

amassed crowds in one place should trigger latent conflicts to explode along Qaisi/Yemeni lines. Granqvist, writing in 1933, provides a striking example of these fears from the village of Artas, in the Bethlehem district:

Although now, in the days of zionism and the strong central government of our days in Palestine, the fights between Qais and Yemen do not occur--or only rarely--the memory of them continues in this custom. (...) When Muhammad Yusef in the autumn of 1926 fetched his bride Sa'da Derwis from al-Khadr, this wedding was preceded by rumours that disturbances would take place and when the bride was brought out in her white dress there were mutterings and grumblings of Qais and Yemen among the crowd of people, although a policeman had been sent by the local authorities, they did not come to blows. "It was the first time a policeman was present at a wedding in order to keep order in this part of the country" 'Aliya remarked. (Granqvist, 1935:88).

Weddings, it should be recalled, are the cementing bonds of clan alliances, and as such act as occasions in which clan solidarity and expressions of rivalry are displayed. Even in the recent past, in marriage ceremonies and other public festivities, a token recognition of the family's past affiliation to one of the two factions is observed through the gowns worn by womenfolk; white for Yemen, and red for the Qaisi party. However, as rallying instruments for clan alliances and mobilization these factions had lost their influences by the third decade of this century.

Qaisi/Yemeni factionalism thus disappeared because it was no longer an appropriate channel of organized politics in the changed patronage and class relations in Palestinian society. Its limitations can be located in its relatively fixed character (label) and its emptiness of any ideological content. Although fictitious in origin it is seldom that we encounter cases where a clan had changed its faction affiliation (e.g. the behaviour of the Jarrar clan in the 19th century power conflicts in the Nablus district (Abir, 1975:288-289). Such flexibility would be necessary for a clan striving to secure its interests in the network of shifting alliances between patrons and