Tribalism and Religious Elites in Palestine*1)

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1. Introduction

It is widely thought that Arab tribalism is an offshoot of Islam, and social tribal organization in Arabia has developed according to Islamic teachings. So many people understand Islam through Arab behavior on different levels, and some try to understand the Arabs through studying Islam. To some extent this might be true or right, but one should be cautious in making quick generalizations or making unverified conclusions. General impressions or mass media reports or stereotyping aren’t enough or satisfactory in understanding others, and they might be misleading.

I believe that this matter should be scientifically examined. This research will do just that. A look on the Palestinian society will be coupled with a thorough study of Islamic tenets relevant to the issues. This is of extreme importance in the scientific sense and in practical policies. To be honest, one should detach him/herself from the issue and adopt the scientific objective approach. Thus, it becomes possible to make enlightened decisions concerning different issues. If one, for instance, wants to offer some assistance to the Palestinians in certain cultural areas, he/she will not be misled on how to offer the assistance by stereotyped notions.

Within the context, religious elites and tribalism will be discussed. Are religious elites strictly religious, or are they the outcome of social strata? Or are they used by the influential social class, and thus by the political regime? Is the religious elite the outcome of tribal influence, or is it the instrument of tribal sheikhs?

Concept definition

Tribalism: The concept of tribalism was discussed in the first part of this series of research which is entitled "political elites and tribalism in Palestine. It is advised to refer to that research for details concerning concept definition and the characteristics of tribalism. However, for shortcut information, the first paragraph is phrased: "To make it clear, I should say that tribalism is mostly
the word used to describe a social structure based on blood delineation. This is organic tribalism.1) This concept is used in Arabia to point at very big extended families who share the same ancestry or blood delineation. Some tribes are huge in numbers and might be of 200,000 people, while some others are smaller in numbers. Members of the tribe might not know each other, but mostly they gather and ally with each other whenever they see necessary and compatible with tribal values, customs and habits."

Sheikh: this word is used in Arabic to mean several things. It was pointed in a previous research paper that a sheikh is the head of a tribe; but in this paper it is used to mean a religious figure who leads people in religious activity.

Religious elite: What is meant by religious elites is those religious people or groups who have an influence in the shaping of religious ideas and conduct. These include those people appointed by the regime as leaders of religious institutions such as the supreme Islamic religious council and the judge of judges (Quadi al Quda). And people who have popular influence whether they are members of political organizations or politically independent individuals.

It should be clear here that there are different classifications of religious elites: the patrons of the regime which is tribal in spirit; the ideological who believe in change according to the tenets of Islam; the apathetic who are involved only in rituals.

Methodology

This research will adopt the content analysis approach, and the descriptive analytical one. A study of the Koran and the relevant Islamic teachings is imperative. The verses of the Koran will be analyzed so as to see to what extent they are compatible or contradictory to tribal spirit and behavior. Then religious elites will be given special attention in their formation, ideas and conduct.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis that will be examined is that Islamic teachings are contradictory to tribal conduct, but the regime which is built on tribal spirit utilizes religious elites in its effort to gain legitimacy. Religious elites aren’t necessarily the outcome of tribal mentality, but influential tribes don’t detach themselves from religion and feel that they are always in need of legitimizing their actions and policies through religious elites. Religious elites, in turn, try to find Islamic justification for traditional behavior.

Literature Review

There are many books and articles that study tribalism, and many others that talk about religious elites and their role in Palestinian society. It is not expected to find research papers or books that handle our topic directly, but there is enough material that will facilitate the research.

There are books published in Palestine and outside Palestine that are related to the subject in Arabic and English. And certainly there are so many articles published in newspapers and magazines. Underneath is a very brief summary of three books:

Burahan Ghalyoon wrote a book entitled Sectarianism: From the State to Tribalism in which he discussed sectarianism as the main source of political and ideological struggle in the Arab countries. He doesn’t believe that the Arabs have developed a modern state yet, and is still ruled by tribes or tribal mentality. These tribal and sectarian problems are the main concern of intellectuals and political analysts.

Ghassan At–Tal handles the matter in a different Approach in his book: The Problems of the Tribal Society. He explains tribalism and tribal mentality, and points out the most important tribal values and traditions, and how different tribes shape their internal and external relations. He says that there clear codes of ethics and social behavior that touch in all aspects of life. At–Tal is a Jordanian who has excellent knowledge of tribalism.
Tribal Chauvinism and the Suffering Imam is a book written by Ameer Yakan. The Author outlines the History of Mecca and Ka’ba, and analyses parts of Prophet Mohammad’s life. He talks about the relations of Mohammad’s family with other families, and discusses the differences among the Moslems after the Prophet’s death. He touches on the tribal notions that characterize the behavior of many Moslems.

Elements of the research

The research will consist of the following topics:

1- an introduction that describes the research and goes back to appearance of Islam as a religion. This is important in drawing the historical perspective that hosted the teachings of Islam. It is fruitful in giving a description of tribalism and social structure in the Arab society at the time of Prophet Mohammad.

2- This section will analyze Islamic teachings concerning social structure and organization. Basic Islamic principle in this regard will be discussed, and practical Islamic procedures will be brought to the fore. Examples of social behavior at the time of Prophet Mohammad and the Islamic caliphs who followed will be brought out. Also examples from Islamic history particularly at the time of the Omayyads and the Abbassids will be put into perspective.

3- This section will discuss how religious elites are formed, and how they work. There will be a classification of different elites.

4- This part concentrates on the need of the political regime for religious ratification and on its approaches to attract supporters from the elite. This will be tied to tribalism since the regime itself is tribal in spirit.

5- Drawing conclusions will be the subject-matter of this section. By comparing, integrating and differentiating, conclusions about the correlation between religious elites and tribalism will be made.
II. An historical Preview

Islam appeared in Hijaz (the northwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula) which was known for its tribal social structure. Mecca, the capital of Hijaz at that time was ruled by a tribe called Quoraysh from which prophet Mohammad is a descendant. Quoraysh consisted of different clans atop which was a group of influential or ruling elders. A quasi-council of elders used to run the daily life of the people of Mecca. In general, this type of social structure was typical in all of Arabia.

Mecca was a center of influence because it embraced Ka’ba, the most holy shrine for the atheist Arabs before Islam, and the most holy for Moslems. This shrine was looked at as the most sacred place for all Arabs at the time, and it was the place where they placed their symbolic sacred stone statues. Influential Arabs such as heads of tribes and poets used to make pilgrimage to Mecca, and the place used to witness an annual bizarre where merchants used to exhibit their commodities, and the poets recite their magnificent poems.

The appearance of Prophet Mohammad posed an astounding challenge to the traditional social structure of Mecca, and to the primitive religious thoughts. Although he belonged to the clan of Hashem which was prominent in Quoraysh, the leadership refused him and considered him an outcast. His close relatives were divided: some gave him protection without necessarily following him, and some opposed him to the extent of conspiring against him. Refusal to extend help to a member of the tribe or clan is considered a shame in the Arab tribal tradition, but in the case of Mohammad, the situation was different because he openly spoke against the prevalent social relations, norms and values.

2) Abul Kareem, Khalil, Quoraysh From the Tribe to the Central State, Cairo: Cina for Publication, ed. 2, 1997, p 57.
4) Ibid, p 46.
Prophet Mohammad found listeners among the poverty stricken people and the slaves. (The Arabs used to enslave some Africans). His followers suffered from persecution, humiliation and ruthlessness, and the Prophet himself faced so much harm, humiliation and threats on life. Under the continuous pressure, he and his followers decided to migrate from Mecca to Yathreb, the town which is named now Madina. The people of Yathreb decided to adopt Islam, offered asylum to the Prophet and gave him the necessary help to convey his message to the different tribes of the Arabian peninsula.

Mohammad’s fight against tribalism, slavery and exploitation was uneasy, but finally, he emerged victorious. He won the war against Quoraysh, too; over Mecca, and widened the sphere of his religious calls. However, what is important here is that he could overcome the value of tribal society, and got people to look at each other from a human perspective. He had aids from the upper class, the lower class and from the liberated slaves, and establish the brotherhood value without discrimination. Quoraysh leadership didn’t find it easy, but the logic of history that determines the relationship between the loser and the winner prevailed.

III. Tribalism in Islamic teachings

Islamic teachings concerning tribalism are of two facets: one has to do with creation or the facts of birth, the other with public relations and achievement. The Koran says that Allah (God) created all things and creatures including man in pairs: "and of every thing we have created pairs. That ye may reflect. " and in the form of peoples and tribes: that is, relatives who form a net of natural ties based on birth delineation. But it rejects these relations as determinants of public relations weather economic, social, political, etc.

5) Rida, Mohammed, The Conflict Between the State and the Tribe in the Arab Gulf, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, p 100.
6) Az-Zariyat Chapter, verse: 49.
It is very evident in Islamic teachings that tribal chauvinism is abhorred and completely rejected. There are clear-cut verses in the Koran that prohibit chauvinism regardless of religion, race, color or sex. The book says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted."

Tribal structure in Islam has the function of knowing birth origins, and blood ties, but has nothing to do with justice or achievement. By no means, it justifies inherited status or prestige or privileges; and on the contrary, those Moslems who disregard the achievements of individuals are not praised by Prophet Mohammad. The Prophet says that Moslems should obey even if their leader is a black Abyssinian.7) The Prophet also said "abandon it (means chauvinist tribalism) because it stinks."8)

After Prophet Mohammad

The new Islamic spirit of social equality and the rise of achievement at the expense of inheritance characterized the new emerging society that seemed to be on the move. The prophet made the necessary arrangements that were compatible to the epistemological level of the time. The two caliphs (a caliph is the head of the Islamic Ummah or nation) who followed him, Abu Baker and Omar, strictly observed the teachings of Islam, and made every possible effort to keep tribal chauvinist values away. Both of them concentrated on conveying the message of Islam to the world around Arabia, and handed the key posts in the Islamic states according to qualifications.

The third caliph, Othman, wasn’t strict that much, and handed some key posts in the Islamic state to his close relatives. His failure to appreciate the

views of his critiques led to internal turmoil and bloodshed. He himself was assassinated. As a result, tribalism started gaining impetus.

The period that witnessed the marginalization of tribalism wasn’t long enough to abolish the social phenomenon. Sociology states that it is uneasy to create new social values and make considerable social changes in a period of 30 years. The leader might succeed in promoting social change, but his task to make the thorough permanent change requires few generations.9) The Arabs of that time were not completely detached from their traditional forms of behavior, and the deviation from the Islamic teachings was not far from social acceptance.

The Moslems got involved in internal fighting after the death of the third caliph. The relatives of Othman disobeyed the fourth caliph, Ali, and confronted him and his heirs in the battle field. Ali was the descendent of the Hashem clan, while his rival Mo‘awiya was the descendent of the Omayyad clan, and both of them were descendents of Quoraysh, the larger tribe. Consequently, the Moslems were divided in loyalty, and got involved in the bloody feud.10)

Mo‘awiya emerged victorious and established the Omayyad dynasty which ruled over the Moslems for more than a century. The Ommayads turned the office of the caliph to an inherited ownership, and turned their backs to the teachings of Islam. The new tribal caliphs started to behave like Roman and Persian emperors who conducted a luxurious royal life. They engaged themselves in palace building and in life enjoyment that was alien to the general public.11) Members of the clan started to assume so much power and influence, together with the material gains and privileges.

11) Al-Madrasi, mohamamd Taqi, Lessons From Islamic History, (no Publication facts).
The Abbassids (another clan of a Quoraysh origin) toppled the Ommayyads, and established their own kingdom on the footsteps of their predecessors. Although, they made so many achievements in the realm of scientific discoveries, they opted to foster tribal mentality and behavior.

Both the Omayyads and the Abbassids did so much harm to a basic Islamic principle that rejects tribal chauvinism in favor of achievement and creativity. They deviated so much from the basics of social justice and equality, and created a social structure similar to that that prevailed before Islam.

What is of extreme importance for this paper is that the caliphs started using the religious elite, or making an elite of their own so as to serve their own interests with a religious cover or justification.12) So many of the caliphs were behaving contrary to Islamic teachings, and they needed the clergy to give Islamic justifications or fatwa for their wrong-doings. (fatwa is a religious ruling that states the right and righteous behavior according to Islamic teachings).

So many Sheikhs (religious people) put themselves in the service of the caliph and his whims and desires. They were ready to rule and judge according to the wishes of the caliph, and to undertake the job of convincing the people of their ideas and fatwas. Some sheikhs refused to do so and announced their opposition to the wrong doing and to the fatwas that contradict the tenets of Islam and distort the religion. These people had to face troubles, imprisonment, torture and killing.

This utilization of Islamic sheikhs to serve secular ends and personal wishes and desires started to be a well-known phenomenon in the Islamic countries.13) The Ottoman Turks adopted the same approach, and could develop a class of


clergymen who devoted themselves to the service of the sultan (the head of the Turkish empire) rather than to the service of God.

**Present Politicization of Clergy**

The Arab regimes of today are on the footsteps of the caliphs and sultans of the old days in recruiting sheikhs and clergy to serve earthly unsacred purposes. Every Arab ruler now has his own close muftis (those who make the religious fatwa) who always take the side of the ruler and search for religious justification of the ruler’s decisions and behavior.14) These people are known in the Arab states as the clergy of the authority, and looked at by most people as hypocrites and the enemies of God.

Key religious positions in the Arab countries are allocated to those who side with the Arab ruler, and find the regime as the best possible under the present internal and external situation. The general religious Mufti (the one who has the right to issue authorized Fatwa) is loyal to the ruler, together with the "judge of judges" who is responsible for observing the establishment of justice all over.15) All staff in the major offices of religious nature is supposed to be people accepted by the regime and meet the requirements of the regime’s security service particularly the secret service.

Concerning religious activity, Arab regimes supervise all religious activities and try to make sure that all religious teachings are in conformity with the policies of the regime and the wishes of the big boss. In different Arab states, the speech of the Friday prayer is checked before its read in the mosque, and in some Arab countries, the speech is prepared by the intelligence and handed to the Imam (one who leads the prayer) to read it before the worshippers.16) Generally, the people know that the Imam is just an employee who makes

15) Executive Summary for religious freedom report, internet website.
stupid of himself.

Most Arab regimes such as the Hashemites of Jordan and the Saudis of Saudi Arabia are tribal, and conduct policies that serve the interests of the tribe. Since religion plays a big role in shaping the thinking and the behavior of the Arabs, the regimes try all the time to make their rule appear as it is heavenly ordained. That is why they insist that the religious elite should be loyal to the presidential or royal court.

The regimes appear to believe in divine authorization, something similar to the beliefs of European Kings of the Dark Ages. Together with their close religious elite, they try to draw a picture of sanctity to Arab presidents and kings. Some clergy try to convince the people that the king is a descendant of Prophet Mohammad in an attempt to bring acceptance and obedience.

This is a dangerous game that forced so many Moslems to think of how to topple these religious elites together with the regimes. This explains to some extent why forces of resistance are gaining grounds in the Arab countries.

Types of Religious Elites

Although the Arab regimes recruit religious people so as to legitimize themselves and to gain more public support, it could be said that categorizing religious elites is possible into the following:

a - The elite affiliated with the regimes. This elite is interested in having official influence and making personal gains through the regimes. The regimes provide so many privileges among of which material profits and social and religious status.

b - The elite that insists on political, social, economic and ideological change. This elite is highly committed to the teachings of Islam, and strongly believes that these teachings are valid for application and organizing states. This elite believes that the Arab regimes are un-Islamic, and some of them are anti Islam, and they should be

toppled through possible means. Besides, this elite believes that the regimes cooperate with Israel and the US against the interests of the Arabs and the Moslems. This elite isn't a favorite of the regimes, and suffers persecution.

- The elite that believes in resistance. This elite which is described by some others is described as terrorist. The members of this elite believe that Palestine will not be liberated through negotiations, and Israel doesn't understand but the language of force. They also believe that the US is an enemy that seeks the exploitation of Arab wealth. Members of this elite are out-laws wanted by the regimes because they are considered dangerous to stability.

- The elite that confines itself to religious rituals. This elite conducts a life of seclusion, and doesn't play any significant role in the public life of the Arabs.

In this research, the "d" category is neglected.

IV. Religious Elites of Palestine

Palestine is new as a political entity, and had been known through history as the south-western part of Syria (Greater Syria which was divided by Western colonialism into four entities: Smaller Syria of today, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine). Since this new entity fell under British occupation, religious elites have been playing important roles in different spheres of activity. Many of the Palestinian leaders who have appeared over the 90 years that have elapsed are known of their religious statues. Generally speaking, this type of leadership has been publicly accepted. Following is a summary of the ascendance of the religious elites.

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19) This is published in details in Kassem, the Graves of Arab Intellectuals, and partly on internet website, the groups of elites.
The Era of the British Mandate

The Palestinian society is generally conservative, and tends to be religious to the best of the general knowledge of the ordinary layman. People don’t philosophize what they think is religious behavior, and mostly see themselves religious as long as they do the rituals such as the prayers. They don’t necessarily reflect the denotations of rituals in their own daily life, and satisfy themselves with a behavior compatible with social customs and values. Many people don’t differentiate between Islam and socially inherited beliefs and forms of conduct, and believe that habitual actions are the true Islam.

For them, a sheikh is the one who recites the Koran, praises Prophet Mohammad and leads them in the daily prayers. Only in the last 25 years, people started to develop a new religious consciousness, and to question the conformity between social values and the teachings of Islam. Many students of religion don’t depend anymore on traditional religious figures or teachings, and prefer to challenge the traditional interpretations of the verses of the Koran.

Religious figures of Al–Husseini family could lead the Palestinians during the British Mandate. The head of the Islamic Higher Council was a student of religion in Al–Azhar university in Cairo, and lead the Palestinians for a long period of time.\(^\text{20}\) Al–Husseini family was influential, and was thought by the general public as a descendent of Quoraysh.

At the time, the Palestinian society was tribal, and the traditional leaders of the tribes were the actual decision makers. Of course, one should take into consideration the extremely low level of education at the time, and the miserable conditions in almost all spheres of life. Al–husseini family was no exception, and Hajj Amin Al–husseini, the Palestinian leader acted as Husseini but not as a Palestinian.\(^\text{21}\) He used to present himself as a Palestinian leader in public, but investigating his general approach shows his biases in favor of his family.


The degree of awareness concerning the evils of tribalism was very low, and most Palestinians showed enthusiasm for the leader who always had the religious appearance. He used to wear the traditional Islamic gown, and put the Islamic turbine on his head. He used to speak the language of religion and lead the prayers. In other words, he was the right leader who fitted into the historical epoch.

Al-Husseini family was challenged by another family from Jerusalem called An-Nashashibi. An-Nashashibi had the ambition of leading the Jerualemites and the Palestinians, but they didn’t have the qualifications needed for leadership. They were known in the Palestinian street as collaborators of the British, and lacked the religious figures who could speak the language of the people.22)

Hajj Amin Al-husseini was responsible for all the mosques of Palestine, a thing that enabled him to appoint all Imams, the leaders of the worshippers in each village and town. He did it the tribal way and appointed only those who support his leadership and family. Those who were thought by the leader to be opposing him lost their chances to become Imams. The leader maintained a strong grip on the religious institutions, and could insure the support of the religious elites in the main towns, and all people of religious orientation. This helped him in leading the country on personal and tribal basis.

As an attempt to gain political support, An-Nashashibi family decided to become a political party and mobilize all of its supporters in the country. Hajj Amin, as a response, decided to turn his family also into a political party.23) This religious leader, although he knows that Islam doesn’t appreciate tribalism, found no contradiction between his religious and tribal statues. This reflects the level of political thought at the time which I mentioned above.


At the Time of Hajj Amin, a revolutionary religious figure appeared. That figure was sheikh Iz-Zedin Al-Kassam who is still an inspiring leader for the Palestinians. This leader fled Syria to Palestine because he was sentenced in absenteeism by the French authorities in Syria. He was a Syrian revolutionary who led a group of fighters against the French and in defense of the independence of Syria. He thought that he would be able to fight the British in favor of the independence of Palestine. In his thinking, there was no difference between Syria and Palestine, and Syria one day would be re-united.

Al-Kassam could create a group of revolutionaries, trained them and got them ready for fights against the British. He got in touch with Hajj Amin trying to convince him of a joint front against the British but the Hajj refused. Hajj Amin said that he would be able to achieve the independence of Palestine through peaceful means, and there was no need for armed struggle against the British. Al-Kassam carried the gun against the British, but his movement didn’t last for a long time. He was killed by the British, and became the symbol of true sacrifice and heroism in Palestine. Now, Hamas named its fighting brigades after the name of this leader.

The difference between these two leaders reflect the sharp difference between traditional religious leadership that hates confrontation with the enemy and the revolutionary one that thinks that resistance is the only way to achieve independence. The one has gone unheeded by history, but the other has become a symbol of national pride. The one paid so much attention to tribal interests, but the other had no respect for tribalism.

It is of importance to mention that Al-Kassam wasn’t well-received by the traditional leadership of Palestine whether in the mainstream or in the opposition. He refused to serve tribal interests of both sides, and insisted on revolution which considered costly by both sides. It is also important to say that both the mainstream and the opposition didn’t make moves that might

irritate the British because they didn’t want to expose their interests to any harm.

Followers of Al-Kassam who were mostly described as religious partially led the Palestinian revolution of 1936. They sought the help of the traditional tribal leadership but received nothing. Here it should be mentioned that traditional leaders such as Hajj Amin were feudalists and wealthy, while Al-Kassam followers belonged strictly to the poverty stricken class.

The traditional religious leadership was defeated in 1948, the Jews took over most of Palestine, Israel was announced as a state, and most Palestinians were driven out of their country to become refugees awaiting international donations.

The Jordanian and Egyptian Eras

Upon the request of Palestinian notables (heads of influential tribes and families) in the early fifties, the Jordanian government annexed the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; while the Egyptian government decided to put Gaza strip under the Egyptian military law. Jordan issued Jordanian passports to the Palestinians and started treating them as Jordanian citizens; but Egypt decided that the Palestinian should keep their entity and pursue efforts for the salvage of Palestine.

The fifties and the sixties witnessed a fierce cold war against the communists all over the world in an attempt of confinement and strict isolation. Most Arab regimes who were made by British colonialism took part in the effort. The Jordanian government took harsh and ruthless measures against the communists, but the Egyptian new regimes which toppled the royal one by a military coup wasn’t that harsh. However, both regimes needed the


27) Abdul Jabbar, Faleh, Bonyat Al-Wayy Ad-Dini wa Ar-Raasmaliyya, Beirut: Center for Research and Studies in the Arab Countries, (no year of Publication), p 73.
help of the religious elites in their fight against communism. That is why they adopted policies of mobilizing the Palestinian clergy who were unhappy with Marxist theories.

Communism denied monotheism, and rejected religions because they are instruments of exploitation. That made religious elites furious, and relentless in opposing communism. No single Palestinian religious figure defended communism, and there was a consensus that communism is bad theory that spreads evil and damages the ethical fabric of the people. Mosques became centers of activity against communism, and religious occasions were exploited to intensify curses against the communists.28)

The religious elites, regardless of their backgrounds and aspirations cooperated with the political regimes. They considered themselves part of the international struggle against what they described the destructive ideas of Marx. Although some members of these elites were unhappy with the regimes, but the common enemy pushed them to carry the same guns.29) And although these members thought that the regimes were unreligious and un-Islamic, they accepted the conditions and restrictions imposed on mosques. Contrary to Islamic teachings which provide that the Imam (the leader of worshippers) should handle the ongoing matters that concern the public, the Imams satisfied themselves with reading the governmental prepared text of Friday weekly prayer.

Most Palestinian religious elites members were just instruments in the hands of the despotic Arab regimes, and prison was the fate of those who refused to be tools. During the fifties, some religious political parties who were dissatisfied with the regimes appeared in Palestine. First was the Moslem Brothers party which appeared first in Egypt; second was the Tahreer Islamic Party which appeared in Palestine. The Moslem bothers sought to peacefully

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establish what they still describe as the Islamic way of life, while the Tahreer party called for radical change at the expense of Arab regimes.

Thareer religious leaders refused to cooperate with the Jordanian regime, but the Moslem Brothers held good relations with the regime and were given the privilege of open activity in Jordan including the West Bank. Actually, the Moslem Brothers followed policies that were very helpful for the Jordanian regime, and very harmful to other political parties who were seeking political change such as the Ba’th and Pan-Arab parties. The Moslem Brothers sided with the King, and mobilized its supporters to face other parties’ street activities. The King felt relaxed seeing political parties engaged in acrimonies. This Moslem Brothers party had to face the suppressive measures of the King later as he felt strong enough.

What is of extreme importance here for this research is that Islamic elites were not strictly Islamic in their behavior and political positions. The Moslem Brothers believe that the Jordanian regime was made by the British, and sided with the colonial powers at different occasion, yet they offered help at times when it was possible to topple the regime. The main reason behind this help was the hot competition against the Ba’th party. Instead of seeking cooperation for the sake of accomplishing the desirable change, Islamic parties behaved on the footsteps of traditional tribes that always place interest rather than principle at top.

The Era of Israeli Occupation

In general, religious elites didn’t thrive during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The elites engaged themselves most of the time in ordinary daily rituals, and their influence on the daily life of the Palestinians receded drastically. The official religious institution which called Awqaf (religious trust) remained under the supervision of the Jordanian government, and worked just as a care-taker of mosques and holy shrines such as Al-Aqsa mosque. However, in the latest years, i.e., by mid eighties, the Islamic movement started to witness a noticeable rise. This rise could be
categorized as follows:

**Palestine of 1948**

An Islamic movement started to gain strong grounds in the land occupied in 1948, in what is called Israel. This movement concentrated on social work and the protection of Islamic sites against Israeli governmental intruders, and gave politics minor attention because of the Israeli pressures and measures. As the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza promoted an uprising in 1987, the Palestinian Islamic movement extended a hand by sending food, clothes and school instruments.30)

This movement is still active, but it is mostly engaged in humanitarian activity, and defending Islamic holy places. In 2007, this movement conducted a strong mass media struggle against Israeli attempts to approach the historical walls of Al-aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

**The West Bank and Gaza**

The Moslem Brothers appeared in Palestine early in the thirties and forties. During the reign of the Hashemite Kingdom, it was the only licensed [political party, and was free to educate people on its program, and to hold religious lessons in the mosques. The situation was very much different in Gaza Strip because Nasser’s regime undertook all possible measures to dismantle the party.

After the fall of the West Bank and Gaza under Israeli occupation, religious activity was so much tolerated as long as it did no harm to the Israeli security. The Israelis generally don’t care about parties that are involved in teachings that don’t bear any form of incitement. That is why, religious parties felt to be free under occupation more they were under Arab rule. The Moslem Brothers party found it easy to enhance its religious program, and if there were members fighting the Israelis it was on their own and the party carried no responsibility.

The rise of an organized Islamic movement was first announced in 1981 when students at Najah National University declared themselves members of that movement. Still the movement stayed away from confrontation with the Israeli occupation, and concentrated only on criticizing the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). The Israeli occupation found no harm in that, and allowed enough space for the expansion of the movement.

It was until 1987, the year of the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada, that Hamas was formed by the Moslem Brothers party. Hamas is the acronym of the Islamic resistance movement, and the true representative of Islamic resistance spirit of the whole Islamic Brothers on the international level. Simply, the Moslem Brothers found it uneasy to achieve the acceptance of the Palestinians without confronting the Israeli occupation. That is why the Israelis started to hit hard against Hamas.

As Hamas grew strong and started to be known as a resistance movement, its influence in the Palestinian street mounted to the extent that it won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006.

V. Tribal Mentality of the Palestinian Factions

As discussed in an earlier research on Palestinian political elites, Palestinian Factions such as Fateh, Hamas and others don’t behave actually as modern political parties or as true resistance movements. They weakly show similarities of modernity and resistance, but they mostly exhibit tribal characteristics. Their conduct is more or less tribal because they don’t adopt any kind of scientific approach, and each of them claims the ownership of absolute truth. Some of these factions are very similar, if not identical, in their programs, but don’t merge due to what the leaders believe of their social status. Merger means that there will be less leaders, and, consequently, less
ability to assert oneself.

The tribal mentality of the factions has been inflicting so much harm to the Palestinian society due to factional feuds and lack of serious cooperation. All factions praise national unity, but it is hard to see any of them taking actual steps toward such a unity. (please see the paper on political elites)

**Religious Elites and Tribalism**

Are religious elites different from other elites that belong to Palestinian factions or work with the Palestinian Authority? Are they adherents of Islamic teachings or prisoners of tradition and social values? Do they promote the common weal or the private good of their groups and parties? Are they ready to accept others from outside their circles, or do they practice discrimination?

To answer these questions, one needs to classify these elites and point out their trends of thought and conduct. In the West Bank and Gaza, these elites could be classified as follows:

1 - The religious elite affiliated with the Palestinian Authority. Members of this elite are authority employees, reign over the Waqf (trust) of the Moslems, and supervise the affairs of mosques shrines and the activities of all waqf employees. These members have the power of the authority, or the official administrative authority that regulates the ordinary clerical work concerning marriage, inheritance, divorce, orphans, etc.

However, these people aren’t far from politics, and they are generally used by the executive to justify political decisions. These people legitimate the Oslo accords with Israel on Islamic grounds, and say that the Palestinian leadership acted according to Islamic teachings when it decided to negotiate with Israel and sign the accords. These people belong to the court of the president of the authority, and have the privileges of being true supporters.

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It is noticeable that this elite hides away from general political discussion particularly when this discussion is related directly to Islamic teachings. As one of them told me, he hates to see people because he reads in their eyes the accusation that he is liar. He asked me not to mention his name and added that he feels that he is a hypocrite who is betraying God and his Prophet. I asked if others in the same sphere share him the same feeling, he responded positively. He explained that this Palestinian religious elite is no different from similar elites in the Arab countries.

The same as it is in the Arab countries, members of this elite are very much concerned about their personal interests, and if these interests come into contradiction with religion they choose their own interests. It is very hard to say that these people are truly religious, but it is easy to say that they are hide under religious appearances to promote personal aspirations. For them, religion is just a tool.

2 - the religious elites affiliated with Palestinian factions such as Islamic Jehad and Hamas. The members of these elites are leaders, and usually appear in the mass media talking about resisting Israel and the liberation of Palestine. They are part of the unofficial decision-making process, and the makers of political equilibrium with the head of the Palestinian authority. These people are generally targeted by the Israelis, and some of them such as Ahmed Yassen and Ranteesi were assassinated by the Israelis. This elite exhibits several characteristics that might seem contradictory. First, they are revolutionaries in the sense that they believe in fighting the occupation, and insist on liberating the land. They are ready to offer the necessary sacrifices, and to endure the burdens of being wanted by the Israelis. They cannot travel around because they are wanted by they Israelis, and they cannot visit the Arab countries even if they have the chance to leave the country because the Arab regimes don’t tolerate these revolutionaries who are described as terrorists.

33) This is widely known because it is a media concern.
Second, these elites are active socially and don’t detach themselves from ordinary people to the extent that their personal security allows. They are involved in social work and in providing assistance to ordinary people particularly those who belong to their own parties or factions. They are active in religious teachings, and they are critical of the Palestinian authority and Arab regimes. Most members of these elites are well to do financially and they are known of being committed to the common good of their factions.

Third, these people revolve around their own political parties, and believe that their parties are the true holders of Islamic truth. Each elite has its own interpretation of Islamic teachings and hardly appreciate the interpretations of others. Each tries to monopolize Islam, and tends to accuse others of being un-Islamic. This is particularly evident in the mutual accusations between Hamas and Islamic Jihad who are resistance groups. Sometimes, Hamas people are heard accusing Jihad as a Shi’ite organization, and Jihad accusing Hamas being an affiliate of Arab regimes.

Fourth, these elites hardly pay attention to ordinary people outside the faction or the party. If the house of a Hamas member is demolished by the Israelis, financial assistance will be extended by Hamas elite, but if the house of a non-factional or independent Palestinian is demolished no body cares. I personally have a wide experience in this regard. One day the Red Cross sent shoes to the Palestinian war prisoners, a shoe for each prisoner. The Palestinian factions took the whole quantity while independent people like myself were left without a shoe. One night, my car was set afire, no faction offered me any assistance. I read condemnations in the local media for the criminal act, but no member of the factional elites including the religious ones showed up in my house. (it is an Arab norm that people show solidarity through home visits)

Five, members of these elites show a great deal of tribal chauvinism. It was mentioned in the research entitled political elites and tribalism that it is very hard to trace large extended tribes in Palestine, but political parties have taken the place of the tribes and show tribal
behavior. Each elite suffers from superiority complex, and prefers to remain the boundaries of their own religious and factional circles.

Fateh was so much criticized for its favoritism, and employing Fateh people in the official institutions. After Hamas won the elections and formed a government, this favoritism was practiced. The overwhelming majority of the new or un-needed created jobs were provided to Hamas members. Rarely one can notice that there is somebody who isn’t Hamas got a job in any of the Palestinian official institutions. Academic and experience qualifications don’t mean a lot for this religious elite, and the most needed qualifications is to be a member in the faction, and to be a militant defendant against other Palestinian factions.

3 - The apathetic Religious Elite. Members of this elite show concern about strictly religious matters that have to do with the religious life of the people. They aren’t interested in politics or in social work or in any public activity. They look at themselves as the true worshippers of God and spend so much of their time in reading the Koran and meditating on universe and creation.

Members of this group have strong religious influence on people who think that politics is a dirty game that should be abandoned. There are Palestinians who are engaged in Divine thinking that has nothing to do with earthly concerns.

This elite is apathetic and doesn’t have an impact on events in the area, and doesn’t play a role in shaping public attitudes.

VI. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research paper comes to few ends that characterize the Palestinian religious elites. These ends are:

1 - Religious elites have been leading the Palestinian society, or have been part of the Palestinian leadership at all epochs of modern history.
2 - Religious elites don’t draw clear-cut lines between religion and tradition. Islamic teachings are mixed up with social values and norms, and mostly people think of their own traditions as holy Islamic tenets.

3 - Religious elites differ to a great extent in their understanding of religious teachings in a way compatible with social status, personal aspirations and political interest. As a researcher in Islamic theory, I conclude that scientific approaches toward understanding Islam are the last and the least to attract the attention of these elites.

4 - Islam doesn’t approve tribal militancy or chauvinism or discrimination, and appreciates only the identification of inherited blood delineation that tribalism provides. Tribalism, for Islam is helpful in building personal acquaintances. Religious elites of all types don’t stick to this evident Islamic provision, and try to turn their groups or parties into tribal gatherings.

5 - Tribalism gives so much attention and importance to inherited status, and pays little consideration for achievement.

6 - Religious elites practice favoritism which is in the final analysis destructive for the society and for its ambitions toward development.

7 - Religious elites aren’t all in the same boat. Three major elites could traced: regime loyalists, change advocates, and the apathetic.

Recommendation

For the Palestinian to proceed in development and to overcome their problems, religious elites should concentrate on modern organization and the building of modern political structures. Otherwise, most efforts of the Palestinians toward freedom and independence will continue to face massive difficulties. Traditional tribalism is the negation of modernity and state building.
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국문초록

사타르
안자나 국립대

이 연구는 팔레스타인 종교 엘리트와 부족적인 심성의 영향을 알아보기 위한 것이다. 팔레스타인에 뿌리있는 자신들의 종교적 성향을 가진 부족들이 있다고 보기 힘들지만, 부족적인 심성은 존재한다. 부족적인 심성은 사상과 공적인 행위에서 드러나며, 종교 엘리트도 예외는 아니다.

이 연구는 팔레스타인 부족주의와 종교 엘리트들의 특성을 다음과 같이 결론 내렸다. 종교 엘리트들은 팔레스타인 사회를 주도해오거나 근대 역사상 팔레스타인 지역에서 중요한 역할을 해왔다. 종교 엘리트들은 종교와 전통 사이의 명확한 분할선을 갖지 않았다. 이슬람의 가르침은 사회의 가치와 개념들과 혼합되어 있다. 대부분의 사람들은 그들 자신의 전통들을 성스러운 이슬람의 가르침으로 받아들이고 있다. 종교 엘리트들은 사회적인 지위, 개인의 영망, 정치적인 이해관계에 적합한 방법으로 종교적 가르침을 해석한다. 따라서 종교 엘리트들은 기독교와 이슬람에 대한 해석은 서로 서로 매우 다르다. 이슬람 이론에 대한 연구자로서 나는 다음과 같은 결론을 내린다. 이슬람을 과학적으로 이해하기 위해서는 종교 엘리트들을 주목할 필요가 있다.

이슬람은 부족의 호전성, 광신주의, 차별대우를 인정하지 않는다. 이슬람은 오직 부족주의가 제공하는 유전된 혈통의 가치만을 인정한다. 이슬람에서 부족주의는 개인적인 관계를 정립하는 것만을 듣는다. 모든 유형의 종교 엘리트들이 이러한 명확한 이슬람의 규정을 지키는 것은 아니며, 부족주의를 이용해서 자신들의 집단이나 파벌을 형성하고 강화시킨다. 부족주의는 상속된 지위에 대해서 주목하고 중요한 가치를 부여하며 성취한 업적에 대해서는 거의 주목하지 않는다.

팔레스타인인들이 발전을 지향하고 자신들의 문제들을 극복하기 위해서는, 종교 엘리트들이 근대적인 체제를 정비하고 근대적인 정치 구조를 수립하는데 전념해야 한다. 그렇지 않으면, 해방과 독립을 위한 팔레스타인인들의 대부분의 노력들은 심각한 어려움에 직면하게 될 것이다. 전통적인 부족주의는 근대성과 국가 건설에 장애물이다.