

# **Palestinian Historians/Historians of Palestine: Writing under the Mandate and beyond**

One-day colloquium  
King's College London, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018

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09:15 – 09:45, Room K0:19  
Arrival, coffee & pastries

09:45 – 10:00, Room K0:18  
Welcome and introduction – Sarah Irving, KCL

## **10:00 – 11:30**

### **Session one: thinking about Palestinian historiography (K0:18)**

Discussant: Tony Gorman, University of Edinburgh

The Arab historiography of Palestine  
Jihane Sfeir, Université libre de Bruxelles

The history of Palestine and of its people has long been marginalized to the benefit of the dominant Israeli historical account. Even though this history has been absent from the global account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has nevertheless been central in the Arab historiography. This article reflects on the stages of construction of the historical narrative, made in parallel of the conflict and around the memory of the founding event, which is the 1948-Nakba. It aims at recounting the various interpretations of the Palestinian history elaborated outside of the original territory, based on non-Palestinian sources and passed on by the memory of a people, which had been scattered in diaspora.

From the Great Jewish Rebellion to the Great Arab Revolt: The Second Temple Period in Early Palestinian Histography  
Eli Osheroff, Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture, Berlin and The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

The Zionist colonization of Palestine in the twentieth century made the Jewish history of the land an interesting and highly contested subject for Palestinian historians. In this paper, I examine how Palestinian historiography represented this history of the “Other,” specifically as it is represented during what is defined in Jewish historiography as the Second Temple Period (roughly 500 BC-130 AD). While Palestinians did not necessarily adhere to this Jewish-Zionist (that is, European) periodization, they nevertheless invested substantial intellectual effort in dealing with its major milestones. For Palestinian historians, events such as the Jewish rebellions against the Hellenistic-Seleucid state (circa 160 BC) and the Roman empire (70 and 136 AD) constituted significant chapters in the history of Palestine as a territorial unit and simultaneously explained the contemporary struggle against Zionism and British rule.

I discuss the works of well-known historians such as ‘Arif al-‘Arif, Khalil Totah, and Omar Salih al-Barghuthi, as well as less familiar authors like Mahmoud al-‘Abadi (including his early essays in the Journal of the Teachers’ Training College in Jerusalem, al-Kuliyyah al-‘Arabiyya). I trace the influence of the authors’ biographies as well as the identity of their publishers (colonial or independent) on their historical approaches. I argue that the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1939) was a rupture not only in Palestinian society and politics but also in Palestinian thought. Following the revolt, Palestinian historiography turned to alienate the history of the Jews from the history of the land. The revolt thus marked the end to the national-imperial age with its inclusive national tone and the beginning of the more homogeneous national era. As the Second Temple Period still plays a major role in Israeli-Zionist culture today, I discuss briefly the places where this inner Palestinian debate is relevant to recent discussions regarding the notion of “historical rights” and the possibility of writing a shared Jewish and Arab history of the country.

11:30-11:45 (K0:19)

Break

**11:45 – 13:15**

**Session two: under British rule (K0:18)**

Discussant: Charlotte Kelsted, Exeter University

‘Izzat Darwaza and the quandaries of Palestinian leadership under the British Mandate

Charles Anderson, Western Washington University

For more than two decades ‘Izzat Darwaza played a central role in Palestinian politics, and this paper argues that the various phases of his political career are reflective of the development and dilemmas of the Palestinian national movement, and particularly its changing modes of struggle and (elite) models of political leadership.

Darwaza’s initial nationalist activism was pan-Arab, top-down, and tied to Faysali Syria. After the French occupation, he drifted towards the Grand Mufti of Palestine, becoming inspector of waqf in the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC). Darwaza later regretted this period, believing that the Palestine government had used the SMC to sow division and distraction inside the movement. By 1928 he championed popular mobilization, first in the emergent youth trend (joining the Young Men’s Muslim Association) and then in 1932 in the militantly anti-British Palestine Istiqlal party, which helped radicalize the movement and foment the 1936-39 revolt. During the revolt Darwaza was both an elite leader and a populist. As secretary of the Arab Higher Committee he was interned, and later, in the revolt’s second phase, he again allied with the Mufti, becoming the director of the Central Committee for the Jihad, the rebellion’s would-be exilic leadership. Colonial Secretary MacMichael referred to him in 1938 as “probably the biggest villain of the lot,” but after the defeat of the revolt, Darwaza, who was imprisoned in Syria, was driven – along with the national movement’s official leadership – into the political wilderness.

By tracking Darwaza’s history, this paper seeks to examine both the shifting self-conception of a key nationalist stalwart and the broader predicaments of leadership within the Palestinian national movement as it ultimately forged a path from quiescence to militancy.

Tibawi and US Interests at Kadoorie Agricultural School

Joshua Thew, Graduate Institute, Geneva

How have Tibawi’s views of American influence in Bilad al-Sham stood the test of time? It seems worth revisiting Tibawi’s writings to examine how his perspective of US influence in the region stand in comparison to contemporary views of education as shown through the lenses of

colonialism, decolonization, development, and primitivism. Tibawi establishes an initial base for implementation of US ideas of education; however, many new sources and theories enable a better understanding of both Tibawi's contributions and limitations. By using the Kadoorie Agricultural School (KAS, Tulkarem) as a case study, I would like to explore the functions of US missionaries, humanitarian & philanthropic organizations, and eventually, the Technical Cooperation Administration (Point Four Assistance) as they played minor yet illustrative roles in the establishment of KAS.

The periods under examination Late Ottoman until the Cold War offer an extended perspective of changes in US actors and their actions. The research would begin with a look at the 19th century as viewed from American Interests in Syria. Then move to the establishment of the Kadoorie and the capacity of the Near East Foundation in the school's early years. Finally, the work would follow US influence at KAS to look at assistance provide through the Point Four Program. The research would also contextualize US actions at KAS by surveying the agenda of other organizations at KAS such as UNRWA during the Cold War.

13:15 – 14:15 (K0:19)

Lunch

**14:15 – 15:45**

**Session 3: Miqdadi and Nationalist Historiography (K0:18)**

Discussant: Laila Parsons, McGill University

Of Paradigms, Genealogies and Theories of World History: Pan-Arabism and D. al-Miqdadi's History of the Arab Nation

Dyala Hamzah, Université de Montréal

Abstract How did one go about devising teaching material in the 1920s and 1930s Middle East? Philip Hitti, the father of Middle East Studies in the U.S.A. and formerly professor of 'Oriental history' at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, remembered the years he was lecturing there as conspicuously lacking in textbooks, research facilities and reference works. He himself had written a PhD in Arab history without having ever been lectured, at the SPC or at Columbia, on that subject. "Arab history", he said, "was not taught in Beirut." What methodologies did Hitti rely on to engineer the new discipline of 'Oriental history'? What new sources did he conjure up and how did the stuff of pre-modern chronicles get transformed in the process? Sati' al-Husri, the architect of the modern Iraqi schooling system relied on imported French models formerly in use at Istanbul's academies. Was it therein that he devised a pedagogy for distinguishing between useful knowledge and knowledge for its own sake? This paper focuses on one pioneering Arab historian, himself a student of Hitti and a functionary under Husri, as he articulated in school textbooks the passage from local patriotism (wataniyya) to nationalism (qawmiyya), and from Islamic historiography to the modern discipline of history. Darwish al-Miqdadi (1897-1961) co-authored with Akram Zu'aytar his first primary school textbook, *Tarikhuna bi uslub qisasi* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1935) and went on to write single-handedly his secondary school textbook *Tarikh al-umma al-'arabiyya* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1936). The paper interrogates the craft of the new historian by probing him dialectically at work with his masters, old and new. It looks at the subsequent editions of *Tarikhuna* and *Tarikh*, asking whether al-Miqdadi acknowledged Hitti's 1937 *History of the Arabs*, as well as the extent to which he was the heir of a later master, the German scholar of Palestine and Arab nationalism, Richard Hartmann. Finally, it asks to what extent Arab nationalist history was an anecdotal, if ironic, offshoot of Orientalism.

Darwish al-Miqdadi's Kuwaiti Career, 1950-1961  
Talal Al-Rashoud, Kuwait University

A prominent Arab nationalist educator, historian, and activist, the Palestinian Darwish al-Miqdadi (1899-1961) had a professional and political career that spanned four decades and numerous countries. Scholars have scrutinized his years of teaching in Palestine in the early twenties, his doctoral study in Berlin in the late thirties, and above all his time in Iraq, during which he fulfilled a range of academic and political roles between 1926 and 1941. By comparison, very little attention has been paid to his career in Kuwait as Director of Education (1950-1952) and Assistant Director (1952-1961).

Drawing on previously unused local documents, British archives, memoirs, and interviews, this paper will demonstrate that al-Miqdadi's period in Kuwait was a productive and highly influential phase in his career. It will start by examining the circumstances behind his move to Kuwait, arguing that Arab nationalist networks linking him to Kuwaiti officials were key to his appointment. The development of his educational and political thought will then be examined through newly unearthed articles that he published in the Kuwaiti press. Finally, it will be argued that al-Miqdadi played a central role in incorporating Arab nationalist indoctrination into Kuwaiti education, particularly through the subjects of history and geography.

Primarily as a result of his influence, the spread of Arab national awareness became a key goal of the country's first national curriculum introduced in 1955-1956.

15:45 – 16:15 Break (K0:19)

**16:15 – 17:45**

**session 4: post-Nakba histories (K0:18)**

Discussant: Nora Parr, SOAS

Learning Exile: Reconfiguring Palestinian Academic Identities after 1948

Hilary Falb Kalisman, Furman University

How did Palestinian intellectuals' imbrication in the Mandate's government education system shape their trajectories post 1948? How did self-made, elite, educated and influential Palestinian men forge relationships to Palestine in the wake of the Nakba? This paper uses oral histories, memoirs, novels, poetry and international archival materials to take up these questions, following the lives of three Palestinian academics. They possessed similar trajectories, but wildly different views of their links to Palestine. Born into poor families, Nicola Ziadeh, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Abdul Latif Tibawi all graduated from the meritocratic Arab College of Jerusalem. They worked as teachers in government schools, were awarded government scholarships, attended British Universities, and gained refuge as academics abroad after 1948. Ziadeh embraced an all-encompassing Arab nationalism. Jabra threw his creative energies into the concept of exile, and Tibawi wrestled with his placement as a Palestinian/British academic, adding new dimension to Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and Orientalist history. I argue that although these intellectuals were denied a nation-state of their own, their British educations allowed them to become prominent during the heyday of Arab qawmi nationalism. Therefore, they played key roles in global literary and cultural reconfigurations of what it meant to be Arab, and Palestinian.

Figures of the City: al-Quds between 1948 and 1967  
Haneen Naamneh, LSE

In March 1967, a delegation of al-Quds municipal council represented Jordan, alongside the delegation from Amman, in the inaugural conference of The Arab Towns Organization in the city of Kuwait. Al-A'rif who was then a member of al-Quds municipal council requested from the mayor to be part of the delegation, since he was working on a book on al-Kuwait at the time. Nevertheless, al-A'rif rejected for reasons that remain unclear.

In my paper I will attend to this story and place it within the larger discussion of Palestinian historiography. I will speak to the timing and circumstances of The Arab Towns Organization conference within the context of the elaboration of local urban identity in Jerusalem under Jordanian rule. I intend to introduce a critique of the historiography of Jerusalem during and after that period.

This analysis is multifaceted: it examines how post-1948 al-Quds is researched in the Palestinian historiography, and how does this historiography diverge from the historical project that historians like al-A'rif introduced about the city. More closely, I will engage a social history as I explore how these historians, intellectuals and civil-servants experienced dis/continuities during different epochs in al-Quds. The municipal council and The Arab Towns Organization conference will be an entry point to examine such dis/continuities leading to al-Naksa (1967).

17:45 – 18:00

Closing discussion and wrap-up