ISLAM AND THE POLITICS OF MEANING IN PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

Nels Johnson

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Islam and the politics of meaning in Palestinian nationalism

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CONTENTS

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic transliteration is always a problem, and I have chosen a simplified system out of the large number of possibilities used today. The Arabic *hamzah* is represented by an apostrophe ('): the *ʿAyn* by a raised, lower-case letter, 'c' (e.g. *ᶜUthmān*). Dots are placed under the appropriate letters to represent the Arabic emphatics: ṣḍṭẓḥ. An Arabic word commonly used in English is not italicized.

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I would like to thank Mahmud Darwīsh for permission to quote his poems in chapter 3.

We are only ᶜUthmān's Shirt. After the Caliph ᶜUthmān was murdered, leaders would say, 'I do this in the name of ᶜUthmān' when they wanted people to believe them. They only used his name. They waved his bloody shirt. Today, we Palestinians are ᶜUthmān's Shirt. . . .

INTRODUCTION

I

The intention of this essay is to explore the relationship between an ideological idiom and the changing social movement in which it operates. The basic question is that of what roles an Islamic symbol complex played in different phases of the Palestinian nationalist movement, and what were the socio-economic factors which help to explain, and are themselves partially explained by, the appearance of these roles. Islam was ideologically 'appropriate' at different stages in the development of the movement, and the study to follow will ask: in what ways and why?

The aims of this study are more social-scientific than historical, to use disciplinary boundaries which are hazy at best. I am interested here in discerning socio-cultural patterns which might be extended as generalizations to other cases, rather than in presenting a narrative of particular events. The latter, of course, is inevitable and necessary in a study of this kind, but for Palestinian history such a narrative has been done well and often enough to make another complete re-telling redundant. Rather, I shall re-work the historical material in order to abstract certain socio-cultural patterns; cutting into the narrative ground from a slightly different angle, and in such a way as to expose the relevant layers of events and relationships. The perspective from which I view this material is largely that of social anthropology, and the assumptions from which I am working will shortly be described in detail.

A word of clarification first: Palestinian political culture is a highly complex one, even by the standards of a region where such phenomena are notably defiant of neat analyses. Through time, in the face of British imperialism, Zionist settlement and finally expulsion from homeland, many elements have made up the ideological weave of the Palestinian movement: ethnicity, Arabism, Christianity, Marxism, anti-imperialism, Islam, and so forth. All have been important, but as with most social movements, none may be said to be the quintessential characteristic down to which it can be reduced.

Such a reductionism, then, was definitely not implied in my decision to focus on the role of Islam in Palestinian nationalism. The choice was made because this ideational element provides an especially illuminating vehicle for the examination of theoretical matters in the study of social movements and political culture. The focus was not dictated by a misguided notion that Palestinian

political culture can best be understood in terms of Islam or any other single element. Palestinian nationalism is doggedly non-sectarian in its aims. None-the-less, the politics of ideology - of social meaning - has taken its vocabulary from many modes of discourse, including Islam, and the scrutiny of that particular symbolic form happens to be suited to the enquiry I have in mind.

II

At this juncture it is necessary to outline the assumptions about symbolic and social systems which ground my interests and give them direction. The main points will be discussed under the headings that follow.

Ideologies are symbolic frameworks through which social reality is constructed, maintained, and manipulated

The human construction of social reality is that which marks the uniqueness of the species. The key factors in this process are symbols: words, objects, gestures and events which embody shared meaning and whose use implies and evokes those meanings.[1] Through shared symbols we create a version of social reality - the representational nature of symbols allows us to fix or freeze an experience: to categorize it, externalize it, and by so doing act toward it and communicate it to others.

Symbols are created and recreated in interaction with others. They are learned with others in the ongoing process of social intercourse and certain symbols come to be dominant or are ignored depending on their relevance to the primary social groups in which we act. Therefore the modes of symbolic construction dominant in our primary social groups - class, ethnicity, caste - dominate in our individual lives. Knowledge, a particular and partial interpretation of the world, thus has social locales, and an ideology may accordingly be defined as that version of social reality characteristic of those occupying a given social locale. It is the language of group perception and purpose.

Ideologies with their normative ideas which set ideal guides and expectations for human action are rarely, however, completely or consistently adhered to by individuals. Though most who share an ideology would agree on general normative orientations ('thou shalt not steal'), the range of behavior felt to be in accordance with or in contravention of that normative orientation varies a great deal ('income tax fraud isn't theft'). This lack of consistency between norms and act often pushes the observer to the extreme of ignoring the study of norms. This is an unwarranted and misguided position, for although there is a gap between ideal and action, the norm is never irrel-

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[1]This section on the symbolic dimensions of ideology owes its main thrust to Geertz (1964), Ideology as a Cultural System.

elevant. This is because individuals do not act so much in accordance with norms as they do with reference to them; they are not hard and fast rules, but behavioral signposts with regard to which one gauges the actions of oneself and others. It is impossible, therefore, for the observer to comprehend even a direct contravention of norms without reference to that which is being flaunted: even a rebellion takes its definition from the normative status quo.

Ideologies can and do change constantly. This is because they are not organic systems; their constituent symbols do not share such close functional relationships that a change in one aspect leads inevitably to changes in the whole system. This sort of semantic domino theory was characteristic of an earlier stage of the study of symbol systems (mainly the early functionalists), but it is becoming increasingly obvious as research proceeds that ideologies can easily change in several domains while still preserving an overall illusion of order and internal coherency. This process lies at the heart of ideological change and manipulation, and as this is a crucial area for the present study, some consideration of it is needed.

The malleability of ideologies is due for the most part to the multivocal nature of their constituent symbols. Nowhere has this idea been so thoroughly explored as in the work of Victor Turner, and it will be obvious how much this section owes to his work.[2] Turner points out in his study of ritual that dominant, powerful symbols carry a heavy semantic load; they are "multivocal" or "polyvalent" meaning that they do not represent only a single phenomenon, but a constellation of phenomena. Most of the significata have some logical relationship to one another, but they can also be related (as in Turner's case of the Ndembu spirit Kavula) merely by their fact of being represented by a common symbolic form. Dominant symbols thus consist of an aureole of connotations around a core meaning. In a given context, only certain connotations are totally relevant; none the less the whole semantic chord is heard when the tonic note is struck.

This multivocality gives symbolic systems a flexibility rather like that of rubber sheeting, to borrow an image from Leach. The spread of connotations means that symbolic forms can be stretched to cover a variety of situations, and pulled in an assortment of directions, yet still maintain recognizable boundaries and limitations. As a result they can be manipulated to provide conceptual continuity through time. But lest I be accused of an unintended idealism, I hasten to say that this stretching, pulling and so forth is done by humans in definable social positions, which leads to my next point.

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[2]Of Turner's work, the most important for this section are his essay, Symbols in African Ritual (1977) and his book, 'Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure' (1969).

Ruling classes dominate the ideological orientation of a given social formation

Marx's comment that the 'class which has the means of production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production' hardly needs explication here. Hegemonic groups come to have control over the flow of information in a society, and whether self-consciously or not (probably both) their social position enables them to edit the world view of most of those around them.

My interest in this regard is in the relationship between a changing hegemony and the ideological system which exists in a social formation. What happens to a society's dominant ideology when the entrenched economic and political power relations of that society are called into question? This, of course, is a puzzle that has occupied many a sociological and historical mind, and I do not presume to answer it all here. One thing, however, seems certain, and that is that ideological changes are usually changes of emphasis and connotation in the system of dominant symbols - more a question of conceptual retooling than one of sea change. This appears to be true even in major revolutionary movements. Mao Tse-Tung greatly altered the social order of China, but such post-revolutionary phenomena as rule by gerontocracy and a state presided over by an oracular autocrat smack of the Confucianism which the Cultural Revolution so energetically attempted to exorcise.

The key process in this change in ideological configuration is, I believe, the following. Hegemonic groups articulate and further their interests by emphasizing a range of connotations available in the dominant symbols of their culture. These connotations become the presiding ones associated with the symbolic complex and with the economic and political relations which it expresses. As the domination of the ruling group begins to weaken and the socio-economic relations which bolster that hegemony begin to change, so too does the ideological profile of the society. Some connotations of dominant symbols become less prominent, and their range of interpretation increases, due to the weakening of the social relations which they expressed and in which they were embedded. This freeing of the connotational play of key symbols allows them to be reworked and adapted into ideological frameworks more appropriate to changing circumstances. As we shall see in the conclusions to this essay, this process is important for an understanding of social movements.

An example of this loosening of connotative range might be helpful here. Islamic symbols are, in the Ḥaḍramawt, among the most conspicuous of dominant symbols, as they are in the rest of the Middle East. Bujra's study of the changing politics of stratification in a Ḥaḍrami town (1971) provides us with information that allows an analysis of how these religious symbols were manipulated.

The political elite of the town, Sadah, were descendants of the

Prophet who emphasized their lineage to the Prophet and his family and encouraged a widespread belief in the sanctity of such kinship in order to legitimate their position as the wealthy and powerful stratum in local society. They argued that their sanctity entitled them to hereditary rights to respect and positions of office. The rest of the society were their political and economic clients.

As a result of emigration on a broad scale, mainly to Indonesia, many Ḥaḍramis were able to free themselves of their client status to the Sadah, and by so doing, eroded the power of the latter. This led to a questioning of the Sadah use of Islam. The Irshadi reform movement began in Indonesia among Ḥaḍrami migrants who argued that Islam was indeed the source of norms and morals, but that the Sadah had corrupted it. The Irshadi emphasized a different set of Islamic connotations - egalitarianism, and a rejection of superstition (which is how they defined the Sadah claim to inherited sanctity). It charged the Sadah with sanctioning inequality through religion, and alleged that they were as a result actually working against the true spirit of Islam. The Irshadi movement was the forerunner of a general anti-Sadah trend which spread through the Ḥaḍramawt.

Here a dominant constellation of symbols - Islam - is used by a hegemonic class to legitimate its position through emphasizing certain elements of the Islamic 'connotational fan'. As this hegemony eroded, other elements in this same fan were emphasized and eventually used to attack the old elite. In this way a general ideological orientation based on religion was preserved, but new social interests were expressed within it. We can see, then, that ideological change often proceeds through change in social relations which frees the associations and connotations of major symbols to be reinterpreted and reapplied.

The relationship between an ideology and the economic and power structures in which it is situated is a dialectical one

Although ideologies serve to carry social relations and define them, the symbolic system of a social formation cannot be reduced to those relations or be viewed simply as a reflex or epiphenomenon of them. The relationship between these levels is a dialectical one, that is, they are interconnected, mutually defining and mutually transforming.[3]

Of the factors involved in this interaction, the economic one is 'in the last instance' the determinative one. I take this phrase of Marx to mean that economic structures are prior to all others in so far as they set the final terms for any existence at all. This however, is not a reductionist position for within these ultimate parameters of life take place the infinite permutations

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[3]Recent writers whose work has helped form these views are Henri Lefebvre, 'The Sociology of Marx' (1969); Nigel Harris, 'Beliefs in Society' (1968) and Maxime Rodinson in his conclusion to 'Islam and Capitalism' (1974).

of social interaction which constitute history. Bricks and mortar are causally necessary for a piece of architecture, but the final form can be neither deduced nor predicted from the materials of its construction.

Moreover, in the interconnected course of this dialectic, it is clear that ideologies can at times act back upon and transform the economic base of a social formation. As Lucien Goldmann remarked in an essay on consciousness, every form of the division of labor requires a means of categorizing beings and things in order to act toward them in a shared and understood manner (1970, p. 122). If this shared understanding of 'beings and things' changes, then so too may the division of labor. Marxism itself is the most obvious example of this.

Power relations are also a part of this dynamic interaction. In this regard, I am concerned with opposing the 'debunking' school of ideological analysis, which sees politics solely in terms of leaders, and ideologies merely as their device for conning the yokels. That we yokels are often conned is indisputable, but this observation is itself insufficient as an analysis of specific beliefs in a political culture. It begs the questions of which beliefs mobilize, sway, outrage - or con - particular people and of what the relationship is between those beliefs and a society's members, leaders and productive forces.

Both leaders and audience ('followers' is too often misleading in describing those ruled) are situated in a historically developed system of beliefs about who should hold power, why, when they can be challenged and how, what are the goals of the polity, and so on. These are themselves related to the major value orientations of the culture, and together they make up an ideology. This symbolic system is the vocabulary for the interaction between those who lead and those who are led, and the overall patterns which emerge from this interaction are what we call a political culture.

In this interaction, those in power and those not each constantly define and redefine the nature of the other. A leader is a 'leader' to the extent to which he works within, or makes a pretense of working within, the ideology he shares with his audience, and he is a 'tyrant' to the extent to which he contradicts it. Being in a better position than most to manipulate cultural symbols, however, he can mold and recast, though rarely alter completely, the normative expectations with reference to which he acts and is judged by his audience. Thus the assumption that those in power are the sole generators of ideologies (and concomitantly that the latter can be analysed simply as part of the machinations of politicos) is a misleading one, as is the opposite view that the powerful submit to and act consistently with regard to ideologies. An ideology is not the purview of one group or another, and neither, *pace* Durkheim, does it have a life of its own; it is negotiated through time in the interplay of forces and actors existent in a social formation.

III

I view ideology, then, as a flexible symbolic complex which embodies a range of meanings and constitutes a society's, or a sector of a society's, interpretation of itself and others in a given historical context. There is, however, one final and crucial point to make in this regard. Following Douglas (1970), I would argue that there are regular patterns of co-occurrence of particular *types* of social structures and particular *styles* of symbolic expression. That is, the structure of social relations (whether egalitarian, stratified, kin-based, and so on) and the structure of dominant symbolic complexes (whether ritualized, highly defined, open-ended, and so on) in any one case exhibit a logical 'fit', and the same logic of co-occurrence will be seen to prevail when similar cases are compared. Certain symbolic styles, then, are appropriate for certain social structures.

In the conclusions to this study, I will argue that this observation on the fit of ideological and social structures is important for an understanding of the ideologies around which popular social movements tend to crystallize. This provides a new perspective on the genesis and trajectory of such movements. I believe this study of Islam in Palestinian nationalism is a useful initial illustration of this hypothesis, the details of which are best left until the case at hand has been presented.

This study requires a perspective on both the symbolic system of Islam in the Palestinian context and the conditions of power and economics which provided its base. I have used a variety of historical and sociological materials. Those used to describe the economic and power base and its changes have been drawn from primary and secondary sources in English and Arabic. Where conflicting interpretations exist, I have made an effort to depend on primary sources.

The study of Islamic symbolic complexes in each of the three periods discussed is grounded in primary materials of different kinds. To describe these a brief theoretical word is called for. Turner (1969) has argued that a holistic approach to cultural symbols requires attention to three semantic levels: exegetical, operational, and positional. The exegetical level is that consisting of the actor's understanding of a symbol, elicited in the course of fieldwork by the observer. The operational level is that whose meanings are derived by observing who uses a symbol, how, and in what contexts. The positional aspect is the semantic dimension derived from the relationship and juxtaposition of one symbol to another.

A concern with these three levels of meaning has led me to use various sources of data. The exegetical dimension was provided by informants' interpretations of ideological categories during a wider studying of Palestinian political culture conducted among Palestinian exiles in Kuwait. The operational level was probed through the use of a broad range of written texts - speeches, proclamations, histories - noting the historical

contexts, and the individuals and groups involved. The positional dimension was investigated through an examination of the semantic fields of a symbol, analysing what other symbols appear with it and in what contexts, and thereby deriving implicit meanings generated by the proximity of one category to another. A detailed discussion of this latter technique will appear in chapter three.

The plan of the book is straightforward. I have divided the historical narrative into three phases, each demarcated by a watershed in the development of Palestinian nationalism, and each marked by the emergence of some ideological role for Islam. The first period concerns the role of the landowning 'notable' class, the *aʿyān*, and their use of Islam in the early phases of the movement beginning with the end of World War I and continuing up to 1929. The second period deals with the populist revolt of the 1930s and the forms assumed by Islam during its course. The third part deals with the revived nationalist movement, from 1965 onward, and the contemporary manifestations of Islam in Palestinian political culture. This last chapter begins with a preface on Palestinian alienation, for this is the primary fact of Palestinian existence since 1948, and no analysis of any modern Palestinian ideological form can be made without taking this into account.

Again, and finally, I am interested here in conveying some sense of the mutual interplay of forces: political, personal, ideological, economic, and so on. This is obviously not an easily executed plan, for the nature of analysis itself rarely allows one to say convincingly, 'let's look at these things separately, but they are really a unity'; to present details of any phenomenon is to make it seem discrete and independent from its matrix, making all the rest appear to be 'background'. In the end, I suppose this is as inevitable in social science writing as labelling is in language: all one can do is issue a disclaimer and proceed.

1 ISLAM AND THE POLITICS OF NOTABLES

I

This chapter will take as its subject the role of Islam in the ideology and politics of Mandatory Palestine's ruling class, the notables or *aʿyān*.[1] This class came to power in the nineteenth century and remained in a dominant position until the 1930s; here, however, I will only deal with events up until 1929, the year of the Wailing Wall rebellion. The reason for this will become clear in the chapter which follows, in which will be described the later changes in the position of the *aʿyān*.

The Arabic term *aʿyān* literally means 'notables', and has come to refer to an urban-based class of landlords. In the predominantly peasant agricultural economy of Syria and Palestine, this meant that they dominated the class structure of the society. The notables' power, however, extended much further than the owning of land. They were the elite in all senses: they were faction leaders, educated spokesmen, brokers between central authority and the masses, often agents for foreign powers, and religious functionaries. This latter, of course, is of particular interest here, for in the first decade of British rule in Palestine, the politics of class were inseparably tied to the politics of religion.

In order to understand the hegemony of the *aʿyān*, it is necessary to relate how it was they became the elite of Palestine. This requires an overview of the relevant history of the region.

II

Palestine was conquered by the Arab armies in the name of Islam in 636, when the Caliph ʿUmar personally accepted the surrender of Jerusalem from the Greek Patriarch. The city and its environs had already acquired a sacred place in the doctrines of Islam as the site of the activities of so many of the Jewish and Christian prophets. Its sanctity was such that the Prophet Muhammad had given it only slightly less merit as a pilgrimage point than the

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[1]The debt owed to several recent historians of this period, notably Al-Kayyālī, Lesch and Porath, is evident in this chapter. I have greatly benefited from discussion with Ann M. Lesch on the events described here and I am very grateful for her time and comments. Clearly none of the faults are hers.

Hijāz cities of Mecca and Medina. Jerusalem's holy precinct, the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, with the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Al-Aqṣā, was revered as the locale of the Prophet's ascension to Heaven, and his night journey in the company of the Angel Gabriel. Its importance in folk eschatology, which held the city as the seat of the Day of Judgment, was equally great.

With Jerusalem as its social, religious and political pivot, the land as a whole was buffeted by the major currents of change which swept across it from different directions: rule by the Ummayyads, ᶜAbbasids, Fatimids, and so on. 'Palestine' as a concept, however, had only sporadic administrative or cultural currency. The politico-cultural boundaries of the land were non-existent in their twentieth-century form, and the identification of the people was with the greater whole of Syria.

European expansion into Syria, beginning at the end of the eleventh century, brought a quickening of the pace of change, and the turbulence between Europe and the Islamic East during the Crusades heightened awareness on both sides of the religious and political centrality of Palestine. This period also bore witness to the political fragmentation that would proceed to characterize the history of Greater Syria through to the present day. It was due to this fragmentation that the Crusades were able to make such advances as they did. Political disunity is one of the major themes of this chapter, and its historical depths demand investigation.

Fragmentation of power in Syria was to all effects an institution under the Saljuqs, the Turkic pastoralists whose empire covered the Middle East from the Mediterranean to the Oxus in the eleventh century. Saljuq garrisons were largely independent of their nominal lords (Hodgson, 1974, p. 260), and the various local rulers of Saljuq descent were mired in endemic internecine warfare. This strife took its most extreme form in Syria where each large town was the venue of a single *amīr* who closely guarded his territory from encroachment by other local rulers.

Disunity was both the key to, and exacerbated by, the success of the early Crusaders. This mass of European soldiery, driven by a variety of motives, appeared in Syria ostensibly at the behest of the waning powers of Christian Byzantium. Saljuq *amīrs* found it impossible to withstand the initial Crusading momentum simply because they could not unite, with the immediate upshot being the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 and the slaughter of its citizens.

The tide of political chaos was stemmed for a time by the *Amīr* Zangī and his son Nūr al-Dīn, who managed to unite some of the Syrian factions and recapture several Crusader positions. They were succeeded by the Kurd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin) who built on the Zangid successes and retook Jerusalem in 1187.

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's dynasty was short-lived. It fell to its own corps of slave soldiers, *mamlūks*, who realized that the control of Egypt and Syria was effectively in their hands and did away with the Ayyūbid ruler. In doing so, however, they did away with

the only unifying authority in the region. Once in power, the *mamlūk* leaders fell to squabbling among themselves on a spectacular scale; none the less, their rule continued for the next three centuries.

The Ottoman Turks were fated to preside over the longest period of imperial control in the history of the region. Their extensive power, however, was nominal in many areas, with open rebellion and internal feuding as constant features.

The Ottoman forces crushed *mamlūk* power in Syria in 1516. Ottoman administration was put into effect: governors were assigned and the taxes collected by the practice of 'farming' their collection to individuals who made a profit on the enterprise (Poliak, 1939). This institution would be a key one in the rise of the urban *aᶜyān* class, to whose social milieu we shall turn now.

III

Palestinian society in the Ottoman period was at least as fragmented and turbulent as it had been at previous times. The various elements which made up this mix can be grasped by taking each group of participants in turn and examining their roles in the society.

Peasants and Bedouin

The peasantry, the *fallāḥīn*, formed the largest single bloc of stable population in Palestine. Their livelihood was far from secure, and their enemies, both human and natural, were many.

Peasant social organization centered on the village, which formed a cohesive social unit, and on the *ḥamūlah*, a patrilineage several of which composed a village. Cohen has noted (1965, p. 3) that the description of a *ḥamūlah* as a corporate lineage or clan can be misleading, but for the purposes of this essay, I will let the definition stand. The corporate nature of the *ḥamūlah* was its most important feature; blood-feud was regulated through the *ḥamūlah*, with its members sharing responsibility for acts committed by their kin, and for carrying out acts of vengeance or negotiating payments of the *dīyah*, payment demanded by spilled blood. Land tenure was regulated by *ḥamūlah* membership, for private ownership of land was not common. Under a system of redistribution known as *mushāᶜ*, each village apportioned the available land to *ḥamūlah* elders on an annual or semi-annual basis. This was then distributed among the extended families that made up the patrilineage. Such a system gave all kin fair access to good land and bad.

The village was a recognized socio-political unit, and was thought of as such by its residents, and used as an administrative unit by the Ottoman government. The most important administrative task in which the village participated was tax collection. Each *ḥamūlah* collected taxes from its members, and the village

as a whole was collectively responsible for its tax contribution to the government. The tax-farming system made the village especially responsible to its individual tax-farmer, and the villagers as a result came to see their interests arrayed against those of the government and their agent.

Life was very precarious for the peasantry. Arable land was scarce, and drought, famine, flashfloods and malaria took a heavy toll of the population. The most serious threat to life and the greatest contributor to instability came in the form of the predatory Bedouin.

The nomads were the true rulers of the Syrian hinterland. Their roving way of life and their often desperate struggle to survive made them extremely difficult to contain or control, and the Ottoman government often found it easier to recognize a powerful *shaykh* and his followers as the powers in a given region than to attempt their complete subjugation.

The age-old conflict between the nomad and the peasant was found in an extreme form in Ottoman Palestine. The village was practically defenseless against the constant Bedouin raids. The nomads had acquired firearms as early as the mid-sixteenth century (Sharon, 1975, p. 19) and they used them to good effect, extracting what they could in goods and protection money from the villagers, and fending off punitive expeditions from the government.

Bedouin raids impoverished the peasantry. They paid protection money to nomad *shaykhs* as late as the early twentieth century (ibid.; p. 15) and to minimize the frequency of raids, villages often moved to less fertile land simply because it was less accessible to attack. The relationship between nomad and peasant was made even more difficult by the fact that the Ottoman Porte attempted to quell disturbances by making nomad leaders into Ottoman officials and granting them tax-farming privileges over villages in certain regions. This apparently reached its worst point in the eighteenth century when the *shaykhs* became so powerful that they not only collected the taxes, but decided how much the contribution was to be (Abir, 1975, p. 286). The peasants were thus not only robbed by the nomads, but were taxed on what they managed to retain by Bedouin leaders acting in the name of the Sultan.

Factionalism and Religious Sectarianism

Cutting across and further complicating the tensions between nomad and peasant were cleavages based on faction and religious sectarianism. These rifts could easily serve to heighten hostility between nomadic groups and villagers, but could set off, with equal facility, village against village or Bedouin tribe against tribe.

The incessant strife between the factions of Qays and Yaman spread all over the Arab world, and this tension was particularly prevalent in Syria. Briefly, the Qays and Yaman factions have their roots in pre-Islamic tribal rivalries between northerners

(Qaysis) and southerners (Yamanis). This factionalism was so pervasive that when Islam spread with the Arab armies, these affiliations spread with them, and peoples as far afield as Iran were designated to one or the other faction (Patai, 1969, p. 185).

Syria, as mentioned, was an area which suffered particularly from this ancient rivalry. Irreconcilable differences based on these ties existed between many different social groups. The cleavages extended into the towns and cities and to the religious elite. The rivalry between two of the most powerful *aʿyān* families of Palestine, the Ḥusaynīs and the Khālidīs, had a strong element derived from the fact that the former were Yamanis and the latter Qaysis (Abir, 1975, p. 293).

Religious sectarianism, however, was even more powerful an agent of fragmentation in Syria. This cannot be stressed too strongly; by the mid-nineteenth century, religious strife, particularly between the Druze and the Maronite Christians, had reached such a pitch that some of the worst atrocities in recent Middle Eastern history were perpetrated in the name of religious differences. Suffice it to say that the relations between all sects were strained: Druze, Sunni, Shīʿah, Christian, Nusayrī, and so on. The Ottoman administration, as always, was unable to prevent such tensions, and indeed, they continue to present critical dangers to the region today.

Foreign Influence

Foreign powers added the last touch of confusion to the maze of Syrian power relations, and they were, in fact, directly responsible for many of the tensions in the area. The powers had claimed, and received in the capitulations, freedom of trade, travel and protection within the Empire; European agents were almost totally above Ottoman law, even when the crime was murder. By the nineteenth century, the powers and their representatives had such influence that they were able to extend direct protection to particular ethnic or religious groups in the Empire. Notables who rendered services to the foreigners could be protected, and citizens of the Empire themselves were made consuls (Hourani, 1968, p. 65). Whole sectors of the population, such as the Maronite Christians, became clients of a European states, and Ottoman policy in their regard came to be dictated by the patron power.

The European states and their consuls therefore had the ability to change the relations between groups, and further, to mediate between the Ottoman central government and rebellious citizens. In so doing, however, they often gave power to local strongmen, and the new status to which their client groups climbed raised resentments and animosities to deadly levels.

Ottoman Syria was a land of political anarchy. Tribalism, rivalries between economic groups, ancient feuds and factions, foreign influence and interference, and religious sectarianism all made it into a political no-man's-land. It was in this context that the urban *aʿyān* became the masters of Palestine, and the

details of that rise to power are the subject of the next section.

IV

Syria was not the only chaotic Arab area of the Empire: by the early nineteenth century, Egypt had thrown off the *mamlūks* and proffered only nominal fealty to the Sultan, and the Arabian Peninsula was torn by the followers of Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb. These and other struggles made it clear that reform was necessary if the Empire was to survive. This led to the period known as the Tanzimat, the age of Ottoman reform and reorganization.

The Tanzimat was directly responsible for the emergence of the urban notables as a ruling class in Ottoman Palestine. The Porte, in seeking to quell the troubles and establish order, created the conditions for an indigenous set of rulers to appear. The most important aspects of this process center on the reform of the tax-farming system, land reform laws, and the creation of local administrative councils.

The change in the tax-farming system was a direct result of the political fragmentation described earlier. In an attempt to erode the power of the tax-farmers, who were Bedouin or village *shaykhs* for the most part, the Ottoman administration abolished the practice of tax-farming altogether in 1839. They found, however, that their own collection methods were inadequate, and so shortly thereafter, the institution was revived, with the exception that the privileges of tax-farming were to be auctioned to the highest bidder (Porath, 1974, p. 9).

The urban notables were in a position, due to their wealth and influence, to outbid the *shaykhs* whose hereditary privilege the farming of taxes had been. This development allowed the *aᶜyān* to exert their will over the peasantry; it also, however, earned them the enmity of the rural *shaykhs*, whose status plunged.

The Land Reform Law of 1858 was intended as a means of allowing peasants to register their land as private property, and by so doing to encourage more productive practices. The *aᶜyān*, however, managed to register much of the land in their own names. This came about not merely because of the land-greed of the elite, but because the peasants themselves were suspicious of any apparent benison bestowed upon them by the Turks (Badrān, 1972, pp. 123-6 passim).

It is unlikely that either the acquisition of tax-farming rights or the appropriation of land would have been possible without the existence of the Ottoman administrative councils, on which the *aᶜyān* sat. The councils were part of the Tanzimat reforms and were set up to reduce corruption and local ties among Ottoman officials by rotating them regularly while local notables served as advisers and provided the administrative continuity through their membership in the councils.

The *aʿyān* used the councils for their own ends. As the literate sector of the population, and as the sole form of continuity in government, the notables were able to parlay the reforms of the Tanzimat into near-total control for themselves. In the end, this Ottoman attempt to rejuvenate the Empire resulted in the creation of yet another of its worst enemies - a powerful local elite.

Who made up this stratum of Palestinian society? By and large, the notables were a homogeneous group. The 'big families' such as the Ḥusaynīs, Khālidīs, or Dajjānīs were land-owning, urban-based Muslims. Their power lay in the ability to control factions made up of their clients - in villages they owned, among their debtors, those to whom they distributed political favors. Their position was legitimated, strengthened and given international import by the religious offices they occupied and over which there was bitter rivalry. This is a topic which deserves some elucidation.

The *aʿyān* had religious influence which was felt at different levels in the social structure. The religious functionaries from the notable class had great power among the peasantry, for whom they represented, in fact, the most legitimate and comprehensible of the society's authority-holders, unlike secular politicians or theorists. The *ʿulamāʾ* were able to serve as middlemen, as political and cultural brokers, between the masses and the central government. They derived a great deal of their prestige from their role as organizers and patrons of the major religious festivals which were the high points of the peasants' religious calendar in Palestine. The festival of Nabī Mūsā, the Prophet Moses, was the most important of these, a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet Moses which drew crowds from all parts of the country. The Ḥusaynī family had been given the patronage of Nabī Mūsā by the Ottomans, and it was later used in the Mandate period as an emotive backdrop for nationalist demonstrations.

At a more formal level, the *aʿyān*'s control of major religious offices gave them prestige even outside of Palestine. As guardians of the numerous holy sites of Palestine, and trustees of one of Islam's most sacred precincts, they were in a position to wield influence not only among the Muslims of Palestine, but in the Islamic world as a whole. As we shall see, this breadth of spiritual power became an important aspect of the *aʿyān* strategy in dealing with both British and Zionist aliens.

Thus, the Palestinian *aʿyān* came to dominate the class and power hierarchy of the country in the late Ottoman period, using the endemic chaos and fragmentation which threatened the Empire as a springboard for their own advancement. In this process, the prestige and power attached to religious office was used to good effect: the politics of *aʿyān* and *ʿulamāʾ* were one and the same, just as were their constituent members. The Ottoman defeat in World War I was to change the nature of the power game. The stakes were higher and the adversaries different, but through it all the politics of religion would grow in importance.

V

The British Mandate over Palestine became a reality in 1922, and the formal installation of a British High Commissioner in September of that year was a signal to the *aʿyān* that a change of tactics was needed if they were to maintain their dominance over the Palestinian Arabs and prevent the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

Previous post-war attempts at preventing either British or Zionist intrusion had centered on the notion of Palestine becoming part of the Kingdom of Syria, that ill-fated monarchy which was to have been part of the Arabs' prize for coming into the war on the side of the British and against their Turkish overlords. The kingdom was headed by the *Amīr* Fayṣal, son of the Sharif of Mecca who had been the titular head of the Arab Revolt during the war. The Palestinian notables believed that becoming part of the kingdom of Syria would allow them to maintain their position and perhaps to augment it. This would be a better alternative in the post-Ottoman world than the British Mandate and its policy, voiced in the declaration of Sir Arthur Balfour, of assisting in the creation of a Jewish National Home.

The notables' hopes were quashed with Fayṣal's expulsion from Syria by the French in 1920, although the concept of a Palestine embedded in a Greater Syria lingered for many years, but did so with progressively fainter enthusiasm. The time had thus come to retrench and fight a battle both inside Palestine and on an international level. In this particular period, and given the cultural and political resources of this particular ruling class, the most effective weapon at both levels was Islam.

That this was the case is clear: for no other single ideological idiom could speak to the outside world's vast Muslim population, for whom the prospect of Jerusalem under non-Muslim control was anathema. No other single idiom held so much potential threat for the British, who feared a backlash among their Muslim colonies. No other idiom was as comprehensible to the Palestinian masses, among whom the concept of a secular nationalism was foreign. And none other was so totally and legitimately monopolized by the *aʿyān*.

The years with which we are concerned here, from 1922 until 1929, saw a great deal of political activity aimed against the British and Zionists and couched in terms of Islam. The primary actors on the scene were the Supreme Muslim Council and its President, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī. The council and its president were by far the most powerful political agents among the Palestinian Arabs, and came to dominate (though against an opposition, however inchoate) their political fortunes regardless of individual religious affiliation.

Amīn al-Ḥusaynī was born into an old and renowned family; indeed, it can be argued that the Ḥusaynīs were the most important single family in the region. The family laid claim to a strong Sharīfian lineage, one with clear genealogical links to the line

of the Prophet (Porath, 1974, p. 184). From the seventeenth century on, the Ḥusaynī family had held the most powerful of religious offices in Palestine, that of Mufti of Jerusalem, the most authoritative source of opinion on Islamic law in the area (Khadduri, 1973, p. 69). The Ḥusaynīs' hold on local politics was tightened by their acquisition of the office of *Naqīb al-Ashrāf*, in which resided the responsibility for the affairs of those descended from the Prophet. These were the two highest positions in the Ottoman administration to which local notables had access.

Amīn al-Ḥusaynī studied at Al-Azhar in Cairo where he received his formal training as a Muslim jurisconsult. He was also a protégé of the conservative Islamic reformer, Rashīd Riḍā (Nuwayhiḍ, 1974, p. 5) and the effects of the ideas gleaned from contact with Riḍā are obvious in Ḥusaynī's later religious and political positions. Amīn al-Ḥusaynī returned to Jerusalem in 1917, and became active in post-war protests against the impending British Mandate and its stated Zionist sympathies. For his part in the uprising of April 1920 against the British, Ḥusaynī was sentenced in absentia to ten years in prison. He was pardoned, however, in 1921 (Khadduri, 1973, p. 70).

In 1921, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī was made Mufti of Jerusalem. Following Ottoman practice, the British had chosen the Mufti from among three candidates whose names were put forward by the Jerusalem *ᶜulamā'*. The choice of Ḥusaynī was largely a matter of political expediency, a matter of distributing offices and their powers among the competing *aᶜyān* families in order to equalize, and hopefully neutralize, their influence.

In 1922, Ḥusaynī was elected President of the Supreme Muslim Council. This event was to be crucial for the political life of Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, for the council was the most important political institution for Palestinian Arabs in this period, and was the focus of elite politics. Its genesis and nature therefore merit particular attention.

The council was conceived of by the British as an institutional mechanism for handling Muslim religious affairs which naturally they felt were out of their jurisdiction, and in any case were potentially explosive enough to warrant a policy of non-interference. The council had control of a very broad spectrum of affairs: controlling large sums of money, legal matters, appointing legal and religious officals, and so forth. Its wealth derived from its complete jurisdiction over *waqf* funds in Palestine: those sums coming from endowments made by pious individuals. This brought in approximately £50,000 a year, and helped to finance the activities of the council.

The Supreme Muslim Council acted, in a very real sense, as the ideological clearing-house of the Palestinian Muslims. It controlled the domain of Islamic law by having the head Mufti as its president, whose role it was to pass judgment on the legitimate application of the law. The council also controlled the recruitment and dismissal of all legal functionaries from judges

to marriage registrars. It controlled by these means the legal institutions of Islam in Palestine. Further, the council had complete power over all mosque personnel in the country. This function cannot be overemphasized for the mosque and its personnel served as the interpreters of ongoing events, and were therefore a major ideological lens through which the largely illiterate population, especially the peasantry, comprehended the world. The Friday sermon, the *khuṭbah*, often played the role of not only interpreting events in the country but making explicit the religious duties of the populace with regard to those happenings. This was a powerful tool in the hands of a traditional elite, and provided a ready means of mobilizing people, as it has done throughout Islamic history. The council also endowed and maintained schools and associations through which it had a formative effect on Muslim youth.

The council, then, was controlled by the traditional elite, and through the medium of Islam managed to affect profoundly the lives of Palestinian Muslims, and through factional politics the lives of non-Muslims as well. Although not the only political institution dominated by the *aʿyān*, it was far and away the most important. Its power was such that the British came to regret its existence; Sir Henry Luke, Chief Secretary of the government, regarded the scope and influence of the council to be of such a scale as to constitute a virtual abdication of some of the Mandate government's functions (Porath, 1974, p. 198).

VI

Aʿyān control of religious institutions and the political power which came with such control, was not a new phenomenon in Palestinian, or indeed Arab, politics. Neither was the tremendous expansion of factional politics that was triggered by the creation of the Supreme Muslim Council and the domination of it by a scion of one particular elite family. The political fragmentation discussed earlier was characteristic of Syrian and Palestinian society; but the extreme factionalism which took form in the 1920s was unusual even for this region. This is a subject which is complex and much of it lies outside of the scope of this study, but a brief discussion of it is necessary, for factional infighting was the order of the day during this decade, and was pursued to the detriment of more effective measures and ones which would have reflected more of a concern with the society as a whole.

The primary split existed between the Ḥusaynī family and the Nashāshībīs, and due to the Ḥusaynī control of the Supreme Muslim Council, soon developed into a country-wide cleavage between the *majlisīyah* and the *muʿāriḍah*, those of the Husaynī Supreme Council faction, and all those opposed to them.

The factions were not new - there had always been political camps made up of the great families and all those in town and

country allied to them by ties of patronage. The Ḥusaynī-Nashāshībī split widened quickly with the end of the war. Previously, the main rivals to the Ḥusaynī clan had been the Khālidīs, and among them they shared the important religious offices of Palestine. With the arrival of the British, the main axis of conflict shifted to the Ḥusaynī-Nashāshībī tension. The cause of this shift and the fast growth of factionalism which resulted came about through the removal by the British of Mūsā Kāẓim al-Ḥusaynī as Mayor of Jerusalem in 1920 as a consequence of the latter's participation in that year's riots against Jewish settlers and the British authorities (Lesch, 1979, p. 89). He was replaced by Rāghib al-Nashāshībī whose moderate stance toward the British came to contrast sharply with the position of the Ḥusaynīs.

The creation of the Supreme Muslim Council sharpened the conflict between the two factions, for it was clear that whoever dominated that institution would inevitably gain the upper hand in elite politics. The competition for presidency of the council was fierce, but the British finally chose Amīn al-Ḥusaynī as a means of balancing the scales of influence between a Nashāshībī mayor and a Supreme Muslim Council headed by a Ḥusaynī mufti.

From this point on, the conflict heightened and broadened; the tactics used in the factional dispute increased in intensity throughout the 1920s and by the middle of the 1930s were at a literally murderous pitch, as we shall see in the next chapter. The conflict also became broader, with each side using all the ties of kin, sect, class and patronage to win over individuals and groups. By the end of the 1920s most of the country fell into one camp or the other.

The decade was for the most part a quiet one, at least in terms of violent outbreaks, simply because the factions were engaged in fighting one another. Effective political action against the British and the Jewish immigrants in this period was dangerous for the factions, because they might well have forced the Mandate administration to take counter-measures which would result in a loss of advantage on the part of one side or the other.

The domination of the Supreme Muslim Council by the Ḥusaynī faction was complete, although the Nashāshībīs attempted to break its powerful monopoly on the politics of religion. In several cases, religious organizations were formed to counter the council, but none were ultimately effective. The Nashāshībīs did come to dominate a sizable opposition to the councilites. The extent of this factional cleavage and its detrimental effects on Palestinian politics during the Mandate cannot be exaggerated. Its extent, however, is such that a detailed treatment of the subject is impossible outside of a separate and specialized study. Suffice it to say that a very considerable amount of this political chaos was the product of a struggle between factions over Islam and its institutions as key factors in the politics of the *aʿyān*.

VII

At this juncture, it is appropriate to take a detailed look at the different forms assumed by the politics of Islam in this period. The main actor on the scene is, of course, the Supreme Muslim Council, but it was not the sole elite organization to cast its ideology and strategy in an Islamic mold. In this discussion, I will aim at giving some notion of the audience which was affected by the ideology and what goals, either implicit or explicit, can be discerned in each instance. For the sake of presentation I shall discuss the elite's use of Islam inside Palestine and outside of it in separate sections.

Internal Campaign
Under this heading will be presented material on the Nabī Mūsā and Wailing Wall outbreaks, the anti-land sale campaign, the protection of the Islamic Holy Places, the National Muslim Society, and the boycott of the Legislative Council elections.

(i) Nabī Mūsā Outbreak The riots which occurred against the backdrop of the Nabī Mūsā festival in April 1920, were among the first anti-British and anti-Jewish demonstrations in Palestine in which peasants were major participants. It is clear, however, that this outbreak was orchestrated by members of the *aʿyān* and that the future of Palestine and Islamic exigencies were intimately linked by the *aʿyān*.

The Nabī Mūsā festival itself, as mentioned above, was the most important of the 'folk' Islamic events in Palestinian life; it was also an occasion which had been dominated by the Ḥusaynī family for a long time. The festival itself was a gathering of peasants from all over the countryside which culminated in a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet Moses outside Jerusalem.

One cannot briefly state the events of 4-5 April 1920, simply because the views on exactly what happened are not clear. The general course of events began with the traditional reception of delegations from outlying villages, and then a series of speeches given by various leaders, including the Mayor of Jerusalem, Mūsā Kāẓim al-Ḥusaynī (whose participation, as mentioned above, resulted in the British ousting him from office). In the wake of the speeches, anti-Jewish and anti-British riots took place among the Nabī Mūsā participants which lasted, with scattered occurrence, until martial law was proclaimed. There were several deaths and many wounded on all sides (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 149).

The Nabī Mūsā incidents were not directly the result of appeals to Islamic sentiment, as were so many similar and more violent outbursts to come. It was, however, definitely a case of the elite juxtaposing religious themes with their own political goals in a way that made the two seem inseparable. While much else in the recounting of this episode varies from observer to observer, this juxtaposition stands out in the accounts; first, 1920 was the

height of the movement to make Palestine a part of the Arab Kingdom of Syria. The Amīr Faysal had been installed as King of Syria in March of that year, a month before the riots of Nabī Mūsā. The elite saw Faysal's kingdom as a traditional type of polity in which their economic and power relations could survive. The theme of joining Faysal's kingdom pervaded the Nabī Mūsā events (Porath, 1974, p. 99); photographs of the initial demonstration depict long banners bearing the slogan *Filastīn juz' min Sūriyā*, 'Palestine is part of Syria' (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 162).

This demonstration of support for incorporation into Syria was the first, and to my knowledge, the only one which was truly popular - that included peasants and workers. This must be seen in the light of the fact that its setting was a large religious festival, and that Islam was interwoven with the nationalist themes. The extent of this interweaving of ideological domains can be seen in some of the surviving details. Chants of 'The country of the Arabs is from Syria to Baghdad' mixed with 'The Faith of Muḥammad rose by the sword' *(dīn Muḥammad qāma bi-l-sayf)*, and the long-term Palestine resident, Francis Newton, noted that violence began when a Jew desecrated an Islamic flag (Khillah, 1974, pp. 148-9 passim).

The Nabī Mūsā riots, then, were an early example of the use by the *aᶜyān* of nationalist and religious symbols to mobilize Palestinians. It must be borne in mind, however, that Christian and non-sectarian elements were also present in this incident, but the most organized sector of participation was the Muslim elite, centering on such individuals as Amīn al-Ḥusaynī (Darwazah, 1959, p. 37), and such radical reform groups as the Association of Brotherhood and Purity, led by Shaykh Saᶜīd al-Khatīb, the main preacher at the Mosque of Al-Aqṣā, whose followers were armed (Porath, 1974, p. 79). The level of overt articulation of opinion and goals in terms of Islam increased from this point on, especially with the creation of the Supreme Muslim Council.

(ii) Legislative Council Elections In 1922 an order in council was passed calling for the setting up of a Legislative Council composed of all parties in Palestine to act as a political voice and guide. Arab reaction to the proposed council was swift and unequivocal; participation in the elections would be tantamount to an acceptance of the Mandate and its support of the Balfour Declaration (Khillah, 1974, p. 183).

Formal rejection, however, was not considered sufficient; the election would provide an excellent arena in which to demonstrate Arab sentiment against the Mandate and the Jewish National Home. To this end, a boycott of the elections was deemed the most effective expression of Arab antipathy. Here again, the *aᶜyān* found in Islam an instrument for mobilizing the society.

The Supreme Muslim Council and its religious functionaries acted to ensure as complete a boycott as possible, and although

they were not the only ones against the elections, their tactics appear to have met with signal success. They waged the boycott campaign through the mosques, using the *imāms* and *khaṭībs* to get the message across in village and town that avoiding the elections was a religious duty encumbent on all Muslims. The Friday sermons were used to propagate this message, and it was backed by threats of excommunication - withdrawal of Muslim legal, burial, and marriage services, and being banned from major mosques - for all those who took part in the elections. Important religious figures such as ᶜAbd al-Qādir Muẓaffar, made frequent speeches drawing attention to the boycott of elections as a religious duty (Lesch, 1979, p. 182).

The boycott was a notable success; few participated in the elections, and the concept of a Legislative Council was shelved for the time being. The degree to which the boycott's implementation was connected with religious suasion can be judged by the fact that it was a total success in those areas of conservative Muslim sentiment (Porath, 1974, p. 156). Those who did participate in the election were largely individuals who were opposed to the Supreme Muslim Council and its growing influence. They attributed the stand of the Ḥusaynī faction against the elections as symptomatic of a fear of having to share power and thereby lose the grip on popular opinion provided by the Supreme Muslim Council and its religious legitimacy.

(iii) National Muslim Society The power of Islamic ideology in this period is strongly expressed in the formation of the National Muslim Society in 1922. Its creation is a clear example of the *aᶜyān*'s realization of this power, and the lengths to which they would go to have it serve their interest - in this case, factional in-fighting.

The society was set up by the opposition to the Supreme Muslim Council which was beginning to coalesce around the Nashāshībī clan. It is a measure of their estimation of Islam's force in their own political milieu that this was the first organization created to oppose the other great elite faction. Its members were drawn from many of the major notable families.

The National Muslim Society was ultimately a failure, but its very existence, and the fact that it had any support at all, gives an excellent example of religion being used for pursuing notable interests, for the society took a stance diametrically opposite to that of its factional and religious rival, the Supreme Muslim Council, by formally accepting the British Mandate and claiming to want to work within it. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the society was formed solely in order to compete with their rivals - and competition here meant taking opposite political tacks - and that a religious institution was the most obvious form. This fragmentation obviously served only the narrow interests of the elite and their factional style of politics, and was potentially destructive of any society-wide solidarity. The other interests served, however, were Zionist; the benefits

which came to them through this fragmentation were recognized to such an extent that the organization was granted funds *by the Zionists* to cover operating expenses (Lesch, 1979, p. 51). This latter fact led to its undoing, however, for when the source of funds was disclosed, many of its members were discredited.

The extent to which the society was willing to collaborate with the British is seen in the fact that it was the only group which seriously attempted to participate in the Legislative Council elections in 1923. This is also indicative of its factional nature, for as we have seen, the boycott of those elections was strongly supported by the Supreme Muslim Council and the Ḥusaynī faction. The interplay of religion and factional politics is clear in the announcement of the foundation of the National Muslim Society:

> It is laid down in the laws of our Society, which has been recognized by the (British) government, that 'the basic principle of the Society is the acceptance of the British Mandate over Palestine, on the condition that it respects the position of the Muslim majority, which is the overwhelming majority in Palestine . . . the Society will be the mechanism [*ādah*] between the people and the British government for strengthening the ties and arbitrating the relations which will come to the people of Palestine with all benefit'. And this is in accordance with that said by God the Exalted: 'Consign yourself to your Lord for wisdom and good counsel . . . for civil strife [*fitnah*] is worse than killing, and those who spread evil in the land, their lot shall be the cutting off of their hands and feet . . .' Those who bear witness to our achievement shall have the right to say their mind in our Society, to strengthen us, and to set us straight [*yuqawwimū mu^{c}wajjanā*], for the Faith is guidance, not calumny and strife, which are among the works of Satan. God guides to the Truth* (text appended to Khillah, 1974, pp. 539-40 passim).

Even a brief perusal of this text within its historical context is illuminating. Clearly, the founders of the society are making a point made by many other Muslim ruling classes through history: those in power are to be followed, for strife is sin. Furthermore, the relations with the British will bring benefit to the people of Palestine. All those opposed are therefore in contravention of the Word of God and are trouble-makers; in this context, they can only be the Ḥusaynī faction and the Supreme Muslim Council. This is given added weight in condemnation by the semantics of the word *fitnah* used in the document for '*strife*'. In a religious context (and certainly in the passage from the Qur'ān cited here) it implies strife that is a deviation from the Path of God, an act of unbelief, *kufr* (Lane, 1863). A less obvious aspect of the document is that the reference to the

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*Translation, and all those that follow, by the author.

protection of the Muslim majority is a harbinger of later anti-Christian sentiment in the Society, generated by their conviction that the Mandate administration was not treating the two religious communities in an even-handed manner.

The foundation of the National Muslim Society therefore had definite factional and class interests as its rationale. It served as a religious expression of the tension and competition between the major *aʿyān* political camps.

(iv) Anti-Land Sale Campaign As the number of Jewish immigrants grew in the 1920s, so too did the demands for land. The land-hunger was fed by many large land-holders who could make far larger profits by selling land to the Jews than they could by maintaining their holdings or selling them on the open market. The majority of land-holders selling their properties in this period were non-Palestinian absentee landlords, but some land was being sold by resident landlords, and there is persistent evidence in the historical record that among the land-sellers were members of prominent notable families (Darwazah, 1959, p. 59; Lesch, 1979, p. 69; Great Britain, 1939a). It was difficult to trace and pressure land-sellers, mainly due to the use of land-brokers and middlemen.

Here again, the use of religious sanctions - as in the Legislative Council boycott - came into play. Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, in his role as Mufti of Jerusalem, issued a *fatwā*, a legal opinion in Islamic jurisprudence, which forbade any sale of land to Zionists or their agents. The technique of excommunication was also used, in which transgressors were refused access to Muslim sites or functionaries.

(v) The Wailing Wall Outbreak The Wailing Wall crisis of the late 1920s which culminated in open rebellion of the Palestinian populace, is the most important case of the internal use of Islam by the notable class; it was the result of several years' campaign to make the world, and Palestinians, aware of a threat to the Muslim Holy Places. As such it provides a fitting lead-in to the next section in which will be examined the notables' politico-religious efforts in the international arena.

The Wailing Wall is the most sacred site in Judaism. It is the last remnant of the Temple of Solomon, and has remained the revered object of pilgrimage down through history. It is also, however, the Western boundary of the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, the Muslim sacred precinct which includes the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. It is also the locale at which the Prophet tethered his winged mount *Al-Burāq* on the occasion of his Ascension to Heaven, and by which name the Wall is referred to in Arabic.

The Jews had long chafed under the fact of Muslim domination over the Wall. As early as 1887, wealthy interests had attempted to acquire legal ownership of the Wall from the Ottoman authorities, and another attempt was made to secure the site, this

time from the British, in 1920.

Faced with British occupation and Zionist immigration, the Muslim population feared for the security of their Holy Places. Immediately upon its establishment in 1922, the Supreme Muslim Council began to challenge the Jews' right of access to the Wall with ritual paraphernalia (screens, benches, and so forth) arguing that the Wall was part of a *waqf* endowment and therefore Muslim property. This campaign was low-key in Palestine itself in the early 1920s, but was central to the *aᶜyān*'s international pan-Islamic campaign from the beginning, as we shall see in the next section.

Tensions over the Wall grew with the government's decision that there was nothing to be done about the Jews' rights of worship, for the Muslims had clear legal title to the monument. On the Day of Atonement, 24 September, in 1928, Jewish worshippers at the Wall set up screens to partition men from women. These were removed by British police, and the incident resulted in heightened tension (Lesch, 1979, p. 208). The Supreme Muslim Council exacerbated the tension by harassing Jewish worshippers with loud sufi *dhikr*, repairs to the Wall which were considered desecration by the Jews, and turning the pavement in front of the Wall into a public thoroughfare (Lesch, 1979, p. 209).

The Supreme Muslim Council also began an active internal campaign to raise Palestinian religious consciousness of the perceived danger to the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*. Previously this issue had not been raised to any great extent within the country, due largely to the fact that it was in the interests of the Supreme Muslim Council to keep the populace quiet while they consolidated their advantages over their political rivals (Porath, 1974, p. 265). With consolidation of their power, however, an active campaign of religious propaganda aimed at the Palestinians themselves was initiated which was very provocative and in the end successful in swaying peasants and the poor. The manifestoes of this movement were often published in Amīn al-Ḥusaynī's newspaper *Al-Jāmiᶜah Al-ᶜArabīyah* and were the work of his 'Committee for the Defense of Al-Burāq' (the Wailing Wall). An example will illustrate the strength of these appeals and the range of themes touched on in them:

> The Mosque of Al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem is for all Muslims among the greatest Houses of God . . . [It] is a House of God toward which the greatest of Prophets and the Muslims turned their faces [in prayer]. A House of God whose sublime destiny and favor is set forth in the Noble Law, for it is the first *qiblah* [direction of prayer] and third of the Mosques - that from which the Prophet's Ascension and Night Journey took place. . . . The Muslims of Palestine have exceeded themselves in representing all Muslims as guardians of the Mosque of Al-Aqṣā and the Islamic Holy Places in their country . . . and they ask of their Muslim brethren wherever they are, and

> their kings, amirs, and masses, to strengthen and aid them as far as they are able; for the Mosque of Al-Aqṣā and Al-Burāq belong to all of them. . . And God is the Preserver of His Houses, Victor of His Army: 'If you aid God's Faith, He will give you victory and strengthen your foothold' (Qur. 48:7) (text reprinted in Al-Kayyālī, 1968, pp. 119-26 passim).

This sort of manifesto, together with increasing Jewish militancy with regard to the Wall, served progressively to heighten tensions throughout the remainder of 1928 and into 1929. They reached a peak in the summer of 1929; on 14 August a group of Revisionist Zionists staged a demonstration at the Wall. Arabs responded with a demonstration that resulted in bloody fights breaking out. On 23 August, in response to a rumor that Jews were to attempt to attack the Wall, a crowd of villagers descended on Jerusalem and attacked Jews in the city (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 238). For the next six days killings took place on both sides all over the countryside. The fighting was only put down by the government after hundreds were killed and wounded.

The rebellion over the Wailing Wall was one of complex causes. There is no question that it was an expression of popular hostility and frustration with the political state of affairs in Palestine. It is not at all clear to what extent the *aʿyān* political institutions directed the actual day-to-day events of the outbreak. It is clear, however, that the religious issue of the Muslim Holy Places was one close to the hearts of Palestinian Muslims, and that the Supreme Muslim Council and other elite organizations carried out an intensive campaign to exploit that aspect of Palestinian culture. It is questionable whether they gave specific order for the violence, but it is unquestionably the case that they set the scene and defined the terms of a greatly heightened conflict through the use of an Islamic idiom.

Further, it is obvious that such a scene-setting and its outcome served the internal (and external) political interests of the elite. The preceding seven years had been a time of quiescence in the national movement, a period of outward calm masking political struggles among the elite. With the strengthening of the Ḥusaynī faction in the late 1920s, a revival and expansion of the popular base of the movement within the framework of their control became feasible and desirable and the major ideological agent of this expansion was Islam and its institutions.

International Campaign

From the early 1920s, the Palestinian *aʿyān* carried out a campaign to bring Palestine to the fore of the international pan-Islamic movement. This movement was a collection of activities which existed in the pre-World War II era among Muslims in all parts of the world, and aimed at a recognition of common interests and enemies (Western imperialism being the primary one) and entertaining notions of a common Islamic polity. The movement

was fuelled for the most part by the ideas of such reformers as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, and Rashīd Riḍā.

The Palestinian elite saw in the pan-Islamic movement an opportunity to bring Palestine into an international arena; to present a case to their co-religionists all over the world that the Palestinian Holy Places were threatened, and that the threat came from British imperialism and its Zionist clients. The campaign is very important, for the elite concentrated a great deal of effort in it all through the decade. Even when relatively little was being done inside Palestine, a high level of activity was being sustained outside the country. The Supreme Muslim Council and the Ḥusaynī faction concentrated on two issues: the preservation and protection of the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf* and the Caliphate *(Khilāfah)* movement, and it is to a detailed consideration of these issues that I shall turn now.

In the previous section, we saw the effect of the internal campaign to heighten the politico-religious significance of the Islamic shrines, which culminated in the outbreak of August 1929. The campaign, with an expanded focus, was aimed at an international Muslim audience from a much earlier date. The tone for this campaign was set in a speech delivered by Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Muẓaffar in July 1922 addressed to the Egyptian people. The declaration is an important one, for it was made on the occasion of a Palestinian delegation being sent to the Ḥijāz during the Pilgrimage season, whose mission was specifically to raise the issue of Palestine as a religious concern for all Muslims. It reads in part:

> The Islamic Palestinian people, who have stood guard over the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Noble Rock for 1,300 years, proclaims to the Islamic world that these Holy Places are in grave danger from Zionist aggression . . . We, as vigilant loyal guardians charged by God with preservation of the Third of the Holy Precincts . . . have devoted ourselves to its protection. Our right to it is [also] the right of the Egyptian, Ḥijāzi, Turk, Persian, Afghan, Indian, Javanese, and all those who utter the Testament of Faith in the East or West . . . We now greatly need you to claim those rights, for the time is approaching in which Zionist hopes will be either fulfilled or will fail - and the date is 15 July, 1922. When the Council of the League of Nations takes up ratification [*ṣakk*] of the Palestine Mandate embracing the ominous Balfour Declaration, and sealing the fate of Islam in Palestine and the defeat of the Islamic Nation [*al-ummah al-Islāmīyah*] . . . We call out to you and to the Islamic world to come together to protest before the world and the League of Nations, against this usurpation . . . It is to the aid of the Faith that we call you, Egyptians and Muslims, with constant and breaking hearts . . . ('Al-Ahram', 4 July 22).

The delegation which saw the appearance of this manifesto was

the first attempt to present Palestine as a pan-Islamic cause and to attempt to raise funds for the restoration of the Islamic monuments in Jerusalem: both campaigns were successful.

Concentration on protection of Jerusalem's holy sites was very much in the interests of the Supreme Muslim Council, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, and the *aʿyān* class in general. Drawing attention to the situation not only brought Palestine into the international arena, but pointed up the importance of the Palestinian *ʿulamāʾ* as political and religious figures. The funds brought in by the campaign allowed the Supreme Muslim Council and others to engage actively in a program of restoration of the Holy Places, which gave credence to their position as protectors of Islam in Palestine. As participants in an international level of politics and religion, the elite also derived the benefit of increased prestige among their own followers, and gave them a further reason to be taken seriously by the British.

The protection of the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, as we saw earlier, became a more militant theme in the later 1920s. One can see in this a change aimed not only at increased awareness on a pan-Islamic plane, but also an attempt to stir religious sentiment in Palestine itself by arguing that Palestine's problems were not local, but rather symptomatic of wider imperialist patterns. The added urgency in the call in the later 1920s can be seen in the following excerpt from a declaration by the Ḥusaynī-inspired Committee for the Defense of *Al-Burāq Al-Sharīf* issued in October 1928, soon after the attempt by Jewish worshippers to gain increased access to the Wall. The declaration, addressed to all Muslims, begins with their view of the recent events, and ends on the following note:

> It is incumbent on our Muslim brethren to assess the truth of this critical situation and rush to attend to it with resolve and concern, turning aside from all else to face this aggression against their Holy Places and make of their 400 million voices a single voice, raised in defense of *Al-Burāq Al-Sharīf*, which is part of the blessed Mosque of Al-Aqṣā, and demanding of the British government and the Western World that the Muslims be treated in the matter of their Holy Places in accordance with the belief that these places shall continue to be secure from all aggression (Al-Kayyālī, 1968, 116-18).

The rhetorical force of this passage comes from the linkage made between local Palestinian situations and international tensions, and the provision of a symbol - *Al-Burāq* - which encompasses both levels. It is plain to see the effect that this must have had on those who would participate in the Wailing Wall rebellion less than a year later. The events of August 1929, had a strong pan-Islamic impact. Primed by the dire warnings of the Palestinian *ʿulamāʾ* and elite and convinced by what was largely a self-fulfilling prophecy about conflict over the Wailing Wall, there was a sharp increase in international Muslim interest in

Palestine. This culminated in the Islamic Conference of 1931 held in Jerusalem, which will be touched on briefly in the next chapter.

The Caliphate, or *Khilāfah*, movement formed another important aspect of *aʿyān* participation in international Muslim politics. The Caliph *(khalīfah)* is successor to the Prophet as head of the Community of Islam, though opinion varies on the exact nature of that role from sect to sect and thinker to thinker through the centuries. Its importance in the age of imperialism was clear: a renewed Caliphate could serve as the focal point for the revival of an Islamic polity, an expression of Muslim unity and power which had died with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I.

A revivified Caliphate was wholly in the interests of the Palestinian *ʿulamāʾ*. As guardians of some of Islam's holiest sites, and as the most important Islamic functionaries in the country, their prestige and position would be guaranteed in the long term under an Islamic political system. In the short run of things, however, the fundamentally anti-imperialist position of the Caliphate movement allowed them to envisage the possibility of increased leverage on a Britain already concerned about the stability of its Islamic dominions.

Within a short time of the establishment of the Supreme Muslim Council, Amīn al-Husaynī had forged close links with Shawkat and Muḥammad ʿAlī, the Indian leaders of the Caliphate Committee. Ḥusaynī was a key figure in the Caliphate Conference of 1926, called in Cairo to discuss the issue, and waged a campaign to argue the indissoluble bond between the Caliphate and Palestine issues. The movement did not long survive, but the extent of the Palestinian elite's interest in it can be seen in their arranging for the Caliphate advocate, Muḥammad ʿAlī, to be buried in the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, a symbol of the intertwined nature of the issues.

VIII

The 1920s thus saw an attempt by the Palestinian *aʿyān* to use Islamic belief and institutions to further their own brand of Palestinian nationalism. Their vision of the future was one in which they would remain the leaders of the Palestinian Arabs to the same extent, and within the same social parameters, as they had in the preceding years. In so doing, they pursued narrow class interests to the exclusion of wider national concerns, and used Islam as a major means to their ends. As in any investigation of class politics, the extent to which these interests were pursued self-consciously and cynically is a perennially fascinating one; it is also an ultimately pointless one, for a convincing and 'accurate' picture is elusive. None the less, the interests with respect to which men interpret social reality and act on it remain essentially similar within a given class, regardless of individual motivation.

The Islamic idioms used by the $a^{c}yān$ in this period were highly varied, problem-specific, and often theologically sophisticated. They were tailored to suit the needs of the dominant class in the social milieu as they understood it. The idioms were well thought-out, perceptive interpretations of the religious significance and implications of imperialism at both local and international levels. They were campaigns carried out with the politics of class as a primary theme. This entrenchment of class through religious ideology required a broad array of arguments and a skilful use of Islamic vocabulary and history as rhetorical devices. Just as their interests were complex, so too was the ideological discourse required to articulate and structure action. In the next chapter, we will see the results of this constellation of Islam and class interest in the following decade, and trace the emergence of a different Islamic ideology with a different symbolic structure, wielded by and appropriate for a different set of social interests.

2 ISLAM AND REVOLT

I

In this chapter, I am going to turn attention to the 1936-39 Palestine revolt. The focus will be on the movement of Shaykh ᶜIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām which occurred just prior to the revolt, and most of the chapter will be concerned with tracing and analysing the nature and effect of this seemingly minor movement on Palestinian political culture. Qassām's movement marked a turning-point in the nature of Palestinian politics, and the idiom of this cultural and historical juncture was that of populist Islam.

I will characterize Qassām's movement, and the new political forms it cast, as 'redemptive'. The reasons for this are two-fold; the first is that Qassām's movement closely parallels other politico-religious outbreaks whose principles have been described in these terms. The second reason is that, by a perhaps not-so-startling coincidence, the Arabic concept *fidā'* (redemption, ransoming) and its derivatives appear with increasing frequency in this period as the Palestinians' own characterization of their political activities, and occurs commonly in later descriptions of the events of these times.

Burridge (1969) in his study of millenarian movements, argues that they share some basic patterns, and that these shared patterns exhibit a 'redemptive process'. Briefly stated, this process is one in which a society in anomic or oppressive conditions attempts to create new channels for expression of major values and to restructure the distribution of power. This most frequently takes the form of religious movements which propose new formulations for conceiving of the existent oppressive conditions, and contain strategies, either implicit or explicit, for altering those conditions. 'Redemption' therefore refers to a process which leads to the restoration of socio-cultural integrity.

The Ghost Dance religion which had wide currency among North American Indians in the last century is an excellent example of a redemptive movement. This is especially so in its manifestation among the Great Plains tribes. These free-ranging nomadic people, whose core values centered on freedom, martial skill and hunting buffalo, were conquered, restricted and decimated by the whites. The Ghost Dance - a highly syncretistic new religion - guaranteed the return of the buffalo and the old way of life, the resurrection of dead ancestors and family, and the destruction of the whites if the Plains people would perform certain rites. The Ghost Dance was redemptive in that it provided

an alternative to oppression which would result in the restoration of an old and valued way of life.

Redemptive social movements are often couched in religious terms. The logic behind this is clear: under circumstances in which a re-ordering of the social world is called for, an appeal to the sacred as a final definer and legitimator of a new order is highly effective. It links cosmology, history, the group and individual together in opposition to encroachment and oppression. Religious idioms in these cases not only allow one to take up a cause, they imply that it can be no other way. The redemptive process is a useful analytical perspective on the rebellion of ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām, for it provides a coherent overall pattern in which the threads of class interests, oppression, deprivation, religion and nationalism all can be seen to be interwoven. Central to any analysis of such a social movement is a description of the socio-historical context in which it took place, stressing the sources and nature of the tensions which led to such a drastic attempt at reordering social reality. Why Qassām's revolt took place and assumed the form it did will be the subject of much of the rest of this chapter, but first I should introduce the main characters and the general outline of the rebellion.

The revolt of Qassām was the first highly organized popular resistance to the British Mandate and Zionist settlement. The course of events, briefly, were as follows. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām, a Muslim cleric, fled to Palestine from Syria where he was hunted by the French for political reasons. He began to organize peasants and workers in and around Haifa in the 1920s, calling on them to fight the British and Zionist settlers in the name of Islam. He organized a network of *ḥalaqāt jihādīyah*, holy war cells, which were under his control. In 1935, as a result of various events to be discussed below, Qassām and a band of close followers declared the holy war, but were killed in their first major action against British and Palestine police. His death, characterized as a martyrdom for God, had an immediate, unforeseen, and extremely profound impact on the Palestinian masses, and served as a catalyst for the general revolt against British and Zionist forces which was to fill the remainder of the decade.

We are, however, far ahead of the story. The nature of Qassām's redemptive movement must be seen in the light of several major aspects of the larger arena of British imperialism, Zionist aspirations, and Palestinian class relations. Once these are understood, we will be in a position to discuss why Qassām's Islamic populism served as an effective voice for the disinherited of Palestine.

II

I have chosen 1929 as a baseline for discussing the conditions leading up to Qassām's revolt. This is not an arbitrary choice, for the Wailing Wall riots of that year brought changes in the

general alignment of all parties in the Palestinian political arena: British, Zionist, *aʿyān*, and masses. I will in what follows, sketch the major pressures on those who constituted Qassām's movement.

Zionist settlement

The pressures of Zionist settlement and the British policies supporting it were the direct causes of the rebellion. Here I will only outline some aspects of their importance, for the details have been too well told elsewhere to bear repeating. The pressures of settlement on the Palestinian peasantry were of two economic sorts: land purchases and labor policies. Clearly both of these subjects cannot be easily separated from the enormous increases in Jewish immigration, both legal and illegal, during the early 1930s. Neither can this increase in sheer numbers be separated, in the broader view, from the British policies which permitted legal immigration and tolerated the illegal. None the less, for my purposes in this chapter, I will discuss these aspects of the situation one by one, and ask the reader to bear with the impression of detachment such a presentation entails.

Zionist immigration to Palestine increased rapidly in the early 1930s. In 1929 the number of immigrants was 5,249; in 1932, 9,553; in 1933, 30,327; in 1934, 42,359; and in 1935, 61,854 (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 315). These figures, of course, do not represent the true numbers of newcomers for they obviously do not include the great numbers of illegal immigrants. This increase greatly dismayed all sectors of the Palestinian Arab population, not only because of the economic effects, to which we will turn shortly, but also because of the political implications of these new immigrants; the increase in immigration put the Arabs of Palestine on notice that the British authorities could not be trusted to take a balanced and judicious view of the increasingly fragile situation in Palestine.

Immigration quotas had been set by a highly artificial measure of Palestine's 'economic absorptive capacity'. This, as with any such measure, was not a true indicator of the effects of Zionist immigration especially given the high rates of illegal immigration. The Arabs could still take comfort, though cold comfort it was, that some British officials recognized the danger to their community. The Parliamentary White Paper on Palestine of 1930 gave some encouragement to the Arabs, in that it acknowledged the Arabs' rights in Palestine. Any Arab faith in British policies was shattered, however, in 1931 by the MacDonald 'Black Letter' - Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's letter to Chaim Weizmann which ignored the White Paper and further declared that the regulator of immigration quotas would henceforth be the economic absorptive capacity of the Jewish community alone. This meant that as long as the Jewish sector of the economy continued to expand, immigration quotas would continue to soar; it would be virtually unrestricted.

In themselves, the large numbers of new Jewish settlers were

less of a problem than the effects they had on the Arab economy; for from 1929 on Palestine saw an ever-rising rate of land sales to Zionists. Land sales to settlers had, of course, been a major political and economic problem since the first years of the Mandate, and those who sold land or acted as middlemen in land sales were excoriated. In the 1920s, most large land transfers had been between settlers and absentee landlords living outside Palestine. This was due to the fact that large tracts of land were owned by such landlords and it was most convenient for the Jewish settlers to purchase land in large units (Porath, 1977, p. 83). In the 1930s, as these large areas were bought up, the settlers turned to the purchase of many smaller tracts, and these mostly from Palestinian landlords. The numbers of these transfers obviously increased sharply as the result of the purchase of smaller areas of land; in 1933, for example, there were 673 purchases, while in 1934 there were 1,178 transactions.

The effects of these land sales on the Palestinian peasantry, who made up some 59 per cent of the population, was catastrophic. By 1931, it is estimated that 20,000 peasant families had been expelled from their land. Expulsion orders were enforced by police (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 290) and those left with land often found it impossible to support themselves on small tracts. Many small-holders were forced to sell what land they had in order to pay debts, which often equalled their total yearly income (Warriner, 1948, p. 63). Palestinian peasants were thus driven off their land; they were barred even from employment as farm labourers by restrictive Jewish labor laws. Many of the disaffected peasants crowded into towns where they often served as labor on construction sites. This, too, became more of a problem as labor restrictions were more tightly enforced.

Resistance to forcible evacuation grew somewhat among the peasantry in the early 1930s, but it was inevitably fruitless. The loss by a large number of peasants of their means of livelihood was not just a question of losing a source of income; it represented the destruction of a whole way of life for those alienated from the land. Adjustment to a culturally foreign urban milieu was often a shattering experience. Peasants coming to towns had to live in shanty-towns like that of old Haifa where many of these displaced persons came into contact with ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām.

Workers, too, found themselves in dire economic straits. The world depression had its impact on Palestine, but Arab labor found itself in an extremely difficult position due to the policy of Hebrew labor exclusivity. This policy was prompted by the flood of immigrants in the early 1930s, and the determination of the Zionist authorities that all immigrants should find work; hence the policy that all Jewish construction be limited to Jewish labor (Porath, 1977, pp. 129–30). As immigration increased, then, so also did the rate of Arab unemployment.

Palestinian Arabs thus found themselves in an economic wasteland: peasants without land and workers without jobs. These

tensions, and the sense of frustration and alienation that they fostered, found no outlet and little prospect for resolution within the existent socio-political framework of Palestinian Arab society.

The A^{c}yān

The presence of Zionist settlement and the supportive Mandate policies set the primary socio-economic context of Qassām's rebellion, but an understanding of its redemptive form requires an awareness of the political activities of the *a^{c}yān* from 1929 up to the rebellion. This perspective is important because during that period, when the threat to Palestine as an Arab entity grew with wrenching rapidity, the Muslim peasants who made up the largest single sector of the population found no effective leadership among the traditional elite.

It must be noted at the outset of this discussion that all Palestinian Arabs-peasants, workers, *a^{c}yān*, Muslim or Christian-were united in their opposition to the Mandate and to settlement. The point here, however, is that class differences and their accompanying divergences in perspective made for different definitions of appropriate action. The goals were identical but the means to the agreed-upon ends were varied.

The factionalism among the *a^{c}yān*, and particularly the Ḥusaynī-Nashashībī split, continued to be the main feature of *a^{c}yān* politics after 1929. In fact, this rivalry grew throughout the early 1930s. As the years of this decade passed, however, it became more and more evident that the Ḥusaynī faction was gaining the upper hand.

The Supreme Muslim Council, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī's main political vehicle, stepped up its campaign to make Palestine an international, pan-Islamic issue. The Wailing Wall riots of 1929 drew sharp attention from the Islamic world in general and gave added force to the council's campaign. The degree of concern over the threat to Muslim hegemony in Palestine can be judged by the enthusiastic response to Amīn al-Ḥusaynī's call for a world Islamic Conference to be held in 1931. The conference was held in Jerusalem, and though other issues were discussed, its attention centered on Palestine and the issue of the Holy Places. The conference was well attended by representatives from all parts of the Islamic world (Ghunaym, 1973, p. 120; Darwazah, 1959, p. 83); but the leaders of the countries involved, with the exception of Yemen's Imām Yaḥyā, remained aloof from the conference and its dealings, largely because of the political implications it carried for their relations with the imperialist powers.

The Supreme Muslim Council's tactics with regard to Palestine, as exemplified in the Islamic Conference of 1931, had little direct impact on the pressures felt by the peasants and workers. By concentrating on international attention, the council hoped to bring external pressures to bear on British and Zionist interests to modify their stance toward the Arabs of Palestine. This moderate approach did nothing to alleviate immediate problems

such as land sales or to put effective pressure on land-sellers and brokers, while it did contribute heavily to reinforcing the outside impression that the upper class was the spokesman for the people of the country.

The politics of the *aʿyān* underwent a change in form with the demise of the Executive Committee in 1934. The Executive Committee had been the figurehead political voice of Palestinian Arabs. Established in 1920 to serve as a non-partisan mouthpiece for Arab interests, it was born in the early age of Palestinian politics - an age of conferences, petitions, delegations and committees - and held to a very moderate position with regard to the Mandate. It fell prey to the deepening rifts of factionalism soon after its inception (Porath, 1974, p. 242). It was compromised on so many issues that it actually became more moderate toward the end of the 1920s; as, for example, in its acceptance of plans for a legislative council it had rejected some years earlier (Hirst, 1977, p. 62). The Executive Committee never represented, even in its best days, any more than the most conservative elements of the urban elite. Dr. ʿIzziat Darwazah, a prominent participant in, and later historian of these years, noted with acerbity the 'representative' nature of the 1928 Seventh Arab Congress and the Executive it elected:

> The Congress elected a large Executive Committee of 48 members in order to extend representation to all groups and areas . . . and indeed it was representative of all groups: Muslim Councilites and Opposition, the righteous and the hypocritical [*munāfiqah*], the land-brokers [*samāsirah*], land-sellers and spies (Darwazah, 1959, p. 59).

Needless to say, these last three categories were considered the dregs of Palestinian society.

The gradual weakening of the Executive Committee, from all the various factors, and the general disillusionment brought on by the MacDonald 'Black Letter' of 1931 made its demise inevitable. The end came in 1934 with the death of its venerable President, Mūsā Kāẓim al-Ḥusaynī, and there followed a flurry of political activity of a new sort: the formation of an assortment of political parties.

The parties fragmented an already fractured political scene. Their appearance, in historical perspective, seems a case of special interests scrambling for an organizational foothold in the vacuum left by the Executive Committee; but it is clear that this was also a view commonly held by the mass of Palestinians who witnessed the further splintering of their national leadership with dismay. It bolstered the villagers' conviction that the *aʿyān* did nothing except that which served their own interests (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 289).

The parties founded after the collapse of the Executive Committee were the Palestine Arab Party, the National Defense Party, the Reform Party, the National Bloc Party and the

Palestine People's Party. The striking thing about these new parties is that they were really only channels for would-be leaders who wished to take control of the national movement. Their platforms were practically identical: opposition to British occupation and Zionist settlement. All parties were moderate in their political stance toward the Mandate and all were either constituted by members of the important elite families or had close ties to them (Ghunaym, 1974, p. 286). One exception to this tendency was the Independence Party founded in 1932. This was in fact the Palestinian manifestation of a pan-Arab party seeking the unification of all Arab lands.

The formation of the new parties was symptomatic of a general fragmentation of the traditional leadership. This fragmentation found its most serious expression in a deepening of the Ḥusaynī-Nashāshībī factionalism. In 1934, Rāghib al-Nashāshībī was defeated in Jerusalem municipal elections. The defeat led to his formation of the National Defense Party which in effect institutionalized the factional conflict between the two families. The balance of power had swung to the Ḥusaynī side, and from this point until the end of the decade, the conflict between the two blocs became increasingly bitter and violent.

From 1929, the *aʿyān* appear to have realized that their policies of moderation and their consuming preoccupation with factional in-fighting were eroding their position as spokesmen for the national movement. This was clear to the Mandate authorities as early as 1927, as witnessed by this report from Colonel Symes, governor of the Northern District, sent to Ormsby-Gore, the British Secretary of State for Colonies:

> Hostility between these two groups [Ḥusaynīs and Nashāshībīs] was waged unremittingly throughout the abortive elections last year for Supreme Muslim Council. . . . The differences between Arab politicians are chiefly personal ones; their disputes about policy are usually on the grounds of expediency, not of abstract desirability. . . . Arab politicians of the present generation belong almost exclusively to the Effendi class which finds that under a European form of government, it is rapidly being dispossessed of what it regards as its rights and privileges. . . . But the peasantry, they (the Effendiyah) note with apprehension, show a growing tendency to distinguish between national and Effendi class interests . . . (Great Britain, 1927).

The 1929 riots served to feed this growing realization that they, the elite, were not totally secure. The spontaneity of the riots and the general indifference of the rioters to their leaders' pleas to cease hostilities were a strong indication of this tendency. Jamāl al-Ḥusaynī, visiting London in 1929 after the riots, admitted to the press that the leaders realized they were losing their influence and that they feared a further outbreak of violence (Khillah, 1974, p. 305). Amīn al-Ḥusayni himself felt threatened

enough by the chaotic state of factional politics to request police protection and a bullet-proof vest as surety against an assassin's attack (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, pp. 291-2).

Throughout the early 1930s, then, the politics of the *aʿyān* became less and less effective, and as they did so, their political machinations tended to point up and accentuate the class differences between themselves and the masses. The situation was further exacerbated by the escalation in land sales, as noted in the previous section. As the mid-1930s drew closer, however, there was more of a trend toward land being sold by resident Palestinian land owners, and this clearly added to the growing tension between the peasants and the politicians.

The situation was a desperate one. On the one hand, peasants and workers were being pushed further and further into poverty by the pressure of Zionist settlement. On the other hand, the traditional political authorities of Palestinian society became more and more heavily weighted with the chains of their own class, factional, and later party interests. There were no channels for expression except those controlled by the *aʿyān* and their institutions, which in their turn preached moderation. Moderation itself served only as a means to buy time for the elite - time to jockey for position in the political pecking order.

III

On to this stage set by deprivation, oppression, poverty and political frustration stepped the figure of ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām. He had, in fact, been a character in the drama of post-war Syria and Palestine for some time. His early biography is known to us through only a few details, and the fine points of his later career have become the subject of a historiographic debate. In any case, he left an indelible stamp on the character of Palestinian political culture. In order to understand why this was so, we have to look at those things which formed his own character; for charismatic leaders do not emerge as the catalysts of a new historical reality so much by innovation as by personifying the lost values of those who eventually come to follow them.

Al-Qassām's birthplace was Jablah in the Northern Syrian district of Ladhiqīyah. The exact date differs from source to source, but the one most commonly stated is 1871 (Ghunaym, 1974, p. 294). The mountainous region of Northern Syria had long since spawned a distinctive politico-religious culture of its own. The mountains positively encouraged rebellion; centralized governments had for centuries been faced with pockets of resistance which relied on the rugged landscape for ambush and refuge. The relative isolation also sheltered various Muslim sects - notably the ʿAlawīs - whose orthodoxy and even whose Islamic nature was doubted by the Sunnī majority. Religious sectarianism was practically an institution in the area, and social action taken

in the name of faith practically a tradition.

Shaykh Al-Qassām studied in Cairo's Al-Azhar, the great seat of Muslim religious education, and was a pupil of Muḥammad ᶜAbduh. ᶜAbduh's teachings, and the general climate of Al-Azhar at the time, undoubtedly had a great impact on Qassām, and his later creed reflects this effect. ᶜAbduh believed that Islam had the inner resources to come to terms with the modernizing, secularizing effects of the West; he saw that the greatest danger to Islam lay in imperialism, and that Islam and its faithful would only survive its onslaught by a conscious self-rejuvenation. He believed that *taqlīd* (rigid adherence to received tradition), and back-sliding Muslims themselves were at the heart of Islam's inability to deal on an equal footing with the West, and that a return to an earlier, purer form of Islam cleansed of philosophical and theological accretions, was the clearest alternative (Cragg, 1965, p. 36). ᶜAbduh, like his mentor Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, and several of his own pupils, was an activist who intended that his message be heard outside the walls of Al-Azhar, and that it shake both the imperial complacency of the British and the political tractability of his fellow Arabs. It is hardly curious that Qassām should have been a pupil of ᶜAbduh, for no major Islamic activist of that period or since has escaped his influence.

An interesting possibility, suggested by Porath (1977, p. 133) is that Qassām may well have been in contact during his Azhar years with Rashīd Riḍā, a pupil of ᶜAbduh, and a well-known activist. Qassām's creed, as we shall see later, bears strong traces of the Wahhābī doctrine which Riḍā came to espouse later in his life. Riḍā, along with many other reform-minded Muslim intellectuals of the time, believed that Islam needed its own polity in order to deal with the West, and that the most logical form for such a polity was a revived *khilāfah*, Caliphate. This was, needless to add, a threatening development for the imperialist powers who understood the danger if their Muslim dominions united.

Qassām, then, was born into a region with particularly high religious consciousness, even by the standards of the Middle East, and he spent his formative intellectual years at the focal point of the most active period of Islamic reform; a period that saw imperialism analysed and condemned as the primary opponent of not only the Muslim Arabs, but of the Islamic world as a whole.

With the end of World War I came the partitioning of the Middle East into French and British spheres of influence. The French were stiffly resisted by the Syrians in most regions - notably in the ᶜAlawī mountains - and it is here that we can briefly pick up again the early threads of Qassām's biography. Having returned from Al-Azhar after years of study, Qassām was installed as a teacher of religious subjects in the school of Sulṭān Ibrahīm Bin Adham (Ghunaym, 1974, p. 294). He became closely involved in the bitter fighting against the French in the ᶜAlawi

region led by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ᶜAlī which began in 1918 (Burj, 1974, p. 320; Yāsīn, 1967, p. 60). He is described as having been a leader of these resistance activities (Saᶜīd, n.d., p. 117) and this is borne out by the fact that he was sentenced to death in absentia by the French military court in Ladhiqīyah.

Qassām and two of his companions fled to Haifa, where the local notables and *ᶜulamā'* made welcome the 'rebel *ᶜālim* and his companions in the *jihād'* (Yāsīn, 1967, p. 61). Qassām's reputation appears to have been widespread already, for his name appears in 1921 on a petition to the Palestine High Commission from the Muslim notables of Haifa (Porath, 1977, p. 133). He had been appointed teacher in the Haifa Islamic school and was shortly afterwards appointed preacher in the new Istiqlāl Mosque in Haifa.

From the very first, Qassām preached against British imperialism and Zionist settlement in Palestine. His message was unequivocal: holy war, *jihād*, against the British and their Zionist clients was the only means of removing the invaders from Arab Palestine. He used the pulpit of the Istiqlāl Mosque, and his position as the founder of the Haifa Muslim Youth Association to spread the message. He preached against drinking, gambling and prostitution and attempted to instill in his followers some of the reforming zeal that he had acquired from men like Muḥammad ᶜAbduh.

Qassām's message did not fall on deaf ears. Haifa was filling with dispossessed peasants and unemployed workers, who were forced to live in shanty towns in shacks made of old petrol cans, and other flotsam of a more affluent part of society. Qassām himself refused to leave the slums of Old Haifa and built up around himself a core of close followers. Qassām believed that only the peasants and the other poor of Palestine could be trusted to carry out the *jihād* against the foreigners. He gave night classes to teach illiterates to read and write, and to provide some religious education; but as one important participant put it, his classes:

> were on religious questions, but it was he among all the shaykhs who pointed out the necessity of *jihād (durūrat al-jihād)* in order to prevent Zionism from carrying out its dreams. . . . He concentrated on British imperialism and Zionism . . . and as a result of his nationalism and call to *jihād* there formed around him a group of men whose driving force was nationalism and faith (Abū Ibrahīm al-Kabīr, quoted in Khillah, 1974, p. 375-6).

It is not known what the reaction of the *aᶜyān* was to Qassām's preaching at this stage. At least one source, however, notes that Qassām was refused the position of 'public preacher' (*waᶜiẓ ᶜām*) by Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, who was not sure that Qassām would work for a political (i.e. peaceful) solution to Palestine's problems (Yāsīn, 1967, p. 32).

Qassām was appointed *ma'dhūn*, a Muslim marriage official, in 1929. This position took him into the villages where he began to spread his message of reform and *jihād* among the peasants. He did not do so openly, but only to those whom he believed, after a period of observation, to be pious and trustworthy. To them he preached the necessity of war as a holy and pious duty (Ghunaym, 1974, p. 295; Darwazah, 1959, p. 120).

From among the poor in Haifa and those he contacted as *ma'dhūn* in the rural areas, Qassām began to organize armed resistance. The structure of his organization was cellular; each unit of the organization had no specific knowledge of other units. At first he limited the number of men in each cell to five, but later increased it to nine members (Yāsīn, 1967 p. 30). The exact date at which he began this secret organization is unclear: some sources say before 1929, others afterward. In any case, the structure appears to have been sound, for it was not detected by British intelligence until Qassām chose to reveal its existence. Arms were bought with money made by selling jewelry and anything which had an open market value. Training was undertaken at night in the hills, and Qassām set up an intelligence network to gather information on British movements and Zionist settlements.

Qassām's message was an interesting, though not an unusual, one which sought the reform of Islam and the protection of the Faith and the homeland. Ṣubḥī Yāsīn, whose information on Qassām and his movement came from participants in it, describes the 'creed [*ᶜaqīdah*] of the secret organization':

> Faith in God was the first requirement for membership in the organization. The leadership set forth the Islamic creed conscious that it was a revolt against imperialism, aggression, apathy [*jumūd*], despotism [*istibdād*] and oppression. It was a requirement that each member memorize what he could of the Qur'ānic *āyāt* on *jihād* in the Path of God and the homeland [*fī sabīl Allāh wa-l-waṭan*] . . . The members studied the Islamic wars led by the Prophet Muḥammad and the Sword of God Khālid bin al-Walīd, ᶜAmru bin al-ᶜĀṣ. . . Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī and other of the great warriors of history (Yāsin, 1967, p. 63).

Waging holy war was not, however, the sole theme of Qassām's message. He preached a reformed and more fundamentalist Islam, and believed that only those who were themselves pious could be the salvation of the country. The range of his reforms, however, went beyond that normally found in the school of thought founded by ᶜAbduh and Afghānī; his reforms smack of Ḥanbalī reform thought, represented primarily by the *Muwaḥḥidūn*, or the Wahhābis of Saudi Arabia. This style of thought was championed by Rashīd Riḍā in Cairo, and gives credence to Porath's suggestion that Qassām had been influenced by the former. Among these reforms, Qassām condemned the repetition

of God's name in ceremonies, the stress on mourning and grave visitation, and the intermingling of sexes (Porath, 1977, p. 133). This type of argument was implicitly critical of common Muslim practice and of the role taken by the *ᶜulamā'* in the rituals of everyday life. That these implications were not missed by their targets is clear from the apparent attempts to have Qassām removed from office (ibid.).

One of the very few statements from a survivor of Qassām's movement dealing with the shaykh's ideology is a letter from Ibrahīm al-Shaykh Khalīl, who succinctly describes the thought of Qassām and its attraction:

> A split (between Qassām and his followers) did not occur-neither during the life of the martyr leader nor after his martyrdom. The reason is very simple; the martyr leader called for *jihād* on a religious basis *(asās dīnī)*, a *jihād* in the Path of God, for the liberation of the homeland and for ridding the population of oppression. In the notion of *jihād* on a religious basis there are not problems, no ideological or personal complications, no profundities or alienation; and all that pertains to such a *jihād* is dictated in familiar *āyāt* of the Qur'ān. There was one slogan that encompassed all concepts of the rebellion: "This is a *jihād*, victory or martyrdom", and such a *jihād* is one of the religious duties of the Islamic creed *(farḍ min furūḍ al-ᶜaqīdah al-islāmīyah)* (Khalīl, 1972, p. 267).

Qassām, then, had an ideology and an organization; his goal, the explusion of the British and Jewish invaders from the country, was shared by all other Arab organizations. A very important question becomes that of the nature of Qassām's relationship with other political organizations in the country which were, almost by definition, in the control of the *aᶜyān*. The answer is not totally clear, and is one which has sparked off a debate among Palestinian and other historians: was Qassām controlled by any party, organization or faction? I believe not, and it is necessary to detail the evidence before going further, for this argument strongly affects the interpretation of Qassām's movement presented here.

To begin with, several Arab historians who were participants in Palestinian politics in this period have stated that Qassām was controlled by one group or another. ᶜIzzat Darwazah, for example, has claimed that Qassām was a member of the Istiqlāl party (Darwazah 1959, p. 120; 1950, p. 116). In a private letter to ᶜAdil Ḥassan Ghunaym, Darwazah went further and stated that he was in contact with many of the nationalist leaders, including himself and Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, and others of the political organizations prior to the revolt (Ghunaym, 1972, p. 188). In 1961, the journal *Filasṭīn*, the voice of the Arab High Committee under the direction of Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, published an article claiming that Qassām was a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Party (the Ḥusaynī faction party) and that his

organization was formed with the knowledge and consent of Amīn al-Ḥusaynī.

I do not find convincing the view that Qassām was controlled by other parties. First, as we shall see, the outbreak of Qassām's revolt destroyed the political parties' campaign to press the British for a Legislative Council, and was therefore working against those who supposedly controlled it (Lesch, 1973, p. 34). Second, Darwazah's statement on the exact relationship between Qassām and the Istiqlāl party is not clear; he says that they were in contact and implies control, but gives no clear example or evidence to support this statement. In any case, as a leader of the nationalist movement, Darwazah himself was a participant in the events under scrutiny, and therefore an historiographically 'interested' party. His evidence, then, is not sufficient on its own to make the case that Qassām was in fact an agent of the elite. The case is weakened even further by the contention of Amīn al-Ḥusaynī's group that Qassām had been a member of the Ḥusaynī political party and had conducted himself in consultation with the latter. This contention is difficult to accept, for Ḥusaynī never mentions Qassām in his own writings (Khillah, 1974, p. 380) which he surely would have done if he had had a hand in Qassām's movement and if the shaykh had been, in fact, a member of the Executive Committee of the Ḥusaynī party.

Evidence tends to support the view that Qassām was indeed in contact with other leaders, but that he carried out his plans on his own, and in the end against the interests and probably the expressed wishes of the *aʿyān* politicos. As far as party connections are concerned, it is worth quoting Ibrahim al-Shaykh Khalīl, the old Qassāmite, on this matter:

> With regard to Qassām's following or connection with any particular party, any who knew him well, as did many of my surviving comrades such as Abū Ibrahīm al-Kabīr, Shaykh Salmān Abū Hammām . . . Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī . . . know that the martyr leader never had any connection with any party and that his sole commitment was to the Islamic creed (1972, 269).

Yāsīn produces evidence that Qassām was perceived by the elite leaders as working against their interests. Shortly before declaring his revolt, Qassām contacted Amīn al-Ḥusaynī through a mediator and suggested that they co-ordinate an open revolt - Qassām in the north and Ḥusaynī in the south. Ḥusaynī's reply was a rejection of the idea, saying that 'the time has not yet arrived for such action. Political activity will suffice in obtaining the rights of the Palestinian Arabs' (Yāsīn, 1967, p. 32). Porath cites one rather mysterious source who claimed that Amīn al-Ḥusaynī supported Qassām up until it became clear that he was going to oppose the Mandate violently, at which point Qassām was expelled from Ḥusaynī's party (Porath, 1977, p. 139). This source buttresses the evidence given by Yāsīn with regard to

the elite's attitude toward Qassām's populism. Kanafānī (1972, p. 62) attributes the Ḥusaynī faction's claim to have controlled Qassām (in the 1961 *Filasṭīn* article mentioned above - 25 years after the death of the shaykh) to Amīn al-Ḥusaynī's realization that Qassām and his movement had opened a large rift between the *aʿyān* and the Palestinian masses. Claiming to have controlled him was therefore, in this view, an attempt to restore some degree of legitimacy to the old elite. It is indicative of Qassām's importance in Palestinian nationalism that even after his death so many other leaders wished to be associated with his name and activities. In any case, all those who have looked disinterestedly at Qassām have come to the belief that he acted on his own and without the direction of the elite (Ghunaym, 1972, p. 189; Hirst, 1977, 80; Kanafānī, 1972, p. 61; al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 293; Porath, 1977, p. 139).

IV

In Jaffa harbor on 18 October 1935, a shipment of cement destined for a Jewish merchant was inspected and found to contain a cache of arms and ammunition. It had long been common knowledge that the settlers were forming their own army, but the discovery of the Jaffa cache appears to have been the final sign to Qassām that his rebellion had to be openly declared.

It is unclear how many men were organized by Qassām, but those with training in arms seem to have numbered around 200. The total cell organization, though, was much larger, and may well have been close to 1,000 men. Qassām's suggestion to Amīn al-Ḥusaynī that he should jointly call and lead the rebellion was, as we saw earlier, refused; Qassām had in turn rebuked the *ʿulamāʾ* for not having declared a holy war, citing *āyāt* of the Qurʾān dealing with *jihād* and martyrdom (Ghunaym, 1972, p. 182). It was therefore up to Qassām to provide the impetus for a rebellion, and all signs point to his having realized that it would end in his death.

On 12 November 1935, Qassām called some of his closest followers around him and told them that the time had come to declare themselves (Yāsīn, 1967, p. 38). Their intention was to travel into villages around Haifa and call the peasants to revolt. Their movements, however, were brought to the attention of the police, and a force was sent out to intercept them.

Pinned down outside the village of Yaʿbad, Qassām and his men attempted to hold off the police sent against them. When his surrender was demanded, Qassām is said to have replied, 'Never, this is a *jihād* for God and the homeland', and to have exhorted his followers to 'die as martyrs'. In a short while, Qassām and several of his men were dead.

The death of the shaykh rocked the people of Palestine. His last acts and words seem to have given expression to all the tension, deprivation, and fear of the people as a whole; his

death crystallized the feelings of frustration and despair of the peasant and working classes, giving them a clarity that they had never had before. Qassām personified the solution, the redemptive path, for the majority of Palestinians. His death brought with it the realization that only militant activity, outside and if need be against the traditional leadership, would have an effect on the British and Zionists. His death was an exhortation; as one eulogy expressed it:

> Beloved friend and martyr: I heard you preaching from up in the pulpit, summoning to the sword. Today you are in the presence of God, but through your death you are more eloquent than ever you were in life. ('Al-Ahrām', 22 November 1935).

The immediate effect of Qassām's death was the largest demonstration yet seen in Palestine (Ghunaym, 1972, p. 186). Mass prayers were said for the shaykh and his dead compatriots. The city of Haifa was closed for the day of his funeral, and throngs of mourners took turns carrying Qassām's coffin to his burial ground in a village outside the city.

Qassām's funeral and later the traditional mourning ritual for the fortieth day after death saw mass manifestations of outrage against the British authorities and Jewish settlers. Qassām and his men took the stand that the British were as much, if not more, the enemies of Palestine as were the Zionist settlers. But the rage of the lower classes was directed also at the traditional leadership, who were disgraced by the fact that Qassām's actions pushed to the forefront of mass consciousness the extent of their own inaction. This found widespread expression in words and events. The words of one poem eulogizing Qassām are typical:

> Who would imitate Qassām as Islam's ideal soldier
> Follows, if he wishes release from his inherited humiliation,
> the best master;
> For he forsook words and the weakling's idle chatter.
> Our leaders have stuffed our ears to bursting with talk!
> We believed true what they wrote, but it was only a delusion.
> (Quoted in Ghunaym, 1972, p. 186)

It became apparent to the *aʿyān* that their leadership was in grave danger, for events quickly showed that the deprived were in no mood to compromise any longer. The popular mood was black, and the elite feared a flare-up of violence. They declined to attend the funeral of Qassām - an act seen as a slap in the face to those for whom Qassām was a hero and martyr. The people had in Qassām a standard by which to gauge their leaders, and his death found the latter wanting; as a result of their policies, as a recent Palestinian historian put it, 'the Palestinian leaders found themselves only a little less hated than the British' (Al-Kayyālī, 1970, p. 295). At Qassām's funeral and

arba^{c}*īn*, members of the official class were banned from participation (Kanafānī, 1972: 62).

The political climate had changed so dramatically with Qassām's death that both the leaders and the British had to take stock of their positions. Several days after the funeral of Qassām, all prominent Palestinian leaders met with the British High Commissioner to warn him that unless the British altered their policies, the popular mood would degenerate to the point where all their control would be lost. It can hardly have been a coincidence that only a month later the British made moves toward the establishment of an Arab Legislative Council and toward the limitation of land purchases - both Arab demands on which the British had long stalled.

It is important to make one point before moving on, and that is that Islam was unquestionably the dominant organizing idiom and motivation for Qassām's movement. This is a point which is emphasized in the writings of all Palestinian and non-Palestinian historians. Earlier writers such as ^{c}Izzat Darwazah made this clear by describing Qassām's organization as *ḥalaqāt jihādīyah mutadayyinah* (religious war cells) (Darwazah, 1950, p. 120). Al-Kayyālī (1970, p. 292) describes Qassām's mission as a 'call to piety [^{c}*ubūdīyah*] and against the foreign British and Jewish unbelievers [*kufār*]'. Porath (1977, p. 137) emphasizes that Qassām's movement was the first manifestation of nationalist consciousness among lower classes and that it 'should be borne in mind that this happened when the struggle was expressed and understood as an *Islamic* necessity' (italics in original). Ghassān Kanafānī, the Palestinian Marxist writer, noted that Qassām's movement was misunderstood and its importance underestimated by Western writers, going on to say:

> In reality it appears that a failure to realize the tightly woven relationship between religion and national struggle in the underdeveloped world [*al-*^{c}*ālam al-mutakhallif*] is responsible for underestimating the importance of the Qassāmite movement (1972, p. 61).

Indeed, the example of Qassām's movement as a religio-nationalist phenomenon is so outstanding that it has been used by Islamic organizations outside Palestine as a model. Recently, for example, the Egyptian fundamentalist journal 'Al-Da^{c}wah' discussed the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in various 'holy struggles' of this century, pointing out in particular the participation of their members in Qassām's rebellion ('Al-Da^{c}wah', April 1980, p. 44).

V

We have seen, then, that Qassam's rebellion was one that aimed at the expulsion of the British and Zionists from Palestine, that

it worked against the *aᶜyān* both in nature and in later effects, and that Qassām's followers saw themselves as fighting for an Islamic cause and that this perception of their ideology is one incorporated into the interpretations of later historians. That Qassām and his men served to change the course of Palestinian politics is, I believe, certain, for their movement and its actions marked the first phase of a transition from elite to mass political action; from the politics of parties to that of mass resistance. The effects of Qassām's movement on the Arab revolt is therefore my next concern, for it is there that the change in political action can most readily be seen, and the case for Qassām's role in that change can best be argued.

The revolt can be broken into two phases; the first in 1936, the second from 1937 to late 1938. These two phases are quite distinct, and some comments on their sociological differences will be made in due course, for I believe the divergent nature of the two periods discloses some illuminating information on the nature of the revolt in general.

Some sources say, and I would agree with them, that the initial phase of the revolt really began the November night in 1935 when Qassām and his men left Haifa for the hills and their deaths. However, what has come to be known as the Great Arab Revolt had its immediate first causes in the murder of two Jewish settlers on the Ṭulkarm road in April 1936. The murders exacerbated tensions which were already high, and led to reprisal killings by Jews of Arabs and finally full-scale riots in Jaffa. Jewish settlers demanded an army to protect themselves and marched on Jaffa. Arabs attempted to gain permission for a counter demonstration and were denied permission. A riot ensued on 19 April which spread to the towns of Nāblus and Ṭulkarm (Kalkas, 1971, p. 240). The riots led to the granting of permission to Jews to use arms in their own defense.

Even in this early period of the revolt, a pattern began to emerge which would characterize its first phase, and to some degree its second: spontaneous, local-level political activity, undirected by the *aᶜyān*, started to sweep the country. Between 19 and 20 April, 'national committees' cropped up in major towns and villages aimed at organizing some kind of resistance to the Mandate and the Zionist colonizers. The national committees, beginning with that of Nāblus, launched an appeal for a general strike to continue until Arab demands were met. This call was taken up by other national committees and firmly supported by the inhabitants of the towns and villages. The strike became formally unified, and the Arab Higher Committee, made up largely of the *aᶜyān*, businessmen and intellectuals, was formed to coordinate the strike at a national level. The Arab Higher Committee was a cosmetic unification of the disparate party interests in the country, and had little control over the strike.

The strike gained momentum from its inception in the third week of April, and by the end of May the strike was, for all practical purposes, general. A few groups whose continuing

participation in the national economic and political spheres was necessary to the Palestinian Arabs, went about their business as usual.

The spontaneity of the strike, and its clear lack of control by any over-arching body, startled the British. This does not mean that there occurred no cases of coercion, for some did take place, but they were unimportant; the strike lasted six months - which made it one of the longest in history - and no amount of coercion can make an unwilling populace sustain this sort of action, especially when the most powerful factor in the political equation, in this case the British, is opposed to it. Most, then, participated willingly, guided by the local national committees. The committees were to a great degree autonomous, and this is perhaps the primary reason for the strike's longevity; when a local leader was arrested, another immediately appeared to take his place. It was this acephalous quality that convinced the British that the strike's base was indeed popular sentiment rather than orders from the elite (Great Britain, 1936a; 1936b).

The strike was hardly a movement of peaceful civil disobedience. Within a few weeks of its start, violent incidents began to grow in frequency: guerilla attacks against Jewish targets and then attacks on British installations. The violence escalated until by the first days of summer, it was apparent that the strike had been overshadowed in importance by a general rebellion.

The violence was carried out by armed bands of guerillas whose ranks were filled almost completely by peasants. Their numbers were supplemented by a few townsmen, most of them probably former peasants who left the urban areas and returned to the countryside to fight. The bands had a regular internal organization and hierarchy, but there was little contact between them. The most efficient, dedicated and active bands were those headed by former followers of Shaykh Al-Qassām, but this is a phenomenon to which I will turn in detail further on.

Just as the towns spawned national committees to oversee the strike, peasant villages spawned bands of rebels. There was a lack of co-ordination in their action in this period - due to a great extent to inter-clan rivalries and competition - but by June 1936, the rebel numbers had grown to an extent which could not have been foreseen even a few months earlier. Targets were picked according to the locale of the band, and with little eye toward overall strategic importance. Relations between the guerilla bands and villagers were good at this point. The villagers themselves formed bands and supported others with food and information.

Several leaders came to the fore in this early phase of the revolt, the most important of whom was Fawz al-Dīn al-Qāwuqjī. Qāwuqjī was not a Palestinian, but an Iraqi who had led a rather checkered military career. He had been an Ottoman officer, then fought against the French in Syria in 1925. He then went to Saudi Arabia to serve as military adviser to Ibn Saud (Bowden, 1975, p. 156). Qāwuqjī entered Palestine with a force of 200

men; a mixed contingent of Syrians, Trans-Jordanians and Iraqis. This pan-Arab element was to be a part of the revolt for its duration, with Arab volunteers coming from various parts of the Middle East to take part. Apparently many of these men had been attracted by the example of Qassām, whose dramatic death had been widely reported in detail in the Arab press, as had the events which took place at his funeral and *arbaᶜīn*.

Qāwuqjī met with leaders of the most important guerilla bands, who agreed to support him as commander-in-chief (Porath, 1977, p. 189). Despite his title, the other bands and their leaders appear to have had a considerable degree of autonomy. Qāwuqjī's relatively sophisticated military experience was one of his main contributions; the change in tactics, choice of targets and general strategy displayed by the assorted bands under Qāwuqjī's tutelage changed for the better.

The party leaders, now under the nominally united front of the Arab Higher Committee, took a generally moderate stand with regard to the rebels and the strike. It is obvious that the strike and the rebellion were against the general interests of these leaders, and though they played some part, it was not a major one and they worked toward a settlement of the situation from an early date. One can easily see their predicament; on the one hand being well-nigh forced to involve themselves by virtue of the very popularity of the revolt, or lose whatever sway they had, while on the other hand being acutely conscious of the fact that the British would not hesitate to arrest and deport them if their involvement were too obvious. Another factor, however, is that any revolt of this nature is bound to heighten the social and political awareness of its participants, and those who are committed unequivocally to the struggle are inevitably going to be viewed as the most appropriate leadership. The old leaders were sensitive to this fact and could not help but have felt threatened by the popular leaders emerging from the fighting. The rebel commanders, for their part, took largely their own counsel.

As the revolt and strike wore on into the fall of 1936, there was an increase of activity on the pan-Arab front among the ranks of the Arab leadership. The Arab Higher Committee appealed to the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Iraq to issue a call for the cessation of the strike and revolt. There had been previous consultation on this matter, for the rebellion was not in the interests of either the Palestinian elite or the rulers of other nations in the area. With the post-war realignment of boundaries and polities, the rulers found themselves fully occupied with the management of their internal affairs; a revolt in Palestine, including as it did so many foreign nationals, such as Qāwuqjī and his force, was not conducive to a stabilization of political affairs - never mind the fact that the revolt upset relations with the most threatening imperial force in the region.

The strike and revolt had also taken their toll of those who participated in them. The economic disruptions and the pressure

from the British army and Palestine police all served to weaken many of the participants. When the leaders of other Arab nations called for an end to the disturbances in October, the response was relatively prompt: the general strike ended, guerilla bands dispersed, and the force led by Qāwuqjī, though surrounded by British troops, was allowed to leave the country.

The prompt termination of the revolt's first phase was not a symptom of a lack of resolve, but rather a result of the Palestinian Arabs' belief that they had won a moral victory. They had fought hard, had organized an impressive general strike, and had ended it only at the request of their brother Arabs. The British, in the meantime, had been organizing another Royal Commission to enquire into the causes of the revolt.

The Commission was constituted, arrived in Palestine, did its work, and then submitted a report in July 1937 which recommended partition of the country into a Jewish and an Arab state. The partition plan was, of course, anathema to the Palestinian Arabs and their neighbors. The Arab Higher Committee roundly condemned the plan, as did the other Arab leaders. In September 1937, a pan-Arab conference was held at Blūdān in Syria which saw delegates commit themselves to a continuing struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

The second phase of the revolt began directly after the Blūdān Conference. It was clear to the Arabs that the revolt had to be continued if they were to gain any concessions from the British. The opening shot was the murder in September of Lewis Andrews, the Acting District Commissioner of Galilee. This was meant by the Arabs, and taken by the British, as a declaration of open revolt. Amīn al-Ḥusaynī had taken refuge in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem, an inviolate sanctuary, and thus was spared deportation; but most other Arab party leaders were deported by the British. Ḥusaynī escaped from the Ḥaram in October, 1937, and took refuge in Lebanon.

The Arab bands had not been disarmed in 1936, and as a result they found no difficulty in resuming the revolt; but the politics of the country had changed a great deal in the year since the cessation of the strike and revolt in October 1936, and these changes directly affected the nature of the revolt in its second phase.

The revolt of 1936 had been spontaneous, peasant-led and manned, and marked by strong co-operation between villagers and guerillas; its targets were primarily British and Jewish ones. In the towns, the traditional leadership had been forced to unify in order to present a semblance of unity to the Mandate administration and to their own people. This unity was illusory, however, and masked a marked decline in the relations between the Ḥusaynī and Nashāshībī factions. The latter had grown more moderate in their stance, in large part as an attempt at dissociating itself from anything to do with Ḥusaynī faction. The Nashāshībī representative had resigned from the Arab Higher Committee, and as a result the tension between the factions grew

even greater. Finally, in the revolt's second phase, threats, extortion and assassination became part of the political scene in late 1937. Both sides in the factional split were willing to go to any lengths to defeat their rivals.

The moderate Nashāshībīs rejected the rebels completely, and in fact worked directly against them. The Ḥusaynīs maintained guerilla bands whose targets were more often other Arabs than British or Jews. The revolt, in its second phase, had to a great degree become an extension of inter-*aʿyān* factionalism.

None the less, the revolt continued to aim at the expulsion of the British and Jewish presence, and many, perhaps most, of the band leaders remained solely committed to this priority. There is good evidence that some major guerilla leaders violently disagreed with the assassination of fellow Arabs. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥājj Muḥammad, for example, is said to have regularly been hostile to the Ḥusaynī faction's plans, and a major source of tension between him and the other major leader, ʿĀrif ʿAbd al-Rāziq, was the latter's willingness to engage in factional assassination (Great Britain, 1938).

The revolt, in this stage, despite its often factional character, was quite successful as a result of the committment of such leaders as ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥājj Muḥammad. By mid-1938 the Mandate administration could claim little control outside of the major cities. Even Jerusalem was controlled in name only; the Old City became as dangerous to British personnel as the countryside.

The peasant nature of the revolt asserted itself strongly in this period. In the towns, the peasants' *kūfīyah* and *ʿiqāl*, the traditional headgear, came to replace the *tarbūsh* of Turkish origin (Darwazah, 1950, p. 207). This was partially a symbolic recognition of the nature of the revolt by townsmen and a show of solidarity, partially a means of camouflaging peasants (and therefore possible rebels) from the eyes of the authorities, and partially an imposition of the peasant rebels on the townsmen (Hirst, 1977, p. 90). In those areas controlled by the rebel bands, *sharīʿah* courts were established to try offenders and mete out punishment.

Gradually, as the revolt ran into 1938, relations deteriorated between rebel guerilla bands and the villagers on whom they depended. The reasons for this were many. The British were putting large forces into the field to crush not only the rebels, but also anyone who was suspected of harboring or assisting them. The possession of firearms was made a capital offense. Worst of all, villages were considered corporately responsible for any assistance given to guerillas, and were decimated even when only a few inhabitants were actually suspected. The rebels' demands were therefore less than welcome in many areas. Extortion, threat, and violence against villagers at the hands of guerillas grew, too (Darwazah, 1950, p. 216) and village shaykhs began to organize groups to defend their people. In this latter endeavor, a great deal of assistance was given by the

Nashashibi faction (Great Britain, 1939a). It is important to note that this violence was not carried out by all bands or guerillas, but was characteristic of those bands which were involved in factional in-fighting.

None the less, persecution of villagers was serious enough for the regional guerilla leaders to issue manifestos declaring that those who committed offenses against villagers would be tried for high treason by a rebel court (Great Britain, 1938b). In one case, a reprimand was issued to a local guerilla chieftain by ᶜĀrif ᶜAbd al-Rāziq, and the culprit promptly attempted to murder him in retaliation (ibid.).

Massive British military pressure began to take its toll at the end of 1938. The British massed 20,000 troops in Palestine, and made heavy use of RAF planes to strafe and bomb suspected rebels. The withdrawal of much peasant support, and the active Nashāshībī-led resistance to the rebels made the latter's activities insecure even among their own people. The lack of a coherent leadership, and the factional squabbling which increased in late 1938 led to a dissolution of the resistance structure.

The revolt's symbolic end came with the death of the most respected of the surviving band leaders, ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥājj Muḥammad in March, 1939. It is a mark of the factional depths into which the revolt had fallen that a Nashāshībī follower and anti-rebel fighter, Farīd al-Irshayd, supplied the army with information disclosing the leader's whereabouts, and fought alongside the British in the ambush which took his life (Yāsīn, 1967b, p. 198; Great Britain, 1939b).

The Great Arab Revolt began, then, in 1936 as a spontaneous popular uprising. It returned in a second phase with less of this spontaneity and populist nature, and developed eventually into a movement often preoccupied with factional in-fighting. In the end, it lost a great deal of support from those who had been its original prime-movers - the peasantry. Responsibility for this loss of support was put squarely on the shoulders of the faction leaders. A striking example of this is an open letter from former guerilla leaders exiled in Syria which was published in mid-1939 (Great Britain, 1939a). In this letter, the former guerilla commanders bitterly condemned Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, saying that he had exploited the revolt as a means of gaining advantage over his political rivals. They accused the Ḥusaynī faction of plotting assassinations of fellow Arabs during the revolt for reasons of 'satisfaction of their revenge and personal hatred'.

The ghost of *aᶜyān* politics haunted the end of the revolt. Though beginning as a populist revolt, its death came about as a result of attempts to exploit it by the elite for their own ends - ends which ultimately served no one.

VI

We now return to the question of what effect Qassām's movement had on the Arab revolt of 1936-9. That Qassām was a crucial catalytic element in the events of the period is unquestionable, but with the exception of Yehoshua Porath, no historian has gone into detail on how it was that Qassām served this function beyond saying that oaths were sworn in his name, his example was used in mosques in exhortations to rebel, and that his name was used by several guerilla groups. In this section, we will look at the wider effects of Qassām on the revolt, focussing on leadership and ideology.

Qassām and Leadership

Porath's study of the revolt provides much of the key information on Qassām's effect on the revolt's leadership. Porath demonstrates that the backbone of the revolt was composed of leaders who had been followers of Qassām and his ideology; they were the most active, and formed the single largest element of the rebellion's leadership. In order to look at this subject clearly, it is necessary to go back in time a little and set the scene.

It is easy to be misled by the course of events involved in Qassām's death and the start of the revolt some five or six months later. There is no gap between these two points; that is, there is no lull in guerilla attacks between these events. The fact is that directly after Qassām's death, groups of his men took to the hills and began to launch operations against the enemy and to organize peasants. I would argue, then, that the revolt actually began with the death of the shaykh, and that the starting date usually given for the revolt (April-May 1936) is a historiographic fiction that only marks the sudden broadening of participation in the revolt which attended the formation of the national committees and the declaration of the strike. Thus Qassām and his organization were not just in at the beginning of the revolt, they *were* that beginning itself.

Qassām's followers were the actors involved in the opening shots of both phases of the rebellion: the murders on the Ṭulkarm road in 1936, and the assassination of Lewis Andrews in 1937. Their more important role as leaders carrying out Qassāmite ideology is best illustrated by turning to Porath's compilation of material on the revolt leadership. Porath shows that the major leaders of the revolt were drawn from among the followers of Qassām; they were invariably found at the highest levels of command (1977, p. 263) as regional commanders, band commanders, and sub-band commanders. This reflects, I would argue, not only the level of organization of Qassām's followers, but the extent to which they were respected and followed by the peasants who made up the bulk of participants in the rebellion. This respect and prestige is also mirrored in the case of Farḥān al-Sa^{c}di, a major Qassāmite, whose execution by the British was a factor in the intensification of anti-British activity in 1937.

Qassām as an ideal was also influential in the recruitment of many non-Palestinian Arabs into the revolt, at least at the leadership level (Kanafānī, 1972, p. 65).

A most interesting piece of information on Qassām's effect with regard to leadership and commitment in the rebellion is that those areas which were most heavily influenced by him during his life, and in which could be found the highest concentration of his followers, were also the areas of the fiercest and most sustained fighting. Porath points out that by far the largest group of leaders came from those areas influenced by Qassām (1977, pp. 262-3), and that the geographical distribution of involvement in guerilla activities coincides with this sphere of Qassām's influence. Bowden notes that in Northern Galilee, a strongly Qassāmite area, the fighting was 'so intense that it almost represented a sub-war; a war within the over-all revolt' (1975, p. 160).

A final piece of evidence is an illuminating comment from Muṣṭafā Bey al-Khālidī to the High Commissioner for Palestine on 8 August, 1939 (Great Britain, 1939a). Al-Khālidī stated that rebel resistance had finally been wiped out, with the exception of Qassāmite bands still operating around Haifa. Qassām and his men thus began the revolt in 1935, and as late as the summer of 1939 the shaykh's followers were still to be found fighting in the area where the populist revolt was born, bitterly determined to keep it alive.

Qassām and Populist Ideology

In my view, the most important effect of Qassām, and the key to the redemptive character of his movement, is in the area of Islamic populist ideology. I believe that the change from *aʿyān* party politics to popular resistance cannot be understood without reference to this phenomenon; Qassām was the trigger of a populist revolt, and the primary factor behind this role was his ideology of Islamic populism.

By 'Islamic populist', I mean any movement which uses Islamic concepts to argue for, and in many cases to demand, the participation of a mass of people in social action. These movements are often, though by no means usually, devoid of scholastic or theological argument. Rather, they employ the concept of *jihād* (struggle, holy war) as a necessity to protect the Faith, and an array of negative concepts (*kufār* 'unbelievers'; *mushrikūn*, 'polytheists') to characterize the targets of the movement. In this way action becomes populist in the sense that Muslims feel it a requirement of faith *(farḍ)* to participate in the action.

Qassām's ideology, as we have seen, was a classic example of this Islamic populism. His call was aimed at all levels of society, particularly at the lower classes, and focussed on the religious demand to expel the British and Zionists from Palestine. This being the case, if his ideology did have an impact on the revolt, we should find an element of this style of thought in evidence during the revolt, and that it should be strongly associated with

the most highly populist (i.e. non-*aᶜyān*, non-party) element of the revolt. This is, in fact, what we find; texts, such as declarations, exhibit an unequivocally Muslim populist appeal to arms to save the Holy Land. In these texts, the use of the conceptual field of *jihād* with its attendant concepts of *mujāhid* (one who fights in a struggle for the Faith) and *shahīd* (a martyr in the Path of God) are used continually as part of the description of the revolt. Two important examples should serve to illustrate the point.

The first example is the text of Fawz al-Dīn al-Qāwuqjī's first communiqué titled 'Proclamation from the General Leadership of the Arab Revolt in Southern Syria-Palestine' which is dated 28 August 1936 (Al-Kayyālī, 1968, p. 433). The communiqué, which was the opening announcement of a unified revolt command, begins with several well-known verses of the Qur'ān stressing the necessity of *jihād* and God's promise to assist those who fight for Him; they are among the verses used by Qassām in his teachings:

> Go forth heavily armed or lightly, and struggle with your wealth and your lives in the Path of God. That is best for you if you but knew it (Sūrat al-Tawbah: 41).
>
> If you do not go forth, He will afflict you with a painful doom, and will put another nation in your place. You cannot harm him, for God is able to do all things (Sūrat al-Tawbah: 39).

The text goes on:

> [Palestine] incites us to expend ourselves in the Path of God in order that the world might bear witness to the unity of nation, hope and blood in all the Arab countries; for we are Arab volunteers in the army of your immortal *jihād* and your holy rebellion [*thawratika al-muqaddasah*] . . . [The Arabs] call to battle in the path of freedom, independence and hope, and see in the rebellion against oppression a religious duty [*wājiban dīnīyan*] . . . To arms in defense of the first *qiblah* and the second of the Noble Holy Sanctuaries!

The communiqué ends with Āyah III of Sūrat al-Tawbah describing God's promise of the rewards of martyrdom.

The second text (Darwazah, 1959, pp. 210-11) is dated 1938 and is signed by the General Leadership of the Revolt in Palestine. The document is addressed to the Arab Nation as a whole, but is clearly meant largely for the village population of Palestine. Some excerpts:

> The *mujāhidīn* have pledged themselves to God and have gone forth in submission to Him, and only to serve His purpose, the *jihād* in His Path, and to gain His reward *(mathwabahu)* and His favor. They will not be satisfied with anything else, and

> they do not seek power. They believe in that which God has promised [to martyrs] . . . and they race triumphantly to the battlefield of *jihād* and martyrdom in the cause of truth. . . . We call upon every Arab and Muslim to support the *jihād* in the Path of God and to assist the *mujahīdīn* in the defense of the Holy Land, which is a trust to every one of them, and for which each will be answerable before God, man and history. We proceed along this path - if God wills - to write the victory of this nation and follow the command of God. 'God gives victory to those who assist him.' 'If you assist God, He will grant you victory and guide your steps.' God is our trust and He gives comfort to the trusting and the ally.

In both of these texts, which are among the few declarations of guerilla leaders, we find the Islamic populist conception of the revolt. It must be stressed again, however, that this idiom was first introduced as a systematic ideology in Palestinian political culture by Shaykh al-Qassām, and was carried on in his name and by his own followers in the revolt that ensued. Qassām encouraged the notion of popular resistance, but did it through the vehicle of Islamic populism. As we saw in the previous chapter, Islam was earlier a part of *aʿyān* politics, but it appeared for the most part in the context of a pan-Islamic demand for Muslim unity, and as such held appeal for those who understood the arguments of pan-Islamism. Qassām's creed was effective in creating a sense of the necessity of *popular* participation, and in doing so he altered the course of Palestinian political action.

VII

The study of social movements is often plagued by piecemeal analysis. Central concern is placed on demonstrating the causal finality of one element or another in the historical milieu of the movement; that it was 'really' a product of the power alignments and economic order which prevailed, or that it was an expression in action of some aspect of the symbolic realm - religion, philosophy, political theory and so on. The question which needs to be answered, and is too often begged, is why a particular constellation of beliefs was held by certain people under particular socio-economic conditions.

In concluding this chapter, I am going to attempt to answer this question with regard to Qassām, his movement and the rebellion; why was Qassām with his populist creed able to trigger a shift to popular resistance in Palestine? The answer to this lies for the most part in the redemptive character of his movement, and its Islamic idiom. First it is necessary to review the redemptive process which underlay his movement.

The conditions of the British occupation and Zionist settlement put an enormous strain on the Palestinian Arabs, and the peasantry

in particular. Land sales, expulsion from their land, alienation in urban areas and abject poverty in the slums of the cities put an intolerable weight of oppression on them. As Kanafānī pointed out, expulsion of peasants meant not just the end of their means of livelihood, but the collapse of a world-view (1972, p. 51). These kinds of pressures are ones all too tragically familiar to the student of social movements.

At the same time, the political hierarchy of traditional Palestinian society still held a monopoly of power, as a result of education, wealth, and religious office, as well as kin, faction and debt ties. This elite was caught in its own web of class interests and inter-factional feuding. Their class interests kept them from wavering seriously from a moderate and generally conciliatory position toward the Mandate, while their factional warfare kept them from dealing effectively with the pressure which choked the mass of people.

These are classic conditions for a redemptive movement: intolerable destructive pressures on the one hand, and a lack of existing means of alleviating them on the other - in the case of the Palestinians, a genuine blockage to effective action against the British and Zionists existed in the form of elite and party politics. Redemption, in the form of a solution to this dilemma, came in the form of the popular resistance preached by Qassām. This ideology side-stepped the blockage to action by calling for a war to protect the Faith - a duty encumbent on every Muslim and therefore requiring mass participation. The shaykh's definition of the British and Jews as *kufār* who sought to attack Palestine was emotionally compelling.

The reasons for the effectiveness of an Islamic vehicle for this redemptive process are clear. There is no doubt that the idea of *national* interests - even the idea of nation itself - were foreign to the Palestinian peasantry. The very name 'Palestine' was new and uncomfortable, as witnessed by the references to 'Southern Syria' as an appellation for the country in this and earlier periods. Ties of faction, clan, and religion remained of greatest importance to the mass of Palestinians. Of these, faction, kin and clan ties had no utility as a symbolic armature on which to mold an ideology for mass resistance. If anything, they were a hindrance, as factional ties and their attendant feuds had proved. Islam, however, was highly appropriate; faced with a foreign enemy of two different religions who sought domination over the second holiest land of the Faith, Islam provided the cultural categories, in the conceptual field of *jihād*, to encompass and organize resistance. Qassām's creed demanded popular resistance as a matter of conscience, indeed morality, for the Muslim population. The way to redemption - to the restoration of personal and cultural integrity and stability - lay in participation in the *jihād*. There is no mystery to this phenomenon; it is perfectly comprehensible. Islam was the most appropriate available symbolic idiom for the redemptive process behind mass resistance. The fractured society of Palestine in

this era found renewed articulation in Islam for it wove together the greatest number of threads in the lives of those who were most oppressed. It linked the individual to God's enterprise in the doctrine of struggle in His Path, and in so doing gave him closer ties to fellow believers and to the homeland - and did so in a manner which was effectively and conceptually more powerful in that time and place than those conceived of in the idiom of kin, faction, or secular nationalism. It was a doctrine that could be understood at many different levels of sophistication, and therefore had the greatest breadth of appeal and application. We would do well to recall the words quoted above of Ibrahīm al-Shaykh Khalīl, the Qassāmite who explained the shaykh's appeal both before and after his death: in *jihād* there are no personal, ideological or ethical problems to trip up participants.

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the revolt triggered by Qassām's original brotherhood had been. The elements of Islamic reform, for example, which had been a personal preoccupation of the shaykh did not surface in the populism of the revolt. Neither can it be claimed that Qassām and his ideology served as the model for *all* popular resistance in Palestine during this period. Many secular nationalists and Christians would obviously have participated in the battles of the period without finding in Qassām a convincing or appealing paradigm.

But it is important on the other hand, that those in the vanguard of the popular resistance, such as ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥājj Muḥammad, conceived of themselves as *mujāhidīn* engaged in a struggle in the Path of God. This, in the end, was Qassām's legacy to Palestinian political culture: a broadened and heightened popular conception of resistance as a religious, and therefore a moral and ethical, duty. It remains now to explore in the next chapter the question of how these elements of religion and resistance continue to be linked in contemporary Palestinian political culture.

3 ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

PREFACE: ALIENATION AND IDENTITY

The collapse of the populist revolt of the 1930s spelled the collapse of the whole of the Palestinian nationalist movement. The popular leaders - most of them guerillas - were either dead or had fled the country. The *aʿyān* elite were by and large discredited and those who had not gone into exile, voluntary or forced, stayed quiet or collaborated with the British. Wartime measures combined with depletion of will and resources effectively ruled out any nationalist action.

The creation of Israel, and the 1948 war found the Palestinians without a solid political infrastructure. A valiant resistance was finally overcome by the Israeli forces, and the uprooting of the Palestinian Arabs was effected by terror and murder. The tale of the Palestinian Diaspora does not need re-telling here; it is a tragedy whose details are all too well known to anyone familiar with contemporary history. The humiliation and deepening despair brought on by the 1967 war only piled another burden on to the shoulders of an exiled people, and made many more Palestinians into refugees from their homeland.

My intention in this short preface is to examine two themes that run through the world-view of Palestinian exiles, themes which must be understood in order to comprehend both the revival of Palestinian nationalism as an active movement in the mid-1960s and the nature of any ideological form within that revival. These themes are those of alienation and identity. The tension between these two facets of Palestinian existence - between being denied the status of normal humanity on the one hand, and the burning concern with maintaining Palestinian identity on the other - has generated nearly all forms of Palestinian nationalism as it is found today. They are the poles of Palestinian existence which defy any barrier of distance, class differences, or biography between exiles; they are the essence of being Palestinian.

The twin themes of alienation and identity are inseparable. To examine one is to define the other; Palestinians feel alienated from normal human social expectations because of the loss of a homeland which gave them, in large measure, their social and cultural identity, an identity which has been preserved and even enhanced through the decades of exile. This maintenance of identity, in its turn, has to a significant degree occurred through the commonly experienced sense of alienation.

This unity of themes poses a dilemma for a brief elucidation such as this. As one theme implies the other, they cannot easily be separated or discussed independently. This being the case, I have chosen to present this overview with an organizing focus on modes of expression of alienation and identity. I have grouped these into four board categories: exegetical, literary, social structural and political.

A word on terms is necessary here. 'Alienation' in the sense in which I am using it here refers to a conscious awareness of being cut off from or kept outside of a perceived social normality. Although Marx's concept of alienation as man's unconscious state of having his products overwhelm and dominate him can apply easily to the Palestinians, I feel that the conscious level of alienation is more crucial for the purposes of this essay. I will concentrate here on alienation from Arab social and cultural norms and the sense of being outsiders in the Arab world; the reasons for this are that alienation from homeland is obviously the major issue, but the implications of this separation for Palestinians' relations with the rest of the Arab world are not widely understood. 'Identity' here means the sense of community; of sharing common culture, experience, trauma, interests, and goals. In all of the modes of expression discussed below, one or the other of these two themes will inevitably be emphasized in any given example, but the implications for the twin of a particular theme will be obvious in each case.

Exegetic Mode

By exegetic I mean here simply explanations and interpretations given by individual Palestinians in the course of field research. In order to broaden the scope of this section, I have supplemented my own work with examples from the excellent study by Rosemary Sayigh (1979).

One of the most incisive comments on both alienation and identity came to me from several different individuals who referred to themselves and to Palestinians in general as *qamīṣ ʿuthmān*, 'ʿUthman's Shirt'. Asking what this meant led me early in my field research into the complexities of Palestinian alienation. One man explained it this way:

> We are only ʿUthmān's Shirt. After the Caliph ʿUthmān was murdered, leaders would say 'I do this in the name of ʿUthmān' when they wanted people to believe them. But they only used his name. They waved his bloody shirt. Today we Palestinians are ʿUthmān's Shirt. . . .

This phrase, 'ʿUthmān's Shirt', sets the note around which the rest of this discussion reverberates. To think of oneself and one's primary social identity as existing for others solely as a rallying point, and to be convinced that even then a deep hostility underlies overt sympathies is the depths of alienation. It is, to use Turner's phrase (1969), a liminal state: a state

defined by reversals and inversions of normal human social interaction, a state of existing in the interstices between human statuses.

The persecution of Palestinians by other Arabs is the most alienating of experiences. To be expelled from one's homeland by foreigners is difficult to conceive of, but to be reviled by self-proclaimed sympathizers - to be reduced to ᶜUthmān's Shirt - is incomprehensible:

> The real enemy of the Palestinians is the other Arabs. That is because we know the Zionists are against us, but the Arabs say they are our friends and brothers, but the truth is that they just use us for what they need. King Ḥusayn said he would help us fight the Jews. Then he and his Bedu murdered our people. We have no friends.
>
> They [the Arabs] are not helping us, though they say they are. We work hard for them because we must, but if we don't like something, they say 'why don't you go home?'. They think that's funny.

Sayigh (1979, p. 127) summarizes the overall tone of this alienation of Palestinians in the Arab world:

> Camp Palestinians felt that the normal laws of reciprocity had been cancelled in their case: they followed the rules and got punished; they worked hard, yet were badly paid; they treated others well, but others treated them badly.

The sense of dwelling in a liminal state in which the normal laws of society not only did not apply but were inverted gave rise to a high concern with Palestinian identity and its maintenance. One of the symptoms of this is found in the everyday vocabulary of selfhood. Palestinians refer to themselves and their society as 'the revolution', *al-thawrah;* they are not so much a society as a movement, a thing unfolding. This was expressed to me in the following terms:

> We aren't a people. A people has a territory. We have a homeland (*waṭn*) but no land. We aren't a people, we are a movement (*ḥarakah*). The revolution is the Palestinians.

The semantic dimensions of *al-thawrah* will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, but a final quote from Sayigh points at the redemptive character of revolution in the lives of exiles:

> I was proud to be Palestinian, but others insulted us. It was because of such things that I was waiting for anyone to make a revolution, and, thank God, it came and I can share in it (ibid., p. 136).

Literary Mode

Contemporary Palestinian literature is a living part of Palestinian society. Poetry is a very common part of many gatherings and literary figures such as Ghassān Kanafānī have been active political figures. Not surprisingly, the themes of alienation and identity are the core of this literature. The young Palestinian poet laureate Maḥmud Darwīsh is among the most articulate in expressing alienation in his 'Letter from Exile' written in 1973:

> Father, sisters, relatives and friends . . .
> Perhaps you live
> Perhaps you are dead
> Or perhaps, like me, you have no address.
> What is a man worth
> Without a homeland
> Without a flag
> Without an address
> What is a man worth?
> (pp. 51-2)

Ḥalīm Barakat, in his novel *Days of Dust*, carries this theme of alienation into the realm of liminality and inversion in this dialogue:

> 'You're a Muslim!'
> 'No. I reject and am rejected. I'm not a believer, but not an atheist either.'
> 'You're a Communist?'
> 'No, but not a capitalist.'
> 'You're a rightist?'
> 'No.'
> 'You're a leftist?'
> 'No.'
> 'Well, what are you then?'
> 'I am not anything. All I know of myself is that I reject and am rejected . . .' (1974, p. 7).

Fawaz Turki's autobiography, *The Disinherited*, provides some of the most cutting comments on alienation in Palestinian literature:

> I hated. I hated the world and the order of reality around me. I hated being the victim of social and political Darwinism. I hated not being part of a culture. I hated being a hybrid, an outcast, a zero. A problem. Dwelling in a world that suspended me aloft, petrified my being and denied me a place among men until the problem was resolved. A world where this problem and I became interchangeable. Where I, the problem, was ignored by some, rejected by others, and derided by the rest (1972, p. 77).

Turki describes how the revolution and his commitment to it eventually allowed him to regain his identity as part of the Palestinian community. The rage he describes as part of his youth, which stemmed from constant harassment by other Arabs and humiliation at his non-status, is a common element in Palestinian literature. Mahmud Darwīsh in his 'Naive Song for the Red Cross' gives tongue to the humiliation and rage of the camp refugee:

> They forbade me the cradles of day
> They kneaded mud into my bread . . . and dust into my eyelashes
> They took from me my wooden horse
> And made me carry the burdens from my father's back
> Made me carry a year in a single night
> Who in one night exploded me into a torrent of fire
> Who stripped me of a dove's nature
> Under the flags of the Red Cross (1973, pp. 272-3).

The despair of alienation, however, is answered in Darwīsh's work through the confirmation that despite the "wound" of separation from Palestine, his identity is still with the land:

> Contemptuous wound
> My homeland is not a suitcase
> And I am not a traveller.
> I am the lover and the land the beloved (1973, p. 390).

Palestinian literature, in the end, is itself the most powerful negation of the alienation with which it is preoccupied. The poetry of resistance and struggle is part of Palestinian identity and community and serves to express the communal sentiments of a scattered people.

Social Structural Mode

One of the most important factors in the maintenance and continuity of Palestinian identity in the face of alienation has been the preservation of traditional social structures in refugee camps, and the attendant continuity in traditional norms.

From the first months of the Diaspora, Palestinian villagers and townsmen continued to co-reside and to turn for leadership to traditional headmen and notables. Villagers tended to regroup in camps according to their village affiliation and replicate the social structure of the villages from which they had been expelled (Sirḥān, 1974, pp. 64-7). The *ḥamūlah* (patrilineage) discussed in chapter one remained the key organizational focus of social life. Village headmen and notables maintained their old positions as leaders in the camps, although the notables lost much of their remaining claim to leadership by living in major cities in comfort. Gradually, however, these traditional figures of authority have been supplanted in the camps by guerilla leaders.

The maintenance of traditional social structure has been an important factor in the preservation and assertion of Palestinian identity. Social fragmentation - breakdown of family life, traditional norms and so forth - has been kept to a lower degree than that found among other refugee populations. It has provided a means of dealing with alienation in that it allows a social unit with a history and a particular territorial identity to realize that it still exists despite the dispersal of the population - that the members of the group may have been expelled from their land, but that something powerful still remains of the old way of life. It has also provided for continuity of identity between generations; it allows young people to grow up in a group which existed before the Diaspora and makes the idea of the homeland less elusive.

Political Mode

The problems of alienation and identity have also found major expression in the realm of power relations and organization. The most obvious of these is the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO as it exists today is an expression of the alienation of Palestinians in that it was taken over by the Palestinians themselves after the 1967 war. The war, known as *al-hazīmah*, The Defeat, was a humiliating blow to the Arab world in general and many political reform movements and progressive intellectual currents can be traced directly back to it. For the Palestinians, however, The Defeat crystallized nearly 20 years of doubts, often unexpressed, about the sincerity of Arab intentions in their regard, and certainly about the Arab regimes' abilities to regain Palestine.

In 1965, the first independent Palestinian guerilla group, Al-Fatḥ, had emerged but had little mass following and even less Arab backing. After the 1967 war, this emergent independence led Palestinians to take control of the PLO itself which had up until that time been a body created and run by leaders taking orders from Egypt's Nasir. In a short time, the PLO was headed by Yāsir ᶜArafāt, a politically moderate leader who was the head of Al-Fatḥ.

The PLO has consistently made a policy of asserting Palestinian identity. This is done through schools which teach the history and culture of the Palestinian Arabs. The PLO has attempted to protect this identity through such means as discouraging schemes for giving Palestinian exiles official citizenship in host countries on a large scale. This, they fear, could eventually lead to a dilution of the sense of being Palestinian and distract from the primary problem of regaining their rights.

This sort of action for the protection of identity occurs spontaneously, too. Even in the 1950s there were protests by camp dwellers against attempts to make the camps seem more permanent - by planting trees, for example (Hirst, 1977, p. 266). The logic of this and similar moves was explained to me time and again: if the Palestinians move from the camps, or accept citizenship in

another country, they will cease to have a distinct identity after a few decades, and if they permit this to happen, they will lose their struggle for rights in their own land.

Palestinian society today is an entity for which one is hard put to find parallels in recent history. It is a *society* by any accepted definition of the term: with a common language, a range of shared norms, a great deal of shared experience, but most important of all a concept of selfhood, of being a community. But it is a scattered society, its members either in exile or under occupation, and this makes its selfhood an object of constant attention and its boundaries the focus of much probing and shoring-up. It is, in the final analysis, an anti-structure - a liminal body defining its present in terms of its past and its future in terms of inversions of normality and with reference to what it has lost.

In the preceding chapters, ideology was dealt with in the context of a social reality dominated by traditional class relations, then later with the breakdown of the old order. In the present chapter, we are dealing with Islamic ideology as it appears in the matrix of a contemporary Palestinian reality, given shape and direction by the forces of alienation and identity.

I

In this chapter I will argue that in contemporary Palestinian political culture, Islamic ideation has become closely interwoven into the fabric of the wider ideological domains of national consciousness and struggle. It does not form a coherent indigenous theory of the Palestinian movement, as it did for some groups in previous periods, as we have seen in the preceding chapters. Rather, I will demonstrate that Islamic ideation exists as highly ambiguous symbolic formulations which are susceptible to wide application and interpretation by individuals and groups in modes which can be both secular and religious in connotation. This high ambiguity has implications for the Palestinian political process, which will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter.

The primary task here will be to demonstrate the high degree of ambiguity found in Islamic ideation; to show its wide range of connotations in different contexts - connotations which range from the clearly religious to the secular. This task will be carried out by the use of methods drawn from symbolic anthropology applied to materials collected in field research and to textual analyses of Palestinian political materials.

I have chosen two of the many methodological devices available for the analysis of meaning: the concept of 'key symbol' which has been most highly developed by Ortner (1973), and the approach to semantic fields as described and utilized by Izutsu (1966). Simply put, I will describe here sets of key symbols, with both Islamic and secular origins, and then demonstrate the interpenetration of their semantic fields which produces that suscepti-

bility to broad ranges of interpretation which I am calling ambiguity. Before embarking on this analysis, it is necessary to discuss the nature of both key symbols and semantic fields.

Key symbols are those which dominate a conceptual system by virtue of their relatively great capacity either to summarize or to elaborate on the social world (Ortner, 1973). These summarizing and elaborating modes of key symbols are not pure categories, but are analytical devices which represent the ends of a continuum; that is, key symbols commonly operate in both modes. In the summarizing mode, meanings are compressed and provide representations of general cultural orientations. Ortner suggests the American flag as an example of this mode. The elaborating mode of a key symbol is that which supplies categories for sorting out the world and implicit strategies for action. This mode operates largely in a metaphoric manner, drawing on analogues from other domains to provide meaning. Here, Ortner uses the role of cattle in Dinka culture to illustrate her point; cattle serve the Dinka as symbolic templates for conceptualizing social relations (Ibid., p. 1340). Key symbols, then, are 'key' at both emic and etic levels; for the social actor, they provide important bases for integrating and ordering his social world. For the social scientist, discovery and exegesis of these symbols provide crucial clues to dominant themes in the structure of a culture.

Ortner describes what she calls a 'key scenario' in an ideational system. This is an event or a narrative in which the dominant themes defined and represented by key symbols are displayed and integrated. Ortner uses the Horatio Alger myth as an example of an American key scenario, in which the key symbols of free enterprise, personal freedom, democracy and success are all played out. Alternately, the passion of Ḥusayn at Karbalā' serves as a key scenario for the Shīᶜah Muslims, and is kept alive by its yearly re-enactment on the tenth of Muḥarram.

Key symbols can be recognized by an assortment of characteristics. Ortner suggests five indicators that a particular element of culture is a key symbol:

(1) We are told that it is important.
(2) It arouses positive or negative reactions rather than indifference.
(3) It appears in many different contexts or symbolic domains.
(4) It is surrounded by a greater elaboration or vocabulary, or details of characteristics and so forth, than other cultural phenomena.
(5) It is surrounded by a greater number of cultural restrictions, sanctions or rules than similar phenomena.

The key symbols which are to be explored in this chapter are 'key' according to several of the criteria listed by Ortner; they appear more frequently than similar concepts, as a word count has established (Johnson, 1977): they have a great deal of

elaboration surrounding them, and they appear in many different domains.

But the most important single indicator of the key nature of the symbols to be analysed here is an historical one; the Islamic concepts to be discussed have been prominent ones in the history of Palestinian nationalism. In the previous chapters we saw these concepts playing important parts in the politics of various groups. This was especially true in the last chapter in which it was argued that the notion of populist action, triggered by the ideology of Shaykh al-Qassām and those directly or indirectly following him, was largely based on Islamic concepts.

The historical prominence of these symbols is especially significant for two reasons. First, their occurrence in widely separated periods under very different circumstances indicates that they represent major ideological components in Palestinian nationalism. Second, the fact that such continuities in ideology exist at all helps lay to rest the obvious methodological question of why these particular symbols were chosen for analysis: they form semantic fields which have been, and clearly still are, major constructs in Palestinian world view. Thus the rationale behind their analysis is clear, and their importance for an historical understanding of Palestinian political culture unexaggerated.

The notion of semantic field has been, to my mind, most creatively used by Toshihiko Izutsu (1966) in his study of the ethical structure of the Qur'ān. Izutsu studied the ethical terms of pre-Islamic Arabia and those of the Qur'ān in order to establish how the former system was transformed and incorporated into the message of Muḥammad's revelation.

Semantic field theory focuses on the argument that terms which are related to each other in a symbolic system will co-occur in important contexts. The symbols can thus be shown to have a common referential domain. Usually they are linked by metonymy; that is, one term implies the other. For example, an investigator probing the meaning of the term 'honesty' will find many of its dimensions by examining the other terms which co-occur with it. He would find that some of these dimensions are the qualities 'trustworthy', 'straightforward', 'open', 'loyal' and so forth. This analytical device allows one to demonstrate systematically the meaning-content of a given set of symbols, and does so in a somewhat more 'objective' and replicable manner than purely intuitive analysis.

My primary aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that two semantic fields of key symbols which stand by themselves lexicographically, have come to overlap in Palestinian political culture, providing an ambiguous and flexible symbolic framework for the ordering of the Palestinian social universe.

II

In order to carry out the aims of this chapter, I will proceed along the following lines:
(1) Introduce two sets of key symbols, one with strong religious origins, connotations and use in Palestinian political history, and a second set with secular-nationalist origins. Obviously, if the main object of this chapter is to show the contemporary ambiguity of religious and secular symbols, then the two domains must be analysed together. Both sets of symbols will be first introduced with a discussion of their 'neutral' semantics, that is, of their range of meaning in Arabic lexicography as distinct from the context of Palestinian political culture.
(2) Demonstrate that these two sets of symbols are tightly interrelated by examining examples from field research and from texts.
(3) Describe and analyse two key scenarios in which the interplay of these symbols can be seen in a well-defined context.

Key Symbols: Lexicographic Range
This section will introduce the purely lexicographic semantics of these symbols. The symbols and the semantic fields which they form are the following:

Islamic:	*Jihād*	Secular-Nationalist:	*Thawrah*
	Shahīd		*Isti^{c}mār*
	Mujāhid		*Ṣahyūnīyah*
	Al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasah		*Fidā'ī*

Islamic Lexicographic Set
This lexicographic semantic field consists of key symbols whose origins are Islamic. They are linked by metonymy - by chains of logical implication - as a result of their common origin.

Jihād The term *jihād* is derived from the verb *yujāhada*, meaning to struggle violently, or to wage war, and especially war or struggle for the sake of Islam. Lane's Lexicon describes the word in the following manner:

> The use or exerting of one's utmost power, efforts, endeavors, or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation; and this is of three kinds, namely a visible enemy, the devil, and one's self . . . jihād came to signify generally 'he fought, warred or waged war' against unbelievers and the like (1863).

Jihād meaning holy war is one of the few Islamic terms which is commonly recognized in the West, and is rather less than well understood. *Jihād*, in Arabic, is frequently linked with the phrase *fī sabīl Allāh* and in such conjunction can be translated as 'struggle or endeavor in the Path of God'. This, of course, can refer to holy war, but can also refer to a personal struggle

to be righteous: 'the greatest *jihād*', said the Prophet, 'is the struggle against the evil passions of oneself'. The concept of *jihād* in general appears in the Qur'ān:

> Any who struggle [jāhid] do so for their own souls;
> For God is free of all needs from Creation (Qur'ān, 29:6).
>
> And those who struggle for Us We will surely guide them in Our Path;
> For God surely is with the Righteous (Qur'ān, 29:69).

In the Ḥadīth, the Prophetic Traditions, the meaning of *jihād* as holy war is made clear:

> The Apostle of God said: He who meets God without wound of *jihād*, meets God with defect in him (Ibn Maja)
>
> The Prophet of God was asked . . . which *jihād* is best? He said: He who fights the polytheists with his property and his life (Abu Daud).

In Islamic law, *jihād* is a *farḍ al-kifāyah*, an obligation upon Muslims from which the majority are relieved as long as some of the members of the community perform the action (Khaddūri, 1955). The *jihād* is divided into several different types (ibid, p. 80); against polytheists, apostasy, dissenters and so on. The clearest broad category for the objects of *jihād* is that of threats to the Muslim community.

The *jihād* can be directed against the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) who are tolerated normally if they pay the poll-tax *(jizyah)*. If they refuse to pay the tax, they can be considered beyond the pale of toleration and war with them is allowed. Obviously war with the People of the Book is never questioned if they constitute a threat to the Muslim community.

Jihād, then, has the meaning of struggle, commonly in the form of warfare for the sake of the Faith, and in the context of safeguarding the Muslim community. It is the widest category of the religious semantic field in Palestinian political culture, and the terms to follow in this section fall into the semantic field of *jihād*.

Mujāhid This key symbol is linked closely to *jihād* linguistically as both share a common derivation from the root *JHD* and both have come to have a specific Islamic content. *Mujāhid* literally means 'one who struggles', but its recognized meaning is that of a holy warrior or a soldier in a *jihād*. It stands in sharp contrast to such words as *jundī* or *muqātil* which carry simply the notion of fighter or combatant.

Mujāhid is commonly used in the context of Islamic social movements. Mitchell, for example, cites the use of *mujāhid* in the terminology of the Muslim Brotherhood to signify the highest

level of membership in that organization: a level open only to those most dedicated to the service of 'God and Message', and who had fulfilled to the highest degree their responsibilities to Islam and to the Brotherhood (Mitchell, 1969, p. 31). The Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist journal 'Al-Da^{c}wah' refers to any prominent Muslim activist as *mujāhid:* Abu A^{c}lā Al-Mawdūdi, for example (Al-Da^{c}wah', November 1979). Finally, *mujāhid* was also used to refer to the strict Wahhabī *Ikhwān* of the early Saudi state, with the specific meaning of 'holy warrior' (Cole, 1973, p. 124).

Although *mujāhid* refers generally to a fighter in a holy war, it is also used to refer to someone who is active in protecting Islam, in any capacity. This stems from, and dovetails with, the notion of *jihād* as meaning not only active warfare for the Faith, but any struggle for its sake. *Mujāhid* shares the semantic field of *jihād,* then, in that it represents the actual actor included in the process of *jihād,* at whatever level of activity it is defined.

Shahīd This key symbol is linked metonymically to *fihād* and *mujāhid;* it connotes 'martyr', one who has died in the course of struggle. Although it can be used in secular contexts, they are usually ones in which the dominant Islamic nuances are being played upon.

The martyr concept is one which is of common occurrence in Islamic social movements, and has been the object of a great deal of cultural elaboration, some of which I will outline at this point. In Islam, *shahīd* refers to one who has died in the Path of God *(fī sabīl Allāh)* and though it can mean one who has died in this Path in peaceful circumstances its most common reference is to one who has died in *jihād.* One who has done so has won a place in Paradise with other martyrs at the side of the throne of God. He does not require the intercession of the Prophet on his behalf, for his virtue is unquestioned.

The range of persons and circumstances in which *shahīd* appears are numerous. Recently, both Ali Bhutto and Mullah Muṣṭafā al-Barzānī have been lauded as martyrs for Pakistan and the Kurds, respectively. The former, it was argued, for his efforts at islamicization of Pakistan and his death at the hands of his opponents, and the latter because of his role as leader of an ethnic and religious (Sunni) minority struggling for recognition. Just as *mujāhid* refers to one who struggles in a wide spectrum of ways for the defense (broadly defined) of Islam, *shahīd* refers to those who die in such efforts. An example of its broad applicability is the case of the funeral in 1974 of the legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthūm. At the funeral, larger-than-life portraits were carried through the streets of Cairo depicting the singer wearing a sash saying *Al-Shahīdah,* the Martyress. I asked some Palestinians why she was given the honorific 'martyr' when she had not died in battle. The reply was that the past thirty years of Arab history qualified as a prolonged holy war, and Umm Kulthūm's intense political involve-

ment earned her the title; the repertoire of her regular concerts was often picked as a deft political commentary. Thus, the title *shahīd* can be conferred on a wide range of individuals whose action - from Barzānī's Kurdish resistance to Umm Kulthūm's footlight *khuṭbah* - could be construed in some way as a defense of the Faith.

Al-Arḍ Al-Muqaddasah This key symbol, 'the Holy Land', is clearly part of the religious semantic field; it is the land to be recovered - the object of *jihād*.

The importance of the land of Palestine, and especially of Jerusalem, for the Christians and the Jews is too well known to need discussion here. Its importance for Islam, in both the formal religion and the 'folk' religion, is much less well understood.

Jerusalem (*Al-Quds*, 'the holy') is the third sacred city of Islam, along with Mecca and Madinah. It was, in fact, the first direction of prayer (*qiblah*) designated by the Prophet, apparently following Judaic tradition. This was changed soon after it became apparent that the Jewish tribes of the Hijaz had no intention of converting to Islam. The sacred status of Jerusalem remained, however. Its sanctity is surpassed only by that of Mecca and Madinah, and in this the Hijaz cities are really first among equals.

Jerusalem is the object of veneration for a number of reasons. It is traditionally the site of the Prophet's Night Journey (*al-Isrā'*) and his Ascension (*al-Miᶜrāj*). In the former Muḥammad was led to pray one night in Jerusalem by the Angel Gabriel, both mounted on the winged steed *Al-Burāq*. The Prophet's Ascension to Heaven also occurred under the guidance of Gabriel; conflicting traditions exist as to whether the Night Journey and the Ascension happened at the same or on different occasions. There is also scholarly debate as to whether the Jerusalem referred to is the city itself or some Heavenly Jerusalem. In any case, the Palestinian city itself is popularly accepted as the site of these miraculous events.

Jerusalem and Palestine are also the lands of the Christian and Judaic Prophets, who are greatly revered in Muslim tradition, and especially so in folk Islam. There are dozens of important Islamic shrines and many more minor ones in Palestine (Al-ᶜĀrif, n.d. pp. 275-303). Among the most important is the Dome of the Rock, which is the site of Muḥammad's Ascension, and the Al-Aqṣā Mosque. The Wailing Wall is the site where the Prophet tethered his mysterious mount *Al-Burāq*, by whose name Muslims refer to the Wall. Tombs and domes abound honoring the prophet and other sacred persons: Jesus, Abraham, Mary, Solomon, David and so on. One of the most important cult shrines is that of Nabī Mūsā, the Prophet Moses, near Jericho, which attracted thousands to its annual pilgrimage.

The Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah*) is a good example of a center of worship and popular cults. A list of some of these

shrines will give some idea of the intensity of cultic accretions which have built up around Palestinian Islamic sites. The Rock itself is thought to have been the first piece of land created, and was the first land to emerge from the Flood. It is believed to be the site of the Temple of Solomon, and the *miḥrab* (prayer site) of David and Solomon. It was the *miḥrāb*, too, for Al-Khiḍr, the figure associated with Saint Elias who came to play a central role in folk Islam and sufism. It was the *miḥrāb* of Abraham, the throne of Gabriel and will be the throne of God on Judgment Day. It is said to contain the tomb of Zachariah, the hermit's cell of ᶜAlī, and the Gate of Heaven (Busse, 1968, p. 462).

The importance of Jerusalem in Islam is best demonstrated by its role in Muslim eschatology. It is to be the site of the final Judgment by God, who will take the Rock as his throne. The Last Days will be ushered in by an attack on Jerusalem by *Al-Dajjāl*, the Anti-Christ, but the city will be successfully defended by either Jesus or the Mahdi (traditions conflict; some say both). During the Judgment, all mosques in the world will move to Jerusalem, including the Kaᶜbah (ibid., p. 4).

The Holy Land, *Al-Arḍ Al-Muqaddasah*, is thus an important key symbol in the religious semantic field; it is the object of *jihād*, of war for its recovery and defense. It is associated with a constellation of satellite symbols which will be examined closely below.

These key symbols, then, make up the formal religious semantic field, the metonymically linked Islamic symbols and their strictly lexicographic meanings.

Secular-Nationalist Lexicographic Set

This set of key symbols is that which carries no formal religious meanings; that is, their "dictionary" definitions are without reference to Islamic ideation. The dominant term of this field is *thawrah*, revolution, and it sets the tone for the field as a whole, much as *jihād* does for the religious field.

Thawrah This category is a very strong one. It denotes a difficult or violent political struggle, and as such is of common usage in Arabic political parlance. The root *ThWR* indicates a swirling-up, flying into rage, or the unleashing of a storm, and has much more force than other terms such as *inqilāb*, 'a turning-over', which is used to mean a coup. Hisham Sharabi, in his discussion of Arabic political vocabulary, notes:

> Revolution, *al-thawrah*, is a 'good' word in Arabic: it has a sense of inner liberation and restoration of self-respect associated with it regardless of the actual reality of any particular revolution in the Arab world (1966, p. 101).

Thawrah is a very broad spectrum political term, as Sharabi indicates. In American political culture, 'revolution' as a category generally refers to a movement based on Marxist philosophical

and political tenets. It is, depending on one's political stance, either 'progressive' or 'sinister'. It provides us with an excellent example of the interpretive pitfalls waiting to bag the unwary analyst, for there is no such straightforward meaning in the Arabic category; *thawrah* has come to refer to almost any struggle against a formidable foe. Thus we find the Afghan rebellion against the Marxist Kabul government, the Marxist-Islamic ideological mélange of Libya's Qadhdhāfi, the establishment of PDRY and the Iranian movement led by Khomeini all being called 'revolution' in the Arabic press; though a perusal of these examples will reveal no shared (in fact, some contradictory) political trajectories.

The formal lexicographic sense of *thawrah*, then, is political struggle broadly defined and implying the existence of some sort of mass movement. *Isti^{c}mār*, 'imperialism' (also *isti^{c}māriyah*) is one of the main objects of *thawrah* and so falls into the secular-nationalist semantic field. It has come to refer to a wide variety of political phenomena and is applied in an equally varied assortment of contexts. To quote Sharabi again, *isti^{c}mār* is:

> a key term, symbolizing all that is hateful and repugnant to Arab nationalism. Neo-imperialism - indirect political or economic influence by a foreign power - has become the object of attack as being an even more pernicious form of influence and exploitation. Traitors are easily bought by imperialists, and goals of imperialism - whether British, French, Russian, or American - are vague: the prevailing impression, however, is [that] it aims at dominating the Arab world in order to re-establish political control. . . . In its efforts to achieve these goals, imperialism must fight Arab nationalism and try to block the movement of Arab unity (1966, p. 99).

As Sharabi indicates, in the Arab world as in most other parts of the world, 'imperialism' has become a 'folk' political category as much as the description of a definable predatory politico-economic complex.

Ṣahyūnīyah 'Zionism' need not be elaborated here. Obviously this refers to the Judaic revivalist movement which was responsible for the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs in 1948 and 1967 and in whose name the Israeli settler state was established. This term falls into the secular-nationalist field because it is one which is the primary target of *thawrah* and is considered a major manifestation of *isti^{c}mār*, imperialism. I will discuss the ways in which it is interpreted by Palestinians in the analysis to follow.

Fidā'ī Loosely translated as 'guerilla', this is the last key symbol to be discussed in this section. It is a description of the most important actors in the semantic field of *thawrah*.

This category is a highly emotive one. It is derived from the root *FDĀ*, signifying 'sacrifice', 'ransoming' or 'redeeming', and

implies self-sacrifice in a cause. This meaning is dwelt upon in Halim Barakat's novel *Days of Dust*, in which he says of one of his characters:

> The word guerilla always aroused Ramzy's feelings. It brought a sense of pride to him and affirmed his convictions as an Arab For him, the word had become a symbol of someone able to reject all those worldly temptations for which we sell our lives. The guerilla, the *fedai*, fulfills his own life by means of his own death (1974, 173-4).

III

We have seen the formal lexicographic meanings of the two sets of key symbols and the semantic fields which they comprise. The more important, and far more complex task is now before us: to show how these two sets of symbols have merged into one large and flexible semantic field as a result of their ambiguity.

This is a complex task precisely because these symbols are ambiguous. Rather than being linked by clear metonymic chains of meaning, where they logically imply one another and form two neat lexicographic semantic fields, we will see that their ambiguity allows numerous metaphoric links between symbols, and a consequently high degree of complementarity and combinability. For example, at the lexicographic level, the key symbol *jihād* has clear metonymic links to the other terms in its semantic field. But the way it exists in Palestinian political culture is ambiguous, allowing it to also occupy the secular-nationalist field and, for example, be linked to such symbols as *thawrah* and *istiᶜmār*. In other words, the neat lexicographic semantic fields collapse and in use the key symbols are seen to form a tightly interwoven pattern of metaphor, cross-meanings and oblique references in addition to their metonymically structured formal lexicography.

Obviously, this cross-weaving of meanings is impossible to trace completely. What I will do, then, is to outline the major patterns of ambiguity for each symbol and provide examples from fieldwork and written sources.

Interpretive Field: Religious Symbols

Jihād The religious, lexicographic meanings of *jihād* are readily apparent in Palestinian political culture. Rather than attempt to describe its use, a few examples should make the point.

In 1978, Yāsir ᶜArafāt made the pilgrimage to Mecca and gave a speech on the liberation of Palestine. The site for the speech was chosen with a stage-manager's panache; it was set at Minā, the locale east of Mecca where pilgrims symbolically stone the devil - the arch-enemy. His remarks were unequivocal:

> Palestine and Jerusalem have never been just a Palestinian question, or solely an Arab question, but they are a problem for every Muslim. . . . The liberation of Jerusalem is a *farḍ taklīf* upon every Muslim, for it cannot remain a *farḍ kifāyah* under today's circumstances. . . . I declare from here, from the land of the Prophet, from the cradle of Islam, the opening of the gate of holy war [*fatḥ bāb jihād al-muqaddas*] for the liberation of Palestine and the recovery of Jerusalem . . . ('Al-Ḥawādith', 23 February 1979, p. 18).

It should be noted that in Muslim law, the *jihād* is a *farḍ kifayah*, a duty encumbent on the Muslim community as a whole, but from which most Muslims are freed so long as someone in the community is performing the duty. ᶜArafāt, on the other hand, says that the *jihād* is today a *farḍ taklīf*: a commandment from God from which no Muslim is exempted.

Another, and very important, context for the religious use of *jihād* is the first communiqué of Fatḥ on 1 January, 1965. This is especially significant for as we will see in the discussion of the category *thawrah*, this communiqué is seen as the first public emergence of a resurrected Palestinian nation. One section of the communiqué states:

> Our trust is in God and our faith is in the right of our people to fight for the recovery of their usurped homeland, and our faith is in the obligation of holy war [*bi-wājib al-jihād al-muqaddas*] ('Al-Muqāwamah', 7 January 1975).

Similarly, another religious use of *jihād* is that of a proclamation to an assembly of ᶜulamā' from Fatḥ:

> [We washed] away the shame of the Defeat [*al-hazīmah*, the 1967 war] with the blood of our martyrs. We openly declared the *jihād* among the ranks of our youth and we gave up the best of them on that path. . . . Our pledge to you and to God is to bear arms until victory or martyrdom [*istishhād*] (Fatḥ, 1968b).

The last passage was extended in order to show the co-occurence of *jihād* and 'martyr' *(shahīd)* in a single semantic field.

In the course of fieldwork, informants commonly interpreted *jihād* as a religious term. Yāsir ᶜArafāt was the fittest of Palestinian leaders because he was a devout Muslim, and so 'the best leader for the *jihād*'. In probing the various dimensions of this category, the form *jihād waṭanī* came up, when asked what this referred to, it was explained as '*jihād waṭanī* is the war of Palestinians to recover the holy land. It is a war against the Zionists - Islam against the Zionists.'

Christian interpretations also could be religious: that *jihād* was a war for their holy places also. A common Christian response, however, was a recognition that *jihād* as a category was

appropriate primarily for Muslims; that they were a minority and therefore had to work within the culture of the majority. This was not considered a positive element in Palestinian ideology, and that it was one which could create rifts in the Palestinian community, especially given the fact that all gave support to the notion of a non-sectarian state in Palestine.

The ambiguity in the category *jihād* came out in informants' statements, where it was often interpreted as the neutral term 'struggle' and as a non-religious synonymn for *thawrah*:

> *Jihad* is just another word for the Palestinian revolution (*thawrah*) . . . it does have a meaning in religion, but we don't use it that way . . . our whole life now is a struggle (*jihād*).

Later we will see this synonym working in the other direction - *thawrah* as a religious war. It is worth noting that this last statement on life as a struggle is echoed in an article by Rosemary Sayigh on refugee camp life (1977, p. 4). Christians also interpreted *jihād* in this fashion, seeing it as a term which meant 'struggle' for the recovery of Palestine. Even when the phrase 'holy *jihād*' was explored, the Christian interpretation often given was that 'holy' here meant that it was a duty. Some Muslims rejected that idea of *jihād* as a religious term:

> I'm proud to be a Muslim and it is important to me, but *jihād* to me means to fight strongly for something - it isn't part of religion to me. . . . I know that many Muslims understand it this way, but this is not correct.

An interesting ambiguity in the use of *jihād* is the common phrase in Palestinian political writing: *jihād fī sabīl al-thawrah*, '*jihād* in the path of the revolution'. This is clearly a play on the Islamic phrase, *jihād fī sabīl Allāh*, in the Path of God. It can be read both as a religious and as a secular nationalist message. Some parallels to this usage may be found in other, overtly secular, ideologies such as that of Michel ᶜAflaq's Baᶜth (Salem-Babikian, 1977, p. 281).

Jihād is therefore used in its religious sense, as a holy war, but also in the secular sense of 'struggle' and a synonym for *thawrah*, revolution. It can occupy both a religious semantic field in which case it is linked metonymically - by chains of logical association - to other religious symbols; but it also can occupy the secular-nationalist semantic field through metaphoric links (e.g., by being 'like *thawrah*') to the symbols of that field. Its ambiguity thus gives it free play and interpretive utility in a varied assortment of contexts and in the experience of a range of social actors.

Shahīd The category *shahīd*, martyr, and its verbal noun, *istishhād*, are a common part of Palestinian political culture, and

have great affective power no matter what their context, nor which mode of interpretation is in use.

To begin with its religious interpretation, in the course of collecting materials for this study, I found that *shahīd* was one of the key symbols most often associated with religion. It was commonly expressed as, for example, the driving force behind many of the guerilla operations:

> *Shahīd* is a man who dies in the revolution (*thawrah*). If a man dies he is great in the eyes of his people and the Lord. . . . This is important for the *fidā'iyīn*, for if they die, it is for God and for Palestine. Look at the Kiryat Shmona operation; those men knew that they would die, but that they would be martyrs.

A similar interpretation:

> Islam is part of the Palestinians. Palestine is the holy land. This is important for the people and for the guerillas. They go to fight in Israel and they know that they might be killed, but they will martyrs for the people and for God.

These views are echoed in Kuroda's study of the political socialization of Palestinian commandos. In noting the high percentage of Muslims in his sample, he states that the strong *shahid* ethic appears to be an important element in the degree of Muslim participation. The belief in dying for God and for the cause, and of going to heaven after death in battle not only strengthens their participation, but also gives their families a means of coping with their possible deaths (Kuroda, 1972, p. 263).

In the preceding section on *jihād* an example was given in the declaration to the ᶜulamā of *shahīd* and *jihād* occuring together in the religious semantic field in Palestinian literature. Another example of this religious use is the following commemoration on the death of a Palestinian leader:

> The General Command of *al-ᶜĀṣifah* forces deeply mourns the death of the martyr S.Y. . . . The General Command . . . pledges itself to God and to country to continue the progress along the road of revolution for the duty in whose service our martyr has died, and declare that his blood was not shed in vain - for in Paradise, O Abū Khālid, is immortality with the Highest Companion (Fatḥ, 1968a).

In this passage, despite its clear religious implications, we begin to see the overlap of semantic fields with the co-occurrence of *shahīd* and *thawrah*. This overlap and layering of symbols is evident in the case of one particular raid. In 1974, three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command) launched a suicide attack on an Israeli settlement. The

guerillas - a Palestinian, a Syrian and an Iraqi - set off on the raid to make a point about the lack of Arab unity on the question of Palestine. To push the point home, they left messages to various Arab leaders which were intended to be published after their inevitable deaths. These messages were published in the press all over the world, and centered on their martyrdom (*istishhād*) and the lessons to be gained from it. Their major themes, and the themes of martyrdom in general, can be summed up in their letter to President Sadat in which they said that: they were 'three youths who believed in their Lord, their homeland, and their *ummah*'. The latter term, *ummah*, can be taken as both *al-ummah al-ᶜarabīyah* or *al-ummah al-Islāmīyah*, the Arab Nation or the Islamic Nation; both are crucial terms in Arab political culture.

The religious theme in their letters is best exemplified by their statement that many 'will mourn today, just as we mourn Karbalā' every year for a thousand years, but the new Karbalā' will be Palestine and all of the other Arab lands after the recognition of Zionism'. The reference to Karbalā', of course, is to the most famous martyrdom in Islam: that of Ḥusayn ibn ᶜAlī, the grandson of the Prophet who died at the Iraqi town of Karbalā' at the hands of his enemies.

The theme of homeland, specifically Palestine, but implicitly all of the Arab lands, is expressed in their message to ᶜArafāt:

> As we set out on our suicide mission [*ᶜamalīyatinā al-intiḥārīyah*] we declare that our blood is a trust [*dammunā amānah*] . . . our sacrifice, like that of all martyrs of the revolution, is not going in exchange for the solution of surrender . . . our spirits will be a constant reminder of the goal for which we were martyred [*bi-l-hadaf alladhī istishhadnā min ajlihi*] . . . the liberation of Palestine, all of Palestine.

These religious and nationalist themes were picked up and expressed in accounts of the deaths of the three men, some ending with such phrases as 'God's mercy on the pious pure martyrs whose abode is in the expanse of Paradise' and 'Do not consider those who were killed in the path of God [*alladhīna qutilū fī sabīl Allāh*] as dead, but living in the blessing of their Lord' ('Filasṭīn', May 1974).

Among responses from informants are some which are not religious. They include some which recognize the layers of meaning which the category carries:

> *Shahīd* is a religious term for the Christians and for the Muslims. They all use it, but it also means 'martyr for a cause' as you say in English. Everyone uses it, but it comes from religion in the beginning.

An insistently secular interpretation:

> *Shahīd* is a man who dies in battle, in the revolution. . . . It was a word in religion, but now it means only a *fidā'ī* who is killed. We don't use it as Muslims or as Christians because there is no difference - we are all Palestinians.

Shahīd, in sum, is an honorific given to one who dies in battle. It has a wide range of possible interpretations though its origins and lexicography are dominated by Islamic themes.

Mujāhid *Mujāhid*, another in the key symbols of the *jihād* field, has both religious and secular nationalist interpretations. The former are best introduced by examining a passage from a commemoration of the death of a famous Palestinian guerilla. This excerpt allows us to see the high definition of the *jihād* semantic field in the intense co-occurrence of *jihād*, *shahīd* and *mujāhid*. The total length of the original is only about 300 words, which gives some idea of the frequency of the use of these categories:

> A commemoration was held for the *shahīd* . . . the great *mujāhid* . . . and his brethren the *mujāhidīn* . . . the hall was filled with delegations . . . and the last of the *mujāhidīn* who participated with the Martyr Leader [*al-Qā'id al-Shahīd*] and his brethren the *mujāhidīn* leadership in the battles of the noble *jihād* . . . and the previous battles of the Palestinian *jihād*. . . . The hall was decorated with pictures of the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn *miḥrāb* . . . and of the Martyr Leader . . . and his brethren the martyr *mujāhids* [*al-mujāhidīn al-shuhadā'*] . . . (a speaker) spoke on the importance of Jerusalem and the Blessed Al-Aqṣā Mosque . . . and said that (the Prophet's Ascension) taught us that the land of the Al-Aqṣā Mosque is bound to the Qur'ān and Muḥammad . . . and that with Faith and *jihād* we will liberate our holy places ('Filasṭīn', April 1974).

The religious interpretation is in evidence in an official Fatḥ pronouncement to the new Iranian leadership in early 1979, which pointed out the parallels between the Iranian and the Palestinian revolutions:

> I extend to you, in the name of all the Palestinian *mujāhidīn* . . . our deepest congratulations for this blessed victory . . . at the same time I am sure that the faithful [i.e. pious] Iranian *mujāhid* people [*al-shaᶜb al-īrānī al-mujāhid al-mu'min*] will overcome their problems . . . and prevail over all their enemies who are our enemies and those of our Islamic nation [*aᶜdā' ummatinā al-islāmīyah*] ('Filasṭīn Al-Thawrah', 11 February, 1979).

The religious sense of *mujāhid* and its use as a synonym for *fidā'ī* are found in the statements of informants:

> The *mujāhid* is a Palestinian *fidā'ī* . . . he fights in the *jihād* against the Zionists . . . he is a Muslim fighter.

Secular use of this category is also frequent:

> *Mujāhid* is a *fidā'ī*. . . . He is not a Muslim or a Christian because these religious differences are not important in the revolution.

Another:

> *Mujāhid* means revolutionary, a man who is part of a revolution, any revolution . . . , ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir was a *mujāhid*, and Ho Chi Minh.

A Christian interpretation:

> For us, it is just a man who fights . . . for the Muslims, it means one who fights in a holy war, you know, a *jihād*. That is the way that they see the Palestine war.

Al-Arḍ Al-Muqaddasah 'The Holy Land' has clear religious connotations in Palestinian political culture, but it also has the interpretation of homeland; that it is 'holy' in the sense of being the heart of a nation. Palestine is both holy land and homeland, and so the inherent ambiguity in use is perhaps too obvious to require elaboration here.

The most interesting aspect of this key symbol is that it is the tonic symbol of a sub-semantic field which is comprised of symbols that focus on the defense and recovery of the holy places. The main symbols of this satellite field are historiographic metaphors which draw parallels between the contemporary Palestinian resistance and themes drawn from Islam and the Crusades. I will discuss these briefly here, but stress that their nuances will become much clearer when we look at their use in the key scenarios to be examined later in this chapter.

One of these symbols in the constellation of 'Holy Land' is *Fatḥ* ('Fatah' in popular transliteration), the name of the primary guerilla organization. It means, literally, 'opening', but came to mean Islamic conquest: the 'opening' of a land for Islam. This was pointed out to me by Christian informants in the course of discussions about the religious affiliations of different resistance organizations:

> *Fatḥ* is the largest group because it is mostly Muslim. The leaders are Muslim and even its name means taking a land for Islam. When we say *Fatḥ Miṣr* in Arabic for example, this usually means the early Islamic conquest of Egypt.

Clearly this can have a secular significance; the name *Fatḥ* without any specific Islamic content. It is illuminating to realize that

its Islamic origins and implications are brought out both by Muslim and by Christian Palestinians.

A set of symbols with important implications for the key symbol *Al-Arḍ Al-Muqaddasah* are the names Ḥaṭṭīn, Yarmūk, Qādisīyah and ᶜAyn Jālūt. These appear regularly in different contexts in Palestinian political culture. Their most important application, however, is that in which they serve as names for the four battalions of the Palestine Liberation Army ('Arab Report and Record', 29 September 1978). The names have significance because they are the names of famous battles in Islamic history which relate to the holy land. The battle of Yarmūk in A.D. 636 secured Syria for Islam. The battle of Qādisīyah in 637 brought Iraq virtually into the hands of the Islamic empire. At Ḥaṭṭīn in 1187, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin) took back Jerusalem from the Christian invaders. In 1260, the Battle of ᶜAyn Jālūt took place near Nazareth with international effects: the Mongol Kitbogha was defeated by the Mamlūk General Baybars and the 'spell which the great Chinghiz had cast upon the world was broken forever' (Saunders, 1965, p. 183).

These terms have clear Islamic content, but they also have implications for the Palestinian people as a national/ethnic entity. These are events in which they were involved either as defenders or conquerors of the holy land. This can take a purely secular interpretation, as was indicated to me:

> These battles are part of Palestinian history - all Palestinians, not just Muslims. Two of them were battles in which the Palestinian people fought for their land. Yes, they have some religious meaning, but they are used for different reasons - because the Palestinians have always had to fight imperialism, from the West, or from the Mongols or from the Zionists.

The theme of the Palestinian struggle being one that goes back to the Crusades is a frequent part of Palestinian political culture. It will not be discussed as yet, for it forms a major current through one of the key scenarios to be analysed later in this chapter.

We will now turn to an examination of the secular-nationalist field of *thawrah* as it appears in Palestinian political culture.

Thawrah It is important at the outset to note that the concept of revolution is used as a maximal description of the contemporary Palestinian nationalist movement. 'Our revolution' is the most common reference to the movement used by Palestinians. In the contemporary movement, *thawrah* is given a definite starting date: 1 January 1965, the date of the first public communiqué of Fatḥ. This date marks the event which Palestinians consider to be crucial, one which is set apart from the preceding 50 years of their nationalist aspirations. The date signals the beginning of an autonomous Palestinian resistance, fostered and supported by Palestinians and independent of a single Arab regime for

complete support or on its goodwill for survival.

The tenth anniversary of the emergence of Fatḥ was widely celebrated by the Palestinian community, and provides illuminating examples of some of the conceptual content of *thawrah*. The following commemoration is typical of commentaries on the anniversary of Fatḥ:

> *Ten Years of the Revolution*
>
> The anniversary of Fatḥ is an anniversary of Palestine. It is a celebration of the Arab revolutionary and the revolutionary everywhere a celebration of the lover of justice who refuses to submit to tyranny. . . . This is our anniversary, an anniversary of Fatḥ and Palestine, a celebration of the revolutionary wherever he is. . . . A man is born but once and but once he dies. A people is not born, nor does it die, but it slumbers and is resurrected time and time again [*taghfū wa tinbaᶜith marrāt wa marrāt*]. In early 1965, there occurred a new resurrection [*inbiᶜāth jadīd*] of the Palestinian people ('Shu'ūn Filasṭīnīyah', 1975:6).

For mainstream Palestinian nationalism, that of Fatḥ for example, *thawrah* has more redemptive than theoretical political overtones. It is the means to resurrection, to restoration of national rights and dignity:

> To our great people . . . to our struggling Arab nation [*ilā ummatinā al-ᶜarabīyah al-munāḍilah*] . . . from the heart of our *mujāhid* nation [*min ḍamā'ir ummatinā al-mujāhidah*] our revolutionary vanguards are pushing forward believing in the armed revolution as the path to return (Institute for Palestine Studies, n.d., p. 1).
>
> In the name of God the Merciful the Beneficent - Our faith is that our stolen land will not be regained except by blood and self-sacrifice [*bi-l-dimā' wa-l'fidā'*] and that the way to our return . . . is armed revolutionary action (ibid., p. 38).
>
> [We respond] to the call of the sacred duty [*al-wājib al-muqaddas*] to our stolen homeland Palestine, and our faith is that the way to its recovery and return of our usurped rights is armed revolutionary action and sacrifice [three words used: *wa-l-taḍḥīyah wa-l-badhl wa-l-fidā'*] (ibid., p. 41).

This notion of 'redemption', *fidā'*, is the general theme of *thawrah*, and appears specifically in the word for guerilla, *fidā'ī*, which is another category to be discussed in the semantic field of *thawrah*. The specific way to redemption, the character of the revolution, however, is the problem at hand. In mainstream Palestinian nationalism, this is not defined, and in fact, attempts at sharper definition are discouraged. In the small Marxist groups, 'revolution' is, in many ways, hardly a category

of Palestinian political culture in itself, but is part of a progressive theory for the socio-political transformation of the Middle East as a whole (Al-Sayyid, 1970).

Thawrah, then, is a general redemptive characterization of the Palestinian nationalist movement. The redemptive motif blends comfortably with an assortment of perspectives. The simple 'recover the homeland' meaning is obvious from the foregoing quotes, with the emphasis on sacrifice and armed struggle. The redemptive motif also allows Islamic interpretations, and *thawrah* is often found in association with religious phrases or terms. We find this again in that important document, the first communiqué of Fatḥ, which was discussed earlier as the herald of the beginning of *thawrah*:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent. . . . Our trust is in God . . . and our faith [*īmānunā*] is in the duty of holy *jihād*, and our faith is in the attitude of the revolutionary Arab [*al-ᶜarabī al-thā'ir*] from the Atlantic to the Gulf (Al-Muqāwamah', 7 January 1975).

This theme is seen even more explicitly in the following official Fath commentary on the first communiqué:

> The first communiqué was the birth of the revolution, whose holy torch was raised on high . . . and under the feet of the holy torch fell all those who tried to extinguish its light . . . [this was] the noblest of battles and the holiest of *jihāds* [*jihādan ka-aqdas mā yakūn al-jihād*] . . . a battle we were determined to pursue until the final communiqué announcing the fall of the Zionist entity, and a *jihād* in which we resolved to shed every drop of blood in our veins (Fatḥ, 1968a, p. 8).

All of these themes are in evidence from informants' statements, from the religious to the politically progressive:

> We are Muslims and the Zionists are Jews. They kill our people and steal our homes. Our revolution is a *jihād* against the Zionists. They hate the Muslims - they burned the Al-Aqṣā Mosque.
>
> There is no difference between *thawrah* and *jihād*. There is none - it is because the Israelis are Jews and they steal the land of Palestinians.
>
> The Palestinian revolution is against imperialism which is the Zionists and the Americans and the British in the past. We fight just like the people of Vietnam or Cuba.
>
> Our revolution is part of a revolution in all the countries in the Arab world. We fight against the kings like Ḥusayn and Fayṣal and the leaders who are the friends of the United States.

Isti^{c}mār Isti^{c}mār, imperialism, is a highly elaborated concept in Palestinian political culture. Zionism and the imperialism of the great powers are intimately linked and the Zionist movement is characterized as imperialist. These points are made in the following example:

> The Zionist adventure began to carry out its plan during the last part of the past century, and never attempted to check its imperialist, racist [*^{c}unsurī*] and expansionist [*tawassu^{c}ī*] character. . . . For from its ideological standpoint it was political - a nationalism aiming at the appropriation of the land of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state there on a basis of territorial imperialism. . . . After the emergence of its settler state, Zionism was to continue to consolidate its regional centre while it played the role of imperial watchman in the Arab world (Razzūq, 1971, p. 27).

Imperialism also has its agents among the Arab regimes of the Middle East, most notably among some of the conservative states. Qābūs of Oman and King Ḥusayn of Jordan, for example, are described as clients of the imperialist nations. Wars such as that in Ẓufār province of Oman are therefore clearly anti-imperialist:

> With the support of British, Iranian and Jordanian imperialism, the lackey [*^{c}amīl*] Sultan Qābūs proceeds without restraint against the people of Oman and the Oman revolution without heeding the recent experience of imperialist lackeys at the hands of people struggling to attain their freedom and independence ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 11 May 1975).

The Palestinians quite naturally see these struggles as part of 'their revolution' in that they share the fight against imperialism with other peoples of the Arab world. Beyond this, however, imperialism is perceived as the common enemy of all of the Third World, and the Palestinian struggle as part of a global resistance. This is clear in the following report by an influential Palestinian intellectual:

> Yesterday our delegation returned from Peking . . . [the reception] had the warmth and vigor of comrades who fought imperialism in order to free their country. . . . In Hanoi the reception was also warm, reflecting the friendship, brotherhood and solidarity between comrades who meet fighting a common battle, on the same front, in the same trench, against the same enemy (^{c}Adwān, 1973, p. 59).

Isti^{c}mār has also come to be used in a broader, less sophisticated set of meanings, in which it is an appellation for any opposing force. This has often taken an anti-Islamic overtone, largely because Zionist encroachment in Palestine and its ties to the great powers is seen as merely a contemporary manifes-

tation of the historical encroachment of the West into the Muslim Middle East. This was evident in discussion with informants who defined imperialism as 'just another word for the Jews fighting the Muslims'. This religious-tinged interpretation will become clearer below in the analysis of key scenarios. Suffice it to say for the moment that this notion of *istiᶜmār* as an ancient phenomenon revolves around the events and the actors of the Crusades and early Islam.

Fidā'ī The term *fidā'ī* has come to refer to guerilla or combatant in a highly emotional cause. Its root, as noted above, carries the semantic content of 'redemption', or 'self-sacrifice' in a cause.

In Palestinian political culture, *fidā'ī* as a name for nationalist guerillas has a long history. Its first appearance was in connection with rural guerilla bands in the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as *Al-Kaff Al-Khaḍrā'*, the Green Hand (Great Britain, 1930).

The secular-nationalist interpretation of *fidā'ī* is one that we need not dwell on for long, for it is so clearly a part of the redemption motif found in the key symbol *thawrah* that elaboration on its range would be redundant. It is necessary only to note the two examples cited above under *thawrah* in which *fidā'*, redemptive sacrifice, is seen as the path of revolution, and to mention the fact that a common synonym for revolutionary activity is *al-ᶜamal al-fidā'ī* '*Fidā'ī* action' (e.g., Fatḥ, 1968d, pp. 4-26 passim).

The redemptive content of *fidā'ī* lends itself, naturally enough, to Islamic interpretation. The concept of dying for a cause, redemption and sacrifice, fit in with the *jihād-shahīd-mujāhid* constellation found in Islamic political culture in general. It is not surprising, then, that the term *fidā'ī* has been used to refer to those who fight in an Islamic cause. The two examples which come to mind are the agents of the Niẓārī Ismāᶜīlī sect in medieval Islam (Hodgson, 1955) and the Shīᶜah nationalist *Fida'iyan-i Islam* of Iran in the post-war years.

This Islamic pattern appears in Palestinian political culture. It appears in contexts which have strong religious connotations:

> The leadership of Al-ᶜĀsifah forces . . . pursued its *fidā'ī* actions in the area of our beloved homeland and the blood of its martyrs flowed in the arena of honour . . . and in their vanguard were the *fidā'iyūn* of Al-ᶜĀṣifah who began to plant terror in the souls of the enemies of God [*aᶜdā' Allāh*] (Al-Baᶜth, 4 April 1965).

One of the most pointed examples of the Islamic interpretation of *fidā'ī* was in its use as a synonymn for *mujāhid* among some of those Palestinians with whom the term was discussed. This is by no means an isolated phenomenon: a parallel example, though an extreme one, can be found in the fact that the two most radical

religious activist groups in Iran in the post-war era were called *Mujahidin-i Islam* and *Fida'iyan-i Islam*.

Fida'ī, then, carries both secular-nationalist and religious connotations. It can be interpreted as guerilla in a national war of liberation, and as a synonym for *mujāhid*, fighter in a holy war.

Ṣahyūnīyah The last concept to be discussed here is Zionism, *Ṣahyūnīyah*. This is probably the most difficult of all simply because it has so many different layers of meaning and inference in Palestinian political culture. I can only demonstrate its range by again, as elsewhere in this chapter, stressing two different modes of interpretation. Here I will concentrate on the interpretations of Zionism as a political movement, and the implications this has for Islamic ideation.

At the purely political level, probably the most important theme is that of Zionism and its illegal occupation of Palestine as being not only anti-Palestinian but also anti-Arab as a whole. It is seen as being the most important and dangerous problem facing the Arab world today:

> The Zionist presence is the cause of all of our problems in the Arab world, and shatters all our aspirations for a new dawn for the Arab Nation. All the hopes of the Nation and its aspirations and solution to its problems will not be realised except by confining all its efforts to the liberation of Palestine (Fatḥ: 1968c, p. 16).

Zionism is thus not only the movement which was instrumental in the usurpation of Palestinian lands, but is that factor which prevents any further progress and unity in the Arab nation. Zionism is a threat to *ᶜurūbah*, Arabism, because as long as the Arab nation lives in the knowledge that part of its land is under occupation, it can never claim to be an effective or convincing ideology. The solution to this problem for mainstream Palestinian nationalists is the recovery of Palestine; for the groups of the political left, it is the overthrow of the present socio-political order of all of the Middle East.

As noted above, Zionism is viewed not only as imperialist in itself, but as being the agent of British and American imperialism. This, it is argued, is its real *raison d'être:*

> Because the imperialist powers, in their assault on our Arab homeland, feared for their plans as a consequence of the prodigious national struggle . . . they planned, through the use of the world Zionist movement, to usurp the land of Palestine in order to establish there a racist, imperialist entity [*kiyānan ᶜunṣurīan isti ᶜmārīan*] to be a guard house to protect the domination of imperialism and Zionism in our Arab homeland (PLO, 1973).

Not only is Zionism, at a political level, a threat to Palestine and the Arabs, but as an extension of the great imperialist powers this threat has international implications.

Zionism is also interpreted with an anti-Islamic content: as a political movement with a strong religious ideological component, it is not at all surprising that this mode of anti-Islamic interpretation should exist in response. Its outlines are, in brief, that Zionism represents the contemporary manifestation of the old Western aspiration to dominate the Islamic world as a whole. This leads to analogies being drawn between today's anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist movement and the Arab resistance to the Crusades. This pattern will be seen in detail in the analysis of scenarios in the next section of this chapter.

Another interpretation is that Zionist encroachment into the territory of a largely Muslim group represents an old Jewish-Muslim enmity going back as far as the early Muslim Community and the conflict between the Prophet and the Jewish tribes of the Hijaz. This was a common point brought up in conversation with Palestinians during fieldwork, and its frequency is probably attributable to the fact that this notion is one which was taught to young Palestinians. A 1967 UNESCO report on refugee education commented that in history lessons:

> an excessive importance is given to the problem of relations between the Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Arabia, in terms tending to convince young people that the Jewish Community as a whole has always been and will always be the irreconcilable enemy of the Muslim Community (quoted in Peretz, 1971, p. 85).

The anti-Islamic interpretation of Zionism was given support by the burning of the Al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem in 1972. The mosque is one of the holiest in Islam, and though the damage was done by a deranged tourist, there is a persistent belief that the crime was perpetrated by Israelis.

This analysis of Zionism as a category in Palestinian political culture has necessarily been scanty, though sufficient for our immediate purposes.

IV

Scenarios

In the preceding sections I presented the semantic ranges of some dominant symbols in Palestinian political culture. This was, of necessity, done in piecemeal fashion, by examining each category and its ambiguity. This exercise demanded that each category be examined on its own, taking it out of the framework formed by its juxtaposition with other categories. In this section, I will remedy this necessary methodological problem by analysing these symbols as they appear in a significant context: what I am

calling, after Ortner, a 'key scenario'. There are two points to be made in this analysis. First, if these *are* dominant symbols, we can expect them to appear as major elements of discourse in important texts. Second, if as I have argued these symbols have combined to form one dense semantic field, they should co-occur in these key scenarios. Of special note is the fact that the ambiguity of the categories is thrown into relief by the fact that both 'religious' and 'secular-nationalist' categories are found to co-occur in scenarios with very different overall themes - one religious and the other nationalist. The scenarios are the Iranian Revolution and the Battle of Karāmah.

The Iranian Revolution

When the Shah of Iran was deposed in early 1979 and the country brought under the rule of the Ayatallah Ruhallah Khomeini, the Palestinian community rejoiced. The revolution gave hope that a genuinely autonomous anti-imperialist Middle Eastern revolution could succeed. The Palestinian view was that Khomeini's revolution was a positive portent for their own struggle. The Iranians clearly shared this view, for Yāsir ᶜArafāt was the first Middle Eastern political figure invited to Iran after the triumphant return of the Ayatallah from exile.

The speeches, letters and commentaries on the Iranian revolution provide an important opportunity to bolster the arguments presented earlier about dominant Palestinian symbols, for they serve as texts of political culture. The tonic note of these texts is Islamic, and specifically that both the Palestinians and the Iranians are struggling against an attack by Western imperialism upon the Islamic *Ummah*. This tone was noted by several Arab commentators, one of whom referred to the Palestinian leader as 'Ayatallah ᶜArafāt' ('Al Ḥawādith', 23 February 1979).

For our purposes, however, the important point here is the co-occurrence of both 'religious' and 'secular-nationalist' categories in this highly charged Islamic context. To give some idea of the tone and use of these symbols in the texts, I am providing examples of typical passages from official sources. This is from a speech by ᶜArafāt:

> This is our road, which we have jointly conceived: one road, one revolution, one people and one faith, we travel side by side together to victory. This great Iranian people lives with us in one trench raising together the same emblems - all of us are fighters, all *mujāhidīn*, all revolutionaries [*thuwwār*] under one flag - the flag of our Islamic Nation [*ummatinā al-islāmīyah*] against imperialism ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 20 February, 1979).

The next example is from a letter from Palestinians in Gaza:

> You have made glory and honor for the great Iranian people and the Islamic Nation together. We congratulate you. You have built the edifice of Islamic civilization which is stipulated

> by our Islamic religion [*dīnunā al-islāmī*] . . . Your revolution is a great blow to American imperialism and Zionism and imperialism and the lackey forces in the region, and confirms that this [Palestinian] Arab and Islamic nation will be totally victorious over all its racist, Zionist, and imperialist enemies ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 25 February, 1979).

This notion that both Palestinians and Iranians are part of the Islamic *Ummah* and share a common western imperialist enemy is spelled out time and again. Imperialism, and by extension Zionism, is an ancient enemy which has succeeded in the past in driving wedges between Muslims:

> Imperialism has been active since ancient times and has succeeded in dividing the *Ummah* against itself, fragmenting it at one time by sectarianism and at another geographically, and was able thereby to perpetuate its interests and monopolies in the region ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 20 February 1979).

The theme of imperialism as being ancient and an old enemy of Islam became one of the major themes of Yāsir ᶜArafāt's visit to Khomeini, and took the form of analogues between the present age and that of the Crusades, and contemporary leaders with those who fought the Crusaders for the freedom of the Holy Land. An official Fatḥ editorial stated:

> The new age for Islam . . . is an age of the liberation of the East from imperialism, and we do not exaggerate when we say that the Zionist attack is a continuation of the Crusaders' attack on the East. The expulsion of the Crusaders' threat came from the East at the hand of Nūr al-Dīn Zangi and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbi, and today begins a new age in which the Zionist threat is being repulsed ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 20 February 1979).

The mention of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who recovered Jerusalem from the Crusaders, is a reference to the fact that when ᶜArafāt met with the Ayatallah Talaqani, he compared the Ayatallah with these medieval Muslim leaders, and later did the same for the Ayatallah Khomeini ('Al-Ḥawādith', 23 February 1979). This same set of analogues was used as a means of characterizing enemies. In reference to President Sadat of Egypt, it was said that 'The "shah" of Egypt is preparing to sign the surrender documents just as did the ruler of Egypt at the time of the Crusader wars' ('Filasṭīn al-Thawrah', 20 February 1979). Imperialism, then, is an enemy of the Islamic *Ummah*, and the greatest manifestation of this is the Zionist occupation of the Holy Places of Islam (Ibid., 25 February 1979). The Palestinian and Iranian fight against this enemy is both *thawrah* and *jihād;* these two categories co-occur and are used as synonyms for one another, as are *mujāhid* and *thā'ir* (revolutionary):

> In the name of the Palestinian people and its revolutionaries, the *mujāhidīn*, I congratulate you . . . the victory of the Iranian revolution . . . is a victory for the Palestinian revolution . . . may God give you success and set your steps on the path of truth and *jihād* (ibid., 13 February, 1979).
>
> The victory of your revolution is the victory of the lesser *jihād*, and now comes the role of the greater *jihād* . . . for during the revolution the enemy is obvious, but afterwards the enemies are numerous (ibid., 23 February, 1979).
>
> God give you success in both the lesser and the greater *jihād*, You are leading the historic journey . . . whose road and battle will be completed at the walls of Jerusalem, upon which will be raised the flag of our *Ummah* and our joint revolutions, ever on the path of truth and *jihād*, and sovereignty [*abadan ʿalā tarīq al-haqq wa-l-jihād wa-l-su'dud*] (ibid., 11 February, 1979).

Though this is only an outline of the discourse dealing with the Iranian revolution, it is one whose examples are representative. A summarizing reconstruction of the message being communicated in these texts is in order.

At the most encompassing level of discourse, this is a portrait of a struggle. It is a conflict shared by the Iranian and Palestinian people. They travel along 'one road' in 'one revolution'. Both peoples are linked because they are members of the *Ummah* of Islam ('our Islamic *Ummah*', 'our Islamic faith'). They are brothers in the conflict because they fight a common enemy, whose agent in the area is Zionism. Imperialism is that common enemy and it is an old foe which has attacked the Islamic East since the Crusades, and Zionism is just the present manifestation of the 'Crusaders' attack on the East'. The present struggle, then, is analogous to the Crusades, and the present leaders are analogues of the medieval leaders of the resistance to the Crusaders and those who eventually recaptured the Holy Places of Islam. The struggle itself is both *thawrah* and *jihād* and those who fight in it are both revolutionaries and *mujāhidīn*. The struggle is the herald of a 'new age for our Islamic *Ummah*'.

The ambiguity described in the foregoing section is seen here in context; both 'religious' and 'secular-nationalist' categories clearly co-occur and in some cases even serve as synonyms for one another in a context of which the dominant tone is distinctly Islamic. The point, however, can be made even more strongly if the same co-occurrence can be seen in a scenario with a distinctly nationalist tone, and it is to this that I will turn next.

The Battle of Karāmah

In March 1968, combined forces of the Palestinian resistance and the Jordanian army clashed with a large Israeli army force in the area of the Jordanian village of Al-Karāmah. After a lengthy

battle, the Israeli units retired with unusually heavy losses. The victory of Karāmah was tremendously important for Fatḥ and the other Palestinian organizations for it came in the wake of the June War of 1967; The Defeat, as it is known in Arabic, was the most shocking and humiliating event of recent Arab history.

The Battle of Karāmah not only salved the spiritual wounds of the Palestinians but it proved to both leaders and followers that an autonomous Palestinian resistance could defeat Israeli army units in pitched battle. Karāmah made a turning-point in the history of the Palestinian resistance for it was thereafter recognized as a credible military force.

The reports and official statements dealing with the battle make clear its significance. A Fatḥ pronouncement called it a 'decisive step on the road to the return [to Palestine]'. The semantics of redemption and sacrifice fill these texts:

> The Day of Al-Karāmah . . . is the beginning of similar days to come - the day is coming soon when we will hear of the Day of Nāblus, then the Day of Rām Allāh and then the day of Jerusalem . . . and the end of the lines of refugees receiving their monthly ration from the international aid agencies - a bitter morsel for the begging lines in lieu of a good mouthful for the legions of redemption [*tawābir fidā*] (Fatḥ 1968b, p. 92).

The importance of this event in the secular-nationalist realm is clear, and yet there are strong Islamic symbols used in the texts on Karāmah. These symbols are so evident that their appearance has been commented on by several Arab authors, notably the Palestinian Sociologist Naseer Arūri, (1977, p. 278). These texts are interesting for our purposes in that this is very clearly a secular-nationalist event, and yet we find the same interpenetration of Islamic and secular-nationalist themes seen in the overtly Islamic scenario analysed above.

The Islamic themes in the Karāmah texts centre on historical parallels with events in Islamic history. One is a short report (Fatḥ, 1968b, p. 92) which says that the battle marked 'a new day to be added to the Days of the Arabs alongside Dhū Qār, Yarmūk, Qādisīyah and Ḥaṭṭīn'. The significance of these battles, as mentioned previously in this chapter, is that they were critical points in Arab and Islamic conquests. The report continues, comparing those who fought at Karāmah with some of the great figures of Islamic military history:

> Between five-thirty in the morning . . . and eight-thirty that night the heroes brought to mind Khālid bin al-Walīd, Sa^{c}d bin Abī Qāṣ, ^{c}Akramah, and Ja^{c}far, and all the Arab heroes (ibid., p. 92).

The passage ends on a particularly subtle note. When speaking of the list of heroes the writer states that it will not end:

> until Bilāl ascends the walls of Jerusalem in order to proclaim [*yu'adhdhin*] that the corruption has passed away [*al-bāṭil kān zahūqan*] (ibid., p. 92).

Bilāl, of course, was the first *mu'adhdhin* chosen by the Prophet, and the verb *yu'adhdhin* in modern Arabic is used especially with the meaning of 'to call to prayer'.

Other reports of the battle of Karāmah are scattered with Islamic themes: those of Masᶜūd (1968, p. 594) and Fatḥ (1968d) contain a great amount of co-occurrence of the religious and secular-nationalist fields.

V

Summary and Conclusions

Ideologies, I contended at the beginning of this book, are the languages and vocabularies of group purposes: they are the means of conceptualizing and expressing the social, political and economic milieu of a number of individuals with common bonds. In the preceding chapters I presented an interpretation of the role of Islam as an ideological idiom in two periods of Palestinian history.

In this chapter, I have asked what the role of Islam in contemporary Palestinian nationalism is now that that movement is by nature engaged in a war of liberation. Using concepts from symbolic anthropology and applying them to materials gathered in fieldwork and to textual analyses, I argued that Islamic and non-Islamic conceptual fields have interpenetrated and that the Islamic idioms are highly ambiguous. That is, we find organizations using these symbols, and individuals interpreting them, in a variety of modes; some distinctly Islamic concepts have their religious meanings denied on occasion, while some sophisticated political concepts (such as imperialism) are often given Islamic nuances.

Having argued that dominant symbols are often ambiguous, and having demonstrated this point for contemporary Palestinian political culture, is there anything more to be said? I think there is, and that it strikes at the heart of understanding not only the specific relationship of Palestinian ideology and political process, but at the nature of that relationship in general.

The most systematic way in which to present my conclusions is to begin by stepping back and looking at the categories as a whole. The first point is that they are all categories of conflict; that is, they are symbols used to characterize enemies, to imply modes of action against them, and to define, by refraction, the nature of the Palestinian community and its struggle. The Islamic categories and themes discussed are not ones which deal with religious reform, personal ethics, or with legalities, but only with conflict. It is not surprising that we should find such categories, for Islamic political culture is filled with such symbols,

beginning with the basic distinction between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*.

It is not surprising either that we find such 'political' and 'secular' concepts as 'imperialism' and 'revolution' being cloaked with some degree of religious significance; Zionism itself has set the tone for such interpretation by being the contemporary ideology and state most heavily dependent on religious legitimation. If one's foe states the terms for a conflict, then it is most appropriate to respond in kind. In addition to this, there is the fact that 'Islamic revolution' is a notion being used in the Middle East today from Libya to Iran, Afghanistan, and the Ḥaram of Mecca.

Neither, to see the other extreme of the ambiguity, is it puzzling to find secular-nationalist interpretations of Islamic concepts. Palestine as a territory has been the scene of a tremendous amount of conflict over the centuries, and most of it has had something to do with Islam. The historical national struggles - such as the Crusades - can thus be taken as the main focus, with Islamic concepts being interpreted as nationalist ones which are vehicles for talking about territorial roots, legitimate national aspirations and historical continuities.

As a result of their inherent ambiguity, these categories of conflict allow for a very broad range of characterizations of enemies, of modes of action and definition of 'group self'. This sociological importance of these categories is something for which the early German sociologist Georg Simmel provided some useful insights.

Simmel, among other propositions about the implications of conflict in groups, noted two aspects which I believe are interrelated. The first is that conflict tightens group boundaries and increases group solidarity. It follows that the higher the escalation in the conflict, the higher the internal solidarity of a group. The second of Simmel's points is that conflict produces a search for enemies; that a group in conflict with another will seek to sharply define a set of monolithic enemies. The two propositions are related in that a successful definition or set of definitions of enemies will heighten conflict, promoting solidarity and a strong sense of group identification.

The interpenetration of Islamic and secular-nationalist fields therefore allows for a very broad range of characterizations of the Palestinians' conflict situation. It allows for a wide variety of interpretations of enemies, modes of action and group identity. This means, in turn, that a high degree of group boundary maintenance and solidarity is possible while appealing at the same time to the widest possible audience.

This point is one which gives us an important perspective on contemporary Palestinian politics, for it provides us with an insight into why mainstream Palestinian nationalism is, in fact, mainstream. Fatḥ, the largest of the Palestinian organizations and that which is most representative of the social composition of the Palestinian community, has declined to elaborate a sophisticated

ideological line. By so doing, it has perpetuated the ambiguity of its concepts, and hence broadened its base of support. By contrast, the smaller and more sophisticated Marxist groups have produced a coherent political philosophy, with correspondingly sharp conceptual definition; but in the process they have limited their appeal to those for whom the political-ideological debate has meaning. Quandt has commented on this phenomenon:

> the simplicity of Fatah's nationalist political goals makes them understandable to the large mass of poorly educated Palestinians. By contrast, other groups have often engaged in highly sophisticated ideological debates that have little meaning to most potential recruits (Quandt, 1973, p. 55).

He comments further:

> The largest commando groups have been consistently opposed to the idea of carefully defining a social and political program in ideological terms. In fact, this relative abstinence from ideological debate has been partly responsible for Fatah's success in gaining a broad following compared with that of the smaller and more radical PFLP and PDFLP (ibid., p. 111).

And here we come to the final point: the shift in Islamic ideation to a concentration on conflict categories, and the ambiguity of those categories indicates to me a concomitant shift in the orientation of that ideation toward the question of identity and group boundaries. That is, the concerns that underlie the continued existence of Islamic concepts in Palestinian nationalism in the present period are ones that revolve around ethnicity, historical struggles and sharper definitions of 'Palestinian-ness', than primarily around theological arguments or other sacred concerns. Islam, then, is *one* of the many elements of Palestinian identity; it is an ideological idiom which appears in many of the most emotional of contexts, largely because its roots are deep in the majority of the population, and because in past religious leaders and struggles, many can find paradigms for, and emotive parallels with, the present. Even an atheist can point to the Crusades and say 'our people have fought imperialism for a long time', for Islamic history and issues have been part of the historical identity of the Palestinian Arabs in general.

This is not to say that these concepts have become 'secularized'. It is only that the connotational emphasis, as I discussed in the Introduction, has changed. As with most religious ideation, whether in Polish Catholicism or, for that matter, in Zionism, religious conceptions provide one of several layers to the articulation of a conflict - and extremely powerful ones - but the conflict as a whole is rarely conceived of as *essentially* 'religious'.

There is much in this that echoes Geertz's distinction (1968), presented in a study of Islam elsewhere, between 'religiousness'

and 'religious-mindedness'. The former is unselfconscious 'common-sense' piety; but religious-mindedness is a pattern which consists of a self-conscious display of religious symbols because they are part of a cultural identity - an identity which is being challenged, as in the case of the Palestinians, by a powerful enemy.

Thus, Islamic symbols today form one of many layers in Palestinian political culture. They are powerful ones: evoking historical, ethnic, regional and sacred themes either singly or in combination. Their ambiguity gives them the power to strike a wide range of chords in a community which has a shifting and diffuse social character. The question of where this most recent Islamic manifestation fits into the history of Palestinian nationalism, and its implications, will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

CONCLUSIONS: IDEOLOGICAL CODES AND CHANGE

In the Introduction, it was contended that certain types of symbolic codes co-occur with particular types of social structure, and that this interplay between structures of symbols and structures of social relations provides an instructive perspective on the genesis and development of social movements. In this conclusion, I will argue that the case of Islamic ideation in Palestinian political culture is a good case in point.

Specifically, I believe that in its historical changes within Palestinian political culture, Islamic ideation exhibits a shift from being an elaborated code to a restricted one, that this shift is related to changes in Palestinian social structure, and that it in turn sheds some light on the kinds of ideological idioms which commonly articulate the concerns and goals of a social movement. In order to clarify this, we must step back and look at the work of Bernstein and Douglas on symbolic codes.

I

Basil Bernstein, a British sociolinguist, has made extensive and highly original studies of the relationship between speech codes and social classes. A speech code, for Bernstein, is a particular ordering of the major components of a language, of which he has isolated two major types: elaborated and restricted.

An elaborated code is one in which there is a wide range of syntactic and lexical choice in evidence. It is one in which linguistic expression exhibits little ambiguity, a marked differentiation between semantic fields and little use of metaphor. An elaborated code is one which allows for a great deal of individualized expression, and is capable of carrying very precise information.

A restricted code is one in which meanings tend to be implicit, and a single symbol carries highly condensed meanings. There is a high degree of ambiguity, a lesser differentiation between semantic fields, and metaphor is important. Restricted codes tend to be localized and to transmit communalized symbols: 'we' rather than 'I' is emphasized. They create social solidarity and allow for little idiosyncratic expression. Shared experience, identification and empathy are epitomized in such codings (Bernstein, 1972).

Bernstein has shown that the two types (actually poles of a continuum) have definite social correlates. Restricted codes

tend to be associated with communication in lower socio-economic classes, while elaborated codes occur among higher classes. The phrases 'restricted' and 'elaborated' have no value-judgments attached to them: one can say approximately the same things through each code, but it is said in a different manner. The importance of these codes lies in the effects that they have on socialization. Since social roles are patterns of behavior largely communicated and learned through language, then the specific language code in a child's milieu will affect the way in which he perceives and performs the roles. Thus, linguistic codes are associated with particular types of social organization, and affect the behavior of the individual.

Mary Douglas, in *Natural Symbols* (1970), presents a stimulating development of Bernstein's theory. Widening the scope of Bernstein's work, she proposes that we examine more generally the relationship between social organization and symbol systems. She argues that the distinction between elaborated and restricted codes can be applied to broader symbol systems, such as religion, and that these have definite patterns of co-occurrence with specific types of social organization. Douglas holds that major symbol systems will vary in the degree to which they are elaborated or restricted according to the strength of group boundaries. Those social organizations with strong group boundaries and definition, in which the group has a powerful influence over the individual, will exhibit restricted codes with highly condensed meanings; those with weak boundaries will have elaborated codes with diffuse, explicit meanings.

An example of this is that groups such as the Ituri Pygmies, who have a weak set of group boundaries and in which the group does not have much influence over the individual, show little concern for religious ritual. On the other hand, those with strong group definition manifest a high degree of ritualization with ambiguous symbolic forms and condensed, implicit meanings. This is a matter for theoretical concern, for it suggests that the historical appearance of particular ideational styles is not random, but is to some degree influenced by the structure of the ideation itself.

II

It is argued, then, that Islamic ideation gradually shifts from the elaborated to the restricted mode. In order to support this and to see why it is important, it is necessary to review the phases of Palestinian history discussed in the preceding chapters and the roles of Islamic belief in each.

First Period

In the first period, from the era of Ottoman Reform until around 1929, we saw in Palestine a society under foreign occupation and one in which new political patterns were barely beginning to

emerge. What Albert Hourani (1968) has called the 'politics of notables' was the prevailing indigenous power arrangement; rule by a class of pre-eminent families whose power derived from their combined position as landlords, faction bosses, brokers between central government and people, and as high religious functionaries. This arrangement continued despite, and was in fact strengthened by, the mandate government imposed by the Powers after the First World War. The notables saw in an independent Palestine a chance to further their own ambitions; to be the rulers of an Arab state rather than merely the interface between a central government and a province. To this end - the expulsion of the British occupiers and the Jewish settlers and the creation of an independent Palestine - the notable class directed much of its energy. They also, however, diverted at least as much energy to intra-class factionalism.

As the 1920s wore on, factionalism increased and with it the extent of domination of the population by the *aʿyān*. Despite the surfacing of an embryo middle class with its own political interests, the notables' style of politics lost nothing. As it became apparent during this decade that the British and Zionists would not easily be dislodged, jockeying for political advantage led to an extension and firming-up of the internal factional lines of conflict; cleavages between political rivals grew with the level of frustrated ambitions.

Under the circumstances of *aʿyān* dominance, Islam played a key role. It was, almost by definition in such conditions, an expression of the dominant class interests and outlook. The Supreme Muslim Council was, significantly, the most important political institution in the country for *all* Palestinian Arabs. With its total control over Muslim institutions and schools, it was in an excellent position as a platform from which to disseminate the political interpretations of the establishment *ʿulamāʾ*, who were important members of the notable class.

Islam in this period was an elaborated ideational code in the realm of politics; that is, its meanings were largely explicit, non-local, theoretical, and class-specific. Its class-specificity was a result of the domination of Palestinian Islam by the establishment *ʿulamāʾ* of the notable class. It was explicit and theoretical because it was concerned with such issues as pan-Islamic solidarity, restoration of the Caliphate, and intellectually sophisticated reformism of the sort formulated by ʿAbduh. It was non-local in that its appeals often aimed at audiences outside of Palestine; protection of the Holy Places, for example, as a means of gaining the political and financial support of the Islamic world as a whole. A further case in this regard is the Islamic Conference of 1931, which, while temporally peripheral to the period under study, points up the degree to which non-local and highly theoretical religious issues were intertwined with Palestinian affairs by the dominant class.

Notable class interests were clearly being articulated in this elaborated code. The Supreme Muslim Council was its political

voice, and campaigns such as that to preserve the Holy Places, the pan-Islamic appeals and the international meetings were most certainly a way in which to gain recognition for the notable class as spokesman for the Palestinian Arabs.

Thus we find an elaborated ideological code being wielded by a dominant class; but it is important to note that Palestinian society at this point was still one with little sense of itself. Nationalism, never mind national self-interest, was still a new and novel concept. 'Palestinian-ness' for the majority was still superseded in these first few years of mandated nationhood by identification with fractionated, local reference groups: kin, faction, village, region. Social boundaries were complex and cross-cut; a single over-arching national selfhood was yet fully to emerge in the popular consciousness.

Second Period

The second period - running from approximately 1929 to 1939 - witnessed a great deal of change and upheaval on both the economic and political planes. Zionist immigration soared during this period with concomitant rises in the number of land sales by landowners and increases in the eviction of peasants from their land. Tied indissolubly to this trend was the frustration of political aspirations; on the one hand, this was produced by the obvious intransigence of the British with regard to their pro-Zionist policy. On the other hand, frustration grew with the dawning realization that the notable class had pursued its own interests to the detriment of those for whom they spoke.

With a marked increase in adversity came a marked rise in national consciousness. As a result of economic deprivation caused by foreign occupation and settlement, and the failure of a traditional ruling class to act effectively, a slowly emerging notion of a national identity can be discerned in the early 1930s which grew until mid-decade. This emergent identity erupts among various classes in the rebellion of 1936-39 which if not specifically anti-notable in ideology, can be interpreted, especially among the peasantry, as a vote of no-confidence in that class's ability to lead an effective resistance to occupation.

It is in this context that Islam as a populist idiom appears. The combination of despair, political frustration and growing awareness of both national identity and class tensions found a major articulation in the form of Shaykh al-Qassām and his redemptive appeal to fight for the Faith; parochial, local problems and religious ones were shown to be tightly interwoven in his creed. Though not the cause of the revolt, he was its catalyst; by personal example and religious belief, Qassām found a mode of populist discourse extraordinary in its ability to interpret simply and monolithically a range of individual and group frustrations. The revolt which closely followed the shaykh's death was clearly nationalist in aims, but its definition of nationhood owed much of its mass appeal to the Islamic populism of al-Qassām and his followers.

Here we find a trend toward a restricted Islamic code. In this populist idiom, Islamic symbols tended to be highly condensed, with a wide range of implicit, ambiguous connotations. The concepts of *jihād*, *shahīd* and *mujāhid* - struggle and sacrifice - predominate, but with little elaboration except to say that such struggle is the duty of every Muslim. Significantly, although the shaykh himself was a proponent of Islamic reform and pan-Islamic solidarity, these theologically sophisticated concepts find little expression here; and the call of Islamic populism gave only brief and nominal notice to those outside of Palestine.

The condensation of religious ideation can partly be seen in the choice of symbols: the concepts of *jihād* and its associated semantic field is one which carries a strong implicit concern for group boundaries and definition. There are many possible interpretations of *jihād* in this context; to cite again Ibrahīm al-Shaykh Khalīl, there were no personal or political obstacles to this call in this period, for it can alienate no one (at least among Muslims). However, the range of interpretation of these concepts of boundaries and struggles were not, at that time, free in connotative play - for they were carried, at least originally, by religious leaders and therefore retained a self-consciously Muslim tone.

Third Period

In the contemporary period, Palestinian society is dominated, of course, by the fact of expulsion from the land. The population is fragmented and dispersed, and after 30 years of dispersal there is a growing heterogeneity in the economic and political spheres. The Palestinians today are alienated from their homeland. The first clear consequence of this is that they lack a stable economic base: they suffer, as a population, an insecurity of livelihood stemming from their dispersal. They are dependent largely on the goodwill of their hosts to be able to remain and provide themselves with the basics of life. A further consequence of this, however, is that alienation from their own territory deprives them of direct contact with a major symbol of their group boundaries - the land itself. Although 'the homeland' stands as the major objectification of Palestinian identity, being physically absent from it, for the majority, makes it an abstraction; this does not lessen the power it has over the minds of the people, but it turns the notion of homeland into a condensed and multi-faceted concept.

Alienation also exists at the level of ethnicity. Singled out as the major concern of Arab nationalism and pan-Islamic solidarity on the one hand, but feeling discriminated against and often the butt of hostility in the Arab world on the other, the Palestinians cannot help but feel the contradiction. The sense of being 'ᶜUthman's Shirt' - of being nothing but a pawn, a political token, or a rallying point - is inescapable.

In the midst of all this, however, we find the Palestinians with a strong sense of selfhood and national identity. A great

deal of concern focuses on group boundaries and their nature: history both recent and ancient is explored to define the roots of this identity; arts, especially poetry, are highly developed as an expression of who Palestinians are; offers of passports are refused for fear that after a generation the boundaries of 'Palestinian-ness' will begin to blur. In an alienated condition, indeed, a palpably liminal one, in a world in which some politicos can state that Palestinians do not even exist, this concern with, and illumination of, national selfhood is not surprising. Neither is it uncommon; history is full of examples of dislocated, alienated peoples whose very dislocation strengthens their identity. In recent years the Armenians provide us with a case very much in point, and Zionism itself has made an explicit ideology of this phenomenon.

Here we find Islamic ideation as a highly restricted code: full of ambiguous and implicit meanings and undifferentiated semantic fields. Ambiguity is present to such a degree that some interpretations of historically Islamic concepts deny any contemporary religious meaning. The focal point of these symbolic patterns is that of social boundary; not reform or fundamentalism or other theoretically sophisticated beliefs. The repertoire of religious symbols has settled on conflict categories: *jihād, mujāhid, shahīd* and so forth, that have implicit within them characteristics of who *we* are and by reflection who the *enemy* is. Historical parallels are present - the Crusades and imperialism, the Islamic wars and the Palestinian resistance - which give historical depth to social boundary and conflict categories. Even here, though, is present the ambiguity: the Crusades are in some instances clearly a religious parallel with the present, while in others it is a secular commentary on the ancient role of Palestinians as fighters of imperialist aggression. History here becomes mythos: time is collapsed and myth provides a sense of strong continuity with remote times and struggles.

Islam in the contemporary period provides a vocabulary of identity. Its appeal is broad, but this breadth is related to its restrictedness; being highly condensed and ambiguous it has great scope for application across a wide spectrum of contexts. It is one of several contemporary forms of discourse (Marxism among others) which both reflects and transcends the Palestinian Diaspora.

III

The pattern revealed by looking at these stages as an historical progression is an instructive one. What emerges is a picture of steady decline in the domination of a single class and the hegemony exercised by it over the politics of Palestine. With it there is a steady movement in Islamic ideation from an elaborated code to a restricted one; as alienation increases, and with it concern over group boundaries and their definition, so grows

the degree of restrictedness in the symbolic coding. Therefore we find in this progression the occurrence of restricted codes in both the second and third periods; but the degree of restrictedness intensifies, and with it the degree of ambiguity, metaphor and lack of differentiated semantic fields.

I would argue that the following process underlies this case of ideological change. As dominant class control diminishes, so too does its ideological monopoly. With this comes a loosening of the meaning-structure from its entrenched moorings; old associations become unsatisfactory or are questioned, and the connotative range of symbols composing the ideological system widens and becomes increasingly ambiguous. That is, the number of possible referents and interpretations of a given symbol grows, and the condensed, implicit meanings characteristic of a restricted code appear. This restricted code with its condensed and ambiguous meanings is one in which a broad spectrum of individuals can find meaning and thus when transformed into a specific ideology, has the power of great appeal.

I think this is an accurate description of the change in ideological roles of Islam in Palestinian nationalism. It is, however, an analysis which I believe has implications for other cases, in both Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. The relationship between the two will be clearer if we examine the more general implications first.

This material suggests that there may be a crucial process at work in the genesis and progress of social movements which is instrumental in the rise of new and effective ideologies. This process centers around the breakdown of social structures and the concomitant appearance of restricted codes; given that social movements tend to appear in circumstances in which dominant social groups, ideologies and power alignments begin to falter, and given the notion that such faltering results in a loosening of the connotative structure of ideation, I would suggest that we look at those points at which restricted codes emerge for clues to the appearance of new ideological forms. Such codes, I have argued, have wide appeal due to their condensed meanings and ambiguity, and this appeal is in turn dependent to a large extent on the erosion of a dominant ideology carried by hegemonic groups.

Critical points for the emergence of new and effective ideological forms may therefore come when prevailing edifices of power and meaning erode to the point where restricted codes can appear - around whose ambiguous condensed symbolic forms social movements can coalesce. The crucial process here may thus be conceived of as a feedback system in which the faltering of the prevailing structures feeds the ambiguity of restricted codes; this is in its turn central for the genesis of social movements for it provides an idiom in which a wide range of individuals can find satisfactory and (apparently) integrated interpretations of their disoriented social milieu.

This suggested role of restricted codes helps to explain why

Islam is so frequently the core of social movements, or at least plays an important part in them. To begin with, social movements are everywhere concerned with the maintenance or reformulation of group boundaries; who we are, who they are, where are we going, from where have we come, and so forth. A successful ideology, I have argued, is one that articulates these concerns in a way which appeals to a wide audience. Islam has highly condensed and complex ideation concerned with group boundaries: concepts such as *hijrah, jihād, ummah, kufr, dār al-Islām, dār al-ḥarb* and *dār-al-ṣulḥ*, among others, focus on the questions of Muslim identity, opposition, and change. This concern with boundaries has clear historical roots in the first Muslim Community and its attempts to define, protect and later expand itself. This remained important due to the fact that, at least in principle, the first community and its problems served as a conscious model for later states and empires.

Islam is not unique in this preoccupation with group identity, but it has reached a level, due to historical importance, of uncommon ritualization. Due also to this historical importance, and to their constant application to different situations, the concepts dealing with boundaries have become extremely dense, with a vast range of connotations implicit in them. Thus Islam has embedded within it a latent restricted code with all of its attendant ambiguity and appeal. This code is a ready-made vocabulary for conflict and identity (two faces of the same issue), which are inevitable foci for nascent social movements. Islamic ideation is therefore a highly appropriate idiom for mass political action. To return to the first point, one still has to discern the conditions under which restricted codes appear, but it should not be surprising that Islam has such longevity and frequency of appearance as such a code.

Again, this characteristic is not unique to Islam. Ironically, Zionism is at least as concerned with boundary maintenance as Islam; and the fact that both have so densely systematized this domain and that its connotations are so wide, may have a great deal to do with the apparent insolubility of the Middle Eastern political morass.

One must not take this as an orientalist argument. It is not being argued that Islam is a particularly effective armature of social movements as a result of a certain *Geist* or mind-set induced in its adherents which is its sole property. To the contrary, it faces common human problems and provides solutions to them according to underlying principles which it shares with many (though certainly not all) other ideational systems.

In a more narrowly circumscribed domain, the analysis and suggestions here point to a possible theoretical consideration. Douglas's insight that strong group boundaries are associated with restricted codes seems, at this point, to be a sound one, although a great deal more work needs to be done definitively to demonstrate it. I would suggest, however, that the relationship is not always one in which the restricted code *reflects* the

strong boundaries. It may well be that the co-occurrence of the two phenomena could be explained by turning this argument on its head; that solidarity and strong boundaries are to a degree products of a restricted ideological code whose ambiguity permits it to serve as a common discourse for individuals and groups of widely different social characters. The relationship between types of social organization and coding still stands; I merely question the utility of seeing one or the other as primarily causal in any general sense.

In sum, the recognition that there are correlations between particular forms of social structure and types of ideational systems, and that this may be illuminating for our understanding of social movements, is an important one. The suggestions presented here are tentative, but they raise issues which social science and historiography would do well to confront. The interpenetration of ideational and social structural domains is a great deal more complex than is usually apparent in individual studies; this may well have to do with the fact that acting upon an awareness of that complexity inevitably leads to analyses which place greater demands on the social scientist or historian. Facing these demands requires receptiveness to approaches and techniques beyond parochial disciplinary boundaries: but to do otherwise, as Engels warned, condemns us to analyses as simplistic as the solution of a first-order equation.

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