

TURKISH PERIODICALS IN THE DISTRICT OF JERUSALEM AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

The history of the press in Palestine during the late Ottoman period is, in reality, two histories reflecting the separate existence of the two major communities which inhabited the land – the Arab Palestinian and the Jewish. Compared with neighboring regions such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, the publishing of Arabic language newspapers and other periodicals was late to arrive in Palestine. According to some sources, initial steps in this direction were taken in Jerusalem in 1876, but little is known about them and, in any case, they did not continue. Among the obstacles facing the development of the press was the lack of proper printing houses and the cool attitude of the local authorities, which, for a long time, withheld permission to establish one. The existing printing houses which contained Arabic fonts were small establishments belonging mostly to Christian church groups and were unsuited to the task. A more developed commercial printing house was founded in 1894 by George Ḥabīb Ḥanānyā, a Greek Orthodox Arab from Jerusalem, although the license for it was only issued in 1898.¹ Ḥanānyā also applied to start an Arabic language newspaper. But the real turning point came only after the Young Turk revolution in 1908 when a number of Arabic newspapers, including Ḥanānyā's *al-Ḳuds*, were finally allowed to appear in Jerusalem as well as in other cities in Palestine. They were varied in

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content and soon became lively platforms for the discussion of ideas then prevailing in the Arab community. Under the strict control of the authorities, and suffering from severe financial difficulties, they struggled hard to survive and by World War I had mostly ceased to exist.²

The Jewish press in Hebrew already made its debut in 1863, when the first newspaper appeared in Jerusalem, to be followed by others. Hebrew printing had already existed for some time in Palestine, and the main motivation behind the establishment of these newspapers was the need to serve as a channel of information and the expression of ideas within the small, but growing, Jewish community. One other purpose was to pass information and messages to Jewish communities abroad. Hebrew newspapers were subject to the same control by the Ottoman authorities as other publications in the Empire and from time to time were forced to close down. They were, however, allowed to survive throughout the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, presumably because they focused primarily on Jewish internal affairs. The Young Turk revolution gave rise to a number of new Jewish Hebrew publications, but they, too, like their Arabic counterparts, faced financial difficulties and frequent interruptions, and most of them closed down before or during the war years.³

While the Arabic and Jewish press has already been amply studied, no attention has been given to date to two Ottoman Turkish newspapers, which were published in Palestine during the later years of Ottoman rule. One of them, the *Kuds-ı Şerif* (Jerusalem), was the official weekly gazette of the district (*mutasarrıflık*) of Jerusalem and was modeled very much according to the pattern of other provincial gazettes appearing in the Empire and which were designed as channels of communication between government, state officials and the public at large.⁴ The other, the

¹ Ami AYALON, "The Beginnings of Publishing in pre-1948 Palestine", in Philip Sadgrove (ed.), *History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East*, Oxford, 2004, p. 73.

² See Ya'qūb YEHOŠU'A, *Ta'rīkh al-Şihāfa al-'Arabiyya fī Filasṭīn fī l-'Ahd al-'Uthmānī, 1908-1918*, Jerusalem 1974; Yūsuf al-KHURĪ, *Al-Şihāfa al-'Arabiyya fī Filasṭīn, 1876-1948*, Beirut, 1976; Muhammad SULAYMĀN, *Ta'rīkh al-Şihāfa a-Filasṭīniyya, 1876-1976*, vol. 1, 1876-1918, Nicosia and Athens, 1987; Q. SHOMALI, "La presse arabe en Palestine dans la période ottomane", in D. Trimbur & R. Aaronsohn (eds.), *De Bonaparte à Balfour: La France, l'Europe occidentale et la Palestine, 1799-1917*, Paris, 2001.

³ See Galia YARDENI, *Ha-'Itonut ha-'Ivrit be-Eretz Yisra'el ba-Shanim 1863-1904* [The Hebrew Press in Palestine, 1863-1904], Tel Aviv 1969; Getzel KRESSEL, *Toldot ha-'Itonut ha-'Ivrit be-Eretz Yisra'el* [The History of the Hebrew Press in Palestine], Jerusalem, 1964.

⁴ On the provincial gazettes, see Hasan DUMAN, *Başlangıcından Harf Devrimine Kadar*

Musavver Çöl (The Desert Illustrated), was a biweekly journal aimed largely at the top Ottoman officers and officials serving in Palestine during the Great War. Both periodicals were published in Turkish, but included, as in the case of the official gazette, either translations of the whole text into Arabic (appearing under the title of *al-Ḳuds al-Sharīf*), or, as in the case of *Musavver Çöl*, writings in Arabic by Arab authors.⁵ The Arabic parts were aimed at the local Arab population, officials, notables, and others from among the educated classes.

Both publications have survived in very small numbers of issues. Still, I thought, the small sample should not stand as an obstacle to looking at the issues at hand and attempting, at least in general terms, some kind of characterization of these periodicals from the points of view of purpose, content, and impact. In the case of *Ḳuds-ı Şerif*, although it was possible to trace only six issues out of the hundreds which seem to have appeared,⁶ some meaningful generalizations could be arrived at with aid of many quotations in other newspapers.⁷ In the case of the *Musavver Çöl* the sample at hand, ten issues, was again very small, but since the newspaper seems to have appeared in no more than twelve issues in all, at least the

Osmanlı Türk Süreli Yayınlar ve Gazete Bibliyografyası ve Toplu Kataloğu, 1828-1928, vol. 1, Ankara, 2000, p. 44-46; Uygur KOCABAŞOĞLU and Ali BİRİNCİ, "Osmanlı Vilayet Gazete ve Matbaaları Üzerine Gözlemler", *Kebikeç*, vol. 2 (1995), p. 101-121; Anja PISTOR-HATAM (ed.), *Amtsblatt, Vilayet Gazetesi und unabhängiges Journal: Die Anfänge der Presse im nahen Osten*, Frankfurt am Main, 2001.

⁵ Some authors mention a separate Arabic edition called *al-Şahrā' al-Muşawwara*. Filib TARAZI, *Tarikh al-Şihāfa al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 2, Beirut, 1929, p. 140-141; Mustafa KABHA, *The Palestinian Press as Shaper of Public Opinion 1929-1939: Writing up a Storm*, London and Portland, 2007, xix. I have not, however, found any traces for such an Arabic edition, and since the *Musavver Çöl* included some writings in Arabic, I do not think there was much of a justification for it. Yehoshu'a writes that 'Ārif al-'Ārif, who was governor of Beersheba during the Mandatory period, informed him in answer to a query that he had not heard anything about this Arabic edition, Yehoshu'a, p. 143.

⁶ Two issues are to be found in the Özege collection in the library of Atatürk University in Erzurum, Duman, p. 490. Four are in the Yellin collection at the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.

⁷ Such were, for example, items found in the Hebrew newspapers of the Hamidian period, *ha-Havatzelet* under the title of "official news" (*Yedi'ot Ofitzyaliyot*) or *Hashkafa*, in its section called "This Week" (*ha-Shavu'a*). Hebrew newspapers after 1913 appear not to have cited the gazette. There were no Arabic newspapers during the Hamidian period, and the available collections of those which appeared under the Young Turks showed that only very few referred to the gazette. It may be assumed that in many cases, at least in official news, local newspapers did rely on the official gazette, even without indicating the source. In this article mention will be made only of such news items which mentioned the official gazette as their source.

proportion of those which have survived was high.⁸ An examination of these two publications was deemed worthy because they could add to our knowledge and perspective of what went on in Palestine in its last days under Ottoman rule. Both being mouthpieces of the authorities, these two newspapers could reveal something about the positions, attitudes, and methods of the Ottomans at some of the most critical and dramatic points in their own history and the history of Palestine — the end of the Hamidian regime, the consolidation of the Young Turks in power, and finally the war years.

THE KUDS-I ŞERİF (AL-ĞUDS AL-SHARĪF)

The story of the gazette

It was not until the end of the Hamidian period that an official gazette, a weekly, appeared in the district of Jerusalem. The provincial laws of 1864 and 1867 stipulated that each province (*vilayet*) should publish an annual and an official gazette and this was implemented on a more or less regular basis in most of the provinces. Strictly speaking, Jerusalem was not a *vilayet* but a district (*sancak* or *mutasarrıflık*) and it is probably for this reason that the law was not considered applicable in its case. Still, owing to its international importance and its geographical position on the border of Egypt, Jerusalem by 1874 had acquired the status of an “independent district” directly accountable to the central government in Istanbul. It now became a *vilayet* in all but name and therefore deserved its own official publications. We do hear from some sources that a monthly official gazette first made its appearance in 1876,⁹ but there is no supportive evidence to prove that this step, if taken at all, was more than a short lived experiment. On the 25th of March, 1904, the Hebrew *Hashkafa* reported that an official gazette had just appeared.¹⁰ This was confirmed by the French consul in Jerusalem who wrote to Paris on the 19th of April

⁸ The ten issues out of 12 which were consulted were found in various libraries in Turkey with the help of Duman’s catalogue, p. 607-608. No. 3 has apparently not survived, whereas no. 11 which should have been located in the Istanbul University library, was not to be found. Occasionally, like no. 12, the journal was called *Çöl Risalesi* (A Letter from the Desert). See also “Nazar-ı Dikkata”, *Musavver Çöl*, no. 6.

⁹ AL-KHÜRĪ, p. 2; SULAYMĀN, p. 45.

¹⁰ *Hashkafa*, no. 26, 9 Nissan 5664/25 March 1904.

that the new gazette had been initiated by the governor of the district, Osman Kâzım Bey in anticipation of a change in Jerusalem's status from that of a district to a full fledged province.¹¹ It was the first Turkish newspaper to appear in Jerusalem and, because it appeared in Arabic translation, too, may be regarded as the first and only Arabic newspaper in Palestine before the Young Turk period.

The change in the status of the district which Osman Kâzım anticipated never materialized, but the gazette survived throughout the remaining years of the Hamidian regime and seems to have ceased publication in the early months of 1909. This interruption in its publication may have been connected with financial difficulties or else with the unsettled conditions which occurred in the wake of the attempted coup and the eventual overthrow of the sultan in April 1909. It reappeared, however, with a new numbering system in December 1913, during the governorship of Ahmed Macid Bey, and after the Committee of Union and Progress had established itself in power once again.¹² Its publication continued into the war years, at least until March of 1915. It was interrupted some time later but we have no information as to the exact date.¹³

The two editions of the gazette, the Turkish and the Arabic, were attached and, with the exception of minor differences, identical. Its first issues had four pages in each, but, after the Young Turk revolution, the number of pages dropped to two for each language. The publisher was, as in other provinces, the district's administration, but the actual printing of the first issues was done privately by George Ḥabīb Ḥanānyā in his printing house in Jerusalem. The later issues of the gazette were printed by the government's own printing press.

No names of editors or writers appear in the gazette, but we know of three names associated at one time or another with its editing. These were Mahmud Sadık, the head of the district chancellery, who was the provincial official responsible for publications; 'Abd al-Salām Kamāl, a mem-

¹¹ French Consul General in Jerusalem to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 April 1904, Correspondance Politique, Jerusalem, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris.

¹² Al-Khūrī, p. 25, mentions the 18th of December as the exact date.

¹³ In the following pages the *Kuds-ı Şerif* (hereafter *K.Ş.*) will be cited only by its number, preceded by A or B to indicate the Hamidian or Young Turk periods, respectively. Numbers and dates are as follows: A22, 13 August 1320/31 July 1904; A210, 9 December 1324/22 December 1908; A217, 10 February 1324/23 February 1909; B56, 29 January 1330/10 February 1915; B59, 26 February 1330/11 March 1915; B62, 12 March 1331/25 March 1915.

ber of a well known Jerusalem family and later a writer in the Young Turk newspaper *Tanin*, who edited the Turkish edition; and ‘Alī al-Rīmāwī, from Bayt Rīmā near Rāmallah, a teacher, poet, journalist, and publisher, who edited the Arabic part.¹⁴ Judging by their active participation in the celebrations held in Jerusalem to honor the constitutional order, it would seem that they enjoyed high social stature and took an active part in public life.¹⁵

The gazette was financed by the government, but some of its revenues came from subscriptions. Similar to the case of the central government gazette and other provincial gazettes, most of the subscribers were probably officials required to do so. This did not altogether alleviate the gazette’s financial problems and may have been, as has already been pointed out, one reason behind the long interruption in its appearance. It was a typical problem facing all official gazettes at the time.¹⁶

Contents

a. Announcements

Announcements constituted a major part of the contents. As in other provincial gazettes, announcements printed in the *Kuds-ı Şerif* were almost always official and were of two different kinds – those issued by local official bodies and those originating at the center and brought to the knowledge of the local population. Typical local announcements were invitations for applications to farm certain government revenues or to lease state properties.¹⁷ Bids (*müzayede*) were invited for property whose owners, for one reason or another, could not keep or which served as collateral for loans which could not be paid. Applicants were asked to contact the offices concerned, usually the land registration (*tapu*) office.¹⁸ In cases where disputes erupted over the title to property, claimants were requested to apply to the courts.¹⁹ Yet another category of announcements were tenders (*munakasa*) which were sought for such matters as

¹⁴ Al-Khūrī, p. 2, 25.

¹⁵ *Hashkafa*, no. 93, 13 Av 5668/10 August 1908.

¹⁶ Kocabaşoğlu and Birinci, p. 107-109.

¹⁷ *K.Ş.*, no. A22.

¹⁸ *K.Ş.*, nos. A22, 210, 217; B56.

¹⁹ *K.Ş.*, no. B56; *Hashkafa*, no. 25, 8 Tevet 5668/13 December 1908; no. 42, 10 Adar 5668/12 February 1908.

the construction of public works or for the supply of goods.²⁰ There were also announcements about job openings in public institutions. When it was decided, for example, to open new schools, candidates for the positions of teachers and supervisors were asked to apply to the education department.²¹

Other announcements, made by various administrative departments in the district, originated in decrees, laws, and regulations issued by the central government. This type of announcement conformed to one of the basic aims of the official gazette, for this was one way, perhaps the only one, to inform the officials and the public at large of the new regulations. Taxation was, naturally, an important topic and there were many changes, whether related to new levies or to changes made in the mode of taxation. Such were, for example, new instructions issued on the stamp tax (*damga*) required on official documents²² or new regulations regarding the assessment of the profit tax (*temettuat*).²³ In one case an exemption granted farmers in several Jewish settlements because of a pest which afflicted their vineyards was declared null and void.²⁴ Severe steps were taken against tax dodgers,²⁵ and in view of the common practice to conceal land transactions, warnings were issued requiring the population to register land transfers legally and to be in possession of valid land deeds.²⁶ It was stipulated that land not cultivated by farmers for longer than the permitted time should revert back to the state by law.²⁷ There were also warnings against construction of any sort of building without a permit.²⁸ Residents were warned that they must carry identification papers for all their contacts with government bodies.²⁹ A special category of announcements related to matters of public health: Due to the frequency of epidemics, for example, warnings were issued to the population as to how to avoid them and receive immunization.³⁰

²⁰ *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

²¹ *K. Ş.*, no. A217.

²² *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

²³ *Hashkafa*, no. 2, 9 Tishre 5668/17 September 1907.

²⁴ *Hashkafa*, no. 81, 6 Av 5667/17 July 1907.

²⁵ *Hashkafa*, no. 3, 2 Heshvan 5666/31 October 1905.

²⁶ *Hashkafa*, no. 1, 25 Tishre 5666/24 October 1905.

²⁷ *Hashkafa*, no. 90, 11 Elul 5667/21 August 1907.

²⁸ *Hashkafa*, no. 79, 27 Tamuz 5667/9 July 1907.

²⁹ *Hashkafa*, no. 40, 2 Adar I 5668/4 February 1908.

³⁰ *Hashkafa*, no. 2, 28 Tishre 5666/27 October 1905; no. 33, 7 Shevaṭ 5668/10 January 1908.

During the war years, announcements were often made reflecting the new conditions of war. The government imposed special levies to cover the war costs and initiated changes in the regulations on exemption from military service aimed at increasing the sources of manpower for the armed forces.³¹ Non-enemy powers which maintained peace with the Ottoman Empire were required to renew the licenses given to their religious and charitable institutions in the district³², while enemy powers were confronted with measures designed to prohibit or at least limit the activities of their nationals.³³

b. News

The news section contained both official and unofficial news. Most official news consisted of notices about changes in different administrative positions in the district, of appointments, arrivals and departures of officials; of decorations and medals received by them; and of exchanges of messages between the district and the center. There were also reports on the activities of the authorities in different areas. These usually conveyed an air of accomplishment. One report, for example, spoke of Governor Ali Ekrem Bey's (1906-1908) formation of a reform committee in Jerusalem to oversee progress in the district and make suggestions for further improvements.³⁴ The subject of water supply was high on the agenda of the authorities. A long report in the gazette listed and praised the efforts made by governors to alleviate the problem of water in Jerusalem.³⁵ Yet another report spoke of the exploration work done around the Dead Sea in search of minerals.³⁶ The gazette also reported on the project to restore the tomb of Nabī Sāmū'īl near Jerusalem which was to be undertaken by both the civil authorities and the administration of pious foundations (*evkaf*).³⁷ On a somewhat different note was Governor Ahmed Reşid Bey's (1904-1906) proposal to introduce horse races to the city in the hope that this would improve the local breeds.³⁸

Public commissions were a common feature of the Hamidian period, and their reports and recommendations received due coverage in the

³¹ *K. Ş.*, no. B62.

³² *K. Ş.*, no. B56.

³³ *K. Ş.*, no. B59.

³⁴ *Hashkafa*, no. 23, 1 Tevet 5668/6 December 1907.

³⁵ *Hashkafa*, no. 56, 26 Adar II 5668/27 March 1908.

³⁶ *Hashkafa*, no. 57, 2 Nisan 5668/3 April 1908.

³⁷ *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

³⁸ *Hashkafa*, no. 36, 28 Shevaṭ 5666/23 February 1906.

gazette. Some of these commissions were permanent and dealt with a variety of administrative affairs, while others were *ad hoc* commissions set up to investigate a specific matter. In one report, the gazette published the recommendations of four different commissions set up in Jaffa: One, on the state of education, recommended the opening of two or three more elementary schools; a second dealt with the poor conditions of Jaffa's slaughtering house and recommended the construction of a new one; the third spoke of the poor hygienic situation in the Manshiya quarter caused by flooding; and yet another commission warned against over exploiting farm land in the Jaffa subdistrict.³⁹

Very extensive coverage was given to a report on a special commission sent to Beersheba, a town founded as the center of a new subdistrict (*kaza, kaymakamlık*) in the southern Negev desert just a few years earlier. Aimed at consolidating Ottoman control over the dangerous border zone between Ottoman territories and British controlled Egypt, the new subdistrict, along with its newly founded town, was designed to tie the Bedouin population more firmly to the central authority. The commission investigated the geographical and economic conditions of Beersheba, evaluated the potential for further development, and made its recommendations. It gave considerable attention to the town's communications and, among others, recommended the upgrading of the road to Gaza and the completion of the road to Hebron and Jerusalem. The report, which also dwelt on the climate and water conditions in the region, recommended the planting of trees and the digging of more wells, relying on the abundant evidence of past civilizations in the Negev.⁴⁰ The affairs of Beersheba, as it turned out, continued to command considerable attention. The official gazette reported in the spring of 1908 of the new administrative changes effected there by Ali Ekrem Bey and of the visit he made to the Negev on that occasion. Among others, a new subdistrict and a new commune (*nahiye*) were established in 'Awja al-Ḥafir and in Mulayḥa, respectively, while the status of Beersheba itself was raised and its governor given the title of deputy governor (*mutasarrıf muavini*). The gazette gave all the details of these reforms and quoted in full Ekrem Bey's speech to the shaykhs on that occasion.⁴¹

³⁹ K. Ş., no. A22.

⁴⁰ K. Ş., no. A22.

⁴¹ *Hashkafa*, no. 68, 14 Iyyar 5668/8 May 1908; no. 71, 25 Iyyar 5668/19 May 1908; no. 72, 28 Iyyar 5668/22 May 1908; *Ha-Ḥavatzelet*, no. 22, 25 May 1908.

News reports during the Young Turk period reflected the changes brought about by the new regime. Emphasis was given to covering the activities of the representative bodies which were reinstated both at the center and in the provinces. According to the provincial laws of 1864 and 1867, a provincial general assembly (*meclis-i umumi*) composed of delegates from all districts was to convene once a year to discuss necessary reforms. Under the authoritarian regime of Abdülhamid, these bodies were never called into session, but they were restored after the Young Turks revolution and given some wider powers under the provincial law of 1913. Jerusalem, too, was given the chance to have an assembly of its own, chaired by the governor and including representatives from each of the subdistricts.⁴² The gazette at the outset of the new regime had already published the relevant paragraphs of the provincial law⁴³ and, once elections were held and the general assembly convened, began to report regularly on its deliberations and resolutions, as required by law.⁴⁴ In one of the issues at our disposal we have a full report of the fifth and sixth sessions of the assembly in 1914, reflecting the typical issues which were placed on the agenda of this body. Topics discussed in the fifth session included a report by the public works commission; another on the health institutions and the preventive measures taken against contagious diseases; questions of economic development; the reply given by the Mişve Yisrael agricultural school regarding the admission of Muslim students; and the purchase of equipment for the construction of roads. The sixth session of the assembly discussed the need to complete the road between Jaffa, Hebron, and Beersheba; the planting of trees; the appointment of teachers in several schools; and the supply of wheat to the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. Also discussed was a plea for financial aid from the municipality of Hebron.⁴⁵ A further report from the assembly included the discussions on education and public works and also a complaint that the money allocated to different projects was not always spent.⁴⁶ Delegates of subdistricts seem to have been good spokesmen for the interests

⁴² Haim GERBER, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem 1890-1914*, Berlin, 1985, p. 136-142.

⁴³ *K. Ş.*, A217.

⁴⁴ Kocabaşoğlu and Birinci, p. 103.

⁴⁵ *K. Ş.*, no. B59.

⁴⁶ *K. Ş.*, no. B62. Summaries of the minutes of 21 sessions of the first general assembly, originally brought by the official gazette, were printed by the Executive Committee of the Judean Settlements and were then published by *ha-'Olam* (Odessa), no. 22, 18 June 1914.

of their respective regions, raising their own particular problems and suggesting solutions.⁴⁷

Local news about accidents, fires, and crimes was also at least semi-official as it must have originated with the relevant administrative bodies which were involved in these cases such as the police.⁴⁸ After the revolution, considerable coverage was given to reactions in the district to the important events which took place at the center. The gazette published a lengthy report on the celebrations conducted in Jerusalem on the occasion of the opening of the Ottoman parliament. The city was decorated and illuminated, and a grand meeting was held to mark the event. It was attended by high officials and notables and featured a military parade, music, and patriotic speeches. A special religious service was conducted by the chaplain of the garrison battalion. In Jaffa, a patriotic play was performed by some officers under the auspices of the *mutasarrıf* with all revenues going to the Committee of Union and Progress. The play was enthusiastically received by the audience.⁴⁹

News about events taking place outside Jerusalem but within the borders of the Ottoman Empire took a secondary place and generally appeared only when there was local interest in them or were important cases relating to the state as a whole. One report spoke of the arrival in Aleppo of the new governor, Osman Kâzım Bey, but the attention given to him was probably due to the fact that earlier he had been the governor of Jerusalem and, as mentioned before, was the founder of the gazette.⁵⁰ Other reports spoke of the deployment of troops to guard the telegraph line to Hijaz, the establishment of *nizami* courts in Ma'ân and Karak, and the opening of a boat service between Jaffa and Lybia.⁵¹ All these reports related to adjacent areas.

The achievements of the Ottoman army were particularly noted and praised. During the war years frequent reports appeared from the war zone, usually of Ottoman victories and corresponding losses by the entente powers, Britain, France, and Russia. The gazette reported, for example, on Ottoman victories against the British on the Suez front, on the achievements of Sanusi insurgents against the Italians in Lybia, and on the retreat of the Russians in the Black Sea region. It also covered the

⁴⁷ *Filasṭīn*, no. 296, 3 January 1914.

⁴⁸ *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

⁴⁹ *K. Ş.*, no. A210.

⁵⁰ *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

⁵¹ *K. Ş.*, no. A22.

local public reaction to the events. Demonstrations and meetings were held in Jerusalem, where speeches were made in support of the Ottoman armed forces and prayers were conducted for further victories.⁵²

World news which had no bearing on the Ottoman Empire appeared only rarely, and when it did, seems to have given special attention to some insignificant bizarre stories, a common phenomenon among newspapers and magazines of the time.⁵³ An exception, at least during the period of Abdülhamid, was the interest shown to the world of Islam, something which was in line with the Empire's prevalent political and cultural orientation. The gazette quoted the *Firat*, its Aleppo counterpart, on the progress made by Islam in Japan, adding that it was to be hoped that Islam would eventually be accepted in that country.⁵⁴ A further report spoke of the establishment by the emperor of Japan of a committee to examine all religions and determine which was the most truthful.⁵⁵ The gazette also quoted a British newspaper which wrote that the British people were becoming more and more attracted to Islam finding it in conformity with their own values.⁵⁶

c. Articles and commentaries

From time to time the gazette published short articles and features which were not signed, and presumably expressed the views of the editors. These were totally apolitical and focused on cultural and social themes with a very general message of promoting enlightenment and progress. What examples we have belong to the relatively free Young Turk period, but it is possible that they appeared in the Hamidian period, as well, when themes of this kind were the only ones allowed under the heavy censorship. Addressing itself to the general assembly of the district, one such article spoke of the importance of education for human progress. Nations which gave no attention to education remained backward, and, furthermore, could not retain their identity and independence. Schools, the article noted, were the instruments for spreading education and it was therefore vital for the assembly to open schools wherever

⁵² *K. Ş.*, nos. B56, 59, 62.

⁵³ *Hashkafa*, no. 81, 1 Tamuz 5668/30 June 1908. The gazette publishes a story of a six years old American boy who although communicating well with people around him, could not do so with his own parents. Doctors explained that some time during his mother's pregnancy his parents had a falling out and did not speak to each other.

⁵⁴ *Hashkafa*, no. 32, 14 Shevaṭ 5666/9 February 1906.

⁵⁵ *Hashkafa*, no. 69, 29 Sivan 5666/20 June 1906.

⁵⁶ *Hashkafa*, no. 71, 6 Tamuz 5666/29 June 1906.

needed, hire qualified teachers, and equip them in the proper manner.⁵⁷ Another article spoke of the need in life to have a definite purpose and to work according to a plan. Success for both individuals and nations depended on that, but while advanced nations conducted their affairs accordingly, the Ottomans, the gazette complained, did not reap any benefits from their work. Once again, the solution according to the article lay in education.⁵⁸

While cautious and not dealing with political issues directly, the gazette did not refrain from commenting and expressing views on certain events and personalities. It was always supportive of the regime and the people in power. During the Hamidian period this came out in expressions of praise and support for the sultan-caliph while in the following period of the Young Turks emphasis was put on the ideals and goals of the revolution, and loyalty was expressed to the ruling Committee of Union and Progress. But the gazette was invariably patriotic and gave due acclaim to those who, according to it, distinguished themselves in the service to state and nation. Governors and officials were, quite naturally, praised for their good deeds and achievements and were appropriately congratulated on their appointment and promotion. In one case the gazette went as far as publishing a whole poem of praise written by a Lebanese notable for Governor Midhat Bey, appointed in 1915.⁵⁹ Other citizens received similar credit for their communal work. The gazette published the names of all the contributors to the construction of the Jerusalem clock tower which was Governor Ali Ekrem's most noteworthy achievement in public construction.⁶⁰ It acclaimed the charity and good works prevalent among Jews⁶¹, and singled out the Jewish banker Haim Valero for donating land to a state school.⁶² The efforts of Jews to learn Turkish, the official language, were also noted. On one occasion the editor of the gazette, 'Abd al-Salām Efendi, was present at an examination in a Jewish school and wrote about the great satisfaction he derived from the progress made by the students in the knowledge of Turkish.⁶³

⁵⁷ *K. Ş.*, no. B56.

⁵⁸ *K. Ş.*, no. B59.

⁵⁹ *K. Ş.*, no. B56.

⁶⁰ *Hashkafa*, no. 90, 11 Elul 5667/21 August 1907; no. 93, 20 Elul 5667/30 August 1907.

⁶¹ *Hashkafa*, no. 72, 28 Iyyar 5668/29 May 1908

⁶² *Hashkafa*, no. 59, 9 Nisan 5668/10 April 1908.

⁶³ *Hashkafa*, no. 1 25 Tishre 5666/24 October 1905.

Criticism of provincial gazettes seems to have started early on among private newspapers. As early as 1868, the Istanbul newspaper *Terakki* attacked the provincial gazettes for supporting the old and traditional ways while having their costs met by the local administration or by the forced subscriptions of officials.⁶⁴ Years later, when the Young Turks came to power and some private newspapers were established in Jerusalem, criticism sprang up among them, too. A writer in the *al-Ḳuds* newspaper accused the official gazette of interfering in matters which did not belong to it and of misleading its readers. The gazette forgot, it said, that its purpose was first and foremost to inform people about government regulations and decrees and instead concerned itself with praising or condemning different persons and taking sides in public affairs.⁶⁵ The gazette responded by saying that it was obliged to inform the public of government affairs, and if it praised certain officials it did not do so because of their personal attributes but, much like religious faiths, because of their good deeds in the service of nation and state.⁶⁶ No doubt the matter at issue in this debate was not only differences in outlook, but also clear envy since. While private newspapers had to cover their costs themselves, official gazettes enjoyed full financial support.⁶⁷ The grievances persisted even later. In 1913 following the resumption of the appearance of the *Ḳuds-ı Şerif*, *al-Ḳuds* wrote that the latter turned out to be no different from the older publication, that its Arabic edition was nothing more than a translation of the Turkish, and that it was full of typographical errors. It continued, it said, to receive enormous and unprecedented allocations from the district treasury.⁶⁸ A later issue of the same newspaper criticized the general assembly for approving the allocation and raised several arguments. It argued that there was no need for an official gazette altogether since decrees and regulations were published by the private newspapers, as well; the *al-Ḳuds* was, similarly, always supportive of the government and served state and nation faithfully; and the costs of the gazette had increased – a

⁶⁴ Michael URSINUS, “Ahmet Midhat Efendi at *Tuna*” in Pistor-Hatam, p. 53.

⁶⁵ *Al-Ḳuds*, no. 26, 25 December 1908, quoted by Yehoshu‘a, p. 37-38.

⁶⁶ *K. Ş.*, no. A210, also quoted by Yehoshu‘a, p. 38-39.

⁶⁷ The provincial gazettes complained, however, that they had enormous financial difficulties stemming from low distribution, obstacles in receiving subscription payments, lack of advertisement and the like. This emerges from responses given by the gazettes to an inquiry addressed to them by the Council of State in 1909. Kocabaşoğlu and Birinci, p. 107-108.

⁶⁸ *Al-Ḳuds*, no. 373, 19 December 1913, quoted by Yehoshu‘a, p. 36.

great financial burden on the citizens.⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that while earlier the *al-Ḳuds* had written that the gazette had a role to play in publishing official news only, it did not now see the need for its existence at all. Furthermore, whereas earlier it had rebuked the gazette for its bias in favor of the authorities, it did not now shy away from openly declaring that it always gave the government its full support

Conclusion

The modern day historian may not be able to construct a full and continuous story of what went on in the district of Jerusalem from the very few issues of the gazette that remain. At the most, he may supplement some new details to what is already known about the workings of Ottoman government and administration during the period when it appeared. By reading between the lines he may also catch a glimpse of the “spirit of the times”, the ideas and values promoted by the government and the response to them in the population. But the gazette must be evaluated, first and foremost, on its own terms. It was, after all, basically a bulletin of announcements and news designed primarily to inform officials and the public at large of the acts and deeds of the authorities so that they might understand them better and accept them.

As such, the Jerusalem gazette appears not to have been different from other official *vilayet* newspapers of the period. It had the same goals of informing and educating. It carried the same kind of announcements and news of official activities and occasional features. Its format, appearing both in the official language and that of the population, was also the same, as were its methods of distribution. Yet, based on what we know about official gazettes in the various provinces, they were not all identical, either. Some reached a higher level of development than others, measured by size, frequency, number of readers, and content. Some newspapers appeared more than once a week, had a circulation of thousands, and showed a greater variety in content. This depended to a large extent on the relative size and development of the province itself as well as on the stature and ability of the editors. The talents displayed, for example, by Ahmed Midhat Efendi, are seen as one of the reasons accounting for the success of *Tuna* (in the Danube *vilayet*) and *Zevra* (in

⁶⁹ *Al-Ḳuds*, no. 374, 26 December 1913, quoted by Yehoshu'a, p. 36-37.

Bagdad) both of which he edited.⁷⁰ The Jerusalem gazette appears not to have been among the more advanced. Jerusalem was, after all, not a full fledged *vilayet* but a district (*mutasarrıflık*) and was much smaller than the other provinces. It also lacked an editor of Midhat's stature. It is impossible to draw any definite conclusions from the limited sample of the gazette's issues which have been consulted, but it seems that compared with other gazettes it gave very little attention to news outside the borders of the district as well as to general Ottoman or foreign news.⁷¹ There seems to have been a dearth of articles and no letters to the editor. There were, of course, no open discussions on political or religious issues, and, contrary to some other provincial gazettes, not even features on local history and culture.

Was then the *Kuds-ı Şerif* one of those faceless and ineffectual publications, which could do nothing other than to sing the praise of those who gave them support and protection? This would, however, be an extreme and simplistic judgment which does not properly take into consideration the very purpose of these provincial gazettes. As an official newspaper put out by the authorities it could not be expected to write freely about matters or act as a voice of public opinion. In the circumstances of the time, whether during the period of Abdülhamid or that of the Young Turks, and under the heavy hand of censorship, it would have anyway been difficult to express opinions not in line with the political regime, and even private newspapers had to abide by these rules.

Although we do not have any real evidence about the effect the official gazette had on its readers, it is reasonable to say that it must have had a role to play in the process of modernization in the district and beyond. It should be remembered that at least during the first few years of its existence, it was the only local newspaper in Turkish as well as in Arabic appearing in Palestine. Although other publications from neighboring areas had long found their way into the country, it was the only one which concentrated on local matters. This must have evoked a great deal of interest and consequently a wide readership. The gazette can therefore be said to have further acquainted the reading public with this modern device of communication called the press. It thus contributed to the politicization of the population. Becoming more familiar with their environment, as well as with the institutions and methods of their government,

⁷⁰ Michael URSINUS, "Ahmet Midhat Efendi" in Pistor-Hatam, p. 112-114; Christoph HERZOG, "The Beginning of the Press in Iraq, *Zevra*", in Pistor-Hatam, p. 55-63.

readers could get a better notion of the modern state, better appreciate their place in it, and perhaps also shape new political goals for themselves.

THE MUSAVVER ÇÖL

The journal and the people around it

This journal appeared for a little over half a year in the last stages of World War I, very close to the occupation of Palestine by the British. A biweekly, it apparently had, as already mentioned, only twelve issues, the first dated 28 October 1332 (corresponding to 10 November 1916) and the last one dated 15 May 1333 (15 May 1917).⁷² It was published and printed first in the town of Beersheba and from the seventh issue – in Jerusalem. Its initial place of publication was not accidental since Beer-sheba, established only a few years earlier, was a major base on the Empire's frontline, facing the British in the Sinai and in Egypt. Concentrating on affairs connected with the war and the war zone, its aim was to enhance among its readers loyalty to the state and a spirit of self sacrifice at a time when the Ottoman Empire was struggling to save itself from its final collapse. It was distributed almost exclusively to subscribers who, according to its managing editor, reached the number of 780.⁷³

The name of the journal stems from the great attention shown by the Ottoman Empire at the time to the Negev and Sinai deserts. These desert regions which had been seen by the Ottomans as strategically important even before the war now became even more vital to Ottoman interests. They were regarded as frontline bases for the defense of Palestine and Syria from a possible British attack, and as a spring board for an Ottoman attack if the Ottomans decided to attempt to restore their control over Egypt. The term “illustrated” in the title alluded to the fact that the journal accompanied its printed texts with numerous photographs and

⁷¹ Foreign news seems to have been altogether forbidden by the censor. “La Presse musulmane en Palestine”, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, no. 6 (1908), p. 570.

⁷² The issues of the journal (hereafter *M.Ç.*) will be cited by number only. The issues consulted were as follows: No. 1, 28 October 1332/10 November 1916; no. 2, 15 November 1332/28 November 1916; no. 4, 15 December 1332/28 December 1916; no. 5, 30 December 1332/12 January 1917; no. 6, 1 February 1332/14 February 1917; no. 7, 15 February 1332/28 February 1917; no. 8, 15 March/1333/1917; no. 9, 30 March 1333/1917; no. 10, 15 April 1333/1917; no. 12, 15 May 1333/1917.

drawings. A drawing of camels, palm trees, and pyramids appeared on the front page right from the first issue, symbolizing the war aims of the Ottomans and, beginning with issue no. 6, the drawing was enlarged to include a number of new details. It showed the long railroad constructed by the Ottomans at the outset of the war into the Negev and Sinai, and a long train making its way toward the Suez Canal. Much evidence appeared of Ottoman presence in the desert including troops marching or riding, military camps, and guns poised for attack. In the background, the drawing showed the Suez Canal, flanked by palm trees and traversed by a bridge, and further away, Egyptian towns with the minarets and pyramids.

The journal was managed by the “General Inspectorate of the Desert” from its seat in Beersheba. The military authorities, who were the initiators of the journal, continued to be heavily involved. The spirit behind it was Cemal Paşa himself, minister of the navy, commander of the fourth army and governor general of Syria and Palestine. His name, photographs, and sayings appeared frequently in the pages of the journal, and he was invariably praised for his war efforts and concern with the welfare of the population.⁷⁴ Along with him the journal mentioned two other senior officers who were associated with it: Colonel Ali Fuad Bey, the chief of staff of the fourth army, and Colonel Behcet Bey, who was commander of the war zone, governor of the new *mutasarrıflık* the Ottomans established in Sinai, and the general inspector of the desert. Haci Cemal, the managing editor, marking the six months which had passed since the birth of the journal, singled out all three for their continuous support and encouragement. He mentioned the great interest which the journal had raised in Syria, and, interestingly, wrote of yet another initiative undertaken by the printing house which printed it to publish a daily bulletin of news in four languages – Turkish, Arabic, French, and Hebrew. A great need, he wrote, was felt for such a publication.⁷⁵ Presumably the idea was to reach broader sections of the population in the area.

In contrast to the official gazette, writers in the *Musavver Çöl* identified themselves by name. They were a small group of authors, poets and

⁷³ H. CEMAL, “Çöl Risalesinin Altı Aylık Devre-i Hayatı”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12.

⁷⁴ “Musib bir İcraat”, *M.Ç.*, no. 10. The journal quoted from the Hebrew language *ha-Herut* which described Cemal Paşa in glowing terms on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem and praised him for his attention to agriculture and education.

⁷⁵ “Çöl Risalesinin Altı Aylık Devre-i Hayatı”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12. This may be identical to the Hebrew bulletin *Hadshot ha-Milḥama* [*News from the War*] which appeared in 1917 and is referred to by Kressel, p. 117.

journalists, both Turks and Arabs, who contributed almost all that was published in the journal. Among the Turks were the above mentioned Hacı Cemal, Rıza Turgut who was apparently the editor, and the poets Naci Seniğ and Sabit, with Ruşdî Şa‘th the most prolific writer among the Arabs. Some writings were, as was customary, copied from other publications and some contributions were penned by some well known Turkish authors like Yusuf Akçura⁷⁶, an early promoter of Turkish nationalism, and Abdülhak Hamid [Tarhan]⁷⁷, the major poet of the Tanzimat period. The most prominent name was that of Halide Edib [Adivar]⁷⁸ who was given the title of honorary editor of the journal. Halide Edib visited Palestine during the war and was invited by her friend, Cemal Paşa, to tour the Negev and Sinai. In her memoirs she described the spell of magic which the desert exerted on her as well as the sense of history she felt while travelling in Palestine.⁷⁹ She did not mention her connection with the journal, but one of its issues published her feature “The Spirit of the Desert” where she gave expression to the enchanting impression made on her by the silence and grandeur she had found there.⁸⁰

Contents

a. The war

The journal defined itself simply as a “political, social, technological, and literary newspaper” and sometimes also as “agricultural”. This was a very general self definition, but in practice, as seen from its content, it

⁷⁶ Yusuf Akçura (1876-1933) was a Tatar born in Simbirsk, Russia, who came to the Ottoman Empire as a child. He established contacts with the Young Turks and joined nationalist circles after the 1908 revolution. He was most probably the author behind the pen name “Akay” *M.Ç.*, nos. 8 and 12.

⁷⁷ Abdülhak Hamid [Tarhan] (1852-1937) came to be known for his innovative spirit. He also held several diplomatic positions and became a member of parliament. The *Musavver Çöl* published his introduction to a play he wrote about the conqueror of Spain, Târiğ ibn Ziyâd. “Tarikin Mukaddemesi,” *M.Ç.*, no. 7.

⁷⁸ Halide Edib [Adivar] (1884-1964), an author, teacher, and public figure, was born in Istanbul. During the Young Turk period she was active in Turkish nationalist societies and came to be known for her intense patriotism and her promotion of women’s rights. During the war she volunteered as a soldier and a nurse. Later she took part in the Turkish war of independence and collaborated with Mustafa Kemal. After a stay in England and the United States, she returned to Turkey and became a university teacher and a member of parliament.

⁷⁹ *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, New York and London, 1972 [1926], p. 412-428.

⁸⁰ “Çölün Ruhı”, *M.Ç.*, no. 2.

had a precise and definite goal. It was, as has already been explained, to call for the utmost loyalty and support to be given to the state and to stimulate among the readers a willingness to fight and sacrifice themselves for the great cause. This goal permeated almost everything that appeared in the journal be it simple news, articles, poems, or photographs. There were, to be sure, features which were at least outwardly unconnected with the main theme. Such were articles on scientific matters, some pieces of literature and poetry, and the like. A commercial advertisement also once appeared in the journal.⁸¹ But most of what was published was in some way or another oriented towards the main goal, instilling in the readers an intense patriotic feeling.

One category was news. There was very little news about events and developments in the world generally, or even in the Ottoman Empire, but there was an abundance of reporting about the war. Every issue gave ample space to news from the front as relayed by the news agencies, including not only those battles in which the Ottomans participated, but also those of their allies. In all these reports the Ottomans and their allies were the winners while their enemies were described as losing and retreating. Undoubtedly, the purpose of this kind of reporting, which was also apparent in the Jerusalem gazette, was to keep high the spirits of hope among the readers so as not to let them sink into a defeatist mood. The same approach was also visible in descriptions of battles in Sinai and Palestine. The journal reported on the failure of British air attacks near Beersheba⁸² and, in April 1917, described the bitter battle of Gaza as a great victory for the Ottomans achieved due to their superb command and the bravery of their troops.⁸³

A clear distinction was made in the journal between friend and foe. As appears from its pages, the values and principles held by the Ottoman Empire and its allies, the Central Powers, were diametrically opposed to those of the Entente Powers.⁸⁴ Particular hostility was reserved for Britain, which is often described with expressions of contempt such as “snake”, “coward” and the like. When the journal described the failure

⁸¹ This was an announcement by the Palestinian Bank of Commerce “Kudüs Ticaret Filistin Bankası”, *M.Ç.*, no. 6.

⁸² “Tayyare Hücumu”, *M.Ç.*, no. 1; “İngiliz Cebanetinden bir Numune daha”, *ibid.*, no. 4.

⁸³ “Ajanslardan Hulasadır”, *M.Ç.*, no. 10.

⁸⁴ See the poem quoted from the Syrian gazette listing all the nations participating in the war. “Al-Ḥarb wa-Lisān Ḥāl al-Duwal”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12.

of the British air force over Beersheba, it expressed its satisfaction at seeing “this cowardly and despicable nation” persist in such “crazy” operations which proved the “lowliness of their values and their character”.⁸⁵ In an article on British “crimes” in Egypt, the journal wrote that Egyptians did not have a single moment of peace since the British occupation began. The British, it said, from the moment they arrived in Egypt, committed crimes and atrocities testifying to their wild nature. The journal listed the various acts of destruction brought about by the British and their maltreatment of the Egyptian villagers, accompanying the text with a photograph of a public execution carried out by the British.⁸⁶ A poem written by Naci Seniḥ was outspoken in lashing out against the British and was entitled “You, My Bloody Enemy.”⁸⁷

The same negative attitude was manifest also in the case of other enemies of the Ottoman Empire, including rebels from within. Hacı Cemal, in an article on national unity, attacked all those Muslims who, out of personal interest, exploited religion and disrupted the unity of the Islamic community. All Muslims had one prophet, he wrote, and he could not understand why they created divisions between them when only through unity would it be possible to stand up to the outside enemy.⁸⁸ The first issue of the journal published the Imperial Decree which prescribed the death sentence on the Egyptian Khedive Ḥusayn Kāmil for accepting British protection and declaring himself sultan.⁸⁹ Elsewhere it quoted from the harsh letter sent by Shaykh ibn al-Rashīd to the Hashimite Sharīf Ḥusayn in Hijaz for declaring a revolt against the Caliphate and disrupting the unity of Islam.⁹⁰ The Hijazi rebels were similarly condemned by Rushdī Sha‘th. They positioned themselves, he wrote, against the Caliphate at the very time when the Ottomans were fighting for the survival of Islam and in an extremely emotional appeal called on Muslims everywhere to declare a Holy War on these rebels.⁹¹ The journal gave its attention to “smaller” rebels, too: Announcements appeared from time to time about Ottoman troops who deserted the lines or collaborated with the enemy. It would seem that these announcements were

⁸⁵ “İngiliz Cebanetinden bir Numune Daha”, *M.Ç.*, no. 4.

⁸⁶ “Faḫā’i’ al-İnglīz fī Mişr”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12.

⁸⁷ “Ey Kanlı Düşmanım”, *M.Ç.*, no. 7.

⁸⁸ “Kalem... ve İttihad”, *M.Ç.*, no. 9.

⁸⁹ “İrade-i Seniye”, *M.Ç.*, no. 1.

⁹⁰ “İbn al-Rashīd Hazretleri...” *M.Ç.*, no. 9.

⁹¹ “Sayḫat Muta’allim wa-Anīn Āsif”, *M.Ç.*, no. 10.

meant not only to ask for help in finding them and turning them in, but also in order to deter others from committing similar acts of treason.⁹²

Among the important messages the journal wished to impart to its readers was faith in the just cause of the war and the right decision made by the Ottoman Empire in entering it. The entry into the war was described as inevitable, forced upon the Ottoman Empire in its battle for survival. The decision was not reached for reasons of sentiment or because of considerations of prestige, but was the outcome of totally rational calculations. As explained by Naci Seniğ, joining the war was incumbent upon the Ottomans since they could literally not detach themselves from their past and from the Muslim world. They needed to demonstrate the necessary steadfastness against the aggressive intentions of the enemy, openly expressed, as the alternative would have been enslavement and humiliation.⁹³ The continued participation of the Ottoman Empire in the war was likewise not of Ottoman choice, as the various efforts made by the Ottomans to bring it to an end had not been successful. In a declaration to the army made by the sultan and published by the journal, it was pointed out that the Empire, along with its allies, had proposed to the enemy the opening of peace talks in an effort to prevent further destruction and bloodshed, but the offer was rejected. In view of this, the sultan asked his troops to demonstrate the same courage they had shown until then expressing his hope in final victory.⁹⁴

Interestingly, along with the justification of Ottoman participation in the armed struggle, the journal expressed itself at times in a manner which betrayed a certain compliance with the very idea of war. In one article, Hacı Cemal tried to answer the “difficult” (as he put it) question of why wars broke out at all when human beings were actually commanded to help and serve each other. He saw the origin of this phenomenon in the natural contest which existed among people in a way which made them wish to obliterate one another. This, he went on, was in fact a blessing, since the earth could not contain all of mankind, and some people needed to sacrifice themselves.⁹⁵ In another article, Rıza Turgut saw war as a “law of nature”. All efforts to achieve eternal peace in the world had failed, and if anything did preserve peace it was military power

⁹² “İlan”, *M.Ç.*, no. 2.

⁹³ “İslamiyet Nokta-ı Nazardan Harb”, *M.Ç.*, no. 10.

⁹⁴ “Beyanname-i Hümayun Sureti”, *M.Ç.*, no. 6.

⁹⁵ “Hayat”, *M.Ç.*, no. 8.

and the willingness, under threat, to use it. Without it a state would lose its right to exist.⁹⁶ Conflict, struggle, and war are thus seen not only as natural features of human behavior but as social and political obligations. Furthermore, in some of the writings of the journal on self sacrifice for the sake of faith, these concepts also acquire the character of a religious prescription with rewards in another world. Rushdī Sha‘th, in an unusually moving story about a martyr in the Holy War, describes how he loses his life in battle, how his soul ascends to heaven, and how he addresses his grieving mother. His words to her reflect the sense of gratification he feels at being allowed to fulfill his religious duty and at finding himself in the presence of God: “Weep not, mother, fear not and do not be sad, for your son’s soul is flying together with those of his forefathers, around the seat of God in a world of truth.”⁹⁷

Whatever the views on war and death, and no matter what the general situation was, it was, of course, the goal of the journal to build up hopes for the final victory. According to Sabit, the Ottoman Empire was lucky to be on the side of Germany, the strongest power in the world, and would inevitably emerge victorious. The Muslim world would reunite and rid itself of the two “snakes” (Britain and Russia).⁹⁸ Though the present situation was gloomy, he wrote, there was no doubt that Turkestan would eventually collaborate with the Caliphate, Iran and Afghanistan would together bind themselves with the world of Islam, and Egypt, too, though today it was a British stooge, would soon experience a rebellion of its young generation against their rulers. In a somewhat hallucinatory note he goes on to say that there are lots of unexpected events happening in the world, and one must therefore never lose hope.⁹⁹

b. The desert

The *Musavver Çöl* devoted considerable attention to a description of the region itself, Sinai, the Negev, and the town of Beersheba. A series of articles on the history, geography, economy, and demography of Sinai appeared starting with the first issue, the main messages being the antiquity of settlement in the peninsula and its strategic importance as a land bridge between continents in both the past and present.¹⁰⁰ Special empha-

⁹⁶ “Terakkiyat-ı Askeriye”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12.

⁹⁷ “Yā Shahīd”, *M.Ç.*, no. 7.

⁹⁸ “Cereyan-ı İslam”, *M.Ç.*, no. 8.

⁹⁹ “Cihan-ı İslam”, *M.Ç.*, no. 9.

¹⁰⁰ “Sina”, *M.Ç.*, nos. 1-12.

sis was placed on the role of Sinai in the history of Islam and the history of the Ottomans themselves. By crossing the Sinai and conquering Egypt from the Mamluks, Sultan Selim acquired the important titles of Caliph and the “Servant of the two Holy Cities” and thus became a great unifier of Islam. The journal published the text of the message sent by Selim to his son Süleyman announcing his victory, as well as the prince’s answer to his father. Süleyman praised his father for his heroism and described the enthusiastic response of the population to the event. As if the analogy with the present was not clear enough, the journal stated in its opening remarks that it was possible to see in today’s campaign in the desert an expression of history repeating itself.¹⁰¹ The evident conclusion was that Ottomans should learn from the ways of their forefathers and follow in their footsteps. Sinai, the Ottoman Empire, and Islam were worthy causes in the past and should remain so in the present.

The positive effects that Ottoman rule had on the desert and its inhabitants was a central motif in the pages of the journal. It fit in well with the new “colonial” approach which developed among some Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals during the last years of the Empire. According to this approach, which several scholars have already noticed and discussed,¹⁰² the Ottoman state was perceived as filling a “sacred mission” in the areas under its control by diffusing in them the fruits of civilization (*temdin*). It echoed the idea of the *mission civilisatrice* of colonialism, which was current in Europe at the time, and which sought to justify colonial rule by helping poor and backward areas of the world reach a higher level of civilization. Admiration for western civilization (*medeniyyet*), the need to adopt it, and the Ottoman role in spreading it, find wide expression in the journal. Some writers go further by claiming the existence of an original and unique Ottoman civilization. In the view of Yusuf Akçura, for example, the Ottomans excelled not only in military victories and in efficient administrative practices, but in creating a civilization which competed with those of most advanced nations of the time.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ “İhya-yıTarih”, *M.Ç.*, nos. 4, 5.

¹⁰² See, especially, Selim DERİNGİL, “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate”, *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, 45, 2 (2003), p. 311-325; *ibid.*, *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, London, 1999. On the Ottoman view of the desert during the world war see Eyal GINIO, “Presenting the Desert to the Ottomans During World War I: The Perspective of the *Harb Mecmuası*”, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 33 (2005), p. 41-62.

¹⁰³ “Tesbit-i Hatıra”, *M.Ç.*, no. 7.

The Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were considered in this scheme of things, to be one of the targets for this civilizing effort. Cemal Paşa, as has already been mentioned, won considerable acclaim for, among others, his concern for development in Syria and Palestine. But it is the desert and its inhabitants, the Bedouins, which receive the utmost attention in the journal as the receivers of *temdin*. The desert had in the past suffered from extremely poor conditions and accordingly had a very poor reputation among the people. The trouble was that this reputation persisted out of ignorance long after the Ottomans succeeded in bringing about a change in conditions. The journal broadly covered, in words and photos, the visit of a delegation of writers and public men from Istanbul. Though their purpose was mainly to visit the troops on the front, they also familiarized themselves with the conditions of life in the area. The desert had begun to change, and the arrival of the delegation was therefore an eye opener helping to dispel the negative image which people had of it.¹⁰⁴ Hacı Cemal wrote that he had been skeptical in the past about the visit of the delegation, but was favorably surprised when he read in the newspaper the positive impressions of its members as related by one of its members in an article in *Tanin* entitled “Memoirs from the Desert”. He thereupon decided to publish these impressions in *Musavver Çöl*.¹⁰⁵

The major change introduced by the Ottomans was transforming the desert into a livable region. Naci Seniğ wrote that in the past the desert had been identified with sand, heat, dryness, solitude and silence, but with the achievements already accomplished by the Ottomans, faith was growing in its ability to “wake up”, and the Bedouins, previously destitute, were now ready to partake in the wealth of the nation.¹⁰⁶ Rıza Turğut made a similar comparison between past and present. The desert which had been desolate in the past, now transformed into a lively and prosperous area, where water was being pumped out of wells, new tracts of land were being brought under cultivation, new settlements were being established, and roads and railroads were being constructed. The responsibility for the desert’s sad condition in the past lay, he said, with the British, whereas the changes have all been the work of the Ottomans.¹⁰⁷ An Arab author by the name of Ibn Ya’küb wrote about his personal

¹⁰⁴ “Muhterem Simalar”, *M.Ç.*, no. 1; “Arz-ı Teşekkür”, *ibid.*, no. 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Teşebbüs-i Fikri”, *M.Ç.*, no. 6. The memoirs appeared from this issue onwards under the title *Çöl Hatıratı*..

¹⁰⁶ “Çölde ve Bedeviyette İnkılab-ı Hayat”, *M.Ç.*, nos. 6, 7.

¹⁰⁷ “Çöl”, *M.Ç.*, no. 4.

experience. Just a few years previously, during the first Suez campaign, all he could see around him was empty space with no water and no trees. Now, thanks to the tireless efforts of the leaders, the area has turned into a vibrant place, full of life.¹⁰⁸

In this process of *temdin*, it was the Ottoman army that was seen as playing the major role. According to Rıza Turgut the Ottoman army was not only a military force and was not only satisfied with the victory it had in conquering the Sinai. It went further and achieved a “second victory” by bringing development and progress into the region.¹⁰⁹ The best example could be found, according to him, in the development projects initiated by the army in such places as al-Sir, ‘Awja al-Ḥafīr, and ‘Aslūj in the Negev, planning and implementing the distribution of land to needy Bedouins with the purpose of encouraging their settlement. The writer thanked the army for its settlement projects which were designed to bring the original inhabitants of the desert ample sources of livelihood and happiness. By so doing, it gave them the opportunity to share the fruits of civilization.¹¹⁰ For the benefit of prospective applicants, the journal published, in both Turkish and Arabic, detailed information about conditions for receiving the distributed land.¹¹¹

Apart from encouraging the settlement of the Bedouins on the land, the army gave its attention to spreading education among them. Rıza Turgut wrote that when the Ottomans occupied Sinai they found the inhabitants to be in a state of utter ignorance. The British were to blame and it was the Ottoman army, once again, which stepped in, seeing its mission as eradicating illiteracy and ignorance and creating for the population proper educational facilities. Among others, it helped found a new vocational school for Bedouin children in Beersheba. It was designed to train children in some practical skills as well as provide them with elements of a general education.¹¹² In order to encourage enrollment, a detailed program for the school was published in Arabic in the journal and outstanding graduates were promised continued studies in higher schools in Istanbul.¹¹³ On the occasion of the opening of the school, the journal carried a special feature on the importance of education in the life

¹⁰⁸ “Ma‘nā al-Ḥayāt”, *M.Ç.*, no. 6.

¹⁰⁹ “Çöl”, *M.Ç.*, no. 4.

¹¹⁰ “Güldeste-i Şükran”, *M.Ç.*, no. 7.

¹¹¹ “Sir Çiftliği İskan Talimnamesi”, *M.Ç.*, no. 5.

¹¹² “Gonca-ı Zafer”, *M.Ç.*, no. 5.

¹¹³ “Madrasat al-Aṭfāl al-Ruḥal al-Sinā’iyya”, *M.Ç.*, nos. 4, 5, 6.

of a nation, giving the example of Japan, where educated women had an important role in raising a new generation of patriotic citizens.¹¹⁴

In everything related to this process of *temdin*, Beersheba was regarded as a model town. The journal published descriptions of the town in both the past and present. Tawfiq Shātīlā wrote that in the past Beersheba had been considered a wild and ill reputed place, but when he visited the town more recently he found it to be modern and clean, well lit up by electricity, and with many new buildings including workshops, a hospital, and a school.¹¹⁵ The aforementioned member of the Istanbul delegation, who visited the region, described the town in his reminiscences as clean and orderly, a symbol of *temdin*. The town had industrial plants and public buildings, and life there was dynamic and vibrant day and at night. While walking with his friends in the park at the center of town, he discovered there an abundance of water and plenty of trees and flowers which made him believe that one day the town would be swathed in forests. In the evening he went to see a film and was gratified at the sight of Bedouin residents giving lively and loud expression to their enjoyment.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The impact made by the *Musavver Çöl* on its individual readers cannot be determined. Considering the goals it tried to achieve and the ideas it tried to inculcate it was, of course, a story of failure. The journal attempted to arouse a passionate feeling of patriotism toward the state and a willingness to do everything possible in order to prevent its ultimate fall. It did so by using a variety of methods of persuasion: it tried to implant in its readers a sense of history and their own personal role in shaping it; it tried to persuade them of the just causes the Ottoman Empire was fighting for and in the correctness of its decision to join the war and remain in it; it praised devotion, action, and self sacrifice as lofty human ideals; it described the enemy in the most contemptuous terms; and it constantly reported on Ottoman achievements and enemy retreats never losing hope of eventual victory. But judging by the consequences of the war for the Ottoman Empire, all this was soon to prove

¹¹⁴ “Bi-munāsabat iftitāh maktab al-Aṭfāl”, *M.Ç.*, no. 2.

¹¹⁵ “Bir Saba”, *M.Ç.*, no.7.

¹¹⁶ “Çöl Hatıratı”, *M.Ç.*, nos. 8, 9.

useless. By the end of 1917 the British would occupy Jerusalem and by the end of the following year would complete the conquest of the Arab provinces.

It is, however, interesting to follow the somewhat pathetic attempt made by the Ottomans, as represented in the journal, to prevent at this very late hour their final collapse and turn the course of history in their favor. It is also interesting to notice the different, and sometimes contradictory loyalties, they were trying to promote among their citizens. As it turns out, the concept mostly used by the journal in its call for loyalty and devotion was “homeland” (*vatan*). Presumably this term, familiar, general, and not marked precisely by any borderlines, could serve best the purpose of mobilizing people, for it was only natural for them to show loyalty to their “home”, be it in a narrow, or wider, more general, sense. It could bring them all together no matter how they chose to identify themselves, and to what entity they preached their first loyalty. Commonly used with no specific definition in mind, *vatan* had the advantage of fitting in with all other ideologies and doctrines which were current at the time among Ottoman citizens.

It was, however, impossible to forgo the use of other possible foci of loyalty which had their roots at the very foundation of the Ottoman Empire and had long been promoted by its rulers as the best guarantee for ensuring Ottoman territorial integrity against all dividing and destructive forces. One was the concept of Ottomanism, which sought to unite all Ottoman citizens under the banners of loyalty to a common Ottoman dynasty (or state), a common “nation”, and a common homeland. In the journal, the idea of being an “Ottoman” (*osmanlı*) finds wide expression and it is commonly as Ottoman citizens (*vatandaş*) that people are called to express their loyalty and to act. All Ottoman citizens, without regard to their geographic origin or their ethnic, racial, or religious background, share the duty to defend their state on an equal basis. The other concept, and the one which had long proven its efficacy in rallying people around it, was the concept of Islamism, which rested on the deep link which existed throughout history between the Ottoman state and Islam. The Ottoman Empire, created by Muslims, had since its inception seen its mission in the defense and promotion of Islam, it always took a leading role in the history of Islam, and its ruler, the sultan, was widely recognized in his role as leader of the entire Muslim world. Islam was, and continued to be, the common religion of a majority of Ottoman citizens, who saw their attachment to the state as resting on a religious bond rather

than on citizenship or loyalty to a state and dynasty. It is for this reason that the Ottomans, notwithstanding their profession of Ottomanism, tried to make use of the Islamic factor, as well, and declared the war to be a holy war. The journal expressed this notion in many of its writings and, in its calls for action, played on the religious loyalties of its readers as much as their patriotism or their Ottoman “nationalism”. As put by Hacı Cemal, “nationalist feelings (*kavmiyet*) must combine with those of religion into one whole”.¹¹⁷

It is significant that side by side with the appeals to “homeland”, Ottoman patriotism, and religious faith, all of which had been in use in the past, a new idea was to appear occasionally in the pages of the *Musavver Çöl* – the bond which exists between the Ottoman Empire and its founders, members of the Turkish ethnic group. A Turkish (racial or ethnic) self view had already appeared among Turkish intellectuals and statesmen by the end of the 19th century, but there remained some reluctance in identifying, at least outwardly, the Ottoman Empire as a Turkish state for this would have further alienated non-Turkish citizens. It would seem that with the progress of war and the loss of further territories, most of which were inhabited by non-Turks, the walls of caution began to crumble. The member of the delegation who published his reminiscences of his visit to the Negev and Sinai wrote of the “Turkish spirit” which was responsible for establishing all the new institutions he had found on his trip.¹¹⁸ Rıza Turgut, who dealt with the change brought to the desert by the Turks, saw it as proof of the extent of Turkish commitment to progress and modernization, showing “how deserving they were to preserve their name and existence and how more superior they were from all points of view to the European nations which embody the European spirit”.¹¹⁹ Yusuf Akçura, in the last issue of the journal in our possession, made an emotional appeal to “the Turkish army” to restore honor to the Turks, guard their homeland, and be worthy of its forefathers.¹²⁰

The possible contradictions between these concepts, “homeland”, “state”, “Islam” and “Turkishness”, were too obvious, but their use can be explained. The writers and journalists associated with the journal, much like the state itself, could not be expected to seek consistency and harmony in their writings. The constraints of war were such that *all* tools

¹¹⁷ “Hayat”, *M.Ç.*, no. 8.

¹¹⁸ “Çöl Hatıratı”, *M.Ç.*, no. 8.

¹¹⁹ “Çöl”, *M.Ç.*, no. 4.

¹²⁰ “Ey Türk Ordusu”, *M.Ç.*, no. 12.

had to be used in order to evoke loyalty and sacrifice and it is well to remember that Ottoman society was still fairly heterogeneous at the time. It included Muslims and non-Muslims, Turks and non-Turks, and these groups could simply not be addressed in the same manner. This situation was to change within a very short time for by the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire, for the survival of which so much had been said and done in the past, had ceased to exist.

Final word

The two newspapers just surveyed were mouthpieces of the Ottoman authorities, and both were designed to advance the state's interests, first and foremost, the survival of Ottoman rule in the region. While written primarily by Turks and aimed at Turkish speaking officials or officers, they had to consider the divergence between the Ottoman rulers of the land and the Arabic speaking population, which, of course, had to be brought into the fold and remain loyal and law abiding citizens. For this purpose they did not have only to include Arabic editions, or at least Arabic sections, i.e. to "speak" to the Arab population, but also to emphasize in their writings the unifying factors among the peoples of the Empire as well as demonstrate the order and benevolence of the state.

But as can be easily seen, the two publications were of two different kinds and appeared at two different time periods. The *Kuds-ı Şerif*, the earlier of the two to be published, was issued at a time when the state, while facing serious problems, still appeared to have the upper hand. Turkish-Arab unity was looked upon as something which stood a chance, and the survival of Ottoman rule in Palestine was yet to be challenged by either an outside enemy or a disloyal population. The prime tasks seemed to be administrative. It was after all an official gazette, created by and aimed at civil officials, and its purpose was, first and foremost, to make the everyday business of administration smoother and more efficient. This was also reflected in its style: Carrying mostly announcements and news, its language was prosaic, simple, and clear.

The *Musavver Çöl* appeared almost at the "last minute" of Ottoman history. It was initiated primarily by top officers and officials who were highly involved in state affairs and who knew from their experiences on the ground that the time of reckoning was fast approaching. Addressing themselves to fellow officers and officials as well as to the local Arab population, they did all they thought they could to change the fortunes

of the war. The journal had a clear mission to stir up loyalty and devotion, and just as it used all possible foci of identity to appeal to its readers, it also employed all possible literary forms – from descriptions and features through stories and poems to direct calls for action. Its messages were highly emotional and passionate. Perhaps, it was hoped, the Ottomans would emerge the winners after all. For this journal, the issue at hand was not one of administrating the land but of assuring Ottoman survival within it.

David KUSHNER, *Turkish Periodicals in the District of Jerusalem at the End of the Ottoman Period*

The article describes and analyzes the contents of two separate Ottoman Turkish periodicals which were issued by the authorities in the district of Jerusalem in the closing years of Ottoman rule. Very few issues have survived. One was the official gazette, *Kuds-ı Şerif*, which appeared between 1904 and 1909, and again between 1913 and 1915. It was published also in an Arabic version and was modeled after other Ottoman provincial gazettes, designed primarily to inform officials as well as the public at large of government regulations and news connected with the province. The other was an illustrated bi-weekly, *Musavver Çöl*, which was published between the end of 1916 and mid 1917, first in the desert town of Beersheba and then in Jerusalem. This journal, which also contained a number of writings in Arabic, aimed at stirring up loyalty and sacrifice among its readers just at the time when the Ottoman Empire was fighting its last battles for survival.

David KUSHNER, *Périodiques turcs dans le district de Jérusalem à la fin de la période ottomane*

L'article décrit et analyse le contenu de deux périodiques turcs ottomans qui furent publiés par les autorités dans le district de Jérusalem dans les dernières années de l'autorité ottomane. Très peu de numéros ont survécu. L'un de ces périodiques fut le journal officiel, *Kuds-ı Şerif*, qui parut de 1904 à 1909, puis de 1913 à 1915. Il fut publié aussi en version arabe et prit modèle sur les journaux provinciaux ottomans, destinés originellement à informer les officiels aussi bien qu'un large public des réglementations du gouvernement et des nouvelles liées à la province. L'autre fut un bi-hebdomadaire illustré, *Musavver Çöl*, publié de 1916 à mi-1917, d'abord dans la ville du désert, Beersheba, puis à Jérusalem. Cette revue, qui contenait aussi nombre d'écrits en arabe, visait à susciter loyauté et sacrifice parmi ses lecteurs, au moment où l'Empire ottoman livrait ses derniers combats pour la survie.