# Introduction

*Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri*

## Genesis of a Project

At the height of the Arab Revolt against the colonial British Mandate in Palestine, in 1937, Arab Orthodox students founded an association in Bethlehem, which within months grew and transformed into the successful "League of Arab Students". Its various activities (rhetoric, theatre, library, athletics, public events, journalism, arts and travel) were aimed at "fighting… urban and rural illiteracy, elevation of the cultural and ethical standards of the Arab student, establishing tight links between students in Palestine and in neighbouring Arab countries".[1]

The League of Arab Students published a number of articles in the local newspaper of the Christian Orthodox community, *Sawt al Shab* (*the voice of the people*; Bethlehem) before establishing its own magazine *Al Ghad* (*the Levant*). The magazine provides elements about the educational and social profile of the League's members and the new social environments they inhabited outside the old cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem. From the group's inception, its publications highlighted "culture" as a phenomenon to be actively described and discussed, as the achievement of "civilisation, progress, and reform", borrowing specific terms from the *Nahda* ('Arab Renaissance') movement that arose

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[1] *Al Ghad* Bethlehem 1, no. 2 (June 1938), 2.

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at the end of the nineteenth century. Until 1938 *Al Ghad*'s activities were also supported by some Jewish students, and by family members established abroad. The French consul in Jerusalem and the British authorities, however, suspected that the League was being directed by the Soviet Union.

Taking this newspaper as a point of departure, several questions arise on the powerful cultural practices which developed during the formative years of the Mandate. This book, and the collaborative project of which it is the tangible outcome, found its initial motivation in a series of questions, linked to the puzzle around the roles of cultural actors, agency, agendas, cooperation, domination and appropriation during the British Mandate, which emerged while working on language policy in Mandate Palestine.[2]

The first set of questions coincided with archival work on the YMCA and Vatican archives and the quest for their opinions on the Arab students' association encountered earlier in archives in Bethlehem. How did Arab Christians use cultural enterprises to define their place in the proto-national configuration in Palestine between 1920 and 1950? How did the European Arab Christian diaspora convey cultural concepts of modernity between Europe and Palestine? And what was the role of "culture" in European policies towards the Arab Christians of Palestine?

The second set of questions arose several months later during the first meeting, at Leiden University in September 2018, of the *Crossroads* research group.[3] The workshop was dealing with the redefinition of the concept of cultural diplomacy applied to Palestine during the British Mandate period,[4] envisaging it from the perspectives and methodologies of history, cultural studies and international relations. How did Arab Christian communities use European cultural agenda(s) in order to promote and safeguard their own national and communal affiliations and interests? What role did culture play in the policies of European agents (both governmental and non-governmental) regarding the Arabs of Palestine? What was the cultural and ideological framework that European representatives used when they promoted their cultural and linguistic practices in Palestine? And how did European representatives contribute to the initiation of or opposition to sectarianism in Palestine via cultural agendas?

To understand the contested role of culture during these formative years of the modern Middle East, the research group *CrossRoads* was interested in the cultural practices and ideas of both local communities and their

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[2]Karène Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine: Fear of Confusion or Powerful Tool?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies BJMES*, special issue coordinated by J. Tejel and B. White, "The Fragments Imagine the Nation" vol. 43, no. 2 (2016): 191–205.

[3]See https://crossroadsproject.net.

[4]"Workshop 'Cultural Diplomacy Revisited' Leiden University," https://crossroadsproject.net/project/cultural-diplomacy-revisited/.

**Fig. 1**  Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Untitled (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_NINO_F_Scholten_Jaffa_01_0068—Education Bookstore, Jaffa)

communal and religious leaders (foreign and local), as well as their interactions with European cultural actors (both from a regional and global perspectives). It is intended to shed light on modes of interaction and influences, first between Arab Christians and other social groups in Palestine and European actors, but also between the local, regional and transnational spheres, instead of studying a mere aggregation of communal and institutional histories. Considering the polycentric processes for both Christian communities and the various ways in which Arab Christians located themselves in these broader cultural processes, the importance of these questions, after several months of fieldwork, crystallised in a conference. This volume is the result of these fruitful conversations and the many exchanges before and after the conference (Fig. 1).

## The Power of a Cultural Paradigm for British Mandate Palestine and Christian Communities

The mandatory system was a pervasive form of colonialism[5] that lasted only thirty years, but was formative for the proto-national Zionist and Palestinian milieus, and "in scholarly literature and in Palestinian popular imagination

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[5] Kimberley Katz, *A Young Palestinian's Diary, 1941–1945. The Life of Sami'Amr* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2009), 15.

the Mandate has acquired a colossal, if not mythical, impact on the moulding of modern Palestinian society and its destiny".[6] The period corresponded to cultural connections between Arab and non-Arab cultural and intellectual practices, as well as the mobility of cultural ideas,[7] increasing literacy and the spread of news media (the latter started in the Young Turk period, and that flourished again after WWI).[8] From an administrative point of view, one of the consequences was the separation of Palestine from Greater Syria, but the borders between the French and British Mandates remained fluid, albeit solidifying, during the Mandate, presenting a common cultural outlook. "Secular education, cafés, social clubs and recreational centres responded to the growth of middle-class tastes and sensibilities. The personal writings of the period reflected a changing sense of individualism".[9] Be that as it may, the Mandate was a special form of colonialism[10] that challenged the indigenous Christian communities. The colonial creation of legal and political sectarian identities for Palestinian citizens transformed the status of Palestine's Arab Christians from integral members of a multi-religious middle class into a legally defined religious "minority".[11]

The significance of class structures and their relationship to modernity also impacted Palestinian cultural dynamics. As shown recently by Sherene Seikaly, journals like *Iqtisadiyyat*, though economic in nature, were formative in developing cultural attitudes, particularly in relation to questions of production and consumption as they related to the Palestinian nationalist project. This can be seen, for example, in the projection of idealised family

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[6]Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar, eds., *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904–1948* (Northampton, MA: Interlink, 2014), XXVII.

[7]Tamari, *The Storyteller of Jerusalem*; Nisa Ari, "Spiritual Capital and the Copy: Painting, Photography, and the Production of the Image in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine," *Arab Studies Journal* 25, no. 2 (2017): 60–99.

[8]Andrea Stanton, *"This Is Jerusalem Calling": State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); Evelin Dierauff, *Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine: Debates on Ethno-Confessional Relations and Identity in the Arab Palestinian Newspaper Filasṭīn (1911–1914)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

[9]Tamari, *The Storyteller of Jerusalem*, XXIX. In Jerusalem for example, the literary club in Mamilla street (p. 119), the Al Arab Café in Ein Kerem (p. 185) or the famous Jawariyye café (p. 133). On personal writings during the Mandate period and the changing sense of individualism, Katz, *A Young Palestinian's Diary* and Sarah Irving, "Intellectual Networks, Language and Knowledge Under Colonialism: The Works of Stephan Stephan, Elias Haddad and Tawfiq Canaan in Palestine, 1909–1948" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2017).

[10]Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (London: Routledge, 2015); Katz, *A Young Palestinian's Diary*.

[11]Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Erik Freas, *Muslim-Christian Relations in Late Ottoman Palestine: Where Nationalism and Religion Intersect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Anthony O'Mahony, ed., *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: Studies in History, Religion and Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

**Fig. 2**   Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Untitled (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_
NINO_F_Scholten_Weg_Jaffa-Jerusalem_02_0039—Maspero Freres, Jaffa-Jerusalem
Road)

structures and gender roles.[12] The journal also addressed questions of culture
through political identity, posing the *al-adib al-za'if*, the "false intellectuals"
like poets and writers, against the *al-adib al-haqiqi*, the "true intellectuals"
who were engaged with business and the economy.[13] This shows the diversity
of approaches to culture within Palestinian communities, but also the ways in
which the ideals of a national culture were contested (Fig. 2).

   The power of such publications was a significant factor in shaping a cul-
ture of national consciousness, though it was far from singular. The editors
of *Iqtasadiyyat* even funded rebels during the Arab Revolt, though they
never went so far as to feature articles about it within the journal.[14] In this
way, the press became a crucial terrain of power, and an important means of

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[12]Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford:
Stanford University Press, 2016), 37–38 and 56. A good example is the defining and populari-
sation of the *musrifa*, the spendthrift urban woman, as virtuous when consuming domestically
produced goods or the *hasifa*, the frugal and productive women, who contribute to economic
productivity, be it rural or urban.

[13]Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 37.

[14]Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 50.

**Fig. 3** Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Untitled (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_ NINO_F_Scholten_Porte_Entree_101-150_0011—Isa al Isa (founder and editor of the Newspaper Filestin) with son, Raja)

wielding it, drawing subtle linkages between culture and politics. This was by no means unique, many papers often run by Christians such as *Filastin* and *Al-Karmil*[15] made use of culture for political ends. What this press ultimately engendered was the culturalisation of political tensions (Fig. 3).

Within the highly charged political context of the British Mandate, culture took on an even greater importance in asserting identity. The period saw an "enhancement of religion as a marker of national identity".[16] The Christian communities make for a specific lens through which to view the study of cultural diplomacy for several reasons. Firstly, there was the lack of Ottoman cultural investment in minorities, while the *millet* system imparted significant cultural autonomy.[17] Arab Christians, as a result, were often targeted

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[15] Dierauff, *Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine*.

[16] Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), XXVII; Noah Haiduc-Dale, *Arab Christians in British Mandate Palestine: Communalism and Nationalism, 1917–1948* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[17] Valérie Assan, Bernard Heyberger, and Jacob Vogel, *Minorités en méditerannée au XIXe siècle. Identités, identifications, circulations* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2019).

as the main recipients of European cultural diplomacy. Secondly, the growth of Western school systems, mainly those of the French or Russians linked to missionaries, but also many others, were geared at least initially to specific Christian communities. Thirdly, the tendency to hail from urban, rather than rural, backgrounds meant that Christians were well placed to engage in cultural activities that were legibly modern, perhaps facilitated by the mercantile and professional networks that sustained the community. Finally, within the context of British policy during the Mandate, Jews and Muslims were directly addressed in British policy, while Christians had to invest in their community's development, somewhat more autonomously.

Contextualising the impacts of urban–rural divides, Palestinian scholarly production gives us a sense of the class dynamics in which Palestinians operated. Figures like the medical doctor and anthropologist Tawfik Canaan saw rural Palestinian practices as under threat of vanishing with the rapid transformation of Palestine, and so documented disappearing folk history while carrying out his medical duties. These studies were published extensively in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* and other outlets.[18] This underlying assumption of Christians as intermediaries between Western institutes and broader Palestinian society has credence. However, the complexity of a research and documentation project such as Canaan's, which both preserves knowledge as part of a nationalist approach to heritage, but also remediates scholarship to international academic circles, undermines narratives of Christians as simply a conduit for indigenous knowledge. Instead we see a complex valorisation of such indigenous knowledge, the simultaneous distance that such social structures created and the ways in which networks of cultural diplomacy provided different modes of agency to different segments of Palestinian society in pursuing a common nationalist agenda.[19]

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[18] For instance: *Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine* (1920), *Folklore of the Seasons in Palestine* (1923), *Light and Darkness in Palestine Folklore* (1931) *The Unwritten Laws Affecting the Arab Women of Palestine* (1931) to name but a few. At the same time, Canaan was also a scientific modernist who believed that folk practices should disappear in the face of "progress". His life and its experiences as physician, ethnographer and political intellectual illustrate "the multifaceted predicament of upwardly mobile modernist professionals in late Ottoman and Mandate Jerusalem […] torn between his commitment to modern laboratory medicine and hygiene, and his attachment to a peasant lifestyle", Philippe Bourmaud, "'A Son of the Country', Dr. Tawfiq Canaan, Modernist Physician, and Palestinian Ethnographer," in *Struggle and Survival in Palestine/Israel*, eds. Mark Levine and Gershon Shafir (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), introduction.

[19] Howard Eissenstat, "Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Nationalizing Empires*, eds. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015), 429–460; I. Khalidi, "Sports and Aspirations: Football in Palestine, 1900–1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 58 (2014): 74–88.

## Precedents

The last decade has seen a rise in the number of studies on the Christians of the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[20] For the inter-war period, and for Palestine, studies portrayed Christians via the sectarianism of the British Mandate authorities, Christian nationalism and the religious institutional history of Christians.[21] The national, political and religious presence of European states in the "Holy Land" has been explored from national history perspectives[22] while religious studies examined the history of local communities, mainly of Jerusalem.[23] More recently, studies on educational policies, language use and their impacts presented a more complex portrait of these communities from a religious and political perspective.[24] However, their

[20] H. J. Sharkey, *Cultural Conversions: Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missions in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Anthony O'Mahony, *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land* (London: Melisende, 1999); O'Mahony, *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land*; Anthony O'Mahony, "Christianity and Jerusalem: Studies in Theology and Politics in the Modern Holy Land," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 5, no. 2 (2005): 82–102.

[21] Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*; Haiduc-Dale, *Arab Christians in British Mandate Palestine*; Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009); Freas, *Muslim-Christian Relations in Late Ottoman Palestine*.

[22] Haim Goren, *'Echt katholisch und gut deutsch'· Die deutschen Katholiken und Palästina, 1838–1910* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2009); Dominique Trimbur, *Entre rayonnement et réciprocité. Contributions à l'histoire de la diplomatie culturelle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002); Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure: Anglican Mission, Women and Education in Palestine (1888–1948)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Ran Aaronsohn and Dominique Trimbur, eds., *De Balfour à Ben Gourion, Les puissances européennes et la Palestine, 1917–1948* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2008); Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East 1933–40* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[23] Konstantinos Papastathis, "British Colonialism and Communal Politics: The Patriarchal Election Controversy and the Arab Orthodox Movement (1931–1939)," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2016): 259–284; Konstantinos Papastathis, "Arabic vs. Greek: The Linguistic Aspect of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church Controversy in Late Ottoman Times and the British Mandate," in *Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities and Their Languages in the Emerging Nation States of the Middle East (1920–1950)*, eds. Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Karène Sanchez Summerer, and Tijmen Baarda (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 261–286; Heleen Murre-van den Berg, *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twenty Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

[24] Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure*; Karène Sanchez, "Le triptyque Langue/ Education/ Religion en Palestine ottomane et mandataire," *Sociolinguistica* 25 (2011): 66–80; Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine"; Karène Sanchez Summerer, "Preserving Catholics of the Holy Land or Integrating Them into the Palestine Nation? Catholic Communities, Language, Identity and Public Space in Jerusalem (1920–1950)," in *Modernity, Minority and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, eds. Heleen Murre-van den Berg and Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 121–151; Philippe Bourmaud and Karène Sanchez Summerer. "Missions/ Powers/ Arabization," special issue *Social Sciences and Missions Brill* 32, 3–4 (2019); Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Karène Sanchez Summerer, and

overlapping cultural identities[25] and cultural dynamism, and their cultural networks within Europe (including Orthodox Russia and the Soviet Union)[26] have hardly been explored, apart from the seminal work of Sarah Irving on intellectual networks,[27] partly due to the inaccessibility of the local archives. Furthermore, with the exception of a handful of Orthodox personalities, the cultural nationalism of Arab Christians remains insufficiently studied.[28]

Middle Eastern studies has only recently begun to adopt some of the critical apparatus of cultural studies, especially the new diplomatic history, which sought to widen the scope of investigation to include socio-cultural activities. A suite of research, which intensified in the 1990s, instead focused on the "hard" diplomatic apparatus and new histories of British, French and American interventions in interwar Syria and Lebanon from a diplomatic perspective, but these did not address Palestine.[29] Though approaches to cultural dynamics in the Levant, and particularly their relationship to European influence via diplomatic overtures, have increased,[30] most studies pick up the threads of a

Tijmen Baarda, *Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities and Their Languages in the Emerging Nation States of the Middle East (1920–1950)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[25]We will refer to the historically definition of P. Burke: "a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artifacts) in which they are expressed or embodied", Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 11.

[26]I. Mironenko-Marenkova and K. Vakh, "An Institution, Its People and Its Documents: The Russian Consulate in Jerusalem Through the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire, 1858–1914," in *Ordinary Jerusalem 1840–1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City*, eds. Angelos Dalachanis and Vincent Lemire (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 200–222; Papastathis, "British Colonialism and Communal Politics"; Denis Vovchenko, "Creating Arab Nationalism? Russia and Greece in Ottoman Syria and Palestine (1840–1909)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 6 (2013): 901–918.

[27]Irving, "Intellectual Networks, Language and Knowledge Under Colonialism"; Sarah Irving, "'A Young Man of Promise.' Finding a Place for Stephen Hana Stephan in the History of Mandate Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 73 (Spring 2018): 42–62; Dan Spencer Scoville, "The Agency of the Translator: Khalīl Baydas' Literary Translations" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012).

[28]N. Tadros Khalaf, *Les Mémoires de 'Issa al-'Issa. Journaliste et intellectuel palestinien (1878– 1950)* (Paris: Karthala, 2009); Tamari, *The Storyteller of Jerusalem*; A. Abu-Ghazaleh, "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine During the British Mandate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 3 (1973): 37–63; Papastathis, "Arabic vs. Greek."

[29]There have, however, been a number of more recent studies that have been critical of the "NGOisation" of Palestinian civil society that can be seen as having reference to contemporary modes of cultural diplomacy. Lama Arda and Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood: The NGOization of Palestine." *Business & Society*, 2019, 000765031987082. https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-civil-society-what-went-wrong/.

[30]Jennifer Dueck, *The Claims of Culture at Empire's End: Syria and Lebanon Under French Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Idir Ouahes, "Catholic Missionary Education in Early French Mandate Syria and Lebanon," *Social Sciences and Missions* 30 (2017): 225–253; Idir Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon at the Outset of the French Mandate: Workings of Cultural Imperialism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

"new communalism" encouraged by European diplomatic apparatuses, which included the Mandate states themselves in the Levant. Such studies on the Palestinian Mandate[31] emphasised that these communities were minorities, somehow "stirred up" by European diplomatic apparatuses seeking to achieve realpolitik goals. They treated the communities' interactions with European powers distinctly and with little reference to broader international networks.

The study of "soft power" in the contemporary period owes much to the Cold War, when culture offered a surrogate for damaged and blocked political dialogues,[32] but practices aiming at promoting national cultures and languages abroad were in existence before then. Some historians have traced their origins back to the nineteenth century with the formation of nation states in Europe and the growth of ministries of foreign affairs. In this contested region, cultural diplomacy has played an unusually prominent role, due partially to the failure to ameliorate conditions at a political level. Akira Iriye, in his seminal study on cultural internationalism, argued that after WWI, international relations gained a cultural dimension, but without a comprehensive comparison of the dynamics in the region. Cultural diplomacy has been explored for other countries of the Middle East, but research on the contemporary history of cultural foreign policy remains scarce for the Levant.[33] None of the historical studies of institutions like the British Council and French cultural centres address how these organisations functioned alongside each other, their conceptions of culture, the goals they promoted or their impact. Recently, the idea of "national culture" being defined through an international context has been questioned,[34] as well as the role of language in education.[35] The field of "soft power" has grown to incorporate emotions

[31] Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*; Haiduc-Dale, *Arab Christians in British Mandate Palestine*.

[32] Charlotte Faucher, "Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations in the Twentieth-Century Europe," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 373–385; Giles Scott-Smith, Joes Segal, and Peter Romijn, *Divided Dreamworlds: The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014); F. Caubet and L. Martin, *Histoire des relations culturelles dans le monde contemporain* (Paris: Colin, 2011).

[33] J. Gienow-Hecht and M. C. Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York and London: Berghan, 2010); Willem Frijhoff and Karène Sanchez, eds., *Linguistic and Cultural Foreign Policies of the European States 18th–20th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine"; Sanchez Summerer, "Preserving Catholics of the Holy Land or Integrating Them into the Palestine Nation?"; Ouahes, "Catholic Missionary Education in Early French Mandate Syria and Lebanon"; Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon at the Outset of the French Mandate*.

[34] Tamara van Kessel, *Foreign Cultural Policy in the Interbellum: The Italian Dante Alighieri Society and the British Council Contesting the Mediterranean* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

[35] Frijhoff, *Linguistic and Cultural Foreign Policies of the European States*; Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine"; Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri, *Imaging and Imagining Palestine: Photography*

**Fig. 4**  Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Untitled (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_
NINO_F_Scholten_Jaffa_01_0039—picnic, Jaffa)

and "sport diplomacy" for example. In addition, historians have approached
cultural diplomacy not only through foreign policy analysis, but also through
the cultural history of the field.[36] Within a transnational paradigm, scholars
have paid attention to the role of religious orders, academics, and migrants in
shaping soft power.[37] But most importantly, historiography has until recently
largely omitted soft power policies produced by so called "peripherical" coun-
tries or regions. In the case of Mandate Palestine, Jewish and Zionist actors
remain better known as far as cultural institutions where proto-national
agenda are concerned (Fig. 4).[38]

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*and Social history in British Mandate Palestine (1918–1948)*, OJ Series (Leiden: Brill,
forthcoming).

[36] Jennifer Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy: Britain in Europe, c. 1750–1830* (Manchester:
Manchester University Press, 2011).

[37] Sarah Curtis, "The Double Invisibility of Missionary Sisters," *Journal of Women's History* 28,
no. 4 (Winter 2016): 134–143.

[38] Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism and Language Diversity in Palestine
1920–1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Michael D. Birnback, *Colonial Copyright
Intellectual Property in Mandate Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Abigael
Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbours: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory
Palestine* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016).

## LOOKING AT CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN A PROTO-NATIONAL SETTING: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

This volume is not about cultural policies or about cultural life/ expressions/ activities themselves, nor about the cultural transfers which took place in Mandate Palestine, but about the agency of different actors within the cultural framework. We privileged a concept of "cultural diplomacy", that includes "dialogue", as we intended to trace the activities of states and institutions operationalising culture as a means to wield power and communicate ideologies, but also Arab associations and individuals as cultural diplomats themselves. We reflected on previous studies published by participants in this network on the role of language within the consideration of cultural entanglements in Mandate Palestine, and beyond, for religious minorities in the emerging nation states of the Middle East.[39] We indeed tested the concept of language at the heart of a form of cultural diplomacy, language endeavours being central to the interactions between Europeans and Arab Christians and the self-affirmation of Arab Christians, in which multilingualism played a major role. Within these cultural exchanges, the importance of language as both a tool and symbolic identity marker among these communities encouraged us to enquire further into the notion of a multilingual "Holy Land" from a cultural diplomacy angle, in another publication.[40]

Cultural diplomacy was effective in Palestine, before WWII, in the sense that Europeans were aware of the effects of the cultural products they exported and Arab Christians were active in the process of meaning-making and cultural export themselves. The cultural diplomacy lens enriches the comprehension of cultural actors within the processes of cultural influence, underlining the multiplicity, heterogeneity and the "real" and the "desired" agency of the actors involved, both in practical and ideological terms. The flattening of the Palestinian cultural landscape and its actors, due partly to nostalgia and an idealisation of the pre-1948 Palestine as well as a more Zionist historiography, could lead to binary assumptions. On one side Palestinian elites, aristocracy, notables and a growing middle class and on the other, a mass of peasants and workers, whereas diversity was present within these groups. Against these considerations, this volume intends to address the multilayered agencies in the national and communal identification processes and the role of international and transnational cultural relations in the way Palestine was understood socially and politically during the British Mandate.

Cultural diplomacy allows us to overcome the dominant perspective of a unidirectional flow of influence from Europe to Palestine, and to appreciate

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[39] Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine"; Sanchez Summerer, "Preserving Catholics of the Holy Land or Integrating Them into the Palestine Nation?".

[40] *A Multilingual Holy Land*, forthcoming publication for the *CrossRoads* research group.

the ways in which Palestinians were integrated into global circuits of culture and information in this period. During this period of investment by European states in culture for nationalist promotion abroad, and the appearance of new media, many circulations, connections and interactions took place between European countries and Arab Christian communities in Palestine.

Considering the porous nature of the boundaries between cultures, and the new understandings of social hierarchy these Arab Christians had, many actors shaped new cultural horizons. Civil society organisations were set up, and elite support played a role in the dissemination of cultural and scientific subjects. Different clubs brought together different types of Palestinians. These diverse actors operated at different scales: macro (state or supranational entities), micro (individuals) and meso (network and institutional) levels.[41]

Furthermore, the concept of cultural diplomacy is relevant because it illuminates another angle on the transformation of Arab Christian affiliations by exposing the mechanism of change via cultural agendas and initiatives. It shows how collective identities are transformed under the pressure of major socio-economic and political developments, cultural adaptation and transformation as a means of changing the boundaries of one's own identity and engaging with other collectives. Via the study of their intricate and nonlinear transformations and negotiations, it allows a far more nuanced view of the process of modernisation in the region and a challenge to the link between "Arab culture" and Arab nationalism.

Cultural diplomacy appears as a useful concept in deprovincialising the history of cultural influences between Arab Christians and European countries. It allows an essential correction to the dominant one-sided perspective on culture, highlighting how deeply European and Middle Eastern histories were intertwined, and showing the intersections and interactions of European culture with the "Arab Others" from an integral and comparative perspective.

The Arab students' association mentioned at the beginning of this introduction reveals the extent, scope and influence of the currently underestimated transregional networks of Arab Christians via their cultural associations, active beyond the borders of Mandate Palestine. These contacts and the "circulation" of Palestinian Christians indeed started well before 1948, as a long-term historical process, which impacted durably the identity-building process of Palestinians and the way the international community viewed Arabs. This more global approach recognises that a way of life often considered to be genuinely Western was deeply influenced by cultural encounters with the non-European world, as cultural influences were not unidirectional. The exposure to reading material, mainly from Cairo and Beirut,[42] and to the debates and discussions of clubs and associations, was

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[41] Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon at the Outset of the French Mandate*.

[42] Katz, *A Young Palestinian's Diary*, 37.

**Fig. 5**    Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Untitled (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_NINO_F_Scholten_Jaffa_09_0044—classroom, Jaffa)

transregional. This volume therefore tries to respond directly to a pressing conceptual challenge, by linking the study of the micro-scale level of everyday life to the macro-narratives of global change (Fig. 5).[43]

In this volume we have also employed an interdisciplinary approach that centres culture, cutting across disciplines from history to cultural studies. The cultural studies framework is particularly useful to considering the mechanics of cultural diplomacy as it pertains to the production of culture. Resulting from our fruitful exchanges with David Clark, we adopted his model for framing the social and political importance of cultural diplomacy, and considered the four actors he lays out in the process of meaning-making in cultural diplomacy: policymakers; agents (both institutional and individual) who implement cultural diplomacy; cultural practitioners; and cultural consumers.[44] Considering the process of meaning-making for another volume resulting from *CrossRoads* research,[45] those actors involved in photographic

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[43] Jean-Claude Passeron and Jacques Revel, eds., *Penser par cas* (Paris: EHESS, 2005); John Paul Ghobrial, "Seeing the World as a Microhistorian," *Past and Present* 242, no. 14 (2019): 1–22; Jan de Vries, "Playing with Scales: The Global and the Micro, the Macro and the Nano," *Past and Present* 242, no. 14 (2019): 23–36.

[44] Clarke, "Theorising the Role of Cultural Products in Cultural Diplomacy," 154.

[45] Sanchez Summerer, *Imaging and Imagining Palestine*.

production, for example, are equally engaged as those who actively shaped the market by consuming photography:

> Cultural consumption is, firstly, a complex process of meaning-making, in which the boundary between cultural 'producers' and 'consumers' is blurred; and, secondly, that in the realm of culture both production and consumption are intrinsically bound up with the articulation and negotiation of identity in a social context.[46]

The framework of meaning-making adds considerable complexity to understanding the context of culture, and indeed cultural diplomacy, in the context of the British Mandate. By drawing a correlation between the production and consumption of culture, we can begin to understand the dynamism of transnational relationships between Palestine and the world. It also remaps such relations with the agency of Palestinians in mind, rather merely considering Palestinians to be passive recipients of Western modernity. This provides a framework for thinking about Palestinian cultural production from creative fields like art and literature to academic and scholarly endeavours and even as far as disciplines such as economics. The model of meaning-making becomes even more convoluted when we consider the porous line between the often-colonial ambitions of state and non-state agents of European cultural diplomacy and the ways in which Christian Palestinians made use of such networks.

Our approach tries to privilege dynamics of personal and institutional interactions, complemented via a comparative analysis of the cultural agenda of their Jewish and Muslim peers. We seek to make processes more visible, identifying archival gaps. Subaltern narratives emerge from some of the archives presented for the first time in this volume, belonging to the non-elite groups, and throwing new light on transformations in Palestinian society. These new aspects can be traced in the archives of associations, private collections, programmes of educational institutes, local/regional journals, pamphlets and books, church archives, governmental educational establishments and private cultural institutions, nuanced by the comparative analysis of British and Zionist archives.

## Overview of the Book

This volume is divided into three sections. From the outset, these divisions aim to undermine more orthodox views of cultural diplomacy as a unidirectional political force by actively engaging with the cultural arena. Given our approach, that aims to reconsider conceptual and practical definitions of cultural diplomacy, each of these three sections has a short introduction which

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[46] Clarke, "Theorising the Role of Cultural Products in Cultural Diplomacy," 153.

defines some of the rationale for these divisions. Likewise, a conclusion sums up the issues outlined in the volume and the epilogue takes a macroscopic view, considering the growing influence of the United States during the British Mandate period and gesturing to the Cold War politics that were so formative on Palestinian politics and culture from 1948 to the First Intifada.

Part I "Turning the Tables? Arab Appropriation and Production of Cultural Diplomacy" deals specifically with the dynamics of Arab actors in proffering modes of cultural diplomacy. Specifically, the selected chapters engage with the novel ways in which Christian Palestinians responded to European cultural diplomacy. This section is designed to reiterate that cultural diplomacy was not a unidirectional phenomenon, but a circumstance in which Christian Palestinians held significant agency and were able to mould cultural diplomacy for their own ends. It was placed as the first section in order to highlight that Christian Arabs were not simply "recipients" of cultural diplomacy, but were indeed actively engaged with such international processes and arenas. This is a specific gap in current research that we specifically aim to address with this volume.

Sarah Irving opens the section with an introduction that reconsiders the way we conceive of cultural diplomacy. Her brief, but salient point that in 2015 five of the largest global economies were corporations, not nation states, opens up space for alternative visions of the practice of cultural diplomacy that elides typical assumptions of that field as a practice of states or supranational religious actors. Instead, she proposes a bottom up view that recognises the agency of Palestinian networks.

Focusing on the development of Greek Orthodox Clubs and networks, Norig Neveu's chapter deals with the longest duration in the book. She considers the development of Orthodox cultural infrastructure in Palestine during the British Mandate, but also the implications of the Nakba, state formation and political collapse on the development of Orthodox networks in Jordan.

Likewise, Sadia Agsous takes on the role of Orthodoxy, this time in the literary sphere. She shows the formative ways in which modern Palestinian literature, fostered by a number of Arab Orthodox personalities, bolstered the Nahda narrative and the Arab nationalist movement. She traces the birth of the modern novel, Palestinian translation of Russian literature, the growth of newspapers and forums like the 1946 Palestinian Arab Book Fair.

Maria Chiara Rioli and Riccardo Castagnetti look at the work of musician and composer Agostino Lama, who was trained by the Franciscan Custodia in Jerusalem. The chapter details the ways in which Palestinians interacted with broader Catholic agendas in Palestine, but also centres Palestinian parishioners through the production of Arabic liturgical song. Rioli and Castagnetti also discuss the politicised links between the Franciscans and the Italian state under Fascism.

Shifting to rural communities, Charbel Nassif looks at the ways in which the Melkite Archbishop Gregorios Hajjar shrewdly managed the

Greek-Catholic community's interests. Hajjar carefully navigated intercommunal rivalries and the geopolitical nature of European cultural diplomacy to both secure French funding for Melkite schools and carve out a sphere of autonomy.

Finally, Maayan Hillel focuses on the rapid development of Haifa during the British Mandate. She traces the impacts of various Christian communities on the development of social and leisure activities, talking about the roles of the beach, theatres, sports and the growth of clubs and associations that were so much a part of the modern middle-class life of the city.

Part II "Showing and Telling: Cultural and Historical Entanglements Under the Mandate" deals with the production and dissemination of culture and knowledge as well as the ways in which Christian Palestinians were involved with institutional frameworks in the Mandate period. It complicates the idea of cultural diplomacy, by looking at the ways in which a number of actors utilised cultural institutions within the politicised cultural context of the Mandate. This section considers a set of cultural entanglements beyond communal structures and the ways in which Christian Palestinians contested, affected and were shaped by cultural production in Palestine. It specifically considers the products of cultural diplomacy—the forums in which culture and knowledge were produced—both in Palestine and abroad.

In his introduction to the second section Philippe Bourmaud addresses the ways in which cultural arenas formed politicised spaces that contested the historical narratives foundational to the plethora of national and proto-national agendas that make the period so rich for the contemporary historian. His analysis gestures towards an examination of power, anticipating some of the contents of Part III.

Sarah Irving's paper looks at two Christian Palestinians, Na'im Makhouly and Stephan Hanna Stephan, who both worked in the Department of Antiquities. Through a comparative microhistorical analysis, her chapter cleverly considers the ways in which Palestinians made use of the colonial structures produced by European cultural diplomacy.

Archaeology is also tackled by Mathilde Sigalas, this time as a mode of cultural diplomacy from a Western perspective, contrasting the different national approaches of European states and the growth of US interest in the region. She shows the ways in which international cooperation in Palestinian archaeology became a space of great contestation and a highly politicised arena.

Nisa Ari's chapter also looks at competition and contestation within the cultural sector. She focuses on the Zionist-run Levant Fair in Tel Aviv (1932) and the First National Arab Fair in Jerusalem (1933), each of which proffered nationalist visions through cultural production, but equally considers the networks that led to creation of both fairs and the audiences and networks to which they addressed their respective messages.

Part III "Influencing the Other: European Private and Governmental Actors" deals with European agents of cultural diplomacy. This section considers the role of European state and non-state actors in Palestine and their

attempts to affect Christian Palestinians. By examining the role of state and religious institutions, this section addresses questions of identity formation within various Christian communities through a series of case studies of both successful and unsuccessful cultural diplomacy. These studies navigate questions of intent, especially considering the colonial subtext of cultural diplomacy, but more importantly also points of convergence or disjuncture.

As Heather Sharkey states in her introduction, the third section tells us "more about the history of Christians *in* Palestine than about the history of the Christians *of* Palestine", in that it predominantly deals with attempts to build and wield influence through confessional networks. This section is perhaps a catalogue of colonial actors and actions, that gauges some of the various religious networks and the ways in which such influence was successful or not.

Looking at the ethnically Greek community of Jerusalem, Konstantinos Papastathis traces the development of the Greek Club in Jerusalem and the ways in which the Greek community positioned themselves socially in Jerusalem given the fraught relationship between the indigenous Arab Orthodox and the Greek-controlled Jerusalem Patriarchate. He shows that the community was strongly connected to the recently formed Greek state through both religious and secular networks, despite their close relations with their Arab coreligionists.

Russia's Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IPPO), one of the key instruments of Russian cultural diplomacy in Palestine, is the central concern of Lora Gerd's chapter. She traces the role of the IPPO in addressing the Arab Orthodox community, particularly in the arena of education and intervention into the conflicts between Palestinians and the Patriarchate. Tracing the evolution of the institution, she also shows the impacts of World War I and the Russian Revolution on the increasing marginalisation of the organisation as an instrument of Russian cultural diplomacy.

Barbara Haider-Wilson explores the transformation of Austrian relationships with Palestine from the Habsburg monarchy through the First Republic and into the authoritarian period. She shows the ways in which Austria utilised Catholic networks, its relationship with the Franciscan Custody, and the role of institutions like the Austrian Hospice in reconjuring its imperial past as its power in the region faded.

Showing the shifting terrains of Italian cultural diplomacy, Roberto Mazza looks at the complicated and often contradictory nature of Italian approaches to Palestine, including relations to both Arabs and Jews, contrasting this within the significant shifts of the Italian state itself during the course of the interwar period.

Paolo Maggiolini tackles a "Catholic cultural diplomacy", from the perspective of International Catholic networks around the Latin Patriarchate. He looks at the role of sometimes controversial Latin Patriarch Luigi Barlassina and the Foundation for the Protection of Latin Interests in Palestine. In doing so he shows the careful line that Catholic communities in Palestine trod against the politicised backdrop of the Mandate period.

The Swedish School in Jerusalem is Inger-Marie Okkenhaug's focus. She considers the school both as a symbol of Western modernity and of Nordic colonialism. She considers the specificities of Swedish approach to education and the inclusive nature of student enrolments which cut across both class and communal bounds, and how the pupils were taught by Arab teachers in Arabic.

Finally, Dominique Trimbur considers French cultural policy in Palestine with the establishment of the two Centres for French Culture in Jerusalem. He traces the ways in which the French addressed Arabs and how this differed from their mode of interaction with Jewish constituencies, as well as the impacts of the Arab Revolt on the proffering of French cultural diplomacy in Palestine specifically, but the Levant more generally.

In her conclusion, Tamara van Kessel considers the effectiveness of expanded definitions of cultural diplomacy, seeking to test the hypothesis laid out in the introduction. She contrasts developing theoretical frameworks for cultural diplomacy, while also comparing Palestine and Christian Palestinians to other Mediterranean society's experience of colonialism and cultural diplomacy.

Finally, Idir Ouahes in his epilogue to the volume, sets out a significantly broader field for considering questions of cultural diplomacy focusing on secular actors. Ouahes' epilogue deals with some of the latent tensions that would have considerable importance in the period after World War II, particularly the rise in US–Soviet tensions. More importantly he considers the impacts of such cultural diplomacy on Palestinians as well as Arabs from neighbouring states and the ways which they made use of such networks. He reminds us that the national identities so fundamental to this volume were in a formative stage as the boundaries imposed by the British and French became more entrenched in the three decades upon which this volume focuses.

## Speaking to the Silences?

The cultural diplomacy paradigm operates strongly in the context of Palestinian mobility and transregional dynamics. The Middle East, like so much of the world, was undergoing a process of globalisation that affected the mobility of three categories in particular: people, objects and ideas.[47] This categorisation of mobility provides a useful framework for understanding cultural diplomacy in the context of Christian Palestinians. The movement of people was often accompanied by networks of trade that facilitated the

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[47] L. Kozma, A. Schayegh, and A. Wishnitzer, *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 6.

movement of objects, while ideological networks, be they religious or political, facilitated the movement of ideas alongside more mercantile pursuits. The significant movement of people also gave rise to new diasporas, both as part of the *Mahjar* (Arab diaspora emigrated from Ottoman-ruled Lebanon, Syria and Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century) as well as the displacements of the First World War period.[48]

Palestinian Christians migrated overseas in increasingly large numbers to broaden their trading opportunities from the nineteenth century onwards. Trading outposts, for instance in the mother of pearl industry, ran as far afield as France, the Caribbean, Singapore and the Philippines.[49] The ways in which Palestinian Christian identity was mobilised in the marketing of mother of pearl devotional goods shows a nuanced understanding of the power of marketing the "holiness" of Palestinian cultural production abroad. The fact that such goods appear to have been produced in different styles and marketed to different confessional groupings overseas—from Orthodox focused goods in Kiev to Catholic goods in Manila and Paris[50]—shows an awareness of transnational religious networks and a canny mercantile sense to making use of them.

While recent research has shown the formative role of Russia in shaping Palestinian literature,[51] similar research on the visual arts is significantly lacking beyond Kamal Boullata's seminal *Palestinian Art*, particularly on the shift from iconographic practices to modern painting.[52] Likewise, the role of the Franciscan Custody has been explored from an Italian perspective,[53] but less so looking from a Palestinian perspective at the indigenous practices that arose from Catholic patronage. The influence of the British Arts and Crafts movements was formative,[54] particularly in the character of modern

[48] Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian, eds. *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

[49] Jacob Norris, "Exporting the Holy Land: Artisans and Merchant Migrants in Ottoman-Era Bethlehem," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 1, no. 2 (2013): 14–40.

[50] Ibidem.

[51] Agsous in this volume and Dan Spencer Scoville, "The Agency of the Translator: Khalīl Baydas' Literary Translation" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012).

[52] Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present* (London: Saqi, 2009).

[53] Daniel M. Madden, *Monuments to Glory: The Story of Antonio Barluzzi, Architect of the Holy Land* (Portland, OR: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964).

[54] N. Hysler-Rubin, "Arts & Crafts and the Great City: Charles Robert Ashbee in Jerusalem," *Planning Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (2006): 347–368.

Jerusalem, but the artists and artisans involved in the execution of much of the works produced by Charles Ashbee and the Pro-Jerusalem Society have been largely overlooked, though recent work on Ohanessian's role in developing Armenian Ceramics is beginning to remedy this.[55]

While painting practices and pictorial traditions often take a central position[56] given canonical approaches to art, industries like weaving, glass blowing or Islamic calligraphy were significant and are also very understudied, sitting outside hegemonic ideas of what constitutes art. Another significant issue is understanding the connections between communalism and art in Palestine.[57]

These insights confirm the value of an inquiry into a connected history and underline the importance of a holistic approach. In order to fully understand these links, we need to examine not only the strategies but also the contexts of production, as well as the interpersonal networks, within Palestine and outside, and the circulation of actors and products considered.

The coverage of this volume is neither comprehensive, nor final. Some Palestinians from the Americas or European countries re-established themselves in Palestine, challenging their predominantly middle-class communities of origin. Other came with political or religious delegations and at times stayed regularly but for shorter periods. Their circulations, connections and interactions with Palestine and with their European interlocutors will be the next aspect *CrossRoads* will look into (Fig. 6).[58]

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[55] Sato Mougalian, *Feast of Ashes: The Life and Art of David Ohannessian* (Redwood City, CA: Redwood Press, 2019).

[56] This is particularly evident in surveys of Christian art practices such as Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, *The Madonna of the Prickly Pear Cactus: Tradition and Innovation in 19th- and 20th-Century Christian Art in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2010).

[57] Boullata, *Palestinian Art*, 63–64. Looking at the work of Muslim painter Daoud Zalatimo, for instance, it is clear that personal networks and his close association with the Jawhariyyeh brothers enabled him to spend extensive time in Nikola Saig's studio, before embarking on his own art career.

[58] These transnational networks of cultural diplomacy will be explored in a *CrossRoads* forthcoming volume about the Greek Orthodox priest Nikola Khoury, who utilised Orthodox networks in the Balkans to exert diplomatic influence at the United Nations. Tourism also provides fertile territory for a *CrossRoads* forthcoming publication *New Industries in Ancient Lands* which considers the ways in which Palestinians and the colonial government marketed the historical and religious importance of the country abroad, as well as understanding the ways in which Palestine and its culture was perceived by visiting pilgrims and tourists.

**Fig. 6** Frank Scholten, 1921–23, Album Choses interressantes I Appareil avec miroirs (Jericho) (*Source* Image courtesy of NINO; UBL_NINO_F_Scholten_Palestine_Choses_Interessantes_01_013 Image courtesy of NINO)

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