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30. THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF WESTERN CULTURE ON TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY PALESTINE

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I

In nineteenth century Palestine, educational innovation and change in its institutional aspect was limited in scope and modest in its impact on traditional society. Whatever reform and progress there were in education applied almost exclusively to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, most (if not all) of the impact of reform and progress was felt only after the First World War, when the British authorities leniently allowed some of the earlier administrative procedures, school curricula and methods of instruction to continue with little modification.

It was the schools themselves, rather than society as a whole, which first felt the impact of a moderate degree of modernization. In this, one may differentiate between the Jewish and Christian communities in Palestine, in more direct contact with the West, on the one hand, and the Muslim majority, less prone to change, on the other. The latter, indeed, was somewhat influenced by regional centres in Cairo, Beirut and Istanbul, to which some students went and from which educators came to Palestine; however, this impact was rather limited, since such educators soon tended to be submerged in their surroundings, at least during the nineteenth century. Perhaps one may get a better perspective by treating each of the various groups separately.

While the Ottoman Education Law of 1869 tried to regulate more efficiently the organization of education,[1] and to enforce better government supervision of state schools, this was not taken very seriously in many provinces, including Palestine. Nonetheless, new state schools, serving mainly — but not solely — the Muslim population, sprang up during the reign of 'Abdülḥamīd II. Of these, the *rüshdiye* schools (a sort of post-primary institution) were the most noteworthy; they were established in the towns, including Jerusalem.[2] However, the government's control of these schools, also remained lax in subsequent years.

[1] A.L. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine*, London, 1956, pp. 128 ff.

[2] A.L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria*, London, 1969, p. 134; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 168, 182.

A new education law, promulgated by the Young Turks in 1913, attempted to remedy the situation; its effect, however, was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War. But the Young Turks did manage to reorganize the state primary schools, at least in the towns. By 1914, these were already giving instruction in such secular subjects as history, geography and arithmetic and — to a lesser extent — in hygiene, physical science, music and domestic science, in addition to the Koran and the Turkish language (with some Arabic).[3] It should be emphasized, however, that village schools — and these formed the vast majority — remained unaffected, continuing to teach Koran and the rudiments of the three R's in a traditional manner. According to Turkish and other reports, quoted by Tibawi,[4] there were fewer than 17,000 pupils (mainly male) in all schools, urban and rural, catering to Muslim children. Needless to say, this is a very low figure, when compared with the then total Muslim population in Palestine of about half a million.

II

In contrast, most Jewish children in Palestine got some form of schooling, but mostly in traditional institutions: the *ḥeder*, *talmud torah* and the higher level *yeshiva*. All these, in nineteenth-century Palestine, were true copies of the same schools in the countries from which the Jews had emigrated.[5] Even the language of instruction reflected this fact; it was Ladino, Arabic or Yiddish. There are quite a few reports by pupils who studied during the nineteenth century,[6] and the overall impression is that the subject matter studied and the ways of imparting it were the same in Palestine as they had been in their countries of origin. Even Sir Moses Montefiore could not persuade these schools to include secular studies in the curriculum.[7] The full significance of this fact can be gauged if one remembers that as late as 1910, about 90% of all Jewish schoolchildren in Palestine studied in traditional institutions such as these, and only some 10% were enrolled in schools of other types.[8]

The latter schools catered mainly to Sephardi Jewish children and

[3] A.L. Tibawi, *Education*, pp. 77–78.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[5] Ben-Zion Gat, *Ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Eretz-Israel bi-Shnot 1840–1881*, Jerusalem, 1962–63, esp. pp. 203 ff.

[6] E. Cohen-Reis, *Mi-Zikhronot Ish Yerushalayim*, Tel-Aviv, 1932–33, I, 4, 18–20; G. Frumqin, *Derekh Shofet bi-Yerushalayim*, Tel-Aviv, 1954, Ch. I.

[7] Cohen-Reis, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Cf. Gat, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–221.

[8] As computed soon afterwards by Y. Ozerkowski, "Batei ha-Sefer be-Eretz-Israel," *Ha-Ḥinukh* (Tel-Aviv), Vol. I, No. 2 (1910), p. 128.

to some non-Jews. The extreme orthodox Ashkenazi Jews fought against the new institutions, since they were sponsored by foreign bodies. Nonetheless, these institutions were of considerable importance, as they introduced foreign languages, with at least some of the cultural content attached to studying them, into Jewish schooling in Palestine. There were four types of educational institutions of this sort, supported, respectively, by philanthropic organizations in Austria, France, Great Britain and Germany.

In 1856, the Lämmel School[9] was founded in the Old City of Jerusalem with funds donated by a Viennese Jewish lady. This was the first modern Jewish school in Jerusalem: the language of instruction was German, and the curriculum included elements of biology and geography, besides Hebrew and Arabic. Because of the emphasis on German, it attracted many Ashkenazi children, but also not a few Sephardim. Dr. Ludwig August Frankl,[10] the secretary of the Jewish community of Vienna, asked for and obtained the collaboration and protection of the Austrian consul in Jerusalem. This suggests that the Austrian authorities, too, were probably interested in extending their influence.

Due to various pressures, the Lämmel School gradually began to resemble a *ḥeder*, although German and Arabic continued to be taught. Perhaps this was one of the reasons for the foundation, in 1864, of the Evelina de Rothschild School for girls, which taught in French and later, when it was taken over by the Anglo-Jewish Association in 1891, in English. Along with academic subjects, handicrafts were taught. While instruction for girls was not an innovation, the relatively sizable number (235 in 1872–1873) and the emphasis on handicrafts were significant.

III

However, the most important contribution at the time — at least in numbers — was that of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. This Paris-based organization, founded in 1860, was active in bringing schooling to many of the poorer Oriental Jewish communities, from Morocco to Iran. Simultaneously, the Alliance Israélite Universelle worked enthusiastically for the spread of the French language and culture in these lands. The systematic encouragement and collaboration of French consuls may indicate that France was not

[9] For whose fortunes see Y. Press, *Me'a Shana bi-Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem, 1964, pp. 87–91.

[10] The second volume of whose book *Nach Jerusalem*, Leipzig, 1858, is an instructive account of the founding of the school and of the situation in Palestine (and particularly in Jerusalem) at the time.

averse to using this as a means of increasing its political penetration. Here we witness, for the first time, *systematic* educational work by a foreign Jewish body in Palestine — not just isolated actions, as those mentioned above.

These activities[11] started in 1867, with an attempt to found a school in Jerusalem, which closed down in 1870. But the same year saw the foundation of an agricultural school at Mikveh-Israel, near Jaffa. This represented a two-fold innovation: firstly, a school intended to produce agronomists; secondly, a school combining the study of agriculture and the earth sciences with various humanistic subjects, such as history, Bible and languages.[12] A boys' school was established in Haifa in 1880 and a boys' trade school in Jerusalem in 1882. Boys' and girls' schools (separate, of course) followed in Jaffa, Tiberias and Safed; eleven of the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools were functioning in 1910.[13] Some of these were vocational schools, teaching handicrafts. All were based on official French attitudes to education; they used French as the medium of instruction and attempted to bring some of the finer points of French civilization within the grasp of their pupils of both sexes. Not less meaningful, the network of the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools in Palestine offered, for the first time, an education based strictly on secular lines.

The *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* was, in certain respects, the German equivalent of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Founded in 1901, the *Hilfsverein* directed its educational efforts to needy Jews in the Balkans and the Middle East, including Palestine, at the same time that the German Kaiser and his advisers were becoming increasingly interested in that area.[14] While the Alliance catered in French to the Sephardim, in particular, the *Hilfsverein* did much the same in German for Ashkenazi schoolchildren, many of whose parents knew German, or at least Yiddish. The *Hilfsverein* took over the Lämmel School and founded several new schools. Probably one of its most noteworthy decisions was to found in Haifa, in 1907, a technical school, which was to become the Haifa Polytechnic after the First World War. Before long, the organization was maintaining twenty-

11 Narcisse Leven, *Cinquante Ans d'Histoire: l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Paris, 1920, II, 209–245; André Chouraqui, *L'Alliance Israélite Universelle et la Renaissance Juive Contemporaine (1860–1960)*, Paris, 1965, pp. 357–365. For its activities in Palestine see also Mordechai Ben-Hillel Ha-Cohen, in *Ha-Ḥinukh*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1910), pp. 40–49.

12 See Y. Bekhar in *Ba-Maʿarakha* (monthly, Jerusalem), Vol. X, No. 3 (June 14, 1970), p. 10.

13 Ozerkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–129.

14 See also Press, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–122.

seven schools in Palestine, ranging from a kindergarten to a teachers' college.[15]

Influenced, directly or indirectly, by the German government,[16] the *Hilfsverein* schools increasingly emphasized the German language and *Kultur*. One of the subjects that suffered was Hebrew, previously used much more in these schools than in those of the Alliance. A passionate struggle (which cannot be described here) led, in many schools, to the acceptance of Hebrew as the language of instruction in the years immediately preceding the First World War. It had already been used as a vehicle of instruction in some schools in smaller Jewish agricultural settlements, where it had had to compete with French. Now Hebrew was on the way to becoming the acknowledged axis around which Palestinian Jewish education turned, from kindergarten, through elementary and secondary school, to the Polytechnic. This point is stressed here not only for its intrinsic interest, but because it was only one facet of the change in outlook in education and in its modernization. Since new textbooks had to be compiled in almost every field of instruction, the latest available subject matter and teaching techniques were studied, experimented with and adopted in the last years before the First World War.[17]

This is even more evident in the Hebrew secondary schools — the first of which was established in Jaffa in 1906 (with only seventeen pupils at the start, quickly increasing to 800), followed by others in Jerusalem (1909) and Haifa (1913).[18] In 1913, there were sixty institutions, with an enrollment of 2,600 pupils, using Hebrew as the sole medium of instruction.[19] The curriculum of these schools was no blind imitation of any European model and strove to blend Jewish and general studies, humanities and science. It compared favourably with curricula in West-European secondary schools and may be considered as the most evident external sign of Western educational impact in Ottoman Palestine. To these secondary schools one may perhaps add schools of art and music. In practically all these institutions, instruction was co educational, a factor of lasting importance in bringing an increasing number of girls into the orbit of direct cultural activity.

[15] Moshe Avidor, *Education in Israel*, Jerusalem, 1957, pp. 17–18; J. S. Bentwich, *Education in Israel*, Philadelphia, 1965, p. 14.

[16] Noah Nardi, *Education in Palestine*, Washington., D.C., 1945, pp. 18–19; idem, *Zionism and Education in Palestine*, New York, 1934, p. 26.

[17] This has already been dealt with in some detail. See, for example, Aharon Berman, *Toldot ha-Ḥinukh be-Yisrael u-va-ʿAmim*, revised ed., Tel-Aviv, 1967–68.

[18] Details in Y. Luriya, *Ha-Ḥinukh be-Eretz-Israel*, Tel-Aviv, 1920–21.

[19] See Esco Foundation for Palestine, *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies*, New Haven, 1947, I, 53.

Later, the Arab community was to emulate some of these schools (but not the coeducational approach), with the assistance of the British authorities in Palestine.

IV

The education of local Christians proceeded along parallel, if not similar, lines. Of course, to quote one observer,[20] Palestine "was not a country rescued from the fetters of ignorance by the foreign missions. Native Christian schools existed before the arrival of the foreigners." Nevertheless, foreigners contributed to the spread of education, as well as adding a Western dimension. As in the case of the Jews, education was to a large degree directed and funded by a number of competing sponsors — in the Christian case, generally by missionary societies. These were attracted to the Holy Land for evident reasons; they increased their activities there, as well as in Syria, after the 1860 riots. There is a fairly extensive literature on Christian work in Palestine, including education, and we can only hint here at some aspects, keeping our main topic in mind.[21]

In the educational sphere, there was ceaseless competition among the various Christian groups. All had a dedicated religious approach and emphasized — among other subjects — the teaching of at least one foreign language: French or Italian (Catholics), English (Presbyterians, Anglicans, Quakers), German (Lutherans), or Russian (Orthodox). Every denomination seems to have had at least one school in Jerusalem, but they also penetrated the countryside in varying degrees. For instance, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Protestants, led by the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, Samuel Gobat, maintained schools in Jerusalem (about 90–100 pupils), Bethlehem, Bayt Jālā, Lod, Ramla, Jaffa, Nablus, Shafā ʿAmr and al-Ṣalt, besides several smaller places. There were some near Haifa, also, intended (among others) for the Druze children in the neighbourhood.[22] Not all were permanent and some were short lived. Even so, they certainly widened the scope of education — as did many other mission-schools elsewhere in Palestine.[23]

The Catholics seem to have been the first, but other missions soon caught

[20] Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria*, p. 141.

[21] For a brief, but good, description, cf. Geographical Section of Naval Intelligence Division, Naval Staff, Admiralty, *A Handbook of Syria (Including Palestine)*, London, n.d. [1920], pp. 199–204.

[22] *Br. Interests*, pp. 158–159; Cf. E. R. Pitman, *Mission Life in Greece and Palestine*, London, n.d., *passim*.

[23] For a Quaker school, see Rosa E. Lee, *The Story of the Ram Allah Mission*, Manchester, N. H., 1912.

up with them after 1821, when the first American missionaries started working in earnest in Jerusalem. Upon the foundations of the Russian "Palestine Society", Russian educational work increased in scope — based on two languages, Arabic and Russian. Its best-known institution was the teachers' seminary in Nazareth, which opened in 1885–1886.[24] According to *The Jewish Chronicle*,[25] in 1903 there were 155 schools connected with the Russians (many of them small ones) in Syria and Palestine, with some 15,000 pupils, as compared to 9,000 only three years earlier.

While it is difficult at present to say definitely in which of the church schools the impact of European education was most greatly felt, it would appear that their combined effort was impressive. The fact that some of these educational institutions, such as the German-sponsored Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem, had their own active printing presses[26] may have contributed even further to the European cultural penetration.

There were also foreign secular educational institutions, such as the schools of the German Templars in Haifa (from 1869), near Jaffa (from 1870), and in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Although the Templars settled in nineteenth-century Palestine out of religious convictions, their schools were secular in character. They were intended first and foremost for their own children, as the Templars were great believers in the merits of education.[27] However, since the school children were few, schooling was also offered to local people. But not many local people sent their children, as tuition was expensive (compared to the free education in mission schools). A small number of children of the well-to-do, such as the sons of ranking Turkish officials, attended these schools: 21 in 1870; 44 in 1877; 77 in 1916.[28]

V

To sum up: It is my impression that whatever Western culture was embodied in educational innovations in nineteenth-century Palestine had but very

[24] See Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine, 1834–1914*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 44–45, 137–158.

[25] Quoted in the London *Globe* of July 10, 1903, p. 20.

[26] Details in Ludwig Schneller, *Vater Schneller, ein Patriarch der Evangelischen Mission im Heiligen Lande*, Leipzig, 1925, pp. 114 and *passim*. See also Hans Niemann, *Gedächtnisschrift zum 70-Jährigen Bestehen des Syrischen Waisenhauses in Jerusalem*, Köln, 1930; Hermann Schneller, *Festschrift zum Neunzigsten Jahrestag der Gründung des Syrischen Waisenhauses in Jerusalem*, Köln, 1950.

[27] E.g., Christoph Hoffmann, *Occident und Orient, eine Kulturgeschichtliche Betrachtung vom Standpunkt der Tempelgemeinden in Palästina*, Stuttgart, 1875, particularly pp. 62–73.

[28] Hans Seibt, *Moderne Kolonisation in Palästina*. I. Teil: *Die Kolonisation der Deutsche "Templer"*, Stuttgart, 1933, pp. 110–112; Karl Imberger, *Die Deutschen Landwirtschaftlichen Kolonien in Palästina*, Öhringen, 1938, pp. 102–107.

limited *immediate* impact on traditional society. This society was either impervious to it, such as practically the whole of the Muslim community in Palestine, which, if at all, was aroused by fears that the Christians were proselytizing their children; or, as in the case of the Jewish traditional community, was aroused to fight against the dangers of secular education. Nevertheless, all the above types of schools afforded the opportunity for children of all communities to meet. This, while nothing new in missionary schools, was rather an innovation for both Muslim and Jewish schools. Previously, the *kuttāb* or the *ḥeder* and *talmud Torah* were always attended, respectively, by only Muslims or Jews. The Ottoman state schools and those founded by Jewish or Christian philanthropic societies, though still having a preponderant number of pupils from one religious community, were open to all and encouraged some enrollment from other communities.

Another feature was the relatively small number of those exposed to a measure of Western impact in one or another of the above schools. The schools themselves were numerous, but most of them were small; many of the village schools consisted of one classroom only. It is likely that the total number of pupils hardly exceeded several hundred each year. While it is impossible to generalize, one gets the impression that for many of these pupils, the extent of their Europeanization was to know a foreign language well, without, however, delving deeply into the civilization it represented. Some of the pupils, indeed, read foreign magazines and newspapers, and even contributed to them personally or assisted in raising their circulation in Palestine. More relevantly, out of those who continued their studies in the secondary schools, some went on to become the leaders of the élite group that made its mark in politics under the British Mandate — people such as the Arab Mūsā ʿAlamī or the Jew Moshe Sharett (who graduated from Tel Aviv's first Hebrew secondary school in 1913). Many of the civil servants in British Palestine, both Jews and Arabs, had studied in these schools. The fact that these people had had some taste of Western culture during their formative years was in itself not without significance.