

## Transforming the Holy City

*From Communal Clashes to Urban Violence,  
the Nebi Musa Riots in 1920*

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Led by General Allenby, British troops entered Jerusalem in December 1917, ending Ottoman rule and opening a new and crucial era in the history of Jerusalem and Palestine. The history of Jerusalem has traditionally been depicted as the quintessential history of conflict and strife, of ethnic and communal tensions and of incompatible national narratives and visions. The transition from Ottoman to British rule marked a dramatic and radical change in the history of the city, often described as the beginning of a period of great transformation. Looking at the riots that took place in the city in April 1920, this chapter will explore the emergence of structured urban violence in Jerusalem and the ways it superseded communal violence. The context is provided by the political framework set by the British with the Balfour Declaration, the large-scale arrival of Zionists in Palestine and the reshaping of the urban fabric of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will first discuss some general definitions of communal and structured violence. These two types of violence are not necessarily distinct categories, but define different ways of understanding violence and its use. I will advance the idea that violence during the Nebi Musa riots became in some way elaborated and was no longer spontaneous. Arab political leaders used the Nebi Musa celebrations as an ideal time to test the degree of Arab resentment and to test violence as a political tool. Without suggesting a radical breakaway from the communal nature of early episodes of violence that occurred in Jerusalem, the rioting was no longer the spontaneous reaction of a population fearful of losing their land. This transformation is apparent when comparing the Nebi Musa riots with earlier violent events such as the intra-communal incidents

between Christians in 1901 and the 1911 affair over the archaeological excavations close to the Haram al-Sharif.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, this chapter will provide a general background on the British Military Administration and the politicization of emerging nationalist movements in Palestine. It will argue that the transition from communal violence to structured violence was the result of the combination of a variety of factors: the arrival of the British, the establishment of the Zionist Commission and the spread of Palestinian nationalism. A separate section will show how the changes in the urban landscape, implemented by the British governor Ronald Storrs, played a major role in renegotiating the urban space of Jerusalem and in the radicalization of local politics through policies of confessionalization and segregation that eventually created the framework for the development of structured urban violence.

An account of the Nebi Musa riots, discussed in the last part of this chapter, will illustrate the shift from communal to structured violence with a focus on the importance of the new political conditions engendered by British rule.

### Definitions

In late Ottoman Jerusalem, violence was common, but not in an organized form, and its expression was milder than in other areas of the Ottoman Empire. As we delve into a brief definition of key terms such as violence, communalism and urban violence, it is arguable that violence is generally associated with the destruction of life, the material world and meaning.<sup>3</sup> One point should be clarified in relation to the concept of violence: particularly to the Western mind, and without being too simplistic, 'violence' strongly connotes behaviour that in some sense is illegitimate or unacceptable.<sup>4</sup> However, I would argue that violence in Jerusalem was not an arbitrary expression of uncontrollable anger. It was rather used as a means of socio-political advancement; judgement on violent behaviour is therefore irrelevant in the development of this chapter.

As for 'communalism', defined as the competition between groups within the same political systems based on ethnic, linguistic, racial or religious identities, it is important to stress that although Jerusalem at the beginning of the twentieth century was a city divided along religious lines, it was not a confessionalized city. Urban space was not entirely divided in accordance with religion, and shared spaces were a common feature of late Ottoman Jerusalem, as a variety of sources suggest.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the years between 1856 and 1860 were characterized by a

complete rift between Muslims and Christians throughout much of Syria and Palestine (as a result of the promulgation of the 1856 Hatt-i Humayun, which promised full equality regardless of religion for the citizens of the Ottoman Empire), Jerusalem proved to be a significant exception until the arrival of the British in 1917.<sup>6</sup> No major disturbances, whether organized or spontaneous, occurred in Jerusalem in the second part of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of the 1911 Haram al-Sharif incident over the alleged Christian violation of the shrine following archaeological excavations, the most common outbreaks of violence occurred mainly among Christians themselves over the control of holy places.<sup>8</sup> A good example is an incident involving Greek Orthodox and Franciscans on 4 November 1901, when, following a quarrel between a number of monks, the two communities became fully involved. Two dozen people were killed and many others were injured.<sup>9</sup>

Violent episodes involving individual members of different communities were indeed frequent in Jerusalem, but it seems that a number of factors prevented the outbreak of major communal violence. Looking at the socio-political configuration of Jerusalem, it is possible to say that the presence of a high-ranking Ottoman governor answering directly to Istanbul, and of foreigners and foreign consuls – a modernization process initiated by the Ottomans that marked the shift of the Jerusalemites from subjects to citizens – as well as the political organization of urban politics around a few notable families, all worked towards the prevention of communal violence and in a sense towards the partial integration of local communities.<sup>10</sup> Overall, conflicts or potential clashes were partly mediated through the socio-political structure of the city and partly controlled by the Ottoman establishment and the threat of foreign intervention. To this extent, communal violence in Jerusalem was clearly far from being organized, but at the same time it was not exclusively the outcome of irrational behaviour; it was more the tipping point of strained relations between communities.

The last term that needs to be clarified is ‘structured violence’, defined as the performance of violence following a script and rituals within a recognized arena, and I would suggest it represents the bridge between communalism and fully organized violence.<sup>11</sup> Structured violence, as developed in Jerusalem, displayed political aims propagated by the rhetoric of political empowerment and led by self-appointed leaders whose purpose was to set the stage for a large, organized political struggle. As argued earlier, the historical shift that occurred after the arrival of the British in 1917 led to coordinated efforts by both Zionists and Arabs to destroy one or more parties involved in the dispute. Evidence suggests that the organization of group mobilization in violent events became

very visible in the spring of 1920. Without suggesting a full prearranged set of measures to adopt at a certain time in a certain place, the shift from communalism to structured violence occurred at the exact moment when inflicting damage on an enemy became in some way calculated, as we will see later through the discussion of the riots.

### **The British in Jerusalem**

In December 1917, the focal point of the transition from Ottoman to British rule of Jerusalem was the military occupation of the city by British troops. The conquest of Jerusalem and Palestine proved to be a difficult task; the British attempted to take Gaza twice and only when General Allenby was offered the command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force did things change. In April 1917, the Palestine campaign entered a new phase, which led eventually to the capture of Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> A heated debate broke out in London over the occupation of Jerusalem; three weeks before the actual occupation, the War Office eventually formalized the main policies to be adopted.<sup>13</sup> This note already makes it clear that the British had scanty knowledge of the mechanisms regulating the urban life of Jerusalem. Internal security was to be the primary task of the new occupying force; non-Muslims would not be permitted to pass the cordon established around the Mosque of Omar.<sup>14</sup>

On 7 December, despite the cold and heavy rain, everything on the British side was ready for the assault on Jerusalem, which was surrounded. On the following day, the Ottomans began to withdraw from the city; the Ottoman governor and the German and Austrian consuls fled during the night.<sup>15</sup> No fight took place inside the city, and by 9 December Jerusalem was free of Ottoman and German troops. The occupation of the city then became a powerful political tool to be exploited. General Allenby made his formal entry into Jerusalem on 11 December, following plans that had been carefully devised by Mark Sykes. Allenby entered the city through the Jaffa Gate on foot, followed by a procession of British military officials and two small Italian and French contingents. He then read the proclamation of martial law and promised religious freedom. Jerusalemites were generally happy, if not about the arrival of the British then indeed about the end of the war.<sup>16</sup> However, this reality would soon change as local residents realized that the new rulers were to 'muddy the clear waters' of intercommunal relations.<sup>17</sup>

With Allenby's entrance into the city, military rule was officially established. The first governor of Jerusalem, General Bill Borton, set up the administration following the principle of the status quo ante bellum,

which regulated the military administration of occupied territories.<sup>18</sup> The governorship of Borton lasted a few weeks, and Ronald Storrs, former oriental secretary in Cairo, was appointed in early 1918 as the new governor of Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Although specific plans were yet to be drawn up by the military administration and the Foreign Office in London, this appointment proved to be crucial in the social, political, religious, economic, urban and architectural development of the city. I will later argue that the British, mainly through Ronald Storrs, also contributed to the creation of the conditions that allowed violence to become a common political tool.

The first task of Storrs and the military administration was to cope with the general lack of food, medicine and fuel; in other words, they had to cater to the needs of the army and most importantly to those of the civilian population. Slowly, commerce, trade, bureaucracy, schools and legal courts were also re-established. The military was not supposed to deal with political issues, but in the end, despite decisions made in London, the military had to deal with local politics, as it was charged with enforcing the status quo. The Zionist Commission, representing the Zionist Organization and in charge of the application of the Balfour Declaration and the emergence of Christian–Muslim associations as part of the developing Palestinian national movement, reshuffled and redesigned the role of the military rule. I would argue that what was supposed to be temporary lasted for several years, as the future of Jerusalem and Palestine was yet to be decided.

In this context, the British relied in local matters on local notables de facto perpetuating the same ‘politics of notables’ implemented by the Ottomans. Early in 1918, Ronald Storrs appointed the most prominent member of the Husayni family, Musa Kazim, Mayor of Jerusalem. He was a political activist who, once in charge of the mayoral office, was initially tactful in his opposition to the British and Zionism; however, as we shall see later, he was dismissed after he played a major role in the Nebi Musa riots.<sup>20</sup> The leaders of local notable families were not only able to maintain their power once the British arrived, they increased it while becoming the leaders of the anti-Zionist movement that in this particular period took the form of the Christian–Muslim Associations.<sup>21</sup>

The arrival of the British, the establishment of the Zionist Commission, the spread of Palestinian nationalism and the politicization of the local elites were all signs that a paradigm shift was ready to take place, one that included violence as a political tool available to the parties involved. The British and the introduction of organized violence redefined urban space, too. Jerusalem was turned from a space for the development of citizenship into a sacred place.

## Planning Jerusalem

The renegotiation of the urban space of Jerusalem, which then led to the radicalization of local politics and the introduction of structured violence, occurred mainly through the British governor Ronald Storrs and the civic advisor Charles Ashbee.<sup>22</sup> Both employed urban planning in an effort to control newly acquired territory and to satisfy personal desires. Ronald Storrs trained in classical studies at Pembroke College, Cambridge, also studied languages and was quite fluent in Arabic, knowledge that he used to be appointed to the Egyptian Civil Service and then to become oriental secretary to the British Agency in Cairo.<sup>23</sup> Full of himself, and imbued with never-ending self-esteem, Storrs, while appointed civil governor of Jerusalem in 1920, claimed to rule Jerusalem district like his 'predecessor' Pontius Pilate.<sup>24</sup> He imagined himself as an all-powerful governor in charge of every aspect of urban development, life and governance. Storrs believed that his tastes and ideas about urban space would have a benevolent impact on Jerusalemites. He unequivocally intertwined imperial interests with his personal views in his style of government. Aesthetics, a very high civic and religious sense, and a feeling that the communities of the city should be involved, all led Storrs towards the creation of the Pro-Jerusalem Society in 1918. The society was composed of the mayor of Jerusalem, the consular corps, the heads of the Christian denominations and other leading members of the British, Arab and Jewish communities. According to its statute, the main purpose of the Pro-Jerusalem Society was the preservation and advancement of the interests of Jerusalem: the provision and maintenance of parks, gardens and open spaces and the establishment of libraries, museums, music centres and theatres.<sup>25</sup> With an emphasis on preserving religious antiquities, the society promoted the communitarian notion that Jerusalem was a city of three faiths, rather than a space for equal citizenship. The very logo of the society was a religious symbol representing the Cross, the Star of David and the Crescent Moon.

The members of the society gathered on a regular basis between 1918 and 1924; however, it is clear that Storrs and Ashbee played the leading role.<sup>26</sup> Some of the most dramatic reforms implemented by the British under the aegis of Storrs were the renaming of the streets, as studied by Yair Wallach, and the confessionalization of the quarters in the Old City.<sup>27</sup> Wallach has noted that two-thirds of the names for the new city commemorated prophets, saints, scholars and kings; a third of the names were biblical; and the rest included names of crusader kings, Christian emperors, Muslim sultans and one Arab medieval scholar. Only one woman was commemorated – the crusader Queen

Melissanda. The names chosen made the streets of 'new' Jerusalem look ancient. Jerusalemites were reminded on every corner that they were walking the biblical city of the prophets, Jesus and Saint Paul. Names were not linked to British history, because Storrs chose to link street names to the history of Jerusalem, perhaps in an attempt to achieve some sort of sectarian harmony. This historical pathos was a new feature in Jerusalem and contrasted with the late Ottoman geographical division of the city. Jerusalemites called streets by various names that emphasized local characteristics, buildings or local residents. Storrs was radically changing this tradition and, in a manner of speaking, was dressing Jerusalem in biblical clothes. Not surprisingly, Ronald Storrs projected his own British and Victorian ideals in order to preserve the 'celestial' character of the city. He prohibited commercial advertisement close to the Old City, and brothels were forbidden within the walls; the sale and consumption of alcohol was regulated.<sup>28</sup> Religion as a marker of national identity was artificially enhanced and became the principle the British used to divide the Old City and to issue identity cards and passports. Whereas the urban space under the Ottomans was divided according to a mixed class–religion character, under the British the city became largely divided according to religious identities. The segregation model that developed upon the arrival of the British reduced social interaction and contributed to creating the idea of an inevitable conflict between communities.

The street names chosen were clearly linked with the history of Jerusalem, but none of them really symbolized the unity of the city; on the contrary, they suggested a clear religious cleavage of the city and failed to promote a sense of unity based on common citizenship – something the Ottomans had, to an extent, been able to promote in the last decade of their rule. Late Ottoman urban planning was driven by discourses of modernity through public works such as transportation, electric lighting and civic buildings – like the clock tower that for two decades dominated the skyline of Jerusalem before Storrs had it demolished for being ugly and not in line with the ancient walls.<sup>29</sup>

The British, through the agency of Ronald Storrs, set in motion a social and spatial process that aimed at the division and homogenization of the Old City and the city outside the walls according to religion; it may be defined as confessionalization or segregation. The British, whether aware or not, contributed to the development of exclusive and 'asyncretic' religious identities, which made religion a key feature of Palestinian nationalism and favoured Zionism as an example of full secular nationalism. Salim Tamari has noted that this proved to be a retrogression from the Ottoman system.<sup>30</sup> Social interaction between commu-

nities was very common and not at all an empty cohabitation; it was based more on neighbourhood coexistence, as proved by the diaries and memoirs of local residents like Wasif Jawhariyya, Isman Turjman and Gad Frumkin and also of Western residents.<sup>31</sup> Jawhariyya noted in his memoirs, 'During the Ottoman rule we, the sons of Jerusalem of our different denominations, lived like a family, with no difference between a Muslim and a Christian.'<sup>32</sup> British policies, such as the aforementioned confessionalization of the Old City, which eventually ended with the division of the Old City into four communities – along with street naming, the demolition of the Ottoman clock tower, the regulation of buildings (colour and shape of the stones), the regulation of businesses inside/outside the Old City and the regulation of public transportation – catalysed the shift from communalism characterized by shared spaces to nationalism based on ethnic and religious identity characterized by the absence of shared space. However, it would not be fair to attribute to the British alone the structural changes that occurred in the city. Nationalism as an ideology, already fostered by the Ottomans, played a major role; the war and British support for Zionism through the Balfour Declaration also proved to be a strong impetus to nationalist mobilization. Then, quoting Tamari, 'all of a sudden, a Jew [including any local Jew] in Arab Palestinian eyes became the European, the intruder from a different ethnic community which was contesting ownership of the land' in Jerusalem and in Palestine.<sup>33</sup> The shift was indeed gradual and cumulative through the 1920s; however, I would argue that the Nebi Musa riots were the first major sign of a changing pattern that introduced violence as a political tool, and the first test of national struggle.

### The Riots

Surprisingly, the Nebi Musa riots have not attracted much academic attention. Historians have regarded these events as being of secondary importance, mostly overshadowed by clashes between Arabs and Zionists like the Wailing Wall riots of 1929, or the revolts from 1936 to 1939. I suspect this lack of attention is due to the very fact that the British defined them as 'riots', a definition that involved a political judgement. Often, authorities label as riots events that are considered detrimental to public order and driven by supposedly 'irrational' mobs.<sup>34</sup> While riots are generally associated with spontaneous eruptions of violence, this is not always the case. Often, riots are meticulously planned and collectively executed actions of contention, as was indeed the case in the Nebi Musa riots.<sup>35</sup> I believe many scholars in search of the origin of



the Arab–Israeli conflict have simply overlooked this event, labelling it as an example of communal violence. However, this was not the case at the end of the First World War. I would argue that at this stage the dispute was far from being a ‘simple’ communal issue, as it was clearly over projects, ideas and perceived threats that crossed the boundaries of communalism. The escalation from communal hostility to structured and politicized violence was becoming visible but not at all inevitable. However, I would argue, the presence of a less than coherent and consistent third party – the British – contributed to the polarization of the developing conflict between emerging national-political movements. British policies also redesigned the borders of Jerusalemite society and space, with short-term plans such as forbidding Muslims to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and with long-term projects like the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. I would suggest that foreign intervention through occupation and the implementation of policies, or the threat thereof, is key to understanding the outbreak of the riots and more general conflicts in the city.

Nebi Musa was an Islamic religious festival that included processions from different towns around Jerusalem leading into the city; Muslims celebrated the prophet Moses during the same period as the Christian Orthodox Easter and the Jewish Passover. The central celebration was the long pilgrimage from the traditional burial site of Moses, near Jericho, along the road to Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> The celebrations had the power to create a bond between people from various parts of Palestine who gathered in a single place for the festival. Indeed, in 1920, the leaders of the Arab political parties and associations exploited the excitement and enthusiasm aroused by the festival to make sure their voices were heard by both the Zionists and the British. On the other hand, Zionists, particularly those led by the revisionist Vladimir Jabotinsky, who proposed a more aggressive approach towards local Arabs, worked to heat up the atmosphere, already far from idyllic.

To show how a degree of structured violence was introduced and how the paradigm shift mentioned earlier took place, let us focus on the events that occurred at the beginning of April 1920. On Friday, 2 April, the first ceremony of the Nebi Musa festival passed without incident, and it seems that the small police force dealing with the procession was successful. Sunday, 4 April, was the day of the main pilgrimage from the shrine of the prophet Moses near Jericho to Jerusalem. Ordinarily, the route followed by pilgrims upon their arrival in Jerusalem included a walk along Jaffa Road. They then entered the Old City through Damascus Gate and from there reached the Haram al-Sharif. On this day, the procession stopped outside the Old City on Jaffa Road, just opposite the

Jaffa Gate. Notables and religious leaders, including a very heated group coming from Hebron carrying the Hebron banner, then started to deliver inflammatory political speeches, contrary to the usual protocol.<sup>37</sup> The choice of Jaffa Gate, I would argue, was not accidental. The gate represented one of the most important access points in the city, was not affiliated with any religious groups and was a symbol of modernity, as it was the seat of the Ottoman clock tower built in 1907 and later demolished by the British. Aref al-Aref, the editor of the popular nationalist newspaper *al-Suriyya al-Janubiyya* (The Southern Syria), published since 1919, declared, 'If we don't use force against the Jews, we will never be rid of them.' In response, the crowd chanted *Nashrab dam al-yahud* (We will drink the blood of the Jews). Khalil Baydas, also known as *Ra'id al-qissa al-filastiniyya* (the pioneer of Palestinian history), concluded his speech by saying, 'My voice is weakening with emotion, but my national heart will never weaken.' From a balcony, Musa Kazim al-Husayni, the mayor of Jerusalem, also spoke. After his speech, the crowd roared, 'Palestine is our land, the Jews are our dogs!' Pictures of Faysal were also displayed, and he was acclaimed as King of Syria and Palestine. A young al-Hajj Amin cried aloud: 'O Arabs! This is your King!'<sup>38</sup> This rhetoric polarized the situation, opening more avenues for open violent conflict and, as Charles Tilly stated, 'widening the political and social space between claimants.'<sup>39</sup>

While the first half of the procession was passing through the Jaffa Gate, the riot began between Christaki's pharmacy and the Credit Lyonnais. Available sources do not clarify the exact trigger, and it is arguable that more than one event functioned as a catalyst.<sup>40</sup> In the vicinity of the Arab rally, some Zionists were listening to the speeches. It is likely some belonged to the self-defence force organized by Vladimir Jabotinsky, by this time already enlisting six hundred troops performing military drills on a daily basis.<sup>41</sup> Already in early March, Jabotinsky was working to inflame the atmosphere, and he began to publicly predict a pogrom. Some evidence suggests that these Jewish spectators were quite provocative. Allegedly, a Jew pushed an Arab carrying a nationalist flag, and he tried to spit on the banner and on the Arab crowd.<sup>42</sup> According to testimony gathered by the French consul, some young Jews standing near Jaffa Gate attacked some Arabs after the speech delivered by Muhammed Darwish of the Arab Club (one of the Christian-Muslim associations).<sup>43</sup> All of these reports suggest only Jewish provocation; however, it is possible, though unreported, that Arab activities also triggered the riots.

Shops inside the Old City were looted after they had been the targets of a volley of stones, and spectators close to the New Grand Hotel were beaten with stones. The crowd then moved down towards the centre

of the Old City, where some Jewish shops were looted and several Jews were assaulted. Some of the Jews involved carried weapons, as in the case of two who fired from a house overlooking the procession route. Both were shot by the British-Indian police deployed by Ronald Storrs. The incident started at 10.00 A.M. and was practically over by midday. The night was quiet, and the pilgrims from Hebron, who were confined for the night in the police barracks, were taken to the Haram al-Sharif and from there escorted to St Stephen's Gate on their way to Nebi Musa. Disorder, however, broke out again early in the morning and lasted until 3.00 P.M., when martial law was declared following some cases of violent assault and looting. The following day, looting and violence continued, albeit on a smaller scale, although two cases of rape against Jewish girls were reported close to the Arab market near New Street; the police shot into an Arab mob to reach the house where the rape allegedly occurred. Although martial law was declared, looting was still carried out; in fact, it seems the police were not able to cope with the intricacy of the streets of the Old City – a labyrinth. By Friday, 9 April, the situation had slowly been brought under control, and only occasional incidents were still being reported. The reported casualties amounted to 251, of whom nine Jews and twenty-two Arabs were critically wounded. Five Jews and four Muslims had been killed; 211 Jews were reported wounded, as opposed to twenty-one Muslims and three Christians. Seven British soldiers were also injured; however, it appears that the police were never the target of the attackers, whether Arabs or Jews.<sup>44</sup>

Storrs seems to have ignored early warnings of impending troubles issued in the reports available in late April and in the Commission of Inquiry established by high commissioner of Egypt and commander-in-chief, Allenby. Zionists accused the local police force of being inadequate and mainly Arab in character. On Friday 2 April, the day before the outbreak, the ceremony had passed without incident; this led Storrs to think or at least to claim that the small, local police force could cope with the main procession. After the first day of riots, Storrs decided to withdraw the main bulk of the troops from the Old City, in order to enable business to proceed as usual. Storrs believed that showing normality restored could prevent the outbreak of further violence.<sup>45</sup> In brief, the military apparatus allowed the demonstrations to take place, and it adopted a 'wait and see' policy. Only when incidents became evident and events unstoppable did the military intervene to stop the violence.<sup>46</sup>

The riots had a visible impact on Jerusalem. The stage was now set for an open tripartite political battle among British, Arabs and Zionists; yet, this does not mean that escalation in the degree of hostility between these actors was inevitable. The British saw the riots as an expression of

political and racial tensions, and did not consider these events an organized attempt to introduce violence as a political language in Jerusalem and Palestine. However, in my view, communal clashes were now superseded by structured violence, or at least by the threat of it. As performers of violence, both sides, Arabs and Zionists, realized that in this new context tactical pre-emption was vital, yet not to be deployed immediately because of the presence of the British, and in the case of the Zionists because of their demographic disadvantage. The riots were a bitter clash. They were politically motivated, but were not yet evidence of an open conflict. In other words, in April 1920, local values and alliances were renegotiated but not radicalized.<sup>47</sup> The confessionalization of space implemented by British policies played an important part in fostering the emergence of organized violence. From a space for the development of citizenship, Jerusalem had been transformed into a sacred space.

### Conclusion

This chapter has shown how and why structured violence emerged in Jerusalem during the transitional era from Ottoman to British rule. The Nebi Musa riots that broke out in April 1920 epitomized a major change in urban and national politics, and were instrumental to the introduction of organized violence as a means of reaching political goals. Relationships between Zionists and Arabs were not inherently violent; in fact, violence was still an option rather than the normality. With the creation of political organizations on both sides – the Zionists with the Zionist Commission, later to become the Jewish Agency, and the formation of Muslim–Christian associations and later Arab societies – and the absence of political institutions, violence became a tool for political communication. This chapter has tried to answer an important question about the nature of this violence. Did the Nebi Musa riots introduce violence as a means to an end, or rather as an end in itself? The latter would certainly be a frightening conclusion. As shown, the introduction of violence in a more organized and sophisticated way was the outcome of a variety of factors: the British creation of a fertile framework; and a choice, certainly not well pondered in the long term, by the Zionist and Arab organizations.

This chapter has also highlighted how the urban policies implemented by the British contributed to a shift in the local urban alliances and in the relationship between communal identities and space. In the late Ottoman era, relations between communities were marked by a degree of coexistence that included shared religious and civic spaces. The Nebi

Musa riots marked the end of this state of affairs, opening a new chapter in the history of Jerusalem and of Palestine. For those who depict the Palestinian–Israeli conflict as something that goes back to time immemorial and regard violence as something naturally implanted in both communities, the study of the Nebi Musa riots shows the exact opposite. Collective organized violence was relatively unknown and little experimented with in Jerusalem; relationships between communities, though not always idyllic, were not continuously strained, and it is only with the introduction of political discourses over land control that relations between communities, gradually in time and radically in nature, changed. These riots were a first step in this direction.

### Notes

1. I have already discussed these riots elsewhere, as I was originally interested in looking at this particular event in relation to the British administration, and have argued that the Nebi Musa Riots determined a major shift in the character of British rule, not only in Jerusalem but more broadly in Palestine. R. Mazza. 2009. *Jerusalem from the Ottomans to the British*, London: I.B. Tauris, 165–78; see also A. Jacobson. 2011. *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
2. L. Fishman. 2005. 'The 1911 Haram-al-Sharif Incident: Palestinian Notables versus the Ottoman Administration,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34(3), 6–22; D. Fabrizio. 2006. *Fascino d'Oriente*, Genoa: Marietti.
3. F. Coronil and J. Skurski. 2006. 'Introduction: States of Violence and the Violence of States,' in F. Coronil and J. Skurski (eds), *States of Violence*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 5.
4. D. Riches, 1986. 'The Phenomenon of Violence,' in D. Riches (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1.
5. On communalism, see M.J. Wyszomirski. 1975. 'Communal Violence: The Armenians and the Copts as Case Studies,' *World Politics* 27(3), 430–55.
6. On equality, see R. Davison. 1954. 'Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian–Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century,' *The American Historical Review* 59(4), 844–64.
7. D. Kushner. 1984. 'Intercommunal Strife in Palestine during the Late Ottoman Period,' *Asian and African Studies* 18, 201.
8. For details on the Haram al-Sharif incident, see Fishman, 'The 1911 Haram-al-Sharif Incident.'
9. For details on the incidents that occurred on 4 November 1901, see Fabrizio, *Fascino d'Oriente*, 158–98.
10. Kushner, 'Intercommunal Strife in Palestine,' 201–3.
11. C. Tilly. 2003. *The Politics of Collective Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 14.

12. A.P. Wavell. 1946. *Allenby: Soldier and Statesman*, London: George G. Harrap, 14.
13. The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO) FO 371/3061, War Office to Headquarters Cairo, London, 21 Nov. 1917.
14. TNA: PRO FO 371/3061 War Office to Headquarters Cairo, London, 21 Nov. 1917. 'Prime Minister wishes to make first announcement of occupation of Jerusalem in House of Commons in following terms. (1) Manner in which you were received by the population, (2) That you entered Holy City on foot ... (5) That Mosque of Omar and area around it has been placed under exclusive Moslem control.'
15. C. Falls (ed.). 1930. *Military Operations Egypt & Palestine*, London: HMSO, 234–35; R. Mazza (ed.). 2011. *Jerusalem in World War One*, London: I.B. Tauris, 183–85.
16. On the British conquest of Jerusalem, see Mazza, *Jerusalem from the Ottomans to the British*, 111–46; Jacobson. *From Empire to Empire*, 117–47.
17. S. Tamari (ed.). 2000. 'My Last Days as an Ottoman Subject', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 9, 34.
18. N. Bentwich. 1923. *England in Palestine*, London: Kegan Paul, 20; B. Wasserstein. 1991. *The British in Palestine*, Oxford: Blackwell, 20; TNA: PRO FO 371/3384 Allenby to War Office, 23 Oct. 1918, 'Turkish system of government will be continued and the existing machinery utilised.'
19. For details on Storrs, see Mazza, *Jerusalem from the Ottomans to the British*, 158–63.
20. See Y. Porath. 1974. *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918–1929*, London: Frank Cass.
21. Christian–Muslim associations began to be formed in several locations in Palestine early in 1918 with the purpose of fighting Zionism, but also to counter the British argument that Arabs in Palestine were divided along religious lines. See Mazza, *Jerusalem from the Ottomans to the British*, 68–73; Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 148–59; L. Robson. 2011. *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 16–43.
22. On Ashbee, see C.R. Ashbee 1923. *A Palestine Notebook 1919–1923*, London: William Heinemann.
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