Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East

DARALAYTAM ALISLAMIC ALSINA'IYYA

INDUSTRIAL ISLAMIC ORPHANAGE SCHOOL—Jerusalem

Edited by

Nefissa Naguib & Inger Marie Okkenhaug

BRILL

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Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia (S.E.P.S.M.E.A.)

(Founding editor: C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze)

VOLUME 103

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Beth Baron: Recently named a Carnegie Scholar, is Professor of History at the City College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York and author of Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics (University of California Press, 2005) and The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press (Yale University Press, 1994). She is founding co-director of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Kjersti G. Berg: Phd Candidate at the Department of archaeology, history, cultural studies and religion at the University of Bergen. Her research interests include Palestinian refugees, humanitarian aid, civil society and charities, and she is currently writing a dissertation about The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Susanne Dahlgren: Studied Anthropology, Islamic studies and Arabic in the University of Edinburgh, the London School of Economics and University of Helsinki. She got her PhD in 2004 (Department of Social Anthropology, University of Helsinki) and currently works as a Research Fellow in the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Among the topics she has published include colonial and Islamic law, morality and the public sphere, sexuality, and Middle Eastern gender studies. She received the Association for Middle East Women's Studies (AMEWS) "Young Scholar Award" in 2001 for best published article.

Ilana Feldman: Assistant Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs at George Washington University. She is the author of Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–67 (Duke University Press, 2008). She is currently conducting research on policing and security practices in Gaza and on humanitarianism and the Palestinian experience.

Lars Gunnar Lundblad: Phd Candidate at The Department of Sociology at the University of Bergen. He has worked for many years as a teacher and social worker. His interest within the research program 'Global

Moments in the Levant' includes current social and political changes in the Levant, in particular Islamic welfare and comparative aspects of welfare organization.

Renate Lunde: Phd Candidate at Department of archaeology, history, cultural studies and religion at the University of Bergen. Her research interests are particularly missionary history and social and poverty history in Egypt with a special focus on women and children.

Michael Marten: Researches and writes primarily on British and German missionaries in pre-1948 Palestine. He has published "Attempting to bring the gospel home: Scottish missions to Palestine, 1839–1917" (I. B. Tauris, London, 2005), and a number of articles on related themes. He is currently examining the ways in which British and German gender norms were communicated and impacted upon through the encounter with Palestinians in the Mandate era. Other research interests include the role of religion and ideology in determining European policy towards the Middle East in the post-1948 era.

Nefissa Naguib: Associate professor in anthropology at Oslo University College and currently working on a research project entitled "Global Moments in the Levant" based at the University of Bergen and financed by the Norwegian Research Council. Naguib's ongoing research and publications include themes regarding minorities in the Middle East with focus on Jewish and Armenian communities in the region; in particular how foodways, photographs and craftsmanship relate to and impact people's memories and experiences of larger global events.

Inger Marie Okkenhaug: Researcher at the Department of archaeology, history, cultural studies and religion at the University of Bergen and currently working on a project on Scandinavian women missionaries and welfare in Palestine, Syria and Turkey, in the years between 1900–1940. Author of "The quality of heroic living, of high endeavor and adventure" Anglican Mission, Women and Education in Palestine, 1888–1948 Leiden, Brill 2002, and co-ed. with Ingvild Flaskerud: Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East: Two Hundred Years of History, Berg, Oxford 2005.

Bethany J. Walker: Associate Professor of Middle East History at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she teaches courses on the medieval and modern Middle East, Islam, and Islamic archaeology. Her research focuses on medieval Islam, and specifically the Maluku Empire (1250–1517 CUE.), combining archaeological fieldwork with the archival methods of more traditional history. In the 1990s her work centered on the material correlates of imperial decline, and today she is interested in the ways in which the provinces of medieval Islamic states responded to the processes of economic and political transformations that ushered in the early modern period.

INTRODUCTION[1]

Nefissa Naguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug

Welfare and relief activities and efforts in the Middle East, like other regions, involve ideas and practices of improving people's lives. These activities include charitable acts, benevolence, and philanthropy and are performed or carried out by states, secular and religious institutions, and individuals. Studies and debates regarding past and ongoing welfare activities in the Middle East have focused mostly on religious doctrine and political positioning, yet few have examined how welfare is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, local practices, community and state relationships. In this multidisciplinary volume welfare is regarded as a significant chapter in the history and culture of social politics and work in the Middle East. Contributors examine not only men and women's chain of involvements and activities in the region, but also the daily welfare encounters, individual experiences and the production of such encounters. The concern is with the period between 1850 and 2005 when the region witnessed marked social, economic and political transformations. This time span represents moments of colonisations, occupations, wars and conflicts which resulted in unmet needs and broken down institutions. Each chapter gives a fuller picture of the ways benevolent efforts contributed to the daily lives of people in the region.

If we contemplate the number of wars and political crises in the region of the Middle East, it is indeed remarkable that there are not

more scholarly contributions to the understanding of the impact and significance of the brutalities of historical moments on the lives of the people. *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East* is about the relationship between events, realities, human activities and involvements in the region. Emerging welfare studies on the Middle East are dedicated to observing, recording and figuring out the historic and contemporary patterns of relief mobilizations and needs in communities. In the quest for more authenticity, and in order to contest existing prototypical accounts of benevolent activities in the region, scholars have more interest in voices of ordinary people, stories from below as it where. Personal accounts or statements, which include the marginal voices of the poor, women and orphans are today addressed more directly and written into the larger historical narratives in the attempt to reveal the multiplicities and complexities of past and present everyday concerns. Here we find path-breaking research and we will in this volume draw on such earlier works.[2] However, we will go further in the following chapters. This book's contributions lie in the close study of welfare beyond the religious divides, codifications and indoctrinations, based on different problematic and methodological perspectives.

Welfare is progressively more caught up in controversies at the global and transnational level. The global politics of welfare involves not only the uneven allocation of access to humanitarianism, but also moral and political impact and involvement in what is seen by many as a merging of aggression and humanitarianism in the name of freedom and faith. In this way, we are witnessing increases both in the extent of global welfare networks and in the force and impact of global interconnectedness. This implies not only that potential impacts of local events on distant affairs are becoming more significant, but also that global involvement in welfare makes us more vulnerable to shifts in practices, regulations and routines that take place in distant parts of the world. Welfare activities are entwined in complex webs of political interests and manoeuvrings.

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[2] For example see M. Ener *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), M. Bonner, M. Ener and A. Singer, (eds.) *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), M. Petmesidou & C. Papatheodorou *Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean. Trends, Politics & Welfare Prospects in the New Millennium* (London: Zed Book, 2006), see also B. Baron *Egypt as a Woman. Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

We know that it is not welfare, by itself that makes it a political agenda, but it immensely increases the quantity of miscellaneous interests, relations and regulatory frameworks that are registered as each welfare activity makes its way from benefactor to beneficiary. As such, the possibilities for welfare and relief interests to be caught up in the complexities of official politics and come into conflict also grow, even if only a few of these controversies ever make it on the political schedule of the ever-powerful multinational satellite newsrooms.

Welfare involvements and activities, therefore, can never be removed from political, social or economic contexts. We propose that what seems to appear as mere constructions of schools or orphanages are indeed profound historical and socio-political construction. This breach between what we actually know about activities and what we could potentially know makes transparency a key issue. As such, welfare is also a politics of silence and publicity, a pursuit for the power to be in charge and command what will be declared, what will be the focal point of public questions and what will remain tacit.

Welfare is also locally embedded and practiced. As the following chapters demonstrate, such local contexts strain which welfare-related topics are to surface in the public awareness, and offer a framework within which such issues are created, understood, debated and explained. By this we mean that welfare activities, such as the unique involvements and impact of women as active supporters and benefactors (see Lunde, Marten and Okkenhaug, this volume), individual responses to multinational relief (see Naguib, this volume), communal charitable commitments (see Lundblad, this volume) or the long historical involvements of specific families in providing local public services (see Walker, this volume) represent encounters of complex interactions between local, national and at times transnational levels. The care of orphans in nineteenth and twentieth-century Egypt resonated well with the prominent institutionalizing by British colonial officers, Islamists, and national reformers (see Baron, this volume), while the female body is absorbed in the larger campaign in Aden for the advancement and benefit of its citizens (see Dahlgren, this volume). Similarly, although the idea of humanitarianism lives on as an exceptional mode of intervention after close to sixty years the practice of humanitarianism has come to represent normality and increasingly resembles government itself (see Berg and Feldman, this volume).

Interpreting the complexities of welfare and relief in the Middle East is another way of drawing attention to the fact that such activities also inform power constellations and must be analysed as such. Relationships that are formed by and through welfare and relief efforts can serve to reinforce or create new and complex social and communal hierarchies. Our approach to power relations goes beyond the study of established relief institutions of the state and religion; welfare defined too restrictive as a bureaucratic or religious activity would simply be too narrow to grasp issues and realties.

Welfare is embedded in practices, discourses, controversies and principles that are not always categorized. Drawing attention to some of the less obvious ways in which welfare is practiced, expressed, acquired and experienced we seek to contribute to a more nuanced interpretation and examination of welfare and its outcomes. Authors in this volume promote social maps that involve agents of welfare and their recipients. In developing a fuller picture of the ways welfare contributes to the daily lives of individuals the volume also engages with individuals and families living on the margins; welfare is not only a medium for survival, but it is also linked to overall social life and relations.

Interactions between social activities and individuals living on the margins provide salient illustrations of gender issues in the scholarship of welfare in the Middle East. We cannot read women movements in the Middle East without noting the dynamic and indispensable role of Jewish, Christian and Muslim women who were pioneers in charitable and developmental endeavors. Female nationalists nearly always coupled their work for the nation with social reform. Yet, as noted by Beth Baron, this commitment and activity has rarely been the main story (2005). In the debates now underway on the connections between history of events, women's history and gender studies it is clear that we have what Joan W. Scott (1997) refers to as 'movement' that tie the 'story of the history of women' to the multifaceted nature of politics. Elizabeth Thompson builds further on this connection and introduces women's performances in history to the broad conceptualisations of civic order (1999).

What are the stories behind health care, schools, orphanages and vocational schools, maternity homes and hostels? Which institutions and who were the people involved in welfare activities? And who were the recipients of such efforts? The collection of chapters probe and explain these questions not only in the context of stable communities and nations, but also as they emerge in vulnerable states and disintegrat-

ing societies. Furthermore, this volume brings forth the historical and contemporary voices of those who provide relief and the beneficiaries of such efforts. At the core of this book are themes concerned with humanitarianism in relation to people's unique experiences, state/government, gender and modernity. As such, the presentations capture the social politics, ranging from politics dynamics and structures, to motivation and practice.

In the first chapter Beth Baron looks at the history of welfare, abandoned children and orphans in modern Egypt. Baron is concerned with the children who have been on the margins of not only family and society, but also Middle Eastern history. Scrutinising written sources and photographs Baron draws our attention to government policies, social activism and providers of welfare. Sponsors of orphanages included French Catholic nuns, Ottoman-Egyptian and British colonial officials and their wives, women missionaries and Egyptian social reformers and later the Ministries of Religious Endowments and Social Affairs. Social welfare was not only an act of 'saving' children; it also involved the enhancement of sponsor's legitimacy as guardians of the poor. Institutions, officials and individuals involved in these projects saw orphans as a blank slate, open to their proselytizing, modernizing and nationalizing agendas.

While Baron's main concern is with the sponsors of orphanages, Nefissa Naguib's perspective is from the orphan's emotive experiences and memories of enduring loss. Chapter Two associates itself with the post World War 1 exodus of Armenian refugees and their arrival in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The essay traces relationships between relief efforts and memory. Naguib captures not only orphan survivors' sites of memory and attachments but she also argues against the general idea of Armenians as merely a nation of victims. Although accounts from Jerusalem are about massacres, deportation and relief that at one level convey a single shared experience, Naguib's use of grounded ethnography focusing on individual accounts shows that recollections of relief are diverse and can be contradictory. She provides a close study of individual experiences which tell us more about impacts of relief on people's lives and contribute to our understanding of people's perceptions and memories of such efforts.

Relief work in Armenian history is also the theme in Chapter Three. Inger Marie Okkenhaug shows how Scandinavian female missionaries, together with secular organisations like the Red Cross and the Near East

Relief, were crucial welfare agents engaged in rebuilding and preserving what was left of Armenian society between the massacres in the 1890s and the interwar period. This transnational activity created what has been termed one of the first international aid-operation in modern history. Thus the missionary can be seen as a forerunner for the present-day development/aid worker. The central challenge for those parts of Armenian society that had been affected by the massacres was the large number of orphans, and the large number of single women who had to support their families. These challenges had a decisive effect on the missions' relief activities and aid-projects. Female missionaries would specialize in mother and child-related welfare and self-help programs were created to give Armenian women a chance to self-support.

In Protestant mission ideology and rhetoric in general women were seen as the key to religious change and social improvement—two interlinked factors in the missionary project. This link between women, modernity and religious reformation is also a theme in Chapter Four, in which Renate Lunde looks at Anglican mission's maternity and infant welfare work in Cairo from 1920–1950. Her empirical foundation is sources of the daily encounters between female British missionaries/nurses and Egyptian mothers in infant welfare centres in the slum quarters of Cairo. These projects were influenced by contemporary international discourses on philanthropy, and are another example of mission being part of the transnational movement of health, knowledge and modernisation. These Anglican women were not merely doing philanthropy, but aimed at more profound social change. They concentrated on preventive medicine through teaching young mothers childcare techniques and hygiene. Egyptian women also influenced the centres by demanding new services and an income-generating project. This venture still exists for the women in the "Social Centre" as it is called today.

Mission, welfare and gender is also a theme in Michael Marten's essay on the Scottish mission girls' school in Jaffa. While originally a mission to Jews, the school developed into an educational institution for Arab children in Palestine during the British Mandate period. This is yet another example of western welfare involvement that changed its practice because of local demands. Marten shows how the middle class orientation of the Scottish mission makes it part of larger picture in which Western colonization was closely related to middle class aspirations. The female Scottish teachers were part of the dominant European narrative that defined itself in terms of "modernity and bourgeois identity".

Even so, in practice this institution offered local girls and women not only education, but also a practical training that would create female self-reliance. This income-generating project was empowering poorer women in the Jaffa region.

The modernisation-welfare-gender connections figure prominently in Susanne Dahlgren's contribution. In Chapter Six Dahlgren provides insight into contrasting ideas of what is good for women, presented as welfare projects during a moment in Aden's history which includes periods from British colonialism to present-day Yemeni unification and 'Islamic' welfare activities. Tracing gender ideologies that have informed such welfare efforts, Dahlgren takes a Gramscian position on civil society and argues that the way the activist woman is articulated in these programmes notifies respective notions of modernity of each period. While the 'advanced woman' is presented as the outcome of these projects, by drawing on her material Dahlgren shows that the 'advanced ideal woman' is not always the object of welfare but that she can also be the activist.

In Chapter Seven welfare efforts are also explored through a gender perspective. Kjersti Berg discusses concepts, ideas and ideals that inform UNRWA's gendered refugee projects. Berg explores how concepts like self-help; rehabilitation and self-reliance are at the core of UNRWA's humanitarianism, development and modernisation project. Serving 4.2 million Palestinian refugees, of which one third live in sixty-one camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, UNRWA has had particular concern for the empowerment of women through sustainable educational programmes and vocational training. Berg's essay is an addition to the ongoing discourse on women's impoverishment within the context of relief in vulnerable nation states.

In Chapter Eight Ilana Feldman analyses the relations between humanitarism and government with the case of Gaza in the aftermath of the war in 1948 as an example. The role that transnational humanitarian networks might play in governing places with a weak or non-existing state is also important for today's understanding of current global dynamics. In the case of Gaza, as shown by Feldman, humanitarianism and government were to a large degree mutually dependent. UNRWA has since it was established in 1950, been responsible for aiding displaced Palestinians. What is unique about the Palestinian refugee situation is that it is a seemingly permanent condition of human deprivation. Humanitarism has become the normal order of things. During such a

long time span, the humanitarian organisations cannot avoid to take on some of the functions of a state. From 1948 till 1967 Gaza was an area that was "shared" by government (the Egyptian administration until 1967) and humanitarian organizations.

In Chapter Nine, Lars Gunnar Lundblad also addresses humanitarism within weak public structures related to the Palestinian areas, but from another perspective and location. Drawing on his material from the West Bank, Lundblad examines *zakat*, alms, multifaceted complexities, practices and significance. Taking the politicization of Islamic welfare further Lundblad's contribution is not only an argument about how voluntary *zakat* committees unite religion and the people's world, but it is also an analysis of how Islamic welfare provides a presence of traditions and unity among its users. Strongly represented and locally committed, *zakat* systems form significant pockets of fundamental relief that assist people in their survival. Hence they provide confirmation of the effectiveness and value of 'social Islam' in countries without adequate state welfare provision. (Bentall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003)

Islam, welfare and an insufficient state in this area, is also the topic of Chapter Ten. However, Bethany Walker has a historical view when she looks at Sufi sheiks' contribution to public service in nineteenth century Jordan. She argues that rural Sufism played an important role as channels of charity and public service in the late Ottoman Jordan. As a result of the Ottoman state's slow response to the educational needs in rural Jordan, local sheikhs attached to Sufi brotherhoods created kuttabs—elementary schools for boys. In the absence of state-run schools and hospitals, traditional kuttabs and home-based clinics provided the only literacy and basic health-care for most villages before 1920. Walker concludes that while the Sufi dervishes did not transform social structures, they did provide essential public services in the absence of a centralized state.

Collectively the chapters in this volume show that welfare is profound and integral to human society. Of course, ongoing wars, conflicts and not least regular media reporting exposing the general public to the casualties of conflicts, if nothing else, turn our book into a text that engages with ongoing life destructions and needs in the Middle East. We hope that this book shows that scholarship on welfare can play a transformational role. Welfare and relief are not easily pigeonholed and no longer limited to a list of political or religious activities; or as a colleague grumbled "we don't need another book about almsgiving in the

Holy books." We hope that new ground has been broken. In putting this volume together we attempt to bring welfare forth as a field that will reintroduce scholars to the perpetually irresolvable issue of where researchers are to stand in life-essential matters of welfare and relief. In the remainder of our introduction we would like to give a brief consideration to some issues that we do not examine, or only touch upon, but which we think need more careful research. New approaches suggest additional openings for the kind of empirically informed writings we are arguing throughout the book.

One area that so far has been ignored to a large degree by scholars is the motivation behind various welfare activities and the relations between the ideals and practice of welfare. We also need to look at the conditions and definitions of who needs welfare. Emergencies, whether they are on a national level or individual level, endanger basic rights to livelihoods and accesses to fundamental needs; they are multidimentional. One dimension is that these emergencies occur within defined locations; another dimension is that an overwhelming number of sufferers are civilians. Related to the fact that civilians suffer heavily is the high number of shattered families; as a consequences the old, handicapped, women and children are left to cope. Which institutions or individuals hear these voices? And how do the desolate and extreme poor reach the benefactors?

A few scholars have written systematic historical studies of the relationship between gender, state and private agents in welfare policies, including the relationship between local, state and foreign actors and institutions (Thompson, 1999, Fleishman 2003, Baron 2005A). However, more historical inquiries are needed. This also includes current day issues, for example the increase of women's pious movements (Deeb 2006, Mahmood 2006) and women's roles in private charity and in the development towards a welfare-state.

Yet an other issue we would like to propose for future studies is investigations in to the quotidian features in Jewish, Christian and Muslim salvation practices. Long-term daily charitable giving, rescue, protection, shelter and gestures of kindness are forgotten aspects of Middle Eastern regular everyday human compassion and varieties of welfare practices. We propose that more scholars should follow Talal Asad and question secularism as singularly modern; instead let us study its attributes in daily religious practice. In a masterly way Talal Asad wants us to bear in mind all the "…monotheistic believers who

are tolerant—let alone to the variety of behaviors in which 'tolerance' is expressed and lived." (2001:212)

Amartya Sen (1999) argues that war, civil unrest, and breakdown of institutions are the obstacles to people's well being and therefore need to be taken into account and documented. References to the obvious connection between violation of basic freedoms and deprivations are also documented and addressed in the United Nations Arab Human Development Report (first published in 2002). These issues open up essential new avenues to other questions concerning the study of welfare and human development in the Middle East. Writing the introduction in 2007 at a time when war dominates large parts of the Middle East and millions of civilians are uprooted and traumatized by the brutalities of war, one is struck by how agents of bombings and wars of resistance are in some cases almost identical with the efficient agents of welfare and development.

In sum, we ask for more empirically based studies. However, this empirical research should begin from the premise that welfare is not simply another topic that suggests institutions and religious doctrine, but one that demands us to rethink methods, assumptions and theories in innovative and constructive ways. Welfare raises some of the key questions that preoccupy not only scholars, but also the general public. We agree that scholarly research and writings on human sufferings do not alone define the profound intimidations men, women and children living in need confront, but more documented studies can contribute to raise awareness towards the realities of welfare during emergencies like for example the seemingly mundane, yet not trivial, matters of having access to medicine, food, education, shelter and not least human dignity.

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ORPHANS AND ABANDONED CHILDREN IN MODERN EGYPT

Beth Baron

Orphans stand out in Islamic writings as deserving of special protection; abandoned babies, by contrast, were an anathema in Middle Eastern societies, evoking shame not sympathy. The legal status of orphans and abandoned children differed, but they often found themselves in similar circumstances, at the margins or outcast from families, the mainstay of society. Care of orphans and foundlings slowly became a concern to providers of social welfare in nineteenth and twentieth-century Egypt. Ottoman-Egyptian officials, French and American missionaries, British colonial officers, Islamists, and national reformers increasingly opened refuges, institutionalizing the care of orphans and abandoned children. But they had their own competing agendas, which politicized the issues surrounding the social welfare of these children. Questions about colonialism, conversion, and care collided in sometimes contentious debates.

Islamic inheritance law set the parameters for caring for abandoned and orphaned children, and was followed by both Muslims and Copts in Egypt. Legally, an orphan (*yatim*; pl. *aytam*) was one who had lost a father, his or her legal guardian. The driving principle in stipulations regarding orphans was the issue of inheritance, and the law had a great deal to say about the care of orphans and their property. Set by fixed Quranic shares, an inheritance could only be assigned to those in the blood line. The law thus clearly distinguished between those whose paternity could be established and those whose paternity was unknown or contested. The law sought to protect the inheritance of orphans whose paternity was known by assigning guardians and regulating their role, and a child of known parentage whose father had died would most likely be raised by relatives. The law, however, prohibited adoption, shoring up the notion of family as a set of blood relatives with a shared pedigree and leaving those whose paternity was unknown in a social wilderness, though legally they were wards of the state. Foundlings (*laqit*, pl. *luqata'*) were generally assumed to be the result of illicit sexual relations.

Legally they were not orphans as their father had not died. While the woman was considered to have disgraced the family by having pre-marital or extra-marital relations, the child bore the stigma of the act and was perceived to have "tainted" blood.[1] Middle Eastern societies were not unique in stigmatizing children born out of wedlock and branding the mothers. Western societies had similar histories, and single motherhood became accepted only slowly and with resistance.

Since the social category of "single mother" did not exist in most of the Middle East, nor did legal adoption, what happened to the children of unwed mothers? The anthropologist Jamila Bargach writes movingly of the experience of "bastards," as she consciously and provocatively calls them, in her *Orphans of Islam: Family, Abandonment, and Secret Adoption in Morocco*. One solution, which she traces in interviews, is secret adoption, in which a couple, longing for a child but unable to conceive or deliver (another social stigma for women), takes the infant from a mother who is unable to raise it for social or financial reasons. The secrecy in many of Bargach's cases often unraveled at the moment of the father's death, when relatives stepped forward to contest the "adopted" child's right to the patrimony. (Truly secret or successful adoptions might not have been accessible to the researcher by their very nature.) Other mothers abandoned their newborns in places where they would be found or handed them over to institutions that had a program to place them in foster care. While formal adoption is illegal, a form of fostering in which a family gives the gift of care but not its name, is regulated by the Moroccan (and Egyptian) state. Those children who are not placed in foster homes due to vagaries of supply and demand—and the demand for girls is ironically much higher than that for boys—are raised in orphanages. Bargach captures a full array of emotions on the part of birth mothers, abandoned children, and foster parents. At the same time, she follows the work of social actors who serve as intermediaries and look for practical solutions, while she herself challenges state legislation and social values that perpetuate the quandary and the pain.[2]

Orphans have been at the margins of the family and society as well as history. This essay will sketch a history of institutions established

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[1] Beth Baron, "Women, Honour, and the State: Evidence from Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2006): 1–20.
[2] Jamila Bargach, *Orphans of Islam: Family, Abandonment, and Secret Adoption in Morocco* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

in Egypt to house and aid orphans and abandoned children. This is an attempt to get at those children who were, for a variety of reasons, excluded from the family, and see how society and the state dealt with what Bargach calls the "surfeit of bodies."[3] Given the nature of our sources, which include stories and photographs in the Egyptian press, British colonial records, and American missionary and State Department documents, we learn more about government policy, social activism, and refuges than the children's and mothers' emotive experience of their condition.[4]

The Ottoman-Egyptian State and Social Welfare

In her *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952*, Mine Ener has shown how the Ottoman-Egyptian state "managed" the poor in the nineteenth century, setting up new institutions to serve those who were not sufficiently provided for by the safety net of the family or by forms of religious charity. She preferred the word "managing" to "policing," for she saw the poor as actors who pursued various strategies in obtaining relief, including seeking aid from the state. The poor are the subject of her book, but orphans figure prominently in the text.[5]

In pre-modern Egypt, the poor found multiple services in large complexes established by sultans and the wealthy through religious endowments (*waqfs*). Maristan Qalawun, for example, founded by the Mamluk sultan Qalawun in 1284, included a mosque and hospital. In the nineteenth century, the hospital contained an orphanage and foundling home which took in abandoned children found in Cairo's streets or those children whose parents could no longer care for them.[6] As a religious trust, this foundling home and orphanage would have been outside the purview of the pre-modern state. But early in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman governor Mehmed Ali took control of religious trusts as part

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[3] Bargach, *Orphans of Islam*, p. 213.

[4] This essay builds on chapters by Amira al-Azhary Sonbol, "Adoption in Islamic Society: A Historical Survey," (pp. 45–67) and Andrea B. Rugh, "Orphanages in Egypt: Contradiction or Affirmation in a Family-Oriented Society," (pp. 124–41) in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

[5] Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[6] Ibid., pp. xi, 26.

of a bid to augment his power and secure resources for a dynasty. His grandson Ismail later established the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which remained a contested fiefdom well into the twentieth century.[7] The royal family legitimized its rule and aggrandizement of power in part by claiming the mantle of guardianship of the weak and vulnerable. At the same time, institutions for the poor, who in pre-modern times had found refuge in the multifunctional Islamic mosque-hospital complex, became increasingly specialized.

The Ottoman-Egyptian state started its own home for foundlings and the first rudimentary state orphanage within the new School for Mid-wives (Madrasat al-Wilada) and orphans were among the first students. The school had been established in the 1830s in the Civilian Hospital of Azbakiyya. Ener found an "extensive discussion of infant abandonment and admission to the Madrasat al-Wilada" in police records over the eight year period 1846–54. She estimated that the numbers of foundlings entering the school home ranged from one to three per month. She gave the example of an unnamed peasant woman who showed up at the police station in November 1846 with an infant boy discovered at a mosque in Gamaliyya, Cairo. Ener reports that mothers, fathers, neighbors, and others brought in infants to the police for placement in the new foundling home and orphanage when they could not nurse or care for them. The home provided infants with a wet nurse.[8]

The orphans that Bargach interviewed showed a keen interest in locating the site of their abandonment. The child above was found in a mosque. Edward Lane, writing in roughly the same period, reported that parents abandoned infants on the steps of mosques hoping co-religionists would raise them, and he attributed their abandonment to financial difficulties. Other sources suggest that infants were abandoned at the doors of churches as well.[9] But the mosque does not figure in Bargach's list of "sanctioned spaces where the act of abandoning was done" in Morocco. She explains, "The mosque is emphatically a proscribed space, unlike Europe where the church was seen as the appropriate space for abandoning an infant. . . . The doorsteps of the

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[7] Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), chap. 5.

[8] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 42–45, p. 155 n. 81; A. B. Clot, *Aperçu général sur L'Égypte* (Paris: Fourtin, Masson, 1840), vol. 2. p. 425.

[9] Ibid., p. 42, p. 155 n. 82, and quoting E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1842; rep. 1989), p. 197.

house belonging to a notable, or the zawiya [saint's shrine] were more welcoming." She also mentions public baths as sites of abandonment.[10] Andrea Rugh's elderly informants in Cairo remembered the practice of leaving newborns at the door of a wet nurse, who raised them with government or private subsidies until they could enter an institution.[11] Did the site of abandonment change as the state rather than religious institutions (or the state as protector of religion) came to control the fate of these infants? What were the changing perspectives of the act and its symbolic dimensions? Did an earlier tolerance on the part of religious or state authorities give way to rigidity or fear of prosecution? Were babies found at mosques quietly and quickly placed, thus averting the eyes of the state and historians?

Ener tells us that orphans were among those who petitioned for entry to the Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun, which was transformed into a poor shelter in 1847–48. There are cases of children seeking admission when a father or mother died; sometimes a relative showed up later, petitioning authorities for their release. One Hasan Ahmad, for example, admitted in 1868, stayed for two weeks and then was released to his brother. Mothers came as well, with young children, asking to be admitted when they had no support. These mothers may have been divorced, separated, widowed, or spouses of men absent in the army (for the petitions do not reveal what happened to the husbands).

Ener also found that "women may have used Takiyyat Tulun for the sole purpose of having a safe place to give birth." In one year forty-nine babies were born in the refuge. Some mothers stayed months afterward, but lists of residents show "that this shelter also served as a temporary refuge for women about to give birth."[12] One wonders about the circumstances of these women. Why did they go to a refuge to give birth? Was it to escape the watchful eyes of villagers or neighbors? Why did some leave immediately after giving birth whereas others stayed for the better part of a year? One can speculate that the refuge may have served in part as a home for unwed mothers who came to deliver and left quickly afterwards. What became of their offspring? Sadly, Mine Ener is no longer here to help us answer these questions. We do know that Takiyyat Tulun, which had served as a poor shelter for over thirty

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[10] Bargach, *Orphans of Islam*, p. 179.
[11] Rugh, "Orphanages in Egypt," p. 130.
[12] Bargach, *Orphans of Islam*, p. 57.

years, was restored as a mosque in the early 1880s when preservation-
ists reclaimed the space.[13]

It is clear that the state increasingly took the role of guardian, investing
itself with greater responsibility for the protection of the most vulner-
able, whether these were orphans of known or unknown pedigree. Iris
Agmon shows for Palestine how from the 1850s the Ottoman state set up
an authority to administer a central fund for orphans (the Supervision
of Orphan Properties) as part of a series of court reforms designed to
strengthen its control over the court system and the judges who presided
over the courts. An authority was established to manage the property
and money that orphans were to inherit at majority.[14] In Egypt, a pro-
bate or guardianship court (majlis hasbi) "to protect the well-being of
minors," was decreed under Ismail in 1873, and went further than the
Ottoman reform in secularizing the law.[15]

At mid-century the state was willing to share the stage and sup-
ported French Catholic social welfare ventures, including the building
of schools, hospitals, and orphanages. When in 1850 priests found two
infants abandoned on the doorsteps of their church in Alexandria,
they handed them over to the Dames de la Charité until the parents
could be located; shortly thereafter, the sisters started a home for the
orphaned and the abandoned. In 1860, they took in Syrian refugees
and forty orphan girls. That year they started the St. Vincent de Paul
Orphanage for boys who had been orphaned in the sectarian troubles
in Syria. Subsequently, the sisters began a separate home for foundlings,
calling it the Refuge of Saint Joseph; the boys and girls were separated
and sent to separate institutions at the age of seven.[16] French Catholic
orders also established orphanages in the capital, Cairo. These included
the Maison du Bon-Pasteur in Shubra in roughly 1869, and the Maison
des Soeurs Franciscaines, which late in the century had 54 orphaned
children and about thirty in the refuge for foundlings, the smallest of

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[13] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 74–75, 95; National Archives of the U.K. Foreign
Office (hereafter FO) 371/3203/1775, 95, Ali Labib, "Appendix: Ministry of Wakfs. The
Medical Service," Cairo, June 1918.

[14] Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman
Palestine* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), chap. 5.

[15] Antoine K. Sabbagh, *Les Meglis Hasbys et la protection des biens des mineurs en
Egypte* (Paris: A. Fabre, 1931), pp. 11–18.

[16] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, p. 103; Victor Guerin, *La France Catholique en Égypte*
(Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1894), pp. 54–61.

whom were with wet nurses in Bulaq under the surveillance of a sister.[17] In Port Said, the community of Bon-Pasteur d'Angers established an orphanage as part of its complex.[18]

British Colonialism and Private Social Welfare Initiatives

The British had roundly criticized Ottoman-Egyptian elites for not providing adequate care for the poor. But when they came to control the state after the occupation of 1882, they curtailed the forays of the state into social welfare, only minimally funding education, health, and other social services.[19] They looked instead to the private sector to provide solutions to social problems, giving missionaries, foreign activists, and Egyptian reformers a wide berth to launch and expand their own social welfare operations. To encourage them, they handed out state subsidies in the form of exemptions from customs duties, train passes, and the like. Some of these ventures must be seen as joint ones, in which foreign and local social activists collaborated, and competed, in providing social services.

One such enterprise, founded by the friends of the first Lady Cromer, was a refuge for foundlings. The Lady Cromer Home, or Foundling Hospital, was started in 1898 in a wing of Qasr al-Aini Hospital (itself built by public subscription) to take in abandoned babies. In 1902 it admitted eighty-five children, thirty-two of whom were later place in homes; two years later, the hospital admitted 131 abandoned babies. "The mortality among these children still keeps very high," Lord Cromer, the British consul general, wrote in his annual report of 1904, "it is chiefly due to the terrible condition in which the majority are brought to the hospital. The mothers abandon them, immediately after birth, on some piece of waste ground or in some deserted building, and they are seldom found until after they have been exposed, in a state of nudity, to the weather for several hours."[20] As Bargach argues in the Moroccan context, this sort

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[17] Guerin, *France Catholique*, pp. 169, 174–75.

[18] Ibid., pp. 208–209.

[19] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

[20] Quote from FO 407/164, No. 82, Cromer to Lansdowne, Cairo, 15 March 1905, "Annual Report of 1904," p. 126; FO 407/161, No. 7, Cromer to Lansdowne, "Annual Report of 1902," Cairo, 26 Feb. 1903, p. 53; "Malga' al-Itfal wa al-Wilada," *al-Mar'a al-Misriyya* (Dec. 1920), pp. 353–57.

of statement indicts mothers for abandoning their newborns, showing little understanding of their plight, fear, and desperation. Moreover, she writes, such declarations about maternal accountability ignore paternal, and social, responsibility. Bargach captures the pain of mothers who remember how they felt compelled to give up their offspring, knowing the impossibility of living in Morocco as unwed mothers.[21]

The British saw the work of the Lady Cromer Home, which expanded to include dispensaries, as a model for future endeavors.[22] Egyptians eventually claimed it as a local project. The journalist Balsam ʿAbd al-Malik wrote after visiting the home, that it "had been previously known as the Lady Cromer Home. The truth is that there is no connection between the home and that name, for it is part of Qasr al-Aini Hospital and is funded by the Egyptian government." Egyptian notables also gave donations to fund its operations. In 1920, the Home for Babies, as it had come to be known, consisted of three rooms with forty-two beds; four nurses were overseen by an English matron and her assistant. An adjacent Birthing Home consisted of fifty-four beds; two Egyptian and three English doctors were on rotation.[23] Wafd Khalil Agha, a Muslim women's voluntary welfare association, was established in connection with the hospital to, among other things, find homes for the infants.[24] That informal adoption took place in Egypt is clear from anecdotal evidence. Safiyya Zaghlul, "Mother of the Egyptians" and wife of the nationalist leader Saʿd Zaghlul, had as a teenager in the 1890s visited an orphanage and "adopted" a young girl who was raised in her family.[25] Elites often raised orphans alongside their own children as playmates and extra domestic help, providing for the orphan's needs and eventually arranging marriages for them.

British sources suggest that the number of abandoned children increased from the late 1800s, but more abandoned children were probably noted due to stepped up policing. The colonial state became

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[21] See, e.g., Bargach, *Orphans of Islam*, pp. 181–84; see also, Ann Fessler, *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades before Roe v. Wade* (NY: Penguin Press, 2006).

[22] FO 371/1362/15421, Kitchener to Grey, "Annual Report for 1911," Cairo, 6 April 1912, p. 37.

[23] "Malgaʾ al-Itfal wa al-Wilada," *al-Marʾa al-Misriyya* (Dec. 1920): 353–57, quote from p. 356.

[24] Grace Thompson Seton, *A Woman Tenderfoot in Egypt* (NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1923), p. 49.

[25] Fina Gued Vidal, *Safia Zaghloul* (Cairo: R. Schindler, 1946), pp. 16–17.

increasingly preoccupied with older abandoned children, or "street children," whom they suspected of criminality, and passed a law for dealing with vagrant children in 1908. The "immediate effect of this measure," wrote Eldon Gorst, Cromer's successor as consul general, "was that eighty-one children in undesirable surroundings were taken off the streets in Cairo and Alexandria, and sent to the reformatory," which had been recently built in Giza.[26] Attention to the problem of street children was also possibly part of a British strategy to wrest control of religious endowments from the khedive. Tawfiq, who monopolized large charitable works, had eliminated the Ministry of Religious Endowments in 1884 and in its place created a General Administration of Waqfs, which was directly responsible to him. The British ostensibly sought to rein in khedivial corruption in administering religious endowments and at the same time win control over a lucrative source of funds. Under Kitchener, Gorst's successor, the Ministry was reinstated, but the khedive retained a great deal of control over religious endowments, keeping a royal prerogative.[27]

The Ministry of Religious Endowments had a medical section that oversaw four *takiyya*s, including Takiyyat Abdin, a hospice that cared for twenty-five to thirty-five indigent women, and an orphanage at Bab al-Luq. In 1918, the Cairo Orphanage for Boys and Girls at Bab al-Luq housed 96 boys and 35 girls, but few seemed to be foundlings. Rather, boys and girls were accepted in the orphanage "when it is established that their families are unable to provide for their bringing up." The children received an elementary education, including instruction in reading, writing, math, health, and Islamic principles. Boys were taught industrial crafts and trained as shoemakers, blacksmiths, or tailors; girls were taught domestic skills and trained in cooking, ironing, and sewing. Workshops connected to the orphanage supplied clothes and similar items to medical and other establishments run by the Ministry of Religious Endowments. The boys also formed a musical band.[28]

Dorothea Russell, wife of Russell Pasha, British commandant of the Cairo police, was instrumental in establishing the Brotherhood Waifs and Stray Home in Shubra. By 1924, a few years after its founding, it

[26] FO 371/661/12738, Gorst to Grey, "Annual Report of 1908," Cairo, 27 March 1909, p. 86; Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 114–15.

[27] See Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 94–95, 102; Baer, *Social History*, pp. 83–84.

[28] FO 371/3203/177595, Ali Labib, "Appendix: Ministry of Wakfs. The Medical Service," Cairo, June 1918.

had some 150 to 180 boys. In a letter to Said Zulficar Pasha, a patron of the Home, Dorothea explained the links between the Brotherhood Association of England and Save the Children, which it had started. The original impetus to start this Home in Egypt, Russell wrote, came from people who were religious minded and pious—the moving spirit was the business manager of the Nile Mission Press—but not, she adamantly asserted, missionaries. The committee running the home investigated Egyptian charges of proselytizing in the 1920s but found the accusations unsubstantiated. The boys were taken regularly to church or mosque services, whichever was appropriate, and attempts were made to give them Islamic or Christian religious instruction.[29]

In describing the lines along which the Home was run, Dorothea Russell explained, "Nothing of this kind has been attempted in Egypt. It is run on the most modern and up to date principles of self government by the boys, on character forming principles. It has been found in America to give results, to which nothing comparable is attainable under the old systems." In a word, the "essence of it is an atmosphere of unofficialdom."[30] Like boys in other homes, the boys in the Shubra Home learned industrial crafts, and the proceeds from sales covered materials and wages of industrial instructors. Yet for a time, due to under-funding of the home, they went out begging. The Waifs and Stray Home claimed it deserved state support equal to or even in access of that given to Malgaʾ al-Hurriyya (Freedom Shelter) because of its size and mission. "The class of the boys in this Home are [sic] a class that no other institution will take, the totally destitute," wrote Dorothy Russell. "We contend that…it is the truly destitute child whom it is the business of the State to look after. The State does not do it, hence the crying need for this Home."[31] Segments of the Egyptian community supported the shelter, as evidenced by positive write-ups in *al-Marʾa al-Misriyya* and *al-Lataʾif al-Musawwara*, with the latter showing a picture of the group and the orphanage committee.[32]

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[29] U.S. National Archives, State Department (hereafter SD) 883.00/540, Howell to Sec. of State, Cairo, 30 Dec. 1924; "Note by Mrs. Russell Pasha on The Shubra Waifs and Strays Home, for His Excellency Said Zulficar Pasha"; Balsam ʿAbd al-Malik, "Malgaʾ Abnaʾ al-Sabil," *al-Marʾa al-Misriyya* (15 June 1924), p. 307.

[30] Note by Mrs. Russell Pasha.

[31] Note by Mrs. Russell Pasha.

[32] Balsam ʿAbd al-Malik, "Malgaʾ Abnaʾ al-Sabil," *al-Marʾa al-Misriyya* (15 June 1924), p. 307; *al-Lataʾif al-Musawwara*, (21 Feb. 1921) cited in Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 120–22. The name of the shelter seems to have been translated into Arabic

As orphanages evolved into autonomous institutions in modern Egypt, some became single sex. This had not been a characteristic of earlier refuges but seemed to be an innovation of colonialists and missionaries, following practices in Great Britain and the U.S. Were there more boys in orphanages and more orphanages for boys? Jamila Bargach found that in Morocco, social workers had a much easier time placing girls in foster care than boys due to anxiety about bringing a male into the family who was not part of the blood line. Boys, it was feared, might turn on adoptive parents and become violent. Boys also had to be kept segregated from female family members at a certain age, since contact would have been proscribed. Girls, on the other hand (as Iris Agmon has pointed out), moved in and out of families throughout the life cycle and might have been more easily accommodated at a young age. Girls were also sometimes desired—and exploited—as household help.

Missionary Efforts: "Saving Children"

Christian missionaries came to have a prominent role in running orphanages in Egypt. French Catholics, as mentioned earlier, had a pioneering role in this dimension of social welfare work, but they were not alone. There seemed to be plenty of business to go around. An Anglo-American Orphanage at Port Said, center of a dispute about custody and conversion in 1908, was likely a missionary endeavor.[33] The Swedes also started an orphanage in Port Said, calling it the Swedish Salaam Orphanage. (It too became center of a dispute.) The Dutch Reformed Church started an orphanage for boys in Qaliub. Noting the scarcity of orphanages in Upper Egypt, Lillian Trasher started one for boys and girls in Asyut in 1911. A Pentecostal from Georgia, Trasher ran the Asyut Orphanage (which was later named for her) as a faith-based institution for half a century. It grew into a virtual village, housing at its height some 1400 orphans and widows and proved quite exceptional.[34]

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alternatively as Malgaʾ Abnaʾ al-Shawariʿa or Malgaʾ Abnaʾ al-Sabil. *Malgaʾ*, rather than *maljaʾ*, reflects the local Egyptian pronunciation.

[33] FO 371/452/38684, Gorst to Grey, Cairo, 30 Oct. 1908, pp. 495–97.

[34] Beth Baron, "Mama Trasher and the Assiout Orphanage," paper presented at the conference "Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and American Empire, 1812–1930," Rothmere American Institute, University of Oxford, April 2006.

The American Presbyterians' Fowler Orphanage in Cairo can be taken as a more typical missionary enterprise. And because the Presbyterians were rigorous in record keeping, a history of the Fowler Orphanage can be reconstructed from reports, minutes, letters, diaries, journal articles, and other sources. The orphanage must be seen in the context of an extensive network of schools, hospitals, and other social services built with the goal of evangelizing. The American Presbyterians had come to Egypt to convert Egyptian Muslims, Jews, and Coptic Christians to Protestantism and in so doing to "save" them. They emerged as the dominant missionary group in the Nile Valley from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century.[35] The orphanage was not the central institution of the mission or even a main one. Yet it was one of its most successful, since many of those who walked through its doors were converted and went on to serve the church.

Margaret (Maggie) Smith was the organizing spirit behind the Fowler Orphanage. Smith arrived in Egypt in the 1870s as a single missionary, joining the growing American group and spent the next sixty years in Egypt. After completing the requisite Arabic course, Smith, like many of the single woman missionaries, took up teaching, and shortly thereafter began directing the girls' school in Harat al-Saqqa'in, an assignment she had for thirty-two years. The school grew to become one of the largest in Egypt, attracting the daughters of the elite, including those of ʿUrabi Pasha, the leader of the 1882 Revolt. Smith also organized women Bible readers who visited homes within the quarter to read passages of the Bible to the illiterate and literate alike.[36]

For years, Smith dreamed of starting a home for homeless children. She found patrons in Esther and John Fowler, an American Quaker couple who visited her school in 1896. The Fowlers encountered numerous street children in Cairo and raised over $8,000 for an orphanage upon returning to Ohio. That amount was insufficient to buy a property and sustain a home but was a start. Smith and the American missionaries in Egypt began petitioning the Board of Foreign Missions, the governing body for the United Presbyterian Church of North America,

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[35] Heather Sharkey has a series of articles on the history of American Presbyterian missionaries in Egypt and is currently writing a book on the topic.

[36] *One Hundred Twenty Years of Service in Egypt: Anny Y. Thompson and Margaret A. Smith* (a pamphlet issued in Pittsburgh by the Women's General Missionary Society of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, n.d.), p. 10.

for permission to start a home. The Board was not in the business of providing social services that could not be self-sustaining (schools could charge tuition and hospitals fees, but orphans had few resources), and it feared the expensive plan first proposed by John Fowler. Since the American missionaries were dependent on the Board for infusions of capital and personnel, they would not act autonomously. The Egyptian Missionary Association, the corporate body of American missionaries in Egypt, won approval for the plan when Smith promised not to approach the Board or anyone else directly for funds: the project would be faith-based with funds coming in answer to prayer. This did not mean that Margaret Smith could not write lengthy and colorful accounts for inclusion in the Annual Report and missionary magazines to spur readers to contribute.[37]

Although the Board of Foreign Missions did not provide direct financial support for the orphanage, it administered the home through the bureaucracy that ran the mission. The Egyptian Missionary Association set up a "Fowler Orphanage Committee" to develop a plan to establish and run the orphanage, which was named for the major donors. That committee was charged with submitting reports to the bi-annual meeting. These reports were in turn incorporated into the Annual Report of the American United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt. A careful reading of these reports reveals internal missionary politics and external social obstacles to establishing and running an orphanage in early twentieth-century Egypt.

Once authorized by the American Board, Margaret Smith began receiving orphans. These girls were to be placed in existing girls' schools and their upkeep paid out of the "Fowler Orphanage Fund."[38] The first six orphans received were placed in the Fum al-Khalig School under Margaret Smith's care. Smith was officially recognized as superintendent of the orphanage. After a few months, better accommodations (the home of a deceased priest whose son was sympathetic to the project and whose daughter-in-law had attended Smith's school) were found close by and rented for the school and the orphanage.[39] That home soon

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[37] *One Hundred Twenty Years*, pp. 11–12; Presbyterian Historical Society (hereafter PHS), Egyptian Missionary Association (hereafter EMA), *Minutes*, July 1904. The summer meetings were held in Ramleh, on the coast near Alexandria; the winter meetings were in Asyut.

[38] EMA, *Minutes*, Feb. 1906.

[39] EMA, *Minutes*, July 1906, pp. 13–14.

proved inadequate, too, and within a few years, the missionaries were looking for a suitable property on which to build a new home.

The project of a new home received a boost when a Mrs. Arnold of Pittsburg left a legacy of $10,000 toward the building. Permission from the Board was still needed; but this time, Smith and her colleagues made a strategic shift and appealed to the Women's General Missionary Society Board (WGMS) rather than the Board of Foreign Missions for support. They thus threw their lot in with the women back home, who took a greater interest in the project than the men had shown.[40] In the end, they converted the old Austro-Hungarian Hospital in ʿAbbasiyya, which had been sequestered at the outset of World War I, into an orphanage. Bought for $5,000, it was renovated with $1,000, and the ʿAbbasiyya Girls' School was added.[41]

During her tenure as head of the orphanage, Smith pushed for expanded quarters, petitioned and updated the Board and "Friend Fowler" on details pertaining to the new institution, pressed fellow missionaries into service, and utilized the educational and health services of the mission to help her girls. Sitt Habishiyya, whose name suggests she came from Ethiopia, served as matron of the home. Separated from her husband in the Sudan and with an infant daughter in her care, she found a home and job in the orphanage; her daughter died shortly thereafter, but she stayed on, mothering the girls in her care. As the home grew, and Smith grew older, she required more assistance. Smith appealed to the Women's Board to name Ellen Barnes, who was already in the field assisting, a missionary.[42] Smith managed the home until 1920, when age, exhaustion, and failing eyesight forced her to hand control over to Barnes. In the interim and beyond, other women in the field, missionaries and non-missionaries, helped in the home. Americans generally supervised the mostly indigenous staff.

Prospective orphans were presented by family members or others to the committee and underwent a physical exam (toughened after one girl entered with typhus). A physician from the Tanta Mission Hospital was drafted onto the committee and called in to give advice.[43] Those accepted

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[40] PHS, *Annual Report of the American United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt* (hereafter Annual Report), 1909; EMA, *Minutes*, Feb.–March 1910.

[41] Earl E. Elder, *Vindicating a Vision* (Philadelphia: Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1958), pp. 134–35.

[42] EMA, *Minutes*, Feb.–March 1910.

[43] EMA, *Minutes*, July 1909; Annual Report, 1906–1907; Annual Report, 1910.

for entry were also the subject of a contract outlining the terms. Within its first year, twenty-three girls had been admitted to the Orphanage; since six left, the balance stood at seventeen.[44] Six months later, the total admitted stood at thirty-nine with twenty-three remaining.[45] By 1915, after the move to the renovated hospital, numbers stood at sixty-three.[46] The orphanage fluctuated between forty and sixty. Over time it became harder to gain entry to the orphanage, which had a limited number of spots (in contrast to the Trasher Orphanage, which expanded to accommodate new entrants). In 1920 fifteen girls entered, and six applications were turned down.[47] A report filed in 1937, to which we will return below, suggested that over two hundred girls had "graduated" from the institution. But it seems that many others were rejected at the outset or had only short residencies. Roughly one-quarter to one-third seemed to be expelled or left in the early years.

The orphanage opened with two Greek girls. The appeal of their widowed mother had strengthened Smith's resolve to start the project. But that pair left within a week, taken by Roman Catholic priests, who, according to the report "had a greater claim on them." There was some consensus among Christian missionaries that they would not pilfer others' wards. Two Syrian girls, one aged three and one five, were among the youngest the first year. As Smith told the story, their mother had deserted their father, converted to Islam, married, and sent them to a Muslim school. Their father, in turn, had taken them from the school and brought them to the orphanage to be raised as Christians.[48] Many of the girls who found their way into the orphanage for shorter or longer stays were caught up in similar family feuds, waged between a divorced husband and wife or families of the deceased. Some girls were fatherless, some motherless, some had lost both parents, and some had both but were caught up in the drama of divorce.

Another category of girls were those whose mothers were "living a disreputable life." How actively missionaries sought out children of prostitutes, seeing the mothers and children as particularly vulnerable, is not clear. (The proliferation of orphanages in Port Said, a busy port town, may be connected to a population of prostitutes.) Smith

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[44] EMA, *Minutes*, Feb. 1907.
[45] EMA, *Minutes*, July 1907.
[46] *Annual Report*, 1915.
[47] *Annual Report*, 1920, p. 34.
[48] *Annual Report*, 1906–1907.

complained when one Syrian woman reneged on a fee mentioned in
the contract that she had to pay if she did not leave the child in the
orphanage.[49] Presumably the fee would have been a financial disincen-
tive to reclaim her child.

In the first year, the girls ranged in age from three to twelve. These
were not then foundlings but rather girls whose family members applied
for entry. Only occasionally does a foundling find her way in. Smith
describes one such girl presented to the orphanage in 1910: "[A] dear,
dirty, half starved, cross-eyed baby girl was given to us to bring up for
the Lord. What little she wore, even the tuft of her hair on the top of
her head was cast into the fire…we call her Timmy for short."[50] Burning
clothes was clearly a measure to prevent the spread of disease at a time
when epidemics still ravaged the population, and removing hair would
have been a measure to prevent lice, but the extreme also indicates a
desire for a clean start.

The schooling and routine of the girls carefully instilled Christian
values. A day school was connected to the orphanage intermittently;
the girls received their early schooling there and then went on to other
missionary schools, which sometimes provided scholarships, for an
upper level education. Their days were filled with schooling, prayer, and
housework, which included sewing, doing laundry, cooking, and clean-
ing, the bulk of which was carried out by the older girls. In the 1920s,
industrial work was added. The girls made silver shawls, bead bags, and
garments for sale, and later dolls were added to their repertoire.[51]

The reports are careful to note the religious backgrounds of the girls.
In July 1907, of the twenty-three: ten were Orthodox Copts, three were
Protestants, three Roman Catholic, three Greek Catholic, and four
Muslims.[52] In subsequent years, the reports mention Armenians, Jews,
and Syrian Catholics among the residents of the home. The agenda
of converting all of the girls to Protestantism and having them join
the Presbyterian Church is evident. Each report details the number of
girls expressing an interest in joining the Church, being examined, and
undergoing baptism. The biggest prize for the missionaries clearly was
the conversion of Muslim girls. But Smith was careful to wait until they

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[49] *Annual Report*, 1910, pp. 63–64.
[50] *Annual Report*, 1910.
[51] EMA, Minutes, July 1920, p. 12; EMA, Minutes, Feb. 1922, p. 139; EMA, Minutes,
Jan. 1925; EMA, Minutes, Jan. 1931, p. 12.
[52] EMA, *Minutes,* July 1907.

reached their majority before accepting them formally into the Church. "There are now fourteen Church members besides two Moslem girls who were examined and would have been baptized if there were religious freedom; but as there is no such freedom they were asked to wait until they are older," she wrote in 1909.[53] The next year, Smith reported, all six of the "Mohammedan girls" have asked for baptism but were delayed for instruction until their majority.[54] The intent of the missionaries was not lost on Egyptians. In one of the early reports (1910), Smith noted that three girls had been withdrawn: among them "a dear little ten-year-old Mohammedan … stolen by her father and married soon after because he feared she might become a Christian" and "a Jewess … taken away recently—being stolen by her mother, also on account of the religion of Jesus."[55] That the report repeats the term "stolen" reflects how proprietary the missionaries felt about the girls in their care.

The number of Muslim girls who entered the orphanage, although not a majority, was substantial and grew over time. In 1923, fifteen of fifty-one girls were Muslim (29 per cent).[56] By 1930, twenty of fifty-seven were of Muslim origin (35 per cent), with one placed in the orphanage when her father converted to Islam. Six of these were baptized, and two others asked for baptism. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the missionaries became bolder in baptizing the Muslim girls.[57] The anti-missionary wave of 1933 caught those in the Fowler Orphanage by surprise. "We passed through four strenuous months," they reported. The stress was made particularly intense because they had six baptized converts plus fifteen other non-Christian girls in the home. Eight girls were "compelled to leave," returning to their families. "In spite of the exasperating conduct of some of our persecutors and the attempts that were made to enter our compound by violence, our hearts were cheered by the faith and loving forbearance manifested by our girls and our staff."[58] The difficulties persisted into the following year, with more girls leaving under various circumstances.[59]

In 1937, upon the orphanage's thirty-year anniversary, Ellen Barnes, who was to retire two years later, provided an accounting of the girls in

[53] *Annual Report*, 1909.
[54] *Annual Report*, 1910.
[55] *Annual Report*, 1910, pp. 63–64.
[56] EMA, *Minutes*, July 1923, p. 406.
[57] EMA, *Minutes*, Jan. 1931, p. 12.
[58] EMA, *Minutes*, Dec. 1933, p. 298.
[59] EMA, Minutes, Dec. 1934, p. 391.

the home. The report gives the names, professions, and marital status of 69 of those who went through the home: thirty-one teachers in Christian schools, nineteen as Bible women, sixteen as helpers and nurses in missionary and other hospitals, clinics, and homes. Collectively, the girls donated hundreds of years of service to mission institutions. The missionaries had prepared the girls for lives in service as teachers, Bible women, nurses, and domestic helpers, as well as Christian wives and mothers. Barnes wrote, "about two hundred girls have found a truly Christian home and a training which has resulted in many of these girls going out into various lines of Christian service."[60] The report does not show what these girls thought of their upbringing, how their education, upbringing, and socialization had prepared them for life in Egypt or, alternatively, whether it had alienated them from their own society. Bargach argues that missionary orphanages in Morocco left children feeling linguistically and religiously alienated from the host society.[61] The report also does not discuss those girls who entered the institution but left, or were forced to leave, after a short period. What contributed to the "drop-out" rate? And where did "drop-outs" go?

The Fowler Orphanage, later renamed the Fowler Home, was among the properties passed on to the Egyptian Evangelical Church after the 1952 Revolution to avoid nationalization or appropriation. It had left its imprint on those girls who had passed through, on the women who worked in the home, on those who had funded and served it, and on its neighbors.

Civil Society and the State Strike Back

The inroads of the missionaries at a time when the state had provided few funds for social welfare projects motivated Egyptians to organize their own benevolent associations. Ener discussed some of the orphanages that were established for boys, including Malgaʾ al-ʿAbbasiyya, an industrial school and orphanage founded in Alexandria by the Muslim Benevolent Society during the time of Abbas Hilmi II (1892–1914), and the Malgaʾ al-Hurriyya, founded by a group of activists after the

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[60] Minutes, Jan. 1937, pp. 84–85; Programs and Needs, 1938, p. 28.
[61] Bargach, "B-A-S-T-A-R-D Biographies: Inside an Invisible Space," paper presented at the conference "Family History in Islamic and Middle East Studies," University of California, Berkeley, April 2000.

1919 Revolution. These were, she argued, part of a nationalist and reforming program that challenged both British and royal patronage of social welfare.[62] Yet I would argue that missionary activity had a larger impact than Ener acknowledged, stimulating a reaction that generated institutions and dictated their form. Egyptian social welfare institutions were not only created as a nationalist, Islamist, or Coptic, response to missionary and other foreign enterprises; they were created in their image. The orphanages that emerged from the 1910s were specialized institutions set apart from hospitals or refuges, were often single sex, and incorporated an educational and training—industrial or domestic—component. Moreover, the greatest spate of orphanage creation occurred in the 1930s and 1940s, after the story of an attempt to coerce a conversion in the Swedish Salaam Orphanage in Port Said stirred a national scandal.[63]

Just as women missionaries took the lead in founding missionary orphanages, Egyptian women, who came to dominate social welfare work, started schools and homes for orphans. The school of the Society of the Fruits of the Union (Jam'iyyat Thamarat al-Ittihad) for orphan girls opened in 1914 with 75 girls of various backgrounds. On the eve of the war, the girls were organized into a scout troop. While missionaries sought to imbue orphan girls with Protestant values, Egyptian social activists countered with a nationalist paramilitary scouting creed.[64]

The Society of the Egyptian Ladies' Awakening (Jam'iyyat Nahdat al-Sayyidat al-Misriyyat), an association with an Islamic nationalist vision started by Labiba Ahmad (1870s–1951) in 1919, took as its first project the opening of an orphanage. Labiba and her colleagues gathered together 170 orphaned or abandoned girls from the area around Sayyida Zaynab and opened a home in 1920. That 170 girls could so easily and swiftly be found raises questions about how they had been cared for prior to the formation of the orphanage. Not all the girls were strictly speaking orphaned. One of the few profiled and pictured had been abandoned when her parents divorced and remarried. Labiba Ahmad decried the ease of divorce, pointing to the price paid by children who

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[62] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, pp. 102, 117–19.

[63] Beth Baron, "Summer of '33: Orphans, Converts, and the Anti-Missionary Movement in Egypt," paper presented at the American Historical Association meeting, Philadelphia, January 2006; Rugh, "Orphans in Egypt," p. 132, who cites the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs, *Guide to Nursery Schools* and *Orphanages for Socially Vulnerable Children*, 1969–1970.

[64] *Al-Lata'if al-Musawwara* (4 April 1921), p. 11.

were excluded from new family formations. Labiba, whose work was "inspired by God" and a desire to "uplift the nation," vowed to raise these girls as good Muslims.[65]

Tracing the girls of the orphanage is difficult as their testimonies are not recorded in the brief mentions of the Society in the press. Photos in *al-Nahda al-Nisaʾiyya* give faces but few stories. One shows a small child who accompanied Labiba on a trip to see off a friend sent into exile. Others show them marching or at the opening of the new workshop and institute. As Ener noted for the refuges for boys she discussed, before and after pictures were systematically taken and displayed. In this case, pictures of a disheveled group of girls upon their entry into the orphanage and a later picture of the girls ordered and neatly dressed were published. These photos are meant to illustrate the reforming impulse of the nationalists, which in certain respects was not that dissimilar from the civilizing mission of the Americans and British. Social welfare activists were promoting their own ideological agendas in providing care for orphans and publicizing their politics. The press coverage suggests that the nation should care for its weakest members, supplanting foreign ventures and augmenting royal benevolence, and that those Egyptians who created such projects deserved credit. Yet the significance of photos of orphans appearing in the press in this period—1910s through 1930s—should not be lost: orphans were moved out of the shadows and into the limelight. Although these girls rarely had names (only the collective orphanage or school is given), they have faces and are visible. For a moment, at least, they lost their social shame and were incorporated into the newly emerging nation, if not into specific families.

Islamist and other women's associations continued to identify orphans as a group in need of care. Labiba Ahmad mentioned an orphanage in Benha, where "fate had prevented [the orphans] from knowing the affection of mothers or fathers."[66] Zaynab al-Ghazali, an Islamist who in many ways was heir to Labiba Ahmad, founded a women's association in the 1930s that in turn started an orphanage for girls.[67] Other elite

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[65] For full references to the section here and below, see Beth Baron, "Islam, Philanthropy, and Political Culture in Interwar Egypt: The Activism of Labiba Ahmad," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Michael Bonner et al. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 239–54.

[66] "Al-Malagi wa-ʿInayatiha," *al-Nahda al-Nisaʾiyya* 4, no. 43 (June 1926), p. 240.

[67] Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 210–11.

women started orphanages, but it could be a courageous undertaking, given the stigma around illicit sexuality and illegitimacy. Leila Ahmed relates in her memoir that her Aunt Karima, "further added to her reputation for unconventionality when she founded an orphanage for illegitimate children. It was scandalous to men like Grandfather for respectable women even to mention such a subject, let alone to be founding a society and openly soliciting funds from him and his cronies to support an organization addressing the matter."[68] Numerous state and private orphanages were founded from the 1930s in Asyut and elsewhere to care for the Muslim children who at that time were pulled out of missionary orphanages.

When the Mabarrat Muhammad Ali, which ran an extensive network of clinics and hospitals, and the New Woman Society, which specialized in training schools, merged in the 1960s, the new group turned its attention and what remained of its assets after nationalization to developing orphanages and childcare centers.[69] By the late 1960s, the number of orphanages had stabilized at 179, one-half of which were Christian, although Copts were a minority estimated at somewhere between 5 and 15 percent of the general population.[70]

Conclusion

The mid-nineteenth century saw the emergence of the institution of the orphanage in Egypt as a specialized site for caring for orphaned or abandoned children or those whose families could no longer care for them. Over time, the terminology shifted from *takiyya* to *malga'*, reflecting a shift from general hospices to refuges or shelters that targeted specific groups in need (e.g., male or female children or the blind). The sponsors of such sites included the Ministry of Religious Endowments and later the Ministry of Social Affairs; French Catholic nuns, British colonial wives, and American Protestant missionaries; and local social reformers. In providing social welfare, the sponsors hoped to enhance their

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[68] See Leila Ahmed, A *Border Passage: From Cairo to America-A Woman's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), p. 132.

[69] Nancy Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars: Epidemics and the Politics of Public Health* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), p. 171; Afaf Marsot, "The Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt," in Louis Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 272–74.

[70] Rugh, "Orphans in Egypt," p. 133.

legitimacy as guardians of the poor, to earn social and political capital, and to "save" children. Each saw orphaned and abandoned children as open to proselytizing, modernizing, and nationalizing agendas.

Children ended up in orphanages for a variety of reasons. Some were abandoned at birth, presumably the product of an illegitimate relationship. Others were placed in the home at a later stage, upon the injury, illness, poverty, or death of parents, or divorce and remarriage. Still others had physical impairments. In short, illegitimate children were excluded from the family, which was posited on descent through the male blood line, and other children were sometimes pushed out as well, particularly the products of broken marriages or dysfunctional homes or those parentless children whose relatives could not support them. Social activists challenged the stigmatization of orphans and abandoned children by promoting them as good citizens of the nation, whose responsibility it was to care for them, and by attempting to give them a political purpose. Children also continued to find homes through the practice of informal and secret adoption, sidestepping Islamic injunctions against formal adoption.

The care of orphans became increasingly bureaucratized in the twentieth century, as the number of orphanages grew. Legal changes reflected new procedures: a law in 1912 gave eminent domain to the woman who found an infant; in 1946, the finders-keepers clause was dropped, but officials still retained discretion in placing children; by 1965, all foundlings had to be brought to the nearest center or refuge, where the police registered the child, often creating a false pedigree of made-up names, dates, and time of birth. From the late 1950s, fostering or "the gift of care," sanctioned by Islamic law and regulated by the state, was increasingly promoted by social workers as the best solution for abandoned or orphaned children. Toward this end, the Ministry of Social Affairs established a foster families program, setting informal adoption in a bureaucratic frame to regulate the procedure and find homes for children without families and find children for families without offspring.[71]

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[71] Rugh, "Orphans in Egypt," pp. 130–34; Sonbol, "Adoption in Islamic Society," p. 61.

A NATION OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS
ARMENIAN MEMORIES OF RELIEF IN JERUSALEM

Nefissa Naguib

Introduction

Fernand Braudel (1979) maintained that history can be studied from three intertwined temporalities: the long term, 'la (très) longue durée; the conjunctural, 'l'histoire conjoncturelle'; and that of events, 'l'histoire événementielle'. The first period concerns the geography, the physical environment of a region. The second is tied to the lifespan of a civilization, the structures of a state and the economy. Basically, civilizations and cultures develop within these two frameworks, and cultural changes occur as part of longer or shorter processes of transformation. My focus will be on the third temporal aspect—that of individual events. This type of temporality, according to Braudel, does not have a lasting impact on cultural context.

Although this chapter is motivated by Braudel's argument about global moments in human history, I propose that significant, critical events indeed can transform societies, although proof of this are not always found in extant historical sources. Evidence of transformation may instead be found in peoples' responses to traumatic experiences and struggles for survival, in testimonies of personal experiences, and in the people and institutions that provided them with assistance and relief. These are all factors critical to the understanding of the powerful impact of individual events.

The Armenians as a people survived genocide and were to a great extent displaced by it, the memories of which continue to haunt and bind them together on some level or other. The present essay addresses the brutal displacement and the immediate relief efforts which followed. With life stories as my empirical window, I examine the Armenian experience of the relief efforts through the memories of those who lived through them. I contend that the relief efforts are an integrated part of the Armenian narrative, but I do not see Armenians as an embodiment of relief activities.

Although ethnographically focused, this essay is not meant to be an ethnographic study of relief work and social life among Armenians. Instead, it concentrates on the correlation between relief activities and memory. I will draw on my earlier research on diaspora's historical consciousness, or the *felt force of past events* on the present (Naguib 2006). I use ethnography and postulate that a close study of individual stories will inform us more about the impact of the relief work on people's lives and give us a better understanding of people's perception and memories of the events that took place and their ambivalence towards them. I shall begin my account of the genocide with a brief description of my fieldwork in Jerusalem before I continue with the voices of orphans.

Baselines

In September 2003, I was in the old city of Jerusalem to begin my research on the Armenian community. The old city of Jerusalem is divided into four quarters: the Jewish, Christian and Muslim quarters—the three religions that sanctified the city—and the Armenian Quarter, the most distinctive. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim quarters are made up of narrow alleys with their markets and coffee shops. The Armenian Quarter is very different.

As a casual walker you may not notice the black and white maps posted on the walls, illustrating the deportation routes. It's easy to walk right past them. You only realise they are there if you know about them or if you venture inside the quarter. However, you can't just walk in without an invitation or appointment with a resident. The Armenian Quarter is

Figure 1. Deportation map.

only opened for visitors for half an hour each day; non-Armenians are then allowed to visit the cathedral. Inside the gates, on the left, you will find the doorman; further on you'll enter a small courtyard in front of

the St. James Cathedral, next to the patriarch's office. Continue and you'll come to an enormous courtyard.

Standing at the entrance to the inner courtyard, you realise that you're in a city within a city encircled by a high stone wall. Here you'll find the clinic, the kitchen—where volunteers work and distribute food—the restaurant, the club houses, the school, the seminary and the church. At the far end is the museum. The Edward and Helen Mardigian Museum of Armenian Art and Culture is a two-storey complex that originally served as seminary; with the arrival of Armenian orphans to Jerusalem, it was converted into residential quarters for male orphans and named Araratian.

The museum exhibits relics of Armenian history and culture. Among the artifacts are hand-woven rugs, liturgical objects, colourful tiles from the Kutahya district, an ancient map of the world printed in Armenian, and a replica of Guttenberg's original printing press, the first press to be established in Jerusalem in 1833. The rooms are mostly devoted to the history of the genocide, the deportation and the subsequent international relief efforts. Several maps illustrate the routes of deportation, and maps show deportees walking, children crammed in camps, public executions and burned homes.

In the hallway, overlooking the main staircase, are huge copper cauldrons crafted by Armenian smiths; the cauldrons were used both to make food and to heat bathing water for the orphans. The walls around the museum courtyard are carved with dates and inscriptions; an especially long one reads: "Chaz Cabazian. I am from Lezk of Van. Born in 1909. From Araratian orphanage. I am a scout. I wrote this in 1922 when I was 13." The inscription was translated from Armenian by Kevork Hintlian, the Armenian com-

Figure 2. Inscription on the wall of the museum.

munity historian. Having heard of my research and interest in the Armenian communities in the diaspora, Hintlian remarked that "the Armenians are a nation of widows and orphans." An understanding of
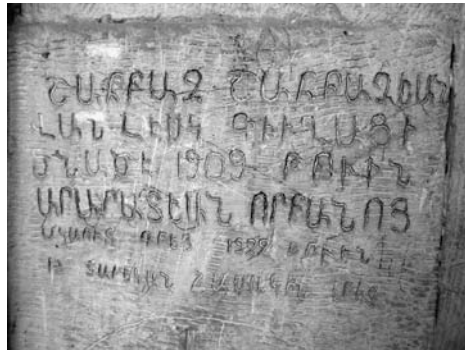
the significance of the deportations and the relief memories would be a good starting point for my examination and comprehension of Armenian life in the Middle East, he claimed. "The past is the glue that binds the Armenians to a story of pain and relief. The widows are dead, but there are still orphans among us."

How should a modern anthropologist approach and examine this past held together by a collective memory? What common stories do the orphans have? Do they share the same relief histories? These questions are not easily answered, but they helped me focus on the issues that are at the heart of this chapter. Basically, I wish to capture and convey how the various forces of history, altered by moments of conflict, are brought to bear on the lives of communities and how they form and shape people's personal experiences. The forces of history are articulated through spoken and written stories, and the collective memory becomes discernible in the actions and statements of individuals. The people I interviewed draw on historically and socially remote events, and the remoteness explains the difference between the recorded history and the individual recollections. In a certain way, the memories represent distinguishable types of 'knowing' and 'being' in the world.

History, in general terms, is about notable facts and starts only when the oral tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up (Halbwachs 1980:78). History, Halbwachs tells us, begins with the recording of social memory and is scholarship, while collective unrecorded memory is not; the collective memory is the undercurrent of society. In other words: there is but one history, while there are many memories and stories belonging to the collective memory. Pierre Nora takes a somewhat different stance to that of Halbwachs; he looks at the disparity between artificial history and true memory; claiming that by its very nature, memory is a living thing, while history is not only constructed, but reconstructed (Nora 1984).

I turn the question around. Instead of asking what history does to memory, I ask what memory does to history, i.e., in what way can individual memories be combined with history, and what type of accounts emerge from this combination. Borgström defines this combinatory technique as ethno-history (Borgström 1997): memories about the relief efforts live on because they are constantly being transmitted by the survivors of the 1915 massacres. They are the 'living' proof of a determining moment for the Armenian identity. Stories told by the survivors in Jerusalem create a feeling of continuity which makes it possible to redefine the past so that it fits the present. The relief-effort recollections encourage interest in the contemporary, precisely because they

require an accompanying narration to bridge the present with the past.

Still, the stories involve several abstractions, and it is challenging to theorize and analyze the material one has understood intuitively. This is also Fredrik Barth's concern in *Vi mennesker* (2006). Reviewing his sixty years as an anthropologist, Barth is mainly concerned with how we understand others. He says that in order to comprehend other peoples' lives, we must not question their world as it is, instead we must observe the processes by which people endow it with meaning; how they perceive themselves and their realities. If we do this, inconsistencies and variations become apparent. I am inspired by Barth's perceived individual ongoing and present contemporary realities; however, my cases are firmly embedded in the past. Although motivated by Lowenthal's argument that the past is 'another country' (1985), my fascination with the stories of relief is based on the stories' ability to conceptualize and contextualize Hintlians's statement: "We are a nation of widows and orphans."

The Armenians of Jerusalem

The Kaghakatsi and Zowaar are at the core of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. The Kaghakatsi, literally 'town dwellers' (town being Jerusalem), trace their families back to the early Christian era. Approximately five hundred native Armenians, as they are referred to, live in the Old City, mainly around Haret el Arman, just outside the walls that surround the Armenian Quarter. They attend mass in Armenian, but unlike the Zowaar they read the Bible in Arabic. The Zowaar, or visitors, who are the focus of this paper, came to Jerusalem as a consequence of the violent events in Eastern Turkey in 1915. The Turkish minister of war, Enver Pasha, and the minister of interior, Talaat Bey, claimed that the Armenians were openly supporting Russia and had taken to gang aggression. In retaliation, both ministers ordered the deportation of the entire Armenian population from the north-eastern provinces to locations outside of Anatolia (Fromkin 1989, 212). Though the figures concerning how many perished have been and are the subject of bitter dispute, there can be no disputing the result: Turkish Armenia was destroyed, and almost half its people perished.

The majority of survivors were women and children. I have heard several different accounts of the events in my attempt to piece together information about the children who were transported to Palestine. Many spoke about the 800 abandoned orphans in Nahr Omar in Iraq. Most

of these children had come from orphanages in Van and Mosul. The plan was to transfer them to Armenia, but the British perceived the situation in the Caucasus too unstable. Moreover, there was a famine in Armenia, complicating matters. In cooperation with the Near East Relief Committee (NER) and the British, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) organised transportation to Jerusalem. However, just before the arrival of the orphans, a member of the executive council of the AGBU, Dijanik Tchaker, had difficulty negotiating an agreement with Stores, the British High Commissioner in Palestine. Apparently the British were planning a home for the Jews in Palestine, and Stores was worried about an influx of Armenian refugees.

Armenian sources show that more than half the orphaned boys and girls were sent to Soviet Armenia, and large numbers arrived in Syria and Lebanon; even in Turkey itself there were nearly 4,000 orphans. By 1923, the NER and the AGBU in Egypt had more than 50,000 children under their care. Refugees were transported to countries like Australia, Canada, the United States and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. 909 children were transported to Palestine (Simel 1927, 158–159).

NER, which is mostly relevant to survivors in Jerusalem, grew out of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief and the Committee on Armenian Atrocities. Near East Relief was an accomplished agency with a politically and financially influential constituency and heavily funded by the Rockefeller Foundation (World Affairs Near East Relief 1896–1925). By 1923, the NER were sheltering 27,000 orphans in Soviet Russia, 11,000 in Beirut, Jerusalem and Nazareth, 13,000 in Eastern Anatolia and Greece (ibid.). The president of the International Near East Association, Charles V. Vickrey wrote in the "Golden Rule Sunday"[1] report from 1924 that 81.6% of all orphans were under the age of fourteen and 61.6% were under twelve. At the time, NER staffed and operated 200 orphanages (1924).

As for the AGBU, it was established in Cairo in 1906 with the mission "to assist in the intellectual, moral and economic progress of the Armenian people in the homeland and to encourage projects or publications which strive toward that goal." Following the 1915 deportations, AGBU became an immediate emergency relief agency responsible for sending

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[1] The Golden Rule Sunday was the first Sunday in December when Americans were asked to skip a meal and contribute the money saved to the Near East Relief.

'scouts,' later known as 'orphan archaeologists,' into the Syrian desert to search for and rescue orphans. The organization set up hospitals, orphanages, health units, shelters and open-air classrooms for refugees in Greece, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Turkey and Egypt.

The children who were relocated to Palestine arrived with their caretakers, teachers and priests to the Jerusalem railway station or the port in Haifa. Some remained in Haifa, others were sent directly to Nazareth and Jerusalem. The youngest children were placed in orphanages, very few were adopted by native Armenian families and the older children were sent to vocational schools. In the mid 1920s, an unknown number of young women arrived from orphanages in Lebanon and Syria as brides. In spite of their different places of deportation, Armenians still speak Armenian or Turkish and read the Bible in Armenian. Most are fluent in Arabic; a small number of the oldest survivors don't speak any Arabic at all. Many speak either English or French, depending on the orphanage or the vocational school they have attended.

Stories

Although the relationship between native Armenians and the Zowaar (visitors) remains difficult in Jerusalem, some Armenian families showed the newcomers great kindness and in some cases adopted young orphans into their own families. One example is the famous cases of the carpenter, Thomas, who was adopted by the Zakkarian family. He was later educated in the Lutheran vocational school, The Schneller School in Jerusalem, and became head-carpenter at Dar el Eitam, the Islamic boys orphanage in the old city. Several carpentry students in Dar el Eitam knew about 'Usta' [master] Thomas, and to have been an apprentice with Thomas is still a mark of excellence in the old city.

Thomas was Mrs. Arshalouys Zakkarian's adopted brother. Mrs Zakkarian belongs to a native Armenian family. She remembers being taken by her mother to watch as 816 orphans, their teachers and caretakers walked past the Temple of David towards the Armenian Quarter in February 1922. She still recalls the sight of skeletal children in ragged clothes and the stench that filled the area as they walked past. "The smell was terrible, the orphans had arrived starving, sick, homeless and filthy."

Mrs Zakkarian was taken by her mother to the Armenian Quarter, there she watched as 816 children, 545 boys and 271 girls were scrubbed, fed and groomed. In the convent, large quantities of water were boiled in huge cauldrons to wash the children; other cauldrons were used to prepare meals for the children. A barber came to cut their hair and a doctor to check for disease. Most of the boys were lodged in two buildings; however, some were taken to houses outside the Armenian Quarter. The girls and the youngest boys were transported to the Greek Orthodox monastery. After a couple of years, all the boys were moved back to the Armenian Quarter. The British had to negotiate with the Greeks on behalf of the Armenians to allow 250 girls to stay on in the Greek monastery in the Valley of the Holy Cross. The orphanage, known as Vasbouragan, was administrated by Mihran Garabédian and funded by the AGBU. It included a dispensary, kindergarten and school.

In May 1926, Vasbouragan was closed, and about 159 girls were taken to an orphanage in Beirut. Most of the girls who grew up in the Holy Cross were married: Armenian boys were given 100 dinars to marry girls from Vasbouragan. Some were adopted by local Armenian families or worked as maids in Armenian homes. However, a few like Arpina Avakian took further vocational training and became professionals. Miss Arpina Avakian was among the 816 orphans who arrived in 1922. She was also among the youngest girls placed in the orphanage in the Valley of the Holy Cross.

Arpina Avakian was born in Aghba, near Van in 1919 and does not remember her family. She was found with one of her sisters and a brother, they were later separated and she ended up in Adana before she was sent to Nicosia where girls and boys were put in the same kindergarten. From Cyprus, the children were collected and sent to Port Said. The Nubar Foundation financed their subsequent transfer to Palestine. Arpina Avakian never felt "like an orphan." "We were purely orphaned; we had nobody, and the people in the orphanage took very good care of us," she explained. She continued, "I never cried; we were all the same, like one family. Everybody had lost." In the kindergarden the children were given music and drawing lessons. "On Sundays, they would take us to church in the Armenian Quarter—God bless them."

At eighteen, she left to study nursing and midwifery at the Russian Compound in Jerusalem, at the time under the British Mandate's administration. Arpina Avakian had no problem finding a job. She was given the position of matron at the Qalqilya refugee camp. "The people in the

orphanage taught us to depend on our abilities. In the refugee camp, I worked to my abilities." When asked why she did not choose to work as a nurse in Jerusalem close to the Armenian Quarter, she replied that "I know I am an orphan. I don't need to be reminded of the fact for the rest of my life." Six months later, when I was back in Jerusalem to attend the 90 year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, walking towards the Armenian cemetery, Arpina Avakian reminded me of our last conversation, "They were good people who rescued us and took care of us in the orphanage. I owe my life to them, but I also wanted to do normal things."

As for her years in Qalqilya, they were 'the best years' of her life. In Qalqilya, she had her own living quarters. "It was home for me," she told me. There she felt respected by the doctor, nurses and patients. "Arabs," she explained, "always respect their doctor and nurse. Especially the midwife is loved." There were no problems with the Muslim doctor or Muslim patients in the refugee camp, "they were never a problem and they were all Muslim," she remembered. Arpina Avakian later told me how they would knock on her door at all hours of the night and tell her "In shah'Allah, there will be a delivery tonight." She recalls a particular evening: there was a wedding in the camp, and she was seated among the guests of honour. Although a guest, she was constantly called to deliver babies; there were five deliveries during the party. "I have many step-children," she said.

After 1967, life took a difficult turn. Miss Avakian was absent during the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and when she returned she did not have her identity papers in order: "I became a non-person." The patriarch gave her a room in the quarter, and she was among several people who were provided with food from the seminary's kitchen. "So you see," she told me, "I go back to living from the good heart of others. God bless them." Writing this chapter, I received a telephone call from Jerusalem telling me that Arpina Avakian had died "as a non-person."

Arpina Avakian repeated her gratitude to the people in the orphanage and to the Patriarch. Others spoke about how they resented the Kaghakatsi, finding them more Arab than Armenian and accusing them of having been passive during the massacres. Edward Dadrian remembers being taken to Aleppo, "being hungry the whole time," and that the "fellahin" peasants, gave him food sometimes. Eventually he was adopted by a Turkish family. "The wife wanted a child because

they could not have children. The husband was a clerk in the administration." To my question regarding life in a Turkish family and how he felt about the Turks, Mr. Dadrian answered: "They were good to me. I ate well and they showed affection. I remember that well." To my second question, he answered, "I was young when it happened and happy in their home. The people I lived with were not responsible for the genocide. The Turkish government must acknowledge the destruction of our homeland and families."

After World War I, the British, French and Americans demanded that all the Armenian children adopted into Bedouin or Turkish families be brought back to their orphanages. Dadrian was then taken by the Near East Relief to an orphanage in Lebanon, then to another in Nazareth. In Nazareth, he was encouraged by his teacher to go to Jerusalem and find a vocation. "The teacher was a good man. He knew that we have to find our own way in life. Relief cannot last all your life."

Edward Dadrian was a clever man; "In Armenian we have a word, 'jarbig,' it means 'keep your eyes opened'." Mr. Dadrian had and still has great musical talent, never missing an opportunity for work. He started by taking odd jobs in expensive restaurants and hotels. Some of the customers talked to him and he soon had parents asking him to give their children music lessons. He had a good life working as a private piano teacher. Dadrian spoke Arabic, French and English and many of his pupils belonged to the Arab nobility or the foreign communities.

His daughter Elise, who assisted during several of our conversations, told me how her father repeats adamantly at every family gathering that their fortune in life was not a result of the native Armenian community's assistance. He lives with his wife inside the Quarter, but he wants to keep his mingling with the neighbours to a minimum. Mrs. Dadrian, whose story I have included elsewhere, disagrees with him on this point, so they have agreed that she can socialize with the neighbours, while he will spend time with the world outside the Quarter. "But my father, when he still could walk easily, always came home at night before they locked the gates to this place. He loves it here." To my question regarding the significance of the relief in her father's life, she replied that for both her father, and her mother, the deportation and relief efforts are intrinsic to the Armenian identity. However, they also want to be more than "just victims and refugees," which is the reason, she said, why her father during family gatherings always starts by giving thanks to "the three 'As': American funds, Armenian smartness, and Arab naivety."

"What about God?" I asked Mr. Dadrian; "He was too busy," he smiled, and then Else continued, "Please remember in your research; we Armenians have a special approach to humour. My father is a typical Armenian, he turns melancholy into a joke."

By the time the relief efforts started, the Armenian children were scattered at many points. Mary Aberian's family were from Dort Yon (near Alexandret)—the city of four roads—near the sea with plenty of fruit trees. Her mother lost her first husband and all her children on the road to Aleppo. In Aleppo, she married another Armenian who lost his parents, sisters and brothers during the cholera epidemics in Syria. An Arab merchant had adopted him and sent him to school and later had him set up with a shop. "I am telling you this so that you will understand that my life has been a mix of relief aid and my own strength," Mrs. Aberian said.

Mary Aberian does not remember her father; however, when he died, her mother put her two daughters on a donkey and travelled to Amman. When Mary was five years old, her mother became seriously ill and could no longer care for her daughters. They ended up living in the streets, where a Circassian lady, who had been Mary's wet nurse, picked them up and took care of them. Mary Aberian still remembers that Mehmed Nur Janakat was the name of her Circassian milk-brother in Amman.

She cannot remember the exact year when 'El Latin,' the Catholics, offered to feed, educate and clothe Mary Aberian and her sister. They were transported along with several other children to the Dame de Zion School orphanage in Jerusalem; "Although they were nuns," Mrs. Aberian remembers, "they made us orphans work, making souvenirs for the tourists." There were about one hundred orphans, not all of them Armenian. She left the Dame de Zion when she got engaged to a much older man. He was considered a very good match; well dressed and from a rich family famous for their smart restaurant, which for convenience I will call "The Windsor." Mary Aberian married in November 1935. The next summer there was the Arab revolt, followed a couple of years later by World War II.

Due to 'accidents of fate' Mary Aberian had to support her mother, her husband, and their four children. "Through the eye of my needle," she proudly told me. She was able to open her own tailor shop with money she made working for an Armenian philanthropist. I asked her if she got any help from the Patriarch, "the Patriarch is like a father;"

then she got up to fetch a dress that needed mending: "Some are better fathers than others." She repeated that the "Armenians manage because they want to survive. I am grateful that El Latin gave me life, but…" she stopped and pointed to my notebook, "write what I tell you down. OK, they gave me relief, as you call it, but I lived my life with the help of God."

Mary Aberian now lives outside the Quarter. Inside the high walls of the Armenian Quarter are a warren of tunnels and passageways, a blend of small rooms and larger, attached homes. These are the homes of the Zowaar—the guests. There are pots and tins of herbs and flowers, lace curtains and Armenian crosses carved on the doors. More than ninety years later they are still guests, and therefore no rent is paid for these rooms; the homes are handed down from generation to generation, change hands by agreement or payment of a type of key-money.

Mr. Hagoup Norayan used to be a close neighbour of the Cathedral; he did not go to church then, and he does not do so today: "Where was God when I needed him?" Norayan never goes to weddings or baptisms and he sleeps with the lights on. He was born in 1916, deported with his family from Marash and arrived in Jerusalem, along with his mother and grandmother with the help of the French. His mother died young of exhaustion and for a very short time, Mr. Norayan shared a tiny room—what is today the public lavatory by the entrance to Armenian Quarter—with his grandmother, but she was weak and unable to take care of him. He spent most of his childhood in an orphanage with many children and does not want to be more specific. To my questions regarding the number of boys' in the orphanage, he said that "the place" could not house all the boys, so some were taken to live in run-down rooms and buildings outside the Quarter. The older boys used to give these rooms fancy names like 'Hotel Fast' (after one of the more elegant Jerusalem hotel) or 'Allenby Hotel.' "In this life you have to know how to make a joke."

When I asked him about Christmas in the orphanage and whether the boys were given more to eat on special religious occasions, Norayan became irritated and answered abruptly:

> No Christmas presents. You and your luck with food. You had bread. How can you have presents when there is no food? What presents?—we needed food. We got two whole walnuts and bread. If you were lucky there was something inside the shell of one of the walnuts. Orphanages are just places. Some died others did not die. We were thrown into the maytam

(orphanage) to think fast about how to find something decent to make a living from. That is why so many of us are good with business. Relief made us think of how to make a good living with food on the table.

When I visited him the next day to apologize for upsetting him with my questions about the orphanage, he smiled: "Now let me tell you my child about real life." Norayan's life really took off when he "was no longer dependent on the miserable life in the orphanage." He became an apprentice in a tailor shop. It took him five years to master the trade and he then opened his own tailor shop. Hagoub Norayan learned from an early age to depend only on his abilities. To illustrate this point, he told me that while there are always crises in Jerusalem, he has never needed to turn down an order. "I have some family here and there." Whether he needed special oil for his Singer sewing machine, sharp German scissors or even a brand new Singer, his relatives in France or in America shipped it over. He advised me to keep my eyes opened and the world accessible to me: "You need both my dear."

Norayan married late in life. Both his grandfather in 1895 and father in 1915 were massacred before they turned thirty, leaving behind only one child. He changed his name from Papian to Norayan. Papian was a name that only brought bad luck. Hagoub Norayan married at thirty-four and moved with his family to a home just outside the Armenian Quarter. "I wanted to feed my family." His son interrupted to tell me to pay closer attention at how Armenians shop for food. "They shop like there is not tomorrow. We are worse than the Arabs." Armenian families, he told me, buy large supplies of food in order to get a better price. But it is also because they never want to know hunger again. "You don't get a round Armenian face from an orphanage." His father nodded; he agreed that they are so obsessed with food because of the famine their families suffered during the deportation years and because of the time they spent in orphanages. As Armenians, it is compulsory to have proper provisions. "A person comes to visit. You don't want them to think you are a 'maytam.' So you have your cheese, basturma, bread." It also means that your family, neighbours and friends can rely on your hospitality.

The Zowaar are still distinct from their native Armenian neighbours in language, history, cuisine, bearing and traditions. As indicated earlier, when the Zowaar arrived in Jerusalem, they spoke no Arabic, only Armenian and Turkish. They brought with them traditions and customs that distinguished them from the Armenians who had lived in Jerusalem for centuries. Over the years, some have inter-married

with native Armenians or Christian Arabs; others have left for Europe, Australia or the Americas. Their descendants and the few living survivors of the 'chart' or the genocide, make up most of the population of the Armenian Quarter today. Most of the Zowaar who married native Armenians live outside the Quarter.

The first woman I met was a Mrs. Anne Stamboulian. She had married into an established native Armenian family. Her family were from Gurin and she had been found among countless other children in an orphanage in Aleppo. She has no idea how she came to Aleppo. What she most vividly remembers about Aleppo is the cold and her constant search to find a warm spot in the sun. She is uncertain whether she was taken by Danish or American missionaries to Lebanon, but she does remember travelling on the Mediterranean: "There was water, water, water," and an older girl explained that this water was called the sea. In Lebanon, she was first brought to an orphanage run by the Swiss in Gazir, then transferred with other children to Bird's Nest in Jbeil, overlooking Sidon. The *Near East Report* explains that the orphanage was called Bird's Nest because it "nestles 388 'birdies,' all of kindergarten age" (1924, 15). In 1928, the Danish missionary Maria Jacobsen took charge of the orphanage after the Near East Relief and it became the Danish Birds' Nest Orphanage.

Mrs. Stamboulian cannot remember her parents; this bothered her for a while, and she returned to Aleppo in search of their names. She found the names and discovered that her real name was Asnim. "Then something strange happened. It was no longer important." Anne was her "Bird's Nest name," and "So Anne is now my name," she said. But the children were not called by their name; instead they had a number and Anne was number 256. Every child in the orphanage had a Danish benefactor, and at Christmas the children wrote cards thanking their sponsor. Sponsor funding was never enough, so Maria Jacobsen was always busy raising more money. Anne Stamboulian studied half the day and embroidered the other half. The products were sold in Denmark. The 'mayriks'—orphanage matrons—supervised the children, fed and washed them, punished and cuddled them. Every 'mayrik' was responsible for twenty children.

Jacobsen is considered one of the great saviours by Armenians in the Diaspora. In several documents she is referred to as 'mayrik'—"stepmother" or "Mama" Maria Jacobsen. In contrast to the many motherly references made to Jacobsen, Anne Stamboulian's experiences with

Maria Jacobsen are exceptional. She strongly objected to my reference to Maria Jacobsen as 'mayrik.'

> Maria Jacobsen was busy administrating and could not be a 'mayrik.' She was the captain. Maria Jacobsen was elegant, but not fashionable, never went out without a hat. She was a nice lady. A good lady with a strong and honourable personality. We respected her. At times she was nervous, or perhaps it's called energetic, but we respected her. We did not see her everyday; she sat among us for the Sunday dinner, making sure we all got a fair helping of boiled potatoes and pork belly.

Every Christmas, the children would gather outside her door and sing. Although the orphans were educated in English or French schools, inside the orphanage, Armenian was the only language allowed. Maria Jacobsen spoke Armenian fluently and read to the children from an Armenian Bible. I asked whether she had an accent. "No, she did not," Mrs. Stamboulian replied. Then after a long pause she laughed: "But the native Armenian priests who came every Sunday had a terrible accent. Miss Jacobsen used to be very angry with us when we made fun of the Holy men in violet."

The only time the children had close individual contact with Maria Jacobsen was when she cut their hair and brushed the loose hairs off their neck. When she was finished, her sister Anne would clean up the floor. Miss Jacobsen, Anne Stamboulian said, was only mother for her own daughter, Beatrice, whom she had adopted in Kharbert. Beatrice lived in Jacobsen's private rooms and was the only child allowed to ride on a donkey to school. Later, when it was time to marry, Maria Jacobsen chose an Armenian dentist for her.

Anne Stamboulian believes that Jacobsen especially liked her, because she was asked to stay on at Bird's Nest as a 'store keeper,' a position that required a trustworthy person because the keeper had keys to the food supplies. When the peasants came with the goods, she weighed and stored them, and noted the transaction accurately in a book: "Only a trustworthy and loyal person could have that position."

Armenian suitors used to come to Bird's Nest to find Armenian brides. Several used to come from as far away as America. Hers came from Jerusalem. All the girls had to have Maria Jacobsen's approval before getting married, and they needed her reference to get a job. When she was getting married and moved to Jerusalem, Maria Jacobsen provided her with her number to get a passport. She proudly showed me the Armenian Bible she was given "for good and faithful work" by Jacobsen

as a good-bye present. It's leather bound with a dedication written in Armenian by Maria Jacobsen: "This Book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this Book."

Anne Stamboulian met Maria Jacobsen again in 1944 when she came to visit Jerusalem and stayed at St. Andrews. She brought presents for Anne's baby. Life after Bird's Nest was complicated. Mrs. Stamboulian explained that in the orphanage, all the children were real orphans—nobody knew them. "My only identity," she explained, "was being an orphan," and the only time she felt sorry for herself was when she got married: "My husband had a normal family; I had nobody. The only time I felt like an orphan was when I got married." It was her mother-in-law who made life bearable for her. Mrs. Stamboulian senior did not want her daughter-in-law to end up like her working day and night. She knew that Anne Stamboulian was exceptionally capable with a needle and thread. "With Maria Jacobsen, everything had to be perfect, so I was very gifted in handwork." But her mother-in-law refused to let her do or to even tell her son about it.

Mrs. Stamboulian senior had herself been a clever seamstress. Knowing that she could support the family, her husband never came back from his trip to South America. Because of this, she believed that once her son found out that his wife was just as clever, he too would go "drifting" and not work. "Men are like that," she used to tell her daughter-in-law. I asked her if she would like to visit Gurun and how she feels about the Turks. To the first question she replied: "What shall I do in Gurun? It's a village." To the second, she shrugged and said: "What will happen if I don't forget? They know what they have done."

I will conclude as Anne Stamboulian did when we last met: 'Sawene el Story'—the story is settled.

Figure 3. A survivor.

Reflecting on the Stories

The stories above are a good starting point to reflect on Hintlian's powerful statement about the Armenians' enduring loss: "We are a nation of widows and orphans." My assumption is that memory's orientational function (Schwartz 1996) begins when we start recording discursive events—we, i.e., the recorders; reconstruct narratives (even history) with witness accounts. This type of overview is necessary to put the stories into perspective and to understand why I use individual accounts of encounters and experiences when analyzing and contextualizing the relief efforts. The relief efforts live on in people's memory. They have become part of the present experience.

Memory is an empirical phenomenon; powerful experiences are produced, reproduced and expressed in personal narratives. In her writings on the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, Rosemary Sayigh urges her readers not to neglect the way personal stories "interweave the personal with the collective, conveying a sense of 'being within history' as well as 'knowing history.'" (2007:149).

The recollections in this chapter are multilayered. Turning up the volume on individual life stories not only resonates with personal redemption, but illustrates how the perception of critical events are crucial to explaining why individual memories are sustained and how we can gain insight into the irreducible particularities of human responses to global moments.

Arpina Avakian, Hagoup Norayan and the others echo Razmik Panossian's argument that there is "more than one national identity and more than one way of belonging" (2006:316). The voices recorded give voice to experiences of a particular chaotic and painful historical moment; bridging not only history and memory, but providing an anthropological account of specific Armenian connectivities. The stories serve as allegories for how broader issues affect our view of the role relief had on people's 'being in the world.' Recollections, the oldest form of history, are unique properties of individual lives; they have a way of shaping what people remember and giving their memory duration. As such they introduce configurative meanings which are not found in the folds of history.

Obviously, recollections are 'incomplete evidence,' personal stories are infused with human details and private experiences—they are highly biased. After all, they are based on what people remember, what they wish to remember or forget, and also on what the recorder is recording,

or striving to remember about how and what people said. The inter-viewer also affects the narratives by choosing the questions, by selecting what to record in writing and what to leave out. Clearly the procedure of retelling human stories and experiences is influenced by movements at both ends—that of the narrator and that of the writer. An essential finding is that the content of the individual experiences evolved as the relief situation changed, and as the ethnic, religious and political condi-tions in the region altered. Perception changed over time.

Anne Stamboulian, Hagoup Norayan, Edward Dadrian and Mary Aberian all recount the brutalities of evictions, forced marches over harsh terrain, encounters with 'orphan archaeologists' and rather dismal relief accommodations in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. These events are the core components of the collective memory—they are the 'glue that binds.' The stories illustrate Hintlian's point: namely how genocide, deportations and rescue and relief operations were constitu-ent parts of a shared and remembered past, the basis of a collective memory that has actively shaped the Zowaar distinctiveness. And there is more. The different narratives illustrate that although individual lives are lived simultaneously in the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem, the perceptions of a 'common life' show variations, compromises and contradictions.

Recollections exist in different forms along a spectrum of personal histories and experiences; their significance does not lie in what they retain, but in *how* the relief activities are being depicted. We have what Kukchiyan and Herzig refer to as "the different strands of Armenian identity" (2005, 2). Sketching 'different strands,' I have attempted to grasp how the relief activities shaped individual pasts and how they were perceived by different individuals. In doing so, I realized that certain strands of experienced relief, in a variety of shapes and degrees, surface as recurrent themes among the survivors of the genocide.

Arpina Avakian was purely 'orphan' and expressed thankfulness towards the staff at the orphanage, who taught her to sing and draw. Mary Aberian talked about 'El Latin' who sent her to school in Jeru-salem. She recognized their contribution, but insisted that I emphasize her own accomplishments in life. Edward Dadrian is one of many orphans we know were adopted by Arabs, Turks or Bedouins. He is grateful for the Near East Relief's efforts and for Arab generosity, but like Mrs Aberian, he underlined the autonomy, tenacity and personal achievements of the Armenians. Hagoup Norayan spoke only reluc-tantly of his time in the orphanage. To him, 'real life' began when he

landed his first job. While scholars tend to portray Maria Jacobsen as a 'mayrik'—a 'mother'—Anne Stamboulian considered her a 'captain,' and organizer and fund raiser.

The accounts of Armenians in Jerusalem converge on the genocide, the exodus, the perception of enduring loss and realities of the relief efforts as significant factors that at some level do connect Armenians. To my question regarding their experiences of the relief, the answers varied. I heard their gratitude, but they also told me about their sorrows and losses. Even more remarkable is the fact that the stories of the relief efforts actually include life 'after the fact': they are plural, multifaceted and full of individual triumphs, which people 'know' to be their own.

The different memories of the relief activities constitute metaphors for how fragments of their life 'glue' the various individuals together. The focus on connectivities and communalities provides important avenues to understand the cultural complexities of which 'feeling Armenian' (Bakalian 1993) are a part. Personal accounts illustrate that heterogeneity is not random. The Armenian identity has been interspersed with Turkish ethnic elements, Muslim religious culture, Arabic heritage, and shaped by orphanages run by American and European missionaries and the encounters with European communities. This is not all: the memories of massacres, terrible escapes and marches, well-intended relief efforts, personal losses and triumphs, the accomplishment of a professional career and a decent livelihood—all of these elements bring out and 'reinstate' individuals from the wreckage of history and open up to the richness of not only 'being and knowing the world,' but also 'understanding the world.'

La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II continues to inspire and stimulate discussion and provoke counter-arguments to which I hope this chapter will contribute. Of course, it is by now obvious that there are no ultimate conclusions to be drawn from what followed the Armenian genocide; still, what I find confirms the intricacies of individual incidents on human history. The post-World War I dispersion of Armenian women and children to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, and the subsequent spread of epidemics, the constant hunger and thirst and lack of shelter are facts that illustrate the enduring loss and need for restoration that prompted salient relief activities, caused numerous controversies, and produced an elaborated distinctiveness and modified familiar structures for Armenians in the diaspora.

Figure 4. Commemorating the Armenian genocide.

Acknowledgements

Sanjian, who kindly e-mailed me references on AGBU. This article was first presented at the American University in Cairo; I would like to express my gratitude to Nicholas Hopkins for inviting me as visiting scholar and for encouraging me to concentrate on the voices. I want to thank Beth Baron for sharing with me information on the Armenian orphans in the Middle East. My good friends Elizabeth Rasmussen and Inger Marie Okkenhaug graciously read and made valuable suggestions. I owe a particular debt to my dear and kind friend Nancy Frank for friendship and guidance. As always, my family provided the support that makes it all possible.

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WOMEN ON A MISSION! SCANDINAVIAN WELFARE AND THE ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1905–1917[1]

Inger Marie Okkenhaug

In the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian population had a special place in various Western missionary enterprises. From the massacres in the 1890s till the interwar period, Western missionaries—together with secular organisations like the Red Cross and the Near East Relief, were an important part of the forces that were rebuilding and attempting to preserve what was left of Armenian society. Missionaries with vital connections to Western state authorities could operate relatively safely and independently, unlike men and women from local communities who often depended on money, supplies and infrastructure from the outside in order to help the destitute. Thus the missionary can be seen as a forerunner for the present-day development/aid worker.

This essay will look at the missionary's role in times of emergency and her contribution to Armenian society in the period from the late 1890s to the end of the First World War. The study will be based on a Norwegian nurse and deaconess, Bodil Biørn (1871–1960), one of several Scandinavian missionaries from the Lutheran Female Mission Workers' organization (Kvinnelige Misjons Arbeidere, KMA) based in Eastern Anatolia. These Norwegian, Danish and Swedish missionaries worked for the German mission Deutscher Hülfsbund für Christliches Liebswerk im Orient.

Patricia Grimshaw reminds us that: "The tension in the mission project apparent between, on the one hand, concern for universal human rights that few of their contemporaries nourished, and on the other, the arrogance bred of Western cultural imperialism, underpinned mission activity across the British Empire…."[2] Although the Nordic countries

never were colonial powers in a strict sense of the term in the nine-teenth and twentieth centuries, Grimshaw's "contentious dilemma" is of course relevant when evaluating Scandinavian mission history. Even so, this essay will argue that in order to have an impact, the missionary would have to restrain her cultural arrogance, and develop empathy with and understanding of the religious, social and political conditions that determined the local population's conditions of life. This necessitated a will to work with indigenous people, men and women,—who had their own agencies for choosing to cooperate with Western missionaries. Thus my focus will not merely be on the missionary's strategies for welfare, but also on this encounter as a complex interaction with local peoples and political and social developments in the 'field'. [3]

Aid-work among Armenians after the 1894–96 Massacres

The massacres of the Armenians from 1894–96 under Sultan Abdül-hamid and, later, the genocide of the Armenians during WW1 loomed large in American and European consciousness and social and political life during a span of four decades.[4] This was also true for the Scan-dinavian countries, where the priest Ernst Lohmann and his brother Johannes Lohmann from the Deutsche Hülfsbund played central roles as advocates for the Armenians. In the late 1890s, the Lohmann brothers toured in Scandinavia, where they spoke at public meetings about their experiences among the survivors of the massacres.[5] Several Scandinavian intellectuals wrote about the Armenian conditions in the Ottoman Empire. Danish KMA was established partly as a response to the Armenian plight. The Norwegian branch, established in 1902, also gave priority to this aid-oriented work in Turkish Armenia.

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[3] On American mission to Ottoman Armenia, see S. Moranian, *The American Mis-sionaries and the Armenian Question: 1915–1927* (PhD. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1994) and H. L. Kieser, "Mission as a Factor of Change in Turkey" in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 13, no. 4 (2002): pp. 391–410.

[4] P. Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* 2003 xviii; Matthias Bjørnlund, 'Et Folk Myrdes': Det Armenske Folkemord i Danske Kilder" (MA thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2005), p. 18.

[5] M. Bjørnlund, "Before the Armenian Genocide: Danish Missionary and Rescue Operations in the Ottoman Empire, 1900–1914", *Haigazian Armenological Review* 26 (2006): pp. 141–56.

Through secular organisations like the Red Cross and Christian mission organisations, people in the USA, Russia and European countries sent help to the areas affected. This transnational activity created one of the first international aid-operations in modern history. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, ABCFM, the largest, oldest and most important mission organisation involved in the Empire, and the German organisations Deutscher Hülfsbund für Christliches Liebswerk im Orient and Deutsche Orient Mission were the central players in the Protestant missionary network involved with the Armenians.[6]

Also the various local Armenian societies attempted to repair and restore their societies.[7] An English couple, Rendel and Helen Harris, who worked for the British Quaker Relief Committee in Aintab in 1896, reported back to England that "Armenians were working industriously and 'helping one another splendidly' in their efforts to repair their lives and culture."[8] However, in many villages in Anatolia there was absolutely nothing left of material goods that were necessary to start tilling the land.[9] The following numbers give some idea of the existing social conditions after 1896. Of a total of 2 million Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, 88,234 Armenians were murdered, 500,000 robbed of all their belongings, 2,493 villages and towns plundered, 568 churches pillaged and destroyed, 282 turned into mosques.[10] There were also many examples of Armenians given the choice between conversion to Islam and death.

The central issue for those parts of Armenian society that had been affected by the massacres was the large number of orphans, or children without a father where the mother was not able to support her children. In addition came the large number of single women that had to support their families and were without protection, because the men had

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[6] See for example S. E. Moranian, "The Armenian Genocide and American Missionary Relief Efforts", in J. M. Winter (ed.) *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 186–213.

[7] The Turkish authorities did participate in the rebuilding, but apparently only for a short period of time. See Julius Richter, *History of Protestant Missions in the Near East* (London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1910).

[8] Balakian, p. 83.

[9] National Archive, Copenhagen, (Rigsarkivet) KMA 10. 360, pk. nr. 16. Letter from Christa Hammer, 19.1.1902.

[10] Richter, p. 143. According to Hilmar Kaiser this is a conservative estimate, personal communication by e-mail, 10 October 2006.

been killed.[11] An eyewitness, probably a Western missionary, gave the following description from the massacres:

> After the massacre in Malatiye all the Armenians who were left fled from their burning homes to save their lives, taking with them nothing but the poor clothes that they were wearing. Of all the 2,000 plundered families, representing 8,000 souls, only fifty are living and these in deepest despair. Delicate women whose husbands and grown-up sons have been massacred, and whose houses have been burned down, have been robbed of everything and now live in huts or damp cellars. The once rich are now in rags and have no food. Many of them have to go a-begging from door to door or stand in the market places clamouring for alms. There, sitting in their shops, the men who have made them widows and robbed them of all their possessions, may throw them a handful of copper coins while they mock them for trying to pick up some scraps like the dogs.[12]

In 1901 Ernst Lohmann went to Armenia for a four months' stay to assess the social conditions among the survivors. While in many areas in Turkey the living conditions of the Christian population were not worse than those of the Muslim population, in other areas, hunger and suffering among the Armenian population were worse than during the massacres.[13] Lohmann describes the difficulties of single women with families to feed, in a society where there was no tradition of employment for women outside the home. Women were forced to offer their children for sale at the Muslim markets.[14] Thus, it was vital for rehabilitating society to take care of the children without families and find ways for single women to operate in a patriarchal society. Lohmann's writings were translated into Scandinavian languages and read by supporters of the various national branches of the KMA.

 Bodil Biørn was one of the Scandinavian women who were deeply moved by the sufferings of this 'first of the Christian nations'. Coming from one of the wealthiest families in Kragerø on the Norwegian south coast, Biørn had studied music in Germany before she had a religious calling to become a deaconess. She was educated at the pioneering deaconesses institution in Oslo. After ten years of working as a nurse in Germany and Norway, Biørn decided to join the Norwegian branch

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[11] Richter, 146. Richter estimated that there remained around 100,000 widows and orphans.

[12] Richter, p. 148.

[13] E. Lohmann's "Skildringer af Armeniske Forhold og Tilstande", translated from German to Danish, published in Copenhagen, 1902, p. 11.

[14] Ibid.

of the Scandinavian Women Mission Workers' organization, which sent missionaries to Armenian areas.

Bodil Biørn's 'Armenian life' can be divided into three parts: From 1905 till 1917 she stayed in Mezereh, now Elazig (two years) and Musch (nine years); the last year was spent working with refugees and orphans in Harunje. From 1922 till 1925 she worked in Leninagrad (todays Gumri) in the Armenian Republic, establishing an orphanage funded by the Norwegian KMA. The last part of her life she worked for Armenian refugees in Aleppo, Syria, from 1926 till 1934. From her home in Oslo she continued to work actively for the Armenian cause until her death in 1960. Here we will be concerned with her years in the Musch region.

In the fall of 1904 Bodil Biørn left for Copenhagen where she attended the mission organization's school. The motto of the school was "the road to glory goes through suffering". However, when leaving Copenhagen in the fall of 1905, Bodil Biørn could never have been prepared for what waited her the next twelve years in the heart of Turkish Armenia.

During these years before World War One, Biørn was employed by the Deutscher Hülfsbund. When she first came to Armenia, she worked in a large, German mission hospital in Marasch. After a short time she was transferred to Mezereh, where she worked with Danish and German missionaries, spending one year learning the Armenian language and working as a nurse at the German Orphanage. Later on Biørn established a home where the sick children from the Orphanage were nursed. She also initiated work among the destitute and sick out in the poorest areas of town. In Mezereh Bodil worked together with two Armenian male doctors and two Armenian women who helped with caring for the sick children.[15] This close cooperation with Armenian personnel was to be a pattern throughout her working life.

While Mezereh was a city with a large mission station, Biørn's next transfer, Musch, was eight days on horseback from Mezereh. It was 'a lonely place'—lonely in that there were only two other Protestant missionaries. Biørn had heard of all the poor and sick in this area that were without medical assistance, and she felt a calling to go there. The journey was made on horseback, and she had the company of one other missionary on this dangerous journey, through Kurdish mountain areas.

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[15] Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere, *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, Oslo 1952, p. 27.

Figure 1. "Bodil Biørn and her horse Olaf" Photo courtesy of National Archives of Norway.

Figure 2. Bodil Biørn and her Armenian assistant at work in the polyclinic in Musch. Photo courtesy of National Archives of Norway.

Biørn arrived safely in Musch in the autumn of 1907 and was to spend nine years there, "my longest and most trying time", as she described this period.[16]

Work among Women

Musch and the Sasson district in Eastern Anatolia were of the worst hit regions after the 1890s massacres. Musch was believed to be 3,000 years old, located on a plain 1500 m above sea level with a population of around 50,000.[17] In this isolated mountainous country, half of the population was Christian and half Muslim (Turks and Kurds). There were around 300 villages where Armenians were in a majority. Kurdish tribes raided the Armenian peasant population at random, and severe winters with snow four to five months a year made life difficult. "It is

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[16] Ibid., p. 28.
[17] http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/0/DA7DFB02A0C594 C5C1256 AD700793C71.

known to be a restless area", she told her home audience.[18] There was a great need for welfare work, and, like many of the rural areas in the empire, there were few medical doctors.[19] This lack of health offers inspired Biørn's move to Musch, despite the advice of her German and American colleauges in Mezereh, who warned her against going to this 'wild and uncivilized place'.[20] After two years in the urban centre of Mezereh, Biørn described the local conditions in this Eastern periphery as shocking. Armenian reformers at the time were also writing of the appalling conditions of the Armenian peasantry.[21] In the villages around Musch people lived in caves (with their livestock in the next room), in indescribable poverty. Biørn compared the local bread with the bread made of rind that Norwegians had to eat during the hunger caused by the Napoleonic wars.[22] The price of grain and food wares was very high at this time, and the poor suffered.[23] Biørn writes that:

> I had never earlier seen as many poorly and pitiably ill people, as I did in Mus (sic) and the surrounding villages. There were only two doctors for the population of the whole area, a military doctor and the district physician, both Turks.[24]

By now Bodil Biørn had been working as a nurse in various places and under different conditions for more than ten years. This long time experience was crucial, since she now often had to work as a doctor.[25] Biørn established a polyclinic (outpatients' department, locally named the Doctor's Ward) where 4,000 patients were treated every year.[26] Yearly

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[18] *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, p. 28.

[19] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen*, 1907, letter dated Musch, 22.10.07

[20] Unplished article by Bodil Biørn, "Armenia og armenierne", Oslo, dated October 1944. Private archive. I would like to thank Jussi Biørn for allowing me to use this material.

[21] R. Panossian, *The Armenians. From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, Colombia University Press, New York, 2006, p. 141.

[22] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 2, 1908, 16, 28: A very powerful image for the Norwegian audience at the time. Henrik Ibsen has written an epic poem, "Terje Vigen", of these years of hunger, when the English blockade prevented the necessary import of grain to Norway.

[23] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 2, 1908, p. 16.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere, *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, Oslo, 1952, p. 29.

[26] Ibid.

she also visited around 300 patients in the city and 200 in the villages. The large number of patients, Armenians, Turks and Kurds, expected this 'doctor' to cure all ailments, the most common being trachoma, malaria, lung diseases and rheumatism. To assist her, Biørn taught a young Armenian man, who later was educated at the mission hospital. She also had two young Armenian women helping her.

This is an example of the transnational health training that became an important—maybe one of the most important—'side products' of the missionary project in general. The professional training of deaconesses was part of this development. The Deaconess Institutions established by the German Kaiserswert in the Middle East from 1850 on, has been called a "history of social and cultural globalisation".[27] The young women working with Biørn might have gone on to receive a professional training at the German deaconess school, supported by the Hülfsbund and opened in 1904, located at the large European hospital in Marash. Here Armenian girls from the various German orphanages became trained nurses.

Western female missionaries and deaconesses—single women earning a salary as professional nurses—were also role models for the local girls. Women like Bodil Biørn clearly represented a new and modern alternative for Armenian women. In addition there was also a growing demand among the Turkish, Arab and Armenian populations in the Ottoman Empire for locally trained female teachers and nurses. Ocassionally Arab and Armenian women, who had been educated in various schools run by German deaconesses, became members of the deaconess sisterhood.[28]

While the number of health personnel—both local and mission based—in the region was growing, there was still a great need for health specialists in mother and child-related welfare. Concern for the high percentage of women dying in childbirth made Biørn certify as a midwife from an institution in Berlin. She writes of the great joy when assisting these Armenian and Turkish women during delivery. She felt an 'enormous responsibility' to be there so alone, and the burden was

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[27] U. Kaminsky, "German 'Home Mission' Abroad: The Orientabreit of the Deaconess Institution Kaiserswerth in the Ottoman Empire" in *New Faith in Ancient Lands. Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* ed. H. Murre-van den Berg, Leiden—Boston, 2006, pp. 191–210.

[28] Ibid., pp. 207–208.

often heavy.[29] It was hard work, with many difficult births, but there were also improvements to be seen, for example the fact that women who were about to give birth learned to send for the midwife in time.

The Turkish consulate in Berlin approved Bodil Biørn's certificate as midwife. She was allowed to work with female patients, but not 'to give medicine to other ill people'. Biørn had not met opposition from Turkish authorities or doctors. There was, however, Armenian opposition to her health work. An Armenian, Roman Catholic doctor tried to forbid her work. This was a young, inexperienced man, and he saw the Norwegian woman as a competitor. According to Biørn, people had confidence in her and no trust in him. Despite the problems this doctor created, Biørn continued her work.[30] This conflict has at least two dimensions. It is an issue between Armenian Roman Catholics vs. Protestant mission, and it is also about female, Western health workers operating within a patriarchal context.

A central issue for the Scandinavian Women's Mission Workers was the plight of girls and women in a society where—"the men eat alone and demand unconditional obedience. The Women are ignorant, do not know how to read and are married off by their parents"—as described by Bodil Biørn.[31] In Protestant mission ideology and rhetoric in general, Non-Christian women were to be included in what was perceived as the collective of Christian, liberated women. This was a result of the Evangelical belief in all women's right to salvation and the corresponding spiritual equality of men and women. Women were seen as the key to religious change and social improvement—two interlinked factors in the missionary project. The ABCFM's establishment (from 1855 onwards) of elementary schools for girls, teaching women to read, and Bible-study sessions were among the early mission projects to carry out "women's work for women" among Armenians in the province of Kharpert, eastern Turkey.[32]

The link between women, modernity and religious reformation is also strikingly apparent in the Deutsche Hülfsbund's ideology, where the Armenian orphaned girls were to be raised to become the 'Light and

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[29] *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, p. 30.

[30] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen*, nr 3, 1912, p. 27.

[31] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen*, nr. 4, 1910, p. 28.

[32] B. J. Merguerian, "Missions in Eden: Shaping an Educational and Social Program for the Armenians in Eastern Turkey (1855–1895)" in. H. Murre-van den Berg, p. 252.

Salt' of Armenian society.[33] As a response to the high level of illiteracy among young and married women outside the care of the orphanage, Biørn also established a day school. After some time there were 120 pupils at the school, with two Armenian women teachers. This was an attempt of 'help-to self-help' for women, a pattern that was to be copied by KMA-work among Armenian refugees after World War One. Even so, in Musch there were also women who needed immediate help. Widows with children to feed came in rags, barefooted in the snow, to the mission station to ask for help.

This important aid-work had to be financed. The Hülfsbund's answer was a system of 'adopting' the widows to German and Scandinavian supporters of the KMA and Hülfsbund, 'Pflegeeltern,' a parallel to the long-distance adoption of today. In the mission magazines, there were photos of the widows and their children with information on each woman's name, age and how her husband had died. The mission cataloged these photos and data in an album with the title "Witwen in Musch".[34] This was essential welfare contribution in a society where the state had sanctioned persecution of the breadwinners, and women were left to take care of children and the old.

The use of photography was important in the work to gain sponsors for the missions' aid-programs. In the new age of the picture magazine, the Armenian massacres of the 1890s were making history. At this time, there was a dramatic rise of newspaper and magazine circulation, both in the USA and Europe. With evolving technology of image making and photographic reproduction, magazines became increasingly popular.[35] Thus the photos of survivors of the massacres, that appeared in the various Scandinavian KMA journals, booklets and books in the years before and after World War One, were part of this larger development.

Photographs of local people and environments helped create empathy for the Armenians and thus secured finances necessary for continuation of welfare work. However, this was not only about "public relations" and funding. Sometimes the photographs were also part of a genuine expression

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[33] E. Lohmann's "Skildringer af Armeniske Forhold og Tilstande", translated from German to Danish, published in Copenhagen, 1902, p. 30.

[34] The album was probably made by the German missionary B. von Dobbler and his wife; they worked for the Deutscher Hülfsbund at the same time as Bodil Biørn and her Swedish colleauge Alma Johansson.

[35] Balakian, p. 126.

of identification between the missionary,—the photographer—and the people she worked with. Bodil Biørn brought a camera when she left for Turkey in 1905, and many of her photographs were shown as slides at KMA meetings in Norway.

Besides photos of need and suffering, pictures of 'progress' were also important in the mission's self-representation. There were 'before and after' photos of children—before and after they were admitted to the orphanage. The gradual expansion of the mission station, with a number of buildings being built in the years before the World War, was also captured by Biørn's camera. From 1911, when Biørn became head of the station, she was responsible for the expansion. This indicates her capacity and standing within the Hülfsverein. To head a mission station was a man's job. However, there was no male missionary there at this time.

Biørn had ambitions for the mission station, and her capacity as administrator is seen in the continuing expansion of the work within both health and education. The mission station already consisted of a school for boys and two orphanages, one for girls and one for boys. In 1913 a new school was completed, a light and beautiful building. At the boys' school there was at least one Armenian teacher, and an Armenian pastor also worked with the missionaries. In the autumn of 1914, the polyclinic was made into a hospital, with ten beds.[36] The local authorities were, however, not happy with this expansion. When the Hülfsbund wanted to build a new school building in Musch in 1914, the local authorities repeatedly tried to stop the work.[37]

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[36] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 3, 1914, p. 28.

[37] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 2, 1913, letter from B. Biørn, 7.01.1913. The personal views of the various local authorities seem to have been decisive for the policy in relation to Western mission establishments. In Mesreh, the first missionaries apparently had great problems with Ottoman authorities, but in 1902 Christa Hammer observed that the Turkish authorities were quite friendly and positive to the mission's work. The local Vali was known as a 'good man'. National Archives, Copenhagen (Rigsarkivet) KMA 10. 360, pk. nr. 16: Letter from Christa Hammer, 19.1.1902

Figure 3. The widow Wartuhi Bedrossian. "Witwen in Musch" (Widows of Mush) is an album probably made by German Hülfsbund missionary B. von Dobbeler. To each of the 18 pictures there is a text with information about the widows; their name, age, number of children, how their husbands came to die etc. Photo courtesy of National Archives of Norway.

"The great task is as far as possible to rouse to new spiritual life in the dead Church"

In 1910 the Swedish missionary Alma Johansson (1880–1974) came to Musch to take over Biørn's work when she went on a year's leave.[38] When she was back in 1911, the German mission couple von Dobbler left, leaving Johansson and Biørn as the only western missionaries in the region.[39] Soon Bodil Biørn grew to respect and love the people she had chosen to live and work with. She told her diary that:

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[38] On Alma Johansson, see M. Småberg "Att bevittna det outsägliga: Alma Johansson och massakern på armenierna 1915" in Valéria Molnar (ed.), *Vetenskapssocietetens Årbok* Lund, 2007

[39] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 2, 1913, p. 12. Biørn did not see administration as her role and wanted a male missionary to come to Musch and take over the responsibility so that she could spend more time on working among the poor and the sick.

> With time I become more and more fond of the Armenians. I am able to understand them better and feel with them in all their troubles and unhappiness. Armenia has become my second home country. I know that it is the Lord himself that has planted the love for this country and its people in my heart, and this helps me survive so that I am able to carry on, and despite everything wait and hope for great things for this suppressed, unhappy and tormented people.[40]

Included in this non-specific notion of 'hope for great things' was political and social freedom from discrimination within an Ottoman context—a hope she shared with other Protestant missionaries. However, the hopeful vision also included a religious reformation in the Gregorian (Orthodox Armenian) Church, which was seen as spiritually dead. Among Protestant missionaries it was commonly believed that the Armenians were living in spiritual decay because of being occupied by the Muslims, whose influence had led to heathendom. Christa Hammer, the first Scandinavian (KMA) missionary in Turkey, prayed for a religious reformation and blamed Muslim occupation for what she saw as spiritual decay among the Armenians.[41]

This recognition of the Armenian's Christianity, and difficult position as religious minority, led some missionaries to work for preserving the Gregorian Church.[42] Even so, most of the Scandinavian missionaries longed for a reformation and wanted to create 'believing Armenians.' The Armenians who earned this title read the Bible in their own language, thus having gained the Protestant notion of a personal, direct relationship with God while still belonging to the Armenian Church. And there were Armenians who accepted Protestant tenets without taking the explicit step of leaving the Armenian church.[43]

However, despite the basic—and egalitarian—Christian belief that everyone can achieve salvation through Christ, Protestant missionaries operated with a worldview that was based on a cultural and racial hegemony. The 'other' needed help from the mission to reach a higher level, both in a religious and material sense. Bodil Biørn and her Norwegian deaconess and KMA colleague, Thora Wedel Jarlsberg, who worked among the Kurdish population, saw the poor and sick as being in great

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[40] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 4, 1913, p. 33.

[41] Rigsarkivet, KMA 10. 360, pk. nr. 16: Letter from Christa Hammer, 19.1.1902.

[42] For example Karen Jeppe; see J. Vejlager *Karen Jeppe: 32 aars opofrende arbejde blandt armenierne* (Kolding: Konrad Jørgensens Forlag, 1936); Bjørnlund, 2006; Eva Lous, "Karen Jeppe—Danmarks første befrielsesfilosof", Det danske fredsakademi. 2003, http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/jeppe.htm.

[43] Merguerian, p. 242.

spiritual and physical need—two aspects that often were linked in mission thinking.[44] According to mission statistics, 1/4 of the population in Turkey was healthy and 3/4 was ill. How this was measured is not known, but such numbers clearly legitimized mission presence in an area where direct evangelization among the Muslim population was forbidden and numbers of converts among the Christian minorities were relatively few.[45] Health and welfare-related work gave a rationale both to the missionaries 'in the field' and to financial supporters at home.

In his work published in 1910, the mission historian Julius Richter concluded that:

> The relations of the mission to the Gregorian Church are subject to much fluctuation. . . . the prevalent feeling among the missionaries is that there must be no proselytizing. The great task is as far as possible to rouse to new spiritual life in the dead Church.[46]

The following examples from Hülfsbund's work in Musch shed light on how Bodil Biørn and her Lutheran missionaries attempted to create 'new spiritual life' among the Armenians and also how the local response could vary. In the first example we see the combination of welfare-work (curing the sick) and evangelisation.

The missionaries often went on horseback out to the various villages close to Musch. One Sunday morning Bodil Biørn rode out to a village to visit the sick and to 'gather the women' for a meeting. After seeing to a sick woman she asked the relatives to ask the Gregorian minister for permission to gather the women in the church or in the local school. The minister reacted strongly and accused her of being a "thief, bandit and a Satan", who tried to seduce the people. Biørn did not manage to calm the priest, and she concluded that: "It was one of these fanatic priests, who thinks that we have come to make Germans out of the Armenian people, and make them leave their church, something we in no way want to do."[47]

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[44] K. Hestad Skeie, "Pioneering Female Autonomy? Johanne Borchgrevink's Girls' School in Late-19th Century Madagascar", *Le Fait Missionaire*, no. 16, 2005, pp. 11–42.

[45] KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 4, 1910, 28. Reference from a talk given by B. Biørn in Norway.

[46] Richter, p. 158.

[47] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 3, 1910, p. 24.

While this Armenian minister put up active resistance against the missionaries, there were other forces that were more welcoming to the Lutherans' presence. It is important to note, however, that in this instance Bodil Biørn overstepped the limits both of gendered behaviour and local hospitality. As a woman she was not supposed to take the initiative in relation to church representatives, who were male. Her request for a meeting place—a church or a school—was also overstepping the private-public divide.[48] This can be seen in contrast to the successful encounter—in the eyes of the missionaries—in the following example, where Biørn was invited to speak in a private setting.

At this instance, also a Sunday morning, one of the Armenian men working for the mission asked the missionaries to come and give a speech to a large gathering of people. In the house of a newly deceased more than 100 people gathered, mostly Armenian women from several churches (Gregorian, Roman Catholic, Protestant) and some Muslim women. The Armenian badvelli (minister) gave a lecture, before Bodil Biørn spoke. A female Armenian teacher interpreted the text in the Protestant tradition, which implies that Armenian women were given an important role within the mission's religious life. The sense of community across religious borders is emphasised by the fact that some women prepared food in order for the people to have lunch together.[49]

We see that Armenians from different denominations did meet each other, and Muslims could also join in such gatherings. If this is something that only women did is difficult to say. For the missionaries this was an opportunity to react to a local situation, as they were invited in. They were guests and had to interact with local expectations of how guests behaved. Provocative actions would not be fruitful, and other strategies based on patience and practical work had to be chosen. In a speech that was printed and read by Protestant missionaries all over the Middle East, George P. Blyth, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem (1887–1914), emphasised that it was the way the missionaries conducted themselves in life that had a true impact on people, and not words or deeds.[50] The World War was to create conditions that made Blyth's

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[48] I thank Karina Hestad Skeie for this point.

[49] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 3, 1912.

[50] National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699, nr. 0028. KMA *Kvartalshilsen* nr. 3, 1915, p. 24.

Figure 4. "One of the classes in the day-school in Mush with their teacher Margarid. For several years we had a day-school in Mush. The teacher Margarid Nalbanchiani and most of the 120 children of the day-school were murdered in 1915"; Bodil Biørn's words on the back of the photo. Photo courtesy of National Archives of Norway.

words prophetic for those Protestant missionaries remaining in Anatolia, including Bodil Biørn and other Scandinavian colleagues. Now health and rescue work overshadowed all other aspects of the mission work. The Western missionaries working in the Ottoman Empire during the war and their supporters in their various home countries broke *new ground in the history of philanthropy.*[51] Like many other female and male missionaries from Western countries, all the Scandinavian KMA missionaries who were based in Turkish Armenia chose to stay there during part of or the whole war-period. During the war, missionaries put up resistance to the Turkish dictatorship's massacres. Several of the Scandinavian women—like other female missionaries—were responsible for saving and ameliorating the lives of thousands of Armenians.[52] To

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[51] S. E. Moranian's phrase, p. 185.
[52] For example the Danish Maria Jacobsen (KMA) and Karen Jeppe, the American Mary Louise Graffam (ABCFM) and Swiss Deaconess Beatrice Rohner, Deutsche Hülfs-bund.

succeed in this extremely dangerous project, these women needed strategies to bargain with local authorities.

Firsthand Witnesses to the Extermination of Turkish Armenians

From the time the Young Turk regime came to power in 1908, the Ottoman Empire was ruled by an increasingly xenophobic, Turkish, Muslim national ideology. The Christian minorities, including the Armenians did not fit in the great picture of nation building. The war created a pretext for practical policies for removing the unwanted minorities. Officially this was to be done by deportations to the Arab provinces, but in reality the aim was to kill all or most of the deportees.[53]

> In some areas of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Eastern Anatolia, the collapse of moral values happened so fast and was so complete that the abuse (of Armenians) took place openly, probably as a consequence of a combination of factors, like the closeness to the frontline, brutalization through warfare, atrocities committed against Muslim civilians, (perceived) Armenian resistance and revolutionary activity, and the officially sanctioned view of all Armenians as being inner representatives of the main outer enemy, the Russians.[54]

Thus writes the Danish historian Matthias Bjørnlund of the early period of the war. Bjørnlund has pointed to the gendered nature of genocide. A report from Musch, for example, states how female relatives of male torture victims were raped in front of their husbands or brothers as part of the punishment. In the same region, "'good looking' Armenian women and children were abducted to be Turkified or adopted into Kurdish households, but the rest were burned alive rather than deported."[55] At the mission station in Musch this was the fate of all the children and most of the Armenian staff. In July 1915 Biørn and Johansson were promised that children and staff would be taken to Mesopotamia; however, they were burned alive not far from the city.[56]

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[53] See for example D. Bloxham, *The great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2005) and Kaiser 2001.

[54] Bjørnlund, "'A Fate Worse than Dying': Sexual Violence during the Armenian Genocide", p. 9.

[55] Ibid.

[56] *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, pp. 30–31.

Eastern Anatolia was "far away from the rest of the world", as Alma Johannsen later wrote, when describing how the news of war and Turkish mobilisation came as a shock to the missionaries in Musch. Both Johansson and Biørn were on summer vacation in different locations when they learned of the outbreak of war. The idea of leaving Turkey and going home to the neutral Scandinavian countries was unthinkable. Johansson rode for six days in extremely hot weather to find everyone at the station, i.e. Armenian staff and children in the orphanages, safe. But everywhere else was chaos.[57] Strict censorship prevented the missionaries from discussing the worsening situation of the Armenian population in their correspondence. Even so, in her diary Biørn noted that: "Turkey is at war, the Armenians are said to be 'disloyal' citizens. In Musch there are rumours of mass deportations." At the mission station Biørn, Johansson and their Armenian colleagues joined in daily meetings where they prayed to God asking that he would prevent a massacre.[58]

During the first year of the war Bodil Biørn and colleagues also worked among Turkish and Armenian wounded soldiers. Several other Western missionary-nurses also worked in war-hospitals for the Turkish army. Among these women who nursed soldiers in various areas along the war-front, were Thora Wedel Jarlsberg and her German deaconess colleague, Eva Elvers. They volunteered as nurses at the front in Erzerum. Here the ABCFM missionary Mary Louise Graffam was also working as a volunteer nurse for the Red Crescent Hospital.[59] The nurses in Erzerum had to deal with a typhoid fever epidemic. Also in the Musch region soldiers brought typhoid fever with them. In the summer of 1915 Biørn contracted the disease and became seriously ill. At a later stage Biørn wrote about this period:

> When war broke out in Turkey, the male Armenian population was used for provision and munitions colonies on the Eastern front. They suffered beyond words. They brought spotted fever (typhoid fever) back home, and since there were no hospitals for them, Musch and the villages were infected with typhoid fever. I worked among these sick for more than one year. Many died, but quite a few were saved, just to be murdered later. We had a very difficult time. We took two rooms in our house and

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[57] A. Johansson, *Ett folk i landsfykt: ett år ur armeniernas historia* (Stockholm: Kvinnliga missionsarbetare, 1979), p. 8.

[58] I. Sandberg "Armenia er mitt annet fedreland! Misjonæren Bodil Biørn intervjuet i 1948" in Historieglimt 2001. Årsskrift for Kragerø og Skåtøy historielag, 2001, p. 85.

[59] Billington Harper 2004, p. 221.

nursed ten soldiers, both Armenian and Muslim, since the (existing) care of these men was so bad.[60]

Mary Louise Graffam later explained that she:

> did not go to help the Turks particularly, I went to work with the Turks, thinking that possibly I could get on the good side of some pashas, and it might help us later on, for I felt the time was coming when we would need such help.[61]

If Biørn had such strategic considerations regarding the inclusion of Turkish soldiers in her hospital is not known. She had treated Turks, Kurds and Armenian patients without discrimination in her Doctor's Ward, before the war, and would most probably continue this practice also during wartime. However, Biørn and Johansson were forced to think and act strategically during the early phase of the war, working for Turkish officials as it might help them later on in their work for the Armenians. They were both known to be excellent nurses, also among the local Turkish elite. In the treatment of typhoid fever, the Turkish doctors soon noticed that the patients treated by the missionaries had a much better recovery rate than the rest.

The reputation of the missionaries as successful healers also reached the (Turkish) Governor of Musch. His sister, the wife of a high-ranking government official in Farkin, was seriously ill with typhoid fever. This man wanted either Biørn or Johansson to make the three-day journey on horseback to nurse his sister. And as Johansson writes, "if they refused his wish, he would in the same manner refuse to fulfill their wishes."[62] This was a clear threat, as Biørn and Johansson several times earlier had asked the Governor to be lenient. Under the existing conditions it was not at all safe for a woman to travel through these areas of wilderness. But, according to Johansson, "the thought that this might be an opportunity for us to serve the Armenians, made us decide that one of us had to go."[63] As Biørn with her long-time experience as a nurse was in charge of the hospital, while Johansson was heading the orphanage—which the Armenian female teachers could look after—it was decided that Johansson should go. She left with her trusted

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[60] *Se til hvorledes i bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, pp. 30–31.
[61] Billington Harper, p. 221.
[62] Johansson, p. 15.
[63] Ibid.

Armenian servant, Michael, escorted with a large group of Turkish soldiers and the city-doctor Assaf, originally from Albania. (With an ongoing typhus epidemic it is interesting to note that one of the two doctors-according to Biørn—of the area, was ordered on a private mission for the Governor.) Travelling through snowstorms and deep abysses, the Swedish missionary and her Turkish escorts finally reached Farkin. After two weeks Johansson's two female patients were recovering. However, the husband of the Governor's sister had no intention of letting Johansson go. He clearly wanted to keep her there, and the doctor, Assaf, was agreeing. With the help of her Armenian servant, she did, however, manage to leave when the rest of the group was returning to Musch. Johansson had been afraid for her security during the stay in Farkin, and she writes of her growing fear of being in the company of these leading officials, including the doctor. It was partly based on fear for being sexually molested, but also on being a Christian at this time and place. Antagonistic feelings towards the Christian population were voiced constantly among these men, and on the way back they were told of massacres in Zeitun and Van.[64]

In the spring of 1915, the missionaries lived in total isolation in Musch. Strict censorship made it impossible to write or receive any news. Even so, news of what was to be expected slowly seeped in. Women, who had escaped from cities devastated by Turkish troops, started arriving at the mission station. "If you could understand how it feels to be closed off from all means of communication and the only thing you see is death in a very violent shape closing in on you!".[65] Thus Johansson tried to describe the claustrophobic feeling of those spring months.

In the beginning of June 1915, 20,000 soldiers from the Constantinople army came to Musch, and the roads began to be closed off. Parts of the male Armenian population fled in small groups across the Sassun Mountains to Russia, as during previous massacres the target had mainly been men. A central strategy for the Turkish regime's plans for extermination of the Armenians was as far as possible to keep everything absolutely secret in order to maintain 'deniability' at all times.[66] In accordance with this policy, the local Governor with orders from the German and Turkish governments demanded that all Europeans

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[64] Ibid., p. 18.
[65] Ibid., p. 19.
[66] Bloxham.

in Musch leave for Harput. But Johansson and Biørn told the Turkish official that they neither could nor wanted to leave their posting.[67]

The refusal to leave interfered with the policy of absolute secrecy and explains the hostility Alma Johansson was met with when she came to the Governor (the same one who 'owed her a favour') to ask for protection for the orphanage. She later wrote of this bizarre meeting: At the Governor's there was a wild frenzy. He said that we had deserved what was happening. "Why had we not left earlier? The whole of the Armenian part of town was to be levelled with the ground."[68] Thus, on July 11, 1915, when the massacre began, Bodil Biørn and Alma Johansson were by their own choice the only Western witnesses to the mass killings of Armenians in Musch.

The massacre lasted for three days. Biørn was seriously ill, bedridden with typhus, which meant that it was all up to Johansson to intervene with the Governor and Doctor Assad, (who lately had often visited the orphanage and had stayed for a cup of tea), in order to save their Armenian children and staff. A Turkish official gave Johansson his word of honour that their children would be spared, and she had to let them go, being promised that they were taken to Mesopotamia. Some time later the news came that all the children and most of the teachers—male and female—and been killed immediately. In the words of Bodil Biørn:

> Of the Armenian part of Mus (sic), where 10,000 people lived, only ruins were left. It happened during the warmest time of the year, the heat and the smell from the burning houses and all the people who were burnt to death and all the killed, was almost impossible to bear. It was an awful time. Almost the whole Christian population was murdered, often in a gruesome manner. 40 ox wagons with women and children were burned in this manner. 11 canons were put on the heights above the city and fired at the Armenian quarters. Some managed to flee to the mountains, some fled through Persia to the Armenian republic, some were deported, but the majority was killed. The Armenian part of the city and all Armenian villages were in ruins. I myself was very ill with spotted fever. A fanatical Albanian doctor tried to shoot sister Alma, but hit two other women who both died. Our children were taken from us, and this doctor forced himself into my house and with the help of twenty Turkish soldiers, abducted our co-workers. But with the grace of God, some of them were given back to us. Our 3 believing Armenian women teachers were in Turkish captivity for 2 days and nights, but God heard our fervent prayers, and they were

[67] *Klasse kampen* 3.7.2005, p. 24.
[68] Johansson, p. 23.

given back to us unharmed. Together with these three women and six of the other Armenians that had been saved, among these three of our big girls and one boy, we managed, with the help of a Turkish escort, to flee to Mesereh, after 10 days on horseback through dangerous Kurdish areas. The Lord held his hand over us in a wonderful manner.[69]

The 'fanatical Albanian doctor' was the same Doctor Assad, who earlier had been a frequent guest at the orphanage. We can just speculate why this man was so intent on exterminating the Hülfsbund's mission, including its female missionaries. Alma Johansson describes him as fanatically anti-Christian and anti-Armenian. As a supporter of the Turkish regime, he was one of many who believed a Turkish nation had to be pure, i.e. without Christian minorities.

In Mezereh the situation was not as extreme as in Musch; however, the need was large. Biørn and Johansson stayed there helping the other missionaries who worked among the 7–800 Armenians who had gathered at the German mission station. As it was strictly forbidden to give aid to any Armenian, it demanded "grace and great wisdom to give help that was forbidden to give".[70] If the aid were detected it would endanger the children in the orphanage.

Now Biørn and Johansson decided to aid the victims in two different ways. Biørn chose to go back to Musch to start urgent relief-work among the surviving Armenians, while Johansson was to go to Constantinople and give a report of the policy of genocide to international authorities. This decision was made after several requests from Armenian survivors, who pleaded with the missionaries to tell Western authorities what they had witnessed. The major weapon against what was happening was publicity, and that is what the Turkish government understood.[71] Also the missionaries understood this, but no one believed it was possible to reach Constantinople alive at such times. Twice Alma Johansson volunteered to go, and the second time the German missionaries allowed her to go, 'at her own responsibility.' Alma Johansson risked her life for contributing to publicity, while Bodil Biørn did the same in order to give immediate aid. Both of them were sure they would die sooner or later during these times, a sense that made them fearless.

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[69] *Se til hvorledes I bygger videre, K. M. A. gjennom 50 år*, pp. 30–31.
[70] Johansson, p. 31.
[71] Interview with Professor of History Margaret Anderson, University of California, Berkeley, in The Armenian Weekly, Nov. 11, 2006. (http://www.armenianweekly.com)

Both choices included a very dangerous journey through war-ridden landscapes. Johansson met hordes of deported Armenians on her way. Maria Jacobsen, a KMA missionary stationed in the Central Anatolian town of Harput (Kharpert) wrote in her diary in June 1915 that if the destination of the deportees really was to be the Syrian Desert, "it is quite obvious that the purpose of their departure is the extermination of the Armenian people".[72]

After a three weeks' journey, Johansson reached Constantinople, where she bitterly experienced the lack of interest; "the world was concerned with greater things than a small nation of three million human beings being exterminated".[73] Alma Johansson then left for Sweden. She later wrote that at the time—finding herself safe and physically unharmed—the idea of living was disheartening. Even after several years the idea of having to stay alive seemed almost unbearable.[74]

After 2 1/2 months in Mezereh, Biørn and an Armenian woman,—her 'kind housekeeper,' Zerpuhi—started on the dangerous journey back,—*at my own responsibility*, as Biørn wrote. They left on horseback and were accompanied by an elderly Turkish major that Biørn knew. Back in Musch horrible conditions awaited them, with destruction everywhere. The mission's house was in terrible shape.

In order to get anything done, Biørn had to choose a strategy of cooperation with local Turks, some of who were willing to help their Armenian neighbours. Also Armenians were part of this resistance, for example the woman who had been the housekeeper at the mission station, who volunteered to come with Biørn back to Musch. As pointed out by Hilmar Kaiser, while Armenians were victims, generally earmarked for death, they did not give up. If at all possible, Armenians organized some communal structure and thereby provided a base for relief work.[75] We must assume that a similar development took place in Musch. This would have helped Bodil Biørn in her task of getting the

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[72] M. Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen Diary 1907–1919* (Kharput-Turkey, Antelias, Lebanon, 1979), 210–211, quoted in Bjørnlund, p. 5.

[73] Johansson, p. 44. See A. Toynbee *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falldon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,* London 1916, pp. 88–91. http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende. nsf/0/DA7DFB02A0C594C5C1256AD700793C71.

[74] Johansson, p. 44.

[75] H. Kaiser (in collaboration with L. and N. Eskijian), *At the Crossroads of der Zor: Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915–1917*, Princetown, NJ, 2001, p. 73.

mission station functioning as a centre for relief work. Her long-time experience from living in Musch and interacting with Turks in trade and bureaucracy, were also crucial factors in the relief efforts.

Biørn bought grain and food from a Turk she knew. Another Turk had hidden many Armenians in the basement of his home. Now Biørn was able to help these people. Many others who had hidden in the mountains came back to Musch. They were in a wretched state. This relief-work was, however, very dangerous. Any form of aid to the Armenians was punishable by death. Because of hiding six Armenian boys in the hospital where they worked, Thora Wedel Jarlsberg and Eva Elvers were expelled from Turkey.

This period in Musch, working against a state-initiated genocide, was for Bodil Biørn a time of grace, a breathing space before the final doom. On the other hand she also sees this time as a parallel to the days of the early Christians and their persecution by another empire, the Roman:

> What joy it was to be in Musch and help these poor people the 3 1/2 months before the Russians invaded the town. Often we all were in mortal danger, but felt totally surrounded by the strong hand of God. Almost every day somebody was sent away to be killed. It was a difficult time, but I would not have missed it since I could be of help to and comfort for these unhappy people. Some of the boys from the orphanage escaped and came to stay with me. The evil Governor was dead and his successor was better, which meant that I, being very careful could stay in town and in secrecy help some of the suffering Armenians. Every Sunday I held church service for the people who were hidden in the cellars. We used to lock the doors in order to prevent the Turks to come in unexpectedly. It reminded me very much of the persecutions in the early Christian times.[76]

In the middle of February 1916 the Russian army was coming closer, and Biørn and her Armenian helpers had to leave Musch. After two days on horseback, riding in deep snow they reached Bitlis. Biørn describes the catastrophe waiting in Bitlis:

> …where the last of my Armenian friends and the children who had been saved were taken from me. I was close to desperation, but God kept me on my feet, and I came alone to Diabekir together with a Turkish gen-

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[76] Unplished article by Bodil Biørn, "Armenia og armenierne", Oslo, dated October 1944. Private archive. I would like to thank Jussi Biørn for allowing me to use this material.

darme. I stayed there for three weeks attempting to get my people back, but everything in wane.[77]

From Diabekir Biørn came to Aleppo, where she stayed with the Swiss missionary Beatrice Rohner who had gathered 400 orphaned Armenian children. Later Biørn went to Harunje in Cilicien, where she stayed with her former German colleagues, Mr. and Mrs von Dobbler, working as the head-nurse in the large orphanage there for one year. Biørn came back to Norway in 1917.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of the welfare work of missionaries like Bodil Biørn, Alma Johansson, Maria Jacobsen, Beatrice Rohner and Mary Louise Graffam, in the aftermath of the Armenian massacres in the 1890s, the years of relative calm up 1914 and the relief work during the genocide itself, has still not been fully documented or analyzed, despite existing source material. Together these individuals, based within various transnational missionary organisations, represented one of the first international aid-operations, with female missionaries interacting with local people in the crisis area.

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[77] Ibid.

BUILDING BONNY BABIES—MISSIONARY WELFARE WORK IN CAIRO 1920–1950

Renate Lunde

In 1934 Miss Liesching, a British missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), described the district of Bulaq in Cairo as an extensive slum area, the most thickly populated, and the poorest in Cairo where infant mortality rates were extremely high.[1] She said that crime and drug-trafficking constantly kept the police busy in this neighbourhood that was known as 'The Devil's University.'[2] From a window in the CMS building the missionaries had a panoramic view of the slum area of Bulaq where most families lived in one room, the floor usually made of mud only, with no water supply and no sanitation. Water had to be fetched daily by the women from public taps, and it had to be paid for. Rubbish and dirty water were thrown into the streets, where they lay all day rotting and collecting masses of flies. In the houses that were lucky to posess an open mud oven for baking they left the rubbish to dry on the roof and then used it as fuel, and Miss Liesching said that the pestilent fly was then brought one stage closer to the family food and baby.

In her annual letters Miss Liesching said that ever since CMS came into this needy and neglected neighbourhood in 1923, they felt that something had to be done for their poverty stricken neighbours, and the female missionaries were particularly concerned with the welfare of mother and child. In 1927 the CMS established their second infant welfare centre in Cairo, and this was situated in Bulaq on the same preventive lines as the first and pioneering centre established in Old Cairo in 1921.

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[1] CMS G3 Annual Letters Marjorie C. Liesching, Bulaq, Cairo, 1926–1930.
[2] Liesching, M. C. and S. A. Morrison, 1934.

The urban colonial landscape has for the most part been gendered male in much of the earlier historiography both on the Middle East and Africa. I want, as Jean Allman, Deborah Gaitskell and other historians have done on Africa,[3] to devout my attention to the ways Victorian notions of domesticity and maternity were transplanted overseas, and my greatest concern is to study the meetings and relationships between European and local women.[4] In this essay I want to explore the encounters between British missionary women and Egyptian mothers that attended the CMS Infant Welfare Centres, and attempt to probe some of the *experiences* of both givers and recipients of this British missionary project of modernising and improving mothering and children's health in the Cairo slums.

Sources and Dilemmas

Missionary archives constitute the main sources used for this essay, and it is a rich material consisting of annual letters and reports, published articles and newsletters, official documents, pamphlets, photographs and documentary films produced by the missionaries. The CMS women wrote extensively, and they described and reflected about their work and to a certain extent about the responses they claimed were received directly and vocally from the mothers. In addition the women offered their own interpretations of the recipients' actions and attitudes.

We must of course read the missionaries' documents as expressions of how they perceived the locals, and we should consider the context of where, why and to whom these documents were written. Much of the missionary material was naturally aimed at readers back home in Britain and was intended to raise sympathy, curiosity and money for the missionary work. The dilemmas of representation of both the missionary lady and the 'subject' are many, as the local woman's 'voice' in the material rarely is authentic. I do, however, not believe that dismissing the missionary narrative as fiction is an option. I rather seek to cross these dilemmas by using Hayden White's depiction of writing history as an act of translation based on the historians' questions, and Geoffrey

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[3] See for example Jean Allman, 1994, pp. 23–47, and Deborah Gaitskell, 1992, pp. 178–202.

[4] This is a preliminary study that is ongoing, and here I attempt to probe some research questions that will be explored further in my dissertation.

Oddie's argument that missionary material actually offers the historian the benefit that we already know what the missionaries' biases were likely to be.[5] We are thus better equipped to recognise and reveal their particular rhetoric and enable a 'translation.' I thus attempt to 'translate' the religious idiom and colonizing subjectivity that are present in much of the missionary documents. In addition I follow Oddie when he claims that missionary sources are a most valuable source for the 'history from below,' as one of the major focal points in missionary literature were the lives of the depressed. Another advantage is that the missionaries were under considerable pressure to produce the evidence and verify everything they claimed.[6] Still we must be aware of the dilemma of selectivity in this material and also of the fact that all kinds of personal and cultural factors have to be taken into account. With this background I do seek to convey the authenticity of the missionary account, but I make no 'truth-claim' for either my narrative or that of the missionaries.

Modernising Maternity

When Marjorie Clairmonde Liesching was recruited to CMS Egypt in 1925 she was probably a product of the philanthropically oriented Victorian society she came from; that society increasingly saw the mission call as a compassion call for the needy. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain has been described as "the great age of evangelical philanthropy"[7] where ideas of social duty and benevolence spread across the evangelical and political spectrum of Victorian England. Simultaneously Christianity had lost its intellectual credibility for many, and the missionary societies could not ignore this new popular climate of opinion. The public showed a growing awareness and sympathy for the philanthropic dimension of the missionary's task, and this probably is an important factor in explaining the growth of medical and social missions overseas from the mid-nineteenth century.[8] The first priority remained to win souls for Christ, but medical and social welfare missions were welcomed to demonstrate the Divine idea in practice.

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[5] White, Hayden 1978, Geoffrey A. Oddie, 1996.
[6] Oddie, 1996, p. 204.
[7] Williams, C. Peter, 1982, p. 277.
[8] Ibid., p. 280.

British political and voluntary organisations increasingly emphasised maternal and infant welfare as a national and imperial interest, and the greatest concern was the high infant mortality rates. Reforming mother-hood was stressed in the recommendations of numerous reports about infant mortality, and both government and voluntary societies directed their efforts to prevent 'bad mothering.'[9] The CMS aimed to be in the front line of exercising this modernising maternity overseas, and they compared their work with that of other societies and philanthropic agencies, as for instance the *Save the Children Fund*.[10]

It is in this context of a professionalized evangelical philanthropy that Miss Liesching worked for poor mothers and children in slum quarters of Cairo. Together with her female missionary colleagues and local women employed by the missionaries, they worked to remould Egyptian mothering into the modern European maternity models that empha-sised preventive and educational methods to reduce infant mortality.

Anthropologist and postcolonial feminist writer Margaret Jolly has, among others, contributed with interesting works from the Pacific to show how maternal rhetoric and methods were used to structure the relationships between the European women and the women whose lives they wanted to 'uplift.'[11] Many studies of the gendered terrain of colonial and missionary encounters have been particularly concerned with the extent to which Europeans sought to 'control' local women through remoulding maternity and thus gendering the modernisation project. Jolly, for one, says that Christian missions, which were the cru-cial agencies that worked to modernise maternity, created a gendered class- and race hierarchy in the colonies. She describes the missionary methods of improving mothering as surveillance, interventions and instruction, which are terms I believe signal the givers' control over the recipients.

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[9] See for example Evelyn Sharp, 1931, and Megan Vaughan, 1991, chapter 3. Anna Davin also writes about the British modernising maternity discourses in "Imperial-ism and Motherhood" in *History Work-shop: a journal of socialist historians*. Oxford, vol. 5 (spring), 1978, pp. 9–65, which is a study that Margaret Jolly, 1998 relies on to a great extent.

[10] Ellerton, Gillian, 1931, p. 5.

[11] Jolly, Margaret. "Colonial and postcolonial plots in histories of maternities and modernities" in Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (eds.) *Maternities and Modernities. Colonial and postcolonial experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge University Press, 1998. See also Jolly, M. "Other mothers: maternal 'insouciance' and the depopu-lation debate in Fiji and Vanuatu, 1890–1930", in Ram and Jolly (eds.) 1998.

I agree that modernising maternity certainly was a project undertaken by missionaries overseas, but I believe that 'control' in itself is a construct that was not necessarily experienced that way by either the missionaries or the recipients of maternal welfare projects. Postcolonial regional discourses have had a tendency to see the missionary enterprises as a colonial experiment where concepts of dominate vs. subordinate are prominent. Said's *Orientalism* can be said to have founded one possible tradition of postcolonial theory,[12] with its magisterial mode of colonial discourse, and despite the critiques against it many scholars have canonized Said's text and thus this type of discourse analysis.[13] The emphasis in several studies on missionaries' biases, racist rhetoric and colonial role and 'plot' is perhaps in itself interventionist in form by excluding the possibilities of interaction and dialogue between the different actors, and thus disfranchises the recipients, the local women and their ability to influence and actively participate voluntarily. I therefore want to go beyond studies of power and authority and rather study the *daily encounters* between missionaries and local women to enable an investigation of the actors' *experiences*. I see the missionaries' welfare work more as a social institution than a colonial agency, and it is a study of the possible interactions and dialogue between the actors that interests me the most. In this debate I follow historians on maternity and missions in Africa, like Heidi Gengenbach and Jean Allman, who emphasise that local women were clearly motivated to engage with Europeans by their own agendas and active choices.[14] These studies are establishing African women as active agents and historical subjects in the making of the world in which they were living, and I want to attempt the same in Egypt by studying the women's interactions with British missionary women. How far did the missionary rhetoric and project of modernising mothering impinge on the urban lower class women? Did the women, by the way they *chose* to participate, seek to transform the European modernising maternity project entirely? Heidi Gengenbach has conceptualised women's actions in relation to colonizers as '*strategic engagement*,' and I want to borrow her term and employ that approach in my investigation of how Egyptian women interacted

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[12] Said, Edward W. 1978.
[13] See for example Gregory Castle (ed.), 2001.
[14] Allman, Jean, 1994, and see also Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi 2002, and Heidi Gengenbach's chapter 1 in the same edited collection.

and selected what they wanted to embrace or reject in relation to the
CMS women and their infant welfare centres.

Infant Welfare in Egypt—New Trends in Poor Relief

Miss Liesching and her forerunners in the CMS directed their welfare
work towards poor mothers and children of the Cairo slums in a time
of change and modernisation influenced by international discourses
on benevolence and philanthropy. The missionaries found that their
work fitted well into the new trend of poor relief in Egypt; this took
a new direction in the early twentieth century Egypt with charitable
associations as the new agents:

> Fashions are fluctuating things, nevertheless certain elements of them
> appear to survive. It is to be hoped this may be the case in Egypt, for baby
> welfare is the fashion of the day in Cairo. In this busy cosmopolitan city,
> still only half awake to modernity, the idea has caught on.[15]

Those who founded the new associations in Egypt differed from the
private and Egyptian state initiatives of the nineteenth century in their
direct involvement and their attempt to generate more profound social
change than simply feeding or clothing the poor would have done.[16]
In the early twentieth century the charitable associations gave special
attention to women and children, who became central in the new
definitions of poor in Egypt.

Organized care for the mothers and babies was initiated by Lady
Cromer,[17] who founded a dispensary for children in a very poor district
of Cairo in 1907. The Lady Cromer Dispensary quickly expanded as the
numbers attending increased rapidly, and it soon became impossible
to give more than just the briefest instruction to the large crowds of
women who came.[18] This philanthropic effort for the care of Egyptian
children and their mothers inspired not only lady missionaries stationed
in Egypt, but also Egyptian notables. Philanthropy was not common
among the educated classes of Egyptians at this time, but Lady Cromer's
initiative motivated the princesses in the Khedival family to establish a

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[15] Ellerton, Gillian, 1931, p. 16.
[16] Ener, Mine, 2003, p. 105. See also Baron, Beth, 2005.
[17] Lady Cromer was wife of the Consul General of Egypt, Lord Cromer (Evelyn
Baring) that served from 1883–1907.
[18] Richmond, Mrs Maurice, 1929. She was the founder of the first CMS Infant
Welfare Centre opened in Old Cairo in 1921.

centre for the protection of infant life.[19] When caring for the children eventually became a topic among some of the new associations, their efforts increasingly took place within a discourse of national duty and citizenship.

Mrs. Richmond, who established the first CMS Infant Welfare Centre in Old Cairo in 1921, claimed that although the centres established before 1920 were useful, there was still a tremendous need for definite preventive and welfare work.[20] Egyptian elite women committed themselves increasingly to social reforms from the 1920s, and for instance in 1926 the committee of the "*Work for Egypt Society*," a group of Egyptian women under the leadership of the intellectual activist Ester Fahmy Wissa, turned their attention from political to social matters. "*Work for Egypt Society*" opened a voluntary welfare centre in another poor district of Cairo, where in addition to advice and treatment for infants, a large number of eye cases were treated. There were, however, as Mrs. Richmond noted, only a few clinics that offered prenatal advice and postnatal care for the mothers and their babies as an effort to lower the high infant mortality rates.

Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre—Building Bonny Babies

The Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre was a pioneer in its focus on preventive medicine through teaching the young mothers child care techniques and hygiene. This particular kind of preventive public health project was a work not taken up by other benevolent societies or the government at that time, but the Egyptian government early acknowledged the work done by the CMS. The missionary women even commented on the relationship with the government as one of cooperation, and the CMS infant welfares was occasionally looked upon as a model by government and other agencies interested in similar projects.[21] In 1927 we saw that the CMS expanded their activities to include another similar centre for mothers and infants in the Bulaq slum.

The missionary women expressed their primary aim as to teach the mothers to direct their love for their children in the healthiest way possible through eradicating the general ignorance the missionaries

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[19] Ener, 2003, p. 96.
[20] Richmond, Mrs Maurice, 1929.
[21] CMS H/H5/E2 287 Mission Field Box 2. C. M. S. Hospital Old Cairo, Egypt. Annual Report 1954. See also CMS G3 AL (annual letter): Miss D. M. Sands 1934–35.

recorded in encounters with the mothers. In accordance with the dominating international discourse at the time, the high mortality rate was considered a rate for the level of ignorance, and the educational component was strongly emphasised during the inter-war years by the Chief Medical Officer in Britain.[22] In Egypt the British missionary workers tried to minimize the deaths that usually appeared the first year of life through teaching the mothers better hygiene, sleeping arrangements, nutrition, fighting the problem of flies, and dealing with general health problems. This was exactly the same issues addressed by government and voluntary agencies back home in Britain and in the colonies.[23]

In the beginning the missionaries had to work hard and patiently to overcome the women's suspicion and what the British women called 'superstitions,' as the women were afraid that the missionaries would cast an Evil Eye on them. Their scepticism did, however, turn into curiosity and the attitude of the local people eventually changed into a relationship of friendliness.[24] Numbers thus increased on the missionaries' books, and some women travelled far to come to the welfare centre.[25]

The Child in the Midst

Let us now 'tour' the CMS welfare centre and join the mothers inside it to explore how the missionaries operated the centre, and maybe catch a glimpse of the mothers' experiences there. At the entrance the mothers were given powder and asked to sprinkle their shoes and ankles.[26] This was considered a very necessary precaution because the mothers and children brought in vermin and insects in their clothing, due to their very poor housing situations and lack of cleanliness that particularly was a consequence of the high cost of water.

The first room the mothers entered was a waiting-room, where the water used for the babies' baths was boiled over a primus stove in the

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[22] Lewis, Jane, 1980, p. 89.
[23] See Ram and Jolly (eds.) 1998 on the Pacific and Asian colonies and Allman et al. 2002 on African colonies.
[24] CMS Max Warren Collection, "With Christ in a Cairo Slum", by one of the workers, undated, London.
[25] C. M. S. Annual Letters. Miss M. J. A. Rees-Mogg, Old Cairo, 1926.
[26] Cook, J. Howard, 1932.

Flies breed in dirt, refuse, and dust.

Flies bring disease, blindness, and death.

THE DANGER OF FLIES
One of the posters used at the Old Cairo Welfare Centre

Figure 1. The visualisation of correct hygiene and feeding through these posters and diagrams was important as the mothers were illiterate and could not read public health leaflets.

corner of the room. The walls were covered with the famous picture posters made by Miss Scott-Moncrieff that were specially designed to illustrate the hygiene lessons, the lessons on good and bad feeding, the advantage of cleanliness, and the danger of fly-borne diseases. Even the government bought the CMS posters to use them in their welfare centres.

The next room in the welfare centre was used for bathing and weighing the babies. At first, when the mothers had literally to be brought in from the streets, rumour had it that the bathing of the babies in the welfare centre was really Christian baptism. In Miss D. M. Sands[27] annual letters it seems apparent that the missionaries sought pedagogical methods to attempt to increase the number of children bathing every morning:

> We were fortunate in getting hold of a splendid little booklet with pictures of birds & dogs & cats cleaning themselves & lastly children bathing. Many

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[27] Miss Dorothy M. Sands was superintendent of the CMS Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre from 1927.

times it has been the means of breaking down the fear of bathing. We get more than twenty a morning now instead of six to nine ( ). Also we have a delightful Bathing Song which we teach the mothers and children. That brings in the element of fun & laughter.[28]

The missionaries interpreted the increased numbers of children bathing and the way the mothers dedicated themselves to this as direct results from their efforts in reducing the prejudices to bathing. The British women were thrilled when the mothers eventually scrubbed their babies with enthusiasm. In 1935 a visitor to the centre wrote an article about her visit in Cairo, and she said that one of the mothers had not been satisfied with the way her baby had been bathed by an English helper, and she then did it all over again to the extreme annoyance of her offspring.[29]

Figures 2 and 3. The philosophy of the CMS welfare centres was that simple methods should be adopted as they were well aware of the environmental and poverty problems. The bathing water was thus heated on primus stoves in old kerosene tins, and flat tin baths were employed because this equipment was similar to what the mothers could afford and already used in their own homes. After the bath the baby would be weighed and put into clean clothes. Weighing was, however, also looked upon with deep suspicion in the beginning.[30]

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[28] CMS G3 AL 1917–34: Miss D. M. Sands Annual Letter August 1929, Old Cairo.
[29] Wynne, Lea, 1935, p. 55.
[30] CMS ACC 124 F1/1: Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre, Old Cairo. Report 1931–1932, by Miss D. M. Sands.

أقتل الذباب وانقذ عينيك

Swat those flies and save your eyes!
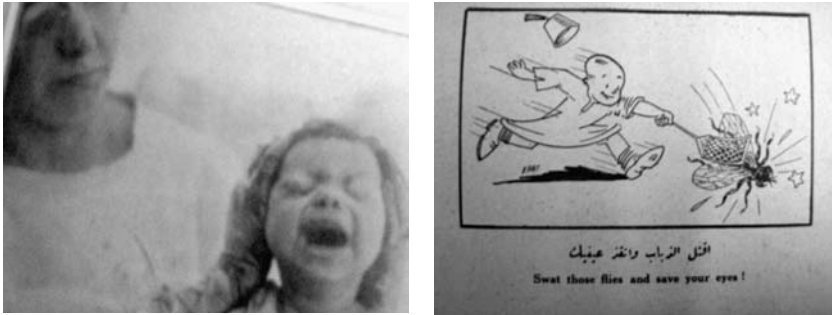
Figure 4. Eye washing was a necessary department and had its own room where the little faces were cleaned, flies removed, and lids soaked. Flies caused diseases that attacked eyes and ears, and it was a real threat to infant lives in the early twentieth century Cairo.[31]

In the case of undernourishment the welfare centre sold condensed milk, cod liver oil or Virol at a very cheap price, or gave it to mothers who had no money to spend at all. The welfare workers wrote about the joy they felt when one or two of the welfare babies were up to normal standard. Miss Liesching, the superintendent told about a mother who had really tried to follow the methods taught her at the welfare centre, and she said that her "pride in her fat, ugly baby was lovely to see. He was her first living child after seven years of married life."[32]

The welfare centre also had a room for talks, and every day there was a hygiene talk with instructions in mother-craft and infant welfare, and prevention of different diseases. They also had lectures once a week which dealt with the life of Christ, the care of children, cruelty to animals, scenes from other lands or showing of photographs of the mothers themselves and their children.

The women were taught needlework and elementary dress-making in yet another room, and they learnt how to dress their babies and infants after the newest European welfare ideas. They were taught to make mattresses, pillows and bedding and were given a piece of netting to make a mosquito net for their babies to keep off the flies. The mothers also learnt how to make their own cot for their babies, and this was brought home when finished to better the sleeping arrangements of their children, which were usually directly onto the mud floor.

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[31] AUC Rare Books Library and Archive: Division of Extension, Watson material. This material has not yet been catalogued, thus the incomplete reference.
[32] Lea, Wynne, 1935, p. 55.
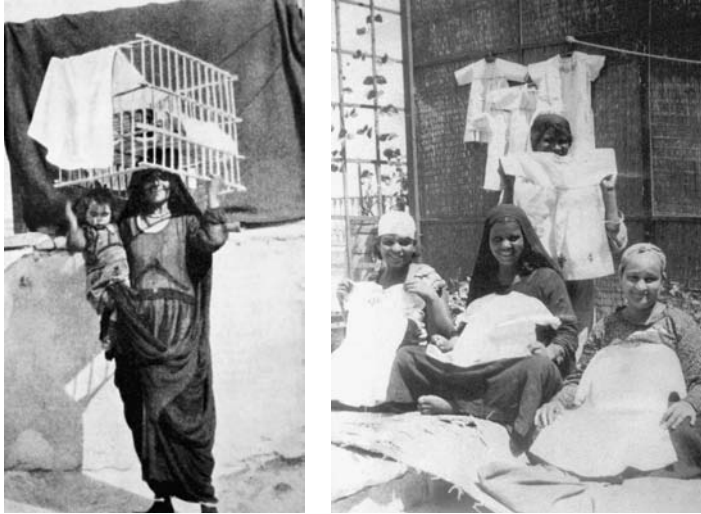
Figures 5 and 6. A problem was that the cot that was made from palm branches was similar to the crates which were used for taking chickens, fruit and vegetables to the market. To the right we see 4 Welfare Mothers showing the clothes they have made for their children.[33]

During the first years the welfare workers regularly found the family washing or the week's supply of bread reposing in the baby's cot, and the baby sleeping on the floor with his face covered with flies. After more than twenty years of work they noted that they nearly always found the baby in the cot, well covered with mosquito net.[34]

The welfare missionaries reported earlier results, as Mrs. Richmond said in 1929:

> After seven years of uphill work there is a marked improvement. The babes are cleaner and healthier, and even some homes are better kept; the work is well established, and the mothers feel that the welfare centre is theirs, and that they find friends who really care for the well-being of their children, and whose teaching, if followed does "build bonnie babies.[35]

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[33] CMS ACC 124 F1/1: Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre, Old Cairo. Report 1931–1932, by Miss D. M. Sands.

[34] Johnson, Edith P, 1946. Miss Johnson was superintendent at the Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre from 1937–ca. 1948.

[35] Richmond, Mrs Maurice, 1929.

Figure 7. A "bonny baby" posing on the roof of the Old Cairo
Welfare Centre in 1931.[36]

The women came to the welfare centre from the third month of preg-
nancy and were attending for at least two and a half years, but the
clinic was usually in contact with the mothers over a longer period
due to the large families. Some mothers were said to have attended the
welfare programs for over fifteen years, and Miss Johnson at the Old
Cairo Welfare Centre mentioned the Muslim mother called Fatma who
had attended regularly for eighteen years, and at that time her daughter
had also become a 'Welfare Mother.'[37]

Biomedicine and Healing of Souls

The mission medicine believed in both biomedicine and the healing of
souls through 'The Great Healer.'[38] The healing of souls was prioritized
before the healing of the body, and the evangelising aim was naturally
the foundation for the missionaries' work as stated in the society's
objects. The work in the clinics was thus merely one part of the welfare
work they conducted. Home-visiting was considered the bedrock of

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[36] CMS ACC 124 F1/1: Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre, Old Cairo. Report 1931–
1932, by Miss D. M. Sands.
[37] Johnson, Edith P. 1946.
[38] Vaughan, Megan, 1991, p. 60.

infant welfare work, as it was thought to give immense opportunities for 'sowing the seed of the Gospels,' and it was developed hand-in-hand with the clinics.

The traditional home-visiting, as they knew it from Britain, was a great step for the Egyptian mothers at first, who often gave false addresses when the missionaries asked to come and visit them in their homes. Many hours were wasted in searching narrow streets for addresses that didn't exist, but still, in Egypt as in other colonial settings, the missionaries considered themselves entitled to encounter and directly enter the private world of the women in their neighbourhood.[39] They were conscious of the barriers that faced them and used deliberate methods in their work to gain friendly relations with the women. At first they surveyed the neighbourhood and promiscuously attempted to visit and teach in some homes, so that they soon were able to judge by the women's responses, who were 'the really hungry ones.'[40]

CMS missionaries employed an official terminology about their work that linked it with rhetoric of the Gospels. The homes were their most important concern, as they had come to help the home-life find its *salvation* in all that the Christian Gospels could give. They wanted to share the burden of the women's motherhood on the road to fulfilling the *law of Christ.* The home visiting was thus reported as crucial in opening up great opportunities in getting close to the hearts of mothers. Debbie Gaitskell believes that this terminology highlights that missionaries' health projects actually were about a new spiritual approach to motherhood.[41] I think it also must be considered that most government and voluntary health and welfare work in Britain at the time can be characterised as inspired by spirituality and religiosity, and thus the missionary work reflected late Victorian convictions that female health visiting drew on a distinctive feminine gift for persuasive sympathy in personal relations.[42] The European health reforms of infant welfare were developed in a Christian society that still employed a terminology similar to the missionaries. I don't want to judge the mission welfare work by its official rhetoric in fear of missing exactly the social dimension of this particular branch of missionary work. If we read the missionaries' published sources in relation to sources not intended for

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[39] Allman, Jean, 1994.
[40] Liesching, Marjorie C., 1937, pp. 21–27.
[41] Gaitskell, Debbie, 1991, p. 194.
[42] Ibid., p. 194.

publication we may see that the dominating Gospel-rhetoric has lost space to a more pragmatic and realistic text. Instead of concluding that missionary social work was merely a proselytising method I believe it is significant to assess the missionary welfare work in practice, in addition to terminology and stated missionary objects, to better consider and characterise female missionaries' infant welfare work. The missionaries work in practice seemed to depend much on international health discourses and also on the actual encounter and interactions with the local women.[43] In addition the material reflects that the British women may have been driven as much by a professional medical motive as opposed to a simple motive of conversion.

The spiritual approach and priority in missionary welfare work does not contradict their principle role as modern health and social workers. Instead, their spirituality may be argued to underline their uniqueness compared to other health workers, a characterisation they did not hesitate to apply themselves. For instance they continuously emphasised that the CMS centres were *pioneers* in infant welfare in Egypt. It may be that behind this constant reminder lay a motive of positioning their medical venture in relation to the national efforts being made for the poor, as is natural in a process of professionalisation. In comparison with government centres and philanthropic agencies, which they praised for excellent results, the missionary women underlined that the missionary welfare work catered for the *whole* man, not only bodily and mental healing, but spiritual healing of the soul as well. They would therefore not be regarded as yet another philanthropic agency, but were proud to be in the vanguard of modern infant welfare work.[44] Still their resemblance with health initiatives in Britain is striking; the main purpose of voluntary and government institutions in their own country was to pass onto the mothers information about, a sense of responsibility towards, and pride in home and family through activities that included the same range as that offered in Cairo.[45]

The spiritual approach was of course constantly present in their welfare work, but usually there was little time for direct evangelisation as the welfare clinics were understaffed and the recipients demanded

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[43] Jean Allman found this evident in her case study in Asante, and the similarities with the CMS missionary women in Egypt and elsewhere must be underlined. See Allman 1994.

[44] Liesching, Marjorie C., 1937, p. 23.

[45] Lewis, Jane, 1980, chapter 3. See also Anna Davin, 1978.

their time entirely on daily routines and health talks. In the homes the missionaries claimed to have spent most of their time to teach the women to cook nutritious food and practice the examples of sanitation. The regular Bible talk in the centres was thus the red-letter day of the week, and Miss Liesching reported that many Egyptian Muslim and Christian women also marked this day and looked forward to the Scripture lessons.[46]

Reflections on the Encounter

Did, however, the Egyptian mothers actually involve themselves in the centres or did they merely seize the opportunity when someone attempted to cater for their neglected needs? Jean Allman studied Asante women and their encounter with missionaries' welfare work. She says that the missionaries stressed the teaching of a mothercraft that ultimately was bound up to 'making mothers.'[47] Allman found that the Asante women nevertheless were able to transform the welfare clinic by the way they *chose* to participate and to structure the encounter with the missionaries according to their particular needs in the community. This signals a kind of *strategic* engagement on the part of the mothers that I would attempt to compare with the CMS Egypt case. The British missionaries in Asante worked at the same time as the CMS women in Cairo, and it seems likely that the missionaries on the Gold Coast of Africa were as strongly influenced by contemporary international discourses on maternal and infant welfare as their colleagues in Egypt. How then did the Egyptian mothers respond to the agenda of 'making mothers' through preventive and instructional advice, and were there signs of mothers involving themselves in a way that actually shaped the welfare work in a direction urged by the mothers themselves?

At this preliminary stage I have only considered a few variables which might be relevant through which to explore these questions further. First, I find the mothers' attendance of importance, as it may at least tell us something about whether they found the clinic useful for their particular needs. Attendance may be assessed with regard to regularity, or lack of it in the actual number of mothers that came. Secondly,

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46 Liesching, 1937.
47 Allman, 1994.

being aware of essential source critical aspects, I still find it interesting to investigate how the missionaries gave voice to the mothers and the responses mothers gave about the welfare programs and their relationship with the missionaries. Thirdly, and lastly here, I think it is relevant for the encounter study to explore whether the missionaries transformed and developed their initial welfare program and philosophy as a result of interactions with the recipients and thus greater awareness of their needs, either expressed directly by the mothers, or interpreted by the British women from their observations.

The missionary records reveal that there were great initial problems with regularity in the mothers' attendance. The missionaries were indulgent with this lack of concern for time and continuous participation, but when the women were more acquainted with the missionaries and the welfare activities, they came in greater numbers, and occasionally the centres needed to limit the number of women in their books due to understaffing and accommodations. The Old Cairo clinic was reported in several missionary journals and medical missionary leaflets due to their excellent attendances, especially of Muslim mothers. Miss Scott-Moncrieff who was one of the 'founding mothers' of Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre reported that the record number of babies seen on one day was 150.[48] There were still problems with regularity in the 1930s, but nevertheless it was reported that the demand was greatly exceeding the supply, and the welfare workers were sorry to know that many women who wanted help were without it.[49]

It still seems likely that the official missionary documents bring mostly the positive sides of attendances to light, because there is less information concerning the times when mothers chose to stay away. In the annual letters of individual missionaries we do, however, find more balanced information. It seems apparent that international and national political contexts and debates at any time could influence the participation in the centres. In 1948 Miss Jane Evans at Bulaq welfare centre became a scapegoat, with the rest of the British residents, on the eve of the war in Palestine:

> When I left in late June the political situation was most unpleasant, and I found it was much simpler to wear a patterned dress when going down

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[48] See for instance Cook, Howard J., 1929.
[49] Wynne, Lea, 1935.

the Slum as the marks from the rotten tomatoes that were shied at me didn't show so much then. Twice I was hit violently with a stick and my watch nearly broke.[50]

She hesitated to come back, but then wrote: "One thing I am glad about is that the opposition in the Slum that was so unpleasant before I went home has entirely disappeared and all seem pleased to see us back again and I can be sure of a good morning and a smile in stead of a rotten tomato."[51]

Considering the fact that some mothers attended regularly for more than fifteen years, as we saw above, and others chose to avoid the centre completely at difficult times, suggests that the encounter between the missionaries and mothers was shaped as much by local factors as by contemporary political incidents. The actual content of the encounter may, however, have been created by the character of the encounter: the mothers' participation and the way the missionaries responded to them.

Heidi Gengenbach hits a most critical issue when she says that, of course, we can not know with absolute certainty what exactly the women did with their relationship with the European women in their private lives or in spheres of local public life to which the missionaries has no access.[52] The British missionaries' representations of the Egyptian mothers are nevertheless interesting, and it was particularly in their annual letters that they reflected and brought forth statements about the mothers' responses. The representations and voicing' of both mothers and children, and even fathers, make these documents worthy of note and study. The very rich and detailed descriptions and reflections of, for instance, Miss M. J. A. Rees-Mogg[53] are written in a diary genre where she shares incidents and thoughts of many aspects of the encounter. She wrote about customs, visits to villages and homes, results and responses, and she gave direct 'citations' of what both Muslim and Christian Egyptians 'told' her. Her stories are about both positive and negative aspects of responses, and of interest is for instance an incident where she mentions a mother that was testing and challenging her. Perhaps

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[50] CMS G3 AL: Annual Letter Evans, Miss J. Cairo, 1948.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Gengenbach, Heidi, 2002, p. 26.

[53] Mary Joyce Ann Rees-Mogg worked as a missionary for CMS Old Cairo Hospital and helped in the welfare work from 1924 to 1957. She worked extensively with visiting work in both homes and villages.

this episode signals that Miss Rees-Mogg saw the mothers as active and thinking participants with their own motivation and agendas:

> A woman held up her baby for me to see. Sometimes one has to be careful not to admire the children too much, because their mothers are afraid that the "evil eye" of courteousness may bring danger to their little ones. This time, however, I did take the child from her for a minute & his mother immediately said: "How I know that you meant what you said about love. I should not have believed you, if you had refused to hold my baby.[54]

The changing attitude toward the missionaries is also visible in this material, and the superintendent Miss D. M. Sands complained in 1932 about how the mothers came to the welfare centre just to take advantage of the benefits they could harvest from their attendance:

> They used to be quite content and listen to the instructions on the care of their babies, & go home, & do just what they had been used to doing! & so long as they received their annual gift of a little frock for their child, that was as far as they aspired.[55]

The attitudes developed in the meeting between British and Egyptian women, both from the missionaries and the mothers' point of view. Miss Liesching for instance proudly visited one of her older pupils that had attended the Girls' Club at the Bulaq Infant Welfare Centre after she had married and moved to Upper Egypt. She was astonished of the enthusiasm the girl showed about the missionary welfare programs:

> I think she must be the only one in her village who can read—certainly her husband cannot. She surprised me by her enthusiastic praises of the Club and what it taught her (it was not to me, but to her assembled relations that she suddenly burst forth about it all in the midst of my aforementioned visit to her) and her chief thanks, after describing in detail the useful household, hygiene, and baby craft knowledge it had given her, was that it filled her mind with good thoughts, to which she said she was constantly recurring in the lonely hours, and realizing now the value as she had never done so clearly at the time. She is very keen on teaching her fellow-wife (with two children) from her mothers craft manuals.[56]

I am of course well aware, as mentioned before, that we cannot actually know whether the missionary accounts were completely true, to which

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[54] CMS G3 AL: Miss M. J. A. Rees-Mogg, Old Cairo, 1926.
[55] CMS G3 AL 1932–3: Miss D. M. Sands, Old Cairo Infant Welfare Centre. She worked at the centre from 1927, but I have not been able to find her date of retirement.
[56] CMS G3 AL 1935–39. Annual letter, Miss M. C. Liesching, Bulaq, 1937.

degree selectivity of mentioned incidents occur in their documents or whether their interpretations of the Egyptian mothers' engagement were realistic. The recorded incidents and missionaries' narrative portraits of some of their recipients are nevertheless valuable in a study of *experiences* of both the missionaries themselves and the Egyptian mothers, especially because they show changes, both positive and negative experiences, and developments in both results, attitudes and interaction. The missionary women themselves also mention several times that they sought to observe and develop the welfare programs on the grounds of their observations of needs in the community in which they worked, and I believe that this makes the missionaries' annual letters most relevant in an encounter study.

The missionaries thus seem to have used the direct requests and their own interpretations of the mothers' responses and needs to develop the centres into new programs. It therefore seems likely that the mothers not only participated as passive pupils of mothercraft, but that their degree of participation, directly and indirectly, actually influenced and possibly transformed the missionary women' initiatives to include more and extended activities for the mothers and children. What kind of developments then did the mothers and children request and see implemented?

In Asante Jean Allman recorded that the mothers sought to transform the clinics into dispensaries giving more *treatment*, and not only health *preventive* services. The local mothers succeeded in Asante, and the clinics became more curative centres. The same strict philosophy and aim of doing preventive and instructive welfare work was rooted in the Cairo centres. The missionaries don't, however, resemble the Asante case in this as they were firm in their agenda of working under the slogan "Prevention is better than cure." The missionaries preventive welfare work did, however, expand into a social institution offering preventive and public health work on a larger scale with a manifold range of activities that included income generating self-help development projects.

The women of the Cairo slums thus influenced the welfare centres more in the daily running of the centre, as they explicitly demanded new services that originally were offered in the Girls' Club at the welfare centre. The little girls were offered an embroidery industry in 1934 to overcome what was believed to be the two great obstacles in the girls' future lives after marriage: boredom and poverty. They were taught eastern designs and when the quality of their handicraft was good

enough the items were sold. The money earned was shared by the girl and the centre. Soon after this new venture was started the missionaries reported that some of the poorest of the welfare mothers wanted to be taught the embroidery:

> Perhaps the most interesting development of all this has been that some of the poorest of the Welfare mothers begged to be taught the embroidery work too. Having learned it they have, through its means, been able to keep the wolf from the door during longer periods when their husbands have been out of work. We have taught some of them in their own homes, and they are benefiting by the mental and social uplift of the work as well as by the incentives to perfect craftsmanship. They are realizing that salutary feeling of self-respect which the exercise of even a small degree of earning power gives a woman.[57]

This income-generating project still exists for women of Bulaq, and in several of my interviews in the spring 2006, with present recipients of services of the Bulaq Social Centre, as it is called today, have I recorded similar narratives from Muslim women participating in this program: They emphasise the feeling of self-respect gained there, and that they are treated with respect by the Christian supervisors in a relationship where interaction and possibility of influence are underlined.

Several new activities were established for mothers, children, and even fathers during the first ten years of welfare work.[58] New programs like the Sunday School for Ragged Children, Kindergarten, and Girls' Club were established, and Miss Liesching even claimed that the Nursery Class they started, as the first one in Egypt, was at the suggestion of a little toddler.[59] This may of course be an exaggeration, but it is still valuable as it signals directly that the missionaries were open to suggestions and requests. It may also be likely that in light of the constant lack of funds in the welfare work, the new activities would have ended if the mothers and children didn't embrace these activities. The little children were given similar training at the Girls' Club as their mothers

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[57] CMS G3 AL: Annual Reports. Miss M. C. Liesching 1926–1939, see also "With Christ in a Cairo Slum", by one of the workers, undated. CMS Max Warren Collection, London and from the same collection: Liesching, M. C. and Morrison, S. A., 1934.

[58] The fathers are mentioned continuously, and in 1933 the missionaries organised a Welfare Exhibition for the Fathers of their Welfare Babies. "It is much needed & was greatly appreciated by the fathers themselves", said Miss D. M. Sands in her Annual Letter 1934–35 (CMS G3 AL SA-SE).

[59] CMS Max Warren Collection, London: Liesching, M. C. and Morrison, S. A. "Pioneering in a Cairo Slum", 1934, p. 13.

in the Baby Welfare, and this was regarded as inspiring from the missionaries' point of view, as the little girls were thought of as unusually quick compared to their mothers. The missionaries thus seized the new venture that was considered as very direct outcome of the Infant Welfare, as an opportunity for giving the young girls character training and instruction in mothercraft to prepare them for their future role as mothers. The services offered thus seemed to satisfy both missionaries and mothers in the encounter, and I want to propose that this may be seen as a result of a *dynamic dialogue* between missionary women and lower class mothers in which the giver and recipient perhaps engaged themselves for strategic purposes and motivations, although based on different strategies for different needs. The women's actions, both the missionaries and the mothers, in relation with each other, were thus possibly *strategic engagements* where the terms, aims and meanings were first of all gendered, but also negotiated and changed over time. Gengenbach claims that these kinds of interactions were far more complex than historians have portrayed them.[60]

Conclusion

Other factors need to be investigated, but at present I can, however, only suggest that the CMS Infant welfare work in Old Cairo and Bulaq seemed to be influenced by the missionaries' actions, the mothers' direct demands and observed needs, and also by the international and national contexts and discourses. The welfare work went from being a mother and child clinic, in which the missionaries struggled to have women attend and apply their instructions of a modernising maternity, into a social institution that included programs established in cooperation and to some extent based on mutual needs.

This essay is a product of my preliminary studies into this multi-faceted issue of the welfare givers' and receivers' encounter, and I am now attempting to follow in the footsteps of the missionaries by house-visiting present recipients and collecting their stories orally in Cairo. To enable a better understanding of their meeting I want to put myself in a position similar to that of the missionaries that came as strangers and foreigners and entered the private world of poor Egyptian women.

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[60] Gengenbach, 2002, p. 21.

Dialogue and interactions are my main interest, and I acknowledge the need to employ innovative methods and sources to render the urban poor women visible, and particularly to attempt to capture their diverse roles as active agents in the making of history. Women's modes of adjustment, coping strategies, negotiations and resistance will be central in my further approaches.

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INDEPENDENT WOMEN MISSIONARIES IN THE SCOTTISH SCHOOL IN JAFFA, 1918–1936: IDENTIFYING SUBALTERN NARRATIVES[1]

Michael Marten

The history of the Scottish Tabeetha School in Jaffa during the interwar years appears at first to be an interesting, though not necessarily very unusual, account of independent female missionary work being arrogated by male ecclesial power. However, the years to 1936 mark a very different story, one that relates much more to women's subalternity and emancipation in a patriarchal ecclesial structure, and from this perspective it can perhaps offer insights into how the transformation of gender and power relationships can be understood and interpreted.

Tabeetha School until the End of World War One

The Tabeetha school in Jaffa is mentioned by various other missionaries working in the region, but there is actually very little written about it as such. What there is, is minimal in content, and is often based on uncorroborated and uncertain sources. For example, Ruth Kark gives it just over half-a-page in her history of Jaffa,[2] whilst Julius Richter mentions it with one sentence, almost dismissing it as just one more of many 'Missiönchen'—a diminutive form of the German word for missions conveying a level of dismissiveness that defies appropriate translation

[2] Ruth Kark, *Jaffa. A City in Evolution. 1799–1917*, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, Jerusalem, 1990: 176.

into English.[3] A short book by a former headteacher commemorating the 120th anniversary is the most commonly available account, but does not appear to have utilised any great number of primary sources.[4] It is therefore worth giving a brief introduction to the school's history before proceeding to portray the post-World War One developments that are the focus of this essay.

The Tabeetha School came into the hands of the institutional churches as a result of a bequest by the founder, Jane Walker-Arnott; it is doubt-ful whether the churches would have wanted to have much to do with it had they been given more of a choice. As already mentioned, this episode can be seen as an independent institution run by women being incorporated into an ecclesiastical structure run by men, and in that context, an attempt will be made to identify the effect on quotidian life at the school and the emphases that changed over time. However, I will also seek to employ themes from postcolonial thought to offer a more nuanced reading.

The Founding of Tabeetha School[5]

Jane Walker-Arnott, born near Kinross in central Scotland in 1834, first lived in Jaffa from 1858–1860, working for a Church Missionary Society (CMS) couple. With the 1860 war she was forced to move to Cairo, returning in 1863, by invitation of German friends who had initiated a small hospital in Jaffa, to found Tabeetha School.[6] Starting with 14 pupils in rented accommodation on 16.3.1863 (moving to purpose-built accommodation on 1.11.1875),[7] the numbers gradually rose, of

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[3] Julius Richter, *Mission und Evangelisation im Orient*, C. Bertelsmann, Gütersloh, 2nd edition 1930: 183. Richter devotes most of his book to German and American missionary efforts. When comparing the first German 1908 edition with the English 1910 edition completed in the US/the second German 1930 edition, the increase in material about the Americans is noticeable—apparently influenced by his stay in the US. This helps to explain why he downplays and at times almost ignores the efforts of other missionary bodies.

[4] Isobel Goodwin, *May you live to be 120! The Story of Tabeetha School, Jaffa. 1863–1983*, Saint Andrew Press (on behalf of Friends of Tabeetha), Edinburgh, 2000.

[5] The early years and the process of transfer are described in more detail in Michael Marten, *Attempting to bring the gospel home. Scottish Missions to Palestine, 1839–1917*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2005: 109–113.

[6] The name derives from Acts 9:36–43.

[7] A document at Tabeetha School indicates that the land was purchased by Thomas Cook for £500 on 17.9.1874; the seller, George Henderson Gibb, had paid £100 for it

Christian, Jewish and Muslim pupils. Funding came mostly from private subscriptions, including prominent people such as Thomas Cook (her school was on his tour groups' itinerary, thereby no doubt increasing her support base), but also many ordinary people that Walker-Arnott recruited as supporters during visits to Britain; there was no formal church connection, though there was a 'Home Committee' to support the work from Scotland and raise funds.[8] Teaching was in Arabic, with some English for older girls, the emphasis being on 'domestic training to prepare the girls to make "good" marriages and on encouraging the more capable girls to train as teachers in their turn',[9] beyond this, of course, the purpose was 'first and foremost, to teach the scholars to read the Bible, and to show them the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord';[10] after 1891 all the suitable girls were 'bound by contract to teach for a certain time in return for the education they had received'.[11] In the 1890s, an Industrial Mission was started in connection with the school, focusing on lace work sold in Britain and America; by 1909, 500 people were working on this project.[12] The school's work at the turn of the century was described by two former pupils, Miriam Wahhab and Leah Wassermann:

> …there were only three classes in which pupils remained for three years. The youngest pupil was six and the oldest eighteen. English, Arabic, Mathematics and Geography were taught as well as Religious Knowledge. In the afternoons…the pupils did hand work and embroidery. Twice a week each class participated in musical drill and singing. On Friday evenings the pupils practised hymns for the Sunday service. On Saturdays many…painted. Twice a week they were taken for a long walk—their

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in 1856. The then headteacher at Tabeetha, Chris Mottershead, located a number of files for my perusal when I visited the school in May 2001. They were not archived or registered systematically and it is unclear whether copies exist elsewhere, though Mr Mottershead presumed not. I wish to record my thanks to him for his time and for granting access to the documents during a busy school day.

[8] R. D. Kernohan, *Scotland's* Life and Work, Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1979: 33.

[9] Goodwin: 32; Nancy Stockdale cites Walker-Arnott, writing in 1880, describing a pupil 'actively altering her home environment as a result of her mission education'; *Gender and Colonialism in Palestine 1800–1948: Encounters among English, Arab and Jewish Women*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of California Santa Barbara, 2000: 187.

[10] Church of Scotland, *Life and Work* (henceforth: CS-LW) 5.1912: 159.

[11] Goodwin: 38; Walker-Arnott wrote that 'All my teachers have been brought up and educated in my school—they live with me and are like my children'; CS-LW 5.1912: 159. Displaced from their own families, they were to be taught domesticity for their futures in the Scotswoman's school.

[12] Goodwin: 51.

only form of outdoor exercise. On special occasions they were allowed
to play games. Normally they had to prepare their lessons or knit their
stockings so there was not much time to play. Attendance at morning
and evening prayers was compulsory…Jews and Moslems attended as
well as Christians.[13]

Christmas and Walker-Arnott's birthday on 1 June were celebrated, the
former with games and singing, the latter by an excursion and picnic
to Sarona, now a part of Tel Aviv serving as the headquarters of the
Israeli army, then home to, amongst other things, a German mission
school.[14]

   Towards the end of Walker-Arnott's life, the school's roll decreased,
and Wahhab's impression of the school as a whole was of a 'somewhat
sombre institution'.[15] Walker-Arnott died on 21.5.1911, her funeral bring-
ing an estimated 3,000 Muslims, Jews and Christians together.

Walker-Arnott's Gift and the Churches' Response

The Church of Scotland (or Auld Kirk), as opposed to the Free (from
1900: United Free) Church of Scotland (or (United) Free Kirk),[16] had
no Palestine missions, although it operated Jewish mission stations in
Beirut and Alexandria, as well as in other locales in Central Europe
and the eastern Mediterranean. However, in a letter, Walker-Arnott
requested her Home Committee to continue the school,[17] and if they

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[13] Ibid.: 55; note the apparent absence of Hebrew (which the other main Scottish
mission in Galilee included in its curriculum), and the Friday evening activity proscribed
for children of all faiths—adherence to religious obligations such as the Sabbath were
clearly not important for the staff.

[14] Ibid.: 56; Frank Foerster, *Mission im Heiligen Land. Der Jerusalems-Verein zu
Berlin 1852–1945*, series: *Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen*, vol. 25, Gütersloher
Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh, 1991: 118.

[15] Goodwin: 56.

[16] A brief introduction regarding the differences between the Church of Scotland,
the Free Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland is warranted. In
1843 the Church of Scotland split, resulting in the Free Church of Scotland (or Free
Kirk) and the Church of Scotland (or Auld Kirk). In 1900 the Free Church united with
the United Presbyterians (another strand of the Presbyterian tradition from an earlier
ecclesial disagreement) to form the United Free Church, most of which rejoined the
established Church of Scotland in 1929; at this time, these traditions represented about
80% of Scottish Presbyterians. Details can be found in e.g. J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church
History of Scotland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960/The Hope Trust, Edinburgh,
1988, especially parts IV and V.

[17] Incorporating the school, two 'outside day-schools in the town and the Industrial
Department…with the lace workers'; Church of Scotland Jewish Mission Committee

felt they could not, to offer it in turn to the Auld Kirk, the United Free Kirk, and the CMS (who already had a mission in Jaffa and would therefore 'perhaps have no difficulty in carrying on the work').[18] The Home Committee sought Church of Scotland assistance in a lengthy letter within ten weeks of her death, although provisional arrangements to continue the work were made: since the school had no financial difficulties, it could continue for some time whilst the Church decided on its course of action.

The process of transferring the mission took several years, not least because the Auld Kirk could not envisage taking on additional work that would draw on their limited resources. They were keen, however, to find a way forward, primarily for classic geopious reasons, as indicated in a May 1912 article in the church's magazine, *Life and Work*, requesting support: declaring the offer to have 'the appearance of a sacred trust', they went on,

> Surely a mission in the Holy Land, offered to the Church in such touching circumstances, to benefit and bless the kinsmen of our Lord according to the flesh in "those holy fields" associated with Himself and the first days of His Church, will carry with it an irresistible appeal.[19]

The Auld Kirk was much keener on the Tabeetha Mission than the Free Kirk, but found itself unable to shoulder the sole financial responsibility for it; eventually, the two churches' Jewish Mission Committees (JMC) took on the school together: the latter agreed on 17.3.1914 to recommend proceeding with the joint operation to its General Assembly, appointing its representatives to a joint management committee on 19 May. However, the outbreak of war interrupted any progress that might have been made.

An article describing the new administrative arrangements[20] also mentions for the first time Walker-Arnott's successor, Madeline G. Stevens, appointed by the Home Committee soon after the founder's death, who had 'the advantage of close friendship with Miss Grierson' of

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minutes (henceforth: CS-JMC) 14.11.1911. The letter was later reproduced in a Church of Scotland General Assembly Report.

[18] Church of Scotland General Assembly: Jewish Mission Committee report (henceforth: CS-GA-JMC) 1912: 447.

[19] CS-LW 5.1912: 160.

[20] Consisting of a committee of 20, half to come from each church, with three from each church to be trustees of the property and funds, chaired by the convener of the Auld Kirk JMC Tabeetha sub-committee.

the school.[21] However, 'the latest phase of events in the near East'—Britain had entered the war on 4.8.1914, the Ottoman Empire on 29.10.1914—were, in striking understatement, 'most unfavourable to the conduct of Mission work': the 'abrogation of capitulations, involving the loss of consular protection' made the missionaries' position 'intolerable and insecure', and some had already left. Although not explained further, the 'conditions of life at Jaffa…are very serious':[22] all the staff left in mid-September and the American Consul in Jaffa saw to the mission's interests[23]—witness the converging of religious with political and imperial interests in discussing the Capitulations and the links to the American political establishment. However, financial support continued to be sought since there was an awareness that 'exceptional' costs would be likely once the school reopened after the war.[24]

Jaffa was bombed in November 1917 after the British occupied it, causing severe damage to the school's roof; internal furnishings had already suffered greatly. The buildings were used as British navy headquarters, before Stevens returned in June 1918, reopening the schools in October 1919. Two former local teachers had already returned, and 156 pupils (which rapidly reduced to 80–90, partly because other schools were opening), mostly girls, were being taught in the Ajameh school (an offshoot of the main Tabeetha institution in a Jaffa neighbourhood), with the main school reopened under Stevens' direction with 17 boarders and 33 day girls. Subjects covered were English, French, Arabic, Arithmetic, History, Geography and Scripture.[25]

It was to be seven years from Walker-Arnott's death before church participation in the work had any meaningful effect. That the school was able to continue for three years (until the war) under the direction of

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[21] CS-LW 11.1914: 352, also: CS-LW 7.1912: 223; Church of Scotland Women's Association for Jewish Missions minutes (henceforth: CS-WAJM) 23.2.1917 and 26.4.1917 etc. show Stevens being suggested for transfer to Alexandria.

[22] CS-LW 11.1914: 352.

[23] CS-LW 3.1915: 96.

[24] The plea for financial aid recurs in a later article in LW, which closes noting the geopious context of the Tabeetha mission: 'Jaffa is the "Joppa" of…Acts, where St. Peter raised to life the saintly woman from which this Mission takes its name, and where he was living when summoned to Caesarea by…Cornelius' (CS-LW 11.1915: 351)—it can be safely assumed that this sentence, which appears without further contextual explanation at the end of the article explaining the present administrative arrangements, was intended to elicit generous donations.

[25] Goodwin: 60–62.

the Home Committee and its new head is perhaps a mark of the stability and strength of the institution that Walker-Arnott had created.

Tabeetha School after World War One

After the War, Britain was granted control over Palestine through a League of Nations mandate.[26] In order to set the context for the Scots' engagement at Tabeetha School, it is worth briefly describing the educational work taking place in Palestine in the first years of the Mandate.

There is a great temptation amongst scholars of missionary work to focus on missionary schools as if they were the only meaningful educational institutions in the country. This was clearly not the case, neither in Ottoman times, nor under the British Mandate: Tabeetha was one school amongst many, including in Jaffa, which in the Mandate period, along with Nablus and Tulkarm, was noted for maintaining or revitalising Ottoman-era education committees which, although only consultative in nature under the Mandatory government, demonstrated a wider public interest in furthering the cause of a quality education amongst the population.[27] For an impression of the numerical context, it is worth noting that by 1921–2, after the initial expansion of the schooling system by the newly-appointed Mandate government,[28] there were 311 government-run Arab schools in Palestine, in addition to 312 non-government schools (42 Muslim, 139 Christian and 131 Jewish), catering for a total of 43, 137 children. In the wider educational context therefore, Tabeetha School represented one very small effort.

In 1921 Tabeetha school recorded 80–90 primary school pupils (mostly Greek Orthodox, with some Jews, Muslims and Protestants), and in the 8–16 age group, there were 15 Greek Orthodox, 8 Jews,

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[26] Numerous geo-political accounts of the Mandate are available, obviating a need to address this aspect here. Introductory texts include: William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Boulder/San Francisco/Oxford, 1994; Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, Longman, London/New York, 1991, 1996.

[27] Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine. A Study of Three Decades of British Administration*, Luzac, London, 1956: 176; the statistical data that follows is largely taken from Appendix C.

[28] The Mandate was assigned to Britain in April 1920, and Herbert Samuel became High Commissioner on 1.7.1920.

4 Protestants 'and the others [an indeterminate number] are Moslem, Armenian and Roman Catholic', with the boarding house having 15 Greek Orthodox, 3 Roman Catholic and 2 Jewish children.[29] The proportionate numbers are significant, bearing in mind that the school was under the control of *Jewish* Mission Committees.

As indicated above, the Auld Kirk's JMC had been reluctant to take on responsibility for the school for financial reasons. However, shortly after the beginning of the Mandate, the two JMCs, exclusively male committees answerable only to their churches' annual General Assemblies, found a way to abrogate responsibility for Tabeetha: they decided to pass it on to what had until then been a relatively insignificant committee of one of the churches: the Church of Scotland's Women's Association for Jewish Missions (WAJM). The 1922 United Free Church JMC report notes, somewhat laconically, that the proposal was approved because the Women's Association 'seems admirably fitted to carry out the purposes for which this Mission stands'.[30]

What was the Women's Association for Jewish Missions?

It started as a collection of associations based in Scottish urban centres, representing one of the few ways for Scottish women to support missionary work, since all the decision-making committees were male, whether ordained or lay. The first such Association (for foreign missions) was established in 1837 in Edinburgh when 22 women formed a committee (with male office-bearers) for raising funds, procuring information, forming further branches and securing the services of well qualified teachers for service in India; a Glasgow equivalent opened shortly afterwards.[31] Jewish missionary work attracted a similar interest, though for many years the Associations played a minimal role in the management of missions, concentrating primarily on promoting the work. Minutes and other records for these local associations appear to indicate that it

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[29] United Free Church of Scotland General Assembly: Jewish Mission Committee report (henceforth: UFC-GA-JMC) 1921: 21; in terms of the Christian population, the Orthodox represented the single largest grouping: Anthony O'Mahony, 'Palestinian-Arab Orthodox Christians: Religion, Politics and Church-State Relations in Jerusalem, c. 1908–1925', in *Chronos. Revue d'Histoire de l'Université de Balamand*, 2000, No. 3, 61–91: 69.

[30] UFC-GA-JMC 1922: 29.

[31] Lesley Orr Macdonald's excellent summary (chapter 3) of the role of women in foreign missions excludes Jewish mission committees and their women's associations, but they followed a similar pattern; *A Unique and Glorious Mission. Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830–1930*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 2000: esp. 113–115.

was only sometime after the various local associations united to form a national Women's Association that records of their meetings began to be kept together with those of the JMC itself. The WAJM was not a JMC sub-committee (reports were sent to the General Assembly directly), but neither was it appointed by the Assembly; therefore, unless explicitly devolved, in theory all decisions had to be ratified by the JMC; practically, this happened less and less frequently. By the 1920s, the WAJM was essentially running significant parts of mission stations—women teachers, nursing staff etc.—but because it was, nominally at least, still under the jurisdiction of the JMC, it nonetheless continued to be in a somewhat anomalous position institutionally.

The Women's Association for Jewish Mission operates the School

The proposal for the WAJM taking over the School appears to have come from the Association itself.[32] The JMC having discussed and approved the proposal, noted, in similar terms to the United Free Church Assembly, that 'it was in every way essentially a woman's Mission'.[33] The financial and legal aspects were discussed extensively, since at the time neither of the JMCs wanted any future responsibility for the mission, and whilst the WAJM had in the past taken on individuals employed by the JMC, they had never had responsibility for an entire mission station. Indeed, it is interesting to note that it is only from this time that records formally described the WAJM as a sub-committee of the JMC, thereby providing a clearer institutional framework.[34] Women now began attending the JMC as representatives of the Women's Association—previously this had been a wholly male preserve. The mission was transferred with effect from 1.3.1922.[35]

That summer, Madeline Stevens returned to Scotland and engaged in apparently lengthy discussions with the WAJM on 6.6.1922. Stevens emphasised the need for a fully-trained teacher to raise educational

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[32] Although the 1922 Church of Scotland General Assembly report of the JMC notes that the joint committee responsible for Tabeetha 'approached our Women's Association, who were known to be desirous of entering upon Mission-work in the Holy Land'; CS-GA-JMC 1922: 252–3.

[33] CS-JMC 20.12.1922.

[34] CS-JMC 30.5.1923. Note that this was not formally decided by the General Assembly at this time.

[35] CS-WAJM 2.3.1922.

standards—she was not qualified to teach, her job being to direct the overall work of the mission in her role as General Superintendent. It is not entirely clear who was teaching in the school at the time, but it is likely that staff were predominantly former pupils of the school, which would of necessity limit the level of education on offer. The Association appointed Lilian Bain as headteacher, to begin that autumn.[36] Immediate improvements to the premises were ordered.[37] Bain arrived on 7.11.1922 and set about changing the school's teaching, including gradually making English the language of instruction, and Stevens made efforts to enrol Jewish pupils, the minutes recording that 'there was a great demand among the rich Zionists of Jaffa for a first-class English education for their daughters, whom they were quite willing should receive religious instruction'. The Association encouraged her in this so as 'to make the most of such a valuable opportunity of reaching influential Jewish families'.[38] This reflects an attitude expressed by Scottish missionaries in Palestine in the past, e.g. an 1899 article in a church journal argued that 'the young men in the Jewish colonies' may offer the best hope for conversion, since they were secular and not bound by the religious commandments of the rabbis.[39] In Scotland, new publicity material was produced to generate further income for the institution.

Attempts to tap into wealthy Jewish families were clearly unsuccessful. Not only were there several non-Jewish schools in Jaffa in direct competition with Tabeetha, more significantly, the creation of the Herzliya Gymnasium provided a clear option for a good education for Jewish children.[40] Given this context, why should 'influential' Jews seek to send their children to a Scottish Christian school, when Jewish, Zionist, alternatives were opening up? Indeed, Bain and Stevens berate the problems of attracting richer Jews, complaining that only poorer Jews were sending children, causing financial problems for the school; they spent some considerable time wondering what to do about attracting

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[36] At the time Bain was working in Cairo for the Foreign Missions Committee of the church.

[37] CS-WAJM 28.6.1922 and 26.10.1922.

[38] CS-WAJM 26.10.1922.

[39] *Monthly and Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland* 1.4.1899: 90; the author was John Soutar. Women were not mentioned in such contexts: females were seen as religious actors, as evidenced by the women who were employed to relate to girls and women, but generally in much diminished roles: the unspoken assumption was that men would lead conversion processes.

[40] Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005: 73–75.

wealthier and more influential Jews. It was hoped that eventually the 'improvement' of the poorer children would attract the wealthier children, but an idea that Bain should go to Tel Aviv to offer English classes to Jewish girls was rejected on the grounds that (a) she would have no time for this, and (b) that it would cause direct conflict with a similar scheme being run by the long-term rivals of the Scottish churches, the London Jews Society (LJS).[41] Later, in fact, the LJS would invite the Scots to 'co-operate' in a project in Tel Aviv, but the Scots declined the invitation.[42] Of course, being part of a *Jewish* missionary effort, this interest in Jews is understandable, though the school continually attracted more Muslims and Christians than Jews. The demographics are noteworthy: in the Jaffa subdistrict in 1931, there were 65,478 Muslims, 69,789 Jews, and 9,921 Christians, with marginally more males than females in each case. Since in Palestine as a whole there were well over four times as many Muslims than Jews, and almost five times as many Muslims and Christians than Jews, the Jaffa subdistrict was clearly unusual, yet the school still had difficulty attracting Jews.[43]

The desire to attract the daughters of 'influential' Jews invites comment on the issue of class. This desire can be seen to fit a pattern that can be identified throughout the Scots' Palestine missions (and those of other organisations) over the previous century. As far as can be ascertained, the level of education and conduct once abroad (at the latest) points to a middle-class orientation for all members of the Scottish missionary staff in the region, men and women. Both the Auld Kirk and Free Kirk as a whole were of the middle-classes, particularly the leaders, and generally the churches had great difficulty in reaching out to the unskilled working-classes.[44] When reflecting on the difficulties

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[41] CS-WAJM 22.3.1923.

[42] Church of Scotland Women's Jewish Mission Committee (henceforth: CS-WJMC) 19.6.1934.

[43] No indication of age groups is recorded. The subdistrict covered an area considerably greater than the town of Jaffa, and included the 'Jewish' town of Tel Aviv. Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine. Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990: 76–77.

[44] Olive & Sydney Checkland, *Industry and Ethos. Scotland 1832–1914*, 2nd edition: Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1989: 75–6; Susan Thorne ('"The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain', in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper/Ann Laura Stoler, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1997, 238–262: esp. 246–248), shows how 'home missions' suffered in attention as foreign missions dominated the evangelical churches' mission agenda. Attempts to link enthusiasm for work with the working-classes

missionaries encountered in relating their gospel message to the people of the Levant in order to achieve conversions—who had such a very different culture and background to their own—one might reflect on the fact that had the missionaries stayed in Scotland, many of them would perhaps have had similar problems in trying to relate to the working-classes, whose background was largely alien to that of the churches' predominant culture. The general ease with which the Scottish churches connected to the upper-classes in society, whether in government or landed wealth, can be coherently construed as an indicator for the aspirations of the middle-class church: its attention focusing on 'upwards' rather than 'downwards' within Scottish society, aspiring to something that was perhaps within their reach and apparently more attractive to the majority within the churches than making common cause with the working-classes. The upper-classes would have had, to some extent, a similar educational background, and the (seeming) ability of the upper-classes to 'make things happen' would have appealed to missionaries and church leaders keen to spread support for their cause as widely as possible. It is interesting in this context to note the appeals to secular authority figures in furthering the aims of missionary work: 'We cannot ignore the affinity between colonization and the making of—or desire for—middle-class sensibilities', as Gikandi puts it, this being an era when the dominant European narrative, incorporating the rest of the world, defined itself in terms of 'modernity and bourgeois identity'.[45] Bain and Stevens can be seen in the context of this narrative, creating and being part of it.

Bain secured committee agreement for an assistant who would concentrate on teacher training, and a Christina Brownlee was appointed. However, she resigned two years later because she wanted to marry[46]—this will be returned to below. In March 1924 the committee approved the creation (or rather, re-creation, although it was seen as new) of a so-called 'industrial mission' based primarily on hand-work, i.e. textiles,

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to foreign missions were generally unsuccessful, with one Scot complaining that many in his own country were 'living in the ignorance of heathens' (quoted by Thorne, 247). This failure to engage with the lower-classes had serious consequences for the support base for overseas mission. Thorne draws useful lessons for seeing 'race' and 'class' as axes of identity from this scenario, pointing to their similarities and the symmetry here.

[45] Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness. Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996: 32.

[46] CS-WAJM 15.11.1923 and 19.5.1924; her plans to marry are recorded in: CS-WAJM 25.5.1926.

and a dress-maker, Bertha Stranbaar, was appointed (she was recommended by the Jerusalem & the East Mission).[47] Stevens and Bain also wrote a report to the JMC—no longer extant—about other mission work in Jaffa; as a result, the JMC created an evangelistic Jaffa mission, appointing a Mr Forrest. There was no direct link between his work and the School, but at various times premises etc. were shared, and he was regularly drawn on for advice regarding building work and the like.[48]

As with all missionary institutions, financial concerns were a real issue. Stevens and Bain regularly spent far more than the committee could generate in income, causing the committee serious headaches. This was partly because although they received a grant from the JMC and a 'Guarantee Fund' had paid for the first few years of WAJM operation of the mission, these latter funds were running out. Furthermore, the JMC was itself facing restrictions in funding, so that even if the WAJM had asked, there would have been no money forthcoming. One of the issues that increased cost was the boarding of pupils. Bain attended a meeting in July 1924 and argued that the demand in Palestine was for day, not boarding schools. Only 2 of the 14 boarders paid the full fee, and another 26 boarding places were unused. Clearly, maintaining the boarding facility was expensive, and the committee decided to accept no new boarders who did not pay the full fees for boarding and education; at this meeting Bain was also granted complete control over the school finances.[49] In October 1924 the budget for Tabeetha was considered, showing income of £689 14s 6d, whilst expenditure was almost 1½ times as high at £962 6s 8d.[50] This was clearly untenable,

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[47] CS-WAJM 19.3.1924 and subsequent minutes.

[48] CS-JMC 19.5.1924, 21.10.1924; for example CS-WAJM 13.10.1924 records Stevens arguing that the gardener could not be dispensed with despite the need to reduce costs, but a decision was left until Forrest could give his advice.

[49] CS-WAJM 29.7.1924; this meeting also records that Bain suggested converting an orange grove into a playground and recreation area, to include tennis courts, obviating the need for the expenditure on 'maintaining the water-wheel, mule, and a gardener'. The committee concurred, since it had been shown in the recent past that the grove could not be used commercially in any way. Interestingly, Goodwin notes that 'One of Lilian Bain's first decisions at Tabeetha was to cut down the orange grove at the back of the school…The committee in Edinburgh never forgave her and according to her youngest sister Florence relations between Lilian and the committee were always stormy…' (Goodwin: 63). There is no primary source material that would corroborate Bain's sister's assertion; the purpose in making this claim is unclear. Having myself seen the location of the former orange grove, it is hard to imagine what else might have been done with this area if the grove itself was not wanted.

[50] CS-WAJM 13.10.1924.

and in December 1924 it was decided to close the boarding school at Easter, dismiss some of the local staff, and concentrate exclusively on the day school. Stevens took the obvious next step and at the March 1925 meeting it was announced that she had resigned 'owing to the decision of the Committee to give up the…work in which she was engaged'; she planned to leave in July.[51] Consequently, Bain was appointed head-teacher and was therefore in sole charge of the mission, doing away with the somewhat anomalous dual control situation that had arisen due to Stevens' post-war connection to the school.[52] This move almost immediately improved the school's finances, and subsequent meetings show that more time could be spent on developing the school's work: in November 1926, it was reported that 8 new Jewish girls had joined the school, bringing the total to 21 (there is no mention of their socio-economic class).[53] However, property issues continued to be a concern,[54] with Forrest reporting various problems with neighbours encroaching on mission property.[55] At times, property costs arose out of government inspections, which highlighted unsanitary conditions or the need for physical repairs.[56]

The school continued to grow, despite these problems: the school year beginning in the autumn of 1927 showed an increase in the number of pupils, with a total of 139: 30 Jews and 35 Muslims (the remainder presumably Greek Orthodox, Latins etc.);[57] the following year this had risen to 160.[58] This was also a key moment in language terms: Bain sought permission to employ a Hebrew teacher because 'Hebrew is becoming the language of the Jews in Palestine' and the pupils and the three Scottish teachers would benefit from Hebrew lessons (it is worth noting that the Arabic-speaking staff were not to be included in the Hebrew classes).[59] In this context, it is interesting to note that some boarders were still accepted, though Bain justified each one, usually in terms of what they could offer the school: e.g. Mary, 'a deserving Jewish

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[51] CS-WAJM 19.3.1925.
[52] CS-WAJM 18.5.1925.
[53] CS-WAJM 18.11.1926.
[54] CS-WAJM 18.11.1926 devotes almost a whole page to building repairs of varying urgency.
[55] It was decided that 'a wall 6 feet high should be erected where necessary, and that the work be begun at once'; CS-WAJM 3.3.1927.
[56] For example CS-WAJM 19.11.1928, previous examples also exist.
[57] CS-WAJM 14.11.1927.
[58] CS-WAJM 19.11.1928.
[59] CS-WAJM 14.11.1927.

girl', was regarded as 'old enough to be useful'—presumably in some form of teaching or prefect-like duties;[60] there were not many boarders, however: in 1931 Bain records three.[61]

In terms of subject matter, preparation for the girls' future was seen as key to the way in which the school operated. In 1928 Bain reported that she had met the 'Director of Education'—presumably this is referring to the government department, though no details are given. The Association's committee records that they discussed,

> the desirability of doing more on the Domestic Science side of education, and [Bain] says: "I wonder if a lady could be found who would do our housekeeping and, in her spare time, give cookery and laundry lessons to some of our girls. The theoretical part–viz., physiology, hygiene–we can give ourselves as class lessons…Do you think it is a wild scheme?"[62]

The committee agreed to try and find a 'lady housekeeper', i.e. a Scottish woman who could teach Scottish understandings of domesticity and household practice. This is a key theme connected to Christina Brownlee that I will return to below.

The status of the WAJM arose in 1929, in discussions for the proposed union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church. Amalgamating the Associaton's work with that of the JMC was discussed and rejected, though representatives from each would now attend each meeting, with the WAJM becoming the Women's Jewish Mission Committee (WJMC). They related more formally to the General Assembly, reporting through the JMC but having a more clearly defined level of autonomy,[63] as the new committee's constitution put it:

> The Women's Jewish Mission shall be affiliated to, and carry on missionary work at Stations approved by the General Assembly's Jewish Mission Committee, through which its Annual Report, shall, after approval, be submitted to the General Assembly, but it shall have power to control, through its Central Committee, its own funds and work.[64]

In Palestine, the 1929 Scottish church union was not particularly important: there were serious riots in Jaffa resulting in virtually all the Jewish

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[60] CS-WAJM 19.11.1928; see also CS-WAJM 25.6.1929.
[61] CS-WJMC 17.11.1931.
[62] CS-WAJM 13.7.1928.
[63] CS-WAJM 23.1.1929.
[64] CS-WJMC Constitution and Bye-laws, reprinted at the beginning of the 1929–1932 volume of minutes.

girls leaving the school. By this time, the language of instruction had mostly become English, and Mathematics and some level of Science had been added. Hebrew and Arabic instruction for new Scottish staff remained an issue, with debates about provision in Jaffa, Jerusalem and Beirut.[65] For many subjects, Scottish staff were clearly preferred over Palestinians, but the committee's needs elsewhere sometimes led to staff being moved on within a few years.[66]

In 1931 there were 186–190 pupils (of which 30 were Jews),[67] but it turns out that not all of these were girls, as the Edinburgh committee had assumed. In fact, of 186, 72 were boys—almost 40%.[68] This caused considerable surprise, since the school had been 'sold' to supporters in Scotland as a girls' school with a handful of boys, rather than being almost a co-educational school. In the autumn, Bain explained that of the 81 boys in the school during the last term, 27 had been in the kindergarten, 48 in the junior school and 6 in the senior school; it was then decided that no boys over the age of 10 should be allowed to remain in the school.[69] Of course, this is a relatively small number in the higher classes: Tibawi notes that in 1930 there were two secondary classes with a total of 28 pupils, so the boy/girl proportions were more marked with the very young age groups, rather than secondary pupils.[70] Unfortunately I have come across no information detailing whether the boys had to attend the same classes as the girls, including domestic tasks and the like—one might assume this would not be the case, but there is no indication as to what they might have been doing instead. Some attempts to add to the school were rebuffed: a request in 1931 by a 'Protestant Armenian pastor in Jaffa' to enrol 20 fee-paying Armenian children, giving them one or two lessons a day in Armenian paid for by the church, was rejected on the grounds that the committee could not allow children to register *en masse*, nor would they allow an Armenian 'access to the classes'.[71] On the other hand, Bain pursued

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[65] E.g., CS-WJMC 18.2.1930.
[66] As for example with Jean B. Rosie, who many years later would become headteacher, but who initially went to Jaffa in 1931 before being moved on by the committee; CS-WJMC 16.6.1931, 21.7.1931, 20.10.1931 etc.
[67] CS-WJMC 15.12.1931.
[68] CS-WJMC 15.3.1932, 19.4.1932.
[69] CS-WJMC 18.10.1932.
[70] Abdul Latif Tibawi, 'English education for Palestine Arabs. Part Two: 1914–1930', in *Orient*, March 1982, 23/1, 106–121: 120.
[71] CS-WJMC 16.6.1931.

the creation of a kindergarten, and also for a while added French to the curriculum, although this latter did not last. In part this was due to a level of uncertainty introduced by a review initiated in 1932 and completed the following year of all the Jewish mission stations; this had arisen because it was questioned whether the way that the Church was prosecuting its mandate to engage in mission to Jews was actually being fulfilled appropriately.[72] This was not then pursued further.[73]

The End of the Women's Committee

The end of the women's separate control of Tabeetha School was in sight however—the amalgamation of the JMC and WJMC, discussed during church union in 1929 but then dismissed, returned as a topic in 1934. Initially, there were to have been 80 committee members, of which 20 would be women, but it was eventually agreed to increase this to 24.

With the 1936 General Assembly, the WJMC was closed down, with all its work being taken on by the JMC, which now had men and women in it almost as equal members (women could not be office bearers, and there were less women than men). The idea that a girls' school and female staff were best served by a women's committee was no longer in favour, and the work began to change. Boys were accepted more and more, and shortly after the creation of the State of Israel Tabeetha became formally co-educational, with approximately 350 pupils.

The Women's Associations started as simple communities of interest and motivation, and represented the only way ordinary women in Scotland could participate in the missionary work of their church, short of going abroad as missionaries themselves. The growth—in terms of size, influence and effectiveness—of the Association to a body that the male-dominated structures trusted to operate an entire mission is one way of looking at this story. The other, more cynical approach, would be to say that the JMCs were aware of the impending financial crisis about to face the school as the original Guarantee Fund expired, and they wanted nothing to do with it. Either way, there is something of the success of the mission and the administration of it that marks the way in which the WAJM redefined the expectations placed upon them, to

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[72] CS-WJMC 21.6.1932 and previous and subsequent minutes.
[73] In 1936 the baptism of a former pupil took place—apparently the first since at least the end of the war.

the extent that they could join the JMC in 1936 on, if not equal, then
certainly reasonably strong terms.

Conclusions: Subaltern Status and Power

In contrast to all the other Scottish missions to Jews in the Middle
East—which were operated by men—Tabeetha was for many years run
entirely by women, both before and after Walker-Arnott's death. During
this time, the WAJM took a number of significant, and at time perhaps
difficult decisions (such as the closure of the boarding school), but also
allowed a considerable freedom for the staff to act, as, for instance, the
surprise at Bain's incorporation of boys into the school indicates. Of
course, this does not preclude classical prejudices about the work they
were engaged in. Racism, orientalism, colonial perceptions of superior-
ity,[74] skewed geopious sentiment,[75] the almost complete absence of local
agency in the mission records[76]—all these and more feature. But a girls'

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[74] Making use of the powers offered by the Capitulatory agreements (and in Jaffa,
bemoaning when these no longer function) and turning to political authority whenever
it was deemed appropriate or necessary marks out this period of involvement of the
churches.

[75] All the Scottish missions resorted to geopious sentiment in their fundraising and
general propagation within their constituency in Scotland, but with Jaffa, it seems
particularly pronounced. Jaffa (Joppa) is not mentioned in the Old Testament or the
gospels, unlike Hebron or the Sea of Galilee. A likely reason for the increased emphasis
lies with the missions the Church of Scotland did not operate: although the JMC ran
missions in Beirut and Alexandria, it controlled none in Palestine, which made Jaffa
more attractive:

> The Committee anticipate much pleasure in conducting "the Tabeetha Mission" in
> conjunction with…the United Free Church…and feel gratified that it has been
> found possible to have a joint sphere of action in commending the Gospel…to
> Jews in the Holy Land. Such united work they believe will react in benefit to the
> Churches themselves, and in stimulus to the whole work of Jewish Missions.
> (CS-GA-JMC 1914: 406)

That the Churches should 'benefit' from conducting a mission in a particular geographic
space points to the significance of that space for the Church's self-defined narrative. The
United Free Church was markedly more reserved, in part, perhaps, because of doubts
about its ability to sustain the work financially, but also, almost certainly, because it
already had two missions in centres of great geopious significance: Hebron with its
Abrahamic link to the original foundational myth of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and
the Sea of Galilee with its connection to Jesus, representative of the foundational myth
of God's renewed involvement in human affairs. Compared to these, a connection with
a miraculous act of an apostle after Jesus' resurrection might seem somewhat lame.

[76] Of interest is also the almost complete absence of the local population in the
missionary accounts. Only if employed by the mission is there a remote possibility of
mention in the official records, and even then names are often omitted. During the
negotiations for the Jaffa mission, locals were neither consulted nor considered, and

school founded, operated, and directed by women could be expected to influence ideas about the model of womanhood that pupils might aspire to. Men were involved in background tasks such as building and garden maintenance, and occasionally the JMC's male missionary in Jaffa, Mr Forrest, would advise on construction or maintenance work. Generally, however, pupils would see a female headteacher, female Scottish teaching staff, female local teaching staff, and female domestic staff; when representatives from Scotland visited the school, they would also be female. Some of the girls went on to study after leaving school, but whether in the context of further study, employment or a return to domesticity, the creation of a school environment and administrative structure almost entirely dominated by women appears to send out a very different message to that of the Tiberias mission and its schools.

Role Models—Marriage and Family Life

However, this halcyon picture of a women's institution catering to girls and giving them new role models to aspire to is not, of course, quite as straightforward as it seems. This becomes clear when examining the situation of Christina Brownlee.

She was appointed early on in the WAJM's administration of the Tabeetha school, and there is no reason to assume that she was anything other than a good teacher and useful member of staff. However, in 1926 she intimated her resignation because she wanted to marry. The records do not indicate who her intended husband was, but (as would have been the case for e.g. a teacher in Scotland) requiring a female missionary to resign upon marriage was normal, as Macdonald explains: 'Those who succumbed to matrimony were automatically deemed to have resigned, though most married other missionaries and in fact continued their labours unpaid'.[77] As far as can be ascertained, however, Brownlee did not continue working in Tabeetha.

Aside from the tremendous waste in resources at losing someone simply because they wish to marry, the clear implication for the pupils

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hardly mentioned—mission is something that is done *to* them, rather than something in which they might *participate*, and so the decisions about *how* it might be done are not theirs to influence or formulate. Local agency in reaction to the missionaries' intrusion is ignored or not understood, turning Palestinians in the Scottish accounts into invisible recipients of missionary munificence. This attitude to the local population also points to the Scots' lack of awareness of any influence on themselves through their encounters.

[77] Macdonald: 114.

would have been the incompatibility of a career and marriage. Of course, this did not apply to male missionaries, but none of the female staff at Tabeetha were married with families—Macdonald again:

> it was expected that male missionaries would enjoy the companionship and support of marriage, [but] females were required to repay their expenses if they married within five years of appointment. Thus at an early stage, the principle was established that those who were to teach heathen women about the blessings and family ideals of Christianity were themselves to be single and childless.[78]

Education as a form of social work relates to gender not only in terms of what is taught, but also in terms of the lives of the practitioners—and clearly a mixed message was being communicated here. This is all the more interesting in that Brownlee's resignation came just as the women's labour movement in Scotland—generally regarded as being at the forefront of moves in Britain to obtain equality with men—was becoming much more engaged with employment issues, so the idea that in the workplace women might be treated in a similar way to men would not have needed to be an entirely strange one, even in the relative ideological backwater of the church and its overseas missions.[79] It needs to be remembered that this was a time of immense change in Britain in terms of gender politics: Nancy Astor had become the first female MP in 1920, and equality of pay and working conditions was a key campaigning issue for a number of women involved in politics in the early 1920s.[80]

Gender and the School

What, then, does gender mean in this context? Does it mean that the combination of educational work and demonstrative living at Tabeetha, when viewed from a gendered perspective, simply reinforced patriarchal norms? Whilst this portrayal undoubtedly includes elements of truth, it can hardly be said to be a complete picture: although the incompatibility of work and family was clearly demonstrated by the lives of the

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[78] Macdonald: 114.
[79] Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women. A History of Women in Britain and the United States*, Penguin Books, London, 1997, 1999: 182. For an overview of work relations in the 1920s, see 128–132.
[80] Rowbotham: 120–132.

Scottish women, there was also a strong element of empowerment and self-determination apparent: after all, until 1936 these women ran one of only six independent British schools in Palestine for Arab children.[81]

It might be more helpful to reflect on some of the conflicting themes that arise in this episode using elements of post-colonial discourse. Understanding the influence of the WAJM prior to taking on Tabeetha as representing a form of the subaltern—i.e. being those who are subordinated by hegemonic structures and excluded from these structures in the power regime—provides a fresh angle on the Tabeetha School. Prior to the period under consideration here, the WAJM could speak in the context of power if that is understood to be the church's General Assembly, but since their decisions were, theoretically, at least, subject to ratification by the male-dominated JMC, they had no real power to dissent from the hegemonic discourse established by the men involved. Therefore speaking in this context had relatively little meaning—until the Association took over Tabeetha.

Acquiring control of the school meant that the hegemonic discourse of the male-dominated JMC was, if not quite broken, at least substantially diminished in this particular area, and the status of the WAJM could be seen as moving from that of a kind of subaltern, to more of an independent, even an emancipated, liberated voice, albeit within the limiting context of a male-dominated patriarchal structure.[82]

But, comfortable and laudable though this reading is, perhaps at first sight even appearing to lend itself to a perspective of universalisation, it is, of course, Euro-centred and completely ignores the pupils' experience. Indeed, in terms of the pupils it could be argued that the incongruence of the women's teaching for domesticity, marriage and motherhood actually led to a furthering of patriarchy, rather than its subversion, perhaps even adding elements of Scottish patriarchal norms to existing Palestinian patriarchal norms. Although this question invites further analysis, it is clear that the girls were invited to aspire towards a Scottish interpretation of an idealised domestic existence as wives and mothers by women who at the time they were communicating these

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[81] Tibawi, 1982: 112.
[82] The basis for this thinking derives from Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nation and Its Women', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986–1995*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997/2000, 240–262.

values were neither of these things:[83] the girls' teachers, their primary modern European role-models, in pursuing independence within their church, *thereby* denied the very model of family life and domesticity that they were teaching their pupils.

In conclusion, however, although it can be argued that this rather damning assessment is in large part sustainable, it presumes complete agency on the part of the Scottish women, and despite elements of freedom within the churches' institutional structures, these women clearly did not have complete agency. Theirs was only a relative freedom: they were part of a patriarchal hegemonic discourse from which they could not escape. This manifested itself on various levels, including, for example, rules governing employment that had been created by men that the Association could not ignore (such as determining the incompatibility of marriage and employment for women). On another level, attitudes and understandings need to be considered: because of the entrenched patriarchal norms at the core of western Christianity and society, it is perhaps unsurprising that e.g. the gradual changes in labour legislation in wider British society took a very long time to percolate through to the institutional churches. Power in the hands of the WAJM was, then, limited power, in the same way that liberation, and the escape from subaltern status, was limited, resulting in the Palestinian pupils' position as subalterns in relation to the western missionary women remaining unchanged, or perhaps even being entrenched.[84]

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[83] British mandate government saw Palestinian Arab women as primarily fulfilling motherhood roles: Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "new" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement 1920–1948*, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2003: 32.

[84] Of course, this does not invalidate Fleischmann's claim that Palestinian women valued such education very highly, and that it played a key role in the nationalist struggle, but that is another topic; Fleischmann, 42.

WELFARE AND MODERNITY
THREE CONCEPTS FOR THE 'ADVANCED WOMAN'

Susanne Dahlgren

On June 13, 1959, a few days before the Muslim holiday ʿīd al-adhā, an advertisement appeared in the Adeni newspaper Fatāt al-Gazīrah:

> (For men and women together)
> For you, O gentleman, who want to seize the heart of your wife, appease her with fine fabrics and expensive clothes.
> And for you, O lady, who want to appear in front of your husband and your female friends adorned in a fine selection of clothes.
>
> *Depositor Gibrān*
> *Owner of Gibrān and Bros.*
> *Near Abān Mosque, Aden*[1]

The advertisement was placed on the pages especially devoted to the newspaper's female readers entitled "Our beautiful half!" (*Nisfnā al-halwa!*). These pages covered issues ranging from news on women's charity work to housekeeping tips of German housewives and Washington's First Lady's cooking recipes. Important were also educational articles on the benefits of a modern refrigerator and household sanitation and hygiene. The pages created an image of the modern housewife, devoted to keeping her house in order with the help of the latest household technologies. In the newspaper add, the woman who wants to "appear" "adorned" in fine cloths is the emblem of modernity. She is no more the mistress of the house (*sayidat al-manzīl*), who tirelessly from morning till late evening ensures that everything is in order in her house and that her husband and children get the service and care they need, and in this role remains invisible. Modernity brings her out of her house to appear in front of her female friends, too, as an actor in parties and gatherings where lavishness and decorum are celebrated.

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[1] Fatāt al-Gazīrah newspaper, issue no. 1048 on Saturday June 13, 1959, translated by sd. In colloquial Adeni g [gazīra] is pronounced as in the English word good. The British considered the newspaper as 'pro-government'.

In this Chapter I will focus on welfare and charitable work carried out in the name of three mutually different political rules that have prevailed in the Yemeni town Aden during the past fifty years. I will start by looking at the nature of such welfare projects and their respective discourses on the promised woman. I will look at how the female body becomes the target of 'advancement' and a symbol of the benefits of the particular agenda. Within these discourses, the female body rises as a symbol of advancement and marks the distinction into other, competing discourses. While the forms of work and attachment to modernisation differ, what is common to these three discourses is the placing of the woman at their focal centre. They also share the fact that the targeted 'needy' do not necessarily share the need for such improvement. Thus it is a question of the female body serving other, perhaps larger societal purposes. I will then discuss these findings in the light of Gramscian ideas of civil society in order to see what kind of civil society each social order allows and promotes. This will also indicate the limits set for women as distinct from men during the three political regimes.

Fifty Years of History in Brief

Aden, the British colony (1839–1967), the capital city of the only Marxist regime in the Arab World (1967–1990) and today, the "economic capital" and "winter capital" of the unified Yemen Republic has during the past fifty years been the platform for different missions of modernisation. As I discuss elsewhere, independence and the coming of a leftist regime did not make for a radical break with modernisation in Aden, but rather changed the colour of it.[2] While during the British period women had little contact with the Europeans and gained in modest numbers the benefits of education, labour possibilities and health care, which fully benefited the local male elite, after independence women at large became a target of such resources. Thus after independence the number of women participating in all fields of life expanded rapidly and brought women to posts and positions earlier occupied mainly by expatriate men.

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[2] The new rulers kept the British systems of administration and management while expanding the scope of people who could benefit from advancement that came with modernisation. I have discussed this in detail in Dahlgren 2004.

After World War Two, and with the increasing number of British service personnel's wives entering the colony, clubs and societies started to spring up and invite women 'in purdah'[3] to participate in life outside the home.[4] As part of the expansion of colonial administration and following the rapidly growing labour market of the colony, attracting labour from as far as the Aden Protectorates, the Kingdom of Yemen, the African coast and British India, organising social welfare services now became a task for the government, too. In 1950 the Crown established the Social Welfare Advisory Council and nominated "a number of interested citizens of Aden and some Government officials" to it.[5] Among these interested citizens were prominent members of the British community such as the wife of the colonial Chief Secretary, a medical doctor the British relied on in sorting out difficult social problems, and representatives of different Christian congregations. Among the local representatives in the committee were leaders of various 'ethnic' communities such as the head of the Moslem Association (as a representative of the Indian-Muslim Sunni community), a prominent lawyer and patron of a merchant family representing a small Shiʿa community, a Hindu lawyer as well as the head of the Jewish community. Among the social issues the committee was involved in solving were housing shortages (many of the immigrant labourers slept in the streets, allegedly causing hygiene problems), labour welfare issues, prison conditions, beggars, prostitution, child immigrants, juvenile delinquency, care for the blind, as well as running services such as free milk schemes in schools.

There is a clear gender difference in the ways women and men were in contact with the modernisation that came with the British. Even though the British were careful not to irritate local people in matters they considered to belong to 'custom and religion', the presence of a European power with lifestyles different from the local ones paved the way to alternative models for sex/gender relations. Still, British influence was seldom direct. As the British presence was military in nature it brought to the colony mainly single servicemen. Typically, prostitution flourished throughout the colonial era. Large residential areas in the districts of

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[3] During the colonial era, sexual segregation and women's seclusion was referred to by the word '*purdah*' (locally pronounced *burda*), common in British India.

[4] IOR files R/20/B/2810 and R/20/B/2813 and Ingrams (1970).

[5] Report on Social Conditions and Welfare Services in Aden 1951, written by the Assistant Welfare Officer Mohsin H. Khalifa (Khalifa 1951).

Maʿalla and Shaykh ʿUthmān were reserved for public prostitution, officially called Prostitutes' lines.[6] After independence the government closed these areas and employed public prostitutes in factory work, in particular at the recently established Tomato Can Factory. Prostitution centred now in restaurants and nightclubs and developed also in the form of direct contacts between customers and sex providers.

Wives of service personnel began to arrive in Aden in large numbers only after the 1950s, when the British military presence was expanded and a new oil refinery added to British interests in the area. Aden was by now the second busiest port in the world. Large housing projects in the peninsula and mainland brought family housing to the British service personnel. The British wives lived a secluded life in their own community and seldom encountered local women.[7] By the early 1950s, British ladies introduced societies and clubs in Aden and attracted local women to join hospital visits and bandage-making parties.

The 'Emancipated Woman' with Make-up

Due to fear of communal riots as experienced in British India, the British were uninterested in transforming women's living conditions. In the 1950s and 1960s, welfare work and charities had a central role in colonial attempts to 'improve' conditions prevailing in local homes. At the beginning, initiators of such activities had to be careful when attracting women to 'bandage parties' as it was not common for non-elite women to move outside the normal network of visiting family, neighbours and female friends. As Doreen Ingrams and June Knox-Mawer, two colonial wives who have critically reviewed their lives in Aden recall, the most 'emancipated' women came from the Parsi trading families, and from among different Indian[8] communities. As Ingrams elaborates,

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[6] The colonial administration kept lists of prostitutes, classifying each working woman according to her 'ethnic' background. The main classification involved a division between 'public' and 'private' prostitutes (IOR R/20/A/1284, 1285, 1375, 2212 and 2213 and R/20/B/990 and 991).

[7] Ingrams 1970, 125, Knox-Mawer 1961.

[8] Indians came to Aden in the thousands as part of the British-Indian governments overseas recruitment programme to occupy lower administrative positions, and as traders benefiting from Aden's busy market. Most Indians were Hanafīs or Hindus, with a small number of Isma'ilīs, Buhras and Twelvers. Parsis were Zoroastrians originally from Iran but settled in India from where they moved to Aden for business.

Most emancipated women were those in Hasanali family, cousins of Jaffers and, like them, of Persian origin. One of them in particular, Nebia, a forthright young woman with a mind of her own, pioneered Arab[9] women's participation in social work. She joined various welfare committees and together with Rahima Jaffer and her sisters helped me to get together sewing parties to make bandages. (Ingrams 1970, 126)

The purpose of these welfare activities was to bring women into "*more active participation in the community*", as Ingrams puts it. Still this was uphill work as "*few men would allow their womenfolk such emancipation as joining a club*" (ibid.). Further, 'emancipation' to the British meant removing the veil and using Western make-up, such as Nabiha, "*the first Arab woman in Aden to come out of purdah*" and who "*always wore the latest European fashions and make-up*" (Knox-Mawer 1961, 85). As women like Nabiha were few, the European ladies had to settle for recruiting women into more modest pursuits to start with. Such endeavours included visits to hospitals and to the blind, sewing baby-clothes for the mother-and-child clinics, running free milk centres for expectant mothers and their children and organising clubs "*to encourage Arab and English women to meet socially*" (ibid. 32). These clubs included those having a variety of causes.

In the 1950s, Aden was the ideal place for clubs and societies of all kinds, mostly reserved for men only and based on communal, tribal, or religious affiliation. Literary, political and religious sympathies brought men together, too, as well as sports activities, occupational affinities or communal welfare projects. Clubs and societies devoted to women had in common the understanding that because women were, due to purdah, confined to the home where they lacked educational opportunities and "intellectual stimuli", they should be drawn out in order to participate in activities meant "for their own good" and for the benefit of the needy elements of society. Activities organised for women in these clubs and societies centred on teaching useful skills in home management and in providing chances to get a job outside the home within the fields reserved for women. During the late colonial era, such fields included clerical, nursing and manufacturing jobs, as well as welfare activities. Among the things women learned were Scottish dancing and Swedish drill, as Knox-Mawer ironically recalls (ibid. 121). In contrast to men's

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[9] The British tended to call Adeni people 'Arabs' regardless of whether or not the person actually was an Arab, to distinguish them from 'Yemenis', that is, people originating from the Kingdom of Yemen.

clubs, these societies tended to have an 'all race' membership, as the British put it, but in practice they attracted women from communities where observing the purdah was unheard of or less strict, such as among Europeans, a section of the Jews, Parsis, Hindus, Khojas (Ismaʾilīs) and Buhras, and, socially, among the wealthier strata at large.

Most of the names of these clubs and societies indicate the nature of the respective activities: Aden Women's Voluntary Services (established in 1950 by the Governor's wife Lady Champion), Aden Ladies' Child Welfare Committee, The League of Good Fellowship (started in the early 1960s by Sister Francesca of the Crater Catholic Convent), Women's Corona Society (which organised social gatherings for the wives of civil servants), Aden Girl Guides Association, Government Guards' Family Association, Aden Protectorate Wives' Club, Hospital Visiting Committee and Boys' Clubs (with branches in all main districts of the town).[10] Most of these societies and clubs met in the Besse Women's Education Centre, established by Antonin Besse, a leading businessman who contributed to the promotion of education in the colony. Later on, the Besse Centre was run by the Government Education Department.[11]

After closing the British Council in 1951, the British opened a club for women called the Aden Women's Club. The club was at the beginning led by Mrs. W. A. C. Goode, the wife of the colonial Chief Secretary. Its activities included instruction in Arabic and English, dressmaking, embroidery, 'simple home nursing', child welfare and modern cooking.[12] Here welfare work was secondary to the attempt to draw women out from purdah.

Becoming a 'Useful Component of Society'

By the end of the 1950s, the Aden Women's Club had been radicalised, and changed the British leadership into a local one. It also took a new name, the Arab Women's Club, to reflect its reformed aims. In its fight for women's education, the club occasionally collided with the colonial

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[10] *Aden, Reports for the years 1957 and 1958*, 52, *Aden Colony, Department of Labour and Welfare* 1954, 28, *Welcome to Aden* 1963, 114–115.

[11] *Aden Colony, Department of Labour and Welfare* 1954, 25, Parfitt 1996, 168, *Welcome to Aden* 1963, 115.

[12] *Aden Colony, Department of Labour and Welfare* 1954, 29.

authorities and the government kept a keen eye on its activities. In 1962 the Aden Recorder, an English-language newspaper, reported how "Aden's Suffragette Demands Rights". In the article Mahiya Nagīb, Aden's first female editor of the women's monthly magazine Fatāt Shamsān[13] was reported to have

> criticised the pace of progress in the field of women's education in Aden, and demanded, as a matter of urgency, the immediate attention of the Government to this aspect. She said that had the Adeni woman been given appropriate attention earlier in the field of education she would have been by now a very useful component of society.[14]

By 1960, the Club and its rivalling Aden Women's Association each had 300 members.[15] These two societies formed the basis for establishing the first nationwide women's association, the General Union of Yemeni Women, in 1968, a year after independence. The above quote by Mahiya Nagīb illustrates well the agenda that came to pattern the new government's policies with regard to women. The new regime relied on symbols linked to Islamic, Arab nationalist and 'modern' discourses in its building up of a new nation, eradicating "*priestly, feudal, bourgeoisie and colonial ideologies*", as the documents of the first General Congress of the Women's Union put it.[16]

Building up a nation state after independence cannot be described as a radical break with the former colonial rule. The modernising project that the new rulers engaged in after independence was to a large extent a continuation of what the British had started. In contrast to the colonial era, the scope of people benefiting from modern reforms was enlarged. Earlier neglected groups were now given a chance, in particular non-elite women and low social strata persons such as members of the local 'pariah class', the *akhdām*.[17] I would argue that

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[13] "The Maiden of Mount Shamsan".

[14] *Aden Recorder* no. 381 (7.1.1962), IOR/20/2813 (Arab Women's Club).

[15] Government of Aden, Memorandum (20.5.1960), in IOR/20/2813 (Arab Women's Club).

[16] *Documents of the General Union of Yemeni Women* 1977, 10. In political rhetoric, the social and economic system that prevailed during the colonial period in the countryside areas outside Aden was called 'feudal' (*iqtaʾ*).

[17] Akhdām (literally 'servants') are a dark-skinned group of people whom the rest of society considers to form a social category with whom they would never share a meal. These people are believed to originate from the cruel Abyssinian invaders of the 6th century AD.

modernisation was here given a new content and literally a new colour rather than causing a break with the past. The administration continued to be organised according to the English administrative system now run by new hands. As I mentioned earlier, the British had been reluctant to introduce changes to matters considered to belong to 'custom and religion', echoing the policies carried out in British India. Among issues that they considered belonging to 'custom and religion' were the women's question and the family.

After a more radical leadership came to power following the so-called Corrective Move in 1969, transforming the family became a government matter. This policy included freeing the woman from "the oppression and subjugation of colonialism and feudalism (and from her) subjugation to the fathers, brothers and husbands", as it was described in the Women's Union documents.[18] Here it was maintained that both society at large and the family were responsible for women's oppression. Their economic independence from men was explained to be the primary condition for emancipation. This could be seen as a critique of the earlier prevailing family ideal that established a relationship of provider/dependent between a man and a woman in marriage. The new discourse was officially called 'women's emancipation' (*tahrīr al-marʾa*) and 'the new Yemeni woman' (*al-marʾa al-gadīda*).[19]

The new regime set out to create educational and job opportunities for women. This was in the beginning not a difficult task considering the labour shortage that the withdrawal of the colonial power had created. As Molyneux suggested, this linked the politics of women's emancipation to the gender equality ideology typical of the 'socialist modernisation' politics of countries such as the GDR, USSR, and Cuba.[20] However, the new policies cannot be seen only against this background. The foundation for the changes was already laid during the colonial period, when there were no links to the above regimes. As Abu-Amr described the early years of the PDRY, the policies were based on the need to put forward political, social and economic transformations to undermine the old

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[18] *Documents of the General Union of Yemeni Women* 1977, 10–11. The draft analysis, discussed in the women's congress, was written by Salem Bukair, at that time lecturer and later Rector at Aden University, and member of the politburo of the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party.

[19] This is naturally an echo of the discussions on the role of women in society in early 20th century Egypt (see Badran 1993 and Al-Ali 2000).

[20] Molyneux 1991, 267.

"social class" composition of society.[21] An important part of this new policy was to 'improve' women also by means of social work.

The Women's Union was given a central role in carrying out projects that would engage women earlier untouched by government services such as education and modern, WHO-standard health care. Acting as the only legitimate women's forum and in close supervision by the ruling Socialist party, the Union, however, adapted its activities according to the prevailing conditions that seldom reflected the idealised notions of the party propaganda. The conditions in which women lived varied greatly throughout the vast countryside, and in different parts of Aden women's clubs faced very different challenges. While the club in Crater, the eldest part of the town and mostly populated by old and settled Adeni families, could attract housewives to join pattern sewing or later on, computer classes, the women's club in the overpopulated northern suburb of al-Mansūrah faced more complex challenges.

This club was during the 1980s headed by a highly respected woman named Falastīn, who had a good knowledge of the range of social problems people living in the area faced. Her method was to interview every woman who entered the classes for the first time to find out about the woman's family background, problems and personal aspirations. This way she engaged in helping the women personally with problems varying from intra-family property disputes, violent or sexually unsatisfying husbands, domestic quarrels, and finding a husband, to lack of housing or sanitation. When visiting the club I could see how much appreciated such assistance was. Alongside the usual classes where skills useful in finding a job were taught, such as machine sewing, typing and literacy, were classes on health and hygiene, childcare, health education and legal questions. These classes were meant to instruct women 'on their rights' as well to 'advance' the woman, a task that now had a different content from that which prevailed in the colonial era.

The 'Advanced Woman'

The 'new Yemeni woman' as outlined in Women's Union and government documents was explained as being the 'sister' who 'took her place

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[21] Abu-Amr 1986, 197–198. For a critical discussion on Abu-Amr's notion of social class, se Dahlgren 2004, 60–61.

alongside her brother' in 'building up the society'. The use of kinship terms metaphorically in drafting the women's role in society is nothing new. Here its purpose was to instruct men to treat every woman 'like his sister', i.e. respectably, and this way fight misogynist language and idioms in men's talk. The idea was also to facilitate a woman's movement outside her home without a *mahram* (male member of kin, or husband, who acts as the woman's guardian).[22]

What did 'advancement' mean in actual terms? When I enquired about this among women I met in Aden, advancement meant the benefits that they considered the revolution had brought. These centred on access to education, the possibility of getting work outside the home and the chance to choose one's husband. For highly educated women, relevant was the opportunity for a professional career. Among men I met, the expression 'new Yemeni woman' tended to appear as a metaphor for the occurring changes with respect to the women's situation during the PDRY. Many spoke with pride about the advancement that the society had made. Still, some women thought that while women gained more opportunities to 'improve themselves' the men had not 'learned new ideas'.

Alongside participant observation, I carried out a small survey around the town asking about matters related to the household, women's labour participation and views on social changes.[23] In the survey were families whose second generation had managed to break the chain of unfavourable social origin and its social implications. These women had improved their social position either through marriage or by gaining on education and developing a professional career. In one such family, a man who had worked as a 'coolie' (porter, *hammāl*) in the port and his wife who was a school sweeper had an accountant (*muhāsib*) as their son-in-law. This marriage was contracted in the 1970s by two families who originally came from the countryside. In another case, the daughter of a factory worker (father) and a carpenter (mother) had completed a university degree and advanced to the position of section chief in a ministry. Her husband, whom she met in the university, was an architect also working for a ministry.

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[22] E.g. Speech by the country's second president Salim Rubaya Ali at the first congress of Yemeni women, in *Documents of the General Union of Yemeni Women* 1977, 4.

[23] The survey consisted of 310 female respondents out of whom 57 were women at home (housewives, unemployed, retired and unmarried) and the rest worked in all fields of working life.

In the official rhetoric, often repeated to me by my interviewees, it was explained that earlier, the woman was confined 'inside four walls' and her going to school was prevented in families where 'backward thinking' prevailed, supported by policies of the rulers not so interested in promoting girls' education. Still, after independence, when schools were opened to women at large, not every woman wanted to 'improve herself' or 'acquire knowledge' (*maʿārif*) as it was put. Thus, nowadays a woman's lack of interest in improvement was explained to be due to her 'voluntary confinement' within four walls and her personal unwillingness to acquire skills such as reading and writing. Women's expertise acquired within the household and in learning from elder women in women's networks was not counted as 'advancement'. Within the years following independence women's expectations had changed alongside the idea that women were now considered to be part of the public sphere along with men.

In my small survey I also enquired about women's labour conditions. I asked about reasons for women joining working life and gave four options: a) subsistence b) wish to leave home c) wish to become economically independent from husband and d) wish to improve educational and work-related qualifications. Of the 248 women who replied to this question, 42 per cent gave making a living as the only reason. For 21 per cent improving one's qualifications (making a career) was the only motivation. Only 0.4 per cent gave the sole reason for taking a job as the wish to go out from the home. Nobody considered economic independence as the only reason for working outside the home.

For most of those questioned, joining the labour market and leaving home for work was a decision having multiple reasons. When we contrast these results with those on the respondents' level of education, we get a clearer picture. While for every educational group (illiterate, literate, primary, secondary, and university level) means of living was the most common reason often combined with other factors, for illiterate respondents it was the only reason. The more education the respondent had, the more other factors came into the picture, particularly the need to improve one's qualifications. This result indicates that what the state propaganda presented as 'improvement' was acquired by means of formal education and active participation in public life such as in political, social and cultural activities. No wonder it was valued most by those who had acquired a higher degree in formal education. While the skills that women learn at home were not considered as 'improvement' those women who valued such skills did not find a need to join the labour market.

In order to test this assumption I conducted a comparative survey among women who stayed at home. These were women of all age groups, from 15 to 57 years of age. Of the 57 house-bound women (housewives, unemployed and unmarried women) about half, 56 per cent replied that they did not want to leave the home for work. Two respondents said that they would like to, but that their husbands stopped them. The result was slightly different when I asked if they would like to gain an education. The majority of the women, 58 per cent said yes. Of the skills these women would have liked to learn, the most popular (68 %) were sewing and embroidery. One-fifth of those questioned wanted to learn typing and 7 per cent cooking. Only some 5 per cent wanted to learn to read and write. Still, these women did not consider working outside the home irrelevant; for them, it was an option for those who had education. Of the jobs these women termed 'suitable' for women in the first place, teacher ranked top followed by housewife, physician and nurse. Only one-fourth considered that all vocations are suitable to women.

'Islamic' Discourse Gains Ground

Housebound roles for women became more acceptable in the new atmosphere that emerged after Yemeni unification in 1990. With all the positive and negative political changes and economic insecurity, questions of morality and of how Islam should pattern life became more central. Partly it was the question of mutual mistrust between the two parts of the earlier divided country, with suspicious attitudes on both sides about the 'real' nature of the other's religious commitment, and partly a matter of global trends throughout the Middle East where 'Islamic' voices gained ground and became more vocal. In Aden, heightened religiosity did not mean a process of increased proselytising, that is, people becoming more religiously minded, but rather that they became in a new way concerned about how other people viewed them as moral persons and 'good Muslims'. Being a morally upright person meant two things for men and women. Men were expected to become careful in hiding a drinking habit if they had one and occasionally visiting a mosque for prayer. As a result of the unfavourable atmosphere, instead of taking alcohol many men simply shifted to chewing *qat*, the culturally sanctioned drug so common in Yemen. Still, women were clearly more in focus; at issue were not only a woman's mind and her

expressing the virtues of proper comportment but her body, too. The female body became the symbol of propriety in an atmosphere of a collapsing economy and pessimism about the future. Public concern over the female body concentrated all fears of moral laxity and 'lack of religion' manifested also in worries about the upbringing of the future generation, considered markedly a female task.

Sexual segregation began again to structure the town. In contrast to colonial times and the segregation that prevailed then, women had now become part of public life, participating among other fields in the labour market, education and political life. Thus sex segregation took new forms. While some public places became all-men, working life and public transportation remained unsegregated. Buses became places where men made efforts to allow women to travel without interference. In restaurants separate 'family areas' appeared to allow women to have ice cream or a meal 'undisturbed'. Women no longer went to the cinema. To see a film, formerly "women's most popular entertainment",[24] women rented a cassette from a video store and watched it at home. While in the early 1990s one of the rationalisations had been that since men cannot control themselves women must disappear from sight, the fact that women now hid themselves behind covering clothes made many men feel frustrated.

Alongside inter-sex avoidance women's covering clothing had an impact on gender behaviour patterns. Even though some women with great enthusiasm took the head scarf, young people in particular thought it just a new exciting fashion and called it a *mandīl* (head scarf) instead of *hijab*, the name reserved for 'religious headgear'. Some women felt negatively about the new dress and considered it interference in women's own affairs. Still, force was not so much the reason behind women adopting the new outfit. More important was the coming to the fore of discourses that favoured traditional family-related role models for women and the curbing of women's 'unnecessary' movement outside the home. The new atmosphere made such women who were less convinced about the necessity of the new costume to confront questions like "Am I a good person if I do not cover my hair?", "What will people think of me as a mother?" and "Am I showing a good example to my children?" Those who still resisted and refused to cover themselves were sometimes subjected to harassment in the streets by adolescent boys who used the

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[24] As Luqman (1960) describes in *The Aden Guide* p. 207.

opportunity to pinch and grope. Segregation in schools followed only after the 1994 civil war, when conservatives were given the chance to sweep away 'heretic' elements in Aden.

All these phenomena indicated the coming of a new era in gender relations, first in comparison to the PDRY time, when a woman's role was declared to be alongside her 'brother' in building up the society and when men were expected to respect every woman like his 'sister', and secondly in contrast to the colonial era when women had no particular role in public life. In the new era 'unregulated' male-female interaction was targeted, but not without resistance. A lively debate flourished in newspapers and other forums on the desired role models for women both in society and the family. These changes cannot, however, be considered as a return to the pre-independence situation. At that time the town embraced various lifestyles alongside each other. While the British brought modernisation to Aden, only after independence was it obtainable to non-elite women in the same way as for men. The British made no effort to transform gender relations to match the modernity they brought along. While segregation and gender avoidance were commonplace during that period, no alternative patterns of inter-sex communication existed in the public sphere, such as the unsegregated labour market. Women disappeared again from public places, but their role in the public sphere did not vanish.

With Yemeni unification Aden lost its status as the national capital and members of administration in large numbers moved to the new capital San'a. Aden became rapidly marginalised. Now a district centre, Aden was struggling with decreased government spending and failing administration. While government adjustment policies to World Bank requirements as well as mismanagement caused high inflation, earlier well-off middle strata families faced economic problems. All this was accompanied a few months after unification by a huge population catastrophe as about a million Yemenis suddenly were sent back to Yemen as a response to the Yemeni president's siding with Saddam Husayn in the First Gulf War. Many of these families had no place to go and thus competed with refugees from civil wars in the Horn of Africa for land on which to erect a hut without running water, drainage or electricity. A few years after unification, Aden had turned into a sea of misery. Political dissent finally erupted into a civil war in 1994, which established a Northern Yemeni occupation in Aden, as people tend to describe the situation.

The Female Body as a Symbol of khairiyya

In this atmosphere some Islamic organisations saw their chance. The government was increasingly unable to meet the needs of the socially deprived, whose number grew rapidly. After the 1994 civil war Aden was given to the Islah party (*al-tagammu al-yamani lil-islah*, the Yemeni congregation for reform) as compensation for the party's loyalty during the fighting. The city administration was now led by Islah politicians from the North with minimal local support.[25] The party had been established in San'a in the early 1990s upon the initiative of prominent Northern tribal leaders, most notably the paramount *shaykh* of the al-Hashīd tribal congregation of the Northern highlands and some of the leading members of the ʿulama having less tolerant ideas for an 'Islamic society'. However, failing ultimately to consolidate political standing in Aden, Islah invested in charity work there.

Islamic benevolence (*khairiyya*) is central in the Islah party's activities in other areas of Yemen, too. The Charitable Society for Social Welfare was established in 1990 about a year earlier than the political party and remains technically independent from it.[26] It engages in fund-raising, education, health and counselling assistance to six groups: the economically needy, the orphaned, the handicapped, the mentally disturbed, victims of natural disasters and finally, linked together, women, children and the elderly. Of its committees, the Women's Committee has a central role in collecting and distributing charity.[27] The other committees are the Neighbourhood Activities Committee, the Special Projects Committee, the Orphanage Care and Sponsorship Committee, the Basic Health Services Committee, and the Emergency Relief Committee. This indicates that while women are engaged in their special committee in carrying out all the tasks, the other committees are restricted to men only.

In Aden, the Charitable Society began some time later than in Sanʾa. Most of the activists in the Adeni Islah's Women's Committee are students, but the leading activists with whom I met told me that their target group is not the students. However, they explained, it is good that students devote their time to societal work. Through the student activists the society attempts to approach families, i.e., women who

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[25] Monet 1994, 3.
[26] Clark 2004, 123.
[27] On women's committees in Sanʾa and Hudayda, see ibid. 129–130.

otherwise are difficult to reach since they spend most of their time at home. Special target groups, the activists tell me, are poor people, orphans and the disabled. The activists attempt to function as a link between people who have means and who can donate, and the socially deprived. Fund raising is particularly active during the Islamic holidays and the fasting month of Ramadhan, but this is not a priority since funds are needed throughout the year. When fund raising among people does not meet the need, the activists go to institutions such as the Aden Chamber of Commerce to appeal for funds. According to the activists I spoke with, women play a more active role in running the society's activities than men.

In her study on the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, political scientist Janine Clark focuses on the benefits and resources that the Welfare Society generates. She argues that while the activists (voluntary and paid) are mostly 'middle-class' women, and the target group, the 'needy', consists of the poor, the outcome of the activities benefits the actors and the objects differently. According to her, most of the activists are university students, university graduates, or pupils in secondary schools intending to go to universities. These women have the time and opportunity to engage in welfare activities due to child care support in extended families and a steady income. These 'middle-class' women gain mainly non-material personal benefits such as friendships and networks, as well as emotionally a strong sense of worth and self-satisfaction.[28] According to Clark, the actual reforming force of these committees benefits the activists rather than the objects. Thus the 'advanced' woman emerges as the activist of the Islamic social institution, the woman who devotes her time and effort to helping the needy and raising funds for the running of charity work in the name of the Islah party.

Focusing on San'a and the other big town in Northern Yemen, Hudayda, Clark's observations cannot as such be said to apply to Aden. Leading women activists of Islah-Aden were neither students nor 'middle class'. Those I met came from modest social backgrounds or from the former political elite, and worked as full-time non-paid activists in leading positions not only in the party and in the charity but some even in women's initiatives and societies. In the latter, they shared the women's

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[28] Clark 2004a, 964.

liberation ideology characteristic of the Adeni women's movement.[29] For them the main motivation to work socially was concern over the unfavourable political and economic situation in the town. Still, for them the activities had a strong 'Islamic' dimension; acting as morally upright persons and as devoted Muslims the women embodied resistance to the corruption and mismanagement that dominated politics. Clark's idea of personal and emotional reward can be applied to these women in the sense that for them, charity acts as a platform for 'making a good Muslim', in other words, in embodying what they considered as Islamic values of propriety and high morality. As for the student activists in charity, they acted between the female leaders and the 'needy', thus playing a mediatory role.

Conclusions

During the fifty years discussed here, three mutually different periods of welfare and social work emerge. What is common to all is that the main target of the projects is the woman and her 'advancement'. The female body becomes the carrier of different meanings: British charity ideology, the social good of the PDRY women's emancipation policy and most recently, the Islamic 'good Muslim' in the fight against corruption and poverty. During the colonial era, the British 'do-gooders' invited women from the domestic sphere of the family and household to participate in charities. As it was understood at that time, the 'emancipated' woman was the one who left her home to engage in societal activities. During the PDRY period, the woman took her place 'alongside the man in all fields of life', as it was commonly explained at that time. After Yemeni unification, women's free movement in society became questioned, but attempts to push her back home were averted. A new social actor emerged—the Islamic activist who donated her time and effort to help the needy and in this role participated in fighting the corrupted rule typical of the post-unification period.

During the colonial era, the activities behind bringing women into "*more active participation in the community*" as manifested in the 'good works enthusiasts', as Knox-Mawer called British ladies eagerly engaged

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[29] I have discussed this ideology in Dahlgren 2004, 101–128.

in charity and welfare work, could be described as reflecting a 'colonial feminist' outlook following the ideas of Leila Ahmed.[30] As it was put, the women's condition due to the *purdah* was that of being confined to the home where they lacked educational opportunities and intellectual stimuli. According to the British, this was the outcome of 'religion and custom' that they found politically difficult to change. Thus women became markers of a limited modernisation that the colonial rule promoted. Expanding the social scope of modernisation became the main focus of the leftist government following independence; now women were invited to take part in society 'alongside their brothers'. Modernisation was aimed to touch the entire society, family and domestic relations included. After Yemeni unification and the emergence of Islamic discourses, modernity and modern roles for women increasingly gained an 'Islamic' character. The advanced woman was now to manifest high morality before anything else.

Even though different in scope, which has to do with civil society and women's participation in it, all three concepts of an advanced woman discussed here manifest attempts to engage women in civil society and thus make them part of the modernisation process, expressed as we see in each era in the varying gender ideologies.

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[30] Leila Ahmed elaborates: *"Even as the Victorian male establishment devised theories to contest the claims of feminism, and derided and rejected the ideas of feminism and the notion of men's oppressing women with respect to itself, it captured the language of feminism and redirected it, in the service of colonialism, toward Other men and the cultures of Other men. […] More exactly, what was created was the fusion between the issues of women, their oppression, and the cultures of Other men."* (Ahmed 1992, 151)

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GENDERING REFUGEES
THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY
(UNRWA) AND THE POLITICS OF RELIEF

Kjersti G. Berg

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to provide temporary humanitarian relief and work to the refugees of the 1948 *Nakba*, the 'catastrophe' when 750.000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from Palestine. Many of these were former peasants, now made landless and stateless refugees in crowded, makeshift refugee camps in the region, outside the new state of Israel. The map of UNRWA's area of operations gives an idea of the territorial presence of the blue and white flag today, more than half a century later. More than 4,4 million Palestinian refugees are registered with the agency, and about one third of these live in the fifty-eight recognised camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.[1] UNRWA is a UN elephant, and one of the largest service providers in the region with its education, health, and social services and relief programmes. The underlying question of this essay is how UNRWA's refugee relief, its services and policies may have gendered the refugee population, and how this in turn is linked to complex notions of development, modernisation, and humanitarianism in a highly political fashion. The question of how and why some approaches or concepts have changed, others remained the same, while others have changed in name but not in content are also addressed.

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[1] http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/camp-profiles.html. This number does not include refugees outside UNRWA's area of operations, and other groups. See note no. 41.

"Educated girls will soon become enlightened wives and mothers"

The UNRWA newsletter *Palestine Refugees Today* was issued between 1960[2] and 1996 to inform readers and donors about the living conditions of the refugees, UNRWA projects, and to mobilise for funding. In 1962 an entire newsletter was assigned to girls and education,[3] and the tone was optimistic: Refugee girls were members of a "new generation in the Middle East" and had opportunities "undreamed" of by their mothers and grandmothers: opportunities of education, of training, and of careers. With the help of UNRWA, refugee girls were now able to "grasp" this new opportunity. The new opportunity the newsletter is referring to is the Ramallah Women's Training Centre which was inaugurated by King Hussein of Jordan on United Nations Day in 1962. The Centre was the largest, and according to the newsletter, the only institution of its scope in the Middle East. The training Centre was residential, which meant that the girls moved out of the refugee camps to study. When in full operation, the residential Centre would accommodate 300 girls in the teacher training section, and 333 vocational trainees. The vocational section offered eleven regular courses: clerk/typist, secretary, home management, institutional management, infants and children's clothing, lingerie making, hairdressing, infant leadership, preparatory nursing, dressmaking, and fine needlework.

The life story of a seventeen-year-old girl, Suad, is presented to the readers of *Palestine Refugees Today* as a typical example of the 15,000 young refugee girls who reach "womanhood each year with a head full of dreams and hopes and ambitions." Suad was more fortunate than most; her dreams and ambitions were coming true. She grew up as refugee in the Irbid region where her refugee father would find it impossible to feed, house, clothe, and care for his five sons and four daughters without help from UNRWA. Now she and the other girls who entered the Ramallah Centre had the opportunity of their lives almost "within their grasps… the opportunity of building a productive life away from the misery and despair of the refugee camps which have been their homes ever since they can remember." To make her dream come true, Suad needed to be "adopted." UNRWA launched an "adoption" scheme under which a donor could pay for a year's training for a girl by providing a scholarship. In

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[2] The exact year and date of the founding of the newsletter is not known by this author, and may well have been earlier. The year 1960 is chosen based on the samples found at the Library of Congress, Washington.

[3] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 17, June 1962, UNRWA.

Figure 1. Students at the UNRWA Ramallah Vocational Training Centre.[4]

return, UNRWA sent the donor a picture of the "adopted" trainee, and a short biographical note about her. The newsletter appealed to the donors explaining how their donation could give the refugees hope to be among the "lucky few," because "hope is what is so often missing form the life of a refugee."

The Centre was the only place for refugee girls to receive secondary training and to learn a skill, and it was outside the confines of the refugee camps. To convince the girls and the more hesitant older generation about girls enrolment in the Centre, UNRWA produced radio programmes, and a series of leaflets, one for each vocational course, and a special brochure for the girls to take home to their parents. The capacity of the Centre was 633 students, and it did have enough applicants. The Centre was the latest branch of UNRWA's nascent educational system that came to be the flagship of the agency.[5] UNRWA's education

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[4] UNRWA Photo Archive, Gaza.
[5] Robert Farethy, 1959: *In Human Terms. The 1959 Story of the UNRWA-Unesco Arab Refugee Schools*. Paris: UNESCO.

system was set up parallel to the host states' schools systems in the region, and the schools were renowned for their high quality secular mass education. UNRWA made a minimum of nine years of education standard at an earlier stage than in government systems.[6] UNRWA education is given a role in explaining the growth of Palestinian nationalism and the organisation of the militant resistance movement.[7] In the overcrowded miserable camps marked by chronic unemployment, UNRWA's educational system served as one of few opportunities for a possibility for upward mobility and economic security. During the decades of their exile, the newsletter depicted the refugee children as eager to improve their situation, through the UNRWA education, welfare or health projects. Refugee children were 'eager to learn,' 'a winner at something,' have 'a new-found dignity,' are 'trying to be the best,' get 'scholarships for successful students.' This is an expression of the emphasis refugees put on education, and the examples show how the newsletter encouraged donors to support this effort. Today more than half a million Palestinian students attend its 644 schools in the region each year. However, operating on double shifts due to lack of funding and an increasing number of students, the quality of UNRWA education has declined.

Refugee families of young girls did take advantage of the free primary schooling offered by UNRWA. According to the current equivalent of the newsletter, the UNRWA web page, gender equality was achieved in 1960s in primary schools, and its Education Programme has had a policy of encouraging and securing refugee girls' enrolment in elementary schooling.[8] A larger percentage of girls have been enrolled in UNRWA schools than in most Arab countries.[9] The percentage of girls increased from 24 percent of all pupils in 1951, to 38,9 percent in 1958, 47,8 percent in 1975, and 50.2 percent of female pupils in 2001/2002.[10] In camps in Lebanon, Julie Peteet has found several reasons for girls' enrolment: the need for basic literacy; the possibility to contribute to family income;

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[6] Maya Rosenfeld: *Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004: 129.

[7] According to Maya Rosenfeld, "Palestinian higher education was intimately connected to pressing social and political issues, such as the economic and class transformation of the Palestinians in the Diaspora, the long term development of Palestinian human resources, and the impact on the latter on the composition and potential of the emergent national movement" (2004: 123).

[8] http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/education/index.html.

[9] Maya Rosenfeld 2004: 116.

[10] http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/education/achievment.html; Maya Rosenfeld 2004: 115.

to be more attractive on the marriage arena; an extra effect was that educated women joined political movements.[11] For girls' participation, the location of the schools in the camps served as another advantage of the UNRWA schools; they were part of the landscape of the camps.

The aims of the RWTC are interesting on several levels. Training was seen as the key to put "new-found skills" to use, something that could generate some income. Education was seen as a way to gain access to professional work. Another point made for educating refugee girls was the long-term "constructive" effect trained and educated girls were thought to have in their communities. In many issues of the newsletter, girls' education is linked to motherhood and marriage; "Educated girls will soon become enlightened wives and mothers," and, women with "Today's methods for tomorrow's wives" would abandon the outdated traditions of the past in favour of the "methods of the present."[12]

Did the same reasons apply for training boys? Ten vocational Centres were set up for refugee boys, and in all these produced more than 2000 graduates annually in the 1960s. To sustain a family was a refrain in reasons given for training boys: "[Muhammed will] be equipped with a skill which should enable him to support himself and his family, no matter where he may live in the future."[13] Self-help or self-sufficiency was another aspect: "Mahmoud will know, for the first time in 15 years, the pride of being able to support himself and his family through the toil of his own hands and not through the charity of others." Almost the exact same phrasing was used many times in later issues, for example during the Gulf crisis, when there was a need to foster refugees' self-sufficiency, education, vocational training, and modest self-support projects "so that they would not remain forever reliant on international relief assistance."[14] Employment was in itself an important asset for men. The January 1964 newsletter notes that, "While there are many aspects to the Palestine refugee problem, none is more serious than the plight of the young adults at the time they reach maturity."[15] Many young refugees were "handicapped" because their fathers were unemployed refugees

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[11] Julie Peteet: *Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement,* New York: Columbia University Press 1991: 35; Julie Peteet: *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2005: 88.

[12] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 34, June–July 1964.

[13] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 40, March–April 1965.

[14] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 130, July 1991.

[15] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 19, Sept. 1962.

and could not teach them a skill. As a result, the young adults did neither have the habits nor the self-discipline "essential for employment". With elementary and secondary education, vocational training and university scholarships, URNWA sought to overcome this handicap and give them skills that would enable them to put their "innate abilities" to productive use.[16]

The Fruits of Modernisation

According to the newsletter, UNRWA was "pioneering" the field of vocational training for girls in the Middle East, but due to the societal perceptions, the hesitancy towards girls training, particularly of the elder generation, was seen as "natural". The newsletter claims that the "Middle East tradition" only a generation ago limited women and girls role to one single—"that of a wife and a mother"—and that the very notion of a girl learning a trade for the purpose of "earning her own way" was unheard of. With the Centre, UNRWA claims to bring the fruits of modernity to the Ramallah hillside. In post-World War II modernisation theories and ideals, where the world was divided between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' and development was a question of promoting the transformation from the former to the latter, UNRWA's training for refugee girls, whose parents mostly were villagers, formed part of these ideals. UNRWA did play a very important role in providing large-scale primary education for refugee girls, and for example the teacher and secretary training created professionals prepared for employment. Over time teaching was considered a respectable profession for girls, and UNRWA's training clearly opened up new possibilities for these young women, who were able work as teachers in for example UNRWA schools and in the Gulf.

However, the novelty of UNRWA's approach requires to be analysed in a broader perspective. Girls' education and values in the Palestinian society before 1948, and values brought by modernisation are highly relevant issues in this regard. UNRWA's training did indeed bring new elements, but female employment and professionals were presented as something new, as results of modernity brought by UNRWA. The fact that some village girls were trained to be teachers during the British Mandate,

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[16] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 25, April–May 1963.

and that women were wage earners before and after 1948, is not taken into consideration. A census of 1931 showed that only twenty villages in Palestine had girls' schools, and girls' education was given a low priority.[17] However, in 1935 the Mandate Government opened a Training Centre for Rural Women Teachers in Ramallah. According to Inger Marie Okkenhaug, this Centre was established to alleviate the need for women teachers in villages, and the background for this Centre was the growing demand for girls' education in urban areas, and these demands also were voiced in the villages. The girls were selected from the top classes of elementary girls' schools and preference was given to pupils with village backgroud. Ellen Fleischmann has found that the training at the Centre consisted of "domestic science" subjects and that the goal of this training was to make the village girls "realize and appreciate the importance of a clean, healthy and well conducted home."[18]

Interestingly, the courses offered at the vocational part of the UNRWA Centre established in 1962 trained girls for predominantly domestic tasks related to a home, to children, and to clothes, training that would prepare them for a future as wives and mothers. To be "educated wives" was an explicit aim of this training: to create enlightened wives who knew about correct childcare, and domestic science. To quote the newsletter, training was important because it was the mother who "supervised" the upbringing of the children and created the "atmosphere of the home." The courses offered at the Centre provide examples of how gender relations were produced and reproduced, in this case gender relations that were part of the ideology of modernity. The Palestinian refugee girls were prepared to be professional housewives, with habits probably different from their predominantly peasant parents, but at the same time within what was considered permissible for young girls.

Vocational training for men was part of the modern "take off", where industrialization was seen as a key to move away from "traditional society" through UNRWA. By learning new skills the young male refugees formed part of modernity, the mechanised society, were "Skill + Tools =

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[17] Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure. Anglican Mission, Women and Education in Palestine, 1888–1948*. Brill: Leiden, 2002: 64.

[18] Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women. The Palestinian Women's Movement 1920–1948*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003: 40.

Work," and skilled men were "in demand."[19] In the 1960s and on UNRWAs current web page, UNRWA's training is presented as an important contribution to technical and economic progress in the region.[20] Compared to the girls' training, young men were offered more possibilities and more diverse opportunities, and, importantly, the main focus was on employment. I will get back to the idea of men as active breadwinners and women as domestics, and how this is related to 'identity' and 'culture' in the section about transformation and continuity in UNRWA's welfare approaches.

As the example has shown, training for girls was both a progressive and a gendered venue. The outcome of the high ambitions for girls' training in 1962 is difficult to measure. Between 1954 and by 2000, more than 60,000 Palestine refugee men and women have graduated from vocational and technical training Centres (the statistics do not single out gender).[21] Today all UNRWA training Centres are open to women, and according to the web page female participation is 30 percent agency-wide. Though employment has been scarce, according to the web page, vocational training has contributed to social stability and partially offset the high unemployment rates. Training gives the possibility of "professional" employment, and trained refugee girls have been employed. A moderate number of women and men find employment in, for example, UNRWA's educational institutions and in its local network of health clinics.[22] Women who are employed contribute significantly to the household economy, and many women are faced with the "double burden of domestic and wage labour."[23] But according to one survey, the rate of employment has been particularly low among female refugees in camps.[24] In spite of being educated—many even surpass men and boys in some respects—the majority is not employed. Lack of opportunities for employment and refugee men attitudes to women's employment are among the explanations given.

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[19] *Palestine Refugees Today*, March 1961 (unnumbered).
[20] 1962 Annual Report, by Dr. Davis, referred in *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 21, Nov. 1962.
[21] http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/education/vocational.html.
[22] Maya Rosenfeld 2004: 159.
[23] Julie Peteet 1991: 33–34.
[24] Laurie Blome Jacobsen, *Educated Housewives. Living Conditions among Palestinian Refugee Women*. Fafo-report 425, Oslo: 2004.

The Luxury of Cleanliness: Refugee Health

"How can one make a Model Home out of a bare, one-room refugee hut?" The 1961 newsletter describes how more than 2,500 refugees in Aqabat Jaber Camp, in the Jordan Valley near Jericho, came to discover the answer one day in the late summer of 1961.[25] Mukhtars in "Arab headdress jostled" with young men at the show, and another day was set aside specially for women, "the shyer mothers carrying their infants came to gaze along with fresh faced girls." The health educator Yahya Hindi had "climaxed" his traditional summer cleanliness campaign with a "Model Home" exhibition. He gave instructions on how to keep the water clean, displayed a curtain to cover the shelf of provisions; how to use a piece of gauze to ward off the flies attempting to invade the baby's crib; and how a bit of wood covered the garbage container to keep flies and other insects from breeding there.

The newsletter reported that "primitive as they are, these amenities represent a luxury to man[y] refugees—the luxury of cleanliness." The problems of garbage thrown into the streets and failure to keep public latrines clean created health hazards in crowded camps, and, therefore, in 1953 UNRWA embarked on a programme to teach the refugees the elements of healthy living. Health educators had "the ticklish job of revolutionizing" the most personal living habits of the 75,000 individuals, most of them "conservative by nature" who came from humble rural backgrounds in Palestine and many of whom were ignorant of the "dangers of unsanitary habits."

The programme focused on several levels of intervention. In the camps, everyone had to participate to keep the camp clean, and cleanliness contests were organised and awards given to all kinds of competitors from the cleanest baby to the cleanest barber. The Agency produced 15,000 posters on six different subjects annually, with films, flannel graphs, pamphlets, and slogans, and these became features in all UNRWA clinics, schools, milk Centres, and other public buildings. The educational films were shown, along with an Arabic entertainment movie, by UNRWA's mobile cinema, which made a monthly tour of the camps in all four host countries. And the results? According to the UNRWA case show in Jericho, "everyone agrees that the roads are cleaner, huts are

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[25] *Palestine Refugees Today,* Nov. 1961 (unnumbered).

neater, school children are more scrubbed, and flies noticeably fewer than they were eight years ago." Some telling examples are listed in the newsletter: the doctor in the Ein el Sultan camp who, on top of his regular duties, makes a special effort to teach mothers how to combat under-nourishment in their youngsters; the schoolgirls who go home and beg their mothers to cover the garbage or wash the vegetables; the mother who visited the "Model Home" show this summer and immediately fixed a tap to her water jug; the sanitation labourer who is such a "stickler for cleanliness" among the refugees in the Nuweimeh camp that "his mere appearance sets them to work cleaning up any rubbish or dirt in sight."

"Healthy Mothers—Healthy Families"

UNRWA has been the main health care provider for the refugee population with the aim to meet the basic health needs of the Palestinan refugees. Today there are 122 Primary health care facilities inside and outside camps, nutrition and supplementary feeding, assistance with secondary care, and environmental health in refugee camps.[26] UNRWA's Health Programme has had a special focus on maternal and child health programmes[27] in its primary health care services.[28] This is in recognition of the fact that women of reproductive age and children under the age of fifteen represent approximately 60 percent of the registered refugee population.[29]

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[26] http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/health/index.html.

[27] This includes maternal health care, antenatal and postnatal care, family planning services, infant and child health care, and school health service.

[28] Primary health consists of medical care, family health, disease prevention and control, health education.

[29] Harish Parvataneni: "Palestine Refugee Women and Empowerment" paper presented at *the Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research in Ottawa*, Canada, June 17–20, 2003: 6.

Figure 2. UNRWA Primary Health Care Centre in Bureij, Gaza.[30]

The interventions targeting women have often aimed at child survival and welfare through the role of the mother. Phrases like "Healthy mothers—healthy families"[31] emphasise the focus in UNRWA's services on motherhood and the gendered family model where women are seen as reproductive and men as productive. The frequent practice of making reference to mother and children together is interesting with regard to Cynthia Enloe's concept of "Womenandchildren."[32] This approach, according to Jennifer Hyndman, essentialises women as mothers, and social relations that do vary across time and space, and it connotes that they deserve to be helped, while men are not seen as fathers. She points at how the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) policies and documents concerning refugee women and refugees of other cultures fail to recognize "the ways in which [concepts of] 'women' and

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[30] UNRWA Photo Archive, Gaza.
[31] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 136, 1994.
[32] Cynthia Enloe: *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993: 165–166.

'culture' are constructed together and in subordination."[33] In spite of health education on for example birth control, birth rates are among the highest in the world, and intervals between births are short, which also affects women's health. These structures need to be analysed in the context of the unstable political situation faced by the Palestinian refugee community.

Embroidery and Emergency, Refugee Relief and Self-reliance

UNRWA's welfare programme was set up with two main tasks: one, to provide special relief for extreme hardship cases like small cash grants, extra clothes, blankets, the other to provide worthwhile hand-skill and athletic activities "to fill the refugees' long hours of unavoidable idleness and to contribute to maintaining refugee morale."[34] The aim of these projects was to improve refugees' positions, through self-help and community development projects. Activities for women and girls were two-fold. The eight embroidery Centres employed about 600 women and girls in a part-time capacity in the 1960s, and they produced embroidery of traditional Palestinian designs. According to the newsletter, their work earned a wide reputation and their income, though small, could ease the hardship of the families. On the other hand, the ten sewing Centres concentrated on instruction, not production, by offering six month's courses for refugee girls to enable them to make clothes for their families and perhaps to do odd jobs to earn a little money. The newsletter reported that more or less 300 girls attended these Centres every day.

The activities offered to the males tended to be more outward looking, focusing on leisure activities and employment. The Youth Activities Centres ran programmes of recreational, sporting, social and cultural activities for young men. Included in this programme were also the Refugee Scouts: The young men were "helped to build more meaningful and useful lives amid the depressing atmosphere of the refugee camp." The six wood-work training Centres taught refugee boys the rudiments of carpentry during a one-year course with the aim enabling them to

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[33] Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman: *Sites of Violence. Gender and Conflict Zones*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004: 203.
[34] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 19, Sept. 1962.

Figure 3. UNRWA Sewing Centre, Khan Younis, Gaza.[35]

earn a small wage to improve the family shelter. About 300 boys gradu-
ated from these Centres each year, according to the newsletter. Within
the welfare programme, some selected refugee boys were also sent off
to England, to the Pestalossi Children's Village Trust, a British voluntary
organisation, to spend five years in England in a house specially built for
them in its Children's village in Sedlescombe in Sussex.[36] These young
boys were given a chance to build a new future for themselves, and
the newsletter described the refugees' excitement about the airplane,
the new future, and the mothers' tears, but it does not give updates on
their experiences.

Embroidery: Transformation and Continuity

UNRWA's welfare projects are interesting with regard to how and what
degree the Palestinian exile was one of transformation. On the one
hand the gendered roles of modernisation thinking of the 1960's were

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[35] UNRWA Photo Archive, Gaza.
[36] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 34, June–July 1964.

Figure 4. UNRWA Embroidery Centre, Gaza.[37]

replicated in UNRWA's programmes. Similar to the education programme, men were seen as productive and active and women as reproductive and domestic, and the skills taught gendered their possibilities. On the other hand, the shock of the exile, the loss of land and nation, might have generated new constraints on women's activities, while, simultaneously, other, and different options were offered and explored, like training and education. UNRWA's welfare activities were 'suitable tasks' for women: embroidery could be done within the confines of the home alongside the demanding domestic tasks and upbringing of children. It seems that sewing, a new skill and technique, targeted the younger generation of girls.

Interestingly, Rema Hammami points out that UNRWA took for granted that embroidery was a general traditional craft of peasant women. But in fact refugee women who came from coastal villages had historically

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[37] UNRWA Photo Archive, Gaza.

been mostly involved in agriculture and were considered by the women from the inland to be "embroidery illiterates." UNRWA's programmes focused on women as domestic, while Hammami documents that the former peasant refugee women of the first generation were actually involved in a variety of economic activities, for example the peddling of agricultural produce and agricultural wage labour, and in this sense certain peasant culture identities continued.[38] UNRWA made embroidery and sewing accessible activities for refugee women. With the second generation of refugees, these activities may have become part of their 'tradition,' which in turn indicates that culture is not fixed, but changing, and provides but one example of how UNRWA's programmes also shaped refugee identity and culture over time.

The activities of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) provide interesting comparisons to UNRWA's actvities. The Union was founded in 1965, formed part of the PLO, and had various branches in the region.[39] Some of these branches were partially limited to urban well-to-do women, but in some cases it moved to the camps and became a more widely based organisation, for example in Jordan before PLO was expelled after Black September in 1970. In the Union, women's needs were addressed along two lines: financial, to give them a way to earn an income, and socially, to prepare women to be active members of society. It is striking that several of the Union's activities and approaches to women were indeed very similar to those of UNRWA: self-help for mothers and children; nursing and feeding programmes; literacy courses; embroidery; sewing workshops, and so on. Similar to UNRWA, the Union sought to raise women's standard of living through education or training to secure additional income. But the difference is also very obvious and might be linked to the significance of politics for their strategies: The Union had an explicit ideological foundation, related to their 'cause.' The union's military training clearly stands out, as do their educational sessions on women's issues and the national struggle. As Peteet has documented, the union simultaneously sought

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[38] Rema Hammami: *Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee women, 1920–1993*. PhD thesis, Temple University 1994.

[39] Laurie A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World. Institution Building and the Search for State*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988: 95–98, 198–203.

to prepare women for a more active role in the national struggle.[40] I will get back to UNRWA's strategies in the conclusions.

In the mid 1980s UNRWA took part in the international development assistance's trend towards support of small-scale projects and focus on women, an attempt to change the passivity that charity generated. Now the Welfare Programme changed its name to "Social Services." The agency worked to reorient and train workers away from welfare toward social development. The Embroidery and Sewing Centres were transformed into Women Programmes Centres by the end of the 1980s. These would focus on the refugee women's initiatives, and involve them in running the Centres. According to the web page, social services imply "longer-term social and economic development".[41] Conceptually, the change from welfare to social services is not clear-cut, the old and new approach have similarities. 'Relief', the 'R' in UNRWA, has also evolved, and the rations programme detailed in the next chapter illustrates some of these processes.

Rations, Registration, and Rights

Once every two weeks, refugees eligible for UNRWA rations would gather at distribution Centres according to a pre-arranged rotation to collect the basic dry rations supplied by UNRWA. The ration per person and per month amounted to: 10 kg of flour, 600 g of pulses, 600 g of sugar, 500 g of rice and 375 g of oils and fats. In the five winter months, additional pulses or flour were allocated, giving an average of 1,600 calories per day in winter, 1500 in summer.[42] The refugees supplemented the basic dry rations with vegetables and meat either by bartering some of their flour ration or from their occational earnings. Peteet has described how women and children, or young boys, would pick up the rations, because men found accepting relief humiliating, and those who were employed would lose that day's wages.[43]

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[40] On tensions between gender, class and nation in the Palestinian struggle, see for example Julie Peteet 1991: 67–88.

[41] These are today projects for poverty alleviation and community development (i.e. the Women's Programme Centres and Community Rehabilitation Centres). See http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/rss/social.html.

[42] This example is from the 1960s. *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 19, Sept. 1962.

[43] Julie Peteet 2005: 71, 76–85.

Figure 5. UNRWA Rations Distribution, Khan Younis, Gaza.[44]

UNRWA's registration of refugees was tied closely to the rations, and registration was a precondition for receiving rations. When UNRWA started its operations on 1 May 1950, they inherited an inflated number of 957,000 refugees from the Non Governmental Organisation predecessors.[45] UNRWA's working definition of a "Palestine refugee"[46] was influenced by the wish to rectify the relief registers, the number of persons entitled to humanitarian aid through the ration card, which was also limited by budget restrains. A formulation from 1952 became the standard working definition of a Palestine refugee; "a person whose

[44] UNRWA Photo Archive

[45] In December 1949, the The Economic Survey Missions estimated that the number of refugees was 726,000, of whom 652,000 were considered to be in need. United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 1949, *Final Report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East. An Approach to Economic Development in the Middle East*, part I, The Final Report and Appendices. Lake Success, New York, 28 December 1949.

[46] Note the difference between the term 'Palestine Refugees' and 'Palestinian Refugees'. See note no. 42 and 43.

normal residence had been Palestine for a minimum of two years pre-
ceding the 1948 conflict, and who, as a result of the conflict, had lost
both his home and his means of livelihood."[47] Two major conditions
were added to the definition: To be in need and to be residing in one
of the countries where UNRWA was providing relief. This definition
was elaborated over time, and, as a result of the criteria, part of the
1948 refugee population was never registered with the agency.[48] It is
important in this setting to note that the UNRWA registration is the
only registration of Palestinian refugees, and that in a legal perspective,
as Lex Takkenberg shows, there is no generally accepted definition of
who is to be considered a Palestinian refugee.[49] One excluded group
is of particular interest here. If a Palestinian refugee woman marries a
non-Palestinian, or a non-registered refugee, she may retain her refugee
status, but she cannot transmit her refugee status to her children, and
their children do not have rights of residency in a host country based
on their mother's status. While refugees and their descendants in the
male line born after 14 May 1948 are registered, these women and
their children are not even eligible for many of UNRWA services. This
implies that there is a large deficiency of registered refugee women, and
Christine A. Cervenak details the implications of this patrilineal system,
which is inconsistent with international legal norms.[50]

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[47] According to Lex Takkenberg (1998), all the phrases in this definition are sub-
ject to interpretation. Takkenberg concludes that the UNRWA definition of a 'Palestine
Refugee' was developed to "meet a condition, not to satisfy a theory". The definition
was designed for the determination of eligibility for UNRWA services, and it does not
coincide with the definition generally employed in the context of international refugee
law. See Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford:
Clarendon Press 1998: 83; 72; 68–85.

[48] UNRWA's definition of 'Palestine refugee' excluded several groups: the so-called
'economic refugees,' e.g. Arab Palestinians who had lost their land, but did not flee
their homes; inhabitants of border villages of the 1948 armistice line; and Palestinian
labourers who used to work in areas that became Israel. Refugees of the six-days' war
in 1967 were defined as 'displaced', not as 'Palestine refugees'. On the other hand, there
are Palestine refugees in the area who are not registered with UNRWA even though they
are entitled to register. Others who are entitled may live outside areas of operation or
they have never registered with UNRWA even though they are bona fide 1948 refugees,
simply because they were not in need of UNRWA's services after 1948. Some were assisted
by their families and clans; many Christians were assisted by their churches, and many
urban well-off Arab Palestinians were not in need of what UNRWA was offering and
hence did not register with UNRWA. See Lex Takkenberg 1988: 78–83.

[49] Lex Takkenberg 1998: 49.

[50] Christine M. Cervenak: "Promoting Inequality: Gender-Based Discrimination
in UNRWA's Approach to Palestine Refugee Status", *Human Rights Quarterly*, no. 26,
1994: 300–374.

UNRWA structured the registration system around the male head of the family, and the refugee status is passed down the generations through the father. This implies for example that women and children's relationship to the rations was "mediated through kinship with male."[51] The official justification for this gender-based discrimination is that UNRWA respects the patriarchal family structure of Arab culture.[52] Cervenak inquires if UNRWA presumptions in fact accurately reflected Arab culture, and she finds this inaccurate and over-generalised; in many cases the Sharia law is more flexible than UNRWA rules concerning maintenance of wives, children, inheritance and citizenship.[53] The exclusion of these women is currently under revision, but it is striking that it has been practiced since the 1950s until today. It is probable that an increase of number in registered refugees has been linked to political issues and UNRWA's crumbling budget and, hence, is opposed by donors and some governments. But UNRWA's eligibility process was rewritten in 1993, and now every bona fide refugee could add his name to the record, irrespective of need, geography and financial situation. The fact that the refugee women married to non-refugees or non-Palestinians were still excluded, indicates that additional explanations are needed, and a lack of priorities and importance attributed to these women and to 'gender' in UNRWA's policies may be one.

The principle behind this discrepancy of rations serves to shed light on another aspect of the politics of relief. In 1982 the Basic Rations Programme was phased out, under the pretext of the need to divert money to the crisis in Lebanon, and because the scarce resources of the Agency should be used to ensure the survival of UNRWA's education programme.[54] It was assumed that the rations by then had only a symbolic value for the refugees. The old ration regime did not measure levels of need; this was charity solely based on the fact of being registered, and it was known that many refugees used to sell their rations and so on. The Special Hardship Programme replaced the rations, and new 'needs criteria' pushed the 'rights criteria' aside. But the needs criteria were structured in a highly gendered fashion; they were based mainly on male unemployment. A registered refugee is eligible for support only if "there is no male head of family aged between 18 and 60 years within

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[51] Julie Peteet, 2005: 71, 76–85.
[52] Christine M. Cervenak 1994: 348.
[53] Christine M. Cervenak 1994: 353 ff.
[54] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 103, July 1983.

the same household who is listed on the same registration card, unless he qualifies for assistance because of medical incapacity, compulsory military service, is following a course of study, of has just been released from jail."[55] There is also a condition concerning income, but UNRWA's concept of poverty is based on the capacity of being employed, not the effective employment. This measure is different from the poverty measures used elsewhere and represents a gendered poverty pattern. In 2002 The Special Hardship families constituted 5.8 percent of the registered refugee population who are unable to meet basic needs for food, shelter and other essentials. Almost 47 percent of these are female-headed households, and this high percentage in "the most vulnerable section" of the refugee community indicates the "heavy burden that refugee women bear at the lowest income levels"[56] and the level of dependency on male employment.[57]

The shift from allocating rations for 85 percent of the refugees, to 6 percent of the refugee population did not pass unnoticed. According to Peteet, rations were symbols of "Palestinian exile, dependency, and powerlessness"[58] but simultaneously symbols of a right and political status as refugees in exile. In the early 1980s there were strikes and sit-ins, and camp leaders protested to UNRWA, as the reduction was interpreted as a liquidation of their rights. UNRWA issued leaflets, and tried to reach out through newspapers. The change of approach was a way of fostering self-sustainability in accordance with prevailing development thinking. While the agency's aim has been to encourage self-reliance, many refugees cling to their special hardship status, at least in the camps because of the link between the notions of dependence and political rights. There is, no doubt, however, as several scholars

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[55] http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/rss/specialhardship.html.
[56] Harish Parvataneni 2003: 7.
[57] UNRWA relief includes food aid, cash assistance, emergency relief, and shelter rehabilitation. Within the social services programmes, UNRWA's microfinance programme is targeting women. "The Microfinance and Micro-enterprise Programme" (MMP) comprises commercial, self-sustaining and market-oriented financial services delivered to the refugee community through the provision of working capital and capital investment loans. These services strengthen business activity, create jobs, generate income for participants, and help alleviate poverty and encourage women's economic participation. The "Solidarity Group Lending product" (SGL) of the MMP targets loans to women entrepreneurs, most of whom work in the informal sector. This product is a working capital loan, though provided with nominal collateral. http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/mmp/index.html.
[58] Julie Peteet 1991: 26, 186; Julie Peteet 2005: 81.

have shown, that the never-ending demands from the major UNRWA donors pressured UNRWA to reduce the numbers of relief recipients, and this dictated the primary approach to eligibility and registration matters for many years.[59]

The concept of 'development' has political connotations that can be traced back to the set up of UNRWA, and it is of importance in order to grasp the complexity of this concept in UNRWA. The establishment of UNRWA was a part of the US efforts to expand its control in the Middle East and to combat Soviet influence and the communist threat in the region,[60] for example as a parallel to the Marshall aid to Europe. Post WWII de-colonisation and development problems in the 'third world' were seen as a political challenge. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) established the Economic Survey Mission (ESM), which is of particular importance in this context.[61] Gordon Clapp, chairman of the US Tennessee Valley Authority, headed this mission. The mission was charged with examining the economic situation in the countries affected by the hostilities in Palestine and with making recommendations to UNCCP for an integrated programme.[62] The mission suggested the establishment of UNRWA, as "a programme of public works, calculated to improve the productivity of the area."[63] As Buehrig and Schiff have detailed, the ESM actually promoted large-scale works programmes (The 'w' in UNRWA) to resettle the refugees in the countries of refuge. These schemes included 'work relief' (small scale training and employment creating projects), 'work projects' (road construction and tree planting), projects subsidising resettlement in Libya and Iraq, and large-scale development projects with host governments, such as a regional water development project to resettle the refugees.[64] In addition to these work schemes, UNRWA was to continue the relief efforts of its

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[59] Lex Takkenberg 1998: 70.

[60] Edward Buehrig: *The UN and the Palestinian Refugees. A Study in Nonterritorial Administration*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971; Benjamin N. Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation. UN Aid to the Palestinians*, New York: Syracuse University Press 1995.

[61] For details about the establishment of UNRWA, see Buehrig 1971, Schiff 1995, Takkenberg 1998.

[62] United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 1949, *Final Report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East. An Approach to Economic Development in the Middle East*, part I, The Final Report and Appendices. Lake Success, New York, 28 December 1949.

[63] Lex Takkenberg 1998: 26.

[64] See Benjamin Schiff 1995: 21.

predecessors, the Non Governmental Organisations.[65] However, due the refugees' and host countries' sensitivity to the economic resettlement schemes, and the high costs involved, by 1957 the weight of UNRWA efforts shifted to relief, health, and particularly to education, efforts this essay has given examples of.

The Politics of Gender, Refugee Relief, and Humanitarian Assistance

UNRWA's programmes were meeting points between a western modern phenomena and local traditions. UNRWA's projects brought new possibilities for social change and were seen as necessary for social development, but elements of continuity—for example teacher training of rural girls during the British Mandate period—were ignored. Training programmes that targeted women were progressive in the sense that they opened up for training of girls and new kinds of employment, and the high percentage of girls enrolled in UNRWA's primary schools represented something new. On the other hand, many projects gendered girls' opportunities; the ideal of educated wives and healthy mothers who performed traditional or modern needle-work was emphasised. Even today the UNRWA registration system reflects the idea of women as nurturers, men as breadwinners. The ideology of modernisation was gendered, while the local traditions were both changing and carrying elements from pre-1948. UNRWA participated in the social transformation of peasants to educated, healthy, and skilled refugees, while women's formers roles in agriculture were either addressed or left behind as 'backward' and 'traditional.' These approaches may reflect a view on how women were seen at the time—an act of balance between modernity, what could be accepted locally, what could generate income or employment—and probably a result of the level of priority of women compared to all the other tasks UNRWA was set to perform and crumbling budgets.

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[65] Until UNRWA started its operations on May 1, 1950, The League of Red Cross Societies took care of the refugees in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan; The International Committees of the Red Cross worked in the West Bank while the American Friends Service Committee relieved the immediate needs of the refugees in Gaza. See for example Julie Peteet 2001: "The AFSC Refugee Archive on Palestine 1948–1950" in Salim Tamari & Elia Zureik (eds) 2001: *Reinterpreting the Historical Record. The Uses of Palestinian Refugee Archives for Social Science Research and Policy Analysis*. Jerusalem, Institute for Jerusalem Studies/Institute for Palestine Studies, Peteet 2005, Schiff 1995 and Ilana Feldman's article in this volume.

The similarities of the welfare approaches of UNRWA and GUPW are striking, yet UNRWA's aims were clearly different from those of the Union.[66] As the Ramallah Women Training Centre showed, in the 1960s, UNRWA education gave hope to the refugee girls; it provided a chance for them to improve themselves and their families both culturally and economically and, according to the newsletter, to give the children a more fruitful life "than that of a refugee."[67] Today one third of the registered refugees live in camps, and form part of these dynamics. Peteet points out that, after WWII, the "notion of *rehabilitation* was firmly integrated in the institutions and modernist discourse of refugee relief" and that UNRWA's task was to

> ensure the survival of the refugees, provide education, rations, shelter, and medical care, and to oversee their rehabilitation until a settlement could be reached. UNRWA's other task was to transform the refugees into productive citizens of other Arab states, a project that generated enormous tensions.[68]

Avi Plascov investigated the processes of the refugees' decisions to take part in UNRWA's programmes/projects.[69] In the 1950s, many refugees wanted these programmes, but could not openly accept them in principle, because there was a fear of any scheme felt to threaten their rights. Gradually, the refugees participated in the numerous UNRWA projects, as a chance to for example establish themselves economically. But according to Plascov, the refugees

> never approved of nor really acquiesced in the basic idea behind these programmes, which was essentially complete resettlement and the surrender of what they regarded as their rights to their former lands. Idleness and apathy among the refugees were replaced by the strong will of an industrious people who aimed at re-establishing themselves. Whatever their outward attitudes, they took advantage of all UNRWA facilities, under the "permitting" rubric of "Until the Day of Return.[70]

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[66] A comparison of the gender approaches of UNRWA to the other relief systems of the PLO social welfare system, the popular organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, zakat committees, and for example, Hamas would provide useful insights to this analysis.

[67] *Palestine Refugees Today*, no. 17, June 1962, UNRWA.

[68] Julie Peteet 2005: 50.

[69] Avi Plascov: *The Palestinian Refugees in Jordan 1948–1957*. London: Frank Cass, 1981: 70.

[70] Avi Plascov 1981: 161.

To define the needs of refugee women is a political act. The different ways of gendering the needs of refugees need to be analysed in an overall perspective, as this has been inter-twined with the various development approaches applied through UNRWA's programmes. 'Self-help,' 'rehabilitation,' 'self-support,' 'self-sustainability,' and 'self-reliance' are concepts that have been used—depending on the discourse of the decade – to describe the aims of many of the interventions targeting both genders within the UNRWA's programmes over the decades. The nuances and implications of these terms are not clear and have changed over time. In today's terminology, UNRWA's programmes and emergency assistance have "emphasised the aim of empowering the refugee community to become economically self-reliant and effectively contribute to the societies in which they live and work."[71] This in turn is linked to the politics of aid, and the notion of humanitarian assistance in UNRWA's services.

UNRWA was set up because of the necessity to "prevent conditions of starvation and distress among the them [the refugees] and to further conditions of peace and stability,"[72] and it was only mandated to carry out direct relief and the works programmes.[73] The lack of political solutions led UNRWA to focus on humanitarian assistance, and this assistance has taken various forms during the decades; it has secured the survival of the refugees also during the many emergencies in the region. But what does 'humanitarian' imply in refugee relief? In spite of the Palestinian claim that their cause is political and national, refugee relief has been left with humanitarianism, and as Julie Peteet has shown, Liisa Malkki's concept of 'depoliticization' of the category of 'refugee' is particularly timely for the analysis of UNRWA and its mandate and programmes. Malkki points at that after the establishment of the League of Nations in 1921, an international refugee regime was established to deal with

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[71] Harish Parvataneni 2003: 1.

[72] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV), para. 5.

[73] On 8 December 1949 the UN General Assembly adopted the UNGA resolution 302 (IV), and UNRWA was established. UNRWA's mandate was "to carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programmes as recommended by the ESM" and "to consult with the interested Near Eastern Governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects are no longer available." United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV), para. 7 a/b. The terms of the mandate have varied from, for example, works projects to relief, welfare, and social services, etc.

the growing number of refugees.[74] According to her, the refugee was seen as an "object of knowledge, assistance, and management," and the effect "was to depoliticize the refugee category and to construct in that depoliticised space a ahistorical, universal humanitarian subject" In the context of a lack of political solutions to their exile, it has been an humanitarian obligation of UNRWA to assist the refugees where they are and to create opportunities for improvement of their lives. UNRWA's humanitarian role has been imbued with politics since its setup; its aid could give the refugee a small hope from the international community, essential for their comfort, for the security of the region, and for a peaceful spirit. UNRWA was left with a narrow mandate, but great expectations from all parties, the donors, the host countries, and the refugees, and demands were continuously expanding while budgets were crumbling.

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[74] Liisa Malkki 1996: 377–378 quoted in Peteet 2005: 50. See also Jennifer Hyndman: *Managing Displacement. Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000.

MERCY TRAINS AND RATION ROLLS
BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND HUMANITARIANISM
IN GAZA (1948–67)

Ilana Feldman

As I complete this essay in the summer of 2006, Gaza is once again facing a crisis. Officials of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees [UNRWA], the organization which since 1950 has been responsible for aiding displaced Palestinians, have been trying to raise the alarm about worsening conditions in the Strip. Under regular assault by the Israeli military, with all means of entrance and egress frequently closed, the population is suffering what may by the most significant humanitarianism crisis since the immediate aftermath of the 1948 displacement—a moment known to Palestinians as the *nakba* [catastrophe]. What is striking about Gaza, and the case of Palestinian refugees more generally, is that since 1948 moments of crisis have punctuated a broader on-going, seemingly permanent, humanitarian condition. In the Palestinian experience the humanitarian emergency is (most of the time) no longer emergent. That is, while humanitarianism is self-defined as an exceptional mode of intervention, it has been the normal order of things for Palestinians. Further, however much practitioners might seek to avoid it, over the longue duree humanitarianism necessarily becomes something like government.

Taking the case of Gaza in the aftermath of the 1948 *nakba* [catastrophe] as an example, this essay explores this often slippery zone between humanitarianism and government. Since 1948 Gaza has been a space 'shared' by government—the Egyptian Administration until 1967—and humanitarian organizations—the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC] from 1948–1950 and UNRWA thereafter. Given that refugees formed a significant majority of the population, services provided by humanitarian organizations occupied as much space in the service landscape as those provided by government. Not only were there frequent jurisdictional quarrels among these various bodies, the question of what sorts of practice counted as "humanitarianism" and what as "government" was often unclear. This lack of clarity is not unique to Gaza—though it was heightened by the difficult conditions pertaining

there. Considering such practices as Egyptian government-sponsored "mercy trains" which brought aid to refugees in Gaza, the AFSC development of ration rolls and other procedures to manage and regularize the delivery of relief, and the regular tussles between the Administration and UNRWA about who would pay for particular public works projects, this essay explores the interactions among the various actors in these processes.

The Gaza Strip is itself an entity created out of crisis. Before 1948, this territory had been part of the Gaza District of Palestine, governed like the rest of the country by British Mandatory authorities. In the course of the war over the establishment of Israel, around 250,000 refugees from other parts of Palestine joined the 80,000 native inhabitants of the area. The boundaries of the Gaza Strip are those of the 1949 armistice agreement that halted fighting between Israel and Egypt, whose forces were in Gazan territory. The terms of this agreement recognized Egypt as the administrator of this newly constricted space with its newly expanded population. In the years that followed, Gaza was the only part of Mandate Palestine that was not absorbed into another state—Israel was established on the largest portion of this territory and Jordan annexed the West Bank. Per Egyptian policy, Gaza remained a Palestinian space, but it was a space without an actually existing sovereign. The unusual status of this territory necessarily contributed to the particularities of humanitarianism here.[1]

In the immediate aftermath of displacement, the United Nations commissioned the AFSC to manage relief provision in Gaza (other organizations were given responsibility for Palestinian refugees in other areas), a responsibility which it maintained until the establishment of UNRWA in 1950 (the Agency was formally established at the end of 1949, but it took another few months for it to be ready to take over relief work). The establishment of UNRWA brought relief for all Palestinian refugees—whether in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria—under the same administrative umbrella. In each place, though,

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[1] Debates about the extent to which humanitarian organizations should defer to local sovereigns have long been a part of this field (see for example, Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCR in the Global Undertow" *International Migration Review* 35, 1 (2001): 244–277 and Tim Allen and David Styan, "A Right to Interfere? Bernard Kouchner and the New Humanitarianism," *Journal of International Development* 12, 6 (2000): 825–42. The fact that there was government, but no sovereign in Gaza created particular challenges.

Agency practice was shaped by relations with the 'host country'. Over the years, UNRWA has reported significantly different levels of cooperation with these countries.[2]

In Gaza, the definition of the 'host country' was a particular challenge. There was no doubt that Egypt was the controlling authority in this territory, but its claims to govern on behalf of a future Palestinian state complicated on-the-ground relations with both the AFSC and UNRWA. AFSC volunteers sometimes complained of Egyptian interference—both in daily work and in their relations with the UN. As one member of the team reported in response to such an incident: "I must say that I look with very little favor at the attempt on the part of the Egyptian authorities to censor or control our communications with the United Nations."[3] When UNRWA came in, it viewed Egypt as the host country in Gaza, while the Egyptians "insisted that Gaza was an entity with which UNRWA should deal directly."[4] Dealing with Gaza directly meant, of course, dealing with the Egyptian military officials who were administering the Strip. Even without claiming sovereignty, these administrators did claim some of the prerogatives of a sovereign power—the right to control borders and admission to the territory for instance—which sometimes created problems for UNRWA, whose officials complained that its employees were sometimes arbitrarily denying permission to travel in and out of Gaza.[5]

This complication about the status of the Gaza Strip itself was one of many factors that produced a sometimes confused relationship between humanitarianism and government. Even more fundamental were the basic demands of humanitarian work itself. While different humanitarian organizations have different attitudes about contributing to lasting changes in local infrastructure or service practices, for all such organizations the efficient delivery of the aid they are there to provide—whether food, medical, or other assistance—is a matter of paramount concern. Not surprisingly, this concern leads to the development of practices of

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[2] While the Agency mandate initially included refugees inside Israel—both Jewish and Arab—the Israeli government ultimately told the organization that it did not want it to operate within its territory.

[3] American Friends Service Committee Archives [hereafter AFSC], #23 FS Sect Palestine, Report on Clapp Commission visit to Gaza, 11 October 1949.

[4] Edward H. Buehrig, *The UN and the Palestinian Refugees: A Study in Nonterritorial Administration* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 69.

[5] Ibid., 70.

management that work to govern—in different ways—the populations
receiving such aid. Humanitarian work in Gaza was no exception to
this dynamic.

Humanitarian organizations often operate in places where local
states have either conspicuously "failed" or where they seem to have
turned against their populations. In these circumstances, even as the
humanitarian mandate is self-consciously narrow, these organizations
are stepping into a gap that requires government. As it seems that
these gaps may be proliferating, it is no surprise that scholars who are
interested in understanding current global dynamics have also been
interested in the role that transnational humanitarian networks might
play in governing such places. As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson
argue about NGOs more generally: "The outsourcing of the functions
of the state to NGOs and other ostensibly nonstate agencies…is a key
feature, not only of the operation of national states, but of an emerging
system of transnational governmentality."[6] Aihwa Ong calls attention to
the ways that NGOs operate in "a fluid space of contending regimes" that
requires them to negotiate with both states and markets "on behalf of
the politically excluded."[7] While much of this scholarship is interested
in relatively recent phenomena—new transformations in the power of
global NGO networks—Gaza provides an opportunity to explore such
'humanitarian government' historically. Here this circumstance is not
a new dynamic, but rather a condition that has characterized the place
since 1948.

Relief Management

The AFSC, which began working in Gaza in December 1948, was not the
first source of assistance to the refugees who were pouring into the area.
Both the Egyptian army and the native population of the area had tried
to provide some help. One native Gazan recalled how people went out
to help refugees coming by boat from places like Jaffa: "A man would go

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⁶ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Spatializing states: Toward an ethnography of
neoliberal governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4, (2002): 981–1002, 990. See
also Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
⁷ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*
(Duke: Duke University Press, 2006), 198.

into the sea with rope until he reached the boat. He would tie it to the rope and 200 or 300 people would try to draw the boat to shore with the rope. Then they [the refugees] were taken to schools and mosques [for shelter]. Scouts would go to houses and shops and ask for donations of food, cheese, and shelter."[8] While these efforts, and those of the Egyptian army—which provided some rations and began the process of organizing people into camps—were not insignificant, the AFSC was the first agency formally delegated responsibility for relief provision. They operated by contract with the United Nations and according to a set of principles that they outlined before they began their work—known as the nineteen points. One of these points described their relation to the UN: "Our identity and autonomy must be preserved. All concerned must understand that we are not acting as an agency of the U.N., but as a private agency at the invitation of U.N., and drawing upon U.N. monetary and other support." The insistence on Quaker distinctiveness in the nineteen points proved a challenge to maintain over the course of the project.

When the AFSC began its work in Gaza, it built on the work that the Egyptians had done before it. A report on camp organization details some of this work. First noting that the camps were not orderly in any sense, the report describes the Egyptian military personnel who were working in these spaces: "The Egyptian army have stationed a Lieutenant (each recently recruited from Egypt and sometimes unused to the crises of refugee camp life) in each camp, with a staff of two or three orderlies, two or three Palestine Police, and up to 20 or 30 employees from among the refugees.... These Lieutenants remain responsible for public order." Camp management always included both the maintenance of order and security and the delivery of services. As the report described Egyptian service provision, they relied on the participation of the population to make the system work:

> Before Quaker personnel arrived, they were dealing with the refugees through mukhtars or notables of each village from which refugees originally came. These certified a man and his family as coming from a specific town and as having a family with x-teen children. From lists thus prepared, distribution of flour proceeded. Beyond this rather informal relationship of the local military to the mukhtars, there seem no apparent

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8 Interview, Gaza City, 16 February 1999. The Gaza port was not deep enough to receive large boats, hence the need to wade out to meet them.

organization—the refugees arrived, lay down, received some tents and some flour, and they are still in the same area, more or less.[9]

While the Quakers were quite appreciative of Egyptian efforts, and admired some of the methods they had used, they felt it was imperative—in order to fulfill their obligations to the UN and to the refugees—that they work quickly towards greater efficiency and orderliness in their operations.

The practice of keeping refugees in village groupings and issuing rations through the *mukhtar* seemed a good one. Recommendations from more experienced relief workers also suggested seeking out and putting to work former members of the Palestine Police among the refugees—who had been "trained for reliability by the British."[10] They would not be asked to work as policemen—the Quakers wanted security responsibility to remain with the Egyptians—but to act as assistants to AFSC volunteers in managing the distribution process. In addition to these staffing questions, population management was a crucial part of the relief process. The Quakers had to know precisely who was supposed to be receiving assistance, and for that registration was a crucial mechanism. Based on the experience in Northern Palestine it was suggested that schoolgirls were helpful assistants in this process, but noted that "boys of the same age [were] unhelpful." The plan for ration cards—which the Gaza team seems to have followed fairly closely—was to issue cards—made of stiff cardboard—by family and "when the ration was issued a streetcar conductor's punch punched a tamper-proof hole in the proper place. Other kinds of markings are not safe—pencil, ink, etc, can all be doctored by our ingenious friends." The ration card system developed by these early relief workers (Quakers in Gaza, IRC, and LRCS elsewhere) formed the basis for the UNRWA card system that is still used.

As the comment about ration card doctoring indicates, the possibility (and indeed prevalence) of fraud was a matter of great concern to the

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[9] AFSC, #9 FS Sect Palestine, Report from Howard Wriggins to Brigadier Parminter, UNRPR, 3 March 1949.

[10] AFSC, #89 FS Sect Palestine 1948, Memo from Howard Wriggins to Delbert Repogle and Colin Bell on meeting with Raphael Cilento, 30 December 1948. As the memo further commented: "Those who were really reliable would have in their possession good conduct papers issued by the Palestine Police—and if adequate rations and perhaps some prestige were offered them, they would be only too glad to come forward for some service—but beware if they haven't a paper of good conduct!"

AFSC and to the UN. As I have explored in some detail elsewhere the particular characteristics of Gaza produced added complications in this regard.[11] A very large percentage of the 80,000 person native population of Gaza were in straits as desperate as the refugees. They were not, however, eligible for UN rations—the mandate being very clearly limited to those displaced from their homes. This exclusion, in addition to the recognized inadequacy of the rations themselves, created conditions ripe for fraud, as people sought ways of getting food they desperately needed. While Quakers were sympathetic to these concerns, and in fact objected to the limits of their mandate, the limits of their resources demanded that they police eligibility fairly stringently.[12]

Ration cards provided a mechanism to monitor eligibility for relief and to track receipt of rations. Managing the distribution process required additional techniques. When the Quakers first started providing relief in Gaza, they lacked a clear method for ensuring what they considered to be efficient and equitable distribution of goods. Early reports reflect a fair degree of chaos in operations. As one volunteer reported on his departure from Gaza, when he first arrived he found a scene of "total confusion" in the warehouse. There was no method for receiving supplies, no adequate bookkeeping system, and "no forms for issuing of goods."[13] A report on distributions in the Nuseirat camp early on described: "The distribution hut is in the center of a clearing surrounded by barbed wire. Thousands of refugees press all around this.... One day a woman's arm was broken, not especially because the crowd was unruly, but just the sheer weight of so many human beings pressing as close to the fence as they could."[14] From the outset, the AFSC worked hard to develop mechanisms for more efficient distribution.

As they prepared to hand over the project to the newly-established UNRWA, the Quaker staff prepared a series of detailed recommendations for relief work—recommendations that reflected the systems they had

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[11] Ilana Feldman, "Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, 1(2007): 129–69.

[12] The problem of ration roll management is one that plagued UNRWA throughout its area of operations. In fact, Gaza's ration rolls, due in no small part to Quaker efforts, were long more accurate than those of other areas.

[13] AFSC, #160 FS Sect Palestine 25 July 1949. These problems were fairly quickly addressed, but difficulties remained in coordinating the Egyptian army for the unloading of supplies as they arrived by train. From the Quaker standpoint, there was a deplorable lack of efficiency in the process—with trucks arriving late and sometimes with only enough gasoline for a partial day's work.

[14] AFSC, #29 FS Sect Palestine, "Background Material on Nuseirat," 15 March 1949.

put into place over the course of their 16-month operation. "All recipients should enter a central door and go by a central line book," begins the section on methods of distribution. It continues:

> Once in the building they may alternately divide between two line and go out doors situated at the end of the line. The ration card should be picked up at the line book and passed from one punch clerk to the other and returned to the owner as they leave. In this way there is more control, less confusion, and less likelihood of substituting a false card…always try to foresee the problems of a given distribution before it begins, and equip yourself accordingly.… Items that may be the subject of controversy such as blankets and sleeping bags should be sorted before the distribution begins, to weed out the bad ones, or you must distribute them as them come, allowing no exchanges.[15]

It is not difficult to imagine the experiences that led to these recommendations, or to the suggestion to: "keep mukhtars and interested spectators out of the center while the actual distribution is going on and thereby lessen the confusion." One of the effects of these methods was to depersonalize relief. People would 'randomly' go through one line or the other, they would have to take whatever goods they got (without distinction or opportunity for complaint). A well-managed distribution process would both improve people's experience with relief and would further ensure that no ineligible persons would receive such relief. In this way, good distribution management furthered the work of record management.

While management concerns were part of AFSC practice in Gaza from the outset, the handover of the project to the newly-established UNRWA required the organization to face them even more head on. The field manual I quoted above was one result of this attention. In addition to providing advice for UNRWA, the Gaza team began to reshape its practice according to criteria that the Agency laid out. Part of the process of preparing UNRWA to take over responsibility for relief operations involved taking the means and methods of the different voluntary organizations working in the Palestinian refugee field and consolidating them into one relief mechanism. As the Agency put it after the successful transfer: "it was necessary to develop rules of procedure and instructions to standardize action in all areas, a condition which could not be

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[15] AFSC, #200 FS Sect Palestine, Memo from Al Holtz to James Keen, Field Director for UNRPR, 20 January 1950.

achieved under the four autonomous bodies previously concerned in relief measures."[16]

The minutes of a December 1949 executive committee meeting outline some of the work required of the AFSC: "the UN would like for us to shape our organization toward the pattern they will use, since if we do this it will be much easier for them to take over and will also be much easier for the refugees.... The psychological factor of making the least possible change in routine at the time of the transfer in administration is important."[17] UNRWA had requested that operations be "streamlined" such that ration distribution could be done bi-monthly rather than weekly. In addition to streamlining the operations and providing a practical guide for ration distribution, the AFSC team also reconfigured the ration cards to meet UN specifications—a process that involved "copying 29,000 to 30,000 villagers cards...since they have asked for the cards to be broken down into small family units."[18] The ultimately successful transfer of operations was, UNRWA noted, "a splendid tribute to the co-operative spirit of all concerned."[19]

Making Humanitarianism Government

Recent discussions about post-Cold War transformations in humanitarian practice have emphasized the development of humanitarian bureaucracy as marking a significant change within this field. Michael Barnett, for instance, has argued that the 1990s standardization and rationalization of humanitarian practice is part of the emergence of humanitarianism as a field, where before there existed simply an array of different organizations.[20] The Quaker experience in Gaza suggests that—even if coordination was somewhat limited—efforts to standardize relief have been part of humanitarianism from the outset. However small or ad-hoc the organization, it is simply not possible to do humanitarian

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[16] UN A/1451/Rev.1, Interim Report of UNRWA Director, 6 October 1950.
[17] AFSC, #73 FS Sect Palestine 1949, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 7 December 1949.
[18] AFSC, #73 FS Sect Palestine 1949, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 14 December 1949.
[19] Interim Report of UNRWA Director.
[20] Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism Transformed," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, 4 (2005): 723–740.

work effectively without some degree of governmentalization. What degree, though, has been a subject of considerable contention.

This was certainly a question with which the AFSC struggled. Each of the concrete management decisions that I described above were certainly also acts of 'government'. But government is more than a collection of management techniques. It also indicates an interest in, as Foucault put it, 'the conduct of conduct'. Governing work always exceeds the formal confines of the state, but in conditions like those in Gaza—where the Egyptian army was the controlling authority, but the previously existing state, the Mandate, had been destroyed—responsibility was even less clear. The Quakers worried frequently about how much they might need to take on the role of the state—both in terms of service provision and in terms of the shaping of refugee character.

These questions were one source of stress in the relations between the AFSC and the Egyptian military. While the Quaker Palestine Unit [QPU] was very concerned that the army not interfere in its relief operation, we have seen that people also sometimes expressed frustration with the chaotic conditions in which this operation had to proceed. The need for better management highlights ways Quakers were compelled to expand their practice—to enter into the domain of government. Somewhat despite itself, over the course of the project in Gaza the AFSC found itself increasingly acting less as a collection of caring individuals, and more as an increasingly impersonal organization. By October 1949 the QPU project leader acknowledged that: "AFSC must recognize that we can not conduct a mass distribution, in which we are acting virtually as a semi-governmental body, as we would conduct a normal Quaker operation."[21] As Quakers came to recognize the responsibilities of government—responsibilities which included not only promoting order and security, but sometimes challenging resource management—required methods of action that did not always mesh easily with Quaker style and ethics.

The question of ethics created raised especially difficult challenges for the AFSC. In this area, in addition to developing governmentalized practices that expanded their sense of their mission, the Quakers also confronted difficult questions about the limits of their responsibility to the Gazan population. As I have explored in detail elsewhere, the fact

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[21] AFSC, #24 FS Sect Palestine, Letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, 15 October 1949.

that the AFSC mandate was explicitly limited to the refugees in Gaza, even as the native population was in as much need as were these displaced people, posed enormous ethical and practical challenges for the Quakers.[22] However much they may have wanted to aid everyone—and they clearly did—they had neither the authority nor the means to expand their jurisdiction. While they could not provide direct aid to Gaza's native population, to the extent that the AFSC acted *like* a government they could participate in managing their condition. In one such case, they helped organize a project to improve sanitation in the village of Jabalya, an endeavor which involved, as they put it "some rather painful meetings with mukhtars, the District Officers [Egyptian officials], and a Quaker representative" with the result that "money is being collected by the village to at least partially care for the situation."[23]

The AFSC was by no means unique in facing challenges about how much like government they should or had to be. *Médecins Sans Frontières* [MSF] and the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]—two exemplary humanitarian organizations—can be usefully compared in this context. One of the things that MSF critiqued the ICRC for in its founding as a "new" kind of humanitarianism was the latter's over-respectful attitude towards states and their sovereignty. ICRC practice entails gaining permission from states before going into an area.[24] MSF, to the contrary, was explicit that state sovereignty should not interfere with their actions. Rather, as Miriam Ticktin describes, they reserved for themselves the right and indeed the duty to interfere anywhere a humanitarian emergency unfolds.[25] In this respect, MSF is is more willing to enter into the terrain of state prerogatives than is the ICRC.

From the perspective of government as management, however, the picture looks somewhat different. Peter Redfield has explored the MSF insistence that it does not, and will not, work to rule the places it

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[22] Ilana Feldman, "Difficult Distinctions" and "The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief," *American Ethnologist* 34, 4 (2007): 689–705.

[23] AFSC, #106 FS Sect Palestine, Monthly Sanitation Report, July 1949. It was also Quaker practice and policy, for instance, "to hire refugees only, unless we cannot find a refugee suitable for a given job" (AFSC, #81 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes Camp Leaders Meeting, 13 December 1949).

[24] Fiona Terry, *Condemned to repeat?: the paradox of humanitarian action* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Press, 2002).

[25] Miriam Ticktin, "Medical Humanitarianism in and beyond France: Breaking down or patrolling borders?" in *Medicine at the Border: Disease, Globalization, and Security, 1850 to the Present, ed. Alison Bashford*, 116–35 (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

operates.[26] From the MSF perspective, to act too much like government in the administrative sense would serve to undermine its delineation of a "humanitarian space" of action apart from the political conflicts which often provoke its work. It is for this reason that the organization has often been reluctant to engage in projects that would effect broader transformations on the places where they work.[27] As Liisa Malkki suggests, the ICRC takes a somewhat broader view of its on-the-ground practice. She argues, based on fieldwork with Finnish ICRC professionals, that workers take pride in being able to develop infrastructure projects, to leave something behind when they go home.[28] The ICRC would not choose the label 'government' to describe these endeavors, but they are clearly more comfortable acting within a government's traditional service domain. Whatever differences of attitude among humanitarian organizations about being called government (and MSF and ICRC are just two examples of a much broader field), it is clear that none have been entirely able to refuse the practice. The experience of AFSC volunteers in Gaza was, in this sense, not very different from that of humanitarian workers operating elsewhere.

Mercy Trains: Government as Humanitarianism

It was not only Quakers who struggled with the proper dimensions of their role in Gaza. The Egyptian Administration, which in its first years was a military regime, also faced uncertainties about how—and to what extent—to govern Gaza. I have explored these uncertainties, and the governmental practices developed in response, in detail elsewhere.[29]

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[26] Peter Redfield, *Doctors, Borders, and Life in Crisis*, Cultural anthropology. 20, 3 (2005): 328–361.

[27] This stance has not been an entirely consistent one. MSF advocacy for affordable AIDS medication is one instance where the organization has chosen a wider involvement with these places and people.

[28] Liisa Malkki, "Professional Solidarities and Situated Universalisms: Bases of Humanitarian Practice Among ICRC Professionals in Finland," Unpublished manuscript.

[29] Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule (1917–67)*, (Durham: Duke University Press, in press); "Government Without Expertise? Competence, Capacity, and Civil Service Practice in Gaza (1917–1967)," International Journal of Middle East Studies 37, 4 (November 2005): 485–507; "Everyday Government in Extraordinary Times: Persistence and Authority in Gaza's Civil Service (1917–1967)," Comparative Studies in Society and History 47, 4 (October 2005): 863–9.

Here I want to recount one aspect of this complex field—the coding of government *as* humanitarianism in its first years. As the Department of Refugee Supervision, Government Assistance, and Social Affairs [henceforth Refugee Affairs] explained its work in a 1953 report: "Our mission for these people is humanitarian in the first degree…we have to expend great effort in spreading reassurance and hope among them in order to stop…the fall into destruction which has already afflicted some of them because of the [difficult conditions] in which they live."[30]

James Ferguson has explored new conditions of governance in Africa where states have become, as he puts it "nongovernmental."[31] To a certain extent, Egyptian rule in Gaza in the first years of the Administration can also be called nongovernmental, but not in exactly the same way that Ferguson means it for Africa. He describes a situation where states "have increasingly gotten out of the business of governing," a circumstance that has resulted in "not 'less state interference and inefficiency,' as Western neoliberal reformers imagined, but simply less order, less peace, and less security."[32] In Gaza, on the other hand, Egyptian rule was coded as nongovernmental (i.e. driven, like NGOs are supposed to be, by humanitarian concerns) in order to make it more possible for Egypt to actually govern this place.

The reasons for this emphasis on the humanitarian were several. I have already noted the uncertain legal status of the Gaza Strip, a condition which made it difficult for the Egyptian Administration to define its government in Gaza in the classic terms of the state. By projecting its service for Gaza as a humanitarian effort, rather than as part of a rationalized bureaucratic structure, the Administration was able (at least initially) to proceed without fully inhabiting the role of a government. The particular Egyptian history with Palestine also influenced its governing form. Egyptian forces had entered Palestine with a promise to defend its Arab character. Instead of vanquishing the Israeli military, however, Egypt found itself quite humiliatingly defeated. Its troops— among them Gamal Abdul Nasser—were trapped by the Israeli army in Faluja, and required international intervention to negotiate a passage

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[30] Israel State Archives [hereafter ISA], RG 115, Box 2024, File 14, Department of General Supervision of Refugees, Government Assistance, and Social Affairs, *Annual Report 1953*, 2.

[31] James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 39.

[32] Ibid.

out. Gazans certainly remember this moment as a promise betrayed. As one person put it to me: "It was five months after the Arab armies had entered Palestine and they handed Palestine to the Jews and they then retreated.... They handed over all the village to the Jews—the rest of Hamama, El-Majdal, Askalan, Barbara, El-Brair, Bir Saba, and all these villages without war. The people, of course, were miserable and had nothing to fight with. The people relied on the army, but the army retreated."[33]

With the failure of efforts to protect the political future of Palestine and Palestinians, an apolitical humanitarianism may—in the first years after 1948—have been the only credible mode of claiming to assist the Gazan population. In the later years of the Administration, a political agenda returned—and the promise of a deferred Palestinian state became important to the language of Egyptian governance in Gaza. In the immediate aftermath of displacement however, not only was the population ill-equipped to organize politically, they were not likely to trust Egyptian capabilities to deliver on such promises. Humanitarianism, in fact, may have provided a means to improve the Egyptian image in Palestinian eyes. Certainly, even as Gazans express frustration with the failure of its military, they remember Egyptian rule in largely positive terms. The most common description of this period I heard from people in Gaza was, in fact, that it was a "golden age" for Palestinians, precisely because of the services Egyptian provided—among other things they made universal primary education a reality for the first time, provided free university education to large numbers of Palestinians, and made land available for sale at very low prices. To a considerable extent, then, Egyptian strategy seems to have paid off.

While humanitarian government was a feature of Egyptian rule from the outset, it is perhaps best epitomized by the "mercy trains" [*qatarat al-rahma*] organized by General Naguib after the July Revolution that ousted King Farouk from the Egyptian government.[34] These trains trav-

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[33] Interview, Gaza City, 22 February 1999. Gazans also talk a lot about the faulty weapons scandal that was uncovered after the war.

[34] While the Mercy Trains were the first major public expression of this mode of governing, it had begun before the Free Officers' Revolt which transformed the Egyptian Government. From the first months of the Administration, Egyptian officials in charge of Gaza wrote to the heads of government ministries in Cairo asking for donations to help keep Gaza's mosques and schools operational (Egyptian National Archives, *Qawá im Al-Mushīr*, Group 8, file number 1–27/s g/14, folder 1 "Administration of the Areas Controlled by Egyptian Forces in Palestine," Letter from Governor General to Agent of *Awqaf* Ministry, October, 1949).

eled between Cairo and Gaza, carrying food and clothing donated by Egyptians for the Palestinian refugees. Gazans remember these trains as organized charity: "The Egyptians offered help through the Mercy Trains. They gave the goods to prominent figures who, in turn, distributed the aid to the people.... The rich gave to the poor."[35] UNRWA's annual report for1952/53 noted that it assisted in "the distribution of goods given by the people of Egypt to the refugees and local residents of the area, and transported by the 'mercy trains' which carried thousands of tons of foodstuffs and household supplies to Gaza as a result of a personal appeal by General Naguib to the people of Egypt."[36]

That these trains were intended to have a public relations effect seems clear from the press coverage they received in both Egypt and Gaza. The inaugural journey of these trains was well-covered by the press of both places, which devoted lengthy articles to describing both donation and receipt of the goods. An article in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* described the arrival of the first trains in Gaza—where they stopped in each town along the route from Rafah to Gaza City for formal acknowl-edgment—as evidence that "the army has not forgotten Palestine" and as an example of the "sympathy and generosity of Egypt."[37] Another article told how an Egyptian schoolboy was so moved by the plight of the Palestinians that he donated all his money for their assistance. The article recounted that he went up to the train conductor and said: "Here is my monthly allowance. I present it to my brothers the refugees."[38] The widespread support for the project among Egyptians was said to mark their concern for their brethren as well as to "constitute proof that the honorable people believes fully in our [the Free Officer's] movement."[39] These articles seem clearly meant to speak to both Gazans and Egyptians and to enhance support for the new Egyptian regime in both places.

That Gazans would not be forever satisfied with simple humani-tarianism from Egypt was evident in the response of the Gazan press. *Al-Raqib*, a local paper, took the opportunity of the trains arrival to thank the Egyptian government for its assistance and to remind it that Palestinians were also waiting for other trains—trains that would return

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[35] Interview, Shati Camp, 16 March 1999.
[36] UNRWA, *Annual Report of the Director covering the period 1 July 1952 to 30 June 1953*, 21. Naguib was the first leader of Egypt after the 1952 Free Officer's Coup, he was quickly replaced by Gamal Abdul Nasser.
[37] *Al-Ahram*, 31 December 1952.
[38] *Al-Ahram*, 4 January 1953.
[39] *Al-Ahram*, 4 January 1953.

them to their villages, trains that would bring weapons and men ready to fight for the liberation of Palestine.[40] This item further underscores the mutual suspicions, and even sometimes hostility, that lurked around this particular humanitarian relation. Gazans did not fully trust the Egyptian government and, equally, the Egyptians were wary of Gazans. The Refugee Affairs report made it clear that humanitarianism served a security purpose in Gaza. In keeping the population from a "decline into depravity," this assistance could also mitigate the risks posed by a population out of control.

As many factors as there were which contributed to the emergence of a humanitarian mode of governing, the practical demands of meeting people's needs made it difficult to maintain this stance for too long. What was initially coded as "relief" soon came to be described as "service." This shift was accompanied by a greater emphasis on the rationalization of government practice, a transformation I have explored elsewhere.[41] Egyptian Administrators seem quickly to have recognized that there was a clear security benefit to efficient, rational operations. Indeed, as we have already seen, efficiency and humanitarianism are by no means opposing principles.

Public Works and Jurisdiction Debates

Certainly no one could suggest that UNRWA is anything less than a highly developed bureaucratic organization. With branches in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and with a staff of approximately 24,000 (of whom 99% are Palestinian, most refugees), it is an enormous operation. Today Gaza is the site of the largest UNRWA operation, as well as the Agency Headquarters.[42] The years of the Egyptian Administration coincided with the establishment of the Agency, and the development of its protocols and procedures. In Gaza, UNRWA occupied an especially important place in the administrative landscape. The Agency made no claims to govern Gaza (in the state sense), but given that a sizable major-

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40 *Al-Raqib*, 30 December 1952.
41 See "Government Without Expertise?"
42 According to UNRWA, 32% of its staff work in the Gaza field offices, as compared with 26% in Jordan, 16% in the West Bank, and 12% in both Syria and Lebanon (http://www.un.org/unrwa/organization/pdf/area03.pdf).

ity of the population were refugees—who received rations, healthcare, and education from UNRWA—it was clearly as significant a governing force (in the management sense) as was the Administration.

The initial impetus behind the establishment of UNRWA was twofold. First, as it became clear that the Palestine situation was not going to be resolved in the "matter of months" that had initially been assumed, the UN realized that it could not rely on voluntary organizations to manage relief indefinitely. Secondly, if the problem was going to be of a longer-term nature and, as was also becoming more clear, Israel was not going to permit refugees to return to their homes, then something more than simple relief was required. UNRWA—the UN relief and *works* agency—was established to "not only carry out relief on a diminishing scale, but would inaugurate a works programme in which able-bodied refugees could become self-supporting and at the same time create works of lasting benefit to the refugees and the countries concerned."[43] From its inception, that is, the Agency was intended to move beyond humanitarianism in its activities.[44]

This work agenda faced challenges—both technical and political—in every area of operation. Politically, Palestinian refugees and their host countries objected to what they saw as attempts to settle them outside of their home country, insisting instead that their right to return be protected. Technically, limited resources and difficult geographic and social conditions meant that it was often difficult to enact major works projects in the places where refugees were residing. Nowhere was this more true than Gaza. As the first Agency report noted succinctly: "There is no opportunity for any considerable works programme in Gaza."[45] In this regard, conditions did not change much over the ensuing years. The 1955–56 Annual Report stated that: "In Gaza, because of prevalent conditions, and the consequent impracticability of large-scale self-support projects, the Agency has concentrated on endeavouring to improve the morale and the standard of living of the refugees."[46] The scale of the projects on which UNRWA ended up focusing in Gaza

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[43] UN A/1451/Rev.1, "Interim Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East," 6 October 1950.

[44] This "works" agenda distinguishes UNRWA from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], the UN organization under whose auspices most other refugees fall.

[45] UN A/1451/Rev.1.

[46] UN A/3212, Annual Report for 1 July 1955 to 30 June 1956.

highlights the limitations in this place, not just of humanitarianism, but of government.

This limited scale of intervention—a feature of government in Gaza that I have explored at length elsewhere[47]—was evident in the nature of the conflicts over jurisdiction that sometimes developed between UNRWA and the Administration. Their shared responsibility made at least occasional conflicts inevitable. An apparently clear division of labor—UNRWA responsible for services to refugees, the Administration to natives—was not without challenge on the ground. It was in regards to public works and infrastructure projects that debates most frequently arose. The Administration often sought UNRWA funding for public projects undertaken outside of refugee camps, arguing that those projects would benefit refugees. These were almost always quite modest projects and the exchanges often centered around correspondingly small amounts of money.

These conversations—mundane and instrumental as they were—also underscore the extent to which government in Gaza was organized more by population than by territory. For reasons discussed above, the Administration was reluctant to make too many claims about its relationship to the territory of Gaza—preferring to be seen as a caretaker of Palestinian space. UNRWA, as an international service agency, made no claims vis-a-vis to this territory. Providing services to Palestinians was self-consciously not the same as claiming Palestine. In regards population, UNRWA's responsibility was explicitly identified as being to the population of refugees and was not limited to the territorial space of the refugee camps (though people living in camps did receive some services—such as housing—that those living elsewhere did not). The Egyptian Administration was self-identified as responsible in some way for the entire population—over the years it provided employment, access to low-cost housing, social services, and security without distinction on the basis of refugee status—though not for everything that population might need.

In a typical instance of correspondence about jurisdiction, the Administration's district commissioner and the UNRWA liaison went back and forth about payment for a cart to transport meat to the Rafah slaughterhouse.[48] The Administration repeatedly underscored both that

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[47] See "Government Without Expertise?"
[48] ISA, RG 115, Box 2007, unnumbered file, correspondence in March 1956.

the facility was "shared by refugees and citizens alike" and that having the cart was a matter of public health. UNRWA did not disagree with this assessment—commenting that it was always ready to "cooperate…to improve health conditions in the villages," but indicated that it had made all the contributions to slaughterhouse operations that it could—having paid for new machinery. In this particular case, the village council ultimately agreed to fund the cart purchase itself; in other cases the Administration view prevailed. The particulars of who paid what towards efficient and sanitary operations of the slaughterhouse is less significant for my purposes than the conversation itself.[49] There is a clear recognition by both parties that they had a shared responsibility—in one fashion or another—for the good government of Gaza.[50] The extent to which discussions about their overlapping jurisdictions remained focused on relatively mundane concerns may, though, have kept larger questions about the nature of that government at bay. Humanitarianism typically has a restricted agenda—even the humanitarianism-plus that characterized UNRWA. As we have seen, humanitarian government was similarly limited in its aims. With attention focused on questions such as who would buy a cart, the significance of these restrictions was left unaddressed.

Conclusion

The example of Gaza during the years of the Egyptian Administration not only illuminates how difficult it can be to maintain clear distinctions between the work of humanitarianism and that of government, but provides insight into the operations of each. While humanitarianism and government often seem to be quite different modes of action, of intervention in a particular place, the Gazan instance illuminates quite clearly how mutually dependent they often are. This dependence, further, is clearly vexing to all concerned. Wherever they come down on the question of how extensively they wish to influence the places where they work, humanitarian practitioners always worry about the extent to

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[49] In "Government Without Expertise?" I describe a similar debate about who should pay to put in public toilets in Beit Hanoun, a village on the northern border of the Gaza Strip heavily populated with refugees.

[50] During the ensuing Israeli occupation the level of cooperation between the government and UNRWA decreased significantly.

which governments may interfere in their work (and the extent to which they often need to rely on governments to make the work possible). While the circumstances of government were particularly uncertain in Gaza—giving rise to persisting anxieties about how to define the relationship between government and the population—such questions about how to govern are by no means exceptional. Whether modern humanitarianism is a new form of imperialism, as some have suggested, or a crucial mechanism for transforming the basic conditions of living for masses of people, a newly global technique of protection, as others argue, there is no doubt of its importance in shaping first the post-war and then the post-cold-war world.[51]

I opened this essay by noting the crisis currently facing the population of Gaza, let me close by commenting on people's responses to the humanitarian government they encountered in the early years of their displacement. While very frequently debates within and between the various agencies providing humanitarianism and government in Gaza proceeded without the direct involvement of the population being served, Gazans were by no means passive in the face of these operations. People used the "compassionate" domain of humanitarian relief as a platform to make political claims about rights and about international responsibility for their situation.[52] In so doing, they also challenged the notion that humanitarianism was an adequate mode of relation to Gaza and Gazans. They demanded more from both the Egyptian Administration and the "international community." From the latter they wanted the fulfillment of what they saw as their right to return home. From the former they wanted the opportunity to fight for this right. From everyone they insisted on the recognition of the causes of their condition and called for a political resolution. As Gazans are once again suffering through a devastating humanitarian crisis, the importance of such a political resolution is again underscored.

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[51] David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Nicholas Stockton, "In Defense of Humanitarianism," *Disasters* 22, 4(1998): 352–60.

[52] For more on the place of compassion in humanitarianism see Miriam Ticktin, "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France" *American Ethnologist* 33, 1(2006): 33–49.

ISLAMIC WELFARE, DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE
THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF *ZAKAT* IN PALESTINE

Lars Gunnar Lundblad

Introduction

Social movements are central in developing welfare structures; either by putting ideological pressure on the governments or by undertaking services themselves. Islamic movements in the Middle East often act politically and logistically, to establish social infrastructures, which also must be assessed against the background of an authoritarian political culture with weak commitments to social security. This chapter deals with the institutionalization of Islamic welfare on the occupied Palestinian West Bank.[1] The greater part of these welfare bodies carry the name of *zakat* committees. Though money from the *zakat* (alms), or the third pillar of Islam, is just part of the funding of these services, the ethical principle of *zakat* but constitute a vital religious and socio-political emblem to the believers and sympathizers. My focus is therefore not how and to what degree the adherents observe *zakat*, but rather how this principle and its "ideology" are materialized in a comprehensive civil welfare system. While these welfare services satisfy day-by-day needs in the Palestinian population, they are as well, in a larger context, embedded in a bigger ideological scheme of islamizing or reislamizing society. According to Islamic tenets this process aims to restage the ideal conditions which were purportedly prevailing during Islam's formative period. The committees harvest a high degree of trust in the Palestinian population for its assumed uncorrupted services and its firm standing in the national struggle. The Palestinian *zakat* system represents a social transfer system, but not one that catapults people out of poverty. None of the social transfer system in the occupied territories is able to eradicate poverty under the prevailing situation, due to occupation.

The committees are part of an important civil welfare structure with

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[1] In the Gaza Strip there is a comprehensive Islamic welfare system, which is not a focus of my studies.

formal connections to the Palestinian Authorities. The general political and social situation within the occupied territories, which have weak public structures and a frail practice of citizenship mostly due to the continued occupation, adds up to a complex sociological picture.

I intend mainly to put focus on two aspects of the *zakat* committees' work: Their organizing and work in the local context and their positioning on the "national" level. One concrete aspect is their delivery of social services on the ground. What kind of services do they offer, and does their prioritizing have any link to Islamic tradition or is it merely a response to the social condition very much branded by the occupation? How do they organize, and how do they recruit people to take leadership in the committees? Why are they in general prioritizing orphan programmes? How do they relate to national and international NGOs? In the latter part of this article, I wish to broaden up the theoretical scope by relating circumstances in my research to recent critics of developmental studies. Before I embark on the main part of the article, I find it relevant to comment upon the professional and personal challenges that might occur when conducting social research in these constrained locations. Possibly this can shed additional light on the data I present.

Islamic Welfare: Much Discussed—Little Studied

There is a yawning void for more knowledge about Islamic welfare as part of the ethical side of Islam and the backbone of my project is a desire to provide more knowledge on Islamic welfare with Palestine as my focus, though I am keenly aware of the risk of producing just another western-centric narrative. There is always the possibility of being caught up in the straitjacket of western concepts. Homi Bhaba[2] poses a relevant question when asking if the language of theory is merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge. It is definitely possible to understand such lines of thought. On the other hand, Arjomand[3] claims that there are many wests, and certainly also many easts, souths and norths. The fulcrum of the situation in the Holy Land, however, is

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[2] Bhaba, H. (1994): *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York.
[3] At Holberg Symposium in Bergen November 28, 2006.

the pervasive atmosphere of occupation. Domination and hegemony are central conceptions to understand something of the total situation in these territories. The Palestinians on the West Bank live in an occupied territory in a state that is deteriorating from a pseudo-state to nothing. The borders between civil society and public structures are very blurred. Collective traditions with roots in local communities and religion seem more sustainable than public projects.

Trying to understand the fashioning of religiously based welfare bodies, we can theoretically envision an overarching global economic and political interaction crossing cultural boundaries where actors appear sometimes entangled in common modernizing projects obliterating particularities, other times representing more particular ventures which seem for instance to attempt resisting western political and cultural hegemony. In the general opinion Islamic welfare is very much attached to politics. In Muslim countries it is usually the Islamic opposition, whether officially accepted, or not, that is the most active in developing welfare services. One example of this is the many medical clinics in Egypt promoted by the Muslim brotherhood, which is formally banned. The fact that in particular after 9/11, there has been an exceedingly sharpened American focus on possible links between Islamic welfare institutions and putative terrorist groups. In mass media, as in academic publications, Islamic welfare tends to be politically scandalized in the West. Claims that many of those institutions are operating in tandem with terrorist groups have contributed to the American 'anti-terrorist certificate.' I have personally observed how much harm this arrangement has done to decent welfare institutions, regardless of religious or political leaning, in the Palestinian territories.

Zakat, is a focal point of social activism in Muslim countries. A Saudi writer[4] holds in a recent article that wealthy Saudis, who have salted down their enormous fortunes in European and American banks and are giving mere crumbs in money, should open their eyes and consider the actions of benefactors like Bill Gates who donated half of his fortune to a charitable institution. Jeremy Benthall and Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan[5] state that research on Islamic welfare is "An almost virgin field for academic research." While there recently have been forwarded a reason-

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[4] http://www.khaleejtimes.ae/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=middleeast&xfile=data/middleeast/2006/august/middleeast_august66.xml.
[5] Benthall J. and J. Bellion-Jourdan (2003): *The Charitable Crescent Politics of Aid in the Muslim World*. I. B. Tauris, London.

able number of publications on the Oslo process and the Palestinian NGO-societies, there is relatively little written about Islamic welfare.[6] After 9/11, an abundance of books and articles on Islamic activism and terrorism have emerged, while analyses of Islamic welfare and economy are not frequently in evidence. The stereotypical image of Islamic activism as a cover for terrorists needs to be redressed. In the present polarized atmosphere, these are sensitive research themes.

"You can't study *zakat*, it is a holy principle", one African student told me at Bergen College. There have also been warnings from qualified circles. In Ramallah at a couple of research centres, there was not much help to find with regard to reports and literature. "It is out of range to visit committees, it is certainly not on our research schedule, and I think it is too difficult", a young political scientist told me. With regard to the politicization of some of the committees, we have to ask: Who is politicizing? What appears in the western media about Islamic charity in Palestine is that it is run solely by Hamas and is a part of Hamas' political strategy and mixes with terrorist activities. But who asks what are they doing on the ground? To illustrate the level of politicization and globalization, I will just mention that I in the course of two months received three requests about fresh information on the committees from three sources, one involved in a court case against an Islamic charitable organization in the US, one from a researcher in a prominent research centre in Washington DC and one from one legal adviser to some US legal teams. To me the institution of *zakat* seems to be an attractive window for exploring collective energies unfolding in the Muslim world. This article is an attempt to shed some light on these social phenomena, which are very much discussed but too little studied.

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[6] On of the most recent reports on *zakat* in Palestine is *Islamic Socal Welfare Activism in the Occupied Territories 2 April 2003. ICG Middle East Report No. 13 Amman/Brussels.* The Palestinian Researchers Jamil Hilal and Majdi Malki published a couple of reports on the social security system in Palestine in 1997–1998, one of them: *Towards a Social Security System in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* was published together with Yasser Shalabi and Hasan Ladadweh. One report was published in Arabic only. It contained amongst others a comprehensive quantitative comparison between Ministry of Social Affairs, UNRWA and the *zakat* committees My own empirical data used in this article are collected on the West Bank in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Access to and Collection of Data: "You Have to Be Fair"

My journeying into the Palestinian and explicitly Islamic context has been very exciting and charging. I build my picture on interviews, conversations, observations, applications schemes, reports, pamphlets, and similar. In the following part of the paper, I have in mind to elaborate further on the challenges I face in trying to get access to relevant data on the committees' organizing and work. My contact with a few people at the Bir Zeit University and the small network disseminated from these contacts has provided the terrain for my empirical work. What I will try to do in this section is briefly to explain procedures to get access to *zakat* committees by a couple of examples, and thereafter touch some methodical and ethical questions.

The title of this paragraph points to the first utterance that fell when I visited a comprehensive Islamic charitable institution in Hebron,[7] possibly the biggest in Palestine when it comes to variety in services and number of beneficiaries and employees.

> "You have to be fair"! I did not immediately ask for the background of this statement, but just remarked that I followed a standard research ethic. After showing us the DVD about the wide-ranging services they offer and the following up questions (which he indicated should be short) were done, I asked what he really meant by what he said initially. He explained then: A film team from BBC had visited the institution and they had moved freely around and asked questions and got answers. When the film then was on the air, in the concluding part of it, it was remarked that this was a breeding place for suicide bombers. This was both surprising and unfair.

When approaching a committee and the first contact person is a Muslim, the contact person will be asked more times through successive phone calls about my person, who I am, political leanings, my aims, and background else, contacts and so forth. This normally takes a couple of days from the first inquiry to the interview can take place. If the first contact person is outside the Muslim congregation, let us say a secular academic, the procedure is a bit longer:

> After my first wish is presented it takes two days, then I get a phone call, and the first meeting is arranged in two days. This meeting is a check out before we can proceed towards the institution. During this meeting you also meet with other religiously devoted persons, like people occupied

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[7] April 2007.

with spreading Muslim and national literature to children and youths. These men are well versed in literature. They also share a meal with me. My contact person appeared to be a relative young university educated man, recently released from three years in jail. He was jailed without any conviction:" It is occupation, man!"

When you learn that there are prisoners from nearly all the big and medium-sized committees, at any given time you better understand all the security precautions. Being a foreign researcher without knowing any Palestinian with substantial status and credibility, I think it would have been nearly impossible to get access to the informants in the *zakat* committees. It is of course relevant to ask what kind of implications this possibly can have on the researcher carrying out his work. Will he in 'gratitude' avoid posing the awkward questions? Will he feel some kind of loyalty and deliberately or not put more stress on actor's point of view than on his own critical analysis? It should be clear that like many social science projects this also involves a range of ethical questions. Sometimes you come in contact on a personal level. This depends also on my earlier career as social worker, I know the professional language. You also feel respect for those dedicated people who are serving their fellow compatriots in an excellent way, and who the next day can be put in jail for months and years without any formal charges. This some-times is felt to be a difficult personal balance, trying to keep a critical distance at the same time as you show empathy with people who so to speak stand with their back against the wall. I think Brian S. Turner's and Chris Rojek's term "detached involvement" covers well the ethical and methodological attitude I seek to achieve.[8]

"In a society where zakat *is paid, there is no hunger"*

What do Islamic scholars think about the societal consequences of *zakat*? Does the principle aim at a comprehensive redistribution? This section is dedicated to such questions. *Zakat* is an essential part of the Islamic narrative. Although *zakat* is commonly defined as a form of charity, almsgiving, donation, or contribution, it differs from these

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[8] B. S. Turner and C. Rojek (2001): *Society and Culture: Principles of Scarcity and Solidarity.* Sage Publications Ltd.

activities primarily in that they are arbitrary, voluntary actions, known as *sadaqa*. However, *zakat* is mostly practised voluntarily, and, as already mentioned above, these practices may vary a great deal.

Mentioned more than thirty times in the Quran, *zakat*, is a central theological, ethical and political principle. The religious logic behind this principle is that, through paying *zakat* of one's assets once a year, both the believer and his fortune will be purified. There are diverse assets that are objects for 'zakatation,' like gold and silver, mining and agriculture. Of most objects the believer is to pay 2.5% of the value, but in some instances, mining and agriculture, the rate varies up to 20%.[9] The Islamic *zakat* discourse has been revitalised in the Islamic renewal of the last 20–30 years, as both a central axiom in Islamic economy and an important symbol and principle in building concrete social welfare institutions all over the Muslim cultural sphere. The religious and political aspects of *zakat* go right back to the beginnings of Islam; in fact it can even be traced to the preislamic times with connections to the Arabic tribe society and possibly also to the Jewish-Christian tradition.[10] In the imagined ideal Islamic society, is supposed to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor members of the Muslim community (*ummah*). There are many different empirical expressions of this phenomenon. Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan hold that: "In contemporary Muslim societies we see a spectrum between complete incorporation of *zakat* by the State and its marginalization to the individual's private conscience."[11]

The following is an extract from an interview with the Grand Mufti of Palestine and Jerusalem:[12]

> LGL: Can the Mufti please elaborate on the meaning of *zakat*?
> Mufti: The deeper meaning of *zakat* is purification, purification of wealth and soul. The one who pays *zakat* does this quite voluntarily, and his money and soul will be purified. *Zakat* is there to take away all forms of

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[9] Kuran T.: "The Economic System in Contemporary Islamic Thought: Interpretation and Assessment," *International Journal of Middle East studies,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 135–164.

[10] Bamyeh M. A. 1999: *The Social Origins of Islam*, *Mind, Economy, Discourse*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis; Bashear S.: "On the Origins and Development of the meaning of *Zakat* in early Islam, Arabica 40 (1993).

[11] Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, p. 8.

[12] From an interview with the Grand Mufti of Jerualem and Palestine, Sabri Ekreme, Oct 1999 in connection with my master thesis.

hatred between the rich and the poor, the poor who gets the money and does some kind of investment. He feels some kind of gratitude or respect and love to the rich, so they will have a good communication, they will not hate each other. Also in the economic meaning of *zakat*, there is some kind of balance between the rich and the poor, because *zakat* will make the poor able to improve his situation step by step.

LGL: Thank you. This is the theology; is there any evidence that *zakat* has an equalizing effect on the social classes?

Mufti: In a society where *zakat* is paid, there is no hunger; for example, they have all the food they need. *Zakat* needs not to be given just in money, but also as in kind, i.e. schools for the poor people…so there will be no illiteracy. Therefore, both giving money and offering services improve society. This has empirical evidence. The two important things in our society that will keep people away from hunger and illiteracy are health services and education. So here, as in any other Muslim society, where *zakat* is paid, there is some sort of service within education and health…clinics, hospitals…which are free for poor people. The strongest committees in this country are the *zakat* committees, especially in Hebron and Nablus.

Going to the communal and psychological content of the principle of *zakat*, we find what I quoted from the Mufti above: a logic that promotes solidarity within the group, local or extended, *the ummah*, and a focus on the giver's conscience and the recipient's right to claim alms from the rich. Is this logic feasible in promoting actions for economic equality? Timur Kuran writes in this regard: "On the one hand, it counsels the rich not to feel obligated to eradicate poverty and never to feel guilty for being well-off. On the other hand, it dampens the resentments of the poor and moderates their demands."[13] It seems like we in this respect are dealing with a class-preserving aspect of *zakat*. The Finnish historian Holger Weiss who has studied *zakat*-practices in Africa reflects critically: "I will argue, along with most Western Scholars, that there has been a rift between the ideal model of *zakat* and its reality in the Muslim states."[14] Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan follow up this point:" In practice, *zakat* has been marginalized. Not a single state exhibits its function as it should, as a system of automatic redistribution." However, these two authors communicate a kind of positive anticipation when they write:

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[13] Kuran T. Islamic Redistribution through *Zakat*: Historical Record and Modern Realities. In Bonner M., E. Miner, A. Singer (eds.) 2003: *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*. State University of New York Press, Albany.

[14] Weiss H.: "The Possibilities of Islamic Welfare: The Concept of Zakat in Theory and its Praxis in various Communities in Africa." *Saharan Studies Assoc. Newsletter* 8/2000, p. 1.

> The theory of *zakat* is raw material ready to be picked up and made use of by Islamic reformists...The Islamic notion that a poor person in the community is, or ought to be, a source of public shame is one that could be fruitfully built on; and is in tune with some of the fund-raising approaches adopted by Western charities such as Oxfam since the 1960.[15]

According to J. M. Burr and R. O. Collins,[16] at the International Conference on *Zakat* in Kuala Lumpur in 1990 some of the participants admitted that *zakat* had achieved too little to eradicate poverty. The kind of collective conception of *zakat* changes over time, and, at a corresponding conference in Kuwait in 1998, one of the conclusions was that "*zakat* was not only seen as charity for the poor but as a pool of funds for schemes to employ them."[17] However, despite criticism, *Arab Human Development Report* reads that: "(i)t may be that this parallel system of income is enabling large segments of the Arab population to escape visible poverty and need."[18] Reform processes have started cautiously renewing the *zakat* principle, yet mostly on a theoretical level. It may turn into a more ordinary economic and politico-social instrument, which perhaps will slightly loosen it from its distinct religious symbolism. So far it is really one of the five pillars, often mentioned together with the prayer, *salah*.

The Canadian sociologist Janine Clark[19] holds that the Islamic social institutions have 'failed' in their declared poverty-oriented practices. She bases her conclusions on studies of many Islamic social institutions in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen. This is a question, which also deserves interest with regard to the Palestinian situation. Thus, so far in my studies, I have noticed a cautious increase in self-payment practices at Al Razi hospital in Jenin. The PNA initiated Al Aqsa treatment has also facilitated the access to Governmental hospitals (if there are available beds). However, an extensive Palestinian research published in 1997 supports the alleged poverty-orientation of the *zakat* services:

> Some of the very poor find they have no alternative other than to request assistance from social support institutions: Ministry of Social Affairs,

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[15] Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, p. 18.
[16] Burr J. M. and R. O. Collins. 2006: *Alms for Jihad*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
[17] Burr and Collins, p. 15.
[18] *Arab Human Development Report* 2002, p. 91.
[19] Clark J. (2004): *Islam, Charity And Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen.* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, p. 9.

UNRWA (confined to those with refugee status), and *Zakat* committees (Islamic charities that target the poor), and smaller charitable organizations. A 1997 study by MAS revealed that only the very poor receive material assistance from these institutions, and the assistance provided by these institutions is aimed at reducing the severity of poverty and not bringing people out of it.[20]

This will of course not reflect the development in this sector in the nine years since then. What I see as a possible trend is that the *zakat* hospitals, which are relatively few, expensive to run and in a constant need of technical improvements, are increasing their fees, while the orphanage programme and similar efforts are still meeting the needs of the poorer segment of society.

"Zakat *is not that bureaucratic as* UNRWA *and the Ministry of Social Affairs when they consider applications for support*"

While in the Western world NGOs have gained a greater role in service delivery as a part of the neo-liberal project, in Palestine the Islamic social institutions have been one of the corner stones in the public welfare provisions since their prudent start in the 1920s.

In the following, I wish to give a brief sketch of the system of *zakat* committees and equal organizations on the West Bank. Looking at the national level one could ask: How do the *zakat* committees position themselves in the total welfare-producing picture on the West Bank? Why are they enjoying such a high level of trust and legitimacy? Another relevant question to pose is why the *zakat* committees to a very little extent are involved in practical, professional, and political collaboration both on local and national levels? What is evident is that the system of *zakat* committees constitutes a very basic element in the total welfare provisions that are offered to the Palestinians.

As stated above, the development of modern institutions in Palestine must be judged against the background of the absence of national sovereignty and statehood. The general political and social situation within the occupied territories, with very weak public structures and a relatively weak status of the (western) concept of citizenship, constitute

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[20] Hilal J.: "The Limits of Informal Social Support systems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", *Mediterranean Development Forum September 3–6, 1998* Marrakech, Morocco, p. 7.

a complex sociological picture. The welfare systems have developed randomly in a multifaceted political interaction framed by internal and external historical, political, and military factors. The welfare structure in Palestine exhibits several problems and challenges.[21] The level of benefits is very low. The introduction of a universal social policy is so far merely on a conceptual level; amenities with universal coverage are almost non-existing. There is only the health insurance (called 'Al Aqsa treatment'), which includes free treatment at governmental hospitals equivalent to a quarterly fee of $11 per family. According to Hilal and Malki[22] the informal social support system, based on kin and clanship, is still very important. In this picture the *zakat* committees appear with a high degree of legitimacy and strong popular support, with their local grounding and non-bureaucratic image.

Controlled by the Ministry of *Waqf*, some of them could to some extent be characterized as semi governmental institutions. In Palestine, there has been a system of about fifty committees. After the Al Aqsa Intifada started in autumn 2001, the number of committees increased rapidly to eighty-three that were operative in Palestine in 2003, sixty-seven of them in the West Bank.[23] At any time, Israeli authorities can close them. The committees comprise both small and big entities, the latter comprising relatively large professional organizations with a range of services within health, education, social services, housing, employment-creating activities like sewing workshops and training centres. They also involve the agricultural sector with milk- and chicken production, although on a smaller scale. The committee in Nablus even runs a research institute. One increasing activity is assistance to people who have had their homes demolished by Israeli forces. According to *Palestine Poverty Report 1998*:[24] "The programs of the *Zakat* Committees are directed to support families in the absence of their male breadwinners." Women are not considered breadwinners even if they work. Both the *zakat* committees and the Ministry of Social Affairs use the male breadwinner criterion. Within the framework of the Orphan's Sponsorship Programme the committees sponsored in 2003 more than eighteen thousand

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[21] "No deliberately planned work of division exists in the welfare system in Palestine". From an interview with an official in Ministry of Social Affairs Nov 2006.

[22] Hilal J. and E. Malki (1997): *Informal Social Support System (non-insititutionalized) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, MAS, Ramallah.

[23] Referred statistical data due to MAS *Social Monitor*, Issue No. 8, 2005.

[24] *Palestine Poverty Report 1998*, p. 69.

orphans. The value of the assistance to families was in 2003 US$22 per month per family. Comparable figures from the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA were US$26 each.[25] The committees are community-based and rooted in what we could call local Islam, although their financial bases are often manifold: local (which has decreased) and international money, donations from rich Palestinians, and support from donors in the Arab Gulf states and from Muslim organizations in Western Europe and the US, as well. This aspect brings the *zakat* system in Palestine into the global economy of welfare. *Zakat* is not a part of the taxation system in Palestine like the stately institutionalised system in Pakistan. It should also be mentioned that there exists a number of Muslim organizations that are offering similar services to those of the *zakat* committees.

"*Zakat* committees enjoy a tremendous amount of legitimacy. Even secular leftists admire their authencity and ability to operate without reliance on western funding", writes Natan A. Brown,[26] and refers to a 2000 poll which listed them as second only to universities in popular trust. That this trust is an enduring phenomenon can be established by the fact that a similar poll from the same program 1998–1999 showed the same result. The citation in the subtitle comes from a secular Palestinian woman with communist sympathies. She holds further that:

> Many people are bothered to tell that they have no food in the house. The *zakat* people know this. If you know about a poor family, you can hint the *zakat* committee. They trust a recommendation coming from people living in the same area. They regard it as an application. The Ministry of Social Affairs and UNWRA do not show consideration like this.[27]

It should be mentioned, however, that criticism also could come from Palestinians. A local UNICEF officer doubted the number of orphans the local *zakat* committee claimed they provided for. Likewise, a secular male social worker expressed both criticism and acceptance:

"Hamas is using welfare politically. There is evidence that they distributed food by night in a refugee camp so people should not be aware of who got support. Their small clinics are well run and have often a very professional staff that also provides help for Christians and secular

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[25] MAS *Social Monitor*, Issue No. 8, 2005.
[26] N. J. Brown (2003): *Palestinian Civil Society in Theory and Practice*, Washington, DC, May 2003.
[27] Interview on the West Bank October 1999.

people".[28] It is true that there is an element of competition in the relationship between some of the Palestinian NGOs. There are also more stories about duplication of services for example two organizations establish each a policlinic in a village. The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 2000 has forced larger segments of the population into poverty. *Palestine Poverty Report 1998* holds that neither Ministry of Social Affairs (PNA), nor UNRWA (UN) and the *zakat* committees have poverty-eradicating forces. A report from 1998 reads: "Although *zakat* committees provide smaller amount of assistance, they reach a larger portion of the population" (then Ministry of Social affairs and UNRWA).[29] It is a matter of fact that the *zakat* money collected in the Muslim congregations in Palestine has been drying up for quite some years due to the general socio-political condition.[30] It is impossible to get information about what proportion the local *zakat* money constitutes of the total resources that are available for the committees.

"I and the person, who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this." [31]

According to Islamic traditions, Muhammad grew up an orphan. His father had died before Muhammad was born and his mother died while he was still very young. Muhammad was therefore brought up successively by his grandfather and his uncle.[32] It seems to me that this story both emphasizes the centrality of orphan care in Muslim communities and in concert with statements about orphans in the Quran is a motivating force in taking care of orphans.

One of the most evident social effects of the continually worsening political and military situation in the occupied territories is the permanent high numbers of orphans. With the strong normative fundament for taking care of parentless children and the evident challenges on the ground, orphan care has become one of the main, if not *the* main, tasks of the Palestinian *zakat* committees and similar charities. These

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[28] Interview on the West Bank May 2007.
[29] Hilal J., M. Malki, Y. Shalabi and H. Ladadweh (1998): *Towards a Social Security System in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (p. 13).
[30] Islamic scholars and *zakat* officials estimate that 5 to 15 percent of adult Muslim breadwinners on the West Bank pay *zakat*. Interviews and conversations April–May 2007.
[31] Muhammad according to a hadith narrated by Sahl bin Saʾd.
[32] Ayob, M. (2004): *Islam Faith and History*, one world Oxford, pp. 17–18.

services have also largely become a part of the global economy of care. The *zakat* committees have built up a comprehensive system of foreign "foster parents" for the Palestinian orphans. Besides commitments from individuals and families, also organizations are dedicated to continuing contributions to work for the orphans, for example British Muslim Hands that supports the Islamic Charitable Society Hebron. Established as early as in 1962 to care for orphans and give them full protection, the Islamic Charitable Society (ics) in Hebron is formally licensed in the Ministry of Social affairs and the Ministry of Interior.[33] Starting with fifteen orphans there is now about 2500 orphans and other partly impoverished children. ics runs three regular schools for children aged 6–18.Twenty percent of the students have to pay ordinary school fees. Nearly three hundred orphans have a full time care and live in two institutions called welfare homes for girls and boys. ics is managing 51 centres for memorizing the holy Quran with nearly 1000 students. The full time staff of ics Hebron numbers 470 men and women. Summer camps are organized every summer, under the motto "keeping oneself physically sound, mentally alert and morally straight". This sounds to be not so far from the credo of the international scout movement. During the Islamic feasts *Id al- fitr* and *Id al- adha* clothes and money for personal consumption are distributed to every student. These practices seem to be pretty much the same in *zakat* committees and other Islamic charities. Established in 1990, the cow farm with ten adult workers keeps 160 cows, which provide fresh milk for children belonging to ics. The redundant milk is sold and brings income to the schools and family homes. An extension to 200 cows and mechanization of the milk production is planned. A bakery with a staff of twelve provides the children with bread. The surplus is sold on the local market. A sewing workshop engages twenty-five women from poor segments of the population. They make clothes for 1000 orphans, suits that tally with the Islamic dress code. Then there is the library with 15000 copies and a computer lab where the students get training in the use of the data gear. The ics also cooperates with a clinic. Growing demand and shrinking resources has driven the ics to initiate new income generating ventures. There is a market for housing and ics rents premises to stores and offices as well as renting an apartment building.

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[33] Visit and interview April 2007.

The Islamic Charitable Society Hebron demonstrates an interesting horizontal integration of services based on knowledge of children's daily needs and their long-term preparation for adult life. This pattern of a comprehensive infrastructure partly independent of local and national authorities can be documented also in towns like Nablus, Tulkarm and Jenin. The *zakat* committees in these three towns can also marshall well equipped hospitals.

The *Zakat board of Jerusalem*[34] has paid much attention to the procedures assessing homes for orphans and the follow up of these children. The forms systemize the social and psychological variables that contribute to an orphans nurturing; how orphans might adapt to their social situation and integration in the religious congregation and central tenets of Islam. It seems as if the orphan programme make's up for long term aims as well as keeping an eye on the child's daily wellbeing. The report puts emphasis on education and religious observance. What is evident is that the Islamic charitable institutions keep a much more explicit focus on the child's moral and religious fostering than many of the international NGOs that work with similar undertakings.

In "Splendid Isolation"?

An often-repeated phrase is that the Islamic activists or Islamists in the Middle East are attempting to create 'states within states.' On the West Bank, as noted before, we observe a comprehensive infrastructure consisting of a network of committees and subcommittees running schools, clinics, day-care centres, sewing centres, building roads, houses, raising domestic animals, et cetera. We also see banking and commercial enterprises with an Islamic signature.

In the following section I seek to shed some light on a few tricky issues: The positioning of the *zakat* committees on the national level and the politicization of the *zakat* committees. Simplifications are obviously attractive on this issue in particular in political discourses. However, the most remarkable about this state of affairs is the seemingly non-positioning of the *zakat* committees on the national level. Considering

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[34] Interview May 2007.

how many clients and patients that are supported, how many professional workers they employ and all the professional and organizational experiences they have accumulated through the years, it is a wonder that this should not be collected and systematized and thus make ground for further expansion. As mentioned above, the committees do not voice critical arguments in the politico-social debate. This debate is mostly limited to academia.

The committees in Palestine have no superior council or body that represents the committees' interest toward the Palestinian Authorities. Neither do they hold membership in any NGO umbrella organizations in the Occupied Territories.[35] While socially and culturally the greater committees are embedded in their local contexts, their financial and religious contacts are also well established with Islamic organizations abroad. To my knowledge, committees cooperate and assist each other when needed. Their collaboration with other humanitarian organizations on the local level must also be characterized as random and informal.[36] This is in accordance with Sarah Roy's findings:

> Sixth, Islamic institutions do not typically work with non-Islamic institutions, although there are a few examples of such cooperation. Furthermore, Islamic NGOs are very competitive, even territorial, and there appears to be very little collaboration or partnerships among them. The common and perhaps only form of cooperation was information-sharing about people applying for relief aid in order to avoid duplicating benefits. It was not unusual to find that one institution did not appear to know what another was doing.[37]

A significant part of the *zakat* committees on the West Bank were established early in the 1980s following Jordanian laws and models. The *Waqf* ministry was established in 1996 as part of the creation of the Palestinian Authorities (PA). The emerging PA configuration aimed at gradually gaining control over greater parts of the NGO sphere the *zakat*

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[35] I.e. The General Union of Charitable Associations in Palestine, organizing about 400 of the PNGOs, about 1/3 of the total number. The PNGO sector employs 20–30.000 people. There are also some two hundred international NGOs, usually in cooperation with PNGOs. (*Journal of Palestinian Studies 25*, Spring 1996).

[36] One interesting fact is that Islamic clinics (*zakat*) in Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm, are partners in a Policy Dialogue Project together with an array of secular, Christian an Muslim medical institutions. This project is initiated and led by the Health, Development, Information, and Policy Institute (HDIP) in Ramallah.

[37] Roy, S.: "The Transformation of Islamic NGOs in Palestine," *Middle East Report, Spring 2001.*

committees included. In 1997 PA closed about 20 charitable institutions allegedly belonging to Hamas. Some of the *zakat* committees are in a paradoxical situation: Reporting to the PA, the *Waqf* ministry, while at the same time being very critical to the PA and in some respects even looking upon the authorities as their adversary. The *zakat* committees have received minimal economic support from the PA. On the other hand the Ministry of Social affairs have asked some committees for support to their multi-traumatized young clients in form of technical equipment for work shops, extra clothes for the summer holiday and so forth.[38]

Let me repeat that the Islamic welfare organizations are not cooperating modestly with other organizations within the NGO-unions in Palestine; neither have they established their own union. They are possibly part of a type of network, resembling what we in general perceive as a union but on a much smaller scale. However, I have no evidence of this, it just sounds reasonable when thinking in terms of political cultures. Some Islamic groups avoid political issues altogether, and concern themselves entirely with charitable activities and moral and religious purification. So why should the *zakat* committees be the object of such a strict scrutiny that they have to protect themselves even against social researchers? Not pretending to give a full and detailed answer to this question, I have a feeling that the dynamics of dominion and hegemony generate these strains, the western media contributing to this. The ensuing text is an extract from an interview with an international scholar at a West Bank university:[39]

> LGL: Many Western journalists and politicians claim that the general strong support to Hamas has to do with the extensive social, medical and educational work the *zakat* committees are carrying out. What is your opinion on that?
>
> Scholar: I would not like to see it this way. The committees are not affiliated with any party. Among their employees you will find people leaning to both Hamas and Fatah. You have to remember, the *zakat* committees are founded on religious principles. *Zakat* is a religious duty.
>
> LGL: Why don't the *zakat* committees unite under one umbrella organization, or a welfare union, like many of the other Palestinian charitable NGOs are doing? Wouldn't it be sensible trying to get a unified voice?
>
> Scholar: The *zakat* committees are not ordinary NGOs like many others. They are not licensed according to the NGO law, since they are strongly tied

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[38] Interview with an official in the Ministry of Social Affairs November 2005.
[39] Extract from interview May 2007.

to the *Waqf* ministry, the Ministry of religion. They have to send weekly reports to the Ministry. They are so to speak semi-governmental.

LGL: At the moment all the biggest *zakat* committees have one of their leading people in Israeli jail....

Scholar: Do you know why? The Israelis are picking out the most serious guarding stones of our society to weaken us. They never find anything to charge them with.

LGL: According to 10 year old statistics the *zakat* committees then were the biggest providers of social support in Palestine in number of cases. It is difficult to find fresh comparable figures. Do you think the *zakat* committees still are the number one in this respect?

Scholar: When it comes to social support in cash I think the Ministry of Social Affairs constitutes the backbone of the system today.

In a society where corrupt practices have penetrated the public realm and also take effect in the civil spheres of society, the question of universalistic versus particularistic practices in welfare provisions becomes present. It receives mention that families and other social groups dominate part of the NGO-sector in Palestine. According to *Poverty Report 1998*:

> Charitable organizations apply a variety of methods due to the nature of services they provide and due to the absence of detailed criteria determining the eligibility for support. However, some of these organizations apply some administrative procedures in determining its beneficiaries, which take into account political, social or kinship considerations. (p. 74)

Does this apply to the *zakat* committees? At this stage I have no evidence to imply that the committees are giving social or medical support on religious and political criteria. What I want to suggest, however, is that religious, political or professional leaders' family or clan background can enhance their authority in organizations more than their formal position can justify. Such relations can strengthen group and individual influence in an NGO or a political party context.[40] There is also much evidence that the Palestinian middle class is dominating the NGO sector, not unlike else in the world.

   To sum up: It seems reasonable that the *zakat* movement takes a dual aim. First and foremost, it tries to satisfy Palestinian Muslims with educational schemes, health and social support; and then in the long term

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[40] Interview with an Israeli-Arab political leader in Israel November 2006.

it tries to build up an infrastructure that can serve as part of national structures when the time comes for an independent Palestinian state. Moreover, the constitution of this Palestinian state should, according to some leaders, preferably be grounded on Islamic principles. Leading officials in the Ministry of Social Affairs with secular preferences see potential problems in this regard at the same time as they acknowledge the vital part these welfare structures play in the Palestinian society.[41] They also have to make concessions to the fact that the *zakat* movement is enjoying a very high degree of legitimacy and trust in almost every part of the Palestinian society.

"You must be rich and behave blamelessly"

The perspective of this section is twofold. First, I will try to look at typical organizational traits of the *zakat* committees, and second, I will bring forward a couple of critical viewpoints in the development discourse that possibly can lift the perspective of Islamic welfare.

My general impression after visiting six *zakat* committees and searching through yearly reports and pamphlets is that there is practically a total male domination in the committees proper and on the higher managerial level. The members hold their offices, if they wish, for lifetime. Even dead members keep their names on the list as a sign of honour. As a result rotation of power is weak and networks of influence seem stable. The members are largely middle-class men, aged 50–70. A majority is businessmen; some are lawyers or Islamic scholars. The assigning of new members is made by the assembly in the mosque. According to my knowledge voices have been raised to reform this fashion of leadership. In a Jerusalem committee that I visited, there is another procedure due to historical and political circumstances of East Jerusalem. Members in the board of seven men are assigned by the Jordanian *Waqf*. All are academics, preferably educated in Islam, or rich businessmen, but younger than the average mentioned above. "But more important than being rich," the representative said, "is that he is honest". The board meets once a month to discuss the cases which are prepared by the staff and then makes decisions. They wish to hire

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[41] Interview with a high-level official in the Ministry of Social Affairs November 1999.

women in the staff, because they in many cases "are better at treating children", but the provisions do not permit males and females working closely together. The social workers visit homes asking questions to get additional information about the orphan before it enters the committee's programme. These social workers are voluntaries who have no education in this field but are trained by the committee itself.

It is interesting to observe the blending of cultural specific elements with the more global, what we could call hybridical of nature. The conventional variants of modernization theory with their inherent assumption of a declining role of religion in public life can hardly be said to be sustained here. The moral of solidarity and elements of religious tenets and traditions play a central part in the creation and fashioning of these welfare bodies. This kind of mobilization and cultural creativity we have also witnessed within Christian culture.

In much scientifical evaluation of developmental work, there is a clear tendency to look at organizational forms with western lenses. One compares the local forms of organizations with evidently western models. The buzzword is often "good governance". Based on diverse studies in Mexico Monique Nuijten[42] argues that many western scholars of development studies jump into an ethnocentric pitfall since they often describe organizations in developing countries as "chaotic and disorganized". In this line of thought patron/client relations and bossism are seen as prevailing cultural tendencies. When we measure this picture up against norms of rationality, instrumentality, and accountability, these organizations fall through and fail to create the desired development, it is alleged. These approaches do not catch "the manifold implicit rules of game in everyday forms of organising", Nuijten holds. Leaning on recent insights from organization theory, political sociology, and anthropology, Nuijten proposes to study "the ways in which people organise themselves around certain resources, projects and events or conflicts" (Opcit. 18). She argues further that the development literature contains a widespread belief that modern democratic forms of organization can improve the situation of the poor.

In my view Nuijten here launches very appropriate theoretical suggestions that fit with what I have witnessed in my project so far. As for

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[42] Nuijten, M.: The fallacy of systems Thinking in Development Studies A practice Approach Towards Organization and Power. *Paper to be presented at the CMS4 conference Cambridge 4–6 July 2005 Stream 20: Postcolonialism.*

"organizing around resources", which is one of Nuijten`s hooks, in this respect I regard the religious-ethical principles like *zakat* as (mobilizing) resources. The *zakat* committee is anchored in a community with a feeling of local self-understanding, which might be regarded as a resource in its own right. The adherents of the local mosques support the development of diverse welfare services. "Projects, events, and conflicts", the histories of the *zakat* committees represent an abundance of this, embedded in individual and collective memory. For instance the Israeli shelling of the Al Razi hospital in Jenin 2001 initiated constructional improvements and galvanized the staying power of the *zakat* committee and its professional personnel. It is the advantage of this alternative way of thinking that the aspect of institutionalization can divert from the traditional Weberian way of thinking. So, instead of insisting on the modern organizational models and management with the formal line of command and instrumental rational action, it is possible to use the lenses of creativity and informal implicit rules of the game. What consequences may this have for the question of comparisons? Instead of picking out punctual elements for comparison, you can view the whole process of institutionalization where modern elements blend with traditional ones and special elements developed through 50 years of occupation—which together form a workable whole. Out comes an organization, seemingly robust and efficient in this socially and politically harsh context.

Summary and Conclusion

There are many charitable organizations in Palestine, Muslim, Christian, and secular, which all are working without a national master plan and a political and economic steady social ministry. We have seen that there is a significant normative fundament in Islam for taking social action. In the absence of a sustainable state structure it has also simply become a necessity. These normative texts and symbols are, as it were, interacting with the material situation strongly tinged by the Israeli occupation and the fairly corrupt Palestinian Authorities. Some emerging points of the *zakat* committees included similar Islamic charities—built on my knowledge about the most leading of them—could be summed up in the following: They are initiated by religiously devoted male middle-class entrepreneurs with firm visions and solid foothold in the local Muslim congregations. These men hold to their positions as long as

they live, more or less. If not a democratic practice, it shows that they keep up their legitimacy in the congregation and exhibit permanence and steadfastness in their duties. Not only professional, but moral standards count. Islamic welfare institutions are also strongly attached to their communal location. Considering this kind of uniqueness in their character, it is no wonder that the *zakat* committees so modestly communicate with other charitable PNGOs. Adding to this the alleged Hamas affiliation, their "splendid isolation" becomes more understandable. I have not elaborated much on this point, rather been arguing that the strong version of this blend diverts the attention away from an overall approach to these welfare bodies. A significant part of the Muslim belief can be traced back to the formative period of Islam when *zakat* was allegedly practiced fully. This idealization of a past period can function as an inspiration, but it may also hinder the Muslim ideologists from developing their ethical and political categories and even think in new ones. The care for orphans is essential in Muslim countries, but is especially developed by committed believers. Even so it is a bit hard to understand why PLO has done so little in this regard. It seems as if their pure nationalistic ideology had small room for this type of social policy and commitment to the upbringing of the most vulnerable segment of children in society. These activities are not merely consolidating Islam in Palestine, they are building the Palestinian nation, and that is, in my opinion, the main reason why Israeli authorities continually are jailing people. As I suggested initially, some Muslims keep visions of creating an ideal socio-political environment by restaging similar conditions to those of early Islamic time. Rounding up this article we could try to link these visions to the Islamic welfare practices of the day and consider this merger as part of the Islamic modernizing project. This being a project which sociologically can be understood as a blend of transnational goods and ideas sophistically mixed with efforts to interpret Islam in political terms, including a firm resolution to stand on its own and on an equal footing with the west.

RURAL SUFISM AS CHANNELS OF CHARITY
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY JORDAN

Bethany Walker

The second half the nineteenth century witnessed marked social and
economic transformations in rural Transjordan with the gradual rein-
troduction of direct Ottoman rule. Concerned primarily with increasing
its tax base, the Ottoman administration provided few public services
in the region, however, and demonstrated little commitment to public
charity. Jordanians relied, instead, on traditional mechanisms for char-
ity that are deeply rooted in Islamic society: the social, political, and
economic activities of local Sufi *tariqa*s (brotherhoods of Muslim mys-
tics). Sufi networks functioned as conduits of charity, as local sheikhs
opened and taught at Quranic schools and, in their role as traditional
healers, provided the only public health care that most villages knew
before the 1920s.

As the Ottoman state certainly gained from the public service activi-
ties of such networks, dervishes in turn benefited in their own ways from
Ottoman rule. Tanzimat-inspired registration of rural land in this period
created an indigenous propertied class for the first time in hundreds of
years. Families of Sufi sheikhs, the representatives of popular religion in
Jordan since the Mamluk period, were conspicuous beneficiaries of the
new system: co-opted by the Ottoman administration, they were able
to gain title to some of the most lucrative agricultural land in what is
today northern Jordan, translating their social collateral into property-
building and consolidating their political power. In their combined roles
as spiritual guides, teachers, healers, and landowners, Sufi sheikhs thus
both contributed to and benefited from the modernizing trends of the
late Ottoman and early Mandate periods.

This paper explores the contribution of one family of Sufi sheikhs in
public service in northern Jordan during the last quarter of the nine-
teenth century, highlighting their role in the education of boys from
rural areas. It considers traditional forms of education and health care
as forms of charity because of their service to the poor, independence
of state control, and low cost. Because such services were imbedded in

multi-layered social networks, the study relies on a variety of documentary sources, including Ottoman and Mandate-period land registers, written records of interviews, the personal memoirs of former students, and secondary studies based on the records of government educational agencies, Ottoman yearbooks (*salnames*), and early textbooks. The results of archaeological survey of Sufi establishments in the region will also contribute to the analysis. The paper concludes with an assessment of the role Sufi teachers played in creating a public education system and their singular impact on the lives of young boys living in rural Jordan. We will begin with a review of the socio-political circumstances in Jordan in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth Century in Context

Today's Jordan had been free of direct government control for nearly three hundred years when the Ottoman state asserted itself in the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. The series of administrative, legal, and economic reforms of the period, collectively known as the Tanzimat, had its greatest impact on Greater Syria with the 1858 Land Code, which required individuals to register land in their names and pay taxes on it. This legislation was applied in Jordan only ten years later: the earliest official land registers date to 1876 C.E. (1292 *mali-rumi*/1293 A.H.) and were applied first in the Irbid District of northern Jordan, which belonged administratively to the *qada* of ʿAjlun in the *sancak* of Hawran (Mundy 1992: 217). This act of "modernization" by the Ottoman state had many consequences in the region, including the creation of a new land-owning elite, transforming the traditional system of group-ownership of land (*mushaʿ*), and the successful co-option of traditional elites by the Ottoman state in the process.[1] In Northern Jordan, these "traditional elites" were made up largely of the Sufi brotherhoods, and particularly descendants of Sufi holy men (*wali*s), as was the case throughout Syria.

Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, exists side-by-side with "orthodox" Islam in most regions of the Islamic world today. Emerging in the early

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[1] There is a debate in the scholarship about the degree to which communal land-holding was impacted by the Land Law country-wide. For a systematic discussion of this issue, see Palmer 1999.

generations after the Prophet's death as an ascetic movement, a popular response to the perceived materialism of later political leaders, Sufism developed into varied expressions of mysticism, impacted by indigenous cultures and religions, the goal of which was to cultivate a personal and emotionally fulfilling relationship with God. Sufi brotherhoods, led by sheikhs, were eventually organized on the basis of shared practices and beliefs, ranging from the "sober", or orthodox establishments (such as the Qadariyya), to the antinomian and "intoxicated" *tariqa*s, which were characterized, respectively, by their rejection of *Shariʿa* and attempt to achieve union with God at any cost. During the Ottoman period, Sufism was at times sponsored by the state, often for political purposes, and at others bolstered local communities in acts of opposition to the state or during times of intense political, economic, and social transition, as followed the application of Tanzimat legislation.

In his recent and masterful monograph on late Ottoman Damascus, Itzchak Weismann demonstrates the importance of traditional factors in charting the course of modernization in late Ottoman society (Weismann 2001: 9). He argues, convincingly, that the city's Sufi *tariqa*s, and their simultaneous engagement with the local emerging middle class and opposition to many of the Ottoman reforms, fired both Islamic revival and Arab nationalism. Relevant to this study is his charting the various Sufi networks active in Syria in this period, including the Qadariyya, and the movements that it spawned. Reformist Sufis from notable families were able to transform their social capital on a local level into economic and political capital regionally through such Sufi networks, such as the al-Kaylani family in Hama that maintained close ties with the Qadariyya establishment there (*ibid.*, 84). Founded in the twelfth century C.E. in Baghdad by ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani and known for its "free will" doctrine, the Qadariyya brotherhood established itself in Syria as early as the fourteenth century (with the establishment of a hospice in Damascus), and soon spread throughout the Arab world and Africa. It is one of the oldest, most widespread, and most mainstream Sufi brotherhoods in the Islamic world.

While the development of Sufism in Syria and Egypt in the late Ottoman period is well known and readily recognized, Jordan is rarely mentioned in studies on Sufi history. There has been a real reluctance to acknowledge the presence of Sufism in Jordan, and little scholarly attention has been paid to the history of Sufism here, perhaps because of the absence of urban centers (and their well financed hospices) in early modern Jordan. Nonetheless, Sufi networks were extremely important

in the region and have a long history that is documented as early as the sixteenth century in Ottoman tax registers (*daftar*s) that describe a landscape punctuated with saints' shrines—financially supported by Islamic endowments (*awqaf*), which were taxed by the Ottoman state at the rate of 10% (Bakhit 1989: 36–37; Walker 2004: 127; TURAB 1996: 22–87).

Sufi brotherhoods and mystical thought, belief, and practice have far from disappeared from modern Jordan. Sufi families, descendants of holy men named in late Ottoman sources, still play an important role in traditional Jordanian society, as the continued visitation of saints' shrines (*maqam*s), the continued activity of Sufi healers, and the homage paid to the descendants of saints (*wali*s) suggest.[2] The leadings families of the village of Malka in northern Jordan claim descent from ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani through al-Sheikh Rumi, a dervish of the Qadariyya order, who according to local tradition came to Malka from Baghdad with his sons and daughters and founded his own *tariqa* there (Tabishat 1991: 27). One of his descendants, Sheikh Omar, led the order in the 1880s, dying at the turn of the twentieth century. The leading families of the village today are descendants of Omar's four sons (*ibid.*, 37).

The remnants of a Qadariyya network today can be traced throughout northern Jordan, Palestine, and southern Syria, through family names and locations of shrines attributed to Sufi *wali*s. I have focused on the activities of the descendants of Sheikhs Rumi and Omar in Malka, where a major shrine dedicated to either one or both of them is located (see below). The shrine retained its importance regionally until only a generation ago: the descendants of sons of Sheikh Omar residing in the villages of al-ʿAyzariyya in Palestine and Darʿa in Syria, representatives of a regional Qadariyya family network, continued to make annual pilgrimage to this shrine as late as the 1940s (*ibid.*: 35, 83). According to local tradition, Sheikh Rumi, who appears to be the saint for whom the shrine was originally built, acquired lands in and around this village when he healed the daughter of a warrior (*ibid.*, 27). Some of the earliest Ottoman land registers (*tapu defter*) of the Tanzimat period in Jordan document the emergence of local sheikhs as new landowners.[3] The *defter asasi* of 1300–1 A.H./1883–4 A.D. includes

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[2] For detailed descriptions of such practices in contemporary Palestine, see Canaan 1927 and Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1960 and 1962.

[3] The Ottoman land registers and Mandate-period schedules, reports, and *diwan* files are rich, but as yet underutilized, sources of information on late Ottoman and

entries for the same village of Malka, one of the earlier settlements to be registered for tax purposes by the Ottoman authorities. Among the first registerees are dervishes (Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Sheikh Latif, Sheikh Yusuf ibn ʿAbd al-Khalq) and family names (such as Ahmad ʿIsa, ʿIsa ibn Ahmad ʿIsa, and ʿIsa ibn Ahmad al-Salih) repeated in association with Qadariyya charitable activities in other documents of the period (the *kuttab* teacher Sheikh ʿIsa al-Ahmad al-ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Malkawi in 1873–4, for example—discussed below). The land acquired by each individual during this initial phase of land registration, according to the *defter*, are mostly 2000–4000 unit[4] plots of arable land (*tarla*), located in what seem to be contiguous blocks in the well watered rolling hills two to three kilometers west of Malka (Jordan DLS [a]: folia 154–158). If these units were *dunum*, as they are generally specified in later registers, these estates would be the equivalent of approximately 500–1000 acres and represent some of the largest land acquisitions of the period (Fischbach 2000: 54–59).

The family network of the Malkawi sheikhs must have held a considerable amount of the land in and around Malka by the turn of the century. According to a pre-sale document of 1319 *rumi*/1902–3 A.D., the sons of one Sheikh ʿIsa al-Malkawi, who opened a Qurʾanic school in Irbid in the 1872–3 and will be discussed later in this paper, held title to twenty *dunum* of farmland contiguous to the shrine of "Rumi" and among the hills and wadis west of the village that they were selling to one ʿAbd al-Manaf and his sons (Jordan DLS/Settlement, n.d.[b]).[5] This early acquisition of land as personal property by members of the Qadariyya establishment in Malka determined access to land well into the twentieth century: until the 1930s people continued to hold and acquire new lands on the basis of their kin relationship to one of the sons of Sheikh Omar (Tabishat 1991: 27). While this evidence alone is scant, the regular association of such family names in Malka with Sufi

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early twentieth-century social history in Jordan, agricultural history, and the local processes of estate-building (Fischbach 1992 and 2000; Fischbach and Amawi 1991; Mundy 1992 and 1996).

[4] It is not entirely clear from these early registers what unit of measure was used, as it is not stated explicitly. In later registers, the *dunum* is the regular unit of measure. Here, however, the unit could be the "old *dunum*", to measure the land surface; *faddan*, a unit of labor; or the *mudd*, which refers to the amount of seed sown. For more about the problems of reading the earliest registers, see Fischbach 2000: 51 and Mundy 1992: 224.

[5] Prof. Michael Fischbach kindly provided a photocopy of this document from the Settlement files of the Jordan Department of Lands and Surveys.

*tariqa*s and land acquisition in contemporary documents suggests that the Qadariyya network was able to transform its religious prestige and social capital into real estate and political power over the course of the late Ottoman and Mandate periods, as was the case in contemporary Syria.

Traditional Educational Systems

Roughly contemporary with the privatization of rural land by local sheikhs is their emergence in the written record as teachers in and founders of *kuttab*, as early as 1848 in northern Jordan and increasing in numbers from the 1870s. *Kuttab*s are primary-level Qurʾanic schools and were normally three-year programs for children, teaching the basic skills of reading (and memorizing Qurʾan), writing, some math, and religion (Islamic belief and practice). They have a long history in Islamic education, being attached to mosques or in combination with public water fountains (*sabil-kuttab*s) from the thirteenth century A.D. Local *kuttab*s often provided the only public education in many rural and Bedouin communities in Jordan from the mid-nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth, teaching the most basic math and reading skills to the poorest of Jordan's population (Rashid 2002: 339). In Bedouin and herding communities, teachers often took in the children, who lived with them until their families returned the next season (*ibid.*, 345); teachers in village communities kept the agricultural schedule, leaving lessons during the harvest, and often teaching in more than one village at a time (*ibid.*). The *kuttab* culture was overwhelmingly male: I have found only one documented reference to a woman teacher, and the students of all the other *kuttab*s were young boys.[6] Initially, it seems that *kuttab*s serviced the village and tribal elite (the sons of tribal sheikhs), but that as the demand for public education grew by the turn of the century, they became more inclusive and welcomed the students of limited financial means and socio-political status. By the end of Ottoman rule, the *kuttab* was the principle educational institution for all poor and rural areas not otherwise serviced by other public schools.

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[6] The wife of one Safr Ramadan, an elderly woman from the Amman region, offered classes (*kuttab*-style) in her home in the interwar period (Rashid 2002: 343—based on an interview with Mrs. Ramadan). Although the source does not say so explicitly, we are led to understand that the students were young girls.

The earliest modern written references to *kuttab*s date to the middle of the nineteenth century. The first were established in northern Jordan in the districts of Kura and Kefarat, where the rough topography of the land prevented Bedouin raids on the villages and permitted comparatively safe travel from one village to another (*ibid.*, 342). As the state secured more of the Transjordan from Bedouin attacks, these schools spread from northern Jordan to the Red Sea by the end of the century. The Ottoman state, which introduced its own system of public education in Syria through state schools (*madaris hukumiyya*) by legislation in 1840, was slow to establish schools in Jordan: the earliest government primary schools (*ibtida'iyya*) in Irbid date to 1882 (Abu Sha'ar 1995: 549), and by 1918 only a handful existed in Transjordan as a whole, these located in the largest towns (*ibid.*, 351). With the state slow to respond to the educational needs of rural Jordanian society, local leaders, primarily village sheikhs attached to Sufi brotherhoods, created *kuttab*s in even greater numbers at the end of the nineteenth century (*ibid.*, 351).

Writing a history of public education in Jordan is beyond the scope of this study; for such a history, one need only consult one of the many fine monographs on the subject by Jordanian scholars (al-Tall 1979; Rashid 2002; Rashid and Hamshari 2002; Uthman 1995), as well as local histories with chapters devoted to education (Abu Sha'ar 1995; Muhasina et al 1997; Rashid 1983). Scholarship on Jordanian education in the late Ottoman period is consistent on these points: the low numbers of qualified teachers (many of whom were either from Palestine, Syria, or Egypt or were local but had received merely a *kuttab* certificate); the absence of permanent schools from most rural areas until the Mandate period; and the low levels of literacy as a whole in Jordan, compared to other regions of Syria, in the nineteenth century. In his personal memoirs, Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall goes so far as to claim that only three men were literate in Irbid during his childhood, all of whom were members of his own family (Abu Sha'ar 1995: 557). Until the Ottoman Education Law of 1840, which mandated the building of schools (*madrasa*s) for settlements of a certain size, public education was either provided by the *kuttab*s (for Muslims) or the denominational schools (for Christians). The curriculum of the three-tiered state *madrasa*s, which provided education from the primary level to something akin to the first years of university, differed significantly, however, from those of the *kuttab*s and included courses in grammar, Islamic and Ottoman history, advanced math, engineering, the natural sciences, calligraphy, drawing, geology, and Turkish language (Rashid 2002: 337; Abu Sha'ar 1995: 545).

The curriculum also differed from that of the Christian schools, with the Ottoman emphasis on political loyalty, demonstrated in the singing of nationalistic songs and panegyrics, and military training (Rashid 2002: 351). Few students, however, had the opportunity to attend the state schools, either because of expense or distance from home, and continued to rely on the local *kuttab*s for their basic education. A system of universal education was not really present in Jordan until the 1950s (al-Tall 1979: 10–13).

The study of the history of education in Jordan is facilitated by the written record of interviews with elderly community members and the preservation of their personal memoirs, many maintained by the library archives of the University of Jordan. Some of these accounts describe in details the student's experience in the *kuttab*s, a three-year period usually recounted with fondness and acknowledging the quality of the education received there. All of the individuals interviewed remembered the names of their teachers, where the "sheikhs" lived (which was occasionally where classes were held), and often where they were from; it was the teachers that the former students, who were quite elderly at the time of most interviews, remembered most clearly.

The teachers in these accounts fell into two categories: local Sufi sheikhs and immigrants from neighboring Arab regions that moved to Jordan for work or as refugees. Few had any education beyond the state school system or, in many cases, beyond the *kuttab*. They negotiated with the families of the students their salaries, which often took the form of foodstuffs and basic domestic supplies: in the case of Maʾin in the nineteenth century, the sons of the Bedouin sheikhs reimbursed their teacher in wheat, teberinth, raisins, and cotton (Rashid 2002: 347); students in Irbid in the same period paid in firewood and lamb (al-Tall memoirs: 176); and, according to one personal account, a teacher visiting Malka from Damascus "received a loaf of bread and an egg from each pupil" as wages for teaching Qurʾan and *hadith* (Tabishat 1991: 91). Foreign teachers occasionally bargained with the community for free accommodations as compensation for their services (Abu Shaʿar 1995: 559). Classes were informal—held at the teacher's home or in a room of the local mosque—and consisted primarily of rote memorization and repetition. As for class size, it is difficult to even estimate numbers, as most interviews and memoirs make no reference to this, and there are no official documentation (by the state or the mosque) of the administration of the *kuttab*s (*ibid.*, 558–9). Upon successfully memorizing a segment of the Qurʾan (*rabʿ*), a student's family would celebrate by *furuq*—distributing clothes and sweets to his classmates or bringing

gifts of cooked meat to his teacher (Rashid 2002: 347). Failure to learn passages in an acceptable amount of time often led to whipping with a stick specially fashioned for the purpose (al-Tall memoirs: 176).

One of the most detailed and personalized accounts of a late nineteenth-century *kuttab* can be found in the unpublished memoirs of the late Muhammad Salih Mustafa al-Yusuf al-Tall, completed in 1948.[7] An important government official and father of the Jordanian poet laureate Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall and grandfather of former Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tall, Muhammad al-Tall was the head of a family of very public and prominent personalities in Jordan's intellectual, cultural, and political elite (Fischbach 1992: 36, note 67). His description of his schooling in Irbid as a child stands out for its vivid descriptions of teaching methods, the personal reactions of the students to the experience, and the hardships entailed by students and teacher alike. For these reasons it is worth citing, in translation, a few passages:

> In 1289 A.H. [1872–3 C.E.] Sheikh ʿIsa al-Ahmad ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Malkawi [from the village of Malka] came to Irbid and opened a *kuttab* (*maktab*) for boys. My father took me to this Sheikh ʿIsa, who was teaching children in a room in the house of Ahmad al-Sukran and then sent me to the *khatib* [of the mosque]. This young man told me to give the sheikh some meat, which was no doubt his fee for teaching.... Then my father left, and I remained with the rest of the small boys. I was given a square tin board, and I returned with it to the school [*maktab*]. The sheikh lovingly wrote the letters of the alphabet for me on my tin board and told me to recite them and learn them by heart.
>
> The students beside me were reading out loud, rocking their heads back and forth and reciting with loud voices in unison.
>
> We would sit together on the ground in a circle, while the sheikh stood in another part of the room, deep in thought, and after a long pause would chose one of us to read the lessons loudly. If he made a mistake, we would hear the powerful blow as the sheikh hit the student with a heavy stick....
>
> The *khatib* required every student to recite the Qurʾan and to give him a ration of wheat [flour] each year. Each student, as well, was to contribute each day a cooked dish, coffee, and a loaf of bread, in addition to wood during the winter months, as long as he continued his studies. (al-Tall memoirs: 176)

Significant in these passages is the description of a Qadariyya sheikh from the village of Malka who has moved, at least temporarily, to the

---

[7] I am grateful to Prof. Michael Fischbach for making this rich account available to me.

regional center of Irbid to establish a *kuttab*. At least one of his students came from what was to become a very prominent family. The identity of this teacher and his family, the status of his village, and the role of both in public education and health care are illustrative of the importance of rural Sufism as channels of charity and public services in late Ottoman Jordan.

Malka

Located in the Kura District, approximately eight kilometers east of Umm Qeis and 23 west of Irbid is Malka, one of the largest and most affluent villages north of Irbid. Malka has traditionally been a center of olive oil production (as it was since Roman times) and its residents today supplement incomes derived from that industry with the sale of dairy products and honey and employment in the state sector—the army and civil service jobs (Walker 2005: 100). Although archaeological surveys have documented occupation in the village since the fourteenth century (Walker 2005), it really experienced resettlement on a permanent basis during the second half of the nineteenth century, like other villages in the region; on the basis of oral interviews and architectural remains, for example, the nearby town of Umm Qeis was settled sometime in the 1870s and 1880s (Shami 1987 and 1989; Mershen 1992). Gottlieb Schumacher visited the region by horseback in the 1880s, during which time he described the village as "one of the largest and most populous villages" in the region (Schumacher 1890: 80) At that point Malka consisted of 124 stone "huts" and a population of 600, all Muslim; at the south of the village was a small, whitewashed shrine, the "Maqam al-Sheikh Omar", which still stands today (*ibid.*).

As was the pattern in other villages of the region, the local population was (and still is today) divided into two groups: the original land-owning *fuqara* (Sufis), who maintained family and operations ties with Omar/Rumi shrine, and the *fellahin* (peasants), who served as sharecroppers for the *fuqara* until well into the twentieth century.[8]

---

[8] The term *faqir* (pl. *fuqara*) suggests poverty, and in a Sufi context refers to one who "lives for God alone" (Nizami 1965: 757). His, or hers, is a life of renunciation, spiritual poverty, and humility. In early Islam, *faqir* came to be synonymous with *mutasawwif*, the generic term for a Sufi (Denny 1994: 226). The *fuqara* of Malka, then, should be understood as Sufi adepts, and not an economically impoverished segment of the village. They were, in fact, quite the opposite.

(Fischbach 2000: 52, 172; Tabishat 1991: 23–38). These divisions were (and are) reflected in choices of settlement within the village, profession, and marriage partner (Tabishat 1991: 26). The *fuqara* are the village's leadership and came to economic and political prominence by combining their control of the local shrine (and its various services and activities) with control over arable land. As described earlier, they came to acquire most of Malka's arable land during an early phase of land registration in the 1870s and 1880s; as early as 1875 "violent disputes" erupted over land ownership (Fischbach 2000: 44–5). Descendants of the leading family's sheikhs were eventually able to assert their local social and tribal authority over what was traditionally communally-held land to make it personal property in the Mandate period (*ibid.*, 172). In Malka, as in other villages of northern Jordan, village sheikhs with Sufi ties aggressively built a real estate base from the 1870s on, gaining control of the choicest land (and particularly irrigated plots for growing fruit and olive trees—Fischbach 2000: 14), often at the expense of other family members and neighbors. In Malka, the ease with which local sheikhs were able to register land in their own names may have been largely related to their early tax-exempt status (a privilege given to them by the Ottoman state, as a way of co-opting this local elite) and their local control of religious education (Tabishat 1991: 37).

I became interested in this village during a phase of my research on Jordanian agriculture in the Mamluk period (thirteenth-sixteenth centuries C.E.). During archival work in Cairo, making use of contemporary documents to compare the history of land management in different regions of the country, I located an unpublished manuscript from the fourteenth century describing Malka and its land. The document is a detailed record of the endowment of properties (*waqfiyya*) owned by the reigning Sultan in Cairo to financially support a *madrasa* he built there, describing the land, crops, facilities, buildings, road network, and topography of the region (Walker 2004: 130 and 2005: 71). Archaeological survey of the village followed in 2003, during which time my team became acquainted with the popular Omar shrine (known also as the shrine of Rumi) and the high status in the community of the descendants of these two saints (Walker 2005). The shrine, which sits at the end of a walled cemetery in the center of the village, is a white, single-room building covered by a dome, 3–2.5 meters at its base and 3 meters high. Three tombs occupy the interior—the burial places, according to tradition, of three ancestors of the *fuqara* clan in the village—and are covered by prayer rugs, donated by visitors (Tabishat 1991: 83). Torn rags of green and blue cloth (*khilaʿ*) are tied to trees and left outside the door

of the shrine, a practice common in the visitation of shrines with the
aim of obtaining blessing. As late as the 1930s and 1940s, descendants
of the Qadariyya in villages in Palestine and southern Syria continued
to visit this shrine annually to pay their respects to their ancestors (*ibid.*,
83). As late as the 1950s local celebrations were held at the shrine twice
a week—accompanied with singing, Qurʾanic recitations, and beating
drums—to bring blessing to the village (*ibid.*, 25).

Malka, moreover, has a long history as a center of education.
Mamluk-period (1260–1516 in Syria) sources make regular reference
to men carrying the *nisba* of "al-Malkawi" who, while apparently
educated at home in their youth, went on to make their academic
careers at important *madrasa*s in Damascus (Walker 2004: 131). The
reputation of Malkawis as educated men continued through Otto-
man rule: in the 1880s Schumacher described the *mukhtar* of the
village as a "learned man" (Schumacher 1890: 81). Education was the
"essential element of the dominant social relations in the town until
the 1930s"; control over its implementation and its acquisition translated
into power on all levels (Tabishat 1991: 110). Sufi sheikhs educated the
sons of sheikhs and other tribal leaders, and these young men were
usually the first to be able to attend the higher level of public schools
when they became available. This education was then transformed into
a greater social, political, and economic power at home.

In addition to its reputation for education, Malka has also long been
a center for traditional medicine, which, like the *kuttab*s, was in the
hands of the sheikhs affiliated with the Rumi/Omar shrine. Muhammad
Tabishat's insightful study on traditional medicine in Malka is one of
the few anthropological works on the village and is rich in data on the
relationship between traditional and modern medicine, the relationship
between traditional systems of education and healing, and the role of
the shrine and the Qadariyya establishment as a whole in the region
(Tabishat 1991). Indigenous health care providers consist of herbalists,
midwives, bone-setters, and practitioners of Prophetic medicine (*ibid.*, 1).
While providers in Malka are both *fuqara* and *fellahin* and include
formally and informally trained men and women, the socially most
prestigious form of health care, Prophetic medicine, has always been
dominated by the descendants of Sheikh Rumi, whose religious merits
and healing powers are believed to have been passed on to them (*ibid.*,
27). Their care consists of a combination of Qurʾanic recitations, the
writing of Qurʾanic verses and *hadith* for amulets, and the visitation of
shrines. Their special sanctity, knowledge of scripture, and the mediating

spirits of ancestors are believed to make them particularly effective in treating mental illness, which is caused by evil spirits (*ibid.*, 38; Canaan 1914: 23). Most of their patients are family members, although they will care for the ill brought to them from other villages, and for these services they are generally paid in foodstuffs, such as a "gift" of cooked and spiced lamb or grains (Tabishat 1991: 39). This form of healing was also known in villages and among the Bedouin of late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine (Canaan 1914; Abu-Rabia 2005). The sheikhs of Malka thus became prominent in the late nineteenth century through a combination of their religious authority and healing abilities, land ownership, and relative monopoly of public education, first in the *kuttab*s and then in the government schools (Tabishat 1991: 37).

   This association of the Qadariyya establishment with both public education and health care is made clear in al-Tall's memoirs, which refers to the *kuttab* teacher Sheikh ʿIsa's abilities in the realm of Prophetic medicine:

> This sheikh could [also] heal the insane. One day a mentally disturbed man by the name of Muhammad, a descendant of Fatima, was brought to him. The sheikh put him up in a cave in the mosque's courtyard, by the western room near the south gate. The cave was under the northern wall that divided the room, and a door opened there to the south. The interior was large and dark.… This indigent fool left (at one point) without his clothes, which consisted of a dirty white *thawb*. (al-Tall memoirs: 177)

It is unfortunate that the sick man (who was, apparently, a *sayyid*) left, because we are left without a description of his healing, and we do not know if any payment would have been involved. However, on the basis of parallels from Malka, the home village of this sheikh, the patient would have stayed with the sheikh for some time, may have been treated with a combination of Qurʾanic recitation and amulets (*hujub*), and his relatives given the sheikh a cooked meal for his trouble.

Legacy of Qadariyya Shuyukh's Public Service

Contemporary sources universally acknowledge the importance of public services provided by Qadariyya sheikhs in late Ottoman Jordan. In the absence of state-run schools and hospitals, traditional *kuttab*s and home-based clinics provided the only literacy and basic health-care most villages knew before the 1920s. Although fees were charged for both kinds of services, the children of the poor regularly made use of

both systems, and in this sense the Sufi sheikhs were involved in an indigenous form of charities work. Such activities were, in addition, an alternative form of public service to the traditional Islamic *waqf*-financed *madrasa*s and hospitals of the larger towns in Syria. While recognizing the pivotal role played by rural dervishes in public service, whether they acted as modernizers and reformers, as they did in Syria, or alleviated the sufferings of the poor by, for example, raising their level of education to the point they could take advantage of the new economic opportunities created by the bureaucratization of the state and the internationalization of agricultural markets, has yet to be demonstrated.

To do so, we must ask of our sources who exactly benefited from Qadariyya services: who attended the *kuttab*s and went on to government high schools, and who had personal access to the healers in the villages? It is clear in Tabishat's study that, in the case of traditional healing, the patients were largely members of the same clan (Tabishat 1991: 38). While it is true that the sheikh of Malka taught the sons of both *fuqara* and *fellahin*, only the sons of the former were able to continue their secondary religious education in Damascus and Palestine (*ibid.*: 28). One could argue that the *kuttab*, Ottoman, and Mandate systems of education were all, in many ways, elitist and conservative, in that they reinforced traditional social hierarchies, through careful selection of students or the limited distribution and selective location of public schools. The sons of the local tribal elite attended *kuttab*s, went on to higher religious or government schools, and were then able to secure jobs in the public sector or business. On the other hand, the poor, who often lived in isolated settlements or poorly serviced small villages, may have learned the basics of reading and math during three years in a *kuttab* but were not prepared for the rapidly changing economic conditions of the turn of the century. These are, in fact, the complaints lodged by Ahmad Yousef al-Tall in his critical history of Jordan's education. According to al-Tall, democratization of education in the country did not take place until the 1950s: by 1946, only 37 students in the country had completed public high school, out of a population of the time of 400,000 (al-Tall 1979: 13). The *kuttab*s, on the other hand, were the "only means of schooling for the lower classes" and functioned as a form of social control, rather than social equalizer, inculcating the masses with proper religious and social morals, values, and attitudes (*ibid.*).

A final assessment of the role of the *kuttab*s, and the Sufi establishments behind many of them, is, thus, a mixed one. While the dervishes in Jordan did not transform social structure or networks, they did provide essential public services in the absence, and then apathy, of a

centralized state. A comparison with indigenous "charities" in neighboring regions in this period would be illuminating in this regard. On the long term, it should be recognized that the educational and healing networks supported by village dervishes played an important role in producing a new generation of Jordanian political, cultural, and economic elite. It is perhaps in this sense that the Qadariyya channels of charity were most "modern" and influential.
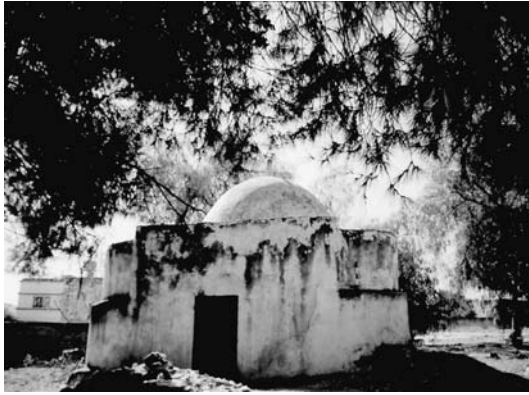
Figure 1. Sheikh Omar shrine in Malka, as it is seen today. Figure provided courtesy of the author.
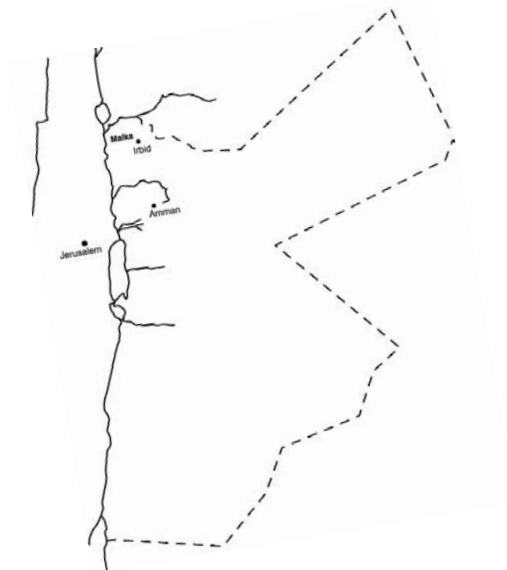
Figure 2. Location of village of Malka in map of modern Jordan. Figure provided courtesy of the author.

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