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“To the Arab Jews: You know that it is a fact that when you sat in the land [of Palestine] of the Arab, they did not trample on your rights...or did not oppress you.”

“To the Zionist foreigners: Your claim that this land is yours is baseless...in this land, sat our forefathers the Canaanites, can you deny this? Then came your forefathers and with their deceit...started to slowly enter the land.”

1 In July 1920, the Hebrew daily, Doar HaYom, published the translation of an open letter that was published just days before in the Jerusalem-based Palestinian newspaper, al-Quds al-Sharif. In the letter, a Palestinian writer addresses the Jewish community, dividing them into two groups: one, made up of a local population of Arab Jews, and the other, comprised of foreign (Ashkenazi) Jews. For the Arab Jews, the author delivers a passionate call to live together in peace with the Palestinians, such as they have done for centuries, when the Arabs protected them as a religious minority. In fact, according to the author, in World War One,

a group from among the Committee of Union and Progress came to Palestine in order to wipe out the memory of Jews, and we did not allow them [to do this] and our answer was: they are the ones that are living amongst us in our home, our rights are their rights and our duties are their duty.

2 Then the open letter addresses the Zionist foreigners, who have come to Palestine and ruined the coexistence between the Arab Jews and the Palestinians:
you are demanding that we live with you in peace, is such a thing possible? Our language is not your language, our traditions are not your traditions...[and] there is not room for both of us.

Just a year later, in the summer of 1921, the Palestinian delegation in London shared with the British negotiation team that the local Sephardim opposed Zionism. Soon after, the Palestinian press once again reached out to the local Jews, expressing how they had been brothers since they arrived in Palestine, and other parts of the Ottoman lands, as refugees from Spain. However, this time their plea met stiff opposition from the local Sephardic leadership in Palestine.²

On the surface, it would seem these examples provide us with a historical picture of how Palestinians hoped that the local Arabic-speaking Sephardic Jewish community – or Arab Jews – would reject the Ashkenazi immigrants to the land, and embrace the Palestinians as true partners. For historians of the period, these examples align well with the fact that just a few years earlier, prior to World War One, there was a group of Arabic-speaking Jews who was putting forth a notion of a “shared homeland”³ in Palestine, where both Jews and Arabs could take part in the building of a mutual homeland. However, what connects these two examples is the absence of the voice of the other. In one case, we see Palestinians defining the local Jews as compatriots, without the Sephardim speaking on their own behalf, thus bringing to light the question of how representative these pleas were. In the other case, as we will see in this article, the discussing of a “shared homeland” by these Arabic-speaking Jews occurred without a Palestinian voice present. If understood in this light, these statements reflect more the divisions that existed in late Ottoman Palestine between the two groups than it does the unity between them.

This article will rethink this period starting with this premise and will argue that it was the Arabic-speaking Jews, some who also defined themselves as Arabs, who were putting forth the staunchest opposition to Palestinian local patriotism. In fact, despite the quotations above of Palestinians extending an olive branch to Sephardic and Arab Jews, we will see that during the late Ottoman era this group of Arabic-speaking Jews at times became a source of ridicule within the local Arab press. Clearly, by 1914 there was a chasm between the local Arab population, who were uniting under a new sense of Palestinianism,⁴ embraced by both Muslims and Christians, and the Arabic-speaking Jews, whose Zionism placed a barrier between them and the local Arab population. Thus, even if some Jews spoke Arabic, maintained intellectual networks in Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul, and defined themselves as “Arab,” this was not enough to unify them with Palestinian Arabs, who were aware of this group’s work on behalf of Zionism and the Jewish colonization of Palestine.

Contextualizing Sephardic Voices within the Ottoman Jewish Yishuv⁵

“Before the Shoah and the foundation of Israel, Zionism had been a minority movement among world Jewry. The majority of Sephardi Jews were either indifferent or at times even hostile to the Zionist project... Zionism, in this period, created wrenching ideological dilemmas for the Palestinian Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities alike.”⁶ Ella Shohat

Can we define some of the Sephardic Jews of Palestine as “Arab”? If so, how representative were they in the Yishuv? Can we distinguish the Arabic-speaking Jews
from the non-Arabic-speaking ones, and define the former as Palestinian? And did Zionism prove a contradiction for the ones who did consider themselves Arab? Lastly, in the case of Ottoman Palestine, can we separate the Sephardic community from that of the Ashkenazim, especially in light of the fact that by 1908, the communities were linguistically merging together through the adoption of Hebrew as the main language of the Jewish Yishuv. These questions work to deconstruct the statement above and show the complexities in defining the Ottoman Sephardim in Palestine. This article’s address of these questions will contribute to the growing literature on Arab Jews, rethinking previous research on the topic by focusing mostly on one group of Arabic-speaking Jews in Ottoman Palestine who have received much attention due to their putting forth the “shared homeland” synthesis.

The Sephardim of Ottoman Palestine were a multifaceted community and not a homogenous one. While a large group of them could trace their roots back to the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Spain, others were from communities who had lived in the Levant generations before that. What united the multiple Sephardic communities in Ottoman Palestine during the late 19th century was that unlike their Ashkenazi counterparts, they were for the most part Ottoman citizens. However, this too, began to change with some Ashkenazi immigrants from the late 19th century onwards adopting citizenship. In addition to these long-established Sephardic communities, Jerusalem was also a place of migration for Jews from other Islamic lands, such as North Africa and Iran, and as far east as Bukhara. Even though these Jews did not necessarily originate from Spain, they did adopt the traditions of the Sephardic Jews, and were often categorized as comprising a part of the Sephardic community. In fact, it is these intricacies that has been one of the greatest challenges in defining them in terms of modern identities.

In addition to their diverse places of origin, Palestine’s Sephardim were linguistically diverse as well. On the one hand, there was the large Ladino speaking community who often lived together with those who spoke Arabic, which included an array of dialects. However, in the years leading up to World War One, the Sephardic community as a whole started adopting Hebrew as the main mode of communication; this not only brought the different Sephardic communities together, but also allowed them to communicate and connect with many of their Ashkenazi counterparts. It was these dynamics at play that made Jerusalem’s Sephardic community quite different from that of Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo –where Arabic was by far the main language of communication between the majority of Jews – or in Istanbul, Izmir, Sofia, and Salonica, where Ladino was the dominant language.

For many of the Sephardim, Ottoman Jerusalem was a magnet of migration, one that was motivated by religious education, marriages, a love for the spiritual homeland of Eretz Israel, and, by the late 19th century, Zionism, which transformed Palestine into a political and cultural center for the revival of the Jewish nation. As different as the Yishuv’s ethnic and linguistic makeup was, so was its stance on Zionism. Certainly, before World War One, and the eventual issuing of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, most of the Sephardim did not differ greatly from their Ashkenazim in Palestine and their brethren in the Ottoman lands at large: Zionism was the Jewish answer to the multiple nationalisms emerging in the Empire among other non-Muslim communities, such as Armenians and Greeks, and did not denote working for an independent state, but rather for achieving measures of cultural autonomy. Thus, in the period following the
1908 Young Turk revolution, the adopting of Hebrew as a national language did not contradict support for the Ottoman homeland. And, if the word “Zionism” was taboo within Ottoman politics, leading some to adopt an anti-Zionist stance to clarify that the Yishuv was not on the road to an independent state in Palestine (something that most could not even imagine), many from among the anti-Zionist camp were not at all against Jewish migration to Palestine and the adopting of national symbols by the Yishuv.

Over the last two decades, quite a few scholars have done pioneering work “writing” the Sephardic community into the history of Ottoman Palestine, pointing to how among them there were Arabic-speaking Jews who played a unique role in bridging the growing divide between Jews and Arabs in the late Ottoman era. These histories, which have focused on such figures as Nissim Malul, Shimon Moyal, Esther Azhari Moyal, Avraham Elmaliah, and Albert Antebi, have provided a base for understanding the history of the Sephardim in Palestine, in addition to serving as a foundation to develop our knowledge of the Arabic-speaking local Jews. What is missing from this narrative, however, is the fact that this group actually does not seem to have been representative of the Sephardim at large, but was a small group of intellectuals, whose experiences outside of Palestine influenced them, while their ties in Palestine to Jewish institutions, Zionist and non-Zionist, made them key members of the Yishuv. The emphasis on their perceived status as “mediators” between Jews and Arabs, who were working for a shared homeland, has blurred the fact that this did not bring them politically closer to Palestinians. It has also diverted our focus somewhat from the crucial role they played in strengthening the Yishuv. Certainly, their towering personalities provide another piece of proof that during the late Ottoman era, the Ashkenazim were not the dominant elite, but rather shared the social and political spheres with an organized Sephardic community.

During the period of 1908-1914, the Jewish Yishuv was made up of multiple organizations and institutions, which, regardless of their stance concerning Zionism, interacted with one another, even as each retained a great amount of autonomy. This created a sense of community and allowed members of various subgroups to place their stamp on society while also strengthening relations within their own milieu. One of these subgroups was the Sephardic Jews of North African descent that established the newspaper HaHerut, which would join the other two main newspapers, the Ashkenazi HaTzvi, representing the new Yishuv, and the religious Ashkenazi Moriah. HaHerut was staunchly pro-Zionist and Ottoman, which covered local news events, such as visits by Ottoman officials to Zionist settlements, awards evenings held at local Hebrew schools, and news from the Ottoman capital, Istanbul. In this sense, it mirrored HaTzvi to a great extent, which should come as no surprise since both their readerships were comprised largely of a new generation born in Palestine, known as “Bney Ha’aretz” (the children of the Land), who were raised speaking Hebrew, and often held Ottoman citizenship. Nevertheless, HaHerut was uniquely a Sephardic newspaper due to its coverage of its brethren in cities throughout the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, while also discussing internal Sephardic politics within the Yishuv. In 1910, a year after it marked its first publication, the newspaper had found its calling, becoming one of the loudest voices defending the Yishuv in the wake of a campaign in the Syrian and Palestinian press against the growing influence of the Jewish community alongside continued land sales to the Zionist movement. It was in this realm that HaHerut carved out a niche among...
Zionists, in addition to its staunch support for the growth of Hebrew in the public sphere.

**The War on the Arab Press**

12 In November 1910, a front-page editorial in *HaHerut*, entitled the “Great Danger”, announced to its readers that the incitement against the Jewish Yishuv had even reached “Jerusalem, the capital of the Land of Judea,” and was quickly spreading from the Christian-run papers to “our good neighbors, the Muslims”. The editor, Haim Ben-Attar, put forth the idea that the Jewish community could combat this surge of hate by starting an Arab newspaper that would show the “many who read Arabic” that what was being written in the Arab newspapers amounted to nothing more than lies. For Ben-Attar, this newspaper would need an “enlightened editor who would fight our war”, with a “special Israeli power”, “strengthened by extensive organization and planning, defending the Yishuv and its Hebrew element.” While this was coming from a Palestine-born Moroccan Jew, an Arabic speaker, he called on all the Jewish newspapers in Palestine to join in “our war”; for Ben-Attar, this war was one that needed to be understood within the context of the growing antisemitism in the Ottoman lands. From his perspective, the attacks against the Jewish community in Palestine were no different than ones they were facing in Ottoman Salonica, where Jews were now being referred to by the Turkish racial slur, “pis millet” (a dirty people) by some on the street.

13 Over the next four years, dozens of articles were printed in *HaHerut* on how to combat the opposition emerging from the Palestinian Arab press, which for the most part was blamed on the Christian editors of the two main opposition newspapers, Najib Nassar of al-Karmil, based in Haifa, and starting in 1911, ‘Isa al-‘Isa of Filastin, based in Jaffa. Despite the blame falling on the opposition newspapers, and the fact that the editors were Christians, it actually were Muslims who led the political fight against Zionism, such as the Ottoman parliamentarians from Jerusalem, Ruhi al-Khalidi and Said al-Husseini, who just six months later brought the issue of Zionism to the floor of parliament in Istanbul. In fact, while *HaHerut* focused on the negative press coverage, the Palestinian opposition to Zionism was a wall-to-wall campaign that included local politicians, notables, and was even expressed by peasants in the form of petitions dispatched to Istanbul. Thus, while Moshe Behar is correct in his assessment that *HaHerut* “dealt with the Palestinian Arab question more than any other Hebrew platform”, it often was not positive in tone. And, while *HaHerut* perhaps promoted “interethnic and inter-religious cooperation” with Muslims, there was no interaction or sympathy extended to Palestinians as a whole. In short, the writers of *HaHerut* never addressed the genuine concerns of the Palestinians over peasant expulsions, land sales to Zionists, the steady flow of immigrants, and the lack of action taken by the Ottoman administration. Instead, the Hebrew writers embarked on what they would call a “conquest” of the press, a term that became more common over time. If the Ashkenazi Socialist Zionists were acting for the conquest of labor and the Zionist Organization for the conquest of land, then the Sephardim now had their war to wage, the conquest of the press. These “conquests,” of course, were not coordinated, but that is what gave the Yishuv its strength. Each community worked on different fronts, often in tandem but sometimes in disagreement, with the common goal of...
strengthening the Yishuv, which included Zionist institutions and non-Zionist ones alike.

Within the pages of HaHerut, however, it becomes apparent that the Jewish Yishuv was largely unequipped to take on the “conquest” of the local Palestinian press, with very few proficient enough in Arabic to write articles. It is not surprising then that the ones who would lead the crusade against Arab opposition voices were two Jews who had lived outside of Palestine for many years, both active journalists. And this is where we return to the previously discussed group of intellectuals—Nissim Malul, Shimon Moyal, Avraham Elmaliah, and Albert Antebi. This group of Sephardic intellectuals, during the last years of Ottoman rule, became key figures within the Jewish Yishuv, following the worldly experiences they accrued outside of Palestine. For example, Lital Levy categorizes both Nissim Malul and Shimon Moyal as comprising a part of Cairo’s intellectual elite, and it was there that they built their careers. However, despite their ability to integrate into Egyptian literary circles, Levy’s further claim that in Palestine they “sought to inscribe themselves and their communities into the emerging Arab collective”, is far more questionable, for reasons that will be clear below.

As for Avraham Elmaliah, after finishing up his role as editor of HaHerut, he moved to Istanbul to work with Haim Nahum, the Ottoman Chief Rabbi. From there he went to Damascus to teach Hebrew, and almost four years after he left, he returned to work for the Zionist-run bank in Gaza. Then, there was Albert Antebi who was born and raised in Damascus, and only came to Palestine after his studies in France. Among this group, Malul was the only one whose family had a long history in Palestine; both Shimon Moyal and Avraham Elmaliah were children of immigrants from Morocco, making up a part of the “first generation” of Hebrew speakers. In this sense, their pro-Ottoman stance was similar to the children of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants who were raised in the land, such as Gad Frumkin and Karmi Eisenberg.

Sephardic Lives within Palestine and Beyond

At this juncture, it will be essential to take a more in-depth look at the lives of the Sephardic intellectuals, in order to grasp how their experiences outside of Palestine shaped them into the people they were, both in terms of their identity and the political worldviews they brought with them. Nissim Malul was raised and educated in Egypt in an Arabic environment, allowing him to adopt a modern identity as an Arab Jew, which would make him an incredible asset in HaHerut’s “conquest” of the Arab press. Malul was born in the northern city of Safad in Palestine in 1892, to a family that had immigrated to the Jewish holy city 200 years before that. When he was 8 years old, his father, Moshe Malul, took up a Rabbinical position in the Egyptian city of Tanta, and then later in Cairo, as a judge in the religious court. Malul’s years in Egypt were quite a different experience than what he had known in Safad as a young child. Visiting his hometown years later, he recalled that the Jews of Safad had little relations with their Arab neighbors; in fact, according to Malul, Jews even feared for their personal safety when entering the Muslim and Christian quarters of the city. While recent historical research has documented neighborly relations between Jews and Arabs within Safad and other cities through Palestine, Malul’s memories of his childhood revealed a reality of segregation and tensions between the different religious groups. According to Malul, these tensions were evident as well during World War One and the years immediate
after it.\textsuperscript{21} The move from a segregated Jewish community in the small city of Safad to an urban center like Tanta, and then Cairo (both with vibrant Jewish communities),\textsuperscript{24} was certainly a life-changing moment for Malul. Just a decade after moving there, he graduated from the American College, and then started to write in one of Egypt’s mostly widely read Arabic newspapers, \textit{al-Muqattam}. Through his studies in Arabic literature, journalism, and philosophy, he was primed during Egypt’s dynamic period when secular politicians took to parliament and the streets, demanding the British relinquish its tight hold over the politics of the country. It was during these years that Malul gained a great admiration for the well-known exiled Egyptian Jew, Yaqub Sanu, one of the most influential characters of the Egyptian national movement, known by his pen name, Abu-Naddara.\textsuperscript{25} Upon Sanu’s death, Malul wrote the following in an obituary: “how difficult is your death for me, just as it is for every Arab – Jewish, Christian or Muslim – who knew you…”, and he signed his name “your son and student who is mourning over you, Nissim Yaakov Malul”.\textsuperscript{26} Importantly, this reveals that he, too, perceived himself as an Arab Jew, embracing it as a modern identity. As this seminal figure played such an influential role in his life, it is not hard to imagine that Malul himself might have dreamed of becoming such a personage in Palestine – a figure that could unite the different religious groups into a mutual civic identity. In fact, Malul discovered in Egypt a civic territorial nationalism, which rallied around the slogan, “Egypt for the Egyptians”,\textsuperscript{27} a nationalism in which Jews could play a central role, just as Abu Naddara had done.

16 It was also during these years that Malul published widely in the Egyptian press with a focus on countering published antisemitic attacks, which at times went as far as blood libel.\textsuperscript{28} One of the ways he did this was by establishing an Association of Jewish Writers in Cairo, and eventually a newspaper of his own, \textit{al-Salam}. However, as much as he saw himself as part of the Egyptian milieu, he was also an avid Zionist, which in his years in Egypt was expressed through his educating Egyptian Jews in Hebrew. In fact, his Zionism was unrelenting, and this led to him to return to Palestine in the fall of 1911, to the land he had left as a child; now, as a young 19-year-old, this move was not just a matter of returning to his birthplace, but was done in order to take part in the dream of building the Jewish homeland. And, despite his young age, it should be noted that he had already gathered a bit of fame within the Jewish Yishuv. The newspaper \textit{HaHerut} announced the arrival of the “famous Hebrew-Arab writer and journalist”,\textsuperscript{29} and days later the paper described his dedication to defending the Jewish people.\textsuperscript{30} Nissim Malul would become one of the most visible Zionist writers in Palestine, settling in Jaffa, making regular visits to Haifa and Jerusalem (and quite a few to Cairo and Beirut as well).\textsuperscript{31} Above all, he would set out to do what he accomplished in Egypt, and that was to challenge the Arab opposition, which he and his Sephardic Jewish colleagues perceived as spreading ugly antisemitic attacks. However, Malul, unlike his counterparts, took it a step further, taking up employment with the Zionist Organization and thereby tying his position to an organization that was outlawed in the Ottoman Empire. This job, which he held up until September 1914, included translating articles from the Arabic press for the Zionist Organization’s Palestine Office, for which he received a regular salary.\textsuperscript{32} According to Jonathan Gribetz, “through these reports, Zionists in Palestine and their leadership abroad discovered what was being written and published about them by Arab journalists and intellectuals”.\textsuperscript{33}
Nissim Malul’s return to Palestine in 1911 was well-timed, as tensions were mounting over Zionist land purchases. Both in the Syrian and Palestinian press, Arab politicians and intellectuals began to voice strong opposition to the unchecked sale of lands to the Zionist movement, which, for the first time, included the removal of peasants from the lands they had inhabited “since time immemorial”. Locally, a new sense of Palestinianism was emerging, uniting Muslims and Christians together against the growing autonomy of the Jewish Yishuv, and creating new divisions between Jews and Arabs, who often maintained close relations within urban public and private spheres. For Malul, the “conquest” of the press was an essential measure to challenge this growing opposition and to ensure the future of the Yishuv, and to reach this goal, the unity between Ashkenazim and Sephardim was the first step needed in carrying out this “holy war”. Here a less noticed attitude of Malul appears, one that perceived the Hebrew culture, at least in Palestine, as superior to that of the Arabs, who possessed, as he described, a “minor culture”. Thus, even if he did identify as an Arab and felt it was essential for Jews to learn Arabic, he too seems to have held some prejudices concerning the local Arabs.

Nissim Malul however was not alone in this war, as an older colleague from his days in Cairo (and one of his role models) joined in. Shimon Moyal was born in 1866 in Jaffa, studied medicine in Beirut and then made his way to Egypt, with his spouse, Esther Azhari Moyal, an Arab Jewish journalist from Beirut. Following the 1908 Young Turk revolution, they returned to Palestine, where their worldly ways must have been somewhat of an anomaly in the Jewish Yishuv; to start off with, both were well known journalists in Cairo. Moyal, not satisfied with a medical degree, also studied at the prestigious Islamic school, Al-Azhar and translated the Hebrew Talmud into Arabic. As for Esther Moyal, she was a renowned writer in Beirut’s intellectual circle and the move to Jaffa must have been difficult; coming from Beirut, her Arabic surpassed that of most of the Jewish community in Palestine, yet, her Hebrew was not near as strong. Moreover, women writers who published in the Jewish and Arabic press were few and far between. In fact, in all the debates within the pages of HaHerut over the lack of Jews who knew Arabic, her name never came up as a potential candidate who could write in the Yishuv’s defense. It seems her status as a woman in the much more conservative Jewish communities of Palestine limited the visibility she was used to in Beirut and Cairo. Lastly, it is a not a stretch to claim that with both writing in such prestigious newspapers as Cairo’s Al-Ahram, their being sidelined by the local Palestinian press must have been difficult as well. Thus, it is not surprising it was the Moyals who eventually established an Arabic newspaper, Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya, the Voice of Ottomanism, which allowed them to continue their journalistic work in Palestine as well as offering a counterpoint to the views expressed in the Palestinian press. With the Moyals, and Malul, continuing to write for the Arabic press outside of Palestine, and working toward opening an Arabic newspaper, they were succeeding in merging their lives in Cairo and Beirut with that in Palestine as Zionists. This status, according to Jacobson and Naor, allowed them to serve as “mediators”, and “maintain their Jewish-Arab identity and integrate it within the national and political project of Zionism”.

Overlooked in the research about the Arabic newspaper that both Malul and Moyal had been proposing was that it was geared towards Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians, and not at all towards the Jewish community. In other words, it was not a “Jewish Daily in Arabic” per se, but rather a pro-Zionist newspaper written by Jews for Arabs.
point hits at the question of how many “Arab Jews” were in Palestine during the late Ottoman era, and challenges recent research arguing that the local Sephardic population should be defined first and foremost as “Palestinian Arab-Jews”. Unlike in surrounding lands—Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, where Arabic was often the mother tongue of Jews—in Palestine, the picture was much more complicated, where the Sephardic population was made up in large part by speakers of Ladino, and even if some of them knew Arabic, it seems that most did not have strong literacy skills in the language. This also included conservative Jews from Arab lands, whose skills were often limited to reading Arabic in Hebrew characters within religious commentaries. Certainly, a modern education in Arabic was overall a rarity. Of course, this is not to say that there were not Jewish communities who adopted an Arab-Jewish identity and spoke Arabic on a regular basis, something that is well documented in the work of Menachem Klein. Nonetheless, Malul and the Moyal were unique to the Yishuv; it was not just that they knew Arabic, it was the status they had achieved in Cairo, together with their capabilities at also integrating fully into the Hebrew press, which produced a unique type of modern Hebrew-Arab intellectual.

This is the very reason that both Nissim Malul and Shimon Moyal were so revered within the Yishuv since there were simply not enough men who had the skills in Arabic to tackle the growing opposition. This fact was noted numerous times among their peers. The editor of HaHerut, Haim Ben-Attar, claimed in one article that there was “only a handful of writers able to read and write Arabic”. He then moves on to ask who among the “Arab-Hebrews” in the Yishuv could take this work on since there were so few Hebrew writers (from among the Bney-Ha’aretz) who also know Arabic. One of these writers was David Yellin whose Arabic was up to par but simply his time could not be sacrificed for this, due to the crucial role he played teaching Hebrew in schools (interestingly Yellin here is not defined as an Arab-Hebrew writer, but rather one that also knew Arabic in addition to his Hebrew). And it was for this reason that the “Hebrew-Arab” Nissim Malul was such an asset—aside from him there was really no one left. For this, he deserved praise for leading the war for the “national idea”. In fact, the lack of candidates with a strong knowledge of Arabic was recognized by Malul himself, who argued that there were not enough Jews between Syria and Egypt able to actively write in the Arab press because so few were fluent and had the ability to write. He went on: “And, you can count the Hebrew-Arab writers on one hand.” Further, “most of our [Sephardic] brothers do not read Arabic, so they [too] do not know what is happening in our enemies’ camp.”

Coming back to Moyal, we actually learn a lot about him through his own writing that he submitted to the newspaper, HaTzvi, on his tour of Palestine to sell monetary shares to support his Arabic newspaper, Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya, which caused excitement throughout the Yishuv. Among the stories he penned, one that stands out is his encounter with an Arab, by the name of Muhammad al-Masri, who was travelling with a caravan of camels. From Moyal’s description, we see that despite his familiarity with the urban Arab population, whether in Jaffa or Cairo, he seems to have had little contact with rural Arabs (similar to the Sephardic community at large). Upon meeting al-Masri, Moyal remained reserved and spoke to him in “clear Arabic”, “speaking like a Muslim”, slipping in Quranic verses and sentences from the Hadith in order to make an impression on him. What is interesting here is Moyal’s sense that he needed to prove his Arabness to this passing Arab. After exchanging greetings, the conversation turned to the 1911 Ottoman War in Libya. Al-Masri seemed impressed at the fact that Jews
were in support of the Ottomans. Moyal then shifted the conversation to the Jewish Yishuv and the issues of the settlements, asking what Al-Masri thought. He answered:

the Jews are benefiting the Land. There is enough land for both of us... and the
[parcels] they have bought from us were not being used and they came and
transformed the land by fertilizing it and working it until it turned into beautiful
fields.\footnote{22}

Al-Masri then goes on to speak of how much open land there was, that the Arabs were
lazy, and that the government helps the efendis who suck the blood from us. He ends
by saying that the “Jews provide a livelihood to many, and they pay their wages”, and
when needed, disputes can be settled in a just way.\footnote{53} Moyal then turned to al-Masri,
stating “there are newspapers and Christian and Muslim writers who are always
spreading [rumors] about the expected dangers concerning the Jewish migration...”. Al-
Masri answered: “I am not surprised about the Christian writers because they are the
enemies of both the Jews and the Muslims”.

Following his encounter with this lone Arab, Moyal continued to other Arab villages,
reaching Tira, and there they respected him, with “coffee and a meal”. He once again
heard positive feedback concerning the Jewish community, confirming that “the native
people in the villages are on our side”, and that even if sometimes you hear them
express slurs, like “damn Jews”, this “is a result of habit more than it is from hostility”.
\footnote{54}

From the Arab villages, he went on to Haifa and further north to the Galilee, being
received with fanfare at some of the Jewish settlements who contributed funds to his
newspaper network. When entering one settlement, Moyal referred to it as entering
“Israeli land,” which exhibits the pride he felt seeing Jewish-owned land being farmed
by (Ashkenazi) Jewish workers. For this urban Sephardic Jew, the settlements
were something novel and he seemed fascinated at their success.\footnote{55} In addition to the new
settlements, he also visited Safad, where he was highly respected within the Jewish
community due to the fact that he had practiced medicine there in the late 1890s
before going to Egypt.\footnote{56} Importantly, his visit was met with excitement among
Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike, with both purchasing shares in his venture,
convinced that his paper could shift the growing tide of sentiment against the Jewish
Yishuv.\footnote{57} During this period, most Jews simply believed that the growing divide with
the Palestinian local community was due to a great misunderstanding and that a
newspaper like Moyal’s could set the record straight.\footnote{58}

The role of both Malul and Moyal were noted in the Palestinian press, where they were
ridiculed for their uncompromising Zionist ideology. This is a key part of the formula
to understand that while in Egypt and Lebanon Malul and Moyal found camaraderie, in
Palestine, they were politically isolated and marked as standing in contrast to
Palestinian interests. In one 1912 article in Filastin, the writer comments that “everyone
in Jaffa knows who Nissim Malul is, or by Doctor Malul, how he refers to himself”. The
author goes on to say that he has been able to continue to write for Cairo and Beirut’s
press due to the simple fact that in return they have increased sales and that most of
his articles about Jaffa are in the defense of Zionism and Zionists. The paper goes on to
say that

\begin{quote}
little by little he has been talking about the newspaper Filastin, not for anything else
except to show to the Zionists that he is watching over their interests and
defending their rights.\footnote{59}
\end{quote}
Concerning Moyal, in the fall of 1911, he succeeded in having his voice heard in the pages of *Filastin*, with its editor allowing him to address the paper’s readers after he had complained in *HaHerut* that an Arab professional organization was refusing membership to Jews (a debate ensued, with this claim being denied). However, this was a rare moment of public dialogue between Jews and Arabs, something that would not be possible as tensions continued to rise between the two communities. Just a year later, *HaHerut* reported that some Palestinian Christian journalists questioned Moyal’s sincerity in joining the Ottoman army in 1912 during the Balkan war to serve as a doctor, something he need not have done due to his age (and status). It was claimed that he was doing this for financial benefit, which he certainly did not need. However, this reflected more the Palestinians’ suspicions of Ottoman Zionist Jewish citizens who were volunteering to fight in the Balkan wars, and by doing so gaining influence within Ottoman politics and its administration.

Of all the Ottoman Arabic-speaking Jews, Albert Antebi is perhaps the most well-known within the literature on the Sephardic community in Palestine. Born in Damascus, Antebi was raised within a Jewish community that was overwhelmingly fluent in Arabic, with most speaking it as their mother tongue and possessing little knowledge of Hebrew. Following his studies in France, he made his way to Palestine where he served as the director of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) and the head of the prestigious Alliance Israélite Universelle. In stark contrast to Malul and Moyal, Antebi was a declared anti-Zionist and can be described as the prototypical Ottoman Jewish citizen, who maintained close ties with Ottoman government officials. In fact, as he was not from Palestine, he was without particular loyalties and played the role of an arbiter between the Jewish community, Arabs, and Istanbul. Nevertheless, Antebi was a central figure in promoting Jewish immigration and strengthening the Jewish Yishuv. In a rare interview in *HaHerut*, Antebi opened up to its editor, Haim Ben-Attar, who was thrilled to be able to talk to the man that “speaks little and accomplishes a lot”. However, from Ben-Attar’s description of him we also see how controversial Antebi was within the Yishuv, in which he kept a safe distance from the Hebrew-speaking Sephardic community (not to mention the Ashkenazi non-Ottoman citizens). Perhaps it was for this reason that Antebi accepted the interview, which provided a platform to go on record in the Hebrew press, sharing his thoughts about Palestine. Ben-Attar first asked him about Shimon Moyal’s call to establish a Jewish federation that would bring all the Jews of the Yishuv into one organization; something that Moyal especially wanted to move forward with, in addition to the Jewish-Arab newspaper discussed above. Antebi expressed his support of such a histadrut, but conveyed he could not give public support for it as his affiliation with the JCA and the Alliance prevented this; however, he suggested that it be apolitical and that if the plan did move forward it was crucial to work “in silence and not with words”, in order to not attract attention. When asked about Moyal’s proposed Jewish-Arabic newspaper, he stated that the idea of starting a Jewish newspaper for the non-Jewish (Arab) population was first introduced following the 1908 revolution. However, Antebi thought that such a project was doomed to fail, especially since the “hate was just getting stronger”. Towards the end of the conversation, Antebi asserted that “we need to show our strength, even if our work will benefit others”. He then expressed the hope that the ones who will benefit from it at least will not be those who hate the Jews. He finished the interview by

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reiterating that the works needed to be done in complete secrecy, without the fanfare the Jewish community usually puts on.\textsuperscript{28}

Just over a year after the interview, Albert Antebi took the leap into politics, leaving his official positions and running in Jerusalem’s local election for the seat of District Engineer. In contrast to his position in the interview, we see that Antebi had now opted for a new strategy: no longer working in the shadows, he wanted to enter local politics and receive the support of the Jewish community. For our purposes, his election loss demonstrates that just as Moyal and Malul were placed into competition with the anti-Zionist Arabic press, Antebi’s election also highlighted the growing divide between the two communities. His opponent in the election, Raghib al-Nashashibi, along with some in the Arab press, claimed that Antebi was a Zionist, which Antebi found highly offensive and interpreted as an act of antisemitism, submitting an official complaint to the Ottoman authorities.\textsuperscript{44} This election was a moment when national lines were drawn between Jews and Palestinians, with the Jewish Sephardim realizing that if someone as anti-Zionist as Antebi could not be elected, then probably none of them could. In fact, just a year before this, it was Shimon Moyal who had encouraged Jews to organize and run a candidate for parliament. However, for this to happen, Jews of the Yishuv – Jaffa, Jerusalem, Hebron, and the new settlements – would have to unite, in order to tip the scales in their favor.\textsuperscript{59}

By the spring of 1914, the Palestinian press was filled with numerous articles protesting the growing influence of the Jewish community in Palestine, with Jerusalem’s Arab notables dispatching petitions exclaiming their deep fears that they were losing their hold over the homeland.\textsuperscript{70} Once again, the Sephardim (very likely Malul or Moyal) succeeded in getting the newspaper \textit{Filastin} closed down, with Istanbul’s Chief Rabbi, Haim Nahum, reporting his disgust with the Interior Minister, Talaat Bey.\textsuperscript{71} However, as in past cases, they knew this would only be temporary. Clearly, the Jewish-Arab newspaper, \textit{Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya}, had completely failed in its war on the Arabic press, and was deemed to be purely a Zionist newspaper, with some Arabs even claiming it was also anti-Muslim.\textsuperscript{72} Thus, new attempts by this group of Sephardic Jews would be needed to convince the Palestinians that the Jewish Zionist project did not mean any harm, but was actually bringing prosperity to the land. This led to the founding of a new society, HaMagen – the Shield – established by the same group: Nissim Malul, Shimon and Esther Moyal, and Avraham Elmaliah, among others from Jaffa’s Sephardic community. According to its secretary, Elmaliah, especially us [the society’s founders], who know the language of the country and who day in and day out read this poisonous press, who know the characteristics of the Arab people, with whom we live in close proximity to, are starting to feel [the situation] getting worse... realizing that we cannot sit silently while such great danger threatens the entire Yishuv.\textsuperscript{73}

The main goal now was to create a society that would improve relations between Jews and Arabs while continuing to fight against “Arab antisemitism”, which was quickly spreading. In fact, it recognized that up until a few years earlier, Jews had succeeded for 30 years, building up the land, from the River “Dan to Beersheba”, bringing education, culture, green groves, and farming communities without any real opposition. Following the Young Turk revolution, the Jews even tried to build up this “shared homeland”, with the Arabs, since the “aretz” (country) belonged to both, as it was “ours” and “theirs”.\textsuperscript{74} However, due to the rise of antisemitism in the press, the local population was unable to see this.\textsuperscript{75}
The organization’s general secretary, Avraham Elmaliah, is the last of these intellectuals to be discussed here. Born in Jerusalem, Elmaliah originally served as the first editor of HaHerut before he left journalism following the visit of the Ottoman Chief Rabbi, Haim Nahum, to Palestine in 1910. Elmaliah decided to follow the Chief Rabbi back to Istanbul. For many Jews in Palestine, Istanbul was the land of opportunities; however, Elmaliah did not go to the big city to study at its prestigious law school like many others from the Yishuv, rather he went out of a love of teaching Hebrew and educating Jewish children. There, he served as principal for the Jewish Talmud Torah school, worked briefly at the Hebrew newspaper, and also immersed himself in Istanbul’s Jewish community. He did not hide the fact that he was an avid Zionist, giving talks in Hebrew and Ladino at Jewish clubs in Istanbul. He was also key in supporting the foundation and spread of the Zionist Maccabi clubs.

Toward the end of 1911, he left the capital and took up a position in Damascus at a Jewish school. As a Hebrew writer, Elmaliah stressed the importance of Hebrew being in the curriculum, making it a condition of his accepting the job offer. During these years, he also worked on the editorial board of the Hebrew (Ashkenazi) Socialist Zionist organ, HaPoel HaTzair, and published in-depth studies of the Ottoman Jewish communities in Damascus and Salonica. In addition to all this, he spent his free time translating books into Hebrew.

Towards the end of 1913, he returned to Palestine, preparing for his new position in Gaza, working for the Zionist Anglo-Palestine Bank.

Conclusion

Nissim Malul, the Moyals, Avraham Elmaliah, and other members of Jaffa’s Sephardic community came together to establish HaMagen. Previously in the literature, this group of Sephardim has been portrayed as representing the Sephardic community as a whole; however, this work has argued that in reality it was their experiences outside of Palestine which shaped their worldviews, not just on Zionism, but also on the growing Jewish-Arab rift. Nissim Malul, born in Safad, moved to Egypt as a young boy where he was raised and educated, and there he experienced an Egypt where Jews were able to enter the public sphere as Egyptians. Shimon Moyal, born in Jaffa, went to school in Beirut, where he met Esther Azhari, and together they joined Egyptian intellectual circles. For her, the fame she found in her hometown of Beirut was not possible to attain in the smaller and more conservative Yishuv. Lastly, Avraham Elmaliah, born in Jerusalem and raised speaking Hebrew, found a new world in Istanbul where Zionism was for many Jews a cultural movement. There he witnessed the Ottoman “shared homeland”, where Turkish and Arab Muslims, together with Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, all had representation in the parliament. Once back in Palestine this group of intellectuals tried to relive their experiences from Cairo and Istanbul; if unity was possible there, it certainly would be possible in Palestine as well. However, it seems it was actually Ottomanism and Egyptian nationalism that perhaps limited their ability to understand Palestinian local patriotism, which was not motivated by antisemitism, but had genuine claims vis-à-vis the Jewish Yishuv. Certainly, what stands out the most in their efforts to create a “shared homeland” in Palestine, was that they were never able to forge a shared political community with Palestinians, much less a dialogue. In fact, in the spirit of Antebi’s entering politics, HaMagen proposed that Jews begin to take a more active role in politics, running candidates in local and parliamentary elections.
with the hope that a new generation of Jewish politicians could challenge the Palestinian Arab ones within the Ottoman political world, both in Istanbul and Jerusalem (as we saw with the Antebi-Nashashibi election).

33 This group also formed a legal team to challenge the Palestinian opposition in the courts. This was in essence a continuation of a former policy, where the Ottoman Empire’s Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum and Malul served as key people in suspending the Arab press in Palestine, deeming it antisemitic. In short, HaMagen would continue the war and the conquest of the press which was started years earlier in the pages of HaHerut. However, time was of the essence since the Palestinian press was ignited with a wave of articles that were transforming from a local patriotism to a full-blown nationalism.

34 Soon after the breakout of World War One, Jewish and Muslim leaders met up in an attempt to join together for the shared homeland; however, it was the iconic (Ashkenazi) editor of HaTzvi, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who represented the Jewish side. Of the group of Sephardic intellectuals, Elmaliah participated and described the meeting as the first time that the two peoples gathered to discuss their relationship. No less important was the educational value of the meeting for the Jews. Tens of years they have been living in Eretz Israel without realizing that there is another people living with them.

35 This meeting was also attended by the Palestinian Muhammad Saleh Abd al-Latif al-Husayni, who, around the time of this meeting, submitted an open plea to the Jews to pursue Ottoman citizenship. In it he calls on the Jews “to remember what our exalted government did for you upon your exiting Spain” accepting them like no other country would. He goes on to enjoin them to fight alongside the Ottomans. What al-Husayni perhaps did not know was that there were already quite a few Ottoman Ashkenazi and Sephardic soldiers fighting alongside the Palestinians. In any case, this plea by al-Husayni connects us back to the calls by Palestinians following World War One for the Arab Jews and Sephardim to join them in their struggle against the British. Al-Husayni’s lack of knowledge about the Jewish community is indicative of these Palestinian entreaties to the Jews, similar to the way these same Jews did not understand the Palestinians. In this case, the communal and political divisions were much more dominant than their shared Arabic linguistic and cultural ties.

36 In conclusion, Malul, the Moyals, Antebi, and Elmaliah provide a unique window into the lives of a small group of intellectuals who, despite their Arabic fluency, identifying as Arab Jews (or Hebrew-Arabs as they often coined it), and their success in forging ties with Arab and Turkish intellectuals outside of Palestine, were unable to forge similar ties with the Palestinian intellectual elite. While the extant literature focuses on their Arab identities and serving as possible intermediaries with the Palestinians, it has overlooked how they were an integral part of a multifaceted Jewish Yishuv, contributing to the proliferation of Hebrew, and the overall success of a Jewish Yishuv that was working for autonomy within the Ottoman system. Perhaps, ironically, the emphasis on the “shared homeland” synthesis, has led us to miss out on the centrality of this group of Arab Jews to the history of the Jewish Yishuv, and how the new borders in the Middle East would greatly change the dynamics of a community that once could thrive in Cairo and Istanbul. No less important, however, is the realization that the political divisions between this group of Arab Jews in Palestine and the Palestinians...
were more profound than previously accessed. Thus, it is not hard to imagine why, following World War One, so many of the Sephardim did not take seriously the call by the Palestinians to join them as equals in their struggle. Nevertheless, and to end, we must recognize that following the war, Palestinians, like the Sephardim and the Jewish community, were also forced to renegotiate their previous concepts of homeland, and it is within this context that we need to understand them.

APPENDIXES

Glossary

**Antebi, Albert** was born in 1869 in Damascus, educated in France and arrived to Palestine in 1896, where he eventually became the director of the Alliance school network, later also serving as the representative of the Jewish Colonization Association. During his first decade in Palestine he was staunchly opposed to the Zionist Organization, which called for an independent Jewish state in Palestine; however, with the realigning of political Zionism following the 1908 Young Turk revolution towards a more pro-Ottoman stance, much of his animosity towards the movement was lifted. Importantly, despite his official anti-Zionist stance, he was not against Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel, and was a key member in facilitating Jewish settlements and securing lands for their expansion. His role as an intermediary between the Ottoman administration, the local Jewish Yishuv and Palestinians, made him into what many has described as the model Ottoman citizen.

**Elmaliah, Avraham** was born in Jerusalem in 1885 to a family from Morocco and finished his studies at the Alliance Israelite. He was a dedicated Hebraist, who worked alongside Eliezer Ben Yehuda in promoting Hebrew as the dominant language of the Yishuv, also briefly editing the Hebrew Sephardic newspaper, *HaHerut*. In 1910, he made his way to Istanbul, where he served on the editorial board of the Zionist Hebrew newspaper, *HaMevasser*, in addition to teaching Hebrew and working with the Jewish Maccabi Jewish Sports club. From there, he made his way to Damascus, where he continued his work as an educator. In late 1913, he returned to Palestine eventually to serve at the Zionist Anglo-Palestine Bank in Gaza. He also wrote periodically for the Socialist Zionist periodical, *HaPoel HaTzair*.

**Malul, Nissim** was born in Safad in 1892 to a family that arrived to Palestine from Tunisia two hundred years earlier. At 8 years old, he moved with his family to Egypt upon his father being appointed as the Rabbi in the city of Tanta, where he would eventually also attend the American College. Malul in his late teens already became an avid writer, eventually writing in the Egyptian newspaper, *al-Muqattam*. In 1911, he returned to Palestine and was welcomed by the newspaper *HaHerut*, where he penned many articles in the defense of the Jewish Yishuv and Zionism. Throughout the late Ottoman era, he continued to write for newspapers in Cairo and Beirut, while translating Arabic articles for the Zionist Organization’s Palestine Office.
Moyal, Shimon born in Jaffa in 1866 to a family of Moroccan origin, was an intellectual whose studies and adventurous life led him to Beirut, Istanbul, Cairo, and back to Palestine in 1908. The fact that he was a medical doctor did not stop his intellectual curiosity, which peaked with his translation of the Talmud into Arabic. Together with his wife, Esther Azhari Moyal, the two established in Palestine an Arabic newspaper, Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya, the Voice of Ottomanism. He was an avid Ottoman Zionist who believed that by adopting a pro-Ottomanist stance, the Jewish community could secure a political presence in the wake of the growing Palestinian opposition to the Zionist movement.

Moyal, Esther Azhari was born in Beirut in 1873. The fame she received there seems to have greatly overshadowed many in the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. As a woman and a feminist, she lived a life of an intellectual who crossed many boundaries. It was her marriage to Shimon Moyal that would eventually lead her to Istanbul and Cairo, and then to the much smaller and more conservative Palestine, where divisions between Jews and Arabs seem to have been more definitive than she had previously encountered. In Palestine as well, it seems she was greatly sidelined as a woman despite the strong skills she possessed and her continued presence in the Egyptian and Lebanese press.

NOTES

1. Doar HaYom, July 11, 1920, p. 2; Al-Quds al-Sharif, July 8, 1920, p. 1; According to Abigail Jacobson: "the terminology was obviously used to undermine the place of Zionism in Palestine, and to highlight the ‘local Jews’ who had been living in the country before the Zionists arrived. The Sephardim may not have fully supported this clear-cut distinction made between them and the Zionists, as two broad distinct categories, as many of them considered themselves Zionists as well...", Abigail Jacobson, From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2011, p. 113. In fact, this and other similar calls by the local Palestinian population have been repeated by other scholars to demonstrate a shared Arab history between the three religious groups, Jews, Christians, and Muslims – all Arabs – and the relative unity that existed between them. However, outside of Jacobson’s original questioning of the motivations behind it, cited above, later scholars have not explored this more. Further, they have not questioned the problem in determining an identity of a minority group through the lens of a collective majority. Certainly, Palestinians defining a group of Sephardic Jews as “local” and “Arab” is interesting, but it does not help us to understand how the Sephardim defined themselves. For a discussion of the post-World War One calls by Palestinians to the local Jews, see: Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine, Boston, Brandeis University Press, 2016, p. 19-23.

2. Filastin, September 3, 1921, p. 2; Doar HaYom, September 5, 1921, p. 3; The Jewish Chronicle, August 29, 1921, p. 28; The Jewish Chronicle, September 16, 1921.

3. Following the 1908 Young Turk revolution, the term “shared homeland” became a common term to denote the unity of Ottoman citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity, and often linguistic divisions. In this paper, we will see how it was implemented linguistically by Arabic-speaking Sephardim within the context of bridging ties between Jews and Arabs amidst a growing rift between them.

4. I define Palestinianism as the “essence of what it meant to be a Palestinian before the rise of nation-state nationalism, when in the late Ottoman era a modern notion of patriotism to
Palestine began to be expressed among the local Arab population,” describing the sense of “connectedness’ and ‘commonality’, which led them to join together to take action, to defend, preserve and place claim over their perceived homeland, without having national aspirations towards establishing an independent state.” See: Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians in the late Ottoman Era: Claiming the Homeland, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2020, p. 16.

5. The Hebrew term “Yishuv,” refers to the Jewish settlement and community in the Holy Land. However, following 1881 and the “First Aliyah,” it would increasingly be referred to as the “New Yishuv,” denoting the modern political Jewish community in Palestine before statehood. This work uses the term, Ottoman Jewish Yishuv, which places the Yishuv within its Ottoman historical context, challenging the dominant Zionist (and now Israeli) historiography which places a clear distinction between the “Old” and “New” Yishuv.


7. This article will show that the term “Arab Jew” was far less controversial during the period under discussion, than it is now. For the ongoing debate over the term, see: Lital Levy, “The Arab Jew debates: media, culture, politics, history”, Journal of Levantine Studies, January 7, 2017, p. 79-103.


9. Many aspects of this current article have been discussed in great detail in the following books, all of which have provided rich analysis and plenty of material to ponder on: Michelle Campos, Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine, Redwood City, Stanford University Press, 2010; Abigail Jacobson, From Empire to Empire..., op. cit.; Jonathan Marc Gribetz, Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014. This work does not include another Arabic-speaking Jew, Ishaq al-Shami, who was the subject of a study by the scholar Salim Tamari. See: Salim Tamari, “Ishaq Al-Shami and the Predicament of the Arab Jew in Palestine“, Jerusalem Quarterly File, 21, 2004, p. 10-26. Also, see the recent article, by Yuval Evri, “Partitions and translations: Arab Jewish translational models in fin de siècle Palestine“, Journal of Levantine Studies, 9, 2019, p. 71-93.

10. Jacobson and Naor correctly state that “Oriental and Sephardi leaders lost the political status they had held during the Ottoman era and they were no longer considered by the Zionist leaders as possible mediators between Jews and Arabs”. Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, Oriental Neighbors..., op. cit., p. 10. Throughout the book, the two authors develop a fascinating look at how the Sephardim played the role of “mediators,” between Jews and Arabs, on multiple social and political levels.


12. The editorial stressed that this be in Arabic characters, most likely to differentiate from the language of many of the Arabic speaking Jews, which was Judeo-Arabic, Arabic written with Hebrew characters.

13. HatBerut, November 4, 1910, p. 1-2. The usage of “Israeli” is interesting here since it was quite rare for members of the Jewish community to use it. Nevertheless, linguistically, I argue the term here does denote some form of modern nationalism; surprising to some, within the Palestinian community, it became a general collective title for the Jewish community in describing Jewish institutions of the Yishuv. This was a derivative from the Quranic (Biblical) term, Bani Isra’il, the Children of Israel.


18. The conclusion I reached is very similar to that of Jonathan Marc Gribetz. See: *Defining Neighbors…*, op. cit., p. 187.
19. Lital Levy, “Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the ‘Mashriq’”, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 98, 4, 2008, p. 465. Menachem Klein also claims that they wished to integrate the Jewish community within the Arab one. See: Menachem Klein, “Arab Jew in Palestine”, *Israel Studies*, 19, 3, 2014, p. 148. Klein provides a fascinating take on Malul and Moyal, defining their Zionism as “Arab Zionism”. However, in essence what he describes as Arab Zionism did not differ that much from the Zionism most of the Yishuv adhered to following the 1908 revolution, when even the Zionist movement began to work toward autonomy in place of an independent state.
20. Louis Fishman, *Jews and Palestinians…*, op. cit., p.157-166. Gad Frumkin went on to Istanbul to open an agricultural office to facilitate Jewish settlements in Palestine, while his brother-in-law, Karmi Eisenberg, became an Ottoman army officer, who later died as a prisoner of war following World War One.
23. Ha-Ibri, January 16, 1920, p. 5-6. This article is an overview of Jewish-Arab relations in the Galilee, which Malul wrote in 1920. In my previous research, I also highlight how in late Ottoman Safad, Jews were quite isolated from the overall population. See: Louis Fishman, *Jews and Palestinians…*, op. cit., p. 139; “The Limitations of Citadinité”, art. cited, p. 510-531. I document in this article as well that there were reports of Arabs taking part in Jewish celebration of Lag B’omer in Safad during the late Ottoman era. See *HaHerut*, June 15, 1913, p. 3.
27. Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians…*, op. cit., p. 57-58. In this book, Fahmy speaks specifically on how the term Misr lil-Misriyyin was promoted by Sanu, who actually helped spread the fervent call within his cartoons, which was key in making it one of the most influential sayings of the Egyptian national movement.
28. *HaHerut*, October 25, 1911, p. 2. It was reported that Malul once even purchased antisemitic pamphlets so they would not be passed out. One of the pamphlets reached Palestine and there were rumors that it was being distributed in Palestine, something that was false, as Malul explained. *HaHerut*, July 24, 1911, p. 3.
29. *HaHerut*, 27 June 1911, p. 3. The term “Hebrew-Arab” and “Arab-Hebrew” writers were frequently used in *HaHerut* to describe Arab Jews and can be added to the list of terms used by Lital Levy to denote Arab Jews. Levy, *The Arab Jew Debates*.1. Certainly, more work needs to be done on these terms which were used often in Ottoman times.
30. *HaHerut*, June 30, 1911, p. 3.
31. Malul also continued to publish articles in the Arab press, both in Beirut and Cairo. Some of these articles were not necessarily related to the Yishuv. For example, in the Egyptian newspaper, *al-Mahrusa*, he wrote about Jewish communities throughout the world. See: *HaHerut*, February 8, 1912, p. 3.
34. Louis Fishman, *Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit.*, p. 84.
35. *HaHerut*, October 25, 1911.
40. This might seem like a small point, but it really hits at the heart of the newspaper itself, transforming our understanding of it. See: Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire..., op. cit.*, p. 105; Lital Levy, “Partitioned Pasts”, art. cited, p. 138.
42. An article in *Ha-Olam* explains that the Jews in Syria are wrongly called “Sephardim,” since the vast majority did not originate from Spain, and they are called there “Arab Jews.” It goes on to say there is a big difference between the “real Sephardim” in Eretz Israel and Syria, and the “local Syrian [Jews] or “Arab Jews,” as they are called there. *Ha-Olam*, March 25, 1908, p. 3. When discussing Beirut, it mentions that the Ashkenazi community there is a great deal from the Ashkenazim originating from the Galilee, mostly Safad.
43. In one interview, the Ottoman parliamentarian, Sasson Efendi, discusses the role of Arabic in the Jewish community. He stresses in it that the Jewish community is an integral part of the overall Arab community. However, he does speak about tensions that exist between Jews and Muslims. Unlike the Sephardic Ottoman parliamentarians, such as (the Turkish speaking) Nissim Mazliyah, who was close to Zionists and believed in cultural Zionism, Sasson did not identify with the movement. *Ha-Olam*, March 10, 1909, p. 11-12.
44. Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 51. According to Klein, “Jewish children from the established Sephardi families of Mani, Moial (Moyal), and Amzaelg attended the modern Arab school, al-Madrasah al-Dusturiyyah, founded in 1909 by Khalil Sakakini”, in addition to other cases he documents. However, this in no way should be seen as representative of the Yishuv overall, which opted for Hebrew, and then (Ottoman) Turkish, as the language of the state (in addition to French).
45. In relation to Arab-Jewish identity, Menahem Klein eloquently states, “Arab-Jewish identity was a fact of life, something encountered daily by the country’s natives. Ideologues did not codify it in a clear-cut way in articles and books, poets did not write of it, and no conferences and fundraising drives were held to promote it or bring it about. Members of some social strata simply lived it. It contained incongruent and sometimes contradictory elements – life never
conforms to a single model but rather flows in different directions”. See: Menachem Klein, Lives in Common..., op. cit., p. 19.

46. HaHerut, July 4, 1912, p. 2.
47. Ibid.
48. HaHerut, August 16, 1911.
49. HaTzvi, January 12, 1913, p. 1. This (cynically written) article, while not directly related to our topic, helps put the perspective of a Jewish Arabic newspaper in context, naming it as one of the main topics of the Yishuv.
51. HaTzvi, June 11, 1912, p. 3.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. HaTzvi, June 14, 1912, p. 2.
56. Moriah, July 16, 1912, p. 2. This letter was signed anonymously, with the name, “a youngster”.
57. HaTzfira, August 1, 1912, p. 3; HaTzvi, 29 July 1912, p. 3.
58. This paper has not focused on the polemic between Malul/Moyal and Avraham Ludvipol, which led some scholars to see the debate over Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya as being essentially one of Ashkenazim versus Sephardim. However, this research shows that the newspaper was as much of an Ashkenazi project as it was a Sephardic one, in terms of funding and support; see: Moshe Behar, “1911: The Birth of the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi Controversy”, art. cited. From my perspective, what is at play here was also the politics surrounding the failed Zionist press in Istanbul, such as the newspapers, Le Jeune Turc, L’Aurore, and others, which like Moyal’s were aimed at shaping non-Jewish public opinion. Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 174.
59. Filastin, September 4, 1912, p. 1. This article revolves around Malul’s defense of the Jewish farming school, Mikveh Israel in Beirut’s newspaper Al-Nasir after the local Palestinian newspaper, Filastin, criticized it for not accepting Palestinian Arabs into its ranks. For more on this, see: Halevy Dotan and Amin Khalaf, “Foreigners in their Country: The Arab Students of Mikveh- Israel School 1870-1939”, Zmanim 135, 2016 [Hebrew]. This case was also discussed in the Hebrew press, see: HaTzvi, September 8, 1912, p. 3; HaTzvi, September 17, 1912, p. 2.
60. Filastin, September 20, 1911.
61. HaHerut, November 1, 1912: A Jewish Ottoman talks about Moyal’s service.
62. On the voluntary recruitment of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews during the Balkan War, see: Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 162-165.
63. HaOlam, March 25, 1908, p. 3.
64. Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 150.
65. Michelle Campos, Ottoman Brothers..., op. cit., p. 219.
67. Ibid.
68. Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 150-154.
69. HaHerut, September 13, 1911, p. 3.
70. Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 86-87.
71. Moriah, April 29, 1914, p. 3. Louis Fishman, Jews and Palestinians..., op. cit., p. 90.
72. HaHerut, June 12, 1912, p. 3.
73. Abigail Jacobson, From Empire to Empire..., op. cit., p. 106; The text of HaMagen’s platform was published in the Hebrew newspaper, Moriah, see: Moriah, April 26, 1914, p. 1. If we possess the same text in hand, Abigail Jacobson translates this differently. For example, she paraphrases “us/we” to mean “Sephardim”, while I argue it only refers to the organizers of HaMagen itself. Also, where my translation states, “we know the characteristics of the Arab people,” her translation is “we know the Arab people”.

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This article focuses on how a group of Sephardic intellectuals, some who identified as Arab Jews, succeeded through their experiences in Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul, to become influential actors within Ottoman Palestine’s Jewish community. Past scholarship has focused on how they tried to build a “shared homeland” with the local Palestinian population. However, this article argues that despite their success in constructing shared communities outside of Palestine, they were overall unsuccessful in forging ties with Palestinians. Through the lives of these intellectuals, we also learn about the makeup of Ottoman Palestine’s Sephardim and the complication of defining them within the framework of language and nationalism.

Cet article examine la façon dont un groupe d’intellectuels sépharades, dont certains s’identifiaient comme Arabes-Juifs, ont réussi, à travers leur expérience au Caire, à Beyrouth et Istanbul, à devenir des acteurs influents dans la communauté juive de la Palestine ottomane. Les travaux académiques précédents se sont concentrés sur la façon dont ils ont essayé de construire une « patrie commune » avec la population palestinienne locale. Cet article soutient toutefois que, malgré leur succès dans la construction de communautés partagées hors de la Palestine, ils n’ont globalement pas rencontré de succès dans leur projet de forger des liens avec les Palestiniens. À travers la vie de ces intellectuels, le lecteur comprend aussi ce qu’ont été les séfarades de la Palestine ottomane et combien il est compliqué de les définir à travers le cadre de la langue et du nationalisme.

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