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ARAB CULTURAL NATIONALISM IN PALESTINE DURING THE BRITISH MANDATE

ADNAN ABU-GHAZALEH *

The Arab world of the nineteenth century witnessed a marked cultural and national revival. With Beirut and Cairo as its centres, there arose a new climate of Arabic literature, journalism, cultural societies and increasingly nationalistic ideas. This atmosphere left its mark upon the young elite of a number of Arab regions, including Palestinians who were later to become exponents of cultural nationalism in their country. Among those involved in Arab cultural and nationalist activities in their pre-1914 student days abroad were a number of the most influential older writers and scholars of Mandatory Palestine, including the historians Mohammed Rafiq al-Tamimi and Arif al-Arif, and Adil Zu'aitir, the translator whose works later introduced many Palestinians to Western ideas.¹ Arabs from Palestine took part in some of the better known nationalist episodes of the time; in 1904, for instance, Najib Azuri of Jerusalem launched a campaign from Paris for Arab independence through his *Ligue de la patrie arabe*, with fiery appeals to the Arabs of Syria and Iraq to overthrow their Ottoman oppressors. The Arab Revolt of 1915 numbered Palestinians in its ranks, and the memoirs of Arif al-Arif vividly express one nationalist's feelings when they tell of the author's escape from a Siberian prison camp, along with twenty other Ottoman Arab captives — all of them

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Because the majority of Arabic works produced in Palestine in the Mandate did not show the name of the publisher, references to such works include only the date and place of publication.

¹ The biographical data on al-Tamimi comes from an interview with his brother Sa'id al-Tamimi on February 22, 1964; that on Arif al-Arif from a bibliographical sheet prepared by al-Arif at the request of the present writer; that on Zu'aitir from *Dhikra Adil Zu'aitir* (In memory of Adil Zu'aitir) Nablus, 1957, pp. 7-11. For reasons of space Zu'aitir's work will not be discussed at length in this article; an account of his writing is included in the author's manuscript, *op. cit.*

conscripted in the Ottoman army and captured on the Russian front in World War I — in an attempt to join the Revolt.²

The occupation of Palestine after the First World War confronted the Arab nationalists of the country with a unique situation. In face of the challenge of the Zionist movement and its scarcely concealed ambitions to turn Palestine into a Jewish state, nationalist writing within Palestine developed a specifically Palestinian orientation. There arose during the Mandate a body of Palestinian Arab literature — creative, political and historical — which may best be described as cultural nationalist. It integrated national themes with literature in such a way as to impress national consciousness upon the important educated sectors of the population. At the same time it was appreciated by its audience for its merits as a body of writing. The aim of the present article will be to describe this literature.

Cultural nationalism was to exert a significant influence on Palestinian national development. It must be acknowledged, naturally, that the number of Palestinian Arabs who were immersed in the cultural nationalist climate was small in comparison with the total Arab population of the country and was generally limited to the towns. But it should be remembered that Palestinian Arab society was in the process of change, with education and general development gradually increasing the number of those who joined the educated sector of society. Because this educated sector was an economically and socially dominant group in the population, its views influenced the outlook of ever larger segments of society. A pattern emerged which was not dissimilar to that by which important change takes place in any society. As had happened in Western Europe, a nationalist ideology spread in ever-widening circles from the few who first advocated it to the larger groups who found it meaningful and relevant to the needs of the time and finally to the population at large.

THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Prior to description of the literature of the Mandate period, two institutions in Palestine's educational and cultural environment merit attention for their role in arousing and stimulating national consciousness among the educated. These were the school system set up during the Mandate, which progressively produced an educated class, and the thirty or so cultural clubs and societies to which educated Palestinians belonged.

The school system educated a minority, though it was one that was gradually increasing. In 1911, slightly less than a quarter of school-age children

² Arif al-Arif, Unpublished Memoirs, May 1932. Of the elite of writers in Palestine, those mentioned earlier and Mohammed Darwazah are also on record as having joined in the Arab Revolt.

in Palestine — 17,000 out of 73,000 — attended school.³ Despite the progress made by the Palestine Department of Education, educational facilities for Arabs remained inadequate and by 1946 hardly more than a third of the school-age population (approx. 103,000 out of 301,250) was in school.⁴ Enrolment was higher in the towns, however, and more boys were in school than girls: among boys in towns attendance went as high as 85 per cent. Figures on literacy are not available, but these statistics indicate that significant numbers in the towns could read and write. The major deficiency in education was in the countryside where only twenty per cent of the girls and boys were in school.⁵

Administration policy laid down an emphasis on elementary schooling. Government provision for secondary training was inadequate, though there was an eventual improvement in facilities. By the mid-thirties, Palestine still had only six government (as opposed to private or foreign) schools providing lower secondary education — in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Nablus, Hebron and Gaza; and but two higher secondary institutions, the Arab College and the Rashidiya College, both in Jerusalem. By the end of the Mandate, though, twenty government institutions provided lower secondary, and eight offered higher secondary, training.⁶ A two-year teacher training course at the Arab College prepared graduates for appointment as teachers in government schools. Students seeking university degrees had to go to Europe, Egypt, or to the American University of Beirut.

Many factors in the system encouraged the growth of Arab consciousness among students. Instruction was wholly in Arabic, and great stress was put upon Arabic language and literature and Arab history. The teaching of European history acquainted Palestinian youth with Western ideological

³ Out of a total school-age population of about 38,000 boys and 35,000 girls, government, private and foreign schools together enrolled only 13,000 boys and 4,000 girls. About 6,000 boys and 1,500 girls were attending government schools, while private and foreign institutions took charge of about 7,000 boys and 2,300 girls. These statistics were gathered by Ahmed Samih al-Khalidi, Principal of the Arab College in Jerusalem, cited in M. F. Abcarius, *Palestine* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1946), pp. 101-2.

⁴ Out of a total school-age population of 157,000 boys and 144,250 girls, government, private and foreign schools together took charge of 74,164 boys and 28,698 girls. This means that only 34 per cent of the school-age population (47 per cent in the case of boys, 20 per cent in that of girls) was registered in schools. Attendance at government schools was 49,373 boys and 13,766 girls; that at non-government schools totalled 24,791 boys and 15,932 girls. *Hawliyat al-Thaqafa al-'Arabiya* (The Encyclopaedia of Arab Education), ed. by Sati al-Husri (Cairo: Arab League Publications, 1949), Vol. II, pp. 13-14.

⁵ In towns, out of 92,000 boys and girls, sixty-seven per cent attended including eighty-five per cent of the 48,000 boys. In the countryside, only a fifth of 208,150 boys and girls were at school. *Ibid*, vol. II, pp. 13-14.

⁶ Jibrail Katul, *al-Ta'lim fi Filastin* (Education in Palestine), (Beirut, 1950), pp. 125-130.

concepts such as nationalism. National themes were evident in the cultural and educational societies sponsored by the secondary schools, which invited prominent people to address their weekly sessions. Because of the official hostility towards political topics, most of these discussed Arab history or contrasted European advances with the backwardness of the Arabs. Some tried to prescribe remedies for the stagnant state of their society and urged their audiences to abandon old-fashioned ways. Others ignored instructions and dealt with the Zionist threat to the country. One such lecture prompted a demonstration which led to the closing of the secondary school at Nablus for a week.⁷

Textbooks, too, were instrumental in introducing Palestinian students to ideas current in the Arab world. Until the early forties, when the Palestinians began to produce their own, these were imported from Egypt. Palestinian students thus became acquainted with the literary contributions of leading writers such as Taha Hussein, Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat and Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, and with the historical novels of Jurji Zaidan, works which surveyed the various periods of the Arab past.⁸

Teachers for the government schools were recruited from among holders of the Palestine Matriculation certificate, the few graduates of universities abroad, and the alumni of the Arab College which in the late thirties and forties assumed increasing importance as a supplier of teachers. Many of its professors had been educated in Western universities, especially in England, where they had come into contact with European ideological concepts, notably nationalism. Especially prominent among these was Nicola Ziyadeh, who personally supervised the activities of the College's cultural society, and encouraged the students to invite persons known for their national devotion to speak at its weekly meetings. His own teaching further imbued the hundreds of his students with a feeling of national consciousness which they carried with them after graduation to the various schools they were assigned to all over Palestine.⁹

Some Palestinian nationalists were by no means satisfied with the quality of education provided. George Antonius, a senior official at the Department of Education, told the Palestine Royal Commission in 1936 that the system did not take sufficient account of the cultural and educational development of the Arabs, and that the Department's personnel were inflexible and lacked suitable qualifications. Appearing before the same commission, Khalil Totah, the Principal of the Government Teacher's College in Jerusalem, charged that the

⁷ Abd al-Qadir Yusuf, *Mustaqbal al-Tarbiya fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi fi Daw' al-Tajriba al-Filastiniya* (The Future of Education in the Arab World in the Light of the Palestine Experience), (Cairo, 1962), pp. 60-63.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Katul, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24. The present writer, himself a former pupil of Professor Ziyadeh at the Rashidiya College in Jerusalem, was a witness of Ziyadeh's strong influence upon the national consciousness of his pupils.

system was wholly intended to create a mentality among Palestinian young men that could acquiesce in the formation of a Jewish home in Palestine.¹⁰

These assertions notwithstanding, there is no doubt that the Arab school system of Palestine contributed immensely to the enhancement of national consciousness. Not only was it, as the Royal Commission described it:

... as purely Arab in its character as the Jewish system is Jewish. The teaching is in Arabic only; apart from scientific subjects, the curriculum is almost wholly devoted to the literature, history, and traditions of the Arabs; and all schoolmasters from the humblest village teacher to the head of the Government Arab College are Arabs.¹¹

The events of the thirties and forties also revealed the prevalence of nationalism in the majority of pupils at government schools. They participated in the strikes that took place in 1929, 1933 and 1936, and they took part in the movement of civil disobedience that was called for by the Arab Higher Committee as an answer to the British insistence on opposing Arab national demands, forcing the authorities to close schools all over Palestine for six months.¹²

Another medium of education in Palestine was the private academic institutions, some Arab, others foreign. In the forties, these schools gave instruction to forty per cent of the student population of the country. While the Arab schools were scattered all over Palestine, foreign schools were concentrated in Jerusalem, which then had eleven government schools, seven private Arab schools and forty foreign.¹³

The emphasis on the teaching of Arab culture was most marked in the private Arab schools. These supplied the country with six leading secondary schools, one in each of the centres of Palestine's administrative districts, all of which gave eleven years of instruction. The most important of them were the Najah National College of Nablus and the Nahdah College in Jerusalem.

Najah College was established in 1920. Its first Board of Trustees defined its goals as: first, providing a suitable atmosphere for adolescence and bringing out the student's potential for responding to his society; second, forming character and breeding love of work; third, strengthening the national consciousness of the student and planting in him devotion and respect for the Arabs' cultural heritage and awareness of the inseparable bonds of the Arab nation in the various Arab countries. In view of the conditions in Palestine at that time the third goal overshadowed the first two in the curricula of the college. These

¹⁰ Great Britain, *Palestine Royal Commission: Minutes of Evidence* (London: The Government of Palestine Publications, 1937), pp. 351-64.

¹¹ Cmd. 5479; cited in Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

¹² Yusuf, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-43.

¹³ Arif al-Arif, *al-Mufasssal fi Tarikh al-Quds* (A Detailed History of Jerusalem) (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 444.

curricula, while following the basic requirements of the Department of Education, devoted more time than government schools to the teaching of Arab language and literature and Arab history. More emphasis was also put on extra-curricular activities, especially discussions, lectures and trips.¹⁴

The secondary division of Najah College drew students from all the major towns of Palestine, especially after the opening of boarding facilities in 1929. The College's records of the mid-thirties showed that out of the two hundred and fifty students in the secondary division of the college, one hundred came from outside Nablus. During the forties the students from Nablus constituted only one-half of a total attendance of three hundred and twenty.

One popular activity of the College, which attracted large audiences, was the holding of semi-annual lectures sponsored by the Literary Club of the school, at which a leading man of letters was invited to speak. A committee of students usually chose the topic and the lecturer and invitations were sent to the leading Palestinian personalities. The text of these lectures used to appear in the local press and thus helped to publicize the work of the school. Another conspicuous activity of the College was the annual festival to which a free invitation was sent to the leading personalities of the Palestine Arab community. At this festival the students usually produced a stage performance that reflected some of the memorable episodes in the history of the Arabs. Such celebrations were held annually from 1930 to 1946, with the exception of the years of the 1936-39 revolt. Early in 1936 a demonstration by the students of the College carried out in compliance with instructions from the Arab Higher Committee sparked a movement of civil disobedience in Nablus and led to the closing of the College by the military authorities in the town. It was closed for one year and then opened under the close supervision of the administration for two more years. It resumed its regular activities only after 1939.

The foreign schools, on the other hand, played an inferior part in spreading national consciousness. Most of them were run by missionary bodies and the medium of instruction was English, French or, very rarely, German. The teachers of such schools were generally missionaries or Arabs with a Western educational background. Hence the students who attended such institutions acquired some knowledge of Western attitudes and modes of life. As a result, most of the graduates of these schools upheld the view that Arab welfare in the future depended on the degree to which the Arab people could substitute new ideals and habits for their oriental beliefs and practices.¹⁵ Missionary

¹⁴ This and the following information is taken from the official records of Najah College, to which the writer was given access by Qadri Tuqan, the principal of the college.

¹⁵ See Habib Amin Kurani, "The Interaction of Islamic and Western Thought in the Arab World," *Near Eastern Culture and Society*, ed. by T. C. Young (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 155.

institutions in some other Arab countries, notably Lebanon and Egypt, sometimes had an effect on their students and teachers opposite to what was expected, for the students resented the strict discipline that was applied at these institutions and the religious bias that sometimes accompanied their administration and eventually became outspoken in their opposition to such schools, accusing them of being foreign tools. No similar outcome was apparent, however, in Palestine.¹⁶

After graduation from school or college, the educated Palestinian could become a member of one of about thirty clubs scattered in the various towns and big villages. These clubs were modelled on the literary societies which had appeared in the major centres of the Arab world in the nineteenth century. The first were inaugurated in the early twenties, when three were opened in Jerusalem, two in Nablus and one in Hebron. During the thirties two were established in Haifa, one in Acre and one in Jaffa. By the end of the Mandate every Palestinian Arab town with a population of ten thousand or more had one or two such clubs. The total membership in each varied between 3000, as in the case of the Arab Club of Nablus, which was sponsored by the Palestine Arab party during the thirties, and about 100, as in the case of the Literary Arabic Club of Beersheba.¹⁷

The activities of these clubs differed from one to the other. The typical club, however, had a literary committee, a political committee, an athletics committee, and a library; some of them also had students' committees. One major activity of the clubs was the holding of lectures and discussion groups, which were usually sponsored by the literary and political committees. Some of these lectures dealt with certain aspects of Arab civilization; others dealt with the social and economic ills of Arab society in Palestine and the other Arab countries. Religious occasions, like the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, the New Year's Day of the Hijrah Moslem calendar and the first day of the holy month, Ramadan, were usually celebrated by a festival which began with an address showing the importance of such occasions for past Arab greatness. The political committees sponsored lectures on such topics as the danger of the Zionist movement to the Arabs, pan-Arabism and Western imperialism. Certain anniversaries became occasions for lectures and discussions in all the clubs: that of the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, in which the condemnation of Britain and Zionist designs were favourite topics;

¹⁶ Katul, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-83.

¹⁷ This information and that which follows is derived from the personal experience of the writer in the late forties, from verbal conversations with some of the living members of the clubs, and from the records and libraries of the nineteen clubs that continued their activity in the Arab part of Palestine after the termination of the British Mandate. Most important of these were the clubs of Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Tulkarm.

of the first shot fired by Hussein ibn Ali, of the Hashemite family, declaring the beginning of the Arab revolt against the Ottomans; of the execution of the three "heroes" of Hebron;¹⁸ and of the beginning of the three year revolt of 1936.

The discussion groups usually examined a certain episode taken from the history of the Arabs or from the contemporary events of Palestine and the other Arab countries. On frequent occasions these groups used to discuss books that dealt with some aspect of Arab nationalism. When a book was chosen for a discussion, copies of it, which were usually available at the club's library, circulated among the members prior to the holding of the session.

The literary clubs were actively involved in nationalist activity. Their influence could be seen in their sponsoring of the civil disobedience campaign of the thirties and in the committee established in the forties for the purpose of boycotting Jewish industry. It could also be observed in the organizations of the late forties which the Palestinian Arabs formed to arrange for the imminent conflict with the Zionists.

The atmosphere current in the clubs can best be gauged by an examination of their available records and of the books that their libraries held during the Mandate. This reveals that members had access to all the political tracts written in Palestine during the period against Zionism and the British Mandate. They received a large number of publications written in other Arab countries, especially those concerned with the theory and the future of Arab nationalism. And, in particular, they subscribed to all the daily newspapers and journals that appeared in the country, as well as to the literary and historical books published by Palestinian Arabs.

CREATIVE WRITING

The maturity of some of the Palestinians who had been members of the different literary clubs in the decade before the First World War, and the return of the few students from the universities where they had received a thorough education in the humanities, provided Palestine with a number of creative writers of varied viewpoints and interests. The economic development of the country and the growth of schools and literary clubs simultaneously provided a sizeable audience for the work of these writers, which illustrated the increasing concern of Palestinians for their country's future.

Some of the literary forms employed by the writers were relatively new to the Arab world. Pre-modern Arabic literature, like the literature of other Moslem countries, had consisted of epic poems, popular romances and folk

¹⁸ See below, p. 49.

tales, and the Arabic novel was not born until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when perceptible changes began to occur in Arab society as a result of increasing contact with the West. By the nineteen thirties, however, short stories and novels, which had first appeared in Lebanon and Egypt late in the previous century, were to become common in most Arab countries including Palestine.

The short stories of Palestinian writers reflected the background in which the authors were living. A few of them depicted the social conditions of Palestinian Arab society: the family ties, the poverty in the villages, and the transformation of social habits under the impact of new conditions, especially urbanization. The majority of stories, however, reflected the impact of foreign occupation, and of Jewish immigration and purchase of land on Palestinian Arab families. A sketch of the themes and styles of some of them will offer a basic idea of the concerns of their authors.

One of the better known collections to appear in Palestine during the Mandate was *al-Akhawat al-Hazinat* (The Grieving Sisters) by Najati Sidqi.¹⁹ This collection included eighteen stories, five of which had as their subjects incidents and events in Palestine in the twenties, while the others dealt with aspects of social life in various Arab countries after Western occupation.

Sidqi's stories revealed a preoccupation with the social and political problems the Arabs were facing. In one of them he described the fortunes of a sentimental young man, brought up in a traditional family, who fell in love with a half-emancipated woman. The story depicted the young man's lack of emotional stability and his personal failure to face up to new conditions. In "The Grieving Sisters," on the other hand, Sidqi described the transformation of the suburbs of Jaffa from a quiet, romantic place into a busy city: the transformation of pure Arab surroundings into a city inhabited by aliens who had introduced strange habits and ways of life.

In the description of characters and events in his stories, especially those that dealt with social problems, Sidqi showed himself to be essentially a romanticist. He displayed little ability to approach subject matter in a down-to-earth, realistic spirit. Nevertheless, his work gave a recognizable portrait of the dilemma of man left adrift between old and new worlds.

While Sidqi was preoccupied with social and political problems, Abd-al-Hamid Yasin focused on the fortunes of the educated elite and their effort to adapt themselves to new circumstances. In a collection called *Aqasis* (Stories)²⁰ he included eight stories, four of which he translated and the rest of which he wrote himself. In "The Feast of the Philosopher," a story of the latter group,

¹⁹ Jerusalem, 1928.

²⁰ Jaffa, 1946.

he portrayed the feelings of an intellectual who tried to substitute for the traditional way of celebrating a feast a new way, one of contemplation and constructive thinking. In another story, "The Face of Voltaire," Yasin displayed his interest in moralizing, describing life as a "series of miseries interrupted by glimpses of happiness."

Yasin's stories reflected his idealism. They summed up what he would like the life of his countrymen to be. The stories are mostly narrated by a "dreaming hero" and consequently lacked many of the characteristics of conventional short story writing.

Short stories were generally more successful than the Palestinian novel, which, like those of other Arab countries, was tardy in its appearance and, in many cases, mediocre in its attainment. The mainstay of most European novels is the concept of love. Although the modern Arab intellectual shares this as an ideal, the social revolution in the Arab countries had not gone far enough to enable the Arab writer to permit the usual novelist's plot to develop realistically. Palestinian novelists tried to avoid this by eliminating the element of love altogether from their novels. The only Palestinian writer to introduce love was Abd-al-Halim Abbas in *Fatah min Filastin* (A Girl from Palestine), in which he placed in local setting characters who are Arab in little more than name.

Representative of the novels that Palestinian Arab writers produced were *al-Malak wa al-Simsar* (The Angel and the Land Broker) by Mohammed Izzat Darwazah²¹ and *Mudhakkirat Dajaja* (The Diaries of a Hen)²² by Ishaq Musa al-Husseini, an educator from Jerusalem. Both had a clearly didactic purpose and reflected the political fears of their authors.

al-Malak wa al-Simsar was a story about a Palestinian Arab who was enticed into selling his land to a Zionist organization. The story opens with a description of a typical Palestinian Arab family in the mid-twenties. The head of the family, an illiterate of about forty, has spent all his life as a farmer and has never been exposed to the attractions of life in the cities. Under the influence of a Jewish broker he makes his first visit to Tel-Aviv. Here he is introduced to a girl who encourages him to spend what little he has. The yield of the land he owns proves insufficient to meet his obligations and the land broker arranges for a mortgage. When the payment falls due, the farmer cannot meet it. The broker offers him a price for his land far in excess of its value, and he is willing to sell. Within a short time he spends the money he received; he deserts his wife and children and turns to begging. He ends his life in a lunatic asylum.

Although stories about unscrupulous money lenders hoodwinking farmers exist in almost every country, Darwazah tried to give the tale a local meaning

²¹ Nablus, 1934.

²² Cairo, 1943.

for his readers by identifying Zionism as the principal source of misfortune, and the Arabs as its innocent victims. His chief practical aim became very clear towards the end of the story when he described elaborately the way in which other villages decided to create a fund for saving lands threatened by Zionist buyers.

The novel by al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat Dajaja*, on the other hand, was a parable employing the ancient device of depicting through the eyes of an animal a reality which human beings themselves are unable to confront.

The diary of the hen begins when it is owned by a peasant family. It can move around as it pleases, food is plentiful and life is easy. The hen records the life of its owners, their dependence on the produce of the land, and their care-free approach to whatever they do. One day the hen finds fences blocking its way. It ascertains from its owners that some of their land has been sold to a rich foreigner in order to pay the increasing taxes. The land that remains is not enough to provide the family with its needs, and so the head of the family begins to sell some of his belongings. The hen is sold to a shopkeeper in a neighbouring town. It is put in a cage and can no longer enjoy the freedom it is used to. Although it does not starve, it has to obey the whims of its master, who sometimes feeds it well and sometimes withholds food altogether. The situation becomes worse when the master brings a number of other hens. Now the hen has to limit its movements to a corner of the cage. What makes the situation more distasteful is that these new hens are most sophisticated: they speak a language the old hens cannot understand and they know how to get the largest share of the food that is thrown in the cage. Gradually the hen begins to understand their strange talk; it begins to realize that it is not the only suffering hen. Most of the old hens are suffering, too. It even hears that the new hens are planning to expel all the old ones. The master, however, takes pity on the old hens that have been entrusted to him and, for some time, prevents new arrivals. When he subsequently changes his mind the hen begins to realize that in time the number of new hens will exceed that of the old if the master is not persuaded to change his intentions. All the old hens must participate in working out a plan to achieve this aim. The last lines the hen enters in the diary show it thinking deeply about the means to ensure a unified plan; it is also unsure about the future.

As the political situation changed, so too did the setting and themes of the Palestinian novel. While al-Husseini's novel was based on the condition of Palestine during the first two decades of the Mandate, the last Palestinian novel on Arab-Jewish relations under the Mandate, *Fatah min Filastin*,²³ was set against the background of the war between the Arabs and the Jews in the last

²³ Amman, 1949.

year of the Mandate. Written by Abd al-Halim Abbas, himself a participant in the events of 1948, its time range extended from the beginning of 1947 through to the signing of the 1949 armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states. Introducing a romantic theme into the Palestinian novel for the first time, Abbas built the plot around a love affair between a Palestinian couple in a village near what became the line of demarcation between the Jordanian and the Israeli occupied territories. He carried the events through the Arab-Jewish clashes in the last twelve months of the Mandate, the Arab-Jewish war, and the beginning of the refugee problem in the few months after the cessation of fighting. The hero of the novel participates in the secret organizations smuggling weapons for the coming conflict, and the novel ends with his death on the land of his village.

Fatah min Filastin pictures the hardships the refugee Arab family underwent immediately after its flight from Palestine. Offering an indication of the current concerns and later political trends of the Palestinians, it abounds in nationalist sentiment: it reveals the strong appeal of Arab nationalism to the Palestinian Arab youth and the devotion of these youths to the restoration of the occupied homeland to its owners. The hero is seen speaking to the youth of his village about the necessity for the independence of Arab countries and their eventual unity and about his satisfaction in hearing that the Arab governments of the neighbouring countries have agreed to the formation of a unified command for the coming war. He considers this agreement significant in two ways: it will protect the national character of his homeland and will serve as a first practical step on the path of full unity.²⁴

Arab novelists faced special problems because they were adopting a literary form imitated from Western Europe where it had greater variety and scope of content and many decades of evolution behind it. Poetry, however, did not pose the same problem since there was already an existing body of classical Arabic poetry. This was the major influence on Ibrahim Tuqan and Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi, who were especially representative of the many Palestinian poets who expressed nationalist feelings during the Mandate. In their poetry both continued to look backward; they used the metres of Arabic classical poetry and acknowledged their indebtedness to past masters. But instead of addressing some wealthy patron, as was the custom in the past, they wrote for the general public in books or in the press. By stressing the heroic rather than the panegyric, Tuqan and al-Abbushi, like all other Arab poets in the period, figured as spokesmen of national loyalties and aspirations. Their nationalism became more intense in response to local and national events that stirred public opinion.

²⁴ *Fatah min Filastin*, pp. 151-54.

Tuqan's poetry was primarily concerned with national considerations; it was a call to his compatriots to rebel against the British authorities and to liberate their homeland from foreign rule. Some of his poems solicited material help from the Arabs everywhere. His inflammatory influence on his fellow countrymen caused the Mandatory authorities to order his arrest. He sought refuge in Iraq for three years and returned shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. In the same year he died after a short illness at the age of forty. By then his poetry was known all over the Arab world through biographies and anthologies and frequent reprints in the Arabic press outside Palestine.²⁵

An example of Tuqan's nationalist poetry is *al-Thalatha al-Hamra* (Red Tuesday), which he wrote in memory of three Palestinian Arabs from Hebron, who were executed by the British authorities for their participation in Arab riots. The poem displays his simple diction, smooth style, and mastery at playing on the readers' emotions, the characteristics that gave his writing such a wide appeal. The poem begins with a general description of the past greatness of the Arabs, their veneration of justice, and their readiness for sacrifice in the service of Arab causes. It then gives a sketch of the events that led to the attacks. After describing the part played by the three "heroes," the author sets forth what he thinks has happened in the military court in which the three have been tried. He then describes the execution in one of the squares of the town and ends his poem by pointing out to Arabs everywhere that:

These heroes are no criminals although those who have condemned them think so. They have been crucified just as Jesus Christ was in order to pay with their blood the price of your redemption. They will go straight to Heaven and reap the reward which God has promised for martyrs. Should you not follow in their path and reap the blessing of God?

Like Ibrahim Tuqan, Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi of Jenin was born into a well-to-do family of landowners; he also received a Western style education. Although less productive than Tuqan, he displayed in what he wrote the influence that nationalist sentiment had on him. An example of his nationalist poetry is his play, *Watan al-Shahid* (The Homeland of the Martyr).²⁶ In his introduction, he summed up the nature of the play and his reason for its composition:

²⁵ Among the most important books written on him are: An anthology by Fadwa Tuqan *Akhi Ibrahim* (My Brother Ibrahim), (Beirut, 1955); Zaki al-Mahasini *Ibrahim Tuqan Sha'ir al-Watan al-Makhsab* (Ibrahim Tuqan, Poet of the Usurped Homeland), (Cairo, 1956); Yaqub al-'Udat *Ibrahim Tuqan fi Wataniyatih wa Wijdaniyatih* (The National and Emotional Poetry of Ibrahim Tuqan), (Amman, 1964).

²⁶ Jerusalem, 1947.

This play of mine is, to my knowledge, the first of its kind to be written on the Palestine problem. I have discussed in it, in verse, the designs of our enemies and their plots against our beloved country, Palestine. I have collected data from the press, from every available document, from historical works, and from any place I could have had access to in order to show the preparedness of our enemies, their watchfulness, and their dangerous plots against our homeland. This work of mine is dedicated in the first place to the commoner to lay off his slumber.²⁷

A Western reader can easily apprehend the book's general sense. He will also perceive the extremely emotional approach of the writer and the large proportion of narrative passages that idolize the great achievements of the Arabs in their early history, their sense of justice, and their devotion to the protection of their rights. What will be less comprehensible is al-Abbushi's association of patriotism with the Moslem faith and the simultaneous veneration of pre-Islamic Arab heroes. On one occasion he cites the oft-quoted dictum, attributed to the Prophet, "love of one's country is a part of the faith,"²⁸ and on another he emphasizes the parochial loyalties of the pre-Islamic Arabs and then concludes that, while Palestine is simply a tiny part of the extensive Arab homeland, Palestinians are bound to display the same sentiment and the same attachment to their fatherland shown by their ancestors in the past.²⁹

Although al-Abbushi called what he wrote a play, it has none of the characteristics of that form in the drawing of the characters or in the treatment of the plot. What al-Abbushi really attempted to do was to arouse the patriotic feeling of his readers by stressing what their forefathers did and by calling on these readers to try to imitate them. In the same manner as earlier foreign invasions were frustrated — the reference being to the Crusaders — he urged that the Arabs should defeat this new attempt at taking away from them a part of their "watan."

Such is a representative sample of the creative works of Palestinian writers. They were the product of a nascent national revival and nationalist themes often predominated over other literary considerations. Yet the attempt to reproduce national feelings in an artistic framework struck a chord in the Palestinian audience. As early as 1928, the daily newspaper *Filastin* had started a regular weekly literary supplement, while the memoirs of the period attest to the immediate and wide popularity of the literary productions among the educated Palestinian classes.³⁰

²⁷ *Watan al-Shahid*, pp. i, ii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁰ Mahmud al-Abidi, Unpublished Memoirs, June 1934 and September 1943; also Arif al-Arif, Unpublished Memoirs, September 1928 and October 1940.

THE GROWTH OF POPULAR WRITING

The reaction of the Palestinians to Zionism and the British Mandate was also expressed in a flood of political publications. These ranged from polemical tracts and booklets to more sophisticated articles and essays in which Palestinian writers tried to acquaint their fellow countrymen with the history of the problem and to explain to other Arabs the implications of the Zionist movement. The origins, aims, designs and techniques of the Zionists were described, analysed and condemned. In some cases precautionary measures were also suggested for dealing with the situation.

Palestinian writers treated Arab national issues somewhat differently from the writers of the other Arab countries. Contemporary Arab writing paid great attention to the Arab nationalist movement and the question of the form Arab unity should finally assume. Palestinian writers were also interested in the Arab national movement, but they linked it with Zionism and imperialism. While other Arab countries fought for national independence, the Palestinians saw themselves as fighting for their national existence. The library collections of the literary clubs offer a comparison of Palestinian and other Arab writing; although the libraries included all Palestinian literature, it was the writings of the Syrian al-Kawakibi, the Lebanese al-'Alayili and the Iraqi al-Husri which provided the basic elaborations of the theoretical basis of modern Arab nationalism,³¹ a theme often lacking in the writings of the Palestinians themselves.

The plans of the Zionists for a Jewish return to Palestine and the danger posed by such plans for the Arab character of the country had been the subject of Palestinian political writing even before the establishment of the Mandate. One author, Najib Nassar, a Christian journalist from Haifa, warned of the danger of Zionism to the future of Palestine as early as 1911, when he predicted that if the country were opened to free Jewish immigration, its Arab population would quickly become a minority, and Palestine would cease to be Arab.³² Subsequent writings continued the same theme. Immediately after the establishment of the Mandate, another Christian Arab, Bulos Abbud, a lawyer from Jaffa, foretold a black future for the Arabs of the Holy Land if the new administration carried out the stipulations of the Balfour Declaration. He looked back on the freedom which the Christians of Palestine had enjoyed among the Moslems, the absence of religious conflicts through the preceding

³¹ Prominent among their writings in library collections were al-Kawakibi's *Umm al-Qura* (The Mother of Towns), (republished in Cairo, 1931); al-'Alayili's *Dustur al-'Arab al-Qawmi* (The National Constitution of the Arabs), (Beirut, 1941); and al-Husri's *Ara' wa Ahadith fi al-Wataniya wa al-Qawmiya* (Views and Addresses on Patriotism and Nationalism), (Cairo, 1944).

³² *al-Sahyuniya* (Zionism), (Haifa, 1911), pp. 150-53.

decades, and the feeling of solidarity and trust between the Christian and Moslem Arabs. Abbud warned that the establishment of a Jewish national home in the country would not only undermine the national character of the Holy Land, but it would also interrupt the peace that had reigned in the Holy City, because its Arab population was bound to oppose by force a plan that would make them a minority in their own homeland.³³

During the twenties there was a lull in political literature as resistance to the Mandate lessened, partly because of the improvement of the economic conditions of the country. But the increase of Jewish immigration towards the end of the decade again made the Palestinians restless and brought forth new writing. By 1929, despite a certain degree of governmental control over immigration, the number of the Jews in the country had increased to about 160,000, more than double the figure in 1920. By 1936 the number of Jews in the country had risen to 200,000 and their land holdings had increased from 110,000 acres to 308,000.³⁴

Some works adopted the theme of Arab unity as the solution to the new danger. Mohammed Izzat Darwazah, who had been influenced by his participation in the Arab nationalist movement in its early stage, tried to link the development of the movement with the future of Palestine.³⁵ His writing was aimed not merely at Palestinians but at the Arab movement itself. He maintained that the Palestine problem should serve as a unifying force among the Arabs, and stressed that while other Arab countries were on the way to achieving some form of independence, the future of Palestine was still in jeopardy. He wanted to make it clear that its loss would be a severe blow to the Arab nationalist movement.

The majority of this writing, however, concentrated on the situation created in Palestine itself as a result of the First World War. One of the important tracts was written by Mohammed Yunis al-Husseini, who had behind him the tradition of a family known for its participation in the national movement. al-Husseini tried to discredit the legal and ethical basis of the Balfour Declaration.³⁶ After examining its alleged motives he maintained that it had no authority in international law because it had been issued in the form of a letter, and that the British Government was not bound by its stipulations. He then argued that His Majesty's Government had neither the legal nor the moral right to issue such a declaration. Lord Balfour, by his

³³ *al-Ard al-Muqaddasah wa al-Sahyuniya* (The Holy Land and Zionism), (Jaffa, 1920), pp. 85-88.

³⁴ Hurewitz, J.C., *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: Norton and Co., 1950), pp. 28-29.

³⁵ *Filastin wa al-'Uruba* (Palestine and Arabism), (Jerusalem, 1929), pp. 4, 5.

³⁶ *Tahlil Wa'd Balfour* (The Analysis of the Balfour Declaration), (Jerusalem, 1933), pp. 1, 11.

statement, was giving notice to the world that the British government was giving away a country to which England had no legal claim and was disposing of a "homeland" that already belonged to another nation.

Emphasizing current hardships as well as legal claims was a work by Sidqi al-Dajani on the situation in the country during the twenties and early thirties. He gave an account of the unsettled conditions resulting from Arab opposition to Jewish immigration and purchase of land. The injustice that befell Palestine, he pointed out, lay in the fact that:

... many Arab villagers have been ousted from the lands their forefathers had tilled for centuries; they are not even allowed to work as wage-earners on these lands. The Jewish influx to the country has benefitted only those Arabs who mostly live outside Palestine.... It is true that the Jews have suffered but it is grave injustice to try to solve the misfortunes of some human beings at the expense of others.³⁷

Arab resentment at Jewish immigration, which was expressed in 1929 by attacks on Jewish settlements, finally broke out into an armed rebellion against the British which lasted from 1936 to 1939. On the literary side, this rebellion produced one popular item, a collaborative work by Amin Aql, Ibrahim Najm and Umar al-Nasr, three Moslems from Jaffa, under the title *Jihad Filastin al-'Arabiya* (The Holy War of Arab Palestine).³⁸ It examined the various revolts of the Palestinians in the twenties and thirties, paying special attention to that of 1936. The book was read by a large number of the rebels because the authors had participated in the uprisings and had incorporated their personal experience in what they wrote. They were among the early Palestinian writers to stress the necessity for Arab solidarity in order to preserve the Arab character of the country.

Politically, the rebellion helped to bring about a new statement of British policy. In 1939 the British government made a bid to secure a more favourable attitude from the Arab world in view of the worsening situation in Europe. The White Paper of that year offered the prospect in ten years' time of an independent state in Palestine, allied to Britain, in which Arabs would be in the majority but would share government with the Jews. Arab moderates and the Arab states considered this a modest victory for the Arabs, although the Palestine Arab Party rejected the proposals and continued to press for immediate independence. The Zionists also opposed the White Paper.

The writings that appeared in Palestine after 1939 reflected a new approach to the problem. Armed clashes had subsided, the Arab moderates and

³⁷ Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani, *Tafsir Zulamat Filastin* (The Explanation of the Palestine Injustice), (Jerusalem, 1936), p. ii.

³⁸ *Jihad Filastin al-'Arabiya* (The Holy War of Arab Palestine), (Beirut, 1939).

Arab states accepted the stipulations of the White Paper and the extreme nationalists were either in exile or detention. Moreover, many of the intelligentsia, in view of the promise of independence, began to feel that the Arab character of Palestine had become secure, as the Arabs would be a majority in the proposed new state. They consequently began to address themselves to the Arab nationalist movement and the place Palestine was to have within that movement.

One of the pioneers among Palestinians to write about Arab nationalism was Najati Sidqi, who analysed the development of the movement in the thirty years from the Young Turk revolt of 1908 to the Palestinian Arab revolt of 1936.³⁹ He considered the movement to have been originally composed of separate national movements — first in Egypt and Syria, later in Iraq and Palestine. He saw in the year 1936 the fruitful results of all these movements: an Anglo-Egyptian treaty that recognized the full independence of Egypt was concluded; treaties between France and the Syrians and Lebanese arranged for the transfer of authority from the French to the Arabs; the Iraqi nationalist Bakr Sidqi seized control in Baghdad; and the Palestinians created a unified command and declared an armed revolt. Another promising sign which Sidqi saw in the two decades after the War was the fact that Arab national consciousness had begun to permeate the masses under the pressure of Western occupation; this, he believed, would lead to pan-Arab sentiment, the prelude to eventual unity.

Ahmad Kamal, a Moslem from Nablus, and a member of the Independence Party, stressed the importance of a common language and the cultural and religious heritage as unifying forces among the Arabs.⁴⁰ He pointed out that Arab nationalism after the First World War was strengthened by four stimuli. In the first place, the Arab liberation movements in the eastern Mediterranean all came to have an identical target: the imperialism of Britain and France. Second, the acceleration of modern means of communication increased contacts among Arabs of the various countries. The Arabs of Palestine gradually mingled with those of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq. The consciousness of the kinship among the Arab peoples, which had previously been limited to a small number of the elite, began gradually to reach the uneducated. (This was, in fact, an exaggeration: some Palestinians came into closer contact with other Arabs, but they were a tiny minority.) Thirdly, the cultural revival gained momentum and contributed greatly to the sharpening of Arab national consciousness. And, finally, the bond of religion brought the majority of Arabs

³⁹ *Tarikh al-Harakat al-'Arabiya min 'Ahd al-Inqilab al-'Uthmani hatta 'Ahd al-Kulla al-Wataniya* (The History of the Arab National Movement from the Ottoman Revolution until the Formation of the National Bloc), (Beirut, 1939), pp. ii, iii, iv.

⁴⁰ *Usus al-Nuhud al-Qawmi* (The Foundations of the National Revival), (Beirut, 1939).

together. Such a condition, he concluded, was bound to lead to some form of Arab unity. (This feeling continued to be reflected in Palestinian writing in the forties, notably in works by Nicola Ziyadeh⁴¹ and Yusuf Heykal, mayor of Jaffa)⁴².

During the last two decades of the Mandate, the Palestinian press was becoming increasingly important as a medium for political writing. A brief account of the development of the press movement in Palestine will illustrate the extent of its activity.

Newspapers in Palestine dated back to 1908 when three appeared at the same time: *al-Asma'i*, named after a famous man of letters; *al-Quds* (Jerusalem); and *al-Nafa'is al-'Asriya* (Modern Treasures). Three years later the long-lived *Filastin* (Palestine) was established as a semi-weekly by Isa al-Isa, a Christian Arab from Jaffa, and his brother, Hanna. Two others appeared in 1913: *al-Maahal* (The Spring) and *al-Munadi* (The Caller).⁴³ Except for *Filastin*, these newspapers had a limited duration, and by the end of the twenties had all disappeared. Before the British occupation, their general theme was the call for Arab independence and a stress on the greatness of the Arab heritage. They were of little significance after the occupation.

The important daily newspapers during the Mandate were *Filastin*, *al-Jami'a al-Islamiya* (The Islamic League), established by Suleiman al-Faruq, a religious leader from Ramleh, and *al-Difa* (Defence) started by the al-Shanti brothers, originally reporters on *al-Jami'a al-Islamiya*. Both these were opened in the thirties: the former in 1931, (although it ceased publication after the death of its owner in 1934) and the latter in 1934. This period was also significant for Palestinian political development in that it saw the appearance of journals which came into existence to advocate a specific political viewpoint. The most important of these was the *Jerusalem Review* which began circulating in 1932 as an organ for a group of Arab intellectuals who advocated immediate Arab unity as a means of containing the Zionist threat to Palestine. It was of brief duration, being suppressed by the authorities after the outbreak of the revolt of 1936.

Other journals of this kind were communist: *al-Munabbih* (The Tocsin) was the official journal of the Palestinian Communist Party which began publication in the late twenties and was issued for a couple of years and then replaced by the monthly *Ila al-Amam* (Forward). This advocated a Palestinian state, with the Jews playing a role in it proportionate to their numbers in the

⁴¹ See N. Ziyadeh, *al-Qawmiya wa al-'Uruba* (Patriotism and Arabism), (Jerusalem, 1945).

⁴² *Nahwa al-Wahda al-'Arabiya* (Towards Arab Unity), (Cairo, 1945), pp. 231-32.

⁴³ Nasser al-Din al-Asad, *al-Ittijahat al-Adabiya al-Haditha fi Filastin wa al-Urdun* (Modern Literary Trends in Palestine and Jordan), (Cairo, 1956), pp. 47 ff.

country. The most important, however, was *al-Ittihad* (Unity), edited by Emil Tuma and founded in 1934 when the Palestinian Arab communists split from the Jewish-Arab Communist Party.

The daily newspapers played a lively role in the politics of the period. *Filastin* in the 1930's supported the National Defence Party sponsored by the Nashashibi family, which maintained close contact with the Amir of Transjordan and advocated an independent Palestine. In 1940-43 it was independent; in 1943-46 it supported the Independence Party, which advocated a platform of Arab unity and was backed by young professionals; during the last two years of the Mandate it was anti-Husseini. *al-Jami'a al-Islamiya* supported the National Defence Party in the mid-thirties. *al-Difa* was the Independence Party mouthpiece from 1934 to 1939; it was independent during the Second World War and subsequently voiced the opinions of the Husseinis' Palestine Arab Party and the Arab Higher Committee. During the early forties both *al-Difa* and *Filastin* supported Arab unity and on March 23, 1943 printed editorials defending the principle of the newly-formed Arab League. In view of the fact that it had been sponsored by Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, though, both also preached caution and watchfulness in view of the black record of Britain in the history of the Arabs.

The editorial in *Filastin* was the more important because it was written by the nationalist writer and translator Adil Zu'aitir. He pointed out that the Covenant of the League had been the first step towards the unity of the Arabs. It might even prove to be the first move up the long path of unification which had always been the result of the people's drive rather than governmental arrangements. He called upon his compatriots not to be dismayed because of the British role in sponsoring the League so long as the Arabs themselves were prepared to continue in the path of unity until the final goal was reached.

Priorities soon shifted from unity to the survival of Palestine itself as the future of the country was referred by Britain to the United Nations. In the last year of the Mandate, with the UN proposal for partition and the subsequent fighting in Palestine, few books or pamphlets were published and newspapers became the main channel of political expression. In 1946 the circulation of *Filastin* had been 9,000 copies daily and that of *al-Difa* 13,000 (in a population of about 1,200,000).⁴⁴ These newspapers now provided the final written expression of Palestinian nationalism under the Mandate. Editorials depicted the struggle that the country was experiencing as a life or death struggle. They urged readers not to underestimate the threat just because

⁴⁴ Figures were obtained by the author in an interview with Hanna al-'Isa, the owner of *Filastin* newspaper, on May 2, 1964, and with Ibrahim al-Shanti, the owner of *al-Difa* newspaper on June 10, 1964.

other Arab countries had committed themselves to come to the rescue in the Summit Conference held at Bludan in Syria in January 1948. Most of the articles in the journals also urged their readers to oppose the partition of Palestine by whatever means they had. The average daily circulation of the major newspapers became about twice that of the preceding decade,⁴⁵ a figure reflecting not only the increase in the reading public but also the great interest of the masses of the Palestinian Arabs in the events of those years.

THE REVIVAL OF THE PAST

Interest in nationalism was stimulated on another level by the work of Palestinian historians. Their books covered a wide range of subjects dealing with Islam, Moslem institutions and civilizations, biographies of outstanding Arabs, archaeology, local history, Arab nationalism and European history. They were similar to the writings of other Arab historians in their diffusion of national consciousness through the glorification of past heroes and accomplishments. Sati al-Husri, one of the best-known Arab historians, once rightly maintained that they were all led by national consciousness "to sharing of pride in the glories of the past and a collective sorrow over present misfortunes."⁴⁶ Most Palestinian historians, too, were Arabists who tried to inculcate in their readers a love of past generations and to stimulate them to build a new Arab world in the image of the old.

Some of them emphasized the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of Arab civilization at its zenith. Qadri Tuqan's writings, in particular, reflected the pride which the Arab felt in the immense contribution of his ancestors to the scientific knowledge of present-day Europe. This was the subject of his *Turath al-'Arab al-Ilmi* (The Scientific Heritage of the Arabs).⁴⁷ The high quality of the work led to the cultural division of the League of Arab States sponsoring its republication in 1954 and 1963.

Tuqan examined the factors underlying the Arabic cultural awakening of the ninth and tenth centuries. The first of these was the importance ascribed by Islam to education and knowledge. In addition to this, the Arabs had enjoyed wide contact with other peoples — Byzantines, Persians, Syrians and Copts — who had at the time been more cultured and civilized. A third factor had been the multiplication of academic institutions, founded by rich Moslems

⁴⁵ According to the publishers in the same interviews. Although no specific figures are given, the increase in the daily issue of the newspapers is also stressed by al-Asad, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁶ *Ara' wa Ahadith fi al-Wataniya wa al-'Uruba* (Views and Addresses on Nationalism and Arabism), (Cairo, 1944), p. 20.

⁴⁷ Cairo, 1941.

partly in the expectation of heavenly reward, and partly to ensure the productive use of their wealth. It was in these institutions that many Arab discoveries in the field of science had occurred.

Tuqan stressed the comprehensiveness of the Arab scientists' knowledge. Most of them displayed a command of a wide variety of subjects. Ibn Sina, who lived in Bukhara in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, was physician, philosopher, philologist and poet; al-Kindi, who lived in Baghdad in the tenth century, was philosopher, astrologer, alchemist, optician and musician.

Tuqan examined the scientific method as it had been developed by medieval Arabs. The book was woven around the life and work of al-Khawarizmi, the principal figure in the history of Arabic mathematics. In addition to examining the methods used by the scientist, Tuqan stressed his contributions, like the composition of the oldest astronomical tables and the oldest works on arithmetic and algebra. His *Hisab al-Jabr wa al-Muqabala* (The Calculus of Integration and Equation) was lost in Arabic, but a twelfth century translation of it by Gerard of Cremona was used as a mathematical textbook in European universities until the sixteenth century. Tuqan constantly stressed the impact of Arabic scholarship upon later European cultural development. Most of the original Greek texts of great thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Euclid and Archimedes had been lost and much of what Europeans know about Greek scholarship came through Arabic translations. Tuqan also examined the influence of Arab knowledge upon the European revival in the late Middle Ages. Such discoveries as the Arabs made, he pointed out, found their way to Europe through the centres in which the two civilizations came into contact: the Arab academic institutions in Spain, Sicily and southern Italy.

Most of Tuqan's books were a call to Arab intellectuals to make the Arab cultural heritage a moving force towards progress and a means for the improvement of present conditions and the building of a better future. Tuqan was not interested in history and biographies for their own sake; he always stressed such events and information as helped to frame a spiritual indication of the time he dealt with. Sometimes he even added touches to enhance the attraction of his heroes in the eye of the reader.

While Tuqan concentrated on science, other historians stressed the greater episodes of Arab history and retold the story of Arab expansion and Arab unity in the face of foreign attacks. Although the history of the Arabs is full of domestic wars and internal rivalries, Palestinian historians showed a tendency to dismiss such rivalries and divisions as insignificant. They tried to present the military history of the Arabs in colours attractive enough to

conform to national interest and to present them in a way that would help to command admiration and pride. Nicola Ziyadeh's *Wathbat al-'Arab*⁴⁸ (The Rise of the Arabs to Power) reflected the pride which Palestinian Arabs, Christian and Moslem alike, felt in the rise of the Arabs under the banner of Islam to the status of a world power. In explaining the causes for the rapid Arab expansion, Ziyadeh stressed the help that the Ghassanid Christian Arab tribes had offered to their brothers against the Christian Byzantines. Yet he was aware of the other factors which had contributed to victory, some relating to the conquered countries, others having to do with the Moslem Arabs themselves. Chief among the first type was the weakness and unpopularity of the opponents of the Arabs. More important, though, were internal factors. The Islamic faith inspired courage and devotion in the soldiers. The Arab commanders showed a skill far superior to that of their enemies. The early victories in Iraq and Syria owed much to the quality of leadership displayed by Khaled ibn al-Walid, the Arab commander in Iraq. His crowning achievement was the crossing, with all of his army, of the Syrian-Iraqi desert in less than two weeks in order to go to the rescue of the hard-pressed Arab army in Syria. Similar skill was displayed by Tariq ibn-Ziyad, who, with a small force, crossed the straits between Africa and Spain to defeat a superior Spanish force. He burned the boats that had carried his army as a sign of the complete faith he had in the fighting ability of his followers and in ultimate victory.

In the telling of early Arab history, two major trends were discernible in Palestinian writing. One was the traditional and purely Islamic tendency to emphasize the bright side of Islamic history and to assert strong belief in the regenerative power of Islam. Emerging more strongly, however, in Palestinian historiography was the pan-Arab tendency to see the history of the Arab world as one and indivisible throughout the ages, and to treat the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods as equally important. Both approaches are discernible in the writings of Mohammed Izzat Darwazah, who started as an exponent of the first trend and shifted to the second under the impact of growing nationalism.

Darwazah's earlier views are expounded in his *Sirat al-Rasul 'Alaihi al-Salam Mushtaqqa min al-Qur'an* (The Life of the Prophet as Reflected in the Koran).⁴⁹ Though published in the last year of the Mandate, the book was written in the late thirties and early forties, and shows great interest in analysing the effect of Islam upon the psychology and outlook of the Arab people. After sketching the main events in the life of Mohammed, Darwazah compares the social and political conditions of the Arabs before and after the appearance of Islam. He stresses the disunity of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic period, their

⁴⁸ Jerusalem, 1945.

⁴⁹ *Sirat al-Rasul 'Alaihi al-Salam Mushtaqqa min al-Qur'an* (Cairo, 1948).

lack of purpose, continuous strife and backward social habits.⁵⁰ After the appearance of Islam, however, the Arab people developed an outstanding and tolerant civilization. The new religion, moreover, endowed the Arabs with a sense of duty and commitment which stimulated them to establish an extensive empire.

Under the influence of increasing Arab nationalism, the formation of the Arab League, and greater contact with Arab historians, Darwazah changed his views on Arab history. In his book *Hawla al-Harakat al-Arabiya al-Haditha* (About the Modern Arab Nationalist Movement),⁵¹ he emphasized the continuity and unity of Arab history. Islam, instead of being the force reforming the Arabs, appeared as the expression of Arab genius, albeit the most important and the most enduring of these expressions in the history of the Arabs. Darwazah now attributed the Arabs with great importance as an early ethnic group, to whom the new culture and the new religion both owed their origins. The two together then established a lasting Arab racial consciousness.

The local history written at the time demonstrated a desire to spread Palestinian national consciousness. The most important contribution was *Tarikh al-Quds* (History of Jerusalem)⁵² by Arif al-Arif, who summed up his purpose as follows in the introduction:

My acquaintance with the line of argument used by Jewish writers to assert the Jews' historical links with Palestine makes it my duty to try to refute their claims by examining the history of Jerusalem, their links with which the Jews have stressed most, and to make it clear that the history of the Holy City reveals its Arab character, the tolerance of its people towards Christians and Jews, and the peaceful relations that have characterized the life of its inhabitants during the last ten centuries.

al-Arif pushed back the origins of Jerusalem as far as he could into antiquity, pointing out that it was built centuries before the ancient Israelites arrived in Palestine. He concentrated upon the history of the town from the middle ages, when the records were most complete and trustworthy. He stressed the humane and tolerant attitudes of the Arab conquerors of Jerusalem and its peaceful life under Moslem rule, noting that this tranquility had been broken twice by incursions, at the time of the Crusaders and during the present.

al-Arif examined aspects of the economic development of the city. Throughout the book he noted occupational customs, prices, charitable bequests and other indicators of economic change. He was concerned with its population problems, attempting on occasion to provide population statistics. He recognized certain facts as relevant to his purpose as a historian,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65.

⁵¹ Sidon, 1948-1952.

⁵² Cairo, 1947.

namely those that would explain how the community worked through the centuries, how it solved problems of housing and provisioning, what it did to supply the needs of the poor, what customs, pastimes and memorials were peculiar to it. The list of names of building donors and other worthy benefactors which al-Arif provided, and his description of the continuous change in the function of the "diwan" (gathering place), help to explain the changing pattern of social relations.

al-Arif understood that the basic requirement of all historical scholarship was the verification of statements of fact. The importance he attached to verifiable facts can hardly be over-estimated. His book's notes contain a variety of historical materials, including copies of letters and proclamations, selections from Islamic sources, lists of names, statistics compiled from various sources and topographical observations. al-Arif was careful to note where he got his information from.

Finally, one period of history held especial symbolic significance for the Palestinians. This was the era of the Crusaders, which offered meaningful parallels to those nationalists concerned with the challenge of Zionism to the Arab character of their country. Some historians delved into the history of this earlier European invasion, examining the mood of the time, the aspirations of the combatants and the reasons underlying the initial reversals of the Arabs and their subsequent triumph. Ahmed Samih al-Khalidi, the principal of the Arab College in Jerusalem, edited two works written by al-Yaquti during the Crusades in the twelfth century in order to solicit help for the defence of the Holy Land against foreign Christian invaders. He illustrated the manner in which al-Yaquti had stressed the productivity of the country, the moderate climate and the easy living, as well as the country's religious importance and the historical links the Moslem Arabs had with it. In his commentary on the texts, al-Khalidi saw the devotion of Syrian Arabs of the twelfth and thirteenth century as identical to that which nineteenth century Englishmen and Frenchmen and twentieth century Palestinians showed to their respective countries.⁵³

In an extensive history of the Arabs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, another historian, Mohammed Rafiq al-Tamimi, saw in the unsettled conditions of the Arabs the major reason for the victory of the Westerners in the first round against the Arabs.⁵⁴ He showed how Arab political unity had disintegrated. Instead of one caliph they had three: the Abbasid in Baghdad, the Fatimid in Cairo and the Umayyad in Cordova. The weakest of the three was the Abbasid, although his nominal authority extended over Iraq, Syria

⁵³ *Muthir al-Gharam bi Fada'il al-Quds wa al-Sham* (The Attractive Side of the Qualities of Jerusalem and Damascus), (Jaffa, 1946), p. 40.

⁵⁴ *al-Hurub al-Salibiya* (The Crusades), (Jerusalem, 1945).

and most of Persia. The power of these three caliphates was in the hands of a number of local rulers: Arabs, Persians, Turks and Moors. Political disunity was accompanied by economic poverty and social instability. As a result Syria was overrun by the Crusaders and a Latin kingdom established in Jerusalem.

al-Tamimi then described the Arab reawakening which reached its climax under Saladin, who enforced unity upon the Arab world and crowned his achievements by occupying Jerusalem. This victory, according to al-Tamimi, was due to three factors: the genius of Saladin, the consciousness of the average Arab, and the disunity of the Crusaders.

In dealing with the last stages of the war against the Crusaders, al-Tamimi stressed the part played by Egypt in the final victory. With its rich resources and greater population, Egypt enabled its rulers to carry the war to its desired conclusion. al-Tamimi ended his work with the opinion that the Crusades had taught the Arabs that "unity proved a solution for any misfortune that befell the Arabs and that in such a unity Egypt was bound to play an important role." Such unity in the twentieth century, he believed, would eventually come under the leadership of a new Saladin, who would unite the Arabs and lead them onto the path of victory.

It can be seen that the basic tendency of Palestinian history writing was to focus upon the achievements of Arab history and to present it as the continuous story of a united and indivisible Arab society throughout the ages. This view served as a theoretical basis for pan-Arabist thinking. The modern historian will note that, in spite of the variety of topics with which Palestinian Arabs dealt, they left many fields untouched. No comprehensive examination of the social and economic side of Arab history was attempted, and no historiographical study was produced. In addition, political theory was neglected. Yet these features, positive and negative, have not been uncommon in history writing at this particular stage of a society's national development. The emphasis on the continuity and unity of Arab history parallels the approach of many nineteenth century European historians and thinkers, especially the Germans, to their own history. Palestinian historians, in spite of the lack of proof of any direct German influence, played the same role for the educated sectors of their society as men like Herder, Fichte, Arndt and Niebuhr did for theirs; they, too, sung the glory of bygone times and appealed to their readers to recapture and rejuvenate the spirit of the past in the face of present disunity and foreign domination.

In tracing the progress of Palestinian nationalism, certain factors — the pressure of a foreign threat, the normal attachment of a people to its land — are of obvious importance. The role of the intellectuals and writers of the Mandatory period who have been discussed above equally deserves attention.

Their work helped to delimit the boundaries within which the current of ideas flowed among the upper sectors of the population. Although their nationalism was the expression of an existing sentiment, the body of literature they created firmly consolidated this sentiment in the minds of the educated. In addition to spreading the ideal of Palestinian nationalism, many of their themes became common currency in Palestinian political thinking — the secular nationalism of writers who emphasized the unity of Christian and Moslem Arabs; the distrust of the West; the blurring of the severe disunity of the Arab world caused by its division after the First World War; and the insistence on nationalism as a programme for action (even the novelists used their books to propose practical means of combating Zionism). The writers did not produce literature that was only of abstract historical interest; on the contrary, by influencing the nationalism of the upper sectors of the population, they played an integral part in the historical process by which national consciousness spread through the various classes of Palestinian Arabs until it reached the masses of the population.