

out the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from their local villages and set out to rule the peasantry from Nablus on behalf of the High Porte. Jerusalem, on the other hand, was a city having its own economic foundations (mainly based on its religious institutions and related crafts); its notables were relatively isolated from their rural hinterland (ibid; 301). In factional disputes the Jerusalem notables were the arbitrators rather than the contenders among the Qais-Yemeni parties (ibid:304).

The use of the term 'party' (i.e, hizb) in most references to Qais and Yemeni factions should not obscure the tribal character of these affiliations. The divisions acted as symbols of permanent identification around which members of a clan can be mobilized to secure various (and variable) objectives of their clan heads and tribal leaders. Owen, in dismissing the picture of a perennial 'tribal' conflict in which this factionalism has traditionally been portrayed, suggests a framework on which Qaisi/Yemeni divisions can be seen as "part of a process designed both to augment the resources of a particular family (or clan) leaders as well as, in the Jabal Nablus and Jabal al-Khalil, to persuade the Ottoman authorities to award them a lucrative public office or the right to collect taxes" (Owen, 1977:2). Furthermore, it provides a mechanism of re-directing "internal dissent against an external enemy."

The decreasing isolation of the Palestinian village (cash-crops, Jerusalem-Jaffa railroad, centralization of government), and the decline of the patronage system associated with the rise of share tenancy during the mandate period affected these alignments negatively. Qaisi/Yemeni affiliations lost their effectiveness as foci of clan identification when a new more complex system of alliances was needed to meet the transformed relations between the peasantry and the urban sector on the one hand, and the Jewish social structure on the other. Nevertheless, they continued to surface throughout the mandate period, and villagers took account of them in public festivities lest the