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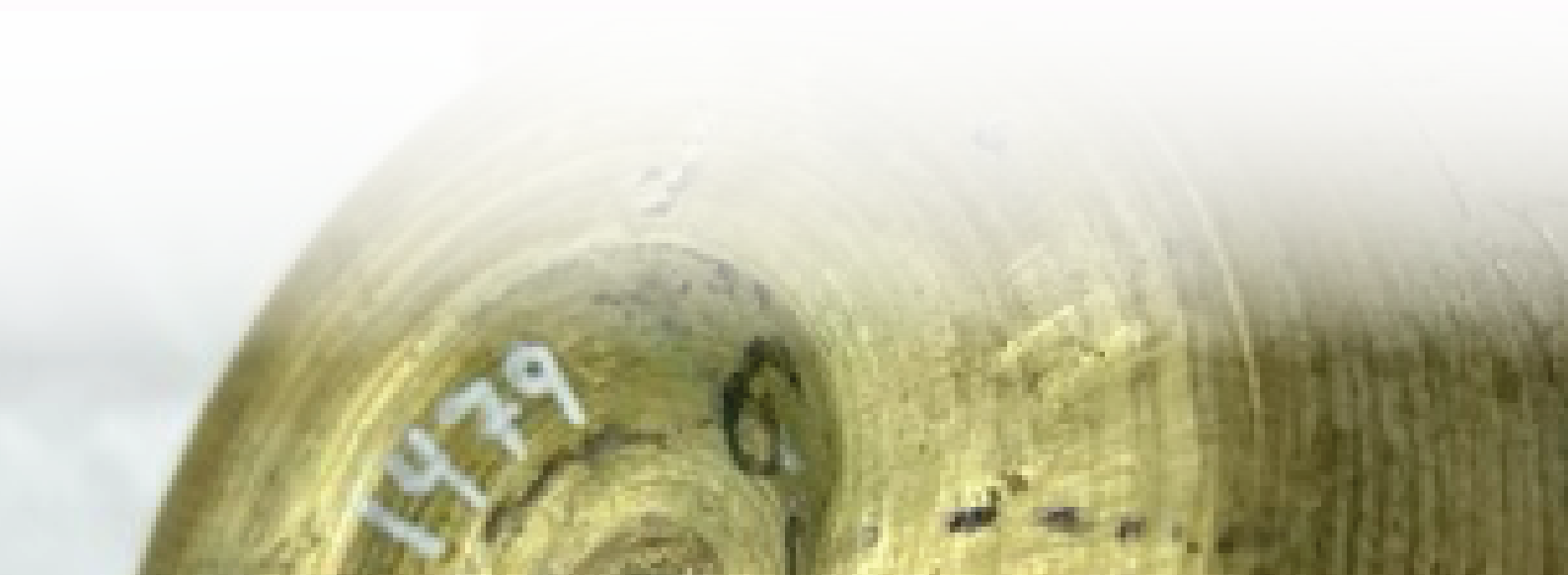

Struggle and Survival in Palestine/Israel

Edited by

Mark LeVine and Gershon Shafir

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To Alessandro, Francesca, Elliot, and Asher, for the stories they have yet to tell

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“A Son of the Country”

Dr. Tawfiq Canaan, Modernist Physician and Palestinian Ethnographer

Philippe Bourmaud

Just a few months before the death of the Beit Jala-born physician Dr. Tawfiq Canaan, on January 15, 1964, the German journal *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* paid homage to its many-times contributor by publishing an extensive, if incomplete, list of his writings. The bibliography of about a hundred books and articles, short and long, published in European languages, was an appropriate tribute to the book-l oving Canaan. For thirty years or so, he would remain hardly more than a footnote in Palestinian history, in spite of Palestinian ethnographers’ acknowledged indebtedness to his works. Yet from the 1970s onward, he would be called the father of Palestinian ethnography, and in the 1990s his work would inspire festivals in the cities under Palestinian autonomy. In turn, this led to a reassessment of his biography by Palestinian and other researchers, who gave greater importance to his medical work and his political activity while also showing that Palestinian ethnography had had many a midwife. Out of a footnote, a conflict of interpretations has grown.

During his lifetime, Canaan was a man of some eminence in Palestinian society under the Mandate, a famed physician and an opinionated man of significant political activity. He promoted the writing down of Palestinian Arab folklore and thus provided a later generation with the wherewithal to assert a different kind of Palestinian cultural nationalism, one based on core elements of Palestinian heritage such as the kaffiyeh, the *dabkeh*, and the Palestinian peasant experience.

Canaan's concern for the peasants and Bedouins of the country appears to have been sincere and motivated by his sense of the great cultural loss happening under his very eyes. Modernization, as he saw it, was most desirable; still, it was changing the landscape and erasing practices and beliefs which he viewed as quite as ancient as the Bible, if not more. Jewish immigration not only accelerated the pace of transformation but—Canaan argued—made Palestinian Arabs feel alien to the new community that was evolving next to them. These ideas were not uncommon among the Palestinian Arab educated class. But Canaan's upbringing made him feel them especially acutely, and he nurtured a desire to salvage through ethnography what he saw as a specifically national cultural heritage. His background, medical training, and early professional experience drew the guidelines of an intellectual project which he adhered

to throughout his life.

THE SON OF THE PASTOR

Tawfiq Canaan was born in the Christian village of Beit Jala, a few miles south of Jerusalem, on September 24, 1882, the son of a Protestant Christian family. His father, Bishara Canaan, was one of the first Arab Protestant pastors in the country. He was a Lutheranist and as such a member of a very small and recent community: the bulk of Protestant missionary activity in Palestine had been accomplished from 1841 onward by diverse societies within the framework of the Anglo-Protestant Bishopric of Jerusalem, which was the result of a compromise between the Church of England and the Lutheran Church of Prussia. When Bishop Barclay, the last man to hold the bishopric, died in 1881, Anglican missionaries and their Lutheranist counterparts parted ways, and small Lutheran communities began to emerge under the protection of imperial Germany.

In Beit Jala, there was a competition for the hearts and souls of the Arab parishioners between Greek Orthodoxy, promoted by tsarist Russia; Roman Catholicism, supported by France; and Protestantism, mostly in the form of German-supported Lutheranism. Most of Tawfiq Canaan's career bore the seal of his proximity and loyalty to German institutions. His intellectual training in these institutions, especially his high school years at Jerusalem's Syrian Orphanage, contributed to his modernist views, since Protestantism had been introduced in the Middle East as a modern, more rational form of religion than Eastern or Roman Christianity, both viewed as decadent and far too lax ethically. Protestants also considered their practice superior to Islam, which they commonly dismissed as a form of superstition, full of empty ritualism, plagued with a stifling sense of social and religious authority, and hostile to any spirit of personal inquiry.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bethlehem area was changing at a rapid pace. In Beit Jala, a village that used to be overwhelmingly Greek Orthodox, the arrival of Western missionaries and church institutions started a real estate bonanza. The increase in religious tourism in the same years spurred a small local industry of olive-wood carvings and religious artifacts in the mostly Christian villages of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala. As local business expanded, so did the population. In spite of extensive emigration, the village began to resemble a small town. The people of nearby Jerusalem still identified its population as fellahin, but this category was more a matter of social status than lifestyle.

Indeed, Canaan was raised somewhere between the countryside of neighboring villages where his father would take him on a horse on apostolic or proselityzing tours, and a quasi-urban bourgeois way of life, which came along with the connection with European institutions. In that period, he developed a lifelong attachment to Palestinian peasants, though he was never one of them.

BRILLIANT STUDENT OF THE AMERICAN MISSIONARIES

Canaan had been sent to high school in Jerusalem and was set for a modernistic college education at the Syrian Orphanage of Jerusalem, owned and operated by the Schneller family,

yet in 1899, shortly after he finished high school, his father died, leaving his family impoverished. Canaan was able to rely on the solidarity network of Protestant institutions and so attend the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut (SPC; today's American University of Beirut), run by American Presbyterian missionaries. The college was even in the habit of halving registration fees for impoverished students, and Canaan took to giving private lessons to pay for his daily expenses and to support his family in Beit Jala.

The loss of family income did not rush Canaan into a profession. Instead, before entering the Medical Department, he chose first to get a BA from the Collegiate Department, which was a way to catch up with either humanities or science studies. Such a course of study was common at the SPC, which recruited most of its students among the former pupils of missionary or public high schools in the Levant and Eastern Anatolia. Those institutions usually gave instruction that was strong in literature and in one foreign language but insufficient in science. Canaan also needed to reach the required level in English, the language in which all medical courses were taught. As a result, he didn't start his four-year-long medical studies until October 1901. Canaan's lengthy stay at the SPC, from 1898 to 1905, is proof of the institution's efficacy in avoiding dropouts on account of economic hardship.

Canaan turned out to be an outstanding student, getting a prize in most medical classes during his third and fourth years of medical studies. He was further selected as the class valedictorian, and on receiving his MD in July 1905, he gave the speech on graduation day on behalf of his fellow students in front of the whole teaching body at the SPC, the American consul, the three delegates of the (military) Imperial Medical School (IMS) at Istanbul, many notables from Beirut, and his fellow students' parents. Canaan's speech was a modernist profession of faith and probably made quite an impression; at any rate, he had the rather unusual honor of seeing it printed in Arabic in the Egypt-based newspaper *Al-Muqtataf* a few days later, under the title "Modern Therapeutics."

Higher education in Beirut was all about getting a position. Students were sent to the SPC or its Catholic rival, the Jesuit-run Faculté Française de Médecine (FFM), first and foremost so that they could enter the skilled-job market that was expanding throughout the eastern Mediterranean. With an MD, graduates could get positions as military physicians in the Anglo-Egyptian military corps in Sudan, in the Ottoman civilian medical administration established in 1869, or in one of the many foreign hospitals and dispensaries scattered throughout the Levant and Anatolia. Yet at the moment when Canaan embarked on studying medicine, there was a glitch: the MD he would get from the SPC would not allow him to practice. The Medical Department had been founded in 1867 without the authorization of the Ottoman government, which refused to recognize it as a fully fledged medical faculty. The medical diplomas given by the American missionaries were of no value in its eyes, although a number of former students often managed to get a verbal authorization to practice from local officials. Since an agreement dating back to 1876, the IMS, acting as the highest jurisdiction for medical matters in the empire, had only agreed to recognize the SPC as a preparatory school of medicine. This meant that students with an MD from the college were recognized in Istanbul to have gone through a medical training and were therefore allowed to travel to Istanbul and take, in one single session, all the examinations of the IMS's curriculum. Provided they passed, they would get an IMS diploma, which alone would serve as a license to practise medicine in the sultan's

realms. This lengthy and costly process deterred many SPC graduates from becoming official MDs.

Three years before Canaan started his medical curriculum in 1901, the government had fully recognized the SPC's French rival. For Canaan, the son of a pastor, going over to the Catholic enemy as many of his classmates had done was plainly out of the question, but there was a high risk that getting an MD from the SPC would prove a hindrance in his career; indeed, the lack of recognition for this degree would prevent him from getting a job in any of the hospitals or dispensaries of the Ottoman Empire. But by 1903 an agreement was found, by which a delegation of medical professors would come every year from Istanbul to supervise the examinations and have the new doctors pronounce the Ottoman Hippocratic oath, which explains the presence of the three Ottoman delegates in front of Canaan when he delivered his speech.

JERUSALEM, 1905: A MEDICAL BABEL

When Canaan started working in Jerusalem after graduating in 1905, the great European powers had largely divided the city's medical field along lines of protection. This protection went beyond the defense by a state of its nationals abroad against unfair treatment by local powers; in the Ottoman Empire, special rules, known as the Capitulations, applied to foreign citizens and Ottoman citizens and institutions under formal foreign protection and were officially designed to ensure fairness of judicial treatments for non-Muslim Europeans. In practice, in the nineteenth century, the Capitulation system had become a form of privilege for individuals and a kind of extraterritoriality for institutions. Most of the latter were of a religious nature, as the Ottoman state granted tax discounts for foreign religious foundations. After the empire made foreign property ownership and building activity legal in 1867, this system allowed religious protected institutions, hospitals among them, to mushroom and expand.

Jerusalem, home to somewhere between eighty and a hundred thousand inhabitants, counted as many as eleven hospitals and an even greater number of dispensaries, and this did not include three additional hospitals on the way to or inside Bethlehem. All of these, except the Municipal Hospital of Jerusalem, fell under the protection of European countries, be it Germany, Britain, France, Russia, Greece, or Austria-Hungary. These institutions were waging a war of popularity, which hopefully would translate into influence for the protecting nation. Thus, hospitals became showrooms of medical progress. Yet the personality of the physician was more decisive in the success of the institution.

Canaan first got a job as a deputy physician at the (German Lutheran) Hospital of the Deaconesses of Kaiserwerth. The institution, renovated for the ostentatious visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898 to Jerusalem, was quickly getting an edge in the medical competition between European nations just then, largely due to the reputation of the head physician, Dr. Samuel Grussendorf, who swiftly got a good reputation and was a sound scientist by all accounts.

Under Grussendorf's direction, Canaan acknowledged, he got a prolonged medical training and especially a deeper knowledge of infectious diseases. He also got access to a

bacteriological laboratory and an X-ray apparatus, which were hallmarks of innovation in the Jerusalem medical landscape. The relation between the two men was quite hierarchical, since it was a matter of fact that European institutions in Jerusalem could only be headed by European physicians, as Arab physicians would not be trusted by these hospitals' patients and would be especially disdained by the European practitioners in town.

But things were changing rapidly on that account. Since the late 1890s, Ottoman physicians had been appointed as heads of the French hospitals in Bethlehem, Jaffa, and Nazareth. Canaan too made good use of his opportunities to work as head physician of the German hospital: when he replaced Grussendorf, gone for a few months on a furlough to Europe in 1906, he was able to establish his popular standing in Jerusalem. The attendance at the outpatient consultation jumped from around five thousand to more than ten thousand per month. In 1910, the head physician of the Jewish hospital Shaare Tzedeq, Dr. Moritz Wallach, entrusted him with the interim direction of this hospital, which signalled Canaan's rising fame. Also in 1910, he was appointed physician of the municipality, and by 1913 he opened his own clinic in the Musrara neighborhood, just north of the Old City. This was the first medical institution in Palestine opened by a locally born physician. He would live there with his German wife, Margot (née Eilender); his sister Badra; his sister-in-law Nora; his three daughters, Yesma, Nada, and Leila; and his son, Theo, until 1948.

There is no point in looking for community borders in the emerging medical profession of Jerusalem prior to World War I. Instead, in spite of national rivalries and the nascent Arab-Zionist confrontation, international cooperation took place in the name of public health and the fight against infectious diseases. Such cooperation was visible during an epidemic of meningitis in Jerusalem in 1910, when Drs. Wallach and Canaan coordinated the gathering of data about patients afflicted with that disease from such institutions as the municipal hospital, then headed by the Jewish physician of Algerian origins Dr. Abraham Albert Abu Ché-did. After reporting the following year on the epidemic in the SPC alumni journal, *Al-Kulliyeh*, Canaan worked in medical-cooperation projects on a much larger scale. When the German epidemiologist Professor Mühlens came to Jerusalem in 1912, he invited Canaan to join his project of an epidemiological survey of Palestine focusing on malaria. Soon the country became a focus for coordinated actions against infectious diseases, with competing projects from Germany and the United States merging in 1913 into an International Health Bureau. Canaan headed the bureau, as well as the antituberculosis team there, for a few months in 1913–14. At the time, tuberculosis was becoming an epidemiological priority, with areas of endemicity such as Nablus. Medical mobilization became a noticeable feature in Jerusalem, and Jurji Zaydan, the founder of the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Hilal*, noted in 1914 how advanced the Holy City was in that regard compared to the rest of the Middle East.

Much as the medical sector in Jerusalem was international, so was its tiny intellectual world. Canaan, who is reported to have met his German wife, Margot Eilender, at Esperanto classes, was an active member of that community. The institutional pattern in the humanities was similar to that in the medical sector, with domination by a few Western research institutes, often of one denomination or another, such as the German Evangelical Palestine Institute, headed by the theologian Gustaf Dalman, or the École Biblique et Archéologique Française (EBAF) of the Dominicans.

Canaan, who was well versed in textual knowledge of the Bible, was especially influenced by Dalman, with whom he remained connected at least until the end of the 1930s. Indeed, the physician developed a growing interest in the ethnography of Palestine as his medical practice led him to hold itinerating consultations in the villages around Jerusalem, much as he had watched his father do in his childhood. At the same time, Canaan was catching up on the relevant bibliography. He started reading the works of Ignaz Goldziher, one of the founders of Islamic studies in Europe, and those on Palestinian Islam by Dr. Paul Kahle, whose articles on religious sanctuaries in Palestine, published between 1909 and 1911, can be seen as forerunners of Canaan's major book, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*, and of Dalman's series of encyclopedic proportions on work and customs in Palestine. Around the time of the Ottoman revolution of 1908, Jerusalem was also turning into a town of conferences, their proceedings often printed in the local press or by one of the several small publishing houses that were sprouting alongside the research institutes. This enabled Canaan to start publishing, first on medical issues, with the pamphlet *Death Or Life* (1908), and then in 1911 on ethnography, with the printed version of his 1909 conference on Palestinian peasantry. The SPC publication *Al-Kulliyeh* was also a ready outlet for his works, yet all of this was of a very local scope. Canaan's cooperation with Mühlens was decisive in his career as both a physician and an ethnographer, as it connected him with European medical research centers and enabled him to be publish with the Colonial Institute of Hamburg, the main German institution for colonial science.

SUPERSTITION AND POPULAR MEDICINE IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

Canaan's first book, *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel* (Superstition and popular medicine in the land of the Bible, 1914), is seminal in his ethnographical career. Yet its posterity in Palestinian ethnography was very limited, inasmuch as it was virtually ignored by later Palestinian researchers for want of an Arabic or an English version. Published by the Colonial Institute of Hamburg, it was a bold step in a specialty which was not his own. It was also an ambitious scientific project for which he lacked access to up-to-date materials. The noted scholar on Islam and politician Carl Heinrich Becker, who was a professor of the history and culture of the Orient at the institute and wrote the preface to the book, noted this but saw a redeeming grace in Canaan's ignorance of Edmond Doutté’s important work dealing with similar issues, *Magie et religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (1909). The many correspondances between the two independently written books was proof of the depth of the common stock of practices and representations of magic and healing throughout the Arab world. In his later works, Canaan would multiply his references to Doutté’s opus.

The two projects differ in conception. Ethnographical research—and France's precolonial policy—motivated Doutté’s presence in Morocco. Yet Canaan was brought to popular medicine and magic through his professional concerns, which overlapped with his early experience of Palestinian peasantry. The preface of his book singles out the difficulties entailed by the medical pluralism amid which young practitioners with an MD started working. Canaan in his foreword is not quite as direct and states his pride as “a son of the country” to be able to present his work, the research for which had been facilitated by his constant contact

with patients. Indeed, soon after his return to Jerusalem after graduating in 1905, he had developed a curiosity about the artifacts his patients used to protect themselves against disease. Word spread that the young physician was interested in such objects, and he accumulated a collection of amulets, talismans, cups, and so forth that numbered more than fourteen hundred items at the end of his life and is now hosted by the Birzeit University Library and the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford.

Handling this material, Canaan was less interested in the objects themselves than in their meaning, the representations of well-being and illness in their connection to the supernatural. This translated in the way he wrote, mostly in the dry, objectivist, descriptive style of much of the ethnographical production concerning Palestine up to the 1920s. Canaan was taught in the Kantian tradition, and his interest in the representations of magic stemmed partly from a phenomenological desire to go from clear consciousness into the depths of collective folk imagination and national psyche. This forbade him, “a son of the country,” from displaying any form of subjectivity in his prose. When Canaan used the first-person singular, it was to refer to the conditions of his research or to place his arguments within an ongoing specialist debate. His ethnographical writing would not vary much from that norm in later works, except for recurring mentions of his own collection as a source.

Canaan's book covered a great variety of topics around the notion of popular medicine: talismans and magic squares, “fear cups” used in the popular healing of diseases consecutive to fits of fright, swearing, tombs of saints famous for curing the sick, and so on. He would develop all of these themes at greater length after World War I.

A PHYSICIAN AT WAR

With the Ottoman Empire entering the First World War on November 5, 1914, Canaan was mobilized for service in the military medical service. Given the concentration of military corps —Ottoman, German, and Austrian—in Palestine, the physician was able to stay in the region for most of the war, first in Nazareth, then mostly between Bir al-Sab’ and Gaza, and finally between Nablus and Damascus by the end of the conflict.

While these circumstances proved fruitful from an ethnographical point of view, with Canaan collecting around two hundred artifacts of popular medicine in less than four years, the period was not as productive for his medical research. Canaan's one medical article in those years shows that the military medical services in Palestine were doing epidemiological work, but less about endemic typhus than less-dangerous diseases. The article dealt with the Jericho boil, a form of leishmaniasis prevalent in the Jordan Valley. Both the German military medical service, with which Canaan kept contact, and its Austrian counterpart were doing research on that usually benign disease, which apparently grew more and more infectious in those years. Canaan's wartime work on leishmaniasis would prove to be a significant turn in his medical career: it was the beginning of his lifelong specialization in skin diseases.

THE MORAVIAN LEPROSARIUM AT TALBIYEH

Canaan's medical career and his interest in Palestinian ethnography often intersected. Among

his circle of acquaintances were Dr. Adolph Einszler and his wife Lydia, née Schick. Dr. Einszler, a Catholic Austrian citizen by birth, had settled in Jerusalem, where he had converted to Protestantism and begun working in the early 1880s at the leprosarium of the Moravian Brothers in Talbiyeh (today in West Jerusalem). Canaan had known him since their days at the German hospital, when the two men had shared responsibilities during Dr. Grussendorf's leave. Einszler's wife, the daughter of the architect of the German consulate, was interested in popular culture and beliefs, on which she started writing ethnographic articles in the 1890s. She collected artifacts of popular material culture and popular magical medicine, which she at times lent to Canaan or exchanged for pieces from his collection.

Einszler died on April 27, 1919, and Canaan succeeded him in supervising the leprosarium; this represented continuity in its service and a logical continuation of Canaan's professional interests. At the leprosarium, he welcomed visitors and friends, such as Dalman, who stayed there when he sojourned again in Jerusalem in 1921 and 1925, yet Canaan's position there was especially important in raising his professional standing and scientific reputation.

In the job, Canaan had an unusual field of study. Leprosy was a disease of limited prevalence and feeble contagiosity, especially in the West, which meant that most specialists of the disease around the world would have met it only occasionally. Yet Canaan had a permanent population of patients under his care, as the Ottoman administration had made it compulsory for lepers in the region to live in Jerusalem, Ramleh, Nablus, or Damascus. After World War I, the British authority chose the leprosarium to host all the lepers of Palestine. Jewish immigration also brought a number of lepers, who were also housed there. Over the years, Canaan published several accounts of leprosy, as both a domestic and an immigrant's disease. With a reasonable number and variety of patients, he was able to work on therapeutical means to reduce the progression of the disease, such as tincture of iodine or an age-old remedy, chaulmoogra.

Canaan's specialization required frequent updating and relations with a world of specialists. Fortunately, the Charter of the League of Nations obliged mandatory powers to enable development in all its forms in their territories. British authorities were to facilitate competence building for the population of Palestine and enable its professionals to improve their training. The number of physicians who took postgraduate courses or went abroad for an upgrade in their specialty in Europe or the United States boomed after 1918. Canaan took advantage of the new opportunities and went abroad for two postgraduate courses, including one in internal medicine in Berlin during the first semester of the academic year 1922–23. Afterward, he took the directorship of the Internal Medicine Division at the reopened German hospital in Jerusalem and held it until the hospital closed in 1940.

Canaan's network among Jerusalem-based physicians of Germanic origin was extensive: it included Drs. Grussendorf, Einszler, and Mühlens, of course, and after World War I the German leishmaniologist Dr. Huntermueller and the surgeon of the German hospital Eberhard Gmelin, Canaan's close friend until the latter, close to the Nazi Party, left for Germany in 1939. His scientific connections also included Jewish scientists who had settled in Palestine, such as the lifelong anti-Zionist Dr. Wallach and, among Zionists, the German researcher Saul Adler, who isolated leishmaniasis from sand flies in Jericho in 1929, the noted Czech ophthalmologist Dr. Albert Ticho, and Judah Magnes, the president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Part

and parcel of Canaan's academic notoriety was his address book.

To what extent did this translate into researching with Jewish physicians, as Canaan had engaged in prior to World War I? That is not clear. He was not working in a binational environment, as would have been the case had he been a civil servant of the Palestine government. Furthermore, he complained in 1936 that the notion of using only “Hebrew labor” had extended to Jewish hospitals, where not one employee, be they physician, matron, or nurse, was non-Jewish.

It seems that some of Canaan's work was of a freelance kind, which did not prevent him from contributing to the research in infectious tropical diseases that were becoming hot public health concerns. There was, for instance, a definite momentum in leishmaniasis research around the years 1929–31, due to the fact that the disease was discovered outside the Jericho region where it had long been known. Canaan found cases of visceral leishmaniasis (kala-azar), a more severe form of the disease, in Jerusalem and the neighboring villages during those years, while another scientist, Arye Dostrovsky, found it in Haifa in 1930. While Canaan had been convinced during World War I that leishmaniasis was endemic only to Jericho, he now came around to the idea that it had been present, though not epidemic, in other regions of Palestine before the late 1920s. By 1945, he had reported on visceral leishmaniasis in Jaffa, Yazur (near Ramleh), Birzeit, Haifa, Beit Iksa, Nablus, Tulkarm, Al-Lydd (later Lod), and Halhul (near Hebron). In the same period, he discovered that cutaneous leishmaniasis, similar in its symptoms to the Jericho boil, could be found in Bethlehem and the nearby villages, including his native Beit Jala. The disease was now present in both the plains and the hills of Palestine, which Canaan attributed to contamination from Jericho, the Egyptian army, and Jewish immigrants. This earned him a degree of bibliometric notoriety in his field, and his name was included in 1932 on the list of famous doctors in tropical medicine compiled by Dr. Gottlieb Olpp, the head of an important medical center for tropical medicine in Germany and himself a researcher into the use of chaulmoogra against leprosy. Among Palestinian Arab physicians, though, this aspect of Canaan's work did not have much influence. Palestinian epidemiologists mostly ignored leishmaniasis until the 1970s.

Another way to get standing in a specialty was to take part in academies, such as the British-inspired Medical Academy of Jerusalem, of which Canaan was appointed secretary in July 1923. International surveys were also a boost to scientific reputation, such as the world inquiry on leprosy undertaken under the direction of the prominent Brazilian bacteriologist and later World Health Organization leprosy expert Heráclides César de Souza-Araújo between 1924 and 1927, for which Canaan wrote the report about Palestine. By the end of the 1920s he had become an international authority on the disease.

Canaan occupied the post of director of the leprosarium until the military occupation of the premises during the war of 1948, when the Zionist forces decided to expel the Arab personnel and patients while keeping their Jewish counterparts on the spot. He then helped to orgazine a new leprosarium in the West Bank village of Surda.

WITH THE PALESTINE ORIENTAL SOCIETY (1920–1936)

Canaan was also engaged in the main venture devised by the British authorities to bring

together representatives of the Arab and the Jewish communities in the humanities, the Palestine Oriental Society, which existed from 1920 to 1948. In the columns of the society's periodical, the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (*JPOS)*, Canaan's articles appeared alongside those of English writers and a couple of Jewish Zionist writers, most notably the linguist Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and the ethnographer and Labor Zionist activist Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. It is hard to say to what extent Canaan's inclusion reflected a political choice, giving credit to the occupation authorities for their cultural policy, or a philosophical stance that science ought to remain above the political fray.

Canaan politicized neither his “nativist ethnography” nor its objects of study. Even his studies of pilgrimages to local shrines, which had become occasions of mobilization and protest since the beginning of the Mandate, were the continuation of a long trend of ethnographic research. His writing was focused on beliefs and the practices translating such beliefs and did not touch upon the possible political use of pilgrimages. Moreover, his belief in the survival of ancient ethnographical features up to the present was not guided by a desire to give legitimacy to the presence of Palestinian Arabs by right of antiquity, as would be the case with Palestinian folklorists a few generations later. It was a standard assumption shared by all researchers on Palestine at the time, deriving from the preoccupation in biblical studies with trying to explain sacred texts by present practices.

Among the authors for the *JPOS*, there were of course differences of approach: while Ben-Zvi would go looking specifically for traces of Jewish presence, Canaan was bent on underlining continuities, the mingling and the stratification of religious influences. His main referential corpus was the Bible, but he also compared practices in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Canaan influenced a group of Palestinian Arab intellectuals who strengthened his approach and became part of his intellectual circle. Of those men—Khalil Totah, Omar Saleh al-Barghouty, Elias Haddad, and Stephan Stephan—the last three were also members of the Palestine Oriental Society. The relationship between them and Canaan was not one-directional: they also facilitated his work, as shown by the references in his writings to fieldwork in Dayr Ghassana, Barghouty's native village.

During the Mandate years, Canaan found another scientific interlocutor in the Finnish ethnographist Hilma Granqvist. She had settled in the village of Artas, near Bethlehem, which had been a spot of ethnographic interest since the beginning of the twentieth century. Hers was probably the first local example of an ethnological project based on immersion, which enabled her to acquire more of an insider's understanding than Canaan, with his urban fashion, ever could. Granqvist influenced Canaan's ethnographic style, and from the 1920s onward his ethnography tended to move away from the systematic form of description of *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel* and toward more interpretive writing.

These contacts enabled Canaan to cover more ground, literally, as he embarked on what remains his best-known project, a survey of pilgrimage places and sanctuaries in the newly territorialized Palestine. This work was published in the *JPOS* from 1924 to 1927 and then as the book *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* in 1927 by the Palestine Oriental Society. It established his academic credit in ethnography, and in 1928 he was appointed chief editor of the *JPOS*.

The late 1920s were a period of great productivity for Canaan, as reflected by the quick

succession of articles, medical as well as and ethnographical, that followed the publication of *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*. In particular, he developed an interest in Bedouin tribes in Transjordan. This led him to take part, in 1929, in the Petra Exploration Commission of the (British) Palestine Exploration Fund, an institution similar to the Palestine Oriental Society. He presented the results of that mission in a series of articles for the *JPOS*, "Studies in the Topography and Folklore of Petra."

Canaan's cooperation with the Palestine Oriental Society came to an end when he sided clearly with the Arab Revolt of 1936. By taking a more militant profile, he lost not only academic connections but also part of his social status.

PORTRAIT OF THE PHYSICIAN AS A SOCIALITE

Canaan was active in Jerusalem society under the Mandate. This was something that the SPC encouraged and trained its students to do: social life in the college, with plays, clubs, concerts, and conferences, was part and parcel of their studies. After its students graduated, the Medical Department kept in touch with them through a medical congress every other year, which Canaan attended on several occasions. Former students also met in local alumni associations. The one at Jerusalem, established in 1911, had Canaan among its founders and regular members. In 1927, he became its president. These structures of sociability were places for future professionals to facilitate their installation in society and earn a fair reputation. This Canaan managed to do in his clinic at Musrara, where he welcomed some of the most famed physicians in Jerusalem.

Already prior to World War I, the Protestant members of the alumni association were also invited to take part in the life of the Jerusalem YMCA. During the Mandate years, the club of the YMCA became the zenith of Jerusalem society life. This was a milieu with which Canaan, as an alumni of the SPC and a famed physician, was well familiar. Over the course of his life, he presided over the YMCA during three years.

Canaan also had a religion-based social network. In 1912, because he had married a German citizen, he was admitted as a member of the congregation of the Church of the Redeemer, in the Old City of Jerusalem. The German government had erected this church on the former Hospital of the Crusader Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and its status limited membership to native German speakers or to nationals of countries whose language was of German origin. It was, therefore, not one of the missionary congregations, which were conceived as part of an Arab national church, with a degree of autonomy which was meant to facilitate conversions to Protestantism of disgruntled Arab Orthodox Christians, whose church was in the hands of Greek prelates. His membership in the Church of the Redemeer of course singled out Canaan among Arab Protestants, though it did not make him any bit alien to Palestinian Arab national concerns. After 1912, he became a pillar of the German Lutheran congregation in Jerusalem, which kept him in touch with German interests and after the war of 1948 offered him responsibilities for relief work among the refugees.

His networking skills took the form of regularity and loyalty in social matters, proof of which are his regular donations to the alumni associations. Yet his social status also derived from his visibility through conferences and especially through his articles in the press. Taking

part in the debates of the hour, he became the image of a committed and opinionated man.

"HEALTH, FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL LIFE": A PHYSICIAN IN POLITICS

Canaan's biographers underline his nationalism and the connection between his ethnography and his political involvement during the Mandate, linking his interest in popular culture with a desire to defend Palestine against the political, demographic, and cultural challenge of Zionism. Yet his ethnographical program was certainly not one of mere conservation, and he seemed more interested in expanding the political struggle in the medical field.

Although Nassib Boulos speaks of Canaan's son, the architect Theo Canaan, as having inherited socialist views from his parents, I have not found anything to support the notion that Canaan Sr. had socialistic inclinations. He was a modernist nationalist attached to traditional values. On the one hand, Canaan expressed nostalgia about the presumed progressive disappearance of an ancient popular culture overwhelmed by modernity. On the other hand, as a professional he remained a staunch supporter of modern medicine against all sorts of popular practices that he saw as superstitious and antihygienic. These views also informed his ethnographic writing.

This stood out clearly on June 27, 1923, when Canaan again made a speech for the graduation ceremonies of his alma mater, which had become the American University of Beirut. It was published in Arabic in July 1923 under the title "Health, Foundation of National Life." *National* is a rendition of *qawmī*, which refers to an ethnocultural definition of a nation, here Arabness. The issues which he described through his observations in Jerusalem he indeed assumed to be relevant throughout the Levant. Yet the political situation in Palestine and the issue of the demographic ratio there between Jews and Arabs was a hidden concern in his speech.

Canaan saw the Arab nation threatened by sanitary dangers coming from within the household. They caused high infant mortality in the poorer classes and a risk of degeneration, he said, akin to what caused the decline of the Roman Empire. Focusing on cultural causes and the family level, the physician put most of the responsibility on the shoulders of Arab mothers, "the pillars of the success of nations."

Entrusted with the education of their children and the transmission of culture, mothers were in fact endangering the next generation and thus the Arab national collective with their lack of education. Canaan blamed the great distrust of academically trained physicians among his compatriots. Mothers would only visit trained physicians when the health of their children had deteriorated beyond cure. Furthermore, they could not be brought to trust Western medicine or to give up the belief that disease came from jinns, the evil eye, or the similar idea of the evil soul projecting ailments over people. Canaan presented his audience with a clear indictment of those artifacts—small eyelike pieces of blue glass, amulets and talismans, and pieces of alum to be placed under the tongue or on other parts of the body—which made up most of his ethnographic collection. Like the rest of the medical profession in Palestine, Canaan kept making the modernist case for Western medicine against popular medicine beyond purely scientific interest.

In the rest of his speech, Canaan criticized family structures—arranged marriages within the

family, marriage of girls under fifteen—and made a much shorter indictment of male behaviors and their public health consequences. In very chaste and chosen words, he blamed male philandering for the post-World War I spread of syphilis, which he never called by name. His most explicit reference to the disease was a mention of *Les Avariés* (1902), a play by the French playwright Eugène Brieux that analyzes its moral and family consequences. Ailments looking like syphilis had been found for decades in Palestine, but the Mandate Charter had made it compulsory for the Department of Health of the Palestine Government to pay special attention to syphilis. This led to a systemic exaggeration of the prevalence of the disease in official reports and explains Canaan's retrospective reading of the history of the disease in his country. The measures he advocated to fight syphilis were eugenic, such as forbidding marriage unless both spouses presented a medical certificate stating their good health on that account.

He concluded his speech by saying that immigration seemed responsible for the growing prevalence of tuberculosis in Palestine, as medical authorities had noted its quasi-absence there during the nineteenth century. In this instance, the goal of the regeneration of the Palestinian people met with immediate politics and the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine, but it was never stated in so many words.

Canaan's concern for family health and infant mortality was a lasting one: he published the article “Infant Mortality among the Arab Population of Palestine” in 1932, “Children's Disease and Infant Mortality among the Arab Population of Palestine” in 1935, and “Arab Fertility and Child Mortality” in 1946. These reflect a nationalism that was not based on the idea that national Arab Palestinian culture ought to be preserved—as a heritage, as an authentic, autochthonous answer to Western modernity, or as a resource in the face of projects to supersede national Arab identity. Such views were representative of the generation of Palestinian folklorists who unearthed Canaan's writings in the 1970s. Rather, like other Arab writers of the Mandate period, he believed that the survival of the Palestinian people would depend not on cultural forms but on “the high moral standard of the Palestinians,” which alone could help them overcome the double threat of westernization and Zionism. Indeed, Canaan concluded one article, “The Child in Palestinian Arab Superstition,” by balancing the results to be expected from the development policy of the Mandate against their moral consequences: “The European civilization which is bringing to Palestine many a blessing is eradicating at the same time many a beautiful and sound moral principle.”

His nationalism also took more direct political forms. As already mentioned, he took a strong position in the Arab Revolt of 1936, supporting the use of arms against British forces. In this he was not alone in his family, as one of his sisters, Badra, who was active in one of Palestine's women's organizations, also called for mobilization. Yet he gave his views a more international range: *The Palestine Arab Cause* (1936) was a short opus and the first of two books he devoted to the revolt, and it was translated into Arabic and French (from English). In it he addressed world opinion and called on British people of good faith to denounce the effects of the mandatory power's policies, especially those concerning immigration and nationality. He furthermore signed a petition in support of the general strike that Palestinian Arab personalities sent to the Arab Higher Committee on August 6, 1936, clearly demanding self-determination for Palestinian Arabs and the end of the Mandate. Following sharp

criticisms from the Zionists and hostile reactions on the part of the British authorities, Canaan published a second, longer book, *Conflict in the Land of Peace* (1936), following which the mandatory power severed its connections with him.

The Palestine Arab Cause was attacked on the basis of the accuracy of its information and the sources its author used, which the anonymous writer of *Comments on Dr. Canaan's Pamphlet* claimed Canaan had simply made up. In *Conflict in the Land of Peace*, the physician-turned-pamphleteer presents a more developed case for the Palestinian Arab cause, mostly based on a compilation of quotations. His meticulously referenced prose shows a learning curve in the Arab-Zionist debate. First, Canaan expresses enthusiasm for cold facts and especially statistics: “Facts and statistics, the truth of which has been shown independently by others, were adduced to give further support to the arguments and assertions put forward here. Unbiased information of this sort cannot fail to throw a revealing light on this unnecessarily complicated subject in some of its aspects.” Statistics were inherent to mandatory governance. Reporting on the development of the countries under mandate to the Mandate Commission of the League of Nations required a specific kind of intellectual apparatus. Tools had to be devised to show that the Mandate's objectives were being met and progress was being made: for this task, figures had the look of indisputable, nonpartisan truths. As a result, starting with *Conflict in the Land of Peace*, Canaan would insist on producing statistical proof of Palestinian Arab contributions to progress, especially in the epidemiological realm.

Two other aspects of *Conflict in the Land of Peace* are of particular interest: the question of land sales, and the extent to which Palestine and Palestinian Arabs benefited from Jewish immigration. As for the former, Canaan noted the systemic conditions that linked Jewish takeover of significant parts of the best agricultural lands and rural joblessness among Palestinian Arabs. He therefore defended an official prohibition of land sales, which were destablizing the country and feeding the anger at the root of the Arab Revolt. Yet he did not consider the circumstances that led to land sales, other than the shrinking of available good land and growing rural poverty. In particular, he did not tackle the issue of massive land sales by absentee landlords, except indirectly through a comment by Theodor Herzl on their willingness to exaggerate the value of their plots and sell all the same.

Now this is where the plot thickens. Kenneth W. Stein, for his study of land sales during the British Mandate, consulted a list compiled by Zionists and held at the Central Zionist Archives. The list includes the names of national activists reported to have sold land to Zionist organizations, along with a brief outline of their roles in the Palestinian Arab national movement. Among the names is *Canaan*, misspelled as *Cannan* yet recognizable beyond doubt, as belonging to an “exponent of Palestine Arab cause in articles and pamphlets.” This document reports Canaan to have sold a piece of land of undetermined dimension in the Beisan area, apparently in a joint arrangement with the politician and representative of the Mandate government Musa al-Alami.

What should we make of such a document? On the one hand, there is some room for suspicion about the accuracy of the information, inasmuch as the sale is not much detailed, which makes it look a bit like a rumor and not a fact based on a definite contract. Indeed, Stein's reference to this document has drawn criticism on his book. In a number of cases, the

land-sale list seems to record mere rumor.

On the other hand, massive land sales to the Zionist camp had already been the object of growing, wall-to-wall reprobation among Palestinian Arabs before World War I. Land was definitely being sold, and someone was selling it: rich absentee landlords did, and so did impoverished peasants, especially in the 1930s. Did Canaan do it? Standing on its own, unsupported by other sources, the document Stein produced gives us no room to establish the veracity of its contents. All we can say is that it clashes with the image of integrity that surrounds Canaan in his biographies and with his increasingly radical nationalist commitments.

The Arab Revolt of 1936 was a turning point for him as for many other Palestinians. While he openly waged the battle on the public opinion front, Canaan secretly provided weaponry to the rebels, according to oral testimony collected by the Palestinian academic Khaled Nashef. Whether one pictures Canaan selling land to Zionist organizations or trafficking in guns and grenades, the polished image of the author of *The Palestine Arab Cause* appears to be shattered. In any case, the book gives an idea of the end game to the Palestine question that he stood for.

Canaan advocated a form of binational state, which he thought possible if the ratio between the Arab and Jewish communities stopped changing—that is to say, if Jewish immigration were frozen. He opposed the partition of Palestine along the lines of the Peel plan, since a small Jewish state, he argued, would have been a primary and easy target for states with an anti-Semitic policy. If anything, his opinions seem to betray a reading of Ahad Ha'am, when he says that “Jews should…continue to work scientifically and spiritually, thus making Palestine the spiritual and religious center for Jewry.” Could it be that he had revamped his views to match what a Western audience would expect to read? That seems unlikely, in a time when the goal of establishing a Jewish national home was far from being prevalently accepted in Western public opinion.

More significant than his possible pandering to Western opinion is the fact that *The Palestine Arab Cause* and *Conflict in the Land of Peace* were written in English: American University of Beirut-trained Palestinian Arab politicians and professionals were used to representing their cause on the international plane, acting as spokespeople, as was the case with Canaan, or as diplomatic go-betweens, as did Dr. Izzat Tannous, whom Canaan must have known in the early 1920s at the latest, when they were both active members of the Jerusalem branch of the AUB alumni association. While Canaan also published articles in the Palestinian Arab press, he was in no way a political leader among his people (nor was he even formally affiliated with any party, for that matter); he was more of a visible face representing the Palestinian Arabs to the Western world. And so it makes sense to presume that the end game Canaan favors in *The Palestine Arab Cause* does not simply reflect his individual views but matches the image of the Palestinian Arab national movement that his political friends wanted to convey to the world.

Indeed, from 1936 until 1948, Canaan's medical writings were also counterargu-mentative, conceived to provide Palestinian Arab nationalists with the necessary material to face up to Zionist representatives on the international level. As Sandra M. Sufian has argued, Canaan was the first Palestinian Arab author who tried to counter the dominant Zionist narrative linking Jewish agricultural colonization with the decrease in the prevalence of malaria over the

Mandate years, using geographical and statistical data to prove the effectiveness of Palestinian Arab antimalarial measures. All through the 1940s, Canaan would provide facts and figures about the Palestinian Arab commitment to improving health while criticizing in detail Zionist claims in the medical field.

Yet Canaan's role was not simply that of an expert, even if a partisan one. Though he was not formally involved in the politics of the revolt or in the negotiations that surrounded it, he did enter the game of factional politics. In those years, he was known to be connected with the Arab Higher Council. He kept in touch with the mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, as did one of his close relations within the Lutheran community of Jerusalem, Dawud Haddad, who was then the head professor of the Schneller Syrian Orphanage and would write, as the Lutheran bishop of Jerusalem, Canaan's official obituary. They kept the mufti well informed about the situation of the German institutions in Jerusalem, as he showed in his conversations with Lutheran bishops during his stay in Berlin during World War II.

Neither Canaan's falling-out with the British mandatory government nor his German ties made him neglect the British public. He addressed it, for instance, through a memorandum on the Arab-Zionist conflict which he sent, on July 29, 1938, to the Scottish Presbyterian church through its Jerusalem branch. However, Canaan's strong stance in 1936 had irretrievably damaged his image in the eyes of the British authorities. The resentment of the mandatory powers toward Canaan paved the way for his being jailed at the outbreak of World War II.

With the declaration of war, hostility to British rule became a dangerous game for a man identified with German interests. Canaan was arrested on September 3, 1939, and after a court hearing he was imprisoned in Acre for nine weeks without being officially charged. His wife, as a German citizen, and his sister Badra were also arrested and imprisoned in Bethlehem before being transferred to Wilhelma, a former German Templer colony built in the late nineteenth century near Jaffa. In 1943, the women's freedom of movement was restored. Canaan, who defined himself as both a Germanophile and an Anglophile, was very much disappointed by being jailed and stopped expressing himself on directly political issues. He moved for good from direct political involvement to professional activism with a political agenda.

THE PALESTINE ARAB MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (1944–1948)

From 1944 to 1948, Canaan's main field of activity was the professional realm, as president of the Palestine Arab Medical Association. Founded on August 4, 1944, the association was a nationalistic venture, though not a narrowly ethnonationalistic one: the vice-president, the Jerusalem-based cardiologist Vahan Kalbian, originated from Cilicia. In the increasingly polarized world of the Mandate, he fell on the Arab side, as the association had been conceived in the face of Jewish immigration.

The association was a long-delayed outcome of the Arab Medical Conference held in 1934 in Haifa. The original priority of its participants had been the professional protection of Palestinian Arab physicians against the growing competition of Jewish physicians. The latter's number exploded between 1933 and 1936 as hundreds arrived from Nazi Germany. Among the immigrant physicians were a number of outstanding practitioners ready to work at any rate,

which amounted to unfair competition for Palestinian Arab physicians in the main cities of Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa.

By 1944, the Palestinian medical profession had changed significantly. Over the years 1937–39, control of the practice of medicine had been tightened, with the establishment of quotas for the licensing of physicians. Jewish immigration had vastly decreased following the adoption the 1939 White Paper. Yet Zionist organizations were boasting about their involvement in public health, be it the drying of marshes to fight malaria, the setting-up of a network of mother-and-child health care centers, the training of nurses, or the development of a system of sick funds for Jewish workers.

In response, Canaan's association and its outlet, the *Journal of the Palestine Arab Medical Association* (*JPAMA)*, aimed less at waging a battle on the front of the control of medical practice than at counterpropaganda. As Canaan had done during the Arab Revolt, the *JPAMA* reported on the extent of Arab participation in drying the marshes. In its columns, Canaan published frequently on his favorite medical subjects: leishmaniasis, amoebiasis, leprosy, and hygiene. For most of his four years as president, the association worked as something between a professional union and a scientific institution.

With the war of 1948, its role expanded. On December 28, 1947, Palestinian Arab irregulars shot and killed Dr. Hugo Lehrs, the Jewish head physician of the government clinic in Beit Safafa, just south of Jerusalem. A couple of days later, a Palestinian Arab physician in one of the government clinics in Jaffa was also killed. This prompted the division of the government health care system between Jewish and Arab areas. The Higher Arab Relief Committee was founded to take over the hospitals and clinics on the Arab side, which were progressively handed over to the Palestine Arab Medical Association. At least two important Palestinian Arab physicians and nationalist activists, Canaan and Tannous, were among the committee's founding members.

In May 1948, the association took over government hospitals in Jerusalem, and Canaan took charge of the Austrian hospice, in the Old City, which had been hastily transformed into a hospital early that year. Continuous shelling forced the medical staff to abandon the premises.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem was being progressively divided into east and west, and Canaan had to relocate: Talbiyeh and the leprosarium were on the western side of the city, while the Musrara neighborhood was on the seam line that would become a no-man's-land. Early in 1948, he had been able to entrust an international organization with his collection of artifacts of popular culture, but looters and Israeli institutions seized his library after he left his house.

Canaan's family took provisional lodgings in the Greek Orthodox convent in the Christian quarter of the Old City. The Lutheran World Federation set up clinics for refugees, where the physician started working, and in 1950 it and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East took over the Augusta Victoria compound and transformed it into a hospital. Canaan was appointed director, a position he held until his retirement in 1955. He then started writing again, ethnographic pieces about a folklore which, under Jordanian rule, he kept calling Palestinian. He continued to reside in the hospital until his death in 1964.

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