

hood would erode the system of patronage on which their very power was based.

But who were the groups and social strata in Arab Palestine that were capable of transcending factionalism, given the appropriate political leadership? The social structure of factional alliances seemed to permeate the whole fabric of urban and rural society:

The pyramidal family and clan network which built on relationships of support and protection from the village level through local potentates to leading families at the distant level, offered the means of rapid articulation of opinion and mobilization of all levels of society. The main political parties were based on this structure, the parties of the particularly influential Husayni and Nashashibi families having ties throughout the country. However, this structure made it difficult to unify the national movement. Since each leading family had a political power base in client villages or town quarters, it felt itself the equal of the others and bargained vigorously before forming alliances. Even then the alliances shifted rapidly, on the basis of personal and family differences rather than policy. (Lesch, 1973:17, emphasis added).

It would be a mistake however, to think of Palestinian national politics during the mandate as based entirely on factionalism. Both al-Istiqlal party and the communists had social bases (especially among urban professionals and sections of the working class) which were secular and devoid of patronage. But both were unsuccessful in challenging the factional leadership of Haj Amin al-Husseini and the Arab Higher Committee, and remained marginal movements.

On the other hand factional alliances in Palestine were remarkable in that, following the intensification of Jewish settlement, they transcended both regional divisions (especially the endemic rivalries referred to above between the Jerusalem and Nablus clans), and religious-ethnic divisions. We have suggested furthermore, that the urban-rural dichotomy has little explanatory value in Palestinian factional politics since faction leaders were mainly urban-based 'representatives' of the hierarchical system of rural 'clients'