

JERUSALEM

FROM THE OTTOMANS TO THE BRITISH

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INTRODUCTION

My arrival in Jerusalem occurred on 6 December 1322 [19 December 1906] and I am still within the seventh month of my appointment, which I know is a great act of grace bestowed upon me by His Majesty the Caliph. There is no denial, therefore, that the authority to study and examine such a major issue as the Jewish question in Jerusalem which a six-seven month experience can provide a weak man, especially such as your slave, is valueless to the point of being in effect non-existent. [This question] has perhaps no equivalent in the Empire and, without denial, is continuing to get more and more complicated and intricate, taking many different shapes and forms. It is always prone, because of the involvement of all powers in it, to become a major political problem and from all points of view, it is, in short, a most difficult and crucial one. (Ali Ekrem Bey, Governor of Jerusalem, 1906-1908)¹

There are enough books on the history of Jerusalem to fill entire libraries, so it is fair to ask: do we need yet another history of Jerusalem? However, the large availability of works does not necessarily mean there is a thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject, even if these works are a reflection of its relevance and publicity.

There are several reasons why scholars, writers and readers have approached the history of Jerusalem. The different narratives available not only represent different styles, methodological approaches and focus; narratives are often, and foremost, the expression of different political and religious visions. These narratives have often been employed to make claims which served

the purpose of those who wished to control the city and its meanings. In this context, Jerusalem has become an ‘imagined community’: in Andersonian terms, the city is imagined as there are many groups whose members do not necessarily know each other, but share strong feelings towards Jerusalem.² The city is also imagined as a community, irrespective of its manifest divisions, as it is conceived more as an ideal, where religious myths have been turned into collective memories, transmitted as history. Issam Nassar has noted how these narratives are in constant competition, as they connect the city with those groups who share the same history, thereby *de facto* isolating the history of different communities from the overall history of the city.³ Is it then possible to write about Jerusalem without falling into these traps? Is it possible to avoid being subservient to a cause or a claim?

This book aims to discuss at least three issues rarely, if at all, touched on in the majority of works which relate to this popular city. Looking at the major literature on the history of Jerusalem, it is noteworthy that the particular period discussed in this work has often been neglected. There are several studies dealing with the late Ottoman history of Palestine, but the whole period of transition from Ottoman rule to British administration, and the period of the First World War, has been almost entirely overlooked. Rather than highlighting specific titles which have disregarded this period, it is more interesting to try and discover why this phase has been ignored. The question of periodisation is not only a practical or methodological issue: it is a choice of values and, to an extent, of claims to make. The division of history into periods is not something that is self-evident but rather – as E.H. Carr argues – a necessary hypothesis whose validity depends on interpretation.⁴ This means that, beyond the simple task of dividing history on paper, what really matters is giving some meaning to the subdivision. While there is no issue with the idea of dividing history, the choice of the periodisation cannot be driven by political, ideological and religious claims. As it happens, concerning the available literature, there are not many claims to be made regarding Jerusalem during the First World War: there is indeed more to be said on the British mandate era, on early Jewish immigration, or on rising Palestinian nationalism. In view of this,

ironically, the years of the war have been ignored for political and ideological reasons.

The choice of the periodisation links to the second issue debated in this work. In Jerusalem during the war, local issues like lack of food or the militarisation of the local environment overshadowed international questions such as the management of the holy places or Jewish immigration. This period, therefore, is less attractive to professional historians. This has to do with the dominant discourses in the historical works in relation to the city. There are more works dealing with Europeans and Zionists than with the local population regardless of their affiliation: it seems as if the natives or local residents were not to be considered as agents of change in this formative period. Jerusalemites have rarely been placed at the centre of attention, and tend to be shown only if interacting with Europeans or Zionists. However, there is also a problem in defining who a Jerusalemite actually is. Personally, I decided to use a broad definition and include not only natives but also permanent residents; it is the interactions of these people that made Jerusalem a lively place, rather than a large open-air museum, Pompei-style. Sometimes, certain narratives give the impression that the inhabitants of the city were supporting actors or extras performing walk-on parts and cameos. This has a major repercussion on the way in which Jerusalem becomes the focus of the production of historical narrative. Including Jerusalemites in the picture broadens the sources to investigate; it becomes necessary to move away from the traditional sources used in the discussion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The questions of sources and historiography are also debated. There are two major issues to discuss: the use of local sources, and the insufficient interaction between the historiographies available. The majority of the works available are based on European sources and accounts of Western travellers. In itself this is not a problem; it is the way these sources have been used that is the issue. For instance, consular sources have been employed mainly to explain political relations between international actors, to shed light on the battles between religious institutions, and regarding Zionism and Jewish immigration; sometimes, data and information on the local population have only been mentioned to support the benevolent

effect of a European presence. The narrative of this book is based on a massive amount of data gathered through Western sources, but it focuses more on local issues, with a particular interest in what went on in the city during the war. The people of Jerusalem *were* the city, so it is necessary to take account of local voices expressed, mainly through diaries and memoirs. A good example is provided by the diary of the Spanish consul who resided in the city during the war; however scholars such as Abigail Jacobson, Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari have worked on diaries and memoirs of other local residents providing crucial information. Clearly, these sources are biased, and offer just one point of view: but it is the point of view of a local resident, and not of travellers imbued with religious fervour or a sense of *mission civilisatrice*. How can one write a history of Jerusalem without Jerusalemites, whether they are Orthodox monks, local businessmen or members of the Ottoman administration?

If sources are the main issue in writing the history of the city, in academic terms what should concern us is the production of narrative in different languages. Histories of Jerusalem have been written in several languages, notably English, Arabic, Hebrew, French and German, but some literature has also been produced in Italian and Spanish. Although most Israeli and Arab scholars have also published in English, what is really striking is the general lack of interaction between academics. In most of the literature in English, it is almost impossible to find references to French, Italian or Spanish narratives, whilst all of these narratives often feel obliged to quote from Anglo-Saxon works as English is the leading academic language. The works of Henry Laurens, Dominique Trimbur or Catherine Nicault are often unknown, while an article by Vincent Lemire and Yasemin Avcı seems to have been overlooked by Anglo-Saxon narratives. Indeed, different national narratives have different purposes: the French and the Italians have often focused on their activities in Jerusalem, while the British have focused on Jerusalem the biblical city or on the issue of Zionism. Arab and Israeli scholars have focused on political narratives, often relying on local sources to argue their cases, but *de facto* relying mainly on Anglo-Saxon literature for the historical context. Despite all possible attempts at interaction, what remains is an atomised

academic field, unable to communicate. The landscape is neither clear nor idyllic. What I have attempted to do in this work is bring together as many narratives as possible; to process them, explore what they have to offer, and to merge these works with my own sources. To claim full knowledge of all available literature on Jerusalem would be a mistake. Also not all primary sources available have been directly scrutinised, such as the diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh or Ihsan Tourjman; however my hope is to have broken through certain academic dogmas, and open the field to new perspectives and more research.

This book is divided into five chapters, dealing with several aspects of Jerusalem: administration, Churches, foreigners, the war, and politics. Chapter 1 discusses the late Ottoman administration of Jerusalem. It presents an overview of the administrative machine, including the local inhabitants, with the long-term purpose of considering the changes and continuities between the Ottoman and the British administrations. As far as Jerusalemites are included in this narrative, it is crucial to define composition of the local population, both in terms of numbers and structure at the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in an effort to present a reliable and apolitical picture of the population, I have tried to gather and combine all sources available. In Chapter 2, the position of religious institutions in the city during the war is debated. My point is that these institutions, despite being alien entities in the city, with poor connections with the local population, had to change their attitudes during and due to the war, renegotiating their positions *vis-à-vis* local inhabitants. A case study is provided through the discussion of the Custody of the Holy Land during the war, which summarises all the paradoxes of the Christian religious institutions of Jerusalem. I also discuss the emergence of the Christian-Muslim associations in response to Zionist activities, less in political terms and more as local organisations reshaping the traditional alliances between the various communities in the city.

Chapter 3 introduces the question of foreigners in the city. It is clear that there is a need to differentiate between visitors and those who, for short or long periods, became residents. The agency of foreigners is scrutinised to show their impact on the city. I am

particularly interested in those foreign residents who lived in the city throughout the war, like the American consul Glazebrook and the Spanish diplomat Conde de Ballobar. Each of them provides a different perspective on the city, but it is the young Spanish diplomat who offers a very interesting insight into wartime Jerusalem. Ballobar wrote a diary of his mission during the war, with plenty of comments about the military, administration, and the local people; in fact, he effectively became one of them. He reported on the social activities taking place in the city, primarily dinners or social gatherings between the local, Ottoman and foreign elites, shedding light on a little-studied phenomenon.

Chapter 4 discusses the overall impact of the war on the city of Jerusalem. The war is discussed from different perspectives. Jerusalem was never an open field for military operations; however, mobilisation, militarisation of the environment, and British plans and occupation had a massive impact on the local milieu. All aspects of daily life were renegotiated, and sectarian barriers were lowered. In the context of the war, it can also be seen how Jerusalem was deprived of its status as a real city of real people, and turned into a symbolic place, a prize for the ultimate winner. It is easy to observe the dichotomy of a city which was inhabited by local people and idealised by the new conquerors, who did not hesitate to define themselves as new crusaders.

Chapter 5 partly mirrors the first chapter, discussing the British military administration of the city. The war was over in Jerusalem in December 1917, with the British occupation of the city, but in fact, I argue that the war period continued until 1920, when a civil administration was established. The military establishment was simple, and worked efficiently though it had to face several problems. Once again, the administrative decisions taken in relation to the city are scrutinised, as is the impact they had on the local population. This means looking at the well known, but not often discussed, figure of the military governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs, and his vision of Jerusalem, which was often translated into decrees with a long-lasting impact upon the city and its inhabitants. Eventually, the military administration was brought to an end by the explosion of violence between Arabs and Zionists in April 1920 – the Nebi Musa riots. A discuss of these events considers their

dynamics, and the impact these riots had on the city and local communities, arguing that Ottoman Jerusalem was fading, giving way to a new city, with renegotiated local values and alliances, but not yet a divided city.

MODERNISING JERUSALEM: ADMINISTRATION AND POPULATION

Ölberg is the German for Mount of Olives. Jabal az Zeytun is the Arabic and Zeytindağı is just the name I gave to my book. There never was a Turkish Jerusalem. (Falih Rıfkı Atay 1894-1971)¹

Historical writings on the modern period of Jerusalem are often based on historical accounts of religious myths and Western encounters with the city. These historical narratives have created tales in which the local population were almost invisible. While it is a fact that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jerusalem was a small provincial centre, it is not necessarily true that Ottoman rule was backward and calamitous as has been previously portrayed. Looking at the sources available, most of the accounts depicting Jerusalem as a dreadful place misruled by the ‘terrible’ Turks are, in fact Western accounts. Are these accounts also the voice of the local residents? They might have had their grievances with the Ottoman administration and, indeed, Jerusalem was not as developed as European cities of the time, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century Jerusalem was in reality an Ottoman city, and not the product of biblical imagination or collective memories. What follows is not an example of a ‘modernisation narrative’, in which the focus is on the origins of this phenomenon, but rather a short study of the process of modernisation itself, and its impact on the local population.

One of the main problems in looking at the city of Jerusalem across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is demography. Many historians have produced figures and statistics with the aim of strengthening specific claims, but what about studies that look at numbers just in terms of local inhabitants and dynamics, in order to explain processes such as the impact of modernisation on the population? Unfortunately not many of these works are available, as it seems that writing a history of Jerusalem means supporting the claims of one of the various communities' narratives. The challenge is to attempt to compile data unrelated to any particular narrative, to be used in the study of the everyday life of Jerusalem.

From Ottoman to Egyptian rule and back

The Ottoman history of Jerusalem begins with the occupation of the city by Sultan Selim I. Since 1260 the Mamluks had ruled Palestine from Egypt, but in 1517 Selim's army defeated them, ending their reign. However, it was not until the rule of his son, Kanuni Süleyman (the Law-giver, known as Süleyman the Magnificent, 1494-1566), that Jerusalem regained its importance after centuries in oblivion. He rebuilt the walls that still stand in the city today, improved the water system and established the foundations of the *millet* system, which regulated relations between the different religious communities.² The *beylerbeylik* (region) of Damascus, which included Palestine, was assimilated into the administrative structure of the Empire soon after the conquest of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) although the Ottomans established a form of indirect rule, relying on local notables who remained important until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.³ The *beylerbeylik* of Damascus was composed of 15 small administrative units known as *sancak*, while the *Sancak-i Kudüs-i Şerif* (Province of Jerusalem) was divided into a number of *nahiyes* (sub-districts), whose boundaries changed several times during Ottoman rule.⁴ The two most important were Hebron and Jerusalem, each centred on the town it was named after.⁵

The Ottomans considered Jerusalem to be of great religious significance, as the city was regarded as the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. However, it was not of paramount

importance either strategically or economically to the new rulers, as Jerusalem was not at the centre of any important trading routes, and did not possess any military value.⁶ The return of Palestine in general, and Jerusalem in particular, to the stage of international politics was triggered to an extent by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, which revived for Europeans, indirectly, the question of the Holy Land and of the holy places. The invasion of 1798 was carefully prepared by Bonaparte himself, gathering together troops, engineers, scientists, artists, economists, pharmacists, physicians, writers, interpreters and publishers. This was not meant to be a simple conquest of Egypt, but the transfer of contemporary French civilisation to the historic cradle of civilisation.⁷ The legacy of the Napoleonic invasion, although studied intensively, has only recently been considered from the perspective of its long-term impact. The influence of the Napoleonic invasion on Palestine should not be overestimated, as the French adventure was short lived, ended in failure and had little influence on the modernisation of Palestine. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the local response to French invasion revealed the awakening of the local cultural life.⁸

The true legacy of Napoleon was picked up by Muhammad 'Ali, who became the viceroy of Egypt in 1805.⁹ Muhammad 'Ali, who was of Albanian origin, came to Egypt with the Ottoman forces sent to fight against the French army in 1799, and seized power in Cairo in 1805 after the withdrawal of the French army in 1801, becoming virtually independent of Ottoman control.¹⁰ In 1831 Muhammad 'Ali and his son Ibrahim Paşa invaded the region known as *Bilad al-Sham*, which included present-day Palestine and Syria. This proved to be a turning point in the history of modern Jerusalem. When the Egyptian army entered the city the population was fearful of what appeared to be a new invading European army: something last seen in the eleventh century, during the Crusades.¹¹ Muhammad 'Ali had, in the previous decades, carried out expensive reforms of the army, introducing a new style of discipline and military techniques, weaponry and uniforms; he also planned to produce armaments in Egypt, to avoid relying on European countries.¹²

In the nineteenth century, Jerusalem experienced two distinct periods of administrative, political, social, economic and military reform: the first was under the rule of Ibrahim Paşa, the then governor of Syria, while the second from 1839 until 1876, the so-called *Tanzimat* era. Following the administrative reforms imposed by the new rulers, the status of Jerusalem began to rise. Ibrahim Paşa abolished the Ottomans' administrative division of Syria and Palestine, which constituted two separate provinces. Instead, he appointed a Governor General over the entire region of Greater Syria who resided in Damascus. This process of administrative centralisation was balanced with the establishment of *maclis*, city councils, which included representatives of the elite families.¹³ On a more local level, the Egyptians relied on a civil governor who was often chosen from among the local notables; the Egyptians adapted their idea of centralisation of the state according to local circumstances. However, the new rulers did not prove able to fully eradicate corruption, and had limited success in curbing the personal power of the local notables, although they did obtain positive results in some local contexts. Nevertheless, a number of changes specifically improved the status of the non-Muslim population, as Ibrahim Paşa hoped that favouring Christians would earn some European support for the Egyptian occupation of Palestine.¹⁴ As a consequence of the elevated status of the Christian communities, as well as generally favourable conditions, the number of European visitors to the Holy Land and Jerusalem increased in the first decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ However, this was not the only reason for a renewed European interest in the region: European intervention was directed primarily towards maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire: its dismemberment would have likely caused a major conflict between European powers.¹⁶ In order to extend trade with European countries the administration promoted strong religious tolerance, and new rights were granted to the *dhimmis*, non-Muslims under the protection of the state.¹⁷ Under Egyptian rule, in the early nineteenth century the first European consuls were allowed to set up in Jerusalem as a symbol of a new approach towards Europeans and non-Muslims.¹⁸ Particularly relevant for the city of Jerusalem was the removal of the centuries-old prohibition on building and

repairing churches and synagogues and the abolition of other restrictions on non-Muslims.¹⁹

Besides administrative reforms, the Egyptians brought some economic developments, which were welcomed by local notables and entrepreneurs. Ibrahim Paşa promoted the introduction of new crops and new industries, with cotton and soap production proving to be the most successful.²⁰ Furthermore, the Egyptian authorities supported the idea of free trade, increasing access to foreign merchants.²¹ Increased imports of European goods threatened local handicrafts, however, and the Egyptians encountered some opposition from local notables and inhabitants, who perceived these reforms as hostile and against their interests.²² Furthermore Ibrahim Paşa introduced a progressive income tax to pay for increased military expenses, which hit the Palestinian elites hard.²³ Palestinians also revolted in 1834 against the military conscription imposed by the Egyptian rulers, and it took extreme measures on the part of Ibrahim Paşa to calm the insurrection.²⁴

The new administration was also supposed to deal with corruption and public security, as bribes, bandits and other similar problems were rife in the period preceding the occupation. In Jerusalem, the relative efficiency of the new system, and the introduction of income tax, led to the outbreak of a revolt in 1834, directed by Muslim notables of the city albeit with strong support from the peasantry.²⁵ The Husaynis, one of the most important families of Jerusalem, played a crucial role in the uprising. While planning the revolt against the Egyptians, the Husaynis duplicitously stated their support for the very regime they wished to overthrow; furthermore, they were trying to maintain a good relationship with the Ottomans, who eventually returned in 1840: a masterclass in Machiavellian machinations.²⁶ Something similar happened when the British took Jerusalem in 1917, and the burden of the surrender of the city was placed on the Mayor of Jerusalem, Husayni Salim Effendi al-Husayni.²⁷ After the revolt of 1834, two members of the family were included in the *maclis*, and Tahir al-Husayni was named *mufti* (leader of the local Muslim community) of Jerusalem.²⁸

Egyptian rule in Jerusalem did not even last a decade (1831-1840), but its legacy reverberated throughout the administrative

organisation of the city once it had been re-occupied by the Ottomans. Under Egyptian rule, the local governors fell under the purview of a council, the *meclis*, composed mainly of the Muslim elite, but also including some of the most influential Christian and Jewish members of the community. The Egyptians therefore introduced both elements of democratic representation: balances and checks.

Following the opening of the British consulate in 1838, other European powers followed, including France, Prussia, Austria and Spain, while the Russian government sent a diplomatic agent. These powers promoted business, protected travellers and supported the construction of hospitals and hospices for visitors and locals alike. The French opened three hospices between 1851 and 1889, as medical assistance granted the easiest and most direct access to local communities.²⁹ The activism of Europeans reinvigorated pilgrimages and tourism. Moreover, Jerusalem's increased importance on the international stage coincided with the Crimean War (1854-1856), which brought the issue of the control of the holy places to the forefront of intra-European politics. Jerusalem became the pretext for war between a Franco-Ottoman alliance against Russia. Despite the fact that the war was fought far from Jerusalem, the conflict impoverished Palestine: food, fuel and other resources were redirected to the frontlines. Jerusalem had to rely on aid from European countries, particularly Britain, France and Germany. Crime marked the emergence of new tensions between Muslims and Christians in the city, as the Greek Orthodox were accused of supporting fellow Orthodox Russia.³⁰ Nevertheless the Ottoman alliance with Britain and France, as well as the presence of a strong governor, prevented the situation from escalating to open violence against the Christians of the city.³¹

From the Tanzimat to the Young Turks through the Hamidian era: patterns of governance and administration

The reform movement known as *Tanzimat*, initiated in the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, was linked to Muhammad 'Ali's rise to power in Egypt and his conquest of the

Bilad al-Sham. The *Tanzimat-ı Hayriye* (Auspicious Reordering) era began on 3 November 1839, when Sultan Abdülmecit promulgated the *Gülhane Hattı Şerifi* (Edict of the Rose Garden). Tax-farming was abolished, Ottoman subjects were granted security of life and property, and a new system of conscription was established. The edict also promoted the principle of equality before the law, which eventually meant the Ottoman subjects became equal.³² Although this was a genuine attempt to promote reforms in the Empire, given the advanced process of decentralisation which had occurred in the eighteenth century, it was also part of a clear strategy adopted by the Ottomans to gain European support in their struggle against Muhammad ‘Ali, who was threatening the core of the Ottoman Empire.

On 24 June 1839, Ottoman forces were defeated by the Egyptians at Nizip, in southeast Turkey. Only the intervention of the European powers stopped the advance of the Egyptian army towards the Ottoman capital. Meanwhile in the winter of 1840-41, British naval forces threatened the Egyptians, who eventually withdrew from the occupied territories of Syria and Palestine. In 1841 Muhammad ‘Ali acknowledged the loss of the region, and accepted the hereditary governorship of Egypt from the Ottomans in exchange, even though he had been independent from Ottoman control. Egypt thus nominally remained a part of the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of First World War, when the British declared the country a formal protectorate.

The *Tanzimat* reforms aimed to strengthen the Empire by implementing political and administrative centralisation. The deep essence of the *Tanzimat* was to change the very idea of the Ottoman state, which included the renovation and reinvigoration of old institutions that no longer worked and the establishment of new ones.³³ This was done through strategies including administrative reforms, development of infrastructures and economic improvements. The government was reorganised into ministries, and a Council of Ministers met in order to advise the Sultan; the government was presided over by the Grand Vizier. In the area of education, which was crucial for the modernisation of the Empire, schools were opened and new subjects taught by the mid-1850s.³⁴ Economic reforms proved to be hard to enforce, however. Despite

the goodwill it created, the Capitulary system was a large impediment to Ottoman economic reorganisation.³⁵ In the mind of the Ottoman reformers, it was paramount to the idea that a more efficient and honest government would create a stronger Empire, composed of a population committed to the survival and development of the state itself. The *Tanzimat* also produced the supranational ideology of ‘Ottomanism’, which was designed to provide a non-religious identity to the subjects of the Empire.³⁶ The *Tanzimat* reforms were implemented throughout the Ottoman Empire until 1876, when Abdülhamid ascended the throne; however, despite his conservatism and the official halt to the reforms, it has been argued that the Hamidian period was the continuation of the *Tanzimat* era: he aimed to save the Empire with different means, focusing on Islam and its symbolic value to strengthen the Empire through a common religious identity.³⁷ Abdülhamid envisioned an efficient administration of the Empire through a strong process of reform of the bureaucratic system which, in fact, brought to fruition the previous reforms. Furthermore, the Hamidian regime was also based on personal loyalty towards the Sultan – which became almost indispensable for the ruling local elites and those wanting to join the civil service.³⁸ The main opposition to Abdülhamid and his regime was epitomised by the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), who staged a revolution in July 1908. The new regime envisioned a new idea of the state, with the leaders seeing themselves as the saviours of the Empire. While the revolution produced changes, it was more about restoring the Empire than changing it.³⁹

The *Vilayet* law of 1864 reorganised the provinces of the Empire and remained the basis for local administration until the end of the Empire, following the First World War. The law aimed to define clear relations between the administrative units. Each *vilayet* was divided into *sancaks* or *livas* (interchangeable), then each *sancak* had several *kaza*, mainly villages.⁴⁰ The law also introduced a system of councils, which will be discussed later, to counterbalance the power of the governors. These officials were rotated so frequently that it was almost impossible to build any personal power or achieve great results in their work.⁴¹ With the reform of the provincial

administration, the ideas of the *Tanzimat* reached all regions of the Empire and became rooted in the local socio-political milieu.

With the Ottoman restoration after 1841, the *sancak* of Jerusalem regained some stability after the turbulent end of Egyptian rule. The *sancak* of Jerusalem was then composed of Jaffa, Gaza, Hebron and eventually Beersheba; following the establishment of a municipality in Istanbul in the late 1850s, Jerusalem soon followed suit.⁴² Municipal government was a new institution across the Empire, as was the idea of an urban administration based on a territoriality separate from the provincial administration; it was not part of the Islamic tradition. Indeed, in Jerusalem the picture was quite different and the municipality, which was founded even before the issue of the law regulating the municipality, shows a genuine attempt to reform the Empire from the inside. Eventually, in Jerusalem the municipality became the most important local administrative body of the city, respected by both local citizens and foreigners, regardless of their identity.⁴³ Despite some limitations, the Jerusalem municipality contributed greatly to the development of the city and its living conditions in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁴

It is not a simplification of the argument to say that, to an extent, administrative and local governance patterns did not alter radically throughout the three eras of the late Ottoman Empire. Centralisation and modernisation were instrumental to the survival of the Empire and were, though under different labels, promoted by *Tanzimat* reformers as well as by Abdülhamid and the CUP. The example of Jerusalem clarifies how cities were the most important recipients of all reforms carried out, and also the most important locus for tripartite competition between local elites, the Ottoman establishment, and foreigners.

The administrative units of Jerusalem have proved to be a crucial element in the process of modernisation of the city, but how can modernisation be defined and understood? Was it just imported from abroad or was it also the product of genuine internal reforms? In his seminal work on Jerusalem, Haim Gerber states that the *Tanzimat* reforms ignited a fast and lasting process of Westernisation of Jerusalem which was already underway, as a result of Egyptian rule in the 1830s, but also due to the strong impact of the West in the region since the early nineteenth

century.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Nora Libertun de Duren, as well as the famous historian Martin Gilbert, have claimed that the real process of modernisation began with the arrival of the British.⁴⁶ According to these scholars, the period preceding the arrival of the British was not marked by the full imposition of the national state logic and state control, suggesting a different arrangement of people, institutions and territory. They have highlighted only the European influence, denying *de facto* an Ottoman process of state transformation.⁴⁷ A workable definition of modernisation can be summarised as a process of change which entailed the transformation of the traditional Ottoman administrative machine through the adoption of new legal and administrative tools. In this respect, modernisation is not viewed as a mere imitation of Western models but as the fruitful encounter between old and new form of urban administration. Though Western administrative influence and cultural penetration in the Ottoman Empire was an undeniable development of the period, to equate modernisation with Westernisation is perhaps too far-fetched. At the same time, it would be an inaccuracy not to consider the *Tanzimat* as a modernising process partly inspired by Western ideals. Some processes and ideas were indeed brought to the region by Europeans but it was the local population which carried out and adapted these reforms, according to their needs and interests. Modernisation without a final recipient would be superfluous and meaningless, which is why this process could come to fruition only if linked with the final beneficiaries.

The Sancak and the Mutasarrif

Following the end of Egyptian rule in 1841, the Jerusalem *sancak* started to enjoy a higher status amongst the other Palestinian *sancaks*, as a consequence of foreign interest in the city. In the summer of 1872, the *sancak* of Jerusalem was detached from the *vilayet* (Province) of Syria and placed under the direct control of Istanbul.⁴⁸ The *sancak*, or *mutasarrıflık* (both terms refer to the same institution) of Jerusalem was ruled by a *mutasarrıf* (governor). After the *sancak* was detached from the *vilayet* of Syria, the *mutasarrıf* of Jerusalem became unique amongst the other governors throughout

the Ottoman Empire, as he was directly appointed and, therefore, responsible to the central administration in Istanbul, not to the *vali* of Syria.⁴⁹ Nevertheless the Jerusalem *sancak*, though highly independent, was subordinate to the *vilayet* of Beirut in judicial matters, remaining so until 1910 when a Court of Appeal was established in Jerusalem. Furthermore, although troops were stationed in Jerusalem, the *sancak* was also dependent militarily on the authority of the Fifth *Ordu* (army), quartered in Damascus.⁵⁰

The strength of the governors depended not only on their personal skills, but also on the authority given them by central government in Istanbul. *Mutasarrıfs* who served in Jerusalem in the late nineteenth century were not particularly experienced, or homogeneous as a group, and none rose to a prominence in the central administration.⁵¹ These governors were required, as part of their duties, to send the money collected from the taxpayers to Istanbul; furthermore, they did not have full control over other officials in the district.⁵² They were more like administrators than powerful Paşas, framed in a complex picture which included several other actors such as notables, consuls and religious authorities, as well as the official policy of the Ottoman state, which was seeking to centralise its administrative units.

In the late nineteenth century, during the reign of Abdülhamid II, governors were appointed from among the palace secretaries of the Sultan, including Ekrem Bey, Governor of Jerusalem from 1906 and 1908. Later at the beginning of the twentieth century, governors were appointed by the Young Turks among Turkish officials.⁵³ It seems there were no marked changes in the character and performance of the nominated governors between the *Tanzimat*, Hamidian and Young Turks periods and has been noted that during the last decades of Ottoman rule in Jerusalem, one or two governors were abject failures, such as Faik Bey, who in 1876 was accused of being extremely corrupt.⁵⁴ However, his successor, Rauf Paşa, who ruled Jerusalem from 1876 to 1888, was a clear exception and challenged the idea that governors were to hold the office only for a short time, proving able to control the notables and impose his authority over the powerful families.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the process of modernisation that was taking place in the Empire improved the quality of the governors of Jerusalem (or

at least the services provided), and from the *Tanzimat* era it is possible to observe an embryonic, modern pattern of public services, which followed the principle of standardisation. Governors had become more loyal to the duties of their position than to personal benefits.⁵⁶

The municipality of Jerusalem

With the *mutassarıflık*, the largest and most important administrative unit of Ottoman Jerusalem, the municipality became the most influential and relevant institution of the city after the late 1860s. As explained earlier the idea of establishing local municipalities in the Ottoman Empire was revolutionary. In fact, according to Sunni Muslim tradition any legal entity other than the individual was unlawful.⁵⁷ The creation of this body illustrates how the *Tanzimat* reforms were successful in adopting European ideas and promoting internal reforms; eventually, the legal status of the municipality was granted using the law of the state, rather than religion. Indeed, the establishment of the municipality in Jerusalem is indicative of a trend towards modernisation in the social and administrative fields, in so far as it provided a degree of communal representation.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the establishment of municipalities across the Empire addressed the issue of the establishment and provision of public services, an indication of the centralisation and modernisation of the city's management.⁵⁹ The Jerusalem *belediye* (municipality) was one of the first to be established in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ It has been suggested that the municipality was established in 1863, but only began to function fully later.⁶¹ According to a letter sent by Ottoman governor Nazif Paşa to the Prussian consul in Jerusalem, it seems that the municipality of Jerusalem became fully operational only after 1867; however, French sources suggest an earlier date.⁶² Although the municipality was established in the early 1860s, the law governing this institution was only passed in 1877, as part of legislation issued by Istanbul which regulated the reforms of the local councils across the Empire.⁶³ The provincial administration was restructured several times before the issue of the *Vilayet Belediye Kanunu* (Provincial Municipal Ordinance) of October 1877, defining the authority, competence, budget and legal limits of the

municipality.⁶⁴ The European powers did not initially welcome the municipality, as article 19 of the 1877 law forbade those who belonged to the municipal council from being employed by or becoming a protégé of a foreign country.⁶⁵ This was meant to prevent Europeans from directly influencing the municipality. The Ottomans had already fought the power of the foreign consuls, so they did not want an internal battle with Ottoman citizens.

The *belediye* was responsible for the cleanliness of the town, maintenance of the roads and distribution of water, supervising public health, cafés and restaurants, commercial activities, urban planning, and other public services.⁶⁶ The municipality also controlled a local police force, which supervised urban communities, and sanitation of the city. From the 1880s sanitation began to improve thanks to the paving of main roads.⁶⁷ Although Jerusalem had several hospitals, in 1891 the municipality established a Municipal Hospital accessible to all the inhabitants irrespective of religion or nationality. The visit of the German Emperor in 1898 resulted in some improvement in the sanitary conditions of the city, as extensive cleaning operations were carried out inside and outside the walls. Due to the expansion of the city outside the walls, in 1905 the municipality made plans for the sanitation and lighting of the new areas, the cost of which would be split amongst the owners of the properties located outside the walls.⁶⁸ In 1911, when a cholera epidemic struck the city, the municipality intensified its efforts to clean streets and other public facilities.⁶⁹ In 1915 after war had already broken out, a local body was appointed for the distribution of provisions to the Muslim community, and informed by the municipality to save a portion of the provisions for the Municipal Hospital, managed directly by the *belediye*.⁷⁰ The municipality was also active in guaranteeing water supplies; foreign companies were called upon to help in improving the water supply for the city.⁷¹ The question of water, both its distribution and availability, became a central issue for the municipality at the beginning of the twentieth century. Water in Jerusalem was scarce and its availability affected rural as well as urban populations: scarcity of water meant less agricultural produce and therefore less tax to be collected.⁷² The newly established (1909) *Chambre de Commerce, d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine* considered access to

water a primary concern for the socio-economic development of Jerusalem.⁷³ Nevertheless a solution was far from being adopted: the Ministry of the Public Works delayed the works several times.⁷⁴ Only in January 1914 was the French Périer Company awarded three concessions to develop and manage electric tramway, electric light and water supply services for the municipality of Jerusalem, to the great satisfaction of the local residents.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the war halted these works almost immediately.

In 1886 the municipality was responsible for the establishment of the first professional police force in Palestine. This police force was generally held in good regard by local and foreign residents, though the governors of Jerusalem thought otherwise. Ekrem Bey complained to his superiors in Istanbul that the police were weak and deficient.⁷⁶ Because municipal policemen were recruited from the urban population, residents believed the police force to be honest; it was often compared favourably to the detachments of the Ottoman army camped outside the city.⁷⁷ As time passed engineers, physicians and veterinarians became advisers of the *belediye*; there was also a specific municipal office in charge of registering street names and house numbers, as well as births and deaths. For instance a municipal engineer was appointed in order to control the construction of buildings, which were previously approved by means of permits issued by the municipality.⁷⁸

In order to provide these services the municipality began to tax residents, and eventually the budget of the municipality needed to be approved by the administrative council, which also meant it could be rejected if the administrative council was required to guarantee debts contracted by the municipality.⁷⁹ The main revenues were from taxes imposed on the sale of livestock, slaughter of animals, charters and other means of transport and the lighting and cleaning of streets, but also from the issue of permits and from tolls.⁸⁰ Sometimes the municipality encountered fiscal resistance from part of the local population, namely the consuls. As noted earlier, in 1905 the municipality intended to carry out work to improve sanitation and street lighting outside the walls, charging the owners of the buildings located in those areas. Traditionally, the owners of buildings within the walls of the city were not charged for these services; the consuls thus tried to oppose the new

proposal made by the municipality. Eventually the municipality was able to establish its authority, but before doing so it had to change the nature of taxation as well as adjust its monetary requirements.⁸¹ In fact, the municipality had ample autonomy in fixing its budget, but its every decision was then challenged by other political and administrative institutions.

At the head of the municipality there was the mayor, who was under the supervision of the *mutasarrıf*. The office of mayor, although without a salary, was considered very influential; as such, the most important families of Jerusalem regarded it as a source of power and competed for appointment to this office. Until 1908, the municipal council was composed only of Arab Muslim and Arab Christian members;⁸² however later in this year Jews also took part in the elections and eventually the first Jewish councillor was elected.⁸³ Following the Provincial Municipality Law of 1877, members of the municipality were nominated through an electoral process.⁸⁴ According to this law, the number of elected members ranged from six to 12, based on the city's population size. Only Ottoman subjects could participate in the elections. According to Yellin, a Zionist of the 'first hour' and a teacher at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, male citizens and residents over 25 years of age, paying a property tax of over 50 Turkish piastres, were eligible to vote.⁸⁵ The municipal council in Jerusalem, meanwhile was composed of ten members; candidates could be any Ottoman subject aged over 30, paying at least 150 Turkish piastres annually.⁸⁶ Members were elected for four years in a rotation, with five being replaced every two years. Eventually, the municipality became dependent on the municipal council, as well as on the governor of Jerusalem and the central government in Istanbul, as well as the attitudes of the foreign consuls and religious authorities.

The municipality was very dynamic, focusing not only on the modernisation of the city, but also on the wellbeing of its inhabitants. Despite its limits and problems, the municipality was indeed an arena for public discussion, aiming to involve the inhabitants in provision of the services required: it was a space for negotiation, rather than the polarisation of interests.

The Councils ruling Jerusalem

From the 1870s there were three councils based in Jerusalem. The *Meclis-i Belediye* (Municipal Council), discussed previously; the *Meclis-i Umumi*, the General Council of the *vilayet*; and the *Meclis-i Idare*, the Administrative Council of the *sancak*. The *Vilayet Law* of 1864 created clarity in the hierarchy of the provincial offices, resulting in the establishment of the *Meclis-i Umumi* and the *Meclis-i Idare*.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the functions and the structure of these bodies were clearly defined with the issuing of the 1871 *Vilayet Law*, which introduced a number of regulations for city administration. The General Council of the *vilayet* of Jerusalem, the *Meclis-i Umumi*, however, became fully operational only after the issue of the *Vilayet Law* of 1913, which was passed by the Young Turks.⁸⁸

The *Meclis-i Umumi* was meant to meet once a year for a period of no more than 40 days. Originally, the members of the General Council should have been elected on the basis of proportional representation, one representative for every 12,500 males, but the system was dropped after its inception in 1913 and the council was eventually composed of representatives from the various *kazas* (sub-districts). The original law had stated that membership in the council was to be shared on a religious basis between Muslims and non-Muslims, according to the population in the *kazas*, since Muslims were not the majority in every village.⁸⁹

Besides the *Meclis-i Umumi*, the law of 1913 established a provincial committee (*Encümen-i Vilayet*) which would continue working whilst the General Council was not in session; its function was to check the annual budget and expenditure.⁹⁰ Rather than passing laws this assembly was meant to give approval to the governor's actions, and it has been claimed that it was nothing more than a rubber stamp.⁹¹ However, the report of the American consul in Jerusalem to the Department of State for the year 1914 suggests that this body was fully functioning. Unfortunately, from the sources available it is not possible to gauge the real influence of the governor upon the council; nevertheless the council was vital and clearly proactive:

I have the honor to report that in accordance with the new provisions of the Vilayet Law, the general Council for the Province of Palestine has just completed its 40 days session; besides approving the Concessions for tramways, electric light and water works, several important allowances from the general budget were made as follows: An appropriation of \$1,826.00 to establish a breeding farm for horses and donkeys. For the establishment of an agricultural school, \$13,200.00 and the transfer of the model farm from Arteef to Sajed and from Jaffa to Hebron. For the purchase of agricultural instruments \$2,640.00. Small sums were appropriated for the repairing of the roads between Hebron and Beth Jibrin, Jaffa and Gaza, Jaffa and Sabil Abu Nabbott and Hebron and the Valley of El Kort. The work of the Council produced general satisfaction as it gave the central authorities an idea of the general needs of the Province and appropriations were made to that effect.⁹²

The General Council for the *vilayet* was involved in financial and budget supervision, but did not make final decisions on it, which was still the prerogative of the governor. Nevertheless, it had considerable power because, through the approval or rejection of the budget, the council could greatly affect the implementation of the administrative decisions of other governmental bodies.

The *Meclis-i Idare*, the Administrative Council of the Jerusalem district, was set up as a result of the issue of the *Vilayet* Law of 1864. The *Meclis-i Idare* included both *ex-officio* (members by virtue of holding official positions) and elected members. Among the *ex-officio* members were the *mutassarif*, a *kadi* (the judge), a *mufti* (the religious leader) and a representative of the Christian Churches and the Jewish communities. There were four elected members; generally one or two were Christians and the others Muslims. Overall there were seven Muslim members and five non-Muslims.⁹³ Access to the franchise was based on the ability to pay at least 150 Turkish piastres in taxation; this possibly means that only 5% to 10% of the population was involved in this process, so ultimately the members of the *Meclis-i Idare* were leaders of the local communities.⁹⁴ However, the notables represented only the wealthy

constituencies, as the process allowed for only a small number of Jerusalemites to have their say, rather than the whole of the population, considering that only 1,000 of 40,000 inhabitants took part at the end of the nineteenth century.⁹⁵ In this context the *Meclis-i Idare* became a sort of 'balancing institution' between the *mutasarrıf* and the local elite, an arena where the two could meet and compete over deliberations on public works, police, land registry, agriculture, finance and tax collection. The council had the authority to appoint officials in charge of the city, but only to a limited extent: the *Meclis-i Idare* could appoint municipal policemen and gendarmes, but not other public officials.⁹⁶

The members of the *Meclis-i Idare* spent most of their time in discussions relating to financial matters, as did their colleagues in the *Meclis-i Umumi*; however, they had control over the financial resources collected through taxation, as well as, to an extent, the power to impose taxes. Although the municipal budgets were quite limited, the *Meclis-i Idare* could deliberate on and approve those budgets, showing either its support for the municipality or its disapproval, which reflected internal battles between the notables. The council also had considerable power in matters of land holding, and the final word in issuing cadastral certificates (*tapu*) defining the value and the ownership of land and house properties, giving it responsibility for the control of the population, mainly the immigrants.⁹⁷ Jewish immigration was, of course, particularly under scrutiny as, at the turn of the century, the majority of Jewish immigrants were from Russia, the biggest enemy of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁸ On the eve of the First World War, the *mutasarrıf* of Jerusalem, Macid Bey, wrote to the Ministry of the Interior that the Jewish immigrants were under surveillance, as were the Jews who were Ottoman subjects, in order to verify their loyalty to the Ottoman state. However, the governor also highlighted that he would not tolerate 'whoever was to make any exaggeration about the Jews as malicious people in order to raise a Jewish question'.⁹⁹

The Establishment of the Italian hospital in Jerusalem provides an opportunity to look at the powers and mechanisms of the *Meclis-i Idare*. In 1911, the Italian Government together with the *Associazione Nazionale per Soccorrere i Missionari Italiani* (National Association for the Assistance to Italian Missionaries) planned to

build a hospital in Jerusalem. The first step taken by the Italian authorities was to change the status of the land, which was the property of the consulate, from *mulk* to *mukataa*: from private land exempt from state control (the land was a property of the consulate) to a tax farm which could be developed.¹⁰⁰ Although the works began, the completion of the hospital was delayed as a result of the Italian-Libyan war (1911-1912) and the ensuing financial strains on the Italians.

In 1914 the National Association for Assistance to Italian Missionaries intervened, offering financial help for the hospital.¹⁰¹ The following year, the members of the *Meclis-i Idare* visited the hospital whilst it was still under construction, fixing, at 3,050 francs, the tax on the value of the building (estimated at 305,080 francs). The Italian consul Conte Senni wrote immediately to the *mutasarrıf* complaining that the hospital was not yet ready; therefore it was unlawful to tax it.¹⁰² After some time, the *Meclis-i Idare* again demanded the Italians pay, but in the meantime Italy had joined the war against the Turks; even though circumstances had changed, the Turkish authorities still sought the money. In July 1915 Senni reported that the Turkish authorities were claiming payment of 16,364 piastres as taxation on the land and the hospital.¹⁰³ Not surprisingly, the Italian Foreign Office ordered the consul not to pay the tax on the hospital building, as it was closed and sealed; in an unexpected turn, however, the Italian Government authorised the consul to pay tax on the land.¹⁰⁴ The hospital remained closed until the end of the war.

Although most of the material available for the *Meclis-i Idare* concerns minutes of a trivial nature, it does not necessarily mean that the council dealt only with matters such as the amendment of entries in the Population Register or the issuing of 'good behaviour' certificates.¹⁰⁵ Its members were often employed as intermediaries, or served on *ad hoc* committees, as in the case of the Italian hospital, where the tax committee visited the Italian building in person to determine the amount of taxation to impose.¹⁰⁶ The council was not an executive one, but mostly functioned passively, meaning that it usually reacted to problems submitted by other actors, such as the municipality, the *mutasarrıf*, consular agents or even private citizens.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the municipality, these councils were more

detached from the local population, though the issue of Jewish immigration could still easily inflame debates between their members. Despite this apparent distance from the population the decisions taken, whether positive or negative, impacted on the local environment and population.

The overview of the administrative structure of Jerusalem in the late Ottoman Empire has clearly shown that reformers aimed primarily to centralise and reorganise the empire. Eventually, it was up to the local governors to implement these reforms, becoming, in a passive way, agents of modernisation, though some proved to be quite proactive. Besides governors, local notables also became agents for change in Jerusalem, as they played the role of intermediaries between the Ottoman establishment, foreigners and the local population. Last, but not least, European consuls and individuals were also powerful agents of modernisation. It was the rise of European interest in the region that brought about dramatic changes, as a European presence meant not only direct influence over the Ottoman administration, but also economic integration into the world market. It would, however, be unfair not to stress the significance of the Ottoman reforms and local efforts, and simply to attribute the modernisation process to external actors. The creation of new urban institutions as a result of centralisation brought the elites and the educated population of Jerusalem much closer to the political centre of the Ottoman state. Also, individuals, through the creation of associations and an increasingly strong press, played a role in the promotion of a genuine locally based process of modernisation. The emergence of a local intelligentsia made Jerusalem the centre of cultural and intellectual ferment and competition.¹⁰⁸

The Notables of Jerusalem in the late Ottoman era

If, on the one hand, Jerusalem was ruled by Ottoman officials as well as by religious authorities and foreign consuls, their power was also balanced by the presence of local groups possessing, to different degrees, social and political influence.¹⁰⁹ These groups, who formed the backbone of the local elites, were a class of notables who functioned as intermediaries between the population,

the Ottoman administration, and other powerful agencies. These notables, whose political profile was rather complex, derived their power from economic sources and from their religious legitimacy. The concept of 'politics of notables' in the Arab Middle East was coined by Albert Hourani, in order to explain the political configuration of Arab cities under Ottoman control. According to Hourani, the 'politics of notables' needed specific conditions, first when a social milieu was ordered around patronage; secondly when urban society was dominated by members of influential families who were able to control the rural hinterland; and thirdly when these local notables could act freely in the political sense.¹¹⁰ The notables were thus an informal elite, composed of the richest, most powerful and prestigious families of the Arab cities.¹¹¹ Local notables mediated between the society that they represented and the state authority that often appointed them. As intermediaries, they had both to possess the political qualities to represent their constituencies and to be able to bargain with their counterparts.

The socio-political elite of Jerusalem was composed of two groups: the Muslim religious leadership (*ulama*), who provided a voice for popular grievances and demands mainly through the Friday prayer, but also from Christian leaders; and the secular notables (*a'yan*, *amirs*), families or individuals whose power was rooted in the genealogic memory of the ancestors (the *asabiyyah* of the family), who controlled the wealth, and commodities such as land and commercial activities. A third group of notables would base their power on the control of local military garrisons (*aghwat*); however, as the military command for the region was based in Damascus, there were no military notables in Jerusalem and the local notables could not build their power on military strength.¹¹² Jerusalem was not of any particular military or strategic value and, therefore, Ottoman troops were camped in other towns and cities, leaving Jerusalem practically undefended.

The notables of Jerusalem were predominantly Muslim and Christian, but there were also some Jewish families included in this group, like the famous Valeros.¹¹³ These elites were not officially organised, and worked on an informal basis. They were open groups, and mobility within and between them was not only allowed but promoted (the only boundaries not crossed were of a

religious nature, and intermarriage between people of different religious backgrounds was not common); movement thus occurred in groups belonging to the same religion. These families, regardless of their creed, not only knew each other very well, but were connected by means of frequent meetings, business, and exchange of services and favours.

In the case of Jerusalem, the question of the local notables fits into the framework presented by Hourani, albeit with some specific exceptions. The notables of Jerusalem in the late Ottoman era were mainly from three families, who occupied most of the available agencies: the Husaynis, the Khalidis and the Nashashibis.¹¹⁴ As Jerusalem was very far from important commercial routes, these notables did not base their power on wealth from trade, but on land ownership in the rural hinterland of the city. It was the control of the key administrative, political and religious posts that conferred their authority over the population and consolidated their position as intermediaries with the Ottoman administration from the end of Egyptian occupation in 1841.¹¹⁵

Ottoman officials held the main administrative positions, such as that of governor of the province and of *kaimmakams* (district governor or senior officials). However, Jerusalemite Arabs, mainly Muslims, were allowed to be part of the lower ranks of the administration, like a *müdür* (director of school).¹¹⁶ The Turkish governors always tried to balance the power of the different families by playing them off against one another, guarding against any single family becoming too powerful. They would also assign notables to key positions within the province and rotate them periodically, to prevent a single family monopolising certain positions.¹¹⁷

The Arab notables were largely found in the spheres of law and education. They presided over the religious courts (*qadi*) as well as the religious and state schools. During the *Tanzimat* era, when education was secularised and brought under the control of the central government, the Arab notables found a way to adapt to the new system.¹¹⁸ The Khalidis supported the reforms of Ali and Fuad Paşas whilst the Husaynis, claiming a direct link with the Prophet, opposed both the Egyptian and *Tanzimat* reforms due to their secular character.¹¹⁹ With the end of the *Tanzimat* era in 1876,

Sultan Abdülhamid II turned against the supporters of the previous regime, with the Khalidis suffering the most as they lost their primacy among the notables of Jerusalem whilst the Husaynis monopolised the function of *mufiti* and became the administrators of the mosque of Nebi Musa.¹²⁰ The Hamidian regime significantly reshaped the image and career patterns of the notables in the Arab lands.¹²¹

The notables of Jerusalem proved to be the cornerstone of Jerusalem's fragmented social framework. Both under Ottoman and British rule, the notables of the city struggled to retain their pre-eminence, as the demographic realities of the city were changing as a result of Jewish immigration. To this effect, the speech of Ruhi al-Khalidi (Bey), elected to the Ottoman Parliament in 1908 following the CUP revolution, is quite instructive. Ruhi Bey warned that Palestine was in danger because of Zionism and the number of settlers coming to Palestine.¹²² Though the majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, towards the end of the nineteenth century, were not Arab Muslims, the notables managed to keep control of the Administrative Council with six Muslim members and only two Christians and two Jews.¹²³

With the advent of the Young Turks in 1908, the status of Jerusalem's notables underwent, once again, some radical changes, with the Khalidis now back on the main stage of Jerusalem's political scene. The first phase of Young Turks' rule was welcomed by the local population at the end of the Hamidian police regime.¹²⁴ However, following the 1909 failed attempt at a counter-revolution inspired by Abdülhamid in Istanbul, the Young Turks started to promote a different idea of Ottomanism, which focused essentially on the promotion of the Turkish identity and thereby undermined the power of the Jerusalem notables. Following the prohibition on political associations, issued in the same year, as a result of rising opposition to the Young Turks, some local notables became Arab activists in secret societies, promoting early Arab nationalist ideals in Jerusalem.¹²⁵ These societies promoted Arab autonomy and/or independence and were composed of notables as well as teachers, students and Arab army officers.¹²⁶ Interestingly, however, some of these associations predate the Young Turks revolution: in 1905 an Arab association called *Ligue de la Patrie Arabe* wrote an open letter

to Arabs under Turkish rule, accusing Abdülhamid of being a usurper and a tyrant.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, it seems that this was an isolated case, as it was the later betrayal of the Ottomanist idea by the Young Turks, and then by the CUP, that led many Arabs to become activists.¹²⁸ A report by the British Arab Bureau in Cairo, gathering enquiries made through natives of Jerusalem living in Cairo after the autumn of 1914, describes the notable families as not being pro-Turk, but being compelled to support the Turks.¹²⁹ Some less prominent members of the Husayni family were arrested in the last days of Ottoman rule, accused of being pro-British: they hoped that a British victory would end Turkish rule.¹³⁰ The problem with these reports is that they do not investigate the reasons why notables turned against the Ottomans, showing just a superficial and propagandistic side of a more complex situation involving this class at the end of Ottoman rule.

The People of Jerusalem (1905-1922): figures and definitions

In the cities of Palestine there was a strong tradition of urban local patriotism, and the idea of being a Jerusalemite was thus deeply rooted among the local population.¹³¹ However, considering the particular character and nature of Jerusalem, the question of who the Jerusalemites were is complex. The local population under the Ottoman government, following the general rule of the *millet* system, was divided along religious lines. Using cultural patterns, the population of Jerusalem can be considered to have been portioned along two axes: the first representing a religious cleavage, the second representing ethnic and linguistic cleavages. The first subdivision corresponded with the official one enforced by Ottoman religious law, as exemplified by the *millet* system; the second represents the divisions which reflect ethnicity, nationality and language, while self-representation also played a major role in the definition of the various communities residing in Jerusalem. An additional element was the presence of foreigner communities, further complicating Jerusalem's demographic landscape.

The following tables present a collection of data on the demography of Jerusalem from the beginning of the twentieth

century until 1922, including the data provided by the first British official census. The main purpose of this reconstruction is to analyse the structure and composition of Jerusalem in the transitional period from the Ottomans to the British. Unfortunately, population statistics are often used as evidence to support claims over the city, rather than for the study of the everyday life of the local population.

The main issue about the demographic history of Jerusalem is, that up until 1922, the date of the first British official census, there are no official statistics available. Most of the available information comes from Western travellers, consuls or residents. On the Ottoman side, a register was held for the urban population called *nüfus*. The General Administration of Population Registration (*Sicill-I Nüfus Idare-I Umumiyesi*) was established during the Hamidian period in the late nineteenth century as part of the system of control created for the empire; however, only Ottoman subjects were recorded.¹³² In 1905 there was an attempt to update the *nüfus*, adopting the European census style. Every individual Ottoman subject was recorded according to sex, year of birth and marital status: Jews and Christians, coming from foreign countries but considered as permanent residents, were not recorded.¹³³

The influential work of Schmelz is one of the most important sources for the demographic history of Jerusalem, as he has worked thoroughly on the Ottoman sources available from the *nüfus* and the 1905 census and offers statistics regarding the population of the region (*kaşa*) of Jerusalem. As is apparent to the readers, the main problem with Schmelz's work, as far as Jerusalem is concerned, is that the statistics available do not detail figures for the urban population, but only for the Jerusalem region.¹³⁴

Relying on a vast set of various sources, Table 1 reports the figures of all the sources it has been possible to gather from 1905 to 1919. Table 2 presents Schmelz's figures for the Jerusalem region, to be used for a comparison with the figures available for Jerusalem as urban centre. Table 3 shows the figures of the British census of 1922. Tables 4 and 5 present the breakdown of the figures of the census of 1922 in relation to the city within and outside the walls. The main division of the population is based on religious lines, but

where other criteria have been taken into consideration, notes are provided.¹³⁵