

Editorial

New Approaches to Archives and Sources for Jerusalem's History

This issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* contains two original compendiums for new archival sources for Jerusalem. The first is an overview of the records for the Ottoman municipal archival records for the period 1892–1917, examined by Yasemin Avci, Vincent Lemire, and Falestin Naïli. The material contained, originally recorded in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, provides breakthrough opportunities for examining the daily operations of the city council in the critical period leading to World War I and the end of Ottoman rule in Southern Palestine. These records contain only a segment (fifteen years) of the municipal records, which were either destroyed or shipped earlier to the imperial capital in Istanbul. The material sheds new light on the civil administration of the city, zoning and planning, public works infrastructure such as street lighting, and public health and hygiene, including provisions for the building of hospitals and the improvement of water networks. As the war approached, the council had to deal with the logistics of military needs, including provisions, conscription, and public reactions to the war situation. In those years, the domain of the municipal council extended beyond the urban needs of the city to cover relations with rural estates (including, for example, tax farming contracts) as well as military requirements for the fourth and fifth armies. For example, an announcement for a public bid of army needs dated 4 March 1326 (by the Ottoman fiscal calendar) announced the following item which indicates that Jerusalem was the center of reference for all military provisioning in Transjordan, Sinai, and the Balqa' region:

The Imperial Registry circular dated 21 February 1325, no. 2802, relevant to the command of the fifth army [*al-faylaq al-*

khamis], announced that all provisions required from March 1326 to February of the following year, for all categories of armed personnel located in al-Salt, Madaba, Karak, Tafila, Ma'an, and 'Aqaba, should be subject to public tenders. Those who desire to enter these auctions need to apply to the district council, or to the military command of the Jerusalem district. Signed as a public announcement on 4 March 1326.

Avci, Lemire, and Naili analyze the content of these archives in relationship to the chain of command with determined how decisions pertaining to the city were taken at several levels: imperial, *mutasarrifiyya* or provincial, and city council. Material contained in these archives is bound to supplement and enrich our knowledge of the city's history derived earlier from probate court registries (*sijills*), Ottoman yearbooks (*salnames*), and administrative records based in Istanbul.

The second compendium, "*Freunde Jerusalems*," is an extensive survey of German language archival sources on Jerusalem and Palestine by the Polish researcher Filip Kaźmierczak. Those records contain a huge repertoire of political, military, social, and pedagogic sources that have been underutilized in Arab, anglophone, and francophone histories of Jerusalem and Palestine. Kaźmierczak's survey covers sources from Austrian, German Australian, and Zionist archives that address – in German – diplomatic, religious, military, intelligence, and scholarly sources. They also contain rich material from Pietist communities in Palestine, chief among them the Templar movement archives in Palestine, Germany, and Australia. His survey indicates that German colonization schemes in Jerusalem and Palestine goes earlier and beyond the work of the Templers and was routed in German inter-imperial rivalries with Russian, British, and French interests. State archives discussed here include the records of the Bavarian State archives, which contain the rich images of aerial photography that surveyed the whole country for intelligence, planning, and military uses in the period from 1917 to 1918. A considerable segment of these archives has been digitized and is available for online access, but much of it is not. In a forthcoming issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Kaźmierczak will examine the political significance of German colonization schemes based on hitherto unexamined material from these sources.

Munir Fakher Eldin, meanwhile, turns a critical eye to one of the most widely used archives in writing the history of modern Palestine, the British colonial archives. In "British Framing of the Frontier in Palestine, 1918–1923," Fakher Eldin gives the reader a keen and astute reading of colonial archives to show the paradox and power of colonial decision-making in the early phase of the British Mandate in Palestine. He shows how, even in this earliest phase (prior to the formulation of a political policy in 1922), tensions within the colonial circles as well as between the colonists and the indigenous population were apparent. Fakher Eldin offers a complicated reading of the archives both as historical and historiographical material, focusing in particular on agency in peasant responses to state impositions. He informs the reader:

By refusing a simply story of colonial land acquisition and loss of sovereignty, I mean to question how property and sovereignty are linked and delinked in given socio-political contexts. While this is in keeping with recent scholarship on the subject, it also opens up a new question, one which has not yet been directly posed. Namely, how can we discuss struggles over land in a colonial context both within and outside the law, in the court and in a legal framework, as well as in lived realities, ideas, and social relations? Much more needs to be told about the latter in the Mandate context; so far, the critical literature has left these struggles, experiences, and realities secondary and external to the legal history of property.

In addition to the question of finding evidence in colonial archives of local agency in struggles over land, Fakhre Eldin is interested in the production of space, in this case the space of the frontier between the new borders of the post-war Mandates. Equally attuned to questions of the social and legal production of certain kinds of spaces, Khaldun Bshara and Romola Sanyal, in two separate essays, examine the urban refugee habitat. In “How Refuge Creates Informality,” Sanyal analyzes the meaning of survival and governability in the camps of Mar Elias, Burj al-Barajneh, Shatila, and Dbayeh in the outer periphery of Beirut. She argues “for the application of the concept of ‘informality’ to the study of refugee settlements by showing how political and economic conditions that humanitarian protection produces compel refugees to engage in informal practices much like the urban poor.” Similarly, Bshara combines an anthropological and architectural approach to the evolution of the camps in urban settings. While Sanyal focuses on camps in a Lebanese setting, Bshara’s “Spatial Memories” deals with those in Palestine. Here “the refugees have been keen to recreate the common while creating the private, in terms of material and immaterial constructions. Stone as the local/endogenous/precious construction material and naming as the process of investing meaning to what otherwise part of everyday life are fields of signification . . . [T]he material representation in the spatial practices appears to have an embedded message of modernity.”

Nablus was the only city in the Arab East that had a self-declared bourgeois party representing the interests of the mercantile and artisanal strata against the landed “feudal order” in the late Ottoman period. This is, at least, what ‘Izzat Darwaza claims in his memoirs. In “A Farical Moment?” Salim Tamari examines the work of Ihsan al-Nimr and Darwaza, as the two leading local historians of Nablus, and the manner in which they analyzed the events of the constitutional revolution of 1908 and the counter rebellion of 1909 in Nablus. Arriving at different conclusions after having witnessed the same events, Tamari questions the limits of local history and the two historians’ claims to be writing national history. Ihsan al-Nimr – having declared Palestine as “too small” for his intellectual ambitions – is portrayed here as an apologist for the Hamidian order, while Darwazeh is seen as a formidable observer of the local scene, using biographic trajectories to illustrate his class-based vision of historical developments.

In this vein, M. Talha Çiçek chooses a single remarkable biographic trajectory to explore historical developments in the period just after that examined by Tamari. In “The

Three Lives of Mehmet Lütfi Bey under Ottoman, Syrian, and Turkish States,” Çiçek delves into the torturous transformations of national (and ethnic) identities during the lifetime of Mehmet Lütfi Bey Yücel, born Muhammad Lütfi Bey al-Rifa‘i, an officer in the Ottoman army from Iskandarun who served in Galipoli, Galicia, Aleppo, Tripoli, and Palestine. Iskandarun (Alexandretta) was a port city on the Turkish-Arab ethnic frontiers. Its ethnic makeup made it a contested territory in the post-war settlement, and “after Alexandretta’s annexation to Turkey in 1939, and presumably due to the ultra-nationalist atmosphere of Alexandretta (and Turkey more generally) and the new republican regulation that required citizens to adopt Turkish last names, Lütfi Bey was compelled to Turkify both his name and surname.” Çiçek makes an intriguing extrapolation from the biography of Lütfi Bey at the end of the Great War, noting that it was a period of transition “where the kinds of identities that people could adopt were still unsure and in flux. Lütfi was able to move from Ottoman to Syrian to Turkish in a way that he likely couldn’t have done several decades later, after the Ottoman successor states became established and the identities connected to them more rigid.”

Iris Albina, meanwhile, looks at the lives of individuals that stretched from the turbulence of World War I and its aftermath through another period of great upheaval, the Palestinian Nakba of 1948. In “Souvenir from Gethsemane,” Albina recalls the lives of her father, Jamil Albina, and his brother Najib, two leading photographers in British Mandate Palestine who were key figures in the American Colony. Albina’s article strikes a fine balance between a personal family story and larger historical narratives, between mobilizing facts, memories, and mementos and maneuvering the vast empty spaces of the unknown. She writes: “Why did we inherit so little from two photographers who lived during such a compelling time in the history of Jerusalem? Surely, we should have been left with stories aplenty and photos galore. It becomes apparent that it is precisely in the very existence of so many unanswered questions that the narrative of Jamil and Najib lies: questions unanswered and documents missing become the narrative of a narrative denied. It is not that my father and uncle were unable or unwilling to transmit their story to their children but more so that they could not.” Iris Albina’s effort to reconstitute the fragments of the past – fragments of memory, but also the physical ephemera of postcards and photographs – serves as an act of recovery, a struggle against an imposed amnesia.

The relationship between amnesia and nostalgia is considered by Penny Johnson, too, in this issue. Nostalgia is not merely a form of sentimental recollection, Johnson tells us. She quotes Milan Kundera’s *Ignorance*, in which he writes: “Nostalgia is the suffering caused by an unappeased yearning to return.” As Jerusalemite writers yearn for both a lost time and a lost place, Johnson writes, “nostalgia is difficult to avoid, but its relation to memory is uneasy. Indeed, in Kundera’s ironic text, nostalgia is viewed as a form of amnesia.” In “Idylls of Jerusalem,” Johnson reviews *The Bells of Memory: A Palestinian Boyhood in Jerusalem* by Issa J. Boullata and *Jerusalem: Arab Social Life, Traditions, and Everyday Pleasures in the 20th Century* by Subhi Ghosheh. Both are, in a way, Jerusalem memoirs: the former explicitly so and the latter in a less conventional sense. In his memoir, Boullata views Jerusalem through the prism of individual memory – marked with nostalgia, perhaps, but told with precision. Ghosheh takes a different tack in his

compendium of “social life, traditions and everyday pleasures” in Jerusalem, although he shares with Boullata the implicit aim of restoring a lost and much loved city to memory. But Ghosheh is almost resolutely anti-biographical, perhaps in order to achieve a more objective and universal tone. In Johnson’s reading, however, “his voice might best be characterized by the troublesome concept of collective memory.” Johnson also adopts a critical eye toward those nostalgias that permeate both Boullata’s and Ghosheh’s books. In Ghosheh’s work, Jerusalem often “slides into a mythic time called ‘before’ – certainly before the Israeli occupation and sometimes before 1948. This mythic time is not false, but it is idyllic and away from the changing terrain of history. Ghosheh’s ‘Jerusalem before’ does not differentiate between late Ottoman, Mandate, and Jordanian Jerusalem; indeed, Ghosheh sometimes operates in a ‘before’ that stretches back to the Canaanites.”

In his “Letter from Jerusalem” for this issue, Khalid Farraj demonstrates just how much Jerusalem’s present stands in contrast to such an idyllic past. Farraj provides a reading of the rising tensions in the city and the clashes over attempts by ultra-nationalist Israeli elements to make claims over the Haram al-Sharif compound. Are these the stirrings of a third intifada? Farraj also reviews the local reception of Amer Shomali’s animated film *The 18 Wanted* – a quasi-documentary about the first intifada during Bayt Sahur’s tax boycott.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, René Wildangel writes from Jerusalem on “How To Take Down the Walls.” He compares the era marking the end of the Cold War with the current predicament of Jerusalem. Referring to activists celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary in Jerusalem by drilling holes in the Israeli wall, he notes, “The holes being punched in the separation barrier remain symbolic acts of protest in this regard. The image is powerful. Yet before the system of oppression and control, of which the wall is only a part and an expression will be dismantled, a widespread movement must be created which uses all its moral superiority as a freedom struggle to bring closer the happy day when the fall of yet another wall will be celebrated.”

Finally, as this issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* goes to press, we bid farewell to Alex Baramki, our Managing Editor for the past four years. Alex has been a leading light in raising the editorial and production standards of *JQ* to a new level. We will miss Alex’s editorial acumen and wish him the best in future endeavors, which we hope will include continuing to advise *JQ* and contributing to its pages as a writer.