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MINORITY GROUPS IN PALESTINE DURING THE BRITISH MANDATE

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Palestinian society during the Mandate period, like other societies in this region, was pluralistic from a religious point of view. This pluralism was not an obstacle to the formation of a national movement. At the same time, Christian and certainly Druze participation in the Palestinian national struggle diminished, especially since the early 1930s. This trend coincided with the intensification of the Islamization process of the national struggle. This process increased during the years of the revolt, deepening trends of alienation among these two groups. Poor participation of Christians and Druze in the active struggle was not the result of their religious differences, but mainly because of the failure of the Palestinian national movement to bridge the social, political, and religious gaps within the Palestinian society and to turn the rebellion of 1936–1939 into a formative event for creating a coherent and board-based national movement.

The present paper explores the sources and processes that led to segregation, isolation and alienation among these groups during the British mandate. The paper will argue that low participation was a consequence of structural weakness that accompanied the Palestinian national movement because of the Mufti's factional approach, internal schisms, and the absence of a cohesive national program. It was also a result of the inability of the Palestinian national movement to channel local loyalties into a common national denominator.

Sectarianism has never been the essence or root of the crisis that accompanied the Palestinian national movement under the British mandate. Regression that hindered the activity of Christians, and more evidently the Druze, was a mark of the crisis of the Palestinian national movement. That crisis originated as the expected result of the failure of the political elite and was nothing if not the result of their failure to create a coherent national community in Palestine.

Keywords: British mandate, Christians, Druze, Palestine, Palestinian national movement

Palestinian society during the Mandate period, like other societies in this region, was pluralistic from a religious point of view. This pluralism was not an obstacle to the formation of a national movement and a national discourse that emphasized the concept of unity vis-à-vis the Zionist enterprise. The integration of Christians into political and journalistic activity illustrates this even more, as Yehoshua Porat's works show. At the same time, Christian and certainly Druze participation in the Palestinian national struggle diminished, especially since the early 1930s. This trend coincided with the intensification of the Islamization process of the national struggle. This process increased during the years of the revolt, deepening trends of alienation among these groups. Despite this, the poor participation of Christians and Druze in the active struggle was not the result of their religious differences, but mainly because of the failure of the Palestinian national movement to bridge the social, political, and religious gaps within Palestinian society and to turn the rebellion into a formative event. In this sense, the ramifications of the revolt as

an event that alienated the Christians and the Druze were not different in relation to other social groups in Palestinian society [Robson 2012, *151*].

Preface

The 1931 census showed that the Christian population had reached nearly 92,000, which was about 11 percent of the total Palestinian population. The Greek Orthodox community was the largest Christian community, at around 43 percent of all Christians in Palestine. Roman Catholics constituted 20 percent, 14 percent for Melkite, 5 percent for Anglicans, with the Maronites at about 4 percent. As for the dichotomy between the city and countryside, the great part of Palestinian Christians lived in urban Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth, Ramallah, and Ramla [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *8–9*].

The Middle Class in mandatory Palestine was composed disproportionately of Christians, who played a major role in internal commerce. By the same token, Christians were disproportionately represented inside the Mandate's civil administration. They also dominated the professional sector, a great part of the doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, journalists, and educators, who provided services to the civil service, merchants, landowners, and the wealthy. By the early 1930s, more than half the Arabs in the professions and nearly half in the financial professions were Christians [Radai 2016, *4–5*].

It is not a coincidence that the great majority of newspapers that appeared in Palestine during the late Ottoman period were founded or owned by Palestinian Christians. Out of a total of 39 newspapers from the late Ottoman period, 25 were owned and published by Christian journalists or communal institutions ['Abd al-Qadir, *430–432*]. The development of journalism in late Ottoman Palestine gives only a single indication about Christian social and educational mobility in Mandatory Palestine. The names of two of these newspapers, established respectively by Najib Nassar and the El-Issa cousins, reflected a sort of early identification with Palestine as a territorial and national sphere; these were *al-Karmel*, established by Nassar, and *Filastin*, established by Isa El-Issa and Yussif El-Issa [Kabha 2004, *15*]. According to some sources, schools and colleges established by the Russian empire between 1862–1914 had played a leading role in creating the new educated elite in Palestine [Abu Hanna 2005, *21–60*]. Personal biographies written by the graduates of these schools show that the vast majority were Christians [Abu Hanna 2005, *139–150*].

Although the British Mandate showed no preference to Christians in Palestine, the Christian communities benefited from the continuation of the millet system and the civil and religious rights guaranteed by the unique character and terms of the Mandate itself [Tsimhoni 1984, *168*, *185*]. They also formed a vital element of the middle class during this period, many gaining a modern education in mission schools, entering the free professions, and serving in the colonial administration. In 1921, while only constituting around a tenth of the Palestinian population, they formed two-thirds of all Arab administrative clerks. Although this number fell by half in 1938, they continued to be disproportionately represented in the administrative system [Vashitz 1947, *142*; Peretz 1977, *51–52*]. The overwhelming majority of the residents of middle-class neighborhoods in the large cities of Mandatory Palestine were also Christian Arabs and non-Arabs. Thus, for example, around 13,000 of the 22,000 residents of South Jerusalem, a middle-class neighborhood, were Christians, those in Jaffa numbering 17,000 of the city's 45,000 Muslim Palestinians [Radai 2007, *962*; 2015, *170*].

The Palestinian Christian community was heavily affected by the conflict between the Palestinian national and Zionist movements. The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 resulted in a mass exodus of Palestinian Christians, 50,000–60,000 of the 726,000 of those who were forced to leave their houses in Palestine were Christians. Many of the Christian refugees eventually found their way to the Americas and Australia. The Christian population of Jerusalem provides a specific example of the catastrophic effects of the 1948 war and the

prolonged conflict on Arab Christians. In 1944, the Christian population of the city was estimated at more than 29,000. By the end of the 1990s, it numbered less than 10,000, and is estimated at 50,000 today [Sabella 1998, *135*]. The same is true of Jaffa; only 3,000 Arabs, Muslims, and Christians are left of a pre-1948 population. Christians constituted a quarter of the city's inhabitants (17,000 out of a total of 71,000) after its occupation by Israeli forces [Radai 2015, *170*, *241*]. According to Sabella, by the end of the Mandate, while Palestinian Christians numbered 156,000, only 34,000 remained within Israeli territory [Sabella 2007, *8*].

The Druze of Palestine counted around 15,000 people, constituting no more than one percent of the total population of Palestine. They were overwhelmingly rural geographically, socially peripheral and traditional. In general, the Druze peasant population was led by several Hamulas (clans)[1], the most prominent of them were those of Tarif of the village of Julis, the Mu'adi of Yarka, and Khayr of Abu-Snan [Firro 1999, *21*]. The geographical distribution of the Druze population did not change during the Mandate period or following the establishment of the State of Israel. The history of the Druze during the Mandate was that of notable families who controlled their society and their lands.

Passivism and Activism:
Druze and Christians within the Public Sphere of Mandatory Palestine

Comparison between Christians and Druze in Mandatory Palestine is not the issue of this article. With this in mind, it is still necessary to address it briefly. It is obvious that the Christians were more involved and integrated in the Palestinian national movement during the Mandate, as well as in its civil administration. As opposed to the Druze passivism, Christians increasingly and consistently showed active participation in the national civil struggle of the Palestinian society. The Christians' activism versus the Druzes' passivism should be attributed to the urban social background of the Christians, in addition to their acquisition of modern education. They were directly affected by the demographic growth and economic empowerment of the Jewish *Yishuv*. The Christians' activism came to be expressed through the political sphere, cultural activities, journalism, and civil society.

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, Christians played a prominent and disproportional role in the Palestinian nationalist movement in Mandatory Palestine and Arab society, liaising with the British authorities on behalf of the Arab populace and representing the Arab-Palestinian position to the Western powers. Christian intellectuals were particularly active in the struggle against the Balfour Declaration and the Muslim-Christian Associations (MCA) created in its wake, constituting around 20 percent of all the members of the latter in the large cities [Porat 1974, *24*]. Despite only comprising 25 percent of the population in Jerusalem, Christians held 33 percent of the seats in the MCA leadership committee in the city. This figure is particularly striking in light of the fact that the Christian Palestinian population at the time constituted no more than 10 percent of the total populace [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *42*].

Following the end of the First World War and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim-Christian societies (*Al-Jam'iyyat al-Islamiyya al-Masihiyya*) were composed mainly of the *Ayan* social class. These societies rose against the Zionist enterprise and the establishment of the Jewish national home, as promised by British Foreign Secretary Lord James Arthur Balfour in 1917 [Wasserstein 1991, *14–16*].

These societies demanded autonomy and independence for Palestine under the patronage of Greater Syria, through participation in international conferences such as that in Versailles and opposition to the Balfour Declaration through demonstrations and political meetings. They also called for political and national unity between the Christians and Muslims in Palestine against the Zionist threat and British colonial rule and demanded that Palestine be part of Syria [al-Hut 1981, *82–83*].

The great part of Arab members of both the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP; founded in 1923) and the League for National Liberation came mostly from urban centers. These were members of either of two social and religious groups; while Christian members were those with urban social background, educated, and constituting the leadership echelons, Muslims constituted echelons of junior members and organized workers in the new industrial economy [Kaufman 1997, *25*]. Haifa and Jaffa, the less traditional cities on the coast, witnessed intensive urbanization and the development of a modern economic structure. Hence, the socioeconomic dynamics in the two cities was the meeting point between the revolutionary educated class and the urban workers. The PCP and later the League for National Liberation constituted a modern political framework for new social classes not represented among the traditional Palestinian elite during the British Mandate [Kaufman 1997, *26*]. Traditionally, Greek Orthodox Christians were most prominent in both the Communist and Arab nationalist movements, not only in Palestine, but generally in all of the Fertile Crescent.

Similar to other historical parts of the Middle East, communism in Palestine applied to social classes of peasants, proletariats, and students. The application of communism found powerful echoes among urban middle classes and laid the foundation for growing integration of educated Christians within the political leadership of the communist party. The new social milieu that was drawn to Communism and Marxism included many educated middle-class Christians; among them was a distinct social group composed of young, Christian-Orthodox members, the majority of whom were from Haifa [Mack 2015, *395*].

Merav Mark suggests three processes that might explain the harmonious meeting between communism and Orthodox Christians in Palestine. In addition to what is called by her the Russian-Arab connections and the anti-clerical sentiments in the community, a third reason for the success of communism was the unique geopolitical situation that resulted from the war in 1948 [Mack 2015, *393–394*].

Christian activists, most of whom were Orthodox, were at the center of the split in the ranks of the Palestinian Communist Party in 1943, due to the controversy within the party around the solution of the conflict between the Palestinian and Zionist national movements. In September 1943 they concentrated on the establishment of a new political movement called the National Liberation League. Of the eight founding members of the movement, at least seven were Christians, most of them from the Haifa area.

In 1946, the new movement published its political platform, which could be summarized in three main points: the abolition of the British Mandate and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Palestine; the establishment of a secular, democratic, and egalitarian Palestinian state that would grant equal status to all its citizens; and finally, the movement drew its inspiration from the universal model of Marxism. The new movement emphasized the difference between Judaism and Zionism. While Zionism was described as a movement that served Western imperialism, the movement emphasized the moral obligation to respect the rights of the Jews living in Palestine.

One important issue that should be discussed here, even briefly, was the nationalization of the local Orthodox community against the foreign clerics [Robson 2012, *86–90*]. The struggle for the Palestinization of the Orthodox church was supported by the Palestinian political leadership, in line with the aspirations of the new educated elite, which was trying to replace the clerical elite, by basing its social and intellectual authority on modern education and nationalism. But the dreams of an independent Palestinian Orthodox Church never materialized. The outbreak of the Great Arab Revolt (1936–1939) changed the priorities of the Palestinian national leadership, and communal matters became less important than the common anti-imperialist efforts directed against Zionism and the Mandatory government [Mack 2015, *393*].

Assessing the political and ideological views of non-elite classes among Palestinian Christians during the mandate is an unattainable goal given the absence of documentation. Still, elitist classes and prominent notables in general supported the National Party, established by the Nashashibi faction. There are two common explanations for Christians' support of the National Party. The first is related to the fact that a great part of Arab officials in the mandatory government were Christians; working with the government was in consistent with the conciliatory approach adopted by the Nashashibi faction. Second, as Daphna Tismhoni argues, supporting the opposition (*al-Mu'arada*) was, to a certain extent, a reflection of growing fears among Christians of increasing Islamization of the Palestinian national struggle against Zionism [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *69–70*].

There is no dispute that the Grand Mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, had integrated religion and politics and did not hesitate to use Islam as a tool for mobilizing the Arabs in the struggle against Zionism and the British [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *69*]. Islamization could partially explain Christian elite members' inclination to the opposition given the fact that some important Christian personalities remained loyal to the mufti, while many Muslims joined the opposition [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *69–70*].

It seems that Christians supporting the Nashashibi faction should be seen within the context of the traditional division characterizing the Palestinian social and political elite during the mandate. Furthermore, the fact that most elitist and prominent Christian public figures were on the Nashashibi's side should be attributed to their prestigious social affiliation more than to religion-related considerations.

Struggling and resisting Zionism and the Mandate by mobilizing religious symbols, terminology, and holy places, as indicated by Haiduc-Dale, did not lead to sectarian strife or violence between Muslims and Christians, but it was a significant shift for Palestinian Christians [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *90*]. The growing Islamization of the Palestinian national discourse and struggle was accompanied by growing political alienation among Christians. Estrangement and alienation became more evident following the eruption of the Great Arab Revolt.

The over-representation of Christians in the mandatory administration provoked protest among some Muslim communities, as can be learned from the journalistic discourse led by the newspaper *Al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* [Abu-Laban 1931]. The latter has debated for distinguishing between demands for more governmental positions for Muslims and national unity between Muslims and Christians in Palestine [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *87*]. Ye. Porath holds that the issue of integrating Christians into the civil service became a public issue of extreme significance, affecting relations between the two communities and arousing resentment among many Muslims [Porath 1974, *300–301*].

The organization of Christians based on communal or sectarian background, was the focus of criticism in newspapers owned by Christians known for their national orientation. It is worth noting in this regard that the paper *Sawt al-Sha'b,* owned by Issa Bandak, orchestrated a counter-discourse against sectarianism and sectarian-oriented frameworks[2]. According to Haidu-Dale, Bandak's integration approach aligned with the discourse of *Al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* of the Husaynis; it agreed with the idea of national unity, but saw it as a unity that must be based on the acceptance of the superior status of the Muslim majority [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *87–88*].

British policy towards the Druze continued the Ottoman heritage, which considered the Druze a part of Islamic collectivism. The mandatory authorities' refusal to recognize the Druze as a separate religious community was in fact part of its policy of maintaining the status quo, given the fact that there was no imperial interest in recognizing the Druze as an independent community (similar to French policy in the Lebanon). The Shiite community was recognized as a separate religious group, in order to limit the expansion of the Syrian Great Revolt to southern Lebanon. Therefore, the Druze in Palestine were regarded as a minority within the larger population of Palestinian Sunni-Muslims. Consequently,

the Druze were obliged to use the Sharia court system [Khnifess 2015, *77*]. Furthermore, by establishing the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), in 1922, the Druze *waqf* and holy shrines were subordinated to the former. In addition, the grand mufti was authorized to approve all appointments to governmental and official positions for the Muslim millet (which included the Druze community) [Porath 1974, *174*].

Druze politics during the British mandate was dominated by the leading families, especially *Tarif*, whose efforts were directed to achieving formal recognition of the Druze as a separate community. These efforts were supported by the other two sides of the triangle: *Kheyr* and *Mu'adi*. Already by the early 1920s, Sheikh *Tarif Tarif* had convinced a large number of leading families to sign a petition calling on the mandatory authorities to recognize the independence of the Druze community [Khnifess 2015, *78*]. It would be misleading to consider this as community politics, rather than the leading families' politics, striving to achieve representation positions, control over *waqfs* and holy places, and social prestige. Hence, struggling for recognition wasn't driven by motivation to empowering the community rather than by concern to promote the politicization of the masses. Instead, recognition was in fact aimed at strengthening the status of those leading families.

Kais Firro has developed an entire historical thesis around the shrine of the prophet Shuaib, according to which the State of Israel worked to cultivate the religious and social cult of the tomb of the prophet Shuaib, in order to place the Holy Sepulchre at the center of the Druze identity formation, according to the Zionist model. It is obvious that the state of Israel spared no efforts to crystallize a Zionist duplicated model of Druze identity [Firro 2000, *42–48*] around the shrine of prophet Shuaib. However, the cultivation of the Shuaib's cult was initiated by Tarif religious leaders driven by the pronounced goal of empowering the family's religious and social prestige.

A review of the history of the Tarif family during the Mandate period actually undermines this thesis. The Tarif family's political and religious activities during the Mandate period focused on two main goals: on the one hand, achieving recognition of the Druze as a separate community, and on the other, gaining control of the tomb of the prophet Shuaib. Sheikh Tarif Tarif and Sheikh Amin Tarif acted consistently to gain control of the tomb of the prophet Shuaib. This can be seen from petitions submitted to the High Commissioner. In addition, Sheikh Amin tried to enlist the support of Syrian Druze leaders to promote this goal [Farag 1990, *8–9*].

Toward the end of the 18th century, Sheikh Mahaneh Tarif, the spiritual leader of the community in Israel, was engaged in an extensive renovation of the tomb compound and for this purpose initiated a fundraising campaign among the Druze in Lebanon and Syria. This successful venture led to the re-opening of the Maqam on 25 April 1882, which became a date of gathering and celebration for the Druze community in Israel [Natur*,* Hasson 2001, *49*]. Over the years, the Tarif family has strengthened its status by noting it was responsible for the Maqam as well as for all the Waqf assets of the community. This activity took place especially in the days of Sheikh Amin Tarif, who used this and other religious sites to strengthen his status and the status of his family in the spiritual leadership of the community [Firro 1999, *76*].

The death of Sheikh Tarif Muhammad Tarif in 1928 sparked an argument among the Druze leadership in Israel regarding the identity of his successor. During this period, an opposition led by the Khir family sought to replace the Tarif family and place its sons in the positions of the spiritual leader of the community and the kadi. Another goal was to undermine the family's control of the assets of the Druze Waqf, headed by Maqam Nabi Shuaib.

However, the superior power of the Tarif family blocked this attempt and the appointment of Sheikh Amin Tarif as the spiritual head of the community in Israel. This was due

to the Britain's desire to preserve the status quo – Sheikh Amin's ties with the Druze leadership in Lebanon and Syria, his religious status, and his ability to use Maqam Nabi Shuaib and other holy sites as a venue for holding religious meetings under his leadership [Firro 2005, *227*].

In the light of the intensification of the conflict at the beginning of the 20th century, the Druze generally chose a neutral position. This position stemmed from their being a relatively weak community, lacking national leadership and national aspirations, and their perception of the conflict as a religious one that did not concern them. This was also expressed in a letter published by Druze dignitaries following the events of 1929 [Zaidan 2015, *25–27*].

Minority Groups and the Great Arab Revolt

Although the Arab Revolt was sparked by the death of Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1935, it did not ultimately lead to entire Islamization of the rebellion [Khalidi 2007, *XXIII–IV*]. By the same reasoning, the fact that the great majority of the rebellion's leaders were Muslims or traditional Muslims did not lead to Islamizing the rebellion that was in the first place of national character, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist. Instrumentalizing Islam as a means of national struggle did not Islamize the 1936–1939 revolt.

Internal Palestinian violence was mainly driven by social, militant national and factional motivations. Hence violence was directed against the rich, urban middle-class, people accused of cooperation with the British authorities and certainly against individuals and families identified as anti-Husseini. The militarization of the revolt, the transformation of the center of gravity of the revolt from the city to the countryside, underwent two transformations that had a profound impact on the internal social and political dynamics of Palestinian society as described by Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi. The latter constructed the internal-social dynamics of the violent stage of the rebellion as a sort of mistrust between the military field commanders and cadres and the Palestinian political leadership. There was deep mistrust between the nominal Palestinian political leadership grouped together in the Arab Higher Committee and many of those who were actually involved in the armed resistance to the British. The latter suspected the notables of being over willing to compromise with the British, with whom the militants knew they had been on good terms for so long. The ending of the general strike in October 1936 without any achievements but a British promise to send out yet another royal commission, that headed by Lord Peel, was seen by these militants as substantiating their fears. Those fears were fully realized when that commission in July 1937 recommended the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state. One consequence of this deep mistrust was that when wholesale armed revolt erupted in October 1937, there was even less willingness on the part of those who animated it to accept the leadership and guidance of the notables, most of whom by then were under arrest or in flight [Khalidi 2007, *112–113*].

As for the catastrophic results of the revolt described by Khalidi:

By the end of the revolt, existing political divisions within the Palestinian polity had become envenomed, leading to profound rifts between the majority supporting the revolt and a minority that had become alienated from the leadership: the consequence was assassinations, infighting, and further weakening of the Palestinian position [Khalidi 2007, *108*]. Mustafa Kabha does not refrain from describing the catastrophic consequences of the rebellion against Palestinian society.

According to Kabha, the outbreak of the revolt led to the suppression of social processes, especially urbanization on the coastal plain; consequently, many villagers who immigrated to the city in the early 1930s began to return to their villages after the outbreak of the revolt. These were mainly Islamist or communist activists who became the hard core of the rebellion [Kabha 2008, *33–34*]. Kabha concludes: "Their takeover in the

name of the nation's struggle over the population first in the countryside areas, and since 1938 also in the cities, created tension and caused friction on the basis of class. The rise of young leaders, without any education, was an unwelcomed development of great concern for the important urban families or even for the rural affluent families. This takeover was also characterized by violent activity; whereas the representatives of the new forces, launched revenge on class and personal rounds against the upper echelons" [Kabha 2008, *34*].

The inter-Palestinian struggles between the rebels and the peace societies created a hostile infrastructure for the rebels within their own community. Things degenerated into a murderous civil war, mortally damaged the efficiency of the rebellion, and ultimately led to its destruction [Kabha 2008, *29*]. Rashid Ibrahim al-Hajj, one of the most prominent Palestinian leaders during the mandate, confirmed that notable personalities were indeed murdered on personal grounds or motivated by certain interests [al-Hajj 2005, *167–168*].

Historical wisdom presented by these two scholars may serve us in analyzing the ramifications of the revolt against Druze and Christians as part of the Palestinian social fabric in Mandatory Palestine. The trend towards Islamization that increasingly marked the Palestinian national struggle after the events of 1929 led many Christians to abandon it. One of the first signs of this shift can be found in a letter Khalil Sakakini – a prominent Palestinian writer – sent to his son in December 1932: "It doesn't matter how high my status is in science and literature, how genuine my patriotism is, how much I do to revive this nation… as long as I'm not a Muslim, I'm nothing or less than nothing. If you want to be worth something, be a Muslim and then they'll let you live in peace" [al-Sakakini 2005, chapter 4, *387*].

The conspicuous Islamization of the Great Arab Revolt during its military stage alienated many Arab Christians from its ranks, despite the Mufti's attempts to unite Christians and Muslims under his leadership. The bourgeois and urban status of many Christians also contributed to their limited participation in the 1936 revolt. Moreover, a great part of the revolt's military leaders espoused a Qassami anti-urban orientation; they had been educated in al-Qassam's revolutionary values of struggling for social justice and destroying the high social classes of the *effindiya* and landlords [Shurab 2000, *56–57*].

As the center of gravity of the armed struggle shifted to the countryside, the rural rebels directed their ire at urban residents. The fact that many Christians were traders and clerks also made them the target of repeated attacks, perceived as fueled by sectarian motives [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *140–141*; Farah, 2003, *82–83*]. The increasing Islamization of the Palestinian national struggle after the 1930s prompted many educated Christians to turn their backs on the traditional leadership and to seek a radical solution within the communist movement, many leading members of the communist "League of National Liberation" being Christians [Porath 1968, *1–5*]. The League called for the establishment of an independent, democratic, secular state in Palestine that would protect and ensure equal individual civil rights to Jews and Arabs alike, thereby guaranteeing Arab Christian integration within the public sphere on the basis of cross-cultural and universal values [Kaufman 2014, *117*].

The Palestinian movement under the Mufti also regarded the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem as a weapon for enlisting support, both internally and externally, i.e. in relation to the Arab and Islamic space. The trend towards Islamization undoubtedly deepened the sense of alienation of the Christian element within the Palestinian national movement. Two events in particular signaled the process of the Islamization of the Palestinian national struggle during the British Mandate period – the riots of 1929 and the Great Revolt of 1936. These demonstrated that Christians were gradually excluded from the national movement, the urban, bourgeois status of Palestinian-Christians explaining their minimal participation in the Revolt; moreover, the center of gravity of the armed struggle shifted

to rural areas, the rebels there imprinting their stamp on the urban residents. The fact that many Christians were also traders and clerks, moreover, made them a target of repeated attacks at the hands of the rebels – this being perceived as an essentially sectarian issue [Farah 2003, *82–83*].

The political intellectualization and instrumentalization of religion were not the sole contributing factors that led to the growth of the trend towards sectarianism within the Palestinian nationalist movement, however. Just as sectarianism was an outcome of the socio-economic dynamics that drove Palestinian society, so it was also umbilically linked to the political patterns of behavior of the elite. During the Mandate period, the Palestinian elite was split into two factions – the Husseinis, who ruled the Supreme Islamic Council, and the Nashashibis, who were excluded from the Council. In an effort to strengthen their political position and challenge the official nationalist discourse led by Haj Amin al-Husseini, which emphasized national unity between Muslims and Christians, two of the Mufti's opponents – Sheikh Suleiman al-Farouki and Sheikh Asaad al-Shuqayri – convened a "National-Islamic Council" and initiated the establishment of organizations known as the Nationalist-Islamic Associations [al-Ghuri 1972, *218–219*]. The two subsequently sought to promote their political status as a rival force to the Mufti by raising a new agenda – namely, the struggle against the non-proportional representation of Christians in the governmental administration and their control of the Palestinian municipal economy. Their public relations campaign called for a boycott of Christian stores and trade with Christians – a move that was felt primarily in Jerusalem and Jaffa [al-Ghuri 1972, *219–223*].

The internal mechanisms driving Palestinian politics and the social dichotomy between minority groups of the educated, affluent Christian middle class and the poorer, less-educated urban Muslim majority formed fertile ground for the emergence of political sectarianism and its expansion into violent conflict in the 1930s[3] [al-Ghuri 1972, *223–225*].

In 1933, there was friction between Al-'Assa, editor of the newspaper *Filastin*, and Farouki, editor of the newspaper *Al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya*. The tension between the two took on personal and religious form and was expressed in the publication of articles in the two newspapers against each other. The British police were on guard in Jaffa because there was fear that the conflict would escalate into riots between young Christians and the Muslim community [The Central Zionsit Archive, S 90/2053/2].

Laila Parsons's analysis of Druze political activity during the Great Revolt of 1936–39 shows how pivotal this period was in the formation of Druze loyalties and behavior patterns, with both Palestinian rebels and the *Yishuv* vying for Druze support during the uprising's early months. At this time, some Druze supported the rebelling (mainly Muslim) groups, while others took the side of the Jews. However, according to Parsons, "The majority of Druze adopted a neutral position", trying to "stay as uninvolved as possible in the hope that the troubles would pass them by and that they would be able to carry on with their normal lives" [Parsons 2000, *28*]. Nevertheless, some rebel groups attacked individual Druzes and whole villages, because they saw the lack of Druze involvement in the uprising as a sign of betrayal; in other cases, attacks were directed against individuals who were accused of collaborating with the Jews or with the Mandatory authorities. At the beginning of the uprising in April 1936, the leaders of the revolt called on the Druze to join them. The commander of the revolt in the north issued a flyer emphasizing the Druze's loyalty to the Arab struggle. Indeed, this call found some echoes among Druze peasants [Farag 2002, *55*]. Upon the outbreak of the revolt, some Druze fellahin joined the ranks of the rebels and quite a few Druze sources who sympathized with the Palestinian national movement, as well as those who demonstrated a hostile attitude towards it, mentioned the names of several Druze fellahin who had joined the rebels [Falah 1996, *19–21*; al-Qadamani 2010]. But what happened in Palestinian society as a whole also occurred among the Druze themselves; that is, there were Druze who joined the rebels and there were Druze who joined the peace associations that cooperated with the British.

The anarchistic militarization of the uprising, the loss of control of the political leadership over the uprising and the growing Islamization among the groups of fighters led to a series of murderous attacks on the Druze communities between 1936 and 1939.

The chronological review presented by Raja Faraj shows that the murderous attacks in the Druze villages have multiplied from the end of 1938, and included mainly the villages of the Carmel mountains, collecting protection fees, killing Druze who were accused of collaborating with the Jews, stealing cattle, and more. This wave reached its peak with the assassination of Sheikh Hassan Khanifas, one of the most prominent and well-known Druze from Shfaram in 1939 [Farag 2002, *63–69*].

The fear of escalation led to the immediate intervention of Palestinian institutions of reconciliation. Following a mandatory court decision to sentence to death Muslim rebels who were convicted of killing Druze peasants, Muslim and Druze notables went into action to avoid implementation of the sentence. The fear was that if the execution were carried out, acts of Muslim revenge and retaliation would follow. A committee of reconciliation was formed in order to achieve a *sulha* (reconciliation). The arrival of a delegation from Syria headed by Abd al-Ghaffar al-Atrashi was an indication of the nature of the escalation. By early 1940, the Druze and Muslim committees reached a *sulha* agreement, under the auspices of the mandatory authorities. This put an end to two years of one of the several inter-communal conflicts that broke out between 1938–1939 [Firro 1999, *29–30*].

The arrival of Druze volunteers from Syria and Lebanon aroused deep concern among the Zionist leadership; accordingly, two chiefs from the Abu-Rukun family, Hasan and Zayed, were sent on a mission to convince the Druze leaders of Lebanon and Syria to stop the stream of volunteers. These appeals fell on attentive ears in the case of the Junblati faction's leader al-Sitt Nazirah Junblat. The suspicious and even hostile attitude of al-Sitt Nazirah to the Muslims was most evident during the revolt. She was strongly opposed to the Druze-Lebanese volunteers joining the rebellion movement – "to be [hand] in hand with the government and the Jews because the end was destruction and destruction for Muslims"[4]. Neutral works that come from an apolitical point of view, such as that by Zaid Naffa, try to glorify the Druze participation in the uprising [Naffa 2010, *81–89, 127–140*]. Still, most Druze who took part in the uprising acted individually and no communal efforts were made in favor of the rebellion or the rebels.

In fact, Druze conscription goes back to the 1936–1939 Revolt due to their fear that as a minority group they faced an existential threat from their Arab Muslim neighbors. Druze historian Kais Firro sums up the historical impact of the Revolt on the Druze community thus: "Although the Druzes within Israel maintained an attitude of indifference toward the conflict, their particularism and the impact of the events of the years 1936–1939 were later made use of by the Israel authorities to gain the loyalty of the Druzes to the new state" [Firro 1992, *363*].

The Zionist movement – and subsequently the State of Israel – thus construed the Revolt as a traumatic event that threatened Druze existence. In the wake of the murder of five Druze peasants by Palestinian rebels, Abba Hushi, a powerful Zionist leader, stated: "The massacres... have lit the flame of revenge in the hearts of the Druzes and if only someone could exploit this, the outcome would be significant" [Firro 1999, *27*]. Therefore, the revolt was manipulated to form the historical background for promoting an alliance between the Druze and the Jewish State as two persecuted minorities fighting Arab-Muslim oppression.

The basic assumption in Israel's strategy towards the Druze has not changed since the 1930s and has continued to be based on the idea of a League of Minorities. The Druze were considered non-Arabs and haters of other Muslims who could be used against those around them. As Aharon Chaim Cohen wrote in 1937: "This is the way for us: to create visiting points within the dark Arab sea which surrounds us" [The Central Zionist Archives, S 25/6638]. Or, as Kais Firro called it in his book, *The Druze in the Jewish State*,

the Druze were a knife in the back of Arab unity. This line of thought had a practical translation: the Druze recruits were separated within the minorities unit. The French and British used the same practice in the Troupes Specials in Syria and Lebanon, and the British with the Iraqi Levies.

Yitschak Ben-Zvi, Israel's second president gave this "Druze policy" an ideological and conceptual dimension. He referred to "the old tradition connecting the Jews with the Druze, whether it is ancient history or is nothing but a product of tradition and late acceptance. I mean the holy place; one of the greatest and most praised personalities of their days is Shuaib or Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law". "The second is related to Zionist theorization of Druze history as a 'persecuted minority group'. 'This nation has suffered so much from the persecution of Muslim and Christian fanaticism for centuries. It has no irredentism, neither near nor far. One should consider this friendship rooted in ancient tradition and similar fate. Worthy and deserving the cultivation and strengthening of historical ties'" [Ben-Zvi 1953, *209*].

This notion of mobilizing the Druze against their Arab-Muslim neighbors has always accompanied Zionist political strategy. Two examples are worthy of note. In 1939, the Zionist movement developed a plan to transfer the Druze village populations in the Galilee and the Carmel Mountains to the Hauran Mountains. This population transfer would be organized and financed by the Zionist movement. Abba Hushi was given the mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Zionist movement with the Druze leader Sultan al Atrash to convince him to support the plan and cooperate in carrying it out. Were the peasants to settle there, the Zionist movement would help each of them to purchase a piece of land. Three decades later, right after the 1967 war, Yigal Allon, one of the labor leaders, suggested using the disruption resulting from the war to create a Druze buffer state between Israel and Syria in the Golan Heights and the Hauran Mountains. This state would be sponsored and armed by the Israeli government and would serve as a front line in the struggle against the Arab threat [Avivi 2007, *363–365*].

It is doubtful if one can relate to the "Christian policy" of the Zionist movement. Although it is not reasonable to think the Zionist movement adopted a separatist approach in regard to Christian Palestinians, or even a line of coherent political thought about them, there were Zionist orientations that regarded the Christians as a group with unique cultural characteristics. The first signs of the view that the Christians constituted a separate cultural-ethnic group from the Muslim-Arab majority can be found in *Herut* at the beginning of the twentieth century. This paper, considered at the time to be the organ of Sephardi Zionism, depicts the Christians as a separate group sharing numerous socio-economic features with the Jews – background, urban status, way of life, migration to the West, and so forth. While these characteristics prompted great rivalry between the two communities, they were also sources of affinity and harmony [Gribetz 2014, *98–99*]. Such a perception had not existed during the Ottoman Empire; it began to take root hand in hand with the growth of the Zionist movement [Campus 2011, *19*].

But it may be argued that as early as the second half of the 1930s, and against the backdrop of the Arab Revolt, a "Druze policy" of the Zionist movement began to crystallize, with the clear aim of separating the Druze from the Palestinian-Arabs, channeling a Druze doctrinal particularism into a separatist trend like the Zionist model. This trend is reflected at both levels of the discourse and practice, especially in the alliance with Druze families, the transfer plan, and later in the recruitment project.

The plan, which was described by Hillel Cohen as a key document, rested on three main strategies. First, supporting opposition forces and creating an alternative leadership; second, deepening fissures within Palestinian society; and third, launching a propaganda machine to publicise the economic advantages of Zionism [Cohen 2008, *17–18*].

The execution of this plan was assigned to Chaim Margalit Kalvarisky, head of the Zionist Executive's Arab Department. As far as Arab-Christians were concerned, the plan

strove to create "provocation of dissension between Christians and Muslims" [Cohen 2008, *17*]. But the main focus of Kalvarisky's strategy was the Muslim effendis and the social elite. The only way to win over their sympathy was to emphasise the economic benefits they would receive from the establishment of a Jewish state. Although driving a wedge between Muslims and Christians lay at the heart of the plan, the Muslim social elite remained the primary objective of this plan [Cohen 2008, *19*]. Kalvarisky led the efforts to establish Muslim-National Associations, with the clear aim of creating a counterweight to the Muslim-Christian Associations, which were considered as the hard kernel of the Palestinian national movement [Cohen 2008, *19*]. The Muslim-National Associations were headed by public personalities who were known as oppositionists to al-Haj Amin al-Husseini. Their activities challenged his leadership as well as the Palestinian national unity in the name of Islam and Muslim interests.

Demographic, socio-economic, and cultural differences between Druze and Christians may explain the deep gaps between the two communities in their levels of participation in the Palestinian national struggle. A great part of the Christian demography was that of city residents, educated, of developed political and national consciousness, and consequently more and more involved within the political and public spheres. Yet neither group played a significant role in the violent revolt against the British. According to Porath's list of rebel commanders, only 1.5 percent were Christians. In comparison with the percentage of Arab Christians within the Palestinian population (approximately 9 percent), and in comparison to the constructive role they played in the composition of the Muslim-Christian Associations, they were under-represented among the rebel leaders and within the military activism of the rebellion [Porath 1974, *269*; Haiduc-Dale 2013, *150*]. Haiduc-Dale counts only three Christians among the revolt's local officers [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *150*]. The Christians' contribution to the Palestinian national struggle was prominent in the fields of politics and journalism [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *149*].

Some Christians and Druze were convinced that they were targeted because of their religious identification. But attacks against Christians and Druze should be seen within the wider context of the internal conflicts and schisms that dominated the Palestinian arena during the revolt. Violence against Christian and Druze individuals was not more violent or cruel than that directed against urban Muslims or against people identified with the Nashashibis. Haj Amin went to lengths to maintain good ties with elite Christians. Furthermore, he was active in ending sectarian tensions and divisions between Muslims and Christians [Haiduc-Dale 2013, *152–153*]. Despite that, Christians, particularly in the cities, were exposed to repeated attacks by the rebels.

To conclude this point of discussion, it is beyond any doubt, and for reasonable reasons and processes, that Christians were more active and more prominent within the Palestinian national movement. This applied also to the 1936–1939 Revolt, where Christians played an important role in perpetuating the general strike. When it comes to the Palestinian armed struggle, their role was minimal. It seems that the Christians' non-violent participation in the Palestinian national struggle was due to their social configuration as urban and bourgeoisie classes.

Conclusion

The mobilization of religion as a recruiting mechanism in the service of the national struggle was not unique to the Palestinian national landscape. The Turkish national movement, despite its emphasis on secularization, did not hesitate to use Islam or religious tradition as a means of control. The Nasserist regime, which expanded the institutionalization of secular Arabism, at the same time, utilized Islam, whether as a tool of control or for the sake of legitimizing Arabism. The Zionist movement followed the same path and did not hesitate to use symbols and religious texts to mobilize the masses. In the same vein, the Palestinian national movement, in view of the intensity of the threats posed by

Zionism and the Mandate, also found in Islam an effective means of mobilizing the masses, of forging Arab and Muslim solidarity, and first and foremost, creating the motivation for the armed struggle against the *Yishuv* and the British.

Islamization, in the sense of stimulating religious enthusiasm, wasn't the sole explanation of the modest participation of groups such as the Christians and the Druze in the Palestinian national struggle, especially during the revolt. Indeed, the Islamization of discourse and struggle created alienation. But the modest extent of Christians and Druze participation should be seen in the wider social and political context that does not refer only to them. The same undoubtedly refers to the middle class in large cities, for example. This low participation was a consequence of structural weakness that accompanied the Palestinian national movement because of the Mufti's factional approach, internal schisms, and the absence of a cohesive national program. Is was also a result of the inability of the Palestinian national movement to channel local loyalties into a common national denominator. The Palestinian national movement failed to establish a national dialogue that would lead to internal political and social cohesion, just as it failed to create a mechanism for bridging existing gaps between the city and the village, between different religious groups, and especially between the two rival Muslim factions. Determining participation in the 1947–1948 war as a measure of loyalty to the Palestinian national movement is a fundamentally false assumption, because Palestinian society as a whole could not mobilize its human resources for the war effort at the most fateful hour of its history. The low level of Christian and Druze participation in the 1936–1939 Revolt was in fact an indication of a structural crisis within the Palestinian national movement rather than an issue of the loyalty of minority groups.

Internal tensions provoked by sectarian or religious motivations did not ignore Palestinian society during the British mandate. That said, sectarianism has never been the essence or root of the crisis that accompanied the Palestinian national movement under the British mandate. Regression, non-participation, and impassiveness hindered the activity of Palestinian Christians, and more evidently, the situation of the Druze was a mark of the crisis of the Palestinian national movement. That crisis originated as the expected result of the failure of the political elite and was nothing if not the result of their failure to create a coherent national community in Palestine.

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[1] *Hamula* is a name given to a group of people who claim descent from a common ancestor. In Arab Villages, during the Ottoman and British periods, each hamula occupied a special quarter (hara), its members held ownership over common land (Musha). Hamulas lost their economic and social functions following lands confiscation, social and economic changes generated by the state of Israel. Nonetheless, hamulas still playing significant political role, especially in the local municipal elections [al-Haj 1988, *237–258*].

[2] See the editorial's article: "Al-Jam'iyyat al-Ta'ifiyya wa-Ishtighaliyya bi al-Wataniyya", *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 5 November 1932; "Al-Ta'ifiyya Huwwat Halak", 28 May 1932.

[3] The most violent-sectarian event referred to by al-Ghuri was the assassination of Michel Mitri, the head of league of Arab workers at Jaffa in July 1935. This event came against the background of incitement against Christians.

[4] See the report by Sheikh Zaid Abu Rachan sent by Abba Hushi to the Druze villages in Lebanon in 1936 [The Central Zionist Archives, S 25/9165].

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Ю. Хазран
Групи меншин у Палестині у період Британського мандату

Палестинське суспільство протягом періоду мандату, як і інші суспільства цього регіону, було плюралістичним із релігійної точки зору. Цей плюралізм не був перешкодою для формування національного руху. У той же час участь християн та друзів у палестинській національній боротьбі послабилася, особливо з початку 1930-х. Ця тенденція збіглася з активізацією процесу ісламізації національної боротьби. Він посилився за роки повстання, поглиблюючи тенденції відчуження у цих двох групах. Низька участь християн та друзів в активній боротьбі була спричинена не їхніми релігійними розбіжностями, а головним чином невдачею палестинського національного руху у зведенні соціальних, політичних та релігійних мостів у палестинському суспільстві і перетворенні повстання 1936–1939 рр. у формаційну подію для створення цілісного національного руху.

У статті досліджуються джерела та процеси, що призвели до сегрегації, ізоляції та відчуження серед цих груп у період Британського мандату. Наводяться аргументи, що низька участь була наслідком структурної слабкості, яка супроводжувала палестинський національний рух через фракційний підхід муфтія, внутрішні розколи та відсутність згуртованої національної програми. Це також було наслідком нездатності палестинського національного руху привести місцеві цінності до спільного національного знаменника.

Сектантство ніколи не було сутністю чи коренем кризи, яка супроводжувала палестинський національний рух під Британським мандатом. Регрес, що перешкоджав діяльності християн, і, більш очевидно, друзів, був ознакою кризи палестинського національного руху. Ця криза виникла як очікуваний результат невдачі політичної еліти і була не що інше, як результат їхньої неспроможності створити цілісну національну спільноту в Палестині.

Ключові слова: Британський мандат, друзи, Палестина, палестинський національний рух, християни

Ю. Хазран
Группы меньшинств в Палестине в период Британского мандата

Палестинское общество в период мандата, как и другие общества этого региона, было плюралистичным с религиозной точки зрения. Этот плюрализм не был препятствием для формирования национального движения. В то же время участие христиан и друзов в палестинской национальной борьбе ослабело, особенно с начала 1930-х. Эта тенденция совпала с активизацией процесса исламизации национальной борьбы. Он усилился за годы восстания, углубляя тенденции отчуждения в этих двух группах. Слабое участие христиан и друзов в активной борьбе было вызвано не их религиозными разногласиями, а преимущественно провалом палестинского национального движения в наведении социальных, политических и религиозных мостов в палестинском обществе и превращении восстания 1936–1939 гг. в формационное событие для создания целостного национального движения.

В данной статье исследуются источники и процессы, приведшие к сегрегации, изоляции и отчуждению среди этих групп в период Британского мандата. Приводятся аргументы, что неактивное участие было следствием структурной слабости, сопровождавшей палестинское национальное движение из-за фракционного подхода муфтия, внутренних расколов и отсутствия сплоченной национальной программы. Также оно стало результатом неспособности палестинского национального движения привести местные ценности к общенациональному знаменателю.

Сектантство никогда не было сущностью или корнем кризиса, сопровождавшего палестинское национальное движение под Британским мандатом. Регресс, который препятствовал деятельности христиан и, более очевидно, друзов, был признаком кризиса палестинского национального движения. Этот кризис возник как ожидаемый результат поражения политической элиты и был ничем иным, как результатом ее неспособности создать целостное национальное сообщество в Палестине.

Ключевые слова: Британский мандат, друзы, Палестина, палестинское национальное движение, христиане