ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: "SONS OF SHEM:" VISIONS FOR JEWISH-ARAB INTEGRATION AND SEMITISM IN THE SECOND ALIYAH (1904-1914)

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This thesis examines a cohort of Zionist intellectuals based in and around Ottoman Palestine who advocated for Jewish-Arab integration in the Second Aliyah period, or roughly 1904-1914. In studying individuals who came from diverse linguistic, ethnic, and political backgrounds side by side, this thesis argues that their shared language around Semitic identity and their advocacy around the same set of civic goals suggests a shared worldview and a common understanding of the goals of Zionism as a movement. The existence of such a cohort suggests a re-examination of the nature of the Zionist movement as well as a re-evaluation of Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations in this period. In addition, by studying the discourse around Semitic identity as it was adopted and repurposed by members of this cohort, this thesis argues that late nineteenth and early twentieth century racial categories and theories influenced Zionist thought in complex ways, providing both a sense of evidence for the supposed indigeneity of Jews to Palestine as well as a logical basis for future coexistence with Palestinian Arab Muslims.

“SONS OF SHEM:” VISIONS FOR JEWISH-ARAB INTEGRATION AND SEMITISM IN THE SECOND ALIYAH (1904-1914)

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

2021

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For my parents

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Introduction

When diplomatic relations were publicly established between Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates in September 2020, the set of agreements brokered by the Trump administration was given the moniker "the Abraham Accords," after the biblical patriarch shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the document signed between Israel and the UAE, one introductory point explicitly cited this heritage as the basis for normalized relations: "[The Parties recognize] that the Arab and Jewish peoples are descendants of a common ancestor, Abraham, and inspired, in that spirit, to foster in the Middle East a reality in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and peoples of all faiths, denominations, beliefs and nationalities live in, and are committed to, a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding and mutual respect."[1]

The legacy of this idea, that a common biblical ancestry between Jews and Arabs could play an essential role in determining political relations between contemporary national groups, is the focus of this thesis. In the early years of Zionist Jewish settlement in Palestine, the first formal group of which arrived in 1882, the question of relations with the pre-existing Arab Palestinian population presented itself. Though many Zionists were able to brush off or otherwise ignore the question, Jewish Odessan journalist Asher Ginzburg, writing under the pen-name Ahad Ha'Am, wrote a prescient warning about this ignorance as early as 1891 in a series of articles he titled "The Truth from Eretz Israel." The series was published in a Hebrew daily newspaper in St. Petersburg. "From abroad we are accustomed to believe that Eretz Yisrael [Palestine] is presently almost totally desolate, an uncultivated desert, and that anyone wishing to

[1] U.S. Department of State, Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, *Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of* Israel, (Washington, D.C., September 15, 2020), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UAE_Israel-treaty-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf.

buy land there can come and buy all he wants. But in truth it is not so," he wrote. "From abroad we are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all desert savages,…This is a big mistake. The Arab, like all sons of Shem [Semites], has a sharp intellect and is very cunning." Ahad Ha'Am warned additionally that if the time came "when the life of our people in Eretz Yisrael develops to the point of encroaching upon the native population, they will not easily yield their place."[2] Ahad Ha'Am did not set out to focus on the Arab Palestinian population in his articles, but his unintentional summary effectively captured the essence of what came to be called the "Arab Question," or the existence of an indigenous population in Palestine that vastly outnumbered the Jews, and whose national rights were at odds with growing Jewish settlement.

In his landmark work *Zionism and the Arabs 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology,* Yosef Gorny outlined four ideological outlooks on the "Arab Question" in the period between the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914: "altruistic integration," separatism, liberalism, and the "constructive socialist" approach. The integrationist group described by Gorny consisted of a mix of Palestinian-born and immigrant Ashkenazi and Sephardi teachers, journalists, and intellectuals: Eliyahu Sapir, Yitzhak Epstein, Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann, Yosef Luria, and Nissim Malul.[3] Though Gorny offered a brief description of this group, he did not delve into the details of their visions for integration nor did he explore the shared intellectual roots between the advocates or the influence of race theories on their thinking. Others after Gorny have looked at these figures as individual outliers, or examined them within their particular ethnic context, such as studies of Sephardi/Mizrahi Zionism and Ottomanism by Michelle Campos and Abigail Jacobson. Alternatively, Jonathan Gribetz has looked at the early

[2] Ahad Ha'Am, "Emet Me-Eretz Israel" (Truth from Eretz Yisrael) in *Al parashat derakhim* v.1 (Berlin, 1930). Reprinted in Alan Dowty, "Much Ado About Little: Ahad Ha'am's 'Truth from Eretz Yisrael," Zionism, and the Arabs." *Israel Studies* 5, no. 2 (2000): 154–81.
[3] Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 40-77.

Zionist-Arab encounter and some of the ways in which early Zionists – First Aliyah Ashkenazim and Sephardi Ottomans – defined their non-Jewish neighbors in religious and racial terms.[4] Other recent scholarship, like that of Hanan Harif, has examined Ashkenazi fascination with the Orient and Jewish-Muslim religious affinity.

This thesis will more comprehensively examine the members of the integrationist cohort first identified by Gorny – Eliyahu Sapir, Yitzhak Epstein, Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann, and Nissim Malul – and suggest the inclusion of two more figures: Esther and Shimon Moyal. In revisiting the integrationists, I will focus especially on their discourse around Semitic identity as a racial category and their related advocacy for Jewish-Arab cooperation based around four key goals: developing a set of shared Jewish-Arab institutions (such as schools, literary and cultural societies, and newspapers), cultivating knowledge of Arabic as a shared language, bringing Zionists' attention to growing Arab Palestinian resentment, and highlighting the agricultural and economic developmental achievements of Zionism among Arab readers of the contemporary press.

In examining integrationist thinking, I do not contend that their platform constituted a "road-not-taken" during this decisive period in Zionism's history. Integrationism as an "outlook," to use Gorny's term, was one among many at the point before Zionism had cohered around a specific set of values or a centralized set of activities in Palestine. That is not to say that each was equally likely to have succeeded. Rather, I argue that integrationist writings offer a window into how racial theories shaped Zionist thinking, and how they helped to cement the view that Jews belonged essentially – that is, fundamentally – to Palestine by virtue of their racial heritage as Semites. While Gribetz, Harif, and Jacobson partially touch on this idea in their

[4] Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014): 95.

work, what tends to take center stage are the finer religious and political distinctions used by the intellectuals studied here. When Gribetz looks at Nissim Malul and Shimon Moyal's writing in the Hebrew press, for example, he focuses on their distinct characterizations of Muslim Arabs and Christian Arabs, and concludes that they focused largely on these religious categories as key markers of difference. This argument appears in Jacobson's studies on Malul and Moyal as well. And while this is true, what is omitted is the racialized language that Malul and Moyal used to describe Muslim Arabs as "fellow Semites" and Christian Arabs as non-Semitic people and the consequences of such rhetoric.

What I aim to do in examining what I would call "Semitism" in the writing of Zionist intellectuals is to develop an understanding of it as a category that, while not entirely fixed, was crystallizing in the early twentieth century. Paired with the establishment of hierarchical and "scientific" racial classifications, the idea of Jews as Semites laid the rhetorical foundation for Jews' belonging "naturally" in Palestine. Under this paradigm, Zionism could move beyond the fulfillment of a religious ideal based on the Jews' longing to return to the Holy Land – which in fact had limited appeal in traditional Jewish circles, whose members were generally opposed to the idea of Jews actualizing this return themselves through Zionism – and could also fulfill a secular ideal of a clearly defined racial group returning to its homeland. Establishing a racial basis for Jewish immigration to Palestine became and remains a cornerstone of Zionist discourse.

In addition to drawing attention to the role of racial discourse in integrationist thinking, this study also argues that we should view Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists as living in the overlapping cultural and political milieus, even as they maintained some of their more insular affiliations and their separate intellectual influences. One such shared idea was the belief that Jews were a fundamentally – that is, racially – Semitic people descended from tribes in the

Levant, making them incompatible with the Aryan races of Europe. This early intellectual exchange and shared discourse between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Zionists suggests a porous barrier between the communities, which have previously been studied in relative isolation. By extension, what is at stake in this argument is the prevailing consensus that Sephardim were predominantly integrationists and therefore generally opposed or indifferent to Zionism, while Ashkenazim came to Palestine primarily as separatists as early as the Second Aliyah. While certainly there were ardent separatist Zionists, I argue it is nevertheless significant that in the period before World War I, Zionists coming from Lithuanian, Galician, Tunisian, and Maghrebi descent were able to arrive at similar conclusions about Jewish-Arab cooperation, constituting a cohort of fierce internal critics of the Zionist movement, and of political Zionism in particular.

Another issue at stake is the fundamental understanding of the nature of Zionist activity in its earlier stages. The Zionist movement was not yet truly headquartered in Palestine before World War I, even as the Palestine Office opened in 1908 in a two-room apartment in Jaffa under the leadership of Arthur Ruppin. While much of the political work of the Zionist Organization was still centered in Europe between 1908 and 1914, this period marked the initial turn from "diplomatic Zionism" to "practical Zionism." This entailed undertaking cultural planning and development in Palestine -- out of the Jaffa Office in particular -- that laid the foundation for future developments including the revival of the Hebrew language and the establishment of "modern" settlements.[5] Therefore, what I focus on here is the developing sentiment in Palestine as a satellite of the larger Zionist Organization. The figures under discussion here worked with and for the Zionist Organization in different capacities, even as they held views about Jewish-

[5] Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*. (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 73-74. See also Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) on the cultural groundwork established by Second Aliyah Zionists in Palestine.

Arab relations and the path of settlement that were, at times, entirely at odds with the views of organizational leadership. By viewing Malul, the Moyals, and their Ashkenazi counterparts as internal critics, one might also understand Zionism as a more pluralistic, negotiated movement in this period. In this I build on Jacobson, who used her study of Sephardi Zionism to argue for the "complex and heterogeneous nature of Zionism" in the period before World War I, defining it as a diversified ideology rather than a monolithic movement.[6]

Despite the fact that the Labor faction would come to dominate the Zionist movement during the British Mandate period following World War I, this was not necessarily the case, nor was it apparent, before the war. Given the particular constraints of Zionist activity under Ottoman rule, the movement was less defined from the top. At the 1909 Zionist Congress, the president of the Zionist Organization David Wolffsohn spelled out the organization's platform: "We aspire to build within the framework of the Ottoman Empire a nationality like other nationalities in the Ottoman realm. Our ambition is to earn the reputation of being the most loyal, trustworthy, and useful nation among the national groups, but a Jewish nation."[7] This left room for wide interpretation of what "Jewish nation" would mean and what the precise relationship between Jews and Ottomans, and Jews and Arab Muslims and Christians, would be in practice. Indeed, Dmitry Shumsky has argued that the idea of a sovereign, separate Jewish nation-state was not the "normative paradigm" of Zionism from the beginning, nor in this period.[8]

Finally, in this thesis I aim both to shed light on the integrationist cohort as well as suggest their inclusion in the intellectual and social structure defined by Ussama Makdisi as the "ecumenical frame." As Makdisi argues in *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the*

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[6] Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule*. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011): 116.
[7] Isaiah Freidman, *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism 1897-1918*. (Oxford University Press 1977): 147.
[8] Dmitry Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018): 1-23.

Making of the Modern Arab World, religious communities in the late Ottoman empire were developing modern norms of coexistence in civic life rooted in the history of Ottoman religious tolerance.[9] One oversight in Makdisi's monograph is the place of Jewish intellectuals in developing or participating in this frame. He writes predominantly about growing Muslim-Christian cooperation in this period to the exclusion of well-known Jewish participants in the *Nahda* such as Esther Moyal, who is described only by two sentences in the book. Makdisi argues that the arrival of Zionism in Palestine and European colonialism after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire trampled upon the burgeoning ecumenical frame. What I suggest here is that this frame of mind was -- at least in the period before World War I -- not incompatible with some versions of Zionist thinking. Figures like Malul and Moyal, especially, insisted on the "absolute compatibility of their Ottomanism and Zionism," to borrow a phrase from Campos.[10] This suggests a more complicated picture for early Zionism, which, for many adherents was not yet a separatist movement and, in fact, was consistently justified by them as a movement to benefit the Ottoman body politic more broadly.

Chapter 1 of this thesis will present the intellectual and cultural backdrop for integrationism during the Second Aliyah period, particularly the discourses around Hebrew revival and the early "Arabization" of Jewish immigrants and Ashkenazi members of the Old Yishuv. Chapter 2 will revisit the writing and thinking of Sephardi Zionists Shimon Moyal, Esther Azhari Moyal, and Nissim Malul. I will draw particular attention to the ways in which race and language influenced their visions for Jewish-Arab cooperation. Chapter 3 will then

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[9] Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019): 1-27.
[10] Michelle U. Campos, "Between 'Beloved Ottomania' and 'the Land of Israel': The Struggle Over Ottomanism and Zionism among Palestine's Sephardi Jews, 1908-13." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 4 (2005): 461–83.

explore similar goals and influences in the writing of three Ashkenazi Zionist integrationists of the same period: Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann, Eliyahu Sapir, and Yitzhak Epstein. This section will also address the intellectual and institutional overlap between these thinkers.

Chapter 1: "Arabizing" and "Hebraizing" in Ottoman Palestine

This section discusses the backdrop upon which integrationist projections and speculations played out during the Second Aliyah period, roughly 1904-1914. One key development was the labor struggle in Palestine, which laid the foundation for discussions around the cultural and political identity of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, or the Yishuv. The Second Aliyah, or the second wave of European Jewish immigrants to Palestine, changed and augmented the Yishuv demographically. A number of socialist and revolutionary Eastern European Jews came to agricultural settlements and cities in Palestine, bringing with them utopian visions of a renewed Jewish life. They founded two major political parties and formed the first Jewish agricultural collective settlements. Many members of the Second Aliyah were influenced by socialist ideology, viewing peasantry and physical labor as the bedrock of society. Others were motivated by the Jewish enlightenment, or *Haskalah*, idea of "productivizing" the Jewish population through direct labor and a transition away from their historically intermediary economic roles as merchants and estate managers. The experience of these immigrants with Russian pogroms also made them particularly focused on self-defense and security when they arrived in Palestine.

The majority of Second Aliyah immigrants settled in towns and cities, but those who were ideologically motivated sought to live out their ideals by working on agricultural settlements. Despite the Ottoman government's attempt to slow and prevent land sales to non-Ottoman Jews, in 1901 the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) was able to purchase large territories in the Tiberias district and expanded its efforts to remove peasants from them. These removal efforts, paired with rumors about new regulations that would enable Jews to enter Palestine freely, triggered greater resistance from Arab peasants and tenants. Villagers

dispossessed by the purchase of land made their displeasure known to the JCA official who came to measure the area for sale, and troops were brought in to remove those who refused to be evicted. Further expansion of Jewish settlements in 1903 were temporarily leased to Arab villagers but led to further clashes and the death of a Jewish settler in 1904.[11]

In addition to localized clashes in Palestine, structural changes meant that the practical situation of Jewish agricultural settlements was at a low point in 1903: the patronage of Baron Rothschild, who had materially supported the first settlements, had been withdrawn in 1900 and the World Zionist Organization had turned its focus from practical settlement to gaining the sponsorship of a Great Power. These, along with a renewed effort by the successive Ottoman Mutasarrifs (district officers) of the Jerusalem district to enforce restrictions on land sales to non-Ottomans, made it increasingly difficult for new immigrants of the Second Aliyah to actually work the land and become small farmers.[12]

As many of half of the immigrants in this wave left due to difficult conditions. But those who remained continued to build the presence of the New Yishuv, coming into clashes with both the Arab majority in Palestine as well as members of the older Jewish community, or the Old Yishuv. In 1905, the more recent arrivals formed the *Po'alei Tsiyon* party. Building on the ideas of Ukrainian-born Labor Zionist Ber Borochov, the members of *Po'alei Tsiyon* hoped to create a Jewish proletariat in Palestine that could then take part in a larger class struggle. The second major leftist party of the Second Aliyah, *Hapo'el Hatza'ir*, rejected Marxist-socialism and class struggle, instead supporting transformation by physical labor and settlement on the

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[11] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 102-103 and Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 22-23.

[12] Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 46 and Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 24-25.

land. Despite their differences, the parties shared in the belief that a large and firmly-rooted Jewish agricultural and industrial class in Palestine would fulfill the aims of the Zionist project and would remedy the dysfunctions and "abnormalities" of Diaspora Jewry.[13] Upon arriving in Palestine, Jews of the Second Aliyah were repelled by the colonial model set up by the First Aliyah – the Baron Rothschild colonies relied on Arab laborers while Jews remained in positions of supervision.

The labor Zionists in Palestine emphasized *kibbush ha-avodah* (the conquest of labor) both as a personal process for one to overcome a bourgeois class background by physical labor as well as in the collective sense of mastering the types of work, like difficult agricultural labor, that few Jews held in the Diaspora. And yet the reality in Palestine was quite different: the agricultural jobs to which these Jewish arrivals aspired were dominated by Arab wage laborers. The abundant supply of cheaper and experienced Arab labor made competition virtually impossible for newer Jewish immigrants. It was in this context that the "conquest of labor" gained a third meaning as a struggle to replace Arab workers with Jewish ones in virtually every sector of the Jewish economy developing in Palestine. According to their platform, "a necessary condition for the realization of Zionism is the conquest of all occupations in Palestine by Jews."[14] As Zachary Lockman has shown, it was this inability to compete effectively for relatively scarce jobs in the Palestinian labor market that fueled the "Hebrew Labor" campaign which gained a central place in labor Zionist discourse and practice.[15]

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[13] Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies : Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948*. (University of California Press: 1996): 21-53.
[14] Gershon Shafir, "The Meeting of Eastern Europe and Yemen: 'Idealistic Workers' and 'Natural Workers' in Early Zionist Settlement in Palestine." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990): 172–97.
[15] Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies,* 21-53.

However, this movement was not only too weak to enforce its demands on private employers, but it also did not address the Yishuv's larger economic problems: low investment in Palestine by private capital and the insufficient number of jobs for Jewish immigrants on a broader scale. Unable to compete for agricultural jobs, Jewish workers remained a minority and Arab workers continued on in Jewish-owned fields, with Jews gaining control of some skilled jobs like pruning, grafting, and operating irrigation pumps.[16] In response, labor Zionists changed their focus to efforts that would create a greater number of jobs – particularly through the development of a higher wage Jewish economy with its own industrial, financial, transport, and service industries.[17] These labor market challenges also prompted the adoption of the *kibbutz* model of collective agricultural settlement, which would better secure employment for Jewish immigrants and advance settlement by excluding Arab laborers entirely.[18]

After 1908, an uncensored press in the Ottoman Empire enabled more pronounced protest against Jewish immigration and land purchases by the Jewish Colonization Association and the Jewish National Fund, which drew broader attention to the question of relations with Arabs of Palestine and their place in the economy. On top of the political and ideological conflict between the labor Zionists, there emerged a cultural struggle between Yiddishist and Hebraist factions, as well as an ongoing discussion in the Hebrew press that attempted to make sense of how and where the Hebrew cultural initiatives that were nestled within settlement-driven and labor Zionism would fit into the demographic and political reality of Ottoman Palestine – that is, the Palestinian Arab majority. Using the language of racial brotherhood and shared linguistic and cultural history, some Zionists argued that successful settlement of the land depended upon

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[16] Shapira, Anita. *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1992): 63-66 and Shafir, "The Meeting of Eastern Europe and Yemen," 175.
[17] Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 21-53.
[18] Shafir, *Land, Labor,* 113-114.

integration and cooperation, and they made appeals to the broader Hebrew revival movement – arguing that knowledge of Arabic would bring Jews closer to their "Semitic roots" as people originating in Palestine.

The idea that Jews were pariahs in Europe because of their Semitic descent gained currency in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, including in Jewish circles.[19] As the Jewish writer, scholar, and founder of the *Hibbat Tsion* organization Moshe Leib Lilienblum wrote after the 1881 pogroms in southwestern Russia, "We are aliens, not only here, but in all of Europe, for it is not our fatherland…We are Semites among Aryans, the sons of Shem among the sons of Japheth, a Palestinian tribe from Asia in the European lands…We will still remain aliens when we will be stuffed with education as a pomegranate is with seeds."[20] Lilienblum rejected prior attempts at acculturation and *Haskalah*, or enlightenment, arguing instead that there existed a fundamental racial distinction between Jews and Europeans that could not be bridged. How Lilienblum arrived at the idea of "Semitism" – that is, the idea that Jews and Arabs were both descendants of Shem, son of the biblical Noah, and therefore were of the same racial lineage as Middle Eastern peoples – as the explanation for Jews' troubles in Europe was a longer process at least one hundred years in the making.

The term "Semitic" began as a linguistic category first used by German Orientalist August Ludwig von Schlözer as early as 1771, citing the Genesis chapter describing the descendants of Shem and their distinct language and peoplehood.[21] However it was the French

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[19] James Renton "The End of the Semites," in Ben Gidley and James Renton, eds. *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe a Shared Story?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 99-127.
[20] Zvi Y. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001): 18, and Hanan Harif "Judaism and Islam in Pre-State Zionist Thought: Moshe Ayzman, Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann and Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz" in *Making History Jewish: The Dialectics of Jewish History in Eastern Europe and the Middle East*, eds. Scott Ury and Pawel Maciejko (Brill 2020): 210-226.
[21] Renton, "The End of the Semites," 102-104.

Orientalist Ernest Renan who developed and popularized the understanding of "Semite" as a modern racial category as distinct from "Aryan" in his *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (1855). In presenting his theory of Semitic linguistic distinctiveness and the existence of a unique "Semitic spirit," Renan introduced essential categories into theological discussions. This also had strong political implications about peoplehood and nationalism, as Renan considered Hebrews, Jews, Arabs and other Semites to be a race excluded from any forms of political organization.[22] According to Gil Anidjar, this equivalence formed the basis of the "Semitic hypothesis," the European logic by which "whatever was said about Jews could equally be said about Arabs, and vice versa."[23]

These views hinged on and were influenced by the development of European Orientalism, the term first defined by Edward Said as the primarily British and French essentialist view of the East as a place of mystery, exoticism, and permanent difference. The image of the Orient developed by European linguists, artists, and authors helped to define Europe in relation to a permanent "other."[24] Simultaneously, Orientalism coincided with the development of modern race theory and social Darwinism. Racial classifications developed and published over the course of the nineteenth century added a sense of scientific validity to the division of "advanced" European races and "backward" Oriental and African ones.[25] The study and classification of various language families, including Indo-European and Semitic, led to the subsequent assumption that the users of different languages would be correspondingly distinct in culture, body, and mind.[26] Thus, race and religion as categories of study and of human

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[22] Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008): 30-32.
[23] Anidjar, *Semites*, 18
[24] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 1-3.
[25] *Ibid.* 206
[26] *Ibid.* 233

classification came into existence contemporaneously in the early modern period alongside the rise of popular and scholarly interest in "the Orient."[27]

Marwa Elshakry's work has established the spread of Darwin's writing in Arabic circles, as well as the birth of a globalized discourse on race sparked by his original publication. The fact that both European Orientalists and intellectuals based in the Arab Middle East were reading and consuming a shared body of popular scientific works helps place the discourse around "the Semitic race" and Palestine in broader context.[28] The circulation of Darwin's ideas and the production of related commentary on social reform and eugenics in Arabic newspapers like *al-Muqtataf*, and commentaries by the Islamic reformers Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, provide critical context for the thinking and writing of the Sephardi Jews I discuss here. Members of the Arabic Jewish intelligentsia like Esther and Shimon Moyal and Nissim Malul were not only consuming material on popular science and social reform from European presses, but they also would have been reading related commentaries in Arabic publications by 'Abduh and al-Afghani that informed their discussions of economic modernization and progress.

Today the term "Semite/Semitism" is almost entirely out of use except in the case of the term "anti-Semitism" – this ephemerality, Anidjar argues, was due to the fact that Semites only existed in the European consciousness "for precisely as long as Europe thought of itself as resolutely secular, as having achieved secularization." When Jews and Arabs were "equally Semites, [they] were both race and religion in a secular political world." However, by contrast, in the post-World War II period, and particularly after Nazism, "one can divide them again, divide

[27] Anidjar, *Semites*, 27.
[28] Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 1-24, 246-247.

the world between political entities, religious ones, and racial (or cultural) ones."[29] This period during which the "Semitic hypothesis" first brought together Jews and Arabs under the same umbrella of peoplehood is the chief interest of this thesis, as it informed the writing and thinking of Zionists and was accepted by many – within Zionism and outside of it – as plain fact.

Other studies have examined how European Orientalism influenced "the Hebrew imagination" and Zionist thinking. Yaron Peleg has argued that despite their embeddedness in the West, European Jews had a different relationship with Orientalism, viewing themselves – as Lilienblum expressed – as a foreign element in Europe and maintaining a sense of connection to their Eastern origins. Peleg and Yael Zerubavel have explored the multilayered anxieties of Zionists encountering the East, both imagined and real: "Zionists looked to the East for a cultural alternative. But like European colonists, they felt the need to distance themselves from the Arabs in order to maintain the integrity of their emerging national culture. The Arab way of life and the actual Palestinian landscapes were new, different, and mysterious to Zionists… but the biblical associations of these landscapes made them part of traditional Jewish culture as well." Jews who came to Palestine were wary of "going native," particularly those who wanted to guard their culture-in-the-making from outside influence. But matters were made more complicated by the sense of affinity many early Zionist pioneers felt toward local Arabs, for ethnic and historical reasons. "Rather than fantasize a nonexistent East, many Zionist pioneers looked up to the local Palestinian Arabs and mimicked the Arab way of life in the hope of reinventing themselves and creating a new Jewish culture inspired by their image," Peleg argues.[30]

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[29] Anidjar, *Semites,* 20.
[30] Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005): 9.

As was the case for other Western observers, Ottoman Palestine was simultaneously a "fetid Oriental wasteland and [a] resplendent biblical garden."[31] This duality within Orientalism shaped the lens through which European Jews viewed Palestine and its inhabitants, providing a language – often patronizing and essentializing – to describe it as well as a means to co-opt portions of it. Lilienblum's use of the term "Semites" remains a strong example of the two modes of Jewish Orientalism that positioned Jews' heritage as a source of permanent and actual difference, but not exclusively as a source of supposed degeneracy. Moreover, Lilienblum, like the authors I will discuss below, used the term "Semites" not as a rhetorical symbol or allusion but rather as a statement of fact.

In his article, "Europe and Its Orients in Zionist Culture Before the First World War," Arieh Saposnik detailed how this idea influenced Zionist visions of racial fusion, the potential for spiritual and physical rejuvenation of the Jews by their returning East, and the need to cultivate a Palestine-based Hebrew cultural revival.[32] Saposnik focuses mostly on Zionist discourse in Ashkenazi circles, finding several examples of this Eastward-facing attitude in the Zionist paper *ha-Poel ha-Tsair*. In 1908, for example, one editorial published in the paper argued that, in response to the Young Turk Revolution, it was time "to openly declare to all that we are a branch of the Semitic peoples who must all unite and carry out a defensive struggle against all those who would seek to sow among us the seeds of European virtue."[33] Here the idea of an

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[31] Lester Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 216. See also Yehoshua Ben-Arieh *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land In the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press 1979) and Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[32] Arieh Bruce Saposnik, "Europe and Its Orients in Zionist Culture Before the First World War." *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (2006): 1105–23.

[33] *Ibid.* 1109

alliance with a reinvigorated post-revolution Ottoman East intersected with an understanding of Semiticness as a core quality shared by recently arrived Jews and Ottomans.

Social Darwinism, and the related idea of pan-Semitism, posited that Jews and Arabs were not strangers but something like long-lost brothers or cousins. Given this, Gribetz argues, it is important to keep in mind that these two groups were not "engaging with each other for the first time in a modern nationalist struggle over a contested piece of land, but rather as peoples encountering deeply familiar, if at times mythologized or distorted, others." The backdrop of early twentieth-century race theories informed such interactions. That race theorists would have considered the two groups to be members of "a single ancient race or, at any rate, close racial (Semitic) relatives was not inconsequential to either Jews' or Arabs' experience of this encounter but rather, for many, central to it," Gribetz writes.[34] The engagement of new arrivals to Palestine with Arab inhabitants, therefore, can be seen as a logical Zionist conclusion: if Jews were to return to the land of Palestine and the land, culture, and inhabitants were Arab, then the Jews would necessarily need to become or reconcile with their Semitic-ness.

The language used to discuss the relationship between Jews and Arabs in this period was influenced by the sights and sounds of daily life in Ottoman Palestine as well as by loftier ideas about Zionism and Hebrew revival in Palestine. The evident integration in Palestine between older Jewish and Muslim communities not only purportedly offered some evidence for the Semitic thesis, but it also prompted discussions in Zionist circles about the mixing of Hebrew and Arabic and the types of relations that should be promoted as greater numbers of Jews arrived in Palestine.

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[34] Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*, 16-17.

Even before the first Zionist settlements in Palestine, the Jewish population was of mixed origin: Jewish pilgrimage in previous decades brought Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe as well as Sephardi communities from North Africa, Anatolia, and Bulgaria. There were also Jews of Sephardi and Ashkenazi descent who had historically settled in the four "holy cities" of Palestine: Safed, Tiberias, Hebron, and Jerusalem. These groups included Yiddish-speaking communities, some of whom also used Ladino, Arabic, or Hebrew in contact with their neighbors.[35] Recent studies of Ottoman Jerusalem and other urban centers have also suggested that these were places of deeper integration than previously thought. Menachem Klein's work on Arab Jewish identity before the rise of nationalist movements argues that it was through Palestine's modernizing efforts, and in its shared coffeeshops, festivals, neighborhoods, and schools that a unique "horizontal Arab Jewish identity" formed, and that it included both Jews of Ashkenazi and Sephardi descent. Salim Tamari's work on Wasif Jawhariyyeh's memoirs has also shown an ingrained cultural hybridity in the city forged through shared festivals, business partnerships, and social venues.[36]

Jews living in Jerusalem often had Muslim landlords, and ties between neighbors, tenants, and merchants led to language exchange. But according to the memoirs of Ya'acov Yehoshua, Hebrew author A.B. Yehoshua's father, "the Arabic spoken by Ashkenazim was incorrect and a subject of jest" by Sephardim.[37] This also led to the creation of Palestinian Yiddish – Yiddish inflected with Arabic words and expressions. As Klein argues, the Arabic

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[35] Bernard Spolsky and Robert Cooper, *The Languages of Jerusalem,* (Oxford University: 1991) 49-56*;* Salim Tamari, "Ishaq al-Shami and the Predicament of the Arab Jew in Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 21 (2004): 10-26.

[36] Salim Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*. (Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 2009): 71-86.

[37] Ya'akov Yehoshua *Childhood in Old Jerusalem* v. 2 (Jerusalem, R. Mas: 1979): 240, quoted in Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron*, trans. Haim Watzman. (York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 40.

words that entered local Yiddish suggest "extensive, ongoing ties" beyond simple commerce. This included the exchange of words to describe conversation, mutual respect, and language to depict moods, dishes, administrative institutions, types of buildings, and dress.[38] Moreover, the "flexibility" of Yiddish allowed it to absorb forms and influences from Arabic that led to a distinctive language used both between Jewish communities and between Jewish and non-Jewish communities.[39]

An additional marker of deep integration can be found in the festivals and public celebrations in Jerusalem that drew in diverse celebrants. The Nabi Musa celebration – the flashpoint of the riots that later broke out in 1920 – was remembered by memoirists including Ya'akov Yehoshua, Ezra Menachem, and Wasif Jawyariyyeh as a time of joy and fanfare. Jews from Hebron would accompany Muslim pilgrims to the Nabi Musa site in Jericho and other families would welcome pilgrims upon their return. In addition, despite separate educational systems, it was not rare for Jewish students to study in Arab schools and vice versa.[40] Yair Wallach's work on Jerusalem also demonstrates how movements of daily life would take a resident of Jerusalem through various quarters. Far from a static map of ethno-religious enclaves, prewar Jerusalem was more fluid and cosmopolitan precisely because subsistence required travel and encounter with members of other communities and classes.[41]

However, the Ashkenazi Jews described by Klein and Wallach were descendants of immigrants who came to Palestine from Eastern Europe in the early-to-mid-19th century, referred

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[38] Menachem Klein, "Arab Jew in Palestine." *Israel Studies* 19, no. 3 (2014): 134–53.
[39] Yonatan Mandel, "Palestinian Yiddish and Its Meanings" *Jama'a* 25 (2011) 173-192 [Hebrew]. See also Mordecai Kosover, *Arabic Elements in Palestinian Yiddish: The Old Ashkenazic Jewish Community in Palestine, its History and its Language* (Jerusalem: R. Mass,) 1966.
[40] Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea*, 84-86 and Klein, "Arab Jew," 140-146.
[41] Yair Wallach, "Jerusalem between Segregation and Integration: Reading Urban Space through the Eyes of Justice Gad Frumkin" in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere : Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, Goldstein-Sabbah, S. R, and H. L Murre-van den Berg, eds. (Leiden: Brill: 2016): 205-233.

to as members of the "Old Yishuv," not necessarily members of the First or Second Aliyah, or what was called the "New Yishuv." The newer arrivals to Palestine, Zionist immigrants who were sometimes called "Moskūbī" [Moscow people] to distinguish them from older Arabized Jews, did not merge seamlessly into the preexisting structures of mixed neighborhoods, schools, and languages.[42]

However, new arrivals to Palestine had to contend with these surroundings. Particularly for Hebrew revivalists, the question of whether and how Arabic culture would influence the Yishuv was a pressing one in this period. A closer examination of Jewish commentators, who expressed both cautious and proud attitudes around the "Arabization" of Jews settling in Palestine in the First and Second Aliyot validates Peleg's assertion that European Jews had a complex relationship to Orientalism colored by their own sense of being Semitic. For First Aliyah settlers, the regional lingua franca was unavoidable — contact with Arab laborers, Bedouin and Circassian guards, and Arab women employed in house work or in markets created conditions for Jews to pick up Arabic words that they often mixed with Yiddish.

The Second Aliyah, despite the attempted Hebrew Labor movement and the shift toward Hebrew exclusivism, still inherited many of these structures such that immigrants were inevitably exposed to and took hold of ambient Arabic influence in Palestine. Large lexical gaps and the absence of colloquialisms meant that often speakers turned to Arabic to fill in where Hebrew had yet to expand. Even intentional lexical planners such as Ben-Yehuda borrowed Arabic words and Ben-Yehuda himself attempted, to no avail, to annex the entirety of native Arab roots into Hebrew. Many of his proposed Arabic-based neologisms were rejected, but many

[42] Klein, "Arab Jew," 136.

were also adopted.[43] Culturally, organizations like *ha-Shomer*, which will be described in more detail in Chapter 3, took pride in embracing performative displays of "Arab-ness" in this period — riding their horses in a similar style, donning headdresses, learning Arabic, and hosting Arab guests.[44] Writers in Hebrew newspapers like *Ha-Tsvi* and *Havatselet* called for learning Arabic,[45] indicating that the idea of Arabic as an important component of inter-Ottoman Zionism was well within the popular discourse. Language teachers, too, discussed the importance and relevance of Arabic to the Yishuv's burgeoning educational system. In the Protocols of the First Conference of the Association of Hebrew Teachers of Palestine, Arabic was discussed as the language of government officials, and it was noted that "natives of the land respect no one who does not speak Arabic."[46] In other words, knowledge of Arabic would be required to undertake any Zionist work in the land. As I will demonstrate in greater detail in Chapter 3, this suggests that the idea of adopting Arabic as a core component of Zionism was not restricted to Sephardi or Mizrahi Jewish circles.

Hebrew authors, a major contingent of the movement for Hebrew revival, who wrote about life in the Yishuv also tended to insert "Arabisms" into their stories to lend an air of "Oriental authenticity" to the world and daily life they described.[47] Indeed, it is clear that individuals like Moshe Smilansky, who arrived in Palestine in 1890 from Ukraine and settled in

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[43] Roni Henkin-Roitfarb, "Arabic Influence: Modern Period" in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, eds. Geoffrey Khan, Shmuel Bolozky, Steven Fassberg, Gary A. Rendsburg, Aaron D. Rubin, Ora R. Schwarzwald, and Tamar Zewi (Brill: 2013).
[44] Jonathan Frankel, "The 'Yizkor' Book of 1911 — A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliya," in Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, eds. *Essential Papers on Zionism*. (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 428.
[45] Yuval Ben-Bassat, "Rethinking the Concept of Ottomanization: The Yishuv in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2009): 461-75.
[46] Protocol of the First Conference of the Association of Hebrew Teachers of Palestine, 1903, first session, in Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 269n20.
[47] Govrin, Nurit. "Ahad Ha'am and His Circle against the "Expansion of Hebrew" Policy. *Kesher* 37 (2008): 60-63.

Rehovot, saw and depicted Palestinian Arabs in his early stories as "primitive natives" who were paternalistically described as uniquely passionate, proud, and courageous.[48] But even Smilansky transitioned in his writing from "ambivalent separation" between Jews and Arabs to "enthusiastic integration."[49]

These displays of appreciation and appropriation of Arabic culture were not without their detractors. Editor and literary critic Yosef Klausner was particularly vocal about the influence of Arabic in his column in *ha-Shiloah*. He, along with Ahad Ha'am and other purists, expressed concern at the neologisms and adopted Arabisms cropping up in the literature and spoken language of Jews settling in Palestine. "In every account I get a stronger and stronger sense of the Arabs' powerful and direct influence on the new Jews," Klausner wrote in 1908, noting "the profusion of Arabic words that the writers of Eretz Israel use when they wish to describe the lives of the people in the farming communities….And what strange pleasure they get from describing every Eretz Israel Jew as speaking Arabic and resembling an Arab!"[50] Klausner and other critics responded to what they saw as a culturally existential threat posed by the profusion of Arab influence on popular culture and daily life in the Yishuv. The pitch of their concern suggests that Arabic-Hebrew fusion was plainly obvious given the structure and social context of the Yishuv, and the resistance to this cultural phenomenon illuminates some of its power, its spread, and its urgency for Hebrew revivalists.

In a similar vein, Arthur Ruppin's vision as head of the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization was to culturally isolate the Yishuv to keep it distinct from its Arab surroundings. Influenced by eugenics discourse, Ruppin sought cultural and economic partitions in this period

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[48] Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination*, 75-77
[49] *Ibid*. 77; and Yaffah Berlowitz, *Inventing a Land, Inventing a People* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1996), 121–128 (Hebrew).
[50] Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination,* 63.

that would allow a siloed Jewish body to "recover from exile" and return to "vitality."[51] Ruppin was also involved in *Ahuzat Bayit*, the society formed in 1906 to purchase and develop land near Jaffa that would become the city of Tel Aviv. The society's founders were explicit in their intention to create the first "all-Jewish" city, in contrast with the mixed city of Jaffa.[52] The sixty members of *Ahuzat Bayit* included established Sephardi and recently arrived Ashkenazi Jews. The society set about establishing a new "modern Jewish city" both for practical reasons – creating housing for the area's Jewish population that had doubled over the previous decade — as well as ideological ones. They hoped to create a "nationalist-Zionist society" with a focus on developing Hebrew cultural and educational institutions and prevent the continued flow of Jewish capital to Arab landlords, which was the primary drain of money out of the Jewish sector. Despite some members' insistence on using only Jewish labor to construct the early neighborhoods of Tel Aviv, the organization ultimately also employed Arab workers, who were paid less and were better skilled, to build most of the first homes in the neighborhood. By 1910, however, clashes had erupted between Jewish and Arab workers on the project, and Palestinian Arab guards had been replaced by Jewish ones.[53]

As I have shown, Hebrew labor sentiment had both economic and ideological roots – it was meant to secure steady employment for newer Jewish arrivals in a slack labor market, but it was also deeply rooted in a cultural and spiritual movement to redeem Jews physically and socially. I would add to this that the argument for "purity" of Hebrew labor also stemmed from a reactionary sentiment. The campaign for Hebrew labor that emerged in this period was a project

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[51] Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*, 119-125.
[52] Yoav Regev, *Yeme Dizingoff: Tel Aviv 1909-1936*. (Netanyah, Aḥi'asaf: 2006): 53-58. Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 60-72.
[53] LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*, 60-72.

of newer Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants, but it seems clear that it would have also constituted a response to the pre-existing structures of integration and the gradual process of acculturation that newer arrivals seemed to be pulled into given the realities of life and labor in early settlements – both rural and urban. The evident practical integration discussed above, as well as the presence of vocal integrationists discussed below, would motivate an urgency for those who pushed for the purification of language and culture and for segregation in labor. In other words, in addition to being a movement that responded to economic hardship and a lack of employment for Jews that had led to emigration of large numbers of Jews from Palestine, Hebrew Labor was also intertwined with the cultural Hebrew revival movement that mandated the creation of a cultural sphere along with the economic sphere of the new Jewish working class.

Chapter 2: Revisiting Sephardi Zionists

This chapter will focus on three Sephardi Zionists who advocated for integrationism: Shimon Moyal, Esther Azhari Moyal, and Nissim Malul. In order to see similarities with the Ashkenazi integrationists discussed below, it is important to draw attention to the ways in which Malul and the Moyals wrote about and called for specific measures meant to encourage a shared civic and cultural life. Specifically, they called for shared institutions between Jews and Arabs, developing knowledge of Arabic as a shared language, a development-first approach to Zionism, and the need to call attention to growing Arab Palestinian resentment in the press. In addition I will show how their discourse around Semitic identity as a racial category was woven into this advocacy and how it may have shaped their view of potential Jewish-Arab cooperation.

Studies of Sephardi Ottomanism and Zionism in the last decade has been led by Abigail Jacobson and Michelle Campos, whose work on late Ottoman Mizrahi Jewry has contributed a great deal to the field of Sephardi Zionism and Ottoman Jewish political life in the early twentieth century. Both historians also address Ottoman Sephardi attitudes towards "the Arab Question." Jacobson in particular has led recent scholarship on Nissim Malul and Shimon Moyal, two intellectuals of North African descent who pushed consistently in Zionist circles for joint Jewish-Arab publications and cultural initiatives.

In her article "Sephardim, Ashkenazim and the 'Arab Question' in Pre-First World War Palestine: A Reading of Three Zionist Newspapers," Jacobson outlines the divisions between the Ashkenazi labor press -- *ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir* and *ha-Ahdut* -- and the Sephardi press, represented by *ha-Herut*. She argues that the Ashkenazi labor press focused on Arab competition and the path to control labor in Palestine while the Sephardi press sought to change Arab public opinion, expressing hope for cooperation. In a nutshell, she argues, Sephardim uniquely realized the

importance and necessity of coexisting and co-operating with the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, having recognized that Jewish life in Palestine was "subject to the ability to co-operate with the Arabs." Sephardim were in a unique position as they "did not wish to undermine any Jewish national characteristics (such as the Hebrew language, for example), but nevertheless wanted to respect and learn the customs and practices of the Arab population."[54]

In her most recent book, she summarizes the perspective of the Sephardi community, particularly in Jerusalem: "On the one hand, the Sephardim were aware of the possible threat that the Arab national movement posed to the Jewish nationalist project. On the other hand, they were also more open and willing to see the Arabs, especially the Muslims, as possible partners for future life in the country." These two ideological forces "existed side by side" among Sephardim. In contrast, she writes that the Second Aliyah Ashkenazi immigrants to Palestine were influenced by socialist ideology, and that they were more suspicious of Arab intentions given their memories of riots and pogroms against Jews in Russia and because they were unfamiliar with local life in Palestine and the Arabic language.[55] This contrast between the "Sephardi view" and the "Ashkenazi view" is critical for Jacobson's argument that Zionism was not a monolithic ideology and that approaches to it varied by community. However what I argue is missing, or overshadowed, in this discussion is both the role of race and Semitism in the Sephardi discourse and the connections between Ashkenazi and Sephardi integrationists.

Campos, in a similar vein, argues in her monograph *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* that Sephardi Zionists saw civic participation in Ottoman life as critical and compatible with the Zionist project while

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[54] Abigail Jacobson, "Sephardim, Ashkenazim and the 'Arab Question' in Pre-First World War Palestine: A Reading of Three Zionist Newspapers." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 2 (2003): 126.
[55] Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 83-87.

"instrumentalist" Ashkenazim saw Ottoman civic participation as good strategy but "devoid of any inherent value" beyond its ability to allow Palestinian Jews to push for Zionist separatism.[56] She argues that Zionism gained adherents in Sephardi/Maghrebi circles because of the failure of Ottomanism's civic vision. "To the extent that it did exist," Campos writes, "Sephardi and Maghrebi Zionism was socially and ideologically distinct from the larger Zionist movement, divorcing Hebraic and Judaic cultural and social renaissance and local communal and economic development on the one hand from Jewish autonomy, anti-Ottoman separatism, and national statehood on the other."[57] In other words, Campos describes Sephardi Zionism as primarily engaged in the Hebraist cultural renaissance and local economic development efforts, while Ashkenazi Zionism was focused essentially on autonomy, anti-Ottoman separatism, and ultimately, sovereignty.

In other words, Jacobson and Campos have positioned Sephardim as uniquely conciliatory and particularly invested in Ottomanism, or the movement for Ottoman civic participation after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, compared to the broader Zionist movement. Jacobson terms Malul and Moyal's approach "inclusive Zionism" in contrast with the "exclusive Zionism" of the Second Aliyah. "Moyal and Malul presented a unique perspective on the evolving national conflict during the years preceding World War I," Jacobson writes. "A belief that close ties must be developed between Jews and Arabs… that Jews who did not know Arabic must be exposed to Arabs and their culture, and finally, that it was important to act as loyal Ottomans in advancing and developing Palestine." [58] Campos similarly places Sephardi Jews in

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[56] Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011): 202.
[57] *Ibid.* 207-208.
[58] Abigail Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic: Shimon Moyal, Nissim Malul and the Mixed Palestinian/Eretz Israeli Locale" in Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio eds., *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011): 177-178.

the unique space between Ottoman universalism and Jewish particularism – wanting to embrace the ideals of the revolution and yet also being exposed to the ideas and institutions of European Zionism. Campos argues that the cultural pluralism of Ottoman society primed Sephardi Jews to see no contradiction between cultural Hebraism, Zionism, and Ottomanism.

The conceptual framework for understanding Malul and Moyal set forth by Campos and Jacobson is important and forms the basis of my discussion, but what I argue in this work more broadly is that these two figures may be less unique than presented. By placing them within the larger group of intellectuals discussed here, I argue that there were others – like Esther Moyal, and the Ashkenazi Jews discussed in the next section – who shared in Malul and Moyal's core beliefs. This suggests a shared discourse about Jewish-Arab cooperation and Semitic identity between the communities that was based less on ethnic descent and more on their views of Zionism's ultimate aims. What a wider scope also shows is that Sephardim were not operating on the fringes, but were in fact instrumental in formal activities of the Zionist Organization in this period. This builds on the expansive work done by Yitzhak Bezalel in *Noladetem Tsionim* and pushes back against a characterization of individuals like Moyal and Malul as at odds with "mainstream" or "Ashkenazi" Zionism. It seems more accurate to say that they worked within and with the ZO and at the same time carried out activities – such as translation and publishing in the Arabic press – that they understood themselves to be uniquely suited for as Arabized Jews.

There is a tendency by historians to flatten the experience of Sephardi Zionists – either painting them as savvy critics of Zionism and disregarded harbingers of the "Arab Question," or alternatively as under-valued Zionist "pioneers" whose contributions were essential to the building of the Yishuv. What I aim to show here is that their intellectual circles and, by extension, their place within Zionism were more complicated. They both contributed to and

criticized Zionist settlement activities, they were alternately acknowledged and ignored by Zionist leadership, and they both identified with and felt marginalized by Zionist activities in Palestine.

2.1 Shimon Moyal

Shimon Moyal (1866-1915) was born in Jaffa to a family that came from Rabat to Palestine in 1853. He was a member of one of the most prominent Sephardi families in Jaffa whose members were active in Zionist associations. Shimon's grandfather Aharon Moyal was a Moroccan-Jewish merchant who brought the family to Palestine in 1853, where he established a Sephardic Talmud Torah school and worked to help absorb Jewish immigrants to the city of Jaffa. Shimon's uncle was Avraham Moyal (1850-1885), a community leader and close partner of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who played an integral role in establishing the settlements of the First Aliyah and eventually gained appointment as the Palestine representative of the *Hovevei Zion* organization. Shimon's younger brother David Moyal became a lawyer and worked with the *Ahuzat Bayit* society, of which he was a member, on its land purchases near Jaffa.[59]

Moyal traveled to Beirut at age 16 to study Arabic and French at the modern Jewish school *Tiferet Yisrael* (The Glory of Israel), also known in Arabic as *al-Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya al-Isrāʾīliyya* (The National Israelite School).[60] Moyal then studied at al-Azhar University, where he met and was involved in the circle around the Islamic thinker and reformer Muhammad ʻAbduh. Moyal eventually returned to study medicine in Beirut, where he met Esther Azhari

[59] Mordechai Naor, *Avraham Muyal: The First Sephardic Leader* (Stiematzky: 2019): 33-42, 155-170 [Hebrew]. See also Gavriel Tsifroni, "Roots of One Prominent Family" *Ma'ariv* 30 September 1979: 44 [Hebrew].
[60] Lital Levy, "Cohen, Zaki", in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Brill: 2010).

(1823-1948), who was born in Beirut to a family of Sephardi descent. The two were married in 1894 and then moved to Istanbul, where Moyal finished medical school. The couple lived in Safed, Tiberias, and later Cairo, where they entered a circle of Syrian Arab intellectuals and published articles preaching understanding between Jews and Arabs in various Egyptian newspapers. It was here that Moyal began work on his translation of portions of the Talmud into Arabic and Esther published a women's literary journal, *al-A'ila* (The Family), from 1899 until 1902, as well as translations from French to Arabic including the works of Emile Zola.[61] The pair moved back to Jaffa in 1908 and integrated into the Sephardi intellectual circle there. In 1913, the Moyals began publishing a Jewish-Arabic newspaper, *Sawt al-Uthmaniyya* (Voice of Ottomanism), which they had dreamed of pursuing for some time. They also helped found an organization in 1913 with a group of other prominent Sephardi intellectuals and social elites – including Avraham Elmaliach, Ya'akov and Yosef Eliyahu Chelouche, Yosef Amzalek, Moshe Matalon, and others – called *ha-Magen* (the Shield) that was meant to respond to anti-Zionist press and promote understanding between Jews and Arabs.[62]

In a 1911 article published in the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Herut*, Moyal detailed his reaction to the situation of the Jewish Yishuv after returning to Palestine in 1908, granting a picture of how he viewed the place of the New Yishuv in Palestine and its most pressing threats:

> When I returned from Egypt about three years ago I saw the danger looming over the Yishuv due to the lack of knowledge of the leaders and great men of the Eastern masses, of their spirit and education and level of culture.… I saw the mistake of those who think that the people of the land are savages, and those who marvel that they are not similar to the 'enlightened' peoples of Europe.

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[61] Jonathan Marc Gribetz, "An Arabic-Zionist Talmud: Shimon Moyal's At-Talmud." *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 17, no. 1 (2010): 1–30.

[62] Abigail Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 165-182. See also Shmuel Moreh, "Moyal, Simon" in: *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* and Isaac Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim: ha-Sefaradim be-Erets Yiśra'el ba-Tsiyonut uya-teḥiyah ha-'Ivrit ba-teḳufah ha-'Ot'manit*. (Jerusalem: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2007): 390-391 [Hebrew] and Itzhak Bezalel, "The First Levantines in the Ottoman Period in Eretz Israel — Their Zionist Identity and Attitude Towards Arab Identity." *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry* no. 125-127 (2010): 75–95 [Hebrew].

In particular, Moyal drew attention to the fact that European Zionists and officials were overlooking one central issue:

> That the people of the land are not the same as the same people who rule in Constantinople, that the connection [an agreement] with the Turks would not bind the Arabs as well. And perhaps more: I saw the Arab Christians' envy of the Jews and their incitement of the Muslims against us and their efforts to slander the Zionists in the eyes of the people of the land and in the eyes of the government.

Concerned by these oversights, by his telling, Moyal set about working "in all my powers to eliminate this danger:"

> I gave speeches in Arabic, I spoke with Arab leaders, in gatherings of our people here I tried to show them their mistakes and explain how to be considerate of the people of the land, I encouraged our rabbis and our representatives to preach their demands in Hebrew in public assemblies and I translated their demands into Arabic, I founded a Jewish-Ottomanist movement, I forced the Jews to participate in the national celebrations and demonstrations, and I held meetings of leaders and administrators, and the officials of our public activists, to discuss the foundation of an Arabic newspaper in order to spread true news about Zionism and the Jews among the Arabs and to counter many of the Christian newspapers that are spending on us a fortune.[63]

Moyal's activities in Palestine were motivated by a fear of Arab Palestinian resentment, particularly coming from Christian Arabs, which he noted was not being taken seriously enough by Zionist leadership. Moreover, an ignorance of "Eastern culture" and its achievements had led European Zionists into a false sense of cultural and political superiority and a belief that pacts with Ottoman political leadership would pave an easy road for expanded settlement.

Moyal committed himself to the task of publicizing the achievements of the Zionist Yishuv in the Arabic press. In one such piece, published in Jaffa-based *Filastin* in November 1911, Moyal responded to a previous article, which he argued aimed to "stir up public opinion against the Jews" and neglected to mention the "modern agricultural tools" brought by Jewish

[63] Shimon Moyal, "Hischat v'shma Israel," *ha-Herut*, 22 September, 1911.

settlers who were using technology to turn their dunams into "gardens under which rivers flow."[64]

In addition to propagandizing in Arabic, Moyal invited rabbis and Jewish leaders to a general assembly to discuss "our status in the land" and the question of "our relations with the people of the land, a matter that cannot be delayed." In an open letter published in *ha-Herut* in 1912, Moyal explained the relations of Jews to Muslim Arabs:

> Palestine is mostly settled by the nation [*le'um*] of the Muslim Arabs, our ancient relative. This kind and noble people does not hate the Jews with a spiritual, racial, incurable hatred like that of the anti-Semites in Europe. The Muslims, if among them there are those who hate the Jews, then theirs is a religious hatred, a jealous hatred of anyone who does not believe what he believes. And for this reason, these types hate the Christian no less than the Jew, and even their own fellow believers who do not behave according to the accepted practices.
> A hatred such as this is uprooted from the heart by patience, by beliefs that follow the development of wisdom, especially through shared life and [through] the channel that will develop from the ties of friendship between Islam and Judaism, and an alliance against the shared hatred of those who hate the sons of Shem.[65]

Moyal viewed the shared heritage of Jews and Arabs through a cultural, linguistic, and racial lens. He also distinguished between "European anti-Semitism" and "hatred of the sons of Shem," which he suggested Jews and Muslim Arabs would be jointly affected by. He repeated in the same letter his belief that Arab Christians were fomenting unrest between Jews and Muslim Arabs, "spreading lies in their newspapers in order to interfere with the Arabs' closeness to the Jews and to separate brothers."

He therefore argued that tensions between Jews and Arabs in the East would ultimately pass, unlike hatred of the Jews in Europe, because he understood them to be religious rather than racial, or essential, hatreds. This view, that European anti-Semitism was permanent and

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[64] Shimon Moyal, "To the owner of *Filastin*," *Filastin,* 1 November 1911, 3. Moyal wrote in response to "Mā yurā wa mā lā yurā" [What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen]. *Filasṭīn,* 28 October 1911, 3. More on this particular press conflict is discussed below. See also Emanuel Beška, *From Ambivalence to Hostility: The Arabic Newspaper Filastin and Zionism, 1911-1914* (Slovak Academic Press: 2017): 33-64.
[65] Shimon Moyal, "Hitorerut. Al Matzaveinu B'Eretz Israel," *ha-Herut,* 2 February, 1912: 3.

intractable, was not unique to Moyal or even to the group of integrationists studied here. This suggests a broader influence by and connection with the larger discourse in the Zionist and Hebrew language press that asserted permanent enmity between Christian Europeans and Jews.[66]

Moyal's open letter presents a prototype of integrationist thought: he promoted the essential Semiticness of Jews as a basis for their settlement in Palestine and their fundamental compatibility. The view that Muslim Arabs would eventually cooperate fully with Jews on the basis of being an "ancient relative" is also seen in Sapir and Radler-Feldmann's writings discussed below. In other words, the baseline racial connection Moyal believed existed between Jews and Muslim Arabs formed the foundation for their eventual partnership.

Moyal also elaborated on some of these views in his exchanges with Islamic reformer and writer Muhammad Rashid Rida. Moyal had been in contact with Rida and other contemporary Muslim thinkers including Muhammad 'Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani from his time in Istanbul and at al-Azhar. He was reportedly a member of the joint Jewish-Muslim-Christian organization, *al-Ta'lif wal-Taqrib* (The Association of Friendship and Understanding), which was founded by Muhammad ʿAbduh and Muhammad Mirza Baker in Beirut.[67] In one written exchange with Rida, Moyal responded to Rida's assertion in his journal *al-Manar* that Jews supported Italy during the Ottoman-Italian war in Libya in 1911. Moyal insisted that the Jews had been loyal to the Ottoman government, and appealed to the similarities between Judaism and Islam: "My political belief is that Islam is one great political community built on a common faith, a common philosophy, and a common history, and so, too, is Judaism. And also that the Arab-Muslim race [*geza*] has a shared racial link [*shituf geza'i*] just like the Jewish race."[68] Here

[66] Anita Shapira, "Anti-Semitism and Zionism." *Modern Judaism* 15, no. 3 (1995): 215-32.
[67] Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 177.
[68] Yehoshua Ben Hanania (Ya'akov Yehoshua), "Dr. Shim'on Moyal ve-ha-Be'aya ha-Yehudit ha-'Aravit." *Hed ha-Mizrach* 3, no. 25 (1944): 6-7.

Moyal did not directly suggest a belief that Jews and Arab Muslims were related to one another, per se, but rather that he believed that Arab Muslims themselves formed a cohesive racial group – that is, they were essentially related to one another – in the same way that he believed Jews did.

In the same exchange, Moyal explained that he believed, perhaps influenced by the Islamic education he received, that most contemporary Jews were descendants of ancient Jews who lived in the Arabian peninsula, not descendants of the Jews who lived in Palestine and were conquered by Rome. The precise details of the arrival of Jews in the Arabian Peninsula is unknown, but one Arab legend that may have influenced Moyal suggests the immigration of Jews to the area following Roman persecution.[69] Moyal viewed the two groups, Jews and Arabs, as intertwined both racially and religiously. Among his other projects, his translation of portions of the Talmud into Arabic were an effort to make some of these similarities more widely known in Arabic circles.

In his activism and his writing, Shimon Moyal saw the founding of a Jewish newspaper in Arabic as a key way to develop understanding. He and his partners in publication, Esther Moyal and Nissim Malul, viewed their Arabic newspaper *Sawt al-Uthmaniyya* as a tool to reach other Arabized Jews outside of Palestine and as a means to counter the growing anti-Zionist press by explaining the "true" intentions of the Zionists to Muslim and Christian Arab readers. Moyal invested thousands of francs in the newspaper, but it ceased publication after the outbreak of World War I.[70] This project can be understood as part of the larger Mizrahi/Arab Jewish

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[69] Reuven Firestone, "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam" in David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002): 267-291.
[70] Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 171, and David Tidhar *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv and its Founders* vol. 3 (Tel Aviv, Rishonim Library: 1958): 1219 [Hebrew].

intellectual project that marked Sephardi Jews' reckoning with Jewish modernization and the place of Jews in Palestine.[71]

The other major manifestation of Moyal's commitment to Jewish-Arab cooperation was his founding role alongside members of other prominent Sephardi Families in *ha-Magen*. According to their manifesto, *ha-Magen* aimed to "defend by all kosher and legal means our status in the land," to strengthen ties between Jews and Arabs in the "shared homeland" by translating Arabic articles into Hebrew and responding to Arabic and Turkish press. The organization was a product of the 1908 revolution: its members aimed to help secure full civil rights of Jews under the restored constitution and declared their intention to translate all Ottoman laws into Hebrew. The manifesto of *ha-Magen* was also in step with standard Zionist talking points: it emphasized how Zionists brought "industry and culture and commerce" to Palestine and that their efforts would "materially and spiritually" improve the "shared homeland."[72] The members even expressed their wish to establish a Jewish-Arab literary club. Moyal's commitment to Jewish-Arab cooperation can ultimately be understood as a commitment to forming shared institutions, promoting bilingual initiatives, and emphasizing the claim that there were material benefits to Zionist development for all the inhabitants of Palestine.

2.2 Esther Azhari Moyal

In the 1910s, at 40 years old, Esther Azhari Moyal shared in the efforts to promote Jewish-Arab cooperation. She was a member of *ha-Magen* and helped to fund the short-lived *Sawt Al-Uthmaniyya* in Jaffa, but she also undertook her own projects, contributing to the first

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[71] Yuval Evri, *Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition: From Al-Andalus to Palestine/Land of Israel*. (Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien e.V, 2016): 4-14.
[72] *Ha-Magen* manifesto text is quoted in Campos, *Ottoman Brothers,* 163-65; see also Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 171-172.

Arab women's journal *al-Fatat* (The Young Lady) and later starting her own literary journal, *al-A'ila,* which published articles related to family, education, and world affairs. Esther Azhari likely studied at the American College for Girls, later teaching at the Beirut Alliance Israélite Universelle school. In 1893 she began publishing in the Arabic press, contributing to major Egyptian periodicals including *al-Ahram* and *al-Hilal*, as well as contributing to the Hebrew language periodical edited by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *ha-Tsvi* and publishing Arabic-French translations. After she and Shimon Moyal moved to Jaffa in 1908, Esther continued to publish, founded a women's organization, and edited the Jaffa-based Arabic newspaper funded by the Zionist office, *al-Akhbar*.[73] Moyal was active in women's organizations and wrote and spoke passionately about the need to promote women's education and employment. However, she also expressed complex views on developing nationalism.

In her brief article in Ben-Yehuda's *ha-Tsvi* in 1909, Moyal wrote about witnessing a meeting of representatives from various Jewish societies in Jaffa, "For the first time I witnessed the clash between the views of the Sephardic Jews, whose circle of views and aspirations is Eastern, and the views of their Ashkenazi brethren, who are "full of the stream" of European views." She expressed her hesitation at what seemed to be a brewing conflict: "At the beginning of the meeting I felt the same sad feeling that one feels when the clouds fill with lightning before the storm." Then she describes how the delegates began to speak to one another in Hebrew and while "not every idea was understood" by each member, they were able to reach a general consensus. Moyal expressed her relief: "We can unite and walk arm in arm since we have

[73] Lital Levy, "Partitioned Pasts: Arab Jewish intellectuals and the case of Esther Azhari Moyal," in Dyala Hamzah, ed. *The Making of the Arab Intellectual: Empire, Public Sphere, and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood.* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012): 136-138.

discovered that the rift that developed between Jews by the power of time, and the influence of the different nations into which we were exiled, is not so wide."[74]

This brief article – though not specific about the circumstances of the meeting Moyal observed – sheds some light on Moyal's view of distinct spheres of Eastern and Western culture, and provides some context for the intermediate position that Sephardi Zionists like Malul and the Moyals found themselves in. For Esther Moyal these categories were particularly prominent in her writing about the future of Palestine and "Eastern civilization" more broadly. Though she did not use the term "Semite" or "Semitic," she described Eastern and Western attitudes in some essential terms: "The Mizrahi, by his nature, does not like his assemblies to depart from the sphere he has set to discuss. He goes slowly and is satisfied, but rushing will bother him … He is moderate and mild, and it is possible that this aggravation is preferable to hasty speed." Meanwhile, "The European is more excited, he wants to move forward in huge strides, despite the local obstacles which are not familiar to him…. he pursues the "principles" in life, at a time when it is too necessary to discuss real things."[75] Despite these perceived differences, Esther Moyal concluded that unity was ultimately possible given the core affinity between Jews.

Moreover, Esther Moyal's account of this meeting provides a picture of how members from Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities in Palestine – and in Jaffa as an urban center in particular – were brought to exchange by Zionist activities. This suggests that Zionism might be more fruitfully understood as an intellectual medium between individuals from distinct social, linguistic, and political backgrounds. The existence of such a forum as described by Moyal, alongside what we already know about the development of Zionist press and other Zionist organizations, provides additional information about how intellectuals from an urban middle

[74] "Aseyfa – Katava meyuhedet" (A Special Report), *Ha-Tsvi* 25, no. 141, 1909, 2.
[75] *Ibid*.

class would have exchanged ideas in Ottoman Palestine, and how those activities were themselves shaped by Zionism.

Lital Levy has placed Esther Moyal, alongside a handful of other Sephardi intellectuals, in the unique space between the Arabic *Nahda* and the Jewish *Haskalah*. These two "enlightenments" happening in parallel were efforts to reimagine and redefine community identity in modern terms. Their progressive and reformist discourse engaged Moyal and the influence of these intellectual streams led her to support both Zionist settlement and its promises of universal advancement in Palestine while also supporting Arab resistance to Western encroachment.[76] In a 1912 speech entitled "*Nahdatuna*" (Our Renaissance), she appealed to the audience, members of the Beirut-based charitable *Shams al-Birr* society, as Easterners facing Western encroachment to "fix whatever is wrong with our morals, and get rid of whatever is holding us back from a true renaissance and give priority to education, and useful jobs, with integrity as a guide, and freedom as a light illuminating our homes, schools, and markets."[77] Moyal explained the need for development and modernization projects in agriculture, education, family life, and industry to build "an Eastern Arab civilization based on noble inherited virtues and a love for work and achievement, and thereby [to] take a prominent and uninfringeable place among other civilized countries."[78] The need to act and modernize to develop a new "Arab East" was a core principle for Moyal, as it was for other Arab intellectuals of the *Nahda*. Like other *Nahdawi* and the Islamic reformers who were her contemporaries and peers, Esther Moyal viewed a "renaissance of the East" not as a wholesale rejection of the West but as an indigenous

[76] Levy, "Partitioned Pasts," 136-138.
[77] Esther Moyal, "Nahdatuna" (Our Renaissance), *al-Hasnāʾ* 3, no. 9 (June 1912), 408–15. Also reprinted in Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture 1893-1958*. (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013): 38-46.
[78] *Ibid.*

renewal and adoption the advancements the West had to offer. Moyal advocated for the adoption of certain technologies, educational models, particular industries and practices but she wanted them applied to a revived "Eastern civilization."

In the same speech Moyal also made reference to the novel agricultural techniques brought by Zionist settlers: "Is it not our duty to replace old agriculture, which is one of the pillars of our wealth, with new agriculture based on sound science, and send the school to the farmer whose circumstances prevent him from going out to it; and replace his old tools with new ones and introduce to him chemical fertilizers that can give him thirty-seven tons for every ton of crops, as is the average harvest in the modern settlements of Palestine?"[79] As Levy argues, Moyal never used the terms "Jewish" or "Zionist" in her speech but nevertheless made the claim that such technological advancements would improve the lot of indigenous farmers, the region as a whole, and the larger Eastern Arab civilization-in-the-making. Moyal was therefore an advocate both of "Easternism" as a means of resisting Western domination and simultaneously a supporter of European Jewish settlement in Palestine.[80] It seems she did not see a contradiction between her call to repel Western encroachment and her desire to replicate the success of some Yishuv settlements. This suggests a view that Jews settling in Palestine did not constitute a threatening Western presence. This "development-first" mindset, the belief that Jewish settlement would materially improve the lot of indigenous Palestinian Arabs, was a cornerstone of the integrationist framework.

Indeed, this dual commitment to Eastern renewal and modernization was shared by members of Esther and Shimon Moyal's intellectual circles, including members of the Ottoman *Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya,* the Decentralization Party. The party was founded by Syrian and

[79] *Ibid.*
[80] Levy, "Partitioned Pasts," 150.

Lebanese émigrés in Cairo in 1912 in opposition to the centralizing efforts of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). The group of Ottoman intellectuals saw themselves as "enlightened" guides who hoped to direct the empire toward progressivism. The party's main goal was a limited transfer of authority and power from the central government to the Ottoman provinces, which they envisioned as part of a loose federation.[81] As active members themselves in the Decentralization Party, Nissim Malul and Shimon Moyal were central go-betweens in the attempt to broker a deal between members of the Party and Zionist leadership in order to form a joint front against the CUP. After a series of negotiations, the Party's president, Rafiq al-ʿAzm, published a statement supporting Jewish immigration in April 1913, in which he declared support for the rights of the Jewish nation and an agreement to foster an understanding between the Zionists and the Arabs. "We appreciate too well the precious combination which Jewish capital, manpower and intelligence can bring us for the rapid development of our provinces to commit the error of refusing them," al-'Azm wrote in his statement for the press. The understanding was premised on the assumption that Jews would adopt Ottoman citizenship and learn Arabic.[82]

One way to further complicate the narrative about the place of Sephardi Zionists is by looking at both of the Moyals' many connections to *Nahdawi* and reformist circles, which suggest an embeddedness within other movements that influenced their thinking and writing. In addition to being involved in the Decentralization Party, Shimon Moyal had also been a member

[81] Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the 'Mashriq.'" *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (2008): 465-466 and Lital Levy, "The Nahḍa and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform.'" *Middle Eastern Literatures* 16, no. 3 (2013): 300–316. See also Jacobson "Jews Writing in Arabic," 175-177 and Thomas Philipp, "Participation and Critique: Arab Intellectuals Respond to the "Ottoman Revolution" in Jens Hanssen, Max Weiss (eds.) *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge University Press, 2016): 243-265.
[82] Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 175-177. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 151-158.

of Muhammad Abduh's interfaith Association of Friendship and Understanding (*Jām'iyyāt al ta'līf wa-'l-taqrīb*) in Beirut, and continued to correspond with Rashid Rida through the pages of *al-Manar*. Shimon and Esther Moyal were also rather close with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, whom they met first when they lived in Istanbul. The couple named their first son Abdullah Nadim after their friend Abdullah al-Nadim, the Egyptian author, journalist, and a student of al-Afghani's, and they named their second son Munir after a pseudonym used by al-Afghani in *Misr*.[83] The Moyals' time in Cairo also intersected precisely with the flourishing of the city's Syrian immigrant community, which included Yaqub Sarruf, Faris Nimr, Farah Antun, and Jurji Zaydan, among others. The social networks and publications produced by these emigres would have influenced the Moyals, who published in Zaydan's *al-Hilal* and other publications based in Egypt that were covering the "new sciences," which included Darwin's theories and their intersection with the "Eastern Question."[84]

Although Levy and others have explored the contributions of Jewish intellectuals to the *Nahda*, and their place in helping to create an "interdenominational community of Arabic-speaking intellectuals engaged in an open-ended dialogue about knowledge and the world," less scholarship has focused on how these activities intersected with their Zionism and how these intellectuals might have seen these activities as compatible. One strand the two movements had in common was an interest in progressivism and modernization. In Esther Moyal's writing in particular, her investment in modernizing the "Arab East" is made plain. Moyal would have found common cause in both Zionist and *Nahdawi* circles in which revival and progress were closely linked and prioritized.

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[83] Tsifroni, "Roots of One Prominent Family," 44, Omar Imady, *The Rise and Fall of Muslim Civil Society*. (Salinas, Calif.: MSI Press, 2005): 24 and Levy "Partitioned Pasts," 136.
[84] Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 73-98.

In addition, Moyal and Malul's involvement in the Decentralization Party may have been connected to their Zionism because a loose federal model with diffused power among the provinces may have been seen as a potential path for increased Jewish settlement. As Hasan Kayali has argued, decentralism appealed both to those in "incompletely integrated" provinces on the outskirts and those more ethnically homogenous areas, "where increasingly articulate elites held that decentralization would better preserve a distinctive cultural ethos." In addition, non-Muslim majority communities saw decentralization as a path to self-determination.[85] It is possible, therefore, that Arabized Jews like Malul and the Moyals were drawn to the potential of a decentralized model as a vehicle for Zionism. Being both immersed in the Arabic cultural milieu and simultaneously participating in the early stages of Hebrew cultural revival, decentralism may have seemed like the natural choice that would enable such communities to continue to coexist. Of course part of Malul's and Moyal's vision within this framework was also that European Jews would make attempt to acculturate, like learning Arabic, rather than forming a hermetic cultural enclave.

2.3 Nissim Malul

Moving finally to Nissim Malul (1892-1959), who was a member of the Moyals' intellectual circles, we see that he advocated for many of the same approaches to Jewish-Arab integration. Malul was born in Safed to a family of Tunisian descent. He studied in Jewish schools in Safed and Cairo and later attended the American College in Tanta, Egypt, to study philosophy, Arabic literature, and journalism. He began publishing in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Muqattam* and in 1911 returned to Palestine to work alongside Shimon Moyal in the Zionist

[85] Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 117-119.

Organization's newly founded Arabic Press Bureau in Jaffa under Arthur Ruppin. Malul translated Arabic articles critical of Zionism into Hebrew and responded to them in the Palestinian papers *Filastin* (founded in 1911) and *al-Karmil (*founded in 1908). Malul also founded, with the support of the Zionist Office, the newspaper *al-Akhbar* in 1911 in Jaffa, which Esther Moyal edited, as well as the paper *al-Salam*. He was also, as mentioned, involved in the *ha-Magen* organization of Arab Jews and in the publication of *Sawt al-'Uthmaniyya*.[86]

It is impossible to disentangle the mobilization of the Moyals, Malul, and the Arabic Press Bureau from the growth of anti-Zionist Arabic press, first in the Egyptian newspapers *al-Muqattam* and *al-Ahram,* and later in Syrian and Palestinian papers. Articles on Zionism began to appear more frequently in Egyptian papers around 1908, and they then appeared in Syrian and Palestinian newspapers by 1909. By 1910 and 1911 the number of articles about Zionism had expanded dramatically.[87] Rashid Khalidi found that in 1911 alone, 286 articles on Zionism were published across the 22 publications he examined from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, constituting roughly 40% of the published material.

A meeting of Zionist representatives of the Palestinian colonies and Jaffa politicians was called in February 1911 to discuss opposition to Zionism in the press and protests by Arab villages surrounding Jewish settlements. Notes from the meeting, headed by Arthur Ruppin, report that a range of tactics was proposed in order to counter unfavorable sentiment in various sectors of society. The ideas proposed included promoting adoption of Ottoman citizenship among Jewish immigrants, purchasing subscriptions to Arabic newspapers in exchange for favorable coverage, ensuring the presence of an Arabic speaker in every Jewish settlement, and

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[86] Jacobson, "Jews Writing in Arabic," 168; and Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire,* 115.
[87] Emanuel Beška, "Political Opposition to Zionism in Palestine and Greater Syria: 1910–1911 as a Turning Point," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59 (2014): 59.

distributing pamphlets explaining the benefits of Jewish colonization among Arab villagers.[88] That same year, the Arabic Press Bureau mobilized Malul and Shimon Moyal and also gained influence over the Beirut-based newspaper *al-Nasir* and the Jerusalem-based paper *al-Nafir*. The most significant forum for debates about the political consequences of Zionism was the Egyptian daily *al-Muqattam*, in which advocates of Zionism including Malul as well as Jacques Levy al-Tantawi responded to arguments from Shakib Arslan, Rafiq al-'Azm, Shibli Shumayyil, 'Isa al-'Isa, and others.[89]

This project – the "conquest of the press," as Moyal called it in 1912[90] – triggered its own backlash. Emmanuel Beška has shown how the position of the newspaper *Filastin*, and its editor-in-chief Yusuf al-'Isa, towards Zionism changed over the course of its short pre-World War I run between 1911 and 1914. In the beginning the paper was "cautiously favorable" towards Zionist settlement, but the editors gradually moved to criticism as they noticed detrimental effects on the Arab Palestinian urban economy, the social conditions of non-Jewish population, and the growing exclusivism of the Zionists. *Filastin* also took note of and began responding to those Jewish authors carrying out the Zionist propaganda campaign in the Arabic press, including Menashe Meirovitch, Abraham Ludvipol, Shimon Moyal, Nissim Malul and David Yellin. Beška concludes that it was not until the very end of 1912 that the paper began to criticize Zionism more consistently and harshly.[91]

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[88] Minutes of the meeting on February 6, 1911, in the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) L2.44, See also Samuel Dolbee and Shay Hazkani ""Impossible is Not Ottoman:" Menashe Meirovitch, 'Isa al-'Isa, and Imperial Citizenship in Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47(2), (2015): 241-262.
[89] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 122–34; and Beška, "Political Opposition to Zionism," 54-67 and Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 130.
[90] Shimon Moyal "Al-Davar Yesod Iton Aravi [On Founding an Arabic Newspaper]" *ha-Ḥerut*, October 25, 1911.
[91] Beška, "Political Opposition to Zionism," 33-64.

But readers of *Filastin,* and naturally also its editors, may have already had knowledge of the Zionists' Arabic press project as of November 1911, when an unsigned article reported on the "unseen battle" happening between Jewish leaders about the establishment of an Arabic newspaper. "What is seen is the battle between Zionists and their opponents in the pages of the Arabic newspapers," wrote the anonymous contributor. "But what is unseen is the war taking place among the Israelites themselves in the pages of the Jerusalem Hebrew press." The author recounted the proposal by Shimon Moyal to found an Arabic newspaper "to defend the Israelites and promote their interests." Avraham Ludvipol, head of the Press Bureau at the Zionist Office, opposed the plan on financial terms and suggested instead printing articles in existing papers because "once the people realize the paper is Israeli [*isra'eliyya]*, they will not accept it."[92] The anonymous column recounted the intra-Zionist negotiation over best strategies to sway public opinion for all to read. Therefore, the press battle in Arabic newspapers could be understood as something of a feedback loop, and it is important to note that the Zionist efforts to publish favorable reports in Arabic were evidently rather transparent.

Campos has called Malul "the paid translator and main propagandist for the Zionist movement from 1911 to 1914,"[93] and it is certainly true that much of his Arabic press activity was funded and pushed forward by the organization under the larger propaganda project described above, but Malul's writing in Hebrew further complicates the picture. It suggests that he not only had a platform that he worked to promote among Arabic readers but also a platform for Hebrew readers, and one that was rather contentious. In June 1913 in *ha-Herut,* Malul published his personal platform in a series of articles that was printed with objections and notes from the paper's editorship expressing alternating disagreement and shock at Malul's line of

[92] Mā yurā wa mā lā yurā [What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen]. *Filasṭīn,* 28 October 1911, 81, 3.
[93] Campos, *Ottoman Brothers,* 287n123.

argument. For example, Malul's copy was printed in *ha-Herut* with the following annotations: "If we, the heirs of Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Levi and Maimonides, wish to follow in their ways, we must know Arabic well and merge with the Arabs (?! The Editors) the way they, the great sages, did (?! The Editors)."[94] Malul's platform evidently set him apart from the Sephardi editorship of *ha-Herut*[95] and was also far from being in lock-step with his supervisor Ruppin's view of the cultural and racial landscape of Palestine.

The series of articles laid out Malul's case for integration, emphasizing the need to connect with Arabic language and culture as a means of developing a "true" Jewish culture and as a means of forming a functional political relationship with the Ottoman government. The three articles were titled "The question of Hebrew teaching of Arabic," "Participating in the struggle for Arab rights and establishing a Jewish-Arab newspaper," and "Our status in the country." Malul argued for the study of Arabic on the basis that, "If we [Jews] want to settle in this land, the land of our past and our future, we must learn its language." He warned that neglecting to teach Arabic to Jewish children would result in isolation, leaving Jews "separated from all other peoples living under Ottoman rule."[96]

In an earlier article responding to a critic, Malul defended against the accusation that he had called for "merging" and "assimilation" [*hitchabrut me'tzad echad v'hi hitbolelut*] with the Arabs, but in a subsequent article – also quoted above – he contradicted himself and concluded that to be the heirs of the "great sages," contemporary Jews must know Arabic and "merge"

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[94] Nissim Ya'acov Malul, "Ma'amadenu ba-Aretz," *ha-Herut*, June 19, 1913. Also reprinted in Behar and Benite, *Modern Middle Eastern Thought*, 65-69.

[95] *Ha-Herut* was founded by Avraham Elmaliach in 1909, and while editors throughout its run were Sephardic, its contributors were diverse. The paper's inaugural issue stated its aim of being an "important Eretz-Israeli newspaper," rather than a niche Sephardi publication. See Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*, 97-98.

[96] Nissim Malul, "Ma'amadenu ba-Aretz: She'elat Limud Ivrit-Aravit," *ha-Herut*, June 17, 1913.

[*lehitmazeg*] with the Arabs. Here Malul appeals to the shared history of Jews and Arabs as a template for present day relations: "As a Semitic nation [*le'um shemi*] we must reinforce our Semitic nationhood and not blur it within European culture," Malul wrote. "By utilizing Arabic we can create a real Hebrew culture, but if we blend it with European elements we will simply be committing suicide."[97] In this final article, Malul was fending off criticism that he was undermining Hebrew cultural efforts by advocating for the adoption of Arabic in Jewish and Zionist circles. His claim that importing European culture to Palestine would be "committing suicide" can be read in different ways. On the one hand Malul may have been referring to the project of reviving the "golden age" of the Jewish "great sages," which would be sabotaged if the Arab Muslim context in which figures like Maimonides worked was ignored. On the other hand, he could be referring to the larger project of a Palestine-based Hebrew revival as distinct from diasporic Jewish culture, which would be undermined by a mimicking of European styles. In either case, the project of creating a new Hebrew culture was tied to the idea of Semitism for Malul, who described the Jews as fundamentally Semitic and only incidentally influenced by European culture.

In his articles Malul explicitly called out the European Zionists who did not speak or read Hebrew, like Max Nordau, suggesting that this transgression should be of greater concern to those who proclaimed their commitment to Hebrew culture. According to Malul, "real Hebrew culture" was premised on knowledge of Arabic and could only develop within a properly Semitic context. His articles showed both a strong commitment to advancing the Zionist cause – indeed, they were published in Hebrew and directed at a Zionist-Jewish readership – and a conviction

[97] *Ibid.*

that knowledge of Arabic and functional relations with Arabs and Ottoman authorities were a fundamental pillar of the Yishuv.

What I have emphasized in this overview of Sephardi intellectual activity is the message shared by these figures – namely, the need to promote cooperation between Jews and Arabs by forming shared institutions, by developing knowledge of Arabic language and culture, and by emphasizing the developmental benefits of Zionism. I have also aimed to complicate the picture of their place within the Zionist movement by emphasizing their embeddedness within Zionist circles as well as other reformist and progressive networks. They spoke from within the Zionist movement and used the language of Semitism to advocate for cooperative development. They did not view their equal commitments to Zionism and Ottomanism as contradictory – in part because they viewed Zionism as a movement to advance Jewish civil rights under the new constitution as well as a movement to bring economic, material, and cultural development to Palestine. They encouraged a shared civic and cultural life that was rooted in a sense of Ottomanism and were simultaneously deeply concerned with the growing anti-Zionist sentiment in the Arabic press. They worked not only to draw attention to it within the Zionist movement but also to write against it and mend what they saw as a misunderstanding of Zionist intentions.

In addition, I have demonstrated how their understanding of Jews as Semites played a critical role in their belief in Jewish-Arab cooperation and in their commitment to Zionism – suggesting that subscription to the Semitic idea was not a strictly European Jewish phenomenon, but rather that the idea also appeared as self-evident fact in the writing of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews as well. Echoing Lilienblum, Malul and the Moyals did not use the term “Semites” and “Semitic” rhetorically, but rather as a statement of fact, expressing their given understanding of Jews’ collective origins. The rhetoric used by figures like the Moyals and Malul has generally

been sidelined, but I argue that it is precisely in these specifics – in the details of their cultural initiatives, their references to Semitism, and in their involvement with the larger Zionist movement -- that one sees the ways in which they practically and ideologically overlapped with Ashkenazi Zionists. This suggests that their activities and understanding of the situation in Palestine can be better understood within a broader intellectual context that included Islamic reformers, Ottomanists, and Ashkenazi Zionists, and not solely as a product of their place in Mizrahi or Sephardi circles.

Chapter 3: Ashkenazi Integrationists

Ashkenazi Zionists including Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann, Eliyahu Sapir, and Yitzhak Epstein wrote about many of the same ideas as Malul and the Moyals. These Ashkenazi integrationists were also fierce critics of political Zionism, and some promoted Ottomanism. There were others whose integrationist or Ottomanist efforts are noteworthy – Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Moshe Ayzman, Aaron Aharonson, and Selig Suskin – but whose work I will not cover in detail here.[98] The three Ashkenazim I discuss, who were interested in Jewish-Arab fusion and subscribed to the Orientalist idea of a "rejuvenating return East," were also the same individuals who saw the Sephardi Yishuv as a potential ally in forming a nation.[99] A common Orientalized view, though not at all universal, among some Ashkenazi intellectuals at the time was that Sephardim were "healthier" Jews, closer to the ancient Israelites, who had not been corrupted by life in the diaspora and whose Hebrew was more "authentic." Their superior physical form, which Europeans believed had adapted to the land and the climate of the East, was seen as indicative of "superior moral traits."[100]

And yet coexisting alongside this view in European circles was one that suggested the longer-term "biological degeneration" of Oriental Jews attributed to poor hygiene, "racial mixing," and other such deterministic factors. Ruppin, for example, believed that the "original Jews" were an Indo-Germanic race, to which Ashkenazi Jews maintained a closer lineage than Sephardi Jews, who he believed had "mixed" with Semites. This theory permitted a distancing of certain Jews from Semitic-ness while also explaining the supposed degeneration and inferiority of the Oriental Jews who he believed to be, at least in part, Semitic people.[101]

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[98] Harif covers some of these figures in "Judaism and Islam in Pre-State Zionist Thought," 210-226.
[99] Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsionim,* 58.
[100] Saposnik, "Europe and Its Orients," 1114-1116.
[101] Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture,* 96-99.

It is worth noting that these integrationists were not proto-Canaanites. The Canaanites emerged in the British Mandate period as a group of intellectuals whose Zionist vision was based on a radical rejection of the Jewish religious and cultural tradition in favor of a return to the prebiblical Canaanite past. Despite the fact that some of these integrationists argued for a return to the "primordial" East, Judaism and Jewish identity firmly grounded their outlook, setting them at odds with the Canaanite ethos.[102] Nevertheless, the connection between the idealized Semitic racial discourse in this period and the later Canaanite discourse could be worth exploring more extensively. However, the Ashkenazi figures examined here viewed the Semitic race as their heritage, and they spoke about it in effusive, Orientalized language that conveyed their belief in the potency of a movement to "return East." Granting their skewed view of Sephardim and Arabs, Ashkenazi integrationists were developing and supporting a largely similar set of goals to those of the Moyals and Malul. In promoting Arab-Jewish cooperation, they also laid a critical rhetorical foundation for the persistence of the Semitic idea and the racial belonging of Jews to Palestine.

3.1 Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann (Rabbi Binyamin)

One such figure was Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann (1880-1957), who wrote under the pen name "Rabbi Binyamin." Radler-Feldmann was born in Hapsburg Galicia in the town of Zborov (today Zboriv in western Ukraine), to a religious family. He studied at the traditional *heder* schools and the *beit midrash* in Zborov. At 21 he departed for Berlin, where he studied agriculture. In 1906 he moved to London and befriended Yosef Haim Brenner, with whom he

[102] On the role of Canaanite mythology in Zionism see David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1-38.

published the Hebrew journal *ha-Meorer*. In 1907 Radler-Feldmann immigrated to Palestine, where he divided his time between agricultural work, writing articles in *ha-Herut* and other Hebrew publications, and working with the Zionist Organization.[103]

Radler-Feldmann wrote widely on Zionism, religion and the East-West divide, but was committed to the idea of "pan-Semitism" throughout his life. He understood Zionism fundamentally as a means for Jews to reconnect with their Eastern roots mentally, spiritually, and physically. Even before arriving in Palestine, Radler-Feldmann wrote in support of Arab-Jewish cooperation and appealed consistently for Jews to unite in fraternity with the Arabs. In "Panshemiyut," a piece first published in the Berlin-based Hebrew journal *ha-Keshet* in 1903, Radler-Feldmann laid out his vision of the Jewish return to Palestine, including settling among the Arabs, of whom he wrote: "we are brethren [*anashim akhim anakhnu*]."[104] Radler-Feldmann understood Zionism to be not merely a physical and geographical project but also a spiritual one that could only be fulfilled by Jews tapping into "the primordial, spiritual well that the East symbolized."[105]

In this spirit, Radler-Feldmann was highly opposed to the movement for the "conquest of labor." Determinedly against the secular discourse, Radler-Feldmann viewed religious and cultural affinity between Judaism and Islam as the foundation for future cooperation within his platform of "pan-Semitism."[106] In his early work, Radler-Feldmann was against the purely

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[103] Harif, "Judaism and Islam in Pre-State Zionist Thought," 217-219. For more on the meeting and collaboration between Brenner and Radler-Feldmann see Anita Shapira, *Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life* (Stanford University Press: 2014): 80-99.
[104] R. Binyamin/Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann, "Panshemiyut" in *Al ha-Gvulin: reshimot v'ma'amarim* (Vienna: Union Press, 1922): 18-20.
[105] Harif, "Judaism and Islam in Pre-State Zionist Thought," 218.
[106] Avi-ram Tzoreff, "'An Imagined Desert That Is Indeed the Core of the Yishuv': R. Binyamin and the Emergence of Zionist Settler-Colonial Policies (1908–14)," Simon Dubnow Institut Jahrbuch (forthcoming).

spiritual or cultural Zionism promoted by Ahad Ha'Am. His vision of a complete spiritual and physical Jewish return to Palestine was more in line with his support for Max Nordau's initiatives for bodily and aesthetic reform: "You all shall come to the land and inherit it," Radler-Feldmann wrote. "Your tall stature, broad chest, and your muscles like bars of iron." Among the generation he described in "Panshemiyut," "there will be no critic or complainer, and no contradictor or mourner."[107] An observant Jew, Radler-Feldmann claimed that the Jews' return to their bodies and to labor would be a return to God. He formulated an idea of Jewish-Arab union as a counterweight to European antisemitism – which he suggested that Arabs, as Semites, were also susceptible to.[108] Thus, Radler-Feldmann argued that Jews' belonging in Palestine was premised on their essential categorization – racially and spiritually – as Semites. "We have found our kind [*matzah min et mino]*," Radler-Feldmann wrote of Jewish settlement among the Arab residents. Only through complete recognition of Semitic identity would the Zionist project succeed, according to Radler-Feldmann.

Moreover, Radler-Feldmann was skeptical of those who believed that merely touting the material benefits of modern agricultural and economic stimulus brought by Zionists would be enough to convince the Yishuv's critics and opponents, or that it would morally redeem exclusivist Zionism. In responding to a commentator in *ha-Herut* writing under the pen-name Ikara, Radler-Feldmann wrote: "Ikara tells of the great good we have brought to the people of the land. I agree with this. It seems I, too, have talked about it enough, and perhaps even too much. But the question is how we brought it." Radler-Feldmann was preoccupied by the moral approach of settlers and their clarity of mission in developing a settlement method that would

[107] R. Binyamin, "Panshemiyut," 18-20.
[108] Hanan Harif, *For We Be Brethren: The Turn to the East in Zionist Thought*. (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2019): 97-100.

elicit “desirable relations” between settlers and “the people of the land.” He wanted to curb the trend towards “snobbery, condescension, ostentation, and the degradation of the character of others” that he saw in settlers.[109]

In perhaps his most controversial publication, “Masa Arav” (An Arab Prophesy), Radler-Feldmann returned to his vision of Jewish-Arab solidary. He warned against alienating and driving out the Arab inhabitants of Palestine and called on Jews to “Open your schools widely to him and his sons and daughters will come; And in them they will learn your language and his language; And you will publish journals for them in your language and his language.”[110] He called attention to the groups’ common racial origins, believing they would merge eventually: “In the future he will be one of you and it will not be noticed that he was assimilated into you. You will give to him your sons and you will take from his sons.”[111] More broadly, Radler-Feldmann made the same claim as other Ottoman Zionists, that the Jews came to Palestine “to revive the land and its inhabitants” and would share with the Arabs “all the riches in [their] spirit.”[112] Complete equality between Jews and Arabs was a pillar of this vision. In April 1912 Radler- Feldmann followed up on these ides in “Bereshit,” in which he argued for the adoption of a pan-Semitic framework for Zionist settlement and the parallel development of Jewish and Arab settlements in Palestine. In one such proposal, Radler Feldmann cited the great efforts that went into building Tel Aviv, arguing it would not be so difficult to then turn to establishing a

[109] R. Binyamin, "Tora hi… (B)", *Ha-herut*, November 11 1913: 2. For more on Radler-Feldmann’s opposition to political Zionism, see Tzoreff “An Imagined Desert” and Tzoreff “Jewish-Arab Coexistence against the Secular Discourse: Theology, Politics and Literature in the Writings of Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann (R. Binyamin, 1880-1957)” doctoral dissertation submitted to Ben-Gurion University (2018): 123-144 [Hebrew].
[110] Rabbi Binyamin, “Masa Arav,” *ha-Meorer* (July 1907): 271-273. [Hebrew]
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] *Ibid*.

similar Arab neighborhood. “The Jew and Arab are not two opposing forces,” Radler-Feldmann wrote.[113]

Radler-Feldmann also worked on the first Zionist memorial book in 1911, “*Yizkor*”, intended to commemorate the eight Jewish settlers killed in clashes with Arabs in Palestine between 1890 and 1911, including members of the *ha-Shomer* organization who served as armed guards for Jewish settlements. The organization of armed guards was founded after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, when members of *Poaeli Zion* began discussing how Palestinian Arabs might mount a substantive competition for territory. In 1907 the party founded *Bar Giora* as a secret defense organization, and in 1909 the legal and public arm, *ha-Shomer*, was founded to address the increasing clashes with Arabs in the Galilee. Seeing Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionist settlement more openly expressed, the founders of *Bar Giora* and *ha-Shomer* placed themselves at the front of the “contest against the Arabs.”[114] Members of *ha-Shomer* believed that Palestinian Arabs would inevitably oppose the establishment of permanent Jewish settlement Palestine, and that the best means to deter such opposition was by mounting a Jewish defense force and building Jewish national presence in order to ultimately allow for the coexistence of two national elements in Palestine. “In their view,” historian Yaacov Goldstein argued, “only the development and expansion of Jewish power would create the opportunity for a balance of power and, consequently, the possibility for mutual understanding and compromise.”[115]

The organization’s contradictory efforts to simultaneously project strength and develop “neighborly relations” led to some odd displays of bravado, romanticism, and appropriation. *Ha-*

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[113] Rabbi Binyamin, “Bereshit,” in *Al ha-Gvulin: reshimot v’ma’amarim* (Union Press, Vienna, 1922): 143-152.
[114] Yaacov N. Goldstein, “The Jewish-Arab Conflict: The First Jewish Underground Defence Organizations and the Arabs.” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 31, No. 4, (Oct., 1995): 744-754.
[115] *Ibid*.

Shomer guards adopted Bedouin dress and mimicked their riding style on horseback. The guards dawned bullet vests and carried their rifles prominently.[116] This ambiguity also led to a slippage between efforts to assimilate, emulate, and surveille the surrounding Arab populations. As one member described, "The aim was to mingle with the Arab people around us, to become acquainted with the human and climatic environment as an organic part of it, as a people returning to its land by right and not on sufferance," and simultaneously to study the Arabs so as to learn "their weak points, the disputes and quarrels among them, to be able to turn them to our advantage."[117]

Radler-Feldmann, though not directly involved in either *ha-Shomer* or *Poaeli Zion*, first suggested the creation of the memorial volume after the death of three settlers – Dov Shveiger, Shimon Melamed, and Yisrael Korngold – in the spring of 1909 in the Lower Galilee.[118] Deep disagreements between the volume's authors, which included Radler-Feldmann and Brenner, among others, delayed the book's publication. In the end, Radler-Feldmann published his controversial preface, in which he further elaborated his view on pan-Semitism and Jewish-Arab coexistence: "We have returned to our country, to our homeland, with strong feelings of affection for the nation living here. … And we know that the one God, the God of Israel and of the world, calls upon us and upon the Arabs to unite in the common cause – to restore our country which lies waste to prosperity; to spread knowledge together; to share the benefits of human culture."[119] Even in this volume meant to commemorate the Jewish dead from clashes with neighboring Arabs, Radler-Feldmann used the platform to convey the need to promote the

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[116] Shapira *Land and Power*, 69-76.
[117] Moshe Eliovich quoted in Goldstein, "The Jewish-Arab Conflict," 749.
[118] Frankel, "The 'Yizkor' Book," 424.
[119] "Hakdama," *Yizkor: matsevet zikaron le-halele ha-poalim ha-ivriyim be-eretz yisrael, ad, A.Z. Rabinovich* (Jaffa 1911): 4-5. See also Frankel, "The 'Yizkor' Book of 1911," 422-453.

concept of a "shared homeland" between Jews and Arabs. He urged "affection," *ahava*, towards the Arab population and believed the two Semitic groups would come together, even completely assimilate, with shared institutions, language, and culture.

Before the *Yizkor* book was complete, Radler-Feldmann published an article in *ha-Poel ha-Tsair* in memorial of Shveiger's death and also responding to Yosef Klausner's alarm at the "Arabization" of Jews in Palestine. Radler Feldmann wrote of Shveiger:

> He was becoming – or, at least, wished to become Arabized; to be like the best among the Arabs. In seeking to be totally Hebrew, he wanted to be like them. He wanted the Hebrew in him to be like the Arab in them. That writer [Klausner] who expressed fear in *ha-Shiloah* regarding the influence of the Arabs on the young generation in our country could have selected [Shveiger] as a perfect example. But so could all those who, from Benjamin Disraeli to the author of these lines, believe that the entire Semitic race [*hagezah hashemi*] really does have a great deal in common.[120]

Here Radler-Feldmann highlighted the aspirational and Orientalized view that some recent arrivals to Palestine held of Arabs. Radler-Feldmann suggested that Shveiger indeed represented everything Klausner feared about Arabic influence, while at the same time serving as an idealized example of the return to Semitic-ness. To be "totally Hebrew," for Radler-Feldmann, was to be Arab. Radler-Feldmann also consciously aligned himself within a larger tradition "from Benjamin Disraeli" onwards of believers in racial Semitism as an essential quality in Jews and Arabs.

Radler-Feldmann also worked in the Arabic Press Bureau of the Zionist Office in Jaffa at the same time as Nissim Malul. The department was composed of only three people: Malul, Aharon Mani, and Radler-Feldmann. Malul worked with Aharon Mani to translate Arabic articles into Hebrew and to publish responses. Radler-Feldmann oversaw the department's operations and translated the translations into German, making them readable both to Ruppin and

[120] Frankel "The 'Yizkor' Book of 1911," 450n16.

to members of the Zionist offices in Istanbul and Berlin.[121] As Avi-Ram Tzoreff has argued, these three employees saw their work in the Arabic Press Bureau as a means to develop a shared Jewish-Arab space, where knowledge of Arabic was essential.[122] Despite the fact that the Bureau was arguably the beginning of Zionist surveillance of Palestinian Arabs, its employees saw their participation in an entirely different light. For Malul, the Bureau was a first critical step in addressing the anti-Yishuv press, while for Radler-Feldmann it was a chance to understand the Arabic press and incorporate that knowledge into his advocacy. In his later writings, Radler-Feldmann described this experience as his first exposure to the political and cultural developments in Arab Palestinian circles, and how he took "any chance for connection" with the Arabs.[123]

Radler-Feldmann, like the Moyals and Malul, was a product of the multinational, pluralistic empire in which he grew up, and the imperial context for his understanding of coexisting national, imperial, and religious identifications is central to understanding his intellectual project. Radler-Feldmann's overlap with Malul in the Arabic Press Bureau, and his shared understanding of the desired forms of Jewish-Arab cooperation and integration suggest both a potential exchange of ideas between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists as well as a larger common discourse of Semitism that he and other integrationists were able to draw upon in describing and promoting their vision. As the subsequent examples will show, Radler-Feldmann was not a sole outlier in this respect.

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[121] Ya'akov Ro'i, "Nisyonotehem shel hamosadot hatziyoni'im le-hashpia al ha-itonut ha-aravit be-eretz Yisrael bashanim 1908-1914" [Zionist Endeavours to Influence the Arab Press in Palestine, 1908–1914], Zion 32, no. 3–4 (1967): 213–25 [Hebrew]. Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*, 191.
[122] Tzoreff, "An Imagined Desert," and Tzoreff, "Beyond the Boundaries of "The Land of the Deer": R. Binyamin between Jewish and Arab Geographies, and the Critique of the Zionist-Colonial Connection," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 82 (2020): 130-153.
[123] *Ibid.*

3.2 Eliyahu Sapir

Another case study in Ashkenazi integrationist Zionism is that of teacher, banker, and botanist Eliyahu Sapir (1869- 1911). A member of the "Old Yishuv," Sapir was born in Jerusalem to a family that had come from Vilna to Palestine in 1832. Sapir was a student of David Yellin's at the AIU school and became fluent in German, French, Hebrew, Arabic, and Turkish. He moved with his wife, the daughter of a rabbi, to Petah Tikva, where he taught Hebrew and Arabic in the Baron Rothschild clerk's school. He helped keep records in the Petah Tikva settlement and handled legal disputes over land purchases. Using his knowledge of Arabic and Turkish, he kept records of births and deaths in the settlement, helped with taxes and military rolls, and wrote official health reports. Sapir also reportedly used his ability to read and write in Arabic to help *fellahin* in the villages nearby in reading and responding to official papers they received from the government and in preparing petitions.[124] His skills in estate law, which he learned in the process of handling local disputes, led him to work for the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in purchasing the territory of Sejera (today Ilaniya) for a farm colony.[125] Sapir then took a position as secretary and chief accountant at the central office of JCA in Jaffa. He went on to work as an assistant to Zalman David Levontin and become the deputy director of the Jaffa branch of the Anglo-Palestine Bank when it was established in August 1904.[126] This position took him into the upper levels of the Zionist Organization's activities in Palestine –

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[124] Mordechai Ben-Hillel ed., *Kovetz Mikhtavei Eliyahu Sapir*, (Jaffa 1913): 5-16. See also: Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv and its Founders* vol. 2, 827-829, and Abraham J. Brawer, "Sapir, Eliyahu." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2007): 37-38.

[125] Details about this land purchase and the demarcation disputes are in Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 67-70.

[126] *Ibid.*

Sapir participated in the February 1911 meeting discussed above, alongside Levontin and led by Ruppin to address the issue of opposition to Zionism in Palestine, in which attendants suggested various strategies to gain more favorable press and to demonstrate loyalty to the Ottoman government.[127]

Radler-Feldmann named Sapir as one of his influences in his memoirs.[128] And indeed, Sapir published early material on the Semitic – defined racially and linguistically – roots of Jews and Arabs as a basis for cooperation. In his articles published in 1899 in *ha-Shiloah,* Sapir was one of the earliest to ascribe anti-Zionism to Arab Christians in particular, believing Arab Muslims to be more predisposed to affiliation with the Jews on the basis of sharing Semitic heritage. "The Muslim-Arab people [*am*] is one of the people – or the one people – closest to us and to our hearts," Sapir wrote. "Among these people, that is, the Arab Muslims, being also sons of Shem, there is to a large extent the same moral quality that our people have."[129] Sapir concluded that the Enlightenment in Christian Europe had rendered permanent anti-Semitic sentiment, whereas Jewish life under Muslim rule historically had been prosperous. This mythologized view of "interfaith utopia" in Medieval Islam was common among nineteenth century scholars of Jewish history, particularly members of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school, whose idyllic view of medieval Jewry under Islam contrasted the "sorrowful, oppressive, persecutory history" of Jews under medieval Christianity. These nineteenth century Jewish scholars developed the "interfaith utopia" model in part in order to challenge European Christians to actualize the promises of emancipation and grant Jews full rights and privileges

[127] CZA L2 44, see also Dolbee and Hazkani ""Impossible is Not Ottoman," 250.
[128] Harif, *For We Be Brethren,* 102
[129] Eliyahu Sapir, "Ha-Sinah L'Israel be-sifrut ha-Aravit," in *Kovetz Mikhtavei Eliyahu Sapir*, 98.

that, at a minimum, would match the treatment of Jews under medieval Muslim rule.[130] Sapir, who had broad intellectual interests, wrote about Jewish history, and read both French and German, was likely exposed to some of these intellectual currents. By virtue of his fluency in Turkish and Arabic, Sapir was also exposed to the intellectual milieu of Mizrahi Jews like Moyals and Malul, and, like them, viewed the specifically Christian Arab opposition to Jews, and in Sapir's work "hatred of Israel" (*sinah l'Israel),* as a critical factor that the Yishuv would need to address were it to succeed in settling the land.[131] Sephardi and Arab Jews also turned to this medieval utopia as a means of understanding Jewish and Arab relations in this period, suggest a shared body of knowledge and references among Jews who came from distinct backgrounds. As Yuval Evri has shown, the legacy of al-Andalus and the Jewish return to Palestine were deeply linked for Arab Jewish intellectuals like Abraham Shalon Yahuda and Josef Meyouhas, whose translation projects were a means of processing the Jewish return to Palestine and its implications for the historical ties between Jews and Arabs.[132]

In his writing Sapir alluded to the peaceful coexistence under Muslim rule leading almost to "complete assimilation" between the peoples. "In [Muslim] days we saw goodness, and his love and closeness to us is still a possibility for the future."[133] In addition, the sheer number of Muslim Arabs in Palestine made them a valuable ally, in Sapir's view: "The Arab Muslim people is the majority and controls the land," Sapir added in a footnote: "by this I mean in control of the territory, not the upper government, which is Turkish." In addition, Sapir believed those living in Palestine's cities and coasts were largely Christians and non-Arab converts to Islam, and

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[130] Mark R. Cohen, "Medieval Jewry in the World of Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies,* Martin Goodman, Jeremy Cohen, David Sorkin eds. (Oxford University Press, 2002): 193-218.
[131] Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs,* 41-42.
[132] Evri, *Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition: From Al-Andalus to Palestine/Land of Israel*, 4-23.
[133] Sapir, "Ha-Sinah," 97.

therefore non-Semites, as opposed to those communities living far from the cities and coasts who were "still pure of race and blood [*tahur be'gezo u'damo*]."[134] For Sapir this would seem to explain the anti-Zionist press coming out of Christian-owned urban presses. Sapir's cosmology of Semitic races and affiliations illustrates the complex intertwining of racial, ethnic, and religious categories that emerged at the fin de siècle alongside the development of eugenics and racial purity. However, critical for the purposes of this discussion, Sapir's proximity to the rural settlements and his role as an Ottoman quasi-administrator and record keeper placed him in the unique position of being in regular contact with rural Muslim Arabs. Based on these experience, Sapir suggested a fixedness of Semitic descent as a signifier of belonging to or living more closely with the land of Palestine, and as a signifier of rural Muslim Arabs' essential similarity to Jews.

In addition, as a reader of Arabic, Sapir, like the Moyals and Malul, saw the anti-Zionist sentiment in the Ottoman press as a crisis in the making. Believing a Muslim Arab and Jewish partnership to be possible and desirable, he recommended a vocal response on behalf of Jews. In one essay, Sapir wrote of the need for a decisive response, lest readers be influenced by hearing a consistent stream of negative characterizations:

> And what comes to us from this: that the hatred of Israel glimmers and arises in Arabic literature, penetrating the hearts of even those who are not in their essence predisposed to it.
> And the Jews stand silent!
> From the countries of Europe we exited with our hands on our heads, and to the Eastern lands we come with our hands on our mouths, blocking our ears to not hear anything against us. But others will hear and will learn to know us only as evil and to see in us a physical and spiritual danger to the land and its acquisition.
> If in Europe we work to no avail to root out and remove hatred of us, an ingrained and ancient inheritance planted and stamped in the hearts of nations, then the one way to save our honor and soul is to remove ourselves from the influence of the 'general consensus' … in the land of our fathers and the nearby lands we must be in every way, in our existence and our actions, an open protest of every word and false accusation levied against us, and most importantly, in the language and literature of these lands we must be as distinguished residents and not as guests.[135]

[134] *Ibid.* 104.
[135] Sapir, "Ha-Sinah," 110.

For Sapir, a strong rebuttal to negative press was critical. He also reinforced the idea of a permanent antisemitism residing in the European conscience. Moreover, he emphasized the need for Jews as Semites to return to language and land as residents rather than guests, situating the Jews as rightful inheritors rather than newcomers.

In his writing, Sapir was critical of political Zionism and warned of the detriment that an importation of European politics would have on the goals of the Zionist movement. In the essay "One Small Question," also published in 1899, Sapir was vocal in his opposition to the movement by Herzl and other Zionist leaders to win the official support of Kaiser Wilhelm II. After the Kaiser's visit to Palestine in 1898, Herzl and others were eager to gain his official support for Jewish settlement and there were talks of making portions of Palestine a German protectorate. Sapir was harsh in his rebuke of this approach: "I do not know how much truth there is to this talk, …but the rise of the Germans in the land and their determination to take all that is good in their hands would be obvious to all residents," Sapir wrote in the essay. He continued: "Every man will realize how the German — who does not come to the land out of spiritual attachment and a desire to resurrect the nation — will exploit all the goodness of the land for himself and how much hatred he will summon in the hearts of the people [*am*] residing in the land, who do not yet even know Israel authentically and from which Israel itself runs and does not seek to love." A committed Zionist, Sapir had withering criticism for the approach of Zionism's European leaders:

> Isn't this also a paradox, that the Zionist leaders, whose entire goal was to get rid of antisemitism, themselves support German politics and its triumph in the land of our Fathers, while everyone knows that Germanism [*germanismus]* and antisemitism are one and the same, and that in every place that the German comes to, he brings with him the hatred of Israel?
> Although the Zionist movement is sublime and valuable, the way its leaders pursue it, how they take every measure possible to secure this 'guarantee' -- this way is in danger.[136]

[136] Sapir, "She'elah ehat ktana," in *Kovetz Mikhtavei Eliyahu Sapir*: 111-114.

In other words, Sapir believed the best route was slow and deliberate integration, while relying on the Ottoman authorities rather than the backing of imperial powers.[137] To bring in an imperial power, argued Sapir, would endanger the integrity of the entire project, which he viewed as premised on deep personal investment in the land. In focusing attention on gaining a charter or other imperial backing, Sapir suggested, Zionists would be importing latent antisemitism and therefore would be undermining their own stated goals. Both Sapir and Radler-Feldmann used their integrationist perspective as a basis for criticism of Zionist leadership and a political Zionism that they characterized as inherently and damagingly separatist.

Sapir's life and work present a complicated case that helps to suggest porous barriers between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities in Palestine, and even between the supposedly separate "Old Yishuv" and "New Yishuv." As a member of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, Sapir penetrated official Zionist circles and came to be a critical agent in wrangling the legal and financial aspects of land purchases and settlements.

3.3 Yitzhak Epstein

Finally, in turning to the best-known integrationist and author of the controversial essay "A Hidden Question," Yitzhak Epstein (1862-1943), one can appreciate how virtually all of his most controversial ideas were shared by several of his contemporaries. Epstein was born in Luban, Belorussia and moved to Odessa with family when he was 14. He studied under Lilienblum and was influenced by the *Hibbat Zion* movement. In 1886, he, along with five others, went to Palestine for training in Rothschild's agricultural colonies. After working for four

[137] Harif, *For We Be Brethren*, 103.

years in the Zikhron Ya'akov and Rosh Pinah settlements, he became a teacher. With little formal teaching experience outside of some private tutoring, he was appointed principal of a girls' school which had opened in Safed in 1891, one year before Nissim Malul was born in the same city. He stayed in Safed for five years before moving to teach in public schools in Metulah and Rosh Pinah. He studied at the University of Lausanne from 1902 to 1908 and directed the Talmud Torah school in Salonica from 1908 to 1915.[138]

Epstein launched a fervent press debate about "the Arab Question" when he published "A Hidden Question" in 1907. He delivered it in the form of a speech in Basel before the Seventh Zionist Congress, and two years later published it in *ha-Shiloah*. Epstein addressed the Congress in the same year that the two major labor parties, *Poalei Tsion* and *ha-Poel ha-Tsair*, were established in Palestine, potentially in an attempt to draw attention to the underlying threat inherent in Zionist exclusivism.

Despite knowing no Arabic, Epstein preached the importance of knowing and understanding the Arabs, much like contemporaneous Sephardi intellectuals: "It is not enough to hold before us the end goal, but we must also have a proper understanding of the Arab nation, its characteristics, inclinations, hopes, language, literature and especially a deep understanding of his life, customs, pain and suffering," Epstein wrote. "It is a disgrace that, to date, nothing whatsoever has been done in this regard, that so far not even one Jew has devoted himself to this topic, so that we are complete illiterates in anything concerning the Arabs."[139] Epstein also expressed support for shared institutions: "Let us open our public institutions wide to residents of Eretz Israel: hospitals, pharmacies, libraries, reading rooms, inexpensive restaurants, savings and

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[138] Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv and its Founders* vol. 2: 822- 823.
[139] Yitzhak Epstein, "She'elah Ne'elamah," *Ha-Shiloaḥ* 17, November-April 1907/08. A full translation of "A Hidden Question" is in Alan Dowty, ""A Question That Outweighs All Others": Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist Recognition of the Arab Issue." *Israel Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001): 34-54.

loan funds; let us arrange popular lectures, plays, and musical performances to their taste and in their language; let us give an important place to the Arabic language in our schools and willingly enroll Arab children in them," Epstein wrote.[140] Peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with Palestine's Arabs would be critical to the future of the Yishuv, according to Epstein.

Epstein's speech has been more often analyzed as part of an inter-Zionist debate between "territorialist" and "democratic" factions at the Zionist Congress and he is credited with bringing the Arab Question to "center stage" within the movement.[141] But another way to contextualize Epstein's words is by viewing them through his experience as a member of the First Aliyah. He not only worked on the privately owned Rothschild settlements during his first years in Palestine, but he also spent time embedded in Sephardi-Ottoman Jewish circles as a teacher in Safed and later at the newly renovated Talmud Torah school in Salonica in 1908. Epstein was hired based on the strong reputation he built in Safed as an effective Hebrew teacher, and his modern pedagogical methods appealed to the Salonican Jewish leadership because they hoped he would "strengthen and modernize the Jewish curriculum of the Talmud Tora," while also bolstering the dominant place of Hebrew instruction in the community's schools.[142] Epstein's outspoken Zionism drew some controversy, placing him at odds with the Ottomanist consensus among the city's Jewish elites. Epstein spent his time at the Salonican school putting the institution on the "path of progress." He described some local Jewish practices as "backwards" yet felt that the Alliance's French emphasis was leading students too far from Jewish instruction and a firm

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[140] *Ibid.*
[141] Shapira, *Land and Power*, 45-50 and Alan Dowty, "'A Question that Outweighs All Others,'" 34-54.
[142] Devin E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016): 154-155.

grounding in the Hebrew language. His goal of modernizing Jewish and Hebrew education earned him the support of the more "traditional camp" in Salonica.[143]

Epstein's experiences testify to the ways in which First Aliyah settlement ideology and the aspirations of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews living in Ottoman urban centers were ultimately rather compatible. As Liora Halperin has shown, Ashkenazim arriving in this period were able to find "common cause" with Sephardi communities because of a shared religious and economic relationship. The integrationist ideology developed by Zionists – the terms on which coexistence between Jews and Arabs was meant to be based – were compatible with those of Sephardi Zionists, whose message of cooperation was, perhaps ironically, closer to the more center- and right-leaning Zionist capitalists than the ideas of emerging Labor Zionism.[144] In other words, the idea that employing Arabs in Zionist settlements would cultivate and preserve relations with Palestinian Arabs made economic and political sense both for settlers in Rothschild's colonies and for the well-off Sephardi merchants and brokers who had a clear eye on the potential of Arab Palestinian resentment to grow.

In addition, some groups within the Sephardi communities of the Ottoman empire were highly interested in the promises of "modernization" that European Zionists like Epstein touted. As the sections on Malul and the Moyals have also shown, certain elite Sephardi circles were drawn to Zionism or found means to support Zionist efforts precisely because of its declared progressivism. Modern education and industry – the core messaging of the First Aliyah – appealed to the Sephardi elites in particular who stood to benefit from the influx of capital and who saw themselves as the vanguards of progress.

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[143] *Ibid*.
[144] Liora Halperin, "Forging Beginnings: Commemorative Cultures and the Politics of the 'First Aliyah.'" *Journal of Israeli History* 38, no. 1 (2020): 53–76.

What I have emphasized in this section on Ashkenazi integrationists is chiefly their overlap with the platform set out by Sephardim like the Moyals and Malul and their emphasis on the fundamental Semitic identity of the Jewish people as a founding principle and justification for their settlement in Palestine. But I have also complicated the set of influences on Ashkenazi integrationists, which came both on the ground in Palestine as a product of their interactions with Arab residents and with Sephardi communities as well as from their European education and continued engagement with materials and ideas produced there. What I have argued by drawing attention to these diverse points of contact is the overlap between supposedly separate ethnic communities in Palestine and the ways in which the ideas of Sephardi Zionists were adopted, accepted, or built upon by Ashkenazi Zionists who shared in their understanding of the movement's ultimate goals. Though not at all universally adopted, the integrationist platform and the related Semitic racial discourse appears to have enjoyed greater popularity than previously imagined.

Conclusion

When an expanded version of Epstein's "A Hidden Question" was reprinted in 1919, Tiberias-based intellectual and journalist Hayyim Ben-Kiki responded in *Do'ar Hayom* with disappointment: "Epstein arrives at the same conclusions that were published in the journal *ha-Herut* well before the War." Though it may have been "impossible to imagine that the [Arab] Question would develop into such a complicated matter," Ben-Kiki admitted, members of the Sephardi Yishuv had already raised such an alarm:

> The [Jewish] natives of this Land [the Sephardim] felt that matters were not being well organized and that all the noise — accompanied with that ringing arrogant tone that came at us from outside — was inappropriate for both the time and the place. The [older] Sephardic Yishuv, a community that came from the lands of the East to an Eastern country — whose soul was forged and formed along several generations with the Arab peoples — sensed that something unpleasant was taking place here, and that all this movement [activity] was not carried out decently. But the admonitions, criticisms, and warnings [of Palestine's Sephardim] were considered meaningless. They stirred only ridicule and gave rise to accusations of assimilation. The new [European] settlers say that any Jew who speaks the language of his native country is assimilating. The leaders now see that the seed of evil that they have planted is beginning to produce fruit and thus see their mistakes.[145]

This became the dominant narrative of the Arab Question and the movement to address it by means of deliberate Arab-Jewish integration: that Sephardi Jews had been the first, and possibly the only, ones to try to call attention to the destructive forces of Zionist exclusivism. Ben-Kiki was correct that Sephardim were dismissed and sidelined based on their perceived proximity to or assimilation into "the enemy"– and they would continue to be through the Mandate and well into the period of Israeli statehood. But what I have aimed to show here is the overlooked spread of their ideas into Ashkenazi circles and the ways in which Sephardi contributions were heard and adopted by some in the period before World War I.

[145] Hayyim Ben-Kiki, "Al she'elat Ha-she'elot be-yishuv Ha-Aretz" *Do'ar Hayom*, August 30, 1921. A translation is also reprinted in Behar and Benite. *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought*, 102-107.

In part, what this thesis has responded to is the tendency in historical scholarship to flatten and isolate the experience of Sephardi Zionists. Two contradictory streams tend to essentialize the Sephardim – either as ignored but prescient critics of Zionism or as forgotten heroes of the Yishuv. What I have attempted here is to complicate the views, intellectual circles, and influences of Sephardi Zionists to better reflect the ways in which they both contributed to and criticized Zionist settlement activities and the ways in which they were simultaneously included in certain activities and excluded in others. One can examine these earlier networks of exchange while still recognizing the ways in which Sephardim were also being overlooked in this period.

The historical study of Ashkenazim and Sephardim within separate siloes – a method that itself stems from the understanding that Sephardi Jews were ignored by the Ashkenazi establishment from Zionism's earliest days – has concealed some of their shared ideas and their early networks of exchange. Even a relatively cursory look at these figures reveals practical and ideological connections between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists: Radler-Feldmann worked in the Arabic Press Office alongside Malul, Epstein taught Hebrew in the *Talmud Torah* school in Salonica and was immersed in the Sephardi community there in the decade before World War I, and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda published Esther Moyal's work in his journal and worked with Avraham Elmaliach to edit another Hebrew journal, *Hashkafa,*[146] This suggests the existence of more networks of exchange between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists, and a closer reading of some of their writing has indicated that integrationism and Ottomansim was not the unique province of Sephardi Zionists, but was rather shared by a larger cohort that consumed and published ideologically similar material. In addition to inhabiting the same spaces and publishing

[146] Bezalel, "The First Levantines," 84.

in the same newspapers, the figures highlighted here shared a larger political and social framework shaped by their belonging to multiethnic empires.

Certainly the marginalizing of Sephardi and Arabized Jews within the Zionist movement and in the State of Israel remains critical context for this discussion. The ways in which Mizrahi communities were transplanted to the newly-formed State of Israel in the 1950s, the discrimination against them on an institutional and social level, and the violent severing of communities and identities documented by Ella Shohat and others has undeniably shaped public memory and the writing of Mizrahi history in Israel.[147] What I suggest is not a counter-narrative to this. I argue that it is productive to view Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists as working in the same cultural and political milieu in the period before World War I, even as they maintained some of their separate, intra-communal associations. For example, while the meetings of *ha-Magen* may have been conducted in Arabic, and were therefore closed to non-Arabized Jews, the organization's members still maintained their connections with Zionist officials, wrote in the Hebrew and Zionist press, and maintained contacts with Ashkenazim. The writing and work of both cohorts suggest strong evidence for Wallach's claim that "in the early twentieth century, Zionism, Ottomanism, and integration with the local Arab society did not seem to be contradictory options."[148] By shedding light on the ways in which these communities overlapped, I have revealed one dimension of their shared intellectual history: that is, the belief in Jewish-Arab coexistence on the basis of shared language, culture, and heritage defined in the emerging racial terms of the early twentieth century. The expansion of this framework to other time periods or topics in the history of the Yishuv in Palestine could be fruitful.

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[147] See for example Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," in *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings of Ella Shohat* (London: Pluto Press, 2017): 37-76.
[148] Wallach, ""Jerusalem between Segregation and Integration," 215.

However, one cannot ignore the fact of the eventual failure of the binational and coexistence-based frameworks of Zionism. The movement's end was clearly tied to the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the assurance of imperial backing for Jewish settlements secured by the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Both of these nullified the need for partnership with the Ottoman government – once viewed as a potential federal protector – and dulled the urgency of gaining favor in Arabic circles and with Sephardi Jewish figures by extension.[149]

One limitation of this study is that the individuals discussed were all from an intellectual class – none of them directly owned tracts of land and none was personally concerned with the labor market that would have defined life for new Jewish immigrants and Arab agricultural workers. Sapir, Epstein, and Radler-Feldmann each performed a few years of agricultural work but went on to become, as discussed above, teachers, public intellectuals, lawyers, administrators, and bankers. As intellectuals, however, they viewed themselves as the vanguard of progress and patrons of culture, both classical and of the "revived" genre. They were also more likely, because of their class and educational attainment, to consume materials about racial theories that then informed their ideas around Semitism. In addition to considering the spread of these ideas outside of the intellectual class, a natural question this study raises is how Semitism and related racial theories influenced other Zionist initiatives after this period. It would be worth exploring how the categories introduced here – such as the key distinctions between Christian Arabs and Muslim Arabs – changed in valence and how such changes influenced Zionist strategizing in the later years of the British Mandate and into the period of Israeli statehood. One might also ask about the fates of these figures during and after World War I – how did their integrationist ideas evolve and respond as the geopolitical circumstances of Palestine were

[149] Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 231-243.

transformed by larger powers? Finally, a more detailed genealogy of thought for these figures would be worth pursuing – the trajectories of individuals like Shimon Moyal or Eliyahu Sapir who straddled many overlapping social and political circles merit further study and such an investigation may be able to further explain the way ideas around Semitism and Jewish-Arab affinity traveled and were shaped over time.

Despite the movement's eventual failure, to ignore the development of the integrationist movement examined here would be to ignore the ways in which definitions of Zionism as a political, national, cultural movement have shifted over time and have been the product of struggles between various factions. Moreover, it would gloss over the varied motivations of individuals drawn to Zionism in this period who, in many cases, defined their affiliation in personal and affective terms and drew on their prior experiences as imperial minorities. In this way I build on Jacobson's argument that there was pluralism and fluidity at this moment in time – but I have widened the scope to suggest that there was greater participation in the integrationist idea outside of the Sephardi community.

Studying this "failed movement" has therefore revealed several valuable conclusions: first, that the eventual supremacy of the separatist factions of the Zionist movement was not inevitable, and that there existed serious skepticism about the ability of Jewish nationalism to succeed outside the Ottoman framework. Second, studying the six intellectuals discussed here suggests that Makdisi's "ecumenical frame," or the mindset that supported inter-confessional coexistence, was present among Sephardi and Ashkenazi Zionists in this period because their understanding of Zionism was premised on confessional coexistence in social, political, and intellectual life. Relatedly, I have demonstrated the existence of more robust networks of exchange that led to an overlap in thinking between Ashkenazim and Sephardim that may have

explained the spread of the "ecumenical frame." Third, this study has supported the idea that the struggle over national language also represented a struggle for national belonging – Zionist appeals to learn Arabic stemmed from a belief in reinvesting in and developing an Eastern-based Jewish nationalism that was intended to be compatible with Ottomanism. Finally, by studying this bygone integrationist perspective, I have introduced a critical discussion of the role of the Semitic racial discourse and the ways in which it laid the rhetorical foundation for the racial belonging of Jews to Palestine. This idea appears to have provided the underlying logic for the integrationist platform for cooperation – the idea of shared racial heritage made a shared polity possible and conceivable for both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Zionists.

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