THE SEPHARDI COMMUNITY OF JERUSALEM BEFORE WORLD WAR I : A NOTE ON A DOMINANT COMMUNITY ON THE DECLINE

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I. Introduction

The British mandate for Palestine was legally based upon the Mandate ratified by the League of Nations in 1922, but the Mandate itself originated from the Balfour Declaration in 29 November, 1917. According to the Declaration, "H. M. Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people", while the latter part of it stipulates that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

The mandate for Palestine, however, changed religious *status quo* in Palestine under the Ottoman rule which was based upon the *millet* system assuring non-Muslim communities in the Empire of autonomy on the religious and personal matters. Especially *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) was totally reorganized with the coming of the British mandate, because the new rabbinate of Palestine with two Chief Rabbis of both Sephardim (*Spaniards* in Hebrew) and Ashkenazim (*Germans* in Hebrew) was established⁽¹⁾.

Under the Ottoman administration the Sephardi community in Jerusalem was recognized as the sole representative of *Yishuv*. In spite of its official status recognized by the Sublime Porte, the Sephardi community gradually lost their exclusive religious and administrative hegemony over other *Kolels* (Jewish communities in Palestine organized upon original places) in Jerusalem during the second half of the 19th century. The declining process of the Sephardi hegemony over other Jewish communities was coincident with the gradual rising of Ashkenazim supported by European consulates, and also of Political and Socialist Zionists after the turn of the last century.

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ry. In other words, 'In Jerusalem, the main losers were "natives" —Muslim Arabs and Sephardis (*sic*) alike—who lost much of their privileged status', and the winners were 'the ascendant Europeans, including the Europeans' "client" populations, the Christian Arabs and the Ashkenazis (*sic*)'(²).

In this article, we will discuss, first of all, political and religious roles of *Rishon le-Tziyon* (literally, *the First of Zion*) in Jerusalem, who was recognized as *Hakham Bashi* (the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardi rabbinate in Jerusalem) in 1842 by the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulmecit I (1839-1861). Secondly, we will describe communal relationship in the 19th century Jerusalem between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and then between Sephardim and '*Adot Mizrah* (literally, *Oriental Communities* of the Jews from other Muslim countries, such as Morocco, Persia, Bukhara, Yemen and so on). Finally, we will also describe the Sephardi community's inner strife which damaged dignity and authority of the Sephardi rabbinate, resulting in the weakening of the Sephardi hegemony.

II. The Sephardi Community and Rishon le-Tziyon in Jerusalem

The number of studies on the Sephardi community in Jerusalem at the turn of the last century and in the first decade of this century remains very small even in Israel. In Shar'abi's recent study, *The Sephardi Community of Jerusalem in the End of the Ottoman Period*(³), which is perhaps regarded as the first comprehensive monograph written in Hebrew from Sephardi viewpoint, she ascribes difficulties in studying the Sephardi community in Jerusalem, firstly, to the abandonment and scattering of materials and documents on the community, and secondly, to the communal conflicts among the Jews, namely, between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and also between Sephardim and '*Adot Mizrah*. She explains that writers belonging to the subordinate '*Adot Mizrah* tend to justify themselves for their own sake by condemning the dominant Sephardi attitude toward them. In contrast to this tendency, there have been few academic studies from Sephardi points of view, according to Shar'abi. Thirdly, in relation to the communal conflicts, it is hard to estimate the values of the memoirs written by those involved in *Yishuv* affairs by themselves.

Sephardim settled in Jerusalem under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire after being expelled from Spain in 1492 and then from Portugal in

1497. They were the dominant Jewish community in Jerusalem from the 15th century to the end of the 18th century, though there existed other Jewish communities⁽⁴⁾.

In the 19th century Jerusalem, *Yishuv* was composed of three Jewish groups of the Ottoman subjects (*Ra'âyâ*). The first group was the dominant Sephardim; the second was *Mista'arevim* (*Arabized Jews*, namely indigenous Jews who had lived in Palestine before the immigration of Sephardim, and adopted Arab way of life and spoke Arabic); and the third was the above-mentioned '*Adot Mizrah* from other Muslim countries⁽⁵⁾.

In addition to these groups, Ashkenazim increased gradually in number, especially after the Egyptian rule (1831-1840) in Jerusalem. According to Gat, Sephardim had been the majority of *Yishuv* in Jerusalem until 1872, but Ashkenazim exceeded 50% of the population of *Yishuv* in Jerusalem in 1875 and then reached 60% in 1877⁽⁶⁾.

Yishuv entered a new stage of its history with the arrival of Zionist immigrants from Russia (most of whom were Ashkenazim) after the Pogrom in 1881. These new waves of immigrants were utterly different in value and way of life from old Ashkenazi community, which was composed of traditional Orthodox Jews such as *Perushim* and *Hasidim*. This new community was comprised of modernized secular Zionists who denied the traditional religious way of life to which religious East European Jews had adhered for hundreds of years. These differences caused serious communal conflicts between old community (*Yishuv Yashan*) and new community (*Yishuv Hadash*) among Ashkenazim⁽⁷⁾.

Sephardi rabbis in Jerusalem, however, were in general foreign to these communal disputes between *Old Yishuv* and *New Yishuv* among Ashkenazim, though some of Sephardi intellectuals were affiliated to *Tenu'at Haskala* (Jewish Enlightenment Movement) and even to the Zionist movement. Because, Halper explains, 'despite their adherence to religious observance, the Sephardis' (*sic*) worldviews, infused with flexibility and synthesis, did not so preoccupy the Ashkenazis (*sic*)'. The attitude of Sephardi rabbis and rich merchants toward Zionism is characterized by indifference. Because 'changes had no transcendent meaning in and of themselves; they either contributed to the fundamental realities of economic, social and political life or did not. Few Sephardis (*sic*) thought, for example, in nationalist terms. It would never have occurred to any of them that

Ottoman rule might—or should—end’⁽⁸⁾.

Sephardim continued to be ‘aristocratic’ as members of an official *millet* under the Ottoman administration and also to embody a typical way of life and values in Islamic society at least until the collapse of the Empire in World War I. They, however, became divided and weakened on their fragile power base with the decline of the Empire itself in the face of the European intervention⁽⁹⁾.

Gat describes the Sephardi community in the 19th century as follows: ‘In the Sephardi community, there were big distinctions among different strata. Most of the rich and well-to-do in the Jewish community were Sephardim, but the humiliating poor and needy existed only in this community. The most important stratum was that of the rabbis who were distinguished from others by their special dress and acquired the highest respect from the community’s members. At the top of the strata stood the rabbis, below them were the merchants and well-to-do, and on the bottom lay the poor and widows’⁽¹⁰⁾.

The title of *Rishon le-Tziyon* is said to have dated back to the latter half of the 17th century. The spiritual authority of the Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem whose title was called *Rishon le-Tziyon*, went beyond Palestine. Questions on *halakha* (Jewish law) and spiritual guidance were asked of him from all over the Diaspora communities. The man elected as *Rishon le-Tziyon*, had to be a great scholar who gained high reputation for his learning and his way of life, and also had to acquire experience in community administration before he attained a high position in the rabbinate. Every candidate for *Rishon le-Tziyon* had to go abroad as an emissary to the Diaspora before he got this position in order to encourage the Diaspora communities to send money to support *Yishuv* (*haluqa*), or to give them spiritual guidance⁽¹¹⁾.

All the Ottoman Jewish subjects belonged to the Jewish *millet*, whose chief was *Hakham Bashi* of Istanbul. He was authorized to represent Jewish communities in the Empire by the Sublime Porte. Every request to the Porte had to be passed through *Hakham Bashi* of Istanbul and all rabbis in various areas in the Empire were legally subject to him.

Such a situation changed with *Tanzimat* (Ottoman administrative reforms). The declaration of legal equality between Muslims and *Dhimmi*s (non-Muslims, that is, Christians and Jews) and also the raising of the legal status of Jerusalem in the administration, brought about the appointment of

an independent *Hakham Bashi* in Jerusalem, separated from the other areas in the Empire. After this independence, *Hakham Bashi* of Jerusalem who served as *Rishon le-Tziyon* concurrently, became the authorized representative of the Jewish community in Jerusalem. This administrative change concerning non-Muslims, especially the Jews in Jerusalem, was caused by the mounting activities of foreign consulates in Jerusalem, which encouraged the Ashkenazi Jews to be under the patronage of consulates and gave them their nationalities. The Porte intended to counterbalance the Sephardi subjects against foreign Ashkenazim⁽¹²⁾.

III. Separation of Kolelim from Sephardim

1. Relationship Between Sephardim and Ashkenazim

Sephardim were old inhabitants of Jerusalem, many of whom immigrated not only from the Iberian Peninsula, but from Asia Minor and Balkan areas during the Ottoman period, while Ashkenazim were new-comers from Russian territories of Eastern Europe. The former spoke Ladino (Spanish dialect written in Hebrew letters) as well as Arabic, while the latter spoke Yiddish (German dialect written in Hebrew letters), but ignorant of Arabic. Eli'av comments on the language problem for both of them, that 'Every Sephardi became accustomed to Arabic dialect of native inhabitants in Jerusalem by himself for a short time. This knowledge enabled them to have contact with non-Jews easily. Contrarily, it was difficult for Ashkenazim to learn Arabic which was completely foreign to them. It was indicated on many occasions that the reason for economic difficulties Ashkenazi immigrants faced was ignorance of the local tongue. But in time they acquired the basics of Arabic by themselves. So at first Arabic was used as the language for communication between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. In the latter half of the 19th century, however, Hebrew had become the language of communication between two communities a few decades before the coming of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1857-1922)'⁽¹³⁾.

Two communities were different from each other in many respects such as clothing, houses, way of life, version of prayer, also *halakha* and religious customs. Moreover the principal confrontation between them was economic one, namely, *Haluqa*, which was 'financial allowance for the support of the inhabitants of Eretz Israel from the contributions of the coreligionist in the

Diaspora', owing to the central and special position of Jerusalem in the religious and national consciousness of the Jewish people⁽¹⁴⁾.

In Jerusalem, Sephardim monopolized *Haluqa* money even in the face of the increasing Ashkenazi population in the 19th century. The discontent of Ashkenazim against Sephardim burst out with aspirations for establishing their own independent *Kolel* (plural; *Kolelim*), which was Ashkenazi communal organization according to country or region of origin⁽¹⁵⁾.

The organizational independence of Ashkenazi *Kolelim* began in the 1830s. The formation of many *Kolelim* was characteristic of Ashkenazim, not Sephardim⁽¹⁶⁾. Why did Ashkenazim desire to establish their own communal organizations?

Ashkenazim asked Sephardim to grant them two requests: The first request was the Ashkenazi right to receive *Haluqa* money sent from their own Ashkenazi communities in Europe. The second was the exemption of foreign Ashkenazim from Ottoman taxes under the protection of European consulates. But both of them were contrary to the Sephardi interests⁽¹⁷⁾.

The first demand originated from the difference of economic weight of *Haluqa* money in daily life between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Sephardim considered it to be used for communal purposes, that is, for support of scholars who learned Torah and Talmud and also for assistance of the poor and needy. The Sephardi establishment, including Rabbis, did not live on *Haluqa* money, but on other sources such as their own commercial activities.

On the contrary, as for Ashkenazim, *Haluqa* money was distributed equally to individual families according to number, even though they were rich. Most of the Ashkenazi immigrants lived heavily on *Haluqa* money. It meant that *Haluqa* money was more essential for Ashkenazim than for Sephardim. Ashkenazim, therefore, struggled for more *Haluqa* distribution in order to live in Jerusalem⁽¹⁸⁾.

In addition, special emissaries of Rabbis (*Shadar*) were sent to Ashkenazi communities by the Sephardi rabbinate so as to collect *Haluqa* money. Ashkenazim themselves were not authorized to collect money without permission of the Sephardi rabbinate⁽¹⁹⁾.

The second request, concerning taxes, resulted from the fact that Ashkenazim were not Ottoman subjects, but foreigners in Jerusalem under the protection of European consulates. On the religious level, they belonged, as the believers of Judaism, to the Sephardi rabbinate as the formal Ottoman

institution when they immigrated to Palestine. On the level of nationality, however, they were exempted from some of the Ottoman taxes as foreigners according to Capitulations. Sephardim, however, ordered Ashkenazim to pay the taxes on Jewish religious matters on many occasions, such as inheritance, burial, slaughter for Kosher meats and so on⁽²⁰⁾.

The momentum to encourage the communal independence of Perushim, many of whom had become the British protégés, was given by Lord Charles Napier (1796-1860), British admiral who in 1840-41 had driven Ibrahim Pasha out of Palestine. In 1856 he acquired *firman* (Sultan's degree) from the Sublime Porte to rebuild an old synagogue, the reconstruction of which had not been permitted for a long time, on a historical site called *Hurva* (the Ruin), where an Ashkenazi synagogue had existed in the 17th century. The reconstructed Ashkenazi synagogue became a communal center of Perushim in Jerusalem. In addition to this renewed center, Perushim succeeded in securing ever larger proportions of the *Haluqa* funds originating in Europe, thus giving them an independent financial base, thanks to Tzvi Hirsch Lehren (1784-1853), a wealthy man in Amsterdam⁽²¹⁾.

The communal conflict reached the peak with the establishment of the General Committee (*ha-Va'ad ha-Kelali*) of Ashkenazi *Kolelim* in 1867, whose purposes were: (1) to coordinate and manage problems common to all *Kolelim*, especially governmental taxes, (2) to give *Haluqa* to divorced families, and (3) to assist individuals of *Kolelim*. All *Kolelim*, including *Perushim* and *Hasidim*, took part in this united Committee⁽²²⁾.

Given this opportunity, Ashkenazim won *de facto* communal independence from Sephardim thanks to aid of European consulates in Jerusalem, even though many problems concerning religious matters still remained unsolved. By the 1860s, there were nineteen Ashkenazi *Kolelim* in Jerusalem, separated from Perushim⁽²³⁾.

2. Relationship Between Sephardim and 'Adot Mizrah

Jewish immigrants to Palestine from other Muslim countries increased after Muhammad 'Ali's rule in Palestine. Among those who immigrated were *Ma'aravim* (from Maghreb especially Morocco), *Gurjim* (from Georgia), *Parsim* (from Persia), *Bukharim* (from Bukhara or Central Asia), and *Teymanim* (from Yemen)⁽²⁴⁾ and so on. These communities were under the patronage of the Sephardi rabbinate after they immigrated.

Ma'aravim were the first Oriental community in Jerusalem to establish their own independent religious institution in 1860. Until then *Ma'aravim* had struggled against Sephardim for communal independence as *Kolel* for decades. Some *Ma'aravim* were Ottoman subjects, and others were of French or Spanish nationality. They were different from Sephardim in many respects of life and religious traditions. Their population reached 2,000 (about 7% of the total Jewish population and 25% of Sephardim in Jerusalem) in 1897⁽²⁵⁾.

The turning point for *Ma'aravim* was the immigration of Rabbi David Ben Sim'on (called *Davash*) from Rabbat in 1854. He was highly respected in the Jewish community of Morocco. When he immigrated to Palestine, many disciples followed him. This immigration made *Ma'aravim* rapidly increase in number in Jerusalem. Among the disciples were highly respectable *Hakhamim* (scholars) in the eyes of Sephardim. So it became easier for *Ma'aravim* to succeed in establishing independent *Kolel*. Rabbi Ben Sim'on had devoted himself to the Maghrebi community until he passed away in 1880, according to Barnai⁽²⁶⁾.

Ma'aravim and Sephardim reached the first agreement (called *peshet*, or "solution" at that time) in 1860, in which partial communal autonomy from the Sephardi rabbinate was ensured. They renewed the agreement in 1874 and 1884. In the agreement *Ma'aravim* confirmed the authority of the Sephardi rabbinate. They were entitled to get some percentage of *Haluqa* money from abroad, to send their own emissaries to Morocco with the Sephardi approval, and also to establish their own independent communal court (*Beyt Din*). In this sense the communal situation of *Ma'aravim* in relation to the Sephardi rabbinate was similar to that of Ashkenazim⁽²⁷⁾.

The second community to establish their own *Kolel* in 'Adot Mizrah was the Georgian community. Following the Moroccan precedent, *Gurjim* became partially independent of Sephardim in 1863⁽²⁸⁾.

The Persian and Yemenite communities were similar to each other in composition of new immigrants. There were many poor people with a large family in both communities. They, therefore, strongly blamed the Sephardi rabbinate for not fulfilling their duty toward 'Adot Mizrah, insisting that the Sephardi rabbinate did not take care of the poor and needy well, but it consumed the money sent from the native lands of Persia and Yemen for Sephardi own purposes.

Persian immigrants increased especially after the 1890s. Their number

reached 1,200 in 1909. But many of them lived in starvation in tinned huts. Rafa'el Hayim ha-Kohen (1883-1954) from Shiraz initiated the establishment of a society for the Persian community, *Hevrat Ohevei Tziyon le-'Edat Yehudei Pars be-Yerushalaym*, in 1898. This society helped poor Persian immigrants in social and educational affairs. *Hevrat Ohevei Tziyon* had to negotiate with the Persian consulate in Jerusalem on the matter of heavy passport tax, and always faced the Ottoman orders to be deported due to their Persian nationality. Persians did not succeed in being independent of Sephardim until the First World War in spite of *Hevrat Ohevei Tziyon's* efforts⁽²⁹⁾.

As for the Yemenite Jews, they immigrated *en masse* from San'a to Palestine in 1882 with their leader Rabbi Shalom Alshaykh (1859?-1944). The Yemenite population in Jerusalem reached 450 in 1885 and then 2,500 in 1908. They also lived a miserably poor life in the Holy Land when they immigrated. But Israel Frumkin (1850-1914), editor of Hebrew newspaper *ha-Vatzelet*, initiated the establishment of a charitable society *Ezrat Nidhim* in order to settle poor Yemenites in Silwan (Shiloah) near the old city of Jerusalem⁽³⁰⁾.

The Yemenite Jews as Ottoman subjects were confronted with the Sephardi rabbinate on many occasions especially on economic problems such as the *Haluqa* distribution and the heavy hurden of *Babal 'Askari* (tax for release from military service as non-Muslims, imposed by the Ottoman authorities). They did not, however, succeed in being separated from the Sephardi rabbinate completely⁽³¹⁾.

In contrast to the poor Persian and Yemenite communities, the Bukharan Jewish community was relatively rich thanks to the Russian rule in Bukhara during the second half of the 19th century, and was also on good terms with the Sephardi rabbinate. The Bukharans made a large donation to the Sephardi rabbinate and even accepted the Sephardi religious rites through the Sephardi emissaries in Bukhara. The Sephardi rabbinate often sent its emissaries to Bukhara after the 1880s in order to collect *Haluqa* money there. Both of them, therefore, cooperated with each other thereafter⁽³²⁾.

A relatively large number of the Bukharan Jews reached Jerusalem in 1871 after the Russian conquest. The Russian rule of Central Asia enabled the Bukharan Jews to immigrate to Palestine by sea through Odessa on the Black Sea. Moreover, *Hovevei-Tziyon* (Lovers of Zion) movement of the Russian Jews encouraged more immigration of the Bukharan Jews to Palestine

in the 1880s and 1890s. The Bukharans established their own quarter outside the old city of Jerusalem, though the population was not so large. In 1891 the Bukharan population in Jerusalem was 500, and then reached 917 in 1913⁽³³⁾.

The mutual cooperation between the Bukharan and Sephardi Jews was halted owing to the inner strife in the Sephardi community over the office of *Hakham Bashi* of Jerusalem. In 1912 the Bukharan Jews established their own religious institutions, while they continued to consider the Sephardi *Hakham Bashi* to be the official religious representative of their own community⁽³⁴⁾.

IV. The Sephardi Inner Strife and the End of its Hegemony

The Sephardi community was split due to the internal strife over the post of *Hakham Bashi* after Ya'acov Sha'ul Elyashar (called *Yissa Berakha*, 1817-1906) passed away in 1906. The Chief Rabbi Elyashar, learned in the Torah and Talmud, succeeded as *Hakham Bashi* in 1893 from his father in law, Rapha'el Meir Panigel (1804-1893). Elyashar was respected by both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and even by heads of the other communities⁽³⁵⁾.

After Elyashar's death, the stiff struggle for the office of *Hakham Bashi* began in the Sephardi community and had intermittently continued until 1921 when the Council of the Chief Rabbinate for Eretz-Israel (*Mo'etzet ha-Rabanut ha-Reshit le-Eretz-Yisra'el*) was established under the British mandate⁽³⁶⁾.

Shar'abi describes the inner strife as follows: 'The severe and continual strife, which erupted for the office (of *Hakham Bashi*) in the Sephardi community, deviated from inner communal nature and called forth repercussions among all circles of *Yishuv* and also abroad. In the discord were involved all sections of *Yishuv*, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, entrepreneurs and rabbis, the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul, *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and *Ezra* society, and also consulates. Local newspapers also played active roles in inflaming the discord. There were no other stormier strifes in *Yishuv* than this strife'⁽³⁷⁾.

The Sephardi community was polarized into two groups contesting the office of *Hakham Bashi*. The first group was the supporters of Rabbi Hayim Moshe Elyashar (called *Ham'a*, 1845-1924), the eldest son of the late Chief

Rabbi Ya'akov Elyashar. Rabbi Hayim Elyashar was one of the famous scholars and known as a businessman. The other group was the supporters of Rabbi Ya'akov Meir (1856–1939), one of the Sephardi leaders close to the Zionist movement. He was familiar with many foreign languages, had broad knowledge, and also represented the enlightened trend to spread Hebrew as the spoken language among Jews in the Sephardi Community⁽³⁸⁾.

In other words, two camps were divided between the conservatives and the opponents in the existing system. The conservative camp made the best endeavors to maintain *status quo* in the Sephardi community. Rabbi Elyashar was a candidate of the conservative camp which reflected the interests of the well-to-do and the establishment people (*Anasei ha-Mimsad*) in the Sephardi community. They were afraid of any change of communal organizations. Because organizational changes would deprive them of economic profits from *Haluqa* money and their control over the community leadership. Among the supporters were traditional Rabbis and the Sephardi Council such as Rabbi Yitzhaq Ashkenazi (1859–1916) and also Hayim Aharon Valero (1845–1923), an influential Sephardi banker and entrepreneur⁽³⁹⁾.

In contrast, the opponents pursued modernization and organizational changes of the Sephardi community. This camp was represented by Rabbi Meir. *Maskilim* (enlightened intellectuals) and the Sephardi masses exploited by the Sephardi traditional establishment, supported Rabbi Meir. Also 'Adot Mizrah (Oriental communities), such as Yemenites, Moroccans, Persians, Bukharans and also *Halebim* (from Aleppo or Halab in Syria) supported him, expecting that a reshuffle in the Sephardi leadership would bring about some change of the allocation of *Haluqa* money and the Sephardi attitude toward 'Adot Mizrah. In fact, Rabbi Meir agreed with the Yemenite Jews on the establishment of Yemenite *Kolel* independent of the Sephardi rabbinate in exchange for their votes for him in the election of *Hakham Bashi*. Among the supporters of Rabbi Meir was a Sephardi Zionist Avraham Albert 'Antebi (1869–1918), born in Damascus, representative of *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and *Jewish Colonization Association* (*I. C. A.*) in Jerusalem. He played an intermediate role between Zionists and the Sublime Porte later⁽⁴⁰⁾.

In September 1906, the first and sole election of *Hakham Bashi* in the Sephardi history of Jerusalem was held according to Ottoman law. Rabbi Meir defeated Rabbi Elyashar in the election. Rabbi Meir was elected

Hakham Bashi of Jerusalem by an overwhelming majority of 80 voters in the General Committee (*ha-Va'ad ha-Kelali*) of the Sephardi rabbinate. The result, however, had to be approved by the Chief Rabbi in Istanbul and the Porte. The conservatives and its opponents sent the petitions justifying their own claims to Rabbi Moshe Levi, the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire or *Hakham Bashi* in Istanbul. Consequently the Chief Rabbi decided, acknowledging the claim of the defeated conservatives, that the election itself was invalid⁽⁴¹⁾.

The reason was that Ashkenazim (Perushim and Hasidim), the majority of *Yishuv*, did not take part in the election of *Hakham Bashi* in Jerusalem. The conservative Ashkenazi communities had been recognized as *de facto* independent *kolelim*, but continued to be *de jure* subordinate to the Sephardi rabbinate before the Ottoman authorities. In addition, political considerations were reflected in the decision, because Rabbi Meir had close and intimate relationship not only with the Zionist leadership, but with foreign consulates through his supporter 'Antabi, who was denounced as a 'traitor against the Empire' by the conservatives⁽⁴²⁾.

The new Ottoman *Mutasarrif* (governor) of Jerusalem, 'Ali Ekrem Bey, reached Jerusalem in December 1906, with the official instruction of *Hakham Bashi* in Istanbul. Rabbi Meir was forced to leave his office and then he was sent to Salonika as *Hakham Bashi* there⁽⁴³⁾.

The internal strife continued even after the dismissal of Rabbi Meir. The Chief Rabbi of Istanbul appointed Rabbi Eliyahu Moshe Panigel (1850–1919) as temporary acting *Hakham Bashi*. He was supported by the Sephardi conservatives and Ashkenazi communities. Rabbi Panigel tried to weaken the Rabbi Meir camp. He was said to carry out reprisal against the Yemenite Jews who supported Rabbi Meir by imposing upon them heavy *Badal* 'Askari. He also attached more importance to the *Ezra* Society of the German Jews than to the French Jews' *Alliance*, which provided the Rabbi Meir camp with their basis in the secular educational field among the Sephardi Jews. These maneuvers inflamed the Rabbi Meir camp with rage⁽⁴⁴⁾.

A change in the situation occurred with the Young Turks' revolution in Istanbul in 1908. The Chief Rabbi Moshe Levi was relieved as *Hakham Bashi* of the Empire. Correspondingly Rabbi Panigel was also relieved as *Hakham Bashi* in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hayim Nahum (1872–1960) was appointed as new *Hakham Bashi* of Istanbul. The opponents succeeded in gaining the

office of *Hakham Bashi* of Jerusalem. But this led only to repeated inner conflicts⁽⁴⁵⁾.

In 1911, Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Franco (1837–1918) from Rhodes, entered Jerusalem as an elder arbitrator between the two camps. Rabbi Franco had retired from *Hakham Bashi* in Rhodes owing to his old age. He reluctantly accepted the office in Jerusalem so that a recurrence of the inner strife would be prevented. He was the sole and last *Hakham Bashi* appointed formally by *Firman* since the death of Rabbi Elyashar in 1906. In spite of his efforts to mediate between the two camps, Rabbi Franco failed in calming the internal strife. After the First World War broke out in 1914, he had to concentrate on working for *Yishuv* in order to collect money for relief of Jewish families whose heads were enlisted in the Ottoman army. Finally he retired in 1915. Rabbi Nissim Danon (1874–1930) had held the acting *Hakham Bakshi* until the end of the Ottoman Empire without any real authority, with only the honorary title of *Rishon le-Tziyon*⁽⁴⁶⁾.

V. Conclusion

The traditional Sephardi leadership could not adapt themselves to the changing circumstances from the late Ottoman period to the British rule after the First World War. Under the British rule, secular Political and Socialist Zionists occupied the central and dominant positions in the Jewish community in Palestine. *Old Yishuv* and *New Yishuv* under the Ottoman *ancien régime* was unified into the Knesset Israel, under which the unified rabbinate was established with two Chief Rabbis. Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaq Kook (1865–1935) was appointed as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi without any difficulty, while it was hard to appoint the Sephardi Chief Rabbi due to the prolonged inner strife. Finally Rabbi Ya'acov Meir, Zionist-oriented opponent to the traditional Sephardi leadership and *Hakham Bashi* of Salonika, was appointed as the first Sephardi chief Rabbi in 1922⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The exclusive hegemony of the Sephardi rabbinate over *Yishuv* was finally lost with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, while the rising secular and modernized Political and Socialist Zionists, namely, *New Yishuv*, had defeated not only the Sephardi hegemony, but also Ashkenazi *Old Yishuv* in Palestine with political and strategic alliance with the British Empire.

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Note

(1) Avraham Hayim, researcher of Misgav Yerushalayim, discusses extensively on the Sephardi community under the British mandate. For example, see Avraham Hayim, "ha-Yehasim beyn ha-Manhaga ha-Sefaradit be-Yerushalayim le-beyn Qehilot Yehudiyot ba-Mizrah ha-Tikhon beyn Shetei Milhamot ha-'Olam", *Shevet va-'Am*, Vol. 8, April 1978, pp. 68–88; Idem, "Hit'irgenut Politit shel Sefaradim be-Yerushalayim ba-Mahatzit ha-Sheniya shel Shenot ha-Sheloshim", *Shevet va-'Am*, Vol. 9, September 1980, pp. 361–368; Idem, "ha-Sefaradim ve-Mosadot ha-Yishuv be-Shenot 1920–1925", *Pe'amim*, No. 21, 1984, pp. 83–112.

(2) Jeff Halper, *Between Redemption and Revival: The Jewish Yishuv of Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991, p. 69.

(3) Rahel Shar'abi, *ha-Yishuv ha-Sefaradi be-Yerushalayim: be-Shilhei ha-Tequfa ha-'Otomanit*, Jerusalem: Mishrad ha-Bitahon, 1989, pp. 3–4.

(4) On the early stage of the Sephardi settlement in Palestine, see Itzhaq Ben-Tzvi, *Eretz Yisra'el ve-Yishuvah: be-Yemei ha-Silton ha-'Otomanit*, Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1975.

(5) Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957, p. 12.

(6) Ben-Tziyon Gat, *ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Eretz-Yisra'el, 1840–1881*, reprint edition, Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1973, pp. 21–22.

(7) On the dispute of New and Old Yishuv, there were many works. For example, see the special debate on this theme in *Cathedra*, No. 12, July 1979, pp. 3–46. *Cathedra* is the Hebrew magazine on history of Eretz-Israel, published by Yad Ben-Zvi in Jerusalem. Also see the special topic of *New Historical Approaches to the Old Yishuv* in the English edition of *The Jerusalem Chathedra*, No. 1, 1981, pp. 214–245.

(8) Halper, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

(9) It worth while indicating that Israeli researchers tend to describe the Sephardi society as 'stagnant and backward', perhaps against the background of traditional Orientalism on Islamic societies. Bartal describes the Sephardi society as follows; 'The Sephardi community was not as strongly polarized in terms of "old" and "new", and there was no fundamental difference between that community in the Palestine of 1840 and 1914'. Israel Bartal, "'Old Yishuv" and "New Yishuv": Image and Reality", *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, No. 1, 1981, p. 228.

(10) Gat, *op. cit.* pp. 22–23.

(11) Mordekhai Eli'av, *Eretz-Yisra'el ve-Yishuv be-Me'a ha-19, 1777–1917*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1978, p. 144. Concerning a brief history and function of *Rishon le-Tziyon*, see Avraham Almaliyah, "'ha-Rishonim le-Tziyon' be-Yerushalayim", *Otzar Yehudei Sefarad le-Heqer Toldot Yehudei Sefarad ve-Tarbutem*, Vol. 3, 1960, pp. 60–76; Ya'akov Barnai, "Ma'amadah shel 'ha-Rabanut ha-Kolelet' be-Yerushalayim ba-Tequfa ha-'Otomanit", *Cathedra*, No. 13, October 1979, pp. 47–69.

(12) *ibid.*, pp. 145–146. The name, term in office and birth places of *Hakham Bashi* from 1842 until the inner strife are as follows: Avraham Gagin (1842–48, Istan-

bul), Yitzhaq Qovo (1848-54, Jerusalem), Hayim Abul'afiya (1854-61, Tiberias), Hayim Hazan (1861-69, Izmir), Avraham Ashkenazi (1869-80, Larista, Greece), Rapha'el Panigel (1880-1893, Tatar-Pazardzhik, Bulgaria), Ya'aqov Eliyashar (1893-1906, Safad), Elihahu Panigel (1907-21, Jerusalem), A. Hayim (ed.), *Te'udot min ha-Osef shel Eliyahu Elyashar*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1971, p. 18. On biographies of *Hakham Bashi*, see Y. Shavit et al (eds.), *Leqsiqon he-Ishim shel Eretz-Yisra'el 1799-1948*, Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1983; M. D. Ga'on, *Yehudei ha-Mizrah be-Eretz Yisra'el: Toltot Rabim, ve-Gedolei ha-Uma, Hakhamim, Soferim, ve-'Asqanei Tzibur, Holemim, ve-Lowamim le-Ra'yon Sivat Tziyon ve-Yishuv ha-Aretz*, Vol. 2, the private edition, Jerusalem, 1937.

(13) Eli'av, *op. cit.*, pp. 156.

(14) "Halukka", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 7, pp. 1207-1216. On *Haluqa* in general, see Meir M. Rotschild, "*he-Haluqa: ka-Bituy le-Yehas-ah shel Yahadut ha-Gola la-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Eretz-Yisra'el be-shenim 1810-1860*", Jerusalem: Reuben Mas, 1986.

(15) On *Kolelim*, see Gat, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-125; Eli'av, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-135 Halper, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

(16) Ashkenazi *Kolelim* were as follow . (1) *Perushi Kolelim; Kolel Hod* (in 1830 , Holland and German), *Kolel Warsaw* (in 1845), *Kolel Shomrei ha-Shomot* (in 1858, from Hungary), *Kolel Minsk* (in 1856), *Kolel Lomza* (in 1856), *Kolel Slonim* (in 1880), (2) *Hasidi Kolelim; Kolel Vohalyn* (from the area between Galicia, Lithuania and the Ukraine), *Kolel Habad* (from Belorussia), *Kolel Hasidei Ostoriya ve-Galitzitya* (from Austria and Galicia), *Kolel Qarlin* (from Karlin), *Kolel Bessarabia*, *Kolel Romoniya*, Gat, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-125.

(17) Yehoshua Kaniel, "Ma'avaqim Irguniyim ve-Kalkaliyim beyn ha-'Adot be-Yerushalaym be-Me'a ha-19", in M. Eli'av (ed.) *Peraqim be-Toldot ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Yerushalaym*, Vo. 2, 1976, p. 102.

(18) Gat, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-109.

(19) *ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

(20) Kaniel, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-123.

(21) Halper, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-79.

(22) Gat, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

(23) Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century: The Old City*, Jerusalem. Ben Zvi Institute, 1984, p. 294.

(24) Rahel Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut 'Adot ha-Mizrah me-ha-'Eda ha-Sefaradit 1860-1914", *Pe'amim*, No. 21, 1984, pp. 31-49. Also see Shar'abi, *ha-Yishuv*, pp. 82-102.

(25) Ya'acov Barnai, "ha-'Eda ha-Ma'aravit be-Yerushalaym be-Me'a ha-19", in Shalom Bar-Ashar and Aharon Mamen (eds.), *Yehudei Tzefon-Afrika ve-Eretz-Yisra'el me-'Aliyat Rav Hayim ben 'Attar 'ad Yemei-nu (1741-1891): Tziyonut, 'Aliya ve-Hitya-shevit*, Tel Aviv: Tenu'at Ra'yonit shel Yotzei Afrika, n. d., p. 91.

(26) *ibid.*, p. 94.

(27) Sa'ul Ziv, "Te'udot Hadashot le-Toldot Qehilat ha-Ma'aravim be-Yerushalaym", in Eli'av (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128; Barnai, "ha-'Eda...", p. 97; Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut...", p. 32.

(28) Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut...", pp. 34-36.

(29) *ibid.* pp. 36-39.

(30) *ibid.* pp. 41-45. On the Yemenite community in Jerusalem, there were many work by Yemenite researchers such as Yehuda Nini and Yosef Tobi. The most recent and comprehensive study is Daryan's. See Nitza Daruyan, *Be-eyn Marvad Qesamim: 'Olei Teyman be-Eretz-Yisra'e 1881-1914*, Jerusalem: Makhon Ben Tzvi, 1981,

pp. 19–79.

(31) Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut...", pp. 44–45.

(32) *ibid.*, pp. 39–41. On thirty-nine Sephardi emissaries to Bukhara, see Avraham Rabin, "Shelhei Eretz-Yisra'el be-Bukhara, 1881–1914", *Pe'amim*, No. 35, 1988, pp. 139–155.

(33) Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut...", p. 39. On 'Aliya of the Bukharan Jews, see Giora Pozailov, "'Aliyat Yahudei Bukhara le-Eretz-Yisra'el ve-ha-Hityashevotem bah 'ad Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Rishona", *Pe'amim*, No. 35, 1988, pp. 121–138. Also there is a monograph on the Bukharan Jews and their quarter, see Darur Varman, *ha-Bukharim ve-Shekhunatam be-Yerushalaym*, Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1991, pp. 9–17.

(34) Shar'abi, "Hitbadelut...", p. 41.

(35) On *Yissa*, see Ga'on, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–68.

(36) Hayim, "ha-Sepharadim...", pp. 102–108.

(37) Shar'abi, *ha-Yishuv...*, p. 33.

(38) Avraham Hayim, "ha-Hakham-Bashi shel Qushta ve-'Milhemet ha-Rabanut' be-Yerushalaym", *Pe'amim*, No. 12, 1982, pp. 105–108.

(39) Shar'abi, *ha-Yishuv...*, p. 34.

(40) On Albert 'Antebi, see M. Laskier, "Avraham Albert 'Antebi: Peraqim be-Po'elo be-Shenot 1897–1914", *Pe'amim*, No. 21, 1984, pp. 50–67.

(41) Shar'abi, *ha-Yishuv...*, pp. 36–39.

(42) *ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

(43) *ibid.*, p. 39.

(44) *ibid.*, pp. 39–47.

(45) *ibid.*, p. 47.

(46) *ibid.*, pp. 52–54.

(47) Hayim, "ha-Hakham-Bashi...", p. 83.