Fig. 26.1: The Soup Kitchen “Green Hall,” Signe Ekblad, children and mothers, 1939. Copyright: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

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Chapter 26

Scandinavian Missionaries in Palestine: The Swedish Jerusalem Society, Welfare, and Education in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, 1900–1948

With the establishment of the Swedish Jerusalem Society (Svenska Jerusalemssällskapet, the SJS), an organization with strong connections to the Swedish state church and king, Sweden became the only Scandinavian country with a national presence in Palestine in the period 1900 to 1948. While the SJS started out as a mission to the Jews, their missionary agenda was transformed into education, health- and relief work among the Arab population. The SJS' non-proselytizing, humanitarian approach found widespread support among the upper- and middle classes in Sweden. Here the lack of state welfare initiatives had inspired liberal Christians to establish welfare institutions for the poor. Adopting this model, Swedish and Arab Christian teachers provided modern welfare for inhabitants of Jerusalem during a time of rapid change in Palestine.

On October 31, 1898, the German emperor Wilhelm II dedicated the new German, Protestant Erlöserkirche in Jerusalem. The date, October 31 – the same day Martin Luther supposedly presented his theses in 1517 – symbolized the Protestant presence in the Holy Land, while the emperor's presence at the ceremony symbolized the international, political aspect of the event. King Oscar II of Sweden-Norway¹ had commissioned two bishops, Swedish Knut Henning G. von Schéele (1838–1920) and his Norwegian colleague Anton Christian Bang (1840–1913) to be his official representatives at the opening.² Bishop Bang, one of the most prominent men in the Norwegian church milieu at the time, represented a country immersed in a struggle for independence and deprived of an independent foreign policy. Both bishops came to Jerusalem steeped in traditional, protestant, Orientalist images of Jerusalem; images that were far from the reality of this city in the periphery of the Ottoman Empire. According to Bang, “the country that was once flooded with milk and honey, is now only a desert.”³ Even

¹ In 1814, as a result of the Napoleonic wars, Norway became part of Sweden in a political union. This union was met with a growing opposition in Norway, and in 1905, the union was dissolved peacefully and Norway gained its independence.

² “Anton Christian Berg,” *Store norske leksikon*, https://nbl.snl.no/Anton_Christian_Bang.

³ Anton Christian Bang, *Erindringer* (Kristiania, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909), 357.

so, their encounter with the earthly Jerusalem led to very different reactions. Bang's impressions and (mis)understandings of his encounter with Palestine in October 1898, later published in his autobiography, makes it clear that involving Norway in a practical way in the Holy Land was not on his mind. On his day of departure, on November 2, 1898 – after weeks of suffering in the heat, dust, and noise – bishop Bang summed up his impression from the visit in Palestine with the following words: “European civilization was as high above Asian civilization, as the sky was above the earth.”⁴ Bishop von Schéele, on the other hand, came from a country that had a long and proud tradition of being an international power. Von Schéele, who was one of the most international and well-connected members of the church elite in Sweden, used the opportunity as official envoy to Palestine to analyze the religious and social situation in the Ottoman province.⁵ For von Schéele, coming to Palestine was a dream come true. For many years, he had longed to visit the holy places. What seems to have made the deepest impression on the Swedish bishop, however, was the poverty, illness, and need of the people.⁶ Von Schéele's encounter with the Holy Land roused a vision that led to action. Motivated by the Prussian Jerusalemverein zu Berlin [The Jerusalem Society of Berlin] established in 1841, and its work in Jerusalem, von Schéele initiated the most important (and for many years, only) Scandinavian establishment in Palestine: The Swedish Jerusalem Society [Svenska Jerusalemföreningen; the SJS] – an organization with strong connections to the Swedish state church and king.⁷

This article focuses on The Swedish Jerusalem Society from its establishment in 1900 to 1948, and its two welfare projects in Palestine; a mission hospital in Bethlehem and a school in Jerusalem. Key research questions are: What were the motivations behind the establishment of the Swedish Jerusalem Society? Who were the central SJS actors in Palestine? What resonance did the organization have in Swedish society? What characterized the organization's interaction with Palestinian society during Ottoman reign, and later under the British Mandate administration?⁸

Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries were central in creating transnational spaces; here defined as “a space where encounters

⁴ “Europa staar ligesaa høit over Asien, som Himmelen er over Jorden.” Bang, *Erindringer*, 376. My translation.

⁵ Gustaf Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem. Svenska Jerusalemföreningen 1900–1948* (Uppsala: Svenska Jerusalemföreningen, 2000), 13–4.

⁶ Jan-Olof Johansson and Sten Norin, *Född i Betlehem. Svenska Jerusalemföreningen etthundra år* (Ingelstad: Svenska Jerusalemföreningen, 2000), 2.

⁷ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 14.

⁸ Before 1918, Palestine was part of the Ottoman province Syria that included today's Palestine, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon. After World War I, this region was divided between France and Great Britain. The latter became the ruler of Palestine as a Mandate power.

across national borders took place,” on both social and ideational levels.⁹ These transnational arenas were characterized by a variety of local and foreign actors. As argued by historian Julia Hauser, the actors competed, cooperated, and appropriated each other’s approaches, or were connected by virtue of the mobility of students and teachers between establishments. In her study of the German Kaiserswerth Deaconesses in Beirut, Hauser shows how the missionary agenda inevitably was shaped by local circumstances and how it in practice underwent considerable transformation.¹⁰

This article examines Swedish missionary encounters in Palestine: it considers the ideas that propelled the mission and addresses the influence of other missions, as well as the local circumstances on the ground in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Swedish mission was shaped by the demands of the supporters back home in Sweden, as well as by the needs of the local community. All the while, the mission was navigating and responding to local practices and policies in Palestine under Ottoman and, later, British administration. This article investigates how all these factors influenced and transformed the agenda of the Swedish mission in Palestine.

The article is based on Swedish sources consisting of SJS journals, and reports and letters to the board in Uppsala from Signe Ekblad, the headmistress of the Swedish School in Jerusalem. While sources concerning the mission are plentiful, there are few sources pertaining to the local pupils, patients, and co-workers. Palestinian voices are heard only indirectly, through texts written by the Swedes. This demands careful reading of missionary texts.

Background: Protestant Missions in Palestine

The nineteenth century saw an increased European presence in Palestine – in both economic and religious terms – which had strong political overtones. France, Russia, Italy, Great Britain, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the United States, were vying for influence in the waning Ottoman Empire. The competing powers sought to establish a presence in the region, and, by extension, mission-based philanthropic institutions were encouraged. By 1900, such enterprises were common in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon.¹¹ Palestine, as Christ’s country of origin, held great spiritual and

⁹ Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, and Jacob Vogel. “Introduction,” in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere. Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*, eds. Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, and Jacob Vogel (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 2.

¹⁰ Julia Hauser, “From Transformation to Negation: A Female Mission in a ‘City of Schools,’” *Journal of World History*, September (2016): 476–7.

¹¹ Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Washington D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1993), 48.

religious attraction among Christians in Europe and North America. Catholic and Protestant missionaries came to Palestine with the goal of regaining the Holy Land by exerting religious, cultural, and philanthropic influence.¹²

The first foreign missionaries, who had settled in the region at the beginning of the seventeenth century, were Catholics; mostly of French origin. The Russians, via the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, were active in the province of Syria, especially in establishing schools for Arab Greek Orthodox children.¹³ Protestants did not start arriving in the region until the early nineteenth century.¹⁴ The motivations for establishing Protestant entrepreneurship in Palestine varied; some wanted to convert Jews, while others focused their attention on the Arab population.¹⁵

Great Britain and Prussia established the Protestant Jerusalemverein zu Berlin as an institutional base, in order to compete with the Russian and French presence in the region.¹⁶ This institutional base was created with the establishment of an Anglo-Prussian Episcopal See in Jerusalem in 1841 (which lasted until 1886). The Bishopric's main missionary task was the conversion of Jews, and it was not to infringe on the spiritual rights and liberties of the local churches.¹⁷ Work among

12 Uwe Kaminsky, "The Establishment of Nursing Care in the Parish. Kaiserswerth Deaconesses in Jerusalem," in *Deaconesses in Nursing Care. International Transfer of a Female Model of Life and Work in the 19th and 20th Century*, eds., Susanne Kreutzer, and Karen Nolte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 82; Roland Löffler, "The Metamorphosis of a Pietistic Missionary and Educational Institution into a Social Services Enterprise: The Case of the Syrian Orphanage (1860–1945)," in *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Heleen Murre-van Den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 153–4.

13 Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 273.

14 The first American Protestants from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived in Lebanon in 1819. See Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 274.

15 Cleveland and Bunton 2013: 46, 54–5. Russia and France had taken the lead in the race to gain influence by "protecting" local minorities. This was made possible through the Ottoman system of capitulations, a series of commercial treaties which allowed merchants from the Christian, European powers to trade freely in Ottoman ports. These treaties also granted extraterritorial privileges to European merchants, thus making them subject to European rather than Ottoman-Islamic law. An additional privilege was the right to grant certificates of protection to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. These certificates allowed their holders to receive the same protection that European nationals had. See also Anthony O'Mahony, "Palestine Christians: Religion, Politics and Society, c.1800–1948," in *Palestinian Christians. Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony, (London: Melisende, 1999), 17–40.

16 Kaminsky, "The Establishment of Nursing Care in the Parish," 82.

17 Charlotte van der Lest, "Conversion and Conflict in Palestine: The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant Bishop Samuel Gobat," (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2008), 270. The Bishopric built the first Protestant church in the Ottoman Empire – Christ Church – in Jerusalem, consecrated in 1849. The Anglo-Prussians found their own protégées, Jews and Protestants, who were placed under the political protection of Great Britain.

the Jewish community was also the focus of the British London Jews' Society (the LJS).¹⁸ The British Church Missionary Society (the CMS), on the other hand, focused on educational work among the Orthodox Christian communities.¹⁹ Both the LJS and the CMS were strongly evangelical, and low church Anglicans. This in contrast to The Jerusalem and the East Mission (the JEM), headed by the Anglican bishop George P. Blyth, who arrived in Jerusalem in 1888. The JEM was high church, and had a non-conversional approach to Muslims, as well as to Jews and Orthodox Christians.²⁰

The Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institution's *Orientalbeid* [Work in the Orient], was an important German Protestant organization that became an influential ally of the Swedish mission. The organization started providing nursing and educational services in Jerusalem in 1851, and this work developed into an independent educational institution for girls in 1868; the *Thalita Kumi*, which still exists today.²¹ The organization defined their vocation as evangelizing among the oriental churches. In addition, this vocation entailed the establishments of hospitals, orphanages, and schools.²²

Another key German Protestant mission institution in Palestine was The Syrian Orphanage, founded in 1860. It is important to note that while The Syrian Orphanage was the largest missionary institution in Palestine and a vital welfare institution for children, it also served as a social infrastructure for Prussian policy, according to historian Uwe Kaminsky.²³ Prussia – the united Germany from 1871 – was to play an exceptional role in the Ottoman Empire: German engineers constructed the railway-system in the Empire and German officers modernized the Ottoman army. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire became Germany's ally.

18 As Islamic law prohibited the building of new churches or synagogues, the church was ultimately allowed as the private chapel of the British consul. See 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), 278.

19 van der Lest, "Conversion and Conflict in Palestine," 270. The ultimate aim of the CMS was to convert Muslims. Since that was forbidden by law, however, their hope was that by influencing the Orthodox Christians by Protestantism – the "pure form of Christianity" – they would in turn convert Muslims.

20 Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure*," 278.

21 Kaminsky, "The Establishment of Nursing Care in the Parish," 83. Kaiserswerth *Orientalbeid* was founded in 1851 by Theodore Fliedner.

22 Kaminsky, "The Establishment of Nursing Care in the Parish," 84–5. In a similar manner to the Anglican CMS, the aim was internal reformation of the local Christian churches. Unlike the CMS, however, the Germans did not have proselytizing of Muslims as a goal.

23 Kaminsky, "The Establishment of Nursing Care in the Parish," 85. The Syrian Orphanage was founded by Johann Ludwig Schneller (1820–1896). It had to close down in 1940.

Sweden was the only Scandinavian country that established a national presence in Palestine.²⁴ Another Protestant establishment with strong Scandinavian connections, however, was The American Colony in Jerusalem, founded in 1881 by the Norwegian-American Anna Spafford and her American husband, Horatio Spafford. In 1896, 77 pre-millennialist Swedes and Swedish-Americans joined the colony. The members did not proselytize, but engaged in a number of economic enterprises as well as welfare work which was open to all religious communities in the city.²⁵ The connections were not close between the Swedish members of the American Colony and the SJS, as the confessional differences were too considerable, but von Schéele still wrote with sympathy about them in several articles in the SJS journal.²⁶

The established Christian churches in Palestine – the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic – as well as the leadership in the Jewish community, staunchly opposed the establishment of a Protestant presence in Palestine. The Ottoman authorities shared this view and attempted to ban the first Protestant missionaries in the Empire. Even so, after having had to rely on military support from Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria in the war against Egyptian ruler Muhammed Ali (who had conquered the province of Syria) in 1841, the Western powers forced the Ottoman Government to open up for Western missions. From now on, a large number of Protestant missionaries arrived in Ottoman lands to “save the people of the East,” where Islam’s power was seen as declining and the Orthodox Churches as “corrupted.”

The missionaries faced major obstacles in their attempts to convert locals. Christian mission was not allowed among the Muslim population, as conversion to Christianity was forbidden for Muslims. Christian missions were allowed to work and were permitted to attempt to convert Orthodox Christians and Jews. The consequences for members of the Orthodox churches and Jews who converted were brutal, however, and could result in persecution and social expulsion. Encountering the realities of the Ottoman world, evangelization increasingly had to give way to a diaconical

24 In the desert, north of Damascus, the Danes Johanne Svanenskjold, Einar Prip, and Rudolf Fox Maule, founded Østerlandsmissionen [The Eastern Lands Mission] in 1898. Caroline Synnes Slattem, “Misjon, kjønn og modernisering. Danske kvinnelige misjonærers utdanningsprosjekt i Syria, 1900-1960” (MA thesis, Volda University College, 2012). English summary: <https://bravo.hivolda.no/hivolda-xmlui/handle/11250/2612388>. Denmark was represented in Palestine for a few years by the couple Maria and Oluf Høyer, who established a small, independent and short-lived mission in Hebron. Daniel Henschen, “Kaldets Verden. En historie om missionsbevægelsen i Danmark fra 1890 til 1950,” (PhD diss., University of Southern Denmark, 2017), 265.

25 Abigail Jacobson, “American ‘Welfare Politics’: American Involvement in Jerusalem During World War I,” *Israeli Studies* 18, no. 1 (2013): 266; Helene Murre-van Den Berg, “‘Our Jerusalem’: Bertha Spafford Vester and Christianity in Palestine During the British Mandate,” in *Britain, Palestine and the Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 276. See also Chapter 22 (Jenny Bergenmar), 448–65; Chapter 23 (Dana Caspi), 466–91; and Chapter 24 (Rachel Lev), 492–511.

26 Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 32.

dimension of Christian mission. This meant that missionaries began to prioritize the development of health clinics, hospitals, schools, and kindergartens.²⁷

What did the Swedish Jerusalem Society envision as their main vocation in Palestine? How did this image change when encountering the reality on the ground? What was the organization's policy on the relationship between evangelization and humanitarian practice?

The Swedish Jerusalem Society

In 1900 in Storkyrkan in Stockholm, twelve men from the upper echelon of Swedish society founded The Swedish Jerusalem Society. These twelve founding fathers – we do not know if the number was intentional – were inspired by new evangelical movements, in particular the British Lord Radstock. They belonged to the elite of society and had strong links to the Swedish royal family. The organization was to be modelled upon the German *Jerusalemsverein*. Even so, King Oscar II, who became the SJS' "high protector," insisted on the independence of the organization. The SJS must not be part of the German organization, but represent the Swedish nation. One reason might have been Sweden-Norway's position as a small state independent of international alliances. In practical terms, the SJS was to have close connections with the German Kaiserwerth's Deaconess Institution and the Syrian Orphanage in the years before 1918.²⁸

In January 1902, the SJS published the first edition of their magazine, "Svenska Jerusalemsföreningens Tidskrift" ["The Swedish Jerusalem Society Journal"]. By the end of that year, the organization had 800 members, mostly from the upper middle class, including many ministers from the Swedish state church and their wives. There were also a number of Swedish-American members, which indicates close connections between members of the SJS board and Swedish churches in the United States. After ten years, in 1913, the number of members had more than doubled and now included a wider social group with male and female teachers as well as school principals. There was still a strong link to Swedish-American congregations, who counted more than 100 members in the United States.²⁹

²⁷ Barbara Reeves-Ellington, *Gender Reform, and American Interventions in the Ottoman Balkans and the near East* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 104; Ellen Fleischmann, "Evangelization or Education: American Protestant Missionaries, the American Board, and the Girls and Women of Syria (1830–1910)," in *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Heleen Murre-van Den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 264; Okkenhaug, "The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure," 278.

²⁸ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 15.

²⁹ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 19, 38.

The SJS in Palestine

On his way back from Palestine in 1898, von Schéele had envisioned that the Swedes would engage in medical mission among the poor in Jerusalem. More specifically, he wanted to help the many people who suffered from eye disease; a form of health work that would also have biblical associations.³⁰ It turned out, however, that there already were established eye-clinics in Palestine. Experienced German colleagues at the Kaiserwerth's Deaconess Institution and The Syrian Orphanage recommended the Swedes to focus on education for young children – a kindergarten and a school based in Jerusalem – as an indirect way of evangelizing.³¹

The SJS started out as a mission to Jews. Twenty-five years earlier, in 1875, pious men had established the Swedish Israel mission; an organization with which von Schéele had close ties. Moved by the idea that the Jews, while being God's chosen people, were not saved until they were baptized, the Israel-mission aimed at converting Jews to Christianity. It was also believed that Jews were to have a special role at the end of time. Thus, converting Jews was of the utmost importance.³² The SJS shared this goal to convert Jews, yet decided that they would be active only in Palestine and only through schools and medical mission. This would prevent them from competing with the Israel-mission that proselytized among Jews in Europe.³³

The first SJS missionary, Henrik Steen, was himself a converted East European Jew. Steen had been ordained as a minister in the Church of Sweden and he defined his vocation as proselytizing among Jews. Even so, when Steen came to Jerusalem in 1900, he soon discovered that the Jewish population did not welcome a former Jew to preach the Christian gospel. In the same manner as other evangelizing projects among Jews, Steen's work was a failure. Steen also met hindrances in his attempt at establishing a school for Arab children, as had been recommended by German colleagues. The SJS board had originally thought that he could spend a few months learning Arabic and then begin teaching. This plan turned out to be unrealistic: not only was it impossible to learn enough Arabic to be able to teach in a few months, there was also an unforeseen gendered aspect of this project. In Ottoman society, only women could teach small children. Steen turned to the Kaiserwerth Deaconesses and they found a young, female, Christian Arab teacher willing to teach at the Swedish school, which was opened not far from the Damascus Gate.³⁴

³⁰ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 16.

³¹ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 20–2.

³² "J Birger Pernow," *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, accessed September 20, 2017, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/Sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=7095>.

³³ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 21–2.

³⁴ Letter from Henrik Steen to SJS, Jerusalem, September 16, 1902. Published in Johansson and Norin, *Född i Betlehem. Svenska Jerusalemsföreningen etthundra år*, 148–9.

Henrik Steen left Palestine in 1902, apparently disappointed in the lack of progress in evangelization among the Jews. The SJS board now decided to establish a medical mission in Bethlehem; again after advice from their German contacts.³⁵ A young medical doctor, Gustaf Ribbing, with a calling to devote himself to “Christian medical work among the heathens” seemed to be godsent to begin work in Bethlehem. After taking his language exams in French, required by Ottoman authorities for foreign health personnel, Ribbing, and his wife Elsa and their two children, arrived in Bethlehem in 1904.³⁶

The Ribbings established a small polyclinic in hired buildings in Bethlehem. Soon, however, the need for a larger operation became evident, and Ribbing suggested that the SJS build a hospital. One argument was the lack of state health clinics in the Ottoman province. In addition, there was the competition from the Catholic medical missions in the area. There was already a hospital in Bethlehem run by Catholics, yet even the Catholic doctor in charge of this hospital agreed that it was of essential importance to establish another mission hospital.³⁷ The need for expansion was evidenced by the number of patients the Swedish doctor was treating, with 12,956 treatments at the polyclinic, 187 operations, and 705 home visits in 1905. A year later, in 1906, Ribbing was able to open a small hospital in rented buildings. In 1907, there were two Swedish nurses working in the hospital. The same year, after much bureaucratic hassle, the SJS bought a plot of land in order to build a hospital.³⁸

The Swedish Consul General in Jerusalem, Professor Gustaf Dalman, became a crucial ally for Ribbing in the process of expanding the medical mission. Dalman, who was a German theologian with connections to Sweden, was the first director of the German Protestant Institute of Archeology (DEIAHL). After his visit to Jerusalem in 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II had requested that the German Protestant church establish an archaeological institute in Palestine. This institute was founded in 1900, in order to promote “the exploration of the Holy Land and its diverse past, cultures, and religions.”³⁹

Dalman was also a key figure in the European community in Palestine, and, because of Germany’s favoured position with Ottoman authorities, he was able to help with the plans for building the Swedish hospital. Even so, the construction work did not start until November 1913. The inauguration day, November 6, was chosen symbolically as it was the Swedish flag day; *Gustav Adolfsdagen* [Gustavus

³⁵ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 25.

³⁶ Betlehemsdoktorn. “Betlehemsdoktorn – The Bethlehem Doctor,” accessed November 20, 2018, <http://betlehemsdoktorn.se/>.

³⁷ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 26.

³⁸ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 27.

³⁹ Das Deutsche Evangelische Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes, “Welcome to the GPIA Jerusalem/Amman,” accessed September 23, 2018, <http://www.deiahl.de/history.html>; “Gustav Dalman’s Glass Slide Collection.” <http://www.deiahl.de/dalmans-glass-slides.html>

Adolphus Day]. On inauguration day, several Ottoman and European dignitaries were present; Swedish and Turkish flags were hoisted, and Swedish music was played by a local brass band. It was a transnational event: a Swedish-Ottoman encounter across national borders.

The Swedish hospital also became a transnational arena. In addition to Gustaf Ribbing, two Swedish nurses, and one Matron, the staff consisted of an Arab doctor, a German Deaconess from the Deaconess institution in Jerusalem, an English Bible woman, one cook, one female assistant, and a (male) farm-help; all Arabs. In addition, two Arab protestant ministers worked part time preaching for the patients.⁴⁰ Ribbing also wanted to evangelize, but he needed a translator in order to talk to the patients, who were Orthodox Christian and Muslim Arabs. The hospital, which in 1913 treated close to 3,000 patients, had no Jewish patients.⁴¹ This was not as a result of a planned strategy, but a consequence of the fact that there were no Jews living in Bethlehem.

The Swedish School in Jerusalem, 1902–1922

The Swedish school opened in October 1902, providing a kindergarten and the first two years of primary school for girls. Soon there were around 70 to 80 children attending the Swedish institution: the majority were Christian Arabs and in addition there were a few Muslim girls.

A German deaconess, Martha Klaer from Thalita Kumi, aided headmistress Afifa Sliman in the running of the school. The German deaconess regularly wrote reports about the school that were published in the SJS journal. The German influence was also palpable when a German minister from the Jerusalemverein inaugurated the school. Bishop von Schéele made an attempt to mark the school as Swedish by telling the supporters at home that the pupils' first wish was to have a portrait – an oil painting – of King Oscar II with his crown on. A girls' school in Stockholm responded to the bishop's call and started fundraising for a painting of the king. Despite the attempt to get King Oscar's portrait on the wall, the only direct Swedish participation in the school was providing funding for teachers. This was in addition to the SJS members who sent gifts to the children, especially at Christmas. The board and supporters at home requested a more direct Swedish involvement in the school. This was achieved in 1909, when the school obtained its first Swedish headmistress, Helfrid Willén. This same year, in 1909, Ottoman authorities officially recognized the school as the *École de la Société de Jérusalem* [The Jerusalem Society School]. The Swedish school had now become an official part of the Ottoman educational system.⁴²

⁴⁰ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 37.

⁴¹ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 30.

⁴² Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 28–9.

World War, the SJS, and the Future of Palestine

When the war broke out in 1914, Gustav Ribbing and his family were on leave in Sweden and they were unable to return to Palestine. The rest of the Swedish staff returned to Sweden in November 1914. Even so, the hospital managed to keep open due to its Arab and German staff, in addition to a German missionary doctor. The doctor's daughter, Gertrud Einsler worked as head of the Swedish school.

Back in Sweden, Ribbing, and several others from the Swedish staff in Bethlehem, gave talks about Palestine and the SJS. The Swedish housekeeper in Bethlehem, Helfrid Jönsson, published a pamphlet with photographs under the heading "On Holy Days in Jerusalem and Bethlehem" in 1916. The publication – sold to fund future work in Palestine – described how Christian Arabs celebrated Christmas in Bethlehem and how Christian Arabs and Jews celebrated Easter in Jerusalem.⁴³

During the war, the changing political realities in Palestine were on the SJS' agenda. In 1917, an article entitled "The Jews in Palestine and the Future of the Country," by Gustaf Dalman, was published in "Svenska Jerusalem förenings Tidskrift." In this long article, Dalman praised Jewish colonization of the country and especially Baron Rotschild's role in the organization and funding of Jewish immigration. Dalman, however, was very critical towards Jewish mass immigration to Palestine. He emphasized that it was simply not true that "Palestine was a land without people." The country was small, geographically, and would not be able to feed a large number of people. Dalman provided a positive view of the Arab population, and he appears to have been given the role of spokesman for the SJS, who thus joined Dalman in his stand against the political Zionist movement and its claim to settlement in Palestine.⁴⁴ The SJS continued this policy after the war, and their sympathy grew for the Arab population's rights during the years under British rule.

During the British Mandate, from 1918 to 1948, Great Britain was to rely heavily on private agents, and especially missionaries, for providing health and educational services in Palestine. What role did the SJS carve out for École de la Société de Jérusalem in this new, post-war landscape?

Post War Years in Palestine: The Swedish School 1902–1922

Since the arrival of the Ribbings, in 1903, the medical mission in Bethlehem had dominated the SJS work in Palestine. This was to change during the Mandate Period. In

⁴³ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 39.

⁴⁴ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 40–1. Balfour Declaration, November 1917.

1925, financial problems forced the SJS board to close the hospital.⁴⁵ The school in Jerusalem, however, could continue, in part, due to a large testimonial gift from the widow of Bishop von Schéele, Gustava von Schéele, who died in 1925. The gift was earmarked for the school in Jerusalem and explicitly assigned to the purchase of a building in Jerusalem suitable for a school.⁴⁶ This was a most welcome gift. When the new headmistress, Signe Ekblad (1894–1952) arrived in Jerusalem in 1922, she described the condition of the Swedish school as appalling. Ekblad's vision of what was expecting her in Jerusalem did not match the realities on the ground. This had also been the case when Henrik Steen encountered the realities of Jerusalem. Unlike her predecessor, however, Ekblad did not give up and return home.

The Headmistress Signe Ekblad

Signe Ekblad was born into a middle class, low-church family in Stockholm. She was trained as a teacher and later in life, after several years in Palestine, she received an MA in Semitic languages at Uppsala University. In an autobiographical text, she describes her decision to become a teacher in Jerusalem as a religious calling. She writes that her calling was to embody a Christian spirit through practical deeds and humanitarian work. Ekblad's calling was clearly also inspired by the Swedish settlement movement's work among poor industrial workers. From 1912 to 1915, Ekblad had worked and lived at the settlement Birkagården, in the poor, inner area of Stockholm.⁴⁷ Her interest in social work was aroused during this period and her stay at Birkagården profoundly influenced her future work in Jerusalem.⁴⁸

Birkagården had its supporters among the radical, Christian, cultural, and intellectual elite in Sweden. Social Christianity, with an emphasis on reconciliation between the classes and self-help rather than charity, were the central points of this movement. One of the founders, the Swedish minister Natanael Beskow – who was married to the famous author and illustrator of children's books, Elsa Beskow – encouraged well-educated Swedish youth to be inspired by the life, practice, and tolerance of Jesus. The settlement movement contributed significantly to the establishment of the welfare

⁴⁵ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 40–1. During the war years, the building of the Swedish hospital had continued in Bethlehem. Before he was able to return to Palestine, Gustav Ribbing died in the Spanish flu in October 1918. In 1923, a new missionary doctor, Edmond Lindholm, who had worked for the Red Cross as a doctor in war-camps, succeeded Ribbing at the SJS hospital.

⁴⁶ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 43, 49.

⁴⁷ Birkagården, established by Swedish minister Natanael Bewskow and Ebba Pauli, was inspired by the work of the British settlement movement in the slums of inner London.

⁴⁸ Inger Marie Okkenhaug, "Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna: Signe Ekblad, jorsalsfarer, lærer og misjonær," in *Religiøse reiser: Mellom gamle spor og nye mål*, eds., Siv-Ellen Kraft and Ingvild S. Gilhus (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2007), 126.

state, both in the UK and in Sweden.⁴⁹ This ideology influenced Ekblad's understanding of her mission in Palestine.

The Swedish School during the British Mandate

The SJS mission board had decided that the new headmistress needed to devote the first six months to the study of Arabic, before she took over the school full time. Ekblad, however, allowed herself only one month to learn Arabic. She then took full responsibility of the school and its 62 children. Of these, 43 were Greek Catholic, 8 were Protestant, 7 were Muslim, and 4 were Roman Catholic. The teachers were Arab Christians, as the German staff had left after the war. Did the Swedish school have a role to play in a British ruled Palestine? This was the main question the mission board in Uppsala expected Ekblad to answer in her first report to her employers.

Palestinian society suffered immense losses during World War I, which led to a restructuring of gender roles. As soldiers, men were the main victims, and under these extreme conditions women now assumed the role as head of family.⁵⁰ The fact that women became head of households changed local views on women's possibilities in life. This led to increased acceptance of women's education and employment in Palestine. After 1918, the Anglican schools had waiting lists for girls. There was clearly a need for the education of girls. Ekblad wrote back to her employers that the Mandatory school system welcomed the Swedish school for Arab girls. It had to be, however, "a good school with a good kindergarten."⁵¹ Under Ekblad's leadership, the Swedish school became one of the most prestigious schools in Mandatory Palestine.

How did local demand in Jerusalem, and the British political framework, influence the development of the Swedish school? How did the Swedish school have a direct bearing on the local population?

A School for Arab or Jewish Pupils?

As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman government awarded official recognition to the Swedish school in 1909. The British authorities also recognized the school and, from 1922, the Swedish institution received state funding in a similar manner to

⁴⁹ See Katherine Bentley Beumann, *Women and the Settlement Movement* (London, New York: Radcliffe Press, 1996), 260; Birkagården, "Välkomna till glädje och gemenskap i ett aktivt hus," accessed October 3, 2018, <http://www.birkagarden.se>. See also Chapter 27 (Anna Bohlin), 540–9.

⁵⁰ See for example Talha M. Çiçek, ed. *Syria in World War I: Politics, Economy, and Society* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁵¹ Signe Ekblad, *Lyckliga arbetsår i Jerusalem* (Uppsala: Svenska Jerusalemsföreningen, 1949), 263.

other private schools under Mandate rule. The school was thus part of the British Mandate's educational system. The Jewish society in Palestine was expanding, and, by comparison, the Jews had a much better educational system than the Arab population. When building the Jewish (Zionist) society, priority was given to educating Jewish children in Hebrew schools. The British educational system, which was responsible for Arab schools, never became substantial enough to cater to all Arab children. As a result of state policy, many girls had no public school to attend. Official policy routed girls into private and mostly religious schools, while offering more support for boys' public education. During the Mandate, the only higher state education accessible to Arab girls were two teachers' colleges.⁵² This was the nationalistic and gendered reality on the ground, which Ekblad had to consider when developing a strategy for the Swedish school. A reality that did not necessarily correspond, however, with the ideas and aspirations entertained by the board and supporters in Sweden for a mission in Jerusalem.

Mission supporters in Sweden and in North America, who cherished the idea of proselytizing among Jews, questioned the lack of Jewish children attending the Swedish school.⁵³ Ekblad answered these critical voices by referring to an analysis of the British government's educational policy in the country. The Jewish population had schools for most of its children, both boys and girls. In contrast, only 41 percent of Arab boys and 18 percent of Arab girls had the opportunity to go to school.⁵⁴ Such facts, Ekblad concluded, indicated that the Arabs undoubtedly needed help in developing their educational system. Ekblad's interpretation of the SJS' mission was defined by local educational needs. She told critical supporters in Sweden that "we are needed among the Arabs."⁵⁵ As we have seen, work among Jews, in reality, had never been part of the SJS' work in Palestine. Neither Orthodox Jews nor secular Zionists welcomed Christian mission, and a mission aimed at proselytizing among Jews would have meant an existence on the very margins of Palestinian society. This was contrary to Ekblad's understanding of the SJS' role in Palestine, which she perceived should be to administer a well-run, modern, and ambitious school for Arab girls. A steady increase in pupils spurred Ekblad's ambition. It was clear that they met a real need among the Arab population. Ekblad's ambitions were shared by Hol Lars Larsson (Lewis Larson), the Swedish Consul General in Jerusalem, who became an important, local ally in the realization of this Swedish educational project.

Before the war, the SJS had relied on the assistance of Gustaf Dalman, the Swedish Consul General in Jerusalem, in their dealings with Ottoman officials. Hol

⁵² Okkenhaug, "The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure," 278.

⁵³ Inger Marie Okkenhaug, "Signe Ekblad and the Swedish School in Jerusalem, 1922–1948," *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 2 (2006): 279. Svenska Jerusalem förenings Tidsskrift, no. 3 (1924): 101–3.

⁵⁴ Ellen Fleischmann, *The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 38.

⁵⁵ Ekblad, *Lyckliga arbetsår i Jerusalem*, 145.

Lars Larsson, who succeeded Dalman in 1921, became crucial to Ekblads efforts. Larsson, born in Sweden, had come to Jerusalem with his mother and siblings as part of the group of religious emigrants from Nås, whom had joined the American Colony in the 1890s. Since Larsson had grown up in Jerusalem he was well connected locally. Larsson recognized the Swedish Schools's potential, and saw that it could expand and become a large educational institution for Arabs. His support was pivotal in Ekblad's endeavours to expand, and he aided in the purchase of land intended for the construction of a new school.⁵⁶

The Swedish School in Mandatory Palestine

With the support of General Consular Larsson, Ekblad convinced a skeptical board in Uppsala that building a new and large school was a sustainable project that would be worthwhile for the SJS. Ekblad had spent her summer vacations fundraising in Sweden, and had won the support and admiration of the Governor of Jerusalem, Edward Keith-Roach.⁵⁷ In 1926, the SJS bought a building suitable for a school on a large plot of land outside the city wall. In December, the same year, Ekblad wrote an article in the SJS journal about the move to the new school building. Her article was written as a letter to the author Selma Lagerlöf, and it was first published in "Idun" [Norse goddess of youth], a Swedish weekly newspaper for "women and the home." Idun's readers were women from the middle and upper middle classes. Ekblad succeeded in creating widespread attention for her educational project, and eventually the idea of a school in Jerusalem reverberated in Swedish society. In 1927, as part of the funding campaign for the new school, the weekly journal "Husmodern" ["The Housewife"], published a petition signed by four of the most significant women in Swedish society at the time. These four were Anna Söderblom, who was married to the Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, known for his liberal theology and ecumenical work; Countess Elsa Bernadotte af Wisborg, a granddaughter of King Oscar II and head of the Swedish YMCA; the earlier mentioned author and artist Elsa Beskow who was married to the radical minister Nathaniel Beskow; and Selma Lagerlöf who in 1909 had been the first female writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. In the petition, these four women encouraged their fellow Swedes to support the SJS' work in Jerusalem, in order to give the children of Jerusalem "a good and Christian upbringing."⁵⁸

"A good and Christian upbringing" in this context meant an educational program based on liberal or even radical Lutheran, Swedish, practical theology. To some

56 *Svenska Jerusalemsföreningens Tidskrift*, no. 4 (1926): 182–8

57 Okkenhaug, "Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna," 129.

58 Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 50–1.

extent this was linked to the SJS' practice in Palestine before the war, but during the Mandate period the SJS saw an explicit transfer from evangelization to socio-cultural influence. At the Swedish school, every day began and ended with a prayer and the singing of a psalm. All students had to attend lessons in Christianity, despite the fact that half of the pupils came from non-Christian homes. Even so, there were no attempts at proselytizing. Ekblad's aim was to create "harmonious, Christian human beings." It was a practical mission ideal that was accepted by most of the SJS' members. Even so, some of the members criticized Ekblad for tasking local Arab staff with teaching Christianity. Ekblad's reason for not teaching Christianity herself, was that the local teachers knew the Arab children and their world in a way she and other foreigners never would.⁵⁹

Time was precious for Ekblad, which was probably another reason why she did not spend it on teaching Christianity. The Swedish headmistress had great ambitions and envisioned a school that offered an education equal to, or better than, the British schools. These grand designs demanded a devoted headmistress able to cater to different kinds of practical and organizational issues. In addition, the headmistress had to nurture connections with the British colonial administration. In 1928, when the new school building was finished (Figs. 26.2, 26.3), Ekblad invited the Director of Education in Palestine, Humphrey Bowman, to assess the school and its surroundings. Bowman was full of praise for the new buildings and emphasized the significance of the school for Arab girls in the city.⁶⁰ Ekblad's success in making the Swedish school into one of the best Christian pedagogical schools for Arab children in Palestine was not only recognized by the Department of Education, but also by the Swedish minister in Cairo, Baron Harald Bildt, who earlier had advised against the building of a new school. Bildt now praised Ekblad for her impressive educational work in Jerusalem.⁶¹

One important reason for this success was Ekblad's insistence that the standard for the school in Jerusalem should be equal to that of primary education in Sweden. Buildings and furniture, for example, should meet the same high standard as schools in Sweden. Ekblad had oak furniture and textiles sent from Sweden, and she made sure that the building was furnished according to Swedish ideals with beautiful Swedish handcrafts and design. Elsa Beskow, the famous Swedish author and illustrator of children's books, was commissioned to design the school emblem. Copies of paintings by Carl Larsson – another famous Swede – hung in the classrooms. The Swedish element was underscored by the Swedish Christmas celebrations that took place at the school every year. Ekblad made sure that a pine tree was sent from Gothenburg and decorated, upon arrival, according to Swedish traditions. For the

⁵⁹ Okkenhaug, "Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna," 130.

⁶⁰ *Svenska Jerusalemsföreningens Tidsskrift*, no. 3 (1930): 93–5.

⁶¹ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 44.

Fig. 26.2: Signe Ekblad and children by The Swedish School's foundation stone, March, 1928. Inscription on the stone: "Grundsten lagd den 23. Mars 1928 [also in Arabic]". Copyright: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

celebrations a whole host of red Christmas candles were lit, and there were gifts for all the children.

The Swedish Christmas Party became an extremely popular and sought-after event in Jerusalem. During Christmas, in 1930, Ekblad and her staff hosted 500 guests over three days. In addition to school children and staff, the guests included parents, both Christians and Muslims, and the people from the British Mandate administration. So as to not offend the custom of gender segregation, the fathers of the children were invited together with European guests.⁶²

The school continued to grow and by 1930 there were 150 pupils in the Kindergarten and the primary school (Fig. 26.4). The boys had to leave the school at the age of 9–10 years, when they continued their education in another mission school (often Anglican) or in a state school. The girls, who continued in the "higher school," left for similar institutions after the fourth or fifth grade at the age of thirteen or fourteen. The staff consisted of seven Arab teachers and one Swedish volunteer, in

⁶² Okkenhaug, "Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna," 128–9.

Fig. 26.3: The Swedish School. Inscription on the wall: "Svenska Skolan. Byggt 1928. Jesus sade: låten barnen komma till mig" ["The Swedish School. Built 1928. Jesus said: Let the children come to me"]. Copyright: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

addition to Ekblad. All were female. In the 1940s, the number had increased to 200–250 pupils with a staff of ten Arab and two Swedish female teachers. As head of the school, Ekblad spent most of her time on administration, and the Arab teachers did most of the teaching. English was taught, but Arabic was the main language of instruction. This was contrary to practice in English and French mission schools, where most of the teaching was conducted in English or French.⁶³ The Swedish school thus had a profound local connection with a mostly Arab teaching staff and Arabic as the language of instruction. This deep attachment to the community also had a social and humanitarian aspect.

Humanitarian Work at the Swedish School

In order to attend the Swedish school the pupils had to pay a fee. Consequently, the children came from Arab middle- and upper-middle-class homes who could afford the school fee. The majority of these children were Christian. Even so, Ekblad also

⁶³ Okkenhaug, "Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna," 131.

wanted to include girls from the poorer, Muslim neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. True to her background, from the settlement movement and the welfare work in the poorest neighbourhoods in Stockholm, Ekblad established a course for girls who could not afford schooling. The course consisted of basic Arabic and English, as well as sewing. She herself characterized this class as “significant social work.” In practical terms, it was a “help to self-help” project, aimed at enabling women to support their families financially. The girls were ten to twelve years old, and they did not have much previous schooling. They were allowed to attend the course until they got married. The forty to fifty girls, who were often undernourished, were given a meal at school and they received treatment for trachoma. This health care was expanded after some time, and the school offered all pupils treatment. The health department recognized the importance of this healthcare, and the school eventually received a relatively large sum from Jerusalem’s public administration budget.⁶⁴

The late 1930s was a time of severe political and social crisis in Palestine, which culminated with the Arab uprising that lasted from 1936 to 1939. In 1938, after two years with unrest and violent clashes between Arab forces and the Mandate government, the Arab staff and Ekblad organized a soup kitchen for the girls in the sewing class (Fig. 26.1). These girls came from families that lived in the poorest Muslim neighbourhoods in the old city. The soup kitchen was soon expanded to also include feeding the girls’ mothers and younger siblings. Around one hundred children from other schools, as well as their mothers and younger sisters and brothers, also received food at the Swedish school. Ten years later, during the war of 1947–48 the Arab staff, some of the older pupils, and Ekblad, again organized soup kitchens for the poor in the old city.⁶⁵ This relief work is yet another example of local demands influencing the mission-project. The situation of local people and an inadequate government welfare system had a direct bearing on the policy of the Swedish school’s activities.

After the end of World War II, the exacerbated conflict between the Arab and Jewish populations ended in civil war (1947–48). Great Britain decided to leave Palestine (1948) and handed over the task to the United Nations of finding a future for Arabs and Jews in this war-torn country. In March 1948, the SJS board in Uppsala ordered Signe Ekblad to leave Palestine. The Arab staff would stay on and keep the school open as long as possible. During the fighting, the school building was damaged and plundered. With the new political realities that followed after 1948, when the Swedish school became part of the state of Israel, the SJS decided to close down the school.

The SJS was not able to return to former Palestine before 1959. This time they took over a girls’ school from the Lutheran congregation in Bethlehem, which was

⁶⁴ Okkenhaug, “Att avresa till Jerusalem som lärarinna,” 280.

⁶⁵ Ekblad, *Lyckliga arbetsår i Jerusalem*, 145.

Fig. 26.4: Physical education outdoors, c.1930. The Swedish Jerusalem Society's School.
Copyright: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

renamed the Good Shepherd's Swedish School. The same year they also re-opened their hospital in Bethlehem. This hospital, now named Hussein bin Talal's Hospital, is today a regional hospital financed by the SJS – which is still active – and the Palestinian authorities.⁶⁶ The Good Shepherd's Swedish School, with its 300 pupils, is among the most important Palestinian girls' schools today.⁶⁷

Conclusion

While the SJS started out as a mission to the Jews and Christian Arabs, their missionary agenda – which was impacted by local factors and other mission organizations – was transformed into education and health work among the Arab population. After World War I, under British rule, the SJS's mission in Palestine developed into a large, prestigious school in Jerusalem. In addition, the SJS undertook significant welfare

⁶⁶ Björk, *Sverige i Jerusalem och Betlehem*, 59.

⁶⁷ Swedish Jerusalem Society, "Välkommen till Svenska Jerusalemsföreningen," accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.jerusalemsforeningen.se/>.

and relief projects that were established as a response to poverty among Jerusalem's poorest Arab inhabitants.

During the first period of Swedish presence in Palestine, from 1900 to 1918, the SJS arenas were characterized by dynamic interactions between three different parties: Swedes, German Protestants, and Christian Arabs. The Swedes and Germans represented a small, Western minority, while the Arabs, who represented the majority in this encounter, had various roles as teachers, workers, cooks, ministers, patients, pupils, and parents. The same applied to the period between 1922 to 1948, when the Swedish establishment in Jerusalem had a substantial majority of Arab teachers, housekeepers, pupils, and parents, and only three to four Swedish teachers. Even if local protagonists substantially outnumbered the Swedes, the encounters between Swedes and Palestinians took place within inherent asymmetries of power and Western dominance. During the British mandate, the head position at the Swedish school was always Swedish. Signe Ekblad, however, was never part of the Mandate ruling society, and local demands, the agency of local protagonists, as well as the dynamics between the Arab staff and the Swedish headmistress, were decisive in shaping the ideology and practice of this Swedish institution in Jerusalem.

The SJS' non-proselytizing, humanitarian approach found widespread support among the Swedish upper and middle classes. In Sweden, the lack of state welfare initiatives had inspired liberal Christians to establish welfare institutions for the poor. Transmitting this model to Palestine, Swedish and Arab Christian teachers provided modern welfare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem during a time of rapid change in Palestine.