

Book Review

## Islam and Israel: Muslim Endowments and the Jewish State

*Michael Dumper. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1994, 192 pp.*

This book consists of six chapters, endnotes, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index. Although fairly short vis-à-vis the long period that it covers (from the Ottoman era to 1988), this book is in fact a very valuable reference work on the subject. The author made considerable efforts to collect, compare, and analyze the data. However, it seems that the main title, *Islam and Israel*, is rather ambiguous and misleading. The subtitle, *Muslim Religious Endowments and the Jewish State*, reveals the book's contents adequately. This title may have been coined by the publisher for marketing purposes.

The book explores Israeli policy toward Palestinian Muslim religious endowments (*awqāf*, sing. *waqf*) and studies the methods employed to confiscate and transfer most of them so that they eventually became exclusively Jewish property. The *waqf* system played a very significant socioeconomic, religious, and educational role in the history of Muslim society. About 15 percent of the agricultural land in Palestine is *waqf* (1.2 million *dunums*), as are many buildings, shops, and other structures in urban areas. The revenue derived from these sources finances important networks of welfare and charitable services in Palestine, such as schools, orphanages, and soup kitchens.

The first chapter tackles the Palestinian Muslim *waqf* system during the late Ottoman empire and the British Mandate. It indicates the importance of *waqf* for the notable families in Palestine and their administration of it in ways designed to enhance their power and influence. It also studies the arrangements made by the Ottomans during the nineteenth century to set up a *waqf* administrative structure and to develop it under their close supervision. During the British Mandate (1918-48), however, a new structure, known as The Supreme Muslim Council, was created in 1922. It was dominated by the Palestinian religious elite and notables and took a "national character" under the leadership of Ḥājj Amin al Ḥusaynī. In 1937, the British mandatory government suspended the council's central committee and replaced it with a government-appointed commission. These measures undermined the *waqf* institution and its role in politics and the national struggle.

The second chapter discusses the Muslim *waqf* system in Israel from 1948 to 1965 and explains how the Zionist state managed to control and confiscate *waqf* properties and resources. In the parts of Palestine that

became Israel in 1948 (about 78 percent of all Palestine), 770,000 of the pre-1948 Palestinian population of 900,000 were expelled, which left only 130,000 (about 14 percent of the population of the new state of Israel) in their homeland. The Israeli authorities imposed their military rule over the Palestinians who remained there until 1966.

Israel took this opportunity to seize the properties and lands of the Palestinians in the diaspora. A clear Israeli policy became evident after the enactment of the Absentee Property Law of 1950. The Jews, who did not own more than 10 percent of the land in their new state, sought to establish a "viable and credible" state and to gain ownership of the land already under their military control. This new law was part of a legal network that transferred Palestinian land and Muslim *awqāf* to Israeli Jewish state lands and to lands owned by the Jewish National Fund. Under these laws, 80 percent of Israel's total land area was acquired from Palestinian-owned land. The *waqf* system was affected seriously, since the Israeli government classified the Supreme Muslim Council as absentee and, as a result, acquired its *waqf* property and land. Only a small portion of *waqf* properties escaped confiscation, namely, the Mulhaq and Dhurri *waqf* properties, whose overseers still resided in Israel. However, about 90 percent of all *awqāf* properties in Israel were confiscated.

The third chapter tackles the Muslim *waqf* system in Israel during 1965-88. It discusses the third amendment to the Absentee Property Law, in which the Israeli government tried to "ameliorate the tensions and problems created by its handling of *waqf* system." However, the structure it established "only succeeded in alienating Palestinians further." The author examines the activities of three boards of trustees established by 1965 amendment in Acre, Jaffa, and Haifa. He found the same policy was adopted to coopt the *waqf* system's leadership, integrate the administration, and transfer the resources.

Chapter 4 studies the Muslim *waqf* system in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1967 to 1988. In the West Bank, the situation was rather different, as the Israeli regime did not annex it officially to the state of Israel. The leadership of the *awqāf* there remained intact, the administration was not absorbed structurally by the state, the resources did not suffer from wholesale confiscation, and the *waqf* system was administered by Jordan. However, the Israeli regime imposed several restrictions on the *waqf* leadership and its responsibilities, which served, to a large extent, to neutralize its political role. In the Gaza Strip, the *awqāf* were small in size and suffered from financial weakness and lack of external support. As a result, the Israeli regime managed to coopt its leadership and marginalize the local *waqf* system.

The fifth chapter covers the *waqf* system in Jerusalem since 1967. East Jerusalem was occupied and annexed to Israel in June 1967. Although Israel considers united Jerusalem its eternal capital, the religious issue remains very sensitive, because one of the holiest Muslims shrines—al Masjid al Aqsā—is located there. Meanwhile, the Muslim religious leader-

