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## State, Society and Politics in Late Ottoman and Early Mandatory Palestine

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Almost any discussion of Palestine Arab society and politics must start with late Ottoman Palestine. This is a period that began with the restoration in 1840 of Ottoman authority over the country, after less than a decade of occupation by the Egyptian Muhammad 'Ali. From that time on a series of political, economic, financial and state reforms were instituted by the Ottomans in an attempt to centralize and consolidate power.<sup>1</sup> These reforms had a gradual impact upon Palestinian Arab social structures and, therefore, power relationships.

### Administrative Structure

Ottoman Palestine in general differed in its regional history and characteristics (particularly between north and south), thus making it difficult to speak of Palestine as a political/territorial unit.<sup>2</sup> Until the turn of the twentieth century, it was known in the consciousness of many as the southern part of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria). Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century encompassed various administrative units. Regionally, there were two *wilayas* (provinces, Beirut and Damascus), governed by a *wali*. The Beirut *wilaya* incorporated most of the country (at least up to the 1870s when the Jerusalem district became independent), and was divided into four *sanjaqs* or *mutasarrifiyas* (districts), each under a *mutasarrif*. These were the *sanjaqs* of Beirut (comprising, in addition to what is today central-south Lebanon, the very northern part of Palestine), Acre, Nablus and Jerusalem. At the local level there were the *qadas* of Acre, Haifa, Nazareth, Safad, Tiberias, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Beersheba, Gaza, Hebron, Jaffa and Jerusalem, each led by a *qa'im-maqam*.

In the ever-changing Ottoman administrative boundaries, the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem held a distinctive place. In 1873 the district was established as an autonomous unit, directly responsible to Istanbul and comprising: one *markaz al-liwa* (*al-Quds* or Jerusalem itself); three *qadas* (Jaffa, Gaza,

Hebron); and two *nahiyas* (sub-districts after *qadas*), which included Bethlehem and Ramle.<sup>3</sup> This shrunk the lines of the Beirut *wilaya* to a point north of Jaffa. Before this, two districts were sometimes ruled by one governor. In the early sixteenth century, Gaza and Jerusalem were amalgamated; from the second half of that same century, Nablus and Gaza were sometimes annexed to Jerusalem; and the same was done in the 1850s.<sup>4</sup>

Before 1918, then, Palestine was a vague geographical entity. As recent as the late nineteenth century, a peasant living north of the *sanjaq* of Nablus (in Acre) most probably felt himself to be a resident of the province of Beirut, and if he lived south of the Dead Sea, a resident of the Syrian province.<sup>5</sup> Economically, the Galilee (*sanjaq* of Acre) was more a part of the southern and western regions of *Bilad al-Sham*, more akin to what is today southern Lebanon. Sidon and Acre were particularly important as ports for the export of agricultural commodities (cereals, grains, and, during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, cotton<sup>6</sup>) from the Syrian interior. In particular the Galilee (and the Jabal Nablus) was dominated by rural shaykhs, beduin chieftains, or local rural families and strongmen.<sup>7</sup>

The southern part of the country was more cohesive administratively, economically, religiously, and socially. The district of Jerusalem was a unifying factor, which encompassed by the late nineteenth century much over half of the country (that is, of the borders that later constituted mandatory Palestine). Internal trade, production and contact were more pronounced in the Jerusalem district, hence the studies on agricultural exports of southern Palestine. This helped unify, in a cultural sense, the rest of the country. This is demonstrated by Y. Porath.<sup>8</sup> First, the area of jurisdiction of the Jerusalem *qadi* exceeded the geographical area of the Jerusalem *sanjaq* and included the *sanjaq* of Nablus as far as Haifa. Second, there was cooperation in the military sphere between the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem and Nablus. There were feudal armies (*sipahis*) organized in every *sanjaq*. The Nablus and Jerusalem *alay beyis* (commanders of their *sipahis*) were required to protect pilgrims and often cooperated. For example, some of the tasks of the Jerusalem *alay beyi* were carried out by Nablus residents. Third, popular religion and worship of saints contributed to the development of ties between the various sections of southern and central Palestine as far as the Jezreel Valley. There were many occasions for pilgrimages to tombs and sancturies where festivals and celebrations were held. The outstanding event was the one celebrating al-Nabi Musa, an annual pilgrimage to the mosque located on the site of Moses's tomb near Jericho. People from all over the country came together. Fourth, the social order in the rural regions of Hebron, Jerusalem, Nablus and Carmel was similar. One of the characteristics of the social order was the

split between *Qays* and *Yaman*, ancient tribal and fictive alignments dating back to pre-Islamic conquests. The continually shifting clan alliances produced ties between the various regions. Fifth, Christianity and its institutions played a very important part in the creation of the Arab concept of *Filastin*. Even before the turn of the century, the idea that *Filastin* was a separate unit from Syria was already evident.

## Rural Society and Elites: From Shaykhs to Notables

Despite the regional differences, the land regime and related socio-economic conditions have often been described in the following terms. Late Ottoman Palestine was essentially an agrarian society in which land constituted the main form of capital.<sup>9</sup> Much of what the rural population produced was for itself and a good portion of the surplus was appropriated by the Ottoman state through tax-farmers and later directly through landowners.<sup>10</sup> The peasant (*fellah*, pl. *fellahin*) thus was heavily burdened with taxation in kind through government officials, officers, merchants, and rural shaykhs who, at annual public auctions, bought rights to tax-farming (*iltizam*). The tax-farmer (*multazim*) usually squeezed what he could out of the peasants and, after paying to the state the taxes assessed for his area, kept the rest for himself. The state gave him the authority to employ troops if necessary and at times he used his own private army and took over many of the police duties of government. While the tax-farmer's rights were over the peasants and not the land, his position tended to become hereditary.<sup>11</sup> The status, power, and authority of the dominant shaykhs derived from their role as *multazims* and the state's recognition of their position, as long as they collected the taxes.

Extensive tracts of land were held by the state and some by large landowners.<sup>12</sup> Village land, particularly on the hills, was usually individually owned and cultivated. Many villages and large tracts were cultivated on the basis of crop-sharing arrangements, such as share-cropping, joint farming, and share rent contracts, wherein the landlord provided land, seed, and ploughing stock in progressively decreasing proportion parallel to the order of mention of these three types of share contract.<sup>13</sup> Finally, a significant portion of village land was held in *musha'* land tenure. This was land held in common under which shares were divided into parcels, or collections of parcels, which were then periodically redistributed between the different members of the village.<sup>14</sup> In general, a large amount of state and private land was cultivated by the peasants.

By the early part of the nineteenth century in particular, village life was characterized by insecurity, beduin raids, and endemic factionalism. From the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the weakness of central power over *Bilad al-Sham* resulted in a shrinkage of the cultivated

area (along the coast and plains) and an expansion of the territory dominated by the beduin. Beduin raids and their virtual encirclement of the hill regions, plus malaria, pushed the population to the central hills.<sup>15</sup> Only in the mid-nineteenth century did the Ottomans begin to push back the nomadic frontiers. Until then and even in the latter part of the century, the hills were more heavily populated. Many of these villagers, particularly the peasants who moved to the mountains, maintained continuous contact with plain lands and made use of these lands by descending—in times of security—to sow, reap and carry to the threshing floor. As a result, satellite villages developed, called *khirbes* and *nazlas*, the former occupied on a seasonal basis, the latter on a temporary (harvesting) basis. These satellite villages began to grow as the population again began to drift westwards in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Before the rise of the urban notables and the institution of reforms, the whole central range extending to the Jezreel Valley in the north was divided into administrative sub-districts, the *nahiyas*, headed by the local shaykhs already referred to. The *nahiya* shaykhs and their families held authority over other village shaykhs in their sub-districts. From the Hebron to the Jerusalem to the Nablus areas there were no fewer than eighteen *nahiyas* each with its ruling clan.<sup>16</sup> The basis of the shaykhs' power and prestige was the extended and partriarchal family system. Each village prided itself on its family and sub-clan ties and relations. The family and village played a central role in the cultural psychology and consciousness of the peasants. The weakness of central power and general insecurity reinforced the village unit as a secure and (concretely) defensive haven for the peasantry, while in the family the peasant felt protection and belonging.<sup>17</sup> Social control, self-government, collective responsibility, sanctions and ostracism were exercised through the extended family and its heads. Under these conditions, the shaykhs were all-powerful.

The shaykhs and their clans preserved their identities and power for many generations, forming and unforming alliances according to wider divisions known as *Qays* and *Yaman*. All clans traced their origins to one of two tribal groups originating in northern (*Qays*) and southern (*Yaman*) Arabia before the Islamic conquests. These factions were pervasive throughout Syria and Lebanon. Because *Qays* and *Yaman* loyalties were based on fictive origins and descent, clan alignments were their medium of expression. Therefore, divisions were expressed through clan alliances that cut across district, regional, urban, sectarian, and religious lines, and that produced solidarity on the basis of common ties. Two clans of the same sect and religion could belong to either faction. Christian and Muslim families belonged to the same moiety. These divisions and alliances were used by the shaykhs to preserve the vertically segmented

social structure rooted in patronage networks and their position as tax-farmers and, in many cases, moneylenders. They were also used by the wealthy landlords who moved to the towns, such as Nablus and al-Khalil, to control the peasantry and protect their land (through their village clients) against the depredations of inter-clan and inter-family conflict.<sup>18</sup> Again, the clan alliances reinforced the relationship and reciprocal loyalty between patron and client through the pervasive pride in common descent.

Ottoman restoration and reforms beginning in 1840 led to the start of the decline of the rural shaykh. Through the *tanzimat*, the state sought to centralize administrative control and develop institutions to foster growth and efficiency—in other words, to build an effective state. A strong impetus for these reforms was the increasing penetration of Western capitalism into the Ottoman Empire and the consequent increasing debts. New ways had to be found to increase revenues, whose burden would fall most heavily on the peasantry. Campaigns were launched against the beduin and private, local armies.<sup>19</sup> The purpose was to restrain the military power of the shaykhs, who were also deprived of judicial powers.<sup>20</sup> An attempt was also made to simplify the complex laws and customs in the land regime and fiscal system and to provide a definite tenure system and so encourage or increase productivity.

In 1839 the *Hatti Sherif* of Gulhane announced the abolition of tax-farming which, although it did not succeed until the First World War, managed to change the character of *iltizam* and weaken the authority of the shaykhs. The government began to entrust the leasing of *iltizam* to the newly created *majlis al-idara* (administrative council) of the district. The government leased the collection of *iltizam* to the highest bidder, in return for a sum determined in advance which the lessee paid into the treasury.<sup>21</sup> The tax-collector, usually hailing from among the urban notables on the *idara*, kept for himself whatever taxes he managed to collect. The tax-collector collected the taxes in cash or kind with the aid of gendarmes who accompanied him or his emissaries. Cash payments for taxes reinforced the dependence of the peasant on the moneylenders/merchants (usually one and the same) who advanced loans at crushingly high rates of interest. This system gradually led to the weakening of the administrative status of the *nahiya* shaykhs and the transfer of the powerful function of tax collecting to other, more influential men.

The growing *a'yan*, or urban notables, had been consolidating their strength in the Ottoman Empire since the eighteenth century. The decline in power of the central government and degeneration and struggles within the imperial forces encouraged the rise of autonomous local powers such as the urban *a'yan* and local ruling families. The urban notables were those merchants and landowners who increasingly moved

to towns and coastal cities, investing their capital in the seaborne related trade with Europe. They comprised powerful town-dwelling families from all over the Syrian province, the rich and influential families of Beirut and Damascus, and, to a lesser extent, Jerusalem, Acre, Jaffa, Gaza and other sub-district capitals.

The growth of agricultural production and trade and the increasing population of towns paralleled the rise of the urban notables to power. Beginning around the time of the Ottoman reforms and accelerating in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the fertile coast and plains of Palestine were increasingly cultivated and the towns grew in population. Although there were no dramatic changes in the agrarian and urban economies and hence in the social structure before 1882, that is, before significant colonization via European missions and Jewish immigration, merchants, big landowners, and tax-farmers were still investing their capital in trade and agriculture. Jaffa, Haifa and Acre served as important export points for external trade, while Nablus remained the most important center "for local and regional trade and for the manufacture of soap, oil and cotton goods."<sup>22</sup> Jaffa exported the produce of southern Palestine, mainly wheat, barley and dura, olive oil and soap, oranges and other fruits and vegetables. These went mainly to France but also to Egypt, England, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Malta and northern Syria. To many of these countries also wheat, barley, dura, sesame and olive oil were exported through Haifa and Acre. A good part of the wheat shipped through Acre came from the Hawran in Syria. Acre and Jabal Nablus were among the most important cotton growing districts of Syria, exporting to France the surplus that was not marketed internally. Finally, internal regional trade in craft manufacture was carried on between Hebron, Jerusalem, Nablus and Bethlehem. Jaffa, together with Ramle and Lydda, formed a center of soap and oil production second in output to Nablus.

**Table 1.1: Increase in Town Populations, 1840–1922<sup>23</sup>**

City	1840	1880	1922
Jerusalem	13,000	30,000	62,500
Haifa	2,000	6,000	24,600
Jaffa	4,750	10,000	47,700
Gaza	12,000	19,000	17,500
Nablus	8,000	12,500	16,000

In many of the towns, then, agriculture flourished, the population of those towns grew, and villages dotted the plains near the major centers. The figures in table 1.1 on selected towns indicate the steady increase in their populations between 1840 and 1922 (although one of them, Gaza, saw a slight decline between 1880 and 1922). These figures included Jews. The Arab population of the mixed towns in 1922 was: Jerusalem, 28,607; Haifa, 18,804; and Jaffa, 27,524.<sup>24</sup> The coastal towns, particularly Jaffa and Haifa, registered dramatic growth.

Aside from changes in economy and social structure, Ottoman reforms augmented the power of the *a'yan*. The local administrative councils previously mentioned were established in various districts to advise the governor. The councils, rather than strengthening the central government, were used by the *a'yan* to strengthen themselves. They advanced themselves and checked the *wali's* attempts to introduce reform that was liable to affect their status, particularly as they were obviously more familiar with local affairs. Another factor that strengthened the notables was the abolition of the hereditary *iltizam*, as was indicated. Because the leasing of taxes came under the authority of the councils which they dominated, they facilitated the transfer of the function of tax collection to themselves.

In order to counter the growing power of the *a'yan* and their autonomous role as regional officials and tax collectors, the *Wilayet* Law of 1864 redefined the role of the administrative councils. But instead of controlling these councils, the law added to the power of the *a'yan* by stipulating that candidates for local councils had to pay a yearly direct tax of 500 piastres.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the Law vested the councils with authority over land and land taxation. With the institution of the Ottoman Land Code before it (1858), members of the Councils "authorized the assessment and collection of taxes, approved land registration, decided on questions of landownership, and expressed influential opinions about the ultimate fate of lands that reverted to the state."<sup>26</sup>

A big impetus to notable aggrandizement and power was the process in which this stratum accumulated large tracts of land in a short time. The Land Code of 1858 and Law of 1867 strove to increase taxation (in cash rather than kind) through individual land registration, extension of rights of inheritance, and the break-up of communal ownership. Villagers' fears of conscription and higher taxes prompted many to register their lands in the names of clan heads and they continued to farm on a communal basis. The local landowner, merchant, moneylender or other notable was also able to record *musha'* shares in his name, with village inhabitants continuing to practice the *musha'* system on a tenure or cultivation basis.<sup>27</sup> These notables were able to reduce the financial pressures of the peasants by redeeming their debts and paying their tax arrears.<sup>28</sup> The powerful *a'yan*,

living mainly in coastal cities (in and outside Palestine, particularly in the *sanjaq* and *wilaya* of Beirut), were able to take advantage of high debts and dispossess the peasant or acquire large tracts of land at very low cost, much of it in the Galilee and the coastal plain.<sup>29</sup> Land appropriation also took place in some uncultivated and uninhabited land, since the small land tax these families paid was sufficient to entitle them to rights of ownership.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the indebtedness of the peasants and small landowners to these men also brought about transfer of ownership. They registered in their names extensive tracts of land in Syria and Palestine. However, though the following examples show that major transformations occurred in landholding patterns, they also indicated that the peasants retained possession of the majority of cultivable lands.

According to an estimate made in 1907, some "20 percent of the land in Galilee and 50 percent in Judea was in the hands of the peasants."<sup>31</sup> In 1909, 16,191 families cultivated 785,000 *dunums* (one *dunum* equals one-fourth of an acre) in the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre, or an average of 46 *dunums* each. The great majority of the peasants in the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem and Nablus—67 percent and 63 percent respectively—were in possession of less than 50 *dunums* to a family.<sup>32</sup> In 1920 a land register listed 144 large estate owners in possession of 3,130,000 *dunums*, an average of 21,736 *dunums* each.<sup>33</sup> Of these 3,000,000 *dunums*, however, 2,000,000 consisted of tribal grain-growing lands (with very little rainfall) around Beersheba and Gaza, leaving 1,000,000 for the Sultan and absentee owners like the Sursuqs and other large (Palestinian) landowners. This would seem to indicate that little of the central range was yet incorporated into large estates.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, at the end of 1932, out of 3,200,000 *dunums* in the coastal and Acre plains, some 80 percent (2,560,000 *dunums*) belonged to *fellahin* and the rest (640,000 *dunums*) belonged to large landowners.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding big landowners, the absentee Sursuq family of Beirut owned 230,000 *dunums* near Nazareth and in the Marj Ibn 'Amr (Esdraelon). Close to another 250,000 *dunums* in the Jezreel Valley were in the hands of the Khury family of Haifa, the Twayni family of Beirut, and other wealthy families.<sup>36</sup> They held this amount after selling at least the equivalent to the Zionists in the years before 1919. The non-Palestinian absentees held and sold some of the most fertile and cultivable land areas of Palestine.

Of the influential Palestinian Arab families who are reputed to have possessed significant amounts of land, the following are examples. The Husaynis owned, in various parts of the Jerusalem district, Gaza and Trans-Jordan, some 50,000 *dunums*; the 'Abd al-Hadis held about 60,000 *dunums* in the Nablus and Jenin areas; the al-Taji al-Faruqis possessed close to 50,000 *dunums* in the south of Palestine (around Ramle); and the



al-Ghusayns (Ramle) owned tens of thousands of *dunums*.<sup>37</sup> There were numerous other influential village families who made their homes in neighboring towns and cities: the Beydases from al-Shaykh Mu'annis (near Tel Aviv); the Abu Khadras (in the Jaffa and Gaza districts); the al-Khalils (Haifa); the al-Shawwas (from Gaza, reputed to have owned over 100,000 *dunums*); the Hanuns (Tulkarem); the Beyduns (Acre); the al-Fahums (Nazareth); the al-Tabaris (Tiberias); and the Jarrars and al-Nimrs (Nablus).

By 1919, thirty-two Palestinian Arab families from all the districts except Beersheba owned a total of 455,000 *dunums*, or an average of slightly over 14,218 *dunums* per family. Seventeen non-Palestinian (i.e., those residing outside of the geographical boundaries of Palestine) families owned (in all districts) 405,000 *dunums*, or an average of slightly over 23,823 *dunums* per family.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the averages conceal wide variations in ownership. However, the proportions give a rough indicator of ownership between the two groups.

A final reason for the rise of the *a'yan* was their access to empire-wide administrative bodies set up by the Ottomans towards the end of the nineteenth century. While land accumulation gave the *a'yan* families power and prestige, they used their resources to send their sons to relatively modern Ottoman schools concerned with the civil service and the military. Their members increasingly became part of the Ottoman aristocracy.<sup>39</sup> They comprised the educated sector and from this stratum emerged the *'ulama* and other religious functionaries. With the promulgation of an Ottoman Constitution in 1876, the urban notables of the various districts dominated nomination and access to that higher body. Bureaucracy and landownership coalesced, giving the notables their political influence despite the fact that this class held no formal or recognized role in the political structure. These notable families pervaded local politics in the Ottoman period and continued to do so in the early part of the mandatory period.

The British colonial administration, although it denied the Palestinian Arabs effective self-government from the national to the local level, nevertheless strengthened the notability stratum by giving it recognition and legitimacy in social and religious affairs, and by accepting its members as the leaders and representatives of the Arabs. At this early juncture, it was almost given that the British should cement their alliances with the socially dominant stratum in Palestinian Arab society. Thus the urban-mercantile class, the religious functionaries, and the socially dominant village families, all retained their positions under the British. The British pursuit of the status quo in the land regime, agrarian situation, and peasant social organization, as we will see in the next chapter, only reinforced the relationship of the urban notables to the countryside.

The British policy of alliance with the town's notability was especially pursued in regard to Jerusalem, which helped that city's notability achieve decisive preeminence in Palestinian politics. For example, during the military occupation, Kamil al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, was elevated to the head of the Central *Waqf* (religious endowment) Committee and President of the *Shari'a* (Islamic legal system or code) Court of Appeal in that city. The British also secured him the new title of grand mufti.<sup>40</sup> In 1922 al-Haj Amin al-Husayni became president of the newly created Supreme Muslim Council, which was granted wide ranging powers over collection and disbursement of *waqf* funds (and which Haj Amin used to build a patronage network). In addition, the urban landowning notables in Jerusalem and all other towns dominated the local municipal councils and mayoral posts. Just as in late Ottoman times, the notables continued to serve as intermediaries between the state and society.

## Factionalism and Clientelism in Early Mandatory Palestinian Politics and Society

Within the socio-economic conditions that predominated in late Ottoman Palestine, it is no surprise to find that, with British rule, the dominant political culture was one based on clientelism and its attendant form of political action, factionalism. From a comparative perspective, it is widely assumed that because pre-modern, developing or Third World countries are not fully industrialized, a social structure having power bases in well-developed, organized, and conscious classes is usually elusive and vaguely defined. Ethnic, religious, familial, or linguistic cleavages and identities are the dominant features of such societies.<sup>41</sup> These vertical political cleavages are manifested through factionalism, the faction leaders fighting for power and status.

The social framework is characterized by a system of patronage in which the faction heads act as mediators, allocators, and arbiters.<sup>42</sup> The essence of the patron-client relationship is the idea of exchange: a good or service is exchanged for support or participation. Clientelism itself is characterized by the following factors. One, there is the concept of unequal interaction or asymmetry. Here the patron is usually higher in wealth, status and political power. Two, there is the concept of reciprocity. The patron is expected to make tangible economic and administrative favors in return for support and votes. Three, clientelism inherently involves informal face-to-face contact between patron and client.<sup>43</sup>

Because vertical cleavages dominate in such societies, it should not be assumed that there are no class divisions. Clientelism actually exists because there are sharp class and wealth differences, as existed in manda-

tory Arab Palestine. There, the landowner-merchants were the dominant class over the peasantry. In addition, professionals, bureaucrats, clerics, workers, and nomads were all part of the class system. What patron-client ties did was to encourage personalist and dependent relationships, and thereby perpetuate the status quo of inequality in power, status, and wealth. For the patrons (notables) and, therefore, faction heads, political factionalism meant the preservation of the social framework and their adaption to change through shifting alliances and manipulation of both nationalist and traditional symbols and appeals.

What was the nature of Palestinian factionalism and the clannish political culture? Palestinian society constituted a sort of pyramidal structure in which political ties were maintained from the peasant villages to the towns to the "national" elite through a network of clan alliances headed by the major urban notables in Jerusalem. The smaller extended family wove this clan network together. In the village and town it constituted the basic social and economic unit, as in many Middle Eastern and Third World countries.

The dominant vertical cleavage in Palestinian society, then, was the clan. The *hamulah* structure with its familial and clan consciousness served well the interests of the landowning urban notables who naturally viewed patronage as the most appropriate form of political action in order to preserve their dominant role, power and status. Mobilization of peasants, therefore, was not based on ideological or class consciousness but on personalities, clan appeals and connections. David Waines, in an article on the nationalist resistance during the mandate, sums up Palestinian politics very well:

The political life of the country was . . . atomized, and vertical lines of alliance were its most common feature. Thus the head of a hamula in a small village would align himself with a larger and more influential clan in the same district, and this in turn might be linked to one of the more powerful landowning families which formed part of the urban upper classes. Political alliances, therefore, rather resembled factions centering around the chief personalities of one or another of these major landed families. . . . The object of political rivalry was the acquisition of power and, thereby, the dispensation of patronage by which means power could be maintained.<sup>44</sup>

But the urban notables did not represent a stable or cohesive network of vertical alliances. Many of the provincial and lesser town notables were relatively strong and secure within their respective areas of influence and thus inhibited the growth and influence of a unified elite rooted in a coherent socio-economic institutional setting. There were powerful and prestigious "leading" families who remained neutral and whom the

urban notability, particularly those of Jerusalem, continually attempted to recruit (when needed) to their factions in order to maintain the "balance of power."<sup>45</sup> Also, the powerful potentates of villages aligned themselves with either faction and were able to maintain a strong position in their villages,<sup>46</sup> which illustrates the continuing power of some rural families even throughout the mandate. Shifting, temporary alliances gave a dynamic to factionalism, which was exacerbated by town frictions and local family divisions. Thus, each notable family was, in a concrete respect, autonomous, and the urban notables as a group held no overall or national control over Palestinian society.

The sources of legitimacy and power of the urban landowning classes were their hold over the peasantry, their administrative, professional and religious positions, and their high political offices. Public office was used as a means for political and economic advancement, prestige and influence. The notables used their role as allocators and arbiters and as the accepted spokesmen (intermediaries) for their people to maintain their power and status. For example, they protected villagers against bandits and arbitrated family feuds. They also obtained favors for the villagers from government, such as tax remission, release of prisoners, and clerical jobs in the bureaucracy.<sup>47</sup>

Descent also played a central part in the position, prestige and status of the notability. Descent claims referred to religious, historical or military origins. The first claim referred either to direct descendance to the Prophet, his family or tribe or the existence of a relationship between the family's ancestry and a religious figure. The second claim referred to descent from a military figure who came with the Muslim conquests or who fought against the Crusades, and the third claim referred to the history of the family in the country.<sup>48</sup> While not all these were really verifiable, they were accepted and gave prominence to the families. Many of the claimants to religious and military origins lived in the central range while practically all of Jerusalem's families claimed descent from all three origins, hence giving that city a special prominence. For example, out of some one hundred and twenty prominent families, forty claimed religious origins, sixteen to twenty claimed military origins, and sixty claimed historical origins.<sup>49</sup>

In the towns and cities, the various urban quarters served as power bases for the notables, with each family maintaining its influence in the particular quarter. The urban masses, such as artisans, wage earners, daily laborers, and porters, were easily mobilized through the factional system. "The family promoted an informal style of association by encouraging a plethora of socioeconomic groups. . . . to seek consultation, favors, loans or any other services."<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the Muslim urban elite developed connections with Christian sects of Palestine. For example, the Khalidis

had generally held a close relationship and had reciprocal loyalty with the Greek Orthodox community, while the Dajanis had a similar relationship with the Armenians<sup>51</sup> (of course, an ethnic as well as a Christian group). The *diwan*, or outer salon or reception room, was used either for the Christian minorities or for patronage/social purposes in general, and for settling personal conflict, rendering advice, or intervening with the tax collectors. This reinforced the personal links, connections, and reciprocal loyalties. It should also be mentioned that the educated sons and family members of the upper classes—the *effendis*—who constituted the upper range of the professions such as doctors, lawyers, civil servants, merchants, and real estate investors, strengthened patronage through their roles as creditors, whether in the urban areas or rural countryside.

But it was not just the urban notables who used the town and its public and administrative offices to maintain influence over their clients. We have seen how rural autonomy decreased beginning with the Ottoman reforms. Influential village families were able to amass large portions of real estate (particularly through the break-up of *musha'*), bringing many peasants under their control. Many rural based families (and their patriarchs) eventually (as late as the 1920s) moved to the cities<sup>52</sup> to take advantage of economic, political, educational, and administrative opportunities whether for themselves or their sons and relatives. Like the urban notables and merchants before them, the village families used public office and their connections to their land (as absentee landlords and rentiers) to reinforce the patronage system. Questions of taxes and legal cases were referred by the peasants to the absentee landlord.

For the upper stratum as a whole, then, land ownership and the interest accruing from it, as well as trade and manufacture in grain and agriculturally related products, were their sources of wealth. The tenancy arrangements, in particular the crop-sharing agricultural relations of production, provided patronage-factionalism with much of its vitality. Those who resided on or near the land they owned (as some of the rural potentates) directly looked after their interests. But if the landowner lived in the market towns of his region or was an urban notable (i.e., was an absentee landlord), he employed a *wakil*, or agent, to look after his interests, the latter either a manager or subcontractor. In this way, the social basis of clan power became dependent on the amount of land controlled by a clan head and the system of patronage concluded with peasant sharecroppers. Again, it also depended on his ability to act as creditor, and his accessibility to public office, therefore providing goods and services to his clients (loans, work, and administrative connections in the city) in exchange for support in factional conflicts, especially municipal elections during mandatory times.<sup>53</sup>

Municipal elections, competition for mayoral posts and for control of

institutions such as the Supreme Muslim Council (located in Jerusalem) actually became particularly intense during the mandate. As will become clear in Part Two, this intensity was most visible in Jerusalem, where the Husayni family and what rapidly became its main rival, the Nashashibis, jockeyed for power and sought and created countrywide factionalist alliances. Jerusalem's religious importance conferred prestige and status on the family that could become the city's preeminent leader (a position which eventually reverted to the Husaynis). Therefore, despite the decline and disappearance of the old fictive tribal divisions (*Qays-Yaman*) and active physical conflicts, elite factional conflict and the more extensive (clan) identities it appealed to helped give new vigor and vitality to a familiar and dominant cleavage in Palestinian society—the family.

What therefore changed by the time of the mandate was that it was no longer fictive alignments that mattered, but the aligning of a traditional society behind various notables and their ostensible (and similar) nationalist goals. Just as the shaykhs decades before them used (consciously or unconsciously) tribal divisions among the clans in order to perpetuate their privileged positions in rural society, the notables used family, clan, patronage and class connections also to maintain their privileged positions. The significant difference was that, under the mandate, nationalism and rapid social change increasingly were intruding into the secure domain of the notability. How these two elements were used and dealt with by the urban notables is the story of Palestinian Arab politics throughout the mandate. Before proceeding to the next chapter, it is important to set the mandate period in perspective by indicating the broad nature and contours of change under British rule.

## Socio-Economic and Political Change During the Mandate

With the advent of British colonial rule, many economic opportunities were opened up as Palestine became increasingly tied to the international market and the cash economy became pervasive. In the twenties and particularly by the mid-thirties the strategic role of Palestine for the British became of central importance. British fiscal policy was almost strictly based on the ability of the mandatory country to pay its own way. Its expenditures were focused on its strategic needs (i.e., ports, roads and communications infrastructure) and internal factors of defense (i.e., roads, prisons, security, and police stations constructed mainly to control Arab dissidence and rebellion), with social services relegated to the bottom of the scale. In fiscal year 1937–38, for example, these types of expenditure swallowed 73.9 percent of the budget.<sup>54</sup>

But, it was these strategic and defense requirements that necessi-

tated projects on roads, camps, airfields, and ports, which brought about economic expansion, urbanization, migration to a growing coastal area, and a growing wage labor class. The standard of living increased, some peasants (during WWII) were able to free themselves from indebtedness, and Arab financial assets multiplied and were invested in a growing citriculture industry and small scale manufacturing, which was producing differentiation in the notable landowning elite as a nascent bourgeois class was developing.<sup>55</sup> There was also the growth of a large professional and administrative middle class which was becoming increasingly vocal in Palestinian nationalist thought.<sup>56</sup> Cultural nationalism was now made available to the literate public through growth in magazines, newspapers, and other publications.<sup>57</sup>

Demographic and urbanization trends, too, reflected the fast-paced changes between 1922 and 1944, during which time the Arab population increased from 660,541 to 1,061,277.<sup>58</sup> Between 65 and 70 percent of the Arab population was rural in 1944, as compared to 75 to 80 percent in 1922. The Christians numbered 71,464 in 1922, one-quarter of whom were rural, and increased to 134,547 in 1944, one-fifth of whom were rural.<sup>59</sup> Or, by 1944, 80 percent of the Christians were urban based (concentrated mainly in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa, which encompassed 53 percent of the Christian population). The increase of the Muslim population was larger in the towns than in the rural areas: In the towns it increased 48 percent between 1931 and 1944, and 42 percent in the rural areas for the same years.<sup>60</sup> In terms of urbanization, there was dramatic increase in the Arab populations in nearly all the towns.

**Table 1.2: Arab Population Growth in Selected Towns, 1931 & 1944<sup>61</sup>**

City	1931	1944
Jaffa	44,666	70,000
Acre	7,897	12,360
Gaza	17,046	34,170
Lydda/Ramle	21,671	30,940
Hebron	17,531	24,560
Nablus	17,189	23,250
Jerusalem	39,281	60,080

Cumulatively, between 1931 and 1944 the Arab population of the eastern (hill) districts grew from 414,935 to 540,700 (or 30 percent) while the western (coastal) districts grew from 340,581 to 518,750 (or 52 percent).<sup>62</sup>

Urbanization, then, was proceeding rapidly. It was producing new structural relationships in the coastal cities of Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre as these grew at a pace faster than the natural birth rate and at a higher percentage than inner mountain cities such as Nablus and Hebron. More rapid economic development in the sub-districts of the coastal plain resulted in a reduction in mortality, a rise in the rate of natural increase, and migration from other, mainly mountainous, sub-districts.

\* \* \*

The question to be asked regarding all this is: what difference did it make for factionalist politics? While there is no doubt that significant social change took place, the traditional elite also remained the dominant group in Palestinian politics. It is important to ask why this was so. We therefore need to examine precisely the extent of social disruptions and changes in order to understand more fully why factionalism continued to be prevalent in Palestinian society, what forms or permutations it underwent, and how this paradoxically led, at the mandate's end, to factionalist politics that were carried on at the "higher" levels with little challenge from or interaction with "lower" politics. To do this, and thereby to clarify the continuities and discontinuities in Palestinian politics and society, it is necessary to analyze social change and factionalism at the rural, urban working class, and elite levels, aspects with which the rest of Part One is concerned.