

Lepers, Lunatics and Saints

The Nativist Ethnography of Tawfiq Canaan and his Jerusalem Circle

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The separation of Arab and Jewish lepers in the Talbieh Leprosarium, during the war of 1948, marked one of those defining moments in the annals of Jerusalem and the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹ In its absurdity, the event encapsulated the depth of the process of ethnic exclusion and demonisation after decades of conflict between Jews and Arabs, settlers and natives. It also signalled a turning point in which much of the intellectual debate, as well as popular sentiment, about the future direction of the country and its sense of nationhood began to crystallize around two separate and exclusive narratives of origin.

In the early 1940s, Tawfiq Canaan, a Jerusalem doctor and noted authority on leprosy, ethnographer of Palestinian peasants,



Tawfiq Canaan with his wife, Jerusalem 1915.

head of the Palestine Medical Association, and (briefly) president of the Palestine Oriental Society, became the director of the Leprosarium, the only home for this dreaded affliction of the Holy Land. By that time Dr. Hansen, of Bergen, had discovered the cyclical genealogy of the disease, which Canaan had examined both medically and in its cultural context, and thus contributed to its eradication in Palestine. Leprosy had become a residual 'biblical' disease, associated for generations with the Holy Land, and evoked in popular imagery not only in parables of healing, but in a rich and textured tradition about the disease associated with isolation, confinement, and exclusion for the last two millennia. It was therefore with a great deal of historical irony that the war of 1948 in Jerusalem brought about the expulsion of all Arab lepers - together with about 800,000 Palestinian non-lepers, to the eastern front. Jewish lepers remained in West Jerusalem

while Arab patients were taken from Talbieh and marched first to a new location in Silwan and then several years later to Surda Mountain north of Ramallah where Dr. Canaan was invited again to become the caretaker.²

Today this incident is hardly remembered and was buried as an unnoticed detail in the saga of the 1948 War. Canaan's contribution to the eradication of leprosy also is barely noted. In limited scholarly circles he is known for his contributions to the study of Palestinian peasants, and ethnography in particular. But between the two world wars, when most of his prolific research was published, he - and his associated circle of Palestinian ethnographers - produced some of the original work on popular culture on Palestine and the Arab world.

This essay will address features of this corpus that constitute a nativist ethnography of Palestine during the Mandate period. I use the term 'nativist ethnography' (and 'nativism' as an accompanying ideology) to refer to the attempts to establish sources of legitimation for Palestinian cultural patrimony (and implicitly for a Palestinian national identity that began to distance itself from greater Syrian and Arab frameworks).



Lepers in Jerusalem, ca. 1880. This photograph and many similar ones contributed to the exoticization of the biblical imagery of the Holy Land. *Source: Photo by Bonfils, © Issam Nassar.*

In this case, these affinities were sought in primordial sources of identity. Interpretation of Palestinian history has always been amenable to selective borrowing from a versatile package of accumulated cultures in its ancient past. The Bible was being a useful index to these 'other' ethnicities - with the Canaanites and the Philistines (or their construction by their Israelite protagonists) heading the list.³

The term 'nativism' has been used widely in the literature to identify movements and ideologies that were broadly advocative. For example, it refers to "social movements that proclaim the return to power of the natives a colonized areas and the resurgence of native culture, along with the decline of the colonizers".⁴ Franz Fanon dwelled at length on the concept of return to native roots and the need to overturn the internalised colonial consciousness that is exemplified in emulating European culture.⁵ The term later found more substantial elaboration in the literature on 'negritude', celebrating African popular cultural roots. In a recent study on Iranian intellectual reaction to the West, Mehrzad Boroujerdi addressed the "tormented triumph of nativism". Following Willims and Christman, he defines nativism as the doctrine that

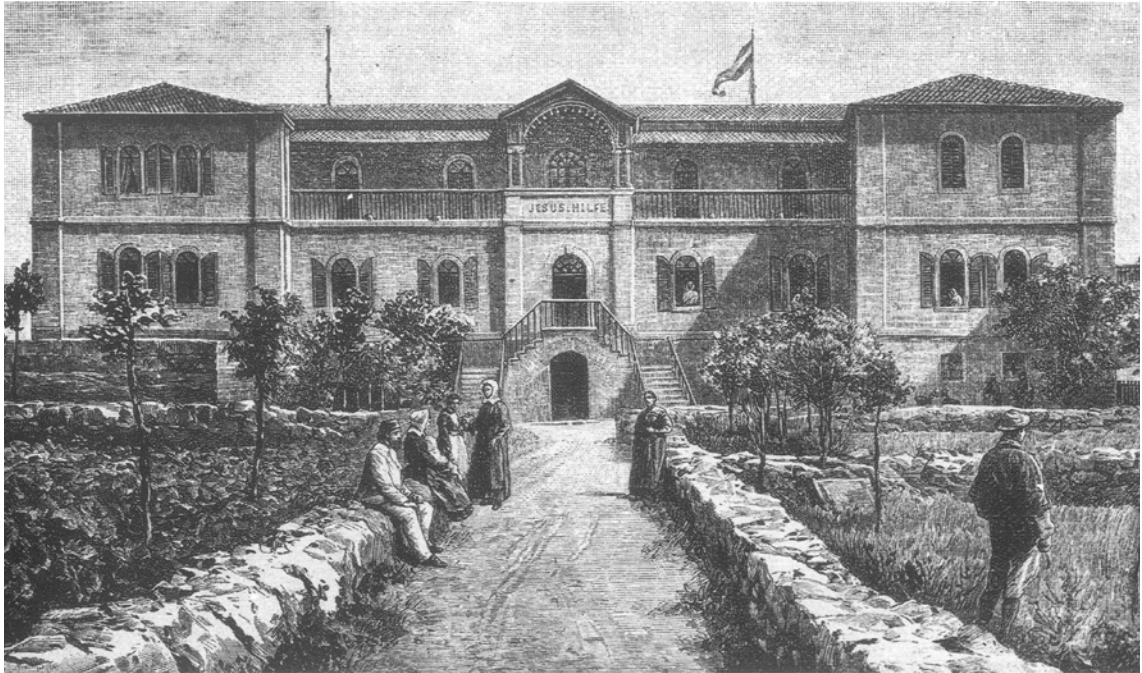
calls for the resurgence, reinstatement or continuance of native or indigenous cultural customs, beliefs and values. Nativism is grounded on such deeply held beliefs as resisting acculturation, privileging one's own 'authentic' ethnic identity, and longing for a return to 'an unsullied indigenous cultural tradition'.⁶

He places the height of this movement in the third world to the post-WWII era of decolonisation in which intellectuals from

Southeast Asia and the Caribbean where attempting to assert their own identity and ending "their condition of mental servitude [and] perceived inferiority context vis-à-vis the West".⁷ Boroujerdi attributes the triumph of nativist ideologies to two developments: the challenges posed by a globalised culture to the 'life-worlds' of traditional intellectual elites; and secondly to the entry of new popular classes (e.g. seasonal migrants, rural city-dwellers) into the national political scene, assuring nativism of "a steady stream of new adherents, recruits and instigators".⁸ While enhancing the nativist intellectuals with an arsenal against Eurocentric models of emulation, Boroujerdi castigates the movement for essentialising a presumed local culture "which sees everything in the context of the binary opposition between the authentic and the alien", and for a tendency among its adherents to fetishise local traditions. He mentions Edward Said's reference to the movement as

an infantile stage of cultural nationalism...often leading to a compelling but demagogic assertions about a native post, narrative or actuality that stands free from worldly time itself. One sees this in such enterprises as Senghor's negritude, or in the Rastafarian movement, or in... the rediscoveries of various unsullied precolonial Muslim essences.⁹

In North America, by radical contrast, nativism became the watchword in the 1830s and 1840s for movements asserting the rights of early settlers (and very rarely of American Indians) against later immigrants, particularly Catholic immigrants.¹⁰ More recently Mahmoud Mamdani used it as a marker of post-colonial citizenship emerging from problems of ethnicity in



The Jerusalem German Leprosarium in Talbieh from a postcard published in *Jerusalem Architecture*, D. Kroyanker, 1994.

African tribal formations.¹¹

It is obvious from the above discussion that the term nativism refers to widely disparate notions of preserving cultural roots and ‘authenticities’. Some - such as its use by English and German early settlers in North America, and notions of Negritude in West Africa - conflict with each other. I use it here in the sense described by Mehrzad as a “resurgence and reinstatement of native or indigenous cultural customs...privileging one’s own ‘authentic identity’”. But unlike the Iranian case, as we shall see, this movement in Palestine was not in reaction to Orientalist discourse, but an attempt to modify that discourse in favour of finding a niche within its confines. Tawfiq Canaan and his colleagues did not use the term ‘nativism’, nor did they consciously think of themselves as belonging to an intellectual movement. Only retrospectively do they emerge as a group. They published most of their intellectual output in one major forum: *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*

(*JPOS*), whose life span corresponded to the life of the British Mandate itself (1920-1948). Those present at the inaugural meeting of the society (March 22, 1920) reflected on the future character and interests of the Oriental Society. According to its first president, Pere Lagrange, the society owed its origin to the American Assyriologist Albert Clay, who conceived it as an instrument to fulfilling “a useful part in the new epoch in the study of the antiquities of the Holy Land”.¹² It was held under the auspicious of Col. Ronald Storrs, Military Governor of Jerusalem and soon-to-be founder and head of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, the association that would invite Muslims, Jews and Christian Jerusalemites to preserve the heritage of the city under the Mandatory Government.

The *Journal* was created to reflect the intellectual interests of the membership: history, philology, archaeology, and ethnography of Palestine - the last two disciplines being the most dominant, if we take the number of articles devoted to

them. French and German biblical scholars seemed to be among the most visible of the society's contributors, but these also included a significant number of Palestinian Arabs and Jews. Among the latter we find Eliezar Ben Yehuda, the founder of Modern Hebrew, who contributed to the journal an article about *The Edumite Language*,¹³ and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, David Ben Gurion's colleague in the labour Zionist movement. The latter was particularly interested in investigating residual Jewish cultural features in contemporary Palestinian villages.¹⁴

However the dominant ethnographers in the society by far, whom I will call here 'Canaan's circle', were Palestinian Arabs.¹⁵ The most prolific and significant figure among them was Tawfiq Canaan himself, but they also included writers with a wide range of talent and versatility: Khalil Totah, the pedagogue and historian, who co-authored with Barghouti, *The History of Palestine* (1922), Omar Saleh al-Barghouti, the lawyer and nationalist activist, who contributed several studies on Bedouin lore and common law to JPOS; Stephan Hanna Stephan, who made significant contributions on peasant notions of time and periodisation of the agricultural cycle; and Elias Haddad, who made contributions on blood revenge, peasant factions, peasant notions of hospitality and peasant pedagogy. With the exception of Totah - who came from Ramallah - every one of these ethnographers was a Jerusalemite by residence if not by birth. In a manner that replicated a similar tradition that emerged in central Europe (Poland, Hungary and Austria) and Scandinavia (especially Finland) half a century earlier, Jerusalem became the arena of an intellectual circle that regarded the peasantry as the soul of the nation - the salt of the earth, uncontaminated by radical intrusions of technology and a Westernising culture.¹⁶

Canaan and his circle were driven by one overriding preoccupation: that the native culture of Palestine and that of peasant society, in particular, was being undermined by the forces of modernity.¹⁷ They saw it as their task to document, classify, describe and interpret this threatened culture. Implicit in their scholarship (and made explicit by Canaan himself) was another theme, namely that the peasants of Palestine represent - through their folk norms and



Canaan as an Ottoman medical officer, 1916.

material artefacts - the living heritage of all the accumulated ancient cultures that had appeared in Palestine (principally the Canaanite, Philistine, Hebraic, Nabatean, Syrio-Aramaic and Arab). Their conceptual assumptions were basically essentialist and reductionist.¹⁸ They postulated that peasant behaviour and norms, as manifested in their songs, sayings, norms, and practices, reflect an earlier mode of existence whose language and time may have been different, but whose content is essentially the same.¹⁹ Most of them, including the Muslim writers among them, held to what might be called biblical parallelism - that is, they believed that much of Palestinian Arab popular traditions are modern and *residual* manifestations of daily life as it was described in the biblical narratives.

These essentialist assumptions did not prevent Canaan and his circle from producing an ethnographic corpus that was rich in empirical detail and textured in the manner it examined regional variations in peasant lore all over Palestine. Tawfiq Canaan, in particular, managed to combine his professional medical career with field trips to rural areas throughout Palestine where he gathered much of his folkloric material while recording his observations about disease patterns and their treatment. In this sense, the group's work differed substantially from contemporary ethnographies of travel writers who attempted to show the "Living Bible" in the peasant traditions of colonial Palestine.²⁰ Among these foreign writers, only the works of Gustav Dalman and Hilma Granqvist, both contemporaries of Canaan and the Oriental Society, show a similar sensitivity to the complexities of peasant society at the turn of the century.²¹ Canaan's work on the architecture of the peasant house, for example, is a masterwork on the evolution of building styles, and their response to both environmental factors and peasant cosmology of the habitat.²²

This search for nativist ethnography stands in stark contrast to the post-Nakba folklorist revivalism among Palestinian intellectuals such as Nimr Sirhan, Musa Allush, Salim Mubayyid, and the Palestinian Folklore Society of the 1970s.²³ Among the latter writers we witness a keen attempt to establish pre-Islamic (and pre-Hebraic) cultural roots for a re-constructed Palestinian national identity. The two putative roots in this patrimony are Canaanite and Jebusite cultures.²⁴ More recently, the former was clearly symbolized by the celebration of the Qabatiya Canaanite festival by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, and the latter by the annual Music Festival of Yabus.²⁵ Writing against what he termed "Canaanite Ideology", the critic Zakariyya Muhammad

suggests that it is an intellectual fad, divorced from the concerns of ordinary people:

We are witnessing today [end of the 20th century] the height of Canaanism. Its metaphors have dominated our poetry, graphic arts, journalism and festivals. The Palestine International Festival, for example, has adopted the Phoenix as its emblem, assuming that it is a Canaanite bird. The Sebastiya Festival in Nablus concocted a procession of Canaanite cities in its opening celebration. Even Iz Ed Din al Manasra, the poet, has recently launched a 'Canaanite initiative' to reconcile the Association of Jordanian Writers to the Union of Palestinian Writers. It looks like a holistic ideology. Its heroes are: Baal, El, and Anat - imported from our antiquity to energize the symbolism of this new movement...

I have to say that this ideology is based on an illusion. While it might be useful as paraphernalia for artistic creativity, it is a losing ideology when used to manage our conflict with the Zionist movement. For 'Canaanism' concedes a priori the central thesis of Zionism. Namely that we have been engaged in a perennial conflict with Zionism - and hence with the Jewish presence in Palestine - since the Kingdom of Solomon and before. Those who adopt Canaanism are actually seeking a Palestinian presence that precedes the claims of [Jewish nationalism]. If Israel goes back one thousand years before Christ, then we go back much earlier than the ancient Hebrews... thus in one stroke Canaanism cancels the assumption that Zionism is a European

*movement, propelled by modern European contingencies...*²⁶

Much of Palestinian nationalist revivalist writings following the war of 1948 were a reaction to Zionist attempts at establishing their own putative claims to Israelite and biblical motifs. In doing so, the Jebusite-Canaanite revivalism of the 1970s and 80s had given up any attempt to relocate (or even relate) modern Palestinian cultural affinities to biblical roots. They seem to have abandoned this patrimony of biblical representation to Jewish nationalist discourse, in a paradoxical manner, reinforcing the claims of their protagonists. Canaan and his group, by contrast, were not Canaanites.²⁷ They contested Zionist claims to biblical patrimonies by stressing present day continuities between the biblical heritage (and occasionally pre-biblical roots) and Palestinian popular beliefs and practices.²⁸

It is paradoxical that earlier debates among Jewish nationalists reflected a heated search for nativist roots in the various groups of the Hebrew Yeshuv - both among the Zionists and the so-called Canaanite (anti-Zionist) followers of Yonatan Ratosh. For example, the chief ideologue of the Zionists, Borochoy, claimed that Palestinian Arabs had no crystallized national consciousness of their own, and would likely be assimilated into the new Hebraic nationalism, precisely because, in his view, “the *fellahin* are considered in this context as the descendants of the ancient Hebrew and Canaanite residents ‘together with a small admixture of Arab blood’”.²⁹ Similarly Ahad Ha’am wrote that “the Moslems [of Palestine] are the ancient residents of the land... who became Christians on the rise of Christianity and became Moslems on the arrival of Islam”.³⁰ In 1918, David Ben Gurion and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, writing in Yiddish, tried to establish that Palestinian peasants and their mode of life

constitute the living historical testimony to Israelite practices in the biblical period. But the ideological implications of this claim became very problematic and were soon withdrawn from circulation.³¹

In his turn Canaan, virtually in the same period but writing from a Palestinian nationalist perspective, stressed the notion of Palestinian ethnography as a manifestation of a *Semitic* culture. In one of his earlier essays (1920), Canaan talks of water demons as a “widespread belief in all Semitic countries... [which holds that] springs, cisterns, and all running waters as inhabited.”³² When discussing the demoted status of women among peasants he refers to the “dual function of traditional law affecting women as ...a legacy from the earliest days of Semitic civilization.”³³ He was also keen in his study of Palestinian popular religion and demonology to demonstrate that magical practices were common to Christian, Muslims, and Sephardic Jews.³⁴ As the discussion of the binary systems of belief evolves, it becomes clear in Canaan’s analysis that the depository of these practices is the contemporary Palestinian peasant.

*This representation of good against evil, white against black, angels against devils, light against darkness... and God against Satan, is a very old idea in Semitic religions and we could not have it better pictured than as reproduced by the simple imagination of a Palestinian fellah.*³⁵

Canaan was keen at framing his observations about peasant practices with copious references from the Old Testament, and less frequently, from the Qur’an. The point here was not to show the unity inherent in the monotheistic texts, but to establish a historical continuity between pre-Islamic

social and normative systems and modern Arab rural life-style. But ultimately it was his ethnographic field observations that lent solidity and depth to his analysis of the changing mores of his subjects, with the biblical references acting as a historical backdrop.

Stephan's Biblical Parallels

Nowhere are these claims for the biblical affinities of modern Palestinian Arab practices as pronounced as in Stephan Stephan's fascinating study "Modern Palestinian Parallels to the Song of Songs".³⁶ Stephan was an archaeologist, the curator of the Palestine Museum, and a civil servant in the Mandate Government. He was perhaps the least acknowledged figure in Canaan's circle. He made several important contributions to Palestinian ethnography of the period. The first was his study of the Canticles, discussed here; the second was his study of madness among Palestinian peasants.³⁷

The first study, on the Song of Songs, is ostensibly a study in literary aesthetics. But it was bold in its assertions as it was meticulous in its detailed examination of what was essentially an erotic popular repertoire. It attempted to compare the "ancient and modern modes of describing the beauty of man and women" with two and half millennia of time.³⁸ Stephan talks about "the striking resemblance between the old and the new, both in the expression of the ideas and in the grouping of words... [Reflecting] the freshness and vigour of their imagery as well as the gloom of their passions in the nuptial and erotic pieces."³⁹ To examine this contrast he analyses 77 wedding, love, and bawdy songs from contemporary Palestinian popular lore - the vast majority of them originating in an urban environment - and makes a systematic comparison with parallel usages in the Song

of Songs: the construction of the love song; description of physical attributes of the male and female beloved; the metaphoric use of plant lore, aromas, and attributes of nature in each collection, and so on. What makes his selection of ballads particularly interesting is that he lists variations on common melodies that he personally collected from the Jerusalem environs, as well as from Jaffa, Nazareth, Nablus and Tulkarem.⁴⁰ His conclusions are astounding. Compared with love songs that we inherited from the written classical texts (for example, Andalusian melodies, and medieval love texts) both the biblical Canticles and modern Palestinian Arab folksongs show uncanny textual resemblance, both in the structure of the language and in attributing features to the beloved, particularly the female beloved:

His love for her inspires him to describe her with a variety of pretty appellatives, common to both periods [biblical and Palestinian], such as dove, reed, an enclosed garden, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; a garden fountain, a well of living water. He is captured by her beauty; first he considers her fair, and then as spotless...to him she is at the same time a rose in a flower garden, and a proud horse.

...[H]er breasts, seemingly the most attractive part of her graceful person, are to the old singer like wine, even far better. We consider them as pomegranates and rarely as clusters of grapes. But in common parlance 'the groom may take one breast for a cushion and the other as quilt...' ⁴¹

Stephan then compares these usages to those we find in *Alf Leilah wa Leilah* (the Arabian



Stephan H. Stephan with Sheikh Yacoub Bukhari, head of the Naqshabandi Sufi tariqa (see *The Harries Sufi*, in this issue) and members of the sheikh's family. Source: Courtesy of Mrs. Muasser Aruri.

Nights), but then the comparison is not as “consistently carried out”.

The face shines like the full moon. Although the form is slim, yet the body is plump, likened to a silver bar or ivory, as soft as the tail of a sheep. The eyes fascinate and captivate like those of the gazelle, and are painted with kohl...like a bouquet of flowers or the cheeks - rosy apples, with a freckle, which enhances their beauty. The teeth gleam like pearls, the lips are as sweet as honey or sugar. The breasts are budding; they are well rounded, like pomegranates, seductive, as white as ivory. The navel may hold an ounce of oil, and is like the bottom of tiny coffee

*cup. The legs are round columns of choice marble, the thighs are cushions stuffed with feathers, and the nates are full and heavy as a heap of sand.*⁴²

In one area Stephan found a significant diversion between biblical and Palestinian aesthetics. While the general theme of the two sets of ballads is “the mutual love of the sexes”, he found that the “beauty of the man is a subject almost neglected in Palestinian popular lore”.⁴³ While “in the Canticles the man is compared to a deer or a hart, in our days it is the wife to whom these attributes are solely applied. The palm tree and the bird are common to both parties”.⁴⁴ Stephan makes no attempt to explain to the reader this divergence.

Peasant Madness

“Lunacy in Palestinian Folklore” was published in 1925, three years after study of the Canticles. It basically pursues two chief pre-occupations of Stephan’s writings in particular and the Canaan circle in general: nativist roots, and Biblical parallels. Stephan also continues to examine love in the popular imagination, and elaborates on a significant theme in the Song of Songs: love as a form of madness. He examines thirty-one manifestations of madness among Palestinian peasants, ranging from the condition of *Junun* (‘state of madness’ - equivalent to ‘being in a fit of passion’) to ‘*Mukhtal ash-Shu’ur*’ (i.e. having a disordered mind). The latter is derived from *shi’r* (poetry), the *sha’ir* (poet) himself being seen as a kind of madman in popular culture. Stephan here makes an important conceptual contribution: in peasant lore, lunacy has divine attributes. God inflicts madness on you as a punishment for evil deeds. On the other hand, a madman is also possessed by the *jinn* (good or bad spirits), and can be healed by exorcism. These countervailing interpretations create a tension (and sometimes a contradiction) in the popular interpretation of madness, since divine punishment and exorcism cannot be reconciled. Thus “lunacy is something divine” (*ahkam rabbaniyah*) - an ambivalent formulation which, according to Stephan, reflects this dilemma in the popular mind about madness.⁴⁵

The most important cause of madness in peasant psychology is possession by *jinn* - a condition that is often brought about by the “transgression of universal moral laws”,⁴⁶ but also by other non-normative transgressions. These include: defiling the dwellings of saints (*maqamat*); a mother beating her child on the threshold; pouring water out-of-doors; the use of aphrodisiacs with wine; and the writing of amulets to make an enemy mad.⁴⁷ Much of peasant lore on lunacy addresses

the relationship between love, insanity and hysteria. This is a theme that Stephan began to treat in his study of the Canticles, but elaborated here:

*Some hold the opinion that love combined with any other sudden emotion, such as sorrow, grief, or fright, is apt to make a man mad. Paralysis is one of the serious manifestations caused by the irritation of the jinn by men. Epilepsy is another illness inflicted by the evil spirits (in this case jinn tayyar, flying jinn). Hysteria, melancholia, neurasthenia, etc. may also be attributed to the evil spirits. Then there are the non-lunatic symptoms caused by jinn, e.g., the nervous impotence of a husband, who temporarily cannot fulfil his marital duties, much against his will. During this period he is considered as being ‘bound up’ by those spirits - marbut.*⁴⁸

The relationship between madness and possession was analysed in a different context by Canaan - that of eccentric behaviour exhibited by *darawish*, followers of Sufi cults. The *darwish* belongs to the lowest orders of *awlia* (saints). Those are usually drawn to an outer source of inspiration, which leaves them in a trance. The *darwish* becomes so absorbed in this external calling that he neglects everything in favour of his inner calling. He abandons his ‘outer’ condition, and appears to the ordinary observer as childlike, simple, or even imbecilic.⁴⁹ The etymology of the word *majdhub* is thus explained in relationship to madness. It comes from *jadhab* (to be drawn, inspired). Thus a *majdhub* (attracted, drawn by an external calling) is a person who has taken leave of his (ordinary) senses, hence turned crazy or demented.⁵⁰

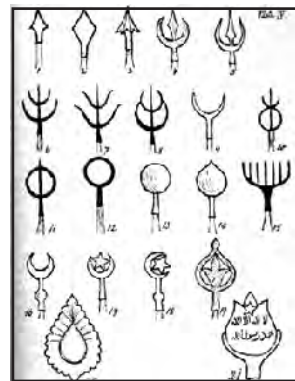
In following a Sufi order, the member of a *tariqa* is possessed by the spirit of the good jinn, and is therefore drawn closer to the presence of God. In this condition the *darwish* acquires superhuman attributes. But the link between being mad and being saintly is also established. “Both the *majdub* and *majnun* [are] inhabited by the spirits, and sharing many points of resemblances,” argues Canaan, “it is easily explicable that many insane persons are regarded by the people as *awlia*.”⁵¹

In this condition the *madjnun* shares the same status of babies - they are on earth, “and at the same time in heaven”. Canaan quotes the popular saying *haki es-ghir haki weli* - the talk of a child is the talk of the saint.⁵² We might add here that like children and poets in Arab culture, saint-madmen are given normative allowances that are not available to ordinary human beings. Here the rules of ethical judgement are suspended and they are allowed to exhibit eccentric behaviour and utterances that are otherwise neither acceptable nor tolerated. They disrupt the routine of everyday life to inspire an extraordinary way of looking at ordinary and mundane.

Canaan’s Demons

The ethnography of Tawfiq Canaan, although much wider in scope than that of Haddad, Stephan, and Barghouti, was preoccupied with peasant religiosity and belief patterns. He devoted much of his writings to popular demonology, which he treated ‘scientifically’ as a mode of coping with the stressful aspects of life in which the peasant is held hostage to natural and human disasters. In his work we observe a linkage between a doctor’s systematic attention to peasant ailments (disease patterns, modes of treatment, and herbology) and to the ideological aspects of folk medicine (uses of magic and magic potions, talismans, magic bowls, and saints’

worship). His concerns are reflected in his earliest writings on folk medicine - where he attempted to link his training in dermatology and study of leprosy with peasant practices throughout Palestine. Early in his medical career (in 1912) he published “Demons as an Aetiological Factor in Popular Medicine”.⁵³ Later on he begins to investigate the relationship between folk religion, magic, madness, and superstition. He collected a huge number of amulets and fear cups (*taset al rajfeh*) - mostly in lieu of payment for his treatment of patients in his frequent tours of rural Palestine.⁵⁴ He developed his thesis on peasant Semitic parallelism in five essays on religiosity: “The child in Palestinian Arab Superstition”, “Water and the Water of Life”, “Modern Palestinian Beliefs and Practices Relating to God”, “Light and Darkness in Palestinian Folklore”, and “Arabic Magic Bowls”. In 1930, he published a monograph on religion among the Bedouins of Wadi Musa (Petra) where he examined the persistence of phallic worship from Nabatean paganism in contemporary local practices.⁵⁵



Staffs of saints' banners held in ceremonial processions or mawasim. Drawing by T. Caanan in *Muhammadan Saints and Sanctuaries*. p. 205.

The most systematic work on peasant religion by Canaan was his seminal *Mohammadan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (1927), which he published when he was elected president of the Oriental

Society.⁵⁶ One can glean Canaan's 'biblical nativism' from the introduction to this work.

*The primitive features of Palestine are disappearing so quickly that before long most of them will be forgotten. Thus it has become the duty of every student of Palestine and the Near East, of Archaeology and of the Bible, to lose no time in collecting as fully and accurately as possible all available material concerning the folklore, customs, and superstitions of the Holy Land.*⁵⁷

He goes on then to list the conditions of modernity that are undermining these roots of Palestinian patrimony, in which he juxtaposes an 'uncontaminated Palestinian peasant culture' against an 'unnatural' European culture:

*This change in local conditions is due to the great influences which the West is exerting upon the East, owing to the introduction of European methods of education, the migration of Europeans to Palestine, of Palestinians to Europe and especially to America, and - above all - to the influence of the Mandatory Power. The simple, crude, but uncontaminated patriarchal Palestinian atmosphere is fading away and European civilization, more sophisticated but more unnatural, is taking its place.*⁵⁸

This notion of a pure peasant culture, "which remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years"⁵⁹ runs throughout Canaan's work and in that of his circle. Yet what one might call here a nativist Orientalism, is modified considerably in his empirical analysis of

peasant mores, which is a highly nuanced examination of local practices, regional variations and changes in response to urban intrusions.

Canaan is careful to show that Palestinian Christians, Muslims and Jews display similar attachments to popular saints (often sharing the same saint and the same shrine, as with al-Khader, St. George, or Mar Elias, St. Elijah). They also have similar ritual practices, even when those run counter to those of established religion, as we witness for example in rain processions during periods of draught.⁶⁰

Muhammadan Saints is a massive examination of shrines (*awlia*) and sanctuaries (*maqamat*), and the cults that articulate popular Islam in Palestine. Canaan examines here the topography and history of these sites, their relationship to the agricultural cycle, and their healing attributes. Popular religion in Palestine is neither Islamic, nor Christian, nor Jewish, but a local magical adaptation of the sacred texts to daily needs of peasants. Although ostensibly rooted in Muslim traditions, local saints are actually ennobled sheikhs who, after their death, are elevated to sainthood. Canaan quotes Conder approvingly: "It is in the worship of these shrines that the religion of peasantry consists. Moslems by profession, they often spend their lives without entering a mosque, and attach more importance to the favour and protection of the village saint, than to Allah himself, or to Mohammad, his prophet".⁶¹ Canaan reminds his readers that these same *fellahin* "are heirs and to some extent descendents of the heathen inhabitants of prebiblical times, who built the first high places".⁶²

From his typology of saints and sanctuaries, Canaan proceeds to explain how local *awlia* and their sanctuaries become the core of peasant religiosity, and why they become distanced from urban religion, which to them

is abstract and formalized:

*All awlia were once human beings, who lived as we live, and experienced in their own flesh all miseries, difficulties, diseases and woes of our life. They also know human falsehoods and intrigues. Thus they feel with us in our afflictions and understand us better than God does. At the same time their anger can be more easily soothed and thus one always hopes, by taking the necessary precaution, to escape or moderate their punishment. This explains partly how they have gradually taken the place of God. More vows are made in their names, more offerings are brought to them and more help is asked from them that is the case with God. In reviewing the formulae used in oaths, vows, etc., this point becomes clear. The first recourse is always to them, while the Almighty is thought of only on especial occasions.*⁶³

This dethronement of God, while making religion more accessible and responsive to their needs, is accomplished, however, at the expense of involving the saints in the peasant's communal struggles. They reflect their political factions (*Qays* and *Yemen*) as well as their binary cosmology of good and evil, black and white ('light and darkness'), male and female attributes. These distinctions are crucial in ordering the moral outlook of the peasants and their normative system. For example a critical distinction in the class of local saints is between 'irritable' saints and 'those with forbearance' (*nizqeen* vs. *tawilin er-ruh*).⁶⁴ While tolerant saints (*tawil er-ruh*) show a great deal of patience with human frailties and give mortals time to fulfil their obligations towards others and their creator,

irritable saints are ruthless with shortcomings and exact severe punishments on those who trespass, make false oaths, or violate the shrine of the saint. In general, this distinction gives peasants a certain degree of latitude in their search for intercession, in the search for healing powers, in the lifting of divine sanctions and the effect of the evil eye. The significance of irritable saints becomes obvious in the dispensation of local justice.

*The irritable saints...do not show any pity to transgressors. This group of saints is therefore more feared and respected than the former group. When a man is suspected of having committed a major crime, the judge may ask the defendant to take an oath at the shrine of a well-known saint, who is always chosen from this class [the 'irritables']. When a person is maltreated and oppressed by an influential man, from whom he cannot get his rights, he hurries to such an easily irritated wali and asks for his aid. Generally the saint is treated in such a way as to irritate him still further, as ... in treating the subject of oaths.*⁶⁵

The author shows that this manner of dispensing justice by invoking the judgement of irritable saints is common throughout the highlands of Palestine and not an isolated phenomenon.

Canaan attributes the extreme variety of saints and their differential impact on intercession to the persistence of pagan religiosity in Palestine, as it originated from pre-biblical times, and with its stress on a hierarchy of demi-gods in conflict with each other. Since most irritable gods tend to be '*adjamis* (outsiders - i.e. descendents of non-native sheikhs), they belong to

a lower degree of sanctity, and therefore have “inherited some characteristics of the heathen local divinities of antiquity”.⁶⁶ He also notes how evil spirits and demons dwell in the vicinity of holy shrines and have to be placated in a similar manner as good spirits. Their impact and intercessions are even felt in the course of political events. Canaan narrates, for example, several contemporary legends related to the defeat of the Ottoman army and the victory of the British, which are attributed by local peasants to the insensitivity of Turkish soldiers to the needs of Palestinian *jinn*.

Local Deities and Madmen

The roots of sainthood, as Canaan systematically illustrates from numerous anecdotes, can be found in the biographies of local leaders who are elevated into divinity after their death, unlike resurrected biblical figures, or residual Canaanite demigods. These were often village sheikhs with a reputation for sound judgement and who intervened successfully in local disputes. Some were bandleaders who exercised a degree of military power against raiding Bedouins or the encroachment of the state. As such, their powers continued to be invoked after their death. This explains why, with very few exceptions (such as that of al-Khader or St. George), saints tend to be local figures, with limited regional influence. Among those Canaan cites are Mar Niqula (St. Nicholas) from Beit Jalla, Ein-Nabi Saleh (from the village of the same name), and a female saint, Sitna el-Ghara, from Beit Nuba.⁶⁷ In addition to the lifting of injustice and the treatment of individual ailments, the main intercession of saints is tied directly to the agricultural cycle: the removing of natural blights (attacks by locusts, earthquakes, droughts, and diseases), the invocation of rain, and the granting of good harvest.

The local nature of saints is related by Canaan to another factor - a manifestation of ancestor worship. All over Palestine are found local leaders who attained the title of *weli* (saint), which - interestingly enough - also means patron, protector. The sons and grandsons of such protectors are also identifiable as sheikhs of great distinction, regardless of their achievement. This makes the *weli*/ancestor a local deity:

*They are not only the owners of the small piece of ground surrounding their tomb and shrine, but are the protectors of the properties of their descendants and [act as] the patrons of the whole village. Palestine has inherited from its heathen ancestors the idea that the whole country is not governed as a whole by any one deity, but that each locality has its own divinity. Although there may be several saints in one and the same village, only one of them is the real patron of the village. The resemblance of this belief with biblical statements is striking.*⁶⁸

In Canaan's class system of saints, the social hierarchy of *awlia* mirror the peasant's worldly order of patrons and sheikhs. They begin with the higher divinities of prophets and messengers who are venerated but barely reachable, and end with the world of saintly sheikhs who are the peasant's own ancestors, or at least the patron saint of the village. And while the higher order of prophets are revered for their intercessionist powers, it is with lower saints, residing in the village *maqam*, that they, the common folk, find solace from their tribulations and support against the injustices of this world. It is only in the travelling *darawish*/madmen - a follower of *tariqa* - that we see living

saints, personally known to the peasant, and whose actions break the routine and ordinary drudgery of daily life. “Whenever a *darwish* gets into ecstasy - while praying, dancing, or beating his drum - it said that his spirit is absent with the *awlia* or even with God himself, and his bodily actions become mechanical”.⁶⁹

‘Mechanical action’ in this context is an eminently suitable metaphor. It is a usage that evokes in Canaan’s religious ethnology the conventional mode of the peasant’s existence, squeezed as it were between servitude to the agricultural cycle, and the relentless demands of social obligations. The escapism, or rather the spiritual flight of the *darwish*, his ‘drawness’ (*indjidhab* - literally, ‘attractiveness’) takes the shape of insanity to the external observer because he defies the mundane (the ‘mechanical’) while seeming to perform it. In this way he challenges the ordinary and the conventional, and discovers a new truth through his madness.

Canaan lived to see the dismantling of the peasant system with the dispersal of Palestinian peasants throughout the Arab world and the diaspora. Many of them replaced their dead patron saints with dead national martyrs, elevated to the level of national sainthood, Jamjoum (hanged in Akka), Abdul Qadir al Husseini (killed in Qastal), and Izz ed-Din al-Qassam (killed in Ya’bad). But throughout the mountain villages of central Palestine, the tombs of saints continue to exercise substantial allegiance from local worshipers, more female than male visitors, and more elderly people than young, as they vye as it were with newly-built mosques.

Nativist Ethnography and Proto-nationalism

Virtually all the ethnographic work of Canaan and his colleagues was written in an

implicitly functionalist vein. In particular, they saw the descriptive protocol of the customs and mores of popular culture as contributing to continuity, stability, and integration of a perennial society - until it was disrupted by the intrusion of external disruptive forces: the modernity of the central state (Ottoman), and the forces of British colonialism and the Zionist movement, and finally, the emergence of a Palestinian nationalist identity that undermined the sense of localism.

Like their central European and Nordic counterparts, they also saw the peasantry as the depository of the national soul, and perceived the city as the conduit of those disruptive intrusions that undermined that tradition. As in the central European folkloric tradition, a substantial body of Palestinian ethnography in the 1920s and 1930s was devoted to the recording of peasant material culture: the agricultural cycle and its implements, the architecture and spatial allocations of the peasant house, saints’ shrines and the organization of pilgrimages, and rural crafts and skills.

Canaan’s ethnographic work appeared in a particular intellectual milieu, which can be described as a proto-nationalist context. I use the term ‘proto-nationalist’ because Palestinian nationalism during the Mandate period was still in its formative stage, emerging as it was from the defeat of both Ottoman decentralization, as well as from greater Syrian identity formation. The colonial regime imposed on it two ideational parameters: that of geographic separation from its *shami* (Syrian) boundaries, and a nascent (colonial) state-formation which set it against the Zionist project in Palestine.

Moreover, Canaan and his colleagues were not writing for an Arab intellectual class, and certainly not for a nationalist base. Their nativist ideology was rarely articulated in Arabic. Writing primarily in English (and

German), they targeted a European audience, which included the Mandate political elite, and a wider circle of Western biblical scholars, archaeologists and historians. Like George Antonios in the 1930s, they were challenging a colonial policy that questioned the authenticity of Palestinian roots in the land, and which they saw as giving credence to a putative Jewish nationalism on the basis of a *Western* biblical tradition that coincided with British imperial strategies.

By contrast, most Palestinian nationalist writings of the period, such as those of Muhammad Izzat Darwazah, Awni Abdul Hadi, Musa al-Alami, Ajaj Nweihid, and many others were rather oblivious to the writings of Canaan's circle and their nativist ideology.⁷⁰ For these nationalist writers, Palestinian claims to the land were based on self-evident assumptions of historic patrimony and did not need any nativist justifications. In the post-war period, these claims were consolidated within a wider Arab nationalist secular framework, stressing the placement of Palestinian movement within a wider context of Nasserist and Baathist discourse. By contrast, the Palestinian folklorist revival of the 1970s and 80s retracted the claims to the land and stressed the specificity of Palestinian culture within nativist ideology that echoed the Phoenician, Pharoanic and Assyrian movements in neighbouring countries. Unlike Canaan's circle they shed all biblical parallelism and focussed their search for roots on pre-Israelite, pre-biblical putative origins - Canaanite, Jebusite, and Philistine.

In his lifetime, Canaan was well-known as a dermatologist and a doctor, but his scholarship remained largely obscure and unread. The resurrection of his ethnographic work took place during the early 1970s when the study of folklore became a watchword of cultural resistance to Israeli occupation and settlement activity. Without exception, these

studies of Canaan were hagiographic and uncritical. In the last two decades alone, at least five different sets of Arabic translations of his work have been published, with appropriate acclaim for his achievements.⁷¹ But the rest of his circle remain virtually unknown and unacknowledged, particularly the original work of Stephan and Haddad.

The strength of Canaan's nativist ethnography lies in its sensitivity to the details of local practices, to variations over time (despite its claims for perennial peasant traditions), and to the interpretation of these practices in their wider social context. Above all, both Canaan and Stephan - in the best anthropological tradition - combined their intimate observations of peasant and urban popular *practices* with a textual analysis of the oral narrative. This textured and contextual approach is evident in Canaan's study of saints and sanctuaries discussed above, and in Stephan's treatment of popular erotic songs and his study of peasant madness. By contrast, the current corpus of folkloric ethnography is primarily based on the codification of a recorded oral tradition that tends to reflect little variation in Palestine and is consciously aimed at preserving the 'purity' of that tradition. It has little or no sociological content. One reason for this difference has to do with the erosion of village autarky, to the extent that it existed at all at the turn of the last century.

The context in which this new revival took place is the radical transformation of Palestinian (and Arab) rural society typified by visible indicators: the relative decline of agriculture as a source of rural living, the massive movement of peasants to urban employment, the suburbanisation of rural habitat, and the creation of hybrid lifestyles impacted by mass media, emigration and formal education. The result has been the linkage of the nationalist project with the study of folklore and the creation of

a homologous and reified ethnographic corpus that engages little with the dramatic economic changes that have affected contemporary Palestinian society. This is clearly noticeable, for example, in Barghouti's extended lexicon of the peasant vernacular (published in 2001), which presumes that there is one set of vernacular usages with little or no regional variations, and almost no urban or foreign influences.⁷²

It is also a *reactive* nativism that sees itself as an instrument of the nationalist struggle with little concern for historical nuances. In choosing a title for the annual international musical festival in Jerusalem, Yabus explains its objectives in direct ideological language:

*Yabus is the primordial name of Jerusalem. It is derived from the Jebusites - a Canaanite tribe that built the first city that evolved into modern Jerusalem almost 5,000 years ago. We have selected the name in 1995 at the founding of the festival in a contentious political atmosphere which responds to the [Israeli-initiated] campaign of Jerusalem 3,000.*⁷³

The campaign was clearly a jab at Ehud Olmert's municipal campaign publicizing Israeli claims to the Hebraic origins of the city, and thus ignoring its antecedent pre-Israelite roots. But Yabus also ignored any claims for historical accuracy about the Jebusites, whose origins are dubious, and whose language and culture is most likely to have been non-Arab and even non-Semitic.⁷⁴

It is true that both Canaan's circle and the current Palestinian nativist ethnography aim at preserving a culture that was 'threatened with extinction'. But while Canaan's ethnography examined a living tradition, the more recent writings have created a 'pickled'

ethnography that aims at celebrating and glorifying a tradition that no longer exists - or exists only as part of a putative nationalist narrative that has little to do with artistic and literary production in the Arab world today. Thus, the fate of Tawfiq Canaan's lepers with whom we began this essay has come full circle. While the analytical ethnographic discourse he and his colleagues established was superseded by a narrower and more modernist nationalist narrative, events on the ground in the land also moved in the direction of enhancing a rabid exclusivist ideology. Leprosy as a disease has been eliminated in Palestine and most of the world, but leprosy as a metaphor still haunts the nativist ethnography of Canaan's successors, and the country which he and his colleagues tried so valiantly to preserve from its demons and saints - those irritable and forbearing.

Endnotes

¹ The author would like to thank Rema Hammami for her critical reading and valuable comments on this essay.

² It is not easy to find sources about this bizarre episode of the war, which is mainly transmitted through oral narratives. For substantiation, the reader is referred to *The Newsletter* (January 2001) of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church North America. It includes a brief history of the Leperhaus, and then the following reference to the War of 1948:

*After the First World War, Great Britain took over the government of Palestine. Therefore the British Mission Board of the Moravian Church was held responsible for the leprosarium. The nurses still were sent from Emmaus. During the Jewish - Arab War 1948, the part of Jerusalem southeast of the Old City became Israeli territory. The Arab patients and the staff from abroad had to leave the hospital. The lepers found a place in the very old Turkish leprosarium in Silwan, where care and treatment of sick people were insufficient. Some of the nurses remained in East Jerusalem and continued to take care of their patients in Silwan. ("Care for Former Leprosy Patients of Star Mountain" - in *MCPs Newsletter*)*

For the role of Tawfiq Canaan in the Leprosarium see

Khalid al Nashif, "Tawfiq Canaan: Taqweem Jadeed", in *Majallat al Dirasat al Filastiniyyah*, No. 50 (Spring 2002) 77-78.

³ Niels P. Lemche has suggested that within the biblical narrative Canaan and the Canaanites must be read as an ideological construct of the *other* (i.e. as the non-Jews), rather than as a reference to an actual ethnic group. "The Canaanites [of Palestine] did not know that they were themselves Canaanites. Only when they had so to speak 'left' their original home...did they acknowledge that they had been Canaanites." *The Canaanites and their Land*, published by the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement No. 110 (The Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 152. The author suggests that in the Deuteronomistic history "the Canaanites are allowed only to act inside the framework of the historical reconstruction and cannot depart from the role allocated to them. [We are] entitled to say that the description of these Canaanites has little to nothing to do with the ancient pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine. On the contrary, the Canaanites may be considered a kind of ideological prototype of an ethnic phenomenon which was very much a reality in the period when the historical narratives were reduced to writing...". (164-165) He concludes by rejecting the concept of Canaanites' religion, since it seemed to have existed only as a normative negation of what the Israelite scribes thought Jewish religion should be, preferring the term 'West-Semitic religion' to include both Canaanite and Israelite religion together. "It is also natural to reject the idea of specific Canaanite cultural traits as being distinctly different from ancient Israelite ones." He ends by making the following intriguing statement: "[T]he 'disappearance' of the Canaanites of the Old Testament can be seen as an indication of a problem which has been endemic to the study of the ancient Oriental world, namely, the application of modern ethnic concepts in oriental studies." (171) The author does not suggest that the Canaanites did not exist as a people, but that they did not exist as a distinct culture from that of other socio-religious groups such as the Israelites and furthermore, that we cannot impose modern ethnic constructs on the biblical period.

⁴ "Nativism" in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁵ In *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

⁶ Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996) 14.

⁷ *Ibid.* 14-15.

⁸ *Ibid.* 17.

⁹ *Ibid.* 18-19. Quotation is from Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) 228-229.

¹⁰ Sean Baker, "American Nativism, 1820-1945" in are.as.wvu.edu/baker.htm; See also Michael Holt, "Nativism", Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, 2002 (dig.lib.niu.edu/ps-nativism).

¹¹ Mahmoud Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press: 2002).

¹² *JPOS*, Vol I, No. 1 (October 1920).

¹³ *JPOS*, Vol I, No 1 (October 1920) 113-115.

¹⁴ Itzhak Ben Zvi. "Historical Survey of the Jewish Settlement in Kefar Yasif", *JPOS*, Vol. V (1925) 204-217.

¹⁵ I use the term 'Canaan's circle' in what follows with some caution. There is no doubt that of the writer's mentioned here Canaan was the most prolific, and most widely known. But the group was not a cohesive one, and did not formally constitute itself as a school of thought. What made them a circle is a number of shared attributes: they produced the bulk of their work in the *JPOS* in the 1920s and 1930s, and they saw the *JPOS* as their main platform; they were amateur ethnographers (Stephan was the only member who had some training in archaeology); they clearly acknowledged Dr. Canaan as their intellectual superior from the frequent citations of his work they used in their work; and finally, perhaps most significantly, they all sought an anchoring in their observation of peasant lore in biblical and other primordial patrimonies.

¹⁶ I have discussed the 'discovery' of the peasantry as a depository of native culture on the part of urban intellectuals in "Soul of the Nation: Urban Intellectuals and the Peasants", in *Middle East Studies, Volume 5* (London, 1982).

¹⁷ See Tawfiq Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*, (Jerusalem: The Syrian Orphanage Press, 1927), v.

¹⁸ Canaan could sometimes be quite crude about his conception of the eternal peasant. In 1931, he wrote: "A study of the effect of the two antagonistic phenomena in nature, light and darkness, on the life of the present inhabitants of Palestine - *who are in many respects as primitive as their ancestors of two thousand years ago* - may explain certain allusions in the Bible" (*my emphasis*). "Light and Darkness in Palestine Folklore", *JPOS*, XVI (1931) 15. He later adds, "The oil lamp is as simple as crudely made as it was thousands of years ago. Until about fifty years ago it was still, as in Old Testament times, an indispensable utensil in every household." *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Tawfiq Canaan, "Introduction", to *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries* (Jerusalem: The Syrian Orphanage Press, 1927).

²⁰ The earliest, and most sustained advocates of the 'living Bible' are found in the pages of *the Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, published by the Palestine Exploration fund. The most typical examples of this trend can be seen in the writings of McAlister and (Mrs.) Finn on the mores of Palestinian peasants.

²¹ Both Gustav Dalman and Hilma Granqvist were well known to Canaan's circle and their works regularly reviewed in the *JPOS*. See for example Canaan's reviews of Dalman's *Arbeit und Sitte in Palastina*, in *JPOS 14* (1934), and of Granqvist's *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* in *JPOS 12* (1933) and *JPOS 17* (1937).

²² Tawfiq Canaan, *The Palestine Arab House: Its Architecture and Folklore* (Jerusalem: The Syrian Orphanage Press, 1933).

²³ The review of the work of Palestinian folklorists can be found in Nimr Sirhan Mawsu'ah, *The Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folklore, Bahithu al-fulkur al-Filastinti, Volume 1* (Al-Bayadir Press, Amman: 1989) 116-132. The review contains an extensive section on Canaan and his work. Of all the post-1948 folklorists Salim Arafat al-Mubayyid is the nearest to the Canaan circle. In his *Al Jughraphia Al Fulkloriyya lil Amthal al Sha'biyya al Filastiniyya* ("Folkloric Geography of Palestine") he focuses on the Byzantine Aramaic origins of the modern calendar of peasants for the mountain areas, and on the Egypto-Coptic roots of coastal traditions, especially practices related to the sea and seafaring. (Cairo: The Egyptian Book Commission, 1986) 261-284. Mubayyid is the first writer to use the term 'Little Continent' to refer to the immense regional variations in the Palestinian topography (see p. 15).

²⁴ See Muhammad Adib al-Amiry's *Arabs in Palestine* (Longman: 1968).

²⁵ See Zakariyya Muhammad, *Al-Ayyam*, April 28, 1998, and Salim Tamari, "Bourgeois nostalgia and the abandoned city", forthcoming.

²⁶ Zakariyya Muhammad, "Canaanite Ideology" in his *Deek al-Manara* (Muwatin, Ramallah:2003) 32-33.

²⁷ There is an anecdote attributed to Tawfiq Canaan of a letter that he sent to the Military Commander of the British Forces in Jerusalem on the eve of the British Mandate, in response to the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration into the terms of the Mandate, in which Canaan claimed that Palestine should not belong to the Arabs or Jews, but to himself and his family, being the

sole descendent of the ancient Canaanite nation.

²⁸ Cited in Y. Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation: A Study in Israeli Heresy and Fantasy* (London: Frank Cass, 1987) 122.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 62-63, and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, *She'ar Yashar* (Jerusalem: 1966) 422-423 (in Hebrew). The earlier work is David Ben Gurion and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, *Eretz Israel in the Past and in the Present* (1918 - in Yiddish) cited by Shavit, *ibid*.

³² Tawfiq Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine", *JPOS 1, No.1* (October 1920) 153. Later on he writes, "...we know that planets, in whose hands human fortune and misfortune lies, were divided by all Semitic races of antiquity, and still by the Palestinian, into good and bad planets" (154).

³³ Tawfiq Canaan, "Unwritten Laws Affecting the Arab Women of Palestine", *JPOS Vol. 11* (1931) 203.

³⁴ Tawfiq Canaan, "Arabic Magic Bowls", *JPOS Vol. 16* (1936) 79.

³⁵ Tawfiq Canaan, "Haunted Springs", 156.

³⁶ Stephan H. Stephan, "Modern Palestinian Parallels to the Song of Songs", *JPOS Vol. 2* (1922) 199-278.

³⁷ Stephan H. Stephan, "Lunacy in Palestinian Folklore", *JPOS Vol. 5* (1925).

³⁸ Stephan H. Stephan, "Modern Palestinian Parallels", 199.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 224. Some of the songs he collected came from Syria and Egypt and Iraq. Stephan remarks on the cultural environment that separated ancient biblical lore from modern Palestinian folklore: "Strictly speaking, no songs of the towns are really autochthonous, as seems to be the case with the Canticles. The relative lack of independence in the lyric literature of modern Palestine when compared with that of ancient Israel is naturally due to the fact that it now has the same language and culture as the surrounding lands, while ancient Palestine was cut off by differences of language from regular interchange of songs with its neighbours." Then he adds a statement that makes his argument even more relevant to the current debate about nativism. "[W]e must not exaggerate this independence, after the discovery of a catalogue of Assyrian erotic lyrics



showing a close similarity in metaphors and expression to the songs of the Canticles, especially since Meek has demonstrated that the Canticles contains many quotations from lyrics belonging to the cult of Tammuz”.

⁴¹ Ibid., 201-202. I have not included here the citations from the Old Testament and from the repertoire of popular songs included by the author.

⁴² Ibid., 218.

⁴³ Ibid., 199.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 203.

⁴⁵ Stephan H. Stephan, “Lunacy”, 2 (see also footnote 4).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 7. In much of this medical treatment, Stephan refers to earlier works by Canaan.

⁴⁹ Tawfiq Canaan, *Muhammadan Saints*, 311.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 310.

⁵¹ Ibid., 312.

⁵² See *ibid.*, footnote 5, 312.

⁵³ *Al Kulliyah*, Beirut, Part 1 3/5 (March 1912) 1-12; Part 2 3/6 (April 1912).

⁵⁴ Those amulets and cups are now housed permanently in the Canaan Collection at Birzeit University Library. They are catalogued in *Ya Kafi Ya Shafi: The Tawfiq Canaan Collection of Amulets* edited by Wisam Abdullah, (Birzeit 1999). See especially the section by Gisella Hilmke, “Amulets”, 27-35.

⁵⁵ *Studies in the Topography and Folklore of Petra*, *JPOS*, IX, 136-218; X: 178-180; later published as a book by Bayt al Maqdis Press, Jerusalem, 1930.

⁵⁶ Tawfiq Canaan, *Muhammadan Saints*, (The Syrian Orphanage Press: 1927), an Arabic edition was published by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, Ramallah 1999.

⁵⁷ Ibid., v.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., vi.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 219.

⁶¹ Ibid., 280.

⁶² Ibid. He also discusses male and female saints with Biblical origins, p. 237ff.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 246.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 247.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 254.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 267.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 310.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 312.

⁷⁰ Only Omar Saleh Barghouti bridged the two currents in his writings. He was both an active contributor to his writings. He was both an active contributor to *JPOS*, a friend of Tawfiq Canaan, and a fierce opponent of the Husseinis within the nationalist movement. See his *Marahel*, Beirut, 2002 (published posthumously).

⁷¹ Canaan’s essays appeared in *Heritage and Society* (published by the Palestine Folklore Society, 1974-present), in a number of translations by Musa Allush (Ramallah), in translations by Nimr Sarhan, Jordan. Several entries about him and his work appear in the *Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folklore*. Birzeit University published two monographs about Canaan’s work (in *Birzeit Research Review*, 1983, and a book about his amulets, 2001). *Muhammadan Saints and Sanctuaries* was translated by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture and published in Ramallah (1999) with a long introduction about Canaan by Hamdan Taha. Unfortunately, none of his German work on popular medicine was translated to Arabic (or English), and this remains one of the major gaps in Canaan’s accessibility to his readers.

⁷² Abdul Latif al-Barghouti, *al-Qamus il Arabi al-Shaabi il Filistini* (al-Bireh: In'ash al-Ura, 2001).

⁷³ “Why was the name Yabus chosen?”, brochure published by the Yabus International Music Festival, Jerusalem (undated).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

