusiasm for such undertakings was reflected in the attendance of thousands of diaspora members, as well as other spectators. These two world's fairs further provided a window onto broader integration of post-Ottoman diasporas into American society. The collective efforts of men and women helped them integrate into American society more effectively than other groups that were considered non-white in this period.<sup>212</sup> A wide array of activities and their popularity indicated that the efforts of diasporas to negotiate their social status and fit within the common understanding of American identity at the fairs were not in vain.

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212 Louise Cainkar: "The Social Construction of Difference and the Arab American Experience", in: *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25:2/3 (2006), 243–278, here 243.





# Translation as Means of Self-representation in Weimar Berlin Muslim Journals<sup>1</sup>

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Anna-Elisabeth Hampel

In order to facilitate mutual understanding between the Orient and Occident, it is necessary for European-educated *Moslimin* to convey the voice of their peoples and the goals of their movements to Europeans.<sup>2</sup>

With this programmatic appeal to self-representation, the Syrian student and anti-colonialist Muhammad ‘Abd al-Nafi‘ Shalabi (1901–1933, Tschelebi)<sup>3</sup> promoted his newly founded German journal *Islam-Echo* at the Spanish embassy in Berlin in 1927. By then, Tschelebi, who had arrived in Berlin in the early 1920s, had become a central figure among the anticolonial and pan-Islamic activists, missionaries, students, diplomats, traders, converts, and former prisoners of war from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia who gathered in Berlin after the First World War during the Weimar Period. Many of them were perceived by German society primarily as Muslims or, as in Tschelebi’s case, defined themselves as such or performed as representatives of ‘Islam’. In striving for self-presentation and in negotiating their relationship with ‘Europe’, multiple forms of translation were, as I will argue in this chapter, a key instrument.

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- 1 This chapter is based on my master’s thesis “Arabische und muslimische Zeitschriften als Medien multipler Übersetzungstätigkeiten im Berlin der Zwischenkriegszeit”, Freie Universität Berlin, 2021.
  - 2 Tschelebi, Nafi: Letter to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin, 23 April 1927, *Nachlass Prof. Dr. Gerhard Höpp, Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient* (NGH), 11.05.070, 25 [Author’s translation from German, emphasis added].
  - 3 In the following, I will transcribe names after the first mention in the form that was mostly used by the persons concerned in the context of the Berlin journals. Urdu names will be transcribed as used in European-language contexts by the individuals concerned. Names of journals and organizations will also be rendered in the transcription chosen by their publishers/founders/members.

Previous studies of these individuals and their activities and networks have been carried out mainly within the framework of research on “Islam in Europe in the Interwar Period”, depicting this period as marked by transformations that continue to have an impact to this day. Bekim Agai, Umar Ryad, and Mehdi Sajid, for example, have characterized the interwar years as a “crucial time of global entanglements”, a time in which Europe became a “borderless, cross-cultural, multi-ethnic and a plurinational sphere for their political and intellectual action, a place where discussions on Islam took shape.”<sup>4</sup> European metropolises in particular became hubs of local and global networks in which, as Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain argue, the structural and ideological foundations of what today is often discursively negotiated as ‘European Islam’ were constituted.<sup>5</sup>

Berlin’s emergence as one of these urban hubs was a result of both pragmatic and ideological factors. Although the German Empire had undertaken a highly instrumentalizing, racist, and ambivalent policy toward Islam in the context of its colonial ambitions and the First World War,<sup>6</sup> its self-staging as a ‘friend of Islam’<sup>7</sup> and the logic it propagated of the need to close ranks against the common enemies of England and France during its wartime alliance with the Ottoman Empire persisted even after Germany’s defeat and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The fact that Germany had to cede its colonies under the Treaty of Versailles added to the coalition-building hopes of nationalist and anti-colonial activists. Thus, in the opening issue of the pan-Islamic journal *Liwa-el-Islam* (Banner of Islam, 1921–1922) the Berlin-based editors expressed their hope that “the German people, who are not imperialist-minded today despite their power, will hear us and help us in our struggle with our rapists and oppressors, such as the English, French, etc.”<sup>8</sup> The German authorities indeed largely tolerated the public activities of anti-colonialists and Mus-

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- 4 Bekim Agai/Umar Ryad/Mehdi Sajid: “Introduction: Towards a Trans-Cultural History of Muslims in Interwar Europe”, in: Bekim Agai/Umar Ryad/Mehdi Sajid (eds.): *Muslims in Interwar Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 1–17, here 4–5.
  - 5 Nathalie Clayer/Eric Germain: “Part II. Towards the Building of ‘European Islam’”, in: Nathalie Clayer/Eric Germain (eds.): *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (London: Hurst, 2008), 119–127.
  - 6 Suzanne L. Marchand: *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 356–386; Rebekka Habermas: “Debates on Islam in Imperial Germany”, in: David Motadel (ed.): *Islam and the European Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 231–253; Anna-Elisabeth Hampel/Nike Löble: “Zwischen Ressource und Gefahr. Ambivalente Konzeptionalisierungen des Islams in deutscher Wissenschaft und Politik während des Ersten Weltkriegs und in der DDR”, in: Leonie Stenske/Tom Bioly (eds.): *Muslimisches Leben in Ostdeutschland* (Leipzig: Universität Leipzig, 2021), 145–180, here 148–151.
  - 7 Wilhelm II already laid the foundation of this rhetoric in a speech he gave during his “Orientreise” in 1889 (See Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 341).
  - 8 Author unknown (N.N.): “Die Tendenz unserer Zeitschrift [The tendency of our journal]”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (German), 15 June 1921.

lim reformers on their territory until 1933, as demonstrating support for the political concerns of non-European actors was one of the few ways for Germany to regain foreign policy influence. This way, it offered a space to escape the control and censorship of British and French authorities on the one hand and traditional religious elites on the other.

Furthermore, hyperinflation made Germany a particularly affordable place, while its universities still enjoyed a good reputation among foreign students. The enormous political and economic shifts and insecurities in Germany in the aftermath of World War I did not only create pragmatic advantages for immigrants – and especially political activists. In fact, the previous political and religious system had been thrown into doubt by Germany's defeat, creating, as Gerdien Jonkers put it in her analysis of the Ahmadiyya in interwar Berlin, a "spiritual vacuum".<sup>9</sup> The capital in particular attracted activists, avant-garde artists, reformers, and diverse political and religious groups from all over the world who tried to fill this vacuum with their ideas and forge alliances or assert themselves against others. Muslims and people from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia came to Berlin to take part in these flourishing intellectual discourses, or just to pursue business opportunities or to study. Many of them saw an opportunity to "propagate Islam in Europe – as a religious belief and as a political project that would help to formulate a vision for the future after the devastating years of the war."<sup>10</sup> As members of urban intellectual elites, most of these Muslims had much in common in terms of lifestyle and discourses with their counterparts from Berlin, Paris, or London. Nevertheless, they expressed awareness that they were seen as members of a group that deviated from the supposed civilizational norm that 'Europe' claimed for itself. Almost all of them were politically and ideologically influenced by the colonial systems in their countries of origin, where this hegemonic logic operated. Many of them acted self-confidently as representatives of the interests of colonized people, the 'Islamic world', or the 'East', which were striving for emancipation.<sup>11</sup> They rarely fixed on only one of these national, regional, religious, and political identities, rather switching and combining emphases according to the context of their arguments and strategies.

Compared to France or Britain, where most Muslim people continued to be soldiers, workers, and sailors from the (respective) colonies, or in Southeastern Europe

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- 9 Gerdien Jonker: "In Search of Religious Modernity: Conversion to Islam in Interwar Berlin", in: Bekim Agai/Umar Ryad/Mehdi Sajid (eds): *Muslims in Interwar Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 18–46, here 19.
- 10 Heike Liebau: "Navigating Knowledge, Negotiating Positions. The Kheiri Brothers on Nation and Islam", in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45:3 (2019), 341–361, here 352.
- 11 On the self-understanding of Arab students in Berlin, see Götz Nordbruch: "Arab Students in Weimar Republic – Politics and Thought Beyond Borders", in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 49:2 (2014), 275–295.

with its large Muslim populations, it was still only a relatively small number of, according to David Motadel, between 1300 to 3000 Muslims who lived in Germany.<sup>12</sup> However, endowed with the privileges and capacities of the intellectual urban elite, these made Berlin the intellectual and cultural center of Muslim life in interwar Europe and created, in Jonker's words, "an amalgam of Islamic flavoured modernity."<sup>13</sup> A variety of organizations and journals founded by them bear witness to their strong activism and the multi-layered networks that connected them globally and locally along anti-colonial, religious, national, and transnational lines. These organizations and journals represent a broad cross-section of the heterogeneity of Muslim life in interwar Berlin. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that they leave out the perspectives of those Berlin-based Muslims who did not engage in public or intellectual discourses and organizations, which might include some former prisoners of war, women, and people who focused on their personal business during their brief stays in Germany.

The multitude of journals published by Muslims in Berlin during this period gives us a glimpse of how they acted as agents of their reformist and anti-colonial agendas, forging alliances between Muslims and non-Muslim Germans and other Europeans by bringing together local and global discourses. The journals were a platform and instrument of exchange and community building. Although Gerhard Höpp has listed and described the corpus of these journals in his basic research on Muslim life in the Weimar Republic,<sup>14</sup> and although they have already been used as sources in existing studies to illustrate the agendas of the people behind them, in many cases, we do not know much about these journals' authors, editorial processes, and their circulation and reception. In most cases, no in-depth analyses of their contents have yet been undertaken. The goal of this chapter is to contribute to filling this gap by, for the first time, examining these journals as sites of translation. This approach makes it possible to learn more about the contents and structures of these journals and, furthermore, to analyze their intellectual and social contexts. It builds

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12 According to Motadel, in the 1920s more than 10,000 Muslims lived in Great Britain, more than 100,000 in France (see David Motadel: "The Making of Muslim Communities in Western Europe, 1914–1939", in: Nordbruch, Götz/Umar Ryad (eds.): *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe. Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 13–44, here 17). The exact number is difficult to estimate because not all Muslims have left traces through registration in official or organizational records. Furthermore, as many of them only stayed for a short time, their number also fluctuated.

13 Gerdien Jonker: *The Ahmadiyya Quest for Religious Progress. Missionizing Europe 1900–1965* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 5.

14 Among others: Gerhard Höpp: *Arabische und islamische Periodika in Berlin und Brandenburg: 1915–1945. Geschichtlicher Abriß und Bibliographie* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1994); Gerhard Höpp: "Zwischen Moschee und Demonstration. Muslime in Berlin, 1922–1930", in: *Moslemische Revue* 10:3/4 (1990), 135–146, 230–238.

on insights into Muslim life in interwar Berlin at the “complex intersection of local and global conditions,”<sup>15</sup> as described above, and helps to better understand the complex strategies used by the journals’ contributors to negotiate these conditions.

On both the pragmatic/infrastructural and ideological levels, translations are an expression of the transculturality, transnationality, and ambiguity that characterized these networks and discourses, as well as of the shifts that occurred between competition and (pragmatic) coalition building. I consider translation here – as Lawrence Venuti put it in his influential work *The Translator’s Invisibility*, a seminal contribution to the merging of translation studies with approaches from the cultural turn and postcolonial studies – as “a cultural political practice”;<sup>16</sup> an act of knowledge production and transmission embedded in its political, social, and ideological contexts.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, I understand translation not as a neutral and technical interlingual transfer of texts and words, but as a broader process of selection, functionalization, partiality, and omission, in which decisions are made about which content is presented to which target groups and how.<sup>18</sup> With these questions in mind, the positions, intentions, assumptions about target groups, and agency of translators become key in understanding translations.

Considering the contributors to the Berlin journals as agents who used translation as a means to follow their agendas, to build networks, and to form a discourse, I examine which texts and which contents of knowledge traditions were made available in which languages and forms to which target groups and why. Building on approaches from postcolonial translation studies not only allows me to gain a broad understanding of translation, but also accounts for the particular power constellations in which the translations were created.

The Berlin Muslim journals are a good example of how the power implications of translations are particularly evident in contexts characterized by large hierarchical divides: In imperial, colonial, and orientalist structures, translations can serve as a means of control and dominance, on the one hand, and resistance, on the other, though they can rarely be clearly assigned to either pole or understood in a static,

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15 Götz Nordbruch/Umar Ryad: “Introduction” in: Götz Nordbruch/Umar Ryad (eds): *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe. Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–12, here 7.

16 Lawrence Venuti: *The Translator’s Invisibility. A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 2014 [1995]), 19.

17 See also Susan Bassnett: *Translation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 30–32, 84, 131, 152. Maria Tymoczko/Edwin Gentzler: “Introduction”, in: Maria Tymoczko/Edwin Gentzler (eds.): *Translation and power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), xi–xxviii, here xxviii.

18 Bassnett, *Translation*, 30–32; Richard Jacquemond/Samah Selim: “Translating in the Arab world”, in: *The Translator* 21:2 (2015), 121–131, here 121–122.

dualistic relationship.<sup>19</sup> In these contexts, translations also play an important role in the demarcation, hierarchization, and overcoming of ‘cultural identities’.<sup>20</sup> The translation phenomena that can be found in and around the journals of the interwar period resume a history of ambivalent instrumentalization of translation in Germany’s relationship with the ‘Islamic world’: In the context of German “Islampolitik”,<sup>21</sup> especially in the pronouncement that fighting against the Entente was “jihad”, during the First World War, propaganda material was produced and translated into various ‘Islamic’ languages.<sup>22</sup> Native speakers who were mobilized to support German non-Muslim scholars in this production and translation of propaganda material, often tried to follow their own nationalist agendas during this collaboration. After the war, not only did some of the Muslim and German propagandists of this alliance remain influential, so did the use of translations as a means of propaganda and coalition building, despite the shifts in conditions and agendas.

In my analysis, I will try to give an impression of how these conditions and agendas were shaped by the ambivalent position of colonized people on the continent of the colonial powers and of Muslims in a society that was marked by orientalist and racist stereotypes, especially concerning Islam. Many anti-colonialists and Muslims in interwar Berlin felt impelled to take a self-confident position vis-à-vis ‘Europe’, its hegemonic claims and the values projected onto it. Umar Ryad and Götz Nordbruch characterize this relationship as one of “ambiguity that implied both fascination and rejection.”<sup>23</sup> ‘Europe’, together with ‘the East’ and ‘the West’, presented less a territorially and ideally delimited entity than a site of projections, a “shifting metaphor”.<sup>24</sup> An analysis of the discourses around these conceptual projection surfaces cannot always avoid citing them. However, in doing so we must always take into account their strongly constructed and constructing character.

Bringing together the research that has so far been done on “Islam in Interwar Europe” with theoretical approaches from (postcolonial) translation studies, I will show how Muslims in Berlin used different forms of translation and multilingualism

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19 Shaden M. Tageldin: *Disarming words. Empire and the seductions of translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 2–3.

20 For further consultation see Bassnett, *Translation*; Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*.

21 A term that was coined, among others, by the German Orientalist and politician Carl Heinrich Becker, in an article of the same name in 1915.

22 Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 437–441; Habermas, “Debates on Islam”, 246–252. On Germany’s Islam-related propaganda in the First World War, especially towards Muslim prisoners of war in the so-called “Halbmondlager”, see Gerhard Höpp: *Muslims in der Mark: als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen, 1914–1924* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1997); Samuel Krug: *Die 'Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient' im Kontext globaler Verflechtungen (1914–1921)* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

23 Nordbruch/Ryad, “Introduction”, 4.

24 Ibid.

to engage in discourses about ‘Islam’, ‘the East and the West’, modernity and imperialism and to challenge Christian European narratives, thereby making translation a key tool in their program of self-representation. The ambiguity of these individuals is reflected in the way their translations adopt orientalist and colonial discourses and structures in order to disrupt and confuse them.

In the first part of this chapter, to provide an insight into the positions and social contexts of the translators, I will provide an overview of the central figures, structures, and networks of Muslims in Weimar Berlin. As we often know little or nothing about the concrete figures behind translations, assumptions about their intentions often must be made based on what we know about the main groups and their entanglements in Berlin. Building on this, in the second part, I will analyze how these translations were used to address different target groups and push certain agendas. Rather than looking at the details of specific translations, e.g., word selection or terminological and typographic choices, I will identify certain key translation phenomena in the journals by selecting and analyzing particularly telling examples. In the final section, I will consider the resonance that the translation practices of Muslims within their journals had in the non-Muslim environment and how these reactions reflected the power relationships in which the translations were produced.

## Muslim Networks and Infrastructures in Berlin

In most cases, Muslims – as with other people from the Middle East and North Africa – only stayed in Berlin for a couple of years, and – after finishing their studies, their business, or their missionary activities – went back to their countries of origin or on to other metropolises. While some had already been in Germany during the war as political allies, businessmen or prisoners of war, the bulk came and left after 1918, and especially from the early 1920s onward. In his network analysis of the “making of Muslim communities”, Motadel distinguishes between “associations and organizations as legal spaces”, “the construction of communicative and intellectual spaces” and “mosques as physical religious spaces”.<sup>25</sup> The number of organizations that Motadel describes as “legal spaces” and “hybrid constructs, combining Islamic purposes with European forms of organization”,<sup>26</sup> exceeded 20. With ca. 15 journals that can be considered “communicative and intellectual spaces”, Berlin was the European city with the largest concentration of journals published by Muslims.<sup>27</sup> Both journals and organizations were intended, on one hand, to ease networking between Muslim communities and to create spaces of solidarity and encounter, and, on the

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25 Motadel, “Making of Muslim Communities”, 15.

26 Ibid., 23.

27 This figure is based on the bibliography in: Höpp, *Periodika*, 59–110.

other hand, to be visible to the outside world and represent common interests.<sup>28</sup> This public visibility was increased by the establishment of physical spaces. In the interwar period, the mosque of the Lahore Ahmadiyya at Fehrbelliner Platz, inaugurated in 1925 as the first dedicated mosque built in the city of Berlin, stood out as an architectural symbol of Muslim presence in the city's urban space.

The journals and organizations reflected the diverse networks that used them as a means of institutionalization. These included migration and diaspora networks organized along ethnic or national lines; professional, student, and trade associations; and branches of international networks and organizations that sought to bring together different Muslim groups in the name of either primarily political or primarily religious common interests. Individuals often associated themselves with several of these organizations and published in a variety of journals, thereby identifying with different national, regional, religious, or political group identities and highlighting unity or differences according to the context of their arguments. Among the nationalist groups, the Turkish<sup>29</sup> and Egyptian<sup>30</sup> ones are particularly noteworthy. They often considered themselves as branches of nationalist parties and organizations in their countries of origin, such as the Egyptian *Watani Party*, but also joined together for common anti-colonial and often pan-Islamic and pan-Oriental goals in organizations such as the *Orient-Klub*, which was founded in 1920.<sup>31</sup> The most successful attempts to gather as many Muslims as possible under one roof were undertaken by the Indian brothers Sattar (1855–1944) and Abdul Jabbar Kheiri (1880–1958?) who founded the ostensibly apolitical *Islamische Gemeinde zu Berlin* (Islamic Community of Berlin) in 1922, with more than 1800 members from 40 different countries,<sup>32</sup> and by the Syrian anti-colonialist student Tschelebi, who founded the *Islam-Institut* in 1927 as a more political and by then also more successful alternative to the *Gemeinde*.

The fact that religious (Christian/missionary) and political-territorial expansion were so closely linked in the European imperial projects also strengthened the linkage of religious (Islamic) and political (anti-colonial) elements in the resistance against these hegemonic claims and in the search for alliances. This was one reason why pan-Islamism had become a central hope of many Muslim anti-colonialists

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28 Motadel, "Making of Muslim Communities", 23.

29 Among the Turkish nationalists, exiled members of the Committee of Unity and Progress like Mehmed Talaat (1874–1921) played a central role as former wartime allies of the Germans. See Höpp, *Periodika*, 25–26.

30 Höpp, *Periodika*, 18–22; Nordbruch, "Arab Students", 284–285.

31 See Höpp, *Periodika*, 25–26.

32 See Liebau, "Navigating Knowledge", 341–354; Höpp, "Moschee und Demonstration", 136–140, 234–237; Nordbruch, "Arab Students", 285–286.



and nationalists.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, as we will see later, people whose activism primarily dealt with political topics often also made reference to Islam, considered rather as a political or 'civilizational' factor than as a religion.

The quest to demonstrate a far-reaching (pan-Islamic or – as many non-Muslims preferred – pan-Arabic) unity towards (Christian) Europe was opposed by particular and competing interests of national and religious groups, which wanted to lobby for and assert their own interests against those of other groups. We may consider, for instance, the major schisms that came about in the wake of the dissolution of the caliphate by the Turkish National Assembly in 1924, which was interpreted by some as a betrayal of the pan-Islamic idea and the demolition of its last bastion. Furthermore, the relationship between the *Aḥmadiyyah Anjuman-i Ishā'at-i Islām Lahore* (Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam) community and the rest of the Muslim community was, especially in the early 1920s, characterized by rivalry or even hostility. The Lahore Ahmadiyya had established its mission center in mainland Europe in Berlin in 1922 and presented itself as largely apolitical. Its institutional presence was expanded on several levels over many years via the publication over many years of the journal *Moslemische Revue* (Muslim Revue, 1924–1940) and the founding of the *Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft* (German-Muslim Society) in 1930. While, in the early 1920s, the Lahore Ahmadiyya was accused – as happened in many parallel cases in other countries – of collaboration with the colonial powers and deviation from Islamic teachings, over time a pragmatic coexistence and the will to represent united interests to the non-Muslim surroundings prevailed.<sup>34</sup> We will see later that pragmatic coalitions such as these were a crucial factor in how and why translations came about; though translations were also used to foreground a particular point of view over that of others.

In addition to this internal coalition building, various Muslims in Berlin also sought alliances with non-Muslim Germans and international actors from different ideological camps. These included, for example, some of the anti-colonial activists engaged in the *League against Imperialism and for National Independence*, founded in Brussels in 1927 to function as a hub and trans-national, trans-sectarian network of anti-imperialists with communist affiliations.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside their professional and everyday interactions with non-Muslim Germans, some Muslims also found political support both among policy makers and

33 See Umar Ryad: "Anti-Imperialism and the Pan-Islamic Movement", in: David Motadel (ed.): *Islam and the European Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131–149, here 146–147.

34 For further information on the Ahmadiyya's activities in interwar Berlin see Gerdien Jonker: *On the Margins. Jews and Muslims in Interwar Berlin* (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2020); Jonker, *Ahmadiyya Quest*.

35 See Höpp, *Periodika*, 40. For further consultation see Fredrik Petersson: "Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement. The League against Imperialism and Berlin, 1927–1933", in: *Interventions* 16:1 (2014), 49–71.

scholars. Many of them, such as Georg Kampffmeyer (1864–1936), were associated with institutions that had been founded under the ‘utility of scholarship’ paradigm to serve German political and imperial interests towards the ‘Islamic world’, such as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde* (German Society for the Study of Islam) or the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* (Seminar for Oriental Languages). In addition to demonstrating political sympathies with Arab national movements, the exchange with foreign Muslims in Berlin offered these scholars a favorable “opportunity for personal contact with Orientals and at the same time for foreign-language studies [...], especially in view of our being cut off from still wide areas of the Islamic Orient.”<sup>36</sup>

Outside the academic community, some Germans also developed a romanticizing attraction to ‘the East’ or ‘the Orient’, which was portrayed as the spiritual antithesis to the vacuous ‘West’ or ‘Occident’ and through which criticism of the latter could be exercised during the post-war ideological crisis.<sup>37</sup> This sentiment was seen as an opportunity, especially by missionaries, to gain converts with whom they built up especially intimate relationships and who played an important role as bridge builders, which often included translational practices.

On the other hand, Muslims also faced manifest negative stereotypes and hostility: ‘*Völkisch*’ nationalists railed against the “propagation of Islam” and the presence of Muslims in Germany and reproduced racist stereotypes in their periodicals.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Muslims were the targets of violent racist attacks, as were other people from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.<sup>39</sup> Muslims resisted these hostilities not only in the press and in the courts,<sup>40</sup> but sometimes – as in the case of the Human-zoo-like Tripoli Fair at the Berlin Zoo in 1927 – by writing joint letters of protest to leading politicians.<sup>41</sup>

Coverage of Muslim life in Berlin in the German media often reflected the ambivalent prejudices of the German population, characterized by both romanticizing fascinations and racist imageries of threat.

With the Nazis’ seizure of power in 1933 and their concomitant policy of ‘*Gleichschaltung*’ – the Nazification of all areas of society – the conditions for Muslim life and public activities in Germany changed considerably and were characterized by severely restricted agency and strict control, which was no longer comparable to the

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36 Hans J. Bassewitz: “Orientklub in Berlin”, in: *Nachrichten zur vertraulichen Kenntnis der persönlichen Mitglieder der Gesellschaft* 1:1 (1921), 5–6. [Author’s translation from German to English].

37 Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 428–435.

38 Höpp, *Periodika*, 31–35.

39 Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 484.

40 Höpp, *Periodika*, 31–35.

41 Nordbruch, “Arab Students”, 289–90.

relatively liberal conditions of the Weimar period.<sup>42</sup> This period will not be discussed in this paper.

## Berlin Muslim Journals as Sites of Translation

By the interwar period, journals were already established as a relatively affordable and widely available media of global intellectual exchange. They enabled ideas to be ‘transplanted’ into different contexts, “imagined linkages”<sup>43</sup> to be created, and intellectual elites to participate in translocal discourses such as pan-Islamism and Islamic reform movements.<sup>44</sup> In addition, journals provided an international and local platform for the networking of editors, printers, authors, and readers, which often preceded or replaced the (more complicated/formalized) founding of organizations, as was the case for Berlin’s Muslims. For diaspora groups, the function of journals in establishing group identity was particularly strong. David Motadel explains it as follows:

The journals reflected an emerging Islamic internationalism, which was particularly promoted by Muslims in Europe. Indeed, among diaspora groups, the imagined global umma seemed to be more important as a reference point than it was in the Islamic world itself. This is reflected in the journals’ languages, their subjects, their contributors, and their distribution. [...] They frequently discussed global Muslim issues, such as the caliphate question, Pan-Islamic anti-imperialism, or the Palestine conflict.<sup>45</sup>

While the focus on such political and religious topics primarily served the journals’ purpose of internal exchange among Muslims locally and worldwide, these publications also had a second function of external representation, directed at the non-

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42 On the relationship between National Socialism and (people from) the Islamic and Arab world and the question collaboration and criticism, see, for instance, Peter Wien: “The Cul-  
pability of Exile: Arabs in Nazi Germany”, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37:3 (2011), 332–358.  
On the role of different Muslim organizations in Berlin under National Socialism, see  
Bernd Bauknecht: “Muslime in Deutschland von 1920 bis 1945”, in: *Zeitschrift für Religion-  
swissenschaft* 9:1 (2001), 41–81, here 60–80.

43 Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*  
(London: Verso, 2016 [1983]), 33. For further discussion of the infrastructure of journal dis-  
tribution, see Ami Ayalon: *The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership*  
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 97–153.

44 Prominent examples include the *al-Manār* published by Rashid Riḍa (1865–1935) and the  
*al-Urwa al-wuthqa* published from Paris by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897). See Mo-  
tadel, “Making of Muslim Communities”, 24; Ryad, “Anti-Imperialism and the Pan-Islamic  
Movement”, 136.

45 Motadel, “Making of Muslim Communities”, 27.

Muslim European and German communities. This function explains why the journals also sought to enlighten their readers about Islam in general and the Islamic-German or Islamic-European cultural and economic relationship. While some journals, such as Tschelebi's *Islam-Echo* (1927–1929), conveyed their positions by reporting on current political events, others, such as the Kheiri brothers' *Islam* and the Ahmadiyya's *Moslemische Revue*, discussed political-religious issues in more foundational terms. Some journals, like the short-lived Arabic *al-Hamama* (The Dove, 1923–1924) focused on cultural and scientific topics and discussed everyday questions of significance to Muslims and Arab émigrés living in Europe. In addition, the journals bear witness to the activities and networks of Berlin's Muslims: Announcements of lectures, religious festivals and excursions, advertisements for commercial enterprises and printing houses, reprints of public statements by Islamic organizations, etc. outline the everyday personal, political, and economic relations that existed.

The Berlin Muslim journals appeared in several languages and were often distributed internationally in European metropolises as well as in Muslim-majority countries outside Europe, especially in the Near and Middle East and among the core lands of Muslim journalism such as Egypt. The multilingual journals *Liwa-el-Islam* and *Azadi-yi sharq* (Freedom of the East, 1921–1930) were sent to a particularly large number of countries.<sup>46</sup> However, we know little about the readership in these countries – neither qualitatively nor quantitatively.

Marfa Heimbach deduces the primary functions of the periodicals from their languages: While pan-Islamic organs tended to be multilingual, nationalist publications tended to be monolingual.<sup>47</sup> The underlying logic of choosing language(s) according to target group can be taken further: While journals intended primarily for exchange with the surrounding society were published in their languages (German, English, French, etc.), those for international, intra-Muslim exchange tended to be published in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. However, 'European languages' could also serve as common languages of communication for Muslims from different linguistic communities. This explains the existence in Berlin, alongside exclusively German journals, of English journals such as *The Crescent* (1923–1924), which were intended to address an audience across Europe.<sup>48</sup> Although the Berlin journals provide an insight into the diversity of Muslim intellectual life, they were created for the most part by and for members of an urban, intellectual, and largely

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46 Höpp, *Periodika*, 29; Motadel, "Making of Muslim Communities", 26–27. Höpp and Motadel cite a British Foreign Office report that these two magazines were distributed in India, Iran, Egypt, Dubai, Qatar, Oman, and the Najd.

47 Marfa Heimbach: *Die Entwicklung der islamischen Gemeinschaft in Deutschland seit 1961* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2001), 32.

48 Motadel, "Making of Muslim Communities", 27.

male elite. Moreover, they make these people and their lives visible in a context where they often explicitly defined themselves as Muslim or anti-colonialist and emphasized Islam or their political activism as a unifying element. As a result, many other perspectives – such as those of many former prisoners of war, of Muslims not active in public life, or of many women – have not survived through them. Using journals as a source for historiographical research therefore runs the risk of reproducing the invisibility and subalternity of these groups.

Translations in the Berlin Muslims' journals took place on many levels, but often not in a way that is recognizable as such at first glance. The diverse interlingual and intertextual forms of translation found in the Berlin journals can be divided into three main phenomena, which I will illustrate below with exemplary cases and examine their possible functions in their discursive, social, and political contexts: 1) 'Internal' multilingualism of journals, 2) translations in the context of journalistic and political networks, and 3) translations of the Islamic tradition, primarily Qur'an and hadith.

The processes and actors behind the translations are very rarely if at all addressed or made apparent in the journals. The invisibility of this 'editorial authorship' is not uncommon in the information chains and editorial processes of international journalism. In addition to pragmatism, however, this invisibility also has a discursive-functional implication: It speaks for the naturalness with which a given interpretation was consciously or unconsciously perceived and offered as 'neutral', and thus also for a claim to interpretive sovereignty over highly contested political and religious matters. However, not knowing who exactly was responsible for translative knowledge production makes assumptions about the intentions behind them all the more speculative.

## Multilingual Journals

In practical terms, publishing journals in multiple languages, as was the case with *Liwa-el-Islam* (see below), *Azadi-yi sharq* (Persian, Arabic, Turkish, occasionally German, English, and French), and *El-Islah* (The Reform, 1925–1926[?]; Urdu, Persian, Arabic, rarely German and English) increased the international circulation of the journals and enabled their insertion into the international journalistic discourses among the established centers of Muslim intellectual life. Furthermore, multilingualism also had important symbolic functions, as it demonstrated solidarity among different Muslim language communities in a pan-Islamic or pan-Oriental sense, usually against the backdrop of common anti-imperialist concerns. Moreover, multilingualism acknowledged that European discourses were embedded in global ones. German- and English-speaking audiences were considered on a par with others in these global discourses. Multilingualism was thus also an expression of multiperspectivity: Instead of recognizing German and English as universal

norms, these languages (and the civilizations with which they were symbolically associated) stood on equal footing with Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and others.

Multilingualism was practiced in two main ways: The first was to publish separate language issues of a given journal. Ideally, but rarely in practice, these were published parallel and contained similar content. The example of *Liwa-el-Islam* will be discussed below. The second way was to publish only one version of the journal, including articles in different languages in the same edition, as was the case, for instance, with *Azadi-yi sharq*. However, multilingualism usually did not mean that the contents of the journals were published completely in parallel and identically in different languages. Rather, the selection of articles published in a particular language was adapted to the assumed interests of the audience associated with that language. Translation between the different language editions was thus accompanied by decisions regarding the composition of the content for each language-defined target group determining which specific political and religious agendas should be propagated in that case. The primarily pro-Turkish but also generally pan-Islamic and anti-colonial journal *Liwa-el-Islam*, edited by Ilias Bragon, is a good example. It was published in Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and German in largely separate issues, with editorial articles appearing in (almost) all languages and other, more specific articles appearing in only one or two editions. While strong parallels in terms of content can be observed between the Persian and Turkish editions, with a focus on the Greek-Turkish War and Turkish nationalism, and, in the Persian edition, also on events in Afghanistan, Iran, and Russia, in the Arabic edition, this content gave way to articles on topics such as the Rif War and Mandate rule in Syria and Palestine. Some of the latter topics, as “condensation points of the anti-colonial activities of Arabs living in Berlin,”<sup>49</sup> found their place in the non-Arabic editions as well. The German edition, on the other hand, is notable for the fact that, in addition to articles by the editors, it also included articles by German non-Muslim authors, most of whom expressed sympathy for Turkey that still derived from the former wartime alliance.

Articles appearing in three or all four languages include key political editorials such as the renowned pan-Islamic politician and writer Shakib Arslan's (1869–1946) speech on “Eastern Solidarity”,<sup>50</sup> which was published in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish – but not in German – and the article “Talaat Pasha and His Murderer”, which appeared in Turkish, Persian, and – in a slightly shortened version – German.<sup>51</sup> Enver

49 Höpp, “Moschee und Demonstration”, 232–232 [Author's translation from German].

50 Arabic: Shakib Arslan/N.N.: “al-Taẓāmun al-sharqī”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Turkish-Persian-Arabic), 15 April 1921, 22–24; Turkish: Id.: “Şark akvamı ârāsandeh taẓāmun”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Turkish-Persian), 1 May 1921, 48–49; Persian: Id.: “Hamdastī-yi millathā-yi maşriq-zamīn”, *ibid.*, 54–55.

51 German: E.: “Talaat Pascha und sein Mörder”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (German), 15 June 1921, 1–2; Turkish: E.: “Tal'at Pāşā ve kı̄til-e”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Turkish), 15 June 1921, 71–72; Persian: A./E.: “Tal'at Pāşā va qātil-i ū”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Persian), 15 June 1921, 70–71.

Talaat (1874–1921) was shot dead by the Armenian Soghomon Tehlirian (1897–1960) in Berlin in March 1921 in revenge for his key role in the Armenian genocide. The incident and Tehlirian's subsequent acquittal by a German court provoked outrage in the Turkish nationalist community and among Germans who still held sympathy for their former Turkish allies. The case was accordingly covered in detail in order to promote this form of 'traditional' coalition building, to blame the German authorities for their betrayal of this longstanding Muslim and especially Turkish loyalty, and to invoke solidarity among Muslims. While the publication of the article in the German and Turkish editions is not surprising given this background, it is hard to explain why it appeared in the Persian edition but not in the Arabic one. This may be due to the rapprochement between Turkey and Iran during this period and the long rivalry between Arab and Turkish nationalism. It may also have to do with the fact that the article mentions that Tehlirian considered himself to be of Persian-Armenian origin. Ultimately, however, for this as for other articles, it can never be ruled out that practical considerations were decisive in determining which text could appear in which languages.<sup>52</sup>

Another example of content that was considered to be relevant and potentially unifying for all languages associated with a Muslim and anti-colonial readership, was a fatwa "on the question of whether, in view of the fact that the Emir of Mecca is in league with England and has assisted the English against the Muslims, the pilgrimage to Mecca remains a religious duty or ceases to be such until such time as the disgrace of infidel rule over the holy places is removed."<sup>53</sup> In 1922, it occupied large portions of several issues in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.<sup>54</sup> This prominent and extensive fatwa in several languages and by scholars from different countries is also an example of how religious Islamic authority has been used for anticolonial purposes. In all these cases, the authorship of the translation is not indicated.

## Translation in international journalistic and political networks

Besides the translation of articles in multilingual journals, which can easily be traced, we can also assume that translation processes occurred in background editorial processes, i.e., in the exchange and transmission of information; this is simply common journalistic practice for both multilingual and monolingual journals. These

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52 For example, the Persian and Turkish issues appeared more frequently than the Arabic and German ones, and often had very similar contents. This might be explained by the fact that the core members of the editorial staff were able to write (and therefore also translate) between these languages more easily than in Arabic or German.

53 Erich Pritsch: "Laufende Zeitschriften. Liwa-el-Islam", in: *Welt des Islams* 8:1 (1923), 27 [Author's translation from German to English].

54 Muhammad Barakatullah/Musa Jarullah/'Abd ar-Rashid Ibrahim: "Fatwa", *Liwa-el-Islam* (Arabic), 15 March 1922, 9–12; (Persian), 15 April 1922, 17–20; (Turkish), 1 June 1922, 25–26.

'background' translations – together with translations of readers' letters, advertisements, etc. – point to a well-functioning international journalistic network, which at the same time indicates the existence of established transnational alliances. This is also evident in references to other German and international – often Middle Eastern – journals, such as those found in the short news section and longer articles of *Liwa-el-Islam* or Tschelebi's *Islamische Gegenwart* (Islamic Present, 1927–1929). In some cases, these journals are only referred to as the source of information, in others we find passages or entire articles quoted, reprinted, and therefore often translated. Translations of longer passages or entire articles from other journals are marked as such, but without mentioning who authored the translation. Once again, what was reproduced and translated often points to a specific agenda: For example, at the end of 1921, *Liwa-el-Islam* published an article in its Arabic, Turkish, and Persian editions that had first appeared in the Jerusalem journal *Lisān al- 'arab*.<sup>55</sup> The article described how the Maronite dignitaries in Lebanon complained to Henri Gouraud (1867–1946), the French General and later High Commissioner for the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, about the French Mandate regime and put him in his place when he visited them in the hope that they would help him put a stop to critical journalism in the country out of gratitude for French support for the Maronites. The article thus not only portrayed an important event of anti-colonial, trans-sectarian resistance, but also helped to publicize critical journalism, which was feared by the mandate authorities. Particularly against the background of the press censorship that German-Muslim journals frequently criticized, it can be assumed that the reproduction and translation of articles from the colonized territories was an expression of solidarity and resistance against such attempts at censorship. This journalistic exchange as a form of solidarity, made public through references, also existed among the Islamic journals and organizations published in Berlin.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to direct exchange among the various journals, there are also chains of information and translation between reporters or foreign correspondents and the

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55 N.N.: "Uskut! Afkārükum mutasammama fī al-lubnān [Shut up, your thoughts are poisoned in Lebanon]", *Liwa-el-Islam* (Arabic), 15 November 1921, 118–120; N.N.: "Sākit! fikrhā-yi šumā dar Lubnān zahrđār šudih", *Liwa-el-Islam* (Persian), 15 November 1921, 142–143; "Şüş! Lubnāndeh fikrlarkun zaharleh nişadār", *Liwa-el-Islam* (Turkish), 15 December 1921, 57–58.

56 For example, *Liwa-el-Islam* printed an open letter from the *Egyptian Watani Party* branch in Berlin to the president of the government delegation, 'Adli Yakan Basha, which was first published in *Die Aegyptische Korrespondenz* in German and Arabic. Zweigstelle der Ägyptischen Nationalpartei in Berlin: "Uebersetzung des offenen Schreibens (Manshur) der ägyptischen Nationalpartei in Berlin an den Präsidenten der offiziellen ägyptischen Abordnung Adly Yeghen Pascha", *Liwa-el-Islam* (German), 1 September 1921, 21–23; Shu'bat al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī al-Miṣrī Bīrlīn: "Khitāb maftūḥ li-ra'īs al-wafd al-ḥukūmī 'Adlī Yakan Bāshā", *Liwa-el-Islam* (Arabic), 1 September 1921, 96, 103–104.



central editorial offices of individual journals. Tschelebi's exclusively German-language *Islam-Echo* is a striking example of this. Tschelebi had established an international network during his hajj in 1926.<sup>57</sup> His journal is an expression of this network: The news section refers to "leading experts and its own [the *Echo's*] representatives in the most important places in the Orient,"<sup>58</sup> who were probably Tschelebi's personal contacts and whose reports and notes were likely translated into German by him and his editorial staff. Using personal contacts as sources of information also made it possible to become independent of news agencies based in Western Europe, such as Reuters, which were already strong in the Middle East at the time. These were accused of conveying a distorted picture of events in the colonies due to the censorship of the colonial powers.<sup>59</sup> Tschelebi's network-based approach is an expression of his program to make non-European perspectives on political events in the Islamic world visible in Germany, i.e., to strengthen self-representation (see the quote on page 1). Tschelebi also highlighted this agenda in his other journal, *Die Islamische Gegenwart*: "It [the journal] is not and does not want to be one of those Orient journals that presents to Europeans opinions of unscientific Europeans about the Islamic Orient, rather it is the Islamic world itself that speaks through it."<sup>60</sup> To this end, Tschelebi established a series of essays in *Islam-Echo* beginning in June 1927 as an "attempt at an intellectual exchange between the press of Europe and that of the Orient" by selecting "journalistic representatives of that part of the Oriental press [...] which usually never comes to Europe and remains unknown even to the correspondents in the capitals of the Orient"<sup>61</sup> and which, due to its rural location, provided an example of the limitations of European influence. A first such translated article, originally written by Yussuf Rudshuf and published in the journal *Najaf* in the Iraqi town of the same name, appeared under the title "The Fate of the Arab People."<sup>62</sup> Tschelebi's approach was welcomed by parts of the German expert community, namely the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde*. Its chairman and Tschelebi's supporter, Kampffmeyer, published some of the news from *Islam-Echo* in the news

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57 Höpp, *Periodika*, 38.

58 Nameplate *Islam-Echo* [Author's translation from German to English]. These were located in Cairo, Mecca, Baghdad, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Beirut, Delhi, Teheran, etc.

59 Such a criticism is to be found in an article by the Egyptian organization *Freier Nil*: "Menschenschlächtereie in Alexandrien [Slaughter in Alexandria]", *Liwa-el-Islam* (German), 1 October 1921, 26. On the growing importance of news agencies in the Middle East from the 1860s onward, see Ayalon, *Arabic Print Revolution*, 101.

60 N.N.: "Zur Einführung [Introduction]", *Die Islamische Gegenwart*, November 1927, 2 [Author's translation from German].

61 *Islam-Echo*: "An die Redaktionen [To the editorial department]", *Islam-Echo*, 27 June 27, 1927, 5 [Author's translation from German].

62 Yussuf Rudshuf: "Das Schicksal des Arabischen Volkes [The destiny of the Arabic people]", *Islam-Echo*, 27 June 1927, 5–7.

section of the *Gesellschaft's* journal *Welt des Islams*, because *Islam-Echo* offered “regular contact with the Arab press that has hitherto been lacking, a faithful picture of the intentions of the Islamic Orient, and an insight into those facts and developments in the Islamic Orient that appear important to the Muslim himself.”<sup>63</sup> By providing a platform for the publications of Tschelebi and other Muslims in the journals he edited, Kampffmeyer extended the chain of journalistic information dissemination while simultaneously supporting – albeit under the paradigm of the utility of scholarship that he shared – his Muslim counterparts’ claim to self-representation.

It is the claim to independent reporting, coupled with the aim of strengthening the political empowerment of the readership by making political documents available, that may also explain the frequent translation of political documents in the journals. Political documents such as treaties, open letters, and official speeches naturally appeared primarily in journals that had a political and anti-colonial focus. Some were summarized while others were printed in literal translation.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the selection of political texts reflects the anti-colonial and nationalist agendas of the editors.

### Translating ‘Islamic Tradition’

Compared to political texts, translations of texts from the Islamic tradition take up relatively little room in the primarily political and anticolonial journals. However, they served two essential functions in this context. First, they were selected and positioned to affirm Islamic solidarity. Second, the texts presented to showcase the Islamic tradition often implied a defense against Orientalist and Islamophobic prejudices and functioned as counter-translations to existing European translations,

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63 N.N.: “Unabhängige Berichterstattung über die Gegenwartsentwicklungen der Islamwelt [Independent reporting in the world of Islam]”, *Welt des Islams* (Nachrichten), 10:1 (1927), 1\* [Author’s translation from German]. The “Urkunden” section of *Welt des Islams* also published, among other political documents, (translated) reprints of open letters from Muslim Berlin organizations such as a pamphlet from the *Syrische Kolonie in Berlin*: “Protest der Syrer in Berlin. Abdruck eines Flugblatts. Heftiger Protest gegen die barbarischen Schandtaten der Franzosen in Syrien [Protest of the Syrians in Berlin, Copy of a pamphlet. Strong protest against the barbaric outrages of the French in Syria]”, in: *Welt des Islams* 8:2–4 (1923), 133–134.

64 E.g. the Treaty of Ankara: “Das französisch-türkische Abkommen”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (German), 15 November 1921, 31–32; “Farānsih-Türkiyā maḳāvalih-sī”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Turkish), 15 November 1921, 148–151; “‘Ahd-nāmih-yi Türkiyā va Farānsih”, *Liwa-el-Islam* (Persian), 15 December 1921, 148–151. Further examples include a Turkish Ministry Declaration: “Türkische Ministererklärungen über Politik, Wirtschaft und Aufbau der Türkei”, *Islam-Echo*, 22 April 1927, 6–7; A memorandum of the Syrian Delegation to the League of Nations: Emir Schekib Arslan/Ihsan El Djabry/Riad E Souh: “Denkschrift der syrischen Delegation an den Völkerbund (Genf, 12.9.1927)”, *Islamische Gegenwart*, November 1927, 7–14; the 1927 Treaty of Jeddah: “Der Wortlaut des Vertrages Hedschas-England”, *Islamische Gegenwart*, November 1927, 15–17.

which, in the view of many Muslims in Berlin, manifested these prejudices as a result of the fragmentary selection of translated texts, distortion, or ignorance of linguistic subtleties.<sup>65</sup> Countering these translations with translations from the Muslim perspective was thus an important means of negating an ascribed passive position and challenging not only stereotypical images of ‘cultures’ but also the idea of a separation and hierarchization of these ‘cultures’. Therefore, instead of painting a picture of an archaic religion, the translations made by Muslims in Berlin emphasized the lively, tolerant, and universal character of an Islam that is compatible with modernity. This objective was addressed in an exemplary fashion by Tschelabi in his preface to *Islamische Gegenwart*, which was written for not only the open “enemies of Islam” but also its romanticizing “friends”:

The task of this journal should be to remove the grossest and most objectionable of these errors [about Islam, author’s note]. It draws the justification for correction, which may seem presumptuous, from the fact that it is written by Muslims themselves. [...] It is directed not only against the apparently malevolent enemies of Islam, but also against those all too well-meaning and exceedingly numerous friends who confront its world with a sentimentality that does not do justice to its essence.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, each issue of *Islamische Gegenwart*, which otherwise hardly dealt with religious topics, was preceded by Qur’an and hadith excerpts in German translation. These portray the cohesion, clear monotheism, and noble moral compass of the Muslims (Qur’an 12, 92, 16:20–22, etc.). Among them is a hadith transmitted by Bukhari: “A parable of the mutual love and solidarity of the Muslim is the organism; when one of its limbs is sick, the other limbs suffer through fever and sleeplessness.”<sup>67</sup> The body metaphor taken up here is one of those motifs used by both Arab nationalists and Islamic reformist activists,<sup>68</sup> and it makes clear the central role ascribed to Islam

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65 It was above all the representatives of the Ahmadiyya in Berlin who criticized how Islam had been “put at a disadvantage by its European translators” [Author’s translation from German]. Khan Durrani: “Fatalismus und Islam [Fatalism and Islam]”, *Moslemische Revue*, April 1926, 59–79, here 61. See also Maulana Sadr-ud-Din: *Der Koran. Arabisch-Deutsch. Übersetzung, Einleitung und Erklärung* (Berlin: Verlag der Moslemischen Revue, 1964 [1939]), VIII; Khalid Banning: “Über den Koran [About the Qur’an]”, *Moslemische Revue*, April 1925, 5–11.

66 N.N.: “Zur Einführung [Introduction]”, *Die Islamische Gegenwart*, November 1927, 2 [Author’s translation from German].

67 “Hadith, Bukhari”, *Islamische Gegenwart*, June 1929, 33. Free Translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Chapter 71/Nr. 6011 [Author’s translation from German]. German version in the source: “Ein Gleichnis für die gegenseitige Liebe und Solidarität der Muslimin ist der Organismus; wenn eines seiner Glieder krank ist, leiden die übrigen Glieder durch Fieber und Schlaflosigkeit.”

68 Gudrun Krämer: *Der Vordere Orient und Nordafrika ab 1500* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2016), 485.

in its political and resistance potential by Muslim anti-colonialists and nationalists. Tschelebi also made this clear in 1927 in a statement on the aims of the student organization *Islamia*, in which he lamented that the division of the Islamic world into colonies disturbed “the unhindered blood circulation of the body of Islam,”<sup>69</sup> echoing thereby contemporary biologicistic notions of human collectives as ‘pure bodies’.<sup>70</sup>

Despite Tschelebi’s stated intention to make himself independent of non-Muslim European representations of Islam, the Qur’an translations he uses in his journals are for the most part, and always without being marked as such, taken from the non-Muslim German Friedrich Rückert’s 1888 translation, in which he attempted to imitate the poetic style of the Qur’an with German rhyme schemes.<sup>71</sup>

A different picture emerges with the Qur’an and hadith translations of the Ahmadiyya, for which the selection, translation, and provision of Islamic sources in various languages constituted a cornerstone of their international missionary program on a practical and symbolic level. Therefore, the Ahmadiyya missionaries devoted much energy to producing their own translations. For example, the first Berlin Ahmadiyya Imam, Sadr-ud-Din (1881–1981), was the first Muslim to write a German translation of the Qur’an. In its preface he writes:

I am sure that the German public will welcome a translation written by a Muslim. After all, such a translation can be based on a thorough, solid knowledge of the religion, whose benchmark is the holy Qur’an, whereas similar efforts from non-Muslim pens often lack the understanding that can only arise from complete spiritual harmony with the subject matter.<sup>72</sup>

In the Ahmadiyya’s explicitly apolitical mouthpiece *Moslemische Revue*, numerous translations from the Qur’an and hadith reflect its reformist understanding of Islam and its program of religious-intellectual dialogue between ‘East’ and ‘West’. In the first issue of *Moslemische Revue*, the editors declared its ‘enlightening’ purpose “to educate Germans about the teachings of Islam and about the moral and social culture that this faith has brought to humanity.”<sup>73</sup> The Ahmadiyya sought to assert Islam’s claim to universalism by being as adaptable as possible to the specific intellectual context. Therefore, the Ahmadiyya’s Qur’an and hadith translations accommodated the reading habits of its target group in terms of content and style. Particular elements of the legitimization of authority in the Islamic tradition, such

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69 Tschelebi 1927, quoted by Höpp, “Moschee und Demonstration”, 234.

70 The German translation used by Seif is also found in a letter addressed by him to Friedrich Ebert on 6 June 1921, NGH 07.12.014, 93.

71 *Der Koran*, translated by Friedrich Rückert (Frankfurt a.M.: Sauerländer, 1888).

72 Sadr-ud-Din, *Koran*, VII [Author’s translation from German].

73 N.N.: “Der Zweck der Zeitschrift [The purpose of the journal]”, *Moslemische Revue*, April 1924, 1–2, here 1 [Author’s translation from German].

as chains of transmission (isnād) of hadiths, took a back seat to forms and terminologies perceived in modern Western discourses as expressions of intellectual authority and universal validity: Liberty, equality, and fraternity; but also tolerance, democracy, socialism, gender equality, the striving for knowledge, the compatibility of Islam and science, and moral and corporeal purity. These are the buzzwords that the community around the mosque at Fehrbelliner Platz used with the intention of gaining a foothold within Berlin's intellectual discourse. The quotations from the Qur'an and hadith thus selected were listed as references in longer articles or collected in the familiar form of aphoristic "collections of sayings".

Passages from Qur'an and hadith that could have been interpreted as contradicting the above-mentioned 'values of modernity' were not translated or were omitted. For example, Sadr-ud-Din translates from Sura 2:228 to prove the legal equality of men and women, without translating the specific context of divorce law and menstruation or the part of the verse in which men are given a higher rank than women. To demonstrate this, this translation will be shown next to the Arabic original and a German translation of the whole Sura published by the German orientalist Lazarus Goldschmidt (1871–1950) in 1916:

Es gebührt den Frauen dasselbe Recht, wie von ihnen die gleichen Pflichten verlangt werden. Und sie haben in gleicher Weise Rechte gegen die Männer, wie letztere solche gegen jene (d.h. die Frauen) haben.<sup>74</sup>

Und die Geschiedenen sollen drei Menstruationen warten, auch ist es ihnen nicht zu verschweigen erlaubt, was Gott in ihrem Leib erschaffen, wenn sie an Gott glauben und an den Jüngsten Tag. Für die Männer aber ist es geziemender, daß sie sie wieder nehmen, falls diese es wünschen, und mit ihnen umgehen, wie ihnen nach Recht obliegt. Der Männer Rang ist jedoch über ihnen. Und Gott ist allmächtig und allweise.<sup>75</sup>

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74 Sadr-ud-Din: "Die Stellung der Frau im Islam [The Position of Woman in Islam]", *Moslemische Revue*, July 1924, 63–73, here 64. English translation by the author: "Women are entitled to the same rights as the same duties are demanded from them. And they have rights against men in the same way as the latter have rights against those (i.e. women)."

75 Lazarus Goldschmidt: *Der Koran* (Berlin: Brandussche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1916), 36. English translation by the author: "And the divorced shall wait three menstruations, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs, if they believe in God and in the Last Day. But it is more appropriate for men to take them again, if they wish, and to treat them as is rightly their duty. But the men's rank is above them. And God is all-powerful and all-wise."

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ۗ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ  
 مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ  
 وَبِعَوْلَانَهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ  
 الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ<sup>76</sup>

While displaying the similarity of ‘Islamic’ and ‘European values’, it was at the same time important to demonstrate just enough difference from and criticism of Europe to show Islam as the only way to realize common ideals and to satisfy Western needs for ‘Eastern wisdom’. Thus, the Ahmadiyya mission in Europe and Germany represents a notable example of how Muslim reformers challenged Christian European claims to superiority and prejudice against Islam with an ambivalent strategy between subversion and adaptation.

The case of the Ahmadiyya also highlights the diversity of actors involved in translation processes: Translations that emerged in the Berlin Ahmadiyya community were often the joint work of ‘Muslim-born’, foreign Muslims and German converts. These processes of collaborative translation were another expression of how the Ahmadiyya practiced its program of intellectual ‘dialogue between East and West.’

Moreover, the translations reveal the close cooperation and similarity between the publication, translation, and missionary activities of the Ahmadiyya’s two European centers, Woking (near London) and Berlin: Because there is a large overlap not only in the selection of contents from the Qur’an and hadith that were made available to a European public, but also in the manner of translation. In part, the English and German translations are so similar that it can be assumed that the earlier English translations made in Woking served as direct models for the German versions. A good example is a longer, dialogical hadith, which has been handed down via Bukhari, among others, and the essence of which was rendered by the Woking mission’s founder Kamal-ud-Din (1870–1932) in the English booklet “Some of the Sayings of Mohammad” and by the editors of the *Moslemische Revue* in a collection of hadiths as follows:

Charity is a duty unto every Muslim. He who hath not means thereto, let him do a good act or abstain from an evil one; that is his charity.<sup>77</sup>

76 The Arabic version is based on the 1924 Cairo Koran edition, as in the digital edition by Michael Marx, in collaboration with Tobias J. Jocham et al. (Corpus Coranicum, <https://corpuscoranicum.de/de> (accessed 15 May 2022).

77 Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din: *Some of the Sayings of Mohammad* (Woking: The Islamic Review Office, ca. 1920), 21.

Mildtätigkeit ist eine Pflicht für jeden Moslem. Wer keine Mittel dazu hat, soll eine gute Tat vollbringen oder einer schlechten aus dem Wege gehen; das ist seine Wohltätigkeit.<sup>78</sup>

Such parallels demonstrate not only pragmatism and the close cooperation between the two European mission centers. They also suggest a unifying view of Europe as an interlocutor and mission destination with similar cultural and intellectual legacies, and thus similar requirements for missionary work. This becomes all the more clear as the invisible chain of translations and their copies reaches even further and beyond the Ahmadiyya network. For the above-mentioned English hadith translation is found, like many others, verbatim in an English hadith collection already published by Abdullah al-Mamun al-Suhrawardy (1870–1935) in India in 1905.<sup>79</sup> This in turn had served Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) as a model for his short brochure of “Sayings of Muhammad” translated into Russian in 1910, in which he expressed his deep admiration for the universal spirituality and wisdom of this tradition.<sup>80</sup> The Christian Palestinian publicist Salim Qub‘ain (1870–1951) then adapted Tolstoy’s collection and ‘translated it back’ into Arabic in Cairo in 1915, recovering and compiling the Arabic originals, and thus “forging a hybrid authority that simultaneously draws on both the authority of the Islamic religious tradition as well as the most prominent of his European intellectual contemporaries.”<sup>81</sup> The pan-Arabist Qub‘ain went even further, seeing in Tolstoy’s admiration for the hadith tradition evidence of the potential for “building an Arab identity able to reach beyond sectarian divisions to unite Arabs of different religious backgrounds within a single community.”<sup>82</sup>

The Qur’an and hadith translations in the Berlin Muslim journals, and specifically in the *Moslemische Revue*, were thus only one link in a chain of translations that unfolded between India, Russia, Egypt, London, and Berlin, providing legitimacy to pan-Islamic, pan-Arab, anti-colonial, universalist-spiritual arguments. While similar translation strategies in these chains testify of a strategy to frame and address ‘Europe’ as a civilizational entity with a similar history and culture, but also a common imperial debt, in other contexts – often also for missionary purposes or to prove the superiority of Islam – it was emphasized that Europe was divided as a civilization and politically and in need of the unifying power of Islam to overcome

78 N.N.: “Sprüche des Propheten”, *Moslemische Revue*, January 1927, 48.

79 Abdullah al-Mamun al-Suhrawardy: *The Sayings of Muhammed. With Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Archibald Constable and Co, 1905), 58.

80 Lev N. Tolstoy: *Izrečeniya Magometa, ne vošedšie v Koran* [Sayings of Muhammad which were not included into the Qur’an] (Moscow: Posrednik, 1910).

81 Spencer Scoville: “Translating Orientalism into the Arabic Nahda”, in: *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 38 (2018), 11–36, here 26.

82 *Ibid.*, 28.

its crisis.<sup>83</sup> The Ahmadiyya's translation practices are thus also exemplary of a more widespread ambivalent addressing of Europe as either 'divided' or 'united' according to the argumentative strategy currently being pursued.

### **Resonances in the non-Muslim Environment: Between Fascination, Support, Rejection, and Securitization**

Inquiring into translators' agendas also throws up the question of how well they succeeded in reaching their target groups and making their voices heard. The exchanges that we know took place between Muslim journals in Berlin and Europe – advertisements, readers' letters, copied articles, etc. – suggest that the journals, including their translations, fulfilled the role of enabling internal discourse among Muslims in Europe. In addition to this 'internal' target group, the examples mentioned so far also reveal clearly that the Berlin journals did not fail in their aim of finding resonance in the non-Muslim environment as well: Be it in the local press, which showed a sometimes benevolent, sometimes exoticizing, and sometimes hostile interest in the activities of Muslims in Germany; be it in the reception by contemporary scholars of Islam, such as Kampffmeyer, who supported their activism and redistributed some of their writings; or by people who decided to convert, partly because of the access to the Islamic tradition created by the journals and their translations.<sup>84</sup> The attempt to convey a picture of 'Islam as seen by Muslims' and to fight negative stereotypes was appreciated by some non-converts as well. For example, in a review of the *Moslemische Revue* for the protestant journal *Neues Sächsisches Kirchenblatt*, the reviewer Hermann Meltzer, a teacher from Zwickau, not only analyzed their translations from the Qur'an, but also came to the conclusion that it would be good "not to judge it [Islam] according to preconceived and handed down opinions, but rather to let the Muhammadans tell us how they perceive their religion."<sup>85</sup> By contrast, conservatives such as Hans Mulzer, chairperson of the *Bund der Asienkämpfer*, an association of veterans of the so called 'Asia-corps' in the German army, described the "Islam pro-

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83 This approach is also very prominently expressed in Jabbar and Sattar Kheiri's two-issue journal *Islam. Ein Wegweiser zur Rettung und zum Wiederaufbau*. [Islam. A Guide to Rescue and Recovery] (1922–1923).

84 This is described, for instance, in the conversion narratives of Hans Lohbauer: "Die Wahrheit [The Truth]", *Moslemische Revue*, January 1926, 34–38; and Mohammed Assad (Leopold) Weiss: "Mein Weg zum Islam [My Way to Islam]", *Islam-Echo*, 10 June 1926, 5–8.

85 Hermann Meltzer: "Eine deutsche muhammedanische Zeitschrift [A German Muhammadan Journal]", in: *Neues Sächsisches Kirchenblatt* 14 (1931), 211–218. [Author's translation from German].



paganda” of the Ahmadiyya and other Muslims in Berlin as “insolent”.<sup>86</sup> Although reactions like those of Meltzer and Mulzer were limited to a relatively small part of the German population, they represent the ongoing polarity between ‘dialogue’ and ‘rejection’, ‘fascination’ and ‘fear’ in the discourse of ‘Islam in Europe/Germany’ which was precisely the situation that many Muslim translators were trying to address.

In addition, the journals and the people behind them, especially those with a decidedly political agenda, also attracted the attention of the German and European security authorities. These translated the journals into their language of security and categories of potential threat or usefulness: The former above all when it came to the potential for rebellion – both at the domestic level, and especially in the colonies; the latter when it came to building alliances that could be of use to foreign policy – especially for Germany. For this purpose, a number of articles and even full issues were translated and summarized, often by scholars who were asked to assess the political profile of the journal. For example, the orientalist Sebastian Beck (1878–1951) translated almost an entire edition of the multilingual *El-Islah*, published by the Indian pan-Islamist Muhammad Barakatullah (1859–1927), for the German Foreign Office.<sup>87</sup> In addition to anti-colonial and anti-Entente attitudes, the journals’ so-called “Bolshevik aspirations”<sup>88</sup> were also monitored closely. Passages pointing to such aspirations were often singled out for translation and assessment, especially in the case of *Azadi-yi sharq*, which was classified by the Foreign Office as “stridently Mohammedan nationalist” and generally received the greatest attention from German and international security authorities.<sup>89</sup>

However, as long as the editors did not turn critical of Germany and were not suspected of carrying out “propaganda” for the Entente,<sup>90</sup> the German security

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86 Mulzer in: *Mitteilungen des Bundes der Asienkämpfer* 4 (1925), 43, as quoted by Höpp, *Periodika*, 35 [Author’s translation from German].

87 Sebastian Beck: “Bericht über die Zeitschrift ‘el-İslāh’, 2. Jahrg. Nr. 7 vom März 1927 [Report on the journal ‘el-İslāh’, 2nd Vol., No. 7 of March 1927]”, 12 April 1927, NGH 07.12.025.

88 Schreiben an den Staatskommissar für öffentliche Ordnung [Letter to the State Commissioner for Public Order] Berlin, 22 November 1921, NGH 07.12.014, 141.

89 German Foreign Office cited in Höpp, *Periodika*, 29. Regulating the relationship of Muslims to communism and Russia required Western and Central European governments to perform a balancing act: In England and France, hopes were pinned on preventing communist sympathies among Muslim workers by promoting a sense of Islamic belonging. German authorities, in turn, observed such sympathies in Muslim journals with concern, but tolerated them, partly because they were interested in improved relations with Soviet Russia and especially in reaping the economic benefits (See Jonker, *On the Margins*, 26–27; Nathalie Clayer/Eric Germain: “Part III. From State Control to Foreign Policy. Introduction”, in: Nathalie Clayer/Eric Germain (eds.): *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (London: Hurst, 2008), 216–228, here 220–228).

90 For example, one issue of *al-Hamama* was confiscated and the journal briefly banned after Kampffmeyer expressed suspicions to the Foreign Office that it was carrying out French propaganda (See Höpp, *Periodika*, 23).

authorities did not intervene on their own initiative, thereby using the support and freedom they granted Muslim anticolonial activists on German territory as a source of soft power abroad. In contrast, the British, French, Spanish, and Italian embassies in Berlin demanded intervention from the German authorities, which probably led, in the case of the *Azadi-yi sharq*, to warnings and ultimately, in 1926, to the adoption by the journal of a primarily economic focus.<sup>91</sup> In addition, European states criticized in the journals used their power to impose export and publication bans in the territories they controlled: *Azadi-yi sharq* was thus not allowed to be published in India, Iran, France, or Italy.<sup>92</sup> A ban was imposed on the export of *El-Islah* to India.<sup>93</sup> *Islam-Echo* also addressed press censorship and its own ban in Syria.<sup>94</sup>

Among other things, the security authorities' classifications of the Berlin Muslims' journals testify to us today that these journals did not operate and circulate in a secluded space, but were received by non-Muslims who adapted them to their own conceptual systems. Today, we can most readily speculate about the dissemination and reception of these journals outside of Germany using traces of official attempts to regulate them. The translations undertaken by the security authorities also served the function of observation and regulation, thereby reflecting the (imperial) power hierarchies and political conditions that created the framework within which the Muslim translators acted.

## Conclusion

In Berlin, on the continent of the colonial powers, a surprisingly large number of Muslims found a place where they enjoyed unusual freedom to develop their anti-colonial and reformist ideas and to shape the discourse on the relationship between 'Islam' and 'Europe'. Today, the journalistic traces of Muslim life in Weimar Berlin give us an impression of that discourse as a very polyphonic and interconnected one about how Islam was to be understood and lived in the modern, globalized world formed by imperialism. Muslims who shaped this discourse in Europe, for and in collaboration with a European non-Muslim audience, faced a particular challenge in responding to European epistemic logics, prejudices, and narratives of superiority. They had not only to defend themselves against this, but, at the same time,

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91 Ibid., 18–20, 38–39.

92 Ibid., 28–29.

93 A "Note in the [British] Intelligence Bureau" (dated 20 October 1926) on this, with translations or summaries of articles from the journal, can be found in NGH 07.12.024.

94 N.N.: "Das 'Islam-Echo' in Syrien verboten! [The 'Islam-Echo' banned in Syria!]", *Islam-Echo*, 5 June 1927, 1–2.

to meet the standards set by 'the West' for the legitimization of worldviews and for their political demands. Translation in this context entailed a difficult balancing act of engaging with the logics and categories of a hierarchized discourse in order to simultaneously question and overcome them. Europe was to be addressed as a reference point and partner for a critical dialogue, but was not to be accepted as the central reference point. A binary understanding of these discourses as conformist or resistant does not do justice to this dynamic.

The ambivalence with which Muslims related to 'Europe' is reflected in the ambivalence with which their European environment reacted to their claim to self-representation: These reactions varied between rejection and fascination, between seeing the presence and intervention of Muslims as a threat or as enrichment. Both reactions were rooted in orientalist fantasies, which some were willing to question.

Translations were a central part and means of this discourse, even if they were mostly undertaken without being highlighted as such because they were seen as a natural part of the process. They always had both pragmatic and ideological implications. Thus, they not only testify to a well-functioning network between the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and beyond, and to the political agendas of their contributors and editors, but also reflect the ambivalence described above by serving or challenging epistemological and linguistic habits. Whether in the 'internal' multilingualism of some journals, in the editorial translation processes of international journalistic networks, or in making texts of the 'Islamic tradition' available to a German audience, translations were always accompanied by processes of selection and omission in conscious or unconscious alignment with the translator's agenda, legitimation strategies, and the assumed expectations of the target audience. For anti-colonialists, translation was a means of fostering independent reporting from colonized territories and countering press censorship or the views of Western press agencies.

The program of Muslim self-representation, often presented with a demonstrative unity, should not obscure the fact that translations were also part of the Muslim contest over the authority to interpret Islam in the 'modern world' and to represent the Islamic world vis-à-vis Christian Europe.

Further exploration of this body of journals will not only allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the networks and polyphonic discourses to which they bear witness. The journals and the translation phenomena within them show us how these ongoing discourses can repeat themselves, but also how perspectives may be broadened, epistemic conventions may be challenged, and new questions asked.



## Beyond Sea and Desert

### Journeying Between London and Baghdad in the Interwar Years

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César Jaquier

In July 1929, the Iraqi Minister of Finance, Yusuf Rizq Allah Ghanima, left Baghdad with his wife and children for a three-month stay abroad.<sup>1</sup> The family crossed the Syrian Desert by car and spent a few days visiting Damascus and Beirut together before parting ways. Yusuf Ghanima continued his journey to Europe alone, where he spent time in Rome, Paris, and London before returning to Lebanon towards the end of September to be reunited with his family. Although the primary motivation for his journey was to find a doctor in Europe who could treat his heart condition, he also traveled for other purposes and under many guises: as a wealthy tourist, a well-known Christian figure, and an Iraqi minister. In the same year, the British travel writer Freya Stark left London for a summer sojourn in Italy before embarking on a steamer to Haifa and Beirut, and then continuing on a journey of several months eastwards. This was her second trip across the Mediterranean, but the first time she crossed the Syrian Desert and visited Iraq, where she spent about five months before heading to Iran. For two years, she had been nurturing the desire to visit Baghdad by reading the accounts of European travelers who had journeyed to “Arabia” in past centuries, researching Iraq’s archaeological sites, and immersing herself in the imagination of the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>2</sup>

These two journeys across the Mediterranean and the Syrian Desert shed light on the transregional connections that developed between Europe and Mesopotamia – or the nascent state of Iraq – during the interwar period. In the late 1920s, it was possible to travel from Baghdad to London or vice versa in nine days using motorized transport across the Syrian Desert, whereas a decade earlier the journey took

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1 I am very grateful for the comments and suggestions from the editors and all the participants to the workshop *At the Crossroads – The Middle Eastern and the North Atlantic World During the Interwar Years*, which helped me to improve and revise the previous versions of this chapter.

2 See the letters she wrote during her first visit to Lebanon and Syria in 1927–1928. Freya Stark: *Letters from Syria* (London: Murray, 1942).

between 20 and 25 days by sea via the Suez Canal.<sup>3</sup> Their journeys reflect two ways of navigating the vast, transregional web of interlocking transport networks that combined cars, ships, and trains. But there is more to these two personal experiences.

In following the travels of Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima, this chapter takes its cue from a burgeoning scholarship that focuses on the experience of “transit” of those who traveled around the world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Martin Dusingberre and Roland Wenzlhuemer put it, this perspective aims to “remap the occasionally bland language of ‘connections’ – of analyses that locate the place of a journey’s beginning and end but assign it a character of placelessness or ‘nowhere’ during the in-between – by focusing more precisely on *transit*.”<sup>4</sup> By investigating connections and movements between Europe and Iraq through the experiences of Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima, this chapter falls within the framework of global microhistory, which proposes to rethink global processes and the questions we ask about them by focusing on specific spaces, objects, or individuals and by paying attention to details in the sources.<sup>5</sup> Here, the microhistorical approach, as historian John-Paul A. Ghobrial points out, may enable us “to challenge the triumphalism of grand narratives of mobility.”<sup>6</sup> By examining the travel accounts of these two individuals, this chapter aims to uncover the practicalities and difficulties associated with traveling, the observations, perceptions, and feelings of Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima, and their encounters with the people and spaces they came across. Combined with the examination of more institutional sources, the study of travel accounts can help us move beyond the sometimes overly simplistic narrative of accelerated mobility and increased connectivity put forward in global history and mobility studies.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Christina P. Grant: *The Syrian Desert: Caravans Travel and Exploration* (London: A. & C. Black, 1937), 276.

4 Martin Dusingberre/Roland Wenzlhuemer: “Editorial – being in transit: Ships and global incompatibilities”, in: *Journal of Global History* 11:2 (2016), 155–162, here 158. See also David Lambert/Peter Merriman (eds.): *Empire and Mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 6.

5 Romain Bertrand/Guillaume Calafat: “La microhistoire globale: affaire(s) à suivre”, in: *Annales HSS* 73:1 (2018), 3–18; Sebastian Conrad: *What Is Global History?* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 129–132; John-Paul A. Ghobrial: “Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian”, in: *Past & Present* 242:14 (2019), 1–22.

6 John-Paul A. Ghobrial: “Moving Stories and What They Tell Us: Early Modern Mobility Between Microhistory and Global History”, in: *Past & Present* 242:14 (2019), 243–280, here 249.

7 On the importance of reflecting on immobility, differential access to mobility, impediments to movement, etc., see Nina Glick Schiller/Noel B. Salazar: “Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe”, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39:2 (2013), 183–200. It is worth noting that in the early 2000s, proponents of the ‘mobility turn’ were well aware of the need to think about the factors that produce mobility for some and immobility for others: Kevin Hannam/

While traveling around and through the Mediterranean and the Syrian Desert, Yusuf Ghanima and Freya Stark gave accounts of their journeys in letters and travelogues. Ghanima wrote two diaries which were later compiled by his son into a travelogue, *Rihla ilā Urubbā 1929 (A Journey to Europe 1929)*. These diaries recorded his daily activities, as well as his observations and feelings, from the day he left Baghdad until his return.<sup>8</sup> For her part, Freya Stark published a travelogue of her journey to Iraq in 1937, *Baghdad Sketches*.<sup>9</sup> But she also wrote numerous letters to friends and relatives during her trip, which formed the basis of the second book of her four-volume autobiography, *Beyond Euphrates: Autobiography 1928–1933*. Published in 1951, this volume combines Stark's letters with introductory notes reflecting the author's later thoughts on her journey.<sup>10</sup>

Like all travel narratives, these accounts are composites, made up of notes and scripts written in different places and times, possibly rewritten as well.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, although the editing process cannot be ignored, Freya Stark's autobiography and Yusuf Ghanima's travelogue consist mainly of notes and letters written *during* the two authors' journeys. Thus, these accounts differ from many travelogues published with a time lag, which inevitably raise the question of their authors' relationship with their memories and travel notes.<sup>12</sup> In what follows, travel writing is first and foremost understood as a genre that reflects how travelers "make sense of themselves and the worlds through which they move", as Roxanne L. Euben puts it. Travel narratives can reveal how traveling functions as a reflexive and transformative experience, in which travelers become aware of and reshape their conceptions of "home and away, self and other, familiar and foreign".<sup>13</sup> For both Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima, the spatial and temporal dimensions of the journey left their mark. Traveling transformed their perceptions of space, either by making them more aware of geographical distance or by altering their spatial imaginations concerning the

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Mimi Scheller/John Urry: "Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings", in: *Mobilities* 1:1 (2006), 1–22.

- 8 Yusuf Ghanima: *Rihla ilā Urubbā 1929: mukhtārāt min yawmiyyāt wa rasā'il* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Sa'dūn, 1986). The diaries were compiled by Harith Y. Ghanima.
- 9 Freya Stark: *Baghdad Sketches* (London: Murray, 1937).
- 10 Freya Stark: *Beyond Euphrates: Autobiography 1928–1933* (London: Murray, 1951). Other letters can be found in: Freya Stark: *Letters. Vol. 1. The Furnace and the Cup, 1914–1930*, edited by Lucy Moorehead (Salisbury: Compton Russel, 1974).
- 11 James Duncan/Derek Gregory (eds.): *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 3–4.
- 12 On travelogues being (re)written and published later on, see Michael Ursinus: "Ottoman Travels and Travel Accounts from an Earlier Age of Globalization", in: *Die Welt des Islams* 40:2 (2000), 133–138, here 135.
- 13 Roxanne L. Euben: *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 9–10.

world.<sup>14</sup> As will become apparent, moreover, their travel experience was influenced by a combination of materialities, socialities, and affects, including but not limited to the expanding transport infrastructure that greatly reduced travel time between London and Baghdad.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, travel writing has been widely studied in terms of the cross-cultural encounters that travel entails. In this regard, a vast literature has criticized and qualified Edward Said's view that the narratives of travelers from the North Atlantic world to the 'Orient' formed a coherent discourse that shaped and othered the spaces and populations they encountered. Instead, the study of travelogues reveals both heterogeneous attitudes and perspectives as well as the transformative nature of these encounters for both travelers and local people.<sup>16</sup> Drawing again on Roxanne L. Euben, this chapter shows that Freya Stark's and Yusuf Ghanima's narratives highlight multiple encounters producing various feelings of familiarity and otherness in the course of their journeys, thus demonstrating the diversity and multiplicity of the North Atlantic and Middle Eastern worlds.<sup>17</sup> Finally, while documenting the workings of the transport networks that connected Europe with Iraq and vice versa, these travel accounts show the coexistence of different forms of mobility and the highly variable travel conditions of those who moved along these routes, whether they were upper-class travelers, less fortunate migrants, or poor pilgrims heading for Mecca. They also reveal how these mobilities were classified by states according to social, racial, and gender categories that underpinned different mobility regimes, which historians and other scholars have highlighted as a process that accompanied globalization.<sup>18</sup>

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- 14 On connections between travel, cultural production, and spatial imaginaries, see Johannes Riquet/Elizabeth Kollmann (eds.): *Spatial Modernities: Geography, Narrative, Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
- 15 In his article on 'passenger', Paul Ashmore calls for the study of the "social, material and affective assemblages" that contribute to the experience of travelling/passenger: Paul Ashmore: "Slowing Down Mobilities: Passenger on an Inter-war Ocean Liner", in: *Mobilities* 8:4 (2013), 595–611.
- 16 Ali Behdad: *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 1994), 9–13; Kate Hill: "Introduction: Narratives of Travel, Narratives that Travel", in: Kate Hill (ed.): *Britain and the Narration of Travel in the Nineteenth Century: Texts, Images, Objects* (London/New York: Routledge, 2016), 1–10; Geoffrey P. Nash: *From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East, 1830–1926* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Mary Louise Pratt: *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992).
- 17 Roxanne L. Euben: *Journeys to the Other Shore*, 14.
- 18 Valeska Huber: *Channelling Mobilities: Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Liat Kozma: *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017); Jordi Tejel/Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (eds.): *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918–1946* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).



## I Freya Stark

Freya Stark (1893–1993) grew up between Britain and Italy, where her family owned a small house. During her youth and early adulthood, she acquired a broad literary culture both by herself and by studying at university. She also traveled extensively in Europe, before feeling the urge to cross the Mediterranean. In 1927, she left Europe after reading the accounts of many travelers who had visited the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire before her. She was driven by the desire to become an explorer and writer herself, and attracted by recent archaeological discoveries in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Freya Stark traveled with very little money and stood out from her fellow citizens in how she interacted with the locals and because she spoke some Arabic, to the extent that she came to be considered a “subversive” traveler by the British.<sup>19</sup> Freya Stark was still unknown to the public during her first trips to Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, which inspired her to write accounts of her travels. In 1928, she published one of her first newspaper articles about her stay in the Lebanese mountain resort of Brummana. Her situation was not much different when she traveled for the first time to Iraq in 1929, as James Canton pointed out: “in Baghdad, she was very much an unknown figure, though one gaining a reputation as a daring and audacious woman.”<sup>20</sup> This would change during the 1930s, as she gained a reputation and some notoriety, but also as her relationship with the British community and administration overseas gradually changed. By the time she published *Baghdad Sketches* in 1937, she had established herself as a famous traveler and writer in British society and her initial reputation as a “subversive” traveler had partly fallen away.<sup>21</sup>

### Infrastructure and Logistics

On 26 September 1929, Freya Stark embarked on a Lloyd Triestino ship, the *Camaro*, heading from Trieste to Jaffa and Beirut. At the time, Lloyd Triestino operated a number of shipping lines between Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean and advertised its service as the “quickest routes [...] to the Far East”, from Greece to India.<sup>22</sup> Trieste was also an important transit port on the migration route of European Jews, and the ships of Lloyd Triestino carried more than a hundred thousand migrants

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19 Jane Fletcher Geniesse: *Passionate Nomad: The Life of Freya Stark* (London/New York: Modern Library, 2001); Malise Ruthven: *Freya Stark in the Levant* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1994), 7–10; Malise Ruthven: “A Subversive Imperialist: Reappraising Freya Stark”, in: *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 26 (2006), 147–167.

20 James Canton: *From Cairo to Baghdad: British Travellers in Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011): 119–120, 139; Malise Ruthven: “A Subversive Imperialist”, 147–167.

22 Maura Elise Hametz: “Envisioning the Italian Mediterranean Fascist Policy in Steamship Publicity, 1922–1942”, in: *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 16:1/2 (2006), 175–186, here 182.

from Trieste to Palestine during the interwar period.<sup>23</sup> On board the *Carnaro*, Freya Stark came “for the first time fully face to face with the Zionists of Palestine”, as she later wrote in her autobiography.<sup>24</sup> The emigration of Jews to Palestine was also the subject of discussions with her cabin mate. In a letter written on the ship, she explained that she shared her cabin with three “missionary women from Palestine” with whom they talked about the recent “massacre” of Jews in Palestine, a hint at the murder of dozens of Jews in Hebron in August 1929.<sup>25</sup>

Lloyd Triestino’s ships provided a regular service between Italy and Palestine, but also operated up to Beirut, thus linking southern Europe to the French mandated territories of Lebanon and Syria.<sup>26</sup> After a journey of about a week at sea, Freya Stark arrived in Lebanon, where she had planned to spend a few weeks in a mountain resort before leaving for Iraq. At the port of Beirut, she was able to clear customs without paying duty on her luggage, as some convenience was granted to travelers who were only passing through or spending a short time in Lebanon and Syria. As Freya Stark recounted, these institutional arrangements were well known to those not entitled to them, as some of the ship’s passengers sought to circumvent customs legislation by taking advantage of her situation.

Then the young Levantine who was also on the boat thought he might profit by my going to Baghdad and avoid paying duty on his luggage, mine being ‘in transit’. The porter murmured some Arabic to this effect, and I would not really have minded annexing three more suitcases: but when a man’s bicycle was added and I was asked if it belonged to me I said ‘No’, and also repudiated the young Levantine who apparently had described himself as travelling with me.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from these provisions to promote the movement of foreign travelers, Freya Stark also benefited from a transport infrastructure that now enabled travelers to move between the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia in just two or three days.

In the late 1920s, various companies offered regular car and bus services between Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad at widely varying prices and standards. The transport sector had grown and diversified considerably since the first attempts to drive through the Syrian Desert in the aftermath of the First World War. In October 1923,

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23 Ibid., 115.

24 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*, 64.

25 Ibid., 70; Henri Laurens : *La question de Palestine, Tome 2 : Une mission sacrée de civilisation, 1922–1947* (Paris : Fayard, 2002), 538–548.

26 In the post-war context, the San Remo Conference of April 1920 ratified the designation of France by the League of Nations as Mandatory Power in Syria and Lebanon, thus entrusting it with the task of assisting the populations of these territories until they were deemed fit for independence.

27 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Letter to Venetia Buddicom (“Darling B”), Brummana, 5 October 1929.

two New Zealand brothers Norman and Gerry Nairn, who had previously served in the British army in Palestine, set up a regular transport service for mail and passengers between Haifa, Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. In their wake, the Lebanese Francis and Alfred Kettaneh established the Eastern Transport Company in 1924, whose cars departed from Beirut and went as far as Tehran.<sup>28</sup> These first two transport companies mainly targeted a wealthy clientele by offering a service to European standards.<sup>29</sup> After their merger in 1926, the Nairn Eastern Transport Company continued to develop a luxury service.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, several Lebanese, Syrian, and Iraqi entrepreneurs tried their hand at transdesert transport with varying degrees of success. After the first of these companies went bankrupt, two other Syrian companies emerged in 1928 and enjoyed some success in transdesert transport: Debes & Akkash and Adib Shaaban.<sup>31</sup>

Freya Stark chose to travel with one of them. As soon as she stepped ashore at the port of Beirut, the agent of a “native transport company” approached her to propose a good price for the trip to Baghdad: only nine pounds, including the transport of her luggage. Stark was well aware that the majority of European travelers journeyed with the renowned Nairn Transport Company, but chose instead to accept the offer of the Syrian company. “The English Company, the Nairn, charge £19 without luggage, and I can’t think the difference can be worth the £12”, she wrote to her friend Venetia Buddicom, suggesting that the Nairn Transport Company also charged an additional £2 for luggage.<sup>32</sup> After a few weeks in the Lebanese resort of Brummana, Freya Stark left Damascus on the morning of 25 October for the transdesert journey. Although the agent of the transport company in Beirut had assured her that her traveling companions would be British, presumably in an attempt to win her over, they proved to be of different nationalities.

The two ladies have turned out to be Greeks from Constantinople settled in Aleppo and now going to visit a brother who is a pastry-cook in Baghdad, where I have

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28 Christina P. Grant, *The Syrian Desert*, 270–289.

29 Circular letters by the Nairn Transport Company and the Eastern Transport Company attached to the letter from the US Consulate, Baghdad to the Department of State, 14 April 1925, The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) at College Park, Record Group 59, roll 16, 890d (Syria).

30 “New Car for the Desert Route, *Baghdad Times*, 18 February 1926”, Middle East Centre Archive, Oxford (MECA), GB165-0215, Nairn Transport Company Collection; Thomas Cook’s agency, Haifa to Thomas Cook & Son, London, 13 March 1935, Thomas Cook Archives (TCA), Black Box 32 ‘Nairn Transport Company’.

31 ‘Trans-desert motor transport concerns established in Baghdad: December 1929’, appendix to extract from Economic report N°149, The National Archives (TNA), CO 732/39/11.

32 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Freya Stark to Venetia Buddicom, Brummana, 5 October 1929.

promised to call on them. The only other traveller is a young Levantine in a béret, very obliging and polite, but not at all like a colonel in any army.<sup>33</sup>

The small group left Damascus at 8.20 a.m. “We had a great time strapping the luggage, and I was just able to insist on not having half of mine left behind”, she wrote to her father.<sup>34</sup> They traveled for two hours until they reached the French border post of Abu Shamat. The various cars traveled in convoy for security reasons, as Stark remarked: “It is not so much fear of raids now as that a car can get stuck or lost: one driver alone two months ago went round and round in the immense spaces till his petrol was finished, and he was found dead.” The group continued without stopping until nightfall when they halted for a few hours at a place called Rutbah, where a fort and hotel offered travelers a safe haven in the desert, halfway between Damascus and Baghdad. “It is very like the sort of place the Jinn used to produce when the lamp was rubbed, I am sure”, she wrote in terms that evoked the *Arabian Nights* imaginary that accompanied her, but also her pleasure at finding a safe place after a harrowing journey through the desert. At 1 a.m. the group set off again for a twelve-hour journey, first to Ramadi and then to Baghdad.<sup>35</sup>

## Mesopotamia and the (Middle) East

It is very remarkable – here I am in Baghdad. I sometimes wonder how it comes about. [...] There are no beautiful bazaars like Damascus, and the mosques with their gaudy domes do not seem beautiful from what I have seen (but I haven't yet examined). But the *people* are there; and I shall be very happy I do believe. That is after all the real interest: the people here are of all fascinating sorts – the beautiful ones being Kurds.<sup>36</sup>

Freya Stark could not believe that she was in Baghdad, in this city she perceived as so far away. For a European traveler like her, visiting Baghdad was a novel experience and still an unusual practice at the time. In the 19th century, indeed, Mesopotamia still represented “a remote and unwelcoming locale” for travelers from the North

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33 Freya Stark, *Baghdad Sketches*, 5. In a letter to her friend Viva Jeyes, she described this group of women in a different way: ‘a Turkish family from Aleppo whose male members keep a rather low-down eating house here’. She may have understood afterwards that these women were of Greek origin, but in any case she seems to have had difficulty in identifying them. Freya Stark: *Letters*, Vol. 1: Letter to Viva Jeyes, 26 October 1929.

34 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Letter to Robert Stark (‘Pips’), Freya’s father, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929.

35 Freya Stark, *Letters*, Vol. 1: Letter to Viva Jeyes, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929; Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Letter to Robert Stark, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929.

36 Freya Stark, *Letters*, Vol. 1: Letter to Venetia Buddicom, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, October 1929 (emphasis in original).

Atlantic world.<sup>37</sup> European tourists crossing the Mediterranean used to visit Greece, Egypt, and Eastern Mediterranean cities such as Jerusalem, Beirut, and Istanbul.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, Iraq was only just beginning to open up to European and American tourists in the early 1920s. To be sure, people and goods moved through the Syrian Desert before the advent of the automobile. Throughout the Ottoman period, camel caravans connected the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean with those of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf and continued to do so until the beginning of the 20th century and even during the interwar years. However, the desert journey took between three weeks and a month for the caravans.<sup>39</sup> The development of a car-based transport system in the post-war years not only facilitated mobility across the Syrian Desert, but also provided new travel opportunities between Europe and Mesopotamia. By way of the desert route, Baghdad was now within nine days of London, a fact not lost on the well-known British travel agency Thomas Cook & Son, which was quick to promote Iraq as a tourist destination by publishing brochures and travel guides and making arrangements with the Nairn Transport Company.<sup>40</sup> As a major player in the “business of tourism”, the British agency played an influential role in making travel to Iraq more convenient and desirable in the 1920s, just as it had done in Egypt a few decades earlier.<sup>41</sup>

Like her British counterparts visiting Iraq, Freya Stark was imbued with orientalist imaginings and a desire to discover the archaeological remains of ancient cities such as Babylon and Ur. At the same time, she was also deeply interested in the people, as illustrated in the above quote. This interest found expression in frequent comparisons between the language, culture, and appearance of the people she observed in Iraq and Syria. On arrival at the border post of Ramadi, for instance, she noted that the Arabs were “very much darker here than the Syrian and not so fine a type from what I could see.”<sup>42</sup> Other such remarks punctuated her letters, always con-

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37 Frederick N. Bohrer: “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France”, in: *The Art Bulletin* 80:2 (1998), 336–356, here 337.

38 Waleed Hazbun: “The East as an Exhibit: Thomas Cook & Son and the origins of the International Tourism Industry in Egypt”, in: Philip Scranton/Janet F. Davidson (eds.): *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 3–33.

39 Philippe Pétariat: “Caravan Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire: The ‘Aqil Network and the Institutionalization of Overland Trade”, in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 63:1/2 (2019), 38–72; Faruk Tabak: “Local Merchants in Peripheral Areas of the Empire: The Fertile Crescent during the Long Nineteenth Century”, in: *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 11:2 (1988), 179–214.

40 “A Land Made Fit for Tourists: The Remarkable Development of Mesopotamia”, in: *The Traveller's Gazette* 73:12 (December 1923), 11; “To Baghdad in Nine Days”, in: *The Traveller's Gazette* 74:10 (March 1924), 10; as well as the brochure *Tours to Mesopotamia (Iraq)*, season 1927–1928, 18, TCA.

41 Waleed Hazbun, “The East as an Exhibit”, 3–33.

42 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Letter to Robert Stark, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929.

cerned with the physical traits of Iraqis, as compared with that of Syrians.<sup>43</sup> In some respects, these comparisons reflected Freya Stark's changing understanding of the world. The new travel opportunities across the Syrian Desert and the intensive advertising of Iraq by transport and tourism companies were having a significant impact on the spatial imaginations of Europeans, putting Mesopotamia on the map of an increasing number of travelers, merchants, and diplomats in the North Atlantic world.

On her first trip to Lebanon and Syria in 1928, Freya Stark spent time in Brummana and Damascus, two places she saw as belonging to distinct spaces, separated by the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. After one of her journeys from Damascus to Beirut through these mountains, she wrote to her mother Flora Stark: "We have left the East behind us. This is not Europe: but it is Mediterranean. Very lovely."<sup>44</sup> A year later, she made the same comment in a letter addressed, once again, to Flora Stark after her arrival in Damascus: "It seemed incredible to be here again and find it all better than before. I feel I am in the real East again."<sup>45</sup> She had a similar feeling in 1929 when she crossed the Syrian Desert. The further she got from the Mediterranean, the deeper Freya Stark felt she was entering another world. As she explained in her autobiography, the journey from Damascus to Baghdad opened up new horizons for her, in a very literal sense.

Of all the sights and sounds and feelings which my first winter in Baghdad brought me, three principal influences remained. The first was the most obvious, the immediate *enlargement of my world* to include an East independent of the Mediterranean. A foretaste of this had been given by Damascus the year before, for the great valley behind the Lebanon, the Beka'a, is I think the boundary between the Levant and Asia. Where the tiled roofs end and the flat roofs become general, and the Christian churches have no bells, is the beginning; and it is roughly separated from the Mediterranean world by a curtain of wastelands, of which the Syrian-Iraqi desert is the easiest to cross.<sup>46</sup>

By reducing travel times between Europe and Iraq, the new transport opportunities created a sense of shrinking space, but they also led to an "expansion of transport space" by including new regions into the existing transport system and, consequently, in the mental map of travelers like Freya Stark.<sup>47</sup> They also gave rise among

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43 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: [Notebook] 1.11.29. "The Iraqi has not the haughty beauty of the Syrian [...]. Nose wide at nostril and slightly tilted: eyebrows inclined to meet: three-cornered face: lovely dark brown hair with wave in it seems typical."

44 Freya Stark, *Letters*. Vol. 1: Letter to Flora Stark, Brummana, 17 April 1928.

45 *Ibid.*: Letter to Flora Stark, Damascus, 19 October 1929.

46 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*, 83. Emphasis is mine.

47 This dialectical effect has been examined by Wolfgang Schivelbusch with regard to rail transport in Europe: Wolfgang Schivelbusch: *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and*

travelers to new spatial imaginaries that organised the world. As Duncan Bell put it, transport and communications technologies produced “an imaginative rescaling of planetary space.”<sup>48</sup> In this process of reshaping her mental map, Freya Stark conceived of the Mediterranean Sea, the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, and the Syrian Desert as natural boundaries shaping regions populated by different societies.<sup>49</sup>

The growing European awareness of and interest in Iraq was not a completely new phenomenon, however. Historical scholarship has shown that Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf acquired a central importance for the British Empire in India over the course of the 19th century, as this region was progressively regarded as first a buffer zone and then a corridor facilitating mobility and communication between India and Europe.<sup>50</sup> Advances in transport and communications also made the Persian Gulf region more accessible to colonial administrators, soldiers, and travelers of all kinds in the 19th century. In 1902, the United States naval officer Alfred Mahan recommended that the British secure control of “the Middle East”, a term he coined to refer to the region centered on the Persian Gulf and which he deemed central to London’s maritime connections with India. The term was not immediately adopted and stood alongside other more commonly used terms such as the “Near East” for two decades before it took hold.<sup>51</sup> In the interwar period, British and French colonial expansion into the former Ottoman provinces, the creation of the Middle Eastern mandates and the expansion of transport links across the Mediterranean and the Syrian Desert made Europeans even more conscious of the areas north of the Persian Gulf. As Vincent Capdepuy has argued, the development of a transport system across the Syrian Desert greatly contributed to shaping “the centrality of the Syrian-Iraqi space” for foreign powers. As the lands surrounding the Syrian Desert became of crucial importance to both the European imperial powers and the USA,

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*Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 121–122. See also John Urry: *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 100–101.

- 48 Duncan Bell: *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 174.
- 49 On the modern view that societies are closely associated with bounded spaces, see Doreen Massey: *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 62–75.
- 50 Guillemette Crouzet: *Genèses du Moyen-Orient : Le Golfe Persique à l'âge des impérialismes (vers 1800-vers 1914)* (Ceyzérieu : Champ Vallon, 2015), chapter 6.
- 51 Roger Adelson: “British and U.S. Use and Misuse of the Term ‘Middle East’”, in: Bonine, Michael E./Amanat, Abbas/Gasper, Michael E. (eds.): *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 36–55; Vincent Capdepuy: “Proche ou Moyen-Orient? Géohistoire de la notion de Middle East”, in: *L'Espace Géographique* 37:3 (2008), 225–238, here 232–233.

the term “Middle East” came into wider use, encompassing and replacing the older term “Near East”.<sup>52</sup>

Freya Stark’s travel accounts shed light on how these geopolitical and infrastructural developments could operate within an individual’s spatial representations. By stating that her trip to Iraq had *enlarged* her world she provided a very telling illustration of how this region later known as the “Middle East” emerged in the minds of travelers from the North Atlantic world in the interwar period. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Freya Stark never talked of the “Middle East” in her letters sent from Baghdad. Yet she started to make extensive use of the term in a later book published in 1945, where she recounted her travels between Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq during the Second World War.<sup>53</sup>

### Uneven Mobility on Similar Routes

As mentioned above, Freya Stark often referred in her writings to her traveling companions as well as to other travelers she encountered on her journeys. In fact, her travels were also an opportunity to meet people. Her journey from Damascus through the desert, for example, was a time for socializing with her three traveling companions.

We are all very contented, and share each other’s provisions, and the ladies give me water from a canvas bag kept cool by the moving air. This is my first journey across the desert; I have no useful knowledge.<sup>54</sup>

This way of traveling contrasted sharply with that of passengers of the Nairn Transport Company. Freya Stark never missed an opportunity to poke fun at the high standards sought by the company and its passengers. Not only was she amused at the luxurious service offered by the company – which “cook[ed] your breakfast-sausage romantically for you in the open desert”<sup>55</sup> – but she also felt that their passengers traveled in a way that was detached from their surroundings, without coming into contact with the people and the nature around them. “[Crossing the desert] is a wonderful experience – and better in a way in the open car with all the vagaries of native casualness than in the respectable seclusion of Nairn”, she wrote to her friend Viva Jeyes once in Baghdad.<sup>56</sup> While passengers of the Nairn Transport Company shared a car or bus with other travelers, the high fare effectively restricted the clientele to

52 Vincent Capdepuy also mentions Arab nationalism and the discovery of oil as other factors in the emergence (‘resurgence’) of the Syrian-Iraqi space. Vincent Capdepuy, “Proche ou Moyen-Orient?”, 230–234.

53 Freya Stark: *East is West* (London: John Murray, 1945).

54 Freya Stark, *Baghdad Sketches*, 5.

55 *Ibid.*, 3.

56 Freya Stark, *Letters*. Vol. 1: Letter to Viva Jeyes, 26 October 1929.



a relatively affluent, often European, segment. By deriding travelers with the Nairn Transport Company in her letters and travelogues, Freya Stark was also trying to portray herself as an unconventional traveler who was willing to step off the beaten track used by her wealthy compatriots.

The Rutbah Hotel also featured prominently in the travel accounts of Freya Stark, who described it as a luxurious hotel where waiters “spontaneously [thought] of hot water” when travelers arrived and where British officials gathered and relaxed in a classy atmosphere.

An then you dine on salmon mayonnaise and custard and jelly and read the sort of notices on the walls that might belong to a golf club-house in the country, and the British officials are all talking shop or shooting or such and look so nice after the French in Syria.<sup>57</sup>

Although Freya Stark was keen to intermingle with people from different backgrounds than her British compatriots, she nevertheless yielded to the opportunities offered by her status. While her traveling companions rested in the car parked in the courtyard, she rented a room in the hotel, as did the British officials. In *Baghdad Sketches*, she admitted that the situation had embarrassed her. But she had not given up her privilege.

Meanwhile the Aleppo ladies and such eat whatever happens to be inside their strange bundles and wait in heaps in the cars in the yard. As I walked across to my room I peered at their dim untidy dishevelment where they lay asleep. I think it is not good manners to be more comfortable than my fellow-travellers; it is a sentiment which never gets put into practice, but I had felt apologetic about it when I went to dine.<sup>58</sup>

On several other occasions, Stark was granted a special status. On arrival at the Iraqi border post of Ramadi, for example, she realized that she had forgotten to apply for a visa to Iraq. Nevertheless, although the legislation prohibited it, she was able to obtain her visa on the spot. She attributed this exception to the fact that she had mentioned eating with former Prime Minister Jaafar Al-Askari while in London.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, Freya Stark tended to avoid the places where rich Europeans confined themselves. “I hate this sort of hotel”, she wrote to a friend about the Windsor Hotel in Haifa on 9 June 1931, during another trip. “The British are going through on leave, nice and clean and talking in pleasant low voices and looking very much as if they lived in a private club in this foreign land.”<sup>60</sup>

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57 Ibid.

58 Freya Stark, *Baghdad Sketches*, 8.

59 Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*: Letter to Robert Stark, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929.

60 Ibid.: Letter from Windsor Hotel, Haifa, 9 June 1931.

While she was fascinated as much as irritated by these high-class travelers, Freya Stark was also intrigued by those who traveled with far less means. On the *Carnaro*, for example, she paid attention to the Jewish passengers in third class. “Down below in the third class they sing their monotonous anthem, or dance in a circle three steps one way one step back, with a grunting cry, evidently next cousin to the Arab dance.”<sup>61</sup> In Syria and Iraq, her attention was drawn to the Muslim pilgrims who traveled through both countries on the way to and from Mecca. In the interwar period, indeed, the development of motorized transport between Baghdad and Damascus diverted many Iraqi, Iranian, Afghan, and even Indian hajj pilgrims from the sea route across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea that they had previously used to the overland routes through the Syrian desert.<sup>62</sup> On her journey from Damascus to Baghdad, Freya Stark was also particularly impressed by the buses filled to the brim with pilgrims. She gave several vivid descriptions of her encounter with lorries carrying pilgrims through the Syrian Desert, probably on their way to Mecca.

I thought we knew all about ‘diligences’, but the wooden atrocities which the poor pilgrims cram into for this long weary journey are quite beyond anything we can remember. I saw one go off, packed so high it was *just* able not to topple over if it took the corners slowly, with a good stout wooden grating all round to prevent the human contents from bursting out.<sup>63</sup>

Leaving for Iran few months later, she would give a rather similar description of the pilgrim convoys she encountered on leaving Baghdad.

We got off at five-forty-five; Baghdad looking comparatively clean and empty except for lorry-loads of pilgrims: they travel in sort of cages with wire-netting sides on which the water skins and jars are hung, so that the view from inside is completely hidden.<sup>64</sup>

As these descriptions suggest, the mobility of indigent travelers could be radically different from that of travelers with the Nairn Transport Company. From the mid-1920s, pilgrims traveling with very few resources fell back on cheap services to cross the Syrian Desert, despite the travel conditions and the dangers involved.

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61 Ibid.: Letter to Venetia Buddicom, S.S. Carnaro, 29 September 1929.

62 Luc Chantre: *Pèlerinages d'empire: Une histoire européenne du pèlerinage à la Mecque* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2018), 255–256; Sylvia Chiffolleau: *Le Voyage à La Mecque: Un pèlerinage mondial en terre d'Islam* (Paris: Bélin, 2017), 248–254; César Jaquier: “Motor Cars and Transdesert Traffic: Channelling Mobilities between Iraq and Syria, 1923–30”, in: Tejel, Jordi/Öztan, Ramazan Hakkı (eds.): *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918–1946* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 228–255.

63 Ibid.: Letter to Robert Stark, Zia Hotel, Baghdad, 26 October 1929.

64 Ibid.: Letter to Robert Stark, Hotel de France, Hamadan, 17 April 1930.

While Freya Stark enjoyed a certain social status that enabled her to observe from a distance, and sometimes share at will, the conditions under which less fortunate travelers moved across the Mediterranean and the Syrian Desert, as a woman she experienced more complicated travel conditions than her male British counterparts. Her experiences show that European women were exposed to gender-based judgments by their compatriots when they traveled alone to Iraq. During her first visit to Iraq in 1929, Stark appeared as an “eccentric” traveler in the eyes of the European community, as she traveled alone and at low cost, and resided outside the British-inhabited neighborhoods of Baghdad.<sup>65</sup> As James Canton has argued, Freya Stark “found herself an outsider to the British colonial community” in this city.<sup>66</sup> Traveling as a European was frowned upon by Freya Stark’s compatriots, as she later recounted in a speech to the Royal Central Asian Society in London.

‘What is the use of your travels?’ I was asked this once in Persia by an English-woman who evidently disliked me. I think she must have disliked me to ask so unkind a question. She herself, she said, was fully occupied in looking after her husband: she could spare no time to wander in the hills.<sup>67</sup>

But traveling as an independent woman not only met with verbal disapproval, it was also subject to special regulations in the late 1920s. In 1928, the British administration in Iraq issued a set of regulations for “ladies travelling in Iraq”, which stipulated that European and American women were to travel in the company of a man outside the main Iraqi cities, unless they stayed on the main roads or obtained prior permission from the relevant authorities.<sup>68</sup> As literary scholar Dúnlaith Bird argues, this regulation replicated 19th century European laws that aimed to regulate the mobility of those identified as vagrants as much as to identify them, but this time by targeting the “solitary women traveller”.<sup>69</sup> Those who posed a threat from the British perspective were European and American women of a certain social status. Freya Stark was well aware of this, as she humorously pointed out in an op-ed published in the *Baghdad Times* that a woman without social standing could “pic-nic off the main road without notifying the Ministry of the Interior”.<sup>70</sup> In short, what the British commu-

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65 “I was soon considered a rebel a dangerous eccentric, or a spy”, wrote Freya Stark in her autobiography (Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates*, 86).

66 James Canton, *From Cairo to Baghdad*, 119.

67 Freya Stark: “In defence of travel”, in: *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 23:1 (1936), 104–110, here 104.

68 Thomas Cook & Son: *Cook’s Traveller’s Handbook Palestine and Syria* (London: Simkin Marshall, 1929), 435–436.

69 Dúnlaith Bird: *Travelling in Different Skins: Gender identity in European Women’s Oriental Travelogues, 1850–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56–65. On the regulation of prostitution in the interwar Middle East, see Liat Kozma, *Global Women*.

70 Quoted in Dúnlaith Bird, *Travelling in Different Skins*, 63.

nity in Iraq did not like about Freya Stark's way of traveling alone off the beaten track and socializing with the locals was that her behavior could be associated with British women at large. This is clear from a letter Freya Stark sent to her friend Venetia Buddicom from Baghdad on 6 January 1930:

My dear, you can't imagine what a place this is for taking an interest in other people's affairs, nor what a mutual shock my first contact with proper conventional civil service society has caused. No one else (respectable) appears ever to have settled in a shoemaker's home on the banks of the Tigris, nor has anyone succeeded in living in Baghdad on two rupees a day. One lady has asked me if I am not 'lowering the prestige of British womanhood' by sitting in school among the Iraqi girls.<sup>71</sup>

In the same spirit, the British and French authorities decided in the mid-1920s to ban European women artists from entering Iraq and Syria, respectively. The British were the first to take this step to ensure that European women could not be associated with prostitutes, as this would have damaged the "prestige" of the British nation.<sup>72</sup> The French, for their part, decided not to impose a total ban on French artists entering Lebanon and Syria but to refuse visas to any woman whose status as an artist was not "clearly established".<sup>73</sup>

In sum, French and British colonial administrations dealt with the mobility of women between Europe and the Middle East in a different way to that of men in the interwar period, seeking to regulate and even prohibit their movements. Based on a sexist and racist discourse, these measures aimed to preserve the "prestige" of European nations. The treatment of European women travelers shows the development by the French and British Mandate authorities of their own mobility regimes based on the differentiated promotion, regulation, and prevention of various patterns of mobility.<sup>74</sup> Not only were the different kinds of travelers moving between Europe, Syria, and Iraq subject to varying conditions in terms of comfort, speed, and safety – as we have seen from Freya Stark's descriptions of the travelers she encountered

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71 Freya Stark, *Letters. Vol. 1: Letter to Venetia Buddicom*, Baghdad, 6 January 1930.

72 Satow (British consul, Beirut) to Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, 27 July 1927, TNA, CO 732/28/14.

73 High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, 28 January 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve (CADC), 50CPCOM310; Delegate (High Commission, Beirut) to Union Artistique de France, 10 August 1931, CADC, 50CPCOM544; High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 December 1931, *Ibid.*

74 Tejel/Öztan (eds.), *Regimes of Mobility*.

along her journeys – but they were also treated in different ways by the French and British Mandate powers.<sup>75</sup>

## II Yusuf Ghanima

Yusuf Rizq Allah Ghanima (1885–1950) was born and raised in Baghdad in an influential family of Chaldean Catholics. In his lifetime, he engaged in many diverse activities that made him known as a merchant, politician, intellectual, journalist, and historian. In 1908, in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution that introduced increased press freedom in the Ottoman Empire, Ghanima founded a weekly newspaper in Baghdad, *Seda Babel* (Echo of Babylon) which covered a wide range of social, cultural, and political topics. In 1925, the year he was elected to the Iraqi parliament for Baghdad, he also directed a political newspaper for some months, *Al-Siyasa*. Well known to scholars for his history of Iraqi Jews, Yusuf Ghanima also published several essays and books on Iraq's economy.<sup>76</sup> He also served several times as Minister of Finance, including under the government of Prime Minister Tawfiq al-Suwaidi, which was formed in April 1929. He held this position when he left for Europe in July 1929, but a cabinet reshuffle at the end of August, while he was in London, saw him replaced by Yasin al-Hashimi.<sup>77</sup>

### Experiencing Luxury, Solitude, and Distance

In July 1929, Yusuf Ghanima decided to travel to Europe to seek treatment for his heart disease, which Iraqi doctors were unable to cure. He was given two months' sick leave and the blessing of King Faysal. His journey took him from Iraq to Europe and back by two different routes: through Egypt on the way out and through Turkey on the way back. For the round trip, Ghanima combined numerous trips by car, train, and ship that carried him across and around the Syrian Desert and

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75 Valeska Huber: "Multiple Mobilities: Über den Umgang mit verschiedenen Mobilitätsformen um 1900", in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 36:2 (2010), 317–341.

76 Kamil Sulayman al-Jabburi: *Mu'jam al-udabā' min al-'aṣr al-jāhili ḥattā sanat 2002* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyya, 2003), 50–51. See also Orit Bashkin: *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 44, 48; Aline Schlaepfer: *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad: Discours et allégeances (1908–1951)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 47. On *Seda Babel* ('Echo of Babylon'), see also the description on the Library of Congress website: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020741464/> (accessed 12 March 2022).

77 Peter Sluglett: *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 108–109; Justine Stievenard: "L'implication de l'armée dans la politique irakienne de 1933 à 1936, une étude de cas à travers le personnage de Bakr Sidqi", 2018, <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-02155577> (accessed 12 March 2022), 108–111.

the Mediterranean. While highlighting Ghanima's use of this multi-modal transport system, this section examines his perceptions, doubts, and fears along the way. Thus, by foregrounding his journey as a process, it aims to show that traveling could be a major and above all transformative undertaking in the interwar period, despite the ease and comfort provided by developments in transport.<sup>78</sup>

Yusuf Ghanima and his family traveled from Baghdad to Damascus with Debesh & Akkash.<sup>79</sup> On the way, the small group stopped for the night in Rutbah. Like Freya Stark, Ghanima was surprised by the amenities and services offered at the hotel. But unlike her, he seemed more amazed than displeased by the pomp and splendor of the site. He described the “electric fans, the fresh water and the beds” provided in the hotel, which gave them comfort in the sweltering desert heat. The presence of a telegraph station in this remote location was another element of importance to Ghanima, which he mentioned in his description. Ghanima made sure to use it to send a message to his mother in Baghdad.<sup>80</sup> As will become apparent later, Ghanima frequently mentioned in his travel diary the various means of communication that helped him keep in touch with his relatives while he was away. After a few hours of rest in Rutbah, the family set off again in the evening and drove all night until they arrived in Damascus the next morning.

Ghanima's state of mind when leaving Baghdad is reflected in a letter he wrote to his mother from Damascus on 26 July, in which he explained that the reason he remained unmoved during the farewell was due to his strong and impassive nature. Yet, in reality, he was filled with fear when he left Baghdad.

Indeed, my dear beloved mother, in Baghdad I bid farewell to my love, my reverence, my hopes, my pain, my people, my compatriots, whereas I do not know if I will return there safe and sound or if my life of service to the country will come to an end, while I am in a far away land.<sup>81</sup>

After a few days in Syria and Lebanon, Ghanima continued his journey to Europe alone, leaving behind his wife and children, who remained in a Lebanese summer

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78 On 19th century sea travel as a transformative experience during which passengers “re-worked ideas about themselves and their worlds”, see Tamson Pietsch: “A British sea: Making sense of global space in the late nineteenth century”, in: *Journal of Global History* 5:3 (2010), 423–446, here 443–446.

79 For the drive to Damascus, they paid 250 rupees – still the official currency in Iraq at the time – which was equivalent to about 19 pounds, the same amount that the Nairn Transport Company charged for one person. For information on Iraqi currency and conversion rates, see “Coinage of Iraq”, in: *Maps of Iraq with Notes for Visitors* (Baghdad: Government of Iraq, 1929), 14.

80 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 15.

81 The letter is reproduced in the introduction to Yusuf Ghanima's travelogue, written by his son Harith Y. Ghanima on pages 13–14.

resort. He first traveled by car from Beirut to Haifa where he stayed at the Hotel Central and visited a friend. At the end of a long and warm discussion, however, he felt sorrow at being separated from his family (*‘alam al-firāq*). His friend therefore asked his children to take him for a drive in the mountains to relieve his mind. The next day, Ghanima took a train from Haifa to Cairo and traveled in the utmost comfort, as the railway company, having learned that he was the Iraqi Minister of Finance, gave him a first-class compartment with six empty seats. He therefore made the journey of 14 hours and 35 minutes without talking to anyone, an experience he greatly disliked, as he noted in his diary: “It was tough for me, and I damned the rank that prevents [a human] from the pleasure of familiarity with one’s fellows.”<sup>82</sup> The privileges afforded by his standing resulted in a lack of society for Yusuf Ghanima.

His stay in Egypt was again a time of intense activity and meetings. Together with Rashid al-Khuja, an Iraqi notable based in Cairo at the time of his journey, Ghanima visited the Matossian cigarette factories as well as agricultural experimentation sites. He also traveled to the Nile Delta to study Egypt’s extensive system of dams, which he could compare to the Hindiya Dam south of Baghdad. After a couple of days in Cairo, Ghanima traveled by train to Alexandria to board a ship for Europe.<sup>83</sup> After completing border formalities and buying a ticket, he boarded the *Halwan* for Brindisi, Italy.

Far from the friends and colleagues he had in Cairo, he was once again struck by a strong feeling of loneliness. “People were saying goodbye, hugging each other and shaking hands, while I was alone and remote, waving goodbye to my family from afar but hearing no response”, he noted on 3 April as he was about to leave the Egyptian coast.<sup>84</sup> The sea voyage that followed was marked by luxury and solitude, just like the train journey that had taken him from Haifa to Cairo. Ghanima was impressed by the opulence of the ship: the spacious lounges, the electric lights and fans, the wireless telegraph and postal facilities, the lifts, the cinema, the orchestra that played during meals, and the fine cuisine.<sup>85</sup> But once again, it was in the midst of this opulence that he was struck by a feeling of solitude.

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82 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 23.

83 Alexandria had long been a transit port on various shipping lines crossing the Mediterranean between Europe, Egypt, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Marie-Françoise Berneron-Couvenhes: *Les Messageries Maritimes: L'essor d'une grande compagnie de navigation française, 1851–1894* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), 126–128, 435–437; Xavier Guillot: “From One Globalization to Another: In Search of the Seeds of Modern Tourism in the Levant, a Western Perspective”, in: Remi F. Daher (ed.): *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007), 95–110.

84 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 29.

85 *Ibid.*, 29.

The sea was calm, restful and so perfectly fine and yet I felt pain and was grieved by loneliness; I remembered the day I spent in the train from Haifa to Cairo. I recommend to all those who want to travel to do so in second class because they [can] get to know the people around them.<sup>86</sup>

Whilst traveling, Ghanima became more conscious of the distance between himself and his loved ones, which gave him a sense of wistfulness that was made even more painful by the solitude. This mix of feelings was accompanied by a fascination with rapid means of communication. On board the ship, he noticed that some passengers were receiving telegrams from their relatives. While the wireless telegraph station at Rutbah made communication possible in the middle of the desert, the telegraph on the *Halwan* even allowed contact with the outside world while on the move.<sup>87</sup>

The same feelings accompanied him throughout his time in Europe. Mentions of these emotions punctuated his diary, contrasting with the many visits, meetings, press interviews, and medical appointments he had in Italy, France, and Britain. In Rome, for example, he once arrived at his hotel to find it full of visitors who reminded him of his absent wife and children. It seemed to him that “Providence did not want life to be good and whole in this world, but wanted it to remain always imperfect so that humans would think that true happiness was not of this world.”<sup>88</sup> On the train from Rome to Paris, he thought about Iraq and tried to remember whom and what he loved. “My soul was craving to see my life partner, my own blood, as well as my mother, so much so that I started to sing Iraqi songs.”<sup>89</sup>

The medical examination and subsequent treatment also produced anxiety. On 19 August, he went with a friend who was living in France to see Doctor Raoul Boulin, who enjoyed a great reputation as a diabetes specialist.<sup>90</sup> After examining him, the doctor diagnosed him with a serious but non-life-threatening inflammation of the heart and prescribed him a treatment consisting of five injections, plenty of rest and abstinence from smoking for a few days. Ghanima was much troubled by the diagnosis, “especially because [he] was far from his wife and children”, as he wrote down.<sup>91</sup> The next day he went to the radiologist who took an X-ray of his heart and confirmed the inflammation. He received the first treatment the same day and the other four injections over the next few days, which he spent resting, eating light meals, and

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86 *Ibid.*, 30.

87 On radiotelegraphy on board ships in the early 20th century, see Roland Wenzlhuemer: “The ship, the media, and the world: conceptualizing connections in global history”, in: *Journal of Global History* 11:2 (2016), 163–186.

88 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 36.

89 *Ibid.*, 47.

90 Paul Rambert: “Raoul Boulin”, in: *Diabetes* 8:3 (1959), 234–235.

91 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 49.



thinking about his loved ones in Iraq and Lebanon.<sup>92</sup> He also received visits from several Iraqi acquaintances living or spending time in Paris, whose company brought him closer to his country. Ghanima also maintained contact with his mother by correspondence throughout his journey. When he was in London, she even sent him a photograph of her, which he promptly took to a photographer to have enlarged.<sup>93</sup>

After renewed soreness during his stay in London, which required a visit to a doctor, Ghanima had no more pain during the rest of the journey. He left Paris on 11 September, after about a month in Europe, and traveled back by the Simplon-Orient Express railway, which took him overland from Paris to Istanbul via Dijon, Lausanne, Venice, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sofia in four days (including a one-and-a-half-day stopover to visit Venice).<sup>94</sup> The Orient Express had been running from Paris to Istanbul since the 1880s on a northern route, before being reoriented after the war to this more southerly route, taking advantage of the recently opened Simplon tunnel. In the aftermath of the First World War, moreover, the Baghdad Railway had been completed to Aleppo and Nusaybin. Since 1927 the *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits* had been operating the Taurus Express between Istanbul and Aleppo, thereby extending the Orient Express to the south-east.<sup>95</sup> Thanks to these developments in rail transport, Ghanima traveled all the way from Paris to Aleppo by train. He then drove to Beirut and the mountain resort of Aley where he met up with his family. After a few days in Lebanon, they drove back to Baghdad through the Syrian Desert.

While Ghanima's journey highlights the coexistence and combination of several transport systems that profoundly transformed the possibilities of travel between Iraq and Europe in the interwar period, his perceptions and feelings as conveyed in the diaries bring another perspective to this account of faster and easier travel. Starting from Ghanima's experience of the journey *being made* makes apparent his growing sense of remoteness, that is, his awareness of geographical distance and social separation. This observation casts a different light on the impact of the developments in transport. Although the expanding transport infrastructure resulted in shorter travel times and thus, in a way, in the "shrinking of the world", it did not

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92 Ibid., 50.

93 Ibid., 66.

94 Ibid., 66–71.

95 Amit Bein: *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 181, 205–206; Sean McMeekin: *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 32–53; Morton B. Stratton: "British Railways and Motor Roads in the Middle East, 1918–1930", in: *Economic Geography* 20:2 (1944), 116–129, here 129.

mean the annihilation of “in-between spaces”.<sup>96</sup> Ghanima was not left untouched by the space and time of his journey, quite the contrary. His trip across land and sea made him aware of the distance separating his loved ones and his beloved Iraq from the main European capitals. His perception of remoteness took shape while he was in transit and affected him in moments of solitude. Illness and fear of death made this perception of distance even more acute. Here, micro-analysis makes room for the doubts, fears, and awareness of distance that went along with the transregional mobility produced by transport developments, as much as the speed and comfort they offered.

### Visits and Encounters Along the Way: Multiple Identifications

Although health was the main motivation for Yusuf Ghanima’s voyage to Europe, he also acted as a tourist and a pilgrim during his trip, both in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Europe. This section focuses on the visits and activities he undertook during his journey, which bring out his interests and allow for reflection on his various identifications and the question of cross-cultural exchange. Yusuf Ghanima first combined his trip with a few days in Syria and Lebanon with his family. In Damascus, they stayed two nights at the Victoria Hotel and made various cultural visits. On the first day, they walked around the city and visited various sights, such as the Umayyad Mosque, the Tomb of Salah ad-Din, and the ‘Azm Palace. The imposing 18th century palace had been home to the *Institut Français d’Archéologie et d’Art Musulman* since 1922, which preserved and exhibited Islamic antiquities.<sup>97</sup> Ghanima was impressed by the building, but not so much by the objects displayed inside.

[The ‘Azm Palace] is really beautiful, but the remains there do not deserve to be called “mawzat khāna” because in the Iraqi museum there are many more valuable objects than in this one and there is no reason to compare them.<sup>98</sup>

Ghanima’s remark reflects both his interest in the remains of an Arab-Islamic past shared with the Syrians and his pride of being Iraqi. On the second day, they visited the Syrian Museum and several churches, and took an excursion outside Damascus to see the house where King Faysal of Iraq lived during his short reign in Syria. The next day they drove to Beirut and stopped on the way to visit the site of the Battle of Maysalun, where French troops defeated the army of the short-lived Arab Kingdom

96 On rail travel in 19th century Europe, which supposedly eliminated the experience of ‘spatial distance’, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.

97 Idir Ouahes: *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 68.

98 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā 1929*, 19. “Mawzat khāna” being the Farsi for “museum”.

of Faysal on 24 July 1920.<sup>99</sup> Ghanima and his family visited the tomb of the Arab General Yusuf al-'Azma and those of various French soldiers.<sup>100</sup> This excursion can be regarded as a form of heritage tourism, for the site of the Battle of Maysalun gradually became a monument to the recent past during the interwar period, serving in Syrian nationalist discourse as a symbolic reminder of the struggle for independence. Nationalist commemorations already took place in the 1920s in the form of secular pilgrimages to this battle site.<sup>101</sup> As can be seen, this place was also important to an Iraqi like Yusuf Ghanima.

Once in Lebanon, the family visited several tourists sites in Beirut before going up to Brummana, one of the important Lebanese summering sites of the time, where Ghanima paid a visit to the Iraqi politician 'Abd al-Muhsin Sa'dun, who was spending the summer in Lebanon. During the few days they spent together, Ghanima and his family experienced all the activities characteristic of modern tourism (sightseeing, cultural and leisure activities, break from routine).<sup>102</sup> The first part of Ghanima's journey therefore provides a fitting illustration of the development of tourism and summer vacationing between Iraq and Syria/Lebanon in the interwar years and how these two practices could mix.

In the interwar years, the Eastern Mediterranean attracted tourists and summer visitors from the North-Atlantic world as well as from the various countries of the former Ottoman Empire. These tourists shared certain practices, such as the places and summer resorts they visited along the way and the hotels where they stayed. This is particularly true of Brummana, where Ghanima's friend and colleague spent the summer and where Freya Stark stayed for a few weeks before leaving for Baghdad.<sup>103</sup> But these common travel practices, by making these travelers from different backgrounds interact, could also highlight their differences. Ghanima recounted an amusing anecdote about his encounter with American tourists in Damascus, which

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99 On the Battle of Maysalun, see Philip Khoury: *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 97–99.

100 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā 1929*, 20.

101 Elie Podeh: "Celebrating Continuity: The Role of State Holidays in Syria (1918–2010)", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40:4 (2913), 428–456, here 434; Review from the American Consulate General, Beirut, 1 September 1933, NARA, Syria Internal Affairs, 1930–44, roll 7.

102 Eric Zuelow: *A History of Modern Tourism* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 9. On the tourist journey as a 'break' in the life of the traveler, much like pilgrimage, see Daniel H. Olsen: "Religion, Pilgrimage and Tourism in the Middle East", in: Timothy J. Dallen (ed.): *Routledge Handbook on Tourism in the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Routledge, 2019), 109–124.

103 On the development of summer tourism in Brummana and how it transformed the village, see Richard Alouche: *Évolution d'un Centre de Villégiature au Liban (Broummana)* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1970).

taught him that he – or, in this case, his child – could become an object of interest to tourists imbued with orientalist imaginaries.

When we arrived at the Victoria Hotel [in Damascus], where we stayed, American tourists were standing around taking pictures, and when my son Hārith stuck his head out of the car window, they were surprised to see him wearing Arab clothes (the dishdasha, the kufiya and the 'iqal) and after asking my permission, they started taking pictures of him.<sup>104</sup>

In that moment, his son became the focus of the orientalist gaze of these American tourists, who projected onto him their “desire to identify the already defined signs of exoticism as exotic.”<sup>105</sup>

Throughout the rest of his trip, Yusuf Ghanima undertook many tourist activities as well. He went to the pyramids of Giza in Egypt, visited the Lateran Museum, the catacombs and the Vatican in Rome. In Paris he walked to the Pantheon and the Sorbonne, paid a visit to the Grand Mosque as well as to the Louvre, climbed the Eiffel Tower and took the train to Versailles. In London he visited the Science Museum and the British Museum. Besides visiting these emblematic monuments and institutions, Ghanima was also interested in the cultural and social life he observed here and there. In the Villa Borghese gardens in Rome, he watched a group of people enjoying the performance of acrobats, listening to music, and dancing.<sup>106</sup> In Paris, he visited the famous and chic department store *Bon Marché* where he found all the wares attractively presented in accordance with “French taste”.<sup>107</sup> These excursions testify to his interest in and appreciation of the cultural life and history of the European cities he visited.

At the same time, Ghanima drew comparisons between the practices and habits he observed in Europe and Iraqi customs. His observations were mainly concerned with women's clothing and the question of nudity. While visiting the Vatican Museum, Ghanima witnessed a scene where a young woman who was warm took off her cloak, which uncovered her shoulders as her outfit was sleeveless. An employee then asked her to cover herself, first gently, then by raising his voice as she had not heard him. “Even in Europe”, Ghanima commented, “short sleeves are not welcome.” And he added that this was ignored by those in Iraq who were trying to follow the example of the Europeans. “In Rome, women's clothing stops an inch below the knee when it is short, or goes down to the feet. But Orientals who imitate [Westerners], they do so blindly.”<sup>108</sup> On other occasions, however, Ghanima pointed to cultural differences.

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104 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 19.

105 Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, 48.

106 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā* 1929, 37.

107 *Ibid.*, 48.

108 *Ibid.*, 37.

During his one-and-a-half-day stay in Venice, he made an excursion to the Lido island, where he walked along the beaches watching people swimming in the sea and sunbathing. Ghanima described the place as a holiday destination for many Europeans and Americans, where men and women bathed together. Women, he pointed out, would get out of the water and sit in the sun to get a tan and give their bodies an attractive colour.<sup>109</sup> In Paris, Ghanima also attended two cabaret shows. During his first stay in the French capital, he went to the *Moulin Rouge* one evening, where he watched two performances. He did not enjoy them at all, however, finding them “close to debauchery (*khalā'a*) [...] because the women were naked.” He nevertheless appreciated the other performances, which stood out for the “refined art of dance and the lightness of the movements.”<sup>110</sup> On his return from London, he spent an evening at the *Folies Bergères*, where he had a similar experience. “If one excludes the nudity (*arā*) of the women, which I disapprove of, whatever people say as an excuse, this dance hall is very important from the point of view of performance, dance and clothing.”<sup>111</sup> Yusuf Ghanima's journey was motivated by the desire to discover Europe and “construct links between the self [...] and the Other”, just like a tourist or an anthropologist.<sup>112</sup> This interest manifested itself in the search for a shared cultural heritage but also in the perception of differences in terms of customs.

Ghanima's journey also involved a form of religious tourism, even pilgrimage. In Syria and Lebanon, as well as in Europe, he visited many Christian religious sites. The purpose of his stay in Rome was to “receive the blessing of the Supreme Pontiff”.<sup>113</sup> During the four days he spent in the city, he met with various important religious dignitaries, went to the Vatican several times, and visited numerous churches. The account of his meeting with the Pope is also an important part of his travelogue. Ghanima described in detail his own preparation and the lengthy procedures before arriving in the room where he was to wait for the Pope. This moment provided another instance of cultural dialogue. As Ghanima had dressed for the occasion in a tailcoat and put on a *sidāra* (an Iraqi style of headwear), one of the masters of ceremonies came and asked him to remove his hat out of respect for the Pope. But the Reverend Paul who was accompanying Ghanima intervened in Italian to say that the *sidāra* was a mark of honour in Iraq.<sup>114</sup> This episode once again shows the importance that Yusuf Ghanima gave to traditional Iraqi clothes and underlines the different meaning people could attribute to these external attributes. Interestingly,

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109 Ibid., 67.

110 Ibid., 48.

111 Ibid., 65.

112 Ellen Badone/Sharon R. Roseman: “Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism”, in: Ellen Badone/Sharon R. Roseman (eds.): *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 8.

113 Yusuf Ghanima, *Rihla ilā Urubbā 1929*, 34.

114 Ibid., 41–42.

it required the intervention of an interpreter – Reverend Paul – to allow for cultural understanding. On arrival, Pope Pius XI gave Ghanima his blessing and said he would pray to God to bestow healing on him. Then the two men discussed the situation of Catholics in Iraq for about twenty minutes. Ghanima responded to the Pope’s questions by assuring him that Catholics enjoyed a good situation in Iraq. He noted, however, that their schools were lagging far behind. The Pope recalled the importance of having a school near every church, and then withdrew after some formalities.<sup>115</sup>

Yusuf Ghanima’s stay in Rome points out the depth of his sense of Christian belonging. More generally, his journey from Iraq to Europe brings to light the multiplicity of his identifications, which become apparent through his visits and encounters but also through his reflections. Ghanima appears both as an Iraqi and a Christian; as an Arab eager to remember the fight for independence led by Faysal’s forces, a heritage shared also specifically with the Syrians; as a self-proclaimed “Oriental” when he points out cultural differences between the “West” and the “East”; but also as an intellectual and modern tourist drawn by the historical and cultural heritage of the Middle Eastern and European worlds between which he wished to build bridges.

## Conclusion

In the 1920s, the expansion of motorized transport across the Syrian Desert greatly facilitated the movement of people and goods between Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. At the same time, the progress of transdesert transportation stimulated the development of an overland route between Syria and Iraq that was integrated into transregional and even global transport networks. The transdesert transport system became interwoven with pre-existing rail and sea transport networks in the Eastern Mediterranean, across the Mediterranean, and within Europe, bringing London within ten days of Baghdad. From the mid-1920s onwards, the Syrian Desert thus became the site of intense movements of people, goods, and mail that flowed between Iraq and the North Atlantic world.

Reflecting on the transregional mobilities and connections that developed between Iraq and Europe with the development of this vast web of transport networks should be done from various perspectives. While the interactions arising from the incorporation of the Arab provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul into the British colonial empire have received much scholarly attention,<sup>116</sup> the social, economic, and

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115 Ibid., 45–46.

116 To name but a few: Susan Pedersen: “Getting Out of Iraq—in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood”, in: *The American Historical Review* 115:4 (2010), 975–1000; Priya Satia: “Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology

environmental dimensions of the connections fostered by these expanding transport networks deserve further exploration. Furthermore, the study of these interactions would benefit from being conducted at multiple scales of analysis in order to highlight different actors, dynamics, and geographies. This chapter has drawn on the field of global micro-history and chosen to start from the individual experience of a British and an Iraqi traveler that journeyed between London and Baghdad and vice versa, rather than from the heads of the multimodal transport system linking Iraq to European countries. Besides providing insights into the organization and operation of the transport systems and the practicalities of travel, the accounts of these two travelers have shed light on what it meant to be traveling along these routes in the interwar period.

By following Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima on their geographical and inner journeys, this chapter has sought to “challenge simplistic ideas about the ease of mobility in the past”,<sup>117</sup> but also to foreground travel as a meaningful process, in contrast to some studies centered on the abstract categories of “mobility” and “connection”, which sometimes perceive it as a meaningless and uneventful experience. Stark’s and Ghanima’s travel accounts, show that for both of them the journey was a transformative experience in terms of their perceptions of space and distance. The journey across the Syrian Desert put Iraq on Freya Stark’s mental map, broadening her horizons but also changing her way of ordering the world, as she felt she was entering another part of the globe, quite distinct from the Mediterranean basin, which she regarded as “the real East”. For Yusuf Ghanima, the trip to Europe was, in some ways, a harrowing experience, which made him aware of the geographical distance between Britain and Iraq and led him to endure a social separation that caused him to feel homesick and nostalgic for his family. Both travel experiences invite us to refine our understanding of technological developments in transport and communication beyond the mere production of time-space compression.

Furthermore, examining these two travelers’ experiences has revealed interactions and encounters that might have remained unnoticed by approaching the transregional connections from a different angle. While rail, sea, and motorized transport networks facilitated movements between London and Baghdad – and thus enhanced interactions within the British Empire – the travel accounts of Freya Stark and Yusuf Ghanima show the transimperial dimension of their journey.<sup>118</sup> It was in

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in the First World War”, in: *Past & Present* 197 (2007), 211–255; Peter Sluglett: *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London/New York, I.B. Tauris: 2007); Charles Tripp: *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

117 John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Moving Stories and What They Tell Us”, 246.

118 On transimperial history, see Daniel Hedinger/Nadin Heé: “Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition”, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 16:4 (2018), 429–452.

Paris that Ghanima went to find a doctor to treat him, not in London. During his journey, moreover, he took advantage of the extensive transport infrastructure to go sightseeing in Syria and Lebanon, take a study tour in Egypt, visit Rome and the Vatican where he had long wanted to meet the Pope, and pay visits to friends from the Iraqi diaspora. Freya Stark spent time in her cottage in Italy before crossing the Mediterranean, stayed for a few weeks in Brummana in the Lebanese mountains, and then continued her trip to Iran after a few months' stay in Iraq. In the course of their journey, Stark and Ghanima interacted and built relationships with various people and places between and beyond the French and British empires.

Their journey, like any voyage, was also characterized by encounters and exchanges with people from different linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds. Ghanima's journey reveals his sense of belonging to the Iraqi nation, his attachment to a common heritage with the Syrians, his fraternity with Arab counterparts, and his allegiance to the Catholic Church. Beyond these multiple identifications, his trip was an opportunity to forge intercultural bonds, but also to become aware of his attachment to values and customs different from those he observed. Other encounters, such as the one with American tourists, made him aware of his reification as "Other" through the eyes of some. Freya Stark also experienced the manner in which she was regarded and perceived, albeit in a different way. Her time in Iraq exposed her to the disapproving gaze of her British compatriots who disliked the way she traveled and interacted with local people. Stark was indeed eager to escape from the exclusive British environment to mingle with the local population and the lower social classes, even if she sometimes accepted the privileges of her status. Based on gendered considerations, the disapproval of her compatriots also translated into regulations that severely restricted her freedom of movement in Iraq.

Finally, Freya Stark's travel writing draws attention to the differences in access and experience of mobility between Europe and Iraq. As a lone European woman, she experienced discriminatory mobility regimes. Moreover, her constant attention to the people she crossed paths with during her journey highlights the very different travel conditions under which other groups of travelers moved across the Mediterranean and the Syrian Desert, particularly Muslim pilgrims heading to Mecca. Her travel accounts serve as a reminder that the mobility made possible by transport developments could take many forms depending on social and material factors – but also on the (dis)approval of those in authority.



## A Fort under Another Name

### “Imperial” Architecture as a Tool of Bedouin Control in the British Mandate

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Margaret Freeman

The desert and steppe regions of the Mashriq are populated with the architectural remains of empires past, from Roman military forts to Ottoman pilgrim hostels. These buildings are often interpreted as evidence of top-down imperial control of the “desert-dwellers” – the nomadic or semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes which for centuries have inhabited and migrated within the Syrian and Arabian deserts. “The tribal question” is one that a succession of rulers of this region sought to solve; highly mobile and therefore difficult to locate and control, and dwelling within a harsh landscape that was often inaccessible to outsiders, the Bedouin have for centuries been perceived as a thorn in the side of imperial police officers, census-takers, tax collectors, and military conscription agents.<sup>1</sup> There is an equally long history of architecture as a solution and as a means of imperial control and surveillance over Bedouin populations, from the Roman *limes Arabicus* to the Umayyad *quṣūr*.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 See Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [orig. 1377]) for an example of how the Bedouin have historically been represented as incompatible with empire-building and civilization, and as a problem for empires to reckon with and solve. For an in-depth discussion of “the tribal question” in the context of the interwar Mandate government, see Robert Fletcher: *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”: Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
  - 2 The *limes Arabicus* represented one part of the Roman Empire’s empire-wide system for boundary-marking, defense, and fortification. Spanning a distance of approximately 1500 kilometers from the Gulf of Aqaba in the south to Syria in the north, it consisted of a system of walls, roads, forts and watchtowers. It is hypothesized to have been built as defense against incursions and raids by the ‘barbarian’ Arab tribes to the east of this line, but recent scholarship has also argued for a more diplomatic or commercial function. For more on the *limes Arabicus* and imperial Rome’s larger strategy for the *limes* system, see, for example, David L. Kennedy/Derrick Riley: *Rome’s Desert Frontier from the Air* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); David J. Breeze: *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (Barnsley/Havertown: Pen & Sword Military, 2019); Hugh Elton: *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2012); Matthew Symonds: *Protecting the Roman Empire: Fortlets, Frontiers, and the Quest for Post-Con-*

This chapter focuses on architecture as a key pillar in Mandate Britain's strategy for control of the "desert periphery" of Transjordan and Iraq and its nomadic inhabitants. I identify how British administrators sought to deliberately imitate their imperial predecessors through this strategic approach. However, I also move beyond simplified narratives of top-down mechanisms of imperial control by highlighting Bedouin contributions to the built environments of Jordan and Iraq. I present evidence for the role of Bedouin tribespeople and sheikhs as builders and patrons of architecture, which not only sheds new light on the architectural history of the region but also interrogates the true nature and extent of British imperial control over the desert frontier and its indigenous inhabitants.

Notions of nomadic peoples and lifeways as being by definition opposed to the construction and use of permanent architecture predominate in the popular imagination.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I argue that such notions were at least in part solidified and perpetuated by British representatives of the Mandate government, for whom it was

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*quest Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Rob Collins/Matt Symonds/Meike Weber: *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers: Armies and Their Architecture in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015); C.R. Whittaker: *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). The Umayyad *quṣūr* refers to the development and occupation by the elite of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750) of a network of primarily rural castles, forts, bathhouses, and hunting lodges throughout the Syrian desert. Approximately 100 such buildings are estimated to have been used by the Umayyad caliphs throughout Syria, Jordan, and Palestine; some were built entirely from scratch, while others were adapted from existing Roman or Byzantine-era constructions. After the fall of the Umayyad caliphate, their successors, the Abbasid caliphs, shifted away from spending time in the desert and steppe regions and towards large-scale urban development projects, with the consequence that projects of building in the sparsely-populated desert regions have been seen as unique to the Umayyads in the history of early Islam. In the historiography of Islamic art and architecture, Umayyad building projects have thus been grouped together homogenously under the umbrella of "the Umayyad *quṣūr*" (*quṣūr* being the Arabic word for "castles") or "the Umayyad desert castles". Both terms are misleading, as some of the buildings assigned to this category are not castles nor are they in the desert. Although the *quṣūr* have been understood and represented as a neatly defined category, no scholarly work exists to my knowledge that treats the *quṣūr* in their totality. Rather, scholars have focused individually on specific *quṣūr*, and usually solely on those which are best-preserved today. Examples of some of the most influential such publications include Garth Fowden's monograph on Qusayr 'Amra (Garth Fowden: *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)), and Oleg Grabar's research on Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (Oleg Grabar: *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East: An Account of the Excavations Carried out at Qasr al-Hayr East on Behalf of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan, with the Help of Harvard University and the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978)).

3 For a broader discussion of this phenomenon and its historiography, see Margaret Freeman: "Rendre Leur Âme Aux Fantômes: Nomadisme et Hantologie de l'architecture Chez Les Bédouins", in: *Perspective* 2 (2021), 221–238.

both politically expedient and symbolically significant to lay sole claim to the desert's built heritage and imperial legacies. As I will discuss further below, Mandate administrators saw architecture and its power to express imperial ideologies and continuities as being of particular strategic importance in the context of a predominantly nomadic landscape. They imagined that “the tribesman would be more impressed by the exhibition of solid unmovable strength within his midst,” in the form of forts or other permanent structures, than by tentage or other “nomadic” installations.<sup>4</sup> Thus British officials arrived in the region with an entrenched perception of nomadism as being mutually exclusive with permanent architecture, and architecture as a tool which by its very presence would cow nomadic peoples into submission. In a curious case of imperial obliviousness (or perhaps something more insidious), this perception was not shaken even when the same officials had knowledge of Bedouin peoples building, sponsoring, and occupying desert forts and castles. Rather, as discussed in the final section of this chapter, internal reports by Mandate administrators as well as the books, articles, and presentations they produced for the consumption of the British public continued to insist that local Bedouin peoples had no relationship to the architectural heritage of the Middle East.

This archival corpus produced by British Mandate officials constitutes the majority of the sources utilized in this chapter. It is something of a trope in the study of nomadic peoples that their own perspectives, experiences, and histories are difficult if not impossible to locate in the documentary or material record, but at least in the case of the Bedouin in the modern Middle East, numerous scholars have proven this to be false.<sup>5</sup> By relying primarily on British archival sources, it is not my intention to privilege this perspective or suggest that it is the only one available to us. My aim is to illustrate the deeply entrenched ideas held by British administrators towards the nomadic peoples they sought to control; ideas that were not changed even in the face of conflicting evidence. British documentary sources reveal that such attitudes were held towards the Bedouin at the same time as evidence observed in the field belied them, and, furthermore, that policies were developed and enacted based on these Orientalizing stereotypes rather than on officers' direct experiences with the Bedouin. In my reading of these sources, I analyze this imperial mindset vis-à-vis the Bedouin and identify the evidence the sources present of Bedouin practices and history, offering an against-the-grain archival interpretation that both illuminates

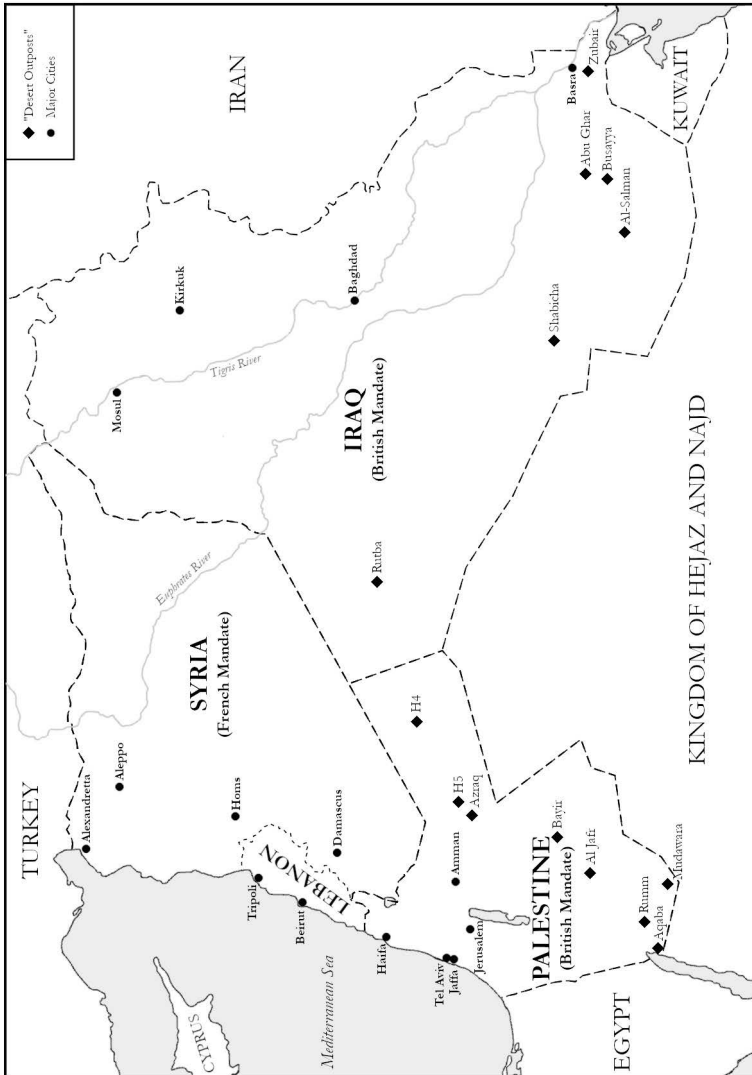
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4 W. Jennings-Bramley, note on the fort at Burg El-Arab, 24 August 1926, in: The National Archives, United Kingdom (TNA), FO 141/514/5.

5 Mélisande Genat: “Tribal Justice and State Law in Iraq”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53:3 (2021), 507–511; Yuval Ben-Bassat: “Bedouin Petitions from Late Ottoman Palestine: Evaluating the Effects of Sedentarization”, in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 135–162.

the complexities of imperial rule and notions of control over subaltern peoples and situates the Bedouin as actors with agency within such systems.

Figure 3 Map of the borders of the League of Nations mandate territories with locations of British 'desert outposts', ca. 1930.



One of the most common imaginations of the Bedouin found in these sources is that of the Bedouin as a singular entity and a homogenous people. The Bedouin have traditionally lived as mobile pastoralists in the Arabian and Syrian deserts, Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula, and parts of North Africa, raising and herding livestock and living off the income from and products of their animals. However, we should understand that, unlike in the Orientalist imagination, peoples categorized as “Bedouin” can differ significantly from one another in terms of subsistence method, level of sedentarization, cultural and religious practices, etc. Until very recently, “Bedouin” was up a term imposed from the outside, whereas peoples thus designated often identified themselves simply as “Arabs” (in contrast with the *fallahin*: Peasants or farmers) or more narrowly by their tribal affiliation or kin group.

In the late Ottoman period and into the interwar years, the desert and steppe regions of West Asia were home to a number of Bedouin tribes, which wielded varying degrees of political and economic power. Some of the larger and more prominent tribal confederations, such as the ‘Anazeh, ‘Amarat, Sakhr, and Shammar, were powerful stakeholders within the Ottoman empire, as well as, eventually, allies of the Ottomans’ successors – the French in Syria and Lebanon, the British in Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, and the Sa’udi dynasty in the Najd and what would eventually become Saudi Arabia.<sup>6</sup> As I will now discuss, this chapter focuses primarily on the peoples, architecture, and history of the Jordan-Iraq-Saudi Arabia cross-border region (Figure 3), and where I refer to “the Bedouin” what is meant is the nomadic or semi-nomadic inhabitants of this region.<sup>7</sup> Although the peoples of this region were by no means culturally or societally homogenous, they were perceived as such by British administrators, resulting in a universalized “principle of desert control”, in which the desert zones of the Mandate and its nomadic inhabitants were conceptualized as a singular, interlinked problem to be managed and solved.<sup>8</sup> While several other scholars have analyzed imperial Britain’s tactics for desert administration, my focus here is specifically on the spatial element of this administrative policy and how the mere presence of architecture was conceived as a tool for control of nomadic peoples.<sup>9</sup> This narrower focus on a key pillar of Mandate desert administration re-

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6 Robert Fletcher: “The ‘Amarat, Their Sheikh, and the Colonial State: Patronage and Politics in a Partitioned Middle East”, in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 163–199; Yoav Alon: *The Shaykh of Shaykhs: Mithqal al-Fayiz and Tribal Leadership in Modern Jordan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

7 For an overview of the main tribes and their migration areas in this region during the interwar period, see Carl R. Raswan: “Tribal Areas and Migration Lines of the North Arabian Bedouins”, in: *Geographical Review* 20:3 (1930), 494–502.

8 Glubb: “Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts”, 19 November 1930, 33, TNA, CO 831/10/2.

9 For studies of Mandate Britain’s general administration of the desert, see, for example, Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”*; Priya Satia: *Spies in Arabia: The Great*

veals how Britain sought to construct a claim to imperial legitimacy and continuity through both the literal and symbolic appropriation of the desert's built environment, severing local Bedouin affiliations with this aspect of their cultural heritage in the process.

We begin in Transjordan in the first half of the 1930s, where the use of architecture as means of Bedouin control was strategically and organizationally perfected. I discuss how Mandate officials in Transjordan seemingly turned to their imperial predecessors in adopting architecture as a means of tribal control, the symbolic resonance of repurposing historical sites, and what such projects can tell us about imperial Britain's ideologies, aspirations, and self-representations. However, I also present the seldom-examined history of Bedouin use and occupation of some of these buildings and highlight evidence for Bedouin modes of inhabiting and interacting with their built environment. This evidence complicates our understanding of how such seemingly top-down systems of imperial control actually functioned on the ground, and the extent to which local actors participated in the development and modernization of their built and natural environments.

Next, moving to Iraq as well as back in time to the late 1920s, I examine the use of architectural fortifications along the border between Iraq and Najd, and the 1927–1930 conflict between Ibn Sa'ud, the Ikhwān, and the British over these border fortifications. As I will discuss, the crisis was instigated over fundamentally differing perceptions among these actors of how architecture and built border regimes function within specifically nomadic contexts and landscapes.

Finally, we move to Great Britain itself, where I consider how Mandate officials contributed to contemporaneous knowledge production about indigenous and nomadic peoples, examining the flow of narratives and ideas about nomads and their histories and practices between England and the Middle East. British leaders marshaled the emerging scholarly fields of Near Eastern archeology and aerial photography to present British modes of desert architecture and desert control as directly indebted to imperial precedents. British presence in the Mashriq was legitimized as a result, but non-imperial (i.e. Bedouin) relationships to the material and architectural past were simultaneously erased.

This chapter is organized into three case studies, in order of outwardly expanding geographical scale. In the case of Transjordan, Britain's strategy of desert

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*War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Priya Satia: "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia", in: *American Historical Review* 111:1 (2006), 16–51; Priya Satia: "Drones: A History from the British Middle East", in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 5:1 (2014), 1–31; Graham Jevon: *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan, and the End of Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

architecture was primarily directed internally, towards controlling and surveilling Bedouin populations concentrated within the borders of Transjordan. In Iraq, the narrative scope shifts to include events and stakeholders on the Najdi side of the Iraq-Najd border, illustrating the wider ramifications across the region, not just within the borders of the Mandate territories, of British imperialism, its uses and reuses of architecture, and its strategies for control of nomadic peoples. In ultimately expanding the focus to include Great Britain itself, we see how and where imperial administrators' ideas of architecture as a reflection and symbol of empire and of nomadism as an inherently anti-architectural lifeway were shaped, and how these ideas informed and were mutually reinforced by decision-making in the field. These shifting geographical frames illustrate the extent to which, at all levels of this story, Orientalist myth-making about the Bedouin reigned supreme. Minoritized and considered 'other' both by foreign observers and by non-Bedouin Arabs, what we consider to be true about the Bedouin today has been largely shaped by a variety of externally constructed narratives that alternately vilify and romanticize Bedouin peoples, history, and identity.<sup>10</sup> This chapter strives to locate within these manifold narratives the complexities of Bedouin relationships with both imperial actors and "imperial" architecture during the Mandate period.

## **"Imperial" Architecture and Bedouin "Control" in Transjordan (1930-1936)**

### **John Glubb and Britain's "principles of desert control"**

The architect – figuratively as well as literally – of Britain's configuration of a spatial control of the Bedouin was John Bagot Glubb, a military engineer by training who volunteered for service in Mesopotamia towards the end of the First World War. He stayed in the region as a civil administrator under the Mandate government and was

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10 For examples of how contemporaneous non-Bedouin Arabs imagined, idealized, and vilified the Bedouin and perceived the role of the Bedouin both in history and in the making of the modern nation-state, see, for example, Ameen Rihani: "Arabia: An Unbiased Survey", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 16:1 (January 1929), 35–55; B. Toukan: "Transjordan: Past, Present and Future", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 31:3/4 (1944), 253–264; Ja'Far Pasha El Askeri: "Five Years' Progress in Iraq", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 14:1 (1927), 62–72; Muhammad Fadil Jamali: *The New Iraq: Its Problem of Bedouin Education* (New York City: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934). All of these texts were composed by elite non-Bedouin Arabs during the interwar period for European or American audiences, and reveal the extent to which Orientalizing stereotypes about the Bedouin were held and perpetuated by Arab observers in addition to foreign ones.

eventually transferred from Iraq to Transjordan in 1930, where he served first as an officer and later as commander of the Arab Legion until 1956.<sup>11</sup>

The primary responsibility of Britain's "desert administrators" at this time was to eliminate the practice of inter-tribal raiding, a long-standing subsistence method among Bedouin tribes in which they raided nearby tribes, villages, or caravans for livestock or other material goods. The economic necessity of raiding for pastoralist peoples living in arid climates has been undertheorized. Generally, Bedouin raiding practices have been used to justify a stereotype of the Bedouin as violent, predatory, and incapable of acquiring wealth through "honest" means. Raiding served not only an important economic, but also political and cultural, function among Bedouin tribes, however. Contrary to the image of bloodthirsty raiders, raiding was governed by a strict etiquette: Killing and physical violence were forbidden during raids, for example, as was the theft of property from widows and female heads of households. Raiding was also a key means by which Bedouin leaders established and maintained power.<sup>12</sup> The ability to successfully lead raiding parties and acquire wealth for their tribe was an essential quality of a Bedouin sheikh, and power dynamics, tribal alliances, and rights to land usage across the desert region were determined by the outcome of raids. In European eyes, however, raiding was unequivocally deemed a criminal activity that had to be eradicated in order to "civilize" the desert and desert-dwellers. In the words of John Glubb, "One of the first essentials if government control is to be in the desert, is the prevention of bedouin inter-tribal raiding."<sup>13</sup> Man-

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11 John Bagot Glubb: *The Story of the Arab Legion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948); Imperial War Museum: "Glubb, John Bagot (Oral History), 26 March 1979", *Imperial War Museum Collections*, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80004370> (accessed 11 May 2022); Trevor Royle: *Glubb Pasha* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1992).

12 Maggie Freeman: "The Bedouin and the Formation of Iraq's National Borders: Interview with Dr. Carl Shook", *Digital Nomads*, 8 November 2021, <https://digitalnomads.buzzsprout.com/1639870/9501095> (accessed 11 May 2022).

13 John Glubb: "Final Report of Defensive Measures Against the Akhwan, Winter 1925–1926", 18 May 1926, 16, TNA, AIR 23/302; Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 76, 96, 102, 110, and 113. Although Glubb appears to pride himself on his work to eliminate tribal raiding and the relative ease and swiftness with which this transition occurred, he also admits to causing unforeseen disruptions in tribal livelihoods and societies. By the winter of 1932, Glubb and his forces had established "complete control" over the desert of Transjordan and brought about almost a complete cessation of inter-tribal raiding. However, this coincided with a severe drought, which in turn resulted in famine. Unable to supplement their income through raiding, many tribespeople starved. Glubb describes parents being forced to abandon their children or selling their children in exchange for food. He concedes that, "Much of the responsibility for the famine rested on us. For we had not realized to what an extent raiding was a social-insurance scheme [...]. The cessation of raiding at first brought hopeless despair to the poor, and indeed the risk of despair to every stockbreeder. For the desert life is full of risks, not only of raiders, but also of drought, epidemics or a sudden snow blizzard killing sheep in the thousands. In future there would be no hope of recovery from such disasters.



date Britain's strategy for internal Bedouin control was therefore designed first and foremost to eliminate tribal raiding, with its system of police presence and surveillance, described below, aimed at ensuring that tribespeople permanently ceased this newly criminalized activity.

John Glubb became the primary mastermind of Britain's conception of desert protection and frontier control, in which desert outposts were an essential link in a strategic chain of operations that combined displays of permanent force with Bedouin-inspired mobility and flexibility. His policy recommendation, laid out in the 1930 document "Note on Policy for the Control of the Trans-Jordan Deserts", proposed a frontier force made up of local Bedouin soldiers who would patrol the desert, gather intelligence, repel raids, and carry out punitive expeditions against raiders.<sup>14</sup> This force was formed in 1931 as the Desert Patrol. According to Glubb, however, certain conditions of modernity meant that imperial Britain could not rely solely on indigenous peoples and practices to self-police the border region and its inhabitants. First, "the existence of diplomatic frontiers" meant that when tribes in Transjordan or Iraq were raided by tribes from across the border in Najd or the Hejaz (a not uncommon occurrence, as will be discussed further below), any imperial desert police patrol was stymied by the inability to follow these raiders over the border to carry out punitive measures or retrieve captured loot.<sup>15</sup> Second, the modern British forces benefited from "the advantage of possessing scientific weapons which increase mobility and fire power."<sup>16</sup> These weapons included not only machine guns and the wireless telegraph but also, and most importantly, armored cars. Armored cars allowed mobile Desert Patrol Forces – in combination with air reconnaissance, another modern scientific weapon in Imperial Britain's arsenal – to respond quickly to threats of raids. While armored cars made desert patrol forces more efficient and quick-acting, they also required maintenance and supplies.<sup>17</sup> For this reason, therefore, desert stations where cars could be refueled and maintained and where soldiers could seek water and shelter became a necessary component of Britain's "principles of desert control".

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We had though that the abolition of raiding would increase the serenity of desert life. But we discovered unexpectedly that raiding had been not only a pastime for the chivalry of Arabia but also a social-security system of which our ill-timed intervention had destroyed the balance." (Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 168–169).

14 Glubb, "Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts", 31–81.

15 Ibid., 33.

16 Ibid.

17 In a way that Glubb seemed to believe that humans did not; per Glubb, the advantage of a desert police force consisting of Bedouin tribesmen was that they carried their own supplies, could remain in the desert indefinitely, and were happy to drink the water from desert wells, in contrast with English soldiers (ibid., 35).

At the same time, these desert posts could also be used for the most important technique of desert control, which was, as Glubb saw it, “keeping touch with every area.”<sup>18</sup> Glubb proposed that the posts be occupied by small garrisons of Bedouin constables – the Desert Patrol – who could use the posts as a base from which to venture out to local tribes and to receive tribal visitors. This was a key means through which the Bedouin officers could receive intelligence on raids from their fellow tribesmen, another essential part of Glubb’s strategy. As Glubb frequently reiterated, “No non-Beduin can extract information from Beduins.”<sup>19</sup>

The location of the posts was thus of paramount strategic importance, and Glubb and his superiors devoted significant attention to the question of where these posts should be located in order to best serve various stakeholder interests.<sup>20</sup> As with all life in the desert, proximity to water was an essential factor in deciding where to place a frontier fort. Proximity to wells and water holes was important not just to sustain the garrison of a given fort, but also because Bedouin migrations are oriented around sources of water. As Glubb put it:

The desert of course depends on wells, most of the year [...] so we built a fort on every well, with eight or ten men in it. The result was the tribes couldn’t get water unless they came in under the control of the forts. And that also established not only complete control of the tribes, but friendly relations. Outside our forts, we always pitched a large tent, which was for guests. [...] Any passer-by could step off in the guest tent where he would receive a meal and accommodation. And that made sort of friendship and inter-mixture between the police, who were themselves tribesmen, and the tribes who were outside. So before long we and our tribes were friendly cooperators, whereas before they had regarded the government as deadly enemies.<sup>21</sup>

By restricting water access, the forts ensured “complete control of the tribes.” Glubb’s description of the architectural layout of the forts is also telling; each fort was to be accompanied by a guest tent, a common feature of Bedouin encampments. Glubb imagined these tents as a sign of welcome and friendship to Bedouin guests, implying that the forts themselves would not be read as welcoming. In Glubb’s design of the desert forts, the permanent installation of the forts was intended to be perceived by the Bedouin as a symbol of empire and governmental control, while the addition of the guest tent was a symbol of the government’s friendship towards the

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18 Ibid., 37.

19 Ibid., 35, 37.

20 Letter from J. R. Chancellor, 20 December 1930, 15–27, TNA CO 831/10/2; Letter from C.H.F. Fox, 12 December 1930, 28–30, TNA CO 831/10/2.

21 Imperial War Museum: “Glubb, John Bagot (Oral History)”, minutes 18:24–19:57.

Bedouin. Differences between nomad and state were thus reinforced along architectural lines: The nomad in his tent, the government representative in his castle.<sup>22</sup> As I will now discuss, however, there is a long history of Bedouin occupation and patronage of permanent architecture, which was nonetheless rejected or ignored by administrators such as Glubb.

### “New” desert outposts: Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq

When Glubb took up his post in Transjordan, one of his first responsibilities was to identify the locations of three new desert forts and oversee their development. However, none of these forts – located at Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq – was in fact new at all (figure 3). Rather, they were sites that had a long role in the history of frontier occupation and nomad-state relations. Mudawara in southern Jordan, for example, dates back to the 9th century, when it was first developed as a stopping place on the hajj route; home to a natural spring, it provided water and shelter to pilgrims. By the early 16th century, however, its function had changed, and it appears in Ottoman sources as the stronghold of a Bedouin sheikh, Jughayman, who, far from providing protection to passing pilgrims, instead used the fort as a base from which to launch raiding expeditions against pilgrim caravans.<sup>23</sup> A few centuries later it had changed hands again, and was further developed as a *hajj* fort by the governor of Damascus

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22 This binary is of course complicated by the fact that the majority of Desert Patrol soldiers who occupied and manned the forts were themselves of Bedouin origin. The dynamics of co-opting indigenous peoples into colonial schemes for self-policing and internal control have been undertheorized in this context; although it is a complicated subject that would benefit from being fully explored in future research, I believe that Glubb saw the occupation of the desert forts as having a ‘civilizing’ effect on Bedouin soldiers in the Desert Patrol, which separated them from their peers who continued to practice pastoralism and live in tents. This is evident in Glubb’s statement here juxtaposing the Desert Patrol with “the tribes who were outside”, symbolically enforcing a psychic division between the Bedouin tribespeople who occupied the forts and those who inhabited tents. See also Glubb’s discussion of the forts as places where Bedouin Desert Patrol soldiers underwent spiritual and moral improvements, in Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 103, 165–167.

23 In some sources the castle is called Khirbet Jughayman instead of Mudawara after this sheikh. Contemporaneous sources also describe that Jughayman as well as other sheikhs of tribes along the *hajj* route were paid subsidies from the central government as long as they refrained from robbing pilgrims. Sources also mention that, after military intervention when Jughayman still continued to rob travelers, Jughayman’s sons and other members of the same tribe were among those who helped patrol the route and ensure its safety for pilgrims. This is just one of many examples in which parallels to British policies towards the Bedouin—subsidies as incentives against raiding, tribal members policing their own—can be detected historically. Andrew Petersen: *The Medieval and Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan: An Archaeological and Historical Study* (Oxford/Oakville [London]: Oxbow Books; Council for British Research in the Levant, 2012), 122–126; Muhammad A.S. Bakhit: *The Ottoman Province*

between 1730 and 1733. Its period of Bedouin occupation has been largely forgotten; the first European traveler to visit wrote that “the fort is [...] defended [...] from the Beduins’ hostility,” implying that the site was constructed explicitly to keep the Bedouin out.<sup>24</sup>

While there is perhaps some truth to this, Ottoman *hajj* forts were, like the British Desert Patrol outposts, simultaneously sites of both military control and of diplomacy. In addition to being militarized fortifications, they were also places where the government mediated with tribes, distributed subsidy payments in the form of money or grain, and where tribes could meet with government representatives.<sup>25</sup> When *hajj* forts were no longer needed, either because routes changed or because their upkeep became too expensive, they were “left to the Bedouin.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, keeping in mind also the site’s proximity to water and the discussion above about the importance of access to water in a desert climate, we should reconsider who, throughout the fort’s 1000-year-long history, its most frequent visitors are likely to have been. As a 1930 report on the placement of desert forts describes Mudawara, it is “admirably situated for obtaining information from tribes moving from the West to the South East,” a reminder that these sites were expediently located along migratory routes where tribes could benefit from the shelter and resources they provided.<sup>27</sup> These fluctuations over time in who used desert forts and for what purposes reveal the arbitrariness of identifying these sites solely as “imperial” in nature. Rather, Mudawara is just one example among many of an “imperial” site which over the course of time became subsumed into pastoralist lifestyles and migratory routes, complicating our perceptions of who such sites belong to and under whose auspices they were shaped.

Bāyir, a fort in central Jordan thought to have been developed under the patronage of the Umayyad prince al-Walid II (r. 743–744), was similarly described as the “keystone of the corridor for raiding parties from the West and trade, car and camel routes.”<sup>28</sup> Bāyir was also an important gathering site for members of the Banu Sakhr

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of *Damascus in the Sixteenth Century* (PhD dissertation, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1972), 24–26, 259–260.

24 Charles Montagu Doughty: *Travels in Arabia Deserta, Volume 2* (London: P.L. Warner, 1888), 56.

25 Petersen, *The Medieval and Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan*, 211.

26 *Ibid.*, 131.

27 P. Playfair, “Report on the Siting of Desert Intelligence Posts in Transjordan”, 20 June 1930, TNA CO 831/10/1.

28 *Ibid.* See also Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, 157–159. T.E. Lawrence also wrote about the strategic location of Bāyir and its wells in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, in which he described Bāyir as “a historic group of Chassanid wells and ruins in the desert” (Thomas Edward Lawrence: *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London: Cape, 1935), chapter 49)). Exploitation of this strategic location by the state may date back to the site’s construction in late antiquity; see Stephen Urice’s suggestion that it was part of a “series of service stations placed conveniently where couriers or small caravans might switch off

Bedouin tribe, not just because of its wells but also because it is said to be the burial place of the Sakhr's former leader, Sheikh As'ad.<sup>29</sup> Such landmarks – the grave sites of important figures in a tribe's history – constitute important nodes on pastoralist migration routes. They are often found near wells or other places which tribes would have occasion to visit on their seasonal migrations, and marked out in the landscape by burial cairns or other funerary installations.<sup>30</sup> Archaeologist Michael Frchetti describes the significance of continually revisited burial grounds in pastoralist societies: "Mobile pastoralists construct their social geographies through the practical employment of, and investment in, historically meaningful places that accumulate significance through a palimpsest of interactions."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, landmarks such as the graves of tribal notables constitute important sites not just in pastoralist geographies and interactions with the landscape but also in indigenous conceptions of history and cultural heritage. In the context of the desert, where tribal leaders were buried near wells and wells were located near forts, this matrix of grave-well-fort means that we should read the architecture of the desert as having significant cultural and historical meaning for indigenous populations. Control of water resources, as spelled out by Glubb above, is vital to imperial success in the desert. But rather than reading state-built installations to guard these resources solely as top-down mechanisms of control, we can also see how the built environment, by acting as a locus of tribal memory, serves Bedouin cultural practices and means of historical and cultural preservation.

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the major north-south trade route of the Wadi Sirhan into the settled regions to the west" (Stephen K. Urice: *Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan* (Durham: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), 46).

- 29 Mairna H. Mustafa/Sultan N. Abu Tayeh: "Comments on Bedouin Funeral Rites in the Writings of Western Travelers and Explorers from the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries", in: *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 14:1 (2014), 4, 14. In her diaries, Gertrude Bell also wrote about Qaşr Bāyir and its use by the Banu Sakhr, including as a watering-place and for burials; Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell: "Diary Entry 20 January 1914" and "Diary Entry 21 January 1914" (Newcastle upon Tyne: Gertrude Bell Archive, 1914).
- 30 Mustafa/Abu Tayeh, "Comments on Bedouin Funeral Rites in the Writings".
- 31 Michael D. Frchetti: *Pastoralist Landscapes and Social Interaction in Bronze Age Eurasia* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 24.

Figure 4 Sir Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell, *General view of Qasr al-Azraq*, photographed early 20th century.



Like Bāyir, Qasr Azraq (Figure 4) was described in British intelligence sources as “admirably situated from an intelligence point of view” and “the only place from which to feel the pulse of, and control, the whole district and its tribes.”<sup>32</sup> First built as a fort by the Romans in the 3rd century CE, Azraq became famous in the modern era as T.E. Lawrence’s base of operations during the Arab Revolt.<sup>33</sup> Lawrence’s own descriptions of Azraq reveal that the Bedouin tribes who participated alongside him

32 P. Playfair: “Report on the Siting of Desert Intelligence Posts in Transjordan”, 20 June 1930, TNA CO 831/10/1; Glubb: “Monthly Report for the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Deserts”, March 1934, TNA CO 831/10/1.

33 G.R.D. King: “The Distribution of Sites and Routes in the Jordanian and Syrian Deserts in the Early Islamic Period”, in: *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 17 (1987), 91–105; Mahmoud Bashir Alhasanat et al.: “Spatial Analysis of a Historical Phenomenon: Using GIS to Demonstrate the Strategic Placement of Umayyad Desert Palaces”, in: *GeoJournal* 77 (2012), 343–359. Qasr Azraq captured the Western historical imagination in large part thanks to Lawrence’s evocative and romanticized descriptions of the site’s history in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: “Azraq’s unfathomable silence was steeped in knowledge of wandering poets, champions, lost kingdoms, all the crime and chivalry and dead magnificence of Hira and Ghassan. Each stone or blade of it was radiant with half-memory of the luminous, silky Eden, which had passed so long ago” (Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, chapter 75).

in the Arab Revolt had a long history of engagement with and usage of the castle. They guided Lawrence to the castle and told him stories about the building's past, revealing the role of the site in local folklore and Bedouin conceptions of their own histories.<sup>34</sup> Azraq's significance in Bedouin cultures and its history of Bedouin occupation has been largely forgotten. Today, a tourist plaque outside the castle reads: "Qasr al Azraq: Built by the Romans, rebuilt by Arabs under Izz ed Din Aybak during the Crusades and used by Lawrence". The castle's imperial history and usage by the 'great men' of history, in this case Lawrence and Mamluk sultan Izz al-Din Aybak, are thus emphasized to visitors.

Bedouin presence at sites such as Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq over time is difficult to detect historically, as pastoralist peoples by definition occupy sites temporarily and leave relatively little archaeological trace. Nevertheless, both archaeological and documentary sources remain to suggest that these three sites, redeveloped under John Glubb's oversight into places meant to control and surveil Bedouin tribes, had throughout history been economically and culturally significant to local pastoralists. Despite having been originally constructed by imperial patrons, over the intervening centuries all three of these forts were used by Bedouin peoples in varying ways; for shelter, for the collection of water, for tribal gatherings, as landmarks and repositories of tribal memory. Acknowledging these histories belies the impression held by Mandate administrators that the mere presence of permanent architecture in a predominantly nomadic context would function as a symbol of imperial control and dominance. Rather, throughout the history of the Syrian and Arabian deserts such attempts at controlling nomadic peoples through permanent architecture have instead been adapted into and proved useful for pastoralist lifeways. This not only raises questions of the extent and effectiveness of imperial systems of nomadic control but also blurs binary oppositions between nomad and state. As I will now discuss, there is also evidence for Bedouin tribespeople as patrons of architecture, which further complicates the impression that all architecture in the desert is the creation of imperial patrons.

### **Qa al-Jafr and Bedouin sheikhs as patrons of architecture**

The three Desert Patrol fortifications at Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq were completed by 1933. Another outpost, Qa' al-Jafr in southern Jordan, which had originally been built by 'Auda Abū Tāyeh, a sheikh of the Banu Ḥūwayṭāt tribe, was also in use by the Desert Patrol by 1937. Abū Tāyeh, a powerful leader whose support T. E. Lawrence considered vital to the success of the Arab Revolt, commissioned the palatial Qa' al-Jafr after the revolt but died before it could be finished.<sup>35</sup> Qa' al-Jafr was the site

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

of an important well and remained frequently visited by the Banu Ḥūwayṭ tribe so, despite being incomplete and already worse for wear, “full of bugs and snakes”, it was converted into a Desert Patrol post.<sup>36</sup>

Though it has since fallen into ruins, aerial surveillance photographs from the 1920s show that the fort was built conspicuously in the style of a Roman *quadriburgium*, the type of military fort found throughout the Levant.<sup>37</sup> Aerial photographs also show Qa‘ al-Jafr surrounded by rows of Bedouin tents. The *quadriburgium* form, usually square with large projecting corner towers and a free-standing central tower, was built across the southern and eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire.<sup>38</sup> John Glubb’s proposed blueprint for the Desert Patrol outposts followed the *quadriburgium* model as well, albeit simpler and on a smaller scale.<sup>39</sup> However, Glubb’s recommendations for the architecture of the desert outposts came with a key caveat, as already mentioned: That a tent be set up outside its walls to welcome and host passing pastoralists and travelers.<sup>40</sup> This, Glubb thought, was essential to collecting information and intelligence from nomadic peoples – to meet them in a space where they would be most comfortable. His recommendation evokes the image seen in the aerial photographs of Qa‘ al-Jafr, of a Roman-style fort surrounded by Bedouin tents. Glubb’s design for the forts emulated Roman models but with a Bedouin architectural adaptation; perhaps unbeknownst to Glubb, however, this Roman model had already been adapted to a Bedouin context by a Bedouin patron. If we compare the image of Qa‘ al-Jafr – a Roman-style fort surrounded by tents – with Glubb’s design for the Desert Patrol forts, we are presented with virtually identical images. Again, the idea of British “control” of Bedouin subjects through architecture is thus called into question. Glubb’s “principles of desert control” were predicated on the assumption that permanent architecture was anathema in a pastoralist context, thus why he sought to make the forts more palatable to visiting Bedouin with the addition of a tent. The forts themselves were meant to be seen as a symbol of empire and reminder of British presence and control. As I have discussed, however, there is no evidence that Bedouin peoples were inherently opposed to the construction of permanent architecture, and in fact only evidence to the contrary exists.

In Qa‘ al-Jafr, we see a Bedouin patron responding to and emulating the surrounding ancient built environment. Likewise, the Desert Patrol forts at Mudawara,

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36 Glubb: “Monthly Report for the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Deserts”, June 1937, TNA CO 831/41/11.

37 “Photographs and blueprints: Palestine and Transjordan: typical country, 1930”, 3 November 1927, TNA AIR 5/1157.

38 Collins/Symonds/Weber, *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers*, 2.

39 Glubb, “Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts”, 81.

40 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 116; Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”*, 159–160.



Bāyir, and Azraq were all to varying degrees influenced by historical Bedouin occupation. Therefore, the architectural history of Jordan's desert region cannot be understood as one of a direct succession of empires, seeking to control recalcitrant nomadic subjects through their building projects. Instead, interventions on the part of the Bedouin, who shaped the location, function, and appearance of the buildings around them, should be inserted into this lineage as well. Reframing our conception of architectural history in this way reveals the idea of imperial control of the Bedouin through architecture for the mirage it is. For further evidence of this, we turn to Iraq, where British interactions with Ibn Sa'ud and the Ikhwān shed further light on the use of architecture in policies for strategic control of the Bedouin and imperial conceptions of nomadic relationships to permanent architecture.

## Architecture and the Ikhwān Crisis (1927–1930)

### Ikhwān raids on Buṣayya

Glubb's approach to the architecture of frontier fortifications, as a symbol of empire that was also adapted to the needs and preferences of the local population, was a product of his earlier experiences in the administration of Iraq's frontiers with Najd, where British attempts to control and surveil tribal populations while remaining conciliatory toward Najdi ruler Ibn Sa'ud had undergone a prolonged process of trial and error. The most infamous, and most instructive, episode in this process was the Ikhwān revolt of 1927–1930.

The crisis' instigating factor was the construction of a desert police outpost at the wells of Buṣayya in southeastern Iraq, approximately 80 km from Iraq's border with Najd. The fort's construction was controversial from the outset. Article 3 of the 'Uqayr Protocol, signed in 1922 to define the borders of Iraq with Najd and Kuwait, stated that, "The two Governments mutually agree not to use the watering places and wells situated in the vicinity of the border for any military purpose, such as building forts on them, and not to concentrate troops in their vicinity."<sup>41</sup> Ibn Sa'ud complained to the British about the planned Buṣayya outpost in a letter in September 1927, arguing that the outpost constituted a military fort and therefore violated the terms of the 'Uqayr Protocol. The British responded that the outpost was "in no way offensive but is to check trans-frontier raiding to the mutual advantage of Iraq and Najd."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, they disagreed that the outpost violated the Protocol's requirement that the governments not use forts "in the vicinity" of the border, arguing that

41 Dobbs to Victor Cavendish, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 February 1923, The British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR) L/PS/10/937.

42 H. G. Jakins to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mecca, 24 October 1927, TNA AIR 23/30.

Buṣayya lay well outside of what could be considered the border's "vicinity". Construction of the outpost went ahead.

On the evening of 5 November 1927, a party of approximately 50 Ikhwān from the Muṭayr tribe attacked the Buṣayya outpost.<sup>43</sup> The six policemen manning the fort were killed, in addition to 12 construction workers and an Iraqi official.<sup>44</sup> Ikhwān raids into southern Iraq continued over the next months, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi tribespeople and the looting of tens of thousands of livestock.<sup>45</sup> When "strongly worded protests" were conveyed to Ibn Sa'ud on the actions of his subjects, he admitted that the raiders, led by the Muṭayr tribe, had directly defied his instructions by conducting the raid, one of the first signs of the simmering Ikhwān rebellion against Ibn Sa'ud's authority.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Ibn Sa'ud also implied to the British that "that the fault really lay with the Iraq Government in constructing the police post [...] adding that if the police post were abandoned the raids would cease."<sup>47</sup>

However, the British scheme for desert administration could not conceive of a policy in which forts were not used to control tribal mobility, prevent trans-border raiding, and express territorial sovereignty over the desert frontier. In a meeting of an Imperial Defence sub-committee set up to respond to the "Ikhwan situation", Sir Edward Ellington, Air Officer Commanding in Iraq, complained that, "until recently, there had been no administration in the desert. That, in fact, had been the cause of the whole trouble. Tribes from Iraq and Syria had raided into Najd; Ibn Saud had requested us to stop it; and the establishment of the Posts was our response to his

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43 "Akhwan Raids", March 1928, 77, TNA CAB 24/193/20. The Ikhwān, Bedouin tribes that had converted to Wahhabism, were the core of Ibn Sa'ud's power base in Najd and instrumental in his military conquests and eventual unification of Saudi Arabia. Ibn Sa'ud and his Wahhabist clerics required the Ikhwān to sedentarize in agricultural settlements, *hijrah*, where they could be more easily controlled and surveilled and where bonds of allegiance forged within tribes could be broken in favor of solidifying fealty to Ibn Sa'ud. Although the Ikhwān as a militant force ensured Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of large parts of Saudi Arabia, their pacification did not go entirely according to Ibn Sa'ud's plan. Many conformed to a highly orthodox strain of Wahhabism and came to resent Ibn Saud's more politically expedient and flexible interpretation of Wahhabist teachings, eventually leading to their revolt against Ibn Sa'ud. In turn, Ibn Sa'ud suppressed the dissident factions among the Ikhwān and whatever political or military power they might have wielded. For further discussions of the Ikhwan and their role in the formation of modern Saudi Arabia, see Anthony B. Both: "Conflict and a Pastoral Economy: The Costs of Akhwan Attacks on Tribes in Iraq, 1922–29", in: *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 11:2 (2002), 201–227; Jeff Eden: "Did Ibn Saud's Militants Cause 400,000 Casualties? Myths and Evidence about the Wahhabi Conquests, 1902–1925", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46:4 (2018), 1–16.

44 "Akhwan Raids", March 1928, 77, TNA CAB 24/193/20.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

request.”<sup>48</sup> As in Jordan, desert outposts became a cornerstone of British “administration in the desert”, and the British, and now also Ibn Sa‘ud, conceived of these outposts as a symbol of empire which was inherently at odds with pastoralist lifestyles and practices. However, as was also the case in Jordan, in Iraq there is also evidence for Bedouin construction and uses of permanent architecture.

### Bedouin architecture in Iraq

In 1924, Glubb first experimented with using an existing building as a station for controlling tribal movements at Abū Ghar, an Ottoman fort approximately 35 km north of the disputed police post at Buṣayya. As he would later repeat in Transjordan, he set up traditional guest tents outside the fort to welcome passing travelers and collect intelligence from them.<sup>49</sup> Once again, however, Glubb was emulating Bedouin models for architectural use. In the pre-Mandate period, the fort had been used as the site of a seasonal marketplace by local Bedouin tribes.<sup>50</sup> The market had been under the protection of the sheikhs of the Muntifiq tribe, but under Mandate authority and with the attempted cessation of raiding practices, the Muntifiq had lost their political sway and the ability to carry out retaliatory raids against tribes who might try to raid the marketplace. With the increased fear of Ikhwān raids, the bazaar had ceased to function. Glubb proposed to reinstate the market under the protection of British soldiers in order to “materially assist desert administration by transforming Abū Ghar into a common desert market and Headquarters, and a centre of information and gossip.”<sup>51</sup>

Elsewhere in Iraq, British officials gave Bedouin leaders the material and political support to construct their own outposts and exert inter-tribal control. In the 1920s Fahd ibn Hadhdhāl, sheikh of the ‘Amārāt Bedouin tribe, constructed outposts at the wells of Ruṭba and Muhāywir, both approximately 150 km from the Syrian border. He did so under British authority, having been invited to establish and man the posts as a place from which to surveil and subdue his fellow tribespeople.<sup>52</sup> In exchange, his political authority over other Bedouin tribes in the region was validated by the British, and he controlled tribes’ access to water and pasture. Although Muhāywir remained relatively undeveloped, Ruṭba eventually expanded into a full-fledged outpost (Figure 5), described by a visitor in 1934 as “practically the centre of

48 “The Akhwan Situation: Report of a Sub-Committee”, 10 July 1928, 17, TNA CAB 24/196/17.

49 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”*, 159; Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 115–116.

50 “Final Report of Defensive Measures Against the Akhwan, Winter 1925–1926”, 24, TNA AIR 23/302.

51 Ibid.

52 Robert Fletcher: “The ‘Amarat, Their Sheikh, and the Colonial State: Patronage and Politics in a Partitioned Middle East”, in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 163–199.

the desert...a remarkable junction for every kind of cross-desert traffic. [...] Eight years ago Ruṭba consisted of a few wells visited by the Bedouin. To-day there is a masonry fort garrisoned by Iraqi police and containing within its walls a comfortable rest-house for travellers, a restaurant and a wireless station.”<sup>53</sup>

Figure 5 “Air route to Baghdad via Amman and the desert. Rutba wells from lower altitude, showing desert track to Baghdad”, American Colony of Jerusalem Photo Department, ca. 1932–1936.



Abū Ghar, Ruṭba, and Muhāywir are further examples of the phenomenon, already discussed above, of Bedouin adaptations of “imperial” architectural modes and practices for their own use, as well as the eventual absorption of sites historically created and used by the Bedouin into colonial systems for Bedouin control.

### Architecture and the Ikhwān crisis

Underlying the Ikhwān crisis, however, was a perception on all sides that such architectural practices among the Bedouin did not exist, and that any architectural inter-

53 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”*, 72; E.H. Keeling: “The Proposed Haifa-Baghdad Railway”, in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 21:3 (1934), 373–393, here 381.

ventions in the desert were anathema to its inhabitants. In a 1928 memorandum on the crisis, High Commissioner for Iraq Gilbert Clayton wrote that Ibn Sa‘ud had originally refused to agree to the ‘Uqayr Protocol on the grounds that “such a frontier, with its inevitable corollaries in the forms of posts and fortifications in the open desert, would be repugnant to his tribes.”<sup>54</sup> Ibn Sa‘ud had only agreed to the treaty when Article 3, restricting military presence and fortifications around the frontier, was added. For this reason, he was particularly infuriated by the British seeming to renege on Article 3, continuing to argue that

the habits and the mentality of the nomad tribes were such that the erection of a post at a water-point in the desert, even if built for peaceful purposes, was equivalent in their minds to a denial, or at any rate a serious restriction, of access to the water. [...] He kept repeating that it was precisely the question of desert fortifications which had dictated his refusal to ratify the Muhammerah Convention, until Sir Percy Cox had offered him a guarantee against the construction of posts in the desert.<sup>55</sup>

The British also continued to refuse to budge:

Whatever form of organisation is adopted for the defence and administration of the desert tribes of Iraq, the maintenance of a certain number of desert Posts is essential, not only for the purposes of defence, but also in order to restrain the tribes on the Iraq side of the border. It should be impressed on Ibn Saud that we regard the right of Iraq to administer its own territory, and to construct posts within it, as essentially a British interest.<sup>56</sup>

They were willing to be conciliatory, to an extent, on the number and placement of the posts, proposing to limit the number of Iraqi frontier posts to six, with only four near the Iraq-Najd border.<sup>57</sup> While compromises in terms of logistics could be made, the principle of the matter could not be compromised: “The maintenance of Busaiyah and certain other desert posts is essential for the effective defence of Iraq by the existing garrison and that, therefore, it is impossible to give way to Ibn Saud on the principle involved in this question.”<sup>58</sup>

As documentation of the Ikhwān crisis is primarily accessible in British archival records, it is difficult to detect the ideological truth behind Ibn Sa‘ud’s statements to the British, or behind the Ikhwān’s actions. For their part, the British believed that

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54 “The Akhwan Situation: Report of a Sub-Committee”, 10 July 1928, 17, TNA CAB 24/196/17.

55 *Ibid.*, 12.

56 *Ibid.*, 20.

57 “Cabinet Meeting 37 (28)”, 11 July 1928, 118, TNA CAB 23/58/7; “Cabinet Meeting 38 (28)”, 20 June 1928, 50, TNA CAB 23/58/3.

58 “Cabinet Meeting 30 (28)”, 23 May 1928, 450, TNA CAB 23/57/30.

Ibn Sa'ud's "true motives probably lie deeper. He may well see in the Iraq posts, and in the increased efficiency of Iraq frontier administration, a check to his own dreams of territorial expansion."<sup>59</sup> The Ikhwān's true motives in defying Ibn Sa'ud and attacking Buṣayya are not speculated on in British records and are even more difficult to reconstruct historically. Nevertheless, there was a dominant perception from the authorities on both sides of the conflict – Ibn Sa'ud on one side and British administrators on the other – that the outposts represented a form of occupation of the desert that was inherently alien to the Bedouin. For Ibn Sa'ud, the majority of whose citizens at this time still lived (semi-) nomadically, this was sufficient justification to object to the posts' construction. For the British, this was an argument in their favor; desert outposts functioned as an "exhibition of solid unmoveable strength" centered at key points on nomadic migration routes.<sup>60</sup> The leaders on both sides of this conflict seem to have believed that Ikhwān attacks on Buṣayya were directed against the outpost as a matter of principle, based in objections to and an incompatibility with permanent architecture. The conflict, or at least how the conflict was perceived and responded to by authorities, was thus premised on the notion that nomadic peoples could not abide the presence of permanent architecture in their landscape. Again, this notion neglects to account for the millennia-long history of Bedouin peoples interacting with, occupying, and building their own forts or castles – despite the fact that both British administrators and Ibn Sa'ud were well aware of this history.

Although they were surrounded by evidence to the contrary, in their responses to the Ikhwān crisis both the British and Ibn Sa'ud perpetuated a broader perception of nomadic peoples as anti-architectural by nature. For the British, this served imperial ideological goals: As discussed throughout this chapter, separating the Bedouin from the cultural heritage of the desert's built environment legitimated the British as the rightful imperial heirs to past empires which had similarly built in and developed the desert and emphasized European rather than Arab imperial precedents. For Ibn Sa'ud, the forts became a useful tool by which he was able to oppose British actions and profess his own Bedouin identity and affiliation with his Bedouin supporters. Glubb recorded Ibn Sa'ud's comments to the British during a 1928 conference at Jeddah seeking to resolve the conflict: "At Uqair I understood from Cokus [Sir Percy Cox] that the protocol meant no forts in the desert. Now you say that the wording of the agreement does not mean that. How do I know? I am a Bedouin and that was what Cokus told me and I trusted him."<sup>61</sup> The image Ibn Sa'ud presents of the Bedouin is one of a people fundamentally incapable of even understanding architectural terms and discourse. The conception held by outsiders of Bedouin identity

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59 "Akhwan Situation: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", June 1928, 236, TNA CAB 24/195/37.

60 W. Jennings-Bramley, note on the fort at Burg El-Arab, 24 August 1926, TNA FO 141/514/5.

61 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 144.

is thus predicated on their opposition to any engagement or affiliation with permanent architecture. In turn, desert architecture is conceptualized as belonging exclusively to empires and existing solely to control nomadic peoples, and the possibility of nomadic peoples engaging with and shaping their built environment is lost. In the final section of this chapter, we turn our attention to Great Britain and to understanding how and where narratives of imperial precedents to British control of the Bedouin were formed and disseminated.

## Constructing the Bedouin as a Scholarly Subject, at Home and Abroad

British Mandate officials' ideas of Bedouin control as well as of Bedouin architectural practices were formed and disseminated not just in desert campgrounds and police forts, but also in British universities, museums, and lecture halls. Analyzing how figures such as Glubb, T.E. Lawrence, and their peers presented and packaged their work with the Bedouin and in the Levantine desert to a British audience illuminates the transcultural networks of thought, scholarship, and ideology contributing to British policies towards nomadic peoples.

Academic societies such as the Royal Central Asian Society, the Royal Geographical Society, and the Royal Asiatic Society served as key locations where discussions of Britain's modern policies in the Middle East coincided with narratives of the region's history, cultural heritage, and indigenous peoples.<sup>62</sup> These societies' membership rosters consisted of the type of men discussed throughout this chapter: The officers, administrators, explorers, and archaeologists at work in the frontiers of Britain's colonial territories, administering an arid zone that stretched from the Sinai to Balochistan. Despite the ecological and cultural diversity that Britain's desert frontier territories and their inhabitants represented, they were perceived as a cohesive unit: The desert corridor.<sup>63</sup> These societies operated to fulfill the needs of their members to share experiences and insights with one another, and to attempt to work towards a universal policy for desert administration and the control of nomadic peoples.<sup>64</sup>

Publications and lectures by Mandate officials for the audience of academic societies, more so than their governmental reports or meeting minutes, display these

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62 For more on these societies' history, key figures, and political, societal, and academic influences, see, for example, Susan Farrington/Hugh Leach: *Strolling About on the Roof of the World: The First Hundred Years of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2003); Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 19–66.

63 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 67–71.

64 *Ibid.*, 19–66.

officials' engagement with the legacy of past empires in the desert. When publishing and presenting to an audience of their peers, many Mandate officers seized the opportunity to engage in their amateur interests in history and archaeology. Flight-Lieutenant Maitland of the Royal Air Force wrote in a 1927 article on his aerial observations of the Transjordanian desert while flying the Cairo-Baghdad air mail route that "this is the ancient frontier of the desert; and Kasr Kharana, Kasr Amra and Kasr Azrak shew that the raiding-Bedouin was as real a menace to the Romans and Byzantines as they are to the cultivator to-day."<sup>65</sup> Of the three buildings Maitland cites as constituting the "ancient" Roman frontier, however, only Azraq, discussed above, actually dates to the Roman period in construction.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, British officials mapped a distorted, ahistorical image of the Roman frontier and nomad-state interactions in the Roman period onto the contemporary landscape, simultaneously justifying British policies by claiming inspiration from ancient Rome and degrading the Bedouin by portraying them as unchanged since antiquity and therefore archaic and uncivilized.

Also in 1927, Commander Charles Craufurd, a Royal Navy officer who served for sixteen years on ships in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, presented a lecture hypothesizing to have found the Biblical "lost land of Ophir" in the Hadhramaut region of Yemen.<sup>67</sup> He drew an indirect comparison between King Solomon's supposed strategy for controlling his "Bedouin" subjects and modern British methods for Bedouin control, stating that Bedouin raiding along the eastern frontier of Solomon's kingdom inspired Solomon to provide the Bedouin with gainful employment in the facilitation of trade routes. Later, claiming that "the Palestine of today is closely comparable to the Palestine of [Solomon's] day," he suggested that the British military should look to Biblical precedents for the militarization and defense of the desert.<sup>68</sup>

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65 Flight-Lieutenant Maitland: "The 'Works of the Old Men' in Arabia", in: *Antiquity* 1:2 (1927), 197–203.

66 Qaşr Kharrāna and Quşayr 'Amra both date to the Umayyad period in construction; Kharrāna was likely built by al-Walīd I sometime between 705 and 715, while Quşayr 'Amra was likely built by al-Walīd II sometime between 723 and 743. The exact function of either building is unknown; while Quşayr 'Amra's primary function was as a bathhouse, the question remains as to why this elaborate, lavishly decorated fort was built in this particular area of rural eastern Jordan. The authors of the definitive texts on both Qaşr Kharrāna and Quşayr 'Amra agree that, much like with the *hajj* forts, these *quşūr* also served an important political function as meeting places between tribal leaders and government representatives. For more on Quşayr 'Amra, see Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* and for Qaşr Kharrāna, see Urice, *Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan*.

67 C. Craufurd: "Lost Lands of Ophir", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 14:3 (1927), 227–237.

68 *Ibid.*, 232.



He was far from the only one to portray British involvement in the Middle East in a prophetic, Biblical mold.<sup>69</sup> For example, in June 1931 a lecture was given by Captain Rees of the Royal Air Force to the Royal Asiatic Society on the perceived geographical parallels between the route traveled by T. E. Lawrence during the Arab Revolt and the route traveled by the ancient Israelites during the Exodus out of Egypt.<sup>70</sup> Titled “In the Footsteps of Israel and Transjordan: The Exodus and Lawrence of Arabia”, Rees’ lecture claimed that his aerial observations of the landscape had led him to the conclusion that many of the locations of Lawrence’s travels and exploits in the region, recently made famous in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, were the same as Biblical locations described in the Book of Exodus, drawing a parallel between the Israelites’ divine delivery to the promised land and Lawrence as a savior of the Arabs. In addition to the general ahistoricity of his argument, he identifies several of the later buildings used by Lawrence as having been used by the Israelites’ on their flight. As these examples show, both Roman and biblical precedents for British activities and policies in the Middle East possessed significant cultural and political capital, premised on the perceived greatness of ancient Rome as the foundation of Western civilization and on the spiritual resonances of Judeo-Christian traditions. Throughout these sources, the British are presented as the modern heirs to bygone empires, while the Bedouin are portrayed as static and unchanging since the Biblical period. Therefore, the emulation of ancient modes for Bedouin control, in the form of militarized architecture and internal police forces, is rationalized and given legitimacy through the weight of seemingly successful historical precedent.

Renowned individuals such as T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell not only generated enormous popular interest in the history, archaeology, and ethnography of the Holy Land, but also set a precedent for the figure of the archaeologist-slash-administrator-slash-spy. The proliferation and popularity of academic societies for the study of Britain’s colonies in the interwar period likewise gave rise to a class of scholarly administrators. In their publications and lectures, aimed both at colleagues and peers as well as a more general public audience, Mandate officials created an image of imperial Britain as heir to the material and architectural legacy of past empires.<sup>71</sup> The porous line between the roles of administrator and archaeologist meant that while officials could rarely publicly comment on policy or strategy, the realms of archaeology and history gave administrators an opportunity to formulate a connection between their work in the region and the precedents set by imperial forebears.

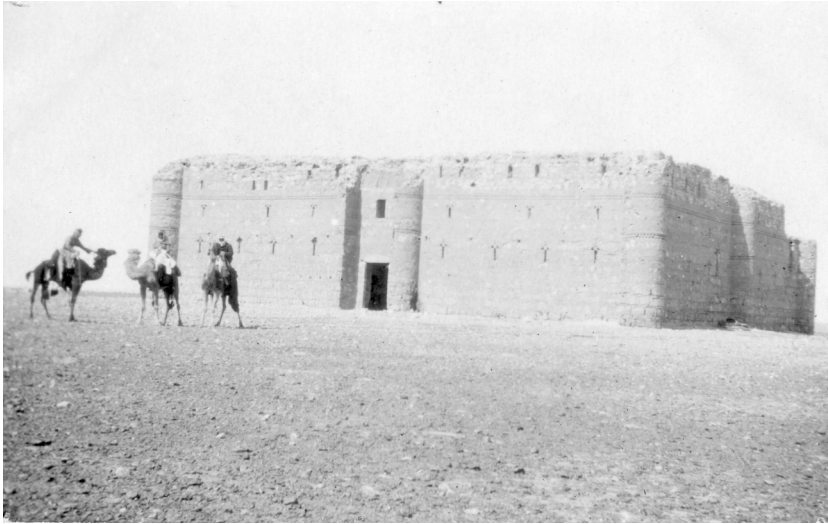
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69 Michael Talbot/Anne Caldwell/Chloe Emmott: “Perceiving Palestine: British Visions of the Holy Land”, in: *Jerusalem Quarterly* 82 (2020), 50–76.

70 V. C. Rees: “Notes of the Quarter”, in: *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 4 (1931), 957–985.

71 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “the Tribal Question”*, 19–66.

Figure 6 Qasr Kharana and men, photographed ca. 1920s by John Glubb.



In this context, the form and appearance of the desert outposts takes on a new light. While equipment such as planes and armored cars helped the British military to control nomadic subjects, they also helped propel the study of the archaeology of the Levant. Articles on archaeological findings made through aerial reconnaissance were widely disseminated, accompanied by photographs. When ancient buildings in the desert were discovered by these means and details of them published, they were assumed to be, and portrayed as, evidence of imperial fortifications against nomadic incursions.<sup>72</sup> Whether accurate or not, this assumption meant that the British desert outposts were perceived and received as following in the footsteps of previous imperial models. The architecture of Glubb's desert forts reinforced this impression: To a lay audience, photographs of a Roman fort or one of Glubb's newly-built outposts were virtually indistinguishable from each other. In the words of Glubb's biographer, his "photos of his men camping in the desert palaces of Transjordan or emerging line ahead from toy soldier forts were, like the Foreign Legion, the stuff of legend"<sup>73</sup> (Figure 6). The conjoined tools of archaeology, history, architecture, and photography were marshaled to validate British policy vis-à-vis the Bedouin. At the same time, the emphasis on imperial predecessors in the architecture of the desert severed Bedouin claims to the history and cultural heritage of such buildings.

72 "Trans-Jordan", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12:1 (1925), 116–119.

73 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 182.

When all forms of building in the desert look like empire, these buildings are thus placed in diametric opposition to the empire's subjects. British modes of Bedouin control through the use of permanent architecture were based on misconceptions both of nomadic peoples as inherently opposed to the construction and occupation of permanent architecture, and of historical architecture in the desert region as evidence of imperial precedents for Britain's "principles of desert control". As I have discussed throughout this chapter, there is an abundance of evidence from throughout history for Bedouin construction, repurposing, and occupation of desert forts. During the Mandate period itself, Bedouin tribespeople built and used an array of permanent sites. It is likely impossible to fully understand how and why Mandate administrators seemingly rejected this evidence that was readily available to them and continued to implement a strategy for Bedouin control which was predicated on the belief that the mere presence of architecture was incompatible with pastoralism. However, by unpacking the degree to which British policies for Bedouin control were based on Orientalizing stereotypes and false narratives both of nomadic peoples and of the desert's built environment, we can also begin to analyze the true nature and extent of imperial "control" of the desert and the Bedouin. By understanding the Bedouin both as architects and as creators of and heirs to material culture and architectural heritage, we can identify the role of the Bedouin in shaping the natural and built environments of the Middle East, a role that is typically only assigned to imperial actors. Through this lens, entrenched binaries between nomad and state, empire and subject, colonizer and colonized begin to break down, framing the Bedouin as actors with a significant degree of agency within and alongside systems of imperial control.



# Loopholes in the Law

## How the Performance of British Masculinity Saved the Lives of Honor Killers in Mandatory Palestine

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Katie Laird

Mohammed Joumeah Abu Kalbein was his parents' oldest son and the leader of his family in the village of Silwan, just outside of Jerusalem. For months, the family had been troubled by rumors and gossip surrounding Mohammed's sister, Naameh, and her conduct with men in the village. Shamed by his sister's worsening reputation, Mohammed went to her house and stabbed her to death with a kitchen knife, killing both her and her unborn child while her ten-year-old son watched. The next day he told police he had killed Naameh because of her "bad character". During his subsequent trial, the court asked Mohammed why he should not be punished for his crime. His response: "I defended my honour."<sup>1</sup>

The sufficiency of male honor as an excuse for murder appeared self-evident.

Mohammed and Naameh's story is a typical example of what has been termed an "honor killing". What qualifies as an honor killing can vary, and has provoked considerable debate over the past three decades. The Council of Europe Committee on Equal Opportunity offered the following definition in 2003: "The murder of a woman by a close family member or partner as a result of (suspected or alleged) shame being brought on a family by the action (a suspicion or allegation will be enough) of the woman."<sup>2</sup> This particular type of violence is regarded by many in the communities that practice it as not only justifiable, but necessary to absolve the woman's family of the shame her behavior has brought upon them.

Honor killings have become a common topic of debate and concern over the past few decades, and for good reason. A 2018 study published by the United Nations found that 50,000 women around the world are killed every year by intimate

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1 "In Defence of Family Honour", *The Palestine Post*, 21 December 1939. The identity or whereabouts of the child's father are not mentioned in the report.

2 Ann Cryer: "So-called 'Honour Crimes': Council of Europe Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Report 9720", *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly*, 7 March 2003, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=10068&lang=EN> (accessed 11 May 2022).

partners or family members.<sup>3</sup> Described as a “pandemic of femicide and gender-based violence against women,”<sup>4</sup> conversations about honor killings often arise among American and western European media in response to lurid images of women being stoned or sensational stories of stabbings and stranglings in places like Turkey, Afghanistan, or Saudi Arabia. Such accounts have also been used to further geopolitical agendas in the time-honored tradition of “white men saving brown women from brown men.”<sup>5</sup>

And yet, for all the talk that surrounds these tragedies, very little scholarship exists exploring the history of the phenomenon. Naameh’s murder took place almost a century ago when Palestine was under British rule, but it still bears an uncanny resemblance to many of the honor-motivated murders that occur today, such as the indictment filed in December 2021 by German prosecutors against two brothers who murdered their older sister for divorcing her husband and pursuing a “Western way of life.”<sup>6</sup>

One of the unfortunate results of the current discourse about honor killings has been an essentialization of the phenomenon as Islamic, and a propagation of the view that honor killings are endemic to Muslim-majority communities and cultures. This discourse is not new; it is merely an echo and continuation of the rhetoric used to justify administrations like the British Mandate over Palestine. In her seminal work on the complexity of Muslim women’s lives, Lila Abu-Lughod has argued that to ignore the “dynamic historical transformations” of honor crimes “strip[s] them of moral complexity” and fails to understand the inherent structural inequalities

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3 Dubravka Šimonovic: “Urgent action needed to end pandemic of femicide and violence against women, says UN expert”, *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, 25 November 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26533&LangID=E> (accessed 11 May 2022). The standard estimate for honor killing specifically has hovered around 5000 for over a decade. (See “Impunity for domestic violence, ‘honour killings’ cannot continue”, *UN News*, 4 March 2010, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/03/331422> (accessed 11 May 2022). However, the general consensus is that such estimates are extremely low, given the long history of underreporting of such crimes.

4 Šimonovic, “Urgent action needed”.

5 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in: Patrick Williams/Laura Chrisman (eds.): *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 92. As one example of this, the George W. Bush administration drew on such images and a discourse of oppressed Muslim women and the American duty to rescue them to garner support for the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. See, for instance, Laura Bush’s radio address: Laura Bush: “Radio Address”, *The White House*, 17 November 2001, archived version available at <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html> (accessed 11 May 2022).

6 “Germany: 2 men charged in killing of their sister”, *Associated Press*, 28 December 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/europe-germany-berlin-478931c3c1f59502b412af8ded53415f> (accessed 11 May 2022).

that inform the practice.<sup>7</sup> This chapter attempts to follow Abu-Lughod's directive by restoring historicity to honor killings in Palestine through analyzing British participation in and reactions to the practice during the Mandatory period (1920–1948).

As one of the top industrial and imperial powers of the early 20th century, Britain embodied the contradictions of a self-proclaimed liberal democracy's attempts to reconcile "Eastern" culture with those acultural values the British attributed to the European Enlightenment. And yet, for the better part of 30 years, British Mandate officials excused, downplayed, and commuted the sentences of honor killers while simultaneously upholding death sentences for murderers motivated by the more pedestrian motive of pecuniary gain.

Badi Hasisi and Deborah Bernstein are so far the only scholars to have written on this topic. In their compelling 2016 article, "Multiple Voices and the Force of Custom on Punishment: Trial of 'Family Honor Killings'", Hasisi and Bernstein suggest that British officials' pattern of leniency for honor killers was motivated by the overriding need to prevent public unrest, the assumption being that to impose execution for these crimes that had barely been prosecuted as manslaughter under Ottoman rule would provoke a backlash.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, I will argue that, while the British did seek to minimize conflict in the region, it was precisely because the victims of honor violence – always women of "bad character"<sup>9</sup> – threatened the dominant British masculinity that British officials refused to fully punish the men who eliminated that threat for them.

While Hasisi and Bernstein focused on the legal decisions reviewed first by the Supreme Court and then passed on to the High Commissioner, I analyzed a broader swath of honor cases, including those that never went beyond the District Court level. Including the lower courts' decisions in the analysis provides a more expansive view of how judges were conceptualizing honor as a mitigating factor in murder, particularly in light of the 1927 Supreme Court holding that a woman's character could be used in determining the defendant's guilt.<sup>10</sup> I also analyzed murder cases

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7 Lila Abu-Lughod: *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 136.

8 Badi Hasisi/Deborah Bernstein: "Multiple Voices and the Force of Custom on Punishment: Trial of 'Family Honor Killings' in Mandate Palestine", in: *Law and History Review* 34:1 (2016), 115–154.

9 As Abu Kalbein described his sister to the authorities during his trial. "In Defence of Family Honour", *The Palestine Post*, 21 December 1939.

10 Assize Appeal 16/26, *Abu Jasser v. Attorney General*, 2 Rotenberg 543 (1927). This holding surely influenced all of the lower courts' decisions in subsequent years, with the net result of dramatically lowering the number of cases that were charged as murder – which were instead charged as manslaughter. This would also mean that review by the higher courts and the High Commissioner never happened. Hasisi and Bernstein never mention this decision in their analysis.

unrelated to honor, for the purpose of establishing a comparative framework that would illuminate the assumptions underpinning judges' thoughts on provocations such as honor violations that justified mitigation.<sup>11</sup> I drew on the work of British historians about British murder rates and punishments to show how Mandate judges treated the murder of women in Palestine compared to murders of women in Britain. Newspaper articles in Palestine often reported on family honor murders, and correspondence from and between British officials to the Colonial Office reveals the way these men were thinking and talking about women in Palestine and their place in the social order.

The ambivalence with which officials treated honor violence a century ago still haunts contemporary conversations about the phenomenon. For instance, many have advocated for the elimination of the term honor killing entirely, as, "No killing of a woman, no matter what the reason, is honorable," and conceding to the use of the term "serves the purpose of preserving the social power of informal structures and fulfilling their material and social interests."<sup>12</sup> Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian has proposed using the term "femicide" as an alternative descriptor for "all violent acts

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11 Not only does this comparative analysis enrich knowledge on honor violence, but casting a wider net catches many of the honor killings that were categorized under the lower charge of manslaughter by judges, or else disguised to look like "ordinary" homicides, accidents, or suicides. In his study of 17th century Jerusalem, Dror Ze'evi found an unusually high number of court records describing the "accidental" deaths of women and girls, while there were virtually no records of females being murdered for reasons of honor. Ze'evi points out that when the death of a female was reported to authorities, evidence given by a male relative frequently sufficed, even when the cause of death was suspicious, such as girls accidentally tumbling off roofs or stones accidentally "falling" onto their heads. As Ze'evi wryly notes, "Reports of this kind, about women who slid into wells, fell off roofs, or were buried by stone avalanches, are fairly numerous, certainly more so than similar cases involving men. This may suggest that women worked on roofs, near wells, or in small stone quarries more than men did, but it is more likely that these incidents represent attempts to avoid murder charges where questions of 'family honor' were concerned." (Dror Ze'evi: *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), 177–78).

This practice has continued into the 21st century, as reports such as Tina Susman and Ceasar Ahmed demonstrated during the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. Ahmed and Susman found that much of the increase in violence against women in the wake of the invasion took the form of honor killings, which, according to human-rights advocates, were often disguised to look like "regular" homicides (Tina Susman/Cesar Ahmed: "Tale of murder, rape and tradition", *Los Angeles Times*, 23 April 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-apr-23-fg-iraq-woman23-story.html> (accessed 11 May 2022)).

12 Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian/Suhad Daher-Nashif: "Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control", in: *Violence Against Women* 19:3 (2014), 295–315, here 297. "Informal structures" in this context refers to the traditional, kin-based structures of power and social control versus formal, usually legal or government-based structures of power.



that instill a perpetual fear in women or girls of being killed under the justification of honor.<sup>13</sup> While I acknowledge these concerns, the term honor killing stems from the actors' own definition and view of familial relations and gender power structures. In an effort to understand the actors on their own terms, I will use the term while recognizing that it is a type of femicide, which refers to the larger category of killing women for reasons rooted in gender. I also recognize and reject the term's inherent attribution of blame to the victim, who, in the killer's view, causes her own death through her aberrant conduct.

Such aberrant conduct was viewed by some Palestinian communities as a major destabilizer of community cohesion, something which was already under threat; first from the Great War, to which Palestine lost at least six percent of its population, and next, to the invasion and occupation of the British.<sup>14</sup> In just under six years, in other words, the social structure Palestinians had known for over 400 years crumbled.<sup>15</sup> As a result, there was perhaps no group more intensely focused on and conflicted about identity formation than the population of Palestine during the ensuing interwar period, with Arab Muslims and Arab Christians and Mizrahi Jews and newly arrived European/Ashkenazi Jews, as well as Zionists and anti-Zionists and the British all thrown together, jockeying for the power to establish what it meant to be Palestinian. The stakes were high, for whoever won this battle would establish the norms and determine the definitions, set up the boundaries of belonging, and punish those who breached them.

Often obscured in the shadow of this identity quagmire were the evolving notions of gender that informed and underpinned the entire process. Competing concepts of masculinity in interwar Palestine were undergoing significant changes before, during, and after the Great War. If one accepts Joan Scott's proposition that gender serves as "one of the recurrent references by which political power has been conceived, legitimized, and criticized," an analysis of how gender influenced British responses to the killing of women for family honor illuminates important ways all

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13 Ibid.

14 Abigail Jacobson: "Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War: Jerusalem During World War I Through the Eyes of a Local Muslim Resident", in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40:1 (2008), 69–88.

15 It is tempting to speculate whether the rate of honor violence increased due to the upheaval and large-scale dissolution of the social structure, as social scientists have found that violence against women often experiences an upsurge during such periods. (See, for example, Donna Pankhurst, "Post-war backlash violence against women: What can 'masculinity' explain?", in: Donna Pankhurst (ed.): *Gendered peace: Women's struggles for post-war justice and reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 293–320; Henny Sleight et al.: "I can do women's work': Reflections on engaging men as allies in women's economic empowerment in Rwanda", in: *Gender & Development* 21:1 (2013), 15–30. However, further research needs to be done to determine pre-war rates of violence in Palestine.

parties were negotiating across class, racial, and political divides to define and challenge current structures of power in the quicksand of interwar Palestinian politics.<sup>16</sup>

## The Logic of Honor Killings

Evidence of honor violence has appeared among many cultures, countries, religions, and ethnicities.<sup>17</sup> Given such a wide variety of settings, it is unquestionably a contingent and complex phenomenon.<sup>18</sup> Recep Doğan has also argued that honor killings are “qualitatively different from other kinds of murders.”<sup>19</sup> First, the meaning of the word “honor” in the context of an honor killing is not an accumulative commod-

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16 Joan Scott: “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, in: *The American Historical Review* 91:5 (1986), 1053–1075.

17 Although the majority of honor killings today take place in communities where Islam is the majority religion, honor violence featured in various forms in a wide variety of religious cultures and legal codes long before some adherents to Islam adopted the practice. Even with the inherently vast underreporting that must be assumed with such a crime, early twenty-first century numbers show that honor crimes have been reported in at least 31 countries around the world, including Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Haiti, Guatemala, India, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Punjab, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, Uganda, the UK, the U.S., Venezuela, and Yemen (United Nations 2002, 4, 10, 12). Ancient Roman law actually punished men who failed to kill their wives or daughters who misbehaved sexually, and Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, and various states in the United States all allowed for a variety of mitigating defense for honor killings until well into the 20th century. (See Matthew A. Goldstein: “The Biological Roots of Heat-of-Passion Crimes and Honor Killings”, in: *Politics and the Life Sciences* 21:2 (2002), 28–37; “The Horror of Honor Killings, even in U.S.”, *Amnesty International*, 10 April 2012, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/the-horror-of-honor-killings-even-in-us/> (accessed 11 May 2022)).

18 As most honor killings today take place in Muslim communities, some assert that very conservative and pointed interpretations of the Qur’an could conclude that the book condones the practice, but others vigorously oppose this, claiming that the Qur’an strictly forbids the practice (see Salam Alkhatib: “Social Death: A Grounded Theory Study of the Emotional and Social Effects of Honour Killing on Victims’ Family Members – A Palestinian Family Perspective.” (PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2012)). See also Andrzej Kulczycki/Sarah Windle: “Honor Killings in the Middle East and North Africa”, in: *Violence Against Women* 17:11 (2011), 1442–1464. It is also worth noting that honor killings have not been present in regions such as Indonesia and Malaysia, which have some of the highest populations of Muslims in the world (see Pieternella van Doorn-Harder: *Women Shaping Islam: Qu’ran in Indonesia* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 15).

19 Recep Doğan: “Is Honor Killing a ‘Muslim Phenomenon’? Textual Interpretations and Cultural Representations”, in: *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 31:3 (2011), 423–440, 423.

ity that can be earned.<sup>20</sup> This first kind of honor, referred to in Arabic as *sharaf*, can be earned by acts of bravery or the attainment of wealth and power. The concept of honor that fuels honor killings, however, is called *ird*, and applies to the entire patrilineal clan, as opposed to just the individual.<sup>21</sup> *Ird* cannot be earned or increased; it can only be diminished, and usually only by acts of the female members of the clan.<sup>22</sup>

The literature is generally consistent in concluding that this asymmetrical power structure developed over time in communities lacking strong centralized leadership.<sup>23</sup> Kinship-based clans required constant vigilance to protect the group from external threats. The need for protection was valued most heavily for female members of the clan to maintain the purity of clan bloodlines.<sup>24</sup> This kind of social structure often results in women possessing “immense negative power”,<sup>25</sup> as their bodies are seen as the “boundaries of their nations”, the only viable options to both physically and culturally perpetuating the kin group.<sup>26</sup> Honor violence can be seen as a control mechanism for a group’s reproduction and survival. An attack on a woman’s body was regarded as an attack on the group as a whole, and particularly on those men responsible for the group’s protection and survival. In this way, a man’s honor was contingent upon his ability and success at protecting the women in his group from being “contaminated” by outsiders.<sup>27</sup>

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20 Although I use the Arabic term for this type of honor, this is more due to the region of focus for this chapter as opposed to any implication that such a concept is endemic to or even at all pervasive in Arabic-speaking cultures. As footnote 17 discusses, honor systems have existed in dozens of cultures and nationalities throughout history.

21 Nancy V. Baker/Peter R. Gregware/Margery A. Cassidy: “Family Killing Fields: Honor Rationales in the Murder of Women”, in: *Violence Against Women* 5:2 (1999), 164–184. Baker et al. distinguish between “systems of honor” that rely on the behavior of others to prop them up and those that depend on internal factors, or the merits of the individual. They argue that those communities with systems that lean on others for honor of the power holders are integral to the perpetuation of violence against weaker members of the group.

22 Manar Hasan: “The Politics of Honor: Patriarchy, the State and the Murder of Women in the Name of Family Honor”, in: *The Journal of Israeli History* 21:1/2 (2002), 1–37.

23 Cees Mari/Sawitri Saharso: “Honour Killing: A Reflection of Gender, Culture and Violence”, in: *Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences* 37:1 (2001), 52–73.

24 “Racist practitioners must enforce domination not just on their racial targets but on both sides of the purported racial divide. For instance, racism demands domestic gender domination, too. Preventing ‘contamination’ of women of a group by men of another race requires restricting women’s personal choices.” (Ben Kiernan: *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 22).

25 Deniz A. Kandiyoti: “Emancipated but unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish case”, in: *Feminist Studies* 13:2 (1987), 317–338, here 322.

26 Valerie M. Hudson: *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 7.

27 Aylin Akpinar: “The honour/shame complex revisited: violence against women in the migration context”, in: *Women’s Studies International Forum* 26:5 (2003), 425–442. Akpinar focuses on Turkish immigrant women in Sweden and the control that male relatives exercise over

The pressure men face to protect in this context almost inevitably mutates into a need to control and possess.<sup>28</sup> This rationale also underpins the occasional killing of rape victims, as a woman's will has no bearing in the status of her male relatives' honor; her defilement, whether consensual or not, represents her relatives' failure to protect her. Thus, as the embodied symbol of family's tainted honor, she must be eliminated.<sup>29</sup>

I argue that the shame men feel in these situations is a direct result of the demands of a contingent and dynamic masculinity. Should a different masculinity be constructed, in which a man's worth were not tied to the sexual choices of his female relatives, much of that shame would likely dissipate, sparing the lives of countless women and girls. But men embedded in this particular gender dynamic are led to see themselves as victims, not perpetrators. This in turn "animates one's sense of justice, i.e., retaliation for harm received. Retributive acts are seen by its perpetrators as fair and righteous deeds."<sup>30</sup> By acting out sexually, the women in their lives publicly expose a man's lack of control. Lack of control diminishes this form of masculinity, causing intense shame. Shame, in the words of historian George Stearn, is "a cry for recognition and respect."<sup>31</sup> By using violence to establish control over the woman who diminishes his manhood, a man restores equilibrium to the original

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female relatives in situations in which ethnic identity takes on elevated importance while living in a foreign environment. Women are controlled and abused, Akpınar argues, because of "the function of women as carriers and bearers of group identity". As such, "the definition of acceptable femininity" in such circumstances shifts to mirror the blood boundaries of their ethnic community."

28 Hudson, *Sex and World Peace*, 6–7.

29 Ibid.; Tina Susman/Cesar Ahmed: "Shame, secrecy and honour killings in Iraq; violence against women has been seemingly on the rise since the U.S.-led invasion altered the social structure of the country", *The Vancouver Sun*, April 2005. Susman and Caesar reported on an incident where a young woman in a prison north of Baghdad wrote home begging for help after becoming pregnant from multiple rapes by prison guards. Her brother responded by traveling to the prison and, with permission from the guards, walking into his sister's cell and shooting her dead. According to the two journalists, the brother murdered his sister and her five-month fetus in order to avoid the shame her condition would have imputed to the family.

30 Peter N. Stearns: *Shame: A Brief History* (Chicago/Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 12. See also Aaron J. Kivisto et al. "Antisociality and Intimate Partner Violence: The Facilitating Role of Shame", in: *Violence and Victims* 26:6 (2011), 758–773. The authors' study found a direct correlative relation between shame and antisociality and partner violence: As shame increases, antisociality and partner violence increase. Kaplenko et al. found that shame played a key role in motivating domestic violence in men through its "influence on authority" (Hannah Kaplenko/Jennifer Loveland/Chitra Raghavan: "Relationships Between Shame, Restrictiveness, Authoritativeness, and Coercive Control in Men Mandated to a Domestic Violence Offenders Program", in: *Violence and Victims* 33:2 (2018), 296–309, here 296).

31 Stearns, *Shame*, 12.

power dynamic, that of the man's "perennial sense of entitlement to women's bodies."<sup>32</sup> While he may have failed to control her sexual behavior, he will exercise the ultimate control by ending her life.

Because shame in this context is connected with the bloodline of a kin group, the majority of honor killings are perpetrated by a woman's agnate relatives, although sometimes that could include her husband, if he happens to be within the same clan. As such, cousins, brothers, uncles, and fathers tend to be the most common perpetrators of honor crimes.<sup>33</sup> A common feminist interpretation of honor violence centers on their function as enforcing the patriarchal demand of "clear familial connections and lines of inheritance."<sup>34</sup> Killing the female involved in the sexual violation is often seen as the "cheaper social price" than killing the man with whom the offense was committed, as that could instigate a blood feud with his family that could last years.<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps easy to underestimate the enormous pressure faced by men in communities where honor operates as a powerful tool of social control. A man in such a community is "constantly forced to prove his honor", and he frequently "uses the concept of honor and shame in order to assess his own conduct and that of his fellows."<sup>36</sup> However, similar pressure is not unknown to men even in communities that do not use honor violence. Researchers have found that achieving manhood in many North American and European communities is both "elusive" and "tenuous;" that it not only must be proven by a set of established rituals or skills – in contrast to womanhood, which is seen as a biological inevitability – but that even if earned, its retention is not guaranteed.<sup>37</sup> In other words, performing masculinity is a lifelong endeavor, the rules are often changing, and it is always at risk of being undermined.<sup>38</sup>

In his fieldwork interviewing convicted honor killers in Turkey, Recep Doğan concluded that many times, the decision to kill the transgressing family member

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32 Cynthia Cockburn: "Sexual violence in Bosnia: How War Lives on in Everyday Life", *Open Democracy*, 28 November 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/sexual-violence-in-bosnia-how-war-lives-on-in-everyday-life/> (accessed 11 May 2022).

33 Baker/Gregware/Cassidy, "Family Killing Fields", 173–74. The authors found that this practice of a woman's natal and extended family controlling her behavior, sexual and otherwise, was practiced in Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Latin American, southwest Asian, and Chinese elite societies.

34 Reza Barmaki: "Sex, Honor, Murder: A Psychology of Honor Killing", in: *Deviant Behavior* 42:4 (2021), 473–491, here 473.

35 Hasan, "The Politics of Honor", 2.

36 Recep Doğan: "The Dynamics of Honor Killings and the Perpetrators' Experiences", in: *Homicide Studies*, 20:1 (2016), 53–79, in 56.

37 Jennifer K. Bosson/ Joseph A Vandello: "Precarious Manhood and Its Links to Action and Aggression", in: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20:2 (2011), 82–86.

38 Ibid.

is “an acute dilemma” for the killer, as he must decide between “insult, humiliation, exclusion and condemnation” from his community or a lengthy prison sentence and the possibility of execution from the law.<sup>39</sup> The following excerpt describes this dilemma experienced by a man who finally killed his daughter after experiencing months of intense social shame:

My daughter used to run away. I used to spend most of my time to look for my daughter and bring her back. I used to go to the train station at night, where youngsters hung around, to look for my daughter. But many people, including my own brothers, did not believe me. They were accusing me of forcing my daughter into prostitution. They used to say ‘You found a way to earn easy money, soon you will be a patron.’ [...] At nights, even after midnight, they would shout, ‘You are running a house, you are doing this business; you are dishonourable. Your daughter is a slut.’ As I spent most of my time looking for her, I was having difficulty to find a permanent job as a concrete worker. Such treatment went on for a long time. Then I thought that moving to another town might solve my problem. However, when I was packing, my daughter objected to the idea of moving and said ‘I will do it my own way. I chose my path and I am happy with it.’ So, I lost my control and killed my daughter by using a rope that I was using for packing.<sup>40</sup>

Notably, some have argued that the responsibility in many North American and European communities for controlling a woman’s actions has merely transferred from a communal context to “the individual man”, be that her partner or her father.<sup>41</sup>

## Law under the Mandate

By the time Britain took over Palestine in 1920, British officials were sufficiently convinced of their own expertise at wrangling order out of the chaos that accompanied what they saw as the uncivilized masses that populated most any region outside of western Europe. The prolonged ebb of crime in London throughout the last quarter of the 19th century not only led Scotland Yard to declare that the city was the safest in the world, but also provided fodder to justify and obligate the imposition of similar order elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Law was even seen by some like the English judge, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, as a more effective and lasting exercise of imperial power than

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39 Recep Doğan: “Did the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 get it right? Are all honour killings revenge killings?”, in: *Punishment & Society* 15:5 (2013), 488–514, 498.

40 *Ibid.*, 499.

41 Baker/ Gregware/Cassidy: “Family Killing Fields”, 166.

42 Martin J. Wiener: *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 216.

military force: “Our law is, in fact, the sum and substance of what we have to teach them. It is, so to speak, the gospel of the English, and it is a compulsory gospel which admits of no dissent and of no disobedience.”<sup>43</sup>

Sir Stephen and others had grounds to hold such views in light of the deeply racialized notion of criminality that prevailed in interwar Britain. Many believed criminal behavior was an inherent trait of less developed civilizations that must be trained out of the people with the implementation of strict laws and even stricter enforcement mechanisms.<sup>44</sup> It was partly this belief, pretext or not, that informed and legitimized the ostensible purpose of the Mandate. As the Covenant of the League of Nations declared, the people in Palestine, as well as the other war-born mandates, were “not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.”<sup>45</sup> As such, the law, particularly in a colonial context, “embodied the desires and interests of groups in power” and could justifiably be and often was used as a “blunt instrument deployed against (indigenous and other nonelite) populations.”<sup>46</sup>

This blunt instrument often took the form of criminalizing any action by indigenous peoples that demanded self-government or more rights than the British were

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- 43 James Fitzjames Stephen cited in: Leslie Stephen: *The life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen: by his brother* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 268.
- 44 Havelock Ellis: *The Criminal*, second edition (London: Walter Scott, 1899).
- 45 Article 22, Covenant of the League of Nations, 28 April 1919, online available at: <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20thcentury/leagcov.asp#art22> (accessed 11 May 2022).
- 46 Sally Engle Merry: *Colonizing Hawaii: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 264. Although, it is worth pointing out that extensive scholarship in this area has proven that colonized populations frequently also used the law of the colonizer to strike back and leverage conflicts to their own advantage. See also Caroline Elkins: *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (New York: Knopf, 2022); Lauren Benton/Lisa Ford: *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Nasser Hussain: *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019); Shaunnagh Dorsett/Jack McLaren (eds.): *Legal Histories of the British Empire: Laws, Engagements and Legacies* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2014); Ronald J. Daniels/Michael J. Trebilcock/Lindsey D. Carson: “The Legacy of Empire: The Common Law Inheritance and Commitments to Legality in Former British Colonies”, in: *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 59:1 (2011), 111–178; Martin J. Wiener: *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice under British rule, 1870–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); John McLaren: *Dewigged, Bothered, and Bewildered: British Colonial Judges on Trial, 1800–1900* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2011); Lauren Benton: “Colonial Law and Cultural Difference: Jurisdictional Politics and the Formation of the Colonial State”, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:3 (1999), 563–588; Jack P. Greene, “‘By Their Laws Shall Ye Know Them’: Law and Identity in Colonial British America”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33:2 (2002), 247–260.

prepared to cede to their “less developed” people under their control.<sup>47</sup> Such a system not only kept rebellious colonized peoples in check, but the proliferation of criminalized actions continued the British need to rule in perpetuity.<sup>48</sup> This self-perpetuating system of control reflected the way honor violence operated: Any assertion of self-determination in women was immediately criminalized within the communal order and violence was used to subordinate the criminal. Just as British-led government violence was legitimized under the auspices of state control, many in Palestinian communities viewed honor violence as legitimate means to maintain control of “criminal” women.

This may have been why the often harsh edge of British justice was softened somewhat when it came to murders committed for family honor, although the British put up a convincing front in their complaints about the leniency of the Ottoman Code on such crimes. The standard British approach of adhering as much as possible to indigenous customs in their imperial endeavors quickly became a vexing problem for administrators where the Ottoman Code was concerned.<sup>49</sup> After taking control of Palestine in 1917, General Edmund Allenby had issued a public decree assuring the people that the military government would aim to retain as many Ottoman laws as possible.<sup>50</sup> But with the installment of a civil administration in 1920, the new officials found the Ottoman Code utterly inadequate to serve “the needs of a progressive state.”<sup>51</sup> As the first British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, complained, “All this new wine could not be contained in old bottles.”<sup>52</sup> Norman Bentwich, the British Attorney General in Palestine from 1922 to 1931, claimed that the murder rate in Palestine was the highest of anywhere in the world, and that murders committed in the name of family honor were “rife” throughout the region.<sup>53</sup> The reason for this widespread violence, he claimed, aside from the

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47 Caroline Elkins: *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (New York: Random House, 2022), 14.

48 Ibid.

49 Officials were limited to applying English law in accordance with Article 46 of the Palestine Order in Council, or inasmuch “as the circumstances of Palestine and its inhabitants and the limits of His Majesty’s [sic] jurisdiction permit and subject to such qualification as local circumstances render necessary.” (The Palestine Orders in Council, 1922–1939, *The Palestine Gazette*, 25 February 1943).

50 Allenby’s Instructions for the military administration of all occupied territory in Syria and Palestine, 23 October 1918, in: Robert Jarman (ed.): *Palestine and Transjordan Administration Reports, Volume I* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1995), 3.

51 Mogannam E. Mogannam: “Palestine Legislation Under the British”, in: *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932), 47–54, here 48.

52 Ibid.

53 Norman Bentwich: “The New Criminal Code for Palestine”, in: *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 20:1 (1938), 71–79, 78.



natural criminality endemic to the inhabitants, was the inadequacy of the Ottoman Code's provision against murder, which was not strict enough to act as a deterrent.<sup>54</sup>

But the British were met with strong resistance in their attempts to anglicize Ottoman law. Not only did the Arabs protest, but some from the Jewish population also resented the intrusion, as importation of foreign elements was exactly what they were trying to avoid in order to revive and reconstruct a "pure" Jewish identity through their own legal system.<sup>55</sup> Some did not see law as a universally applicable code of human justice, but rather unique to each nation, and "just as each nation had its own language [...] both law and language were reflections of the unique spirit of the nation, its *Volksgeist*."<sup>56</sup> British officials were therefore obligated to operate under a slowly evolving hybrid of Ottoman, French, and English codes, giving rise to the quip that Palestinian law was "not Mosaic, but a mosaic."<sup>57</sup>

It took the British council 15 years of debating, constructing, drafting, and re-drafting to finally push through a revised criminal code. The riots of 1929 invigorated the process, partly because, despite the numerous arrests and charges for murder in connection with the riots, prosecutions pursuing the death penalty were made much more difficult by the provision in the Ottoman Code that required proof of least 24 hours' preparation for a murder to establish the element of premeditation. Even with such restrictions, the executions the British succeeded in carrying out sparked protests against the unjustness of applying British law outside Britain. This no doubt contributed to British officials' low opinion of the Ottoman Code but makes their decisions to commute death penalties for honor killings stand out even more starkly in contrast.

Those advocating for the establishment of a more anglicized law argued that the Ottoman Penal Code lacked any deterrent effect, as it 1) allowed for murder to be reduced to manslaughter with evidence of adequate provocation, and 2) allowed for a complete renegeing of charges if the accused could prove the murder had been a direct result of his discovery of the victim committing an act of adultery. With such lenient terms, it was no wonder murder continued unabated in the region, British officials argued.<sup>58</sup> Those opposing the Ottoman law claimed that only stricter laws

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54 Ibid.

55 Assaf Likhovski: "The Invention of 'Hebrew Law' in Mandatory Palestine", in: *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 46:2 (1998), 339–373.

56 Friedrich Karl von Savigny: *Of the Vocation of our Age for Legislation and Jurisprudence* (London: Littlewood and Col, 1831), 24–27. Von Savigny was a German legal theorist who led a movement against the adoption of uniform German legal code à la Napoleon. His work influenced and informed many European nationalist movements, including the Zionist movement in Palestine.

57 Bentwich, "The New Criminal Code", 71.

58 Ibid.

against murder – establishing homicide as the a priori charge instead of manslaughter, for instance – and harsher punishments would carry the requisite prophylactic weight to counterbalance the pervasive criminality.<sup>59</sup>

The 1936 Palestine Criminal Code Ordinance (PCCO-1936) was the resulting compromise. It retained the a priori manslaughter charge for homicide but eliminated the female relative as a mitigating factor while still allowing for lesser punishment if the accused could prove the murder was committed under sudden provocation such that he lost control of his reasoning faculties. Section 216 of PCCO-1936 required three elements for a murder conviction: 1) Resolution to kill; 2) Cold blood with no immediate provocation; and 3) Preparation to kill. If the judges found that all three elements had been met, execution was the punishment.<sup>60</sup>

In his analysis of the revised code, Bentwich predicted that the new definitions of murder represented a “definite departure from the customary social morality”, and as such, would “likely [...] multiply the cases in which the High Commissioner will be called upon to consider the execution of a death sentence.”<sup>61</sup> In this prediction, Bentwich was specifically referring to honor killings, and he indeed proved prescient. But instead of upholding the death penalties meted out by the justices according to the revised code, the High Commissioner commuted many of them, often at the behest of the very justices who had just issued the conviction under consideration. This about face, particularly in light of the international scrutiny of and tenuous justification for Britain’s presence in the region, stands out as a peculiar irregularity, even for an empire like Britain’s, which was “built upon a contradiction.”<sup>62</sup> That contradiction, as Martin Wiener has explained, was “justified as a benevolent liberating mission to many [...] enslaved by ignorance, oppressive traditions, and misrule.”<sup>63</sup> The British saw their law as the most important tool for effecting this self-proclaimed mission of liberation.

## Gendered Sentencing

No one was in more need of liberation than the women of Palestine. At least, that is what British officials told themselves and the British public after obtaining a Mandate over the region from the League of Nations in 1920. Forged through generations of British discourse as a miserably oppressed group who were subject to the despotic rule of the Ottomans, Islam, and their husbands, there was no better place

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59 Ibid.

60 Section 216, Palestine Criminal Code Ordinance of 1936.

61 Bentwich, “The New Criminal Code”, 77.

62 Martin J. Wiener, *An Empire on Trial*, 1.

63 Ibid.

for British men to prove and produce more British masculinity than a land full of suffering women. Not only did the so-called liberation of women help justify British rule in Palestine, but this particular mode of “liberation” was both constitutive and intrinsically contributive to the concept of British masculinity that had been forming since the late 18th century.

With the defeat of Napoleon and Britain's rise to world dominance over the course of the 19th century, British notions of gender underwent a gradual but significant change. Men came to be seen as inherently and uniformly dangerous, prone to violence, greed, and impulsivity. To become a true man, specifically a true British man, one had to learn self-control and “cool-headedness”.<sup>64</sup> As with any masculinity, this one drew heavily for definition on the corresponding contours of femininity. Real British men protected women – importantly, the *right* women – from the abuse and violence of those men who adhered to alternative, inferior masculinities.

In his analysis of Gothic novels in Victorian England, Cannon Schmitt found that the female suffering that pervaded the popular genre “produce[d] or confirm[ed] Englishness” by evoking this “reimagined” British masculinity.<sup>65</sup> Some argue that this change in masculinity was partly due to the rise in numbers of British men who were traveling to and working in the empire.<sup>66</sup> Although violence against women had been common in Britain for centuries, witnessing similar acts committed by others in different settings, particularly by men seen as racially inferior, provided British men a way to differentiate themselves from those they ruled by assuming the role of protector.<sup>67</sup> As a result, a new British masculinity was created which centered around treatment of women and “became a touchstone of civilization and national pride.”<sup>68</sup> The important caveat to this protectionary mandate for British masculinity, however, was that the women being protected must fit the parameters of femininity that corresponded to this masculinity in order to validate that masculinity and confirm its dominance.

This emphasis on protecting women manifested itself most visibly in British courts, where the conviction and execution rate of men who killed women increased steadily into the 20th century.<sup>69</sup> And yet, at its core, this British masculinity de-

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64 Martin J. Wiener: *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness, and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

65 Cannon Schmitt: *Alien Nation: Nineteenth Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 161.

66 Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 3.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., 6. John Tosh notes that the “rising tide of revulsion” against violence such as wife-beating and the like was also due to the rise in literacy and news reports, which provided “repeated reminders of the shocking reality of matrimonial abuse to fuel intolerance of

pended on the suffering of women, and that suffering depended largely on the presence of subordinate masculinities in order to cause the suffering from which true men would protect and rescue women to prove their manhood. If women did not need the protection of men, either because there was no threat or the woman herself did not require or want it, this naturally caused a rupture to the sense of manhood so painstakingly erected by British men.

While the stricter criminalization of men's violence benefited women in many ways, the cost of improved security was the restructuring of femininity into a narrow, artificially elevated box of moral purity, inherent spirituality, and innocent fragility that must be preserved. And, as with the logic of honor killings, the line between protection and control of these purportedly fragile women was often very thin. Thus, those women who would or could not conform to these structural requirements embodied a threat to the masculinity that depended on that particular femininity to give it meaning.

Such women qualified as “unnatural” and a threat to the social order – aka, the dominant masculinity and its correlative femininity – by failing to marry or refusing to stay with and support a parental figure; by exercising independent thought or way of life, such as living alone, supporting themselves financially, or most significantly, by manifesting desire through the choosing of sexual partners, particularly outside the bonds of legally recognized marriage. Choice moves an individual closer to the source of decision-making power, and despite the variation in masculinities over time and place, domination over women and over inferior masculinities is always a central objective of the prevailing masculinity; interwar British masculinity was no exception.<sup>70</sup> While public violence in Britain decreased during this time, helping to feed the widespread perception of self-controlled British manhood, violence in

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it” (John Tosh: *Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 62). Tosh also found that the middle class tended to attribute this behavior to the working class, which helped deflect any conversation or exposure of similar violence taking place in middle-class homes. This again illustrates the operation of the dominant masculinity at play, where those men who had proved themselves “real” men by purging themselves of the violent, uncontrollable impulses could use this gendered capital to justify and increase their control over both the women who needed continued protection from the lesser men, and the lesser men themselves. See also Lynn Hunt: *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), where she argues, inter alia, that the rise in epistolary novels and the concept of bodily integrity through portraiture helped Europeans develop empathy and moral autonomy of the individual, which in turn contributed to a decrease in violence and in the tolerance of violence, eventually leading to “the invention” of human rights as a concept.

70 Michael Kaufman: *Cracking the Armour: Power, Pain and the Lives of Men* (Toronto: Penguin, 2002), 26. See also Kristin L. Anderson/Debra Umberson, “Gendering Violence: Masculinity and Power in Men's Accounts of Domestic Violence”, in: *Gender and Society* 15:3 (2001), 358–380.

the domestic sphere did not.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the public image of controlled, rational British manhood was both true and entirely false, while the public perception justified domination of both colonial peoples whose masculinities were perceived as the opposite of the cool-headed British man and of the women who were subject to the uncontrolled violence of those lesser men. As long as such conditions prevailed, the need for British men to protect and rule would continue, and so British imperial agents had a delicate confluence of priorities to balance: Do just enough to present and uphold the image of liberator to the world while not quite enough to obviate the need for the liberator.

Through this lens, British judges' decisions to ascribe lesser convictions and sentences to men who killed women for violating sexual norms are not only unsurprising but make sense as a natural outcome of the contemporary gender dynamics that upheld British imperial rule. By changing the criminal code, doling out more convictions, and giving lip service to the cruelty of honor violence, British Mandate officials reinforced their image at home and on the international stage as the saviors of oppressed women and models of enlightened justice and human rights. Behind the scenes, however, British justices and multiple High Commissioners signaled their tacit approval of men's prerogative to use violence to control women in order to maintain the very role they vaunted as women's greatest protectors.

When Justice Randolph Copland made to sentence Mohammed Joumeh Abu Kalbein for the murder of his sister, as described in the opening paragraph of this chapter, for instance, he revealed his mastery of this multi-layered ambivalence that characterized the dominant British masculinity. In his speech concluding the trial, he first admonished the defendant for the crime, classified it as "serious", but then let the man off with a mere ten years.

I am quite aware of the unfortunate tradition and custom which is particularly prevalent in the villages, and know that you probably do not regard yourself as guilty. Whatever you think of that, you have committed a crime and killed a human being, and for that you have to be punished. We are taking into consideration everything that there is in your favour, but we find that the crime is serious. The sentence of the Court is ten years' imprisonment.<sup>72</sup>

Here the justices decided that even though Mohammed had known about his sister's actions for several weeks, it was "probable" that he did not know she was pregnant, and because he used his sister's own kitchen knife to kill her, there was no reason to think he had planned the murder. Kalbein's lack of foresight to bring his own murder weapon saved him a conviction of premeditation. But most significantly, the jus-

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71 Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 6.

72 "In Defence of Family Honour, Ten Years for Arab who Murdered Sister", *The Palestine Post*, 21 December 1939.

tices found that learning his sister was pregnant was sufficient provocation to reduce Kalbein's charge from murder to manslaughter.

While provocation has maintained a longstanding presence in British codes as a mitigating factor for murder, what qualifies as provocation often serves as one of the most telling sites of inquiry into the current state of a community's moral priorities.<sup>73</sup> By using women's "bad character" as a justification for murder, British men not only made themselves the ultimate arbiters of what constituted acceptable femininity, but they helped ensure their continued control over the region by perpetuating the need for British men to protect women from the murders that those same men continued to excuse.

This contradiction embedded in the judges' approach to honor violence was recognized by some of the justices themselves, even after the revision of the code. In July 1942, Mohammad Ahmad Salem Ishreim Ishreim was convicted of double homicide after stabbing to death his wife Azizeh and her mother, Sabha. The three justices who reviewed the case upheld the defendant's conviction, *despite* the victims' bad character, which consisted of leaving the village, presumably without the defendant's consent.<sup>74</sup> But notably, the justices came to this decision because although family honor could serve as "an extenuating circumstance in the case of one murder [...] it cannot possibly be an excuse for two murders."<sup>75</sup> The reason for this parsing of justifiable provocation is not immediately clear, particularly in light of Chief Justice Trusted's statement the previous year disavowing recognition by the Court of "honour as in any sense a defense" to murder.<sup>76</sup> But the justices in 1942 may have been trying to play both sides of the fence, as their report to the High Commissioner continued:

For over twenty years now, since the British Occupation, this barbarous custom has continued unchecked, and whilst I agree that education may in time affect a

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73 Danielle Tyson: *Sex, Culpability and the Defence of Provocation* (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2012); Pascale Fournier et al.: "Dishonour, Provocation and Culture: Through the Beholder's Eye?", in: *Canadian Criminal Law Review* 16:2 (2012), 161–193; Mitchell N. Berman: "Justification and Excuse, Law and Morality", in: *Duke Law Journal* 53:1 (2003), 1–77; Caroline Forrell: "Gender Equality, Social Values and Provocation Law in the United States, Canada and Australia", in: *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 14:1 (2006), 27–45; Mandy Burton: "Sentencing Domestic Homicide Upon Provocation: Still Getting Away with Murder", in: *Feminist Legal Studies* 11 (2003), 279–289; William I. Torry: "Social change, crime, and culture: The defense of provocation", in: *Crime, Law and Social Change* 36 (2001), 309–325.

74 *Attorney General v. Mohammad Ahmad Salem Ishreim*, July 1942, The National Archives (TNA), CO 733/434/16. There were two Arab justices assigned to this case – Khayat J. and Abdul Hadi J. – and one British justice, who wrote the opinion. Unfortunately, the name of the British justice is not legible in the records.

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Abu Miriam v. Attorney General*, in: M. Levanon/A.M. Apelbom/H. Kitzinger/A. Goralí (eds.): *Annotated Law Reports* (Tel Aviv: S. Bursi, 1941), 128.

change, I feel that, in a particularly bad case like this, an example might perhaps be made, and would act as a deterrent in the future. Your Excellency will remember that in India it was only a strict enforcement of the law that the custom of suttee, or self immolation of widows, amongst the Hindus, was finally eradicated, and suttee had a religious sanction behind it, which a 'family honour' murder has not.<sup>77</sup>

The justice in this case attests to the fact that, despite the change in law six years earlier, the practice had "continued unabated", and even he believed that this was partly due to the leniency with which the courts had treated the practice for the past two decades. He was implicitly arguing that it would take the unified determination of the legal establishment to curb such a practice.<sup>78</sup> I would suggest that effective deterrence would not have arisen merely from the threat of a potential death sentence, but also because such an act would reconstruct the elements of the dominant masculinity by signaling to the community that using violence to control women's behavior no longer constituted a foundational or acceptable pillar of manhood.

But it is quite clear that the dominant masculinity of British men at this time was not ready to concede its power contained within the law, either through custom or code, that upheld this gender order. The anemic advocacy like that in the preceding case, where the justices were comfortable accepting the murder of one woman for honor, but not two, is the only evidence that justices were ever troubled enough by the weak law to suggest a change.

In 1927, the Palestinian Supreme Court had held that "conduct and character of the [murdered] woman" qualified as a mitigating factor in the sentencing of a defendant in a murder trial.<sup>79</sup> It goes without saying that those who embodied and propagated the dominant masculinity – namely white British men of the upper class – were those who decided if the "conduct and character" of a murdered woman strayed far enough from the dominant femininity to absolve her murderer of full responsibility for her death.

While tolerance for violence against women had been declining in Britain throughout the 19th century, the first half of the 20th century started to see a strong

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77 Ibid.

78 He may have been on to something, as many legal scholars have argued that lenient legal policies are the main culprits in the continuation of honor killings. See, for example, Alkhatib, "Social Death", 39: "Most of the reviewed studies considered legislation that legitimizes HK [honor killings] as the most important reason for perpetuating it." Hasan, "The Politics of Honor", considered it to be legislation, not culture that encouraged men to kill women for honor. He argued that the existence of the phenomenon of HK in Arabic societies is reinforced inter alia by the legal system, which gives 'honor' murderers exemption. Legal systems serve both the governments and the guardians of tradition, forging an alliance between both of them.

79 Assize Appeal 16/26, *Abu Jasser v. Attorney General*, 2 Rotenberg 543 (1927).

backlash against the perceived power that women were gaining in British society.<sup>80</sup> Those most likely to leave Britain for posts in the empire were those whose power was most threatened by the rising women's movement. As John Tosh notes, being at home meant "constant negotiation" with women, and in Britain, those women "were often perceived to hold the advantage."<sup>81</sup> By the 20th century, over 30 percent of men serving in the empire were public school graduates, men who had been educated within traditional models of strong patriarchy and complete male dominance over home, wife, and children.<sup>82</sup> The "men-only sphere" careers in the empire appealed to men who grew up engaging in and seeking after a highly concentrated homosocial environment, where approval from and friendship with other men motivated much of their social behavior.<sup>83</sup> Such men were regarded as having a "veneer of good manners and social poise", but they lacked "respect for women of their own or any other class."<sup>84</sup>

The angst over the gains women had managed to wrangle must have only increased when British men arrived in Palestine and realized that the same spirit of insubordination had infected the women there. In 1933, High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope gave voice to this anxiety when he wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that women, even "good" women from "good famil[ies]" had participated in the latest demonstrations against the Mandate, not only through violent assaults against security forces, but they also "did all they could to urge the male members of the demonstration to defy police orders."<sup>85</sup> Such a disquieting change in the behavior of the oppressed women of Palestine likely entrenched British officials further in their determination to maintain both the political and gender power structures; indeed, both were mutually dependent on the other.

This contradictory stance towards women mirrors the legal approach these men took towards honor violence. For instance, a decade after the 1927 Supreme Court holding, Chief Justice Harry Herbert Trusted denied that honor had ever been treated by the court as a mitigating factor in murder cases, but was instead, he said, merely one factor among many that the High Commissioner took under consideration when deciding whether to commute a petitioner's sentence.<sup>86</sup> This loophole allowed judges to find a defendant guilty of murder instead of manslaughter, but then kept them from having to truly punish them for murder. Not only did Justice Trusted's declaration refute the spirit of the Supreme Court's holding, if not the

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80 Pankhurst, "Post-war backlash violence"; Tosh, *Masculinity*, 177.

81 Tosh, *Masculinity*, 177.

82 Tosh, *Masculinity*, 176.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 High Commissioner (HC) to Cunliffe-Lister (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 23 October 1933, TNA, CO 733/239/5.

86 *Abu Miriam v. Attorney General*, in: Levanon et al. (eds.): *Annotated Law Reports*, 128.



language on its face, his statement was belied by numerous cases, including ones he had presided over.

For example, in 1939, he and the other Supreme Court justices recommended mercy for a man who had confessed to the carefully planned and executed murder of his daughter after she left her husband and took up with another man.<sup>87</sup> Justice Trusted wrote to the High Commissioner after upholding the defendant's murder conviction, explaining that, "Your Excellency's predecessor *always recognized this traditional excuse for murder*, and when satisfied that the crime was so committed, commuted the sentence of death to one of imprisonment."<sup>88</sup> He then recommended mercy, and the High Commissioner granted it.

The same year that Justice Copland reduced the brutal murder of Naameh and her unborn child to manslaughter (1939), the recently knighted Chief Justice Trusted wrote to the High Commissioner asking for mercy for Haj Darwish El Ankar, whom Trusted and his colleagues on the court had just convicted of murder. El Ankar had meticulously planned and carried out the murder of his 35-year-old daughter for having run away from her husband.<sup>89</sup> After making clear that the defendant's guilt was certain, the justices opined that, because the accused "belongs to the past generation who have one idea of the punishment of a loose daughter, and that is by killing her, the Court is willing to recommend to His Excellency the High Commissioner to exercise his prerogative of mercy."<sup>90</sup> The High Commissioner commuted the sentence.

And yet just a few months later, the High Commissioner upheld death sentences for both Khalid Haj Hassan Suleiman and Salah Muheyideen Ahmad Jum'a after they shot a woman over a quarrel about olives.<sup>91</sup> The High Commissioner that same month also refused to commute the death sentence of a 19-year-old man who murdered his friend in order to steal his friend's gold watch to get out of debt.<sup>92</sup>

## Intraimperial Tolerance for Honor Violence

Such murders as those committed in the course of robbery or over a quarrel about property were familiar to British justices. The sacrosanct nature of private property was one of the foundational pillars of British common law and an oft-cited justification for and benefit of British rule in the benighted lands that had yet to grasp

87 *Attorney General v. Haj Darwish El Ankar*, July 1939, TNA, CO 733/390/3.

88 *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Attorney General v. Khalid Haj Hassan Suleiman and Salah Muheyideen Ahmad Jum'a*, April 1940, TNA, CO 733/390/3.

92 *Attorney General v. Muhammad Hussein Bakr*, November 1943, TNA, CO 733/390/3.

this concept. But killing to protect the dominant masculinity was also familiar to the British sensibility. While British law in the early 20th century did not excuse killing for family honor, the role of fathers and male relatives in protecting the chastity of their sisters and mothers was well established, and this value showed up again and again across the empire before and during Britain's occupation of Palestine.

A century earlier, British lawmakers in India had paid tribute to what they saw as the "universally accepted norm" that a man's honor was worth the life of a woman by codifying honor as an excuse for murder:

We think that to treat a person guilty of such homicide [for purposes of honor] as we should treat a murderer would be a highly inexpedient course; a course which would shock the universal feeling of mankind and would engage the public sympathy on the side of the delinquent against the law.<sup>93</sup>

Beth Baron has shown that British officials quickly singled out honor killings as one problem justifying British occupation and implementation of British law in Egypt in the late 19th century.<sup>94</sup> By 1928, hundreds of such murders were being reported every year, but the standard sentence for murders motivated by honor was just five years, causing even those men who had murdered for other reasons to alter their story to obtain a lighter sentence.<sup>95</sup>

British officials showed the same tolerance for honor violence in Iraq. An anonymous author wrote to *The Palestine Post* lamenting the way honor violence was indulged by the judiciary. The author related the story of a recent case tried in the Baghdad Court of Sessions, where a man had stabbed a girl 18 times "to save the family's name" after she ran away from home to marry a man of her own choice.<sup>96</sup> Authorities returned her to her home, despite her pleas that her father would kill her. Her father assured the authorities he would leave her alone, and he kept his promise; the next day her uncle killed her instead. "Having regard to his reasons for committing the murder," (which fulfilled every element of premeditated murder) the court gave the defendant a mere ten years.<sup>97</sup> This was a "typical" case, according to the author. He or she went on to say,

All enlightened Iraqis must view with misgiving the 'lenient' attitude which is still shown by the courts of justice towards certain crimes of a most heinous nature which, in a more advanced country, would never be pardoned except on the

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93 Indian Law Commission/Thomas Babington Macaulay Macaulay: *The Indian Penal Code, As Originally Framed In 1837* (Madras: Higginbotham, 1888).

94 Beth Baron: "Women, honour, and the state: Evidence from Egypt", in: *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2006), 1–20.

95 Ibid.

96 "Murder and the Family Honour", *The Palestine Post*, 23 January 1933.

97 Ibid.

ground of lunacy, and which would bring on the murderers the obloquy and contempt of all good citizens.<sup>98</sup>

India, Egypt and Iraq – all showed similar patterns of leniency toward men who killed for honor, giving credence to the proposition that the same legal approach in Palestine was not merely an effort to appease a restless populace, but rather the result of years of deep-seated gendered sentencing dressed up to look like protection for women, but which proved to be the opposite. Each decision to excuse a man who killed for honor fortified the structure of British masculinity. By convicting the killer of murder, the British man distinguished himself from the man who succumbed to impulsive passion and senseless violence; the conviction also showed the British man's willingness and ability to protect women from irrational and dangerous men. But by reducing his sentence, the British man maintained his control through the implicit message such a sentence conveyed: that a woman's life was only worth as much as her willingness to submit her will to male control.

## Conclusion

Hasi and Bernstein argue that British officials tolerated honor killers because they did not perceive this kind of violence as a threat to British rule. On the contrary, I argue that it was precisely because “bad” women – or those who dared to exercise their agency against the will of their male relatives – were seen as a threat to the dominant masculinities of both British and Palestinian men that British men refused to punish these women's murderers to the full extent of the law. The revision to the criminal code that ostensibly precluded honor as an extenuating circumstance to murder operated rather as a thin veneer to justify British presence in the region and satisfy the conviction of the British that they were protecting and liberating women. To allow Palestinian women, over whom the British had ultimate control, to disobey their own fathers and brothers and husbands would set a precedent that could ultimately destabilize the dominant masculinity to which British men laid claim.

A historical analysis of Britain's encounter with honor crimes in Mandatory Palestine reveals the roots of western complicity in the perpetuation of violence against women in the name of male honor and imperial policy. A historical approach also re-centers western powers' integral role in the toleration and implicit condoning of such crimes through the manipulation of colonial law, the effects of which are still being felt today. By restoring historicity to the interplay of western imperial agendas within early 20th century community frameworks in the Levant, it becomes clear that blaming “traditional” or Muslim cultures as the originators

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98 Ibid.

and sole perpetrators of this particular form of gendered violence has failed to effectively curb honor crimes and complicates the assumption that western European countries have successfully eradicated misogyny from their own socio-legal structures.

Legal scholars have argued that the culpability of a criminal defendant is only one part of the legal contract; if the party or institution to whom the defendant is ostensibly answerable lacks moral standing, the defendant cannot be held accountable to a standard the accusers have not themselves upheld.<sup>99</sup> This could perhaps be one factor at play in Britain's struggle and ultimate failure to control Palestine, as well as a continuing factor in the ongoing problem of honor killings in both Britain and Israel today.<sup>100</sup>

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99 Matthew Matravers: "Responsibility, Morality, and Culture"; in: Will Kymlicka/Claes Lernstedt/Matt Matravers (eds.): *Criminal Law and Cultural Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

100 See, for example, Nadera Shalhoub-Kervorkian/Suhad Daher-Nashif: "Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control", in: *Violence Against Women* 19:3 (2014), 295–315, here 297. They argue that, prior to even investigating cases of suspected femicide, Israeli "police routinely resort to the pretext of 'honor' upon learning of the murder of a Palestinian woman or girl by her brother or father. Classifying such crimes as 'honor' crimes allows the police system to relegate the crime to an 'internal family matter' and 'cultural issue', and hence one in which they cannot effectively intervene [...] The unwillingness on the behalf of the formal Israeli legal system to intervene is itself an act of male domination."

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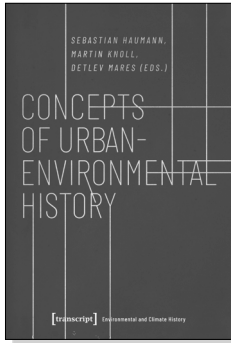
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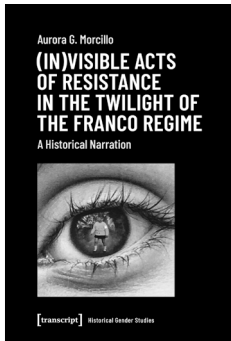
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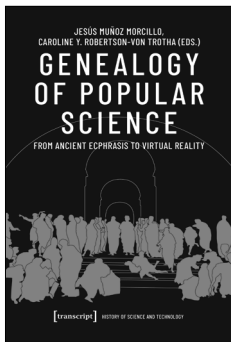
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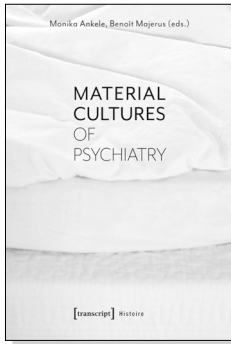


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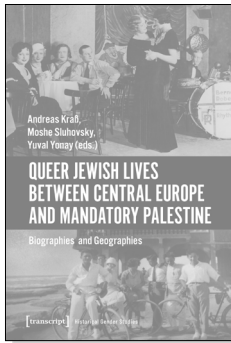
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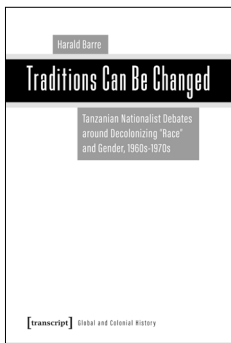
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