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BOOK REVIEW

*Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, by Charles D. Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. xii + 295 pages. Bibliography to p. 298. Index to p. 308. Cloth \$35.00. Paper \$10.00.

Hisham H. Ahmed\*

*Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* is an attempt to review historical events in the Middle East which led to the eruption of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. The period covered extends from approximately 1200 B.C. through the mid-1980's. This work is intended to be used as a textbook by undergraduate students in the United States. Charles Smith hopes to provide his readers with a study in which analysis of the pre-1948 period is not subsumed to the post-1948 era, for in that period, he informs us, can be discerned the nature of Zionist claims to Palestine and the corresponding Palestinian resistance (p. iii). In furtherance of his goal, Smith devotes four out of the ten chapters of his book to survey of key developments before 1948.

The book opens with a discussion of the ancient history of the peoples of Palestine, the politics of the Israelites and the repeated conflicts they had with the country's indigenous population, as well as among themselves. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Zionists came to Palestine "often not for religious reasons but to seek to colonize it" (p. 24). Zionists were "interested in establishing agricultural colonies" (p. 24) in Palestine due to the country's economic viability. Smith thus sheds light on the economic, as opposed to the widely-propagated, supposedly religious reasons for the Zionist colonization of Palestine. Further, he asserts that Palestine's people were indigenous and were not immigrants from other

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This book is an excellent introduction to medieval and Renaissance medicine, written concisely, yet presenting the subject with a breadth that allows the reader to grasp the nature and the evolution of medical science and practice. The reader will learn how medicine interfaced with the wider culture surrounding it. Throughout the book, Siraisi adopts a developmental approach in her discussions of various aspects of medical practice, giving the reader a sense of the incremental and progressive nature of legal, scientific and cultural developments in this area of medieval and Renaissance society. The abundant illustrations are excellent. This is a clearly written, well-organized, highly informative book on a poorly understood and much maligned period of the history of medicine.

Arab countries, as Joan Peters falsely tried to establish in her polemical *From Time Immemorial* (p. 24). Smith errs, however, when he downplays the depth of the Palestinian national consciousness, which existed long before Zionists postulated publicly their idea of colonizing Palestine (pp. 25, 36).

In his discussion of the political and military developments affecting Palestine after World War II, Smith points to the ominous role played by the United States in pressuring weaker countries in the United Nations to vote in favor of the 1947 partition resolution (p. 139). He also clarifies the organized effort by the Zionists to uproot the people of Palestine from their homeland, particularly in 1948, as well as the role played by King 'Abdullāh of Jordan in an attempt to contain Palestinian resistance (pp. 140-148). In addition, the authors pinpoint the reasons for Israeli rejectionism of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (pp. 155, 158).

Furthermore, Smith reviews the role played by the United States in strengthening Israel's position, particularly after 1967, and he makes reference to the inadequacy of the U.S. "peace overtures," manifested in the Camp David agreements. It would have been more illuminating for his analysis, however, had he examined Fayez Sayegh's excellent study on the deficiencies of the Camp David accords.

Smith makes explicit reference to the dynamics of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and its intricate relationship to the Camp David agreements. He also provides the necessary background for an examination of the United States' complicity in giving Israel the green light to invade Lebanon (p. 269). However, the legal responsibility borne by the United States regarding the Sabra and Shatila massacres in September 1982 should have been amplified.

Smith's treatment of the history of Palestine before 1914 is not typical of the work of many scholars in the West, who claim that their guiding principle is objectivity, while in actuality their research method is fraught with bias, contradiction and lack of originality. While he recognizes that in Palestine lived an indigenous people for thousands of years prior to the Israelites' invasion of the country in 1200 B.C., his discussion, nonetheless, focuses solely on the politics of the Hebrews, in the process completely obscuring in the mind of the reader the fact that an indigenous people ever existed on the land and that they had a history worthy of recounting.

The first subtitle of the first chapter, "Ancient Israel: Its Origins and History to the Roman Conquest," misleadingly predisposes the reader to think of Palestine as the ancient, original homeland of the Jews, a premise upon which analysis of subsequent historical development is to be based (pp. 66, 77, 223).

In his treatment of the history of Palestine between 1200 B.C. and the first century B.C., the author, by his own admission, relied heavily on John

Bright's *A History of Israel*, whose Zionist orientation is unmistakable. The substance and the tenor of the first and second chapters are contradicted by some of Smith's later discussion. His presentation of the conflict between the Roman Empire and the Jews, relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Palestine after the advent of Islam, his stereotypical description of Arabs and Muslims and the very negative image he repeatedly tries to instill in the minds of students who, in most instances, lack background on the history and culture of the region, greatly diminish the quality of the work as a whole. Compiling views contained in secondary sources without critically and analytically investigating them cast doubts on the author's qualification to incorporate the first two chapters in a work otherwise meritorious on several counts.

In his presentation of Zionism and its goals, Smith borrows extensively again, this time from David Vital's *The Origins of Zionism*, reducing the possibility of maintaining a balanced perspective. The authoritative *From Haven to Conquest*, edited by Walid Khalidi, for example, is not even cited.

In spite of these flaws, in reading Smith's work one detects the strategic, political, and economic significance of Palestine over the centuries. The author's overview assists in explaining the centrality of the question of Palestine in contemporary Middle Eastern politics. I recommend the use of this work as an undergraduate textbook provided that certain portions be analyzed and presented critically to students.

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References in the text should appear in a serial order that must conform to the list of citations at the end of the text. Citations should be typed on separate sheets according to the prescribed format: author's name (last first), year of publication, book/article title (book title in italics), city/journal title, publisher/pagination. For edited books, insert editor's name after book title. Subsequent citations of the same source must be cited in full; do not use *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, etc.

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