

Prof. Ruth Kark and Prof. Joseph B. Glass

The Role of Sephardi and Mizrahi Elite Families in Landscape Development of Eretz Israel in the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods (1800-1948):
A Genealogical and Social Networking Approach

Final Report
(February 2011)

Introduction

With the support of the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center, we have completed two years of data collection, organization and analysis of material relating to two Sephardi elite families in Jaffa – the Chlouches and the Moyals.

The traditional historiography of Eretz Israel prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 marginalized the role of the Sephardi and Mizrahi economic, social, and religious elite families in the transformation of the landscape. Over the past 20 years we have conducted longitudinal in-depth studies of a number of Sephardi elite families (Amzalak, Valero, and Navon), with special attention paid to reconstructing their family histories and social networks, in order to understand their roles in the modernization of the landscape. These studies have brought to light numerous insights into the development of the urban and rural landscapes as well as the development of the transportation system and economic activities (banking, local and international commerce). They also provided insight to their role in the leadership of their communities and the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Israel, and to cultural and social change. However, these families represent only a small portion of the urban Sephardi and Mizrahi elite families who were active prior to 1948 and contributed to the up-building of Eretz Israel.

The current in-depth research on the Chlouche and Moyal families in Jaffa has been successful in expanding the coverage of the Sephardi elite and adds to the understanding of the specific family units and their patterns of inter- and intra-generational relations and activities. This result came from the development of a clearer overview that spans a hundred years under Ottoman and British rule and the detailed study of specific activities and aspects of their lives.

Data Collection

This type of research is extremely labour intensive and requires the collection of material (with focus on primary archival sources), from private collections and public archives in Israel and abroad, the cataloguing and organization of the information, and in the end its analysis. Not only was the material spread around

the globe, it is written in several languages (Hebrew, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, French, Spanish, English, and more). Thus, in order to conduct the research on a larger group of Sephardi elite families, it was necessary to engage a research assistant to facilitate the collection and organization of the material and in certain cases its translation. Additional costs included the purchase of copies of archival material, and expenses in order to collect material located outside of Jerusalem and abroad.

There was a wealth of material collected from archives in Israel and Turkey. Of special note were documents dealing with Yosef Moyal from 1889-1900. These documents from the Ottoman Prime Minister's office and originally written in Ottoman Turkish provide insight into his tense relationship with elements of the local Arab elite.

Furthermore, the recent digitalization of newspapers in Hebrew and other languages that were published in Palestine has allowed for the easier collection of this type of data. This type of material allowed for a greater understanding of these two families within the local Jewish and non-Jewish social, economic, and political milieu.

We were unable to conduct interviews with older family members who recall aspects of the family history, having had personal contact with earlier generations.

Analysis

Based on our experience investigating Sephardi and Mizrahi elite families, a research approach and methodology has been developed that emphasizes the importance of the inter-generational relations within these families as well as the social networks that facilitated the activities of these families. In the process, family genealogies were constructed with special attention being paid to the role of marriage in inter-communal relations.

Results

The research project has produced a number of concrete results and has laid down the ground work for the analysis of additional questions relating to the Moyal and Chlouche families. The main focus of our analysis was the inter- and intra-generational family relations and their elite role of these families in local society, both Jewish and non-Jewish. It also looked at these families' ascent into the local Ottoman elite and their subsequent decline. Two concrete results that are being prepared for publication are described below. We are considering additional areas of focus and with them additional publications. The areas that we are continuing to investigate and analyze are the influences of the respective families on other spheres of activity such as the local landscape and regional economy.

1. Family biographies

a. The Chlouches

We will briefly outline a few outstanding family members from Chlouches and Moyals and their diverse activities. The founder of the Chlouche family dynasty, Avraham was born in Oran, Algeria in 1812. Having succeeded in his business, he brought his family to Haifa in 1839 but the following year he took permanent residence in Jaffa, a city which was more conducive to trade. His son, Aharon, took up trading, forging precious metals and jewellery production. He was able to invest his earnings in real estate together with other Jaffa merchants and later developed neighbourhoods such as Neve Tzedek, Neve Shalom, and Mahane Yehuda. His son, Yosef Eliyahu, born in 1870, married Frecha Simha Moyal, the daughter of the well-known merchant Avraham Moyal. Yosef Eliyahu stood out as an entrepreneur who ventured into innovative industrial and commercial enterprises. In 1885, the Chlouche brothers (Yosef Eliyahu and Avraham Haim) established a tile factory in Jaffa. Another son, Yaakov, became the treasurer of the Anglo-Palestine Bank.

The role of women in the Chlouche family changed over the generations. During the first two generations, women continued their traditional roles and remained mainly within the confines of their household and family network. They enjoyed the luxuries that came with their status and wealth. The later generations of women were given opportunities in education and attended primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions. These women also were given great opportunities outside the home and some pursued full-time employment and careers.

As indicated, the family started in the trade of precious metals and quickly diversified into real estate and land development. Yosef Eliyahu looked for new economic opportunities in a number of industrial and manufacturing fields and in the end he and his brothers specialized in the production of tiles for building construction. Their economic success also afforded them leadership roles in the local Jewish community. Individuals in the third and subsequent generations branched out into white collar professions and international trade. Some continued to take an active role in the local social and political life. In all, the Chlouches played an important role in the land purchase and development, as well as construction in the Jaffa and Tel Aviv areas.

b. The Moyals

The Moyal family, originally from Morocco and descendants of Jews exiled from Spain in the late fifteenth century, settled in Jaffa in the mid-nineteenth century and made several significant contributions. Aharon Moyal and his sons Shalom and Eliyahu were some of the early settlers who helped shape modern Jaffa

through real estate and land development. Josef Moyal served as the Vice Consul for Iran and Spain. He was also granted an honorific title by Sultan Abdul Hamid II for his help building Jaffa's clock tower at the start of the twentieth century. David Moyal was born in Jaffa in 1880 and became one of the first Jewish lawyers in Tel Aviv after returning from his studies in Beirut. Shmuel Moyal was a teacher who established a modern school in Jaffa. In 1894 a medical student, Simon Moyal, married in Jaffa Esther Lazari who was born in Beirut in 1873.. She helped to establish a women's organization in Jaffa in 1909. From 1913 she and her husband edited the Arabic periodical "Sawt al-Uthmaniyya" ('The Ottoman Voice '). Shimon Moyal, sat on Jaffa's city council and translated the Talmud into Arabic.

The earlier generations of the Moyal family were engaged in real estate speculation and land development. This was partially contingent upon their good relationship with Arab landowners and the local regime. Josef Moyal's consular roles elevated his family's status and facilitated their access to positions of power. The third generation received western educations with many of them studying abroad. They worked in "white-collar" professions ,while some still engaged in land transactions. Some of the Moyals found common ground with the local population and facilitated Jewish-Arab relations. They played an important role in the land purchase and development in the Jaffa and Tel Aviv areas.

The construction of the family' trees and the elaboration a more in-depth understanding of the families' genealogies have laid the foundations for a comparison between the Sephardi economic elites of Jerusalem and Jaffa. The results are being written up in the form of an academic article, which will compare the elite families' patterns of economic, social, communal, and political activities in the two cities. Emphasis will be placed on mapping these patterns within their respective networks.

2. Relations of the families with Arab Society

Within the discussion of Jews living under Islamic rule there have been different approaches to the relationship with and the treatment of the Jewish minority. Certain Jewish scholars promulgated the notion of Judeo-Islamic harmony in contrast to Judeo-Christian discord. It was appropriated by Arab historians and certain Western scholars who emphasize an idealized relationship of inter-communal peace and friendship prior to the rise of Zionism and the threat it posed to Arab Muslim rights in Palestine. A revisionist trend developed creating a antithesis of Arab-Islamic persecution of non-Muslims. In time, a more balanced approach developed among scholars led by Bernard Lewis and Norman Stillman.

The study of the Jewish community in Palestine under Ottoman rule has, for the most part, emphasized internal community development. Many Israeli historians

have portrayed the Ottoman regime as being restrictive, particularly in relation to land purchase and immigration, ineffective in bringing about order and the rule of law, and corrupt. Certain Arab historians have viewed Ottoman rule in Palestine as being despotic and the main reason for the decline of the country's Arab population. Arab nationalist-secular historiography has pointed to the corruption of the Ottoman government as a factor in the success of the Zionist movement. Ottoman civil servants were seen as being corrupt and weakened through massive bribing by Jewish immigrants. Other schools of thought in Arab historiography have found merit in the Ottoman Empire, despite its shortcomings, as the protector of the Arab world from European imperialism.

Our earlier studies explored the issue of Sephardi and Arab relations through the lens of the Valero and Amzalak families. It took these two Sephardi elite families as representative of the larger Sephardi community, and placed them within the context of the Ottoman regime and in relation to the Arab majority. The results revealed a very dynamic and complicated relationship. Many members of the Sephardi elite worked, socialized, and lived with Ottoman bureaucrats and certain elements of the Arab population. There were instances of peace, harmony, and friendship between Sephardi Jews and Palestinian Arabs, as well as cases of antagonism and discord, all leading to multi-faceted and complex relationships that call for further investigation.

The results of the present research are currently being written up as an academic article, which will explore the dynamics of the Moyal and Chlouche families' relationships with sectors of Arab society. The material about the Moyals is based on primary sources that are detailed and until recently unknown. The material about the Chlouches is based on secondary sources. The information collected allows for the in depth study of the relationship of three generations of the Moyal family with the local Arab communities and the regime. The relationships include strong economic and social bonds with a unique effort at fostering Jewish-Arab coexistence and cooperation. The relationships also exhibited tensions and rivalries. The article will highlight recently translated documents from the Ottoman Prime Minister's office from the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. They bring to light tensions between elements of the Arab community and the Moyal family. In all, this avenue of investigation has been fruitful in understanding the relationship between Jewish elite families in Jaffa with various elements of the Arab population.

Acknowledgement

We would like to conclude by thanking the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center once again for its support in this project. The Institute has not only provided financial support but has also facilitated the dissemination of the preliminary results of our research with the larger academic community.

The research grant funding was primarily used for salaries for research assistance, and other research activities with 81 percent allocated to this purpose. The remaining funding facilitated the meeting of the researchers and allowed for the mapping of the research program. The funding supported our presentation of our preliminary results at the World Union of Jewish Studies Congress (Jerusalem, August 2009). We presented the paper "Jewish Genealogical Research and Historical-Geography of the Land of Israel: Lessons from the Study of the Sephardi Entrepreneurial Elite" in the session on "Jewish Genealogy." The Powerpoint presentation was made available to the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center and it has been uploaded on its website.