

A History of Palestine

FROM THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST
TO THE FOUNDING
OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Gudrun Krämer

Translated by Graham Harman and Gudrun Krämer

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shifted toward the coastal area, leading to the rapid development of Jaffa and Haifa in many ways similar to Beirut and Alexandria, albeit on a smaller scale. Under these circumstances, the Nablus merchants looked increasingly toward Transjordan, a development also reflected in the newly drawn boundaries of the district in the 1880s, which was now officially known as Balqa. Although increasingly deprived of military power and political autonomy, the district and its residents still preserved an independent character that would make itself known in the political struggles of the twentieth century.

Chapter Five

EVOLVING NATIONALISMS: ZIONISM AND ARABISM, 1880–1914

TOO OFTEN, the history of late Ottoman Palestine is seen (and told) as a mere prelude to Arab-Jewish conflict in the twentieth century. As a result, the onset of large-scale Jewish immigration, and more particularly of Zionist immigration, in 1882 appears as a turning point in the modern history of Palestine, if not the region at large. The years 1881 and 1882 do of course mark an important time in Middle Eastern history: In 1881 Tunisia was invaded by the French, and in 1882 Egypt was occupied by the British, events noted with considerable alarm by the Ottoman authorities. But for Palestine, 1882 can only be taken as a turning point if history is written from its outcome—the foundation of the State of Israel. It makes no sense if the aim is to write a history of the Palestinian economy and society at large. Jewish immigrants, Zionist as well as non-Zionist, remained a marginal element until World War I, causing no rupture in the local economy, society, and culture. Even politics was not influenced for some time to come. Jerusalem may be considered an exception: Though not yet a center of Zionist activity, it was important for Jewish life in general, and increasingly attracted European interest.¹

JEWIS IN THE HOLY LAND: THE “OLD” AND THE “NEW” YISHUV

The spread of Zionism and the establishment of the Jewish Yishuv (the term commonly used for the Jews living in Palestine in the modern period, derived from the Hebrew verb *yashav*, “to sit” or “to settle”) are generally told and explained with reference to European history. At the same time, ideological if not idealistic commitment to Zionism is privileged over practical considerations such as economic interest or the exis-

¹ The literature on nineteenth-century Jerusalem is very rich; cf. above all Ben-Arieh (1984) (who focuses on Jewish and European institutions); Asali (ed.) (1997); Auld/Hillibrand (eds.) (2000). Gilbert (1994) provides interesting maps and illustrations, but his text is highly tendentious.

tence of political alternatives available to Jews.² Idealism, ideology, and convictions born from the European experience obviously cannot to be ignored in this context. And yet the evolution and characteristic features of the Jewish Yishuv, and later of Israeli society, were strongly influenced by conditions in Palestine itself. Only by considering the local and regional context can we understand certain characteristics that at least in the twentieth century, most Israelis regarded as basic to their society: the close connection between pioneers, settlers, and soldiers; the dominance of Ashkenazi Jews and the concomitant marginalization of Oriental and Sephardic Jews; the centrality of Labor Zionism to Jewish society and Israeli politics; the cooperative forms of social and economic organization; and the coexistence of what has been called the “inner collectivism” of the Jewish economy and society with a market economy within Israel after 1948.

FORERUNNERS OF ZIONISM

I will not attempt here to recount or reappraise the origins and development of Zionism—others have done so successfully.³ What interests me here are a number of elements relevant to the history of Palestine. Among them, certain problems of terminology cannot be ignored, since they touch on the difficult distinction between Jews and Zionists (which still haunts political debate today) and the somewhat less politically charged but equally important differentiation between Zionism and Jewish immigration into Palestine. It is well known that the Zionist movement hoped to solve the “Jewish question (*Judenfrage*),” and that it spoke for the Jewish people at large, and ultimately posed as representative of all Jews around the globe. Yet not all Jews viewed Zionism as the solution to the “Jewish question,” assuming that they even saw this question as existing in the first place. Most Jews in the Middle East, for instance, who tend to be ignored in this context, were not concerned with the *Judenfrage*. To narrowly focus on European and American Jews when dealing with the fate of Jewry in the modern age is as unacceptable as any other form of tunnel vision. And yet, such limitations are hard to avoid, since Zionism first evolved in Europe rather than the Middle East, and in the years up to the foundation of Israel, it was mostly European and American Jews who shaped the fate of Jews in Palestine or Eretz Israel.

² Here I basically follow Shafrir (1989), esp. pp. xi–xiii, 2ff., 19, 49; see also Lockman (1996).

³ Out of a large body of literature, see Shimoni (1995); Shilony (1998), ch. 2; Brenner (2002).

As a specific form of Jewish collective identity, Zionism was much like other forms of nationalism: never the only possible, natural or compelling way of defining collective identity, but only *one* of several possibilities of collective self-understanding and organization. As a cultural and political aspiration Zionism could of course build on the religious tradition of longing for Zion, which had remained very much alive in the Jewish diaspora.⁴ But this did not make Zionism a guaranteed success; its early days were arduous, and resistance was considerable. The idea of preserving, renewing, and indeed redeeming Judaism through an “ingathering” of the Jewish people, or at least a part of it, in Eretz Israel, the “Land of the Fathers,” had occasionally been voiced from the 1830s onward by men such as Rabbis Yehuda Alkalai (1798–1878) and Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874). As observant (Orthodox) Jews firmly rooted in the tradition of messianic expectation, they reacted to the progressive emancipation of the Jews in western and central Europe and in the Balkans, accompanied as it was by the emergence of Reform Judaism. Hence their chief concern was not the physical oppression and persecution of the Jews, but rather their estrangement from their Jewish faith and identity through assimilation. What they cared for was a spiritual redemption of the Jewish people, not a national one. Neither did Moses Hess (1812–75) write under the fear of physical threat, when in 1862 he published his booklet “Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question” to proclaim the idea of a national unity and revival of the Jewish people, modeled on the recent unification of Italy. Significantly, his call went unanswered. Still, it is important to note that the idea of a national revival of the Jews in Eretz Israel developed *before* the rise of modern anti-Semitism. However, to the extent to which anti-Semitism took hold in various European countries, from Rumania and Russia to Austria, Germany, and France, it lent broader support to the Zionist project.

EMIGRATION AND “PRACTICAL ZIONISM”

Faced with poverty, marginalization, and persecution, the Jews of eastern and central Europe had various options at their disposal, even if the full range of choices was not available to all of them. One option was simply to continue living in an Orthodox way without searching for a new orientation, another was to assimilate to local society. Many east-

⁴ For an overview, see Shimoni (1995), chs. 1, 2, and 8; for Alkalai and Kalischer, see pp. 71–82; for Hess, pp. 55–60. On the “yearning for Zion,” see chapter 2 above; also Ben-Arieh/Davis (1997); Budde/Nachama (eds.) (1996); Rosovsky (ed.) (1996).

ern European Jews opted for socialism, or for a specifically Jewish form of socialism; some chose anarchism, others adopted some kind of Jewish "cultural nationalism," which could be variously defined, from Orthodox, to reform, to liberal. The great majority chose none of these possibilities to escape from their difficulties or to alter them decisively, but simply left them behind and emigrated to the New World. Between 1882 and 1914, around 2.6 million Jews left Russia and its neighboring territories, most of them to begin a new life in America.⁵ For the most part they did so without reflecting deeply on identity and political change, and without making a conscious choice between individual and collective improvement, or even redemption. In the 1880s and 1890s, the decisive improvement in favor of Zionism and its realization in the promised land of Eretz Israel, was neither self-evident nor widespread. Of all the Jews who after the persecutions (pogroms) of 1881–82 emigrated from the Pale of Settlement, the area within the Czarist Empire assigned to Jews by Catherine the Great in 1790–91, less than 5 percent went to Palestine.

It is well known that there were already Jews in Palestine in the nineteenth century who became known as the "Old Yishuv" in contrast with the newcomers of the 1880s and 1890s.⁶ "Old" here does not necessarily suggest deep roots, or a long-standing presence in the land. In fact, many members of the so-called Old Yishuv were first-generation immigrants themselves, while others descended from immigrants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who for the most part had followed Orthodox religious leaders to Eretz Israel. Yet others could boast a long line of ancestors in Eretz Israel. "Old" was above all a qualitative term used by the members of the "new," Zionist Yishuv, who stood for a cultural and national renewal of the Jewish people, to mark their difference from those who in their eyes embodied all they detested—tradition, immobility, and reliance on others. It was a moral concept, just as the Hebrew term *'aliya* was a moral term for immigration to Eretz Israel, defining it not as mere migration, but rather as an "ascent" (*'aliya* referred originally to the "ascent" to the Jerusalem Temple, standing "up on the mountain"). In many of the reports from Jewish visitors (if they themselves were not Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox, *haredi*), one senses a certain fascination with the alien ways of Oriental Jews and decided reserve vis-à-vis the poor and pious eastern European Jews.

⁵ Data taken from Metzger (1998), pp. 60–67; Shafir (1989), pp. 7–8, 49; Carmel/Schäfer/Ben-Artzi (eds.) (1990), pp. 17–18, 156. For the Pale of Settlement, which was abolished only in 1917, see also Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz (eds.) (1995), pp. 379–80; for emigration to the United States, pp. 472–73.

⁶ Parfitt (1987); Halper (1991); Kark (1990); Carmel/Schäfer/Ben-Artzi (eds.) (1990). For Sephardic Jews in Palestine on the eve of World War I, cf. Campos (2005).

Jerusalem has been a Jewish city from eternity to eternity. Driven away, they returned once more; driven away, they returned once more. . . . Here they dwell, in rags, the Kurdish Jewesses whose husbands are porters or stone-cutters. Here reside the worthy Sephardim, wearing the fez, with their cleanly wives. Here in vaulted shops Polish Jews, pale, bespectacled, their faces overgrown with blond, brown, or red beards, little black kippas on their heads, sit studying, a book in front of them, while all around a small shop, filled with junk, slowly gets covered with dust. Here reside the oriental Jews who come from Baghdad, from southernmost Arabia, from Yemen. The Jews from Poland wear fantastic garments, fur coats like they were worn around 1300, bronze- and olive-colored velvet coats that belong in the paintings of Rembrandt.

Here live the pious old who intend to die in Jerusalem, and the recipients of alms from all over the world. They have devoted their lives to God, their fellow humans must take care of their bodies.⁷

These were the Jews known to the local Arab population, and with whom they had lived more or less peacefully for ages. In the framework of the *millet* system, the Ottoman authorities regarded the Sephardic chief rabbi of Jerusalem, who was in turn subordinate to the Sephardic chief rabbi of Istanbul, as the head of the Jews in Palestine. The Ashkenazi Jews had no official status. At the close of the nineteenth century, the differences between "old" and "new" Yishuv were not always easy to discern, for even the Zionist immigrants were not all socialist agnostics or "freethinkers" as they were frequently called. From an early date, a religious branch, known as Mizrachi (derived from *merkaz ruhani*, spiritual center), evolved within the Zionist movement. At the same time, a number of local Sephardic and Oriental Jews, who were generally considered religious and non-Zionist, if not openly anti-Zionist, became engaged in cultural and social reform in their community, thereby closing the gap to cultural Zionism. Some even acted as middlemen between Zionist immigrants and the local authorities. Distinctions were most obvious in those cases where long-established Orthodox Jewish families were contrasted with freshly arrived Zionist pioneers who were sometimes nonpracticing secularists if not altogether revolutionary minded. Quite likely, such prototypes hardly ever met. In the course of the twentieth century, the boundary between old and new Yishuv was blurred even further, especially when Nazi persecution weakened the ideological reservations of Orthodox Jewry against Zionism.

The idea of a "productivization" of the Jews through physical labor in combination with a "colonization" of Eretz Israel was part of the

⁷ Tergit (1996), p. 32.

emancipatory project advocated by spokesmen of the Jewish Enlightenment (*haskala*), who had already made first attempts to put these goals into effect.⁸ In 1870 the (decidedly non-Zionist) Alliance Israélite Universelle opened an agricultural school near Jaffa (Mikveh Israel) in which many new immigrants would be educated from the 1880s onward. In 1878 and 1882, Petah Tikva and Ge'oni (later Rosh Pinna) were established as the first rural Jewish settlements in Palestine since antiquity—and they too were founded not by Zionist immigrants, but by members of the “old Yishuv” from Jerusalem and Safed. Both settlements were designed as “model colonies.” Hence, there was Jewish immigration and colonization before the formulation of a Zionist program, and for decades neither was necessarily associated with Zionism.

Jewish immigration is usually divided into a series of waves (*'aliya*, pl. *'aliyot*), to which precise numbers are attributed.⁹ This reflects later attempts to systemize a diffuse migratory movement that most of those involved did not perceive as the first, second, or third lap of a well-defined and linear process. The immigrants of the so-called First Aliya (from 1882 to 1903–1904) were by no means all Zionists or socialists. Nor were they all Europeans: A considerable number came from Middle Eastern countries, especially from Yemen, Kurdistan, and the Maghreb. The majority immigrated for religious reasons and settled down in the cities, not in the countryside. Out of 20,000 to 30,000 Jewish immigrants, some 5,500 moved to twenty-eight rural settlements on both sides of the Jordan River. At the same time, the number of Jewish residents of Jerusalem rose from 16,000 in 1882 to 35,000 in 1905.

Among the new immigrants motivated by ideology, one group would attain significance for Zionism quite beyond its small numbers: the Bilu'im, whose name derived from the opening words of Isaiah 2:5 (*beit Ya'akov lehu we-nelha*: “O house of Jacob come ye and let us go”). The Bilu'im were a group of young Russian Jews who first met in 1882 in Kharkov in present-day Ukraine, who in contrast to most of their fellow immigrants not only wanted to set up agricultural settlements, but also to create a Jewish state.¹⁰ Their hopes and realities differed widely,

⁸ On the intellectual and practical roots, forerunners, and beginnings of this movement, in particular German colonization in Prussia and French colonization in Algeria and Tunisia, cf. Shafir (1989), ch. 3; Shimoni (1995), chs. 1 and 2; Shilony (1998), chs. 1 and 2; Schölch (1986), pp. 68–73.

⁹ Metzger (1998), pp. 65–67; Brenner (2002). Shafir (1989), p. xvi, provides a map of the settlements from 1878–1918; Yemenite immigrants are discussed *ibid.*, pp. 91–122. See also Muhammad 'Abd al-Karim 'Ukasha, *Yahud al-yaman wa-l-hijra ila filastin, 1881–1950*. Third edition (Gaza 1998).

¹⁰ Shimoni (1995), ch. 3, for Pinsker, see pp. 32–35, and Salmon (2002); for their manifesto, dated 1882, see Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz (eds.) (1995), pp. 532–33. Their headquarters was later moved from Kharkov to Odessa.

though: In 1900 the settlement of Gadera, which they established in 1884, numbered sixty-nine inhabitants. It was to remain the only one. The Bilu'im were part of a loosely knit grouping of “Friends of Zion” (*Hovevei Zion*) that included both religious and secular Jews. Deeply affected by the anti-Jewish riots in Russia, Rumania, and the Ukraine, they propagated emigration to Palestine and Jewish national revival there. Leo (Yehuda Leib) Pinsker (1821–91), a medical doctor and prominent representative of the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskala*, provided them with an ideological platform when in 1882 he published “Auto-Emancipation! Exhortation from a Russian Jew to His Kinfolk,” which, significantly, was written in German. The same year also witnessed the foundation of the first Zionist settlement in Palestine, Rishon le-Zion (“First in Zion”), followed by some thirty other settlements, among them Gadera in 1884, Rehovot and Hadera in 1890–91, and Metulla in 1896; two others had to be abandoned after a short time. In 1884 the *Hovevei Zion* held their first conference in Kattowitz (in Upper Silesia, then belonging to Prussia). Meanwhile, they met with great difficulties in Russia. Only in 1890 was their organization *Hibbat Zion* (Love of Zion) recognized by the Czarist government as a “Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Craftsmen in Syria and Palestine” (better known as the Odessa Committee). Due to great practical difficulties and to political opposition on the ground, that is, in Palestine itself, the advocates of “practical Zionism” in and around *Hibbat Zion* were in no position to realize large-scale colonization projects. During this early phase the majority of settlers were supported and maintained by Jewish philanthropists such as Baron Edmond de Rothschild or the Alliance Israélite Universelle. One of the few exceptions was Gadera, which sought to preserve its financial independence.

THEODOR HERZL AND “POLITICAL ZIONISM”

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) is generally regarded as the founder of the Zionist movement, yet he did not invent Zionism.¹¹ The term “Zionism” itself was first publicly used in the early 1890s by the Jewish writer Nathan Birnbaum, to distinguish the political movement from the efforts of “practical” settlement as advocated by various Jewish “colonization associations.” In 1896, Herzl published *The Jewish State*, which served as the manifesto of the young movement. In 1897 he created the World Zionist Organization (WZO) at the First Zionist Congress in Basel,

¹¹ The literature on Herzl is extensive; for judicious treatment, see Shimoni (1995), pp. 88–100; Brenner (2002).

which would represent the Zionist movement in the decades to come. Unlike Alkalai, Kalischer, or Hess, Herzl spoke openly and daringly of a political project to alleviate what he called *Judennot* (Jewish plight): the foundation of a Jewish state on a suitable piece of land. In his view, this need not necessarily be Palestine, or Eretz Israel; it could possibly also be a piece of land in Africa or South America.¹² But it would have to be systematically planned and well prepared, and it would require international support. "The Jewish question," wrote Herzl in his Introduction to *The Jewish State* (p. 20),

exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migration. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution. . . . I think the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, though it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, and in order to solve it we must above all make it a political world-question to be settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.¹³

Here we find the decisive element that distinguishes Herzl from the "practical Zionists": Herzl wanted to internationalize the issue and to systematically involve the European powers—a strategy later pursued by the Arabs as well. The solution of the Jewish question, Herzl was convinced, would benefit everyone, (European) Jews and (European) non-Jews alike, and it could be achieved through diplomatic appeals for support from the European powers and the Ottoman sultan. Ideally, it would be firmly established in an internationally recognized "pledge" or "charter." In *The Jewish State*, Herzl put his idea in a few sentences that would later be repeated time and again (p. 39): "Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy our rightful requirements as a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves." In the same context, he continued with the famous passage (p. 43):

Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency. Supposing

¹² After the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, there was serious discussion of the so-called Uganda Plan, under which the Jews would have been settled in this African country in order to escape persecution in Europe. Herzl supported this option. A considerable number of settlers in Palestine were prepared to abandon Eretz Israel (at least temporarily) in favor of Uganda. Nevertheless, the majority of Zionists rejected the Uganda Plan at the Seventh Zionist Congress, held in Basel in 1905 shortly after Herzl's death. Cf. Shimoni (1995), pp. 98–99, 334–39, and Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz (eds.) (1995), pp. 548–52.

¹³ Here as in all subsequent quotes, I have adapted the English translation (*The Jewish State*, New York 1947) on the basis of the original German (*Der Judenstaat*, Berlin 1936). Page numbers refer to the 1947 English translation.

His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the entire finances of Turkey. For Europe we should form there a portion of the rampart against Asia, we should serve as an outpost of civilization against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The sanctuaries of Christendom could be safeguarded by assigning to them an extra-territorial status recognized under the law of nations. We should form a guard of honor about these sanctuaries, answering for the fulfillment of this duty with our existence. This guard of honor would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish Question after eighteen centuries that for us were filled with pain.

Herzl viewed the efforts of the "practical Zionists" with skepticism ("An infiltration is bound to end badly," p. 42). He found the use of Hebrew as an everyday language ridiculous ("We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us knows enough Hebrew to ask for a railway ticket in that language!" p. 99). No, there would have to be a state, and indeed a "model state," which Herzl anticipated in bold detail right down to the layout of the houses and the introduction of the seven-hour workday (a point to which he was especially committed). Work would shape society and allow the state to develop its full potential, for "the Promised Land is the land of work" (p. 66). The state "will seek to bestow the moral salvation (*sittliche Beseligung*) of work on men of every age and of every class." "Beggars," he continued, "will not be endured. Whoever refuses to work as a free man will be sent to the workhouse" (p. 79). Even so, life would not be entirely without joy. Herzl was a member of the bourgeoisie, not a socialist (p. 59):¹⁴

Yes, the rich Jews who are now obliged to carefully hide their valuables, and to hold their uncomfortable feasts behind lowered curtains, will be able to freely enjoy their possessions over there. If they cooperate in carrying out this emigration scheme, their capital will be rehabilitated there. It will have proved its use in an unprecedented undertaking. If the richest Jews begin to build their palaces over there which are viewed in Europe with such envious eyes, it will soon become fashionable to settle over there in splendid houses.

¹⁴ On p. 54 he says

We are only collectivists where the dreadful difficulties of the task demand it. Otherwise we wish to tend and care for the individual with his rights. Private property, as the economic foundation of independent people, shall be allowed to develop freely, and will be respected by us.

On Zionist concepts of labor and emancipation, cf. Shilony (1998), ch. 2, esp. pp. 49ff.

Religion, too, would have its place, albeit a limited one (p. 100):

Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, science makes us free. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies among our clerics. We shall know how to keep them within the confines of their temples just as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks. The army and the clerics shall receive the honors their beautiful tasks demand and deserve. But they must not interfere in the administration of the State which confers distinction upon them, else they will conjure up difficulties without and within.

The same could be expressed in more sarcastic terms: "We shall let every man find salvation over there in his own particular way. This holds above all for our dear Freethinkers, our immortal army, who are continually making new conquests for humanity (p. 86)."

As can be gathered from his book, Herzl was not primarily concerned with eastern European Jews, but rather with the Jewish and non-Jewish elites of western Europe ("the cultivated men," p. 15). Yet he found his largest audience in eastern Europe. The majority of the approximately 250 participants attending the First Zionist Congress, which Herzl organized in Basel in 1897 to provide Zionism with a structure, visibility, and respectability that it had previously lacked, came from eastern Europe. The "Basel Program" put Herzl's vision into concise words. Zionism's primary aim, it stated, was "to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law."¹⁵ For the time being, however, Zionism was unable to win over the majority of Jews in Europe, America, or the Middle East, and even met with sharp opposition.

After his early death in 1904, Herzl was revered as the father of the Zionist movement, having already in his lifetime been styled as a "new Moses." Like Moses, Herzl did not live to see his dream come true. But he recognized like few others that for an idea to be effective it needed organization as much as symbols—and these he either created or at least helped to popularize. By the turn of the century, the Zionist movement had acquired the nucleus of a modern organization and its accompanying offices and functions. These included an increasingly better organized donation system (including the famous Shekel, a term later adopted for the currency of the State of Israel, and the equally famous blue collection box of the Jewish National Fund), a flag, and an unofficial national anthem known as the "Hatikvah" (from Hebrew *ha-tikva*, hope). They were employed and displayed at the Zionist Congresses, communicating the goals of the movement to a wider audience and giving their leaders a popularity well beyond their immediate circle of fam-

¹⁵ Cited from Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz (eds.) (1995), p. 540.

ily, friends, and followers. From an early date, Zionism was rendered visible in a manner comparable to the established national movements in Europe and America, contrasting starkly with the Arab national movement emerging at about the same time. In the following decades several processes ran in parallel: diplomatic efforts of the World Zionist Organization to win international support for the Zionist project; steady immigration into Palestine by Jews of various origins, as well as the establishment and expansion of Jewish and/or Zionist institutions in both urban and rural settings, carried out by Zionists and non-Zionists alike. Gradually, "political" and "practical" Zionism merged, or at least complemented one another, in what became known as synthetic Zionism.

THE FOUNDING ERA: THE SECOND AND THIRD ALIYAS

With the Second Aliya (from 1904–1905 to 1914) and Third Aliya (from 1918–19 to 1923), the generation of pioneers and founding fathers (and mothers) who arrived in Palestine made every effort to distinguish themselves from the immigrants of the First Aliya and thoroughly transformed the Zionist movement in the country.¹⁶ The decade preceding World War I was crucial for determining the values and self-views of Zionism for years to come. Among them was the idea of "productivizing" the "Jewish masses," by transforming Jewish *Luftmenschen* into workers. Rooted in the Jewish Enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this notion responded to the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jews as parasites living off their "host societies." As important was the aim to establish an egalitarian Jewish society that would be largely self-contained and self-sufficient. In accordance with the idea of "productivization," labor was to be "Jewish labor," or rather "Hebrew labor" (*avoda ivrit*), and the difference between the two is significant. In this context, two objectives were formulated: "the redemption of the land" (*ge'ulat ha-adama*) and the "conquest of labor" (*kibbush ha-avoda*).¹⁷ The basic values of the Zionist immigrants of the Second and the Third Aliya were a pioneering spirit, modest lifestyle, high esteem for manual

¹⁶ Shafir (1989), pp. 2ff., 46–50. The distinction between the idealistic pioneers and the ("ordinary") immigrants guided by material interests can be traced back to Martin Buber, who speaks of election and vocation, and of the correspondence between inner and outer transformation. On the idealization of peasant life in Jewish travel literature, see Kaiser (1992), pp. 476ff.

¹⁷ For the intellectual tradition of Labor Zionism, see Shimoni (1995), ch. 5. On the concept of the "redemption of the land," which combines legal notions with the expectation of salvation, see also Kaiser (1992), pp. 498–99. On "Hebrew labor," see below.

labor (especially agricultural labor), self-defense, self-reliance, and a future-oriented outlook. The idea was to revive *Hebrew* culture as opposed to the *Jewish* culture of the diaspora—the very epitome of everything they despised. The biblical patriarchs, the conquerors, kings, and “Hebrew” resistance fighters from Joshua and David to Judas the Maccabean provided the Zionists with their role models. In a similar manner, Muslim reformers looked to the “pious predecessors” (*al-salaf al-salib*), the first generations of the companions and successors of the Prophet, as their ultimate role models.

Zionist claims, hopes, and aspirations could be expressed in a variety of ways, and could be justified in religious or in secular terms. But no matter how it was done, there remained a certain tone of vibrancy, a sense of the greatness of the task that the settlers and pioneers faced. Their sense of mission seldom rested on deep familiarity with the land and its people. As late as 1935, a Zionist visitor repeated the familiar stock images of a desolate land “redeemed” through Jewish pioneers, which to him also entailed the redemption of the Jewish people, if not humanity as a whole:

Today, 1,900 and 1,800 years after the two great massacres with which Titus and Hadrian mortally wounded the Jewish people in Palestine, the land is once again almost as desolate and deserted as Joshua found it. From Dan to Beersheva, and far beyond this southern point in the waterless desert of the Negev, wherever you go you find traces of former settlement and cultivation, ruins of towns, of buildings, water-pipes, streets, decayed terraces, sealed-up springs and wells. Before this land was taken land by this particular people, it was barren, deserted, and miserable; since the expulsion of this particular people, it is barren, deserted, and miserable, and only at the hands of this particular people has it been fertile, densely settled, and prosperous. This land and this people are like body and soul. Robbed of its soul the body lies as a corpse, left to decay. The soul torn from the body in which it dwelled wanders aimlessly through space, a phantom of itself, a terror for others. The Jews were just such a phantom after losing their land. . . . The day on which body and soul unite once more, on which this people returns to this land, is a happy day not only for this people and this land, but rather a happy day for the entire family of nations, who will be freed from a phantom, from a nightmare.¹⁸

THE “REDEMPTION OF THE LAND” AND THE “CONQUEST OF LABOR”

In Palestine as elsewhere, settlement was dependent upon a variety of factors. It required not only actual physical presence in the land and

¹⁸ Hugo Herrmann, *Palästina heute: Licht und Schatten* (Tel Aviv 1935), p. 231, quoted in *ibid.* (1992), pp. 92–94.

ownership of it, but also sufficient manpower. While Palestine was sparsely populated toward the end of the nineteenth century, it was by no means empty. Unlike North America or Australia, it was subject to a recognized political authority (the Ottoman sultan). Foreigners, including Jews, were in no position to take the land by force. They could only obtain it through purchase, and then only in those places where it was made available to them by the authorities or the locals. At the turn of the century, most Arabs still lived in the mountainous interior region—Jewish “Judea and Samaria” and also Galilee—where the majority of Jews had lived in antiquity. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Arab population densified in the coastal region and the river valleys connecting the coast with the interior. The Jewish settlements were concentrated in the vicinity of Jaffa, Haifa, and Safed. With the exception of Upper Galilee, these were not the regions in which the ancient Israelites had originally lived. Unlike Jerusalem and the other “holy cities”—Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias—these regions also lacked special religious status. It was not until 1910–11 that Jews acquired more extensive property in the fertile plain of Marj Ibn Amir. In Afula they founded the first cooperative settlement (Merhavia) which was protected by the Shomer (watchman), and which quickly became the target of both Arab attacks and lively debates in the Ottoman Parliament.¹⁹ At the same time, Jewish-owned farms and plantations as well as the newly established settlements attracted residents of nearby Arab villages searching for new opportunities of work and income.²⁰ There is therefore some truth to the argument that Jewish immigration drew Arab immigration in its wake, even though the latter cannot be quantified. Zionist observers who remained in the country for a longer time and made an effort to be well informed about local conditions, were fully aware of the distribution of land and population, as seen from a report by Leo Motzkin to the Second Zionist Congress:

One has to admit that the density of population does not exactly put the visitor to Palestine in a joyful mood. In large stretches of land, one constantly comes across big Arab villages, and it is a well-established fact that the most fertile regions of our land are occupied by Arabs.²¹

¹⁹ On land acquisition, cf. Shilony (1998), ch. 5 (for the Jezreel Valley, Afula, and Merhavia, pp. 193–208), and ch. 6 (for Merhavia, pp. 245–58). Merhavia, founded in 1911, was transformed after World War I into a communal settlement or *moshav*, as the cooperative was not economically profitable. Maps of the settlements in Shafir (1989), p. xvi, and Aaronsohn (1990), p. 149. Maps of land use around 1880 can be found in *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients* (TAVO), A X 9 (Southern Levant—Land Use Around 1880) and B IX 21 (Syria and Palestine at the close of the nineteenth century).

²⁰ Shafir (1989), pp. 52–53.

²¹ Cited from the stenographic protocol of the transactions of the Second Zionist Congress, held in Basel from August 28–31, 1898 (*Minutes 1898*, pp. 60, 127).

As we will see, the Ottoman authorities were from the outset resisting Jewish attempts to acquire land in Palestine. For this reason, land purchase and settlement had to be organized, and if possible coordinated. The Zionist movement made every effort to do so. An important example comes from the Ruppin Memorandum of 1907, which marked an N-shaped region between Jaffa and Lake Tiberias as the area of Jewish land purchases—an area that until the Arab uprising of 1936–39 did in fact form the heart of Jewish settlement activity in Palestine.²² Until the turn of the century, colonization was largely carried out by European “colonization associations” such as the Hovevei Zion. The rural settlements (*moshav* and *moshava*), which at first employed local, labor-intensive methods of cultivation, yielded low profits and did not allow for a “European standard of living,” to say nothing of the social and cultural amenities that the Jewish settlers and workers expected. The yields did not improve much when the settlements supported by Baron Rothschild adapted their mode of operation to the French colonial agriculture in Algeria and Tunisia, and produced cash crops such as almonds, grapes, olives, and citrus fruit, earmarked exclusively for export. Despite high investments, Rothschild was unable to make these enterprises self-supporting or profitable, and in 1900 he handed them over to the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), founded in 1891 by Baron Maurice de Hirsch. The JCA was a non-Zionist organization for the support of Jewish emigrants, headquartered in Paris, which maintained settlement colonies, especially in North and South America (Argentina). Abandoning all philanthropic concerns, the JCA employed strictly economic criteria of profitability, even if this entailed dismissing Jewish workers. Repeated strikes and labor struggles could not hold up this process.

Already before World War I, a consensus was forming in Zionist circles that Jewish colonization of Palestine would be possible only through a “bifurcation” of the economy, requiring the establishment of new, and exclusively Jewish structures and institutions. However this could not sever the connections with and even dependence upon the local Arab economy and society—uneducated Arab labor remained indispensable for the so-called Jewish sector well beyond 1948. From 1918 onward, two institutions served as the main pillars of Zionist strategy: the Jewish National Fund and the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in Eretz Israel, known as Histadrut, which worked together to “redeem” the land and “conquer” labor.²³ The Jewish National Fund (JNF, *keren kay-*

²² Shafir (1989), p. 43; K. Stein (1984), pp. 38, 64; Shilony (1998); also note 19 above.

²³ Shilony (1998), chs. 3 and 4, and Epilogue; p. 87 contains a useful diagram of the various organs of the World Zionist Organization. The Palestine Office was officially established at the end of 1907, but only operated from April 1908, when Ruppin arrived in Jaffa (p. 83). For the forestation campaign and the Herzl Forest, created in 1908 with the

emet le-yisrael) was set up in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress and registered in London in 1907, with the proclaimed task “to purchase land for the Jewish people with donations from the people.” All land acquired by the JNF was considered the property of the Jewish people. It could not be sold, but only leased for a period of forty-nine years, and only to Jews. In theory, non-Jews were not admitted as hired laborers (though this policy was not consistently enforced). In a way, JNF lands could be viewed as a secular counterpart to the religious endowments of Jews and Muslims. (In the 1930s, Muslim Arab activists adopted this idea when they declared Palestine to be a “sacred trust” of the Muslim community that could not be transferred to non-Muslims.) In February 1902, the Anglo-Palestine Company was founded in London, which served the World Zionist Organization as a credit institution; soon afterward, it opened branches in Palestine, beginning with Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Hebron. In 1903 there followed the Palestine Commission, with its headquarters in Berlin, which sponsored a series of surveys to explore the possibilities of systematic land development and settlement on both sides of the Jordan River. In 1907–8, the World Zionist Organization opened its Palestine Office in Jaffa (not Jerusalem). The head of this office, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, a lawyer and economist recently immigrated from Germany, would soon play a crucial role in Zionist colonization.

In line with Herzl, the various Zionist institutions spoke out against any “practical settlement” or “infiltration” unless supported by international guarantees for its existence, though they did approve of the colonization of Palestine after the model of German *Ostkolonisation*, internal colonization as pursued especially in the region of Poznan under Prussian domination. Only in 1910, when the advocates of “practical” Zionism were gaining ground within the World Zionist Organization, did the JNF seriously begin to acquire land for Jewish settlements. At the same time, an experiment was started that would later be identified with the Zionist project as a whole. With the support of the Palestine Office (which for a long time had resisted cooperative experiments and preferred private capitalist initiative), Russian immigrants founded the first communal settlement (*kvutza*). Soon renamed Degania, it was the

assistance of the so-called Olive Tree Donation, which sparked violent conflict over the principle of “Jewish labor” (Jewish laborers tore out the seedlings that had been planted by Arab workers and planted new ones), see pp. 115–35. Shilony, pp. 386–401 contradicts the notion that the JNF played a decisive role in the “redemption of the land” prior to World War I (until 1914, land purchased by the JNF amounted to a mere 24,000 dunam). Shilony emphasizes the JNF’s research and promotional activities, which took place predominantly in an urban environment. On this point, see also Shafir (1989) and Metzger (1998), pp. 128–29.

nucleus from which the kibbutz movement subsequently developed. By 1918, Degania had been followed by three more cooperatives.²⁴

At the same time, another element of the "conquest of labor" took shape: the defense of Jewish settlements, which eventually led to the Hagana, and in May 1948 to the Israeli army.²⁵ In 1906 the first units of Jewish watchmen (*shomer*, pl. *shomrim*) formed in Lower Galilee to defend Jewish settlements, vineyards, and other property against Arab attack. They never fully replaced the Circassians and Arabs that had previously been employed in this function. In September 1907 a small group of new immigrants around Yitzhak Ben-Zvi founded the secret society Bar Giora, named after Shimon Bar Giora, one of the leaders of the Jewish revolt of A.D. 70. They took as their motto "In blood and fire Judea fell—in blood and fire Judea will arise," a line from the poem "The Canaanites" by Ya'akov Cahan. Authorized by the Ottoman authorities, the Jewish society Ha-Shomer ("The Watchman") was founded in 1909 and, in 1916, established its first settlement in Upper Galilee.

Up into the 1920s, a plantation-type economy predominated in the Jewish agricultural sector, operating mostly with Arab labor. What was true of European settlers in French-occupied Tunisia or Algeria was also true of Palestine: Few Jewish farmers and landowners were rich and patriotic enough to employ Jewish rather than Arab labor, which, for them, was more attractive in almost every sense. Not only were Arab laborers physically strong and familiar with local modes of production; they were also unorganized, undemanding, and cheap. One Zionist observer spoke openly about the "lack of development" of the Arabs:

Arab [workers] are distinguished . . . by one virtue that is much appreciated by the Jewish farmers, and it is their lack of development, as a result of which they do not know what to demand from the employers. . . . the Arab consents to be working every day of the week, and even continuously for full months without resting for a single day, and he demands no raise for all that [effort] of his regular wage.²⁶

²⁴ Shilony (1998), chs. 5 and 6, esp. pp. 137–56 and 241–45. Naor (1998), pp. 51–52, has interesting illustrations.

²⁵ Shapira (1992), ch. 2, esp. pp. 61 and 71–72, underlines the aggressive masculinity adopted by the guardsmen, building on their ideas of Bedouin and Cossack life and mores; also Shafir (1989); Zerubavel (1995). Shilony (1998), pp. 150–56, and Naor (1998), pp. 32, 37, 43–45, 62, provide uncritical accounts of Hashomer, which in 1916 founded a first settlement in Upper Galilee.

²⁶ Moshe Smilansky quoted from Shafir (1989), p. 57; cf. also pp. 76–77. Shilony (1998), pp. 292–302, emphasizes the sense of sacrifice of the Jewish pioneers and the threat posed by the Arabs. Metzger (1998), pp. 123–37, esp. 128–29, provides data on labor wages.

One attempt to confront the problem without betraying the principle of "Jewish labor" came through the employment of Yemenite Jews. For this purpose, a Zionist envoy disguised as a scholar (Shmuel Warshawsky, later Shmuel Yavnieli) was sent to Yemen in 1911 (his conservative garb served the purpose of "making them receptive to the idea of emigration," since the Jews of Yemen were known to be deeply religious). Yavnieli did indeed manage to persuade some 2,000 Yemenite Jews to make the *aliya* to Eretz Israel. Mordecai Naor, a chronicler of Eretz Israel in the twentieth century, described the episode in the following terms:

The men and women of the Second Aliya view themselves as workers out of conviction, yet they quickly realize that compared with the Arab farm workers, idealists like themselves almost always lose out. There, "workers" are needed who can endure the heavy physical work and oppressive living conditions. In their search for such productive manpower the men and women of the Second Aliya discover the industrious Yemenite Jews, some of whom have already come to the country at the time of the first Aliya. They plan to bring laborers from Yemen to Palestine. . . .

As a result of Yavnieli's mission, 2,000 new immigrants come to Palestine. They build new neighborhoods and work very hard and for little pay in the farmers' fields. The Yemenites are patient workers who seldom complain about the harsh living conditions. For they believe that one would only be worthy of living in Eretz Israel if one "earns it through tribulation."²⁷

A remarkable text. Despite their highly useful attitude toward redemption, land, and labor, the Yemenites did not solve the fundamental problem. For Jewish farmworkers, who unlike the Arabs had no other source of income (but higher expectations), living conditions were difficult and harsh.²⁸ What they were offered was usually poorly paid seasonal labor, not enough to feed a family. The strategy of "conquest of

²⁷ Naor (1998), p. 56 (translated from the German edition). As a general rule, the Yemenites immigrated with their entire families. According to Shilony (1998), pp. 302–309, the Yemenite Jews were well-suited to "push out" the Arab laborers, since they were accustomed to the difficult climate and working conditions, and since they obeyed their overseers and could survive on as low a wage as the Arabs; moreover, they spoke Arabic and they were Ottoman subjects. The Palestine Office regarded them as "natural workers": "All they had to do was show up on the labor market, and Arab workers would be easily ousted from the colonies" (quoted from pp. 302–303). Yet experience showed that the Yemenite Jews could not endure the climate and living conditions in Eretz Israel; infants and small children died in large numbers. In 1913 the experiment was largely brought to a halt. For a critical account, see Shafir (1989), pp. 91–122.

²⁸ Shafir (1989), pp. 53–57, 72–76. According to him, around 1,600 Jewish workers resided in rural settlements in 1900. In 1904 they totaled around 5,500 residents.

labor" failed in the face of hard reality, even though at least on the plantations the labor market was split into two: All of the more highly qualified and better paid positions were reserved for Jews; whenever Jews took over tasks that had previously been undertaken by Arabs, they would be better paid for the same kind of work. And yet they never attained "civilized" working conditions that fulfilled their needs and expectations, since seasonal labor and the lack of social amenities partly neutralized the higher wages. This explains the much lamented phenomenon of "vagabondage" among Jewish laborers, who would often leave a position after a short time in hopes of finding a better one elsewhere—and not necessarily in agriculture. It also helps to explain the high rates of emigration by Jews out of Palestine. All in all, Jewish workers succeeded in "splitting" the labor market, but not in "conquering" it. That would have required a total exclusion of Arab labor, the maximum goal of the Zionist workers' movement—an objective that proved impossible to achieve.

POLITICS AND CULTURE

Even in the heroic years of the First and the Second Aliya, a large number of the Zionist immigrants did not move to the countryside, but rather to the cities.²⁹ There, the poorer among them found employment as workers, craftsmen, and day laborers, while the better off opened businesses or sought positions in administration or the private sector; the better educated worked as teachers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, or nurses. As mentioned before, the activities of the Zionist organizations, including the Anglo-Palestine Company, the Palestine Office, and the Jewish National Fund, were in no way restricted to colonization or agriculture more generally. In 1909 lots were drawn for the first plots of land for a new Jewish residential area north of Jaffa, Ahuzat Bayit, which in 1910 became the city of Tel Aviv (Spring Hill, named after the Hebrew title of Theodor Herzl's book *Altneuland*, published in 1902). The period between 1900 and 1914 witnessed the foundation of various socialist Zionist organizations, unions of workers, craftsmen, and artists, professional associations, clubs, and newspapers from left-wing Zionist to Orthodox, creating a new Jewish sector that for the most part was Labor Zionist alongside the institutions of the "old Yi-

²⁹ Shilony (1998), esp. chs. 8 and 9. For Tel Aviv, cf. Schlör (1999) and LeVine (2005). For Lilien, cf. Arbel (ed.) 1996, and Michael Stanislawski, "Vom Jugendstil zum 'Judenstil'? Universalismus und Nationalismus im Werk Ephraim Moses Liliens," in Michael Brenner/Yfaat Weiss (eds.), *Zionistische Utopie— israelische Realität. Religion und Nation in Israel* (Munich 1999): 68–101.

shuv." In 1905 the first political parties were formed with the socialist Young Worker (*ba-Po'el ha-Tza'ir*) and the Workers of Zion (*Po'alei Zion*), which shortly after began to publish their own newspapers. In 1909 a Hebrew district court was established to deal with intra-Jewish affairs, an interesting extension of the legal autonomy enjoyed by non-Muslims in the framework of the Ottoman *millet* system. In 1911–12, a workers' sick fund was created from which the (Jewish) Sick Fund (*kuppat holim*) arose. At the same time, the anti-Zionist association Agudat Israel was founded in 1912 in Kattowitz, which would soon play a role in Palestine as well.

Education, art, and entertainment should not be ignored either: In the summer of 1902, a Jewish Library opened its doors in Jerusalem that also kept foreign books and newspapers; it later developed into the Israeli State and University Library. In various towns and Jewish settlements, Jewish orchestras were formed.³⁰ In 1905 the first Jewish high school was founded in Jaffa (the later Herzliah Gymnasium), which in 1910 relocated to the newly founded city of Tel Aviv (at least until World War I, its graduate certificates were written in French, Hebrew, and Arabic). There followed several boys' and girls' schools as well as additional secondary schools. In 1906 the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design opened in Jerusalem, directed by Boris Schatz and the artist Ephraim Lilien. In Jaffa, the first Jewish plays were staged by local theater groups. When the rabbis in Jerusalem protested against such frivolity, Ottoman soldiers actually forced a performance to cease. Nonetheless, the Olympia Cinema opened its doors in Jerusalem in October 1908, followed in 1914 by the Eden cinema in Tel Aviv. At the initiative of the Hilfsverein of German Jews in Haifa, the cornerstone was laid for a Jewish Technical Institute, the Technion, in 1912, which immediately became involved in the so-called language conflict: Should instruction be in Hebrew as the Zionists demanded, or in German as the Hilfsverein wished? It was not until December 1924 that the Technion was finally able to open. Still in 1912, the Jewish Maccabi sports clubs—named after the Maccabean (or Hasmonean) dynasty who in the second century B.C. had founded a Jewish kingdom of considerable size, albeit under foreign suzerainty—created its own umbrella organization.

However important the goals and achievements of the founding generation were, one must distinguish between the ideal and the reality. The Second Aliya, triggered by the Kishinev pogrom (in present-day Moldova, then Bessarabia) of April 1903 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, which were followed by a fresh wave of anti-Semitism, brought 35,000–40,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine, among them many of

³⁰ Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz (eds.) (1995), pp. 567–68; Brenner (2002), pp. 59–64.

the future leaders of the Jewish Yishuv, from David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and Levi Eshkol, to Berl Katznelson and Joseph Shprintzak. Yet the Second Aliya also had the highest percentage of emigrants leaving Palestine again after a brief stay (*yordim*, literally “descenders”), a percentage that in some years reached a full third of the immigrants (*olim*, “ascenders”).³¹ In 1914 about 12,000 Jewish farmers and field-workers lived in approximately forty Jewish settlements—and to repeat it once again, they were by no means all Zionists. The dominant languages were still Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Rumanian, Hungarian, or German in the case of Ashkenazi immigrants from Europe, and Ladino (or “Judeo-Spanish”) and Arabic in the case of Sephardic and Oriental Jews. Biblical Hebrew served as the sacred language, while modern Hebrew (Ivrit) remained for the time being the language of a politically committed minority that had devoted itself to a revival of “Hebrew culture.”

OTTOMAN REACTIONS

Rising Jewish immigration after 1880 did not go unnoticed in Jerusalem and Istanbul, and yet the reactions to it cannot be simply classified as “resistance,” as later nationalist historiography would have it. Once again, it is important to distinguish between different actors and interests at specific points in time, notably between the Ottoman authorities, local Arabs, and Arab observers in neighboring countries. At the same time we must distinguish specific themes and motifs: Opposition to Jewish settlement was not necessarily based on, or accompanied by, a developed sense of Palestinian identity, and this in turn was not coterminous with the rise of an Arab-Palestinian national consciousness.

Ottoman policies toward Palestine and the Zionist movement can be sketched here in their rough outlines only.³² The interests of the central government in Istanbul and of its local representatives in Palestine were not always identical, or even in harmony, and in view of international pressures, the Ottoman government had only limited room for maneuver. Ottoman policies did not so much reflect prejudice toward Jews as a religious community, or special regard for Palestine as a Holy Land

³¹ Metzger (1998), table 3.2, and the figures given below on demography; for linguistic statistics during the Mandate period, cf. Himadeh (ed.) (1938), p. 38 (based on the census of 1931).

³² Brief summary in Reinkowski (1995), pp. 25–28; for more detail, see Karpat (1974); Mandel (1976), ch. 1; al-Nu’aimi (1998); Kushner (1999); Campos (2005), pp. 471–77, and chapters 3 and 4 above. For the confusion surrounding the geographical definition of Palestine, see Biger (2004), pp. 13–21.

for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Ottoman policy makers were concerned about the risk of further European penetration of an area that was steadily growing in strategic importance to the European powers. Already in 1872, Jerusalem was raised to the rank of an independent district (Arabic *mutasarrifiyya*), so as to take into account European interests in the Holy Land in general and Jerusalem in particular. In view of the independence struggles in the Balkans and other parts of the Empire, decision makers at the Sublime Porte surmised (and not without reason) that there was a link between organized Jewish immigration and colonization on the one hand and European protection and intervention on the other—supported above all by the legal institution of the so-called Capitulations, which gave their beneficiaries far-reaching rights and privileges.

Even before the first immigrants of the Bilu'im had set foot on “Palestinian” soil (which occurred in Jaffa on July 6, 1882), and even before the first signs of resistance began to stir among the Arab population, the Ottoman authorities had been warned by their consul in Odessa. In response to this warning, they took first measures to prohibit immigration and land acquisition by foreign Jews in Palestine, a ban later extended to include Ottoman Jews who were not allowed to offer land or property to Zionist uses. This had nothing to do with anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic sentiment, but with politics. The Ottoman authorities perceived the immigrants not primarily as Jews, but rather as Europeans, or more precisely, as Russians, and therefore as members of a hostile power against which the Empire had just fought a war. For them it was not a question of hindering Jewish settlement in their territories in general: In fact, the pogroms in Czarist Russia triggered a fresh wave of Jewish immigrants into the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1881–82. A considerable number of Jews settled in Istanbul and other major cities, and quite a few made efforts to obtain Ottoman citizenship. They were perfectly free to settle in the Empire but not in Palestine (but as we know this was not a very precise term at the time). To this end, permission to stay in Palestine was now limited for Jewish pilgrims and businessmen to a period of one month, and later three months—a violation of the Capitulations that was immediately protested by foreign consuls. Official policy at first prohibited sales of *miri* land to foreign Jews; Ottoman Jews were obligated not to sell *miri* land to foreign Jews, or to open it to colonization. Two meetings between Theodor Herzl and Sultan Abdülhamid in May 1901 and June 1902, in which Herzl offered comprehensive debt relief to the Ottoman Empire in exchange for land in “Acre and its surrounding areas,” proved fruitless.³³

³³ Shilony (1998), p. 194. On Ottoman debt relief, see also Herzl (*The Jewish State*, p.

In the meantime, Arabs in Palestine began to react to Jewish land purchases and colonization, though they did so for a variety of reasons, and not necessarily for political ones only.³⁴ Until the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (and beyond) economic motives and interests remained decisive, and they worked in different directions: While some locals benefited from the new opportunities of work and income, others suffered, having been driven away by the sale of their leased land, or deprived of the water and pasturage rights attached to it. Until the mandate era, Jewish buyers mostly purchased uncultivated or sparsely settled land. For this reason, Arab losses remained quite small. A petition of Jerusalem notables in June 1891 against Jewish immigration and colonization is worth noting in this connection, since it shows that even then protest was occasionally voiced. Yet the petition seems to have had no effect other than the creation of a commission by these notables in 1897 to keep a watch on land sales to Jews.

Despite growing Arab protests, the Young Turks, who seized power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908, initially had other concerns than Palestine and Jewish immigration. They did however pass new bans on Jewish immigration and colonization in order to prevent the emergence of a "Jewish question" that would not only invite European intervention, but would also risk provoking Arab opposition that might possibly alienate the Arabs from Ottoman rule.³⁵ Religious motives, or to be more precise, anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic prejudice, can be largely excluded here: Prior to 1908, the Young Turks had found some support among Ottoman Jews, above all in Saloniki. Moreover, the chief rabbi of Istanbul, Haim Nahum Effendi, was known to sympathize with the movement. What impelled the Young Turks to intervene was political motives. Even so, government directives were followed only hesitantly by local officials and only partially executed. Corruption and bribery played a role in this, as did the pressure of local actors, both Arabs and Jews. The governors and their staffs interpreted their interests in different ways: While the governor of Jerusalem complained in 1900 over continuing violations of the law by the Jews, the subgovernor of Tiberias permitted the Jews in his district to arm themselves in the wake of Arab attacks. In the meantime, Jewish immigration into Palestine continued, and repeated interven-

43), quoted above. On Herzl's hope of obtaining support from Kaiser Wilhelm II as the kaiser visited the Holy Land and Istanbul in 1898, cf. Merkley (1998), pp. 26–34; Carmel/Eisler (1999).

³⁴ R. Khalidi (1997), chs. 4 and 5; Mandel (1976), ch. 2. On land purchases, see notes 19 and 23 above, as well as chapters 9–11 below.

³⁵ Mandel (1976), chs. 3–5. This is not the place to discuss the alleged Jewish character of the Young Turk movement (according to which they were Crypto-Jews, or so-called Dönme); cf., e.g., al-Nu'aimi (1998), ch. 4.

tions, bans, and threats of punishment could not prevent illegal land purchases from taking place. Only during World War I were the Ottoman authorities able to block Jewish immigration in any serious way.

LOCAL RESISTANCE AND ARAB IDENTITY

Like Jewish nationalism, Palestinian Arab nationalism developed in the full light of history, acquiring its specific traits in the course of its struggle against Zionist activity, Jewish immigration, and later British occupation. For this reason, it has often been described as a mere reaction to, if not mirror image of, Jewish nationalism. This is certainly an oversimplification. All nationalisms are specifically modern articulations of what Benedict Anderson called "imagined communities," and consciously "constructed" under specific conditions while at the same time very much real.³⁶ This is also true for Arab and Jewish nationalism. Arab nationalism in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and the Hijaz did not evolve, as it were, naturally and with the joyful participation of the masses, as Arab nationalist historiography would have us believe. Interestingly, nationalist narratives as they later developed never focused on a founding figure, real or mythical, that claimed or was claimed like Moses, Joshua, William Tell, Kemal Atatürk, or Theodor Herzl as a founding hero of the nation. Rather, Arabism was centered in three motifs: the unifying role of the Arabic language, the myth of the Arab uprising, and the trauma of European betrayal. The latter two only evolved during World War I and the postwar period, and were not yet in place at the turn of the twentieth century. To insist that all nationalisms are constructed makes it all the more imperative to clarify who did the constructing, who was included in the concept of the nation, and on what grounds, against whom the nation defined itself, and what the mobilizing potential of nationalism was for specific parts of the population at specific points in time. To put it differently: How were the boundaries drawn, and by whom? In the Arab, as in most cases (the Jewish example is especially instructive), identifications and loyalties were by no means exclusive. They could shift over time and be combined in various ways. In other words, Arab affiliation could coexist with other ways of identification and solidarity, from family and clan to religious community. This is especially relevant with respect to greater units that could be defined ethnically, religiously, or geographically, and to the combination of reli-

³⁶ Anderson (1991); R. Khalidi (1997). Morris (1987), p. 8, sums up the situation very well: For Arab-Palestinian nationalism, Zionism was at one and the same time a model, a provocation, and a threat.

gious and nonreligious motifs. The modern reform movements are a case in point: Both the Arab cultural renewal (*Nahda*) of the late nineteenth century and Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century were influenced more strongly by Sunni Islam than is widely thought, since nationalism was long identified with secularism and hence was regarded as a counterweight to religious ties and loyalties. It would be entirely wrong to identify Arab nationalism with secularism and to understand Arab nationalists and Islamic activists as polar opposites rather than as competitors in the political arena.

The Arab national movement of the twentieth century had a number of “forerunners,” among them the movement of cultural renewal (*Nahda*), as well as scattered instances of local resistance against Jewish colonization, physical as well as verbal. Arabism thus crystallized in several variants.³⁷ Demands ranged from autonomy within the Ottoman Empire to Arab separatism (though the proposed Arab boundaries were as yet ill defined). It would be worth exploring the parallels between Arab renewal and Islamic reform on the one hand and Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*) on the other: Both were primarily concerned with cultural renewal through the revival of language and literature; both were rooted in the religious tradition, which they sought to revive in the present; and both gradually gravitated toward nationalist ideas, whether Arabism or Zionism. Yet for a long time, the Arab movement did not acquire a profile and visibility comparable to what Zionism had achieved so early in its history.

Cultural and political renewal were made possible in large part due to the spread of new media, including the growing availability of newspapers and printed books.³⁸ In this process an important role was played not only by European immigrants, Christian missionaries, and indigenous monks and monasteries, but also by private Arab citizens, both Muslim and Christian. In 1908, when the Young Turk government briefly adopted liberal policies easing the harsh censorship laws of the Hamidian era, some thirty Arabic-speaking newspapers and periodicals appeared in the later Mandate region, of which six were based in Jerusalem. In regional terms this was not a great number (in Beirut during the same period twelve Arabic newspapers were printed, and in Baghdad a total of sixteen), but by local standards the figure was noteworthy. In 1909 the newspaper *al-Karmil* (Carmel) was founded in Haifa, dedicated to the struggle against Zionism. It was followed in 1911 by *Filas-*

³⁷ For Arab nationalism in general, see R. Khalidi et al. (eds.) (1991); Kayali (1997); Gershoni/Jankowski (eds.) (1997); Nafi (1998), ch. 1; for Palestine, see R. Khalidi (1997), esp. chs. 2 and 5, and Ayyad (1999).

³⁸ Ayalon (2004); Khalidi (1997), ch. 3.

tin, which was published in Jaffa and quickly developed into one of the most important newspapers in Palestine. *Filastin* (note the title, which predated British occupation) sought to make its readers aware of the danger of Zionism through various means, including the translation of Zionist writings. As in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Greater Syria itself, a new “public sphere” emerged in the urban centers: It was made up of a new class of men (and some women) with cultural and political interests, educated in Ottoman state schools or European and Arab private schools, both religious and secular, who kept themselves informed through periodicals, newspapers, and books, which owing to improved communications (post, telegraph, and steamship) were distributed more quickly and easily than before. They were able to read in newly established reading rooms and libraries where the collections were not limited to religious literature, as was the case in mosques, churches, synagogues, and the schools linked to them. They would meet in private homes and public cafés, clubs, and theaters. Horizons were expanded in every respect, movement became more free, knowledge more easily attainable, and exchange less burdensome—at least in the cities, and at least for the male part of the population.

The Islamic Salafiyya movement owed much to the reform ideas that so deeply influenced Arab society at the close of the nineteenth century. The Salafiyya took its name from the “pious predecessors” (*al-salaf al-salih*), the first generations of Muslims in Mecca and Medina.³⁹ Like the *Nahda*, the Salafiyya was essentially a group of individuals sharing a common cultural outlook, and not a well-defined sociopolitical movement with a clearly defined social base. It too made use of the new means of communication, especially the press, and quite successfully so. If at the time its influence was mainly confined to religious scholars, journalists, and other members of the educated urban elites, it later made an impact on the Islamic as well as parts of the nationalist movement, which referred in one way or another to the Salafiyya.

The situation was different with respect to various currents of Arabism, organized around the turn of the twentieth century into a series of clubs and secret societies that consisted not only of students, writers, and journalists, but also of Arab officers in the Ottoman army. For the most part these clubs could only operate abroad (in addition to Europe, “abroad” also included Egypt). The literary and cultural associations tolerated by the Ottoman authorities were not always clearly distinct from political organizations, which met mostly in secret. Until World War I, local Arab elites and the emerging Arab intelligentsia were staunch supporters of the Ottoman Empire, and the Young Turk Revo-

³⁹ For Greater Syria, cf. Commins (1990); Tauber (1993); Nafi (1998), ch. 1.

lution of 1908 was at first greeted with great enthusiasm in Palestine and other parts of Syria.⁴⁰ The Turkification policies of the Young Turks, however, who fostered the exclusive use of Turkish in state schools (or at least in secondary schools), law courts, and official business, caused grave offense. So did their authoritarian policies, which aimed at strengthening the central government at the expense of local elites, including Arab ones. Hence it will not come as a surprise that the attempted coup staged in April 1909 by conservative followers of Sultan Abdülhamid II found support in Nablus, a place generally regarded as very conservative. The steady loss of Ottoman territory in the Balkans and North Africa (notably present-day Libya) further damaged the reputation of the Young Turks and increased fears of a collapse of the Empire. Yet even after 1909, the Young Turks could still count on supporters in the Arab provinces. In the heavily manipulated elections for the Ottoman Parliament in 1912, most of the "Palestinian" districts went to the Young Turk Committee for Unity and Progress, while in the somewhat freer elections of April 1914 a number of their critics and opponents were victorious.

One of the options discussed in the secret clubs, especially after 1909, involved autonomy within a decentralized Empire; prior to its dissolution, only a tiny minority considered national independence and sovereignty. The group al-Fatat (*al-jam'iyya al-'arabiyya al-fatat*), founded in 1911 by a group of Arab students in Istanbul who later moved to Beirut, Damascus, and finally Paris, advocated greater autonomy and cultural self-determination within the Ottoman Empire. Among their founders was Awni Abd al-Hadi, from a well-known Nablus family, who in the interwar period would play an important role in regional politics.⁴¹ By contrast, the group al-Ahd (The Covenant), founded in Tripoli in 1913 following the Ottoman-Italian War, appears to have had no members from Palestine. Composed almost exclusively of Arab army officers, al-Ahd proposed a fundamental reform of the Ottoman Empire that would protect its "Islamic values." The Ottoman Decentralization Party (*hizb al-la-markaziyya al-idariyya al-'uthmaniyya*), formed in December 1912 in Cairo and one of the few political organizations to be able to work openly, did enjoy support in Palestine, where it even had some Jewish members. The number of people organized in these groups remained

⁴⁰ Nafi (1998), pp. 66–67, 78; Ayyad (1999), pp. 44ff., 56–57. For the enthusiasm evoked by the Young Turk Revolution, see Mandel (1976), ch. 3; Campos (2005); see also Rashid Ismail Khalidi, "The 1912 Election Campaign in the Cities of Bilad al-Sham." In *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16 (1984): 461–74. For the use of Arabic and Turkish in Ottoman schools under Sultan Abdülhamid II, see Deringil (1998), ch. 4; Somel (2001); Tibawi (1956), pp. 19–20; Khalidi (1997), pp. 46–53.

⁴¹ Nafi (1998), pp. 35–47, 60–61; Tauber (1993).

small. An Arab Congress held in Paris in June 1913 attracted only two dozen participants; in Palestine, it was heavily criticized for not paying sufficient attention to the "Palestinian cause." Cultural associations proved more popular and attractive: The Literary Forum (*al-muntada al-adabi*), founded by Arab students in Istanbul in 1909, appears to have maintained numerous branches in the Arab provinces including Palestine, with a total of up to one thousand members. Its activities were only halted when during World War I its chairman was executed. Still in Istanbul, Arab high school and university students joined to form a society known as the Green Flag (*al-alam al-akhbar*) in 1912.

With the outbreak of World War I, Arabs from the later Palestine Mandate area were thus involved in a number of political and cultural associations from al-Fatat to the Literary Forum. Just like the local Arab press, they criticized the prevailing lack of awareness of the Zionist threat, not only in the Ottoman government, but among the public in general. In Palestine itself, however, Arabism remained a minority position until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, never spreading widely among the Arab populace.⁴² Even declared anti-Zionist associations such as the Society to Combat Zionism (*jam'iyyat mukafahat al-sahyawniyya*), active in Nablus around 1913, could not elicit much support. Only rarely was opposition to Jewish settlement and immigration motivated by nationalist sentiment. In most cases it was based on specific interests. The press, however, already reflected the close connection between Arabist feelings and the critique of Zionist designs. The anti-Zionism manifested here was essentially founded in practical concerns related to politics and economics, with religious arguments playing only a secondary role.

⁴² Muslih (1988), p. 67, 96–100. Other authors ascribe more significance to them, such as Nafi (1998), pp. 59ff.; Ayyad (1999), pp. 39ff., 57ff. For contemporary notions of "Palestine," see Porath (1974), pp. 4–9; for early manifestations of Arabism and anti-Zionism, pp. 20–30.