

Issa al Issa's Unorthodox Orthodoxy: Banned in Jerusalem, Permitted in Jaffa

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‘Isa al-‘Isa’s (1878–1950) memoirs provide an opportunity to re-examine the role of the Orthodox Christian intelligentsia in turn-of-the-century debates about Ottomanism and Arab (Syrian) nationalism. They also shed new light on the political environment prevailing in pre-World War I Jaffa that allowed for the creation of a combative press, exemplified by ‘Isa’s *Falastin* (1911–1948), and contributed significantly to the forging of a new identity for readers in southern Syria and beyond.¹ Extensive writings on *Falastin* during that period have focused on its leading role in the forging of a separatist Palestinian identity,² its anti-Zionism,³ and its social agenda in defending the *fallah* and the land question.⁴ In this essay, I examine the early biography of ‘Isa al-‘Isa, derived from his yet unpublished memoirs, to seek a better understanding of the tensions within the Arab Orthodox Renaissance (*al-nahda al-Urthudhuksiyya al-‘Arabiyya*) between the ideology of *Osmanlilik* (Ottoman imperial identity) and the emergent movement for Arab independence.

The struggle for the Arabization of the Orthodox Church against Greek clerical hegemony led Orthodox Christian intellectuals to different positions toward the Ottoman regime and the constitutional revolution of 1908. Writers like Yusuf al-Hakim, the Syrian judge from Latakia who worked as a public prosecutor in Palestine, were firm believers in Ottomanism and in constitutional reform.⁵ Hakim was involved in the struggle against Hamidian despotism and became an enthusiastic supporter of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) and the Young Turks. ‘Isa, on the other hand, placed little hope in Arab-Turkish unity and was skeptical about the freedoms promised by the second constitution.

Although *Falastin*, under the influence of ‘Isa’s cousin and the newspaper’s deputy editor Yusuf al-‘Isa, had initially supported the CUP, ‘Isa al-‘Isa believed the CUP was basically a Turkish nationalist party with strong Zionist sympathies.⁶ Together with Dr. Shibli Shumayyil and Haqqi al-‘Azm – friends from his time working in Egypt – he supported the Ottoman Decentralization party.⁷

***Osmanlilik* and Orthodoxy in the Fluid Years**

The period between the declaration of the 1908 constitution and the commencement of World War I (between *hurriet* and *seferberlik* in popular consciousness) was a period of fluidity in the formation and recasting of local identities in Bilad al-Sham. It marked the relative consolidation of an Ottoman imperial identity (*Osmanlilik*) within the ranks of the Syrian literary elites, played against a heightened contestation by Syrian and Arab nationalist movements. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, these movements had emerged as literary and political tendencies within an overarching Ottomanist identity. In a few cases, such as in the work of Butrus and Ibrahim al-Bustani and among the *Nafir Suriya* group, Syrian-Arab identity was seen as a building block whose strength was a primary condition for the successful construction of the Ottoman principle.⁸ Syrian Arabism was seen as the means for transcending sectarian conflicts in Mount Lebanon, and in Bilad al-Sham in general, while an *Osmanlilik* consciousness was seen as the juridical guarantor of a new form of citizenship in the provinces, binding Anatolia to the Hijaz, Iraq, and Syria.⁹

The Arab Orthodox rebellion against the Church’s Greek hierarchy was divided between those who sought a common Ottoman cause with their Muslim compatriots against European intrusions and those who (like ‘Isa) identified with Arab nationalism against pan-Turkic nationalism. In Palestine, the impact of the press and its extensive diffusion in the 1908–1914 period produced a much more substantial adherence to Ottomanism than that found in the anti-Turkish nationalism of the Balkan hinterlands – as was obvious from the debates that raged before the war in the peripheral provinces.¹⁰ The importance of this debate between adherents of *Osmanlilik* and Arab nationalists within the Arab Orthodox community is all the greater considering the pioneering role of Arab Christians of the Levant and Egypt in the nineteenth-century Arab cultural renaissance (*nahda*), as well as the claim that, at least in its later stages, *Osmanlilik* ideology was reduced to a movement espoused mainly by Eastern Christians seeking an alternative to an increasingly Islamized Ottoman identity.¹¹

The influence of advocates of an *Osmanlilik* identity in the provinces was never even or homogeneous. Early supporters of *Pax Ottomanica*, according to M. Şükrü Hanioglu, were the marginal ethnic and religious populations on the periphery of the empire’s reaches – those who sought an ideology that superseded the *millet* system and allowed them to benefit from the new forms of citizenship.¹² The desired diffusion of Ottomanist loyalties after 1908, meanwhile, was hampered by the lack of a centralized and standardized system of primary education, coupled with widespread illiteracy.¹³

When the centralization of the educational and administrative systems did occur under the CUP administration, it was seen and felt as Turkification.¹⁴

Hanioğlu suggests that the solidity of the Ottoman principle was already weakened in Bulgaria, Serbia, and the remaining Greek areas (as well as in the Mediterranean islands with “mixed populations” of Muslims and Christians) by virtue of the ascendancy of Balkan nationalist separatist movements and the hegemony of the Greek Orthodox Church, with its ability to convert communal religious consciousness into a nationalist identity. “Paradoxically,” Hanioglu writes about the new Ottomanist identity,

the very reforms designed to create a coherent society unified by a common ideology, and a more centralized polity founded on universal, standardized laws, had the effect of exposing and deepening the fissures within the Ottoman state and society. Local resistance to the center’s determined attempts to penetrate the periphery accentuated the fragmentation of identity throughout the empire. The unprecedented attempts to unify multiple religious, ethnic and regional groups only served to strengthen their splintered identities in defiance of central policies.¹⁵

This reaction to the centralizing thrust of late Ottomanism is relevant to an understanding of Balkan and Armenian nationalism, but does not apply in the same manner to the Arab provinces (or, for that matter, to Kurdish nationalism). There, Muslim elites integrated into the body of regional administrations were more secure in their status, partly because of their Islamic affiliation and partly due to Istanbul’s historical relationship to the Hijaz and Syria. Arab Christian attitudes toward the state also differed from other Orthodox Christians in the empire, a dynamic analyzed by Butrus al-Bustani and the *Nafir* group. Orthodox Christians of the East had their own “national adversary,” not in the Turkish Other but in the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy. There was no equivalent conflict in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman state.

‘Isa al-‘Isa, a member of the Greek Orthodox Christian (*Rumi*) community, did not see himself as a member of a minority group in the Ottoman Empire. This rejection of minority status was a product of his identification with the new legal rights of Ottoman citizenship, replacing the notion of subjects (*ra‘aya*), forged in two successive stages by the constitutional revolutions of 1876 and 1908. But it ran deeper than that. ‘Isa saw Orthodox Christianity as part of an indigenous cultural tradition rooted in the Byzantine past of the Arab East, distinguished from Catholicism, associated with Rome and the Crusades, and from Protestantism, which made significant inroads in the Arab world only in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ The latter traditions, despite their substantial following among Christians of the East, were nevertheless religions of conversion and were contaminated, in ‘Isa’s mind, by their association with Ottoman capitulations to the European states. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, was the religion of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople (and to a lesser extent Alexandria) – seats of the Eastern patriarchates. Their Christianity was the religion of indigenous Arab, Syriac, and Coptic communities, with important resonance to Islam and Muslim culture. It was the religion of the Ghassanids and the



'Isa al-'Isa with his son Raja, Jaffa 1928. Source: *Francois Scholten, G. Robinson Lees, and George Adam Smith, Jaffa the Beautiful (London [u.a.]: Longmans, Green & Co., 1931).*

bishops of Yemen, framing and preceding the Islamic message. An implicit belief shared by a growing number of Arab Orthodox individuals in this period, 'Isa among them, was that the Islamic culture of the majority was a derivative of Byzantine and Nestorian Christianity.¹⁷ This belief was at the heart of their rejection of minority status, which was associated with a sense of being culturally foreign to the majority.

Within the Orthodox community, the struggle for Arabization is often portrayed as a perennial conflict between the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy and the majority of the Arab community in Syria and Palestine. The local Orthodox intelligentsia successfully propagated this view after 1908. Its main advocates were well known community leaders and writers such as Ya'qub Farraj, Khalil al-Sakakini, Yusuf al-Bandak (publisher of *Sawt al-Sha'b*), and especially Yusuf and 'Isa al-'Isa. Both Sakakini and 'Isa al-'Isa also argued that the Palestinian (and Syrian) Orthodox community constituted an oppressed majority controlled and manipulated by a minority Greek and Cypriot clergy.¹⁸

There is little evidence, however, to support the argument for perennial conflict, which assumes that an essentially national (and nationalist) conflict emanated from the ethnic differences of the Church's adherents. Other *Rumi* writers convincingly argue that Church records in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries show that elections in the Church hierarchy and patriarchal succession was always the subject of controversy within the Church, but not necessarily between Greek and Arab elements.¹⁹

Indicators of this “national” ambiguity can be found in the local histories of Christian villages and townships in Palestine, including Musa ibn Nasir’s *Tarikh qaryat Bir Zayt* (History of Birzeit); Shehadeh Khouri Ibrahim’s *Tarikh ‘ashirat al-‘Aranika* (History of the ‘Aranika Tribe); and Pierre Médebielle’s *Histoire d’une localité et de sa mission Latine dans la Monatagne d’Ephraïm*.²⁰

Ibn Nasir in particular narrates the intensification of conflict within the Orthodox Church in the second half of the nineteenth century and explains it as a conflict within the community and not only between the patriarchate and the Arab parish churches. Both Médebielle and Ibn Nasir refer to “two parties” within Palestinian Orthodoxy – a party headed by Mikha’il Yasmina, Hanna Nasir Qurt, and a parish priest known as Reverend Dawud, and an opposing party, which championed the Greek patriarchate, headed by Hanna Taqla and a sizable number of parish priests. In the 1880s, a major issue in this conflict was whether the language of Church liturgy should be Arabic or Greek.²¹ Ibn Nasir describes how the conflict between the two parties drove many adherents of Orthodoxy to adopt Catholicism, as the Latin Church presented itself as “above” such factions. In the case of Jifna and Birzeit, the Catholic Church used schooling and soup kitchens to win converts, but was seen at the local level as a movement sponsored by the French government to spread its influence.²² Ibn Nasir himself left the Orthodox faith in favor of Catholicism, but was unhappy with its doctrines and repelled by the cult of Mary and its “discouragement of a rational reading of the Bible.”²³ He also describes how the Orthodox peasants of the Bani Haritha region united with their Muslim neighbors to expel Catholic priests from their towns.²⁴

None of these late nineteenth-century local chronicles – by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant scribes alike – indicate an ethnic conflict within the ranks of Palestinian Orthodoxy. If any ethnic element is present, they suggest that it was a symptom of something else. More likely the assumption of nationalist conflict within the community was based on the emergence of a nationalist ideology and a sectarian development that was still embryonic in the early nineteenth century. Laura Robson suggests two important developments that either created or exacerbated this conflict: first, the growth of a sectarian identity out of the communitarian network of relations that prevailed among Ottoman Christians (and Jews) until the middle of the nineteenth century; and second, the promulgation of the Ottoman Fundamental Law of 1875, which affirmed Patriarchate control over the Church and its properties.²⁵ In both cases, the conflict emanated from increased demands for community control of Church resources that accompanied the adoption notions of citizenship in the first Ottoman constitutional reform of 1876. During and after World War I, the conflict was further exacerbated by the loss of pilgrims’ revenue from the Russian Church following the Bolshevik revolution and by the debt crisis of the Greek Orthodox Church.²⁶

‘Isa’s Orthodox identification was defined in secular terms in relation to his Ottoman and Arab self-conceptions. It was articulated as a marker of an indigenous, urban identity in the struggle to Arabize the Church and free it from the control of the Greek hierarchy. At stake was not only the “national” question involving the language of the liturgy and prayer, which were of symbolic significance to the laity, but also control over the revenue

generated by the immense landed wealth of the Church, the network of Orthodox schools and colleges, and the disbursal of Church welfare. Orthodox real estate endowments (both Rumi and Russian) were immense in Palestine, more numerous than Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic endowments put together.²⁷ In the case of Palestine, the property issue also became pivotal in regard to Zionist land purchases and the Orthodox community's ability to control its vast resources.

These demands were no doubt influenced by the precedents set by Balkan nationalism, in which religious movements (Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian, and Greek Orthodox) combined the demand for religious reform and national emancipation within the Ottoman Empire. In Syria this led to the successful movement of reform within the Orthodox Church and the election in 1899 of the first modern Arab patriarch. Sati' al-Husri – the early ideological exponent of Arabism – called this “the first real victory of Arab nationalism.”²⁸

Palestinian Orthodoxy learned important lessons from the movement to Arabize the Antiochian church. However, the ecclesiastical hierarchy maintained an effective working relationship with the Ottoman political elite, including local governors and administrators, during both the Hamidian and CUP periods – all of which opposed the Arabizing efforts of the Orthodox intelligentsia.²⁹ The seeming “nationalization” of Orthodox affinities in the late Ottoman period camouflaged a more hidden dynamic, with distinct class and communitarian dimensions. This conflict increasingly took a nationalist form in which the Sublime Porte, the CUP, and, later, the British Mandate authorities took the side of the Greeks against the Arabs or, more accurately, the side of the Orthodox patriarchate against attempts by the local lay community to gain more control over Church assets.

'Isa's eventual hostility to the Young Turks was in large part the product of the protracted struggle to Arabize the Orthodox Church. This struggle's success in Syria (Antioch, Latakia, and Damascus) facilitated the integration of members of the Syrian intelligentsia into the Ottoman bureaucracy, while its failure in Palestine contributed to 'Isa's alienation from the regime and his involvement with the autonomy-seeking, and later secessionist, Decentralization party.

The View from Above

But how to understand the Ottoman administration's siding with the Greeks against the Arabs? There are two explanations. First, the Sublime Porte and, later, the CUP government were worried by Balkan precedents, where demands for religious reform within the Church escalated into secessionist demands. The Greek hierarchy in Jerusalem and Antioch was controlled from Istanbul, and therefore constituted an establishment with which the Porte could reach an understanding, while the Arab laity was an unknown factor.³⁰ A more decisive factor, however, was property. The Orthodox landed endowments in Palestine were enormous and the Ottoman administration was keen to keep these endowments under the control of a church hierarchy that could be administered and controlled from Istanbul. An Arab-controlled endowment would be subject to local forces that were potentially separatist and administratively autonomous. Orthodox endowments

in Antioch were miniscule compared to those in Palestine and thus the Arabization of the Church there involved neither the power struggles of Jerusalem nor the nationalist dangers inherent in Palestine. In Antioch and Damascus, the situation allowed an accommodation that did not threaten the status quo as it did in Palestine.

A small but telling anecdote from the memoirs of Yusuf al-Hakim illustrates this alternative conception of the three-way struggle between the state, the Patriarchate, and the dissident Orthodox intelligentsia. Hakim writes:

It was customary in Jerusalem during the Holy Week for the Patriarch to send a personal gift to his Muslim friends and senior administrators. The gift was specially baked bread and colored eggs. The head of the Jerusalem Court, Jamal Bey, called me and indicated that he refused to accept the gift, asking me to join the boycott. I refused to do so, indicating that my position [as public prosecutor] dictates that I remain neutral between the two conflicting parties. In addition, my religious beliefs and social graces compel me to accept the offerings of the Patriarch, simple as it is, as a special blessing from the head of the Church.³¹

Hakim's personal friendship with Yusuf al-'Isa and his basic sympathy with the Arabization movement within the Orthodox community did not sway him from observing the larger picture. He, correctly, did not view the movement in terms of an Arab majority against a Hellenic minority, but one in which a liberal and secularizing intelligentsia was challenging the authority of the Patriarchate and the state. His loyalties were clearly with the Ottoman state, though not with the Patriarchate. And when the moment came, he acted as a state functionary, swiftly suspending the press and sending to prison or into exile the dissidents among his Orthodox compatriots.

The conflict within the ranks of the Orthodox community cannot be properly understood without also taking into account the view of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which had a strong (if often conflicted) institutional relationship with the Sublime Porte. Greek dominance within the Church, according to a recent study on the Jerusalem Patriarchate, was rooted in the notion of "Helleno-orthodoxia" by which Greek identity is closely linked to Orthodoxy. According to this notion, the "Orthodox lay populations in Syria and Palestine, therefore, were not regarded as Arabs, but rather as Greek 'arabophones'."³²

Since Orthodoxy is held to be the true faith expressing God's word and the Greek nation is represented as being by definition the "rightful" owner of His Holy Places, the Greek people are defined as the "chosen" people, under whose guidance all the ecclesiastical centers should continue to operate, as they had since their establishment ... Two strategies were formulated within the Greek ecclesiastical apparatus for confronting the developing local Orthodox movement: a) absolute rejection of lay demands, which were viewed as subverting the Greek character of the Patriarchate and its religious "purity"; and b) the adoption of a controlled concession to the community

of some secondary rights without putting at risk the institution's Greek character and centralized governing structure. The long-standing conflict between these two distinct schools of thought led to a series of crises within the Patriarchate from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.³³

As the demands for reform within the Church and its Arab constituency escalated after the constitutional revolution, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre (i.e., the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy) became more intransigent. The Arab demands for democratization and power sharing became entangled with European interventions. Russian patronage of Arab claims and Russian imperial rivalries with Britain and France were crucial factors in swaying the Ottoman administration to side with the Greek hierarchy.

The Orthodox Struggle in the Press

The battle for the Arabization of the Orthodox Church in Palestine, as in Syria, was exacerbated by the constitutional revolution of 1908. The Jerusalem Orthodox intelligentsia, led by Yusuf al-'Isa and Khalil al-Sakakini, made three demands on the Church hierarchy: to elect at least one bishop (out of twelve) from the ranks of the Arab laity; to share the administration of the Orthodox endowment with the Arab community; and to improve the condition of Arab education within Church schools and establish an Arab Orthodox college of higher learning.³⁴ According to Yusuf al-Hakim, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was alarmed by the Syrian and Lebanese parishes' success in Arabizing the Church and mobilized a campaign within the Arab ranks to preempt a similar coup in Palestine. Their instrument was Jurji Hanania's influential *al-Quds* newspaper.³⁵ But Hanania was not alone – he carried with him a considerable number of Arab writers who favored caution in dealing with the Patriarchate, and those who felt that reforming the Brotherhood must come through the fulfillment of their demands regarding Ottoman decentralization.

The most effective weapon in the hands of the Brotherhood, however, was the Church's dispensation of charity and services to the poorer members of the Arab community. These included subsidized housing on Church property, the provision of schooling, and daily distribution of free bread (*talami*).³⁶ *Talami* was not only a symbolic feature of class division within the Christian community, but a real material instrument in the allocation of influence within the community.

The opposition initially made its case in the pages of *al-Insaf* (Justice). *Al-Insaf* was published from 1908 to 1911 by Bandali Elias Mushahwar as a "literary, political, and satirical weekly," and seemed to have a single target – the clergy of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem.³⁷ Ya'qub Yehoshua suggests that it was supported by the Russian consulate in Jerusalem, reflecting the earliest active intervention of Russian Orthodoxy on the side of the Arab nationalist movement.³⁸ In 1911, however, *Falastin*, under the editorship of 'Isa al-'Isa, was to emerge as the leading organ of the Orthodox dissidents.

Freedom from *Talami Dayr al-Rum*

‘Isa al-‘Isa was born in 1878 in Jaffa. After first studying at the Catholic Collège des Frères in Jaffa, ‘Isa continued his schooling at the Greek Orthodox school in Kiftin, one of the leading learning institutions in Ottoman Syria, under the direction of Bishop Gregorios Haddad.³⁹ When ‘Isa was summoned before a military tribunal in 1915 for his “seditious” articles in *Falastin*, he sought the intercession of the same Gregorios Haddad, then patriarch in Damascus, on his behalf.⁴⁰ Patriarch Haddad, however, was either unwilling or unable to assist ‘Isa, who received a sentence of three hundred days imprisonment for his inflammatory editorials.⁴¹ A closer look at ‘Isa’s background may help explain why ‘Isa could not count on the Church’s patronage to protect him or advance his career.

In a perceptive biographical sketch, muckraking lawyer ‘Umar Salih al-Barghouti noted that ‘Isa came from a well-to-do merchant family and did not depend on Christian charities (*talami dayr al-Rum*) for his survival. According to Barghouti:

He comes from a family of [olive] oil and soap merchants. Their [private] wealth and prosperity was reflected on him gracefully, since the ‘Isa family did not grow up eating convent black bread [baked for the Orthodox poor – *talami dayr al-Rum*]. Nor did they live in the Church’s endowed property [*lam yaskunu fi buyut al-awqaf*], which lent to his character dignity and strength. He is often accused of playing the Christian card in politics, but I know that he is secure and welcoming in his relationship with his Muslim compatriots. Nevertheless he belongs to a Christian family that hesitates to receive Muslims in their household unless their women remove their archaic veils. And perhaps he is right in this matter.⁴²

These sarcastic references offer considerable implications for reading the social map of late Ottoman Jaffa. ‘Isa belonged to a mercantile bourgeoisie that freed itself from dependency on Orthodox charity. The reference to *talami dayr al-Rum* evokes the communal benefaction that bound the community to their church and gave its hierarchy significant control and influence over the laity. There was of course more than bread involved in these transactions for urban Christians; perhaps more significant were the housing of the poor in Church property and the provision of education. With the significant expansion of Ottoman public education through the Nizamiyya schools, as well as educational opportunities available in Protestant, Russian, and Catholic schools, however, avenues of mobility outside the Orthodox schools were increasingly available.

‘Isa embodied the increasing independence of Arab Orthodox Christians from the Church’s direct influence. He was thus able to challenge the Church hierarchy vigorously and without fear of recrimination, and he did so relentlessly. Barghouti notes ‘Isa’s penchant for combative journalism: “his pen is soaked with poison” and “he often causes [his opponents] heart attacks ... with his courage, reaching the point of insolence.”⁴³ Indeed, the alienation of Palestinian Orthodox Christians as a result of Hellenic hegemony within the Jerusalem Patriarchate contributed significantly to the emergence of a cultural

renaissance whose strong Orthodox component distinguished it from similar trends in greater Syria and Egypt.

The particularity of the Orthodox involvement in the cultural renaissance in Palestine found expression in two major venues: in journalism and the press; and in the Russian seminaries and teacher training colleges in Bayt Jala, Tripoli, and Nazareth. The Russian seminaries, with official Tsarist support, sought a foothold in the Ottoman Empire on par with other imperial powers, which benefited from capitulations and provided patronage to non-Muslim subjects under the rubric of protection. Unlike the British and French, however, who became patrons of the empire's Druze, Jewish, and Catholic communities, the Russians had to compete with the Hellenic institutional dominance of the Orthodox Christian community. They did so through schools and seminaries, which contributed to a secular Arab cultural renaissance, producing such leading intellectual figures as Mikha'il Nu'ayma, Khalil Baydas, Bandali Jawzi, Kulthum 'Awda, and Khalil al-Sakakini.

Some of those, such as Baydas and Sakakini, were also active in the nascent Arabic press. And it was in mass-circulating newspapers and satirical weeklies that the Arab Orthodox Renaissance, as it came to be known, made its mark.⁴⁴ After press censorship was abolished in 1908, noted members of the Orthodox community emerged as the editors and publishers of leading newspapers: Jurji Habib Hanania (publisher of *al-Quds*); Bandali Elias Mushahwar and Iskandar al-Khuri (owner and chief editor, respectively, of *al-Insaf*, founded 1908); Khalil al-Sakakini and Hanna 'Abdallah al-'Isa (publishers of *al-Asma'i*, founded 1908); Khalil Baydas (publisher of the Haifa-based political weekly *al-Nafa'is*, founded 1908); Wahba Tamari (publisher of the Jaffa-based satirical weekly *Abu Shaduf*, founded 1912); Emile Alonzo (publisher, with 'Adil Jabr, of the Jaffa-based *al-Taraqqi* – named after the CUP – founded 1909); and, of course, 'Isa al-'Isa, who began publishing *Falastin* in Jaffa in 1911.⁴⁵

Inspired by a Charlatan

“My passion for journalism was not inherited,” begins the memoirs of 'Isa al-'Isa, “but Dr. Dahish told me once that the spirit of a Chinese writer was reincarnated inside me.”⁴⁶ 'Isa continues:

And who knows? What I do know is that Dahish Bek was a big charlatan. My preoccupation with journalism did not begin with the establishment of *Falastin* newspaper in 1911. It started in 1897, when as a student at the American University [of Beirut] I joined my friend Hafiz 'Abd al-Malik in launching a small weekly magazine, which we called *The Elite (al-Nukhab)*. We used to print a few [mimeographed] copies on gelatin and distribute them in the library for students to read. You may find some of those issues that have been kept by the library.

After moving through a number of itinerant jobs in Jerusalem – secretary of Qajar Iran’s consulate in Jerusalem and *turjuman* (interpreter) for the Coptic Church – ‘Isa moved to Cairo and became a correspondent for *al-Ikhlās*, published by Ibrahim ‘Abd al-Masih, and an accountant in the customs department of the government of Sudan in Cairo. He also worked as an inspector for the African Cigarette Company, owned by Qaraman, Deek, and Salti.

The proclamation of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 brought him back to Palestine, where he found that the CUP had “replaced the autocratic rule of Abdulhamid with a dictatorial rule of the Young Turks.” Nevertheless, he soon became involved with the Orthodox Renaissance movement through his cousin Yusuf. Yusuf’s brother Hanna – who, with Yusuf and Khalil al-Sakakini, Shaykh ‘Ali al-Rimawi, and Is‘af al-Nashashibi, had established *al-Asma‘i*, as a bi-weekly literary-political newspaper⁴⁷ – was a member of the Orthodox delegation to Istanbul. This delegation negotiated with the Sublime Porte for the establishment of a mixed council in which the Palestinian Arab community would be represented and which the Patriarchate would provide the sum of thirty thousand Ottoman gold pounds annually for social and educational community projects. None of these provisions were realized, according to ‘Isa, due to the Patriarchate’s immense influence with the Sublime Porte and its ability to fill the pockets of high government officials.⁴⁸ This triggered a series of protests and popular demonstrations among the Arab laity demanding the implementation of the agreements.

It was at this point that ‘Isa decided to leave his job as a bank clerk and join the struggle against the Church. ‘Isa was quite explicit about the primacy of the Orthodox cause in launching his paper. This is how he describes the beginnings of *Falastin*:

My personal savings at the time amounted to seventy French pounds [*sic.*]. I heard that a printing press was available for sale in Jerusalem. I travelled there and found a huge machine that was normally used for producing proofs. I bought it on the spot and had it delivered to Jaffa, where I had rented a store on Bustrus Street near the main Post Office. I bought a new set of print sets and had them fitted to the machine with help from the Wagner Factory. On the first of January 1911, *Falastin* was launched to the public. My purpose in producing the paper was to serve the Orthodox cause above everything else. I organized an opening party for the newspaper in the biggest hotel in town, at which the major poets and literary figures in the country were present. Anybody who reviews the successive issues of *Falastin* from that date until the present will note that the Orthodox movement predominates on its pages.⁴⁹

‘Isa, Hanania, and *al-Nafir al-‘Uthmani*

The Patriarchate was fully engaged in the ideological struggle against the Arab nationalists. In this, their main instrument was the newly emergent Arabic press. The Orthodox

establishment owned the earliest printing press in Palestine. This was established in 1846 under the administration of Spiridon Sarruf and his son Wahba Sarruf (1839–1913), both of whom received their training in the Orthodox Theological School at Dayr al-Musallabeh in south-west Jerusalem.⁵⁰

One of the earliest mass circulating newspapers to represent the position of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre was *al-Nafir al-'Uthmani* (the Ottoman Clarion). This newspaper was published in Jaffa from 1904 to 1907 and in Jerusalem in 1908 by Iliya Zakka, who moved to Haifa and continued publishing the paper under the shortened title *al-Nafir*.⁵¹ Zakka, who was trained in the Russian seminary in Nazareth, became an early Arab advocate of the Zionist project, which earned him the epitaph of “the mercenary journalist” in the Arabist press.⁵²

Following the constitutional revolution, the Patriarchate relied on Jurji Hanania and his newspaper *al-Quds* – which had its own separate printing press. Hanania was able to obtain an official license to publish in 1906 and became the main purveyor of non-religious Arabic, Greek, and Turkish publications in the country, having issued 281 books by 1914, of which 38 were in Arabic.⁵³ Hanania (1857–1920) came from a well-established Arab-Ottoman family. His father, 'Isa Habib Hanania, was the only Christian judge in the Jerusalem Court of Appeals (*mahkamat al-isti'naf*) and his mother was the daughter of the artillery commander Topji (Tubgi) Pasha, a *Rumi* master-general of the ordnance in Istanbul.⁵⁴

In 1908, *al-Quds* was the first private gazette in Palestine with a mass circulation. Hanania was able to enlist some of the best writers in Jerusalem for his paper. Those included Hanna al-'Isa and Sakakini, the founder of al-Dusturiyya College. His main editorialist was Shaykh 'Ali Rimawi (1860–1919), an Azharite scholar and poet who established his journalistic career as the editor of the Turkish-Arabic *al-Quds al-Sharif*, the official Ottoman gazette in Palestine.⁵⁵ Rimawi believed strongly in Turkish-Arab unity as the core of Ottoman citizenship in Palestine and this was reflected in the political line of *al-Quds*. He later produced his own paper, *al-Najah*, and wrote extensively in *al-Munadi*, the anti-Zionist paper of Muhammad al-Mughrabi and Sa'id Jarallah.⁵⁶ But *al-Quds* also became an instrument of the Patriarchate against the nationalists.⁵⁷ Thus, from its inception *al-Quds* espoused a pro-CUP and a pro-Greek platform at the same time.

It was largely against the success of *al-Quds* that *Falastin* was established in Jaffa in 1911 to articulate the demands of the dissident Orthodox intellectuals. Their main objectives included: increasing the role of the Arab clergy in the Church's administration; involving the lay Orthodox community in the administration of the Church endowments (*awqaf*), with an estimated annual revenue of forty thousand Ottoman pounds; and improving Orthodox schools and colleges.⁵⁸

Yusuf al-Hakim suggests that the struggle within the Church involved welfare provisions that the dissident intelligentsia (Sakakini, Farraj, 'Isa, and others) were unable to oppose. He also suggests that the Orthodox intelligentsia were divided between those who, for a variety of reasons, supported the establishment, with Hanania's *al-Quds* as its organ, and those who coalesced around 'Isa's *Falastin*.⁵⁹ Thus, Jerusalem (*al-Quds*) was pitted against Jaffa (*Falastin*) and the poorer communities in the villages and small



“Freedom, Brotherhood, Equality” – the Ottoman slogan – in the masthead of *al-Quds* newspaper, 19 January 1911. Source: *IPS Newspaper Archives, Ramallah*.

towns – dependent on the Greek patriarchate for its welfare – were pitted against the rising professional Orthodox community, free from the “convent bread” and the charity of the Patriarchate to make demands on the Church.

Banned in Jerusalem, Permitted in Jaffa

A pivotal moment in ‘Isa’s battle with the ecclesiastical authorities involved the marriage of Khalil al-Sakakini in 1913. Sakakini was threatened with excommunication by the Church and barred from marrying Sultana Abduh on the lame excuse of “preventing incest” (she was a distant cousin of his). We have two versions of the event. The first is detailed in Sakakini’s diary: he narrates the episode as a punishment for his struggle on behalf of the Orthodox community in Jerusalem for representation in the governing bodies of the Church.⁶⁰ In ‘Isa’s memoirs, the story is transformed into a satirical mockery of the Greek Patriarchate, albeit with a serious intent.⁶¹

Sakakini chose ‘Isa to be his best man (*ishbin*) at the wedding in Jerusalem. When the presiding priest did not show up, the assembled guests found out that the Patriarchate has forbidden the wedding because Sultana, the bride, was the adopted daughter of Sakakini’s maternal cousin (in Sakakini’s version, she is described as his cousin five times removed). After a prolonged period of negotiation, the Patriarchate consented to the wedding, but only if Sakakini agreed to return the keys of Mar Ya‘qub church.⁶² Earlier that year, Jerusalem’s Orthodox laity had rebelled and seized the compound of what they considered the Arab church of Mar Ya‘qub, adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre,

from the Greek Patriarchate. They had handed the keys of the church to Sakakini for safekeeping and as a symbol of separation. Both ‘Isa and Sakakini describe Mar Ya‘qub as a “national” (Arab) church, illegally occupied by the Greeks.⁶³

When Sakakini refused to submit to these conditions, ‘Isa arranged for the marriage to take place in Jaffa. He conspired with his cousin Yusuf to have two local Orthodox priests arrested, apparently on some ruse by the local gendarmerie, and held incommunicado lest they be contacted by the Patriarchate. They were then to be brought to ‘Isa’s house in Jaffa just before the wedding ceremony. ‘Isa recalls:

I had sent the invitations to the guests, and prepared the drinks and food for the occasion. At the right moment I had the two priests released from their confinement and brought to my house. I immediately apologized to them for the arrest and explained to them the circumstances. The wedding ceremony was concluded smoothly and we celebrated the event with great fanfare. The next day the wedding couple left to Jerusalem by train. On that same day *Falastin* published an item on the front page under the title “*What is banned in Jerusalem is permissible in Jaffa*”!⁶⁴

‘Isa, Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya, and Zionism

Zionism was the other major concern for the paper. ‘Isa mentioned that after the new constitution was adopted, the Zionists resumed their vigorous campaign to “buy Palestine” for settlement activities through major loans to the Ottoman state. He noted that chief figures in the ruling CUP sympathized with the project for a Jewish homeland. As a result of the newspaper’s anti-Zionism, ‘Isa wrote: “the Jews began to see me as one of their bitterest opponents and continue to do so until the present.”⁶⁵

‘Isa’s main antagonists were Shim‘on Moyal and his wife Ester Lazari, Palestinian Arab Jews of Moroccan origins, and Nissim Malul, a Tunisian Jew who resided in Jaffa. All belonged to the Society of Arabic Publishing, established in Jaffa to demonstrate Jewish affinity for the Ottoman state and to respond to Arab nationalist attacks against Zionism.⁶⁶ In the view of Moyal, Lazari, and Malul, Orthodox Christian intellectuals – represented by Najib ‘Azuri, Najib Nassar, and ‘Isa al-‘Isa – rather than Muslim Arab leaders were the force most hostile to the Zionist project.⁶⁷ Later, Moyal, with a number of Sephardic Jewish writers and publicists, established *ha-Magen* (the Shield) in Hebrew and *Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya* (Voice of the Ottomans) in Arabic, in response to *al-Karmil* and *Falastin*.

‘Isa devotes a section of his diary to Moyal and Lazari and their role in the attack on *Falastin*. Like ‘Isa, Moyal and Lazari belonged to the Decentralization party, and, aside from the issue of Zionism, they were on collegial terms as fellow journalists. When Moyal made a speech in Jaffa attacking Mayor ‘Umar al-Bitar and ‘Isa, the latter composed a “quintet” (a satirical poem), titled “He Who Knows Himself,” and published it anonymously. It included the following verses:

We have known you as a charlatan, a crook, and a liar; now you claim to be a poet, a writer, but where is the rhyme?⁶⁸

When Moyal found out who the anonymous author was, he came to ‘Isa’s office and told him that his quintet had become a “fisted fiver” in the ear.⁶⁹

It is significant to note here that the Zionist leadership in Jaffa was made up of Sephardic intellectuals like Moyal and Malul, as well as Yosef Eliahu Chelouche and members of the Amzalak family. By and large however, Palestinian Sephardic Jews were either opposed or indifferent to Zionism and were often accused by the Zionist leadership of being “assimilationists,” indicating their desire to be part of the Arab society and affirming their Ottoman citizenship.⁷⁰

‘Isa devotes considerable space of his memoirs to the attempts by his opponents to buy off the paper. They included the German consulate (who sought a mouthpiece to support the Entente powers), the Zionists (who wanted a newspaper that would support Jewish settlement activities), and the local governor, Hasan Bek al-Jabi. ‘Isa’s refusal to cooperate led to the public prosecutor’s legal campaign against *Falastin* for “creating dissension among the population” (*al-tafriq bayn al-‘anasir*) and several libel cases. As a result, *Falastin* was repeatedly fined and its publication suspended on multiple occasions.

‘Isa saw *Falastin*’s closure in 1913 as a result of the intervention of Henry Morgenthau (1856–1946), the American ambassador to the Porte, with Kamil Pasha, the Ottoman prime minister, on behalf of the Zionists. The *mutasarriif* of Jerusalem, who sympathized with ‘Isa, showed him the suspension order from Istanbul and ‘Isa left the newspaper in the hands of his cousin, Yusuf, to continue his campaign from Egypt. The major newspaper in Egypt, *al-Muqattam* (edited by Khalil Thabit, ‘Isa’s former journalism professor in Beirut), refused to publish his protests against *Falastin*’s closure. According to ‘Isa, Nissim Malul, co-editor of *Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya* in Jaffa, had “bought off” *al-Muqattam* by purchasing 500 subscriptions.⁷¹ *Al-Muqattam* also regularly published a column on Palestine signed by an anonymous “senior Zionist,” possibly Moyal.⁷² The paper allowed ‘Isa to reply to Moyal on three occasions, but thereafter Thabit refused to publish ‘Isa’s articles. Two other Egyptian newspapers, *al-Ahram* and *al-Mu’ayyad*, also rebuffed ‘Isa. After several months, however, the campaign on behalf of *Falastin* succeeded in re-opening the paper and ‘Isa returned to Jaffa.

It seems, however, that ‘Isa’s position on Zionism, like the stand he later took toward Amir ‘Abdullah and the Hashimites, for example, was not consistent. In *The Iron Cage*, Rashid Khalidi suggests that ‘Isa’s anti-Zionism was largely motivated by his concern for rural poverty and peasant dispossession in Palestine, a concern demonstrated through the distribution of a free copy of *Falastin* to every village in the Jaffa district.⁷³ In fact, *Falastin* had demonstrated a special attention to land issues and peasant poverty from its beginning in 1911 and 1912, when the newspaper was still published twice a week. A regular column on village issues appeared under the title *Rasa’il al-fallah* (Peasant Letters), signed by “Abu Ibrahim.”

This, however, was the Arabic pen name of Menashe Meirovitch, a Zionist *apparatchik* from Rishon LeZion and an early member of the Bilu Group. The main themes addressed

عدد الأول
 سنة ١٩١٩
 - سنة الأندلس والفتح من كل يوم -
 جده المالك الذي ولدنا
 جدهم ان يكون باسم صاحب البرية ومحمد بن عبد الملك
 - الله كورش. مويل
 لسانه في تحرير البرية
 ابن محمد مويل
AUTOU L'OSMANIAH
 Directeur - Proprietaire - Dr. S. NISSIM
 JOURNAL DE JERUSALEM
 Filiales: Jaffa de St. Per de
 Umm el-Fanar de
 Abou el-Khader de La Presse 4018
 A.P. Palestine

الصورة العثمانية

في الاثني عشر
 حيز - 100 - فرنسيات
 في اثنا عشر 3
 الفرج في 1 فرنسي
 في كلب حيا حيا حيا
 في بنين حيا حيا حيا
 في اصحابنا كثرتم ام نتم
 في حيا حيا حيا حيا
 لسانه من لسان القديس
 حيا حيا

ان للجيش البلجيكي . اطلاق القنابل . انتصار الروس على الالمان . انتصار مساري

قليد امبراطور المانيا السابق لافانه

<p>انا يقول مساري</p> <p>سازو البرية زورنا</p> <p>في السابع لثنا السقة</p> <p>كيف يدعي مامل لان</p> <p>اننا لانا لانا لانا</p>	<p>بيت حيا حيا حيا حيا</p> <p>بنان مامل لانا لانا حيا حيا</p> <p>لانا لانا حيا حيا حيا حيا</p> <p>قد كان حيا حيا حيا حيا</p>	<p>الاتفاق بين ذلك من الذهب</p> <p>والسقة</p> <p>جيش امانى يوربه كيرزما</p> <p>راسمور حيا حيا حيا حيا</p>	<p>الام اميرت حيا حيا حيا حيا</p> <p>الفرق بينه لانا لانا حيا حيا</p> <p>واما الذين هم من القديس الجرماني</p> <p>من كانت حيا حيا حيا حيا</p>	<p>التين التي كتبه السا حيا حيا</p> <p>الفرق بينه لانا لانا حيا حيا</p> <p>واما الذين هم من القديس الجرماني</p> <p>من كانت حيا حيا حيا حيا</p>
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Nissim Malul's *Sawt al-'Uthmaniyya*, Jaffa, 1914. Source: Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

by “Abu Ibrahim” in his column included: government neglect of the peasants, peasant indebtedness, and the need to parcel the land and put an end to the backward *musha* (communal) system of ownership. Meirovitch/Abu Ibrahim frequently referred to the positive achievements of the Jewish colonies, and sometimes the German Templer colonists, as a model for Palestinian peasants.⁷⁴

‘Isa was aware of Abu Ibrahim’s Zionist identity and his political position, yet he continued to publish the column. One explanation for this tolerance should be found in the period in which these views were published. ‘Isa, coming from an elite urban Jaffa milieu, may have seen village conditions as a manifestation of Arab feudalism that had to be reformed in order to meet the challenges of Zionist colonization.⁷⁵ He could also have been fascinated by the modernity of the German and Jewish colonial enterprises and was therefore willing to overlook their Zionist activities. By the time he wrote his memoirs in the 1930s, the scope and meaning of Zionist colonization had become clear and he had solidified his position against them in his paper. Yet despite *Falastin’s* considerable attention to issues of land, dispossession, educational reform, and government mismanagement in the late Ottoman period, the main issue remained the struggle within the Orthodox Church.

Conclusion

An essential feature of Orthodox Christianity in the Arab East is the consciousness among its adherents of its indigenous character. This belief applied equally to the Greek hierarchy in Antioch and Jerusalem – which considered its members the native continuity of the Byzantine presence in the Holy Land, rejecting the “foreignness” attributed to them by the Arab laity whom they implicitly believed to be arabophone Greeks – and the Arab and Syriac Orthodox communities in greater Syria – who regarded themselves as the vestiges of the population that had not converted to Islam.

‘Isa al-‘Isa was the product of the Arab Orthodox Renaissance of the late nineteenth century, with its focal points in Latakia, Antioch, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Jaffa. He belonged to a generation that expected much from the promises of emancipation raised by the Ottoman constitution of 1908. Like many intellectuals from the *Rumi* community, ‘Isa came from an urban professional family that no longer depended on the protection and charities of the Orthodox system, which bound poorer members of the community to the Church. As ‘Umar Salih al-Barghouti put it, they were free from *talami dayr al-Rum*. ‘Isa’s memoirs are crucial in highlighting the significant relationship between Orthodox socialization and the development of Ottoman/Arab consciousness.

The Orthodox Renaissance movement, it should be remembered, became a cause célèbre within wide circles of the Muslim intelligentsia in Syria and Palestine. Many believed that it was an essential component for the development of Arab nationalist currents in the late nineteenth century. Sati‘ al-Husri, the early ideologue of Arab nationalism, believed that the Arabization of the Orthodox Church of Antioch was a critical landmark and historical turning point for the triumph of Arabism in Syria.⁷⁶ Within the various currents of Arab cultural movements in Greater Syria, Orthodox Christian intellectuals often maintained stronger affinities with their Muslim compatriots than did their Catholic and Protestant compatriots.⁷⁷ This is clear from the intellectual ties maintained by Khalil al-Sakakini, Najib Nassar, Khalil Baydas, and ‘Isa himself.

‘Isa rejected the minoritarian status adopted by many Christian middle-class intellectuals who benefited from the patronage of European cultural institutions and the system of capitulations. He strongly believed in the native roots of Byzantine Orthodox Christianity, and took it as a mark of bonding with his Arab Muslim compatriots. The Arab identity of the urban *Rumi* intelligentsia mobilized them against the Greek clerical hegemony of the Antioch and Jerusalem patriarchates and led them to adopt radical secularist stances in Syria and Palestine. The success of that struggle in Antioch and its failure in Palestine were crucial factors in the different paths taken by Syrian and what we now call Palestinian intellectuals toward Ottomanism and Arab nationalism.

‘Isa al-‘Isa belonged to the same social milieu as many *Rumi* intellectuals in Syria and Lebanon (urban professional and mercantile families). He benefited from the limited educational opportunities provided by the Church schools, studying under the noted Orthodox encyclopedist ‘Isa Iskandar al-Ma‘luf at Kiftin Orthodox seminary – at the time the highest center for Orthodox education in the Arab East.⁷⁸ And like many Christian Beirut and Damascene intellectuals, by virtue of his family’s wealth he was freed from

dependency on the communal resources of the Church. This explains to a large extent ‘Isa’s ability to rebel against the Patriarchate.

But ‘Isa also developed – personally and professionally – disconnected from the Ottoman bureaucracy and with strong affinities to the remnants of the capitulations system. His early schooling was at the Catholic Collège des Frères in Jaffa and it continued later at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, where he acquired basic language skills in Arabic, Turkish, French, and English.⁷⁹ He began his professional career by working as a translator for the Coptic monastery in Jerusalem (1903–1904) and as a senior clerk in Qajar Iran’s consulate in Jerusalem, *Pashkarberdaz*, taking care of the interests of Persian subjects in Palestine. Those experiences, as ‘Isa makes clear in his memoirs, influenced his perception of the Ottoman authorities from the perspective of the beneficiaries of capitulations and as a protégé of the Hamidian *ancien régime*.⁸⁰ This attitude was reinforced when, as a commercial agent in Egypt, he became acquainted with a more combative press than was available in Syria and Palestine before 1908.

There is no doubt that ‘Isa’s work with the consular corps in Jerusalem and with the Egyptian press had a major impact on his Ottoman politics. Once the constitutional revolution was launched, he returned to Palestine and joined the decentralization movement, adopting an ambivalent attitude toward Syria’s continued bond within the Ottoman system. The Egyptian wing of the Ottoman decentralization movement – with which ‘Isa apparently identified more closely than the Syrian one – took a secessionist position during World War I. Furthermore, his Orthodox identity and his involvement in the struggle to Arabize the Church convinced him that the Ottoman administration was solidly behind maintaining the privileges of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate against the Arab laity. His early anti-Zionism and support for the plight of Arab peasants pitted him in endless confrontations with the Ottoman censor and in the courts. All of which explains why ‘Isa and his cousin Yusuf were exiled to the Anatolian countryside during the war, while Orthodox Syrians like Yusuf al-Hakim remained pillars of the Ottoman establishment.

‘Isa al-‘Isa’s Orthodoxy was unorthodox – creating an eclectic secular mix of residual Ottomanism with nationalism. After the Great War, ‘Isa’s activity in the development of a separatist Palestinian nationalism became inseparable from that of *Falastin*. The unique situation that Palestine’s Orthodox community (as opposed to their Lebanese and Syrian coreligionists) found themselves in, vis-à-vis the Ottoman government in the struggle to Arabize the Church, in addition to the importance of the local press in this struggle, are crucial in the chain of events that led to ‘Isa’s – and *Falastin*’s – widely acknowledged key role in those developments.

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Endnotes

1. This essay benefited from earlier discussions about Arab Orthodoxy I had with Maria Mavroudi and Iskandar Abou-Chaar; I am very grateful for the critical comments made by Alex Winder and Penny Johnson on the draft.
2. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
3. Noha Tadros Khalaf, *Les mémoires de 'Isa al-'Isa: journaliste et intellectuel palestinien (1878–1950)* (Saint-Denis: Institut Maghreb-Europe, 2009). This book provides an excellent biography of 'Isa as well as excerpts from his memoirs. See also the same author's "Falastin versus the British Mandate and Zionism (1921–1931): Between a Rock and a Hard Place," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 45 (Spring 2011): 6–24.
4. Sam Dolbe and Shay Hazkani, "Impossible Is Not Ottoman": Menashe Meirovitch, 'Isa al-'Isa, and Imperial Citizenship in Ottoman Palestine, 1911–1912 and After," forthcoming.
5. See the first volume of Hakim's memoirs: Yusuf al-Hakim, *Suriya wa-l-'ahd al-'Uthmani* [Syria and the Ottoman Era] (Beirut: al-Matba' al-Kathulikiyya, 1966). The extended version of this essay makes extensive comparisons between the careers and ideas of Yusuf al-Hakim and 'Isa al-'Isa.
6. 'Isa al-'Isa, *Min dhikrayat al-madi* [Memories of the Past] (unpublished manuscript), 14.
7. 'Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 14.
8. Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 3 (May 1980): 287–304.
9. Abu-Manneh, "Christians," 296.
10. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 142–45. A similar phenomenon, for different reasons, characterized Lebanon in this period as well.
11. Bruce Alan Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Adel Beshara, ed., *The Origins of Syrian Nationhood: Histories, Pioneers, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
12. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 106–7.
13. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 107.
14. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 107; Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 178–184.
15. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 108.
16. See Yusuf al-Hakim's discussion of the status of the Antiochian Orthodox Church: Hakim, *Suriya*, 129–145.
17. See Michael Bracy's discussion of the affinities of the Christian communities in the Middle East with their "Eastern" and Islamic roots. R. Michael Bracy, *Printing Class: 'Isa al-'Isa, Filastin, and the Textual Construction of National Identity, 1911–1931* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011), 19–21.
18. Khalil al-Sakakini, *Yawmiyat Khalil al-Sakakini: Yawmiyat. Rasa'il. Ta'ammulat* [The Diaries of Khalil al-Sakakini: Diaries. Letters. Reflections], ed. Akram Musallam, vol. 2 (Ramallah: Institute for Jerusalem Studies and the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, 2004).
19. Hakim, *Suriya*, 195–96.
20. Musa ibn Nasir, *Tarikh qaryat Birzeit mundhu khuruj al-rajul al-awwal* [The History of Birzeit since the First Man] (Monterey, CA: Birzeit Society [U.S.], 1988); Shehadeh Khouri Ibrahim, *Tarikh 'ashirat al-'Aranika* [History of the 'Aranika Tribe] (Birzeit: Dar 'Allush li-l-nashr, 2007); Pierre Médebielle, *Birzeit: Histoire d'une localite et de sa mission latine dans las Montagne d'Ephraim* (Bayt Jala: Latin Patriarchate Press, 2008).
21. *Birzeit*, 38.
22. Ibn Nasir, *Tarikh qaryat Birzeit*, 102–3.
23. Ibn Nasir, *Tarikh qaryat Birzeit*, 105.
24. Ibn Nasir, *Tarikh qaryat Birzeit*, 104, 109.
25. Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 47–51; Laura Robson, "Communalism and Nationalism in the Mandate: The Greek Orthodox Controversy and the National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 1 (Autumn 2011): 6–23.
26. Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity*, 78–79.
27. For a statistical source on the magnitude of these endowments see the forthcoming Survey of Arab Properties in Jerusalem from the Arab Studies Society and Institute for Palestine Studies.
28. Cited in Robson, "Communalism and Nationalism," 8.
29. Hakim, *Suriya*, 196.
30. Bedross Der Matossian, "The Young Turk Revolution: Its Impact on Religious Politics of

- Jerusalem (1908–1912),” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 40 (): 18–33.
31. Hakim, *Suriya*, 196–97.
 32. Konstantinos Papastathis and Ruth Kark, “The Effect of the Young Turks Revolution on Religious Power Politics,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 56–57 (2014): 121.
 33. Papastathis and Kark, “The Effect,” 121–22.
 34. Hakim, *Suriya*, 195.
 35. For the history of *al-Quds*, and a biography of Jurji Hanania, see Mary Hanania, “Jurji Habib Hanani: History of the Earliest Press in Palestine, 1980–1914,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 32 (Autumn 2007): 51–69.
 36. Hakim, *Suriya*, 195–96.
 37. Ya‘qub Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa al-‘Arabiyya fi Filastin fi al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmani, 1908–1918* [The History of the Arab Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era, 1908–1918] (Jerusalem: Matba‘at al-ma‘arif, 1974), 69–72.
 38. Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 71.
 39. Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 95, 247. ‘Isa al ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 9.
 40. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 16.
 41. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 16.
 42. ‘Umar Salih al-Barghouti [?], “‘Isa al-‘Isa,” *Mir‘at al-Sharq*, 19 January 1928. This biographical note appears unsigned, but is attributed to Barghouti by Ya‘qub al-‘Awdat. Barghouti was one of two or three authors who regularly provided biographical entries in *Mir‘at al-Sharq*. See Ya‘qub al-‘Awdat, “‘Isa al-‘Isa,” in *A‘lam al-fikr wa-l-adab fi Filastin* [Prominent Figures of Thought and Literature in Palestine] (Amman: Wakalat al-tawzi‘ al-Urduniyya, 1987), 477–78.
 43. Barghouti [?], “‘Isa al-‘Isa.”
 44. The main newspapers were *al-Quds*, *al-Karmil*, and *Falastin*. But there were also several minor newspapers and weeklies which were launched by Orthodox writers after the constitutional revolution, as *al-Insaf* (founded 1908); *al-Ahlam* (founded 1908), *al-Nasik* (founded 1908), *al-Bulbul al-Ta‘ir* (founded 1908), *al-Dik al-Sayyah* (founded 1908), *Abu Shaduf* (founded 1912), and *Munabbih al-Amwat* (founded 1908). See Adnan Musallam, “Arab Press, Society and Politics at the End of the Ottoman Era,” online at www.bethlehem-holyland.net/Adnan/publications/EndofTheOttomanEra.htm#_edn34, accessed 19 November 2013.
 45. The main source for this is Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*. See also Adnan Musallam, “Arab Press.”
 46. Dr. Dahish was the pen name of Salim Musa al-‘Ashi (1908–1984), a Palestinian-Lebanese spiritualist and founder of the Dahishist movement, which believed in reincarnation. See daheshheritage.org/index.php/en/about/about-dr-dahesh.html, accessed 1 December 2012.
 47. See ‘Adel Manna’, ed., *A‘lam Filastin fi awakhir al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmani* (1800–1918) [The Notables of Palestine at the End of the Ottoman Period (1800–1918)] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 305.
 48. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 9.
 49. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 9.
 50. ‘Arif al-‘Arif, *al-Masihyya fi al-Quds* [Christianity in Jerusalem] (Jerusalem: n.p., 1951), 35; Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 8.
 51. Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 51–52.
 52. Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 53.
 53. Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 10–11.
 54. At least this is the claim made by the family. See Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 47.
 55. Office of Information and Culture – Lebanon, “al-Shaykh ‘Ali al-Rimawi,” online at www.falestinona.com/OurPalWebSite/ArticleDetails.aspx?ArticleId=4531#.UYwUsSvF30A, accessed 7 May 2013.
 56. Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa*, 54–55.
 57. For the history of *al-Quds*, and a biography of Jurji Hanania, see Mary Hanania, “Jurji Habib Hanani: History of the Earliest Press in Palestine, 1980–1914,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 32 (Autumn 2007): 51–69.
 58. Hakim, *Suriya*, 195.
 59. Hakim, *Suriya*, 195–96.
 60. Sakakini, *Yawmiyyat*, vol. 1 (), 348–352.
 61. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 10.
 62. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 11–12.
 63. Sakakini, *Yawmiyyat*, vol. 2, 34, 39, 40, 46; ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 12.
 64. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 12.
 65. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 9.
 66. Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-century Palestine* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011), 163–65.
 67. Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 73–79.
 68. ‘Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 13.

69. 'Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 13.
70. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 201–2.
71. 'Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 11.
72. 'Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 10.
73. Khalidi, *Iron Cage*, 93.
74. See, for example, Abu Ibrahim [Meirovitch], “Rasa'il al-fallah” [Peasant Letters], *Falastin*, 23 June 1912, 1 (cited by Dolbee and Hazkani, “Imperial Citizenship”). Thanks to Shay Hazkani who brought my attention to the Abu Ibrahim columns in Falastin, and who pointed out the correspondence between 'Isa al-'Isa and Menashe Meirovitch.
75. I owe this insight to Alex Winder.
76. William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 125.
77. Bracy, *Printing Class*, 20.
78. 'Awdat, “'Isa al-'Isa.”
79. Bracy, *Printing Class*, 19.
80. 'Isa, *Min dhikrayat*, 4–6.