

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN OTTOMAN PALESTINE: BETWEEN CENTRAL AUTHORITY AND LOCAL ELITES

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Abstract

This study explores the historical, administrative, and socio-political transformation of Palestine under Ottoman rule between 1516 and 1918, emphasizing the region's strategic and symbolic significance within the Empire. Drawing on Ottoman archival sources and modern historiographical analyses, the research traces the evolution of local governance from the semi-autonomous leadership of families such as the Zaydānīs, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha, and Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil, through the Egyptian administration of Muhammad Ali (1831–1840), and into the period of Tanzimat reforms and Abdülhamid II's modernization policies. The study highlights the interplay between central and provincial powers, the emergence of urban elites, and the impact of imperial reforms on rural society and local notables.

Economically, it investigates the expansion of agriculture and trade—particularly the growth of cotton production in Galilee, the strengthening of Acre's commercial networks, and the region's gradual integration into global markets. The Tanzimat era brought new administrative structures, infrastructural development, and legal reforms, though these measures also intensified European influence and missionary activities, reshaping Palestine's social fabric.

By the late Ottoman period, Jerusalem emerged as a key administrative and cultural center, while increasing Zionist immigration and European consular intervention foreshadowed the geopolitical challenges that would define the twentieth century. The study concludes that Ottoman policies in Palestine reflected both the strengths and contradictions of a multi-ethnic empire struggling to preserve its authority amid global imperial competition.

Keywords: Ottoman Palestine, Administrative Reforms, Jerusalem, Tanzimat, Local Elites.

Introduction

Palestine -particularly the city of Jerusalem- has throughout history been recognized as a sacred land inhabited or traversed by numerous prophets, making it the cradle of the divine religions. Home to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, the first qibla in Islam, Jerusalem is uniquely revered by the three Abrahamic faiths—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. As the site of the Prophet Muhammad's Mi'rāj (Ascension), the city has served as a locus of spiritual elevation and religious symbolism, maintaining its central place in the religious imagination of humanity. These qualities have made Palestine in general, and Jerusalem in particular, both a spiritual and historical focal point, preserving its role as a region imbued with the traces of divine revelation and sacred history.

Like the other lands of Bilād al-Shām (Greater Syria), Palestine remained under Ottoman rule for more than four centuries, until the end of the First World War. Yet much of the historical literature dealing with this era has been marred by sweeping generalizations and persistent misconceptions, frequently depicting the Ottoman period as one of stagnation, tyranny, and decline. Such portrayals, lacking empirical foundation, have distorted the historical reality of the period and have obscured its significance from modern generations.

In truth, the long Ottoman administration, while sharing certain overarching characteristics, exhibited substantial variations across time and place. These variations gave rise to diverse political, social, and economic configurations. Even within the relatively small geographical boundaries of Palestine, the differences between provinces and administrative centers during various stages of Ottoman governance were substantial. Consequently, as in

much of the Arab world, the study of Palestine's Ottoman past still demands rigorous and critical scholarship grounded in historical sources and free from ideological bias. Only through such efforts can historians construct a comprehensive and objective narrative of this complex era.

The Ottoman presence in Palestine can be examined through four principal phases, each defined by distinct relationships between the central authority and local powers, as well as by evolving modes of governance and administration.

The sixteenth century represents a Golden Age, epitomized by the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, during which Palestine witnessed a period of security, administrative order, and economic prosperity that was reflected in the daily lives of its inhabitants. The seventeenth century, often viewed as a transitional phase, marked a gradual weakening of central authority following the death of Süleyman, allowing for a degree of local autonomy. The eighteenth century saw the emergence of local power centers, as regional notables and semi-autonomous families asserted increasing influence over political and social affairs, shaping the distinctive character of the period. Finally, the nineteenth century introduced an era of reform and Westernization, driven by the growing political penetration of European powers and the integration of Palestine into the global capitalist economy, leading to far-reaching transformations in governance and social life.¹

This study covers the period from the Battle of Marj Dābiq in 1516, which brought Palestine under Ottoman sovereignty, until the end of the First World War, which marked the collapse of Ottoman rule. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive and nuanced framework for understanding the political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of Palestine during these four centuries. By examining the diverse dimensions of life under Ottoman administration, the research seeks to construct a multi-layered portrayal of this pivotal historical period—one that transcends stereotypes and reveals the depth of Palestine's experience within the broader context of imperial governance and regional transformation.

The Administrative Division of the Palestinian Region

As an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine continued to exist under imperial rule until the outbreak of the First World War. During this long period, and up to the beginning of the British Mandate, Palestine did not constitute an independent administrative or political entity distinct from its surrounding Arab provinces. Rather, it functioned as a subordinate region incorporated within the broader administrative framework of the Ottoman provincial system. In earlier centuries, its territories were divided among several sanjaks (districts) affiliated with larger provinces such as Damascus (Shām) and Sidon (Ṣaydā).

Consequently, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of Palestine and its inhabitants during the Ottoman period as an entirely separate narrative, detached from the socio-political and administrative developments of neighboring regions. The governance of Palestine was deeply embedded within the structure of the Vilayets (provinces) of Greater Syria, reflecting the broader imperial logic of regional integration and hierarchical administration that characterized Ottoman statecraft.²

The administrative organization of the Damascus Province (Vilayet-i Şam) provides an essential key to understanding the structure of governance in the Palestinian territories during the Ottoman period. Under Mamluk rule, the Syrian region had been divided into six administrative units known as *niyābas* (governorships): Damascus, Aleppo, Tripoli, Hama,

¹ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīḥ Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī* (1700–1918). Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 4–5.

² Mennā, A. (2020). *Al-Tārīkh li'l-Muhammashin fī Filasṭīn mundhu al-Ḥukm al-'Uthmānī ilā al-Nakba wa mā ba'dahā* [The History of the Marginalized in Palestine from Ottoman Rule to the Nakba and Beyond]. Nadwat Ustura, 6 July 2020, p. 233.

Şafad, and Karak.³ When Sultan Selim I (Yavuz Sultan Selim) conquered the Syrian region in 1516, the Ottoman administration largely retained this Mamluk system of division. Within this framework, the territories that would later constitute Palestine were organized into the sanjaks (districts) of Gaza, Jerusalem, Nablus, Şafad, and Lajjun.

However, unlike the Mamluk era -when Gaza served as the principal administrative center- the Ottomans designated Jerusalem as the seat of governance.⁴ This reconfiguration elevated Jerusalem to a rank equal to that of Gaza and Şafad, which had previously occupied higher administrative status under Mamluk rule. The change thus marked a subtle but significant adjustment in the regional hierarchy, reflecting both continuity with the Mamluk administrative legacy and the Ottoman preference for centralizing authority around religiously and symbolically significant centers such as Jerusalem.⁵

After suppressing the rebellion led by Canbirdi Gazali, the region of Bilād al-Shām (Greater Syria) was reorganized into three principal administrative units. These were established as the separate provinces (vilayets) of Aleppo, Damascus, and Tripoli. Within this new configuration, Jerusalem was placed under the jurisdiction of the Damascus Province (Vilayet-i Şam). This administrative arrangement reflected the Ottoman strategy of consolidating central authority across the Syrian provinces following the initial phase of conquest, while ensuring the political and fiscal integration of Palestine into the broader imperial system.⁶

After the death of Canbirdi Gazali, the districts (sanjaks) of Gaza, Şafad, and Jerusalem were separated, and each became an independent sanjak within the Damascus Province. Kara Hasan Bey was appointed as the governor of the Jerusalem Sanjak.⁷ In 1522, these same districts—Jerusalem, Şafad, and Gaza—were formally incorporated as separate administrative units within the newly established imperial system. Records indicate that the Jerusalem Sanjak at this stage included the subdistricts (nāḥiyas) of Jerusalem and al-Khalīl al-Raḥmān (Hebron).

By the following year, 1523, Gaza was administratively merged with Jerusalem, resulting in a single, larger sanjak. Under this configuration, the Jerusalem Sanjak encompassed the subdistricts of Gaza, al-Khalīl al-Raḥmān, Ramla, and Jerusalem itself reflecting the empire's efforts to consolidate governance while maintaining the region's strategic and religious centrality within the broader administrative framework of the Damascus Province.⁸

In the early seventeenth century, in order to prevent Emir Fakhr al-Dīn II -one of the influential leaders of Mount Lebanon- from establishing an independent state and expanding his control over the Palestinian territories, the Ottoman administration restructured the regional divisions in 1614. The sanjaks of Şafad, Şaydā (Sidon), and Beirut were separated from the

³ 'Awad, A. (1969). *Al-Idāra al-'Uthmāniyya fī Wilāyat Sūriyya, 1864–1914* [Ottoman Administration in the Province of Syria, 1864–1914] (Published doctoral dissertation). Dār al-Ma'ārif fī Mişr, Cairo, p. 61.

⁴ Avcı, Y. (2004). *Değişim sürecinde bir Osmanlı kenti: Kudüs* [An Ottoman City in a Process of Transformation: Jerusalem]. Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, p. 32.

⁵ Singer, A. (1996). *Kadılar, kullar, Kudüslü köylüler* [Judges, Slaves, and Peasants of Jerusalem] (Trans. Sema Bulutsuz). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, p. 6.

⁶ 'Awad, A. (1969). *Al-Idāra al-'Uthmāniyya fī Wilāyat Sūriyya, 1864–1914* [Ottoman Administration in the Province of Syria, 1864–1914]. Dār al-Ma'ārif fī Mişr, Cairo, p. 61.

⁷ Çakar, E. (2003). XVI. yüzyılda Şam beylerbeyliğinin idarî taksimatı [The Administrative Division of the Damascus Governorship in the Sixteenth Century]. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 13(1), 351–374, p. 358.

⁸ Taşkın, Ü. (2013). Osmanlı hâkimiyetinin ilk yıllarında Filistin'de timar sistemi (Gazze ve Kudüs sancakları örneği) [The Timar System in Palestine during the Early Years of Ottoman Rule: The Cases of Gaza and Jerusalem Districts]. *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, 56, 41.

Damascus Province (Eyalet-i Şam) and reorganized under a new provincial entity named the Eyalet of Şafad-Şaydā-Beirut.⁹

While the Jerusalem Sanjak remained under the jurisdiction of the Damascus Province, a further administrative change took place in 1660, when the sanjaks of Şafad and Şaydā, together with Beirut, were definitively detached from Damascus to form a new, fourth province within Bilād al-Shām, known as the Eyalet of Şaydā (Sidon). Consequently, during the first half of the seventeenth century, the territories of Palestine continued to be governed as part of the Damascus Province, but after 1660, certain northern areas of Palestine were incorporated into the newly established Sidon Province. The boundaries of this province extended as far as Marj Ibn ‘Āmir (the Jezreel Valley), the coast of Haifa, and Atlit, whereas the southern parts of Palestine remained administratively dependent on the Damascus Province.¹⁰

In 1756, Jerusalem was temporarily separated from the Damascus Province and granted the status of an independent province (eyalet).¹¹ During this period, the city was governed by Hüsayn Bey of Gaza, who assumed administrative authority over the region. However, this status of provincial independence lasted for only nine months. After this brief interval, Jerusalem once again reverted to its former position as a sanjak subordinate to the Damascus Province, restoring the previous administrative order that had linked it to the central provincial structure of Bilād al-Shām. This short-lived experiment in autonomy reflected both the strategic importance of Jerusalem and the empire’s continued preference for maintaining administrative cohesion under the Damascus-based governance system.¹²

Between 1807 and 1826, the region of Palestine witnessed a series of uprisings that, although ultimately suppressed, generated a climate of persistent unrest and instability. During the years 1831 to 1840, Palestine came under the administration of Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha of Egypt (Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa), whose rule marked a brief but transformative period in the region’s governance. Following the withdrawal of Egyptian forces, Palestine was re-integrated into direct Ottoman control, restoring the empire’s administrative authority over the territory while leaving behind deep political and social imprints that continued to shape local conditions in the subsequent decades.¹³

In 1841, under Ottoman administration, Jerusalem was separated from the Damascus Province and reorganized to include Gaza, Jaffa, and Nablus, forming a new administrative unit directly subordinated to Istanbul. However, this arrangement proved short-lived, as the Jerusalem Sanjak was soon reattached to the Şaydā Eyalet (Province of Sidon). During the Crimean War, the sanjak was once again placed under the direct authority of Istanbul, but this change was temporary; following the war, Jerusalem was returned to the jurisdiction of the Şaydā Eyalet.

In the same year, 1841, Nablus was incorporated into the Jerusalem Sanjak, but in 1856 it was detached and reorganized as an independent sanjak, also affiliated with the Şaydā Eyalet. These frequent administrative reconfigurations reflected the Ottoman Empire’s attempts to maintain a balance between local governance and central oversight, particularly in strategically

⁹ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA). A.DVNSMHM.d, 78/435 (H. 24-03-1018); A.DVNSMHM.d, 80/365 (H. 28-01-1023); Çakar, E. (2003). XVII. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Şam eyaleti [The Province of Damascus in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century]. Fırat Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Dergisi, 1(2), 47. Elazığ.

¹⁰ Mennā, A. (1999). Tārīkh Filastīn fī Awākhir ‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918) [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filastīniyya, p. 9.

¹¹ BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 207-74. (H-06-02-1273).

¹² Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA). AE.SOSM.III, 39/2764 (H. 12-06-1169); Uluskan, M., Çelik, Y., & Hut, D. (2018). Mühimme defterinde (1700–1719) Kudüs [Jerusalem in the Imperial Registers (1700–1719)]. İstanbul: IRCICA, vol. 5, pp. 53–55; Dolu, A. (2020). [Same source as previously cited], pp. 72–73.

¹³ Köse, F. B. (2015). Osmanlı dönemi Kudüs’ünde idarî ve sosyal yapı [Administrative and Social Structure in Ottoman Jerusalem]. Belgü, 1, 161–199, p. 167. Ankara: Azim Matbaacılık.

and religiously significant regions such as Palestine, where political sensitivities and imperial interests were closely intertwined.

As a result of the administrative reforms introduced by the Vilayet Law (Vilayet Nizamnamesi) of 1864, the provinces of Damascus and Sidon were abolished in 1865, and the new Syria Vilayet (Vilayet-i Sūriyya) was established. Within this provincial structure, the sanjaks of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre were incorporated as sub-provinces (liva) of the newly created vilayet. However, Jerusalem was soon detached once again and placed directly under the authority of Istanbul, before being reabsorbed into the Syria Vilayet for a short period.

With the amendments introduced by the 1871 Vilayet Law, Jerusalem was designated as one of the *elviye-i gayr-i mülhaka*—the “non-affiliated districts” that were directly subordinate to the imperial center. Under the same administrative arrangement, the sanjaks of Balqa (Nablus) and Acre were attached to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Ottoman government ultimately concluded that managing Palestine as a unified territorial entity was not in the empire’s political or administrative interests. Consequently, the region was divided into smaller administrative units to facilitate more direct control. Shortly thereafter, the sanjaks of Acre and Balqa were reattached to the Syria Vilayet, while Jerusalem remained, from 1872 onward, a sanjak directly linked to Istanbul—an arrangement that reflected both the city’s unique religious importance and the empire’s desire to maintain close central oversight over its governance.¹⁴

Administrative Transformation under Ottoman Rule in Sixteenth-Century Palestine and Jerusalem

Following the collapse of the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ottoman entry into the region between 1516 and 1517, Palestine underwent a fundamental transformation in both political and administrative terms. The emergence of the Ottoman Empire and its eastward expansion aroused deep concern among the Mamluks, who responded by mobilizing large numbers of soldiers from the population of Palestine and requisitioning provisions, livestock, and money to sustain their army. These heavy demands, however, caused widespread resentment among the local inhabitants, many of whom sought to avoid military service or fled from recruitment altogether.

The Ottomans achieved decisive victories over the Mamluks in two key battles—the Battle of Marj Dābiq in Syria in 1516 and the Battle of Ridaniyya in Egypt in 1517—thereby bringing an end to Mamluk rule and incorporating the entire region, including Palestine, into the Ottoman imperial system. With the conquest of the Syrian territories, Ottoman attention toward Palestine intensified for several reasons.¹⁵

First, the strategic importance of Palestine was undeniable: it served as the principal corridor linking Damascus, Egypt, and the Hījāz. Its location along the main pilgrimage route (hajj road) made it indispensable for securing the movement of pilgrims between the Levant and the holy cities. The Ottomans favored the Gaza route over the more dangerous inland paths threatened by Bedouin tribes, ensuring safer passage for pilgrims and merchants alike.

Second, the shift of trade routes from land to sea during the sixteenth century further enhanced Palestine’s significance. The Ottomans sought to protect these routes and sustain regional prosperity by constructing fortresses, garrisons, and way stations throughout the area. Notable among these were the fortifications at Cisir Banāt Ya‘qūb, Jubb Yūsuf, Nablus, Lajjun, Bayt Jibrīn, Khan Yūnis, and al-‘Arīsh.

¹⁴ Bostancı, I. (2006). XIX. yüzyılda Filistin (idarî ve sosyo-ekonomik vaziyet) [Palestine in the Nineteenth Century: Administrative and Socio-Economic Conditions] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Firat Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Şanlıurfa, pp. 63–64.

¹⁵ Köse, F. B. (2015). Osmanlı dönemi Kudüs’ünde idarî ve sosyal yapı [Administrative and Social Structure in Ottoman Jerusalem]. Belgü, 1, 161–199, p. 164. Ankara: Azim Matbaacılık.

Third, religious pilgrimage and sacred visitation to holy sites such as Jerusalem (al-Quds) and Hebron (al-Khalīl) necessitated the strengthening of administrative centers and the enhancement of security checkpoints to guarantee the safety of travelers and visitors.

Lastly, the presence of influential local leaders, many of whom were Bedouin tribal chiefs, required a careful balance between imperial authority and local cooperation. The Ottomans sought either to integrate these leaders into the imperial system through patronage or to neutralize their autonomy through firm administrative control.

The first phase of the Ottoman conquest of Palestine began immediately after the victory at Marj Dābiq and the capture of Damascus by Sultan Selim I (Yavuz Sultan Selim) on 28 September 1516. On 14 October of the same year, the Sultan launched a punitive expedition against the Bedouin leader Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd of Gaza, who had resisted Ottoman encroachment in the ʿAjlūn region. Shortly thereafter, on 7 November 1516, Ottoman forces advanced into the Palestinian territories to expel the remaining Mamluk troops. The local population, weary of Mamluk oppression, offered no resistance and generally welcomed the transition to Ottoman rule.

While Sultan Selim was still in Damascus, the city of Ṣafad surrendered to the Ottomans, and the Ottoman army advanced into Gaza and Jerusalem. The final engagement between the Ottomans and the Mamluk commander Canbirdi Gazali, the former governor of Hama, took place at Khan Yūnis on 11 December 1516. The Ottomans emerged victorious, and Gazali was captured; however, it appears that he either managed to escape or was assisted in doing so. Shortly thereafter, Gazali joined the Ottoman side, revealing to them the military strategies of the new Mamluk sultan Tumanbay and advising on the most effective means to defeat the Mamluk forces.

In return for his cooperation, the Ottomans rewarded Gazali by appointing him governor of Damascus in February 1518.¹⁶ During the Ottoman conquest of the Syrian territories, the local population offered no resistance, generally welcoming Ottoman authority after the hardship and oppression experienced under Mamluk rule. Yet following the death of Sultan Selim I in 1520, Canbirdi Gazali rebelled, attempting to restore Mamluk rule in the territories under his control. In response, the Ottoman government dispatched new military units to suppress the uprising. Gazali was eventually killed, but his revolt led to important administrative changes in the region, setting the stage for a more centralized and carefully structured Ottoman governance system in Syria and Palestine.¹⁷

In February 1521, the Ottoman Empire decisively intervened to suppress the rebellion of Canbirdi Gazali. However, the Ottoman authorities did not impose the same harsh measures on Gazali's local supporters in Palestine. This was largely due to the fact that these local leaders represented traditional centers of authority and enjoyed broad social and tribal legitimacy among the population. In general, the Ottoman state pursued a pragmatic policy toward local notables—at times employing coercion, but more often seeking cooperation by granting them rewards, official posts, and timar lands as incentives for loyalty.

Within this framework, the Ottoman administration appointed several of Palestine's prominent local leaders as sanjak beys (district governors) and entrusted them with important responsibilities, most notably the leadership of the Damascus ḥajj caravan. The appointment of these local governors as commanders of the pilgrimage caravan stemmed from their intimate knowledge of the region and their ability to ensure security across its diverse terrain.

¹⁶ Rafīq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī* [Palestine during the Ottoman Era]. In *al-Mawsūʿa al-Filasṭīniyya* [The Palestinian Encyclopedia] (Vol. 1, pp. 701–702). Beirut: al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣa.

¹⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, Sh. (1973). *Iʿlām al-warā biman wulliya nāʾiban min al-atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā* [Notices on the Turkish Governors of Greater Damascus]. Edited by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm Ḥamīd Khaṭṭāb. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat ʿAyn Shams, p. 268.

Particularly for those of Bedouin origin, their experience navigating and maintaining order in difficult desert conditions proved invaluable for safeguarding the caravan's journey. Moreover, their leadership role carried an economic dimension: the taxes collected under their authority often covered a portion of the caravan's expenses, thus integrating local administrative responsibilities with broader imperial and fiscal objectives.¹⁸

During this period, three prominent families of Damascene origin emerged as the principal governing powers in Palestine: the Ridwān, Ṭarabay, and Farrūkh families. The position of amir al-ḥajj (commander of the pilgrimage caravan) was successively transferred among members of these families, depending on the extent of their local influence and the degree of confidence and satisfaction the Ottoman state placed in their service.¹⁹

After the fall of the Mamluk Sultanate, Sultan Selim I did not live long and soon passed away. His son, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, succeeded him and reigned for forty-six years—a period widely regarded as the Golden Age of both the Ottoman Empire in general and of Palestine and Jerusalem in particular. Under Sultan Süleyman's rule, Jerusalem experienced its most prosperous and stable era during the entire Ottoman period.

The extensive urban reforms carried out by Sultan Süleyman played a decisive role in shaping the city's present architectural and archaeological character. Although Jerusalem had witnessed various phases of urban growth under the Ayyubids and Mamluks, it was during the reign of Süleyman that a systematic and comprehensive program of development was first implemented.²⁰

To safeguard the city -particularly against the potential threat of a renewed Crusader invasion -Süleyman ordered the construction of massive fortification walls in 1541. These walls, enclosing the Old City in a roughly quadrangular layout, extended about four kilometers in length, twelve meters in height, and one and a half meters in thickness. They continue to stand today as one of the most enduring symbols of Ottoman architectural and administrative foresight in Jerusalem.²¹

In addition to the construction of Jerusalem's defensive walls and fortifications, the mosques within the Ḥaram al-Sharīf (Temple Mount) and the surrounding structures underwent extensive restoration under Sultan Süleyman's patronage. The water channels carrying water from the Süleyman Pools to Jerusalem were also rehabilitated, while new sabils (public fountains) and other civic facilities were constructed or restored to serve the city's inhabitants.

Among the most notable public works of this period was the Haseki Sultan Imaret (public kitchen complex), established to provide food and shelter for the poor and destitute of Jerusalem. This charitable institution was commissioned by Sultan Süleyman in honor of his beloved wife, Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana), and endowed with extensive agricultural lands and villages across Palestine and its environs to ensure a steady source of revenue. The imaret continued to serve the needy for many generations, embodying both the philanthropic and administrative spirit of the Ottoman state.²²

¹⁸ Rafiq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī* [Palestine during the Ottoman Era]. In *al-Mawsūʿa al-Filasṭīniyya* [The Palestinian Encyclopedia] (Vol. 1, p. 702). Beirut: al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣa.

¹⁹ Zeʿevi, D. (2000). *Kudūs: 17. yüzyılda bir Osmanlı sancağında toplum ve ekonomi* [Jerusalem: Society and Economy in an Ottoman Sanjak in the Seventeenth Century] (Trans. Serpil Çağlayan). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, pp. 57–65.

²⁰ Berekāt, B. (2002). *al-Quds al-Sharīf fī al-ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī* [Jerusalem al-Sharif during the Ottoman Era]. Jerusalem: Maktabat Dār al-Fikr, pp. 2–3.

²¹ Avcı, Y. (2004). *Değişim sürecinde bir Osmanlı kenti: Kudüs (1890–1914)* [An Ottoman City in a Period of Transformation: Jerusalem (1890–1914)]. Ankara: Phoenix, p. 37.

²² Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, p. 6.

Moreover, during this same period, Jerusalem's markets, madrasas, and various other architectural structures were either renewed or rebuilt. These urban developments contributed significantly to the city's economic vitality and social cohesion, enhancing its status as a thriving and sacred center within the Ottoman world.²³

By the mid-sixteenth century, the population of Palestine had grown markedly, reflecting both demographic expansion and patterns of internal migration shaped by social and environmental factors. Many Bedouin tribes, moving away from densely settled areas toward the desert margins, contributed significantly to regional stability by helping secure the pilgrimage routes (ḥajj caravans) and participating in the economic activities that linked the rural interior to the broader imperial trade network.

Rural population growth became increasingly visible during this period, as numerous villages developed into stable agricultural settlements, while urban centers entered a distinct phase of expansion and prosperity. For instance, between 961 AH / 1553–1554 CE, the population of Jerusalem reached approximately 16,000 inhabitants, around 75% of whom were Muslims, with the remainder consisting of Jewish and Christian communities. Gaza's population was recorded at around 14,000, while the cities of Şafad and Nablus each counted nearly 12,000 residents. The city of Hebron (al-Khalīl) was smaller, with an estimated population of about 6,000.

In contrast, coastal towns such as Jaffa, Acre, and Haifa remained relatively small and underdeveloped port settlements, each inhabited by only a few thousand people. During this era, the urban population accounted for more than 20% of Palestine's total population, which is estimated to have reached roughly 300,000 inhabitants. This demographic pattern reflected a balanced interplay between agrarian productivity, urban growth, and the stability provided by Ottoman administrative order, marking the sixteenth century as one of the most dynamic phases in the population history of Ottoman Palestine.²⁴

Local Governance and Power Transformations in Seventeenth-Century Palestine and Jerusalem

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had reached the height of its territorial expansion and political power. However, this zenith was soon followed by a period of shifting power dynamics and the gradual onset of decline. This transformation first manifested as a phase of equilibrium in the Empire's relations with neighboring states, which eventually gave way to stagnation and retrenchment. The effects of this broader transformation were felt across many Ottoman provinces—particularly in regions such as Palestine—though its concrete consequences became more apparent in the following centuries.

During the seventeenth century, Ottoman military expansion on the battlefronts came to a halt, and the economic transformations that took place within the Empire adversely affected the provinces and the administrative roles of local leaderships. In this context, the question arises: how was Palestine influenced by this transitional era, and what were its defining political developments? One of the most significant structural shifts of the period was the transition in the taxation system—from the traditional timar or military iqtā' model to the iltizam (tax farming) system. This reform of local governance coincided with the weakening of central authority, leading to a substantial increase in the economic and political influence of local power holders.²⁵

²³ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, p. 9.

²⁴ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, p. 7.

²⁵ Çadırcı, M. (1988). *Tanzimatın ilanı sırasında Türkiye'de yönetim (1826–1839)* [Administration in Turkey during the Proclamation of the Tanzimat (1826–1839)]. Belleten, pp. 30.

The rise of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II in Mount Lebanon and his subsequent attempts to expand his authority into Palestine had a profound impact on the emergence of several influential local dynasties within the region. These families—acting as local emirs and power brokers—played a decisive role in curbing the ambitions of the Lebanese ruler and ultimately contributed to his downfall.

A major development in seventeenth-century Palestinian history was the emergence of three powerful local families: the Ridwān, Ṭarabay, and Farrūkh households. These families forged a strong political and military alliance, operating with the support—both implicit and explicit—of the Ottoman central administration. Through this alliance, they succeeded in halting Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī's expansionist campaign and reasserting Ottoman authority over the region.

Their rise reflected the broader transformation of local governance under the Ottomans during this period: as central control weakened, provincial families assumed quasi-autonomous roles as intermediaries between the imperial center and the local population. While maintaining formal loyalty to Istanbul, these families functioned as regional governors, military commanders, and protectors of trade and pilgrimage routes—embodying a hybrid model of *decentralized Ottoman governance* that characterized much of seventeenth-century Palestine.

- **The Ṭarabay Family: Their Role, Ascendancy, and Decline**

The influence of the Ṭarabay family was concentrated primarily in the regions of Galilee, Lajjun, and the coastal territories of Haifa, forming a strategic corridor that linked Palestine to Egypt and Syria. Because they were responsible for securing both the coastal route extending from Gaza to Egypt and the inland route that passed through Marj Ibn ʿĀmir toward Nablus and Jerusalem, the family became known as the “Emirs of the Two Roads” (Umaraʾ al-Darbayn). In addition to these duties, they played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of ḥajj caravans and in supplying camels for use along the pilgrimage routes—functions that reinforced their administrative and symbolic importance within the Ottoman provincial order.

The family's political ascendancy began in 1559, when ʿAlī ibn Ṭarabay governed the sanjak of Lajjun. He was succeeded by his son Āṣaf ibn ʿAlī, who expanded the family's influence by taking control of the Nablus district. Despite his early achievements, Āṣaf's authority later weakened, and in 1583, he was exiled from Palestine. Nevertheless, the family maintained its control over the sanjak through its wealth, patronage networks, and alliances with other regional powers.

Among the most prominent members of the dynasty was Aḥmad ibn Ṭarabay, who ruled the sanjaks of Ṣafad and later Lajjun until 1647. Aḥmad was particularly renowned for his leadership and valor in opposing Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II, acting in concert with his allies from the Ridwān and Farrūkh families.²⁶ However, following the fall of Fakhr al-Dīn, Aḥmad's influence declined sharply. The death of his brother-in-law and ally Muḥammad ibn Farrūkh in 1660 further accelerated the family's loss of power. Ultimately, in 1677, the Ottoman government appointed a military governor from its own ranks to administer Lajjun, thereby bringing the Ṭarabay family's political dominion to an end.

The collapse of the Ṭarabay family paved the way for the rise of new local elites. In Nablus, the Tuqān and Nimr families gained prominence, while in Jenin and Nablus, the Jarrār family emerged as a dominant force. By the late seventeenth century, these families had consolidated both political and economic power, evolving into the leading social and administrative elites of their respective sanjaks. Their ascent reflected the Ottoman Empire's

²⁶ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī awākhir ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 11–12.

shifting model of governance—one in which regional powerholders increasingly operated as intermediaries between the imperial center and local society, blending loyalty to the state with autonomous control over provincial affairs.²⁷

- **The Ridwān Family: Their Role and Influence in the History of Palestine**

The Ridwān family was one of the principal members of the threefold alliance that opposed Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II, playing a central role in the political history of Palestine until the 1670s. The family traced its lineage to Ridwān Pasha, who served under Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent and was appointed governor of Gaza and commander of the ḥajj caravan in 1560. Over the course of his career, Ridwān Pasha also held posts in Yemen and Lajjun, yet he ultimately established Gaza as the administrative and symbolic center of his family's authority.

After Ridwān Pasha's tenure, leadership passed to his son Aḥmad ibn Ridwān, who governed the sanjaks of Gaza, Jerusalem, and Nablus for more than thirty years. His long administration reflected both the Ottoman state's trust in the family and the Ridwāns' ability to maintain order across southern Palestine. Upon his death, his son Ḥasan assumed control in 1606, but his rule was brief, ending with his early death. The family's last powerful leader, Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan, inherited the governorship of Jerusalem and Nablus in 1643, later extending his rule once again to Gaza.

However, Ḥusayn Pasha's growing autonomy and his alleged negligence in ensuring the safety of the ḥajj caravans led to his execution in Istanbul, and the subsequent confiscation of the family's wealth. This event coincided with the Köprülü viziers' reforms, which sought to weaken local dynasties and restore centralized authority throughout the empire. The downfall of the Ridwān family, therefore, was not an isolated incident but rather a deliberate part of the Ottoman policy of reasserting imperial control over semi-autonomous provinces.

By the time of their decline, the Ridwāns had already left a lasting imprint on Palestinian history. Their governance of Gaza, Jerusalem, and Nablus contributed to regional stability, the protection of pilgrimage routes, and the flourishing of trade networks. Yet their fate demonstrated the limits of local autonomy under Ottoman rule and marked a pivotal moment in the empire's gradual transition toward bureaucratic centralization in the seventeenth century.²⁸

- **The Farrūkh Family: Their Role and Ascendancy in the History of Palestine**

The Farrūkh family, serving as governors of Jerusalem and Nablus, functioned as a crucial link between the Ridwān and Ṭarabay dynasties. They played an essential role in protecting Palestine from the expansionist ambitions of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II and in securing the safety of the ḥajj caravans that passed through the region. Of Circassian origin, Farrūkh ibn ʿAbd Allāh began his career as a mamlūk under Emir Behram before being appointed governor of the sanjaks of Nablus and Jerusalem, as well as commander of the pilgrimage caravan (amīr al-ḥajj).

After his death, his son Muḥammad ibn Farrūkh succeeded him, assuming his father's administrative duties. Muḥammad became notorious for his authoritarian governance and the heavy taxation he imposed upon the population. Upon his death, his sons ʿAlī and Āṣaf inherited the family leadership; however, the Farrūkh family's influence diminished significantly after the suppression of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II. This decline was closely linked to the Ottoman

²⁷ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī awākhir ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 11–12.

²⁸ Sisalim, I., & al-Sinwār, Z. (2010). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī awāsiṭ al-ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1831)* [The History of Palestine in the Middle Ottoman Period (1700–1831)]. Gaza: Rābiṭat al-Kuttāb waʾl-Udabāʾ al-Filasṭīniyyīn, pp. 23–36. Köse, F. B. (2015). *Osmanlı dönemi Kudüs'ünde idari ve sosyal yapı* [The Administrative and Social Structure of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Period]. Belgü, 1, 161–199, esp. 168–171.

Empire's shifting policy toward greater centralization, which sought to reduce the autonomy of powerful local families. The family's role in Palestine effectively ended with Āṣaf's death in 1671.

The downfall of the Farrūkh family mirrored that of the Ridwān and Ṭarabay dynasties. The Ridwān family's dominance had already come to an end with the execution of Ḥusayn Pasha in 1633, and the Ṭarabay family was finally removed from power in 1677, when the Ottomans adopted a direct and centralized administrative approach. Collectively, the weakening of these families reflected the empire's broader strategy to reassert central authority and curtail semi-autonomous provincial rule.²⁹

Despite their eventual decline, the presence of these leading families in seventeenth-century Palestine served a critical function. Their governance helped contain Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī's ambitions, ensured the security of the ḥajj routes from Damascus, and maintained order and stability across the region. Their alliances—often reinforced through mutual interests and intermarriage—strengthened their collective position and enabled them to balance local autonomy with nominal loyalty to the Ottoman state. Yet, as their power expanded, the empire grew increasingly wary of their independence. The process of dismantling these influential dynasties began with the Ridwāns, continued with the Farrūkhs, and concluded with the Ṭarabays, signaling the Ottoman state's determined shift toward centralized governance and the reconfiguration of power within Palestine.

The Causes Behind the Decline of Local Dynasties and the Rise of Notables and Shaykhs in Late Seventeenth-Century Palestine

Several factors contributed to the decline of the major Palestinian dynasties—the Ridwān, Farrūkh, and Ṭarabay families—during the second half of the seventeenth century. First, the elimination of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī II in 1635 removed the external threat that had previously justified the existence of semi-autonomous regional powers. Second, the reformist policies of the Köprülü viziers sought to restore administrative centralization and reduce the influence of hereditary local elites, reasserting the authority of the Ottoman central government. Third, the transfer of the leadership of the ḥajj caravan from Palestinian governors to the governors of Damascus deprived these local rulers of a crucial source of economic and symbolic power. Finally, the shift from the timar system to the iltizam (tax-farming) system, combined with the growing recruitment of locals into the Janissary corps, enhanced the role of urban and rural populations at the expense of traditional aristocratic families.

By the late seventeenth century, these structural transformations had reshaped Palestine's political and social landscape. The prolonged wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburgs weakened central authority, creating a significant political and military vacuum in the region. The decline of the three great families further deepened this void, allowing new social actors—ayan (urban notables) and shaykhs (village chiefs)—to emerge as intermediaries between the population and the imperial administration. However, these groups struggled to maintain effective control, and Palestine entered a period marked by instability and sporadic uprisings. For instance, in 1662, the inhabitants of 'Arakub refused to pay taxes, while in 1699, bandits in the region assassinated Akil Agha, the *mutesellim* (sub-governor) of Ramla.

The reassignment of the ḥajj caravan's protection to Janissary commanders exacerbated the situation. These military officers, unfamiliar with local customs and tribal dynamics, often failed to make the customary payments to Bedouin tribes, leading to increased insecurity along the pilgrimage routes. Consequently, the Ottoman government was forced to allocate tax revenues from specific sanjaks to cover the expenses of the pilgrimage caravans.

²⁹ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī awākhir 'ahd al-'Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 11–12.

By the end of the seventeenth century, a new social order had emerged. Village shaykhs and urban notables had strengthened their economic and political positions, while new families—such as the Tuqān, Nimr, Jarrār, and Ḥusaynī households—rose to prominence. These elites continued to dominate local politics well into the nineteenth century, eventually aligning themselves with emerging nationalist movements in the late Ottoman era.

The Ottoman authorities, recognizing their utility, tolerated and even supported these evolving power structures as long as they maintained loyalty to the empire and ensured regional stability. This pragmatic accommodation gave Ottoman rule in Palestine a legitimate and Islamic character, reinforcing its authority through cooperation with locally rooted elites rather than direct confrontation.³⁰

Administrative and Social Developments in Palestine and Jerusalem during the Eighteenth Century

The Nakib al-Ashraf (Chief of the Descendants of the Prophet) Rebellion in Jerusalem (1703–1705)

The Nakib al-Ashraf (Chief of the Descendants of the Prophet) Rebellion, which took place between 1703 and 1705, is considered the first major popular uprising in Palestine. The rebellion broke out due to several factors, including the people's loss of confidence in Ottoman authority, increasing taxation, the appointment of a French consul in Jerusalem, and the Ottoman state's policy of weakening local leaderships. The movement gained broad participation from scholars, notables (ayan), local leaders, and the general public.

Under the leadership of Nakib al-Ashraf Muhammad ibn Mustafa al-Husayni, the rebels expelled the Ottoman representatives from Jerusalem and ruled the city independently for nearly two years. However, the rebellion began to weaken as the state maintained control over economic resources, pilgrimage routes were disrupted, and part of the population once again felt the need for Ottoman protection. With the escalation of internal conflicts and the loss of popular support, the Ottoman Empire re-established its control over Jerusalem in 1705.³¹

After the suppression of the rebellion, the Nakib al-Ashraf was captured and executed, while his supporters were imprisoned or exiled. In order to prevent similar incidents from recurring, the Ottoman authorities strengthened their military presence in Jerusalem and began to play a more active role in regional administration by cooperating with local leaders.

During this period, new families, scholars, and local notables (ayan) emerged, forming a stable elite class in eighteenth-century Palestine. This elite remained loyal to the central Ottoman authority, safeguarding its own interests while contributing to the maintenance of regional stability.³²

Zahir al-ʿUmar

In the eighteenth century, the role of local powers in the Arab provinces grew significantly. Some of these forces went beyond mere participation in administration, seeking complete independence and even territorial expansion at the expense of their neighbors. This pursuit of autonomy led to a series of conflicts and wars with the Ottoman Empire. Within the Syrian region, three influential families emerged:

The al-ʿAzm family (Syria) — consolidated their influence through cooperation with the Ottoman state.

³⁰ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī awākhir ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, p. 15.

³¹ Steih, A. (2006). *es-Sirāʾ al-ʿUthmānī maʿa Nakīb al-Ashrāf waʾl-Quwwa al-Maḥalliyya fīʾl-Quds (1702–1705)* [The Ottoman Conflict with the Nakib al-Ashraf and Local Forces in Jerusalem (1702–1705)] (Unpublished master's thesis). Birzeit University, 42–60.

³² Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, 30–35.

The Shihabi family (Mount Lebanon) — engaged in multiple struggles to preserve their independence.

The Zaydani family, led by Zahir al-‘Umar — whose initial role as tax collectors evolved, under Zahir’s leadership, into a campaign of territorial expansion and alliances with the Ottoman Empire’s enemies. Yet, Zahir al-‘Umar’s ambitious objectives ultimately exceeded his capabilities, paving the way for his downfall.

The Zaydani family, originally from the Hijaz, first settled in the Tiberias region and later in the Batuf Plain near the village of ‘Arraba. Following their clashes with the Druze, they succeeded in weakening Druze influence in Galilee. During this period, Shaykh ‘Umar ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Zaydani was appointed chief (shaykh) of ‘Arraba and took charge of tax collection, expanding his family’s influence across Galilee. Over time, through cooperation with the peasants, the family’s power grew, and they began to occupy leadership positions in neighboring villages as well.

In 1697, the local shaykhs of Mount Lebanon elected Bashir al-Shihabi as emir, marking the Shihabi family’s succession of the Ma‘n dynasty. Although the Shihabis were of Sunni origin, they succeeded in earning the support of various sectarian groups, reflecting a rare moment of sectarian reconciliation between the Qaysi and Yamani factions. Emir Bashir al-Shihabi replaced Yamani-aligned emirs with Qaysi ones and, in this context, appointed Shaykh ‘Umar al-Zaydani as tax collector in Safed, thereby laying the foundation for the Zaydani family’s growing prominence in northern Palestine.³³

After the death of Shaykh ‘Umar al-Zaydani in 1703, his fourteen-year-old son Zahir al-‘Umar continued the family’s rise to prominence. Following the death of Emir Bashir al-Shihabi in 1707, Zahir sought to expand his influence over the Sanjak of Ṣaydā (Sidon), though the Zaydani family continued their responsibility for tax collection across various districts of Galilee. During this period, Zahir al-‘Umar’s reputation began to grow rapidly, marking the beginning of his efforts to establish a semi-independent principality in northern Palestine.

- The Era of Zahir al-‘Umar and Stages of His Governance:
- 1730–1746: The consolidation of Galilee under the control of the Zaydani family.
- 1746–1770: The strengthening of rule in Acre (‘Akka) and Galilee, accompanied by attempts to expand authority into other parts of Palestine.
- 1770–1775: The alliance with Ali Bey al-Kabir, the governor of Egypt, and the final phase of Zahir al-‘Umar’s rule.³⁴

Zahir al-‘Umar chose Tiberias (Ṭabariyya) as his administrative center, where he rebuilt and fortified the city, gradually assuming the role of a local autonomous ruler. By securing the support of local farmers and forming alliances with powerful tribes, he consolidated his authority. However, he faced persistent challenges from regional shaykhs responsible for tax collection, forcing him at times to cooperate with them and at other times to confront them. Simultaneously, he struggled against the central Ottoman administration, which sought to reinforce its authority in the region.

Zahir al-‘Umar’s expansionist activities — particularly his conflicts with the emirs of Nablus and Lajjun — alarmed both the governors of Sidon (Ṣaydā) and the influential ‘Azm family of Damascus. As a result, Süleyman Pasha al-‘Azm attempted to besiege Tiberias twice, but both efforts ended in failure. Following Süleyman Pasha’s death, Zahir al-‘Umar moved his capital

³³ Rafīq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī* [Palestine in the Ottoman Era]. al-Mawsū‘ah al-Filasṭīniyyah, Beirut: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣah, vol. 1, p. 709.

³⁴ Rafīq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī* [Palestine in the Ottoman Era]. al-Mawsū‘ah al-Filasṭīniyyah, Beirut: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣah, vol. 1, p. 709.

from inland Tiberias to the coastal city of Acre (‘Akka) in 1746, thereby further strengthening his political and military control over the Galilee region.³⁵

During Zahir al-‘Umar’s rule, cotton cultivation and its export to Europe — particularly to France — flourished in the Galilee (Jalīl) region, fueling urban development, military fortification, and sustained economic growth. By transforming the Port of Acre (‘Akka) into a major hub of trade between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, he effectively integrated the Galilean economy into the European market and unified the entire Galilee under his authority. After consolidating his power in Galilee, Zahir al-‘Umar pursued further territorial expansion, but in the mid-eighteenth century he encountered strong resistance from powerful local families governing Gaza, Nablus, and Jerusalem. Despite this opposition, he successfully captured and rebuilt Haifa, establishing control over its surrounding villages and consolidating his influence along the coastal plain.³⁶

During his rule, Zahir al-‘Umar faced numerous challenges that threatened his authority and power. Among the most significant were the rebellions of his sons, which weakened his internal control, and his conflict with the Governor of Damascus, ‘Uthmān Pasha al-Kurji, which turned into recurring military confrontations over the control of cities such as Haifa, Atlit, and Tantura. Despite these hostilities, the people of Haifa allied themselves with Zahir al-‘Umar in order to preserve their economic prosperity and local stability.

After the death of the Governor of Gaza, Ḥusayn Pasha al-Makki, Zahir al-‘Umar attempted to seize Gaza but failed. Meanwhile, al-Kurji imposed heavy taxes on the population, prompting many locals to seek Zahir al-‘Umar’s assistance against the central authority.

Seeking to strengthen his position, Zahir al-‘Umar forged an alliance with ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir, the ruler of Egypt, and with the Russian navy, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was at war with Russia (1768–1774). This alliance temporarily increased his power, enabling him to launch a campaign toward Greater Syria and to capture Jaffa and Damascus for a short period. However, he faced strong resistance from prominent Palestinian families—especially the Tuqān and Abu al-Maraq families—who obstructed his expansionist ambitions in defense of their own local influence.

In 1775, the Ottoman army under the command of Abu al-Dhahab recaptured Gaza, Ramla, and Jaffa, forcing Zahir al-‘Umar to flee into the mountains. Shortly afterward, the Ottoman state dispatched a naval force under Ḥasan Pasha to eliminate him completely. Zahir al-‘Umar’s life came to an end in August 1775, when he was killed by Aḥmad (or Muḥammad) Agha al-Denizli, assisted by an official named Tatar Aḥmad, who delivered his severed head to the Ottoman authorities—thus bringing to a close his more than four decades of semi-independent rule.³⁷

Cezzar Ahmed Pasha was of Bosnian origin and began his career in Istanbul. He later moved to Egypt, where he served under ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir and Muḥammad Bey Abū al-Dhahab, earning the nickname “Cezzar” (meaning “the Butcher”) for his courage and severity. After participating in battles against the Russians in Beirut, he moved to Acre (‘Akka) in 1775, following the downfall of Zahir al-‘Umar.

In Acre, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha established his authority and was appointed Governor of Sidon (Sayda), choosing Acre as his administrative center due to its commercial and political

³⁵ Rafīq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī* [Palestine in the Ottoman Era]. al-Mawsū‘ah al-Filasṭīniyyah, Beirut: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣah, vol. 1, p. 710.

³⁶ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 54–56.

³⁷ Sisalim, I., and al-Sinwār, Z. (2010). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awāsiṭ al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī 1700–1831* [The History of Palestine during the Mid-Ottoman Period (1700–1831)]. Gaza: Rābiṭat al-Kuttāb wa’l-Udabā’ al-Filasṭīniyyīn, pp. 136–152.

significance. At first, he formed temporary alliances with certain members of the Zaydānī family, but he soon took military action against ‘Alī al-Zāhir, the son of Zahir al-‘Umar, in both eastern and western Galilee. With the support of the Ottoman navy, he succeeded in taking control of Dayr Ḥannā, Tiberias (Ṭabariyya), and Safed (Ṣafād), and in 1776, he killed ‘Alī al-Zāhir, thereby completely ending the Zaydānī family’s influence in the region.³⁸

Despite his rivals’ repeated attempts to remove him from power, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha maintained his authority through a combination of force and intimidation. Between 1785 and 1795, he was appointed Governor of Damascus several times and successfully oversaw the Hajj caravan to Mecca. However, his rule provoked widespread resentment due to his harsh treatment of the population and his exploitative use of local resources. In 1798, following the French invasion of Egypt, he was reappointed governor to organize the defense of Acre (‘Akka), which he transformed into a fortified stronghold capable of withstanding foreign attacks.

Cezzar Ahmed Pasha sought to extend his control over Nablus, Jerusalem, and Gaza, but faced resistance from influential local families such as the Tuqān and Jarrār clans. His attempt to subdue Yusuf Agha al-Jarrār failed after an unsuccessful siege of Sanur Castle in 1791. He also had disputes with As‘ad Bey al-Tuqān, whom he had appointed as mutasarrıf (governor) of Jerusalem, though he later reinstated him to office.

In addition, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha confronted the Bedouin tribes of Banu Sakhr and ‘Anaza, who posed a persistent threat to the region. In 1778, when these tribes launched raids on Safed, Tiberias, and Shefa-‘Amr, he responded by building fortresses, strengthening regional defenses, and conducting military campaigns against them. Yet, relations between the Bedouins and city dwellers were not limited to conflict — trade and pragmatic cooperation also persisted between the two sides.

Through these strategies, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha successfully consolidated his authority in Acre, expanded his influence across much of Palestine, and emerged as one of the most powerful and influential provincial rulers of the eighteenth century.³⁹

The French Eastern Campaign and Palestine

In 1798, the French invasion that began on June 15 caused great turmoil in Egypt, Damascus, and Istanbul. Fearing that the Holy City of Jerusalem might once again face the threat of a Crusade, the Ottoman Empire appointed Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar to oversee the defense of Palestine. At the same time, Cezzar held the governorships of both Sidon (Sayda) and Damascus (Sham), and he entrusted the administration of the Jerusalem Sanjak to one of his leading officers, Ismail Pasha, who remained in charge until Napoleon’s withdrawal from the region.

On February 25, 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte advanced into Gaza, capturing the city without resistance. To pacify the population, he issued a proclamation declaring that his campaign was aimed not at the local people but at driving out the Mamluks and Cezzar’s forces. However, this propaganda failed to convince the inhabitants of Palestine. The French army continued its advance, seizing Ascalon (Ashkelon) and Ramla. The capture of Ramla was a strategic maneuver, intended both to cut the communication lines between Jerusalem and Jaffa and to support the French siege of Jaffa.⁴⁰

Although Jaffa was a significant fortress with strong walls and a capable military defense, it could not withstand Napoleon’s assaults. On March 6, 1799, the French forces breached the

³⁸ Rafiq, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī* [Palestine in the Ottoman Era]. In *al-Mawsū‘a al-Filasṭīniyya* [The Palestinian Encyclopedia], Beirut: al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣa, vol. 1, pp. 718–719.

³⁹ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 85–90.

⁴⁰ Sisalim, I., & es-Sinvar, Z. (2010). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awsāt al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1831)* [The History of Palestine during the Middle Ottoman Period (1700–1831)]. Gaza: Rābi‘at al-Kuttāb wa-l-Udabā’ al-Filasṭīniyyīn, pp. 178–181.

city walls and captured Jaffa. During the battle, about 1,500 French soldiers were killed, while the French massacred approximately 3,000 Ottoman soldiers who had been taken prisoner. Napoleon justified this massacre by claiming that his forces were outnumbered and that the prisoners might rejoin the fighting later. However, in his memoirs written during exile, he described the event as a source of shame.

Following the fall of Jaffa, the French army marched toward Acre (Akka). The city's fortified walls, towers, and moats made it one of the most formidable strongholds in the region. The assistance of the British navy and the resistance of Ottoman troops thwarted Napoleon's attempts to capture the city. The siege of Acre, which began on March 18, 1799, lasted two months. Despite bringing in new artillery and launching repeated assaults, the French failed to breach the defenses. Weakened by battle losses and disease, Napoleon was forced to withdraw from Acre on May 20, 1799. During the retreat, local villagers from the mountainous regions ambushed the French troops, hindering their withdrawal.

When the French reached Jaffa on May 24, 1799, they found about 1,000 sick and wounded soldiers still there. Some were evacuated by sea, while others were poisoned to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Although the French invasion lasted only four months, it left a lasting psychological impact—raising local awareness of European colonial ambitions and strengthening the Palestinians' resolve against foreign domination.⁴¹

At the end of August 1799, the Ottoman army under Grand Vizier Ziya Pasha arrived in Damascus to confront the French forces, but only began mobilizing after Napoleon's retreat. Although the Ottoman state ordered Cezzar Ahmed Pasha to pursue the French into Egypt, he refused, preferring instead to consolidate his power in Acre (Akka), and subsequently resigned from his post as governor of Damascus. The position was then assigned to Abdullah Pasha.

As Ziya Pasha's forces advanced toward the frontier to engage the French, local populations suffered under heavy taxation due to the ongoing economic crisis. Cezzar Ahmed Pasha refused to cooperate with Ziya Pasha. In contrast, Abu'l-Maraq Muhammad Agha, who held authority in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Gaza, formed close ties with the Grand Vizier and was entrusted with the administration of these districts—an appointment that deeply disturbed Cezzar, as it turned Abu'l-Maraq into a formidable rival.

Cezzar reacted by intervening in Gaza's administration, executing several local officials. However, Abu'l-Maraq found protection under Ziya Pasha's patronage, which allowed him to expand his influence. In 1799, while Abdullah Pasha al-Azm was appointed governor of Damascus, Abu'l-Maraq became the *mutasarrıf* (district governor) of Jerusalem. Supported by the Grand Vizier, Abu'l-Maraq strengthened his authority in the region, prompting Cezzar to act against him by besieging Jaffa and inciting the Jerusalem population against his rule. Abu'l-Maraq's harsh tax policies triggered widespread resentment, and the locals, encouraged by Cezzar, lodged formal complaints. Ultimately, Abu'l-Maraq fled Jaffa, sought refuge in Aleppo, and his administration in Palestine came to an end.

Although Sultan Selim III considered removing Cezzar Ahmed Pasha from office, he was instead pardoned and granted expanded authority due to the growing Wahhabi threat in the Arabian Peninsula. Later appointed as the governor of Egypt, Cezzar remained largely inactive in that role. He died in 1804, and was succeeded by one of his commanders, Süleyman Pasha al-ʿĀdil.⁴²

Eighteenth-Century Palestine and Jerusalem: Local Administration, Revolts, and Ottoman Centralization

⁴¹ Rafik, A. (1990). *Filasṭīn fī al-ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī* [Palestine in the Ottoman Era]. al-Mawsūʿah al-Filasṭīniyyah [The Palestinian Encyclopedia], Beirut: ad-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣah, vol. 1, pp. 722–727.

⁴² Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ʿAhd al-ʿUthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 99–103.

After Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār, the administration of Acre was assumed by Süleyman Pasha (1804-1819) and ‘Abdullāh Pasha (1819-1831), both of whom managed to maintain Acre’s superiority over Damascus. During this period, Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) initiated military and administrative reforms in Istanbul, which were later continued by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839). However, the impact of these reforms did not extend to the Arab provinces. In Egypt, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha seized power, implementing modernization policies modeled after Europe and pursuing regional expansionist ambitions. The Ottomans, meanwhile, sought Muḥammad ‘Alī’s assistance in confronting the Wahhabi threat that had emerged in the early nineteenth century, which elevated him into a decisive actor in the regional balance of power. Although some historians consider the French occupation and the subsequent Egyptian rule to mark the beginning of Palestine’s modern history, their direct impact on the region was limited. The first quarter of the nineteenth century can instead be viewed as a natural continuation of the gradual yet significant political and social transformations that had begun in the previous century. Studies of Palestine’s history often adopt a Eurocentric perspective that attributes the region’s "awakening" to European intervention. However, such a view neglects the region’s own internal dynamism and continuity throughout its historical development.

Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil (1805–1819)

After the death of Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār, the soldiers in Acre released Ismā‘īl Pasha from prison and appointed him as governor in his place. At that time, Süleyman Pasha was returning from the pilgrimage caravan, and the Ottoman state ordered him to join Ibrāhīm Pasha in liberating Acre from Ismā‘īl Pasha’s control. Meanwhile, the soldiers seized and plundered al-Jazzār’s treasury. Ismā‘īl Pasha refused to surrender, but following the arrival of the Ottoman fleet in the region, he was forced to hand over the administration to Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil. By an official imperial decree, Süleyman Pasha was appointed governor of Sidon and its surrounding territories. He established an administration distinguished by justice and integrity, earning him the title al-‘Ādil (“the Just”). Unlike his predecessor al-Jazzār, Süleyman Pasha adopted a more moderate and conciliatory approach to governance, emphasizing order, stability, and fair treatment of the population.⁴³

Under the rule of Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil, Acre maintained its political and administrative significance. The Ottoman government entrusted him with the governance of Damascus to ensure regional stability, during which he also oversaw Gaza and Jaffa. Consequently, his influence extended to other districts (sanjaks) of Palestine, shaping their local policies. The state particularly relied on Süleyman Pasha to maintain security in the Jabal Nablus area.

Unlike his predecessors, Zāhir al-‘Umar and Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār, Süleyman Pasha refrained from coercive taxation and avoided oppressive measures against the population. This leniency prevented local resistance and led the inhabitants to perceive him as a source of stability and justice. The governance of Gaza and Jaffa under the governors of Acre contributed to strengthening social, administrative, and economic relations among the elites and ruling classes across all the districts of Palestine.⁴⁴

Despite the escalating threat posed by the Wahhabi movement to the Ottoman Empire, Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil, the governor of Acre, together with Mehmed ‘Alī Pasha, the governor of Egypt, showed little inclination to take decisive military action against it. During this tense period, Abū al-Marāq Muḥammad Pasha emerged as an ambitious figure proposing a military campaign from Gaza toward the Hejaz to confront the Wahhabis. In 1806, the Ottoman government approved his proposal, issuing decrees intended to improve his financial standing and ease the burdens of the local population. Yet it soon became evident that Abū al-Marāq had

⁴³ Sisalim, I., & al-Sinwar, Z. (2010). *Tarikh Filistin fi Awasit al-Ahd al-Osmani (1700–1831)*. Gaza: Rabitat al-Kuttab wa al-Udaba al-Filistiniyyin, pp. 213–214.

⁴⁴ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918)*. pp. 106–108.

deliberately delayed the campaign and refrained from taking real action, thereby exposing the fragility of Ottoman authority in the region. In response, Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil was ordered to expel him from Gaza and Jaffa. Acting on this order, Abū Nabūt Muḥammad Agha, the governor of Jaffa, surrounded Abū al-Marāq’s forces and forced him to abandon the city. The defeated leader fled first to Egypt and later to Aleppo, where he died in 1812.

During Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil’s tenure as governor of Sidon, three major developments defined the political and social landscape of Palestine. The first was the outbreak of local uprisings against Ottoman authority, represented by the governors of Sidon and Damascus, who oversaw the Palestinian sanjaks. These revolts reflected both popular frustration with heavy taxation and the growing assertiveness of local notables and religious leaders who sought to expand their influence amid the weakening of central control. The second development was the occurrence of natural disasters—such as droughts, epidemics, and locust infestations—which inflicted heavy economic losses and deepened the suffering of the rural population dependent on agriculture and trade. The third was a noticeable increase in urban development and public works, as Süleyman Pasha prioritized reconstruction, market stability, and the protection of trade routes. This wave of rebuilding led to a relative sense of prosperity and security, helping to reestablish Acre and the surrounding Palestinian districts as stable administrative centers under Ottoman rule despite the broader challenges facing the empire.⁴⁵

Because the governors of Damascus were preoccupied with internal conflicts and the advancing Wahhabi threat near the borders of Damascus, they were unable to devote sufficient attention to the sanjaks of Palestine. On 30 September 1808, a major fire broke out in the western section of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Damascene administration struggled to contain it. The leaders of the various Christian denominations took turns guarding the church courtyard, setting up tents and organizing vigils. Prominent Muslim scholars, including the Ḥanafī Mufti Ḥasan Efendi and al-Naqīb al-Ashrāf ‘Umar Efendi al-Ḥusaynī, also joined these vigils as a gesture of solidarity and communal responsibility.

In the following year, the Sultan granted permission to the Orthodox community to begin restoration of the church. However, the Armenian and Catholic communities opposed this decision, igniting sectarian tensions. Despite the obstacles, the Orthodox community attempted to commence the reconstruction, but Janissaries intervened to prevent it. A new imperial decree was then issued authorizing the continuation of the repairs, yet the Janissaries once again revolted, seized the citadel, and dismissed the mutasarrıf (district governor) responsible for the city’s administration. To force the fulfillment of their demands, the Janissaries sent messages to the governor of Damascus through the Orthodox leaders.

In response, the Damascene governor dispatched a military contingent to suppress the uprising, ultimately succeeding in crushing the Janissary rebellion completely. Although the revolt appeared to be connected to the fire and reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in reality it stemmed from the Janissaries’ growing anxiety over new imperial reforms and fears about their own uncertain future within the changing Ottoman administrative structure.⁴⁶

Palestine during the Governorship of ‘Abd Allāh Pasha (1819–1831)

After the death of Süleyman Pasha al-‘Ādil in 1819, ‘Abd Allāh Pasha, who had served as his kethüda (chief steward), naturally assumed control of the administration, and power was transferred to him without resistance. In his dealings with local leaders, ‘Abd Allāh Pasha adopted an approach reminiscent of Cezzar Aḥmad Pasha’s harsh and authoritarian style, seeking to consolidate power through intimidation and centralized control. This rigidity

⁴⁵ Rafiq, A. (1990). Filasṭīn fī al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī. In al-Mawsū‘a al-Filasṭīniyya (Vol. 2, p. 855). Beirut: al-Dirāsāt al-Khāṣṣa.

⁴⁶ Baraijia, I. (2021). **Burning of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (1808) and the Ensuing Discussion about the Reconstruction (Archival Study)**. *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (12), 59-69. 60-65.

provoked concern and dissatisfaction within the Ottoman central government, which sought to confine his authority strictly to the city of Acre. Nevertheless, through the mediation of Mehmed 'Alī Pasha of Egypt, 'Abd Allāh Pasha managed to secure formal recognition and was officially appointed as the governor of Sidon (Wālī of Sayda).⁴⁷

Cooperation and solidarity among local administrators increased during this period, leading to stronger relations between Acre and Damascus, reinforced by mutual interests and intermarriage among influential families. The reforms implemented by Sultan Mahmud II in the mid-1820s did not significantly affect the social or political status of the local elites in Palestine. However, sensing the growing threat posed by the expanding power of Egypt under Mehmed 'Alī Pasha, these elites initiated a major uprising in 1834, which spread across a vast region stretching from Galilee in the north to Hebron and Gaza in the south.

During the rule of 'Abd Allāh Pasha, Gaza and Jaffa remained administratively attached to the Province of Sidon, a circumstance that strengthened Acre's influence over Jerusalem, since Jaffa functioned both as the commercial gateway to the city and as the primary port of entry for Christian pilgrims. While Galilee remained relatively peaceful and stable throughout this period, Acre retained its political significance as the administrative center of Ottoman Palestine. Nonetheless, Beirut gradually surpassed Acre in economic vitality and maritime trade, ultimately replacing Sidon as the new provincial capital, signaling a shift in the balance of regional power along the Levantine coast.⁴⁸

The Uprising of 1824–1826

Between 1824 and 1826, a significant uprising erupted in Palestine as a reaction to oppressive fiscal policies. Mustafa Pasha, the governor of Damascus, imposed heavy taxes across the region, prompting widespread discontent. The mütesellim (tax collector) of Jerusalem struggled to collect these levies, and his agents were expelled from the district by the powerful Abu Ghosh family and the shaykhs of Bethlehem. In response, Mustafa Pasha personally embarked on a tax collection campaign through Jenin, Nablus, and Jerusalem, seeking to reassert control. During this campaign, he managed to arrest one of the leading figures of the Abu Ghosh clan, forcing the family to pay a substantial ransom to secure his release. Meanwhile, many villagers fled the oppressive taxation and sought refuge in the surrounding mountains and monasteries, while the residents of Bethlehem and neighboring villages, supported by the Ta'āmira tribe, armed themselves and rose in open defiance of Ottoman authority.

As the pilgrimage season approached, Mustafa Pasha, acting through Christian community leaders, agreed to a reconciliation on the condition that the rebels repent, after which he withdrew to Damascus. However, his departure left a power vacuum that soon emboldened the inhabitants of Jerusalem to rebel. The city's population seized control, and the local leaders of the uprising began to act as de facto rulers. They issued decrees exempting villagers from state (mīrī) taxes and significantly reduced the levies previously imposed on Christian monasteries. This insurrection not only revealed the fragility of Ottoman governance in the region but also highlighted the growing assertiveness of local families and religious communities in shaping the political dynamics of early 19th-century Palestine.⁴⁹

Although the uprising was militarily successful, the notables of Jerusalem, fearing the revenge of the Governor of Damascus, wrote letters to Sultan Mahmud II explaining the causes of the revolt. In response, the Sultan issued a decree ordering the restoration of order in the region. Due to growing complaints against Mustafa Pasha, Sultan Mahmud dismissed him from his post and appointed Veliyyüddin Pasha as his successor in September 1825.

⁴⁷ Rafik, A. (1990). *Filistin fi'l-Ahdi'l-Osmani*, el-Mevsuat el-Filistiniyye, Beyrut, ed-Dirasat el-Hassa, c.2, 856.

⁴⁸ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī* (1700–1918). pp. 124–125.

⁴⁹ Baraijia, I. (2021). *Kudūs'te Osmanlı İdaresi (1808–1874)* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Gazi University, Institute of Social Sciences, pp. 67–74.

As the pilgrimage season approached, an agreement was reached between Veliyyüddin Pasha and the leading figures of Jerusalem regarding the payment of taxes; however, the people of the city failed to fulfill their obligations. Veliyyüddin Pasha was unable to ensure the security of the Hajj caravan, prompting the Sultan to assign Abdullah Pasha, the governor of Sayda, to suppress the revolt. When Abdullah Pasha arrived in Jerusalem with his army, the rebels refused to surrender. The Jerusalem Citadel and the houses of the city's prominent leaders were bombarded by artillery fire. Following these attacks, the insurgents requested to negotiate with the forces of Acre. The uprising finally ended under the terms that: the populace would resume paying their regular taxes without additional penalties or surcharges; the Acre army would take control of the city; and the local leaders were promised that there would be no interference in internal political affairs. With these assurances, the people of Jerusalem agreed to pay their dues, and peace was restored to the city.

In recognition of his success, the Ottoman state rewarded Abdullah Pasha by appointing him governor of the Tripoli Province in 1827, and granted him authority over all regions of Palestine. This development marked the culmination of a process that had begun during the era of Zahir al-'Umar, whereby Palestine was placed firmly under the administration of the governors of Sayda (Sidon).⁵⁰

During this period, the Egyptian governor Mehmet Ali's interest in the territories of Damascus increased. When the Sultan rejected his demands, Mehmet Ali began planning a military campaign. As part of these preparations, he established political and economic relations with administrators, merchants, and local leaders in Palestine and Damascus. In 1826, upon the request of the Katina family in Jerusalem, he supported the restoration of the Tomb of the Prophet David.

Prior to Egypt's campaign in Palestine, the Ottoman Empire requested one thousand soldiers from Damascus to be sent to Istanbul. However, the people of Jerusalem refused to send the forty soldiers demanded from them and also declined to pay the monetary tax in their stead. In 1830, when the central regions of Palestine came under the administration of Abdullah Pasha, a local uprising broke out. To suppress it, Abdullah Pasha appointed Abdullah al-Jarrar as the mutasarrıf (district governor) of Nablus and began making preparations against the impending Egyptian military operation.

From 1830 onward, reports about Mehmet Ali Pasha's planned invasion of Damascus began to spread. To prepare for the approaching conflict, the Sultan appointed Abdullah Pasha as governor of all Palestine. Mehmet Ali, motivated by both economic interests and a desire to consolidate his strategic position, had made this region a central target of his ambitions.⁵¹

For this reason, Abdullah Pasha was regarded as the only obstacle standing in Mehmet Ali Pasha's way, and Mehmet Ali focused all his efforts against him. In the spring of 1830, a large number of Egyptian peasants fled to southern Palestine. Mehmet Ali took advantage of this situation and demanded that Abdullah Pasha return the peasants to Egypt. However, Abdullah Pasha rejected the request, asserting that these lands belonged to the Sultan and that the peasants had the right to settle on them.⁵²

The Egyptian Campaign in Palestine

In 1831, Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha dispatched an army under the command of his son Ibrāhīm Pasha, who successfully captured Damascus. In 1833, he signed the Treaty of Kūtahya with the

⁵⁰ Barajjia, I. (2021). Kudūs'te Osmanlı İdaresi (1808–1874) [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Gazi University, Institute of Social Sciences, pp. 70–85; Mennâ, A. (1999). Târîhü Filistîn fi Evâhiri Ahdi'l-Osmânî (1700–1918). Müessesetü'd-Dirâsâtî'l-Filistîniyye, Beirut, pp. 125–129.

⁵¹ Mennâ, A. (1999). Târîhü Filasṭîn fi Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmânî (1700–1918). Mü'assasat al-Dirâsât al-Filasṭîniyya, Beirut, pp. 129–136.

⁵² Salim, L. (1989). al-Ḥukm al-Miṣrî fi al-Shām [The Egyptian Rule in Syria]. Maktabat Madbuli, Cairo, p. 30.

Ottoman Empire, under which Egypt and Syria were placed under Muḥammad ‘Alī’s administration. After assuming control of Damascus, Ibrāhīm Pasha sought to consolidate his rule by incorporating local leaders into the administration and gaining their support. He abolished the old administrative arrangements and reorganized the entire Syrian region into a single province with Damascus as its capital.

He worked to establish public security, fought against Bedouin tribes and rebels, and sought to settle the Bedouins in permanent communities, encouraging them to engage in agriculture. At the same time, he promoted agriculture, industry, and commerce, developed mining activities, and replaced former tax systems with new ones. However, he also introduced a system of lifelong compulsory military service, requiring one out of every twelve men to serve in the army, and he rejected any form of exemption through monetary payment.⁵³

In April 1834, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha instructed his son Ibrāhīm Pasha to enforce compulsory military conscription. However, this decision provoked strong opposition from local notables and the general population. Excessive taxation, forced conscription, the abandonment of farmlands due to the draft, the confiscation of weapons, the discontent of feudal chiefs, Bedouins, and merchants with Muḥammad ‘Alī’s policies, along with Ottoman propaganda against him, all contributed to an uprising in Palestine.

The revolt began in Jerusalem, where the rebels besieged the Egyptian garrison. Fierce clashes took place at Bāb al-Wād, Wādī Silwān, Nablus, and Hebron. Rebels from Nablus entered Jerusalem and surrounded the city. The insurrection spread to Şafad, the Galilee Mountains, Tiberias, Gaza, and Nablus, and the rebels advanced as far as the walls of Acre, launching attacks on the fortress.

On June 29, 1834, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha arrived in Jaffa to support his son Ibrāhīm Pasha. Through negotiations, he attempted to win over some of the rebel leaders and gain time. With the arrival of reinforcements, the Egyptian army achieved victories, and the rebel leaders fled through Hebron to eastern Jordan. Ibrāhīm Pasha suppressed the revolt within four months. Afterward, many sheikhs and local leaders across Palestine were executed or exiled, heavy fines were imposed on the population, and compulsory conscription became more widespread. Military garrisons were stationed in rebellious regions, and civilians were forced into unpaid labor. Thousands were compelled to work in quarries and factories.⁵⁴

1838 yılında Osmanlı Devleti, Filistin’i Mehmet Ali Paşa’nın kontrolünden geri almak için bir ordu gönderdi ancak başarısız oldu. 1839’da Avrupa devletleri, Osmanlı Devleti’ne Mehmet He advised that ‘Alī Pasha should not attempt to resolve the issue on his own. In 1840, a conference was convened in London with the participation of Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia. Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha was offered permanent hereditary rule over Egypt and lifelong governance of Acre, on the condition that he remain under Ottoman sovereignty. The proposal stated that if Muḥammad ‘Alī rejected the offer, he would first lose control of Palestine, and if he refused again within ten days, the Ottoman Sultan and his allies would be free to take military action.

When Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha rejected the offer, the European powers intervened militarily. The British captured Beirut and Acre, defeating Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha’s forces. As a result, he was allowed to retain only the permanent administration of Egypt, while Syria and Palestine, including Damascus, were returned to direct Ottoman control.⁵⁵

⁵³ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filastīn fī Awākhir ‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 137–139.

⁵⁴ Şāfi, H. (2010). *al-Ḥukm al-Miṣrī fī Filastīn* [The Egyptian Rule in Palestine]. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 223–259.

⁵⁵ Şāfi, H. (2010). *al-Ḥukm al-Miṣrī fī Filastīn* [The Egyptian Rule in Palestine]. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 327–361.

Egypt's policy in Syria was based on granting Jews and Christians equal rights with Muslims. This approach led to an intensification of missionary activities, as Jews and Christians were allowed to build new places of worship and restore existing ones. However, during the 1834 uprising, rebels attacked Jewish and Christian quarters in cities such as Safed, Tiberias, and Jerusalem, accusing their inhabitants of collaborating with the Egyptian administration and benefiting from foreign influence.

After the suppression of the revolt, the role of foreign consulates increased significantly. In 1838, Britain established the first European consulate in Jerusalem, consolidating its influence in the region. It was followed by Prussia in 1841, France in 1843, the United States in 1844, Austria in 1848–1849, and Russia in 1858. From the 1830s onward, missionary activities intensified further, with these institutions becoming active in healthcare, education, and social services. During the same period, Jewish immigration to Jerusalem accelerated. In 1839, the second visit of Moses Montefiore to Palestine marked a turning point in the program to improve the living conditions of Jews in the region.⁵⁶

Palestine during the Tanzimat Era

During the Tanzimat period, Palestine was deeply influenced by the Ottoman reform movement while simultaneously shaped by the region's economic integration into the capitalist market, the growing political influence of Europe, and the intensification of missionary activities in the Holy Land. The local elites interacted dynamically with Ottoman administrative policies and the shifting political and social conditions of the era, playing a crucial role in defining the trajectory of social transformations and in redefining the relationship between the state and society. In this context, these elites emerged as decisive actors in the socio-political landscape of the time.

The Tanzimat era, which left a profound mark on the nineteenth-century political history of the Ottoman Empire, unfolded in two major phases: the first extending from the proclamation of the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (Imperial Edict of *Gülhane*) in 1839 to 1856, and the second from the *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict) of 1856 to the onset of the First Constitutional Period.⁵⁷

The restoration of Ottoman authority in Palestine in 1840 was of great significance, particularly concerning the administrative status of Jerusalem. The Ottomans divided the territories east and west of the Jordan River between the provinces of Damascus and Sidon — assigning the eastern regions to Damascus and the western ones to Sidon. In 1841, the Jerusalem district (*sanjak*) was separated from the Damascus province and placed under the direct authority of Istanbul. Its borders were reorganized to include Gaza, Jaffa, and Nablus, making Jerusalem, for the first time, the administrative center of a vast region. However, this new arrangement was later annulled.⁵⁸

Through the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman Empire introduced significant changes in public security and administrative organization in Palestine. Geographically, the region was divided into coastal and mountainous zones; however, due to the lack of security, the mountainous areas were densely populated, while the coastal plains remained nearly deserted. Bedouin raids created a state of anarchy, placing both the population and local administrators in difficult

⁵⁶ Şâfi, H. (2010). *al-Hukm al-Miṣrī fī Filastīn* [The Egyptian Rule in Palestine]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filastīniyya, pp. 327–361.

⁵⁷ Bostancı, İ. (2006). XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin (İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Vaziyet) [Palestine in the 19th Century: Administrative and Socio-Economic Conditions] (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Firat University, Institute of Social Sciences, Şanlıurfa, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Bostancı, İ. (2006). XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin (İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Vaziyet) [Palestine in the 19th Century: Administrative and Socio-Economic Conditions] (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Firat University, Institute of Social Sciences, Şanlıurfa, p. 42.

conditions and obstructing economic development. This instability gradually diminished with the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms.

The Ottoman administration sought to strengthen central authority and diminish the influence of local leaders by separating civil administration from military power. In Jerusalem, a municipal council was established as part of these reforms, composed of representatives from all local communities. The Tanzimat regulations also empowered the urban guilds, enhancing their role in local political and social life.

In terms of military reforms, the conscription system (*kura usulü*) was successfully implemented in the Sidon province and later extended to Jerusalem. The Ottomans were able to apply these reforms in Palestine relatively smoothly, largely because the oppressive rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his son Ibrahim Pasha had already subdued local resistance. However, the Crimean War and the subsequent *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict of 1856) disrupted this relative stability, as disputes over the administration of the holy places escalated into an international issue.⁵⁹

The Ottoman Empire guaranteed the Christians of Jerusalem and its surrounding regions freedom of worship, as well as the protection of their lives and property. The maintenance and administration of the holy places were shared among the Armenians, Greeks, and Catholics. However, beginning in the seventeenth century, the growing claims of protection and political pressure from France and Russia led to disputes over authority among the Christian communities. In 1850, France demanded that the Ottoman government return control of the holy places to the Catholics, while Russia insisted on maintaining the existing status quo. This disagreement soon evolved into a political confrontation between the two powers, and the Ottoman Empire's attempts to maintain a delicate balance failed to satisfy either side.

In 1853, Russia, through its envoy Prince Menshikov, demanded from the Ottoman government the official guardianship of the Orthodox subjects. When this request was rejected, the Crimean War broke out. At the end of the war, the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1856, and the Ottoman Empire proclaimed the *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict). The edict aimed to establish equality between Muslims and Christians within the empire, but it also provoked resentment among segments of the Muslim population.

During the Crimean War, the Ottoman government took precautionary measures to reduce tensions between Christian communities and the Muslim population in Jerusalem, reaffirming its view of Christians as a "loyal millet." However, reports written by European consuls such as James Finn distorted the actual events, spreading false claims that Christians had been subjected to attacks. In reality, the unrest was caused by groups that had rebelled against Ottoman authority. Bands led by figures such as 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Amr carried out acts of plunder and disorder in the region, and the Ottoman administration punished those responsible accordingly.

This episode illustrates how the Ottoman government sought to maintain internal order in Jerusalem while simultaneously navigating the complex web of European diplomatic rivalries over the Holy Land.

European consulates established in Palestine incited Christian communities and placed the Ottoman administration in a difficult position. Moreover, under the pretext of monitoring the implementation of the rights granted to Christians by the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermanı*), they intervened in the Empire's internal affairs. This dynamic internationalized local unrest and

⁵⁹ Bostancı, İ. (2006). XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin (İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Vaziyet) [Palestine in the 19th Century: Administrative and Socio-Economic Conditions] (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Firat University, Institute of Social Sciences, Şanlıurfa, p, 44-47.

made Palestine, though under Ottoman rule, increasingly susceptible to the influence of Western powers.⁶⁰

One of the most significant effects of the Tanzimat period on Palestine was the increasing influence of European powers, which became evident as the Ottoman Empire's weakness began to emerge in the early nineteenth century. This shift was marked first by the French invasion of Egypt and Syria (1798–1799) and later by Mehmet Ali Pasha's occupation of Syria (1831). Seeking European support, Mehmet Ali abolished discrimination between Christians and Jews, thus paving the way for the establishment of foreign charitable and missionary institutions. As a result, foreign consulates were opened in Jerusalem—Britain (1838), Prussia (1842), France (1843), the United States (1844), and Austria (1849)—signifying the growing international presence in the Holy Land.

The major European powers became directly involved in protecting their respective religious communities: France supported the Catholics, Russia the Orthodox Christians, and Britain and Prussia the Protestants. In 1841, the Anglo-Prussian bishopric was established, and by 1849, a Protestant cathedral was built in Jerusalem, intensifying efforts to convert Orthodox Christians to Protestantism. These activities provoked Russia, which responded by constructing the large complex known as Moskoviya and founding the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, which became particularly active in the Galilee region by establishing numerous schools. However, following Russia's internal and external crises after 1905, its influence declined, leaving Palestine increasingly open to British and French penetration.

During the same period, a German religious sect known as the Templars (Tempelgesellschaft) founded colonies in Haifa and Jaffa in 1869, motivated by millenarian beliefs that the end of the world was near and that Islamic rule would soon end. The Ottoman Empire closely monitored these activities, fearing a loss of control over its territories. Although the Templar settlements maintained limited interaction with Palestinian Muslims, their presence marked one of the earliest organized European colonization efforts in the region. These colonies largely disappeared with the outbreak of World War I, leaving behind only a few neighborhoods that survive to this day as remnants of that era.⁶¹

Palestine during the Reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II

During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), the Ottoman Empire faced severe internal and external crises. The Sultan sought to overcome these challenges and preserve the territorial integrity of the Empire by implementing a series of political and administrative reforms, which were also reflected in Palestine.

The policy of mandatory conscription, imposed as a result of continuous wars, provoked discontent among the Palestinian population. Moreover, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the subsequent 'Urabi Pasha Revolt, followed by the flight of Egyptian rebels into Palestine, heightened public anxiety in the region.

During this period, Palestine became the focal point of international strategic interests and the emerging Zionist movement, which began in 1882 with the first wave of Jewish immigration. Recognizing the potential danger of this development, the Ottoman administration imposed

⁶⁰ Baraijia, I. (2021). Kudüs'te Osmanlı İdaresi (1808–1874) [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Gazi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. ss. 70–85; Mennā, A. (1999). Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī (1700–1918) [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya. ss. 149–152; Bostancı, İ. (2006). XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin (İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Vaziyet) [Palestine in the 19th Century: Administrative and Socio-Economic Conditions]. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Fırat Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Şanlıurfa. ss. 49–53.

⁶¹ Mennā, A. (1999). Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir 'Ahd al-'Uthmānī (1700–1918) [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)]. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 185–190.

restrictions on the sale of land to Jews in an effort to prevent Palestine from becoming a region with a concentrated Jewish population.

Meanwhile, the deterioration of Ottoman relations with Britain and France led to a closer alliance with Germany, resulting in an expansion of German investments and consular influence in Palestine. This relationship culminated in the historic visit of German Emperor Wilhelm II to Jerusalem in 1898, a symbolic gesture underscoring Germany's growing political and strategic interest in Palestine.⁶²

During this visit, the Emperor inaugurated the German Protestant Church in Jerusalem, thereby consolidating Germany's presence in the region. Under Sultan Abdülhamid II's rule, significant administrative, economic, and social reforms were implemented in Palestine.

By 1908, the population of Palestine had increased substantially, reaching approximately 650,000. In the same year, urban dwellers constituted about one-third of the total population. The economic and demographic center of gravity shifted from the mountainous interior to the coastal plains; farmers migrated from the highlands to the coastal areas and the Jordan Valley in search of new agricultural lands, where they established new villages and settlements.⁶³

With the emergence of large landholdings, a class of tenant farmers working on lands they did not own began to form—an occurrence resembling the serf system in European history. This development represented a phenomenon previously unseen in Palestinian history.

Starting in 1873, Gaza became the center of a district (kaza) affiliated with the Jerusalem Mutasarrifate. During this period, an eleven-year civil conflict erupted among the Tarabin Bedouin tribe. The Mutasarrif of Jerusalem intervened, arresting the tribal leaders and imposing tax obligations on the Bedouins.

Following the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, the Ottoman Empire began to attach greater strategic importance to southern Palestine. Within this framework, in 1900, the Negev region was organized into a separate district (kaza) centered in Birüssebi (Beersheba), reflecting the empire's efforts to strengthen administrative control and integrate the region into the broader provincial system.⁶⁴

During this period, Jerusalem became an important center of cultural life in Palestine. The city emerged as a cultural and intellectual hub that addressed the entirety of Palestine. Several newspapers were published in Jerusalem, including en-Nefir el-'Usmānī, el-Beşīr, el-İnsāf, ed-Dustūr, and Sūriyye el-Cenūbiyye; in Haifa, the El-Kermel newspaper was issued, and in Jaffa, the Filistin newspaper was published.⁶⁵

During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, significant progress was made in the field of education. By 1914, there were 45 schools in Acre and 11 in Nablus, though girls' schools existed only in urban centers. Across Palestine, there were a total of 95 state primary schools, three state secondary schools, and 379 private schools operating.

The construction of intercity roads continued during this period. In 1885, a bridge was built over the Jordan River, and on September 24, 1892, the first railway line in the Damascus region was inaugurated between Jaffa and Jerusalem. Later, the Beirut–Damascus, Damascus–Aleppo, and the Hejaz Railway line, opened in 1908, became operational, connecting Damascus, Daraa,

⁶² ALAMLEH, M. (2019). *Osmanlı İdaresinde Kudüs Mutasarrıflığı 1874–1914* [The Jerusalem District under Ottoman Administration, 1874–1914], (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences), Ankara, p. 209.

⁶³ Mennâ, A. (1999). *Tarihü Filistîn fî Evâhiri Ahdi'l-Osmânî (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period (1700–1918)], Beirut: Müessesetü'd-Dirâsâti'l-Filistûniyye, p. 221.

⁶⁴ Mennâ, A. (1999). *Tarihü Filistîn fî Evâhiri Ahdi'l-Osmânî (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period (1700–1918)], Beirut: Müessesetü'd-Dirâsâti'l-Filistûniyye, p. 223.

⁶⁵ ALAMLEH, M. (2019). *Osmanlı İdaresinde Kudüs Mutasarrıflığı 1874–1914* [The Jerusalem Sanjak under Ottoman Administration, 1874–1914], Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara, pp. 144–145.

and Amman with Mecca and Medina. Additionally, a railway line between Haifa and Daraa was constructed, contributing to the development of Haifa and its port. During this era, the three principal cities of Palestine were Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa.

Missionary institutions and foreign investments continued their activities, while the Zionist movement also began to gain influence. Tourism, especially in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, contributed to economic improvement, and the production of ceramics, souvenirs, and religious artifacts from the Holy Land increased.

Advances in transportation, postal and telegraph networks, along with improved security, enhanced economic conditions. The Palestinian economy remained primarily agricultural, with surplus goods being exported. Foreign trade expanded through the ports of Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa, leading to an overall rise in living standards throughout the region.⁶⁶

Following the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, beginning in 1882, the “Lovers of Zion” (Hovevei Tsion) movement initiated the migration of Jews to Palestine. Some of the first settlements founded during this period included Rishon LeZion, Petah Tikva, Zikhron Yaakov, and Rosh Pina. During this first wave of Zionist immigration (1882–1904), Jewish settlers encountered numerous difficulties.

One of the most significant challenges was the stance of the Ottoman Empire. By the end of 1881, the Ottoman government declared that Jews would be permitted to immigrate to all Ottoman territories except Palestine. Furthermore, it required that any immigrants must obtain Ottoman citizenship and comply with imperial laws, a condition that greatly restricted Jewish settlement activities and limited the establishment of new colonies in the region.

Conclusion

The historical trajectory of Palestine under Ottoman rule reveals a continuous process of administrative, social, cultural, and economic transformation, reflecting the region’s evolving roles and meanings across different periods. Owing to its strategic importance, sacred geography, and diverse demographic composition, the Ottoman Empire treated Palestine with particular sensitivity. Yet, this very sensitivity rendered the region a constantly shifting administrative entity, whose status was repeatedly reshaped by both local dynamics and global power rivalries.

Within the Ottoman administrative framework, Palestine alternated between being a sub-province (sanjak) attached to major provinces such as Damascus and Sidon, and a directly governed administrative unit under the central authority. This duality highlighted its strategic and religious centrality but also exposed it to persistent external intervention. Although the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century sought to modernize and stabilize this delicate structure, the region’s demographic diversity and political volatility posed substantial obstacles to lasting reform.

By the late nineteenth century, the emergence of the Zionist movement marked a turning point in the historical fabric of Palestine. The Ottoman state’s restrictions on Jewish immigration were not merely bureaucratic measures but a deliberate attempt to preserve demographic balance and resist foreign encroachment. However, shifting international power dynamics and the gradual weakening of the Ottoman Empire undermined these efforts, paving the way for profound geopolitical transformations.

Following 1908, the Second Constitutional Era reshaped Palestine’s political landscape. Palestinian representatives in the Ottoman Parliament (Meclis-i Mebusan) voiced growing concern over the expanding Zionist settlements, yet state responses remained largely inadequate. These shortcomings laid the groundwork for the Arab-Zionist conflict that would

⁶⁶ Mennā, A. (1999). *Tārīkh Filasṭīn fī Awākhir ‘Ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1700–1918)* [The History of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Era (1700–1918)], Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, pp. 220–221.

emerge after the Empire's fall, transforming the region into the focal point of an enduring historical crisis.

In conclusion, Palestine occupied a dual role within the Ottoman system—as both an administrative hub and a strategic frontier of imperial control. However, with the dawn of the twentieth century, the interplay between international politics, imperial decline, and Zionist ambitions rapidly altered its trajectory. The region became a nexus of global and local conflict, and its transformation raised fundamental questions about identity, sovereignty, and historical continuity.

Understanding the Ottoman legacy in Palestine is thus indispensable for any serious reflection on its modern predicament. The Empire's policies in the region constitute both a heritage and a lesson, offering critical insight into the structural roots of the Palestinian question and the enduring complexities of its historical evolution.

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