

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE FOUNDATION OF THE ARAB LIBERATION MOVEMENT

### CONCEPTUALIZATION AND DIFFICULTIES OF CONCEPT USE IN THE STUDY OF THE ARAB EAST

The Palestinian struggle for an independent Palestine has generally been treated as an inseparable part of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. This assessment of the struggle might explain the Arab assumption of leadership in the endeavor to liberate Palestine. One may also attribute to this assessment the Arab call for a comprehensive and just peaceful settlement for the Middle Eastern question, at whose core is the Palestinian dilemma.

The ultimate goal of the Madrid Peace Conference of October 1991, which was attended by Arab delegations and Palestinian representatives that were carefully selected by the PLO, was presumably to reach a comprehensive settlement that could lead to the end of the prevailing state of belligerency. When the Palestinians and Israelis signed the Oslo Accord later on as a result of secret negotiations, the Arab leadership criticized the PLO, claiming it had damaged Arab solidarity, which it considered vital to the efforts to bring about a comprehensive settlement. In this respect, it would not be unfair to accuse the Arab World of being nothing more unified than potatoes within a sack, it being obvious that the existing political fragmentation in the Arab World in general, not the unilateral actions of the Palestinians in particular, is what is harming the sought after solidarity. Given the urgency of the situation, one can hardly blame the Palestinian leadership for adopting an independent role and making decisions independently of its Arab brethren. Yet, one can certainly see why certain parties who are interested in utilizing the Palestinian cause for their own interests would find this annoying.

The Palestinians' decision to 'go it alone' at Oslo should not be judged without initially looking at the Palestinian relationship with the Arab World. Firstly, the Palestinian dilemma has remained unresolved for many, many years, in spite of the fact that the Arab leadership claimed responsibility for leading the struggle with Zionism. Secondly, the Palestinians are moving toward achieving self-rule and establishing a state at a time when the Arab World as a whole is moving toward greater political fragmentation rather than Arab unity. In this regard, studying the relation-

ship of the Palestinian national movement along with the Arab liberation movement of 1882-1939 becomes crucially important. These findings could possibly shed light on the eventual relationship between the Palestinian people and their political entity in communion with their Arab brothers and sisters.

Palestine lies in the heart of the Arab World, linking Egypt and the Arab Maghreb with the Arab East (the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula). Palestine's geographical position gave it the advantage of acting as a commercial as well as cultural linking point between the two wings of the Arab nation. In addition, Palestine was witness to waves of Semitic immigration, and these two facts combined have enriched Palestine culturally and strengthened its Arab heritage. Although the geographic factor could explain the foundation of the Palestinian ties with the Arab nation, it does not necessarily illuminate the historical roots of the Palestinian national movement/Arab liberation movement relationship, which is the focus of this work.

In dealing with the above-mentioned relationship, this study will center on the nature of the relationship as well as on its pluses and minuses and their effect on the Palestinian struggle for liberation. The adoption of a disciplinary analysis may facilitate delving into its early historical foundation and its subsequent evolution. This system of analysis will consider various factors. Moreover, the study will examine the existing relationship amongst those factors. The analytical system will then assemble and order the various factors, thereby helping in identifying the factor which played a central role in the emergence of the historical problem that serves as the basis of this work.

In order to comprehend the historical process, one must define its different elements, particularly those that could be viewed as historical contradictions, i.e., problematic aspects in history. In this respect, clarification of the historical problem is viewing, in turn, two sides. The cross-section of the vertical with the horizontal components of the historical process methodologically sounds conducive. It helps in identifying contradictions in history and, more importantly, could be used as a vehicle to follow through historical development.

Studying a society at a given moment reveals existing means and relations of production and various social relations and institutions which their evolution represents; the core of the historical process. Accordingly, studying history could be looked upon as studying a given moment being reproduced in consecutive moments.

Focusing on the evolution of the Arab liberation movement and its offshoot, the Palestinian national movement, reveals the passing over of a given moment in order to gather momentum and arrive at a mature state. The investigation would also aid in tracking the very nature of the historical process; that is, the evolving process of which social change could be seen as a mechanism.

Economic transformation triggers processes of social change and political re-institutionalization and adjustment, in which political and intellectual development is inherent. Since dynamism characterizes history, the study of modern society in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century reveals a state of economic and political transformation as well as social change, which acts as an impetus for further political and intellectual development, leading to social and political restructuring and regrouping. This process carried under its wings a redistribution of interests dictated by the entry of the Middle East into the world capitalist market in accordance with the terms of the global division of labor.

Although the economic factors are important in the formation of social classes, it is necessary to note that other factors, such as political and religious ones might act as a basis for one's social standing. Therefore, one might use Marxist and sometimes Weberian terminology in dealing with the evolving social structure of the Arab region, the analysis of which requires careful consideration of social class and status group factors.

Social change in the Arab World is usually gradual, and the emerging social structure does not necessarily totally negate the old one; rather, the emerging social classes coexist with old ones. In this respect, the conflict of interests does not exist merely among the social classes but also on another level, namely between those old classes and the new emerging system resulting from the process of economic transformation and social change. Needless to say, any study of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Arab World dealing with the nature of Arab history and social dynamism must take into account this state of affairs.

The complexity of the Arab social structure is often very confusing. The great importance of the family – *al-aileh*, *al-hamula* – as a social institution may sometimes lead one to believe that Arab society is merely structured along family lines and could hardly be defined in terms of class division. In this regard, I am inclined to suggest that class and family groupings are entirely related to social institution, which one of the confusing aspects of this social structure. It might also help in understanding how the family name in the Middle East is often an indicator of the family's placement

on the social scale. Al-A'yan families in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Middle East, for example, primarily occupied the higher ranks in the social hierarchy; Al-Kawakibi family in Aleppo or the Tuqan family in Nablus were Al-A'yan families, and anyone familiar with Palestinian society would also associate them with the upper social classes.

The complexity of the Arab social structure exceeds the relationship between family and class. The Ottoman adoption of the Millah system was aimed at regularizing the relationship between the artisans and the central authority in terms of tax collection. Within this sort of regulation, some denominational circles, although religiously based, took on a new class position in existing hierarchies, especially when its members specialized in a given handicraft. By the same token, geographical areas would often determine the inhabitants' involvement in a given economic activity, thus placing them in a certain class position. Worthy of note at this point is that the people who inhabited the Syrian coastal area benefited from trade with Europe, whereas many of those who occupied the Syrian interior, where a system based primarily on an agrarian economy prevailed, were large landholders.

As this study primarily focuses on the Arab East in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, it is important to note that the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century produced an economic transformation that paved the way for a process of social change, through which a social restructuring and regrouping occurred. Consequently, the A'yan families belonging to the upper social classes lost the privileges they had enjoyed in the past. The process of change also involved the formation of new social classes, the latifundest and comprador bourgeoisie, whose formation was dictated by the entry into the world capitalist market. This social reshaping caused a redistribution of power and social status in the Arab East and represented the primary cause of a class conflict with far-reaching political implications within the society.

Any conflict between established social classes or between old and new ones inevitably results in change. In the case of the Arab nationalist movement, this change was either economically or politically oriented. The conflict could be viewed in terms of its class foundation, though nationalist incongruity constituted its main impetus. Here we speak of a liberation movement whose political ideology was based on Arab nationalism. In brief, this case was characterized by widespread class consciousness and the resulting political expression, both of which manifested in the Arab struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire. Both could also be traced back to the rooted Arab unrest; unrest that was generated by the

process of social change triggered by the economic transformation in the Middle East in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century.

One should be careful not to ignore the fact that other factors served as grounds for enhancing the newly emerging nationalist trends in the Middle East, and here, one should distinguish between the two very different demands that emerged from class consciousness, namely, the class in itself and the class by itself.<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is important to differentiate between those Arab nationalists who called for Arab independence within an Ottoman Empire and those who insisted upon total independence from the Turks. It should be noted that Palestinian political activists were involved as members of both nationalist groups.

Although the Palestinians were politically active within the wider Arab nationalist movement, they acted as Palestinian nationalists and formed a Palestinian national movement that was designed to provide the organizational tool in the struggle with Zionism. The dual role that the Palestinians played in the liberation efforts does not imply that each role could be treated unilaterally; this dualism is embodied in the existing relationship between the Palestinian and the Arab nationalist movement, the former being an offshoot of the latter. In a sense this relationship affected the development of the Palestinian national movement, which necessitates the examination of the problem in terms of the relationship between the general and the particular in Palestinian society.

Generally speaking, Palestine is part of the wider Arab region and, more importantly, has been deeply involved in the region's history. This generality does not, however, negate the existence of peculiar aspects of Palestinian history. Defining such peculiarities in terms of this generality is nevertheless understandable in light of the continuous interaction between the general and the particular, not to mention the fact that their dialectic relationship has often transformed the peculiar into the general in the history of Palestine's relationship with the Arab region. The Arabs, therefore, view the Palestinian dilemma as their own cause and treat the Palestinian struggle with Zionism as an integral part of their wider struggle to liberate the whole region. This is due to the way in which they perceive the Zionist colonial settlement in Palestine as an offshoot of colonial activities in the entire Arab East region.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolution Movements of Iraq*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, p.12.

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY ARAB EAST

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Greater Syria underwent a process of economic transformation as well as profound social change. The changes that occurred prepared the ground for the intellectual and political development of the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and brought with them a qualitative jump, whereby Greater Syria in terms of socioeconomic, political and intellectual conditions was totally transformed. The magnitude of the scope and nature of that process can be deduced through an evaluation of its substantial impact on the history of the region.

The changes mentioned above cannot be discussed separately from those forces of change which, through their interrelation and interaction, influenced the course of history in the region. The discourse in this respect must consider three major developments that occurred in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which bear the responsibility for bringing about the process of change.

Firstly, the Egyptian occupation and rule of Greater Syria represented a challenging progressive force for long-lasting traditionalism and backwardness in Syrian society and the institutions under Ottoman rule.

Secondly, the entry of the Middle East into the world capitalist market in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century drastically affected the basis of established socioeconomic, political and intellectual orders.

Thirdly, the fact that the Ottomans regained power in Greater Syria added new dimensions to the evolution of Syrian history since the return of the Ottomans was marred by their vested interest in exerting their central authority and rule all over the Ottoman Empire.

On the eve of Mohammed Ali's occupation, Greater Syria lacked control by the Ottoman authority. The coastal area of Palestine was yet to be taken back from a local leader, Mohammed Bek Abu Nabbut, who attempted to mirror Al-Gazzar's experience in Akka. This is especially poignant, as it came right after he made Jaffa his capital, similar to Abu Nabbut's activities, and the Abu Gosh family exerted its control and influence over the valleys surrounding the Jerusalem Mountain. By the same token, the Al-Amru family assumed power and rule over the southern mountains of Palestine as well as Hebron. The As-Samhan family and their collection of smaller families were influential on the northern side of the Jerusalem mountains, while Nablus and its mountains were under the influential families of Jarrar, Tuqan and Abdul Hadi. Having put aside

their internal disagreements and conflicts, the three Nabulsi families declared their rejection of the Ottoman rule and authority.

At the same time, the Bedouins of Transjordan frequently attacked and otherwise disturbed the peasants settled in the lower Galilee. Abdullah Pasha, who was in Akka, acted as the wali of Northern Palestine, declared disobedience and fought wars with local leaders in Nablus and its surrounding region. Through his active conspiracy policy, he encouraged the people of Damascus to declare their disobedience to their Pasha, whom he later killed.

Lebanon, meanwhile, witnessed the constant struggle of Bashir Ash-Shihabi with the Jumblatis, who were the pashas of Tripoli. The Jumblatis frequently switched their allegiances back and forth between Mustafa Barba and Ali Bek. In the area between Damascus and Aleppo, the Bedouins called Al-Lajujiyun troubled the whole region. The inhabitants of Alexandreta and Baniyas accepted the inherited despotic control of an unknown landowner by the name of Qujik Ali, while the Alawayits refused to pay taxes. Moreover, in most of Syria, corruption spread widely through the administration since the influential A'yan were ready to bribe those officials who were tempted to accept such offers.<sup>2</sup>

The A'yan families in Syria represented an opposing force for the Ottoman central authority. A strong central authority constituted a threat to the families' influence. It is not surprising therefore to find that the A'yan of Aleppo and Damascus usually stirred up popular opposition to each and every attempt by the Ottoman Pashas to raise taxes or to exert more influence.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian rule of Greater Syria in the period 1833-1839 severely affected the interests of those A'yan families, though the ruler was primarily in conflict with Ottoman interests and authority himself. Ibrahim Pasha's occupation of Syria resulted from the refusal of the Ottomans to fulfill their pledges to Mohammed Ali. The Ottoman sultan had promised to hand him authority over Greater Syria in exchange for his role in ending the Wahhabi state in Najd and crushing the uprising in Greece. The Egyptian control of Syria in fact set the stage for a military conflict with the Ottomans, while stirring fears among the European powers concerning their interests in the Arab East.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bazily, *Suriyyah, w-Al-Libnan, w-Al-Filistin Taht Al-Hukm At-Turki* (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine under Turkish Rule). Beirut: Dar Al-Hadath Lit-Tiba'ah w-An-Nashir, 1988, pp. 202 -203.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Owen, *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat fi Al-Iqtisad Al-Alami 1800-1914* (The Middle East and the World Economy 1800-1914). Beirut: Mua'ssasat Al-Abhath Al-Arabiyyah, 1990, p. 110.

Furthermore, the Egyptian occupation was an important experience to the Syrians, since Ibrahim Pasha attempted to mirror his father's experience in Egypt.

The reform measures that Ibrahim Pasha applied in Syria, while being aimed at strengthening his central rule, also formed the basis for establishing state capitalism in Syria, i.e., an economy planned and run by the State. In this respect, Ibrahim Pasha attempted to provide the peasants with greater security so that they would produce more crops, the types of which he himself determined. In addition, he aimed at liberating them from the exploitation of the 'multazims' (tax collectors) through allowing them to submit their complaints concerning the multazims' illegal activities. This caused the multazims to show great hostility toward the Egyptian rule. Ibrahim Pasha encountered antagonism from the bourgeois enforcing these policies, which could be summarized by assuming the role of the above-mentioned class concerning buying the crop and marketing it. His measures also disturbed local Sunni families and waqf officials, especially when he established local governing councils in which people of different allegiances and confessions were treated equally. His liberal attitude was also evident in his decision to allow these councils to legislate.

It is worth noting here that Ibrahim Pasha's liberal policy was aimed at appeasing the European powers, mainly the British, who were annoyed by the Egyptian occupation and expressed fear in regard to their interests in the area. With his actions, he in a sense opened the region to increasing foreign influence politically, religiously and culturally.<sup>4</sup>

The effect of Egyptian rule on Syrian society was dramatic. It was Ibrahim Pasha's intent to subjugate the local A'yan leaders and to put their properties at the mercy of his will. He in fact intended to deprive those local leaders of any influence. He disarmed them and their supporters among the peasants and made the A'yans' interests and level of influence conditional on loyalty to his rule. In Nablus, for example, the A'yan families of Jarrar, Tuqan and Al-Barqawi were tortured and harassed by Ibrahim Pasha when they rejected his authority, while other families, like the Abdul Hadis, were chosen by the Egyptian Pasha to administer Nablus, its mountains and the surrounding area. In short, the downfall of families who had previously possessed influence coincided with the rise of new families who assumed more power.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Schölch, *Tahawwulat Jadhriyyah fi Filistin 1856-1882* (Drastic Changes in Palestine between 1856 and 1882). Beirut: Dar Al-Huda, 1990, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Bazily, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

Ibrahim Pasha's decree, which he announced to the people of Nablus upon the Egyptian occupation of Palestine read as follows:

“Since you showed obedience and loyalty, and your country has come under our authority, it is our duty to protect it and to bring to its people comfort and welfare. And due to the fact that our patron Sheikh Mohammed Bin Qasim proved his loyalty and righteousness, we kept him in Nablus, as he was previously a ruler of the city and its surrounding area...”<sup>6</sup>

The Syrian families had generally resented central rule. Each and every A'yan family had its own military organization, which provided them with enough power to face the central government. However, when Ibrahim Pasha realized that he was unable to control them, he resorted to military power, disarming them in the process in order to put an end to violence and to reduce the potential for an open uprising.<sup>7</sup>

The reform package that Ibrahim Pasha adopted in Syria was designed to serve the Egyptian rule, although it could also be viewed as progressive and beneficial to Syria and the Syrians. However, while the measures were useful and very advanced, they resulted in spreading the seeds of resentment among various Syrian social classes. These classes favored weak central authority and the misuse of power over any reform or change, since the former best served the interests of their class and their political influence. Those families who welcomed the advancement of the Egyptian army were the first to rebel in the area surrounding Jerusalem, where they attacked two Egyptian battalions with rocks and stones. When the inhabitants took Ibrahim Pasha himself as a hostage, his father immediately rushed with an army to free him.<sup>8</sup>

In the area of Nablus Mountain, Al-Qasim family leaders were unhappy with Ibrahim Pasha's policy. They met, therefore, with the leaders of other families in the surrounding region and agreed that while performing the pilgrimage to Mecca the coming year, they would make an oath near the holy shrine of Mecca, according to which they would declare disobedience. Upon their return, they began to publicize the idea of mutiny and disobedience, which resulted in the people refusing to pay taxes or serve in the army. In 1834, the leaders held a meeting in Beit Wazan where they all expressed anger and discontent concerning the relationship of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Ihsan An-Nimir, *Tarikh Jabal Nablus w-Al-Balq* (Nablus Mountain Road and Balqa). Nablus: Jam'iyyat 'Ummal Al-Matabi' Atta'awuniyin, 1995, p. 322.

<sup>7</sup> Bazily, op. cit., p.188.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.127.

Abdul Hadi family with the Egyptian administration. Among the attendants were Sheikh Abdullah Jarrar, Sheikh Issa Al-Barqawi, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mansour, Al-Haj Mohammed, Sheikh Qasim Al-Ahmad and his two sons, Sheikh Mohammed and Sheikh Yousef. The outcome of the meeting was a joint decision to enter an open struggle with the Egyptians in an attempt to free the country from Egyptian rule.<sup>9</sup>

The Egyptian policy clearly planted the seeds of tension within the Syrian society and put the whole society on the verge of an open internal conflict. In fact, a state of conflict was to characterize the history of Syria for the entire two decades that followed the Egyptian withdrawal from the country. This situation coincided with the endeavor of the Ottomans to reestablish their rule in Syria. With this aim in mind, they utilized various measures, which were applied by Ibrahim Pasha in his attempt to establish a strong central authority. Ibrahim Pasha also familiarized Syria with the capitalist exchange. This was his market system measure, which reflected state capitalism, established policy and developed Syrian cash crops, which became an essential tool to meet the emerging demand brought about by the entry into the world capitalist market after 1840. This development came along with a drastic increase in the level of foreign influence, and was strengthened by Egyptian policy.

The reaction of the European powers and in particular the British to the Egyptian occupation of Syria exceeded expectations. This act by Mohammed Ali Pasha alarmed those in power, who moved quickly to preserve their interests in the Middle East.

Firstly, they encouraged the Ottoman Sultan to fight the Egyptian army and called for a conference, which took place in London in 1841. The settlement that resulted from the conference effectively allowed them to impose their will on Mohammed Ali and to force him to accept the treatment of Egypt as a part of the Ottoman Empire. The terms of the Empire's entry in the world capitalist market were fully applicable. Consequently, all Mohammed Ali's hopes of developing Egypt and building a modern state were dashed.

Secondly, the Europeans, mainly the British, started to create a new situation. They were aided in this by Mohammed Ali's attempts to reduce the Europeans' fear of his intentions, including the termination of all forms of Muslim and non-Muslim inequality, which paved the way for European political, religious and cultural influence in Syria. The new lib-

---

<sup>9</sup> An-Nimir, op. cit., p. 335.

eral environment facilitated not only the establishment of European churches but also intense European political activity, the most eminent example being the opening of a British consulate in Jerusalem in 1838. Furthermore, the British were quick to conclude the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838<sup>10</sup>, which allowed them to pursue commercial interests in the Empire. The convention was crucially important, since it acted as a regularity framework for the Ottoman Empire's entry into the world trading market.

The developments that accompanied the later years of Egyptian rule in Syria were extremely important as they acted as a basis for a new era in Middle Eastern history. The Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention, for example, formalized the previously informal relationships, allowing European businessmen and companies to enjoy official protection. The religious privileges that the Ottomans had granted the Europeans were thus politicized and used to serve the European powers' intention to increase economic and political influence in the region. Moreover, the Middle East entry into the world trading market triggered socioeconomic political and intellectual changes.

The new stage in the history of the Middle East was marked by increasing world market demand for raw materials, which were needed for European factories, as well as an open market to absorb rising industrial production in the West. The era, therefore, witnessed the transformation of the Middle East economy from a subsistence economy to a cash crop-oriented one. These emerging demands and the economic transformation came at a time when socioeconomic and political institutions in the Middle East were suffering from conservatism and traditionalism. In other words, serious reforms were needed to overcome this obstacle so that the Ottomans could meet market demands.

The Ottomans' reform endeavors entered a new phase by 1839 with the issuing of a decree called *Khatti Sharif Kul Khana*, which confirmed the Ottoman guarantees for man with regard to life, property and dignity. Despite the fact that the decree came at a time when the Ottomans were encountering Mohammed Ali's attacks on their empire, it laid the foundation for an eventual comprehensive reform of both the military and the administration.<sup>11</sup>

With the completion of the Egyptian withdrawal from Greater Syria, the Ottoman local Pashas unsuccessfully attempted to exert a strong central

---

<sup>10</sup> Schölch, op. cit., pp.60-61.

<sup>11</sup> Owen, op. cit., p.91.

rule in the region. They were unable to impose their policies in accordance with *Khatti Sharif Kul Khana*. Their frustration was compounded when they discovered that they did not have enough military or financial resources or constant support from the capital to cope with the problems of centralization.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, the long-lasting weak control of the Ottomans over the provinces troubled the pashas in their ability to deal with central authority rules and regulations.

Although the Ottoman officials attempted to utilize the Egyptian experience when it came to strengthening central rule, their efforts were thwarted. The measures, which Ibrahim Pasha adopted, pushed the Syrian society toward a serious internal conflict immediately upon the evacuation of the Egyptian army from Syria.

After the Egyptian army had completed its withdrawal, the Druze sheikhs and other leaders began to come back home, having previously suffered from either the Shehapi Prince or being forced to serve under the banner of Ibrahim Pasha. The Jumblati brothers – the sons of Sheikh Bashir – returned with the issuing of the Sultan's *faraman* (decree), which granted them the right to repossess the lands that the Prince had previously confiscated after torturing their father. The Arsalan brothers and the Imadiyims were representatives of the Lebanese large landholders dating back to a social system under Ottoman oppression and torture for over 50 years of the Prince's rule. They all returned home, determined to take back the properties and rights they had previously lost. Their families received them with great joy, celebrating not only the return of their sons, but also more importantly the withdrawal of the Egyptian army. They had resisted the imposition of Egyptian military conscription and heavy taxation. Consequently, the Egyptians had dethroned their leaders.

By 1841, the Maronites were expressing hostility toward the British and Turks and were hopeful that the intervention of the French fleet in the Mediterranean would end the Ottoman rule and bring independence to Lebanon. Various Lebanese families and denominations had, of course, a wide range of ambitions and expectations. The Druze sheikhs, for example, called for the restoration of old privileges pertaining to large landholdings and levels of influence that had been granted by the Ottoman regulations. Meanwhile, Christians in the Southern Sunjuks vehemently opposed a return to these old social regulations and systems, and supporters of the exiled Prince Bashir succeeded in ending his years in exile.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.113.

Meanwhile, the Maronite bishops attempted to establish theocracy exceeding the positivist authority.<sup>13</sup>

After the crisis of 1845 was over, the peasants' struggle to improve their conditions slowed down and did not resume in earnest until the latter part of the 1850s. During this period, a number of developments characterized the history of Lebanon. For example, between the 1840s and the 1860s, the population of Beirut rose from 10 or 12,000 to 40,000, while silk production increased by over 150 percent due to the establishment of five or six silk factories, the first of which was built in Batayir. In addition, the 1850s witnessed the establishment of the first bank in Beirut, which relied on British capital, and by 1858, French companies had completed the project of opening the main road linking Damascus with Beirut.

Lebanon underwent a process of deep integration with the world market, but the flourishing capitalist relationship in the country was accompanied by the rise of the bourgeoisie, the existence of internal antagonism and degenerating conditions for the peasants. The peasant immigration, which had started in the 1850s and reached a head by 1858, mirrored this situation. The economic crisis had a severe impact on the condition of Syria and Lebanon. By 1859, the Ottoman regulations allowed Christians to pay a sum of money in exchange for exemption from the obligatory military draft. But while rich Christians were able to meet the requirements of the law, the poor ones were ready to rebel. By way of a response, the Ottomans sent an army to Damascus where soldiers arrested many poor Christians, especially in Al-Maydan section. In Al-Ladhiqiyyah the peasants remained and rose up against large landowners, and in Nablus, a state of disobedience was declared. In Lebanon, meanwhile, disobedience came in the form of a refusal to pay taxes or to serve in the military and a boycott of the government judicial and administrative institutions.<sup>14</sup>

In Lebanon and Syria, the series of internal conflicts, which reached its peak in the Lebanese crisis and the Damascus massacre in 1860, represented an expression of rooted hostility among various factions in the mountains. Each and every group was driven by self-preservation and obtained privileges. For example, the muqata'jiyyah, who were mainly Druze, tried to maintain their status and influence in the face of the Ottomans' intention to strengthen their central authority in Lebanon. In Syria

---

<sup>13</sup> Bazily, op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Issawi, *At-Tarikh, Al-Iqtisadi Lil-Hilal Al-Khasib 1800-1914* (The Economic History of the Fertile Crescent). Beirut: Markiz Dirasat Al-Wihda Al-Arabiyyah, 1990, pp. 99-102.

and Palestine, the same intention to re-establish central administration led to tension and increasing unrest among the local A'yan leaders.<sup>15</sup>

In the Nablus area, an internal conflict emerged involving Sheikh Mohammed Abdul Hadi, who enjoyed a privileged status under Egyptian rule, and who was later appointed Governor of Nablus by the Ottomans for his disloyalty to Ibrahim Pasha. The most serious development at that time was the return home of the A'yan sheikhs and leaders who had fled the region during the reign of Ibrahim Pasha. The families to which they returned were well armed, having obtained the arms either directly from their allies, by stealing them from the Egyptian army, or by purchasing them in Lebanon. This return of the A'yan sheikhs and leaders renewed the conflict among families from Nablus, who happened to be the strongest and most militant among all the Syrian families.<sup>16</sup>

In the two decades that followed the Egyptian withdrawal from Syria, the Ottomans' frequent attempts to strengthen the central administration could not bring about the reorganization of all Ottoman administrative apparatuses and an increase in efficiency. This required the subjugation of all civil and administrative ranks to the Pasha's will. Their attempts were often handicapped, on a temporary basis, by the presence of local leaders in various parts of Syria who always demanded the return of the social and political privileges that had been lost under Egyptian rule. The attitude adopted by those leaders, according to Bazily, could be considered a frustrating obstacle in the path of Ottoman attempts to subjugate the influential A'yan families in various parts of Syria. Their resistance to Ottoman central authority was certainly always active. More importantly, the constant administrative changes and the substitution of the Pasha with another from among his subordinates, in addition to widespread corruption in the Ottoman administration, might have had greater impact on the successes of the Ottomans in the reformation of their administration.<sup>17</sup>

The Ottoman officials in Constantinople were convinced that the employment of Khatti Sharif Himyun, an Ottoman reform law enacted in 1856, and the Tanzimat, another Ottoman regulation, could be implemented only through strong central government. The 1860 Syrian crisis made it evident to the Ottomans that direct military and political control in the province was essential, and one of the top Ottoman priorities was to dismantle the influence and authority of the well-located A'yan families.

---

<sup>15</sup> Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> Bazily, *op. cit.*, p.369.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.339.

In all Syria, including Palestine, their being able to realize these objectives depended heavily on enhancing State authority. By the late 1870s, when the world market penetration into the Arab East had reached maturity, the Ottomans had succeeded in terminating the authority and influence of local families. This task was made all the easier after 1856 due to the support and encouragement of the European governments and their actions concealed in ‘the Ottoman Empire Policy,’ which was directed toward the disruption of all national forces in Syria. Old families were destroyed or downgraded, then peace and quiet prevailed in the country.<sup>18</sup>

The British Consul’s description of the status of the Al-Amru family from Hebron – “It was powerful one day and still possesses influence until now” – applied, from the mid-1860s onward, to the status of all the A’yan families living on or near the mountains of Palestine. Most of them succeeded in rescuing their social and political status in the new era, either because they were ready to become a part of the newly established apparatus or because they occupied important positions in the Ottoman administration. The mukhtar position, which the Ottomans created as a competitor to the status associated with the A’yan families, was not to the liking of the latter, which transferred their activities to the main cities in order to enhance their influence. The A’yan families also had to secure positions in the newly established political and administrative organizations, the most important being the administrative councils and the courts, second to which were municipalities and trade courts. The sociopolitical influence in Palestine then moved quickly to the main cities, especially Jerusalem and Nablus, which became highly important administrative centers. The importance of the city stemmed from the fact that Al-Iltizam, the Ottoman system of tax collection in the new era, could only be granted by city councils, and eventually, the rural leaders and sheikhs had to move to the city in order to compete with the urban A’yans.<sup>19</sup>

The Ottoman efforts to deprive the A’yan families of their influence expanded to include the settled Jerusalemite families. Al-Khalidi and Al-Husseini were two Jerusalem families – Al-Husseini being the larger and wealthier – that belonged to the A’yan and Al-Ashraf group.<sup>20</sup> According

---

<sup>18</sup> Schölch, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 277 & 288.

<sup>20</sup> Al-A’yan and Al-Ashraf families both belonged to the upper social classes (‘notables’). They possessed substantial political influence, especially in the period preceding the Ottoman reformation era. Al-A’yan power was either economically or politically based, while Al-Ashraf power was based on religious grounds, namely the claim that the families were descended from the Prophet Mohammed or the fact that they received a religious education and occupied posts in the Islamic establishment. They often resided in the Al-Hijaz area and sometimes in other parts of the Arab East, particularly the main cities.

to the detailed reports of the German Consul, the Mutasarrif (the Ottoman official in charge of governing and administering the Jerusalem Mutasarrifiyyah) frequently asked the Ottoman Government for permission to put an end to the influence of the A'yan families. In 1879, when the new order pertaining to the election of staff for the court and local governing council came into force, the Ottoman Government granted the Mutasarrif the right to appoint new members to the Jerusalem councils, primarily from among those loyal to him. Consequently, the Mutasarrif dismissed all officials belonging to the Al-Khalidi family in addition to influential officials from the Al-Husseini family from their posts, accusing them of disloyalty and negligence and going so far as to ask for their rights vis-à-vis property and land to be reconsidered. In response, the two families agreed to ignore their differences, at least for the time being, and as a result of an initiative on the part of the Al-Husseini family, they met in Jerusalem to find a means by which they could counter attacks on their status and influence.

The two families petitioned the Ottoman Government several times in October 1879, making it clear that they considered the acts of the Mutasarrif illegal and demanding his dethronement. A petition that followed was reported to carry 8,000 signatures. They also complained about the Mutasarrif before the European Consuls, thereby giving the acts of the Mutasarrif a political dimension. According to the French Consul's reports, the Al-Khalidi and Al-Husseini families considered Ra'uf Pasha's action to carry chauvinistic tones against Arabs. The pasha's discriminatory actions were directed against Arabs in general and the two families in particular. He wanted the Prophet Mohammed's grandsons to be dismissed from their posts and replaced by Turks.<sup>21</sup>

The established families in the old social order were the targets of Ottoman agricultural reform measures. In 1839, an Ottoman decree put an end to various forms of large landholdings (the right of individuals to hold large areas of land) in the Empire, and the land once again became state property.<sup>22</sup> Then, in 1858, the land code aimed at putting land in the names of the old large landowners and at encouraging private land ownership as a vehicle to raise agricultural production and productivity. The Ottomans, through this code, attempted to put an end to family landholdings, which would be replaced by private ownership aimed at the termi-

---

<sup>21</sup> Schölch, op. cit., pp. 281-287.

<sup>22</sup> Bayan Al-Hut, *Al-Qiyadat w-Al-Mua'ssasat As-Siyasiyyah fi Filistin 1917-1948* (The Political Leadership and Institutions in Palestine, 1917-1948). Beirut: Markiz Ad-Dirasat Al-Filistiniyyah, 1981, p. 7.

nation of the influence possessed by family leaders and sheikhs in the old system.

The modernization of the administration, the reformation and the Land Code of 1858, in addition to various aspects of the socioeconomic transformation, affected the whole structure of the Arab region. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the upper social classes consisted of families possessing religious power, who either owned land or encouraged caring of Waqf land. In addition, some A'yans who had social and political influence held high-ranking governmental positions or had large landholdings. The Tanzimat (Reformation) had a serious impact. The Ottomans contained the civil authority of the 'ulama (scholars) and the A'yans through integrating them into the newly established administrative apparatus. The A'yans tried to protect their interests and to enlarge their properties through being members of the local governing councils and were ready to collaborate with the Ottomans, though, along with conservative elements, they were unhappy with the newly employed modernization plan. The peasants' fear of taxes and military conscription helped the A'yans in an indirect way to recover some of their declining estates and influence in the Empire: the land, instead of being registered under the names of its proprietors was registered under the names of Al-A'yan and Al-Ashraf, making the proprietors tenants rather than property owners.<sup>23</sup>

The Ottomans, who were keen to obtain the support of the A'yans for their objective of strengthening their central rule throughout the Empire, planned to control the A'yans, who were members of the local administration councils. Contrary to Ottoman expectations, this class, through possessing vast areas of land, achieved a form of socioeconomic power independent of the State, which, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, provided them with an opportunity to remold their position and role within the councils. Instead of becoming obedient collaborators and implementing state policies, they succeeded in exploiting the councils for their own benefit.<sup>24</sup> They were also committed to a political ideology that differed from that of the Ottomans. The declining position of the A'yans could also explain their increasing interest in sending their sons to Ottoman schools to acquire an Ottoman education. While being primarily concerned with obtaining compensation for what they had lost through the process of Ottoman reform in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, they were also hopeful that by being

---

<sup>23</sup> Amin Said, *Ath-Thawrah Al-Filistiniyyah Al-Kubra 1936-1939* (The Great Palestinian Revolt), translated from Hebrew by Hama Khalifah. Cairo: Matba'at Issa Al-Halabi, 1989, pp. 128, 134-135.

<sup>24</sup> Samir Seqali, *Al-Qadiyyah Al-Filistiniyyah w-As-Sira' Al-Arabi As-Sahyuni, Part 1*. (The Question of Palestine and the Arab-Zionist Conflict), p. 203.

equipped with an Ottoman education, their sons would be able to secure important posts in the Ottoman hierarchy.<sup>25</sup>

The Arab region as a whole benefited from the Ottoman schooling system, especially the military schools, although the benefit varied from one area to another. Al-Yaman and Al-Hijaz did not witness the establishment of military schools but continued to rely on traditional Islamic education. In Syria, the activities of the Catholic and Protestant missionaries concentrated on schooling and education, which might explain the introduction of Western culture, including the idea of nationalism, to Syrians in general and the Lebanese in particular. Iraq, meanwhile, derived great benefit from the Ottoman military schools, which could in fact be responsible for the rise of an Iraqi military elite. This elite played a leading role in the history of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to mention education in Syria. In 1845, an American theologian pointed out that in Kisrawan, one quarter to one third of young male adults were literate, while the proportion of learned women was much less. In Aleppo in 1848, some Christian children were literate, although the vast majority of females could hardly read. By 1839, the level of education in Syria was better than in Egypt, though far more progress could have been achieved were it not for the fact that books were such a rare commodity.<sup>27</sup>

The limited Ottoman schooling in the Arab region, in addition to the increasing number of schools belonging to the Christian missionaries, provided those A'yans whose influence was declining with an important tool in respect to securing positions for their sons in the Ottoman administration. Of even greater importance was the fact that it aided in the polarization of an Arab elite, comprised mainly of young intellectuals who, having been introduced to Western culture and education, adopted the nationalist idea and carried the banner of Arab nationalism.

The adoption of Arab nationalism as a political ideology by the Arab elite in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and up to World War I was enhanced by the rising nationalistic fever in the Empire. The Ottomans, in their attempt to reform the Empire, sought to restructure the union that bound the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the Empire. The Ottoman subjects

---

<sup>25</sup> Abdilaziz Ad-Duri, *At-Takwin At-Tarikhi Lil-Ummah Al-Arabiyyah* (The Historical Foundation of the Arab Nation). Beirut: Markiz Dirasat Al-Wihdih Al-Arabiyyah, 1984, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> Mohammed Anis, *Ad-Dawliih Al-Uthammiyyah w-Ash-Sharq Al-Arabi (1514-1914)* (The Ottoman State and Arab East, 1514-1914). Cairo: Maktabat Al-Anglu Misriyyah, 1981, p. 218.

<sup>27</sup> Issawi, op. cit., p. 76.

had long been unified by Islam, but in 1869, under the Ottoman Citizenship Code, this framework for units was to be replaced by Ottomanization; all ethnic and religious groups were to be united as Ottomans.

With the adoption of the policy of Ottomanization in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a number of developments affected the general political trends in the Empire in general and in the Arab region in particular. While the practice of parliamentary rule through the (Al-Mab'uthan) council in the year 1877-1878 led the people to hope that the situation could be improved, Sultan Abdul Hamid's return to despotism increased the opposition to his rule. He utilized the idea of an Islamic league, which had originally been suggested by the Muslim intellectual, Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani, in order to reduce the likelihood of the opposition launching an effective war against his rule. This development also could have led to widespread popular support for the opposition's attempt to break away from this kind of union under an Islamic banner.

The Ottoman war with Russia revealed the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and confirmed the need for comprehensive reform. This external threat resulted in increased solidarity among the Ottoman subjects, who recognized the imminent danger posed by the Russians in particular and the Europeans in general. The people, therefore, became increasingly interested in acting within the Ottoman union as a kind of framework through which they could tackle the persisting problems. In this context, the Arabs acknowledged the importance of reforming the conditions of the Arab community to allow it to join the civilized world and contribute to the progress of civilization, emphasizing the idea of decentralized Ottoman rule in the Arab World or Arab autonomy. It was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century that a number of developments and challenges pushed them toward the demand for total Arab independence.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, two contradicting tendencies affected Arab thought. The first one was the government's ideological basis of Ottomanization, which stood for the preservation of the Empire and its progress; the second, the Arab nationalist trend, which emphasized the fact that the Arab nation was distinct and its rights and role in the world should be acknowledged. They both agreed, however, on the necessity of development and 'catching up' with Europe, to which they showed a hostile attitude. The Ottomans, prior to and immediately after the constitutional revolution of 1908, confirmed they were unable to face Europe. Furthermore, the Young Turks ruined the existing Arab-Ottoman rela-

---

<sup>28</sup> Ad-Duri, op. cit., p.165.

tionship when they assimilated the policy of ‘Turkification’ and oppressed the Arabs.<sup>29</sup>

“The fate of these two movements is to constantly struggle with each other until one achieves victory over the other, while the fate of the whole world is bound to the final results of the struggle between the two nations, which represent two conflicting ideologies.”<sup>30</sup>

The rise of the Young Turks movement could be viewed as a major contributor to the escalating tensions that resulted in the formation of the Arab nationalist counter movement. The Young Turks movement, which was originally formed during the reign of Sultan Abdul Aziz, represented the interests and ambitions of the Turkish middle class and was composed mainly of young Turkish intellectuals who had been educated in Europe and exposed to Western culture. Their aim was to establish constitutional parliamentary rule in the Empire in order to reform and consequently strengthen it in the face of external threats and to placate rebellious nationalist factions. As a result of Sultan Abdul Hamid’s abandonment of the constitution and the parliament, the Young Turks operated secretly within the Empire and publicly outside, aiming at a restoration of constitutional parliamentary life.

The ideas of the Young Turks were harshly criticized by Ramzour, who viewed the movement as lacking content and failing to recognize the serious problems that the Empire endured. The Young Turks, according to him, played on the fact that they considered Sultan Abdul Hamid solely responsible for the ills of the Empire. They did indeed suggest that the Sultan be dethroned and that Midhat Pasha’s constitution be restored as a means to remedy the problems of the Empire. At the same time, they accused various ethnic groups of treason and of harboring an intention to build their own national states.<sup>31</sup>

Upon the success of the constitutional revolution of 1908 and the rise of the Young Turks to power, a state of Arab-Ottoman mutual understanding prevailed, which allowed for the formation of the Society of Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood. However, the failure of the counterrevolution of 1909 and the return of the Young Turks to power ended the Arab-Ottoman understanding. The Young Turks abandoned all

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.189.

<sup>30</sup> Najib Azzuri, *Yaqzat Al-Ummah Al-Arabiyyah* (Arab Nation Awakening). Beirut: Al-Mua’ssasah Al-Arabiyyah Lid-Dirasat w-An-Nashr, 198?, p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Mahmoud Saleh Mansi, *Harakat Al-Yaqazah Al-Arabiyyah fi Ash-Sharq Al-Asyawi* (Arab Awakening in the Middle East). Cairo: Dar Al-Ittihad Al-Arabi Lit-Tiba’ah, 1972, pp. 91-93.

societies and closed down Arab newspapers while oppressing and harassing the Arab political activists. In a sense, they forced the Arabs to stand against the Turks. In other words, their actions could be considered one of the leading reasons for the increase in Arab political consciousness, for which the Ottoman oppression and hostile attitude toward Arabs in general provided additional grounds.

Throughout World War I, the Ottoman military court in Jerusalem and ‘Alih continued its work in sentencing a number of Arab leaders to death. Tens of people in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa and different towns and villages were hanged for refusing to serve in the Ottoman army. Deportation to the Anatolia also took place, as did the confiscation of capital and property; measures which affected hundreds of Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese families.<sup>32</sup>

In brief, the policy and measures employed by Ibrahim Pasha and later on by the Ottoman Government upon the restoration of Ottoman rule in the Fertile Crescent laid the foundation for the emergence of rebellious groups and strong opposition to central authority. The attempts to expand and strengthen the rule were in conflict with the interests and ambitions of old social classes in the Arab East. The main concern of the A’yan families was to maintain their influence and power – which required the decline of central authority in the region – in order to place themselves in the upper social hierarchy and enjoy a better social status.

With regard to the Arab East’s entry into the world trading market in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this entailed a process of economic transformation, including a shift from a subsistence to cash crop-oriented economy. The Ottomans, in their effort to catch up with the rising demands of the world market, adopted a policy of judicial, administrative, and economic reformation, which prepared the ground for a process of social change throughout the Empire in general and the Arab East in particular. On the one hand, the decline in the position and influence of old social classes was completed, while on the other, the new social classes emerged in accordance with the demands and needs of the newly established order.

Although the dispossessed Al-A’yan and Al-Ashraf families became a part of the newly established administrative apparatus in an attempt to rescue their declining status, it could not make up for their loss of influence and power. The expanding strong central authority limited their ability to achieve the same status they had enjoyed in the past. It is most

---

<sup>32</sup> Al-Hut, op. cit., p. 212

likely that their disaffection and discontent served as the main force behind their stand of political oppression to the Ottomans; their declining status undoubtedly raised their class consciousness, of which their political activism was an expression. The adoption of Arab nationalism as a political ideology, which came along with the rising awareness of political rights, revealed the seriousness of the tension and the struggle. This clearly had class grounds and was enhanced by the obtaining of education through Ottoman and missionary schools, in addition to the export of Western culture with its ideas of nationalism and liberty.

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY PALESTINE AND COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

The developments that took place in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century and which molded the history of the Arab East also affected Palestine, and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there were many young educated Palestinians among the early Arab nationalists. Palestine as a part of Greater Syria was subject to the Ottoman restoration of power and strong centralization through a policy of reformation, which had an impact on the very existence of the established social structure. Moreover, with its entry into the world market, Palestine produced a large quantity of cash crops, resulting in a rapid increase in exports to Europe. The main demand in respect to cash crops was for cotton, which was planted primarily in the north and middle of Palestine. The seamen also became important and increasingly in demand by the French after 1825. The agents of the European Consuls including traders, businessmen, large landowners, multazims and the representatives of foreign European banks acted as comprador bourgeoisie.<sup>33</sup>

The European economic penetration into Palestine coincided with waves of colonial immigration and settlement and constituted the main thrust of the foreign expropriation and domination of Palestine. Palestine then could also be viewed in terms of its peculiar position and the fact that a foreign threat was encountered by a local resistance movement.

The Zionist settlement that took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century could be traced back historically to the earlier rivalry between two traditionally colonial powers, Britain and France. The call of Napoleon Bonaparte to the Jews, made at the time of his expedition to Egypt and Syria (1798-1799), in which he urged them to assist him in occupying the Temple and enabling Jews to return to the Promised Land<sup>34</sup> could be viewed as a cru-

---

<sup>33</sup> Schölch, op. cit., pp. 96-99.

<sup>34</sup> Abdelaziz Mohammed Awad, *Muqaddimih fi Tarikh Filistin Al-Hadith* (Introduction to Modern Palestine History). Beirut: Al-Mu'assasah Al-Arabiyyah, 1983, p. 42.

cial turning point in modern Jewish history. Bonaparte intended to achieve a strategic edge over the British through occupying Syria and reaching out to the Arabian Gulf, allowing him to control the international trade with India. Although the Jews' mistrust of Bonaparte prevented them from responding, his call, in a sense, prepared the way for the eventual relationship between European colonialism and Zionism. As a result of this call, the Jews began to see the answer to the worldwide Jewish problem as being the establishment of a Jewish homeland, the most logical choice for this homeland being Palestine. They also looked at European colonialism.

The British, meanwhile, were alarmed by the call, which directed them toward acting to preserve their interests. The adoption of the Jewish cause, as far as the British were concerned, was on the one hand, a reliable tool with which they could counter the French advancement in the region, and on the other, a way to increase the British influence in respect to the Ottoman Empire in general and Palestine in particular granted in the Capitulations.

The British enthusiasm vis-à-vis the Jewish cause began to take a serious course after 1840. The Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention in 1838 laid the basis for the easy entry of the Arabs into the world capitalist market, while the London Settlement of 1840-1841 established the rule for the evacuation of the Egyptian army from Greater Syria and the world market penetration into Egypt. The privileges that had previously been established within a religious context were transformed and given a political context. These developments solidified the ground for the British move on behalf of the Jewish cause.

In 1840, British cabinet member Palmerstone, under the leadership of Lord Shaftsbury, attempted to convince the Ottoman Sultan to open the door to Palestine to allow the return and settlement of Jews. The rationale behind his stand lay in the fact that both the Ottoman Empire and Palestine would benefit from the wealth that the Jewish capitalists would bring with them, and also in the fact that a Jewish presence in Palestine would block any attempt by Mohammed Ali to threaten the Ottoman Empire once again. The clergy, the politicians and the active British officers in the colonies preferred direct action with regard to the Jewish issue and suggested that the British Government should build a number of colonies for the Jews, the aim being to ensure a the return of Jews to Palestine and the preservation of the British political-strategic and commercial interests in the area.

The British confirmed their interest in exploiting the Jewish issue when they established the Anglican Church in Jerusalem in 1841 and appointed

Alexander, a Jewish convert to Christianity, as the church's first minister, probably because of the Americans' desire to convert the Jews to Protestantism. This could also be viewed as an attempt by the British to strengthen the newly formed and steadily evolving dialectic relationship between European colonization and the embryonic Zionism in Western Europe.

In its attempt to secure the Jewish cause under its wing, the British Government went so far as to enact formal policy pertaining the Jews in Palestine, submitting to Mr. Young, its acting consul in Jerusalem, new regulations and instructions, according to which he was to provide Jews with British protection, whether they were British subjects or subjects of other nations. By 1848, the British Government had instructed its acting consul in the Ottoman Empire in general and Jerusalem in particular to treat Jews as British subjects, especially those who had lost their passports or been denied citizenship in their countries of origin. James Fenn, who was the British Consul in Jerusalem from 1846 to 1862, was particularly enthusiastic in executing his government's instructions concerning the protection of Jews in Palestine.

The British 'concern' for the Jewish cause could be said to characterize the nature of European colonialism, which took the form of economic penetration, colonial settlement and later on, total political and military domination. It also coincided with the Ottoman effort to employ a process of reformation. The measures adopted by the Ottomans were designed to meet the requirements of integration into the world trading market and, at the same time, served as the tools with which the process of colonial settlement in Palestine gathered momentum.

The Land Code of 1858, which aimed at revolutionizing man's relationship with the land through emphasizing private ownership and the redistribution of land among the inhabitants opened the way for the formation of large blocks of land ownership, especially among the wealthier families, officials, and village and tribal sheikhs. In the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 140 families owned a total of 3,130,000 dunums of land, which suggests that the ownership of each and every wealthy family averaged 22,000 dunums. In reality, many families owned a much larger number of dunums. The Abdul Hadi family in Nablus, for example, owned 60,000 dunums, while the Al-Husseini family's land all over Palestine and the At-Taji family land in Ramallah was estimated at 50,000 dunums. The Ash-Shawwa family land in Gaza was estimated at 100,000 dunums.

The Al-Gusin, Abu Khadrah, Al-Fahum and At-Tabari families were, of course, also among the large landowning families in Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

The Land Law of 1867 allowed foreigners to own land and buildings in the Ottoman Empire and, along with the Land Code, facilitated the process of colonial immigration and settlement in Palestine. This process, which started in a limited way, was very soon enhanced and expanded by the blocks of Zionist immigrants and colonial settlers in Palestine.

In 1869, the Ottoman Government transferred the ownership of 17 villages in Marj Ibn Amir, including Nazareth, to a number of businessmen from Beirut, among whom were Habib Bistris, Niqula Sarsak, Twini and Farah. It is worth noting that Sarsak, who bought Bistris' land and consequently possessed the 'lion's share' of the land that was transferred to the businessmen, later transferred villages to the Jewish Agency.

The Nazarines, who in 1868 had protested against the unsuccessful settlement of the *Die Templer* near As-Samuniyyah, expressed a great readiness to fight the appropriation of land to and by foreigners. Eventually, in 1870, they were able to repossess part of the land, and the government subsequently compensated the businessmen from Beirut for their losses. It is necessary to note that the large landowners and the mercantile bourgeoisie were the main leaders of this protest movement in Nazareth. However, in 1882, the Ottomans sold five more villages to Sarsak and Salim Al-Khouri, which completed the Sarsak project in Palestine.

The Christian Orthodox Sarsak brothers from Beirut were owners of the largest industrial establishment in Syria. In addition to a bank and a modern wool factory, the brothers owned a large commercial corporation on the Syrian coast, which specialized in exporting grain, silk and cotton. The Sarsak land in Marj Ibn Amir and Nazareth was estimated at 230,000 dunums, with a value of 120,000 Ottoman golden lira.<sup>36</sup>

Worthy of mention at this point is a Jew named Bergheim, a wealthy financier and merchant and the owner of several factories who enjoyed protection. At one stage, the Bergheim financial institution, which was the main representative of the Ottoman Bank and various London banks, acted as the one and only bank in the region. Moreover, in the 1840s the institution owned land near Jaffa and also in Jerusalem, in addition to a soap factory in Ramle. In 1877, the German Consul estimated the institu-

---

<sup>35</sup> Schölich, op. cit., pp. 65-67.

<sup>36</sup> Naji Allush, *Al-Muqawamah Al-Arabiyyah fi Filistin* (Arab Resistance in Palestine). Beirut: PLO, 1967, pp. 15-18.

tion's capital at 400,000 marks, half of which was invested in the Abu Shusheh syndicate, which was located to the south of Ramle and whose size was estimated to be 1,275 hectares. Milfel Bergmann obtained the syndicate by paying 46,000 piasters, which amounted to all the unpaid taxes of 400 persons from the Abu Shusheh village. The Bergheim family established new buildings, installed modern water pumps and machines and employed modern agricultural techniques, and the project was described as profitable and successful. Unlike the Sarsaks, Bergheim was not from the region and consequently, had to defend his new property socially, politically and legally against large landowners and peasants who had certain land claims. This became increasingly so when the Palestinian peasants felt that they had become workers for foreign landlords. The tension reached its peak in 1884 when a group of peasants murdered Peter Bergmann.

These protest movements and tensions, according to Schölch, could be viewed in terms of the indigenous people's struggle with the Europeans, as they were similar to the protests of the people of Yazur southeast of Jaffa. Yazur land was transferred in 1879 to the Miqweh Yisrael Agricultural School, which was built in 1870.<sup>37</sup>

The establishment of the Jewish agricultural school near Jaffa may suggest firstly an existing relationship between Palestinian Jews and the Jewry in the Diaspora, and secondly, a Jewish intention to work in accordance with European colonization. In other words, it could be considered as part of the process of colonial settlement in Palestine, based on the redemption of land as a means to realize it. The Jews in the Diaspora tended to preserve their religious and cultural ties, and, particularly in Europe, were reluctant to assimilate into their respective societies. Meanwhile, the Europeans were also opposed to the idea of Jewish assimilation. Consequently, the growing relationship between the Jews and the European colonial power enhanced their belief in the need for a worldwide Jewish cause. The accusations concerning the Jews' involvement in the assassination of the Russian Czar in 1881 and their participation in the unsuccessful Bolshevik Revolution of 1905 could be blamed, at least in part, for their worsening conditions and their being treated as a scapegoat. These developments triggered a massive wave of immigration to Palestine, involving Jews from Eastern Europe in particular, which promised a long-lasting negative effect on the Ottoman's collapsing budget. A huge number of the immigrants were elderly and poor.

---

<sup>37</sup> Schölch, *op. cit.*, pp.133-142.

In addition to the financial aspect, there was a political aspect too. It was clear that the immigrants were being used as pawns in the political game being played by Russia and Britain in which each sought to gain influence in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans, therefore, enacted laws that prevented Jews from becoming permanent residents of Palestine. The Jewish immigrants also posed a threat to certain social classes. While the peasants began to lose their land to the newcomers, shopkeepers and artisans soon discovered that they could not live up to the challenge posed by skilled, educated and well-trained Jewish immigrants, neither in respect to modern business techniques nor in the quality of the work.<sup>38</sup>

After the failure of the Bolshevik Revolution, there was a considerable increase in Jewish immigration from Russia. Most of the immigrants were young Jews who were enthusiastic and full of hope concerning the establishment of a Jewish homeland. In particular, they were keen to redeem land through cultivation, which in itself was enough to increase the alarm of the Palestinians who felt constantly threatened by the shift in the Jewish immigration pattern.

Needless to say, the formation of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and its acting agencies after the first World Zionist Congress, held in Switzerland in 1897, greatly enhanced Jewish immigration. More importantly, it constituted the political platform on which rested the necessity of resolving the Jewish cause. It provided the Zionists with the means to support Jewish immigration and Zionist settlement in Palestine both financially and emotionally. Moreover, the WZO now served as an official platform, which allowed, among other things, its leaders and acting agencies to present to the world the Jewish cause and suffering and to secure European assistance in attempting to solve the Jewish problem once and for all. Indeed, its supporters became very active in presenting the Jewish problem in different European circles, attempting to make use of each and every opportunity to manipulate European leaders and governments into aiding the Jewish cause. In doing this, they utilized the Herzl premise, i.e. the Zionists could resolve the Jewish dilemma worldwide and establish a Jewish homeland not through international détente but rather through the utilization of the rivalry among colonial powers.

Herzl did not succeed in convincing the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to make a declaration in which he permitted unconditional Jewish immigration to and settlement in Palestine. His successors, however, were able to dismantle the Ottoman prohibition laws that were designed to halt the

---

<sup>38</sup> Abdul Wahab Kayyali, *Tarikh Filistin Al-Hadith* (Modern History of Palestine). Beirut: Al-Mua'ssasah Al-Arabiyyah Lid-Dirasat w-An-Nashr, 1985, p. 41.

flow of Jewish immigration. They were also able to guarantee an official presence in the Ottoman capital. After the success of the 1908 Young Turk revolution, Dr. Victor Jacobson of Russian origin, a former chief executive for the Anglo-Palestinian Company in Beirut, was appointed as a representative of the WZO in the Ottoman capital. Jacobson subsequently collaborated and consulted with the five rabbis who were generally recognized as representatives of the Jewish community and known to be sympathetic toward Zionist activities.<sup>39</sup>

In a bid to strengthen their presence further, the settlers in Palestine established their own security forces, after using the pretext that their lives were in danger, to gain the approval of the Ottoman Pasha of Safad, which the Palestinians regarded as yet another alarming signal. It was the increasing threat that the Zionists posed to the Palestinians, in addition to an escalating fear of the goals of the Zionist settlers and a desire on the part of the Palestinians to preserve their presence in Palestine that led to the rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement. The Young Turks' collaborationist relationship with Zionism and the Arab nationalists' ambiguous stand on the Zionist issue left the Palestinians alone in the battlefield, which meant they had to primarily depend on themselves and to escalate the resistance. In other words, the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, up until World War I, could be viewed as the era of the rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, which constituted the embryo of the subsequently formed Palestinian national movement.

The Palestinian masses formed the flesh of this movement; its vanguard, meanwhile, was composed of young educated Palestinians descended from Al-A'yan families. This particular group benefited greatly from the education offered by the schools of Christian missions. Worthy of note is the fact that the Ottoman contribution to Arab education prior to 1908 was very limited, and the foreign schools run by Christian missionaries and private schools seemed to fill the vacuum that existed as a result of Ottoman negligence. In the post-1908 era, the Ottoman Government began to establish private schools: the number of primary schools was estimated at 95, while there were three secondary schools. The staff of these schools consisted of 234 teachers, who taught 8,248 pupils, including 1,480 female students. During World War I, a high school was established in Jerusalem in order to provide education and training for young Palestinians. Rawhi Al-Khalidi (1861-1913), for example, was able to continue his education in Constantinople and the University of Paris,

---

<sup>39</sup> Ramzour, *Turkiyyah Al-Fatah*. 1960, pp. 40-41.

where he was greatly influenced by Western thought, especially by French intellectuals, at the time of his education and his work as an Ottoman council in Bordeaux (1899-1908). He was known for being very harsh in what he wrote concerning Sultan Abdul Hamid II's oppressive and despotic rule.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note the fact that the leaders of the Palestinian national movement could be looked upon as Palestinian nationals who were also active members in the Arab nationalist movement, meaning there was an inherent form of dualism in the opposition to Ottoman rule.

One cannot disregard the cultural and educational links between the Palestinians and the Arab World, which probably contributed to the commonly shared hopes, suffering and fears of Palestinians and Arabs alike, as much as they strengthened the nationalist ties. Three of the Palestinian elite obtained their higher education at the university of Al-Azhar or Adda'wah wal-Irshad, which points to the intellectual link that existed between Palestine and the Arab World.<sup>41</sup>

The existing relationship between the Palestinian national movement and the Arab liberation movement could be utilized as a platform for assessing the evolution of the new Palestinian movement, which implies that its progress or decline rested heavily on the ebb and flow of the Arab nationalist movement. One should not disregard the role of both the internal and external factors that affected both movements. This setting furnished the ground for political activism. It also, in part, could be traced back to the peculiar situation in Palestine.

The Zionist settlement in Palestine had a great effect on Palestinian national sentiment, which provided a fertile environment for the rise and evolution of the Palestinian national movement. This peculiar situation, though it affected the Palestinians greatly, might have caused the sympathy and support of the Arab *ummah* (nation) for the Palestinians. This development of 'the colonial settlement' essentially threatened Palestine and the Palestinians, since it challenged the Arab roots and history of Palestine, its land and its people. At the same time, it represented a serious threat and an extremely challenging element to the Arab World, its land and the *ummah*.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ali Mahafzah, *Al-Fikr As-Siyasi fi Filistin 1918-1948* (Political Thoughts in Palestine 1918-1948). Jordan: Markiz Al-Kutub Al-Urduni, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup>Al-Hut, op. cit., p.168.

The common elements between Palestinian nationals and Arab nationalists that placed the former among the latter were social background and origin. The Palestinian leadership in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the high-ranking Arab nationalists of the same period all descended from A'yan families whose families had historically suffered greatly as a result of the Ottoman implementation of reforms in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. This development necessitates a serious evaluation of the Palestinian Arab struggle with Zionism up to 1939.