Baghdadi Jewish networks in Hashemite Iraq : Jewish transnationalism in the age of nationalism

Goldstein, S.R.

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Jewish Transnationalism in the Age of Nationalism

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Promotores:
Prof. dr. H.L. Murre-van den Berg (Universiteit Leiden/Radboud Universiteit)
Prof. dr. D.J. Schroeter (University of Minnesota)

Copromotor:
Dr. K.M.J. Sanchez (Universiteit Leiden)

Promotiecommissie:
Prof. dr. L.P.H.M. Buskens (Universiteit Leiden)
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Prof. dr. X. Luffin (Université libre de Bruxelles)
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On the cover: AIU Archives, Paris, undated – Dining room of the Entr'aide Scolaire Society (founded in 1928) at the Laura Kadoorie School in Baghdad. The students are eating a meal they have prepared themselves in the school kitchen. The photographe comes from the album "Ecoles de Bagdad 1864-1932", edited in June 1932 and prepared in recognition of fifty years of service from the Ecole Normale Orientale de Paris.

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Contents

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List of Abbreviations

Periodicals

AI	*Al-ʿAalam al-Isra'iili* (Beirut)
IM	Israel's Messengers (Shanghai)
IS	Israelight (Singapore)
JC	Jewish Chronicle (London)
JA	Jewish Advocate (Bombay)
JT	Jewish Tribune (Bombay)
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency (New York)

Archives

AIU	Alliance Israelite Universelle Archives, Paris.
AJA	Anglo-Jewish Association Archives, University of Southampton, Southampton.
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.
CO	Colonial Office, National Archives, Kew.
DM	ISEAS David Marshal Private Letters, Singapore National University, Singapore.
FO	Foreign Office, National Archives, Kew.
IJA	Iraqi Jewish Archives, Washington.
IOR	India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.
JDC	Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York and Jerusalem.
JWB	Jewish Welfare Board, Singapore.
KA	Kadoorie Family Archives, Hong Kong Heritage Project, Hong Kong.
SA	Sassoon Family Archives, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Other

EJIW	*Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*
YIVO	*The* YIVO *Encyclopedia of Eastern European Jewry*

Transliteration Notes

The transcription of commonly translated Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Hebrew words reflect common English language orthography (e.g. *haham bashi* not *ḥakham bāshī* or *hahambaṣı*). Less common words reflect the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* standard transliteration. For modern individuals with Hebrew or Arabic names who have their own way of rendering them in Latin script, their spellings will be followed (e.g., Sassoon Khadduri, not Sāsūn Khaḍḍūrī). Geographical names are given in their commonly used modern English form.

Introduction

Anwar Sha'ul (1904–1984), a Jew, was among the most renowned Arab writers in Iraq in the twentieth century. Much has been written about Sha'ul, considered the archetype of the Iraqi Jewish intellectual and a reflection of the Arabization of the Iraqi Jewish community. Rarely noted is that his maternal grandfather was Hermann Rosenfeld a Yiddish speaking Jewish tailor from Austria. Rosenfeld settled in Baghdad in the mid-nineteenth century, married a local Jewish woman, and became active in Jewish communal affairs working to open the first *Alliance Israélite Universelle* school in Baghdad in 1864.[1] Like his grandfather Sha'ul was active in Jewish communal affairs, serving as secretary of the lay council for the Jewish community of Baghdad from 1929 to 1938.[2] Iraqi Jewry is often considered unique because of their long history in Mesopotamia, their adoption of Modern Standard Arabic in the twentieth century and their close cultural and linguistic affinities to local Muslim and Christian communities, all themes which Sha'ul addressed in his writing. Sha'ul, the personification of the Arab Jew, through his family ties and his role as a member of the lay council was intricately linked to another important aspect in the modern history of the Iraqi Jewish community and their identity that has received little attention: the diverse transnational Jewish networks in which they participated.

This thesis studies Iraqi Jewry during the British Mandate and early years of the Iraqi State by analysing the importance of communal leadership, global Jewish solidarity movements, access to foreign Jewish periodicals and community organized secular education.[3] Central to my analysis is the role of Baghdadi Jews (those who associated their origins with Baghdad but did not necessarily reside inside Iraq); specifically, Baghdadi Jews who immigrated to the Indian sub-continent and South Asia in the mid-nineteenth century, founding Baghdadi 'satellite communities' that maintained close contact with Baghdad throughout their existence. I suggest that Jewish identity for Iraqi Jews globalized and secularized in the first half of the twentieth century due to the importance of transnational Jewish solidarity

1 Reuven Snir, "Sha'ul, Anwar," EJIW; Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis, 2007), 44.

2 Aline Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuals juif de Bagdad: Discours et Allegiances 1908–1951* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 301.

3 This period is often referred to as the Hashemite period, combining the periods of the Kingdom of Iraq under British Administration from 1921–1932, followed by the Independent Kingdom of Iraq that lasted from 1933–1958. Over 90% of the Jewish community left Iraq between 1949–1952 following the creation of the state of Israel.

movements and the establishment of Baghdadi satellite communities. As part of this globalization and secularization of Jewish identity in Iraq I consider the importance of a global multilingual Jewish public sphere for Iraqi Jewry which in many ways paralleled the emergent Arabic language Iraqi public sphere in which Iraqi Jews played a significant role.

This period in Iraqi Jewish history represents the height of Jewish participation in the Iraqi state, when Jews were active in the civil service, held high government posts and some Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals self-identified or were identified by others as Arabs. However, the position of Jews in Iraq became progressively more difficult in the 1930s and 1940s due to growing political instability and local outrage over Zionist activities in Palestine, ultimately leading to the mass immigration of over 100,000 Iraqi Jews in the period between 1949–1952.

In looking at global Jewish networks I consider Baghdadi Jewish participation in multiple public spheres, specifically the global Jewish public sphere and the local pluralist Iraqi public sphere. In using the term public sphere, I am referring to the idea of a space where private individuals could identify and discuss societal problems with the objective of taking action to mitigate these problems. For Iraq, this term is applied by Orit Bashkin in her work on pluralism and culture in the Hashemite period, drawing from the theory of Jürgen Habermas in relation to European bourgeois society.[4] In a similar manner, Abigail Green and Vincent Viane apply the term public sphere to global religious networks.[5] In both cases the public sphere refers to individual participation in salons, associations, societies, and periodicals with the aim of improving society. The emergence of a global Jewish public sphere is tied to the emergence of religious internationalism, defined by Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene as:

> "[A] configuration [that] drew upon traditional communal institutions and practices, while remaining distinct from them. It may be defined as a cluster of voluntary transnational organizations and representations crystallizing around international issues, in which both 'ordinary' believers and religious

4 Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 2–3.

5 Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene eds, *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah and Heleen Murre-van den Berg eds, *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

> specialists could serve as protagonists. Spurred on by developments such as revolutions, mass migration, colonial expansion, the spread of the nation-state model or the challenge of secular ideologies, the rise of religious internationals involved a double outward projection of religious energies: into modern society and into the global arena."[6]

The birth of Jewish internationalism is generally associated with the European Jewish response to the Damascus Affair, the 1840 blood libel in which leaders of the Jewish community in Damascus and the chief rabbi of the city were arrested and tortured on the pretext of having killed a Capuchin monk and his servant. As Jonathan Frankel demonstrates, this event and its coverage in the European Jewish press inspired an international Jewish mobilization as European Jews tried to pressure their governments to intercede in the plight of Damascene Jewry.[7] When these newspapers began reporting worldwide Jewish events, it planted the seed for modern Jewish civil society, the idea that global Jewry constituted a community linked by common interests and activities.[8] In particular, these events were of great concern to European Jewish elites who not only felt an obligation to help their co-religionists but to protect the already acquired rights of Jews in their home nations. Thus, these emancipated elites laid the foundations for modern international Jewish solidarity through the founding of philanthropic organizations dedicated to the plight of world Jewry both to aid their co-religionists and to reaffirm the political positions of Jews in Western European countries.

In this thesis, I tie the experience of Iraqi Jewry to the rise of Jewish internationalism in Europe by discussing their collaboration with foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations, European inspired secular Jewish education, and participation in the global Jewish print media. In Baghdad, the three most important organizations were the French *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) founded in 1860, the English *Anglo-Jewish Association* (AJA) founded in 1871, and the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* (JDC) founded in 1914. Whereas Jewish internationalism arose in the nineteenth century in the age of empire, this thesis primarily focuses on the position of Iraqi

6 Ibid, 1.

7 Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8 Abigail Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish Internationals", in *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*, eds. Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 58.

Jewry during the rise of Arab nationalism in the twentieth century, and therefore analyzes the legacy of Jewish internationalism for Iraqi Jewry. Jewish transnational networks refer to disparate Jewish communities exchanging and offering solidarity as national units within a framework of philanthropic organizations, societies, and periodicals. Within this context, solidarity movements to aid other national Jewish groups represented a new form of Jewish exchange predicated on national identities. This is in contrast to earlier periods where Jewish networks were predominantly organized around Jewish sub-groups (i.e. Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Moghrabi, Baghdadi).

In the Iraqi context there are important differences between Jewish internationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century Jewish solidarity networks were defined by Western European Jewry. In the twentieth century, although there remained a power differential, Iraqi Jews were not mere aid recipients but active players in shaping their community and members of the Baghdadi elite held important positions in the AIU and AJA. Ideologically, however, there is continuity between the two periods as transnational Jewish collaboration continued to be perceived by Iraqi Jewry and Western European Jewry as a successful strategy to improve and strengthen the position of Jews in Iraq as they were developing a national identity. It is this ideological and strategic continuity that engendered the long-term structural interconnectivity of these nationally organized Jewish groups.

As Abigail Green notes this framing of global Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth challenges the Zionist national narrative which sees the destiny of world Jewry and its reactions to nationalism, colonialism, and anti-Semitism within the context of a Jewish state.[9] During the vast majority of the period I am considering, I argue, the idea of a Jewish state was not perceived as inevitable and Zionism was one idea among many in these networks. An Iraqi Jew could be a part of a transnational Jewish network, support Zionism, and patriotism to Iraq at the same time. Identification with a global Jewish community was not necessarily perceived by Iraqi Jews to be in conflict with Jews as citizen of an Arab state, and thus personal or communal identification with the 'Iraqi Nation' and 'the Jewish people' was not mutually exclusive.

9 Abigail Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish Internationals", 58.

1. Scholarship on the Jews of Iraq

The majority of studies on the Jews of Iraq have been written within the context of exploring a community which ceased to exist due to the mass migration of Iraqi Jews, primarily to the state of Israel, between 1949–1951.[10] As such, much research on the Jews of Iraq is written from the perspective of Zionist and anti-Zionist ideologies. In broad terms, the Zionist school of thought tends to diminish the importance of Jewish participation in the Iraqi public sphere, perceiving migration to Israel as being driven by religious messianism and Zionist ideology closely connected to anti-Semitism and persecution in Iraq.[11] Whereas those who take an anti-Zionist approach focus on the high level of integration of Iraqi Jews, those who self-identified as Arabs, and the general Iraqi apathy towards Zionism. In this construction the mass migration of Iraqi Jews is the result of Zionist activity in Palestine and specifically Zionist propaganda (and possibly terrorism) in Iraq which caused the Jews to leave Iraq in panic.[12]

The experiences of Iraqi Jewry do not fit neatly into either a Zionist or anti-Zionist narrative, a point which Esther Meir-Glitzenstein concisely summarizes in the introduction to her monograph on the relations between the Jewish community in Iraq and the Zionist establishment in Israel/Palestine during the 1940s:

> "Both ideologies [Zionist and anti-Zionist] are biased, generalized and simplistic views that ignore the complexity of the various processes that operated in the Iraqi Jewish community, Iraqi society, and the Middle East in general. After all, the mass emigration from Iraq was just the culmination or conclusions of a series of developments that resulted from the modernization and westernization of the Middle East, the rise of Arab nation movements, and the Zionist-Arab conflict over Palestine."[13]

Meir-Glitzenstein's work on Zionist activity in Iraq during the 1940s demonstrates the complexity of the Iraqi Jewish community by contextualizing Zionism as one ideological option among Jews during this period. Furthermore Meir-Glitzenstein

10 Meir-Glitzenstein estimates that over 123,000 Jews left Iraq in this period leaving fewer than 10,000 Jews in the country. Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London: Routledge, 2004), xiv.

11 For example, Mordechai Ben Porat, *To Baghdad and Back*, (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1996).

12 For example, Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus* (London: Saqi, 2005); Ella Shohat 'The Invention of Judeo-Arabic', *Interventions* 19, no. 2 (2017): 153–200.

13 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, xv.

demonstrates that collaboration with Zionist groups was not driven by ideological conviction alone, but was also motivated by discontent with the communal leadership, and as a response to Iraqi political radicalism. As suggested by the above quote, the experiences of Iraqi Jewry are much broader than their responses to Zionism. In particular the intersection between participation in and identification with Iraqi and Jewish spheres is the subject of much current research and debate as scholars try to understand the experiences of Iraqi Jewry in the period between 1920–1951 beyond their relationship to Zionism and outside of the Zionist/anti-Zionist dichotomy.

1.1. *The 'Iraqi Orientation'*

Nissim Kazzaz's *The Jews of Iraq in the 20th Century* is one of the first critical studies of Iraqi Jewry to address the participation of Jews within the Iraqi state.[14] His study traces the experiences of Iraqi Jewry from the late Ottoman period until the mass exodus of the community. Kazzaz coined the term the 'Iraqi Orientation' to refer to Iraqi Jews embracing the idea of integration into Iraqi society for pragmatic reasons, specifically economic and political factors which were of particular relevance to the middle and upper classes. Kazzaz traces the beginning of the downfall of Iraqi Jews to anti-Jewish feelings from the local Muslim population due to the material and political success of the Iraqi Jewry and the growing trouble in Palestine. For Kazzaz, the Farhud, the 1941 anti-Jewish riots in Baghdad which left 181 Jews dead and millions of dollars of damage to Jewish business marked a turning point in the Iraqi Jewish experience. As a reaction to this, Kazzaz argues that many Jewish elites misguidedly hung onto the idea of the "Iraqi orientation" but that the middle class youth in Iraq became disillusioned and turned to Zionism or communism as alternative ideologies. Overall, Kazzaz frames the experiences of Iraqi Jews in the Hashemite period by their failure to be truly accepted as equals, stating that Arab nationalism and activity in Palestine made any true form of integration impossible.

Later studies have further contextualized Jewish participation within Iraqi society, regularly using the term "Iraqi orientation" to signify "the active patriotism adopted by some Jewish intellectuals," as Sasson Somekh states.[15] Reuven Snir's work on Iraqi Jewish intellectuals though agreeing with his characterization of the "Iraqi

14 Nissim Kazzaz, *The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi), 1991; Reuven Snir, "Kazzaz, "The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century"" [Book Review], *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 84, no. 4 (1994): 495–500.

15 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 43.

orientation" challenges Kazzaz by looking at their participation in Iraqi literary culture and the intellectual struggles felt by many Iraqi intellectuals who identified with both "Jewishness" and "Arabness".[16] Similarly, Lev Hakak's work on modern Hebrew creativity in Iraq provides examples of the ways Iraqi Jews engaged with modern Hebrew in Iraq not from the perspective of political ideology but from a perspective of cultural interest, religious devotion and transnational Jewish networks arguing that a large number of the community's members knew Hebrew with some having "mastered the language to a spectacular degree".[17] Thus, when considering the work of Snir and Hakak, it is already apparent that Iraqi Jews were engaged in both Arabic and Hebrew language spheres and as such had multiple cultural attachments.

1.2. *Participation in the Iraqi Public Sphere*

Two recent studies on the Jewish community of Baghdad dedicated to the Hashemite period are Orit Bashkin's *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* and Aline Schlaepfer's *Les intellectual juif de Baghdad. Discours et allegeances (1908–1951)*.[18] Both works build on the earlier work of Kazzaz, Snir, Hakak, and Meir-Glitzenstein to further show the nuanced ways Iraqi Jews were successful in their 'Iraqi orientation' even when faced with growing political radicalism. In *New Babylonians*, Bashkin maintains that the Jews of Baghdad, even those who did not refer to themselves as Arabs, began to practice a form of "Arab Jewishness" in the mandate period. Specifically, she states that Iraqi Jews "wrote in Arabic, read Arabic texts, interacted with fellow Muslims and Christian Arabs, and enjoyed Arab cinema, music, and theatre". Her argument is that due to a mixture of state policy, modern education, and technological advancements (by way of cinema and the publishing industry, for example), the Jewish community of Baghdad was culturally and socially more integrated into both local Iraqi and the nascent pan-Arab cultural sphere than in prior decades seeing themselves as part of an Iraqi civil society.[19] Furthermore, Bashkin demonstrates that even after the Farhud Iraqi Jewry con-

16 Reuven Snir. *Arabness, Jewishness, Zionism: A Clash of Identity in the Literature of Iraqi Jews* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005); Reuven Snir, *Who Needs Arab Jewish Identity: Interpellation, Exclusion, and Inessential Solidarities*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

17 Lev Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Creativity in Babylon, 1735–1950* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 15.

18 Orit Bashkin *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuals juif de Bagdad*.

19 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 2–3.

tinued to flourish, thus challenging part of Kazzaz's thesis, by demonstrating how Iraqi Jews continued to espouse a hybrid "Arab-Jewish" identity throughout the 1940s.

Schlaepfer's book focuses on the strategies Iraqi Jewish intellectuals employed in crafting a nationalist discourse and transmitting the idea of a pluralistic nationalist consciousness to their readers (both Jewish and non-Jewish). She writes about the Jewish authors and printers whose work helped to construct the inclusive nationalist Iraqi discourse of the period. In doing so, Schlaepfer's work aims to break the often-assumed dichotomy presented by Kazzaz that politically, Iraqi Jews either embraced communism or Zionism in the wake of political instability and growing anti-Jewish sentiment. Schlaepfer shows how Iraqi Jews were aware of the political precariousness of their position and as a consequence presented nuanced responses to political extremism from both the Iraqi left and right.[20] In Schlaepfer's work we see the conflicted position of Iraqi Jewish intellectuals beginning in the 1930s. As Schlaepfer demonstrates, many intellectuals in the face of political unrest rejected both Zionism and communism and tried to defend the idea of the pluralist middle ground.

As these works focus on Jewish participation within the Iraqi public sphere opposed to within Jewish networks they assign relatively little attention to the relationship between the Jews in Baghdad with Jewish groups outside of Iraq. In particular discussions on the role and influence of the satellite communities within the Jewish community in Baghdad generally falls outside of the main arguments in these works. Conversely numerous works on the satellite communities do not pay much attention to the relationship between Baghdad and the satellite communities. Thus, my project aims to fill a void in the research on Iraqi Jewry by focusing on the role on the satellite communities and other foreign Jewish actors, outside the sphere of Zionism, within Baghdad.

1.3. *Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920–1950)*

This thesis is born out of a larger research project considering minority participation in the Middle Eastern public sphere—*Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920–1950)*. The over-arching research question of the project being—how did non-Muslim communities in the Middle

20 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad*, 1–6.

East use language in re-defining their position in the newly emerging Arab states in the period between 1920 and 1950? The initial title for my project, as defined by the larger research project, was—*Hebrew and the Jewish community of Baghdad: Arab Jews?*[21] The objective was to analyze the importance of multilingualism in identity constructions in the wake of growing Zionism and Arab Nationalism among Iraqi Jews and to investigate the various alignments of religion and language in the Middle East vis-à-vis Arabic and Arab nationalism.

As I began to survey the existing literature in the early months of my research it quickly became apparent that on these questions new research by authors such as Snir and Bashkin in regard to Arabic and Hakak and Meir-Glitzenstein in regard to Hebrew addressed some of the questions surrounding multilingualism in identity constructions.[22] Taking their research as my starting point, new questions came to the fore in regard to the usage of English and French among Iraqi Jewry as a medium to cooperate with Jewish communities outside of Iraq. Almost every history on Iraqi Jewry I consulted made reference to the migration of Baghdadis to the Indian subcontinent and East Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth century, with a relatively narrow discussion emphasizing that the communities became progressively Anglicized with each generation.[23] Furthermore, studies on the Baghdadi satellite communities primarily focus on a single satellite community's experiences, rather than exploring parallel experiences of the satellite communities or Baghdad in regard to demography, language use, identity, and relationship to colonial powers.[24] As a consequence I became interested in how these communities functioned in relation to each other and to the mother community in Baghdad.

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21 Heleen Murre-van den Berg and Karène Sanchez, *Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920–1950)*, NWO project, 2012–2018.

22 *New Babylonians* was published in 2012, after the original project was written but before I began work on my thesis.

23 Kazzaz, *The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century*, 42–56; Nessim Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq: 3000 Years of History and Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 182–184; David Solomon Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (London: Simon Wallenberg, 1949), 203–216; Zvi Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 43–52.

24 For India, see Joan Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), and Ezekiel Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta* (North Quincy MA: The Christopher Publishing Company, 1975). For Singapore, see Joan Bieder *The Jews of Singapore* (Singapore: Suntree, 2007). For Burma, see Ruth Fredman Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007). For China, see Maisie J. Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Jewish Life in Shanghai*, (New York: University Press of American, 2003) and Chiara Betta "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai" in Modern Asian Studies 37, no. 4 (2003): 999–1023.

Another under researched topic was the role of foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), and American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in the Hashemite period. Although the activities of foreign Jewish groups were noted in almost every study, relatively little discussion was dedicated to the importance of long-term structural contacts between European and Iraqi Jewry and the ways these contacts could have influenced the larger Iraqi Jewish community. Furthermore, the wealthy elites of the satellites communities held important positions within the AJA and the JDC as well as remitting significant funds to support Jewish communal infrastructure in Baghdad. This engendered further questions on the triangular relationship between Baghdad, the satellite communities, and western Jewish philanthropic organizations. This early research led to the realization that these satellite communities were vital to understanding the influence of transnational Jewish networks to Iraqi Jewry and that Iraqi Jewry had multiple points of contact with foreign Jewish groups.

Further demonstrating the importance of Jewish transnational networks in Baghdad but from the perspective of religious practice is the work of Zvi Zohar in *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*.[25] Zohar cogently demonstrates the diverse transnational religious networks of the Baghdadi religious elites and the influence of these networks on Baghdadi religious responses to modernity. Zohar goes as far as to argue that from a religious perspective Baghdadis Jews began to situate themselves within Sephardic Jewry in the late nineteenth century.[26] Zohar's research on the transnational networks of the religious elites, further inspired me to research the importance of transnational networks to secular elites. Interestingly, as Maisie Meyer's work on the Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai demonstrates, Baghdadi Jews in the satellite communities self-identified as part of Sephardi Jewry, in certain contexts, in the twentieth century.[27] Therefore I was curious as to the ways the term Sephardic was used by secular Baghdadi Jews to situate themselves within global Jewry and the possible ways this identity construction was consistent with the Baghdadi rabbis' religious identification within the Sephardi *Halakhic* ethos, thus creating a synergy of identification with Sephardi Jewry.

As a result of this early research, this project studies Iraqi Jewry by looking at the diverse ways they collaborated and related to Jews outside of Iraq within a multilingual Jewish public sphere. My research questions the impact that diverse

25 Zvi Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, (London: Bloomsbury: 2013).

26 Ibid, 63–89.

27 Meyer, *From the Waters of Babylon to the Whangpoo*, 29.

transnational Jewish networks had on Iraqi Jewry during the Hashemite period. It is my hypothesis that Jewish identity secularized and delocalised in this period due to the influence of the satellite communities and transnational Jewish solidarity.

2. Methods & Sources

This thesis is based on research spanning three continents—Europe, North America, and Asia with documentation written in four languages English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew. I focus on correspondence between Jews in Iraq with Baghdadis abroad and with foreign Jewish organizations, to understand the nature of this collaboration and better understand the impact of these foreign groups in Baghdad. The limited number of official declarations by communal leaders has caused scholars to place greater emphasis on the works of intellectual elites whose cultural production was more prolific. A reason for the lack of attention to the informal writings of communal elites is that finding the surviving material is challenging. Within Iraq most private correspondence received by Jews was wilfully destroyed by its recipients in the 1940s over concern for personal security.[28]

Other documents were lost in the period between 1949–1952 during the mass exodus of Jews from Iraq. Additionally, censorship was an issue both in sending and receiving mail. The result is that in the period between 1933–1951 Iraqis Jews were extremely cautious in their correspondence. In the satellite communities these documents have, for the most part, been lost as well. The hot humid climate of the Indian sub-continent and East Asia, coupled with cheap paper were not conducive to preserving documents. Furthermore, WWII was a chaotic period for Baghdadis in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Rangoon, and much archival material was destroyed during the Japanese invasion. Finally, like in Iraq the majority of satellite communities dissolved in the early 1950s. With this uprooting countless private letters and documents were lost. Therefore, one cannot assume that lack of surviving documentation is due to a lack of correspondence.

The majority of new material I use is written in English and French opposed to Arabic and Hebrew. This was not my initial intention, but the outcome speaks to the importance of English and French as the transnational Jewish languages of communication between European and MENA Jewry during the first half of the twentieth

28 For example, Jews were imprisoned on suspicion of Zionist sympathies simply for writing to or receiving mail from Palestine. Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 187.

century. Ultimately, through the use of these sources I demonstrate the importance of English and French in the Jewish public sphere in this period. Tellingly my use of Hebrew documents is significantly more limited. Hebrew documents were generally limited to religious documentation and only occasionally personal correspondence. The Arabic documents I have used mostly relate to internal communal correspondence of the lay council, often relating to discussions surrounding fundraising and communal finance.

2.1. *Archives*

I have depended heavily on the archives of Jewish philanthropic organizations and the archives of the British Foreign Office. These archives are the perennial starting point for research on Iraqi Jewry as they provide almost a century of private correspondence, official reports, and annual budgets for the Jewish community. These archives are well catalogued and the documents are in good condition making them particularly accessible. As such, where scholars have cited archival documents or historic press which I have consulted I have cited their work as well as the actual documents.

The AIU archives, naturally, provide information on AIU schools in Iraq. However, these are the archives I have used the least, of the three philanthropic organizations studied. There are multiple reasons for this, all of which relate to the role of the AIU in the mandate period, which was narrowly focused on education in a few schools, compared to the broader role of the AJA, a topic I discuss at length in chapter 3. As such majority of the correspondence in the AIU, is between the foreign Jewish teachers or between the AJA and the AIU opposed to direct correspondence between the AIU and communal leadership. Conversely documents from the AJA and the JDC contain more correspondence directly with Iraqi Jews. Interestingly, many letters and were sent in triplicate to all three organizations, indicative of the multi-partnered approach taken by the Iraqi Jewish leadership.

Of the three philanthropic organizations, the archives of the AJA provided the majority of original material, in particular correspondence with Baghdadi elites in the satellite communities discussing projects in Baghdad. These Baghdadis financed and imposed their ideas on the communal institutions in Baghdad, thus these documents are invaluable in reconstructing the lines of communication between communal elites in Baghdad, the satellite communities, and the Jewish philanthropic organizations. This thesis is, to my knowledge, the first work on Iraqi Jewry to systemically go through the AJA files. These files contain varied correspondence, both private letters and official reports, that span the entire arc

of the period covered in this thesis. Finally, I have used the archives of the JDC. Although the contact with the JDC was significantly less than with the AJA or the AIU, these archives are of interest as they demonstrate the diversity of foreign contacts.

In reconstructing Baghdadi transnational networks I have used the enormous digital database of the Iraqi Jewish Archive (IJA).[29] The IJA is the online databases of over ten thousand documents found in the basement of the Iraqi intelligence headquarters by the United States army in 2003 and subsequently restored and digitalized over the past decade. The documents provide a tremendous amount of new documentation on the Jewish community of Baghdad once thought to be lost. This archive yielded many official communal documents such as budgets, reports, donor lists, and ephemera. However, my usage of this database was hindered due to limited cataloguing, and difficulty, due to water damage, in reading documents. Improving the online functionality and cataloguing of the database would provide countless new insights on the Jewish community of Baghdad.

Whereas correspondence between the communal leadership in Baghdad and European Jewish elites was relatively abundant, surviving correspondence between Jews in Iraq and Baghdadis in the satellite communities, was more challenging to find. To locate period correspondence, I turned to the satellite communities and specifically leading Baghdadi philanthropic families active in both Jewish philanthropic networks and invested in the Jewish community of Baghdad—the Kadoorie and Sassoon families. The Sassoon family archives housed in the National Library of Israel were disappointing. They have yet to be catalogued and consist of boxes of documents carrying only loose descriptions. Finding relevant documents is a question of patience and luck. In contrast the archives of the Kadoorie family in Hong Kong proved to be a treasure trove. These archives contain all remaining correspondence between the Kadoorie family and their agent in Baghdad Ibrahim Nahum, in addition to numerous other pieces of correspondence between the Kadoories and other residents of Baghdad and the satellite communities. The archives contain more private correspondence between Baghdad and the satellite communities than I have encountered in every other location com-

29 Due to water damage many documents are difficult to read even after restoration. Likewise, the discoverability of the documents as they are presented in the online database does not allow for efficient or consistent use of the archive given the limited amount of catalogue information and recent changes in file numbering. https://www.ija.archives.gov.

bined.[30] Lastly, I used the archives of the Baghdadi Jewish community of Singapore referred to as the Jewish Welfare Board and held at the National Archive of Singapore and the private papers of David Marshal, the first Chief Minister of Singapore and former president of the Jewish Welfare Board. Although the material found in Singapore was more limited than in Hong Kong, it was of great interest providing several unique pieces of correspondence between Baghdad and Singapore.

2.2. *Journals & Newspapers*

Central to my research is the use of foreign Jewish periodicals that Iraqi Jews contributed to and read to glean information on Iraqi Jewish participation in the global Jewish public sphere. In all cases, subscription and readership numbers are difficult to know, as no records exist, thus it is impossible to empirically state which periodicals had wider readership amongst Iraqi Jews. It is likely that all press was both shared via informal networks and consulted in the numerous cafes, schools, libraries and private Jewish clubs further complicating the calculation of any concrete readership numbers. Iraqi Jews had access to a wide range of Jewish and non-Jewish publications.

The foreign periodicals I consulted are primarily based on the list of Jewish newspapers which were censured in Iraq in 1934.[31] There were at least sixteen foreign Jewish newspapers with subscribers in Baghdad in 1934, based on the British Foreign Office archives discussing censorship of these periodicals. Of these newspapers eight were published in Hebrew, five in English, one in Arabic, one was tri-lingual (Arabic, French, Hebrew) and surprisingly one in Yiddish.[32] The majority of these periodicals contain either articles or letters to the editors from Iraqi Jews. Furthermore, clippings from or references to the majority of these periodicals appear in correspondence in the Kadoorie and AJA archives. I assume that the list of Jewish periodicals mentioned by

30 The Kadoorie archives are not complete many documents were destroyed during the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941 and the Communist Revolution in China in 1946 destroyed the Shanghai archive.

31 CO/733/275/4.

32 The majority of the censured newspapers came from Mandate Palestine, others were published in Beirut, Cairo, London, Bombay, and Shanghai. The quantity of Hebrew newspapers published in Palestine does not necessarily translate to importance of the newspaper. It is assumed that the Yiddish periodical was the personal subscription of a teach from the AIU or the AJA as this is the only mention I have seen of this periodical. CO/733/268/6.

the British Foreign Office is exhaustive due to the diversity of periodicals mentioned ranging from the widely accessible Arabic language *Al-'Aalam 'Al'Isra'ili* published in Beirut to the niche Yiddish language *Jewish Post and Express* published in London.[33]

The foreign periodicals that covered Baghdad in the greatest detail were those of the satellite communities. The Indian and Shanghai periodicals had a specific interest in Jewish life in Baghdad whereby they carried more original information on Jewish life in Iraq compared to Jewish newspapers in other regions. Many of the articles on Iraq were anonymous reports and it is likely that they came from Jews in Baghdad.[34] The London based *Jewish Chronicle* was also an important periodical for Iraqi Jews. Founded in 1841, the *Jewish Chronicle* is the oldest continuously published Jewish newspaper in the world.[35] The first articles about Jewish life in Baghdad appear as early as 1848.[36] The newspaper continuously carried reports about Baghdadi schools, notables, and specifically encouraged Baghdadi youth to correspond with the newspaper's youth pages.[37] Finally, I have searched the Historical Jewish Press database, housed at Tel Aviv University.[38] This database does not contain the periodicals of the satellite communities or the *Jewish Chronicle*. Instead, I have used the database to research coverage of the Jewish community of Baghdad in foreign Jewish press less present in Baghdad or to check the level syndication for articles written by Baghdadi Jews.

2.3. *Memoires & Autobiographies*

Lack of surviving private correspondence from Baghdadi Jews is compensated by the abundance of memoires, family histories, autobiographies, and oral histories that have been collected about Jewish life in Iraq. The most well-know of this genre includes Naim Kattan's *Adieu Babylone (1978)*, Nissim Rejwan's *The Last Jews of Baghdad* (2004), and Sasson Somekh *Baghdad Yesterday* (2003).[39] In the same genre are biographies

33 CO/733/275/4.

34 These newspapers can be found at the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem and the Babylonian Jewish Heritage Centre in Or Yehuda. *Israel's Messengers*, the newspaper of the Shanghai Baghdadi Community, to my knowledge, is the only Baghdadi Jewish newspaper which has been completely digitalised.

35 David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo Jewry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

36 JC, 7 April, 1848, 491/4.

37 JC, 7 April, 1933, 48; JC, 28 October, 1932, 38; JC, 30 December, 1932, 38.

38 http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/default.aspx.

39 Naim Kattan, *Farwell Baghdad: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad*, trans Sheila Fischman, (London:

and family histories by lesser known authors like Violet Shamash's autobiography, Marina Benjamin's family history, and Jael Silliman's family history of Baghdadi women in the satellite communities.[40]

These personal narratives provide a wealth of information, not found in archives, on the lives of Baghdadi Jews. They are also problematic sources for the study of the Hashemite period as they were written after their authors left Baghdad; at least twenty years, but in some cases fifty years later. In other instances, they were written by the descendants of the residents of Baghdad and are thus based on interviews and family lore. Inevitably, the authors are influenced by Zionist and anti-Zionist historiography. The trauma of exodus and the hardship and racism Baghdadi Jews experienced upon arrival in Israel has shifted how Jews of Iraqi origin remember their life in Iraq. As a consequence, these works are more a product of their time than the period they speak of. With this caveat in mind, I have cautiously used autobiographies to further support conclusions drawn from archival sources and historic periodicals where they have paralleled descriptions from historic documents.

3. Jewish Transnational Networks: Modernization, Globalization, and Secularization

In studying the transnational networks of Iraqi Jews in the twentieth century one must first consider the several dramatic changes the Ottoman Empire underwent in the nineteenth century due to growing European influence and internal reforms. These changes were part of a prolonged process of modernization that included economic, social, and cultural. Sarah Abrevaya Stein in connection to Ottoman Jews interprets modernity as expanded choice for individuals:

> Ottoman Jews were confronted with choices and challenges hitherto unknown [...] It was possible to educate one's children in secular as well as religious schools. Possible to purchase secular reading matter in a Jewish vernacular [...]

Souvenir Press, 2007); Nessim Rejwan, *The Last Jews in Baghdad: Remembering a Lost Homeland*, (Austin: Universtiy of Texas Press, 2004); Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*.

40 Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey Through Jewish Baghdad*, (Surrey: Forum, 2008); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Jael Silliman, *Jewish Portraits Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope*, (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2001).

> Possible to imagine such a thing as leisure time, and to imagine spending it in innumerable ways. Possible for women, men, and children to assume new gender and familial roles. Possible to dress in new ways, cook new foods, to adorn, carry, and care for one's body differently than before. It was possible to use public and private spaces in new ways. Finally, it was possible to describe oneself in new ways, and to declare and develop personal cultural affinities once unimaginable. Modernity made it possible not only to question but also reject the traditions, rituals and social and economic norms of the past.[41]

This is not to say that everyone experienced the same level of choice, or that these changes all occurred in parallel to each other. Instead different groups, at different times progressively began to enjoy new possibilities outside of the communal norms of centuries past, over time, fundamentally transforming Baghdadi Jewry into a transnational cosmopolitan community by the 1920s.

Modernization in Baghdad was a process of societal transformations catalysed by political, technological, and intellectual innovating forces that began in the nineteenth century and continued in the twentieth century. Discussions of Iraqi Jewry in the Ottoman period primarily focus on the state driven Tanzimat reforms and the influence of Jewish internationalism. Examples of this include Zvi Yehuda's recent history of Iraqi Jewry, Jonathan Sciarcon's work on women's education in Baghdad in the nineteenth century, and Yaron Harel's book on the chief Rabbis of Aleppo, Baghdad, and Damascus.[42] Although these three works are quite different in focus, each demonstrates the interplay between the Ottoman led reforms in the reorganization of the Jewish community and the role of foreign Jewish groups in these new organizational structures.

Jewish internationalism in the nineteenth century, as already stated, denotes the emergence of a European Jewish public sphere and, to quote Abigail Green, "the shift from ad hoc mobilization around periodic crises towards the foundation of permanent international organizations for long-term transnational mobilization in a Jewish cause."[43] For Baghdad, this meant institutional relationships with the AIU

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41 Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press: in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8–9.

42 Yaron Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution: Chief Rabbis in Aleppo, Baghdad, and Damascus 1744–1914*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2015); Jonathan Sciarcon, *Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israélite Universelle's Girl's Schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895–1915* (Albany: SUNY, 2017); Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*.

43 Abigail Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish International", 65.

and the AJA, access to European Jewish newspapers and an overall increase in contact with European Jewry. In this period the forces of modernization and the outcomes of this process, such as local Jewish schools using European curricula and reading Eastern European Jewish newspapers, are in many ways analogous to the experiences of other Jewish groups in MENA and their importance remained relevant long after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.[44]

In the Mandate period, Iraqi Jewry's experiences with modernity began to diverge from other Jewish communities in MENA as only Iraq and Egypt were independent Arab states (at least partially) at the time compared with the majority of MENA still under colonial rule. With citizenship for all Iraqis came the emergence of a pluralist civil society, in which Jews enjoyed a high level of social, political, and linguistic integration as citizens in comparison to other Jewish communities in MENA.[45] In Egypt, Jews also participated in secular Arab society, however their numbers were smaller as the majority of Jews in Egypt were not Egyptian citizens and Arabic was not the dominant language of the community as it was in Iraq.[46] Likewise there are similarities with other religious communities in Iraq such as the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, as well as Christian communities in other areas of the Levant.[47] For example, Keith Watenpaugh's discussion of the rise of an Arab middle class in Aleppo in the period between 1908–1946 through the lens of modernity and the process of communal modernization, explores similar themes in the context in Aleppo.[48] For Watenpaugh a "middle stratum of Western and Western-style educated" primarily civil servants, professional and white-collar employees is at the center of this modernity. The middle-class Watenpaugh studies is in many ways comparable with the Baghdadi Jewish middle class of the same period in regard to education, approach to Westernization, and status as a religious community, in his case Armenians and Greek Orthodox Christians.[49]

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44 Julia Philips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

45 Daniel Schroeter, "A Different Road to Modernity", in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* ed. Howard Wettstein (London: University of California Press, 2002) 150–163; Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*.

46 Racheline Barda, "Egypt," EJIW.

47 Tijmen Baarda, "Arabic and Aramaic in Iraq: Language and Christian Commitment to the Arab Nationalist Project (1920–1950)". PhD diss., Leiden University, 2019; Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*.

48 Keith Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

49 For a comparative discussion see Bashkin's chapter on the Iraqi Jewish Middle Class "The Effendia: Questions of Secularism and Judaism". Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 58–99.

In defining modernity in this period Watenpaugh asserts that it was "an intellectual, social, and cultural construct linked to a set of historical and material circumstances" which allowed segments of Middle Eastern society to modernize by incorporating ideas from abroad and giving them relevance within their local settings.[50] So too was this the case in Baghdad where the Jewish middle class played a crucial role in shaping modernity.[51] Central to my thesis is that this modernization was influenced by the international networks and connections of Iraqi Jews that predated the Mandate period continued and further developed in the period after World War I.

Economic globalization is an important force of modernization for Iraqi Jews that bridges the Ottoman and Hashemite periods. At the heart of this globalization is nineteenth century British imperialism in East Asia as it opened up international trade opportunities for Baghdadi Jews and is the catalyst for the Baghdadi diaspora, in addition to providing the impetus for British mandatory control of Iraq.[52] Factors such as reduction in international freight rates, the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal, pricing of imported goods, and global trade policy allowed for the development of a global economy.[53] Thus globalization in the nineteenth century, which produced economic and technological modernization, further expanded in the twentieth century. Baghdadi Jews were active participants in this globalization. Beginning in the 1820s, Baghdadis developed a trade network in soft commodities (particularly opium and textiles) that would stretch from East Asia to Great Britain.[54]

The establishment of Baghdadi satellite communities transformed the nature of Baghdadi society from one that was geographically localized to one that was transnational by definition as sectors of the Baghdadi community permanently settled abroad, obtaining foreign citizenship. Furthermore, globalization put Baghdadi Jews in frequent contact with other Jewish groups via foreign newspapers and visitors from across the globe. Finally, modernization of global banking allowed money from European donors and members of the satellite communities to arrive reliably in

50 Keith Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class*, 19.

51 Ibid, 19.

52 Kevin H. O'Rourke, Jeffrey G. Williamson, "When did globalisation begin?", *European Review of Economic History*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2002, 23–50.

53 Ibid, 35–37; Shiblak, *The Jews of Iraq*, 36–37.

54 Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 206; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 15.

Baghdad via secure banking networks to pay teacher salaries and purchase land for communal institutions.[55]

Another force of modernization which bridges the Ottoman and Hashemite periods is secularization of Jewish communal organization. In the nineteenth century Ottoman context, secularisation was limited to internal religious reforms and official recognition of a lay council as representatives of the community.[56] After WWI secularization took on a new significance with the rise of Arab nationalism, related to the integration of different ethnoreligious groups into the new Iraqi nation.[57] It implied a rejection of sectarianism in favor of a pluralist culture defined by non-religious societal unifiers. In the case of Iraq, Arabic as a unifying language is central to this idea but it was also bolstered by an attempt to construct a shared history and culture between all religious communities.[58]

I argue that Jewish internationalism was a catalyst for Jewish secularization in Iraq, as mediated through the global Jewish press and transnational Jewish philanthropic organizations. The concept of Jewish secular society is most apparent in education. Modern Jewish schools based their curriculum on European languages (and later Arabic), literature and the hard sciences, dedicating only a small amount of time to the study of Hebrew, Jewish history and Jewish Law.[59] Indicative of their level of secularity, prior to the opening of secular schools by Christian and Muslims communities, is that many members of the elites from these communities sent their children to Jewish schools.[60] These schools were administered by the lay council, and financed by local and foreign Jews, forming the cornerstone of Jewish communal infrastructure in Baghdad. However, by offering places to non-Jews, they helped build the modern Iraqi state by educating generations of Jewish and non-Jewish Iraqi civil servants.

Secularization was an important intellectual theme among Iraqi Jews that was articulated in Arabic, Hebrew, French, and English. As Bashkin notes "delibera-

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55 Hanna Battatu *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1982), 270–271.

56 Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbours: Religion Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab* Encounter, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 18–26; Cohen, *Becoming Modern*, 1–18.

57 Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*; Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 58–99.

58 Bashkin *The Other Iraq*; Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

59 MS137 AJ37/3/3/8; MS137 AJ37/4/5.

60 Maurice Sawaydee, *The Baghdad Connection* (Locust Valley, NY: Self-Published, 1991), 40.

tions about secularity and modernity were conducted in a transregional Arabic print market."[61] Similarly, secularity and modernity were discussed in the multilingual transnational Jewish print market accessed by Iraqi Jews, particularly, via the periodicals of the satellite communities. For example, questions of religious reform and the tension between national and religious identities were regularly debated within the English language press of the satellite communities between 1920–1951. This thesis, rather than studying the discourses of secularization and modernization studies communal institutions and networks as important parts of the process of secularization of Jewish identity in Iraq during the Hashemite period.

4. The Jewish Communal Organization in Iraq

This thesis studies Iraqi Jewry primarily from the perspective of the formal communal leadership of Baghdad and their network of connections with world Jewry. In Iraq the Jewish community was an official entity defined and recognized by the state with specific rights and responsibilities.[62] As a specific ethnoreligious group the communal entity was led by religious and lay Jewish leaders acting as the official liaisons to the government. In the Ottoman period, Muslim courts had the authority to administer justice to all Ottoman subjects in the areas of commercial and criminal law regardless of religion. In practice, most religious communities functioned with relative autonomy in their daily lives and religious courts were an important source of authority.[63] In Baghdad the communal organizations held central legal and administrative roles controlling most areas of daily life for Jews. Traditionally the Jewish community of Baghdad was led by a *nasi* (translated as prince or president), a position that had existed since the position of Exilarch was abandoned in the Middle Ages.[64] The *nasi* was responsible for the collection of taxes, the redistribution of communal funds and the maintenance of holy sites. Civil and criminal legal issues were decided in rabbinic courts.

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61 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 59.

62 Reeva Spector Simon, "Iraqi Constitution (1924)," EJIW.

63 Jacob Landau, "Changing Patterns of Community Structures, with Special Reference to Ottoman Egypt" in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century* ed. Avigdor Levy, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 77–87.

64 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 122.

The role of state began to change with the Tanzimat reforms as certain areas of commercial and criminal matters fell within the state, but the corporate religious status of the Jewish community barely changed. The *nasi* was replaced by the *haham bashi* (chief rabbi) of Baghdad, who was appointed by Istanbul. The *haham bashi* was supported by two communal councils, one religious and one spiritual. The spiritual council (*al-majlis al-ruhani*) was comprised of seven rabbis and was responsible for religious issues such as questions of Jewish law, the tax on kosher meat (the *gabelle*), and the religious schools. The spiritual council only existed in Baghdad and was thus responsible for the spiritual leadership in the entire country.[65] The office of the chief Rabbi provided marriage and birth certificates as well as offering legal guidance to Baghdadi Jews around the world.[66] The lay council (*al-majlis al-jismani*) was comprised of a chairman and eight notables of the community. They were responsible for all affairs not under the purview of the spiritual council, in particular administrative and financial matters such as religious endowments. Members on the lay council were technically elected, however these seats were consistently held by a small secular elite who acted as policy-makers for the community.[67]

The Iraqi constitution of 1924 granted equal rights to all regardless of religion or ethnicity, and as such the Jews of Iraq became full citizens of the British supervised Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq.[68] However, the same constitution recognized Jewish and Christian communities as distinct entities with their own communal councils.[69] As a consequence, Jews continued to go through communal offices for the majority of issues relating to their personal status such as births, marriages, divorces, and deaths. The communal offices managed social welfare, whereby those seeking aid be it financial, legal, or health related would use the services offered by the Jewish communal infrastructure.[70] Throughout the 1920s the community continued to be led by the *haham bashi* (also referred to as chief rabbi). After 1931 the position of the *haham bashi* as political head of the community was officially abolished with the passage of the Iraqi government's 'Jewish community law no. 77'.[71] In this law the communal structure stayed largely the same with the position of *haham bashi* being

65 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 65.

66 IJA 3322; IJA 3764; IJA 1454.

67 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 103; Elie Kedourie, "The Jews of Baghdad 1910" *Middle East Studies* Vol. 7, no. 3, (1971): 355–361.

68 Reeva Spector Simon, "Iraqi Constitution (1924)," EJIW.

69 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 56–57.

70 See appendix for list of Jewish communal societies and offices.

71 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 65.

replaced by a president of the community. These changes were in response to a general consensus that having a religious personality lead the community was obsolete and that the role was better suited to a lay leader.[72] Ironically, for the majority of the period between 1931–1952 the community was led by Sassun Khadduri, the former *haham bashi* who acted as both chief rabbi and president of the Jewish community for all of Iraq.[73]

The Jewish community of Iraq had a defined social hierarchy which overlapped with the hierarchy of the communal administration that included the lay council, several important subcommittees, and Jewish government representatives.[74] These elites liaised with the Iraqi government, and foreign Jewish organizations. They were responsible for the administration of communal affairs such as schools, hospitals and charities; they controlled the communal budget which was derived from taxes on kosher meat, rents, and communal endowments.[75] By controlling these institutions and their budgets the leadership was central to the daily lives Iraqi Jewry beyond the elite. For example, they decided the curriculum of Jewish schools, the allocation of scholarships, and eligibility for vocational training. Similarly, it was the communal leadership which opened medical clinics, and distributed food and clothing to the poor. Finally, by organizing modern leisure activities through Jewish social clubs such as charity balls, teas, and sporting events open to both men and women they influenced Jewish social norms in Baghdad.

4.1. *Demographics and Geography*

The Jews of Iraq in the modern era perceived themselves as part of an unbroken chain of Jewish in life in Mesopotamia dating from the time of the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE.[76] In reality, there were constant waves of migration, to and from Baghdad between Persia, Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Syria between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries.[77] Unlike many Jewish communities in MENA that received Sephardic migrants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Zvi Yehuda notes:

72 Ibid.
73 Aline Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad*, 81.
74 Ibid; Abbas Shiblak *Iraqi Jews*, 45–46.
75 IJA 2740; Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 65–67; Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad*, 81–83.
76 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 11; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 1–3.
77 Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 57–74.

> The large wave of Jewish emigration to the Muslim lands along the Mediterranean shores after their expulsion from Spain did not reach Iraq. However, Jews of Spanish origin did arrive in Iraq in the course of the eighteenth century by way of Aleppo and Istanbul [...] Some of the Jews who emigrated to Iraq from Persia and Kurdistan from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries were also descended from the Jews expelled from Spain.[78]

Most significantly, unlike some areas of Jewish settlement in MENA where Jews were identified by their sub-ethnic groups with different communal languages and customs, the Jews of Baghdad absorbed and amalgamated migrants into the larger community. The integration of Jewish migrants into the Baghdadi community allowed for the propagation of the idea of an indigenous community who saw themselves and who were perceived by other groups as the descendants of the Babylonian exile.

The period between the conquest of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols until the eighteenth century is relatively under researched.[79] Little is known about Jewish life in Baghdad during this period due to a lack of sources, even the continuity of Jewish settlement in the city is unclear.[80] Similarly, reliable population numbers are difficult to obtain prior to the mandate period due to a lack of administrative records and conflicting and unrealistic reports from Jewish travellers.[81] For example, in the second of half of the twelfth century Benjamin of Tudela estimates there were about 40,000 Jews in Baghdad, although historians agree that this number is an exaggeration.[82] After this period there are no estimates as to the population size of the Jewish community until the late eighteenth century. What is known of Jewish life in Baghdad comes from *responsa* and Jewish poetry that were written in Baghdad in the period between thirteenth and nineteenth centuries.[83] In 1830, the Jewish population of Baghdad was somewhere between 6,000–10,000 individuals based on estimates from a French consular report.[84]

78 Ibid, 75.

79 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 136; Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 34–37.

80 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 161–168.

81 Sassoon, *A History of Jews In Baghdad*, 102.

82 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 252.

83 Sassoon, *A History of Jews In Baghdad*, 102.

84 Cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 248. Another source for the Jewish population in 1828 comes from David d'Beth Hillel who visited Baghdad. He estimated that 6,000 Jewish families lived in the city. This number is cited in many works on Iraqi Jewry but is

The earliest reliable source for demographic information relating to communal size, professions, and numbers comes from a British consular report in 1910.[85] The report estimates that somewhere between 35,000 and 50,000 Jews lived in Baghdad meaning almost a third of the city was Jewish.[86] The report then divides the Jews into four classes; approximately 5% are considered rich or well off, 30% are labelled as middle class primarily engaged as petty traders, retail dealers or employees, 60% are listed as poor and finally 5% are considered beggars, mostly originating from northern Iraq.[87] One striking aspect of the twentieth century composition of the Jewish community is the large segment labelled as "middle class" which would continue to grow with each ensuing decade. This testifies to a trend, which is seen throughout the Levant during this period; the emergence of a sizable middle class encompassing all confessions who would, through their access to education and western ideas on secular society, alter the intellectual and social landscape of the age.[88] The emergence of a large Jewish middle class in Baghdad is primarily due to two aforementioned factors, access to secular education, and the growth of Baghdad as a commercial centre in the British trade routes to the Indian subcontinent and other parts of Asia.[89]

In the early 1920s the population of the city of Baghdad was approximately 200,000 people.[90] Within the general population, there were somewhere between 65,000 and 80,000 Jews living in the province of Baghdad, at least 55,000 of them living in the city of Baghdad.[91] Proportionally, this means that at least a quarter of the city's population

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generally considered an exaggeration. Rejwan lists the number of Jews in 1828 as 6,000 individuals although he does not cite the source, my assumption is that he is misreading David D'Beth Hillel's estimate of the Jewish population by family. Sassoon estimates around 30,000 Jewish families in Baghdad in 1824 which would be consistent with Rejwan's estimate. *The Travels of Rabbi David D'Beth Hillel; from Jerusalem, through Arabia, Koordistan, part of Persia and India*, Historical Collections from the British Library (London: The British Library, 2010), 63–65; Walter J. Fischel, "David d'Beth Hillel: An Unknown Jewish Traveller to the Middle East and India in the Nineteenth Century" Oriens, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Dec. 31, 1957), 240–247; Ariel Ahram, "Baghdad," EJIW; Rejwan, *3000 Years of History and Culture*, 167; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 127.

85 Battatu, *The old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 35.

86 Kadourie attributes the report to Haron Da'ud Shohet, a Jewish dragoman to the British consulate-general, Elie Kedourie, "The Jews of Baghdad 1910," 355–361.

87 Ibid, 358.

88 Wattenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 22–23.

89 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 20.

90 This number refers to the province of Baghdad, and not the city.

91 Page 3 of a 1924 report from the office of the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad to Judah Magnes; CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

was Jewish, the largest unified ethnoreligious group in the city.[92] Although the Jewish community would continue to grow over the course of the next three decades there was tremendous migration in this period by the general Iraqi population to Baghdad. As a consequence, the proportion of Jews living in Baghdad in relation to the general population of the city would decline from the 1920s onward. By the mid-1930s Jews no longer represent the largest ethnoreligious group in the city. In the 1940s there were an estimated 77,000 Jews in Baghdad whereas the overall population of the city had swelled to just over half a million.[93]

Like other Jewish communities of the Levant such as Syria and Lebanon, the Jewish community of Iraq was overwhelmingly urban with the main Jewish centers being Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.[94] In this thesis, I primarily refer to Baghdad when discussing communal events, as the majority of Iraqi Jews resided in the city and it was the seat of Jewish leadership. However, I will occasionally cite examples from other cities in Iraq, in particular Basra. By 1915, the city had seen a surge in its Jewish population due to immigration from Baghdad. This migration was sparked by Jews wishing to avoid Ottoman conscription in WWI, as the British government already had control of the city. Likewise, Basra traditionally had strong ties to the satellite communities as it was a mandatory stopping point for those travelling by boat from India to Baghdad. Thus, Basra was at the crossroad between Baghdad and the satellite communities. The only segment of the Jewish population in Iraq not considered are the Neo-Aramaic speaking Jewish communities located in northern Iraq (Kurdistan), as the communal infrastructure did not extend to this area.

From a spatial perspective, the Jewish community in Baghdad had an identifiable epicentre occasionally referred to as the *mahallah*, although this term is more frequent in other areas of the Levant. Prior to the 1930s the majority of Jews were concentrated in the religiously mixed neighbourhoods of *Abu Sayfayn*, *Taht al- Takiyya*, *Qanbar Ali*, *Suq Hanun* and *Abu Sayd* which formed the heart of the Jewish quarter housing the Jewish institutions and containing the majority of the poor Jews.[95] As a Jewish middle class emerged, many moved out of these predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods to new "mixed" suburbs into houses which contained indoor plumbing, electricity, and

92 Batatu identifies seven different Muslim ethnic groups in Baghdad, and four non-Muslim ethnoreligious groups. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 40.

93 Ibid, 248; Shiblak, *The Jews of Iraq*, 37.

94 Ibid, 36.

95 Battatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 18.

other modern fixtures.[96] The first of these neighbourhoods in the 1930s was *Bustan al-Khas* followed by *Battawiyyin* and *Alwiyya* in the 1940s. In these suburbs middle class Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived side by side. Some Jews in these neighbourhoods sent their children to local non-Jewish elementary schools, only transferring them to Jewish schools for middle and high school.[97] Although the Jewish community slowly became more dispersed the traditional Jewish neighbourhoods remained the centre of Jewish life, schools, synagogues, clinics, social clubs, and communal offices remained clustered in the traditionally Jewish neighbourhoods. The institutional buildings were close to *al-bab al-Sharqi* and the *Shorja* souk areas that were associated with Jewish merchants. Thus, even as the middle class moved out of the 'Jewish neighbourhoods' they continued to frequent them as they were integral to daily life.

4.2. *Class & Gender*

In the early twentieth century the communal leadership began to expand and strengthen the communal infrastructure. By the Hashemite period these institutions were central to Baghdadi Jewry from multiple socio-economic groups. This is no more apparent than when we consider the relevance of these institutions to the lower classes and to women. Poverty was a continuous problem that plagued not only the Jewish community but all of Iraqi society. As there was no state organized social welfare system lower class Iraqi Jews were dependent on communal charity. Whereas in the mid-nineteenth century communal charity was organized by private individuals, one outcome of the modernization of communal infrastructure was that poor Iraqi Jews turned to communal institutions for food, clothing, education and healthcare in times of need.

These charitable projects were financed by communal revenue, donations by private individuals (inside and outside Iraq), and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations. It was not unusual for communal institutions to have plaques (often in multiple languages) on their walls with the names of multiple donors. Buildings were named for important donors (i.e. the Albert Sasson School, the Laura Kadoorie School, Meir Elias Hospital, etc.), teachers were careful to mention the charity of foreign Jewish organizations regularly to students, and recipients of charity were

96 Shiblak; *The Jews of Iraq*, 35.

97 Somekh mentions his family moving from *Taht al- Takiyya* to *Bustan al-Khas* and Benjamin mentions her family moving from the city center to *Battawiyyin*. Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 129–130; Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad*, 43–44; Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 68.

compelled to pray for the well-being or in the memory of these donors.[98] Undoubtedly, the lower classes were very much aware of these philanthropists, and perhaps even of the transnational networks that sustained their generousity.

Likewise, communal institutions and initiatives represented new opportunities and choices for Jewish women of all classes. The AIU brought girls' education to Baghdad by opening a school in 1893 that was followed by several other girls' schools that offered both traditional and vocational training. Although during the Hashemite period Baghdad society as a whole remained traditional in regard to gender norms; women were legally dependent on their fathers and husbands, had little place in public life and no political rights.[99] These institutions created physical spaces that represented personal choices unknown to earlier generations of Baghdadi women. By the 1920s this included the possibility to attend institutes of higher education, be members of social clubs, organize chartable actions, and receive vocational training.[100] The outcome is that these institutions, although inherently conservative in nature focusing on the nineteenth century Victorian values of modesty, motherhood and domesticity, still represented a more liberal sphere in which middle and upper-class women could express themselves and the idea of poor women working outside the home was destigmatized.[101]

In summary, communal institutions held difference relevance to different groups. Although there was a clear social hierarchy of the elite, the middle class and the poor, large family units cut through the social hierarchy with the poor dependent on wealthy family relations and communal institutions.[102] This meant that individuals were removed from each other by only one, or at most, two degrees of separation and that communal leadership receiving petitions for aid or dealing with problematic individuals in the community most likely had intimate knowledge of the individuals or their families. Spatially, Jews were in constant interaction with each other through their schools, synagogues, clubs, butchers, hospitals, and charities, some of which cut through class, gender, and age. Thus, in the period between1920–1950 the Jewish

98 JDC NY AR191418/4/20/1/154.2; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 165–175, 203–217; Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 252–253.

99 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 116–118.

100 This argument parallels Meir-Glitzenstein's analysis of the attractiveness of Zionism to women in Iraq as the Zionist emissaries presented themselves as dedicated to gender equality and opportunities for women beyond what a traditional, conservation Muslim society could offer. Meir-Gitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Land*, 116–131.

101 Sciarcon, *Education in an Oasis*.

102 Rejwan, *The Last Jews in Baghdad*, 62–73; Bieder, *Jews in Singapore*, 44–49.

community of Baghdad was a definable unit based on political, familial, spatial, and linguistic realities which were imbricated in everyday life.

4.3. *Language Practices*

Prior to the Mandate period Iraqi Jews spoke a local *amiyya* (colloquial Arabic) specific to their community and wrote in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew script). This is analogous to the majority of Arabic speaking Jewish communities in MENA prior to the twentieth century. Part of modernization, like other Jewish communities in MENA, was the abandonment of Judeo-Arabic as the written communal language. However, in contrast to most communities which adopted French or English (due to the influence of colonizing powers), in Iraq modern standard Arabic became the dominant written language of the Jewish community.[103] There are numerous reasons for this, but above all, the decision by the British to make Arabic the official language of the state administration during the Mandate. Given the importance of Arabic within the new state all Iraqi schools taught some Modern Standard Arabic by the 1920s even before it became mandated by the state. As a consequence of these linguistics shifts, in Iraq Jews for the most part abandoned Judeo-Arabic in favor of writing in Arabic script, a trait relatively unique to Iraq in comparison to other MENA Jewish communities who transitioned to writing French and English in Latin script.[104] As such the Jews in Iraq were more prolific in Arabic literature than Jews in any other Arabic speaking country. For this reason, from both a cultural and linguistic perspective the Jewish community of Baghdad is often considered the most Arabized Jewish community in MENA.

Although the use of modern standard Arabic was a unifying feature in the modern Iraqi State the Arabic vernacular spoken by Jews in Iraq also differentiated them from the rest of Iraqi society. The *amiyya* spoken by Jews in Baghdad was distinct from the *amiyya-s* spoken by Christians and Muslims, although this was less the case in Basra and Mosul. However, this difference in speech did not prevent these forms of *amiyya* being used in daily interactions in the city. Linguists usually refer to the

103 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 178, 251–252.

104 Some Jews in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria began to write in Arabic script. Likewise, this trend is similar to Christian communities who abandoned earlier communal/religious scripts and adopted Modern Standard Arabic. For a comparative study of language use among Syriac Christians in the same period see: Baarda, "Arabic and Aramaic in Iraq: Language and Christian Commitment to the Arab Nationalist Project (1920–1950)," PhD, diss.

language of Iraqi Jews as Jewish-Baghdadi-Iraqi Arabic or simply Judeo-Baghdadi or Jewish Baghdadi.[105] Iraqis did not refer to their languages in such technical terms. Instead Iraqis of all creeds referred to the language of the Jews as *haki mal yihud* (the speech of the Jews) in comparison to *haki mal aslam* (the speech of the Muslims). In intimate settings, Iraqi Jews would refer to their language as *el-haki malna* (our language).[106]

The confessional dialects of Baghdad have not escaped the interest of linguists. From the work of Haim Blanc it is now widely accepted that Judeo-Baghdadi has its origins in an older dialect of Arabic originating from the *Maslawi* dialect. In addition to the loan words from Hebrew and Aramaic, Blanc demonstrates that Judeo-Baghdadi is closer to an older form of Arabic originally brought to the region by Bedouin tribes in comparison to the standard Muslim-Baghdadi. Blanc's thesis is that in comparison to Muslims, Jews had less contact with outside Arabic speaking groups over the course of several centuries and thus their dialect evolved slower and was differentiated from the Muslim dialect. The result is a dialect which is perceivably different from Muslim-Baghdadi. Furthermore, from a synchronic linguistic perspective both Blanc and Mansour studied Judeo-Baghdadi using samples from the first half of the twentieth century and have demonstrated the phonological, syntactical and lexical differences between Judeo-Baghdadi, Christian-Baghdadi, and Muslim-Baghdadi. For spoken intercommunal communication, both Jews and Christians usually deferred to the local Muslim-Baghdadi dialect.

From a socio-linguistic perspective there is much anecdotal evidence alluding to the specificity of Judeo-Baghdadi both when comparing it with other Baghdadi dialects or with Arabic speaking Jewish communities. For example, Naim Kattan recounts the day he and his Jewish friends decided to teach their non-Jewish friends Arabic, explaining that the use of Judeo-Baghdadi by Muslims was synonymous with ridicule and derision, used by Muslims to amuse visitors. For Kattan, his Muslim friend's willingness to converse in Judeo-Baghdadi was a fragile symbol of the worthiness of the Jewish dialect from his Muslim friends.[107] In regard to other Jewish communities Violette Shemesh recalls the strange Arabic of her Syrian Jewish teacher at the AIU Laura Kadoorie School in the 1930s. In this case the Jewish teacher

105 Haim Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Jacob Mansour, *The Jewish Baghdadi Dialect* (Or Yehuda: Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 1991); Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic."

106 Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic," 154.

107 Kattan, *Farwell Baghdad*, 5–9.

was ridiculed because her Arabic was not the same as the Arabic of her students.[108] In both cases when communicating with either other residents of Baghdad or with Jews from other countries the dialect of the Baghdadis was generally intelligible although markedly different. As a result, these differences reinforced the communal identity of the Jews in Baghdad in relation to other Jewish and Iraqi communities, at the very least in the memories of Iraqi Jews.

4.4. *Identity & Community*

As Reuven Snir states: "the history of Arabized Jews during the last century provides ongoing lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities, which are always unfinished and unfinishable, always being remade."[109] For this reason, I distinguish the Jews of Baghdad as a discrete group defined by their communal hierarchy, their institutions and the idea of a geographical space in which this community operated. I have done this so as to use a framework which does not ascribe a specific identity or feeling of belonging to individuals in the community but instead to delineate legal and spatial boundaries in the context of the Iraqi state. With this in mind, I explore the ways in which Jews in Baghdad and Baghdadi Jews as a whole self-identified or saw themselves as part of larger transnational Jewish networks and at times ascribed themselves specific identities.

Many discussions on Iraqi Jewish identity constructions are situated within debates surrounding the concept of the Arab Jew, a term used in both a historical context and a contemporary political context.[110] In the historic context, the term Arab Jew refers to an identity and ideology among a specific demographic of Iraqi Jewry during the period between 1920–1950 and to a limited degree some Egyptian Jewish intellectuals in this same period. In this period some Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals in MENA used the expression '*al-yahud al-arab*' in their writings.[111] An Iraqi example of the self-ascribed twentieth century Arab Jew is found in the personality of Ezra Haddad. Haddad was the director of the Jewish communal *al-Wataniyya* school and an Iraqi intellectual who wrote "we are Arabs before we are Jews," arguing that Arabized Jews should actively participate in the Iraqi nation and the

108 Shemesh, *Memories of Eden*, 38–39.

109 Snir, *Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity?*, 220.

110 Lital Levy 'Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the *Mashriq*' *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 98, No. 4 (Fall 2008).

111 Ibid. 461.

concept of pan-Arabism.[112] Haddad is not alone; many other intellectuals articulated similar messages including the aforementioned Anwar Sha'ul, the civil servant Meir Basri, and the translator, poet, and teacher Murad Mikhail, to name only a few, all active members of the Jewish community of Baghdad.[113] Whereas the contemporary use of the term by Israeli intellectuals such as Yehuda Shenhav and Ella Shohat who self-identify as "Arab Jews" is used to reclaim the term from its negative connotations of Arab-ness within Zionist historiography, in the historic context the term was rarely used.[114]

As Lital Levy notes, based on her interviews with elderly Iraqi Jews—"in Iraq, for example, through at least the first half of the twentieth century, the term [Arab Jew] was not used in everyday parlance; rather, identity was formulated as a matter of ethnic or religious affiliation (e.g. Shi'i, Kurdish, Yazidi, etc.)."[115] This point is confirmed by the correspondence I have encountered between Baghdadi Jews in which they refer to themselves as Jews, and other Iraqis by their religious or ethnic affiliations (i.e. Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Muslims). In archival material, where I have seen the term Arab it has inevitably referred to the Sunni Muslim community in Iraq.[116]

How then did Iraqi Jews define themselves during the Hashemite period? How did they consider their intersecting identities within the Iraqi state, the Arab world, and global Jewry? How did Baghdadi Jews position themselves vis-à-vis world Jewry in the period between 1920–1950? In considering the influence of the satellite communities and transnational Jewish solidarity I argue that Jewish identity became delocalised and was not purely bound by nationalist (Iraqi) feelings or geographic ties. This is not to say that nationalist feeling and organization along national lines were not important, they were extremely important both ideologically and structurally. However, I argue that organization and identification were fluid and evolving over time.

Ultimately, this thesis examines what can be learned about Iraqi Jewry from exploring their participation in formal and informal transnational Jewish networks

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112 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juif de Baghdad*, 288; Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 46–56, 72–73; Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 219.

113 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juif de Bagdad*, 283–306; Snir, *Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity?*, 232–234.

114 Levy, "Historicizing the Arab Jews in the Mashriq," 454; Ella Shohat "The Invention of the Mizrahim." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 5–20. Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity*, (Stanford: Stanford, 2006).

115 Lital Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863–1914." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007, 11.

116 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15, see appendix.

during the Hashemite period. In doing so, I look at the nuanced ways they intellectually and politically affiliated themselves with other Jewish groups. I will argue that as the global Baghdadi community came to include many native English speakers, the Arabic language aspect of this identity became less dominant and concepts of cultural norms, religious customs, a sense of shared history and general feelings of solidarity grew in importance. This suggests a Baghdadi identity that is more fluid than Arab-Jewish identity which is fixed in a specific historical context. It assumes that many Jews who affiliated themselves with a Baghdadi Jewish identity had family in multiple countries, were multilingual, and perhaps held foreign passports. However, it also leaves a place for monolingual Jews in Baghdad, who knew little beyond their community but were deeply dependant on the communal welfare structure and family networks and were thus aware of the spatial dislocation of their community.

5. Thesis Outline

This thesis traces the participation of Baghdadi Jews in Jewish transnational networks from the mid-nineteenth century until the mass exodus of Jews from Iraq between 1948–1951. Each chapter explores different components of how Jews in Baghdad participated in global Jewish network through communal organization, Baghdadi satellite communities, transnational Jewish philanthropy, secular Jewish education and the global Jewish press. The first chapter discusses the nineteenth century forces of modernization among Baghdadi Jewry. Focusing on the role of Jewish internationalism and the Tanzimat reforms. In particular, I examine the evolution of transnational Jewish networks from the informal contacts of Jewish elites towards a formalized relationship with foreign Jewish organizations after the establishment of the lay council in 1879.

Chapter two discusses the role of the Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora as a bridge between European and Iraqi Jewry that contributed to the formation of a transnational Baghdadi identity. I consider the importance of informal Baghdadi networks relating to family and trade and their influence on the Jews of Baghdad. This chapter argues that the satellite communities provided a model for the modernization of the Jewish community of Baghdad. Philanthropy is one important aspect of this relationship, which is further developed in chapter three where I explore the role of transnational philanthropic organizations in Baghdad. Focusing on the roles of the three-leading actors—the AIU, the AJA, and the JDC—I provide histories of each organization's actions in Baghdad. I analyze the role of foreign financial aid using communal budgets

from the period between 1920 and 1950. Together, these two chapters examine the two strongest aspects of Jewish transnationalism in Iraq in the twentieth century: the global Baghdadi 'community' and the structural communal links to foreign Jewish organizations.

Whereas the first three chapters look at institutions, structures, and the emergence of transnational networks the fourth and fifth chapters explore the influence of these networks within Baghdad. Chapter four discusses secular Jewish education in Baghdad, by analyzing the curricula of each school type and in particular the different languages emphasized in the different schools. I elaborate on the status and usages of Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French in the period between 1920–1950, as a way to understand how the middle and lower classes participated in Jewish transnational networks. Finally, Chapter five is an analysis of three case studies from the period between 1920–1950, each presenting a different way in which Jews in Baghdad engaged with Jewish transnational networks. The first case study discusses the theosophy controversy in Basra in the period between 1927 and 1936. The second case study looks at the role of censorship and the importance of Jewish foreign newspapers in the early years of the Iraqi state. The third and final case examines the life of Ibrahim Nahum, the Iraqi agent of the Kadoorie family and member of both the lay council and the Iraqi Parliament. Beyond highlighting the interconnectivity of the themes of the first four chapters (communal organization, Baghdadi satellite communities, Jewish philanthropic organizations and secular Jewish education) these case studies demonstrate the centrality of multilingualism, foreign Jewish periodicals, and participation within the global Jewish public sphere for Iraqi Jewry.

CHAPTER ONE

Nineteenth Century Networks and Connections

The transnational networks of the Jewish community during the British Mandate and early years of the Iraqi state were a product of changes that occurred in the nineteenth century. To understand discussions of Baghdadi involvement in twentieth century transnational Jewish networks it is essential to first discuss the economic, political, and intellectual changes which occurred in Baghdad in the previous century. The time period under discussion is from the beginning of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839 until the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. In this period the modernization of Baghdadi Jewry was due to the convergence of several foreign elements: the influence of Western Jewry as expressed by Jewish internationalism, the ideas of the *Haskala*, British imperial interest in the region, and the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms. As a result, changes among the Jewish communal elites led to a new communal infrastructure that was connected to an emergent global Jewish public sphere through access to foreign Jewish periodicals and European Jewish travelers in Baghdad.[1]

1. Secular Jewish Identity and Transnational Jewish Solidarity

Throughout history Jewish communities have rarely existed in isolation from the rest of the Jewish world. The extent and nature of these intercommunal connections, however, is a point which scholars are constantly reconsidering. In the early modern world, these connections were primarily made up of informal networks with no formal ecclesiastical hierarchy similar to Christian groups. From a religious perspective, for example, these connections are demonstrated by rabbis offering guidance in the form of *responsa* literature. From an economic perspective, these links are seen through Jewish trade networks, generally organized around one Jewish sub-group united by

1 For further information on Jewish internationalism from the perspective of western European Jewry see Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2006); Green and Viaene, *Religious Internationals in the Modern World*.

a shared socio-cultural identity as designated by appellations such as Ashkenazi, Sephardi, or Maghrebi or possibly via regional networks opposed to being pan-Jewish in nature.[2]

There is little historical evidence that these traditional networks were understood to constitute a "Jewish People" as is understood by the modern Hebrew term *klal yisra'el*.[3] In the introduction to his book, Matthias Lehmann addresses the issue of a transnational identity and the various schools of thought around pre- and early modern Jewish identity. As Lehmann notes, the idea of the holy land was a source of common ground between different Jewish groups, but was not a foundation to any shared identity or understanding of one supra-Jewish community.[4] Instead, the most one can say in regard to pre- and early modern Jewish identity is that in different periods, Jewish communities practiced varying forms of pan-Judaism via different Jewish diaspora networks often connected by charity or economic networks, in addition to scholarly exchange.[5]

The clearest pre-modern examples of interregional and intercultural Jewish interactions were centered around charity. Specifically, *halukka*, funds remitted to support impoverished Jews in the holy land and *shlikhim* (emissaries) who would travel from Palestine to Jewish communities around the world to raise money for religious academies in Palestine.[6] Although examples of *shlikhim* date from the time

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2 For an example of these networks see—Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, (New Haven: Yale, 2009). Matthias Lehmann translates *Klal Yisrael* as pan-Judaism. Lehmann also uses the term sub-ethnic Jewish groups in his book *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, a term I find useful when describing Jewish groups in this context, however the word "ethnic" is problematic, thus I simply use the phrase Jewish sub-group. Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 4.

3 This term dates from the nineteenth century and was used by early Zionist organizations to describe the Jewish people.

4 Lehman rejects the "telos of Zionist historiography that took for granted a land-of-Israel centric pan-Jewish peoplehood and solidarity." Likewise, he rejects the "post- (or anti-) Zionist reading that claims that modern Jewish nationalism essentially "invented" the idea of a Jewish nation" in the nineteenth century such as in the work of Shlomo Sand. Instead Lehmann's works discusses the way various Jewish sub-ethnic groups interacted and supported each other. Lehmann *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 5, 277–227n5; Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009).

5 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 8–14.

6 Examples of these practices are found in documents the Cairo Geniza, although the practice is most likely much older. A history of emissaries from the land of Israel was compiled by Abraham Ya'ari in 1951. Ya'ari's attempt to show an interrupted connection between the Jewish people to the land of Israel and a historic Jewish unity has been highly criticized his history of *shlikhim* remains the

of the Temple in Jerusalem, the practice was relatively limited as charity was seen as a local obligation, providing for one's own community whether that be geographic or within Jewish sub-groups.[7] Normative Jewish religious law specifies three types of charity; to support orphans and widows, to provide food, clothes, and shelter to Jews visiting from other communities, and the remittance of funds to the Holy Land to support pious Jews residing there. There is little historic precedence for diaspora communities supporting other diaspora communities prior to the middle of the nineteenth century with the exception of ransoming Jewish captives. *Halukka* was de-centralized prior to the nineteenth century as different groups present in the Holy Land competed for financial support by targeting the communities with which they had familial links.[8]

As Nora Șeni argues in her work on the rise of French and English Jewish philanthropy, the radical change in how Jewish communities approached charity and perceived their relationship to other Jewish communities was closely linked to ideas of the European enlightenment and the *Haskala*.[9] These movements modified how Western European Jews viewed their relationship and responsibilities towards both Eastern European and MENA Jewry. Among the reasons Eastern European Jewish intellectuals took interest in MENA Jewry was their search for authentic Jewish practice and a newfound interest in Jewish history. In turn, they wrote about their findings in *Haskala* newspapers making European Jewry aware of the existence of non-European Jewish communities.[10]

When these newspapers began reporting worldwide Jewish events, it planted the seed for the modern Jewish public sphere.[11] The catalyzing moment was the Damascus Affair. In 1840 an Italian Capuchin monk and his servant disappeared in Damascus. Local Christians—assisted by the notoriously anti-Semitic French consul—accused Jews of murdering the men and using their blood to bake matzah. As a result

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reference on topic. Abraham Ya'ari, Emissaries of the Land of Israel [In Hebrew]. (Jerusalem, 1951). For criticism of Ya'ari' work see Jacob Katz "He'arot sotsyologiyot le-sefer histori" *Behinot* 2 (1952) [as cited in] Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 7–9.

7 Ya'ari, Emissaries of the Land of Israel [In Hebrew], xii.

8 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*.

9 Șeni, *Les inventeurs de la philanthropie juive*, (Paris: Editions de la Martiniere, 2005); For a wide discussion on the *Haskala* see Moshe Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond: The Reception of the Hebrew Enlightenment and the Emergence of Haskalah Judaism*, (Plymouth: University Press of America, 2010), 16.

10 Orit Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz? Some Comments about the Reading Practices of Iraqi Jews in the 19th Century," *Journal of Semetic Studies* (2005): 108–109.

11 Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish Internationals", 58.

of the blood libel the leaders of the Jewish community in Damascus and the chief rabbi of the city were arrested and tortured, events which were covered throughout Europe in both the Jewish and general press. As Jonathan Frankel demonstrates in his seminal work on the Damascus Affair, this event and its coverage in the European Jewish press inspired an international Jewish mobilization as European Jews tried to pressure their governments to intercede in the plight of the Jews of Damascus.[12]

This concern for their co-religionists went beyond simple solidarity as there was general concern that these anti-Semitic incidents—particularly the resurrection of medieval style blood libel accusations—would return to Western Europe due to influence from Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire.[13] These events were of concern to 'enlightened' European Jews who not only felt an obligation to help their co-religionists but to protect the already acquired rights of Jews in their home nations, laying the foundations for modern international Jewish solidarity movements through the establishment of organizations dedicated to the plight of world Jewry. In Baghdad, the three most important organizations were the French *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) found in 1860 and the English *Anglo-Jewish Association* (AJA) founded in 1871.[14]

Baghdadi participation in Jewish internationalism during this period has focused on iterations of these intellectual changes particularly in reference to debates about Arabic speaking Jews' participation in both the *Haskala* and the *Nahda*. In particular, Orit Bashkin's article "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz? Some Comments about the Reading Practices of Iraqi Jews in the 19th Century," provides an overview of the reading trends of Baghdadi Jews in the nineteenth century and postulates on the reasons for changes in their reading habits. On the subject of culture and modernity, Lital Levy's 2005 thesis "Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History, and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863–1914" dedicates a great deal of space to Baghdad in demonstrating what she calls Arab Jewish modernity.[15] Both of these pieces advance our understanding how Baghdadi elites were intellectually linked to European Jewry and their awareness of issues being discussed

12 Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*.

13 Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish Internationals", 53–81.

14 The Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden was also nominally active in Baghdad during this time however their contribution in regard to the development of infrastructure was significantly smaller and therefore I have not addressed them in this chapter.

15 Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz?," 95–110; Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863–1914".

in the global Jewish press.[16] However these important contributions do not analyze the influence of Jewish internationalism on communal structure and leadership as this is not their focus. Bashkin asserts these foreign intellectual connections eventually fell away in the twentieth century for a variety of reasons, but in particular due to a lack of social and political relevance compared to the emergent local Arabic language press beginning after the Young Turk Revolution.[17] The one study which discusses the convergence of modernization and communal infrastructure is Yaron Harel's[18] *Intrigue and Revolution: Chief Rabbis in Aleppo, Baghdad, and Damascus 1744–1914*. This work focuses on the changes the rabbinate experienced during this period from both intellectual and political perspectives. It does not, however, specifically address secular leadership or secular intellectual endeavors as its focus is on the position of the rabbinate. This chapter discusses the emergence of secular Jewish leadership in Baghdad from intellectual and political perspectives so as to highlight the centrality of Jewish transnational networks within the local communal organization.

2. Economic and Political Reforms

Prior to the Ottoman period we have little knowledge of Jewish life in Baghdad and even less knowledge regarding communal organization or leadership. At the border between the Ottoman and Persian Empires, Baghdad was regularly the theater for disputes between these two powers, leading to economic and political instability for all residents of Baghdad and causing many Jews to leave the area for Syria, Persia and Kurdistan.[19] The situation in Baghdad began to improve in the eighteenth century when the Mamluks brought some stability to the region, governing Baghdad as an autonomous *wilaya* under the Ottoman sultan.[20] The situation further improved politically and economically with the decline of the Persian state, the consolidation of Ottoman control in the region, and the expansion via Iraq of the British East India Company's trade routes to India.[21]

16 Although Levy's work is about "Arab" Jewish Modernity she acknowledges the influence and importance of Europe in general and the Jewish intellectual trends in particular among the Jewish in Baghdad. Ibid. 354.

17 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews Stop writing to their brethren in Mainz?," 108–109.

18 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*.

19 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 30–45.

20 Ibid, 20, 51.

21 Ibid, 43.

Early nineteenth century accounts of Jewish life in Baghdad describe a small community of 6,000–10,000 people.[22] With the exception of a few wealthy Jewish families of merchants and bankers,[23] the majority of the Jews in Baghdad worked as peddlers or craftsmen living in varying degrees of poverty.[24] Sources suggest that a plague in the city in 1742–1743 killed a large portion of Baghdad's inhabitants including many Jewish religious scholars, with the rest leaving for other communities. Thereafter the city depended on Aleppo to provide religious guidance and a supply of rabbis.[25] Baghdadi Jewish networks in the eighteenth and nineteenth century—prior to Baghdad's reemergence as an economic center—were relatively local, either between Aleppo and Persia or Palestine in the case of pious Jews from Baghdad immigrating to Jerusalem.[26] There was little exchange with European Jewry, although occasional foreign Jewish visitors would stay in the city *en route* to another destination.[27]

At the head of the local community was a secular leader, the *nasi*.[28] The *nasi* was responsible for the collection of taxes, the redistribution of communal funds and the maintenance of holy sites. He was not a religious figure and his appointment was derived from his connections with the Ottoman governor as the *nasi* generally held the position of *saraf bashi* (chief financier) to the government in Baghdad.[29] There was little by way of communal infrastructure to support education, public health, or organized services to the poor.[30] Intellectually, the Jews of Baghdad were very much rooted in the same traditions they had subscribed to for centuries, centered around the study of Talmud and classic religious texts in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. No records suggest that knowledge of the *Haskala* movement in Europe had permeated the community prior to the 1840s and no new religious institution of learning was founded until the rabbinic seminary Midrash Abu Minashi in 1840.[31]

A century later the demographic outlook of the Jewish community had dramatically changed. By the end of the nineteenth century, improvements in the Ottoman

22 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 1.

23 Rejwan asserts that the majority of Jews in Baghdad during this period were relatively wealthy, however he provides no citations for this assertion. Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 167.

24 Shlomo Deshen "Baghdadi Jewry in Late Ottoman Times: The Emergence of Social Classes and of Secularization" *AJS Review* 19, no. 1 (1994): 21.

25 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 20–21.

26 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 46–49.

27 For example, Rabbi David D'Beth Hillel in the early nineteenth century.

28 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 122.

29 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 23.

30 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 65.

31 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 21.

administration and the British use of Baghdad as a nexus for trade between Europe and Asia led to greater political and economic stability. As a result, many Jews from Persia, Afghanistan, and Kurdistan, moved to the city and were incorporated into the Baghdadi Jewish community. In addition to this regional migration, several European Jews moved to Baghdad at this time and brought with them the *Haskala* newspapers of Eastern Europe, which were widely read among the elites.[32]

On the eve of World War I the Jewish population of Baghdad was approximately 60,000.[33] The Jewish community had developed such a diverse infrastructure of social services (i.e. schools, charities, and hospitals) that the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, referring to its schools and hospitals, cited it as a model of "Jewish gentrification."[34] There was a slowly emerging Jewish middle class, which would grow exponentially during the Mandate, due to the growing importance of Baghdad and Basra in British trade routes. Literate Jews in the city, whose numbers had grown due to the opening of secular schools, had access to a myriad of Jewish and non-Jewish periodicals in a multitude of languages from all over Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The Jewish population growth in the city and the establishment of communal institutions were due to a period of economic development linked to globalization brought by improved modes of transportation such as motorized shipping routes along the Tigris (1847), and the opening of the Suez Canal (1869).[35]

The changes were also tied to the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century. The reforms included changes in taxation, military conscription and land tenure regulation. Of particular importance for religious communities, the Tanzimat reforms abolished the *dhimmi* status, with the state officially recognizing Ottoman subjects from all acknowledged religious communities as equals.[36] They also included a restructuring of internal communal leadership as dictated by the Ottoman authorities. Prior to the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman state for the most part practiced a form of benign neglect towards Jewish communal leadership.[37] In 1835, the Ottoman government established the position of *haham bashi* of the Ottoman Empire. This position, modeled after the Orthodox and Armenian patriarchates, was meant to

32 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews Stop writing to their brethren in Mainz?"

33 Hayyim J. Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1972* (New York: Wiley, 1973), 73. By this period a few thousand Baghdadis were living in Satellite communities in India and East Asia, for estimates of these population numbers see appendix.

34 JC, December 7, 1917, 7; See appendix of Jewish communal institutions.

35 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 51.

36 Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, 9–11.

37 Ibid. 10.

recognize Ottoman Jewry as an "official" community (millet) empowering the chief rabbi to act as both civil and religious head of all of the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire.[38]

The Tanzimat reforms were unsuccessful in unifying Ottoman Jewry. The act of creating a chief rabbi had little success in strengthening the ties among the various Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire. Each Jewish community had its own liturgies, customs and religious leaders, in addition to a great deal of linguistic diversity. These disparate groups showed little desire to unite and thus each Jewish community remained relatively independent.[39]

The Tanzimat reforms did, however, change the communal organization in Baghdad. Over several decades, the reforms led to the incorporation of some community structures into the state bureaucracy. Tthe role of chief rabbi was adopted at the provincial level and in 1849 the Jewish community of Baghdad abandoned the position of *nasi*. In place of the *nasi*, like in other Jewish communities, the Baghdad appointed its own chief rabbi, who was meant to be both spiritual leader and to take over the previously unofficial duties of the *nasi*.[40] It would seem, at first glance, counterintuitive that the abolishment of the position of *nasi*, a post previously held by a lay leader in favor of a religious leader such as chief rabbi, would be part of an agenda to modernize the Ottoman Empire. This change, however, implicitly provoked a discussion over the role of communal leadership. The role of *nasi* had been that of tax collector for the community, with little incentive to take on other responsibilities (such as education and personal status) that were part of the mandate of the religious authorities in the traditional communal organization. The new position of chief rabbi was an effort to merge and organize lay and religious responsibilities throughout the Ottoman Empire and place communal organization within the state bureaucracy.[41] As Yaron

38 Avigdor Levy, "Haham Basi," EJIW.

39 Benjamin Braude, 'Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System' in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* Vol. 1, *Central Lands* (London: Holmes & Meir, 1982), 69–88.

40 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 105, 122–127.

41 From the Ottoman perspective, it has been argued that the change in official leadership from lay to religious was done by the Ottomans so as to send a message to both the Christian and Jewish communities that they were not national ethnic minorities (with claims to national-territorial rights) but religious minorities. Although this assertion is impossible to prove, the reforms represent an attempt to consolidate communal leadership by integrating it into the Ottoman governing machine. Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary Legacy", *Ethnopolitics*, 15:1, (2016) 24–42; Eliyahu Agassi, "Communal Administration and Institutions," in *Annals of Iraqi Jewry*, ed. Ora Melamed, trans. Edward Levin, (Jerusalem: Eliner Library, 1995), 185.

Harel demonstrates, during the Ottoman period, from a socio-political perspective (as opposed to a spiritual perspective) the majority of Jewish communities in the Levant were directed by parallel forms of leadership: religious and secular. The lay leadership was responsible for tax collection and relationships with the Muslim authorities while the religious leadership was responsible for internal legal issues and (religious) education. The Ottoman objective of consolidating power, with a religious leader as head of the Jewish community, was difficult to accomplish and elevated the friction between lay and religious leadership.[42]

The most important step in the administrative reforms occurred in between 1863–1865, when the Ottoman government invited non-Muslims communities to draft an organizational statute for their communities. The resulting documents, which significantly increased the official lay representation within the communal administration, also resulted in an official system of communal governance not only for the main seat in Istanbul but also for the Jewish communities located in the Ottoman provinces and led to the ratification of an 1865 Tanzimat decree, the *hahamhane hizamnamesi*.[43] This decree stated that the chief rabbi would be supported by a religious council (*majlis al-ruhani*). This new religious council was composed of seven rabbis responsible for enforcing religious laws and regulations. In addition to this overtly religious council, two new official bodies were created: a lay committee (or *majlis al-jismani*) that was composed of nine elected lay officials; and a general council (or *majlis umumi*) that was intended to include sixty laymen and twenty rabbis.[44] These reforms can be perceived as the Jewish lay elite reaffirming their official position within the Jewish socio-political communal hierarchy. It is possible that the informal lay leadership's pivot toward greater contact with, or at the very least, interest in secular European Jewry was also part of this attempt to redefine their role and provide increased relevance to their position within the community. The reforms also split the Ottoman Empire into eight rabbinical districts outside of Istanbul, greater Baghdad being one of these. These districts were supposed to replicate the hierarchy of a chief rabbi who would report to the chief rabbi of the Ottoman Empire, and be supported by the religious and lay councils.[45] This new hierarchical structure was foreign to the

42 Harel, *Intrigue and revolution*, 3–4.

43 Avigdor Levy "Haham Basi," EJIW; Avigdor Levy, "Hahamhane Nizamnamesi," EJIW.

44 For Baghdad, in English, the council is referred to as both the lay council and the lay committee, two terms which I use interchangeably. In French language correspondence, the lay council is referred to as the consistoire, a nod to French Jewish communal organization.

45 Avigdor Levy, "Haham Basi," EJIW.; Avigdor Levy, "Hahamhane Nizamnamesi,"EJIW.

traditional organization of Jewish communities (in which each community had its own form of organization and authority, and acted independently from each other). As a result, the implementation of the reforms was slow, uneven and unpopular as it forced individual Jewish communities to give up their autonomy in deference to Istanbul in selecting their religious leader and in tax collection.[46]

With this in mind, the reforms had an important impact on the Jewish community of Baghdad, forcing them to formally organize both their lay and religious leadership. In the Ottoman world, therefore, modernization did not mean an end to confessionalism or sectarianism, only a restructuring through more control from the state. This, in and of itself, is a central difference between Jewish modernization in Western Europe as compared to the Ottoman Empire as there was never any attempt to distance religious authority from state authority. In transforming the religious communities, the Ottoman authorities endeavored to instill greater loyalty and notions of citizenship while maintaining the concept of separate religious communities. As Julia Cohen Philips argues, this was relatively successful among Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire,[47] but there is no evidence of a similar phenomenon in Baghdad during this period or of collaboration between Baghdad and Istanbul in this context. The Ottoman concept and structure of communal organization, however, was maintained during the Hashemite period, at a time in which the Jewish community in Baghdad did become part of the national Iraqi narrative.[48]

2.1. *Religious Leadership in Baghdad*

The position of chief rabbi in Baghdad was highly political and contentious from its outset, and most sources suggest that it never functioned as intended by the Ottoman authorities. The main cause of strife for the Chief Rabbi was his dependence on the commercial elite who ultimately became the main policy makers for the community due to their economic and political connections. Almost every single rabbi to hold the position of chief rabbi became embroiled in scandal.[49] The election of the first chief rabbi of Baghdad, as an example, involved a rivalry between the Aleppan Raphael ben

46 Daniel Schroeter, "The Changing Relationship Between Jews and the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century," in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans*, 100–103.

47 Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, 1–18.

48 The Organic Law of 'Iraq—Passed by the 'Iraq Constituent Assembly July 10, 1924 (Baghdad: Government Press, 1925); Reeva Spector Simon, "Iraqi Constitution (1924)," EJIW.

49 Harel *Intrigue and Revolution*, 1–10; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 157–164.

Elijah Katzin who was able to gain the support of many wealthy elites in Baghdad, and Abraham ben Obadiah Ha-Levi who was generally more respected by the Rabbinate and also enjoyed support from other factions in Baghdad. Katzin ultimately achieved the post by gaining the support of the chief rabbi in Istanbul and the Sultan.[50] Sassoon also describes these various scandals in detail in his work,[51] as when *Haham Bashi* Sason [sic] Smooha was accused of bribery and embezzlement of the military tax in 1879. The Pasha ultimately yielded to the will of the secular Baghdadi elites and had him removed from his position for twenty days until his petition to the chief rabbi in Constantinople was accepted and he was returned to his post in spring of 1881. Subsequent rabbis were regularly accused of misconduct and actions unbefitting a rabbi, often by secular elites who had other rabbis in mind to hold the position. This observation is confirmed in 1910 when Haron Da'ud Shohet, (dragoman to the British Consul in Iraq) was quoted as saying that the position of chief rabbi had become marginalized to the point where it was 'simply a mouth-piece' or a 'mere puppet' of the lay elite and that the rabbinate 'enjoy no influence over their co-religionists'.[52] Therefore, the position was not one which the leading religious minds in Baghdad wished to hold.

The moral or religious authority of the position is reaffirmed by the fact that the two most prominent Baghdadi rabbis of the modern period—Abdallah Somekh and Yosef Hayyim (also referred to as the Ben Ish Hai)—never held nor publicly petitioned to hold the position of chief rabbi although they were the most notable, prolific and respected Baghdadi rabbis of their time.[53] It was these men who were consulted by Baghdadi Jews abroad when questions of modernity provoked new interpretations of Jewish law.[54] As Sassoon states "the real leaders of the community in spiritual as well as legal matters were the *Hakhamim* whose life and work [...] show the weight attached to their personality and teachings on the one side, and the influence exercised by their saintliness and benevolence on the other."[55] In this analysis Sassoon is distinguishing between the official chief rabbi and the *hahkamim*, sages of the community. Sassoon's analysis is commensurate with the more contemporary observations of Yaron Harel who notes that the "office of *haham bashi* was an explicitly secular and political one

50 Agassi "Communal Administration and Institutions," 186.

51 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 157–164.

52 Kedourie "The Jews of Baghdad," 355.

53 Deshen, "Baghdad Jewry in Late Ottoman Times," 34.

54 Norman A. Stillman, *Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity*, (Reading: Hardwood Academic Publishers, 1995) 24.

55 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 157.

rather than a religious one, those chosen to occupy it were not usually the greatest Torah sages, but those individuals considered to have the best political talents."[56]

Spiritual authority was directed towards men such as Rabbis Abdallah Somekh and Yosef Hayyim. As the Jewish population in Baghdad grew in the late nineteenth century, for example, there was a shortage of bread produced by Jewish bakers. Past sages had prohibited Jews from purchasing bread from non-Jewish bakers, but to alleviate this crisis, Rabbi Somekh issued a *responsum* stating that Jews could purchase bread from non-Jews. Likewise, Rabbi Hayyim issued a *responsum* to allow for earlier slaughter of fowl before Yom Kippur and for prayer to begin earlier both to accommodate for the growth of the Jewish population in the city.[57] In each of these examples it was the spiritual leaders who were addressing practical responses to religious questions and in answering these questions were also defining communal policy. In fact, Harel goes as far as to argue that "so long as Somekh lived, every rabbi appointed as *hakham bashi* knew that he was working in his shadow".[58] As such, it is important to highlight that religious practice, traditions, and spiritual authority remained important for Jews in Baghdad and questions brought about by the intersection between modernity and religious practice were handled by these spiritual leaders whose readership extended beyond Iraq into the satellite communities of the East Asia.

Modernization of the state thus did not undermine religious authority as it did during the same period in France, for example, where, as Rabbis became civil servants, their powers were significantly weakened.[59] Instead modernization pushed spiritual leaders into informal positions from which they were able to mediate discussions of modernity outside of the state apparatus. As will become apparent in the following sections this point is important as the rabbinic creativity of Somekh and Hayyim for the most part found value in innovation, allowing Baghdadi Jewry to modernize without abandoning its traditions or creating large schisms in the community.[60]

The importance of this in the discussion of communal organization and modernization is twofold. Firstly, official state recognized religious leadership—the chief rabbi of Baghdad in particular—was relatively weak and not entirely successful in its

56 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 6.

57 Deshen, "Baghdad Jewry in Late Ottoman Times," 22–23.

58 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 85–86.

59 Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish-Identity in Nineteenth Century France*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) 192–203.

60 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 11–63.

objective to consolidate Jewish communal leadership via religious channels. Although the Ottoman reforms set out to make the Chief Rabbi a strong position that would bypass secular elites, without the support of secular elites in Baghdad or Istanbul the chief rabbi had relatively little power and resources of his own. Although the specific role of the lay elites during this period is unclear due to a lack of source material or official position, it should not be understated and the importance of the lay elite driving communal decision making should be stressed. This long period of transition in the nineteenth century should be understood as the logical precursor to the Mandate period when the lay council essentially took over the majority of the roles which the Ottomans intended for the chief rabbi to hold. Similarly, the position of chief rabbi would remain contentious throughout the Mandate period and during the early years of the Iraqi state.[61] In this discussion of community leadership, I highlight the superficial nature of the chief rabbi in relation to communal policies so as to better demonstrate that within the Jewish community the lay elite held a great deal of power even prior to the creation of the lay council in 1879. The position of chief rabbi was bureaucratic in nature and little in regard to notions of modernity, religiosity or secularization can be understood by only analyzing the communal structure put in place by the Tanzimat reforms.

Changes in communal organizations, instead, need to be understood in concert with increased contact with European Jewry who brought new ideas regarding Jewish emancipation, religious reform, and changing social mores, ideas which interested both unofficial religious elites and lay elites and is the theme of the following section.[62] As such, the changes in communal organization should be perceived as a form of secularization because the spiritual authority of the community was not aligned with the government recognized religious leader whose authority depended on the economic elites of the community. The lack of spiritual authority of the chief rabbi in no way diminished the importance of religious practice and tradition in Baghdad. It was simply separate from the person designated by the state bureaucracy.

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61 See Harel *Intrigue and revolution* for a discussion around the issue up until 1914; See the final chapter of this thesis for further discussion on the topic during the Hashemite period; Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 180–182.

62 The place and importance of the chief rabbi, would continue to be a major area of contention throughout the Hashemite period. The prime example of this being the last Haham Bashi of Baghdad, Sassoon Khadduri while also acting as president of the community (1928–1930, 1933–1949, 1953–1971). Khadduri's mark on Iraqi Jewish History is more as a politician than a religious leader. Reuven Snir, "'Khaḍḍūrī, Sassoon," EJIW.

3. Nineteenth Century European Influence: Iterations of Enlightenment

For Baghdadi Jews, intellectual changes, unlike political changes, were not imposed by the Ottoman authorities, nor was it primarily dependent on intellectual trends within the Ottoman sphere. Instead, the first wave of intellectual modernity was closely tied to Europe and, in particular via the late period of the *Haskala*, the European Jewish response and adoption of the broader ideas of the European enlightenment. The *Haskala* was a broad movement encompassing many, at times conflicting, ideas, but was generally focused on the question of what modernity and enlightenment meant in a Jewish context. Moshe Pelli concisely synthesizes the major trends and concepts which marked the movement as the rejuvenation of Jewish society through self-development, self-cultivation, and character-formation in the spirit of the German *Bildung*.[63] The modernization and revision of Jewish education was greatly influenced by the study of secular material, including sciences and foreign languages. The revitalization of Jewish culture by introducing elements of European culture, Western values, social customs and conventions and giving greater importance to Hebrew letters stands in contrast to earlier generations' attempts at reforming religious ordinances, customs, and folk religious practices.[64]

One difference in the Baghdadi context was the complexity of navigating between both European and Ottoman/Arab/Islamic culture. Questions of participation in a pluralist secular society would only become relevant in the twentieth century and, as a result, many of these questions seemed more inward looking in the nineteenth century. As I will demonstrate, although the intellectual Baghdadi elites were inspired by the *Haskala*, it cannot be inferred that Baghdadi Jews did not develop their own original forms of modernity or thought, nor that their experience with modernity was exclusively dependent on European Jewry; or as Lital Levy would say "subordinating Baghdad to Europe through a hierarchical (and Eurocentric) paradigm of centers and margins".[65] In fact, I argue the opposite, stating that Baghdadi Jewry did not simply imitate European Jewry but choose how they partnered with European organizations, demonstrating significant agency through their engagement with the Arabic language and its literature and in negotiating their relationships with European Jews in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rabbis such as Abdallah Somekh at times offered responses to modernity in regard to uses of the

63 Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond*, 16.

64 Ibid.

65 Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East," 308.

technology and gender norms[66] which were considerably more liberal than the rabbis of Europe.[67] It is my contention that questions of modernity and the enlightenment entered Jewish Baghdadi circles at this early stage due to contacts with European Jewry, but that elites in Baghdad were defining their own version of modernity using multiple models drawn from Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and the Ottoman Empire.[68]

As Nora Ṣeni points out, one consequence of the *Haskala* in Eastern Europe was an increased interest in the origins of Judaism, and the practices of other Jewish communities as part of the European Jews embracing of the idea of *bildung*.[69] This new way of studying Jewish history meant that European Jews were interested in those communities which were felt to practice an "authentic form of Judaism", or those perceived as historically significant Jewish communities. As a consequence, some European Jews traveled to MENA, the three most well-known of these travelers who wrote of their adventures were Salmon Munk, Louis Loewe, and Albert Cohn, who although they themselves never visited Baghdad, traveled to other parts of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. Their writing made European Jewish intellectuals and philanthropists aware of these communities and the obstacles they encountered.[70] In this perspective, Baghdad was an important destination as it was perceived as being the link to the historic community of Babylon.[71] Lesser known Jewish individuals did make it to Baghdad, for example Israel Benjamin (Moldova) in 1848, Wolf Schor (Poland) visited in 1881 and David Semah (Bulgaria) in 1869 to name a few.[72] Each of these men wrote about their travels to Baghdad and their exchanges with the local Jewish community and published their works in Europe.[73] Many impoverished Eastern European Jews temporarily stopped in Baghdad *en route* to North America, Palestine, and Australia as part of the great Eastern European Jewish migration between 1881–1920.[74] A few Eastern European Jews permanently settled in Baghdad, encouraged by the Ottoman reforms (which were opening up new

66 Stillman, *Sephardic Religious Responses to Modernity*, 24–26; Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 43–90.

67 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 11–89.

68 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 84–85.

69 Ṣeni, *Les inventeur de la philanthropie juive*, 27–47.

70 Ibid.

71 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews stop writing to their Brethren in Mainz?," 97–98.

72 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 177.

73 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews stop writing to their Brethren in Mainz?," 98, n11.

74 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 74–76.

opportunities to Jews), the economic growth from new trade routes and the wish to escape discriminatory measures in their own countries.[75] As Zvi Yehuda notes, there was never a wave of Sephardic migration to Baghdad similar to what Aleppo experienced. In the 1850s, however, there was a small community of Ashkenazi Jews from Poland, Russia, and Germany who, for a short time, carried out a separate minyan.[76] Those Jews who stayed eventually assimilated into the larger community's religious customs and did not form a separate religious community.[77] The two most notable of these men in the context of Baghdad were Isaac Luria a clock/watchmaker who became the first head of the AIU school in Baghdad, and Hermann Rosenfeld, an Austrian tailor who was also an early supporter of the school initiative.[78]

These travelers and those who settled in the Ottoman Empire brought with them the writings of the late *Haskala* and the earliest mentions of Jewish nationalism. At least four seminal European *Haskala* journals *ha-Maggid* (the speaker/preacher), *ha-Melis* (the translator/advocate), *ha-Havaselet* (The Lily), and *ha-Sefirah* (The Awakening) were commonly read by the Baghdadi Jewish elite during the second half of the nineteenth century.[79] These journals provided a window into the debates of the European Jewry. As early as 1860 *ha-Maggid* expounded on the importance of Jewish resettlement in the land of Israel and advocated a moderate view on religious reform.[80] *Ha-Sefirah* was published in Poland with a main of audience of the local Hasidic community and emphasized the lack of contradiction between religious belief and scientific knowledge, a reassuring idea to the rabbis of Baghdad as secular education would become a major focus of the communal administration.[81] *Ha-Melis*, focused on the political issues facing Jews in Tsarist Russia, focusing on the political, ideological, and social dilemmas these Jews faced due to questions of modernity. *Ha-Melis* also supported the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine, publishing essays by Ahad Ha'am and was, perhaps, responsible for introducing Baghdadi Jews to the earliest iterations of secular Zionism.[82]

These newspapers, all published in Hebrew, exposed the Jewish elites of Baghdad to the issues facing other Jewish communities, some of which were familiar to those

75 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 181.
76 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 74–76.
77 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 43–46.
78 Also spelled Lurion and Rozenfeld.
79 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews stop writing to their Brethren in Mainz?," 97.
80 Avner Holtzman, "Magid, Ha," YIVO.
81 Avner Holtzman, "Tsefirah, Ha," YIVO.
82 Avner Holtzman, "Melits, Ha," YIVO.

in Baghdad. Questions on the importance of secular education and religious reform were regularly debated, but other issues, such as the future of the Yiddish language, were completely foreign to Ottoman Jewry. They also supplied the Baghdadi Jews with the general news of Europe and other parts of the Ottoman Empire in a language they could access, Hebrew. That the language of communication for these exchanges was Hebrew is significant as it led to secular interaction beyond rabbinic correspondence between Eastern Europe and Baghdad in the second half of the twentieth century.[83]

The journals surely made an impression on the religious and lay Baghdadi Jews as some came to contribute to these journals, giving European readers insight into Jewish life in Iraq. The most prolific of these writers, Rabbi Shlomo Hutsin, wrote for all of the *Haskala* periodicals available in Baghdad during the second half of the nineteenth century.[84] In some pieces, he discussed simple matters such as informing the readership of natural disasters befalling the community. In other pieces, however, he made greater assertions about the state of Baghdadi Jewry. Most importantly, he made the case that the Jews in Baghdad had knowledge of the enlightenment and were, like their brethren in Europe, committed to science and rationalism.[85] Hutsin was also responsible for importing many of these newspapers to Baghdad[86] and went as far as to try to start a local *Haskala* inspired newspaper in Baghdad, but was never granted permission. Instead, Baghdadi *Haskala* inspired newspapers would be published in Judeo-Arabic in the Baghdadi satellites communities located on the Indian subcontinent, where Baghdadi Jews began to settle as early as the 1840s. These journals were distributed with the European *Haskala* journals in Baghdad and received contributions from Jews living in Baghdad and thus acted as a proxy Jewish print culture.[87] The one exception to the lack of local newspapers was a Hebrew publication *ha-Dover* (The Speaker) which was published sporadically in Baghdad from 1863 to 1871 by Barukh Moshe Mizrahi, and was modeled on the style of *ha-Levanon*, an

83 Yaron Tsur makes the same argument in the context of relations between North Africa and Eastern Europe in Yaron Tsur, "Religious Internationalism in the Jewish Diaspora—Tunis at the Dawn of the Colonial Period" in Green and Viane, *Religious Internationals in the Modern World*, 186–204.

84 Levy estimates that he wrote over 150 articles between the following journals *ha-Levanon, ha-Dover, ha-Magid, ha-Havatselet, ha-Tsfira, ha-Melis, Perah, and ha-Mevaser*. Lital Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East", 340–352.

85 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 101; Shlomo Behor Hutsin, "Asia-Baghdad", *Ha-Maggid* December 26, 1868; Lev Hakak, The Collected Essays of Rabbi Shelomo Bekhor Hutsin [In Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz ha-Me-Uhad, 2005).

86 Yehuda, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 74.

87 See chapter two on the Baghdadi satellite communities.

example of the close intellectual affinities between the Baghdadi intellectuals with their brethren of the *Haskala* in Europe.[88]

If the interest in European Jewry newspapers was consistent, the relationship between the European Jews in Baghdad and the local elites was far from straightforward. The European Jews often portrayed the Baghdadi community from what today would be considered an orientalist perspective, presenting themselves as the saviors and instructors of the community, ascribing the community's success to their "civilizing" influences. As these reports were published in journals which Jews in Baghdad were reading they were well aware of how the foreigners positioned themselves. One example of this complicated relationship is illustrated by the treatment of Jacob Obermeir.[89] Obermeir was a Jew of German origin who was an instructor in the Persian court and the local agent in Baghdad for the *Haskala* journal *ha-Magid*. As part of his role as agent for the journal, he wrote a series of articles about Jewish life in Baghdad in which he described the community as backward, and accused Rabbi Yosef Haim of being an impediment to modern education in Baghdad.[90] In her work, Bashkin summarizes the reprisals by the community:

> "The rabbis excommunicated Obermeir, read the ex-communication document in synagogues and wrote letters and petitions to Ha-Maggid and Ha-Levanon on the matter. Subsequently, Obermeir sent letters of apology to the newspapers. Coincidentally, he concurrently received news about his mother's death, which was seen by the community as divine punishment. No Jew agreed to pray with him during the seven days of mourning and finally, he publicly requested the community's forgiveness."[91]

As this event shows, the Jews of Baghdad were not ignorant of how they were perceived by other Jewish communities, and they used various tools such as the media and social pressure, to assert their agency. As Bashkin underlines in her piece on the *Haskala* journals, the Baghdadi Jewish elites were engaged with European members of the *Haskala* and were aware of their, at times, orientalist perspectives. The Baghdadi

88 Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East", 327–339; Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Creativity*, 171–173.

89 Also spelled Obermayer in some correspondence.

90 *Ha-Magid* no. 2, January 12, 1876. Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 16–18; Bashkin "Why did Baghdadi Jews stop writing to their Brethren in Mainz", 97–98.

91 Ibid.

Jews would also use this narrative when it benefited them, such as decrying poverty when soliciting funds. Their continued reading of and contributions to these journals demonstrate their extended interest in the ideas expounded in these pieces and a desire to participate in these debates.

The question of how these intellectual discussions influenced societal change in Baghdad is difficult to critically assess. In parallel to this intellectual dialogue in print media, we see the Baghdadi intellectual elites founding charities, clubs, and societies all with the objective of improving Jewish communal life in Baghdad. For example the *ḥevrat shomrey mitsvot* (founded in 1868) whose budget would eventually become part of the larger communal budget mixed questions of religious observance such as checking religious parchments and supervising preparation of certain foods with providing support to orphans and widows.[92] An example of the convergence between the writings of the *Haskala* and these societies is an 1868 speech given by Hutsin for the *Hevrat shomrey mitsvot* of Baghdad in which he called for Jewish unity and, in particular, for working to help the Jews of Persia and Kurdistan through traditional charity and, more importantly, education.[93]

Many of the new organizations were partnerships between native Baghdadis and the few European Jews present in Baghdad, especially an initiative in secular education when the Jews in Baghdad decided to transfer administration of their school to the AIU in Baghdad in 1864.[94] This act was significant in that it represented an initiative from two European Jews, the aforementioned Isaac Luria and Hermann Rosenfeld, along with two native born Baghdadi Jews Joseph Shemtob and David Somekh.[95] Additionally it was the first recorded act of an official partnership in Baghdad between members of the Jewish community and a European Jewish organization. Other small initiatives are described by Morris Cohen in his letters to the AJA between 1884–1889 in which he outlines programs relating to small scholarships for deserving students, monies given to open communal libraries and apprenticeship programs for young men.[96]

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92 Ibid.

93 Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East," 351.

94 Zvi Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Cultural Change in educational Activity of the Alliance Israelite Universelle" in *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, ed. Harvey Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, *1996*), 135, 185.

95 Rejwan suggests that the main impetus came from Luria and Rosenfeld; Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 181. However, most scholars include Shemtob and Somekh in the initial project; Sawayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 19.

96 Morris Cohen was the first English teacher sent by the AJA to Baghdad, he stayed in Baghdad from 1879–1901; MS137 AJ95/ADD/5.

These initiatives were developed on an ad hoc basis, supported by patrons inside and outside of Iraq with European Jews quick to take responsibility for the successes and assign the failures to the local community.[97] Neither the money which funded these initiatives nor the administrative structure was formal. For this reason, many of these clubs and societies were fleeting in nature. Even the first secular school, established in 1864, quickly closed after a few months and was not reopened until 1872. The reasons for this closure were numerous, but were generally attributed to religious opposition, a lack of suitable teachers and a lack of communal support (both financial and political), all of which speak to the incoherence in lay organization for the Jewish community in the mid-nineteenth century.[98]

The majority of initiatives to spread and expand on the ideas of enlightenment stayed within a small educated Baghdadi Jewish elite in the nineteenth century. These elites tried to organize schools, clubs, and charities with a broader scope through scholarships and vocational training. However secular leadership was very much in flux caused by migration into Iraq from Jews in Persia and Kurdistan, and towards the satellite communities. As a consequence, we can assume that long term secular Jewish institutions were difficult to develop considering the short life of many of these initiatives.[99]

In summary, the nineteenth century saw an intellectual rapprochement and strengthened communication between Baghdad and Eastern European Jewry, in part due to the flourishing of the late *Haskala* press and European Jews settling in Baghdad.[100] Returning to Pelli's list of characteristics of the *Haskala*, it clearly becomes evident that the majority of ideals expressed in the *Haskala* were of relevance to the Baghdadi intellectual elites as demonstrated in their actions. For example, the small salons that developed in which local elites would discuss the ideas espoused by the *Haskala* periodicals were very much in the spirit of the German *Bildung*.[101] The modernization and revision in the focus of Jewish education is seen both in the earliest of the AIU schools and continues well into the Mandate period.[102] Elements of secular European culture such as Western dress, naming practices, and language acquisition

97 This bias is clearly demonstrated in the minutes of the AJA from the nineteenth century. MS137 AJ37/5/2/2; MS137 AJ95/ADD/5; MS137 AJ 95/ADD/6.

98 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 185.

99 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 84–85.

100 The satellite Baghdadi communities in East Asia helped to forge this relationship, this relationship is discussed in the two proceeding chapters.

101 MS137 AJ95/ADD/5, December 29, 1885; Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 19.

102 See chapter four on education for additional discussion.

were adopted by some Baghdadis toward the end of the nineteenth century, but these too were restricted to a small elite. There was even a small flourishing movement in modern Hebrew linguistic creativity, which was linked to European Jewish writers and poets.[103]

Other themes and consequences of the *Haskala* in Europe were less relevant to Iraqi Jews in the nineteenth century. Western European style political and social emancipation, were not yet a reality in the late Ottoman period for the Jews in Baghdad.[104] Instead, these ideas would gain importance only after 1908 with the Young Turk revolution, the *Nahda*, and later the creation of the modern Iraqi Republic.[105] This is in contrast to Judeo-Spanish speaking Sephardic Jews in Salonika and Turkey who appear to have been much more engaged with the concept of Ottoman citizenship in the nineteenth century.[106] Julia Philips Cohen, gives the example of Sephardic Jews holding formal celebrations in 1892 to celebrate four hundred years of Sephardic life in the Ottoman Empire to "reinforce their relationship with the state and fashion themselves anew as members of the civilized world and as citizens of their Eastern empire."[107] I have found no parallel examples for Baghdadi Jewry prior to 1908. One reason for this may be the societal differences as Baghdadi Jewry perceived themselves as an indigenous population in contrast to the Judeo-Spanish speaking Sephardic Jews, who were more culturally and linguistically distinct and thus they felt less need to justify their position within the Ottoman state. Similarly, Baghdadi Jews seem to have had limited exchange with Sephardic Jews during this period. This may partially be attributed to linguistic differences as the Jews in Baghdad spoke Arabic and the Sephardic Jews spoke Ladino, limiting access to each other's periodicals, although they were reading the same European newspapers, engaged with the same Jewish philanthropic organizations, underwent relatively similar processes of modernization, and fell under the same political regime.

The main commonality between Ottoman Sephardim and the Baghdadis was their religious response to modernity. As Matthias Lehmann demonstrates in *Ladino Rabbinic Literature & Ottoman Sephardic Culture* the Sephardic Rabbis did their best to

103 Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Creativity*, 25–27.

104 Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, "Modernization without Assimilation: Notes on the Social Structures of the Jews of Iraq," [In Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 36 (1988), 3–6.

105 For a comparison of the *Nahda* and the *Haskala* see Lital Levy "The Nahḍa and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform'", *Middle Eastern Literatures: incorporating Edebiyat*, 16:3, (2013) 300–316.

106 Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*.

107 Ibid, 47–48.

legitimize secular subjects within a religious context, by showing value in technological innovations[108] and in this way their work was similar to that of Abdallah Somekh. As Lehmann observes:

> [...] the major difference between modern Sephardic and Ashkenazi halakhah: confronting the onslaught of modernity, the emerging Ashkenazic Ultra-Orthodoxy tend to redraw the boundaries of tradition in terms of increased stringency and rigidity [...] and therefore "it is proper to make a fence around the Torah to be stringent and not add lenient ruling." In contrast Sephardic rabbis "felt free to continue to apply traditional canons of halakhic decision-making processes which enabled, and sometimes even encouraged, encourage intra-halakhic novelty."[109]

As such, Baghdadi Jewry, in comparison to Ashkenazi Jewry, did not experience the stark bifurcation between the traditionalists and those arguing for progress, or fractious reform movements in Judaism. Instead this process of modernization was more gradual and less traumatic in comparison to Ashkenazi experiences. Unlike European Jewry, Baghdadi Jewry exited the nineteenth century relatively intact in regard to religious practice and lifestyle, as Baghdadi society as a whole provided no secular alternative, although the community was, beginning in the 1870s to slowly change.[110] As Shlomo Deshen argues, using sources from period *responsa*, the rabbis of Baghdad did not take action against personal religious transgressions, because they did not believe that these personal transgressions would translate into larger trends of eschewing religious tradition throughout the community.[111] The Rabbis themselves engaged with questions of modernity and saw value in the debates even if they did not accept all of the conclusions.[112] Furthermore, similar to Eastern Europe, only the educated class had a level of Hebrew sufficient to read these European publications in Hebrew and therefore it was felt that those educated enough to read these newspapers

108 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) 187–201.

109 Ibid, 201.

110 Stillman discusses the lack of secular alternative for the whole of MENA Jewry. Stillman, *Sephardic Religious Responses to Modernity*, 3–5, 9–28.

111 Deshen, "Baghdad Jewry in Late Ottoman Times," 37–38.

112 Deshen, "Baghdad Jewry in Late Ottoman Times"; Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*.

could properly understand their message.[113] Overall, in the late nineteenth century the spiritual leadership of men such as such as Rabbis Yosef Haim and Abdallah Somekh's were not contested by the masses.[114]

Beyond these communal reasons for the lack of internal schisms in the nineteenth century, the central reason for the unity of Baghdadi Jewry in this period is that as there was no structural alternative. In the Ottoman Tanzimat system local confessionalism was in many ways strengthened, and thus communal life and organization was not eroded but instead expanded and strengthened. Additionally, Baghdad remained a relative backwater for the Ottoman administration, although it was becoming important trade route. Baghdadi elites represented one of the most modernized groups in the city. The governor of Baghdad, Midhat Pasha, an advocate of the Ottoman reforms and strong proponent of modernization, modeled some of his larger reforms on the initiatives of the Jewish community.[115] In summary, modernization for Jews in Baghdad was primarily internal in this early phase, and the bureaucratic structure of the Ottoman Empire was not conducive to internal schisms.[116]

As in other areas of the Ottoman World, contact with European Jews was for the most part positive, leading to fruitful exchanges. However, there was some tension between the Baghdadi Jews and the European Jews. As Bashkin notes, the Baghdadis were acutely aware of the Orientalist lens through which many of the European Jews were prone to view the Baghdad community, an issue which was constantly being addressed and renegotiated.[117]

4. The Lay Council: Structural and Intellectual Forces of Modernity

The nineteenth century presented a slow process of transition for the Jewish community of Baghdad as it confronted new ideas which challenged societal norms and restructured communal organization. The lay council was the coming together of the

113 This was not dissimilar to Eastern Europe where Yiddish was the main language of the Jewish community, however reading in Hebrew was limited to the intellectual elites. For example, *ha-Melis* is estimated to have had 150 subscribers in 1860. Eddy Portnoy, *Bad Rabbi: And Other Strange but True Stories from the Yiddish Press*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6.

114 The official Ottoman *Zewra* estimated that in 1869 there were 9,325 Jews in Baghdad, Ceylan, Ebubekir, *Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 34.

115 Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 27–31.

116 Eisenstadt, "Modernization without Assimilation" 3–6.

117 Bashkin, "Why did Baghdadi Jews stop writing to their Brethren in Mainz?," 97–103.

structural changes brought about by the communal reorganization of the Tanzimat and the enlightenment ideals espoused by the local Jewish elites. The lay council represented an official apparatus through which the secular communal elites could promote their desire to strengthen ties with foreign Jewish communities and develop secular communal organizations such as schools, hospitals, and charities. In respect to European Jewry the lay council represented a secular partner to act as the main interlocutor for communal policy, dedicated to engaging with modernity, and able to decide who and how they wished to work with other groups. In this way, the lay council was an "agent of modernity," as it had the mandate to make communal decisions, the ability to spread their ideas via secular education and the desire to adopt and adapt to new cultural norms.[118]

Although the foundations for the lay council were enshrined in the aforementioned 1864 Tanzimat reforms of the *hahamhane nizammnamesi*, these decrees were unevenly applied in Iraq and the exact workings of it first decades are not completely known.[119] With the appointment of Midhat Pasha as governor in 1869, Baghdad began to modernize its government and infrastructure in earnest. For example, the city began to pave streets, build public parks, and developed plans for a tramway. For the Jewish community in Baghdad, this had direct consequences in their communal structure as Midhat Pasha strove to apply the Ottoman communal reforms for the organization of communities.[120]

This is first seen through the formation of a general council of sixty businessmen and twenty religious scholars in accordance with the government regulations. From this larger group, a smaller committee of 7 religious leaders and 9 businessmen directed communal affairs although little documentation remains as to how this group functioned.[121] However, it was not until 1879 that Baghdad would establish a separate lay council. This slow adoption of the Ottoman edicts is in line with the fact that the edicts were not followed to the letter of the law. The council's composition varied from what was outlined by Istanbul with the general council being folded into the lay council by including three Rabbis and nine wealthy men at certain times.[122] Overall, communal leadership was far from democratic. Instead it was a representation

118 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 25.

119 Some scholars such as Zvi Yehuda and Avraham Twena go as far as to argue that they were not fully applied until after the 1908 revolution. Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 102.

120 Daniel Schroeter "Changing Relationship between Jews and the Ottoman State" in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans*, 100–101; Sawaydee, *The Baghdad* Connection, 27–29.

121 Agassi, "Communal Administration and Institutions," 186.

122 Ibid, 191.

of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the community who internally vied for power within the community. Rabbinic leadership was picked by these elites, as earlier stated, thus reinforcing the political, as opposed to ecclesiastical, nature of the office of the rabbinate. It would take several decades for the lay council to consolidate its control over the community, as the communal structure had been significantly damaged due to infighting between various pretenders to the position of chief rabbi in the period between 1864 until David Pappo became chief rabbi in 1905.[123]

The first internal document defining the role of the lay council in Baghdad was the "Writ of Acceptance" drawn up to define the council's mandate, upon the council's founding.[124] The document makes no reference to communal reform, or the spirit of the *Haskala*. Instead, the document reaffirms the traditional responsibilities of the communal leaders. It does, however, place the responsibility of communal stability and welfare in the hands of the lay council (rather than with the chief rabbi):

1. Supervision over the income and expenditures of the community;
2. The enactment of regulations for the good of the community and the poor;
3. The determination of communal taxes and the appointment of assessors, trustees, and collectors;
4. Estimating the contribution to be given to emissaries from Eretz Israel [sic] visiting Baghdad and to others passing through the city;
5. Supervision of the *muktars* in the city, who were responsible for the affairs in the Jewish districts.[125]

Although the writ structurally addresses the issue of the poor and developing regulations to help the poor, it is unlikely that this initial writ of acceptance was enacted on. Instead, it is more likely that over time the lay council brought communal charities under its umbrella. Examples of charities which existed prior to the lay council but would come under its jurisdiction within the first decades of its existence include the AIU school (founded in 1865), the Midrash Talmud Torah (founded in 1833),[126] both of which would eventually be run by the schools' committee who

123 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 110–111.

124 Ibid.

125 Text and translation from Eliyahu Agassi "Communal Administration and Institutions: Autonomy and Self-Rule of Iraqi Jewry", 191.

126 Although the rabbinate would control the curriulum of the Talmud Torah, the lay council was responsible for the allocation of funds to run the school.

reported directly to the lay council. The precursor to the charitable actions of the lay council was the aformentioned *hevrat shomrey mitsvot* (founded in 1868) whose budget would eventually become part of the larger communal budget. In fact, this society may be analogous to the earlier general council as the description of its composition is the same.[127] Smaller charities existed to maintain synagogues, holy shrines and to assist the poor. At their founding, these institutions were not financed by communal funds, but were private initiatives financed by wealthy Baghdadis from both Baghdad and the satellite communities. They were also traditional in nature, with the exception of the AIU managed school. By the Mandate period issues relating to religious observance became the jurisdiction of the rabbinate while the budgets of charitable societies fell under the jurisdiction of the lay council. This process, however, was gradual and the exact evolution is not clear from the surviving documentation.

As the actions of the lay council was slowly extended to cover more areas of civil life, central to its mandate was the administration of charity within the Jewish community. Theoretically, the lay council could have replicated traditional forms of charity (alms giving, housing Jewish travelers, and supporting religious institutions), but over the course of a few decades the focus of the council would shift towards secular education and improvement of public health. By the beginning of the Mandate period one could argue that the lay council was in many respects intellectually analogous with Jewish philanthropic organizations in Europe such as the AIU, the AJA in its desire to educate and "modernize" the community through education and opportunities for personal development.[128]

Beyond simply stating the mandate of the lay council, the other important outcome of the writ of acceptance was that the lay council gained a full mandate for all non-ecclesiastical issues affecting the Jewish community, meaning that the lay council had to become more active and organized. The authority of secular leadership was further strengthened by developing formal relationships with Western European Jewish organizations based on the ad hoc relationships which had already existed for decades.[129] An example of this power shift is a letter sent by the AJA to Menahem Daniel Saleh, a member of the lay council, in 1886 suggesting that he bring to bear pressure on the rabbis (in his role as a secular leader) to abandon their opposition of

127 Sassoon, *A History of Jews in Baghdad*, 173–175.

128 MS137 AJ37/4/5, Summary of Report on Jewish Schools in Baghdad 1925 prepared for the AJA.

129 These organizations are addressed in chapter three.

secular knowledge.[130] Although it is unknown how Saleh reacted to such prodding, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the lay council had complete control of education matters and the importance of secular education was widely respected by the rabbinate.[131]

As to the question of poverty, conflicting material exists as to how the communal leadership viewed and addressed poverty prior to World War I. Some sources imply that charity was not central to the objectives of the lay council while others mention orphanages and funds set aside for widows.[132] More realistically the lay council's role developed in concert with the expansion of the Jewish schools, the growth in number and the expanding wealth of the Baghdadi satellite communities, and the increased support from European Jewish philanthropic aid organizations. An early example of a decision taken by the lay council was the 1885 agreement to pay 100 pounds for the teaching of handicrafts if the AIU and AJA would match the sum.[133] These initiatives were first signs of an ideology bent on communal development which would emerge in the first decades of its existence. These policies focused on developing relationships beyond Baghdad, and the Arabic speaking world.

The lay council developed these relationships with two intertwined groups that mutually reinforced each other, one with European and later American Jewish philanthropic organizations, and the other with Baghdadi Jews residing in India and East Asia who maintained close economic and familial ties to Baghdad and were still deferring to Baghdad for spiritual leadership (and, in addition, regularly remitted funds to Baghdad). Development of these formal relationships were slow in coming to fruition. The lay council lacked a defined vision for their communal initiatives in the late nineteenth century, in comparison to the sophisticated reports on education and communal wellbeing they would commission beginning in the Mandate period. This lack of defined objectives was not missed by the foreign teachers of the AIU School in

130 The letter from the AJA to Menahem Daniel Saleh is not contained in the minute book, only the main points of the letter; MS137 AJ95/ADD/5, Executive Minute Book—March 30, 1886.

131 This is generally attributed to Rabbi Abdallah Somekh's decision to allow his own grandchildren to attend the AIU School. Somekh's grandson Shaul Somekh became the president of the AIU in Baghdad and principal of the boy's school. Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 193–194.

132 It is highly probable that these projects were financed by private donations, not communally controlled funds. In reference to the role of the lay council the teacher of the AIU accused the communal leadership of not focusing its resources on supporting the impoverished; AIU Irak BOB4 178–184. Other sources mention the centrality of charity, for example, Avraham Ben Yaacov, *A History of the Jews in Iraq, from the End of the Gaonic Period—1038 CE–to the Present Time*, [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1965), 268–273.

133 AJ95/ADD/5—Executive minute book, July 15, 1885.

Baghdad. In November 1885 one teacher even remarked about the relative inaction of the lay council regarding education and services to the poor.[134] Even with these pessimistic pronouncements from foreign teachers the lay council slowly became more active, as is apparent in their correspondence with contacts from abroad in the years leading up to World War I. The communal leadership even appointed the English teacher from the AIU School, Morris Cohen, to be part of the lay council in 1886.[135] This act itself was perhaps part of a desire to both demonstrate their willingness to include foreign Jews in their communal leadership and also, in this case, to further strengthen their ties to the English Jewry as the British Empire was emerging as the most important foreign actor in the region.

This foreign appointment to the lay council, the lay council's early exchanges with foreign Jewish organizations, and the general turn for the council to take on a more active role in the education and "moral development" of the community may in part be due to a desire to consolidate communal leadership. The most compelling support for such an analysis is the short lived association *Kaveh Le'atid* (Hope for the Future) founded in 1885 by a group of former AIU students who wanted to take on more responsibility in the community and act as a counterbalance to the infighting between the rabbinate and lay elites.[136] The alumni of the AIU school, with the help educated Baghdadi Jews residing in England, India, and China, formed the society to promote the "moral and material" status of the Jewish community of Baghdad. The initiatives included salon style meetings and a goal of expanding education beyond the communal elite.[137] The society itself was short lived but the ideals it espoused were integrated into the ethos of the lay council which eventually took over responsibility for the types of initiatives announced by *Kaveh Le'atid*.

Although we do not know exactly how the first lay council was formed, beyond the above mentioned 1879 writ, by the 1890s, an official body called the lay council existed as the archives of the AIU and AJA contain correspondence from Baghdad written by the lay council on its official letterhead.[138] Prior to this, correspondence with foreign organizations was handled by various and fleeting committees or individual notables

134 AIU Irak BOB4 178–184, Letter to the President of the AIU signed by Isaac Louria and Morris Cohen. This document could also be interpreted as the teachers defending their personal importance within the community.

135 JC, January 8, 1886, 5.

136 AIU Irak III.E., Bagdad, 75a; Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 11.

137 AIU Irak IV.E, 185–187.

138 The majority of these early letters were addressed to the AJA or the AIU in MS 137 AJ95/ADD/6 Executive committee book 4, 1889–1908.

in an ad hoc fashion, and centered around individuals in Baghdad and abroad pledging funds for a project or asking a foreign group to match these funds.[139] Such was the case in establishing the earliest scholarships and prizes at the AIU School. In none of these examples do the actors from Baghdad present themselves as speaking on behalf of the Jewish community of Baghdad as they would in later correspondence.[140] The 1890s is also the period in which reports in the *Jewish Chronicle* begin to make mention of the lay council in regard to decisions about the funding of schools.[141] These articles are indicative of the strengthened relationship between the lay council and English Jewry via their association with the AJA, as their annual reports and activities in Baghdad were published in the *Jewish Chronicle*.[142]

By the early twentieth century, the activity of the lay council is apparent in the amount of correspondence they undertook with local consuls, the aforementioned Jewish aid organizations, and their personal contacts abroad.[143] Their requests for assistance were numerous, well defined, and show a desire to bring Western style education and medical care to the Jews of Baghdad. These international ties of the communal leadership and the expanded communal infrastructure allowed, over time, for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the Jewish community.[144] As early as 1910, reports to foreign consuls emerge suggesting an important Jewish middle class, (understood as to have had access to some secular education and engaged in white collar employment) continuing to grow well into the 1940s.[145] Foreign Jewish aid both from organizations and individuals played an immeasurable role in this development, without which the community would not have been able to flourish as it did. Although the financial aspect of this aid was central to communal development, aid also came in other forms that were just as instrumental, specifically by providing technical expertise, and political support.

Financial aid is certainly the most quantifiable form of support. Regular donations, special grants from foreign organizations and assistance in facilitating dona-

139 MS137 AJ95/ADD/5.

140 This change in organization is apparent in the references of the minute book of the AJA see—MS137 AJ95/ADD/4 AJA Minute book and the AIU correspondence AIU Irak BOB4.

141 JC, March 7, 1890, 13.

142 JC, July 16, 1897, 22–23.

143 MS137 AJ95/ADD/6; MS137 AJ35/5/2/1; AIU IRAK BOB4.

144 The causes of improved socio-economic perspective generally relate to globalization. In the case of Baghdadi Jews increased access to secular education coupled with new opportunities in business and trade. For more on this see chapter four.

145 Kedourie "The Jews of Baghdad," 357.

tions from individuals in foreign Jewish communities made possible the development of a large and successful network of social institutions developed and managed by the communal leadership. Wealthy Baghdadi Jews living both in Baghdad and abroad were extremely important in providing the funds to build communal institutions and later the Jewish middle class were also active in supporting these institutions. The main providers of financial assistance were the few very wealthy Jews inside of Iraq (the most well-known being Menahem Daniel Saleh), wealthy Baghdadi Jews residing outside of Iraq (such as the Sassoon and Kadoorie families), and Jewish philanthropic aid organizations. However, the Jewish community was also successful in receiving funds on occasion from foreign consuls wishing to expand their spheres of influence in Baghdad, specifically through the study of English and French.[146]

Beyond financial support one of the most important functions of these organizations was assistance in providing or arranging for experts to travel to Baghdad to advise the community. As Peter Sluglett mentions, Iraq had a general penury of educated individuals well into the 1930s as a consequence of an underdeveloped education system, and there was a specific need for instructors capable of teaching Western languages.[147] The Jewish community was able to utilize their international connections to bring foreign teachers, administrators, doctors, nurses, and other experts who were sent by foreign Jewish organizations to either themselves work in Baghdad or to train locals from the Baghdad community in areas where expertise was lacking. Aid organizations arranged for Baghdadi Jewish students to receive training in France, England, and even the United States on condition that they return to their home country or to another country in need of teachers upon completion of their studies.[148]

Of the functions these philanthropic organizations served perhaps the most nuanced was that of political lobbyist, informant, negotiator and, at times, protector. Whereas the financial and specialist aid began in the nineteenth century, this political assistance gained greater importance with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and as the importance of Britain in Iraq grew. Additionally, very wealthy Baghdadis abroad also played an important role in lobbying for the community, liaising with foreign governmental bodies on behalf of the Jewish community of Baghdad. This role as political agent and advisor was the most complicated of the three types of aid provided to the community as these political connections raised questions of

146 CO 730/177/2.

147 Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: IB Tauris, 2017), 193–209.

148 MS137 AJ37/4/5—These documents discuss Baghdadi students sent to study in London refusing to return to Iraq to teach as per their agreement. Of particular interest are the files between 1940–1942.

competing loyalty especially when anti-British sentiments grew in Iraq during the post Mandate period. This issue of political support was further complicated in later periods as many of the European organizations and Baghdadis abroad had strong ties to the Jewish community in Palestine. However, these important political connections persisted up until the dissolution of the community.

In the post-Ottoman period the lay council's authority was strengthened by the Iraqi constitution which reaffirmed its mandate as the official representative of the Jewish community.[149] It was this triad of aid that made it possible for the lay council to develop an impressive number of schools, hospitals, charities, and other institutions. One consequence of this relationship was that it bound the Jewish community of Baghdad to other Jewish communities. Eventually these long-established relationships would lead to accusations by the Iraqi state of conflicting loyalty and complicate the position of Iraqi Jews within the Iraqi State. However, in the late nineteenth century these issues were not a concern.

5. Conclusions: Nineteenth Century Networks and Innovations

From the mid-nineteenth century until its dissolution the Jewish community of Baghdad was constantly in social, political, and linguistic transition. As part of this communal evolution a secular leadership apparatus, made up of local elites, emerged which was influenced by both Eastern and Western European Jewry without undermining religious practice or informal spiritual leadership. In the nineteenth century, modernity was expressed by access to European periodicals, new institutions and slow structural changes to communal organization. Modernization was a process by which the community expanded its foreign connections, integrating new ideas and organizational structures. This process was a perpetual palimpsest of transitions that challenged but did not replace traditional societal norms, creating new relationships and networks for the Jewish community.

Baghdad in the mid-nineteenth century remained a relative backwater in the Ottoman Empire, with a small, traditionally organized Jewish community. Western European Jewry, by contrast, had already undergone over a century of transformation via the enlightenment, the industrial revolution, and becoming citizens

149 The Iraqi constitution of 1920 extended official autonomy to the Jewish community. Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 251.

in nation states. Through the arrival of European Jews[150] and their newspapers in Baghdad, the literate Jews of the city became more connected with other Jewish communities than in the preceding decades and observed the debates among both Western and Eastern European Jewry on the secularization of education, the adoption of certain western cultural norms, and struggles for Jewish emancipation.[151]

From the perspective of language use in the Jewish public sphere an important change from the use of Hebrew to English and French in this global forum is apparent. The title of Bashkin's piece on Iraqi Jewish intellectuals during the nineteenth century asks the question, "Why did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz?".[152] This could give the impression that Jews in Baghdad stopped interacting with Eastern European Jewry altogether, as her conclusion is that the ideals of Europe and the *Haskala* were overtaken by local intellectual and political movements. Although I agree that the Jewish intellectual culture of Eastern Europe, embodied by the *Haskala*, became less relevant over time to the Baghdadis, I disagree that it was because they were usurped by local intellectual and political movements. By the end of the nineteenth century the Hebrew language *Haskala* newspapers were replaced by English and French publications from the satellite communities and Western Europe due to political and economic affinities.

The connections to Eastern European Jewish intellectuals did not, however, disappear completely. For example, Lital Levy in her piece "From Baghdad to Bialik with Love" analyzes a Hebrew poem written by a 16-year-old Iraqi Jew in 1933 to the poet Haim Nachum Bialik.[153] Although Bialik was in Palestine by this period, this vignette is an example of the mutual interest in Hebrew letters by Eastern European and Iraqi Jewry. Furthermore, Lev Hakak presents other examples of how Baghdadis engaged with the intellectual ideas of the late *Haskala* during the Mandate

150 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 74–76.

151 This process of modernization via print culture shares many similarities with Eastern European and Ottoman Sephardic Jewry. As Sarah Abrevaya Stein demonstrates in *Making Jews Modern*, the experience of Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire had many parallels to Eastern European Jews, in regard to modernity being expressed via newspapers cultures opposed to political and social emancipation which in the Russian and Ottoman Empires ranged from non-existent to limited in nineteenth century.

152 Bashkin "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz?"

153 Lital Levy "'From Baghdad to Bialik With Love": A Reappropriation of Modern Hebrew Poetry, 1933," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42.3 (2005) 125–154. Lev Hakak presents other examples of how Baghdadis engaged with the intellectual idea of the *Haskala* during the Mandate and Early State periods in Modern Hebrew Creativity.

period, particularly in the areas of poetry, fictional prose and periodicals.[154] Thus, when analyzing the Baghdadi transnational networks from the Tanzimat period until the 1950s one should not discuss these ideas from a perspective of European intellectual or linguistic affinities being a casualty of Arabization or Arab Nationalism, but instead from the perspective of expanded engagement in multiple public spheres in a multilingual and multinational context.[155]

Beyond the changes in language, there are several major differences between the pan-Jewish aid networks of the eighteenth century, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and the late nineteenth century transnational Jewish networks. Firstly, the eighteenth-century networks were focused on helping the Jews in the holy land and thus only looked to other Jewish communities outside of Palestine as benefactors not as potential recipients of aid. Secondly, the eighteenth-century networks were divided into Jewish sub-groups, the most active of which were the Sephardic Jewish networks and geographical networks such as the Mediterranean.[156] One major change in the nineteenth century Jewish philanthropic networks was the rapprochement between different Jewish sub-groups, such as Sephardic and Ashkenazi elites in England collaborating on Jewish solidarity projects.[157] As a consequence these new associations organized themselves along national lines (French, English, German, and American) related to Jews becoming part of civil society as opposed to more traditional groupings linked to religious custom (i.e. Sephardic, Ashkenazi, Baghdadi, Maghrebi).[158] Thirdly, the eighteenth-century networks were relatively conservative in their objectives, aiming only to assist the impoverished in times of crisis, whereas the nineteenth century philanthropic networks aimed to "westernize", "modernize", "improve" and "civilize" the communities they were aiding. Finally, the nineteenth century organizations had strict hierarchies, a bureaucratic apparatus and a defined ideology, a marked difference from the dynamic networks of the eighteenth century.[159] The Jewish philanthropic organizations which emerged in the nineteenth-century were altogether novel both in their nationalist constructions and in their reformist objectives. They were also ideal partners for the emerging Jewish secular elite in

154 Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Creativity in Babylon, 1735–1950*.

155 See the education chapter for more information on this.

156 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 4–5.

157 Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

158 This is apparent in the leadership of all of the Jewish philanthropic organizations. In the case of the AIU and AJA the executive boards included Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews. The JDC was represented by bother Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern and Western European origins.

159 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 11; 14.

Baghdad who had been inspired by the writing of the Eastern European newspapers of the *Haskala* and the possibilities brought by the Tanzimat reforms.

These changes in Baghdad and the relationships between disparate Jewish communities are part of a broader tide of change throughout the nineteenth century European and North American Jewish Diasporas as they considered the question of Jewish identity. Specifically, this period marks the beginning of a transition from sub-Jewish groups grounded in either a specific geographic location or specific religious customs (such as Sephardic, Maghrebi, or Eastern European Ashkenazi) towards the idea of a unified Jewish people in which many Jews began to imagine themselves as part of one global community.[160] This identity-oriented change was not limited to Baghdad or its communal leadership, instead Baghdad was part of a fundamental reengineering of Jewish communal perception that began in the nineteenth century with changes in global Jewish networks.

In regard to the geographical diversity of the Baghdadi leadership's network, this analysis is consistent with Nora Șeni's work on the development of modern Jewish philanthropy. In her work, Șeni demonstrates how much of the intellectual capital which drove the initial development of the Jewish philanthropic network of Western Europe came from the Eastern Jewish intellectuals.[161] Șeni's analysis completes the triangle of influence between Eastern Jewry, Western Jewry, and MENA Jewry during this period and gives further insight into the Eastern to Western shift in pan-Jewish relationships for Baghdadi Jews. The triangle between Anglo-Jewry and Eastern European Jewry is also apparent in the work of Abigail Green, who notes that Moses Montefiore's traveling companions and advisors were often Eastern European Jewish intellectuals who served as advisors and translators.[162] In Baghdad, there was a fourth group which was also important in this global Jewish rapprochement of the late nineteenth century: the Baghdadi satellite communities on the Indian Sub-Continent and East Asia who engaged in a triangle of influence between Baghdad, Asia, and Western Europe. These Jews would straddle the Anglo-Jewish sphere and the Baghdadi Jewish sphere, adding another avenue through which Baghdadi Jews collaborated with Europe, and provide much of the capital to build communal institutions. Their importance in Baghdad is the subject of the next chapter.

160 Ibid, 1–14.

161 Șeni, *Les inventeurs de la philanthropie juive*.

162 Green, *Moses Montefiore*.

CHAPTER TWO

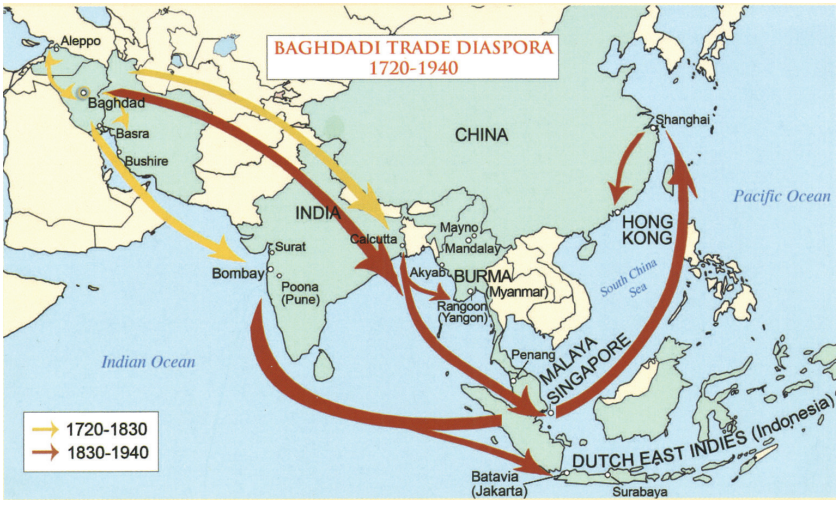
Transnational Networks and the Baghdadi Diaspora

This chapter explores the themes that bound the Baghdadis abroad to the Jews in Baghdad and vice versa, resulting in the development of a transnational Baghdadi Jewish identity.[1] This identity was articulated by secular and religious leadership inside and outside of Iraq, and on a more informal level was reinforced through familial, economic, and social ties. In this construction 'Baghdadi' came to connote a shared religious and cultural tradition, as opposed to being solely a geographic identifier. This definition of a 'Baghdadi' does not ascribe an identity to any specific individual but instead argues that as a defined group, although geographically separated, they worked together for their mutual benefit, sharing a wide spectrum of societal ties. By exploring the Jewish community of Baghdad's relationship with the Baghdadi Jewish diaspora, the transnational networks of the Baghdadis Jews as a whole are better understood and contextualized. Looking beyond the geographic borders of the Iraqi Jewish community to the Baghdadi Jewish world and even the greater Jewish world, this analysis allows us to consider questions of modernity, secularization, and identity construction beyond Arabization, which has been the major focus in scholarship as the main force of secularization in the twentieth century.

The idea that these communities should be studied as one unified community is not novel as many of the histories of specific satellite communities make similar arguments by demonstrating the linkage based on familial or economic ties.[2] These studies, however, focus specifically on the links between the different satellite communities dedicating little space to the discussion of their relationship to Baghdad. Thus, this chapter explores a new facet in the analysis of twentieth century Iraqi Jewish History by demonstrating the level of interconnectivity between the satellite communities and Baghdad. Finally, it is important to discuss these Eastern commu-

1 I consciously use the term Baghdadi (opposed to Iraqi, Babylonian, or Mesopotamian) as it appears to be the most commonly used term within the satellite community and was also regularly used with Iraq. Additionally, given the constantly changing geography of the Middle East it is also the most neutral term. For others discussions of the use of the term Baghdadi in the satellite community see Maisie Meyer, *Shanghai Baghdadi Jews: A Collection of Biographical Reflections* (Hong Kong, Blacksmith Books, 2015) 13–15; Sara Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 100–102.

2 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*; Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*.



Baghdadi Trade Diaspora 1720–1940—Map taken from Joan Bieder, The Jews of Singapore, (Singapore: Suntree, 2007) 18.

nities in the framework of a diaspora so that one can analyze the function they served to the community of origin and the exchanges which persisted between the place of origin and its satellites.[3]

1. The Satellite Communities as a Baghdadi Diaspora

Although many other Jewish trade diasporas have existed, the most famous perhaps being the Sephardic trade diaspora, the Baghdadi trade diaspora has certain unique characteristics. Unlike the Sephardi trade diaspora, which had no nodal center, the Baghdadi trade diaspora remained centered around Baghdad. Also, its origin was not a single mass migration, it was not unidirectional and was not brought about by one historic event (such as the Spanish Inquisition). Instead the Baghdadi diaspora

3 Much has been written about 'trade diasporas', generally in the early modern period opposed to the modern period. Whereas these studies consider what can be learned from the nature of the commercial activities of these trade Diasporas this chapter looks at the nature of the relationship between the nodal center and the satellite communities opposed to trade contracts and partnerships. As such I have not gone into an extensive discussion on the concept of the trade diaspora. Examples of such studies include, Sebouh David Aslan, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 2010) 215–233; Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 3.

developed through a century-long trickle of migration. Although the hagiography of the Sassoon family dynasty states that David Sassoon (1792–1864) fled to India after being jailed in Baghdad by Daud Pasha, the majority of Jews left Baghdad not for security concerns but with the hope of greater economic opportunity and the possibility of more social mobility than was possible within the strict communal hierarchy of Baghdad.[4] Finally, it was a diaspora which until the 1950s offered the possibility to return to Baghdad.[5]

Jael Silliman, in her book on women in the Baghdadi satellites communities, uses the term 'Diaspora of Hope,' as coined by Arjun Appadurai, to define the Baghdadi satellite communities, a term I, as well, find quite fitting.[6] Appadurai has identified three types of diaspora communities[7] as part of his study *Modernity at Large*—the 'diaspora of hope', the 'diaspora of terror', and the 'diaspora of despair'. Applying this typology to Jewish history, the majority of Jewish Diaspora communities are formed out of terror or despair, including the initial exiles at the destruction of the first and second temples, the Spanish Inquisition, the migration of European Jewry from 1933–1945, and the migration of Jews from MENA after the creation of the State of Israel. In all of these cases whole communities were uprooted with very little, if any, contact being maintained with the place of origin. The Baghdadis, prior to their mass exodus after the creation of the State of Israel are one exception, but they are not alone. Other 'diasporas of hope' include North African Jews who moved to South America in the early twentieth century[8] and the networks maintained by the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities in Europe with those in the New World during the early modern period. In these cases, intricate trade networks were girded by a common identity and a continuity of tradition. The Baghdadi migration was an evolutionary process through which the community expanded geographically and flourished financially.[9]

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4 Stanley Jackson, *The Sassoons* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1989), 7–9.

5 Examples of Jews returning to Baghdad are relatively common and discussed in many biographies and historical vignettes. For example, Jacob Ballas of Singapore temporary returned to Baghdad after World War II. Singapore National Library, Oral Histories—http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1495_2009-04-01.html; Examples from Shanghai are mentioned in Meyer, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, 183.

6 Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 12–15.

7 Arjan Appadurai *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.

8 Aviad Moreno, "Ethnicity in Motion: Social Networks in the Emigration of Jews from Northern Morocco to Venezuela and Israel, 1860–2010," Unpublished doctoral thesis Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2014.

9 Jael Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 12–15.

Despite geographical distance, social, religious and traditional connections fostered the idea of a common identity. In short, this diaspora represented a continuity of tradition rather than an historic rupture.

For the most part the Baghdadi satellite communities came to affiliate themselves politically with the British Empire, and not the Arab Nationalist movements prevalent within Iraq during the post-Ottoman period.[10] By the mid-twentieth century, many members of the Eastern Baghdadi communities had obtained the status of "British protected person" or even "British Subject" whereby they attempted to sever formal ties to the Iraqi State.[11] Even in these cases, despite the change of legal status, they did not sever their ties with the city of Baghdad as the spiritual epicenter of the Baghdadi world, nor the ongoing relationship with their brethren in Baghdad. Instead, this demographic shift forged the idea of the "Baghdadi Jew" referring to both the Judeo-Arabic speaking Jews in Iraq and, at times, those residing abroad who had descended from other Arabic speaking communities such as Aleppo, Cairo, and Beirut.

Over time, the appellation Baghdadi came to symbolize a fluid mixture of religious, ritual and cultural affiliation. Silliman describes the Baghdadi network as a multi-centered circuit, whereby there was no periphery or core among the diaspora communities,[12] but when Baghdad is integrated into this network it becomes the core. The satellite communities in the East buoyed the Jews of Baghdad by providing financial support, acting as the financial muscle. In return the Jewish community of Baghdad provided the satellite communities with religious guidance and historical mooring in their new homes. Beyond the positive economic implications of the successful diaspora community remitting funds back to the home country, the

10 As their titles connote several of the studies on the Baghdadi satellite communities address this phenomenon; Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era*; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma*; Chiara Betta "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai."

11 It is unclear what percentage of Baghdadi Jews were able to obtain the status of protected persons. Archival documents attesting to Iraqi citizens and red cross communication from the post-World War II period suggest that many Jews remained Iraqi until they were denaturalized by the 1947 law stating that those who had not returned to Iraq in 15 years would lose their citizenship. IJA 3108 and IJA 3318 contain documents from the 1940s referring to Iraqi citizens who perished during World War II in the Asian theater. Additionally, individuals interviewed by Maisie Meyer suggest that those with Iraqi citizenship were treated differently to Baghdadis with British citizenship in Shanghai during World War II. Meyer, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, 183–185. This issue is also discussed in Sara Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 97–117.

12 Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 15.

extension of the Baghdadi community also had other social consequences. As the satellite communities appropriated aspects of Western culture faster and earlier than Baghdad as a whole, they exposed the Jews in Baghdad to modernizing trends before they were relevant in Baghdad, catalyzing the process of modernization and secularization amongst the Jews in Baghdad.[13] Through questions of religious interpretation of laws, the exchange of print media, and frequent travel, Baghdad was in constant communication with the satellite communities. This gave the Jews in Baghdad a preview of what adaptation to Western culture meant for their community in regard to gender roles, secularization and the generally different approach to modernity outside of the Ottoman and, later, Arab sphere. The Baghdadis in the satellite communities also had a great deal of contact with Western European and North American Jewry in the twentieth century due to the presence of European and American Jews in cities such as Bombay, Singapore, and Shanghai.[14] These exchanges exposed the Baghdadis to other intellectual trends and social movements within the Jewish World which, via print media and travel, eventually trickled back to Baghdad. Together these cultural influences played an important role in transforming the Baghdadi identity in the twentieth century from a geo-localized one in Iraq into a transnational identity equally valid for the Baghdadi communities in Baghdad, Bombay, Burma and Britain.

2. Historical Background

The Baghdadi demographic shift began in the early nineteenth century. Initially, only a few Jews from Baghdad settled on the Indian Sub-continent and in South East Asia,[15] but through the course of the nineteenth century the Baghdadi Jewish diaspora would establish itself as many opted to seek their fortune in the expanding British Empire, hopeful that the East would offer more social and economic mobility than was available within the borders of Iraq.[16] Although the Jewish communities of India

13 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 13–62.

14 This is apparent from the articles in *Israel's Messengers* (Shanghai) and the *Jewish Tribune* (Bombay) which regularly reported on Jews arriving from Europe and North America in their communities.

15 In the 1840s there were probably between 500–1000 Baghdadi Jews living in the Far East. The Jewish community of Baghdad itself numbered around 30.000 thousand. See appendix B for a population overview by year and by city.

16 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 182–183; Sassoon, *A History of Jews in Baghdad*, 204; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 2–7.

and the East Asia would eventually become synonymous with the Baghdadis, they were not the first Jews to arrive on the Indian subcontinent or to settle in the East. Upon arrival in India the Baghdadis found two Jewish communities; the Bene Israel and the Cochinis who had resided in the region for centuries, self-ascribing their origins to the ten tribes of Israel, but whose true origins are the subject of scholarly debate and speculation.[17]

The Baghdadis' first toehold in the establishment of the Baghdadi trade network was the port of Surat, important due to its close proximity to Basra, in the early eighteenth century. There they joined a smattering of European and Middle Eastern Jews who had been trading in the port since the seventeenth century. Later they migrated further South on the Indian sub-Continent.[18] The first Jew from Baghdad, on record, to establish himself in India was Jacob Semaeh who arrived in the port of Surat in 1730, and then settled in Bombay paving the way for future generations of Jewish migrants.[19] In Calcutta, Shalome Cohen, a merchant, is reported to have established a Jewish community as early as 1798 after first arriving in Surat.[20] These communities, however, only numbered in the low hundreds for the first decades of their existence. With few women and children, they were mere economic out-posts.

The first "wave" of Baghdadi emigration occurred between 1818–1830 when a select group of intrepid Jewish merchants primarily from Baghdad and Basra (but also from Syria and Persia), and sometimes referred to as the "Baghdadi Trade Diaspora",[21] began to leave the Middle East for the Indian Subcontinent. In the nineteenth century the Baghdadi Jews settled in Bombay, then Calcutta, later expanding their trade networks to Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Rangoon with smaller "micro-communities" existing in Karachi, Dacca, Penang, Yokahama and Surabaya.[22] The motivations behind this first wave of departure from Baghdad was a mixture of political instability initially caused by Daud Pasha and his distrust of the Baghdad Jewish elite,[23] economic opportunity brought on by the expansion of the British East

17 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 1–2, 11–15.

18 Ibid; for the general history of Jews in India see Monique Zetlaoui, *Shalom India: Histoire des communautes juives en Inde*, (Paris: Imago, 2001).

19 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 16.

20 Shalva Weil, "Calcutta", EJIW.

21 Beider, *Jews in Singapore*, 17.

22 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xv, micro-communities refer to communities which never contained more than 500 Baghdadis.

23 This political precarity specifically relates to the Sassoon family. In the period between 1828–1832 many members of Sassoon clan fled to India because of Duad Pasha, who in his consolidation of

India Company,[24] and the devastating plagues and flooding that ravaged Baghdad around this time.[25]

However, returning to Appaduri's categorization of diaspora communities, these initial merchants were relatively unique in their motivations for leaving. After the initial group of Baghdadis, the main motivation for migration was economic opportunity. In fact, one issue that plagued the community in the late nineteenth century was the preference of AIU educated young men to leave Baghdad for the satellite communities.[26] Indeed, until the 1940s there was a small but constant immigration to the satellite communities not linked to a specific political or environmental phenomenon.

The most prominent families to establish themselves in the East included the Sassoons, Ezras, Eliases, Gubbays, Kadoories, Meyers and Abrahams[27] most of whom were part of the same commercial lay elite who remained in Baghdad and would become members of the lay council or take up other important communal roles. Together they constituted one transnational Baghdadi elite. This eastward migration continued into the twentieth century as each of these trading centers developed small Baghdadi satellite communities which remained tightly linked to each other and to Baghdad. Once these merchants had established profitable firms, they attracted less wealthy, less politically connected and less educated Baghdadi Jews, lured by employment offers from these large Baghdadi firms and the general business opportunities that the East was believed to offer. This migration trend would last until the dissolution of the community in Baghdad. For the Baghdadis, the East came to represent the land of opportunity for those who did not see their future confined to the borders of Iraq.[28]

Compared to the small enclaves of Ashkenazi Jews also present in India, the Baghdadis would form a community large enough to establish and support a communal infrastructure of synagogues, schools, and charities.[29] In fact, the Baghdadi communities across the Far East would absorb other foreign Jews into their communal

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power aimed to oust the Sassoon family from their place of prominence as important bankers within Baghdad and as such imprisoned and murdered several members of the family thus motivating other members of the family to flee. Jackson, *The Sassoons*, 6–8; Rejwan, *Jews in Iraq*, 181–182.

24 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 17.

25 Monique Zetlaoui, *Shalom India*, 311. Shalva Weil, "India" EJIW.

26 Harel, *Intrigue and Revolution*, 111.

27 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 16; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxii.

28 Ezekiel Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 311–312.

29 This infrastructure is discussed throughout—Roland, *Jews in British India* and Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*.

organizations. Jews from Aleppo, Persia, and Kurdistan would slowly, after settling in the satellite communities, adopt a self-ascribed Baghdadi identity, further blurring the lines of any geographic or linguistic definition to the term Baghdadi.[30]

The formation of the Baghdadi Diaspora is relatively unique as Baghdad would remain the center of the community. At the same time as this second wave of immigrants headed to India and the Far East, Eastern European Jews were leaving their homes to settle in the United States and Canada with similar desires of greater economic opportunity and security. Each migration would enable a few to become extremely wealthy, but most would vacillate between very modest means and the middle class. Unlike, however, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the "New World"—for whom American linguistic and cultural assimilation was a benchmark of success[31]—in the colonial societies of the Far East there was no specific group into which one should assimilate, nor was there any expectation, as was the case in the North American Jewish context, that they take on the cultural mores of the indigenous cultures or adopt a local nationalist rhetoric. The Baghdadis, therefore, remained part of the colonial settlement rather than identifying with the local population. Additionally, unlike Eastern European Jews, who mostly settled in North America with no ambition or desire to return to Europe, the Baghdadis Jews regularly traveled back and forth between the satellite communities and Baghdad itself.[32]

All of these Baghdadi satellite communities were governed by the British colonial administration, the de facto culture to emulate. The British colonial authorities, however, did not show any interest in developing any type of cultural melting pot. In the mix of Chinese, Muslims (Arab and non-Arab), Indians and myriad other non-Western groups present in the region, the Baghdadi Jews represented a droplet in a sea of religions and ethnicities, almost statistically insignificant. Their numbers were significant, however, in the context of the world Baghdadi population. Roughly thirteen to fifteen thousand people comprised the Eastern Baghdadi Diaspora between 1920 and 1950,[33] while the entire Jewish community in the province of Baghdad and Basra together numbered between 90,000 to 120,000 in the same period. The Diaspora community, therefore, represented about 13% of those who considered themselves

30 Roland, *Jews in British India*, xx.

31 See examples in Isaac Metzker, *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward*, (New York: Schocken 1990).

32 For examples of this constant travel between communities, one can look at the travel announcement present in the Jewish periodicals of the satellite communities such as the *Jewish Tribune*, *The Jewish Advocate*, and *Israel's Messengers*. A complete list of periodicals appears later in this chapter.

33 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, vx, xxv.

to be 'Baghdadi'. This rise in population is testament to the continuous trickle of individuals to the satellite communities. Given the importance of family networks, these numbers suggest that it would have been difficult to find Baghdadis abroad who did not have direct familial connections to Baghdad well into the mid-twentieth century and visa-versa.

Although the concrete numbers would be impossible to present it is my contention that the majority of Baghdadis in Iraq had some connection to the satellite communities either via family networks or commercial interests. This point is supported by anecdotal evidence in virtually all of the twentieth-century biographies from the Jews of Baghdad who refer to family in India or the East Asia.[34] It is also supported by communal and private records which indicate that many poor and infirm individuals in Baghdad received allowances from wealthier family members abroad.[35] Furthermore, although conventional wisdom would suggest that elites were often those who travelled and settled abroad the socio-economic composition of the satellite communities, in the Hashemite period, was quite stratified. For example, some wealthy Jews in Singapore brought over poor family member thus replicating the Jewish social stratification of Baghdad in Singapore.[36] Further supporting my argument that rich and poor Jews were part of the same extended families.

As the Baghdadi satellite communities grew and built their communal edifices, it is important to note that they did not distance themselves from the Jewish community of Baghdad nor was migration seen as unidirectional. It was not unheard of for families to move to India or the Far East for a few years and then return to Baghdad once sufficient money and trade contacts had been made. Others would return to Baghdad for reasons of homesickness or an inability to learn the local language or sufficiently integrate into life abroad. Overall, up until the dissolution of the Jewish community in Baghdad, the Eastern Baghdadis continued to support the communal institutions of the Jewish community in Baghdad and to defer to Baghdad for spiritual guidance.

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34 The majority of these biographies relate to individual in the upper and middle classes, Nessim Rejwan's autobiography *The Last Jews in Baghdad* on his impoverished youth in Baghdad also mentions family connections to India. Other mentions of Eastern connections include Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 202–203, Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 211–214, Silliman, *Jewish Portraits Indian Frames*.

35 Nineteenth century wills from the Sassoon and Kadoorie families all mention allowances for poor family member who remained in Baghdad. Additionally, remittances to family members in Baghdad are mentioned in Ezekiel Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 311–313.

36 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 46.

3. The Baghdadi Diaspora and its connection to Baghdad

Beyond the organic back and forth of Baghdadis between Iraq and the satellite communities, the reasons for this continued attachment to Baghdad are numerous. The essential point, however, is that wherever the Baghdadis settled in the world they saw themselves as a single community that transcended location and language.[37] Central to this idea was the belief that as the city of Baghdad represented the historic center of Jewish life for this community, it was the responsibility of those in the satellite communities to help maintain its vitality and ensure its future. I argue that in the Baghdadi mind-set Baghdad represented a second Jerusalem, an association made by the Iraqi Jewish intellectual Ezra Haddad as well.[38]

In 1932 David Solomon Sassoon (the younger, 1880–1942) eloquently summarized this attachment to Baghdad, the reasons behind it, and the relationship between the Eastern Baghdadis and their native land in his book *A History of Jews in Baghdad*. He dedicates the last chapter to a discussion of the satellite communities:

> "Though removed from the original soil, and so many thousands of miles away they continued to live under the holy shadow of the life-giving tree of their native place. Spiritually and religiously they remained dependent on the teaching and tradition of Baghdad, although politically and economically they became independent. Yet the wealth gathered and the good fortune experienced in the new countries did not make them forget the "Rivers of Babylon", the sanctuaries and shrines, the colleges and schools, the scholars and the poor, the ailing and the needy, in their old homestead on the Tigris and Euphrates."[39]

This ongoing relationship and attachment to Baghdad is relatively uncommon in Jewish migration history, the general trend being to not maintain roots in one's former place of residence. Those who left Eastern Europe at the same times as the Baghdadis during the 'great migration' between 1881–1924 did not endeavor to

37 Silliman *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 2–10.

38 This is a familiar trope in Jewish history to indicate affinity or loyalty to one's place of origins. Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 47–56. Daniel Schroeter, "A different road to modernity: Jewish identity in the Arab world,"150–163.

39 Although the volume was published in 1949, the volume itself was completed in 1932 and the chapter in which he discusses the Eastern Baghdadi communities and their charitable works was written somewhere between 1925–1932 as a contemporary summary. Sassoon, *A history of Jews in Baghdad*, 203.

preserve Jewish life as it had been in their places of origins nor did they continue to build new monuments and memorials in the way that the Eastern Baghdadis did.

Baghdad and its surrounding region have a special place in Jewish history as the location of the first exile, as the main center of Jewish learning for several centuries, as home to the shrine of the prophet Ezekiel.[40] These, and other historic and biblical connections in part explain this difference. For the Eastern Baghdadis, the continuity of Jewish life in Baghdad itself was seen as constant in a rapidly changing society. Investing in the community's spiritual and social development, therefore, was perceived as supporting a legacy for the next generation. These points alone, however, are not enough to explain the enduring attachment for the Eastern Baghdadi Jews to both the Jewish community of Baghdad and to the city itself. Elaborating on the above quote from David Solomon Sassoon what follows is an examination of the key arguments explaining this continued attachment and support by the Eastern Baghdadis of Jewish life in Baghdad.

3.1. *Religious Connections*

When discussing the importance of Baghdadi religious traditions, Ruth Fredman Cernea writes in her book on the Jews of Burma: "Jewish identity can be conceived as a refuge, a home, a place of security in an alien world. Distanced spatially from relatives abroad, the Jews in Burma were nevertheless close to them through orthodoxy of home and synagogue ritual".[41] The same might be said of all of the Eastern satellite communities, as preservation of the religious customs and traditions of the Baghdadi Jews were considered central to life. The celebrations of holidays, and life cycle events reinforced communal cohesiveness and surely eased homesickness for the newly arrived. Those setting out on commercial ventures made a conscious effort to have enough men to maintain a minyan in the Baghdadi style, made a point of observing the Sabbath, and included someone in their party trained in kosher slaughter so as to facilitate the observance of Jewish dietary laws.[42] Until World War II, all satellite communities looked to Baghdad for questions of ritual, and considered the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad to be their chief Rabbi.[43] In the nineteenth century the Baghdadis

40 Ibid, 98.

41 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 51.

42 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 17; Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 22–23.

43 Sassoon, *A History of Jews in Baghdad*, 136.

in India became so involved in the continued strife surrounding the position of the *Haham Bashi* of Baghdad that religious affairs were heavily covered in the Judeo-Arabic Calcutta newspaper *Perah* and Calcutta locals took sides, penning editorials in the hopes of influencing Baghdad during the scandal.[44] In the twentieth century this happened yet again with Baghdadis in Bombay writing articles in the Jewish tribune decrying the absurdity of the Chief Rabbi's repudiation of Zionism.[45]

Iraq also served as the primary source when looking to hire religious figures, as this was seen as essential to preserving Baghdadi culture and religious practice abroad. In 1926, as an example, when the Jewish community of Singapore was looking to employ a spiritual leader for the Baghdadi community they hired Eliyahu Shalome from Amara, Iraq. In the smaller satellite communities, which ranged from 500 to 1500 Jews, a Rabbi was required to be a religious "jack of all trades" and correspondence over his role often stipulated that he was also expected to act as *ḥazan*, *shoḥet*, and *mohel*, to the community.[46] In the post-World War II period, one of the first priorities of the community in Singapore was to secure a new rabbi who could lead prayer in the Baghdadi style, and it was not until two potential candidates were not able to secure exit visas from Iraq in 1946 that the community was forced to hire a Sephardic rabbi from Safed.[47]

In Shanghai, the Baghdadi community employed Eliyahoo Yitzhak (Isaac) (b. 1852–d. 1939) as *ḥazan* trained in Baghdad. Prior to his employment in Shanghai, he was the Rosh Yeshiva in Hillah. Yitzhak was specifically not employed as a rabbi, and therefore was only given a mandate to lead prayer but had no religious authority.[48] In Bombay, Rabbis Meir Moshe Hallel and Avraham Moshe Shmuel were recruited from Baghdad to lead the community.[49] Calcutta, the largest Baghdadi community outside of Baghdad, had no rabbi or paid religious official in the nineteenth or first half of the twentieth century.[50] Instead various men served as teacher, *mohel*, or *sofer*, in addition to their main sources of income, which were usually in commercial affairs. In Burma, in the 1920s, the synagogue in Rangoon was said to have a *ḥazan*, and men in the community trained as *shoḥet* and *mohel*, but there was no rabbi.[51]

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44 Ibid. 160–162.

45 *JT*, November, 1936.

46 Joan Bieder, *Jews in Singapore*, 67.

47 JWB Archives Microfilm 243, 1914–1950.

48 Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*.

49 Avraham Ben-Yaakov, "Iraqi Jews in India" in *Annals of Iraqi Jewry*, 414.

50 Calcutta from WWII until Indian Independence, had about 5000 Baghdadi Jews. Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 84, 324.

51 As reported by a Zionist emissary in the 1920s. Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 27.

Importing Jews from Baghdad to act as *ḥazan*, *moḥel*, *sofer*, or *dayan* provided an assurance of familiar religious observance in the satellite communities and further reinforced the networks between Baghdad and the satellite communities. The need for a spiritual leader in the satellite communities, however, appears to be less of a preoccupation. This perhaps attests to a desire to leave communal leadership in the hands of the lay members and to promote a certain level of religious deference to the Rabbis in Baghdad without ceding any authority. The lack of a local official religious leader was, most likely, also a tactic to avoid mixing national affiliation with religious leadership as the chief rabbi in Baghdad was a political appointment. This interpretation would explain why synchronous to the official switch of religious affiliation from the *Haham Bashi* of Baghdad to the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of the United Kingdom, those members of the Eastern Baghdadis community able to qualify for British citizenship abandoned their Ottoman citizenship so as to avoid being accused, after World War I, of having conflicting loyalties.

Officially the communities were no longer under the religious jurisdiction of Baghdad. Unofficially, they continued to write to Baghdad for questions of religious practice and maintained strong connections to the office of the chief rabbi by supporting the yeshiva of Baghdad and other religious charities. The centrality of Baghdad as the primary source for religious guidance is a trend throughout the entire period in discussion, with Jewish centers such as Jerusalem and Aleppo taking second place. For example, Rabbi Yosef Hayyim's 1906 *Qanun al-Nisa'* (The Law of Women) notes in its introduction that it was written in Judeo-Baghdadi so to be 'comprehensible for women throughout the lands of Arabistan and Hindustan.'[52] This is an indication that the satellite communities represented an important audience for the spiritual leaders of Baghdad.

Similarly, Abdallah Somekh the head of the *Beit Midrash* in Baghdad corresponded from 1856 to 1889 with Jews in India giving religious guidance on handling new technologies, government involvement in communal affairs, finance and changes in social norms particularly in the area of entertaining in mixed company, all questions which at the time did not have any relevance to life in Baghdad.[53] In most cases Rabbi Somekh was open to innovation and European culture, giving his blessing to married couples riding in carriages together and never suggesting that mixed social activity

52 The translation of the line from the introduction to *Qanun al-Nisa'* is taken from Ella Shohat, *The Invention of Judeo-Arabic*, 170. The original text can be found at https://www.ija.archives.gov/exhibit-pages/images/exhibit/religious-guidebook-sm.jpg.

53 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 16–41.

was contrary to Torah or *halakha*, although all were clearly outside cultural norms within Baghdad for any religious community. In fact, Somekh generally took a liberal view in regard to women and their role in society. Somekh should not, however, be considered overly reformist in his regard to tradition, as he condemned other practices such as carrying a handkerchief or a parasol outside of an *eruv* on the Sabbath.[54] Even as late as 1927 Baghdadis abroad were still seeking religious guidance, as when a hand written *responsum* from the religious court of Baghdad was sent to the Jewish community of Calcutta offering guidance on the observance of death anniversaries in the month of Adar.[55]

The Baghdadi religious and lay elites were also consciously maintaining these relationships. In 1942 when David Solomon Sassoon died, both the Iraqi rabbinate and lay council were quick to send telegrams of condolences to his family living abroad, assuring they had already arranged for ten rabbis to recite prayers in his memory.[56] In 1927 the lay council in Baghdad made an official request to the AJA to allocate an English assistant for the chief rabbi. This request was, in part, meant to enable them to handle English language inquiries for guidance from Baghdadis in satellite communities.[57] These requests would seem to be relatively frequent as late as 1950, when the office of the chief rabbi was still receiving correspondence from the satellite communities regarding questions of personal status and adjudication in settling wills.[58]

As in many communities, modernity brought changes with regard to Sabbath observance when students were obligated to sit exams or others were expected to work. Satellite Baghdadi communities slowly adopted European customs of public dress, diet, and social norms as they strived to be accepted by the British colonial elite.[59] These changes were well known in Baghdad through personal correspondence and are not portrayed in either community as a troubling phenomenon. In general, similar trends developed in Baghdad during the years of the mandate.[60] Other, less

54 Zohar states that many of these smaller negative opinions were ignored by all but the most pious Eastern Baghdadis; Ibid 36–37.

55 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 249.

56 Sassoon Archives Box 35.

57 AJ37/4/2/2—15 March 1927.

58 IJA Archives files 3318 and 3322 contain certificates in English of birth, marriage, and divorce issued to people residing in the satellite communities. Additionally, it includes correspondence on wills issued in the satellite communities.

59 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 37–51.

60 See the autobiographies of Jews from Baghdad such as Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Rejwan, *Last Jews of Babylon* and Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday* for similar forms of secularization.

public, parts of life remained central to the communal culture and did not change. Life cycle rites surrounding birth, circumcision, bar mitzvah, marriage and burial, in particular, continued to follow Baghdadi customs, thus preserving the Baghdadi lifestyle in the home, while Western culture was *de jure* in the work place and the street.

Synagogue architecture, ceremonial objects, and prayer books also reinforced the link between Baghdad and satellite communities. In Singapore, the wealthy Baghdadi Manesseh Meyer built a large private synagogue, Chesed-El, in 1905 to be a sister synagogue to the Baghdadi Beth El synagogue in Calcutta. Although these synagogues were designed in late renaissance style, they still respected the interior architecture of a Baghdadi synagogue with a *teba* in the center and large walk-in *hekhal* along the wall closest to Jerusalem. They exclusively used Baghdadi prayer books, as did all the Baghdadi synagogues. The Torah scrolls and cases were imported from Baghdad, consistent with the majority of Baghdadi synagogues outside of Iraq. In the case of Meyer, who himself lived in a "European" section of Singapore, he went as far as to pay poor Baghdadis from the local Singapore *mahallah* to travel by rickshaw to Chesed-El so as to ensure a minyan for prayer in the Baghdadi style in his neighborhood which did not include many Baghdadi residents.[61] Meyer also financed the publications of Rabbi Joseph Hayyim's work, and was responsible for disseminating his work thus ensuring that the religious learning of Baghdad would continue to be known throughout the satellite communities.[62]

As the religious worlds of Baghdad and the Eastern Communities were inextricably linked, the Eastern Baghdadis sought to recreate the religious atmosphere of Baghdad, modeling their houses of worship on each other and importing religious artifacts from Baghdad. Additionally, there was very little attempt to develop an independent religious hierarchy, preferring to continue seeking spiritual guidance directly from Baghdad (when desired). Although the official shift in allegiance to the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of the United Kingdom could be interpreted as willful distancing from Baghdad or as an attempt to challenge the religious authority in Baghdad, I do not believe that this was the motivation behind the decision. The satellite communities were still writing to the chief rabbi of Baghdad as late as 1950 asking him to provide certificates attesting to one's status as Jew and requesting his adjudication over contested wills and other issues of family law.[63] Instead, I perceive this official

61 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 67.

62 Ibid, 46–48.

63 IJA 3322 provides examples from the 1940s and 1950 from various satellite communities, for example Surabaya 41–50, Rangoon 51–76, and Singapore 97–128.

shift as an attempt, as tension between Britain and Iraq grew, to remain politically neutral in the eyes of the colonial governments and as a ceremonial rapprochement towards Sephardic Jewry, neither of which diminishes the satellite communities' strong spiritual ties to Baghdad.

3.2. *Economic and Family Ties*

Sasson Somekh, in his memoir, states the following when discussing the satellite communities:

> "From the time I was a child I knew that the Jews of Baghdad and the port city of Basra had satellite communities in various parts of India and its environs. At home I often heard the names of relatives and friends who were working or living in India, particularly in Bombay, Calcutta, and Poona, but also on the island of Java, and in Singapore."[64]

Somekh's recollections are consistent with that of others in Baghdad in the Hashemite period. Judaism may have provided the spiritual link between Baghdad and the satellite communities, but family and trade provided the material link to the global Baghdadi community.

Trade between India and Baghdad in the mid-nineteenth century was almost entirely in Jewish control.[65] Baghdad and the port of Basra were a key link in the trade route running from England to East Asia, and Baghdadi Jews residing in places as far west as Manchester and as far east as Hong Kong were actively involved. Although over time the wealthiest of the Baghdadis to settle in the East developed business positions that were independent of Baghdad and the port of Basra, a point that S.D. Sassoon insinuates in the quote presented earlier, for smaller merchants Baghdad would remain an important trading partner ensuring their constant contact with the Jewish community of Baghdad. In many cases, smaller mercantile families were split between India and Iraq, with the result that family and business between the two regions were continuously interwoven.[66]

The most well-known of the Baghdadi merchant families, the Sassoons, initially made their money exporting English textiles to Persia and Iraq. David Sassoon's

64 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 101.

65 Ibid, 45.

66 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 115.

familiarity with the languages and cultures of the Middle East was significant to his success, but even more important were his personal connections in Iraq and his ability to place his sons in key positions within the Baghdad trade network.[67]

Smaller traders also depended on their links to Iraq. For example, Saul Mashal, the father of David Marshall (Singapore's first chief minister), started his business by importing dates from the Middle East for the Muslim population in Singapore to consume during Ramadan. He later expanded his business by importing gunny bags and various articles from India, working with family members who had settled in Bombay and Calcutta.[68] Another example, the wealthy Sehayek family of Baghdad depended on their Baghdadi connections to import textiles from England and India.[69]

Initially the communities outside of Baghdad were relatively small, ranging from a handful of men to perhaps 100, with women and children remaining in Baghdad. It was only after these merchants established themselves that they would bring their families to live with them. Those who were unmarried regularly turned to Baghdad to find a suitable bride, working with matchmakers and the family members who had stayed in Baghdad. Although marrying Jews from other origins was not forbidden, with occasional marriages occurring between Halabis and Baghdadis, or even the occasional marriage with an Ashkenazi Jew, any thought of marriage with an indigenous Indian or "brown Jew" was frowned upon.[70] The vast majority of Baghdadis continued to marry with the community.[71] In Singapore's religious register, well into the 1940s, it appears that very few Baghdadis married Jews who were neither from Baghdad nor descendants of Jews from Baghdad.[72]

Although the communities outside of Baghdad eventually grew large enough to support a self-sustaining marriage market and it was no longer imperative to return to the home country to find a bride, arranged marriages persisted—perhaps as a tool to further forge family and economic ties.[73] Well into the twentieth century, marriages were still being arranged between Eastern Baghdadis and natives of Baghdad, particularly men importing women to the satellite communities.[74] The

67 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 16.

68 Bieder, *Jews of Singapore*, 35.

69 Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 114.

70 Halabi refers to Jews of Aleppan descent. Meyer, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, 19.

71 Ben-Yaakov, "Iraqi Jews in India," 414; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 53.

72 JWB 243; JWB 244.

73 Zvi Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 124; Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 28.

74 Betta, "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai," 1002. Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 26–27.

importation of brides from Baghdad was even satirized in an article in the *Israelight*, the magazine of the youth of the Singaporean community from 1933–1937. It depicts a young woman, Rebecca, who is unable to find a suitor in her home city of Baghdad even as her father continuously increases the size of her dowry. After several years of frustration, he sends her to Singapore in the hope that she will find a suitable spouse in the Singaporean Baghdadi community. In Singapore, no dowry is necessary and a bidding war ensues among the desperate young men looking for a Baghdadi bride.[75] Importing of Jewish brides from Baghdad is also mentioned in the works of historic fiction. For example, in the *Messiahs of Princep Street*, set in the late 1930s Singapore, the protagonist states, as part of a dialogue on the dearth of suitable marriage options for Baghdadi men within the community, that his aunt was specifically brought over from Basra as a bride.[76]

This tradition of marriage between Jews from Iraq and those in the satellite communities meant that the vast majority of those residing outside of Iraq still had family in Baghdad in the 1940s.[77] For example, David Marshall corresponded with his uncle in Baghdad well into the 1960s when the majority of Jews had left Baghdad. The ongoing link within families is also evidenced by the fact that both the Kadoories and the Sassoons continued to provide allowances to poorer family members well into the twentieth century, even after the individuals had left Iraq for Israel and the United Kingdom.[78]

Other examples of cultural links can be seen in food, dress, and literary culture. The newspaper of the Shanghai Baghdadi community regularly ran an advertisement for Levy's Store promoting manna from Baghdad (nougat), *halkoon* (Turkish delight), pistachio nuts and *loozina* (candied quince), all popular treats from Iraq. The advertisements also offered foods from India such as Calcutta plated fresh cheese and India rice.[79] The Kadoories regularly ordered manna to be sent to Hong Kong and Shanghai by their agent in Baghdad to offer as gifts to their friends and acquaintances.[80] Even today, the Singapore Jewish community serves the traditional Baghdadi meal

75 *The Israelight*, 1934, 4.

76 Moshe Elias, *The Messiahs of Princep Street*, (Woodstock: Writersworld, 2015).

77 DM/006.00.8; DM/018.00.6; DM/202.28; DM/184.13.4.

78 Both the Sassoon and Kadoorie family archives contain annual lists from the 1930s and 1940s of financially dependent family members receiving allowances, they also contain correspondence between these families with those in Baghdad receiving allowances or requesting allowances.

79 Manna is also referred to as *manna al-sama*. For an example of these advertisements see IM October 1, 1935, 2.

80 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001.

of *tibit*, chicken with rice for Sabbath luncheon. Conversely, Jews in Baghdad would import certain Iraqi specialty foods—such as 'amba, a pickled mango condiment—as the version produced in India was considered of higher quality.[81] Also imported from Baghdad to the satellite communities was Judeo-Baghdadi theater. Around the time of the first World War, Khadduri Shahrabani organized an Iraqi Jewish theater company which, throughout the following decades, traveled to India to perform for the Baghdadis.[82]

Although Western dress became dominant in public for ceremonial purposes in all Baghdadi communities during the Mandate period, in private Baghdadi Jews continued to wear the loose cotton garments which were popular in Baghdad and most likely imported from there as well.[83] Ellis Sofaer, a member of the Baghdadi community of Burma, born in 1904, remembers that as a child, "he was dressed in Arabic style like his father, with wide trousers and a long-sleeved shirt chemise covering the knees. Outside the home, he might wear a sailor suit or even a Lord Fauntleroy outfit", his father however never abandoned his Arabic dress.[84] Conversely, the satellite community influenced Baghdad style in modern dress. The Sassoon women living in India sent dress patterns and fabric samples to their family in Baghdad ensuring they would have access to the most up to date fashion long before the arrival of a European style department store, Orsodi-back, built in Baghdad in the 1920s.[85]

Even as late as the 1940s the Eastern Baghdadis regularly returned to Baghdad for both business and pleasure. Elly Kadoorie and his sons made numerous trips from Shanghai and Hong Kong to Baghdad in the 1920s to promote their charitable works around girl's education.[86] The Kadoories were also keen to maintain their relationship with King Faisal and his son Ghazi, regularly sending New Year's greetings and small gifts up until Ghazi's death in 1939.[87] D.S. Sassoon—who was born in India but moved to London—made several trips to Baghdad before and after World War I, bringing friends with him on expeditions to visit shrines and search for *genizot*, and to conduct

81 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 100.

82 Rejwan, *The Last Jews of Baghdad*, xvi.

83 Musleah, *On the banks of the Ganga*, 150, 206.

84 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 23.

85 Sassoon Archives Box 31. For more on Orosdi-Back see Uri Kupferschmidt, *European Department Stores and Middle Eastern Consumer: The Orosdi-Back Saga*, (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center, 2007). Violet Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 161–162, 167, 177.

86 *A Philanthropic Tradition: The Kadoorie Family*, (Hong Kong, 2002).

87 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001; KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002.

research on the history of Iraqi Jewry.[88] Eastern Baghdadis even organized pilgrimages to important Jewish sites, such as D.S. Sassoon's travel party in the fall of 1910 to visit Baghdad and the shrine of Ezekiel.[89] In 1925 Rachel Ezra of Calcutta wrote a small brochure, in which she recounts the ease of travel in the Middle East entitled, "From Damascus to Baghdad: A trip across the Syrian Desert"—a promotional piece for the Nairn bus service which appeared in the *Iraq Times*.[90]

In summary, frequent travel between the satellite communities and to Baghdad, the shared culture of religious life, family connections and economic interconnectivity yield Baghdadi Diaspora network and a transnational Baghdadi identity.

4. Language Use and the Baghdadi Jewish Press

Sasson Somekh, when discussing language use in his childhood home of Baghdad during the 1930s and 1940s states:

> "The reality in our household was that no single language dominated, and a rather complicated linguistic state reigned. A clear distinction was maintained between language of reading—essentially English and the spoken tongue, a Judeo-Baghdadi dialect of Arabic."[91]

Somekh's recollections are consistent with archival documentation that suggests that the language practices of the Baghdadi communities in the twentieth century, inside and outside of Iraq, remained similar up until their dissolution. Linguistically, both Baghdad and the satellite communities maintained Judeo-Baghdadi as their primary communal vernacular well into the mid-twentieth century, although in the satellite communities English would begin to rival Judeo-Baghdadi in late 1930s and 1940s.[92] Printed material in Judeo-Arabic became less common in all communities early in the twentieth century. In the satellite communities English became the

88 Sassoon Archives, Box 35.

89 Ibid.

90 Sassoon Archives, Box 31.

91 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 56.

92 There has been little academic research on the use of Judeo-Baghdadi in the satellite communities however this is briefly referred in all of the cited histories of the satellite communities. The shift away from Judeo-Baghdadi can be attributed to secular education almost universally conducted in English.

dominant language of print media in the post-World War I period. In Baghdad, from the Mandate onward, the Jewish newspapers mainly used Arabic, although there were a few attempts to publish in Hebrew.[93] The Jews in Baghdad, however, were also active in the English language press, contributing to the English language satellite newspapers and writing for the English language *Iraq Times* and the *Times of Mesopotamia*.[94]

Language use in private correspondence included a great deal of variety with both language and script constantly changing based on subject and audience, sometimes in the same document. Unlike printed material, for private correspondence Judeo-Arabic remained a relevant language up until the 1940s, particularly for the generation that was educated prior to the Mandate period. The Iraqi Jewish Archives contain a mundane assortment of letters regarding financial transactions from Baghdadi Jews in Jerusalem, England, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, and Baghdad and, although the letters were written in the 1920s and 1930s they were written in Judeo-Arabic. The only non-Judeo-Arabic used are the English addresses on the envelopes and the printed letterheads—which contain a mixture of Arabic, Hebrew, French, and English.[95] Other collections of letters from the same period attest to the growing multilingualism of the community. In the 1930s letters from the Kadoorie family to their agent in Baghdad, although written in English, also spell out terms phonetically in Arabic and Hebrew, or use French expressions. In turn the Kadoorie family agent in Baghdad would reply in French, parsing his sentences with words in Arabic, Hebrew, and occasionally English. The Sassoon archives include letters written in Judeo-Arabic which phonetically spell out words in English, such as beginning a letter "my dear uncle" or in French when referring to a "bal" for a tea dance.[96]

Absent from this informal correspondence are metalinguistic utterances indicating that one or another language is to be preferred in a Baghdadi context, although the use of certain vocabulary would have been a social marker of importance to the Baghdadi community. Although Judeo-Baghdadi was a Baghdadi identity marker, in the satellite communities, I have not come across attempts to preserve any written or spoken forms of Arabic. As the majority of children attended English Missionary

93 The few exceptions to this relate to publications in Hebrew. Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Creativity in Babylon, 1735–1950*; 175–224.

94 For example, Nessim Rejwan was a literary critic for the *Iraq Times* in the 1940s. Rejwan, *The Last Jews of Baghdad*, 218–237.

95 IJA 3339.

96 These examples were pointed out to me by Yaron Naeh as examples from the Sassoon Archives in Jerusalem and relate to documents found in Box 35.

schools or Jewish Schools all—of which used an English curriculum—they did not receive instruction in Arabic. Rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew, on the other hand, was taught, and those attending English schools received Hebrew lessons via private tutors or after school classes organized by the community.[97]

One rare example raising the question of the centrality of Arabic to Baghdadi Jewish culture is found in a letter to the *Jewish Tribune* in Bombay published in 1938.[98] The letter questions the need to read the Haggadah in both Hebrew and Arabic as per the Baghdadi custom, citing that this has been a topic of debate among the author and other parties. The letter writer favors dropping the Arabic rendering of the Haggadah in favor of either a silent reading or a discussion of the text carried out in English. His argument for this change is twofold, firstly, he states that the Arabic is prone to corrupting the text, making it 'less Jewish' such as calling Eres Yisrael, Dar Es Salaam and changing the names of Moses and Abraham to Moosa and Ibrahim. Secondly, he mentions that the younger generation residing in English speaking countries does not easily understand the Arabic of the Haggadah, specifying that the arcane Arabic of the Haggadah is problematic. This leads me to assume that the younger generation understood basic Judeo-Baghdadi, but perhaps not more formalized forms of Judeo-Arabic used for religious translations. The author's suggestion is that the Hebrew reading should be supplemented by either reading the Haggadah in English or by having a discussion of the significance in English. Although the author states that his preference is to lead the Seder in English and Hebrew, as opposed to Arabic and Hebrew, he is not writing to the newspaper to argue his point. The letter ends with the author asking for religious guidance, hoping to end the debate. As letters asking for religious guidance in response questions of modernity were very common in the newspapers of the satellites communities, the author is demonstrating both his deference to religious leadership, and also his hesitation to changing tradition, much in the same way that Baghdadis a few decades earlier wrote directly to Abdullah Somekh. The letter also gives some insight into the changing linguistic terrain amongst Baghdadi Jews in the satellite communities, suggesting that the vernacular Judeo-Baghdadi continued in use but that the preservation of Judeo-Arabic in relation to Jewish tradition was questionable.

Even as the use of Judeo-Arabic declined and some of those born in the satellite communities no longer had mastery of Judeo-Baghdadi, it was still essential to navigating the religious, commercial, and social circles of the Baghdadi world. The

97 JWB 243—January 14, 1947; JWB 243—March 15, 1948; JWB 243—September 20, 1948.

98 JT, J.B.S. Ezekiel of Singapore, March 24, 1938.

global Baghdadi Jewish community, like many other communities, had a distinctive lexicon. In her research, Sarah Benor demonstrates how certain groups of American Jews make a selective use of language to "index their identity," to show group belonging by using specific words or syntax in their speech.[99] Given the persistence of many Arabic words among Baghdadis whose main language of communication was English, it is likely that a similar phenomenon was present among Baghdadi Jews, both inside and outside of Baghdad, even when Judeo-Baghdadi was not the main language of communication.[100]

As J.B.S. Ezekiel mentioned when writing to the *Jewish Tribune*, the majority of Baghdadis maintained the Arabic names for places, biblical figures, holidays, and foods.[101] Other examples of the persistence of Arabic words remaining in English can be found in the names of traditional foods (i.e. *tebit, halkoon, loozina*), the concept of a *wakf* not translated as such in wills as opposed to using the term endowment,[102] and Jewish holidays that often maintained their Arabic names, such as *Eid El Ziara* for *Shavuot*. Language therefore reinforced this communal identity, although the community as such was no longer defined by fluency in Judeo-Baghdadi.

This extended prevalence stands in contrast to other Jewish communities that consciously translated the names of their foods and holidays as part of a process of assimilation. Algerian Jews converted a vast portion of their religious and cultural lexicon from Arabic and Hebrew into French, with life cycles like *brit mila* becoming '*la baptême*', bar mitzvah becoming '*la communion*', and Shavuot becoming '*la Pentecôte*'; and in culinary terms the stew served on Rosh Hashona originally referred to as *m'khater* became a '*blanquette de veau*'.[103] This observation supports my argu-

99 For a discussion of Jewish linguistic repertoires in the American context see the work of Sarah Benor. Sarah Benor, "Towards a new understanding of Jewish language in the 21st century" *Religion Compass* 2 (6) 2008, 1062–1080. Sarah Benor, "Do American Jews Speak a "Jewish Language"? A Model of Jewish Linguistic Distinctiveness." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 230–269.

Sarah Benor, "Ethnolinguistic repertoire: shifting the analytic focus in language and ethnicity" in *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14, no. 2 (2010), 159–183.

100 This was certainly the case for regular Judeo-Baghdadi, which clearly identified someone as a Jew. Jacob Mansour, *The Jewish Baghdadi Dialect Studies and Text in the Judaeo-Arabic Dialect of Baghdad*; Haim Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad*; Kattan, *Farwell Babylon*, 11–16.

101 *JT, March 1938*.

102 The correspondence in the Kadoorie archives shows a great deal of knowledge in both legal and financial matter in Iraq, even amongst Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie who were not born in Iraq.

103 Joelle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88. For greater discussion of this trend see also Joelle Bahloul *La culte de la table dressee*, (Paris: Editions Métailié, 1993).

ment that unlike other Jewish communities in transition, the Baghdadi Jews—both inside and outside of Iraq—did not subscribe to the expected models of modernization, secularization, or assimilation observed in other Jewish communities due to the complex society in the satellite community and their indigenous status in Iraq.[104] Whereas other Jewish groups willfully adopted new languages, in the Baghdadi context this change was more organic, allowing the communal identity to be strengthened even as the community was no longer geographically localized or even linguistically unified.

Printed material, in contrast to private correspondence, was more consistent in regard to language use. During the nineteenth century several Judeo-Arabic newspapers were published in India, being distributed both in the satellite communities and in Baghdad itself. The most important of these publications being *Perah*, which was both widely read in Baghdad and reported extensively on Jewish life in Baghdad.[105] It is only when Judeo-Arabic declines as a written language, simultaneously in Baghdad and the satellite communities in the early twentieth century, that the satellite communities begin to publish their periodicals in English as the publications in Baghdad transitioned to standard Arabic.[106]

At one point in time virtually every Baghdadi satellite community of more than a few hundred people had its own newspaper. These periodicals reported on a myriad of themes including local news, the state of Jewish life in Iraq, and foreign Jewish news.[107] All of these periodicals were circulated among the various satellite communities and in Baghdad itself although readership numbers are difficult to estimat. For examples, *Israel's Messengers* in Shanghai and the *Jewish Tribune* in Bombay regularly ran subscription advertisement for each other. Each of these publications included letters to the editor from disparate geographic locations. The second issue of the *Israelight* from Singapore carries letters to the editor from the Baghdadi communities in Shanghai and Calcutta.[108] Jews from Baghdad

104 For a brief overview of modernization, assimilation, and secularization models in the context of Iraqi Jewry see Eisentstadt, "Modernization without Assimilation. Notes on the Social Structure of the Jews of Iraq."

105 Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in in Mainz?"

106 As a comparison in the Syriac Christian context see Tijmen Baarda, "Standardized Arabic as a Post-*Nahḍa* Common Ground: Mattai bar Paulus and his Use of Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni", in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere*, 71–95.

107 For reporting on world Jewish news these periodicals relied heavily on the Jewish *Telegraphic Agency* and the *Jewish Chronicle*.

108 *Israelight*, June 1943, November 1934.

also regularly wrote to the *Jewish Tribune* in Bombay to air their grievances with communal leadership or simply to wish their friends and family happy holidays. Even the Iraqi government used the journals as a tool of communication, posting a request in 1938 for all Iraqi subjects in Bombay and its environs to register with the local Iraqi consulate.[109] In contrast, it is unclear how well Arabic periodicals, published by Jewish editors in Baghdad, were circulated in the satellite communities.

I have found little reference to Arabic language publications in either private correspondence or the English language Baghdadi newspapers. Private correspondence is more likely to cite general Arab press or English language newspapers such as the *Iraq Times* or the *Times of Mesopotamia* when discussing current events or issues in Iraq.[110] This seeming lack of the Baghdad newspapers in the satellite communities is impossible to fully explain. Publishing in Arabic was certainly an issue, as those educated in the satellite communities were likely unable to read Arabic script. However, those educated in Baghdad were able to read Arabic and definitely read general Arabic newspapers, as they are at times referenced in the correspondence of members of the community whereas the Jewish newspapers are not. Another explanation is that the Jewish newspapers published in Baghdad between 1920–1950 were all relatively short lived compared to the steady publication of the leading satellite newspapers and the general newspapers published in Baghdad. Additionally, the two longest running newspapers run by Jews in Baghdad—*al-Hasid* (1929–1938) and *al-Misbah* (1924–1929)—were relatively narrow in scope, focusing on Arabic literature. Finally, *al-Misbah* cannot really be considered a Jewish newspaper, as although the editor was Jewish, it published pieces from members of all religious communities in Baghdad and enjoyed a readership primarily within literary circles.[111]

It is my contention, therefore, that the periodicals of the satellite communities were more universally accessible than the Arabic periodicals, and came to function as a shared Baghdadi media space due to their long periods of existence and the greater reliability and frequency in their publication schedules. The presence of the periodicals from the satellite communities helped to forge the concept of one united community by reporting on the triumphs and tribulations, such as the opening of a new school or hospital, or the death of an important community leader, in

109 JT, March, 1938, 12.

110 KA E02/16 SEK-8C-003; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-005.

111 Orit Bashkin, "Al-Misbah," EJIW.

TABLE 1 *Table of Baghdadi Periodicals in the Satellite Communities*[112]

Country	City	Periodical	Language	Year	Frequency
India	Bombay	Doresh tov le-'amo/ The Hebrew Gazette	Judeo-Arabic	1856–1866	bi-monthly/ weekly
India	Bombay	The Jewish Advocate	English	1931–1951	monthly
India	Bombay	The Jewish Tribune	English	1933–1940	monthly
India	Bombay	Kol Habonim	English	1938–	monthly
India	Bombay	Va-yases Sis	Hebrew/Judeo-Arabic/English	1885	one issue
India	Bombay	Zion's Messenger	English	1921–1925	monthly
India	Calcutta	The Jewish Gazette/ The Jewish Messenger	English	1913	bi-monthly
India	Calcutta	Magid Mesharim	Judeo-Arabic/ Hebrew	1889–1900	Weekly
India	Calcutta	Mevasser/ The Jewish Gazette	Judeo-Arabic	1873–1878	weekly
India	Calcutta	Perah	Judeo-Arabic/ Hebrew	1873–1889	weekly
India	Calcutta	Shema	English	1946–1960	monthly
India	Calcutta	Shoshanah	Judeo-Arabic	1901–1902	weekly
China	Shanghai	Israel's Messenger	English	1904–1910, 1918–1941	bi-monthly
Singapore	Singapore	The Israelight	English	1933–1937	monthly (sporadic)

each location. The Jewish newspapers of India also ran small notices about less notable Baghdadis who were either leaving or arriving on the subcontinent, while also discussing less trivial items that bridged the divide between those residing in Iraq and those living abroad, providing a window into the choices modernity made

112 All titles and dates are taken from the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* appendix of Jewish publications, excluding the information on the *Israelight* which is not cited in the EJIW. Only periodicals published by Baghdadi Jews have been included and not the publications of the other Jewish communities in India.

possible. One early example of this is a letter written by David Sassoon of Calcutta to the Chief High Clerk of the Court of Justice and republished in *Perah* in 1887. The letter protests the requirement to serve jury duty on Saturday as it forced the Jews to break with the observance of the Sabbath. This letter would eventually lead to the clerk of the court to excuse Jews from the obligation to attend court meetings on Saturdays, an important victory for the Baghdadi community in India. In analyzing this letter and its importance, Bashkin draws the conclusion that this matter was of interest to Baghdadis around the globe for many reasons:

> "For it indicated that enlightenment governments permit freedom of faith, a very topical issue in the Ottoman Empire at the time. For India readers it demonstrated the degree of successful integration, epitomized also in the power of the Sassoon Family."[113]

Bashkin goes on, however, to assert that the Indian Jewish Press became less relevant to the Jews in Baghdad in the twentieth century when it switched from Judeo-Arabic to English as those in Baghdad began to focus on Arabic publishing. I contest this assertion as we know that the periodicals published in the satellite communities continued to be read in Baghdad because they were temporarily banned by the Iraqi state in 1933 and again in 1939, subjects of much outcry among the Jews in Baghdad.[114] Furthermore, Baghdadis contributed to these periodicals as authors and letter writers to the editors through the 1940s, and they newspapers regularly commented on new subscribers in Baghdad and Basra.[115]

In 1936, for example, when Chief Rabbi Sassoon Khadduri made a public declaration distancing the Jewish community from the Zionist movement, it was to the newspapers of that satellite communities that Jews in Iraq anonymously sent letters stating that Khadduri did not speak on their behalf.[116] In the same issue, another anonymous writer from Baghdad used the *Jewish Tribune* as a platform to decry the lack of Jewish periodicals published in Baghdad and implore Jews in Baghdad to work together to start their own newspaper.[117] The newspaper went even further

113 Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz?" 108–109; *Perah* (1), 1878, 41.

114 CO/733/275/4; JT, January, 1940, 3–4.

115 JT, September 1933; JT, December 1933.

116 For example, one letter was signed 'An Iraqi Jew' letter was signed JT, "Iraq's Present Government and the Jews," January 1937, 2.

117 "Need for a Jewish Paper in Iraq", January 1937, 2.

in 1938, when another anonymous Jew in Iraq discussed in a nuanced fashion the reasoning behind the severe public condemnation of Zionists in the Iraqi press while asserting that "The [Iraqi] Community in fact is imbued with truly Jewish feeling and tradition, and is united with Jewry in the Diaspora by ties of religious, idealism, and suffering."[118]

Beyond a simple interest in keeping up to date with family members abroad or communal gossip, Jews in Iraq used these newspapers to discuss Jewish communal issues which would have been censored in the Iraqi press particularly regarding the question of Zionism but also discussing the proper manner to celebrate holidays or to discuss questions of modernity and Zionism.[119] From roughly 1920 to 1950, the satellite press represented a sphere of free expression on topics of specific interest to Baghdadis, whether it was local news, global Jewry or other areas of general interest beyond government and religious surveillance in Iraq.

Although the linguistic terrain changed, understandably, over the course of a century, this did not intellectually distance the communities who engaged, particularly via these satellite newspapers, in lively intellectual debates. Furthermore, as the political situation in Iraqi became more complicated and Zionism became a central theme of discussion in the post-1935 period, the periodicals of the satellite communities remained an important outlet for reliable information on the Zionist project and support of Zionism in other Jewish communities. The periodicals of the satellite communities represented an additional link to the larger Jewish world through their publication of stock articles from the JTA and the reprinting of articles from the *Jewish Chronicle*, bringing them into the sphere of the Baghdadi world.

5. Financial Support and Philanthropy

The continuous points of religious, cultural, and intellectual connection to Baghdad ensured an ongoing dialogue between Baghdad and the satellite communities, which I argue fostered a transnational communal identity. Through the Jewish press, *responsa*, private correspondence and regular multidirectional travel the Jews in Baghdad observed and commented on the modernization of a portion of their community, and the debates that this engendered in the nineteenth century before

118 JT, November 1938, 16.

119 See chapter five for two extended case studies which provide further examples as to how Iraqi Jews used the press of the satellite communities.

the widespread modernization within Baghdad itself in the post-Ottoman era. They also saw their brethren send their children to European schools, work for European firms and, in general, open up to Western norms of daily life even as they maintained traditional homes. This relationship was further solidified by financial aid to the Jewish community of Baghdad. At the most basic level, many modest families outside of Baghdad still had significantly greater means than their relatives inside Baghdad, providing monetary remittances to Baghdad that became an important financial stimulus to the community.[120] On the high end of the economic spectrum, the wealthiest Baghdadis abroad were central to the development of the Baghdadi Jewish infrastructure by building schools, hospitals, synagogues, donating property, and funding endowments for the community. Between these two extremes, the middle-class Baghdadis abroad—in addition to financially aiding their families—contributed to annual subscriptions for the various charitable organizations present in Baghdad.[121] People who were sent letters from the lay council for the 1925 schools appeal include Baghdadis residing in Calcutta, Shanghai, Bombay, but also Baghdadis residing in London, Manchester, Cairo, Alexandria, Paris, and Marseilles. These requests were modest, a few pounds or rupees a year per family, allowing even those who were not wealthy to support Jewish life in Baghdad.[122]

The Jewish community of Baghdad sent emissaries to the satellite communities to raise funds for the home community, modeled on emissaries from Jerusalem (*shlikhim*) who had been raising funds in Baghdad for centuries. As the *shlikhim* were also courting Jews in the satellite communities, at times this became a cause of friction between competing factions.[123] Local Baghdadis in these disparate communities were also responsible for fund raising for specific projects such as the schools committee or the hospitals fund.[124] The Baghdadi Diaspora also contributed directly to the building of infrastructure, working closely with communal leadership and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations. One need only look at the names of the schools, synagogues, and hospitals in Baghdad—such as Sassoon, Kadoorie, Ezra, Elias, and Shamash—to see how important wealthy foreign Baghdadis were for the community in Baghdad.

120 In an interview with the current president of the Jewish Community of Singapore Frank Benjamin, he equated this to the poor migrant workers in developing countries from developing countries remitting funds to their families in their home countries. (Interview with Frank Benjamin, President of the Jewish Welfare Board, Singapore, May 2016).

121 MS137 AJ37/5/2/2.

122 IJA 3738.

123 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 26–27.

124 IJA 3738.

Formalized Eastern Baghdadi philanthropy can generally be divided into two types of giving: those related to memorializing Jewish life in Baghdad and those relating to modernizing Jewish life in Baghdad. The first refers to the building and maintaining of religious structures in Baghdad (mainly synagogues) and support of religious education in the yeshivas, but also maintenance of cemeteries and pilgrimage sites. These charitable projects reflect the idea of Baghdad as a center of traditional Jewish life which should be preserved for generations to come, whereas life in the satellite communities was more transient. When the cousin of Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie, Marry Perry, died in Shanghai in 1931, her will stipulated a portion of her estate should be used to build a synagogue in a prominent place in Baghdad in honor of her and her parents, that a Torah scroll should be commissioned in her memory for the benefit of the community, and that *kaddish* regularly be said for her and her parents, even though Miss Perry had lived her entire life in Shanghai.[125] This episode also alludes to the spiritual position of Baghdad for Baghdadis whereby supporting Jewish religious practice in the city was considered particularly meritorious.

The second type of philanthropy, aimed at modernizing the community, was more aspirational in nature and linked to the close relationship that the wealthiest Eastern Baghdadis developed with Jewish elites and Jewish philanthropic organizations in Europe. The Kadoorie and Sassoon families were extremely active in the AIU and the AJA, contributing large sums of money and holding prominent positions on the boards of these organizations.[126] The social initiatives of the Sassoon and Kadoories provide insight into the ideology of the Baghdadi elites in the Eastern communities and their belief that the Jews of Baghdad could achieve the same level of wealth as those in the Diaspora, particularly through exposure to Western culture and foreign educational and business opportunities. Each of these families did not limit their philanthropy to Baghdad, but also supported Jewish and non-Jewish causes around the world. They maintained, however, a special affinity for Baghdad. This connection is demonstrated by their persuading international Jewish organizations to take interest in the city through large donations and by investing directly in the Jewish community, at times for items which were not necessities. The Kadoorie Family founded the Laura Kadoorie Club in 1925 as a communal space to engage in Western forms of socialization such as charity balls, cabaret evenings, and mixed gender garden parties. Initially, the opening of such a club was perceived as revolutionary, but it quickly became so successful

125 KA E02/16 SEK-8C-003.

126 *A Philanthropic Tradition*, 13–14.

that other Jewish clubs were established in its image.[127] The majority of money being raised, however, was still earmarked for hospitals, aid to orphans and, especially, modern secular education. These clubs were instrumental in making Western culture acceptable and fashionable amongst the Jews in Baghdad by creating microcosms of Western leisure within an Arab city.

Other domains where the Eastern Baghdadis had an instrumental role in communal development were their strong support of girls' education and foreign language instruction in Baghdad. The first English teachers in Baghdad in the nineteenth century were sent from Bombay at the insistence of Silas Sassoon, who in 1883 also set up a small endowment for the purchase of English Language books to be made available to Jewish youth in Baghdad.[128] Elly Kadoorie in Shanghai was responsible for the 1903 establishment of the Laura Kadoorie school in Baghdad, which would be become the largest girls school in the city. In 1930 Benjamin Shamash, a resident of Nice, had the idea to set up the endowment to fund the Shamash School, the first school in Baghdad based on the British curriculum.[129] Throughout their correspondence with contacts in Baghdad and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations, recurring themes are the importance of securing quality French and English teachers and making it possible for girls to receive an education, themes also emphasized in the notes of the lay council meetings, mirroring the objectives of the primary internal Jewish philanthropic organizations.[130]

In the coming chapters I will further develop the role and relationship of international Jewish philanthropic organizations to Baghdad, and the singular importance of access to secular studies within the community. In the Mandate Period, philanthropy provided a tangible link between Baghdad and the satellite communities important for those in Baghdad who did not have close family connections in the satellite communities or were not part of the literate middle class. The connection to Baghdad thus went beyond sentiment and culture and had financial consequences by providing part of the capital necessary for the development of Jewish social services in Baghdad.

127 See appendix A for a list of Jewish social clubs and organizations.

128 MS 137 AJ95/ADD/5, March 16, 1882—AJA Executive Minute Book.

129 MS 137 AJ31/3/2/1 1924–1943 1, December 31, 1944.

130 IJA 1446; IJA 1048.

6. Social Status and Mitigating Poverty

Although it is sometimes assumed, that those residing in the satellite communities was either wealthy or middle class, in reality, every community had a sizeable impoverished lower class.[131] The issue of impoverished Baghdadis in the satellite communities is an another, less tangible, reason for the continued Eastern Baghdadi support of Jewish charitable institutions in Baghdad. The issue of indigent Jews moving from Iraq to East Asia becoming financially dependent on the local Baghdadi community, is hinted at in correspondence but never made explicit in period correspondence. However, the issue of impoverished Baghdadis in the satellite communities was a continued financial and, to my mind more significantly, a social strain on these satellite communities.

Generally, the Eastern Baghdadis elites were sensitive to being perceived by the British as a modern European community. This concern about being labeled as European, as opposed to ethnically or racially Asian or Oriental, was not purely a question of vanity or ego. In the British colonial sphere, racial assignation carried economic considerations, and being labeled as European ensured access to government contracts and bank loans, admittance to elite schools and the possibility of obtaining British citizenship. Being labeled as Oriental or Asian came with varying levels of racial restrictions which plagued the indigenous communities throughout Asia.[132]

Given these restrictions, while the Baghdadi elites in the satellite community recruited heavily from Baghdad they tried to limit this immigration as much as possible to those who were educated, preferably with either passable English and enough education to act as a clerk, or to those individuals able to fulfill a communal need such as religious instruction or kosher supervision. Wealthy elites in the satellite communities promised suitable Baghdadis access to Jewish schools, trade apprenticeships, synagogues, medical care and holy burial grounds.[133] There were, however, many Jews lacking education and finances who also migrated to the satellite communities. The wealthy elites in the satellite communities were quick to develop charities to serve the poor in Iraq to dissuade poor Baghdadis to emigrate as they would be considered the responsibility of the local Jewish community, and could

131 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 44–50, 64–74; Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 311–332; Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo*, 113–130.

132 For further discussion see Musleah, *On the Banks of Ganga* 333, 342–350; Roland *Jews in British India* 56–63; Meyer *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*, 36.

133 Jackson, *The Sassoons*, 63.

potentially challenge both the communal image they were trying to project as a westernized community and add a financial strain to the satellite community in question.[134] In 1921 when 127 poor Jews from Mosul and Baquba arrived in Bombay seeking work, the Bombay Baghdadis did not assist them in settling in the city due to their lack of education, but also because they considered the Neo-Aramaic speaking Jews of Northern Iraq to be not the same caliber as the true Baghdadis residing in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra.[135] In this case, the Bombay Jewish charities worked with Zionist organizations to send these Jews to Palestine to work as cheap laborers, going so far as to undertake the costly and arduous task of having the authorities in Baghdad issue official transit visas for Palestine.[136]

During this same period, more and more poor Jews from Northern Iraq were moving to Baghdad, often finding employment in the homes of Baghdadi Jews who perceived them as "lesser Jews".[137] With knowledge of this southern migration it is likely that the Eastern Baghdadi elites continued to support the communal social services in Baghdad, particularly for the very poorest members of society, so as to mitigate an influx of indigent Jews migrating from Baghdad to the Far East. This motivation to help but also contain destitute Jews is congruent with the Jewish social services that American and British Jewish elites were providing to Eastern European Jewish immigrants during the same period. Specifically, Jewish elites were concerned about the social implications that new arrivals would have on their social status.[138]

It also conforms to the Eastern Baghdadi's hyper-awareness of their racial categorization and their efforts to be categorized as white or European by the colonial administration.[139] An observation confirmed by the main chronicles of all of the

134 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 203–218.

135 IOR/L/PS/11/205 P 30/1921.

136 This incident parallels the reception of poor Eastern Europeans by existing Jewish communities in the West. Susanna Klosko, "The Infirm, the Unfortunate and the Aged: "Likely Public Charges," Immigration Control, and the Yishuv in Theory and Practice," unpublished thesis, Brandeis University, 2017.

137 Unlike other groups who did not originate in Baghdad but would become integrated and considered as "Baghdadi," the neo-Aramaic speaking Jews were often marginalized. Even in Israel, Jews from Northern Iraq were seen as a group apart from other Iraqis. Both Ariel Sabar and Nissim Rejwan discuss this social hierarchy between Baghdadis and Neo-Aramic speaking Jews in their respective bibliographic works. Rejwan, *Last Jews of Babylon*; Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise* (New York: Algonquin Book, 2009).

138 Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A history of the American Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974).

139 Cernea, *Almost Englishman*; Roland, *Jews in British India*; Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 102–103.

Baghdadi satellite communities.[140] Scholarly work on the satellite communities dedicates extensive space to discussing the issue of race in the context of Baghdadi relations with "brown" Jewish communities such as the Bene Israel and Cochinis. Thus, the Baghdadi reticence to mingle with the local Jewish communities is in part due to the concern of being categorized as indigenous and the consequences of this in regard to their relations with the colonial administration.[141] An example of this Baghdadi designed segregation includes the Baghdadi initiative to build separate schools in Bombay, one for needy Baghdadis and one for the Bene Israel.[142]

As Maisie Meyer discusses in the context of the Jewish Community of Shanghai, the Baghdadis of Shanghai went as far as to call themselves a Sephardic community to give credence to their request to be categorized as European, a phenomenon which also occurred in India and Singapore as well.[143] Wealthy Baghdadi families encouraged marriage into prominent Sephardic British families in part to give greater credence to their Europeanness.[144] Furthermore in England the Sephardi community was considered the elite and the English Sephardi communities tended to absorb non-Ashkenazi Jews creating a context there were mainly only Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Thus, it makes sense that, as part of the British empire, Baghdadis would affiliate themselves with Sephardim. Within the greater Jewish World, the Baghdadi communities abroad also aligned themselves with European Sephardic Rabbis and Zionist organization as part of crafting their "European" identity, and also in an attempt to distance themselves from Eastern European Jews who they perceived as being inferior in education and culture. Meyer notes that "identification as Sephardim in India implied a prestigious European pedigree and this label would therefore have appealed to the Shanghai community". She further states that outside the Levant there was little knowledge of Baghdadi Jews so that using the term Sephardic "had the advantage of differentiating between themselves and their Ashkenazi Russian coreligionists, with whom they had little in common."[145]

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140 Racial distinctions is a n underlying theme in each of these works, Cernea, *Almost Englishman*; Chiara Betta, *From Orientals to Imagined Britons*; Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*; Roland, *Jews in British India*.

141 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 189, 210.

142 MS137 AJ37/3/3/10–11.

143 Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*, 29–38.

144 For example, Elly Kadoorie, married the British Laura Moccatta, whose family was prominent in the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Community of London.

145 Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*, 31.

In summary, Eastern Baghdadi philanthropy in Iraq also served a more practical objective, and the relationship to needy Baghdadis in both Baghdad and abroad must be considered in this light. Although it was relatively easy to distance the Baghdadi community from other Jewish communities—such as the indigenous Indian Jews or the Eastern European Jews—the same was not true for newly arrived immigrants from Iraq. If Baghdadi philanthropy went beyond supporting widows and orphans and remitting funds to the pious in Palestine, instead favoring policies of modernization and Westernization, it is highly likely they were trying to change the perception of their community so as to be viewed as "European" and "modern". There seems to be very little discussion of the idea of Arab identity or of the Baghdadis being labeled as "Arab" within the satellite community or by the colonial government. Instead, their preoccupation appears to be between the Western/European appellation and the brown/indigenous association.

7. Changes in the Baghdadi World, 1941–1951

As already stated, the demographic composition of the satellite communities and Baghdad was very similar. Although not all members of the Baghdadi satellite communities came from Baghdad, as Joan Roland notes, within the satellite communities the term "Baghdadi" and even "Iraqi" eventually came to include all Arabic speaking Jews and even some Jews who did not speak Arabic, such as Jews from Iran and Afghanistan who spoke Persian, but came to identify culturally with the Baghdadi Jewish ethos.[146] This was similar to Baghdad where many of the community leaders traced their origins back to Aleppo, Persia or Afghanistan but by the late nineteenth century referred to themselves as Baghdadi.[147] Given the geographic and cultural proximity between Baghdad and Aleppo (and later Beirut), there were constant exchanges between these communities further strengthening this social cohesion. The satellite communities developed a communal infrastructure centered on the values of secular education and philanthropy which was analogous to Baghdad. In all cases, the Baghdadi Jewish community remained stratified with a small group of elites at the top, an emerging middle class that grew with each decade, and a large group who remained

146 Roland, Jews in British India, 5; Bieder, The Jews of Singapore, 17.

147 The wealthy Saleh Family is said to have its origins in Afghanistan. Nessim Rejwan postulates in his biography that his family came from Persia. Rejwan, The, Last Jews in Baghdad, 9–11.

poor, dependent on Jewish social welfare.[148] In each community, the elites represented the most Westernized component and the poorer groups the most traditional sector of society.

Even with demographic similarities and shared communal identities, by the 1940s the Baghdadis outside of Iraq had certain marked differences with those in Iraq. The satellite communities, for the most part, publicly supported Zionism, founding Zionist organizations, publishing Zionist periodicals, and collecting funds to support not only the traditional Jewish communities in Palestine but also the organizations of the new Yishuv, such as the Jewish National Fund which regularly ran advertisements in the Jewish periodicals of India and China.[149] At the same time, the Jewish leadership in Baghdad publicly criticized European Zionist movements and new Jewish settlements in Palestine. The support of Zionism by Baghdadis outside of Iraq is not an issue that the communal leadership publicly addressed, nor is it a theme brought up in the private correspondence I have read.

The difference in response between the Jews in Baghdad and the satellite communities can be attributed to the political climate. Even as the issue of Palestine had become a central issue for the larger Muslim society, in the East the larger multi-ethnic society had relatively little interest in the status of Palestine. Publicly supporting the Zionist project in Palestine carried no consequences in the satellite communities, but in Iraq it was grounds for imprisonment. Prior to Iraqi Zionism being made illegal in 1935, we see similar casual interest in Zionism from Jews in Baghdad. In the 1920s, there was even a government recognized Iraqi Zionist Organization.[150] Thus, the differences in public declarations were more a consequence of divergent political climates as opposed to competing political ideologies. What is more surprising is that the Iraqi government, beyond banning their newspapers from being brought into Iraq, did not publicly attack the Baghdadi Jews of the satellite communities for their Zionist leanings.[151] This could be attributed to their commercial centrality within the Iraqi economic, although I have found no archival documentation to support this idea.

Although tensions over the Palestine issue in Iraq and the Zionist leanings of the satellite communities did not impinge upon relations between Baghdad and

148 For discussions of impoverished Jews in the satellite communities see Bieder, *Jews in Singapore*, 45–49; Meyer, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, 20–23; Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 311–357.

149 For example, *Israel's Messengers*, *The Jewish Chronicle* and *The Jewish Tribune*.

150 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 204–207.

151 See chapter five.

the satellite communities, world events surely impacted the amount of contact and exchange among the communities. Inside and outside of Iraq the 1940s were a turbulent time for all Baghdadi communities. World War II made communication between communities less reliable and travel virtually impossible. In 1941, some Jews in Iraq obtained travel visas to join their extended families in India, particularly after the *Farhud*. Many more, however, were denied visas as the Iraqi state curbed its issuing of travel visas out of fear that Jews would immigrate to Palestine.[152] The Baghdadis in India also took in many Baghdadis from Singapore, Burma, and China during World War II, but beyond these examples of migration carried out under duress, the general world turmoil temporarily limited the community's traditional religious, economic, and familial exchanges. At the beginning of World War II, the Kadoorie family correspondence notes on several occasions the increasing difficulty in transferring funds and the ways in which the instability of currency made their patronage of Baghdad more difficult.[153]

The dissolution of the communities at the end of the decade ultimately brought the Baghdadi world back together. Just as the majority of Jews in Iraq were forced to leave their homes in the late 1940s, the majority of satellite communities were dissolving as well, due to factors such as uncertainty in the aftermath of Indian Independence (1947), the Communist revolution in China (1949) and general fears brought on by the rapid dismantling of the colonial regimes of the South-East Asia. As a result, Baghdad as the seat of Baghdadi heritage and the nexus of the Baghdadi world ceased to exist. In its place, the State of Israel became the de facto epicenter of the Baghdadi world, with London and New York jockeying for second place.

The majority of Iraqi Jews immigrated to Israel between 1949–1951, as very few had other emigration options. Most of the Eastern Baghdadis also willfully chose to move to Israel, although many of these Baghdadis had the opportunity to emigrate to Australia or the United Kingdom. In their applications to the Jewish Agency for *aliyah*, the primary reason cited was a desire to be reunited with their extended family from Iraq, a testament to the generational close contact between families inside and outside Baghdad.[154] Likewise, the majority of Jews from Iraq who settled outside of Israel made this decision based on where their extended families had settled, in particular in the Anglophone countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and, to a lesser extent, North America. Others disenchanted with Israel eventually emigrated to these

152 Sawaydee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 111–127.

153 SEK-8C-005, correspondence from 1940–1941.

154 JWB 243, 1949.

smaller Baghdadi enclaves in the decades following the creations of the state of Israel. Today, 70 years later, those of Baghdadi origin often refer to themselves as Babylonian or Mesopotamian or Baghdadi Jews, at times with only passing reference to their families' extended sojourns in East Asia. This Baghdadi identity which developed in the first half of the twentieth century has endured even in the age of nationalism and globalization. And so, the Baghdadi community has come full circle, with no distinction between the Baghdadis of Baghdad and those of the satellite communities. And, just as there are no Jews left in Baghdad, there are very few Baghdadis left in India, Singapore, and China.

8. Conclusions: Lasting Influences in Baghdad

The Jewish community of Iraq and those of satellites communities imagined themselves as one community, as opposed to seeing themselves as distinct groups, because they were bound culturally, filially, and economically. The satellite communities at times catalyzed changes within the Jewish community of Baghdad, influencing the community through its dedication to philanthropy, and in particular its dedication to secular education, a topic which will be further developed in the following chapters. Taken together these two points reinforce the idea that the Jewish community of Baghdad, from the perspective of identity and culture during the Hashemite period transcended its geographical borders and expanded its definition of who should be considered Baghdadi. This challenges the often presented model of Arabization for the Jews of Baghdad from that of a traditional Ottoman religious community to that of Iraqi nationals in that it recognizes the specific importance of the transnational communal perspective.

I argue that the existence of satellite groups strengthened the idea of Baghdadi communal identity both with the satellite communities and in Baghdad. This argument is comparable to Aviad Moreno's observations regarding Jews of Moroccan origin in Venezuela.[155] Specifically, the processes of emigration to a new place over multiple generations worked towards constructing a 'Moroccan-Jewish' identity. Moreno's observation of this identity construction—which occurred outside of the country of origin—seems applicable to the case of the Eastern Baghdadis, and perhaps even more so as the satellite communities maintained close contact with Baghdad. In

155 Aviad Moreno, "Ethnicity in Motion: Social Networks of Jews from Northern Morocco to Venezuela and Israel, 1860–2010," 102–138.

the case of Baghdad, it is also likely that the strong Eastern Baghdadi identification with the Jews of Baghdad further reinforced Baghdadi identity within Iraq, ultimately making the orientation more cosmopolitan in nature than that of other religious communities in Baghdad. The very existence of the "Diaspora of Hope" represented the idea of personal choice for many generations of Baghdadi youth as they made decisions about their future. For the satellite communities Baghdad represented both traditional Jewish life and an opportunity to leave a lasting monument to Baghdadi culture.

On the most obvious level the Eastern Baghdadi communities were very important in financially supporting the Jewish charities in Baghdad. The very wealthy Baghdadi families in the satellite communities made annual contributions to the main communal funds, donated building for schools, supported synagogues, hospitals and set up *awaqf* to help cover the maintenance of these institutions. In addition, these wealthy families provided allowances to poorer members of their families who remained in Baghdad. Likewise, poorer Jews in the satellite communities also remitted funds to their families in the home country. One can assume that these remittances paid for things like dowries and healthcare, but they also would have allowed children to attend school, prolong their education or study abroad.

The wealthiest members of the Eastern Baghdadi communities became influential within the main European Jewish philanthropic organizations, in particular the Sassoon and Kadoorie families were particularly involved in the AJA and the AIU. The leading Eastern Baghdadi families' importance within these organizations helped put Baghdad on the map and ensured their continued support of charitable works in Baghdad, explaining the high level of engagement these organizations had in Baghdad (in comparison to cities such as Beirut, Aleppo, or Damascus), the subject of the next chapter.

Were Jews in Baghdad from all social strata aware of the importance of the satellite communities for the functioning of the Jewish community in Baghdad? Or, perhaps more significantly, did they sense a personal attachment to the satellite communities seeing them as part and parcel of their community? I contend that the answer is a clear yes. Looking at the satellite communities from the perspective of Baghdad, the centrality of the satellite was entrenched in all aspect of daily life. Families in Iraq were large and the majority of the autobiographies from Iraqi Jews routinely mention family members who resided in the satellite communities.[156] From an economic

156 Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*.

perspective, the majority of Jews in Baghdad owned or worked for small import-export firms or small banking institutions, both of which were dependent on the Baghdadi trade Diaspora to function, meaning that they were in constant contact with the satellite communities.[157] Finally, the community itself was inscribed with the names of those who lived abroad and contributed to the schools, charities and hospitals which allowed the community to flourish, a daily reminder of this link.

In many ways, the satellite communities acted as a 'test case' for greater contact with Western society. The satellite communities also provided a parallel experience in modernization, as they did not experience the direct influence of Arabization and exposure to Arab nationalist movements. Baghdadis in the satellite communities adopted Western cultural norms earlier than those in Baghdad, as portrayals of Jewish life from India and East Asia during the nineteenth century show men and women in European dress, sitting in Western style homes, engaged in contemporary pastimes.[158] Often these shifts in social norms would be adopted in Baghdad shortly after they had become prevalent abroad. The satellite communities also came in greater direct contact with other Jewish group, making them more aware of their cultural idiosyncrasies and reinforcing their communal identity both within the satellite communities and between Baghdad and the satellite communities.

In regard to philanthropy, the satellite communities did not provide many professionals such as teachers or doctors to Baghdad, nor did it have a great deal of agency in interceding with the Iraqi or British governments in communal affairs. For these forms of aid other actors beyond the Baghdadi Jewish network were needed. In the previous chapter, I discussed the emergence of transnational Jewish solidarity in the context of changes in Baghdad during the nineteenth century, I alluded to these other actors, namely foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations. In the next chapter I will tie these two themes together, examining the importance of non-Baghdadi Jewish actors present in Baghdad in the twentieth century.

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157 Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 115–116; Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950: A political, social, and economic history*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 360.

158 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 53, 57, 78; Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, 29; Meyer, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, 162, 303, 343.

CHAPTER THREE

Transnational Jewish Philanthropy

Jewish transnationalism had many antecedents but modernity and globalization brought a fundamental shift in the nature of these relations and their effects on individual communities. The relationship between the lay council and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations illustrates the Jewish networks that formed the basis for Jewish transnationalism. This analysis sheds light on the objectives of the Jewish communal leadership and challenges notions that foreign benefactors—as opposed to local elites—were key decision makers in the development of communal infrastructure and institutions in Baghdad. By analyzing the motivations behind transnational Jewish solidarity and providing an overview of the history of the main foreign Jewish actors in Baghdad—the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) I reevaluate the relationship between imperialism and Jewish philanthropy, and the power differential between European and Baghdadi Jews.

Jewish philanthropy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century is closely associated with the objectives of French and British imperialism.[1] In both France and Britain, Jewish elites used their transnational Jewish networks to influence Jewish communities in their nations' spheres of influence. These actions were philanthropic in nature but also served imperial interests by grooming a local minority population to be sympathetic towards imperial powers. The transnational philanthropic networks allowed French and British Jewry to show their loyalty to their nation by acting as linguistic and cultural emissaries to the local Jewish populations. In the case of Baghdad, the Jewish leadership was not idle in defining these partnerships. By comparing and contrasting the histories of these organizations in Baghdad we can gain greater insight into the political and linguistic choices made by the communal leadership during the mandate and early years of the Iraqi state. Although the histories of these organizations in Iraq are each worthy of their own volumes, the objective of this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive history of these organizations in Iraq but to shed some light on the history of Baghdadi Jewish

1 For further discussion on Jewish participation in French and British imperial networks see Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore*; Lisa Moses Leff, *The Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*; Nora Șeni, *Les inventeurs de la philanthropie Juive*.

cooperation with foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations by considering what can be learned about the community through its transnational connections.

1. Foreign Partners

The main foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations active in Baghdad—the French Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU), the English Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), and the American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee (JDC)—unlike the Baghdadis Jews in India and East Asia, did not have a special connection to Baghdad and much of their initial information on the community came from their foreign representatives in Baghdad, the consuls of their respective countries, or from Eastern Baghdadis active in the organizations. For these aid organizations, the Jewish community in Baghdad represented one community amongst many that were vying for help across Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East as part of this new idea of transnational Jewish solidarity. In Baghdad, the Jewish aid organizations provided aid in the form of financial support, professional expertise, and political assistance to the Jewish community of Baghdad for almost a century.

From an administrative and a structural perspective, all three organizations relied heavily on their local governmental representatives in Baghdad. For example, the AIU relied on French consular representatives to monitor progress in schools during the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century to administer official French exams.[2] The AJA hired members of the British bureaucracy in Baghdad to write reports on Jewish education the city.[3] The JDC relied on American consular support both to distribute aid to Baghdad after World War I and to monitor the political position of Jews in Baghdad in the 1940s.[4] Thus, transnational Jewish solidarity and the advent of a transnational Jewish identity was predicated on imperial networks and the national ties of each Jewish organization. For this reason, the Jewish elites in Baghdad actively courted the American, French and British diplomatic missions in the city as they saw the immense benefits these connections could have.[5] In 1918, at a pivotal period

2 AIU BOB4.

3 E.C. Hodgkin "Lionel Smith on Education in Iraq" Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr., 1983), 253–260.

4 JDC NY_AR1418/00003; JDC NY_AR45/54–516.

5 Foreign diplomatic delegations also provided scholarships and other types of support, particularly to promote secular education within the Jewish communal schools. The British government provided

when Baghdad was transitioning from being part of the Ottoman Empire towards the uncertain position of falling under British mandate, a report by the British India Office described a dinner held only one month after the lay council (unsuccessfully) petitioned the British Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to bestow British citizenship on the Jews of Baghdad.[6] In this report we see how the Jewish communal elites actively courted both Jewish and non-Jewish foreigners by presenting their communal values as analogous to those of the foreign guests. Below is an excerpt from the report:

> On the 10th October Jewish Community entertained to dinner several members of America relief commission, the US consul, French consul, and several officers of Civil Administration (UK).
>
> After dinner followed songs and recitations by Jewish school children exceedingly well done with several speeches by leading Jews in English and Arabic highly flattering to the present regime. As an expression of their earnest feelings the speeches were followed by an auction of some jewellery [sic], presented by a Jewish lady, for charitable purposes: the auction realized some Rs. 30,000, Jewish ladies present spontaneously made further offers of jewelry.
>
> At the close of evening it was announced that proceeds would with the permission of G.O.C. in chief be devoted to relief of poor in Mosul without distinction of creed wherever that place was??? [sic] either before or after end of war. My American friends found above entertainment very instructive.[7]

In this instance, the Jewish community was entertaining the three main foreign presences in Baghdad relevant to the Jewish community, the French, British, and American, most likely using the event to present themselves as a Westernized community with values in line with the foreign countries represented. It is likely that those in attendance were trying to position themselves as allies to these representatives who were often navigating unfamiliar cultural, linguistic and political terrain. As the report notes this event showed educated children, community leaders who spoke English and Arabic, Jewish women publicly mingling with men, and a non-

small donations to the English Language Shamash School in the 1930s and 1940s. The French government provided scholarships for students to study in Paris. CAHJP—Iraq File—6382; MS 137 AJ/37/4/5; Kattan *Farwell Babylon*, 211.

6 Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 256–258.

7 The question marks in the second paragraph are in the original text. The writer of the letter, apparently, is not aware of the location of Mosul. IOR/L/PS/11/139 P 4484/1918.

confessional philanthropic action, all of which were exceptional for Baghdad in 1918. This is similar to the position taken by communal leadership when corresponding with Jewish philanthropic organizations and the Eastern Baghdadis. This particular report was sent to the UK foreign office, which in turn was known to forward similar reports to the AJA, and it is very possible that reports on this event made it into the hands of the AIU and the JDC as similar style reports exist in all of the organizations' archives.

In addition to the general reports on the state of the Jewish community in Baghdad, all the Jewish philanthropic organizations used their local governmental representatives for the transfer of funds, to oversee the distributions of these funds and, at times, to collect receipts from the lay committee or the schools committee, sending them back to the organizations, thus clarifying the highly nationalist nature (British, French, and America) of these organizations.[8] Additionally, local governmental representatives often attended events organized by the schools on behalf of the organizations sending reports to attest to the level and quality of education, and to confirm that the financial aid had been put to appropriate use. In this way the relationship between the foreign Jewish organizations and the local diplomatic representatives worked to forge relationships between the local Jewish community and foreign governments.

Beyond these similarities in the workings of each organization, their roles in Iraq differed as well. As I will expand on below, the AIU's focus was primarily on education. The AJA, particularly during the Mandate, would be a more active partner in the community, acting as a liaison for the Jewish community to both the British and Iraqi governments. The AJA also helped to raise money from Jews in the UK to support the Jewish Institutions in Baghdad, and was instrumental in the overhauling of the Jewish schools in the 1920s.

1.1. *Alliance Israélite Universelle*

The AIU was founded in Paris in 1860 as an outgrowth of Jewish emancipation in France and a desire to advance Jewish emancipation and moral progress wherever Jews were in peril. The immediate event which prompted its founding was the 1858

8 This would change in the 1930s and 1940s when international transfers became more reliable. The Jewish community would use the Eastern Bank or Bank Zilkha, many of whose executives also held positions within the Jewish communal administration. Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 15–17; JDC NY_AR1418/00003.

Mortara Affair in which a Jewish boy in Bologna, Italy was removed from his home after a former servant claimed to have secretly baptized the boy.[9] At its outset the primary goal of the AIU was not to import 'Western Civilization' to the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East through the opening of schools, the initiative for which it would become the most well-known. Instead the initial aim was more local, to help French Jews who had not yet benefited from the economic and social opportunities that the founders of the AIU had been fortunate enough to receive through emancipation. The AIU looked to Judaism as a moral guide that would "*mettre d' accord dans l' homme, la foi, la raison, et le coeur*" in the modern emancipated, secular world.[10] The idea of extra-territorial Jewish solidarity, as already mentioned, was born out of concern in the wake of such incidents the Damascus Affair[11] and other acts of violence against Jews in the Muslim World. In turn, this led to education beyond French borders quickly becoming one of the AIU's main activities and certainly its most important legacy. In working with Jewish communities abroad, the AIU were not religious missionaries trying to save the souls of those they were aiding. Instead they saw themselves as missionaries of modernization and Jewish regeneration or, as they referred to themselves, '*missionaire laiques*'.[12] The AIU saw itself as a partner in development providing resources and expertise to successfully run a modern secular school. It demanded both financial and intellectual collaboration with the Jewish community (or members of the community) for whom it was opening a school.[13]

Baghdad was one the first cities in which an AIU school was opened. The original request for a secular Jewish school predates the formation of the lay council by fifteen years and was a private, not a communal initiative. As previously stated, two European Jews residing in Baghdad, Isaac Luria and Hermann Rosenfeld, along with two Baghdad-born Jews, Joseph Shemtob and David Somekh, wrote to Paris stating their desire to help the Baghdadi community form a school which would instruct boys in secular subjects and asking the AIU for help in this endeavor. The letter notes their awareness of the school that had recently been opened for Jewish boys in Tetouan, Morocco and their belief something similar would be ideal for the Jewish community of Baghdad. The letter also states that members of the Jewish community had pledged

9 Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 244.

10 Perrie Simon-Nahum, "Aux Origines de l'Alliance," in *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours*, ed. André Kaspi (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), 11–52.

11 Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*.

12 Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition*, (London: University of Washington Press, 1993), 105.

13 Ibid., 227–228.

money to support the school.[14] On December 10, 1864, the Alliance school opened with Isaac Luria becoming the first director of the school.[15] This early initiative in secular education sidestepped the religious elites of the city, but was well received by those who saw the value in sending their sons to a secular school. By January of 1865 the school had 43 students, and 75 by June of the same year.[16] The school's initial objective was to teach both secular and religious subjects, making it a direct rival to the Midrash Talmud Torah, the only other option for Jews wishing to obtain higher education in Baghdad.

Tension between religious elites and the emerging secularly educated lay elites is illustrated by a letter sent to the students of the AIU school in 1869 to the French Consul in Baghdad, three years after the original school was opened.[17] The students explained that the Rabbinate was falsely accusing them of irreligion and threatening excommunication. They were writing, therefore, to request help and protection from the French Consul to defend their right to a secular education and to prevent the school from being closed, indicative of the power struggle that was occurring between the religious and secular elites in Baghdad during the late nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that students were writing to the French consul, this suggests that the students thought that the French consul would have sufficient influence to calm concerns of the Rabbinate, an assumption due perhaps to the strong French nationalist bent of the students' AIU education. The students were wrong, however, and the school was closed in large part due to pressure from the rabbinate. Although the first experience with a secular AIU school was relatively short lived, the school eventually re-opened. When Baghdad established a Jewish lay council in 1879 a formal relationship between the Baghdadi Jewish elites and the AIU was established.[18] As the majority of the communication to the AIU in regard to the schools went via the consul general de France, this relationship helped strengthen Jewish communal relations with the French administrative presence in Baghdad. The relationship with the AIU was relatively detached as the vast majority of teachers and school directors did not come from France but were instead AIU educated Jews from other MENA countries, keeping the direct presence of the AIU to a minimum.

14 Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 20.

15 Ibid, 20.

16 *Bulletin de l'Alliance* 1864, 4.

17 AIU Irak IV.E, 8–9.

18 Zvi Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Cultural Change in the Educational Activity of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," in *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, 134–145.

The relationship between the AIU and the Jewish community in Baghdad was relatively tense.[19] The Jewish communal leadership was happy to accept the expertise, money, and political support of the AIU as they were committed to the instruction of foreign languages and other secular subjects, an objective they could not achieve without the AIU assistance. Even those Iraqi elites dedicated to secular education and modernization, however, were skeptical of the cultural superiority of Western civilization that the AIU professed.[20] As early as 1872, members of the Jewish community were pressuring the AIU to modify their standard curriculum, including suggestions for an increase in the amount of time dedicated to Arabic and Hebrew, and the idea to possibly change the language of instruction to English.[21] These requests are in contrast to the AIU's practices in North Africa, which had no emphasis on Arabic or English as the schools functioned entirely within the sphere of the French Imperial bureaucracy. This different approach in Iraq should be understood from the perspective of Iraq's role as a nexus of trade linking Europe to India and that France was less important politically in the region (as compared to North Africa). This was particularly true for the Jewish Baghdadis whose trade networks already stretched from Manchester to Singapore. In addition, Arabic was an important language of commerce in the late nineteenth century Levant and the ability to read and express oneself would have been an important skill long before the language became a symbol of Arab nationalism. Although the AIU never fully acquiesced to these requests, they were forced, due to communal pressure, to modify the curriculum in Baghdad. These unique curriculum modifications at the AIU schools illustrate the Baghdadi communal leaders' high level of agency and engagement in these schools. This communal skepticism of the AIU's cultural superiority is therefore a case of conflicting imperial influence, wherein the narratives of the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire were more relevant and compelling to Baghdadi Jews than the French imperial narrative.

Up until World War I, despite the ongoing cultural tensions, the AIU was the most active foreign Jewish organization in Baghdad. The AIU maintained the two largest pre-Mandate Jewish schools: the Albert Sassoon boys' school and the Laura Kadoorie girls' school, each named after wealthy Eastern Baghdadi benefactors who had donated the land and set up endowments which would partially defray each

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, 139.

21 AIU Irak I.E, 3, report of the committee meeting, 24 December 1872, cited in Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 140. This request appears again in correspondence to the AJA on December 30, 1890 in MS137 AJ 95/ADD/6.

school's operating expenses. Other AIU schools utilized their revised curriculum, but received less financial and teaching support than the first two schools. The success of these schools in the period before the Mandate meant the first generations of Baghdadi Jews receiving a secular education were strongly influenced by their francophone perspective, which can be seen in the correspondence between Baghdadi Jews and Anglophone Jews well into the mid-1940s. Those who received an AIU education presented a strong bias towards writing in French although they were able to understand written English. This French/English mode of communication is seen in the correspondence between Anglophones Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie in Shanghai and Hong Kong with their agent in Baghdad, Ibrahim Nahum, in the 1930s and 1940s. In this case the AIU educated Nahum would write in French—his preferred written Western language—to the British educated Kadoorie brothers who would respond in English.[22] Similar patterns are also apparent in later correspondence with AIU educated Jews from Baghdad writing to the AJA.

After World War I, the importance of AIU diminished significantly due to several convergent factors. Other education options became available to the lay council through the development of Jewish community schools not attached to the AIU—or willfully separating from the AIU—and the government schools that were completely free.[23] This single factor, however, does not fully explain why the AIU's presence in Baghdad declined, especially when considering that the AIU continued to send teachers and school administrators to Iraq well into the 1940s. The AIU girl's school Laura Kadoorie remained the premier girl's school in Baghdad until the 1950s. I contend that the community's distancing from the AIU is not linked towards a desire to separate itself from foreign Jewish organizations but is instead a question of linguistic and political pragmatism.

As Zvi Yehuda notes, "the AIU pursued its efforts to acculturate the Jews of Mesopotamia in two central spheres: 1) setting the curriculum in community schools, in which the French language was used, and 2) changing the customs and traditions of the students in the spirit of France and the West."[24] In the twentieth century, even

22 In correspondence between Baghdad and East Asia in the Kadoories archives Ibrahim Nahum, the Kadoorie agent in Baghdad, writes in French and Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie write in English. It is assumed that attended the AIU school before the Mandate as he worked in the Ottoman Bank in the early 1920s; KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002 December 22 1937; KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—August 14, 1951.

23 Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Cultural Change in the Educational Activity of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," 143; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 40.

24 Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Cultural Change in the Educational Activity of the Alliance Israélite Universelle", 133.

before the Mandate, the objectives and the French ethnocentrism of the AIU became less attractive as the importance of the French language declined in post-Ottoman Iraq, while English, because of increased trade with British controlled India, grew in importance. This shift can be seen from the increase in requests from members of the Baghdad community that English and Arabic be the dominant languages of education, with French taking a back seat.[25] Technically, the Jewish community of Baghdad took over management of the AIU schools between 1918–1921, becoming responsible for both financing and curriculum. Their desire was to focus more on Arabic and English. This project, as outlined in 1921, actually took over a decade to achieve due to the complex problems of overhauling a curriculum and finding suitable teachers.[26] In practice, many of the schools still retained their AIU nature with a curriculum biased towards French, a focus on French cultural production, hiring francophone teachers and working towards French school certificates.[27] Although the desire to separate from the AIU is apparent in the correspondence between the AIU, AJA and the lay council, achieving this objective took time and involved careful diplomacy between all parties as the AIU and AJA collaborated in many of their initiatives, and the Eastern Baghdadis were influential in both organizations.[28] Thus, the dominant factor in the shift away from the AIU is the growing relationship between the lay council and the Anglo-Jewish Association, which was in part, driven by the Baghdadi Diaspora's close ties with Britain.

Although the AIU played an important role in developing secular Jewish schools in nineteenth century Baghdad, it had relatively little to offer in financial or political assistance during the Mandate and the early years of the Iraqi state, nor did it desire to be involved in that way. The financial assistance offered by the AIU was predominantly from Baghdadi Jews based in India and the Far East who had their own agents in Baghdad and were thus able to support the community independently of the AIU, or via the AJA if they preferred to work through an organization. As for political support, the French presence in Iraq was considerably less than in other areas of the MENA. Furthermore, the AIU's lack of flexibility in regard to curriculum changes was off putting to Baghdad elites who wanted a curriculum adapted to the linguistic

25 Georges Weill, "Les structures et les hommes" in *Histore de l'Alliance de 1860 a nos jours*, 60. MS 137 AJ37/4/5—Jewish schools report 1925.

26 MS 137 AJ37/4/5—Jewish schools report 1925—pp. 2–3.

27 Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, "Jewish Education in Baghdad: Communal Space vs. Public Spate," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere*, 96–120.

28 MS137 AJ37/4/2/2; MS137 AJ37/4/5.

needs of the new Iraqi state.[29] By the 1920s, an English language partner to assist the community was a more pragmatic choice than a French language partner, and thus by the end of the decade the AJA had almost completely usurped the position of the AIU as the main foreign organizational partner for the Jewish community in Baghdad. The AJA would hold this position until the dissolution of the community, slowly bringing the AIU under its wing in Baghdad.

1.2. *Anglo-Jewish Association*

The Anglo-Jewish Association is almost as old as the AIU, created in 1871. Originally founded to be the British version of the AIU, the AJA quickly developed its own mandate and ideology, working independently from the AIU.[30] This distancing from the AIU is apparent in its official publications in the first half of the twentieth century as it elides the AIU's role when discussing the AJA's founding, preferring to assert it was founded "to aid in promoting the social, moral and intellectual progress of the Jews" and "to obtain protection for those who may suffer in consequence of being Jews" without mentioning the AIU anywhere in the text.[31] These two statements represent the position the AJA would take in Baghdad, promoting social, moral and intellectual progress relating to education, and the willingness to act as political intermediary for those suffering as a consequence of being Jewish. The first involvement of the AJA in Baghdad, however, was supporting the AIU by sending an English teacher to the AIU boy's school in 1879, and agreeing to cover the cost of the teacher's salary.[32] Shortly after the appointment of an AJA sponsored English teacher, Silas E. Sassoon[33] presented the AIU with a trust bond of 5000 rupees to be put toward English instruction, thus assuring the continuation of English at the school.[34]

Unlike other areas of the Muslim world in which the AIU served as the main link between the local Jewish community and the West, in Iraq the AJA became an

29 Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Cultural Change in the Educational Activity of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," 142–143.

30 Zosa Szajkowski, "Conflicts in the Alliance Israelite and the Founding of the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Vienna Allianz, and the Hilfsverein," *Jewish Social Studies* 19 (1957) 29–30.

31 MS137 AJ37/4/5—Ledger of School involvement—Draft Statement of Aims, November 28, 1943.

32 MS137 AJ95/ADD/4—14 May, 1879.

33 Silas E. Sassoon is most likely from Bombay, it is unclear where he was residing at the time of his gift.

34 MS137 AJ95/ADD/5—16 March, 1882.

increasingly important partner of the Jewish communal leadership as the relationship between the United Kingdom and Iraq became stronger upon the establishment of the Mandate. Even before the Mandate, however, as early as 1890, the AJA minutes note that D. Sassoon in Baghdad had requested that the AJA and the Jewish Board of Deputies in London make inquiries into the new governor general in Baghdad in regard to his attitudes toward Jews.[35] Another important event in the strengthening of relations between the AJA and the lay council was the AJA's support of the Jewish community in the controversy over the 1889 burial of Abdallah Somekh who had died during a cholera outbreak.[36] The Jewish community was prevented by the local Muslim population from burying Somekh near the Tomb of Ezekiel, which is venerated by both Jews and Muslims. The AJA and Jewish Board of Deputies agreed to intercede with the governor on behalf of the Jews in Baghdad in an attempt to resolve the conflict.[37] Although in this incident the efficacy of the AJA can be debated,[38] it was still perceived as more positive and proactive than the AIU, which did not contact its consul in Baghdad.[39] Thus, even before the Mandate period the AJA showed a willingness to lobby the Ottoman government on behalf of the Jews of Baghdad, and although the AIU remained the dominant foreign figure in Jewish education in Baghdad prior to World War I, the AJA had already proven itself in the nineteenth century as the Jewish community's main foreign partner in political matters.

The AJA's large role in Baghdad was motivated by two interwoven factors: Britain's growing role in Iraq, motivated by a desire to protect the trade route to India and the Indian Ocean[40] (in fact the only other place the AJA was as active was in Palestine, a point the AJA refers to in a 1943 summary of its history and objectives);[41] and perhaps more importantly, many Baghdadi Jews on the Indian sub-continent and in the Far East became culturally and linguistically "Anglicized",[42] with many eventually gaining British citizenship. Yet, not surprisingly, these Jews for reasons enumerated

35 MS137 AJ 95/ADD/6—28 January, 1890; 11 February, 1890.

36 Sassoon Archives Box 35.

37 MS137 AJ 95/ADD/6—October 11, 1889; February, 1890.

38 Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 210–220.

39 The AIU relationship with the French consulate in Baghdad in the 1890s was severely strained due to a wave of anti-Semitism in France after the publication of Édouard Drumont's anti-Semitic book *La France Juive* in 1886. Ibid., 221–224.

40 Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 2–4.

41 MS137 AJ37/4/5—Ledger of School involvement—Draft Statement of Aims, November 28, 1943.

42 See chapter two.

in chapter two continued to feel an obligation towards Iraqi Jewry making the AJA an important channel for this demonstration of solidarity as it also confirmed the "Englishness" of these Jews.

One important example of an anglicized Baghdadi is Sir Elly Silas Kadoorie (1867–1944). Born in Iraq, he would live most of his life in Bombay, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. A naturalized Englishman, he was president of the Hong Kong and Shanghai branch of the AJA.[43] Kadoorie was an active supporter of both the AIU and the AJA, not uncommon in his time as the AIU had a larger network of schools. The Kadoorie family invested heavily in the Jewish community of Baghdad, providing funds to found several AIU schools, one of which bear the name of Sir Elly's wife Laura Kadoorie and hospitals, one of which would bear the name of his mother Reema, in addition to their financial support of the AJA.[44] Kadoorie's attachment to Iraq, his faith in work of the AJA and the future of Britain in the Middle East was so great that in 1924 he set up a residuary trust that gave one third of his fortune to build schools in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and one third of his fortune to the AJA to be used for the purpose of education.[45]

The Sassoon family was also an important donor to the AJA, with many family members holding positions in its leadership. One important figure in the AJA was its treasurer, Ellis Franklin (a member of the Sassoon family).[46] The AJA had four major funds dedicated to Baghdad—the Kadoorie Educational Bequest, the Kadoorie Charity Bequest, the Stafford Sassoon Prize Fund and the Baghdad School Trust Fund (Benjamin Shamash), each of which was established by Baghdadis no longer residing Baghdad.[47]

As this Eastern Baghdadi bridge between Baghdad and London was an extremely important diplomatic connection, the financial relationship between AJA and the lay council was a perpetually sensitive issue. One recurring tension was that the lay council directly solicited donations for their philanthropic work in Baghdad from co-religionists in Great Britain. Numerous correspondence between the AJA and the lay council show the AJA diplomatically suggesting that the lay council restrict its fundraising to Iraq so as to avoid overlapping efforts.[48] These exchanges suggest that

43 *A Philanthropic Tradition: The Kadoorie Family*, 6.

44 Ibid.

45 The final third was left to his brother, Eleazar Kadoorie—MS137 AJ31/3/2/1 1924–1943 1 of 3.

46 Georges Weill, "Les structures et les hommes," 56.

47 The only other special fund was for Jerusalem's Evelina de Rothschild School for Girls, MS137 AJ37/5/2/4.

48 IJA 2994, this file shows correspondence in English, French, and Arabic between the AJA, AIU, and the various Baghdadi committees surrounding fundraising for schools between 1924–1935.

the AJA, which depended on private donations to undertake its charitable works, saw the Baghdadis in Baghdad not only as a partner but also as a competitor in raising money, with misunderstandings often assuaged by Baghdadis residing outside of Iraq. This would suggest that the lay council was working to assert its independence and to be viewed as a partner rather than as a simple aid recipient.

The AJA, for its part, functioned with a board of directors in London who made decisions as to which philanthropic initiatives they would support. This board was in close contact with the Jewish Board of Deputies in London, the British Foreign Office, and the local Jewish communities they supported. Within Baghdad, the AJA depended on the English teachers they sent to the city and the local British diplomatic corps to ensure their financial support was being put to its assigned use. Beginning in the Mandate period, the AJA appointed a director of education in Baghdad who also served as the representative of the AJA in the city a testament to its involvement within the Jewish community in Baghdad.[49]

The two most important factors which drew the lay council in Baghdad to work with the AJA were the aforementioned inclination to support the community politically and the desire for English education in the Jewish schools. Although the Jewish schools flourished like none other in Baghdad prior to the 1920s, the French curriculum, as already stated, left something to be desired in the eyes of Baghdadis who saw their future in Arabic and English.[50] The watershed moment in the curriculum shift from the AIU system to a hybrid Iraqi/British system was achieved in the mid-1920s when the AJA arranged for the Jewish community to have Lionel Smith unofficially act as director of the Jewish schools. Smith was the British advisor to the Ministry of Education from 1923–1931. Smith's later writings suggest serious frustration in working with the Iraqi government, feeling his suggestions fell on deaf ears, which perhaps explains his willingness to dedicate so much time to the Jewish community.[51] Smith was charged with assisting the lay council and schools committee in reorganizing and improving the Jewish school system.[52] Originally, the AJA offered Smith 600 pounds per year to be at the disposal of the Jewish community.[53]

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49 The two most important directors of the AJA in Baghdad were Adolph Brotman from 1926–1934 and Emile Mamorstein from 1937 until sometime in the 1940s. Brotman would go on to become secretary of the AJA and later general secretary of the Jewish Board of Deputies. MS137 AJ37/4/2/2; MS137 AJ31/3/2/1 1944–1949 2.

50 MS 137 AJ37/4/5.

51 E.C. Hodgkin "Lionel Smith on Education in Iraq", 253–260.

52 MS137 AJ37/4/2/2—March 24, 1926.

53 Ibid.—October 26, 1925.

Smith declined the money, preferring to advise on an unofficial level as he did not want his work being brought to the attention of the government.[54] Although Smith wrote of troubles in Jewish education, such as teachers resisting attending additional training, his correspondence with the AJA and the lay council presents him as having a positive role in improving the quality of teaching and updating the curriculum.[55] This type of assistance—in which a British colonial official unofficially worked for the Jewish community—would have been impossible without the connections the AJA was able (and willing) to provide.

The reports commissioned by the AJA and written by Smith, other foreign teachers and members of the lay council, were consistent in their critiques of the Jewish education in Baghdad. These letters state that although the Jewish schools in Baghdad represented the highest level of education available in the country they were still lacking in several areas. Reports in the 1920s criticized the AIU's language centric approach to education, stating that four languages left insufficient time to the study of math and science. The most important of these reports attributed to the Baghdad Schools Inspection Committee was likely written by Smith himself. The report suggested that Arabic become the dominant language of instruction with English as the primary second language, essentially confirming the decades long requests of the lay council and offering practical help in achieving this objective. For the schools run by the lay council the report addresses two other major issues: infrastructure (having adequate buildings) and qualified teachers. To address these two issues the AJA was ready to help the lay council financially support and secure better building and, in regard to teaching, the report proposed to work with the teachers college to develop a special training program for the Jewish school teachers.[56] In summary, the report outlined the direction the Jewish schools had begun to take in 1921 and provided a realistic roadmap of partnership between the AJA and the lay council which would ultimately be undertaken in the period between 1925–1935. This report is a powerful example of the synergy between the lay council and the AJA. It is also an example of how two national Jewish organizations, the AJA and the lay council could collaborate under the banner of transnational Jewish solidarity.

The report also addressed the role of the AIU and, although critical of their privileging the study of French over Arabic, the report is diplomatic and pragmatic in regard to the AIU and its place in Iraq. It states that "there was no competition

54 Ibid.—December 14, 1925.

55 Ibid.—April 26, 1926; AJ37/14/2/1—School committee correspondence 1921–1926.

56 MS137 AJ37/4/5.

between the A.J.A. and the Alliance, but that we both worked together, and in Baghdad there was plenty of room for both bodies."[57] Later in the report, in reference to reforms for the Jewish school in Basra, we see a more explicit hint that although this change in orientation from the AIU to the AJA should be smooth, there is some underlying tension: "I hope and believe that anything we may do there will be with the cordial concurrence of the Alliance and that we shall work together …"[58] This report is indicative of the changing tides in Baghdad, not only in regard to language instruction but also of the rising dominance of AJA as the main interlocutor with the lay council. In private, this formal change in the school administration must have caused some tension between the AJA and the AIU, as Brotman was sent to Paris in February of 1926 to meet privately with Jacques Bigart (the secretary general of the AIU) in attempt to smooth things over after the report was published and the lay council made their education plan official.[59]

Lest one think that the AJA was acting unilaterally, the plans outlined in these reports by the AJA were a response to a proposal made by the lay council in 1925 that AJA find a British Jew to act as director of schools. The lay council outlined their own proposal for the position, which included two days per week teaching English in schools in addition to administrative responsibilities. It also included a proposal that the new director of schools (under the direction of Lionel Smith) was to devote time to the organization and improvement of the curriculum in all the schools with the exception of Laura Kadoorie and Albert Sassoon (the two AIU schools). He should be recognized as the executive officer of the community's schools' inspection committee and his duty would be to report to the lay council (after consulting with Lionel Smith) what improvements it would be desirable to effect. The new director would be both an employee of the lay council and the AJA representative in Baghdad. The lay council suggested that the AJA pay two thirds of his salary and the contract for the director would be with the AJA. Finally, careful not to cause tensions with the AIU, the proposal notes that the new position should not affect David Sasson's position as head of the AIU in Baghdad nor the two main AIU schools (Albert Sassoon and Laura Kadoorie).[60] This proposal from the lay council and the official plan laid out by the AJA are indicative of the types of negotiations and policy decisions made by the lay council in collaboration with the AJA. The proposal of the lay council demonstrates their desire to further

57 Ibid, 3.
58 Ibid., 4.
59 MS137 AJ37/14/2/1—1921–1926.
60 Ibid—September 4, 1925.

consolidate and professionalize Jewish education in Baghdad and their recognition of the need for foreign assistance in all areas to achieve their objectives.

The high value placed on English education by the communal leadership is demonstrated by the founding of the Shamash school in 1928, the first school to use a majority English curriculum. This school would usurp the place of AIU's Albert Sassoon boy's school as the most prestigious Jewish school in the city. The Shamash school was heavily supported by the AJA both through their supplying of teachers and administrators and by providing annual subsidies. Ironically, the person who set up the endowment for the school, Benjamin Shamash, was a Baghdadi Jew residing in Nice, France, and a graduate of the AIU school in Baghdad.[61] His desire to establish an English language Jewish school in Baghdad, and the support and thanks he received from the lay council is thus a testament to this preference of English over French.

The position of the AJA, the Eastern Baghdadis, and Jewish community of Baghdad in regard to financial assistance and education is best summarized in a letter sent by the president of the AJA, Claude Montefiore, to Sir Elly Kadoorie on May 17, 1932. The letter is a response to Kadoorie questioning the level of engagement of the AJA and the level of English being taught in Baghdad for which Kadoorie was deeply invested. Montefiore in his response states that:

> For boys [...] good knowledge of English is essential. The AJA in realization of this helps as far as its means allow, the Shamash school, which is designed to give Baghdad boys a secondary education in English. The present policy of the AJA in this regard is apparently appreciated by Baghdadis in England and elsewhere, for they have entrusted more than 3,000 pounds within the last year or two, earmarked for the Shamash school.[62]

Although most of the AJA staff was slowly downsized as individuals were recalled in the late 1930s, firstly due to the growing political instability in Iraq, and later due to World War II, the AJA continued to work with the lay council in Baghdad up until 1951.[63] In 1936 they lobbied the British Foreign Office to intercede with the Iraqi government in lifting a ban on certain Jewish periodicals coming into the country.[64] Even after

61 MS137 AJ 37/3/2/2.

62 MS137 AJ37/4/2/2—May 17, 1932.

63 MS137 AJ37 6/1/4—Foreign affairs committee progress report April 21, 1950.

64 Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, "Censorship and the Jews of Baghdad: Reading between the lines in the case of E. Levy". *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 7:3 (2016), 283–300.

WWII, the AJA remained active, to the best of its ability. They continued to help direct funds to the Jewish schools, whenever possible trying to arrange for teachers. Finally, in the period between 1947–1951, with the help of the British government they closely monitored the deteriorating position of the Jewish community in Iraq and worked with the JDC to, ultimately, get the Jewish community out of Iraq.[65]

1.3. *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee*

Of the three most important foreign Jewish organizations active in Baghdad the last to be established was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Formed in November of 1914, the JDC came into being as the result of a merger of the American Central Relief Committee for the Relief of Jews, the American Jewish Relief Committee and a few other small aid organizations. The JDC, based in New York, had an initial objective to "provide aid to starving Jews in Palestine and Europe".[66] Unlike the AIU and the AJA, the JDC in its first decades worked on a global scale mainly to distribute funds to impoverished Jews in crisis situations, but it did not directly work to develop Jewish communal infrastructure until the late 1920s.[67] This point is highlighted by the founding in 1915 of a transmission department to deliver personal remittances to those areas in Europe and Palestine where established transmission agencies were unable to function under war conditions. The JDC also allowed American Jews to deposit small amounts of money—typically $5 or $10, but up to $100—for the JDC to remit to relatives overseas. As the JDC was an aggregate of several organizations with different religious and philosophical affiliations and a relatively narrow initial focus, unlike the AIU and AJA, at its outset the JDC was less ideologically grounded in the values of communal development or Jewish emancipation. Instead, the JDC was formed to address the pragmatic need to consolidate American Jewish aid organizations. Thus, of the three organizations the JDC was the least ideological, focusing less on the issues of socio-economic mobility beyond basic subsistence needs and crisis management in the first half of the twentieth century. Although the JDC would over time change its mission to include initiatives similar to the establishment of schools and clinics built by the AIU and AJA, this occurred after the exodus of Jews from Iraq.

As the JDC's focus in its early years was providing monetary assistance to those in dire situations due to war or acting as a private bank to help individuals remit money

65 MS137 AJ37 6/1/3; MS137 AJ37 6/1/3 f.2.

66 JDC Website consulted on February 18, 2015 http://www.jdc.org/about-jdc/history.html.

67 Yehuda Bauer. *My Brother's Keeper*, 19–56.

to family members abroad, it is surprising that the JDC became involved in Iraq—or Mesopotamia as it is referred to in the pre-1920 correspondence of the JDC archive—at all. Although much hardship was felt there, Iraq was believed to have suffered less damage than Europe during World War I and there are no records from this time of Iraqi Jewish families in the United States remitting money via the JDC to the Jewish community of Baghdad, nor any specific lobbying by US Jewry to aid Iraqi Jews. And yet, as early as 1917, the Baghdadi communal leadership was already in contact with the JDC via the United States diplomatic corps for the Ottoman Empire.

The development of a relationship between the JDC and the Jewish community in Baghdad—and for that matter any of the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire—should be attributed to two American diplomats: Abram I. Elkus and Oscar S. Heizer, the former a member of the board of directors of the JDC.[68] The earliest surviving correspondence between the JDC and the lay committee is from the United States consul in Baghdad, Heizer, who wrote to Elkus, then the United States ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, on August 4, 1917. The letter makes clear that the Jewish community of Baghdad had no specific knowledge of the JDC, and that the JDC had had no communication with any members of the Jewish community of Baghdad. Unlike the founding of the relationships with other philanthropic organizations, the direct connection is not made by Ashkenazi Jews who have settled in Baghdad (as in the case of the AIU) or Eastern Baghdadis bringing in the organization (as in the case of the AJA). Instead, the lay council inquired of the United States consul, Heizer, as to whether there was a "a philanthropic Jewish society in America" which could help support the social actions of the lay council.[69]

In his letter to Elkus, Heizer mentions that the Jews are aware of the American schools in Constantinople, Beirut, and Asia Minor and that they are hoping something can be done "for the larger number of Jewish children in Baghdad." Heizer also notes that a Baghdadi Jewish notable, Menahem S. Daniel, is keen to impress the need for the expansion of girl's education, as it was still considered of secondary importance compared to boy's education. Given the relatively modest number of female students enrolled, this is yet another example of the lay leadership's attempt to present the communal leadership's education policy in a modern light, in addition to further demonstrating the needs of the community.

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68 Elkus was an active member of the JDC. It is impossible to confirm that Heizer was Jewish, my assertion is based on JDC records in which he is cited by the Jewish Relief Committee of Baghdad as "our co-religionist". JDC NY AR191418/4/20/1/154.2.

69 Ibid.

The lay council had two specific requests in this first letter. Firstly, they hoped that an American philanthropic Jewish organization would be willing to remit money to them to help support the schools which were constantly in need of funds to maintain and expand education. The letter also referenced that the schools are supported by the AIU with principal funding coming from Paris and London. As the Jewish community of Baghdad was an unknown quantity for the JDC, this point was surely added to provide credibility both to the schools and the communal leadership, demonstrating they already had the support of other foreign Jewish philanthropic agencies who the communal leadership assumes were known to the JDC. The lay council, however, stretches the truth in that the schools were never principally funded by the AIU or the AJA.[70] Secondly, they asked whether "there is not some philanthropic Jewish society in America which could take up this work and send out here teachers to reorganize" one of the community schools. One of the AIU teachers, Madame Bassam, specifically asked "if an American lady teacher can be sent out". The letter further stated that their objectives were to modernize the community via secular education, emphasizing the issue of education for girls, saying that if space were made available "there were no less than 2000 Jewish girls in Baghdad who desire to attend school," but don't for lack of space. These formulations and requests show that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Baghdadi Jewish communal leadership knew how to approach organizations and entice them with projects which would be considered as having value, the result being that in most cases these requests did not fall on deaf ears.

A little less than a year after this initial contact, a letter was sent to the JDC by Heizer confirming the receipt of $1000 which he distributed to various Jewish organizations in the city. This marks the formal beginning of a relationship between Jewish communal leaders in Baghdad and the JDC that would last until the dissolution of the community.[71] Heizer notes that he personally oversaw the distribution of the funds, and in particular comments that the orphans of the Aaron [sic] Saleh Orphanage sang a song after lunch each day expressing gratitude for the help for the JDC. The staff and communal leadership were fully aware of this aid and in their letters to the JDC state that the teachers in these schools constantly reminded the young orphans of the kindness and generosity of foreign Jewish communities to the community in Baghdad. The lay Council sent a letter dated June 23, 1919 thanking the JDC for providing funds to war orphans at the Aron-Saleh orphanage. Included with the letter

70 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464; IJA 1446; IJA 2062.

71 JDC NY AR1921/00016; JDC NY AR1921/00773.

of thanks was a speech given in Arabic (an English translation is provided), which was read by one of the teachers during the distribution of summer uniforms to the children.[72]

For the JDC, $1000 was a relatively small sum in relation to their almost 6 million dollars in expenditures for 1918, but it was significant to the Jewish community in Baghdad contributing to the feeding and clothing of orphans, aid for families of soldiers killed in battle, funds for the marriage of 38 orphaned girls, and feeding poor students throughout the Jewish schools.[73] Similar financial aid would continue through the 1920s, but there is no record that the JDC fulfilled the request for teachers, nor did it become engaged in the political issues facing the community in the same way that the AJA would become involved. This is not to say the JDC was not interested in Baghdad, but they generally deferred to the AJA as the dominant presence in Baghdad due to the AJA's geographic proximity, political, and social ties to Baghdad and the JDC's minimal staff in the Middle East.

This financial aid would decline in the 1930s primarily due to hardship caused by the Great Depression. This economic reality is mentioned in this letter from the JDC office in Berlin to the JDC office in New York city dated March 27, 1931:

> "We have considered the situation of the oriental Jews very often lately—not only those of Syria, the Irak [sic] and Mesopotamia, but also of those in Algeria, Morocco and Tunis as well … We have stopped our relief work in Europe because we lack sufficient funds. In the East help is usually wanted for schools and hospitals, for neither of which we can do anything …. The work of the Foundation is now being confined as far as possible to those countries in which we have already started function. In view of the present economic distress in all the countries concerned we must anticipate a hard struggle this year to preserve the institutions which are already in existence."[74]

As this letter demonstrates, the Jewish community in Baghdad continued to request funds from all three of these aid organizations but, as these organizations were affected by the Great Depression, they were forced to make choices in their philanthropic focus, Iraq not being one of the areas of emphasis. Additionally, Iraq had

72 JDC NY AR1921/00016; JDC NY AR1921/00785.

73 In 1918 the total income for the JDC was 5,813,751 USD and the total in expenditures was 5,894,687. Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 305–306.

74 JDC NY AR2132/00106.

flourished economically during the British Mandate and the Jewish community, because of their multilingualism and trade networks, had benefited more than perhaps any other religious community. Therefore, it is fair to assume that they were no longer considered among the neediest cases. The majority of assistance by the JDC throughout the twentieth century was either monetary assistance or, later, emergency relief and aid but never structural development. This may be because the JDC saw themselves as a partner to the more established AIU and the AJA. The JDC was also keen to point out the growing interconnectivity of various communities throughout the Levant, stating that "it is impossible to select only one town or section in the Orient, without simultaneously working in Beirut, Baghdad and other cities".[75] This further demonstrate the actions of transnational Jewish networks, disconnected from political Zionism, during the inter-war years, but strongly linked to Jewish solidarity which focused on supporting and defending established communities.

The financial reality of the JDC is illustrated by the summary of income/expenditures in comparing the period prior to the Great Depression, roughly 1919 to 1929, with the period from 1929 to 1939. Although neither the expenditures nor the income of the JDC was static during this first period, the JDC gave on average around 10 million dollars per year during the 1920s. Post-1929 these amounts were closer to one million dollars on average with contributions only beginning to increase in 1937. This increase may have been a result of an improved economy but was more likely a reaction to the increasingly desperate situation of Jews in Europe as there is relatively little direct contact between the JDC and the Iraqi Jewish leadership, compared to preceding and later periods between Hitler's ascension to power in 1933 and the *Farhud* in 1941.[76]

In fact, the situation for Jews in Europe was so dire that the JDC began calling on Baghdadis both inside and outside of Iraq to aid their beleaguered brethren in Europe. Although at first glance it appears that the Jews in Baghdad were able to do little to help their co-religionists in Europe, a 1938 letter between the JDC and the German Jewish aid committee mentioned that "the Baghdadi Jewish community [...] counts among it some very wealthy families, but there are thousands and thousands of almost starving Baghdadi Jews, and all the charity of the Baghdadi community is therefore directed to assist members of their own kind."[77] The letter was written

75 JDC NY AR2132/00110 April 10, 1931.

76 In 1918 the total income for the JDC was 5.813.751 USD and the total in expenditures was 5.894.687. Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 305–306.

77 JDC NY AR1933/44 711 Council for German Jewry Bombay October 12, 1938.

in the context of the JDC's near bankruptcy and the need to aid Germans Jews seeking refuge in India in particular and is especially focused on the Baghdadi community.

It should be noted that the statement by the representative of the JDC was not entirely correct in regard to Baghdadi Jews trying to help German Jews. There were efforts by Baghdadis both in Iraq and India to assist German Jewry. The Jewish community of Baghdad arranged for a few German Jewish refugee doctors to settle in Baghdad on the pretext of staffing needs for the Meir Elias Hospital, Reema Kadoorie Eye Clinic and Dar al-Shifa Hospital.[78] Many other German Jews were welcomed by the Baghdadis in India.[79] The Baghdadi community in Shanghai decreased it remittances to Baghdad from 1938 until the end of the war because of the large assistance they were providing to Ashkenazi Jewish refugees arriving in Shanghai.[80] Finally, the letter also does not take into account the growing political instability in Iraq which made illegal remitting funds to American or European Jewish organizations with ties to the Zionists in Palestine. The Baghdadis, in both Iraq and in the British colonies, were politically too weak to arrange for mass visas for European Jews fleeing the Nazis. They did their utmost, however, to aid those who managed to escape and found themselves in their communities. Therefore, though the letter was incorrect in stating that Baghdadis were only interested in helping "their own kind", it did however provide another example of the two main reasons for the reduction in aid to Baghdad from all of the Jewish philanthropic organizations: the political troubles in Europe and the faltering global economy. The reaction of the Baghdadi Jews to the plight of German and Eastern European Jewry was also an example of how they were active agents in transnational Jewish philanthropy, not just recipients.

In the 1940s the JDC would assume increased relevance as the political position of the Jews in Baghdad declined and the externally perceived needs were not focused on education or health care, but security and, finally, immigration. In 1941, in the wake of the *Farhud*, the JDC was one of the few Jewish organizations in position to offer aid. Working through the AJA, the JDC offered the Jewish community of Iraq approximately $60,000 in aid. They also were ready to send their field worker in Jerusalem, Harry Viteles, to Baghdad to help the Jewish community rehabilitate

78 JT, May, 1941, 9.

79 Joan Roland, *Jews in British India*, 220–225.

80 JDC NY AR1933/44 711 May 29, 1936. For a history of the Shanghai Ghetto and the role the Baghdadis played see, Irene Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-existence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

itself.[81] The offer was declined under the pretense that the community "with the help of its neighbors" would be able to support itself with local resources.[82] This marked a major break with past offers of aid which had been generally gratefully received. Upon closer inspection, it is likely that given the rising radicalization of the Iraqi political scene—as demonstrated by the *Farhud*, and the related political coups in the government—the Jewish communal leadership felt a strong need to distance themselves from any foreign Jewish organization even remotely linked to Jews in Palestine or the Zionist movement, making the acceptance of any foreign Jewish aid impossible. The one exception to this was the aid from Baghdadi Jews in India and the East Asia which was accepted on the grounds that it was based on family connections, thus strengthening the argument that the Baghdadis mutually imagined themselves as one community.[83]

In the years immediately following the *Farhud*, life for the Jews in Baghdad temporarily improved due to greater political stability and a strengthened economy, making the Jews of Baghdad far better off than their brethren suffering in war torn Europe and Asia. Although the AIU schools continued to function in MENA, the staff of the central offices of the AIU in Paris had dispersed by June, 1940.[84] By the end of 1941, neither the JDC nor the AJA, given the immediate needs for Jewish refugees in Europe, were in a financial position to remit regular funds to Baghdad for educational purposes. The AIU went as far as to ask the AJA to manage their affairs in Palestine and Iraq, which the AJA declined due to lack of resources.[85] Although this message most likely did not make it to Baghdad, as the teachers of the AIU schools sent reports in 1941, 1942, and 1943 on the state of English instruction.[86] Even as the schools and hospitals continued to function with remaining teachers and funds from local endowments, the lay council continued to press for teachers and money (although the majority of these requests fell on deaf ears due to lack of resources).[87] None of the organizations had the financial means to support Baghdad at the same level as they had in the decades before the war. Additionally, travel between the continents was almost impossible so no new teachers could be sent. This does not mean, however, that the organizations

81 JDC NY AR1933/44 714 February 12, 1942.

82 JDC NY AR1933/44 714; Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 133–134.

83 Ibid.

84 Catherine Nicault, "Dans le tourmente de la Seconde Geurre mondiale (1939–1944)" in *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 a nos jours*, 295–330.

85 MS137 AJ37/4/5—Ledger of School involvement November 5, 1940.

86 MS137 AJ37/3/3/8.

87 Ibid; AJ31/3/2/1 1944–1949.

ignored the disintegrating situation of the Jews in Baghdad. The AJA and the JDC kept themselves apprised of the situation in Iraq, receiving regular reports via the local consuls.[88]

By 1948 the situation of the Jews in Iraq had become dire, especially after Iraq sent armies to fight against the establishment of the state of Israel and military rule was established in Iraq. Jews were no longer able to leave the country without their families posting bond, enrollment in higher education was no longer possible, Jews employed in the civil service were dismissed, and individuals could be accused of Zionist activities for letters which had been sent or received from family members in Palestine from as far back as the 1920s (when Zionism was not illegal).[89] The combination of these conditions made it clear to the Jewish philanthropic organizations that the future of Jewry in Iraq was in question, perhaps even before the community itself realized emigration was imminent.

There was, however, a major difference between this new form of aid and the previous decades of assistance. For the first time philanthropic aid to Baghdad was aimed at dismantling the community and transporting it to Israel, whereas the earlier aid had been intended to build the communal infrastructure and assure the place of Jews within the Iraqi nation. Where previous assistance had represented a partnership between foreign agencies and communal elites, the last act of foreign Jewish work in Iraq was orchestrated by the JDC in concert with the Iraqi government and the Israeli government, taking the established Jewish communal leadership out of the decision-making process.[90] Notes from both JDC and AJA board meetings from this period in reference to Iraq no longer mention discussions with the lay council, but instead speak of intelligence reports from their respective countries on the state of the Jewish community.[91]

This exodus was quite complicated and not as organized as Zionist historiography presents, when referring to the immigration as Operation Ezra and Nehemiah.[92] In late 1949, when thousands of Jews wanted to leave Iraq, their motivations, as Esther Meir-Glitzenstein notes, included, "some (who) were Zionists who wanted to move to Israel for ideological reasons; others had simply despaired of Jewish integration

88 JDC NY AR45/54–516; JDC NY AR45/54–707; FO 371/75182; FO 371/45334; FO 371/75185.

89 Bashkin, *New Babylonian*, 187.

90 The Iraqi Jews were represented by Iraqi born Israelis trained in the Zionist underground. Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 239–241.

91 MS137 AJ37 6/1/3 f.2 1949–1950.

92 Daphne Tsimhoni, "Operation Ezra and Nehemia (Ali Baba)," EJIW.

in Iraqi society."[93] Thus, when military rule was lifted and the border was opened, thousands crossed into Iran. Neither the Iraqis or the Israelis were prepared for this, and the mass immigration caused political and economic turmoil in Iraq.[94] As a result, on March 4, 1950 the Iraqi Senate passed Law No. 1 of 1950 which allowed Jews to renounce their citizenship in exchange for the right to emigrate.[95] The JDC played an important role in this process, financing the emigration, the transit camp in Iran, and the airlifts to Israel in 1951–1952 and also acting as an intermediary, at times, between Israel and Iraq.[96] The airlift was estimated to cost the JDC 2.3 million dollars.[97]

In conclusion, the JDC's role in Iraq was markedly different from those of the AIU or the AJA. Unlike the AIU and the AJA, the JDC's position in Iraq was not linked to nationalistic concerns or imperialist ambitions as during the interwar period United States foreign policy was relatively isolationist. Until the 1940s, the JDC's involvement in Iraq was occasional, generally supporting orphanages or providing scholarships to underprivileged students. It had, however, relatively little direct contact with the Jewish community, working almost exclusively via the AJA or the United States consul in Baghdad. It was not until the situation for the Baghdadi Jews became dire that the JDC stepped in to coordinate their emigration from Iraq. This change in philanthropic leadership, notably, parallels the changes within the world order. The United States was ascending in global leadership as Great Britain was largely concerned with decolonization. In the ensuing decades, the JDC would take on many initiatives in other countries similar to those which the AJA and the AIU had undertaken in Iraq prior to World War I. Over time, the JDC's philanthropic philosophy evolved to encompass community building in Jewish communities and humanitarian support for non-Jewish communities in crisis. Even today, the JDC supports the institutions of the dwindling Jewish community in Morocco and has a budget which is most likely several times larger than that of the AIU and the AJA combined.[98]

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93 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 240.

94 For a full discussion of the process of mass emigration see Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 239–254.

95 FO 371/82479 Dispatch No. 55 (1571/8/50). A copy of this ordinance appears in Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 171.

96 JDC NY AR45/54–517—March 28, 1950; Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in Iraq*, 231.

97 JDC NY AR45/54–517—June 1950.

98 The JDC's budget in 2015 was almost 340 million dollars. Exact numbers for the AJA or the AIU in 2015 were impossible to find but given the scope of their activities today it is unlikely that the budgets come close to that of the JDC. JDC Annual Budget, 2015 https://www.jdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/AR21061.pdf, 24.

Thus, the difference in role between the JDC in Iraq in comparison to the AJA and the AIU is also connected to the decline of France and England as post-war imperialist powers.

2. Communal Budgets: A Mosaic of Actors

The three main Jewish philanthropic organizations present in Baghdad were not individual islands of aid but different nodal points in a large network of Jewish solidarity that became more complex and more tangled as the decades progressed. This interconnectivity is apparent when one considers how the finances of the Jewish community functioned. By analyzing the budgets of the schools, it becomes evident that the aid organizations and the lay council were not the only actors. The Iraqi State, foreign consuls and individuals were also contributors in this network of aid. Financial support being central to all charitable projects, all of the organizations made monetary contributions, as did the wealthy elites in Baghdad and the satellite communities.[99] Support by each of the individual actors, however, varied heavily on local economies, political considerations, and the specific needs of the Jewish community in Baghdad. Additionally, the budget of the lay council would change considerably over time with some charitable projects, such as the hospitals, becoming profitable. This surplus could be used to support the general budget of the community (specifically education, perennially the largest expenditure of the community).[100] These various sources of revenue were hinted at by D.S. Sassoon in 1910, although he did not mention the role of the aid organizations. Sassoon's reference to the Eastern Baghdadi communities implied that some of their charitable giving was funneled through the official philanthropic organizations:

> "Midrash Talmud Torah is also supported by the community, from the meat tax called "gabella", and it also received donations at weddings and brit mila [sic] ceremonies. As this source of income is inadequate, and therefore, the midrash Talmud Torah is dependent on contributions from the Baghdad Jews in India, Singapore, Penang, and Rangoon, who likewise have collections made

99 IJA 1446; IJA 2062; IJA 2740.
100 Ibid.

> especially on the occasions of Jahr-zeits [sic].[101] With this money, they provide mid-day meals and sometimes clothes."[102]

These varied sources of revenue, and specifically the aid organizations, were also spoken of in a letter sent by the head of the Alliance school in Basra, A. Zilberstein, in September, 1918 when, in the wake of the instability caused by World War I, many families fled Baghdad for Basra creating great financial strain for the school.[103] The letter was addressed to the president of the AJA, stating that as of yet they had not received financial support from the AJA. The letter went on to express the hope that the AJA will be amenable to supporting the school. The letter is relatively standard and many examples of similar letters exist. What is more interesting is that the letter was forwarded to Jacob Schiff of New York (who would forward the letter to the JDC), E.D. and David Sassoon in Bombay, Nathaniel Rothschild in London, and Ellis Kadoorie in Hong Kong, demonstrating the full arc of fundraising initiatives and importance of the Eastern Baghdadis' support when requesting funds from these organizations. Had Zilberstein's main objective in sending multiple copies been to pressure the AJA, he most likely would have only sent the letter to the Sassoons and Kadoories, as they held positions of importance in the AJA and were deeply invested both in Baghdad and Basra. However, he sent the letter to someone affiliated with the JDC so we can assume that Zilberstein hoped other recipients would send him funds and speak positively of the aid initiatives in Basra to the leadership of the JDC.

The clearest example of this diversity of funding (and fundraising) is shown through school budgets over the first half of the twentieth century. In 1900 Baghdad had two secular schools, one for boys and one for girls, and a religious yeshiva: the Midrash Talmud Torah.[104] The Midrash Talmud Torah was financed by the rabbinate and the lay council, a trend that would continue as foreign Jewish organizations gave very little beyond providing food and clothing to poor students attending religious Jewish schools in Baghdad. For the AIU schools, the AIU in Paris provided about forty-five percent of the funds for the boy's school and fifty percent of the funds for the girl's school. The second largest source of revenue was school fees and the third was

101 It is interesting to note that Sassoon uses the Yiddish term Jahr-zeit when referring to death anniversaries. This term would not have been used in Baghdad.

102 This quote is from page 20 of a manuscript draft of David Sassoon's *A History of Jews in Baghdad*. This paragraph is not included in the published volume. Sassoon Archives Box 35.

103 JDC NY AR1418/00003; JDC NY AR1418/03463.

104 *Bulletin de L'Alliance Israelite Universelle*, 1900, 136.

the AJA contribution that represented twenty-one percent of the budget for the boy's school and eleven percent for the girl's school. The rest of the budgets were covered by small donations from Jewish charities and a miniscule amount of government support. The contributions of the Eastern Baghdadis were less formalized, but just as important. The land and the buildings that housed the AIU schools were donated by wealthy Eastern Baghdadi Jews. The Sassoons donated the land for the Albert Sassoon boys' school in 1874 and the Kadoories donated the land for the Laura Kadoorie girls' schools. The Eastern Baghdadi communities (and wealthy local notables) also provided smaller forms of assistance that most likely did not appear in the reports ledgers, in line with what Sassoon alludes to in the above quote, such as small donations for specific projects like books for the libraries or meals for poor students.

Two decades later, in 1920, Baghdad had seven schools. The AJA was not listed as supporting any of the schools, and the AIU was only supporting Albert Sassoon, its expenditure representing less than ten percent of the school system's budget. The Laura Kadoorie School had become almost completely self-sufficient thanks to school fees (although private individuals provided scholarships to needy students), and the other new schools were being supported by the lay council and special *awaqf* set up for individual schools.[105] By 1930, the situation had changed yet again, with AIU contributing to the budgets of both the Albert Sassoon and Laura Kadoorie schools. The lay council provided subsidies to seven of the ten Jewish schools then open in Baghdad, and the AJA opened the Shamash school, for which they would provide twenty-five percent of the budget in its initial years. The rest of the money came from school fees, the lay council, and the endowment set up by Benjamin Shamash.[106] Unfortunately, I have not come across any school budgets from the 1940s. I suspect that the financial donors would have included very few foreign donors, due to both the financial strain of World War II, and the difficulty of wiring money internationally.[107]

The subsidy from the lay council came directly from the money raised by the Jewish Schools Relief Committee in Baghdad. This committee was active in raising money not only in Iraq but also in the Baghdadi satellite communities and in Britain via the AJA. Although the AJA is not listed as a specific donor (with the exception of its

105 Reports in English and Arabic consistently refer to Jewish charitable endowments as *waqf* and to land grants used for schools as *mahlul*, traditional Islamic legal terms for charitable structures. In the Iraqi republic, these charitable constructions were used by Jews in Iraq as they related to the Iraqi tax code for charitable trusts. Jewish schools reports 1930—CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

106 Ibid.

107 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004.

contribution to the Shamash school), their help in raising money for the lay council fund directly supported the schools. Finally, all of the schools benefited from private benefactors, either wealthy Jews in Baghdad or from abroad, as is mentioned in the notes for each school.[108] Local contributions were always a sensitive issue for the aid organizations who often felt that the local community was not generous enough in supporting their own institutions.[109] This report differs in that it asserts that, as the local contributions are at full capacity, the AJA, the AIU and the Iraqi government should be providing more financial support to the lay council for the Jewish schools.[110]

Although the objective remained to make the schools as financially independent as possible, with the majority of the budget being covered by school fees, this was never achieved in any school. Subsidies were highest for the schools with the poorest students: the Midrash Talmud Torah (one hundred percent of the costs were funded by the lay council by 1930) and Noam/Haron Saleh (less than ten percent of the budget was covered by fees). Even at the Laura Kadoorie School in 1930 only a little over half of the cost of running the school was covered by fees, and at Albert Sassoon and Shamash it was only twenty-five percent. Thus, as the schools continued to expand they accepted more children unable to pay fees and the issue of continuous fundraising remained crucial. This explains the renewed AIU subsidy in 1930 for the Laurie Kadoorie school, specifically earmarked to provide scholarships to poor girls, although the AIU was taking a back seat to the AJA in all other areas of Jewish life in Baghdad.

The budgets also list smaller donations from other actors such as the Iraqi state. Significant as this is, the amount remained pitifully small, accounting for between two to four percent of the yearly budget for the Jewish schools.[111] These contributions were relatively negligible in the greater financial picture, and it does not appear that the community undertook any special fundraising or lobbying to gain more financial support from the Iraqi state. In fact, the government schools in the Jewish quarter (which ostensibly were mostly educating Jewish children)

108 CAHJP Iraq File—6382 tables 1–3.

109 Paul Dumont, "Jews, Muslims, and Cholera" in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. page 354–358. Archives AIU, Irak XIIE 112a, letter of S. Somekh date January 21st, 1889.

110 Report of the Jewish Schools on the Jewish Schools in Baghdad 1930 CAHJP Iraq File—6382; Paul Dumont, "Jews, Muslims, and Cholera: Intercommunal Relations in Baghdad at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed Avigdor Levy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 353–372.

111 In 1925 the Iraqi government gave 5.600 Rs. and in 1930 11.250 Rs. in subsidies to the Jewish schools, the overall budget of the Jewish schools was 294.127 Rs. in 1925 and 303.875 Rs. in 1930. Rs, refers to Indian Rupees, they were replaced by the dinar in 1932; CAHJP Iraq File—6382.

were actually financed in part by the Jewish community through the paying of rents on the buildings housing the schools, and by supplying these schools with Hebrew teachers.[112] Thus these schools, which represented a partnership between the community and the government, indirectly received funds from foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations and foreign Jewish donors via the schools committee. The communal/government construction became increasingly prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, many Jews thought that government schools such as Ras al-Qarya, Al-Firdos, and Rafidiyan were Jewish schools as these schools were run by the government with Jewish communal funding. It's ironic that although the Iraqi government was becoming increasingly more anti-British and paranoid about Zionist ideas infiltrating the Jewish community via the Jewish school networks, they themselves depended on these same foreign Jewish networks to supply funding and teachers for their public education system.

3. Conclusions: Philanthropic Diversity and Continuity

The relationship between the Baghdadi Jewish community and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations in the nineteenth is indicative of the importance of imperial networks in forging relationships between European and MENA Jewry. In the twentieth century this relationship evolved, became more sophisticated and less top-down as communal infrastructure evolved. The secular Jewish lay elite in Baghdad began to participate in Jewish networks as Iraqi citizens working for the betterment of both their religious community and their nation. This differs from earlier patterns where Ottoman subjects would request protection for their religious community from foreign powers. In the next chapter I will demonstrate how the Jewish network of schools was used by the communal leadership to demonstrate the Jewish community's importance and integration in Iraqi society.

By comparing the working model of the AJA to that of the AIU it becomes apparent that the AJA was less intellectually wedded to the propagation of British culture than the AIU was to spreading French culture. Whereas the AIU was a staunch proponent of the teaching French as the dominant language in their schools, the AJA saw greater value in Arabic. The AJA also showed greater enthusiasm and flexibility in working with the local Iraqi curriculum than the AIU, thus making cooperation with the AJA

112 CAHJP Iraq File—6382, 7.

easier. Zvi Yehuda asserts that the AIU's hiring practices sought to acculturate the Iraqi Jews, without consulting communal leadership. This is in sharp contrast to the AJA who sought to hire individuals whose level of religious observance, for example, was commensurate with religious observance in Iraq.[113] With this difference in mind, in many ways the relationship among the AJA, the British government in Iraq and the Jewish community parallels the work of the AIU in North Africa during the French protectorates.[114]

Interestingly, although transnational Jewish solidarity brought disparate Jewish groups together, it also strengthened nationalist rhetoric and identity of each Jewish group by reaffirming each group's relationship to their respective nation. The AIU, the AJA, the JDC, and the lay council all functioned as organizations attached to specific political states. Each organization stressed its national allegiance and the desire for Iraqi Jews to be full and productive citizens of Iraqi society. For the organizations and for the Baghdadis these connections represented a way to help greater Iraqi society by providing an educated and skilled elite ready to participate in the newly constructed nation, and thus fit nicely into the nationalist Iraqi mood of the 1920s.

However, each of the organizations had projects in Palestine and from the mandate period onward, Baghdadis working for these organizations or representing the Jewish community were occasionally sent to Palestine for training, to attend meetings or to acquire supplies such as Hebrew language books.[115] It is only later, when the foreign aid organizations began to have a stronger presence in Palestine and increased their engagement with the "New Yishuv," that the relationship between Baghdad and these organizations became more sensitive. This point plays into a larger theme, namely that up until World War II Zionism remained one ideological project amongst many within the Jewish World, and thus Baghdad's apathy toward the project was unremarkable. Furthermore, prior to WWII the world Zionist organization did not see emigration to Palestine of MENA Jews as part of its agenda, its focus being on Jews from places like Poland and Galicia imbued with Zionist ideology and ready to work the land.[116] Baghdadi Jews by this period were largely middle class, working either as merchants or in white collar office jobs. In the Levant prior to World War II, Baghdadis

113 In 1926 the AJA hired Adolph Brotman an Orthodox Jew to teach English in Baghdad; MS137 AJ37/4/2/2—Communications March 3, 1926 to September 18, 1934.

114 Michael M. Laskier, "La Protection des Juifs en Afrique du Nord" in *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 a nos jours*, 116–140.

115 E02/16-SEK-8C-004.

116 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 40–51.

going to Palestine for a short stay had little political motivation, instead enjoying an occasion to visit family,[117] go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem or a seaside holiday.

The amount of financial aid given to communities in MENA and also in Eastern Europe by American and Western European Jewry, makes clear that Zionist ideology and the establishment of Jewish settlements in Palestine was minor within the full spectrum of philanthropic activities in the 1920s. After 1933, the global focus of transnational Jewish aid shifts from community building to getting Jews out of Germany and Austria, and later all of Europe. The Iraqi government did not comment on Iraqi Jews boycotting German goods or trying to arrange for European Jewish refugees to settle in Iraq or the satellite communities. The relationships between the Jewish community in Baghdad and foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations, however, only became problematic (in the eyes of the Iraqi state) in the wake of a more proactive political Zionism aimed at Iraqis. Although the battle against Zionism within the Iraqi public sphere had begun as early as the 1920s and only became tenser in the 1930s after events such as the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–1939).[118] Prior to this, the Iraqi State generally took a positive stance on the work of the AIU, AJA and JDC in Iraq.

It has been argued that the Jewish community of Baghdad began to distance itself from foreign Jewish entities beginning in the 1930s.[119] Based on the sources I have presented in this chapter, I argue that there is no solid case for this. This purported cooling of relationships is often attributed to differences of opinion over Zionism and a desire for more communal independence vis-à-vis foreign Jewish organizations, primarily based on anti-British Imperialist stance taken by some members of the Jewish community.[120] The transfer of the administration of schools to the lay council, however, did not begin in the 1930s, having grown out of a desire for greater control of curriculum as early as 1908. The decision was ideological, in that the Jewish leadership felt it important to have a greater emphasis on local languages (such as Turkish and later Arabic) as opposed to French, not to mention adding English. Ideologically these changes had nothing to do with issues of Jewish nationalism as Hebrew was consistently taught as a liturgical language and there was little discussion regarding the importance or level of Hebrew instruction. Thus, the decisions surrounding language instruction were most likely being made for pragmatic reasons.[121]

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117 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 125.

118 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 103.

119 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 39–54.

120 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 116–120.

121 See the following chapter for additional information on language instruction.

The sharper changes we see in the 1930s, such as the decrease in foreign funds and foreign expertise, can be attributed to growing concern for German Jewry (and later European Jewry as whole) on behalf of the foreign Jewish aid organizations, forcing them to shift their resources towards the situation in Europe. This argument of global political and economic developments affecting the transnational Jewish ties of the Baghdad community is even more resonant in the early 1940s. By 1941 the AIU central offices had been completely shut down due to the Nazi invasion of Paris, and the AJA and JDC were desperately doing everything in their power to save European Jewry. And yet, with that in mind, after the *Farhud*, the JDC immediately offered help to the Baghdadi Jewish community, and the AJA continued to offer support where possible via the channels of the British foreign office. Although the flow of aid towards Iraq was diminished due to the dire needs of European Jewry, the Jewish community of Baghdad still maintained its ties with these organizations as they too tried to aid their co-religionists in Europe via the sending of money, a boycotting of German goods (beginning in the 1930s) and a mostly unsuccessful attempt to help European Jewish refugees settle in Iraq. In fact, the philanthropy of the wealthy Baghdadi Jews (both inside and outside Iraq) was so well known within Jewish philanthropic circles that one JDC official as early as 1925 mused that the Jews of Baghdad and Calcutta should also being doing their part to aid European Jewish War orphans.[122]

The Jewish communal leadership of Baghdad consistently sought cooperation with foreign Jewish organizations up until the 1950s, regardless of the general political climate in Iraq. Their usage of these networks suggests an acknowledgement of the importance of the role of transnational solidarity, an idea which had not existed before the nineteenth century. Over time, the communal leadership became more sophisticated and formal in their partnerships, writing five and ten years plans for education and investing massively in communal infrastructure.[123] The Jewish leadership of Baghdad positioned itself as equal to the Jewish elites of Europe and were linked by familial ties to the Baghdadis of East Asia. It is in this capacity that the Baghdadi elites embodied both the sentiment and the moral obligation "to promote social, moral, and intellectual progress among Jews," an idea embraced by the AIU and the AJA.[124] These objectives, as perceived by both foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations and the Baghdadi Jewish elites, were grounded in the nineteenth

122 JDC NY AR2132/03128.

123 MS 137 AJ37/4/5; CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

124 *A philanthropic tradition: The Kadoorie Family*, 13.

century European ideals of Jewish Internationalism but functioned up until the late 1940s as modern transnational networks with an optimism about the future of Jewish life in the new Iraqi nation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Jewish Education in Iraq

In the previous chapters I discussed changes that occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century regarding communal reorganization, migration and new forms of transnational Jewish solidarity. Arguing that Jews in Baghdad inexorably became intellectually, political, and economically entwined with other Jewish communities around the globe. This chapter and the chapter preceding it expand on the discussion as to how non-elite Baghdadi Jews could have engaged on different levels with Jewish transnational networks, particularly in the period between 1920–1951.

For example, a 1921 article in *Paix et Droits* mentioned with pride that the students of the AIU schools were sufficiently prepared in French and English to take up employment in the flourishing Jewish communities of East Asia, India, Marseilles and Manchester without any linguistic or cultural barrier. The article continued by discussing the emigration plans of these students and the exciting positions they would take up abroad, made possible by their AIU education.[1] These students would primarily take up positions as clerks in banks and commercial firms indicative of their position within the Baghdadi middle class.

Prior to the 1920s it was mainly the intellectual elites and leadership that saw themselves as part of the larger Jewish world. For the majority of the population, the extended Jewish world was restricted to the Baghdadi satellite communities. In the period between 1920–1951, however, this changed, primarily due to secular Jewish education in Baghdad having put Jews in Baghdad from all social strata in contact with the global Jewish public sphere.

In the previous chapter I discussed the importance of foreign Jewish groups in developing the secular education infrastructure. This chapter looks internally at role of communal schools for the Jewish population in Baghdad. I argue that the Jewish schools demonstrate how the community could simultaneously engage with both Iraqi nationalism and the Jewish public sphere, strengthening the Jewish community's ties to the emergent Iraqi nation while also fostering ties to transnational Jewish networks through their engagement with foreign philanthropic Jewish organiza-

1 "Ecoles: Mesopotamie—Baghdad," *Paix et Droits*, December 1, 1921, 16.

tions. In this chapter I will discuss how the schools became a public platform for the community to show its integration into the new state and its desire to participate in its construction while leveraging and strengthening its ties with Jewish communities outside Iraq. By looking at the evolution of the Jewish schools in Baghdad during the formative years of the Iraqi state, this chapters aims to demonstrate how the community positioned itself between the state and other Jewish communities, cultivating both its national and transnational allegiances.

These national and transnational allegiances were not mutually exclusive. Reflected in the development of the Jewish schools they represented a synergy of empowerment for the Jewish community of Baghdad. From the perspective of the Iraqi state, the Jewish community's success in leveraging its international connections to build an impressive modern school system before this was possible for the entire nation was seen as having great benefit for the nation as a whole. For the Jewish philanthropic organizations, the high level of integration of the Iraqi Jews and their important place within the Iraqi civil service was perceived as a testament to the success of transnational Jewish philanthropy. As such, Jewish transnational networks could be a source of pride for the Jewish community, demonstrating to the Iraqi state its willingness to participate in the Iraqi public sphere, while at the same time placing Baghdad Jewry within the Jewish public sphere via their involvement with transnational Jewish organizations.

1. The Development of a Jewish School Network

The first modern schools in Baghdad teaching secular subjects were primarily established under the authority of religious communities. This may seem ironic when measured against twenty-first century ideas of modernity and the role of modern education but, as previously discussed, secular society in Baghdad was only emerging in the nineteenth century.[2] Thus it is not surprising that the first schools teaching secular subjects were projects primarily organized by religious communities, the one exception being the military academy built by Midhat Pasha in 1870. It was only after the Young Turk revolution of 1908 that a few state schools were developed. By the Mandate period the oldest of the Jewish schools were well established institutions

2 Ceylan, *Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 204–213; Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Searching for Common Ground: Jews and Christians in the Modern Middle East," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere*, 3–38.

in the city, well known in all of the religious communities. These schools fostered an attachment to the Iraqi state, and facilitated the development of ties with the larger (non-Jewish) society while strengthening a communal identity and presenting the idea of a transnational Jewish consciousness. In one space, namely the schools, students developed a simultaneous awareness of both the communal, the public, and the transnational.

Although the type of education offered by these schools was diverse in nature with different actors playing central roles in different schools (such as the AIU, AJA, lay council, the Rabbinate, Iraqi State, etc.) I consider them as a single unit both because of their dependence on the lay council for financial administration and the ideological significance of their falling within the jurisdiction of the lay council. Officially, there was no singular unified Jewish school system but rather a grouping of schools that had varying attachments to either the rabbinate or the lay council, the two main official organs of the Jewish community which controlled a community budget derived from the *gabelle*, *mahlul* (real-estate endowment) and *awaqf* (monetary endowments). These councils were also responsible for liaising with the Iraqi government on the Jewish community's behalf. From the 1920s onward, all of these schools were under the official jurisdiction of a school committee which reported directly to the lay council.[3] The school committee made decisions primarily related to the distribution of funds, but it also controlled some key decisions on curriculum and the hiring of faculty—most notably in appointing Lionel Smith to act as advisor. The school committee also appointed sub-committees which worked to develop libraries, laboratories, sports, summer camps, and other social activities.[4]

Communal reports from 1930 and 1935 describe five types of Jewish schools in Baghdad:[5]

1. Religious schools, such as the Midrash Talmud Torah established in 1932, which was a religious school with elementary studies in Arabic. After 1840 the Yeshiva of Bagdad[6] offered religious education and, beginning in the early twentieth century,

3 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East*, 122–123.

4 Yosef Meir "Traditional and Modern Education", in *Annals of Iraqi Jewry*, 223.

5 These reports were prepared for the AJA by the lay council, to account for financial contributions of funds, and help make the case for allocating additional funds to the Baghdad schools. CAHJP Iraq File—6382; MS 137 AJ/37/4/5.

6 Orit Bashkin, "'Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land' Iraqi Jews as Ottoman Subjects, 1864–1913," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 4, no. 3 (2010), 308.

limited secular education. The Midrash Menashe Saleh school was founded in 1935 and offered both religious and secular subjects on a par with the Iraqi national curriculum.[7]

2. The AIU girls' and boys' schools, based on a French curriculum.
3. The community schools that followed a modified government syllabus teaching biblical Hebrew and Jewish history instead of Islamic studies, and added extra hours to the school week for English lessons (in comparison to the government schools).
4. Communal schools that offered vocational training to poor and orphaned students. These school were often part of larger AIU or traditional communal schools.
5. The Shamash school, a community school based on the English curriculum and supported by the AJA.
6. The State schools built by the Iraqi government in the Jewish quarter at the end of the 1920s. The primary audience for these schools were the Jewish residents of the neighborhood.[8] The curriculum at all these schools was state mandated with the lay council having no jurisdiction over the teaching of core subjects. The lay council, however, paid the rents on the buildings and supplied teachers for classes in biblical Hebrew for the state schools. Additionally, the majority of the teachers in these schools were Jewish graduates of the communal schools.[9]

The argument that the education available in the Jewish school system both enabled intercommunal understanding and prepared Jews to participate in Iraqi society has been discussed in great detail by authors such as Orit Bashkin, Abbas Shiblak, Aline Schlaepfer and Nissim Rejwan.[10] Learning to read and write classical/standard Arabic was key to this participation. With access to Arabic literature and culture, Jewish students were able to engage with the emergent society as a whole, a phenomenon that Bashkin defines as practicing Arab Jewishness.[11] These schools as institutions, however, were opportunities for the community to demonstrate its commitment to the nation and thereby become public spaces themselves. Furthermore, these schools were the central conduit for the develop of a transnational Jewish consciousness

7 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East*, 115.

8 CAHJP Iraq File—6382, 6.

9 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*.

10 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*; idem, *The Other Iraq*; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*; and Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*; Schlaepfer, *Les Intellectuels juifs de Bagdad*.

11 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*.

among the few members of the middle and lower classes who did not have close family contact with Baghdadis abroad. Therefore, these schools epitomized the idea that Jewish communities in this period could organize themselves locally while also cultivating their transnational ties.

In many respects, the education Jews received in these schools acted as the bridge to Jewish participation in Iraqi society, by providing a multilingual education that included Arabic they allowed middle class Jews to participate in pluralist Iraqi society during the Hashemite period. Some striking examples are found in autobiographies from the Mandate period in which we begin to find references to beloved children's books in Arabic and subscriptions to Arabic literary magazines.[12] This is also the period during which the first Arabic language periodicals appeared in Iraq, most notably *al-Ḥāṣid* and *al-Misbāḥ*, whose Jewish editors were graduates of the AIU schools.[13] By receiving an education in formal Arabic, Jewish youth were exposed to *fushā* (literary Arabic). The students were also exposed to the local Muslim-Baghdadi dialect by their non-Jewish teachers[14] and other dialects of Arabic from Jewish teachers from other areas of the Arab World,[15] each of which was distinct from the Judeo-Baghdadi spoken in Jewish homes, and this exposure prepared them for a life beyond the community. It allowed Jews who later joined the Iraqi civil service or foreign companies to converse in a style similar to that of their non-Jewish colleagues.[16] Finally, neither the faculty nor the student body of these schools was homogenous in composition, with the exception of the Midrash Talmud Torah. Records indicate that non-Jewish children, particularly those from the Chaldean community, were welcome among the student body. This tapered off in the 1930s as more Christian schools were opened, as the Iraqi government began to open more state schools, and as the general level of public education improved.[17] Finally, non-Jewish teachers were regularly employed in the Jewish schools, particularly for the study of Arabic. The interactions with non-Jewish students and faculty gave the Jewish students regular meaningful contact with individuals outside their community.

12 Ibid, 23, 244.

13 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East: 1860–1972*, 125.

14 See thesis introduction for a greater discussion on the linguistic differences between Judeo-Baghdadi and Muslim-Baghdadi. Also see Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad*.

15 Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 38–39.

16 Kattan, *Farewell Babylon*, 11–16. This is evidenced in an anecdote he tells of a Jewish friend who speaks in the Judeo-Baghdadi dialect among their non-Jewish friends.

17 MS 137 AJ37/4/5.

The schools were also tools for the community to show its loyalty to the monarch and the state, often by active participation in the pageantry of the state. At the invitation of the community, King Faisal visited the AIU Laura Kadoorie girls' school in 1924 with Ja'far al-'Askarī then prime minister of Iraq; they made a similar visit to the Rachel Shahmon community school a year later. Prince Ghazi, the minister of education at the time, attended the graduation ceremony of al-Wataniyya community school in 1925.[18] As Aline Schlaepfer discusses, the AIU school in Basra publicly mourned the death of King Ghazi in 1949 with teachers fashioning black armbands for the students and faculty to wear.[19] These examples demonstrate the ways in which the schools, as institutions, were used to further the idea of the Jewish community as an integrated sector of Iraqi society.

As Hannah Mueller-Sommerfeld mentions in her work on the role of the League of Nations during the Mandate in Iraq, Jewish communal leaders, although initially desiring British citizenship,[20] accepted the idea of being citizens in an Iraqi state, urged the community to be loyal citizens, and stressed integration as opposed to segregation. This is evidenced by the above-mentioned very public overtures within communal space, and yet, "Arabization" is only one side of the coin. The Jewish community also officially asked for the preservation of the "free opportunity for economic and educational development" as the main pillars of their community, which guaranteed the preservation of their history and communal life in Iraq. As a point of comparison these requests were relatively mild compared to refugee communities such as Assyrian and Armenian hopes for independence, but were certainly in line with the rights that other religious and ethnic communities hoped to gain in the new state such as the Chaldeans, and also essential for the community to continue its relationships with organizations such as the AIU, AJA, and JDC.[21] It was this balance between participation into the new Iraqi society and the preservation of their communal identity, that was key to the flourishing of the Jewish schools of Baghdad.

Jewish transnational networks were at the center of this new conception of both citizenship and preservation of a communal identity that went beyond the borders of Iraq. In this way, the schools worked to forge what can be considered a secular Jewish

18 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 39.

19 Aline Schlaepfer "The King is Dead Long Live the King" in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere*, 185–204.

20 Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 256–258.

21 Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld: "The League of Nations, A-Mandates and Minority Rights during the Mandate Period in Iraq (1920–1932)" in *Modernity Minority and the Public Sphere*, 258–283.

identity, i.e., one not grounded in religious practice and belief or family bonds but based on a transnational Jewish solidarity with values similar to those expressed by the AIU and AJA in their roles as Jewish organization in France and the United Kingdom. Thus, the schools taught students about foreign Jewish communities, included foreign Jewish newspapers in their libraries and gave students the opportunity to study abroad both in Jewish and non-Jewish schools, often with the help of scholarships from foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations. By understanding the fluid role of the schools in forging both Iraqi and Jewish identities in their students we can begin to understand how the Jewish community as a whole constantly navigated between the emergent pluralist Iraqi civil society and participation within transnational Jewish networks.

2. Modern Jewish Schools

On the eve of the Mandate the Jewish community was the oldest and most organized provider of secular education for boys and girls in Baghdad. Although Jewish education in Baghdad had a long tradition, beginning with the fabled Abbasid-era yeshivot,[22] these schools had ceased to exist by the eighteenth century, in part due to the general decline of a city prone to plague and political instability up through the mid-nineteenth century. It was not until 1832 that a new religious school opened, the Midrash Talmud Torah (which educated 2,049 students divided into 27 classes); this was followed in 1840 by the Baghdad Yeshiva for students wishing to continue their education. These schools focused on religious instruction, teaching such as subjects as the Talmud, Zohar, and other religious works, but notably they also provided education in elementary Hebrew and Arabic.[23] Prior to attending the Midrash, young boys were sent to some thirty *ustādh-s*, one-room school houses often attached to synagogues where young boys received religious education by rote until they were old enough to help support their families or continue their education at the Yeshiva.[24] The curriculum and hierarchy in these types of establishments was similar to the Muslim and Christian educational options of the time: limited to boys whose parents could

22 Yaron Ayalon and Ariel I. Ahram, "Baghdad," EJIW.

23 Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 25; Sassoon, *The History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 17.

24 The term *ustādh* (Arabic—master/teacher) is the Judeo-Baghdadi equivalent to Kuttāb in other parts of MENA and the Eastern European *heder*; Rachel Simon, "Kuttāb," EJIW.

afford the school fees, they were organized either by schoolmasters in private homes or by the religious leadership in larger institutions and endowed by a waqf set up by wealthy members of the community.[25] Other options for education included apprenticeships for those entering trade and private tutoring for the wealthy. Although girls were permitted to attend the *ustādh-s* (but not the Midrash Talmud Torah), few if any girls ever attended.[26] More likely, upper class girls received private tutoring, as the existence of correspondence by women from the nineteenth century demonstrates that some had the ability to read and write in both Hebrew and Latin scripts, although this was surely the exception.[27]

For the Jewish community this limited choice in education began to change when the AIU, at the request of members of the community who had heard about the recently opened Alliance boy's school in Tetouan, Morocco, opened its first school in Baghdad in 1864. By way of comparison, the first elementary school teaching secular subjects to Muslim boys in Baghdad was established in 1869 by Midhat Pasha.[28] By the time of the British Mandate the Jewish community had developed the most extensive network of schools, but the importance of modern education also had advocates in other religious communities in nineteenth century Baghdad (although access to these schools was limited to a privileged few). The AIU school—later named in honor of Albert Sassoon—was originally met with limited success; it closed shortly after it opened, then reopened in 1872. As protests from the religious authorities regarding the concept of secular education were relatively mild, it is possible that the rabbinate did not feel threatened by the AIU because of its small size and high school fees. The Midrash Talmud, by comparison, was less costly and better established. Any possible conflict between the AIU school and the rabbinate came to an end when Rabbi Abdullah Somekh sent his son to the AIU school, although he himself was head of the Midrash Beit Zilkha, a branch of the Midrash Talmud Torah.[29]

The most well-known later religious opponent of the AIU was Rabbi Shimon Agasi (1852–1914), a close associate of Rabbi Yosef Haim and a respected Torah sage in Baghdad. His objection was specific to the AIU and his perception of them as emissaries

25 The annual financial reports of the Jewish schools, commissioned by the AJA and written in English refer to the endowments of the schools as *waqf* opposed to *heqdesh*.

26 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle* East, 114.

27 Meir "Traditional and Modern Education", 215. The Sassoon archives boxes 31 and 35 have nineteenth-century correspondence from women in both Judeo-Arabic and French.

28 Rejwan, *Jews of Iraq*, 181.

29 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 55. Schlaepfer "The King is Dead, Long Live the King," 185–204.

of European culture which he feared—perhaps rightfully so—would distance the community from the social norms of the Iraqi environment and traditional Iraqi Judaism. Agasi was not against secular education for either girls or boys and never pressed for the schools to be closed, but instead advocated for greater rabbinic presence in all Jewish schools. In fact, Agasi was such a supporter of practical education that in 1906 he founded his own school which dedicated half of the day to vocational training and half of the day to the study of Torah, thus offering another option for Jewish youth.[30] In this way Agasi is representative of much of the controversy in the Jewish community surrounding education. The question was not whether secular education was useful, but how best to develop secular education and define the ultimate objectives. These objectives included general cultivation, integration into Iraqi society, Westernization, and improve employment prospects. These questions were asked both in regard to girls' and boys' education, although the objectives were often perceived as quite different.

When an AIU girl's school opened in 1893, it was the first of its kind in Iraq. By 1920 Jewish schools enrolling both boys and girls had been established in Basra, Mosul, Hilla, 'Amara, and Kirkuk. Parallel to the expansion of the AIU schools, the Jewish communities in Iraq began to build their own modern schools beginning with what was initially a coed school, Noam (also referred to as Haron Saleh) in 1902;[31] they also slowly integrated more secular subjects into the curriculum of the religious schools.[32] The opening of these schools was in large part a response to the lack of satisfaction with the rigidity of the AIU curriculum and the perceived AIU superiority complex. Over time these new options diminished the role of the AIU as compared to many other Jewish communities in the Islamic world,[33] where often the Alliance schools were the only Jewish education option.

Although early enrollment figures at the AIU schools are available, it is difficult to place this information within a larger context as there is little reliable demographic information for the province of Baghdad from the Ottoman period. Despite these uncertainties, we can assume that throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth

30 Shaul Regev, "Agasi, Shimon," EJIW.

31 This information comes from a 1924 letter from the office of the chief rabbi written in response to Judah Magnes's request for information on the Jewish community of Baghdad for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. The letter describes the functioning of the Jewish community of Baghdad, and gives detailed information on its revenues and expenditures. CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, tables, p. 2.

32 The chief rabbi's office makes a note of this fact in its letter to Magnes.

33 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 186.

century secular education remained limited to a privileged few. In 1900 there were 296 boys and 166 girls enrolled in all of the AIU schools in "Mesopotamia," the term the AIU used when referring to the region prior to the formation of the Iraqi state.[34] The community's decision, however, to open its own schools with lower enrollment fees, in addition to the expanding capacity of the AIU schools during the first two decades of the twentieth century, demonstrates the communal desire to reach a wider social spectrum of students. This desire is clearly stated in an English language report from the 1930s entitled "Report of the Jewish Schools Committee on the Jewish Schools in Baghdad 1930".[35]

To understand the centrality of the Jewish schools to the community itself and to place the evolution of the Iraqi education system between 1920 and 1951 in context, it is important to compare the size of the Jewish community with that of the general population both as a whole and in relation to those who had access to education. In the early 1920s the population of the city of Baghdad was approximately 200,000 people.[36] Of the general population there were somewhere between 65,000 and 80,000 Jews living in the province (opposed the city) of Baghdad, at least 55,000 of them living in the city of Baghdad itself.[37] Proportionally, this means that a least a quarter of the city's population was Jewish, making the Jewish community the single largest religious/ethnic group in the city and as Nissim Rejwan (among others) argues, the best educated as a communal whole.[38] In 1920, the Jewish community of Baghdad lists seven primary and secondary schools plus three vocational schools educating 4,030 boys, 1,481 girls for a total of 5,521 pupils.[39] By comparison, in 1920 in the whole of Iraq there were only 88 primary and 3 secondary schools (for a total of 8,110 students) for a national population of around 3 million.[40]

This means that during the 1920s a large percentage of those who received a modern education were Jewish and, as the Jewish schools dedicated more hours to the study of foreign languages, the Jewish students had a strategic advantage over those

34 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*, 117.

35 Jewish schools report 1930 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

36 This number refers to the province of Baghdad, as opposed to the city itself.

37 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 3.

38 Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq*, 210–211. Other groups included Sunnīs, Shīʿīs, Persians, Kurds, and Chaldeans.

39 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

40 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 35; Roderic D. Matthews and Matta Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East: Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1949).

educated in the public schools who received less training in English and French. One consequence of this was that the graduates of Jewish schools greatly benefited from the British Mandate, due to a sharp increase in white-collar employment opportunities with the increase in foreign companies in Baghdad, and an expanded civil service.

By the 1930s, educational opportunities for the general population had increased. The national population had grown to over 4.5 million inhabitants[41] and Iraq now had 335 primary and secondary schools with 27,467 male pupils 6,573 female pupils and an additional 293 children in coeducational kindergartens. The Jewish school system had also grown along with its population, but not at the same speed as the nation. For a population of around 65,000 Jews in Baghdad, in the 1930s there were ten primary and secondary schools with 5,031 boys and 2,151 girls plus an additional 700 poor girls receiving vocational training.[42]

Based on the growth of the public schools between 1920 and 1930 one could postulate that the Jewish schools became less central to the community and the nation as a whole. This idea was suggested by scholars such as Shiblak and Twena,[43] the main argument in support of this claim being the newly founded government schools. This assumption is corroborated by a 1930 school report from the Jewish lay council, which notes the establishment of a public boys school in the Jewish quarter[44] and the relative stagnation in the number of boys attending the Jewish schools.[45] Until this point those students unable to pay school fees or secure scholarships could only attend the Midrash Talmud Torah or a vocational program, neither of which offered the possibility to prepare for entrance exams for secondary schools, which in turn opened up the possibility of employment in foreign firms or the civil service—both channels to social mobility. And yet, as the table below indicates, the Jewish school system continued to expand. Therefore, it is impossible to argue that the Jewish schools lost their relevance in the wake of expanded public education. Among the multiple reasons for the continued relevance of the Jewish schools are their higher academic standards, a result of the lower student-teacher ratio and the larger proportion of

41 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 40.

42 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464.

43 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 41.

44 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 2.

45 The overall number of Jewish students increased between 1920 and 1930 as the small decline in the number of boys was offset by an increase in attendence by girls.

teachers with a secondary education.[46] For secondary education the Jewish schools were among the few institutions that offered students the possibility to prepare for the French Baccalaureate (AIU schools), or the London matriculation examinations (in Shamash school); other options in the city were non-state, primarily Christian, institutions with comparable school fees.[47] Up until the dissolution of the community the AIU schools and the Shamash school remained the gold standard for both primary and secondary education in Baghdad. This was particularly true in the opportunities they presented for girls. Finally, the continued communal investment resulting in lower school fees and the free vocational opportunities for poor children and orphans both helped the schools remain relevant. Even during the uncertainty of the 1940s and World War II, the *Farhud*,[48] and general political tensions between the Jewish community and the state, six new communal schools were built, including two in 1948 and 1949,[49] indicating clearly that the Jewish schools remained crucial to the community. The opening of public schools worked to further expand the educational opportunities for Jewish youth but did not reduce the student base of the Jewish schools, which continued to grow steadily as demonstrated by the table below.

Schools under the supervision of the Jewish community in Baghdad (primary and secondary)

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
1920	8	5,511
1930	11	7,182
1935	12	7,911
1945	14	10,021
1949	20	10,391

See table in Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*[50]

46 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*, 121.

47 Matthew and Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East*, 209–213.

48 The *Farhūd* was the anti-Jewish riot that broke out in the wake of the coup d'etat in 1941; in it approximately 180 Jews were killed and millions of dollars in damage was sustained.

49 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 40.

50 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*, 123.

Schools in Iraq (Primary & Secondary)[51]

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
1920	91	8,111
1930	335	36,595
1940	791	104,490
1945	949	108,945

See table Matthew and Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East*[52]

The continued expansion of the Jewish schools and the increase in students in the early twentieth century meant that Jewish schools faced challenges similar to those of the state-run schools, namely a lack of funds and a lack of trained teachers.[53] In a 1924 letter from the office of the chief rabbi to Judah Magnes (the first chancellor of Hebrew University), the secretary to the chief rabbi carefully explains the finances of the community. In the case of the Jewish community the most significant revenue came from the *gabelle*, essentially a tax levied on the sale of kosher meat. In addition to this, the community also received money from the rents on three buildings they owned and the sale of sheep intestine casings from slaughtered animals, all traditional sources of communal revenue.[54] For the purpose of financing education the community solicited financial aid from wealthy Baghdadi Jews residing in the East Asia and from foreign Jewish philanthropic agencies, specifically the aforementioned AIU, AJA, and JDC, thereby reinforcing their links to foreign Jewish communities. They also received regular contributions from the Iraqi government, but these funds were extremely limited, representing less than 4 percent of the annual budget.[55]

Education was one of the main expenditures of the Jewish community.[56] The communal organization of schools became more structured as the Rabbinate yielded considerable power to the lay council, which by 1920 was composed of white-collar

51 These numbers show the total number of students (regardless of confession) nationally. I was unable to find figures which only included schools in Baghdad, nor was I was able to find figures for Jews students enrolled in public schools or non-Jewish private schools.

52 Matthews and Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East*, 140.

53 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 8; Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, 110.

54 The chief rabbi's office makes a note of this fact in the letter to Magnes, CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 19.

55 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 40. CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 1–3.

56 CAHJP Iraq File P3/2464, 20.

professionals and merchants, the majority of whom were graduates of the AIU and community schools.[57] By the end of the 1920s the Jewish community had a mature established school system, while the national education system of Iraq was still in its infancy. This is partially because the Mandate government allocated insufficient funds to education in Iraq for fear of developing an educated class that would be unable to find suitable employment.[58]

In addition to these challenges, the Iraqi ministry of education faced challenges that were not shared by the Jewish community, dealing with a larger, more diverse population both geographically and culturally. Thus, the Jewish school system was able to grow and expand their services faster to a larger segment of its population than the general school system; they built new schools, lowered general school fees, and provided more scholarships to meet the demands of the community. Even with the loss of students that resulted from some opting to attend public schools for financial reasons and others attending non-Jewish private schools after moving to new middle-class suburbs during late 1930s and 1940s,[59] the number of Jewish schools and students enrolled in them continued to grow up until the dissolution of the community at the end of the 1940s and early 1950s.

The Jewish schools consistently employed trained teachers who brought an international flavor to the profile of the schools. Initially, in the nineteenth century, the trained teaching staff in the Jewish schools had been comprised of a few Europeans. At the turn of the century the schools began to receive Jewish teachers from other parts of the Muslim world who had been trained at the AIU teacher's school in Paris. Once the community had its own graduates, they too began to fill the ranks of faculty in the schools, although some had little more than primary school training. In the 1920s the Jewish community took several steps to improve the quality of teaching in schools by sending local teachers to secondary education evening classes, but the presence of foreign Jewish teachers remained common in the schools well into the 1940s. Examples of this include the hiring of an orthodox Jew, Mr. A.G. Brotman, in 1926 to assist the schools' committee and oversee education, and in 1928 two additional teachers were recruited for the Shamash school, one from England and another from Beirut. Brotman was succeed by Emile Marmorstein, another English Jew, who would

57 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 45.

58 Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 193–194.

59 An example of this is Sasson Somekh, whose family moved to Bustan al-Khass in 1937 where he attended a private elementary school run by a Christian woman for a few years until he later transferred to the Shamash high school. Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 47.

serve as head master of the Shamash school in the 1930s.[60] Beginning in 1925 the community invited Jewish teachers from Palestine to Baghdad to instruct students in Hebrew language, literature, and Jewish history. Avraham Rozen, who arrived in 1929 to teach at Shamash, also organized clubs for students to promote modern Hebrew.[61] All of the teachers from Palestine were eventually deported when in 1935 the ministry of education prohibited the study of Modern Hebrew and Jewish history education in the communal schools; in addition, the teaching of Zionism was banned.[62] Even the local Jewish teachers brought an international flavor to the schools as many of those with higher education had been educated in Europe, elsewhere in the Middle East or even the United States.[63]

By the 1920s the faculty of the Jewish schools also began to include non-Jewish teachers, due in part to the dearth of Jewish teachers skilled in teaching Arabic language and literature. It appears, however, that well into the 1940s, the schools hired only Jewish headmasters, many of them trained in the United Kingdom or France. The AIU continued its policy of employing former students from other areas of the Muslim world who had studied at the ENIO in Paris, while the Shamash school employed a series of British schoolmasters. Even as the Jewish schools began to hire more non-Jewish teachers, the public schools were pressured to employ Jewish teachers, particularly in the schools where the majority of students were Jewish. This diversity of faculty gave the students varying perspectives on the world at large, as the examples below illustrate.

Sasson Somekh received his introduction to Iraqi politics from his Arabic language and literature teacher at the Shamash school, Muhammad Sharara. Somekh recalls Sharara eschewing semi-official government textbooks in favor of lectures in which he could share his leftist political views—this was in the late 1940s when those suspected of having communist affiliations were imprisoned or even executed.[64] Teachers also brought the concept of Jewish nationalism into the classroom. Violette Shamash, who attended the AIU Laura Kadoorie school in the 1920s, remembers her teacher Mme. Sabbagh, from Paris, teaching the children *Hatikva*, the then unofficial anthem of the Zionists in Palestine; it was only later in life that she learned the significance of the song.[65]

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60 Snir, *Who Needs Arab Jewish Identity?*, 92.

61 Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Literature in Babylon*, 190.

62 Ibid, 19.

63 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 59.

64 Ibid, 77–80.

65 Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 35–36. Shamash mentions the teacher being from Paris although

In this period Zionist ideas reached Baghdad through informal channels. In particular, during the first half of the 1930s Jewish schools employed teachers from Palestine who organized clubs and activities related to the ideas of socialist Zionism.[66] As Esther Meir-Glitzenstein notes, prior to the 1940s those interested in Zionism "came from the lower middle class, and most of them were bordering between Jewish tradition and modernity [...] Their activity may also be viewed as a means of achieving social and political mobility within the conservative framework of the community."[67]

The influence of teachers on students was also found in the public schools that were partially financed by the lay council. In his biography, Nissim Rejwan recalls the days he attended Madrasat Ras al-Qarya, one of the public boys' schools in the Jewish quarter that catered almost exclusively to Jewish students. Madrasat Ras al-Qarya, mostly employed Jewish teachers and received financial support from the lay council.[68] Rejwan recalls a teacher named Dawood Afandi who taught Hebrew Bible[69] and, according to Rejwan, devoted a whole lesson in the spring of 1933 to a discussion of the need to boycott German products in solidarity with the Jews of Germany.[70] This anecdote illustrates how even in a government run school a classroom could become the place of a communal discussion on Jewish transnational solidarity. Furthermore, the idea of boycotting Germany had developed outside Iraq and was imported by Zionist circles present in Baghdad, demonstrating just how interconnected Jewish populations were by the 1930s. It also offers an example of a teacher discussing a very sensitive political subject even as certain factions in the Iraqi government began to profess Nazi sympathies, primarily in protest against British colonialism.[71]

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given her last name and the average profile of an Alliance teacher it is more likely that she was originally from somewhere in North Africa and was educated at the ENIO in Paris.

66 Hayyim J. Cohen, *Zionist Activity in Iraq* [In Hebrew], (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library and Hebrew University, 1968/69), 59–84.

67 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 8.

68 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, n. 41, 250.

69 Rejwan refers to the teacher as Dawood Afandi, however it is likely that Afandi simply refers to his title.

70 Rejwan, *The Last Jews in Baghdad*, 59–60.

71 Schlaepfer, *Les Intellectuels Juif de Baghdad*, 100.

3. Curriculum: Multilingualism and Modernity

The first AIU school in Baghdad followed the Franco-Ottoman education model. Neither Arabic, the local language, nor Ottoman Turkish, the language of the administration, were central to the curriculum although both were taught in varying degrees through the 19th and early 20th century. Not surprisingly, when the AIU girls' school was opened in 1893, Arabic was not part of the curriculum as during the Ottoman period the language of instruction in the Muslim schools was Turkish.[72] Even in 1919, of the 75 public primary schools in Iraq only 56 taught in Arabic, 11 taught in Turkish, 7 taught in Kurdish, and one taught in Persian.[73]

In the 1920s the Iraqi state began to mandate the study of Arabic in schools. In 1924, in written correspondence from the office of the chief rabbi to Magnes in Jerusalem, we see notes that the government was pressuring the schools to teach in English and Arabic, but that the AIU schools were slow to deviate from their francophone bias. Although by this time the majority of Jewish schools were already teaching some Arabic, this educational legislation—and the growing importance of Arabic in commerce and civil society—led to an increase in Arabic instruction throughout the Jewish schools. By 1930 all Jewish schools in Baghdad taught Arabic and all but one taught English. The one school not teaching English was the AIU girl's school, Laura Kadoorie, where French continued to be the main language of education, and Arabic was a distant second. If Laura Kadoorie represents one extreme in language division, it is also far from the exception: instruction in Arabic was inconsistent throughout schools, grades, or genders, with schools allocating anywhere from 6 to 20 hours a week towards the study of Arabic.

The lay council report of 1930 provides a clear breakdown of the subjects studied, divided by language, and providing the number of hours dedicated to each language for all but the Midrash Talmud Torah. By 1930 four schools were being administered by the AIU: Albert Sasson (founded in 1863), Nouriel (founded in 1902), Noam (founded in 1902), and Laura Kadoorie (founded in 1895). At the AIU boy's schools, Albert Sasson and Nouriel, the curriculum was divided between Arabic, French, Hebrew, and English, with French and Arabic being the dominant languages. Below are four charts that compare the hours of study allocated to each language based on the numbers provided from the 1930 report.

72 Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 197.

73 Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, 110.

CHART 1A *Hours Allocated to the Study of Languages by School and Class (Arabic)*[74]

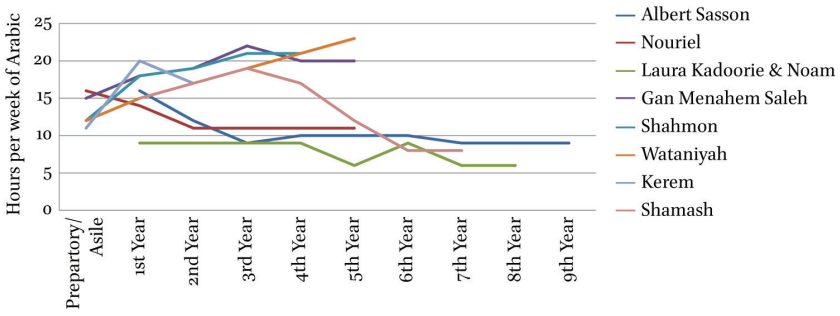
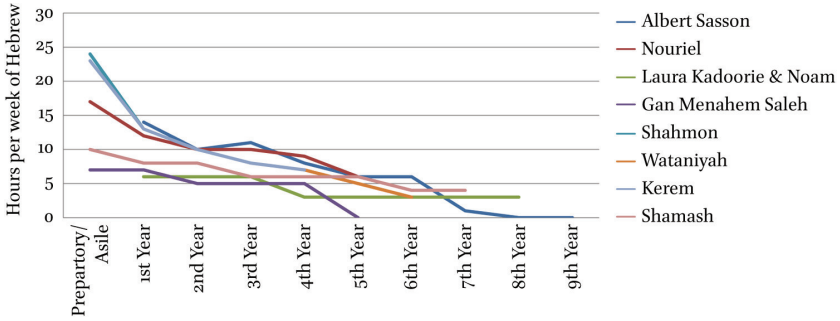


CHART 1B *Hours Allocated to the Study of Languages by School and Class (Hebrew)*



The allocation of hours per language was such that as a student neared matriculation, the time allocated to French would increase and the time for Arabic would decrease. For the less dominant languages, Hebrew and English, hours allocated to Hebrew would decrease as hours allocated to English would increase. The AIU girls' schools operated in a strikingly different manner. At Laura Kadoorie and Noam the dominant language during the entire duration of study was French, with Arabic second, and Hebrew far behind.

From their inception, in the community run schools there was significantly more Arabic in the curriculum, regardless of gender. In addition, all of the schools dedicated substantial time to the study of Hebrew and English. The only communal schools which offered hours in French, and then only in the final two years, was the girls' school Gan Manehem Daniel Saleh (founded in 1910); it offered four hours per week

74 CAHJP Iraq File—6382.

CHART 1C *Hours Allocated to the Study of Languages by School and Class (French)*

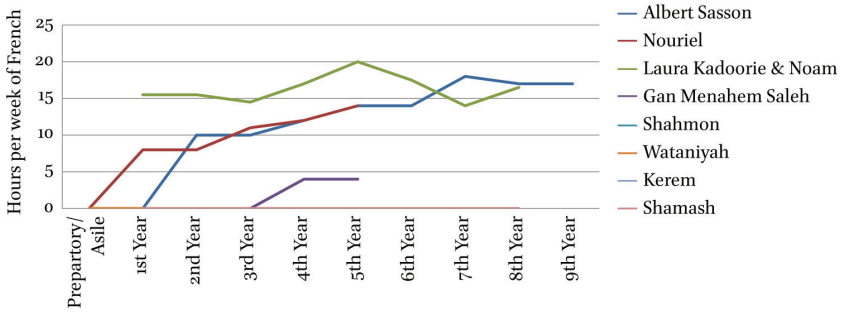
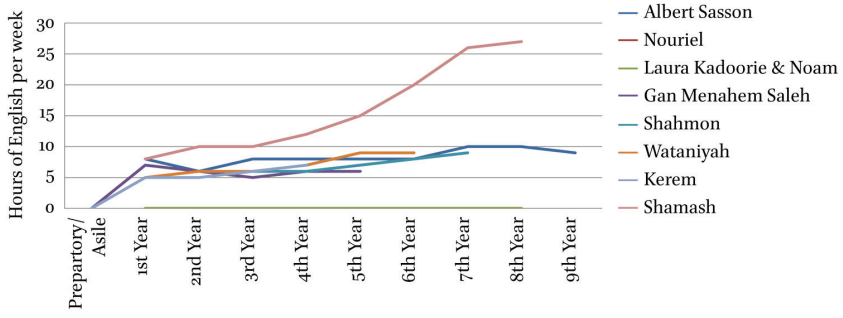


CHART 1D *Hours Allocated to the Study of Languages by School and Class (English)*



in the final two years, most likely to prepare girls who wished to continue their education through year eight at the Alliance Laura Kadoorie school, the only Jewish girl's school offering courses for the final three years of secondary education. For the boy's community schools, Shahmon (founded 1909), Wataniyya (founded 1923), and Kerem (founded in 1924), Arabic was the dominant language. In the first years of education more time was allocated to English, though this slowly reversed as students progressed. Finally, Shamash (founded in 1928), which was a community school with an objective of preparing students to take the London matriculation exams, focused almost exclusively on English in the later years.

When grouping the AIU and communal schools together, the clearest differentiation in curricula is between the sexes. Arabic was not universally included in the girl's curricula until much later, a point discussed in Sasson Somekh's autobiography when he writes about the experience of his parents at the Alliance schools. Born in 1909 Somekh's mother learned to read and write in French and English at the Alliance girl's school in Basra, but was never taught to read or write Arabic. His father, born in 1900 and educated at the AIU boy's school in Baghdad, studied European languages in addi-

tion to Arabic.[75] This contrast illustrates the fundamental differences between boys and girls' education in the Jewish community. Boys were educated to be successful in their chosen careers, have the means to support their future families, and participate as active citizens of the state, while a woman's role was much more limited. The impetus behind educating Jewish girls were the ideas of nineteenth and early twentieth century bourgeois society in western Europe and America. As a girl's education was supposed to develop the qualities she needed to become a wife and homemaker, girls were essentially educated in domesticity. For women, education was synonymous with social prestige, making an educated girl a more desirable match on the marriage market. Overall, girls in the Jewish schools were groomed to be educated wives and homemakers, capable of raising the children of their secularly educated enlightened husbands, their education justified by their predetermined domestic roles.[76]

Girls' education began to change in the 1930s when some professions such as teaching and nursing became open to women and some girls, particularly in the 1940s, attended state schools or studied with boys at the Shamash school, however these instances were exceptions that reaffirmed general trends in girls' education.[77]

The difference in focus between boys' and girls' education, however, is still evident when looking at the gender divide in the curricula of 1930. The clearest indicator of this is the importance of the Arabic language in boys' education compared to girls' education, but there were other differences as well. Boys had three to six more hours of class time per week than girls and more time was dedicated to the "hard sciences," whereas girls dedicated significant time to subjects like embroidery, sewing, hygiene, and home economics.

These differences in and of themselves are not particularly surprising, given the role of women in Iraq (and the majority of the globe) at the time. However, if we consider standard Arabic as one of the main facilitators and markers of national identity, it is noteworthy that this was deemed more important for boys than for girls. This suggests that, initially, the study of Arabic was not ideological but pragmatic—it was necessary for employment in the civil service and in commerce in the 1920s and early 1930s, a point confirmed in many communal reports and also the main source of contention with the AIU and its rigid curriculum.[78] As upper and middle

75 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 55–56.

76 Sciarcon, *Educational Oases in the Desert*, 14; Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 117–118.

77 Bashkin, *New Babylonias*, 87–88.

78 IJA 3787.

class women were not expected to work, the necessity of mastering Arabic was seen as less important, thus the French curriculum and the AIU were central to women's education and social development. This idea is demonstrated in a 1924 letter written by David Sasson,[79] then a teacher at the Alliance girl's school, in which he deplores the fact that families prefer their daughters to learn English over Arabic, even though English has less practical use for these women, noting that girls who are not taught to read Arabic will become women completely dependent on their fathers and spouses.[80] Eventually this changed: by 1930 Laura Kadoorie had dropped the study of English in favor of Arabic, although only 6 to 9 hours a week were allocated to the language.

In the 1930s the only girls who received a comprehensive education in Arabic were those attending the one community girl's school, Gan Menahem Daniel Saleh. These girls received up to 22 hours of Arabic a week, making it the dominant language of their education. Gan Menahem Daniel Saleh represented a minority of those girls who received an education, however, as the school only had 306 students compared to the two AIU girls' schools that enrolled, in total, 1,826 students.[81] As Arabic became a symbol of the nation, representing unity and integration, the number of hours dedicated to Arabic for girls increased, particularly in the 1940s. We cannot know whether the increase in Arabic instruction was designed to facilitate women's integration into Iraqi society, if the community wanted to demonstrate its commitment to Arabic, or whether it was a result of pressure from the government ministry of education. We do know, however, that it was an example of the growing importance of Arabic as an Iraqi national symbol.

Beyond the gendered differences, the other major difference in curricula was between the "religious" and the "secular" communal schools. Although all of the secular Jewish schools taught Hebrew, Jewish history, and religious studies, a point regularly mentioned in the Jewish schools' report, they remained focused on a secular education. The two branches of the Midrash Talmud Torah, obviously, had a very difference perspective: linked directly to the rabbinate and only open to boys, they offered the least "modern" education. The 1930 lay council report does not discuss the curriculum of the Midrash Talmud Torah in the same detail as it does the other schools, yet it does mention that in addition to being a religious school it offered elementary studies in Arabic. The teaching of Arabic was most likely due to

79 Sasson (no relation to the Baghdadi Sassoon Family) was a Persian born Jew educated at the AIU school in Tehran and the AIU ENIO in Paris.

80 Monique Nahon, *Hussard de l'alliance* (Paris: Editions du Palio, 2010), 84.

81 Jewish School Report CAHJP—Iraq File—6382, 3.

government pressure as, in the 1920s, the members of the communities attempted to persuade the rabbis to include more secular subjects, but the initiative was largely unsuccessful. In general, the Talmud Torah was considered to provide the lowest quality education among the Jewish schools, due not only to the lack of breadth in the curriculum but also to the overcrowded classes and the lack of qualified teachers, little of which changed in the school over the course of a century. Although they were also the most isolated from Iraqi society, the religious schools did not close and continued to have overcrowded classes until the 1950s. Knowing that the general bias of the community was toward modern education it is surprising the Midrash continued to attract students. Somewhere between 1925 and 1930 the Midrash abolished all school fees, thereby providing an option to those who could not afford the fee-based Jewish schools and were weary of sending their children to public schools. The abolishment of fees was perhaps an attempt by the rabbinate (who controlled the school) to remain relevant in the wake of the secular Jewish schools and the free public schools. It was not until 1935 that a modern Talmud Torah was opened that offered a traditional religious education, taught secular subjects from the state curriculum and prepared students to take entry exams for secondary education. This school was relatively successful, and is an indication that it was not opposition to religious education that turned people away from traditional education, but a desire for their children to receive a modern education. Thus, the modern Talmud Torah illustrates how modernizing forces entered the most traditional corners of Jewish society in Baghdad. The student body, however, continued to be made up of boys from poor families, from which we can infer that the Midrash was not the first choice for schooling among most Baghdadi families.[82]

4. Linguistic Creativity and Cultural Diversity

Beyond the defined curriculum, these schools were social spaces that allowed creativity to flourish in all languages, providing exposure to cultural norms outside of the hierarchical gendered Iraqi society. The school was a place that allowed students to interact with others beyond their family circle, to practice languages not regularly spoken at home, to learn about activities in foreign Jewish communities and to read publications not widely distributed elsewhere. This diversity was displayed through

82 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East*, 115.

the material available in school libraries, the publications of the schools themselves and the activities and celebrations undertaken by the schools.

Although I have primarily focused on the study of English and French versus Arabic, Modern Hebrew also flourished in Iraq. This is due in great part to its instruction in the Jewish schools which, although formally forbidden to teach it after 1935, continued its instruction as "Biblical Hebrew".[83] Lev Hakak's book on modern Hebrew creativity in Iraq offers many examples of students experimenting with the Hebrew language during the 1920s and 1930s, the best example being the Shamash school's Hebrew language periodical, Shemesh. The school newspaper, written in Modern Hebrew, only lasted three years, but throughout that time was read widely among members of the Jewish community.[84] This type of publication also reinforced the idea of the transnational nature of the Baghdadi community in the 1930s. For example, in the third issue of Shemesh a student at Shamash wrote about his time living in Burma and his experience in the Baghdadi Jewish school in Rangoon.[85] Furthermore, the journal, although short lived, was distributed throughout Jewish communities in the Middle East and to a few Hebrew language journals in Europe, enabling the students at Shamash to receive congratulatory responses from Jewish students in Jerusalem and Beirut upon publishing issues, and the journal was even remarked upon by the editor of a Hebrew journal in Poland.[86]

Linguistic creativity in Arabic in the schools is perhaps best demonstrated through the "pageantry of the state," the official ceremonies referenced earlier, in which students would read poems by famous Arab poets, sing traditional Arab songs, and give speeches demonstrating their loyalty to the nation and the monarchy. In some cases, students composed their own poems, a tribute to the high level of Arabic they had been taught. It was also a tradition to invite notables such as local consuls, government officials, and other elites to attend the public examination of students.[87] The multilingual education benefited Iraqi society as a whole, and these ceremonies were an ideal way to put this on display. One legacy of this education is that the graduates of these schools were responsible for translating many of the great works of European literature and history into Arabic.[88] This linguistic creativity and cultural

83 Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Literature in Babylon*, 189–190.
84 Ibid, 18–20.
85 Ibid, 195.
86 Ibid, 203.
87 *Paix et Droit*, September 1, 1924, 12.
88 Snir, *Arabness, Jewishness, Zionism*.

pluralism as seen through language use was also important in fostering the idea of a modern Jewish identity by connecting Jewish youth to transnational Jewish networks and topics discussed in the Jewish public sphere. As mentioned in the previous chapter the knowledge of family and friends living in the Baghdadi communities abroad and the ever-present role of foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations disseminated the concept of the transnational Jewish community.

As for the role of French culture, the AIU archives are replete with elegant essays written in French by students comparing themselves to heroes and heroines of French literature or comparing the Iraqi Jewish experience to the French Jewish experience. For example, one young woman from Baghdad even tied herself to French history by stating that "we the Jews" had most benefited from French emancipation in an essay about the French Revolution.[89] Other ideas brought from Europe included plans for Jewish scouting groups modeled on *les éclaireuses et éclaireurs israélites de France* and the Jewish Scouts of the United Kingdom, which became popular activities attached to schools in the 1920s and 1930s, with each school having its own troop until all scouting was banned in 1941.[90]

The libraries of the AIU, AJA and community schools contained a diverse assortment of book and periodicals from abroad, with some estimates stating that the combined libraries contained over 18,000 volumes.[91] Although the exact contents of these libraries are unknown, AIU and AJA archives refer to ordering English and French language books and subscribing to foreign periodicals for these libraries.[92] Given the importance Jews played in translating French and English books into Arabic one can assume a preponderance of foreign language works in these libraries.[93] Zionist emissaries to Iraq imported Hebrew books for the schools, and even the Talmud Torah had a library containing works of Modern Hebrew by 1930.[94]

89 Esther Molino "Adieu à ma maison": Sephardi Adolescent Identities, 1932–1936 *Jewish Social Studies*, Volume 15, Number 1, Fall 2008, 131–144.

90 Photograph 'Scouts of the Midrash Talmud Torah, Baghdad Early 20th Century,' *Annals of Iraqi Jewry*, 209; Photograph AIU archives Iraq, Baghdad, Scouts in the Alliance school of the Jewish in Baghdad in the 1930s; Scouting was relatively common during this period there were many Assyrian Scouting troupes in Iraq as well, for a comparison with Syria see Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 291–298.

91 Meir, "Traditional and Modern Education," 223.

92 IJA 3753; MS137 AJ37/4/5.

93 Some of the most well known of these translators were translators were Anwar Shā'ūl and Mir Basri. Reuven Snir, "Shā'ūl, Anwar," EJIW; Shmuel Moreh, "Baṣrī, Me'ir (Mīr)," EJIW.

94 Hakak, *The Emergence of Hebrew Creativity in Babylon*, 18–20, 190.

Copies of many Jewish periodicals were kept in these libraries and students were known to write to foreign periodicals thus participating the global Jewish public sphere. We know that the *Jewish Chronicle* was sent by the AJA to these schools in the 1920s and 1930s, in addition to many families taking out personal subscriptions.[95] One can assume that it was read by many Jewish school children in Iraq as they would write to the *Jewish Chronicle's* youth supplement, Young Israel. Each month the Young Israel section would announce its new members and nearly every month included names from Baghdad, and Baghdadis abroad. The Young Israel page was devoted "to uphold and promote both publicly and privately the best traditions of Judaism and the Jewish people." The majority of the section was taken up by brief discussions of how to be a moral Jew through acts of charity and generosity, thus reinforcing lessons from school. The rest of the pages were taken up by questions from Jewish children around the globe. On December 30, 1932, the editor of the section who referred to herself as Auntie wrote, "I am getting quite a big contingent of nephews in Baghdad but they are not very frequent correspondents." This was perhaps due to issues of censorship and concerns of parents having their children's names in a foreign Jewish newspaper. In the letters which were published, Iraqi school children usually requested pen pals and mentioned interest in meeting other Jewish children, in particular from England, the United States, and Australia.[96] Similarly, Jewish school children in Iraq occasionally wrote for the AIU newspaper *Paix et Droit* providing reports of school events. Thus, the Jewish Press available to children in school, and possibly in their homes, reinforced this idea of a transnational Jewish community with English and French as the main languages of correspondence. Iraqi Jews read foreign Arabic language Jewish newspapers as well. In particular the Beirut based *Al-ʿAalam al-Isra'iili* and the Egyptian based *Isra'il* which regularly reported on Jewish events in Baghdad.[97] I have not, however, come across similar correspondence from Iraqi youth in these newspapers.

For young women these schools were especially important in exposing them to diverse languages and culture. In the first half of the twentieth century, this would often be the most freedom they would enjoy in their lives as they were groomed to be housewives and mothers, the pretext of their schooling being to gain an advantage in the marriage market. As Esther Meir-Glitzestein notes in her discussion of women's education in Iraq in relation to motivations for joining the Zionist movement:

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95 MS137 AJ37/4/5.

96 JC, 7 April, 1933, 48; JC, 28 October, 1932, 38; JC, 30 December, 1932, 38.

97 Guy Bracha, "A letter from Iraq: the writing of Iraqi correspondents in al-ʿAlam al-ʾIsra'ili and Isra'il", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52:1, (2016) 102–115.

> As young Jewish women in Iraq discovered that other societies and cultures offered women more equal lives, they become aware of their inferior status [...] it could not change so long as the values of the society in which they lived remained the same. Under these circumstances, the expectations that the women picked up along with their knowledge and education were demolished repeatedly by the frustrating reality.[98]

Pictures from the period show young women in modern dress playing tennis at the Laura Kadoorie school and in the AIU's social club in the 1930s,[99] organizing charity events for the community, attending parties at school[100] and performing plays.[101] These activities are an indicaton of changing societal norms, if only for the few years until they were married. That these activities were accepted by the community and the parents of the girls was a testament to the trust in the schools and their importance in the community. These activities also demonstrated the large amount of social flexibility and openness within the communal schools and social organizations, which in some ways provided oases from the more complicated social interactions within Iraqi society as a whole.

If the schools represented freedom, there were limits to women's liberation in Iraqi society. As Longrigg notes, in the 1940s, although some Muslim women had discarded the veil but, "circles ... where women were strictly secluded were still considerable, and included the households of many leading notables and the royal family."[102] Conflicting reports as to whether it was socially acceptable for Jewish women to appear unveiled in public as late as the 1940s speak to constraints of living in a traditional Muslim society.[103] A 1937 article in the *Jewish Advocate* stated that more Jewish women were appearing in public unveiled but that the practice was still more common among Christians.[104]

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98 Meir-Glitzenste, *Zionism in Iraq*, 118.

99 *Paix et Droit*, Friday, 1 March, 1929, 13.

100 Jewish Girls at a School Party in the Laura Kandoori Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) of Baghdad, Iraq in 1931. http://diarnaphotos.tumblr.com/post/147846900297/jewish-girls-at-a-school-party-in-the-laura.

101 Photograph "Girls from the Laura Kadoorie School performing 'Le Prince Perdu' sometime in the 1920s", *Scribe*, September, 1996, 37.

102 Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950*, 386.

103 Ruth Bondy, *The Emissary: A Life of Enzo Sereni* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 199–200.

104 A.I. Notiv, "The Struggle in Baghdad: Nearly 100,000 Jews Are Caught Between Forces of Oriental Reaction and Emerging Progressivism", JT, December 1937, 6–7,12.

Young Jewish women's social circles were primarily limited to visiting family and close friends, schools and Jewish social clubs and marrying daughters at an early age remained the norm.[105] Sasson Somekh mentions that his AIU educated mother who helped him with his English, French, and math homework "did not leave the house often," and when she went shopping she would "usually wear clothes that completely covered her arms and legs … and her face would be covered by a *pushi*, a thin veil that barely hid her facial features."[106] This lack of social mobility paired with the focus on European languages meant that girls, unlike boys, were restricted in their exposure to Iraqi society.

Various factors suggest that for Jewish women cosmopolitan Western society represented a tantalizing alternative to the traditional socially restrictive Baghdadi society. Photographs from this period further demonstrate the new opportunities which the schools and social clubs represented for women showing pictures of tennis matches, tea dances, theater performances, piano lessons and parties.[107] The Jewish schools became a special place for young women in that they were a communally sanctioned space that offered a socially acceptable form of female modernity similar to women in Western bourgeois societies. Although the cloistered nature of women's spaces shows the limits of female integration in Iraqi society this was not particularly different for Christian or Muslim women.

5. Conclusions

The Jewish community of Baghdad during the Mandate and early years of the Iraqi state continued to function with the large measure of communal autonomy that it had enjoyed for decades, even as its constituents became more integrated into the new Iraqi nation. The lay council—as opposed to the Rabbinate—continued to levy taxes, to act as the official representative to the community for the Iraqi government and to work with foreign Jewish organizations. Most significantly, they invested heavily in the development of communal educational institutions. It is evident that the public policy of the Jewish community was to embrace the idea of the new Iraqi nation and the Jewish community's place in this new nation. The Jewish schools were a tool

105 Ibid.

106 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 25.

107 *Paix et droit*, February 1, 1924, 5; *Alliance Israelite Universelle Ecoles de Bagdad 1864–1932: Hommage des Ecoles a leurs bienfaiteurs* (Paris: AIU Archives Paris, picture book, 1932) unpaginated.

to demonstrate this ideology both in their principles but also as physical spaces in which the community could learn about and engage with the greater nation. Recent scholarship on Jews in Iraq has reinforced this idea by primarily framing these schools as incubators for Iraqi citizens and Arab identity. These discussions, however, do not often adequately address the other phenomena which were occurring in these schools, particularly the construction of new forms and understandings of Jewish identity. The schools strongly supported the idea of a transnational secular Jewish identity and the possibility of a life beyond the borders of Iraq.

Although united under the administration of the lay council, the schools were not uniform in their curricula: students receivd varying levels of access to Arab, secular Western, and Jewish culture. The differences between individual schools were most clearly delineated in the number of hours dedicated to the study of different languages and the importance placed on secular subjects. Although it is clear that the schools were agents of Arabization, and in this capacity acted as public spaces, this is only one aspect of their objective. It is more accurate to state that Jewish students were given the tools to participate in the new state and society that was being built, and they were also exposed to Western ideas and Jewish culture. The extent of their exposure to these different cultures and ideals, however, varied based on gender and socioeconomic status. In very broad terms, middle class males received the greatest exposure to Iraqi society either by attending the community schools or, in the later period, community supported public schools. This is reflected in the autobiographies of men such as Sasson Somekh, Nissim Rejwan and Naim Kattan, who describe the ways in which they participated in Arab culture and felt part of the nation in their youth. This is also the sector of Jewish society which has written the most on their personal experiences during the Mandate and early years of the Iraq state and is therefore the most documented.[108]

The Jewish schools of this period were remarkable in that they were able to produce Iraqi citizens who identified with Arab nationalism. Iraqi Jews participated in the nascent secular society but also at times became active architects of it through their participation in the civil service, journalism, literary culture, and commerce.[109] Not all students, however, received the same degree of exposure to Arabic or the ideals of the new state, and not every student was inculcated with this strong sense of Iraqi

108 Mark R. Cohen, 'Historical Memory and History in the Memoirs of Iraqi Jews' in *Ot LeTova: Essays in Honor of Professor Tova Rosen* eds. Eli Yassif, Haviva Ishay, Uriah kfir, Mikan Vol. 11, June 2012, 114–116.

109 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuals juif de Bagdad*.

citizenship. The most striking difference, as mentioned earlier, is one of gender: on average, less of the curriculum for girls was dedicated to Arabic and they were taught by fewer non-Jewish teachers. Girls also tended to leave school earlier than boys, often to marry, and this abbreviated education combined with the reduced hours for the study of Arabic limited their participation public debates.

Furthermore, boys were able to engage with the Iraqi society in the streets and coffee shops while most girls socialized at the Jewish clubs or the family home. Perhaps this explains why Iraqi Jewish women were less prolific in Arabic letters than Iraqi Jewish men and the lack, within the autobiographies from this period, of women writing about their engagement as Iraqi citizens.[110] It is also possible that those Iraqi girls who were educated in Jewish schools were disappointed by the roles Iraqi society offered them, with limited opportunity for respectable employment outside the home and a patriarchal family organization in which young women were subordinate to men, a status no different than in Christian and Muslim Iraqi homes.[111] Anecdotal evidence suggests liberating alternatives to life in Iraq for young women included possibilities of emigration to Israel, studying in Europe or joining family in the satellite communities.[112]

The other difference in education was subtler, and relates to socioeconomics. Although the school committee was cognizant of the prohibitive expense of schools and endeavored to provide scholarships and a sliding scale for tuition, it never altogether abandoned fees for the AIU or the community schools. Therefore, families not able to afford these fees and not offered scholarships were faced with diametrically different options, either the free religious school that offered little by way of secular education, or the public schools that were outside the community and provided less exposure to foreign languages and, therefore, Western society. The fact that the religious schools continued to exist is evidence that some families still chose to forgo a secular education and exposure to secular society in favor of having their children attend a free Jewish school. Even in this construction, however, there was flexibility: it was not unheard of for children to change schools throughout their studies or to hire tutors for religious education.[113]

110 For a list of leading Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals, writers, and artists see Snir *Who Needs Arab Jewish Identity?* 231–234. Out of 130 names only 9 are women, two of which were born outside of Iraq after 1950. See also, Snir, *'Ariviyut, Yahadut, Tziyonut*.

111 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 116–131.

112 Ibid; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 235–237.

113 Schlaepfer, "A Bagdad je resterai!" 42.

The poorer families were more likely to send their boys to the free Midrash Talmud Torah, the program with perhaps the least external exposure to communal vocational and apprenticeship programs for boys and sewing or embroidery classes to allow girls to work from home. These programs depended heavily on foreign Jewish philanthropy not only for teachers and school material but also to feed and clothe children, thus reinforcing the idea for the most vulnerable in the Jewish community of dependence on both communal leadership and transnational Jewish philanthropy opposed to the Iraqi state. A picture dating from World War I shows the Aron Saleh Jewish children assembled with a prominent plaque carrying the name of the AIU as the administrator of the orphanage and the JDC as the financier of the orphanage.[114] Similarly, one explanation for the massive exodus of poor Jews from Iraq between 1950–1951 was their dependence on this communal and transnational Jewish infrastructure which they saw dissolving before their eyes as the Jewish elites left and the Iraqi state became more restrictive to its Jewish citizens.[115]

Taken as a whole, these schools and the possible experiences of the thousands of pupils who attended them over the decades were representative of the different intellectual projects which were being considered by different Jewish groups in the period between the two world wars. Although the schools espoused local nationalist ideals, like the AIU and AJA, they did not perceive nationalism or secularization as a rejection of Judaism or contrary to the idea of situating one's self within a transnational Jewish community. In fact, these schools relied on the concept of a transnational Jewish community as they depended on it for qualified teachers and money. Nor were the schools anti-religious, as all schools dedicated some time to the study of Jewish History and biblical Hebrew and many schools were physically attached to synagogues. Within the schools all types of teachers were present, on one end of the spectrum there were teachers who were ardent Zionists and tried to instill this Jewish nationalist idea within their students, on the other end of the spectrum there were Muslim communists who transmitted their love of Arab literature and the hope of a secular Arab society. One could still find others who were religious European Jews who believed that the future of the Jewish people depended on finding a balance between secular nationalism and confessional transnationalism. Finally, for young women these schools were spaces to experiment with new kinds of freedom which modernity could offer.

114 Photograph, 'Children at the Aron Saleh Jewish Orphanage', *Annals of Iraqi Jewry*, 198.
115 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 191–192.

Many aspects of Jewish education in Iraq were similar to the experience of MENA Jewry elsewhere, such as the differences in approach and objectives towards girls' versus boys' education.[116] These secular schools connected the local Jewish students to the greater Jewish world through their study of Jewish history, access to multilingual modern libraries and the composition of their teaching staffs, including a mixture of foreign and local Jewish teachers. By the Mandate period only two schools in Baghdad, Laura Kadoorie (Girls) and Albert Sassoon (Boys) were affiliated with the AIU and following their curriculum. By the 1930s, the curricula of all the schools were decided by the school's committee of the Lay council in close consultation with Jewish philanthropic organizations, but also influenced by the Iraqi government who had requirements as to the minimum of hours of education in Arabic. As such the Iraqi schools dedicated more time to the local language (Arabic) than other areas of MENA where relatively little Arabic or Turkish, if any, was taught.

The hallmark of the Jews education in Baghdad was the size and diversity of the school system. In 1930 the Baghdad Schools Committee managed 11 schools, a number which jumped to 20 by 1949. In most cities in the Muslim world—Istanbul being an exception—there were only one or two modern Jewish schools, the majority being part of the AIU network. Also, in Baghdad few students attended Christian missionary schools, most likely explained by the fact that the Christian community of Baghdad was smaller than the Jewish community and there were fewer Christian schools. Hence, the choice in schooling was generally between a Jewish school and a public school which specifically catered to Jewish students.

In summary, the Jewish education network in Baghdad was a source of great pride for the Jewish community and central to the communal organization, serving several functions. Within the course of a few decades, it allowed the Jewish community to greatly improve its socio-economic status, it was an important tool in integrating the community within the emerging modern Iraqi national identity while maintaining a communal identity and it offered a bridge to a global Jewish society accessible well beyond the communal elites.

116 Sciarcon, *Educations Oases in the Desert*, XXVII–XXVIII.

CHAPTER FIVE

Twentieth Century Networks

This chapter considers different ways Jews engaged with and were impacted by Jewish transnational networks between 1920 and 1951 through three cases studies. The first case study looks at a controversy which arose in Basra due to the founding of a Jewish theosophical society. It considers the importance of foreign Jewish intellectual trends in Baghdad, and twentieth century religious Jewish networks. The second tells the story of a Jewish bookseller from Baghdad who was imprisoned in Iraq for writing an article which defamed the Iraqi State in the *Manchester Guardian*. In this case foreign Jewish and non-Jewish media served Iraqi Jews as a forum to appeal to global Jewish public opinion. The final example looks at the private correspondence of a member of the Iraqi Jewish elite Ibrahim Nahum, with his Kadoorie cousins in Shanghai and Hong Kong and considers how Nahum participated in both Iraqi and global Jewish civil society.

Together these three case studies are indicative of the diverse ways Iraqi Jewry participated in the global Jewish public sphere. In each instance, I highlight different types of exchanges between Jews in Baghdad and other Jewish communities, primarily through private correspondence or print media. More importantly, these examples demonstrate the Baghdadi interest and participation in intellectual and social projects of other Jewish communities. In doing so I argue that these networks demonstrate the fluidity of Baghdadi identities, constantly being redefined due to space, time and context. The examples presented in this section are not dissimilar from the participation of Jews in the pluralist Iraqi public sphere as presented in the work of Bashkin and Schlaepfer and thus, when paired with their research on Jewish Arabization in Iraq, provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of identity formation and participation in both Jewish and Iraqi public spheres.[1]

Each discussion takes into account the cultural and linguistic landscape of the general Jewish population of Iraq between 1920 and 1951, as described in the preceding chapters. Specifically, I look at a few examples from Baghdadi Jewish society during this period from the perspective that an expanded transnational Jewish network played an important role in driving social change and responding to communal

1 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*; Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*; Schlaepfer, *Les intellectual juif de Baghdad*.

crisis. The incidents I have chosen demonstrate the delicate balance between the community's Jewish and Iraqi affinities. One issue that is central to the second and third case studies is the issue of Palestine. By analyzing the relationship of Iraqi Jews to Zionism and Palestine within the framework of their participation in the larger Jewish public sphere, these case studies aim to show the nuanced ways Iraq Jews responded to the Palestine question beyond what has been presented in Zionist and Anti-Zionist historiography.

1. Theosophy: Challenging Rabbinic Hegemony

For the Jewish community of Iraq, the British Mandate (1920 to 1932) represents a "golden age" of social and cultural integration into Iraqi society as defined by the participation of Jewish intellectuals in the pluralist culture of the Iraqi public sphere.[2] In this period, the community experienced upward socio-economic mobility enhanced by an extensive (Jewish) community-sponsored education system and an increase in white-collar employment opportunities in both the civil service and with foreign firms. It was also a time of relative intellectual freedom with little government censorship and increased access to foreign print media.

The first case study discusses the rise of theosophy in Basra between 1921–1935. This episode traces how the flow of ideas from India to Iraq could ultimately challenge the official religious leadership in Baghdad and demonstrates the ways in which religious leadership used transnational networks to support and defend their positions. As discussed in chapter one, the Jews of Baghdad did not experience the deep religious schisms which plagued Ashkenazi Jewry as it modernized. In the nineteenth century, there are virtually no examples of public breaks with normative Jewish practices. Of course, there were private religious transgressions such as smoking on the Sabbath, eating non-kosher food, or not observing certain religious duties. There is evidence that this increased during the Mandate period as more Jews began to work on the Saturday and holidays, or attended non-Jewish schools which taught on Saturday.[3] Furthermore, the position of unofficial spiritual leadership which had previously been so central seems to be less importance in the Mandate period as Iraqi Jews became

2 Schlaepfer, "*The King is Dead, Long Live the King!* Jewish Funerary Performances in the Iraqi Public Space", 189; Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*.

3 Rabbi Eliyahu Agassi addressed this issue in his sermon in 1913, Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*, 160, 195 n. 6.

more secular in their private lives. The official religious and secular structure of the communal authority, however, remained unchanged as the Iraqi state maintained the Ottoman regulations wherein the Rabbinate continued to control the religious courts, marriages, divorces, and the synagogues.

In the 1920s, several attempts at change were made by individuals wishing for a more transparent and democratic running of communal institutions. Although some of these insurgents were successful in getting elected to the lay council in 1926 and 1928, their tenures on the council were short lived and changed very little within the communal leadership.[4] The secular side of communal leadership was also rigidly controlled by a strict social hierarchy based on the wealth and connections of the communal elite. As a result, the communal structure, as defined in 1879 with the formation of the lay council, remained intact through the Mandate and State periods.[5] The most important change affecting official communal leadership came in 1931 from the government with law 77 that allowed the position of chief rabbi and president of the community to be held by the same person, a post which Sassoon Khadduri would hold from 1931 until his death in 1971,[6] and thus the two branches of communal leadership were fused.

Although the communal structure was barely modified, those in positions of responsibility were regularly criticized in private and public through the Jewish press as evidenced from the discussions in *al-Hasid*, *al-Misbah* and *al-Burhan* in the 1920s and 1930s.[7] The Baghdadi newspapers, both in Baghdad and in the satellite communities, all discussed the need for religious reform, the importance of secular education for rabbis, and the general importance of secularization, education, and Westernization within the community.[8] These written records suggest that intellectually many Baghdadi Jews were interested in the concept of religious reform. Foreign Jewish

4 For an extended discussion of these two elections see Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 102–105.

5 Cohen argues that the Iraqi Chief Rabbi had greater power in the Hashemite period as he was no longer subservient to the chief rabbi of Istanbul. However, the level of subservience of the Baghdadi chief rabbi towards the Ottoman chief rabbi is debatable given the lack of success that the *millet* system had in organizing Ottoman Jewish communities. Cohen, *Jews of the Middle East 1860–1872*, 65.

6 Technically Khadduri was Chief Rabbi of Iraq from 1928–1930, 1933–1949, 1953–1971. The gap in leadership between 1949–1953 is due to his resignation in 1949 precipitated by a lack of confidence in his ability to handle the communal crisis brought on by the creation of the State of Israel. Reuven Snir, "Khaḍḍūrī, Sassoon," EJIW.

7 Yehuda *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 104.

8 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 62–64; Al-Hasid, 1:11, April 18, 1929, Al-Hasid, 1:12, May 9, 1929, [as cited in] Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 248 n. 27; Editorial, IM, December 2, 1932.

publications provided Baghdadi readers an avenue to follow debates on religious reform in other Jewish communities, particularly in the Anglophone Jewish sphere where the concept of modern orthodoxy and reform Judaism were beginning to gain traction in the 1920s and 1930s.[9] As discussed in chapter two, the Baghdadi satellite communities had great respect for the religious institutions in Baghdad, but also enjoyed the autonomy and freedom their geographic distance gave them from the religious authorities. This religious autonomy allowed the Baghdadi community of Shanghai, for example, to ally themselves with secularly educated Rabbis such as Rev. Joseph H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Moses Gaster, a Romanian-born Sephardic rabbi in London, and Leo Jung, one of the architects of modern orthodoxy in America, without interference from Baghdad.[10] In Iraq discussions on religious reform rarely went further than editorial pieces in newspapers as religious practice in the home was a private matter and religious authority was generally uncontested, although regularly criticized. Thus, one can safely argue that literate Baghdadi Jews were aware of Jewish religious reform movements, but did not actively seek to import these movements into Iraq as an alternative to the normative religious hierarchy and practice.

There is one exception to this trend of theoretical debate with little success regarding either religious or communal reform: A group of Jews in Basra founded a lodge of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists. This movement was started in New York, became popular in Ashkenazi Jewish circles and was picked up by Baghdadis in the satellite communities as early as the 1880s. It came to Iraq via Baghdadi families, spread out between Iraq and India. At the height of the controversy, Jewish newspapers on four continents were publishing reports and editorials about the Theosophic Society in Basra. To quell the Basra theosophists, the Chief Rabbi in Baghdad eventually leveraged his international contacts, including the Jewish Philanthropist Elly Kadoorie in Shanghai, Rabbi Hertz in London, and Rabbi Jung in New York, to publicly condemn the theosophists and put pressure on the Basra community to renounce theosophy.

This controversy is particularly interesting because it is the only time in the twentieth century that the Jewish community in Iraq was challenged to such a degree that the elected officials became publicly active in delegitimizing their opponents,

9 Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo*, 108–109.

10 Ibid, 36–37.

sparking a controversy within Baghdadi Jewry throughout Iraq and the satellite communities. The controversy was also followed in the non-Baghdadi Jewish press and the Arabic press.[11]

The center of this religious debate revolved around the question as to whether one could be a Torah observant Jew and study/practice theosophy, a pantheistic examination of religion. The issue, however, which caught the attention of the religious leadership in Baghdad was the establishment of a theosophical society which founded its own synagogue and employed a butcher, demonstrating the permeability of a fringe Jewish intellectual project, and how fringe intellectual projects could challenge both the religious and secular establishments. The controversy is often mentioned in the literature on the Jews of Iraq and the history of theosophy.[12]

I link the theosophy controversy to the growing intellectual connectivity between Baghdadi Jews and other Jewish groups arguing that external Jewish contacts could lead to contestations of power within the Jewish community in Iraq. The debates over the practice of theosophy in Iraq were carried out, for the most part, within the foreign Jewish press of the satellite communities and other English language Jewish press as disseminated through the Jewish Telegraph Agency. These articles were also picked up by the pro-British English language newspaper in Basra, *The Mesopotamian Times*,[13] and through the publication of two Arabic booklets published by Isaac Said

11 Menasche Anzi "Theosophy and Anti-Theosophy in Basra: Jews, Muslims and Booklets in Arabic" (Paper presented at International Conference Jews in Muslim Majority Countries: History and Prospects, Berlin October 25 2017).

12 Hayyim Cohen's piece traces the history of the debate drawing conclusions on why it arose and a few conclusions about Baghdadi Jewry during the period—Hayyim Cohen, "Jewish Theosophists in Basra" [in Hebrew]. *Ha-Mizrah haHadash* [The New East], 15 (1965): 401–406. Likewise, the book by David Sagiv, Judaism at the Meeting of the Rivers: The Jewish Community of Basra 1914–1952 [In Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Karmel, 2004) also discusses the Basra theosophists. Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 65; Roland, *Jews in British India*, 47, 73, 97, 99, 285.58; Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 107; Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga* page 73. Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 108–109. For examples relating to the study of theosophy, the work of Boaz Huss, conducted in the framework of the research project "Kabbalah and the Theosophical Society (1875–1936)," funded by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no ≠774/10). I am grateful to Prof. Huss for sharing his sources with me in preparation of this section.

13 JTA February 27, 1927; JTA, July 28, 1932; *The Iraq Times* was a pro-British English Language daily newspaper published in Iraq from 1914 until 1964. It was originally founded in Basra in 1914 as the *Basra Times* publishing articles in Arabic, English, Turkish, and Persian. In 1916, the paper became a purely English publication called *The Times of Mesopotamia*. The name was changed again in 1918 to the *Baghdad times* when the press was moved to Baghdad. Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 288–290.

Nathan in Basra in 1931 and 1932.[14] The actual resolution of the controversy only came about due to the intervention by members of the Baghdadi satellite community, particularly the philanthropist Elly Kadoorie and Ashkenazi Rabbis, including Great Britain's Chief Rabbi, Dr. J.H. Hertz, and Rabbi Leo Jung of New York.[15]

1.1. *The Origin of Theosophy—the Jewish Theosophists*

The term theosophy has been used in various periods to refer to different philosophical movements. This case refers to the Theosophical Society founded in New York in 1875 with the motto "There is no Religion Higher than truth". At its origin the society professed a mystical philosophy that aspired to break down barriers and create a coherent universe. Inspired by Greek, German and American philosophy, its followers believed in a universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, or color.[16] The movement gained popularity among American and European Jews. In the late nineteenth century theosophy became popular in the Baghdadi communities of Bombay and Calcutta. Articles in *Perah* from the 1880s make mention of theosophical meetings attended by Jewish intellectuals, who most likely learned of the philosophy from European Jews residing on the Indian subcontinent. Baghdadis in India formed theosophical societies, meeting regularly in social settings to discuss the importance of these ideas.[17] The formation of these societies did not elicit any comment from the Rabbinate in Baghdad, understandable as they did not challenge communal conventions and were restricted to only a few members.

Theosophy arrived in Iraq via Baghdadis who regularly traveled between the Indian satellite communities and Iraq, and a theosophy lodge was founded in Basra in 1915.[18]

The official journal of the theosophical society, the *Theosophist*, cites Dr. Jacob E. Solomon, a Baghdadi Jew from India, as the founder of the Basra chapter. One source even states that the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad was present at the inauguration of

14 Menasche Anzi "Theosophy and Anti-Theosophy in Basra."

15 JTA, July 28, 1932; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 289.

16 Ainslie T. Embree, *India's Search for National Identity*, (New York: Knopf, 1972) 56–58; Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 107.

17 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 73; *Perah* 8:22, 153.

18 Boaz Huss, "'Qabbalah, the Theos-Sophia of the Jews:" Jewish Theosophists and their Perceptions of Kabbala," *Jewish Theosophists and their Perceptions of Kabbalah*, in *Theosophical Appropriations: Esotericism, Kabbalah, and the Transformation of Traditions*. Julie Chajes and Boaz Huss eds. (Beersheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2016) 140.

the lodge.[19] The club existed until 1917 when it lapsed for unknown reasons.[20] Little is known as to what became of these followers of theosophy; it seems to have drawn little attention from Jewish leadership in Baghdad as they were probably more occupied with the dire situation in Baghdad during World War I. Theosophy continued to attract followers among Baghdadi Jews in Basra and the satellite communities for almost a decade, until the mid-1920s, with little mention in the Jewish press or commentary from the office of the Chief Rabbi.

In December, 1925, at a congress of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, twelve Jewish delegates from India, Europe, the Middle East and the United States founded the Association of Hebrew Theosophists. The organization's underlying principles were: 1) to study Judaism in light of Theosophy and Theosophy in the light of Judaism; 2) to spread Theosophical teachings among the Jews; and 3) to undertake any other activity which could aid in the realization of the objects of the Association.[21] As an outgrowth of the new Association of Hebrew Theosophists, Kedourie Ani, then president of the Jewish community of Basra, founded a branch of the association in the city in 1927. Kedourie Ani had come to theosophy a decade earlier via his brother Reuben Ani, who lived between Baghdad and Bombay.[22]

Initially the theosophical society, a novelty in the community, functioned with little note in a building attached to the synagogue. Many of its early members were youths from the community who had been educated in secular Jewish schools, chose to dress in Western clothes, and who were at ease in mixed gender social settings. The association, therefore, was not just a philosophical society but also represented a new type of secular communal space, similar in nature to Jewish social clubs in Baghdad which had opened around the same time. As Basra was a much smaller city than Baghdad, there were fewer spaces to socialize for the Jewish youth and this alone may have been motivation enough for the youth to become interested in the society. Furthermore, as Zvi Yehuda suggests, many people became involved in theosophy not because they were interested in its philosophy, but because they saw it as potential force of modernity within the conservative communal framework.[23]

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19 "The Persecution of Hebrew Theosophists" in *The Theosophist*, June, 1931, 365.

20 Ibid, 363.

21 The three aims of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists appear in many sources. See for example: Gaston Polak, "Appeal to Members of the T.S." *The Theosophist* 47 (April 1926): 103–104.

22 Cohen, "Jewish Theosophists in Basra," 401–402.

23 Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora*, 104–105.

1.2. *Conflict in Basra*

Between 1927 and 1931, *Israel's Messenger*, the newspaper of the Shanghai Baghdadi community, ran several articles, book reviews and editorials dealing with theosophy and the theosophical movement in the satellite communities and in Basra. Although *Israel's Messenger* was skeptical of theosophy, as a journal dedicated to communal dialogue it covered both sides of the theosophy debate. For example, *Israel's Messengers* took the time to review a booklet published by the Hebrew Theosophist Society of Seattle, sent to the journal by its author who was a former resident of Shanghai but was currently residing in San Francisco. The journal attempted to review the booklet in a neutral manner but ultimately took a very skeptical position on the possible role of theosophy in Judaism.[24] Another article discussing theosophy in *Israel's Messengers* simply stated that "modern theosophy is too poor to stand comparison with the great Jewish teaching" and treated the debates as trivial and without any consequence or threat to Judaism.[25] These mild debates about the possibility of theosophy spiritualizing Judaism continued in the Baghdadi press until Kedourie Ani ran into conflict with another notable from the Jewish community in Basra and was forced to resign president of the community.

The situation escalated in March, 1931 when the office of the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad published a letter in Hebrew, to be read publicly in the synagogue in Basra, condemning the theosophists.[26] The letter was addressed to Hakham Heskell Sasson, the acting Chief Rabbi of Basra as a directive from the Chief Rabbi of Iraq. It states that the rabbis of Baghdad, after consulting several sources including the Chief Rabbi of London, have come to the conclusion that theosophy represents a new belief which differs from the Jewish faith. The letter further states that the lodge should be removed from communal grounds, and that those in the Jewish community who continue to practice theosophy should not be permitted to participate in prayer or hold positions of leadership within the Jewish community. The letter is signed by three members of the lay council.

The theosophists did not accept the ruling of the Chief Rabbi; they argued that theosophy was not a religion but a philosophy. Subsequently, Kaduri Ani and his

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24 IM, April 1, 1927.

25 IM, March 6, 1927; IM April 1, 1933.

26 The article notes that the letter is written in Hebrew, however this may mean that the letter was written in Judeo-Arabic. I have not been able to locate an original copy of the letter. "The Persecution of Hebrew Theosophists" in *The Theosophist*, June 1931, 364–365.

theosophist supporters formally split with the Jewish community of Basra, setting up a community in parallel to the official Jewish community in forming a separate *minyan*, overseeing kosher slaughter, and carry out its own burials.[27] This act was perceived as an attempt to undermine the Baghdadi Rabbinate as the theosophists successfully employed respected Jewish butchers who became theosophists. This meant that the theosophical congregation could now sell kosher meat without charging the *gabelle*, an important communal source of income for funding schools, synagogues, and charities. As the price for the meat under supervision by the theosophists did not include the *gabelle*, it was less expensive than that that of the regular kosher meat, yet still came from a respected butcher and was popular in the wider Jewish community. This gave credibility to the theosophists and caused the Rabbinate in Baghdad to fear that the Jewish community of Basra could secede from the Jewish communal organization of Iraq, or that the theosophical trend could spread to Baghdad and further erode the authority of the chief rabbi.

As a reaction, the Rabbinate in Basra—in conference with Baghdad—excommunicated the Basra theosophists. The published notice stated that all those who take part or visit the theosophy club will be considered as followers, so as to discourage other Jews in Basra from becoming involved out of curiosity.[28] In their public denouncement of the theosophists, both in the Jewish and non-Jewish press, they published endorsements of their stance from an Ashkenazi Orthodox American rabbi, Leo Jung. Jung published his condemnation of theosophy in *Israel's Messengers*,[29] and the article was distributed by the JTA to Jewish newspapers around the world. The controversy sparked a flurry of correspondence in the satellite newspapers, with people from both sides of the debate, inside and outside of Iraq, debating whether it was possible for someone to be both a Torah observant Jew and a theosophist.[30]

On September 4, 1931 the JTA ran an article from *Israel's Messenger* entitled 'Theosophy Making Inroads Among Jews in Iraq.' Its author, anonymously, stated that, "Iraqi Jewry is facing its severest crisis in many years. Appeals for aid have been made to Chief Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz of England and Rabbi Leo Jung of New York, among others, but as yet the efforts of Iraq Jewish leaders have proved unavailing against the danger of apostasy that threatens them."[31]

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27 Cohen, "Jewish Theosophists in Basra," 401–402.

28 Cohen, "Jewish Theosophists in Basra."

29 IM July 28, 1932; JTA July 28, 1932.

30 JA, May 1931, 167; IM, June 1, 1931, 23; IM, April 1, 1932, 8–9; IM, April 1, 1933, 13.

31 JTA, September 4, 1931.

What is surprising in this notice is that appeals were made to rabbis in America and England, the connections coming via the Shanghai satellite community who had distanced themselves from the Baghdad religious authorities in favor of these Western rabbis. Jung, an occasional contributor to *Israel's Messenger*, had even arranged via N.E.B. Ezra, the editor of *Israel's Messenger*, to bring young men from Basra to New York to study at Yeshiva University. The hope was that these American-trained Iraqis would encourage the development of a generation of enlightened Iraqi Rabbis.[32] Ultimately, only one young man was sent to New York, Rahmin Sion. It is Sion and Ezra who brought the issue of the Basra theosophists to Jung's attention. Thus, it is surprising that the Baghdad Rabbinate would turn to these non-Baghdadi Rabbis for legitimacy, as at its outset the idea to train rabbis for Iraq outside of Iraq would have been perceived as an attempt to undermine the religious authority of Baghdad. However, in the context of the Basra theosophists, Sasson Khadduri found himself with unlikely and important allies: anglophone Ashkenazi rabbis.

As a reaction to Jung's article, the brother of Kadurie Ani, Reuben Ani, a resident of India who regularly traveled between Iraq and the satellite communities, published several articles in the *Jewish Advocate* defending theosophy and the lodge in Basra.[33] Beyond the reassertion that theosophy was a philosophy, not a religion, he accused the Rabbinate in Baghdad of trying to sow seeds of discord between Jews, stating that many Jews in the West participate in theosophy without creating an issue for religious authorities. He also clarifies that the Basra theosophists were not trying, "to form a section of the liberal Jews in Iraq." Similarly, in October, 1932, writing in *Israel's Messenger*, a Mr. S.S. Cohen, residing in Ceylon, attacked the letter of Leo Jung denouncing theosophy. He insinuates that the Rabbinate's interest in attacking the theosophists in Baghdad could be a way of deflecting attention from accusations that the Rabbinate had misappropriated communal funds.[34] In this case the newspaper made the point of issuing a clarification that the lay council controls communal funds and that the Rabbinate is not under investigation. Although the newspapers carried both sides of the debate, they generally tended to be pro-Rabbinate and anti-theosophy.

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32 Archives of this correspondence are contained in Yeshiva University in the Bernard Revel collection of papers. Shulamith Z. Berger, ""*Pumbeditha Traveled West!" Yeshiva College's First Iraqi Student*", (Yeshiva University Blog, April 5 2004).

33 JA, May 1931, 167.

34 IM, October 1931.

The resolution of the conflict was anticlimactic. In October, 1935 Elly Kadoorie offered to donate 30,000 dinars if "all confrontation and hate will be removed from the community,"[35] which meant disbanding the theosophy lodge. Following this announcement, on February 24, 1936, Sassoon Khadduri and other respected members of the lay council traveled to Basra and forged an agreement with the theosophists whereby they would disband their society and its institutions. An official declaration was made, stating that, "In the light of the agreement between the theosophical movement and the rest of the Jewish community in Basra, the restrictions against the theosophical movement are hereby lifted. All followers of theosophy are considered fully committed to their Jewish belief and shall therefore enjoy all the rights entitled by this religion [Judaism]."[36]

1.3. *The End of the Controversy*

This incident illustrates the high level of interconnectivity between Baghdad, the satellites communities and the greater Jewish world, well beyond philanthropy, education or concerns for the security of the Jewish community. Whereas the Rabbinate in Baghdad framed the issue of theosophy around the theological issue, those supporting theosophy framed the debate as a power struggle between the religious leadership and secular members of the community, even as those who supported theosophy and those who were against it used the writings of Jews in Europe and the United States to support their claims. Further, this incident demonstrates the Rabbinate's high level of awareness of trends in the other Jewish communities, particularly liberal Jewish movements in other countries and the work of anglophone Orthodox rabbis. This is consistent with the 1927 request to the AJA by the office of the Chief Rabbi to send a secretary to handle English language correspondence. One wonders if this was motivated by an understanding that in the modern world the Chief Rabbi would be required to correspond in English with foreign Jews and keep abreast of foreign news via English language newspapers.[37] In the theosophy case the condemnations of the Basra theosophists from Rabbis Hertz and Jung were written and disseminated in English, not Hebrew.

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35 This is a translation of the statement from Cohen "Jewish Theosophists in Basra," 405. Thank you to Liron Berdugo for her help with the translation.

36 Ibid.

37 MS 137 AJ37/4/2/2—March 15, 1927.

In retrospect, the controversy revolved around questions of money, power, and modernity more than spirituality, as the theosophists had existed in Iraq for over a decade and were primarily concerned with philosophical discussions. The Rabbinate condemned them when the theosophists formed their own synagogue and began to slaughter kosher meat, reducing the collection of the *gabelle* and undermining the communal infrastructure in Iraq. Cohen notes that the theosophy group was limited to Jews in Iraq and that the theosophists remained respectful of traditional Judaism.[38] He attributes this to the conservative nature of the local Muslim society.[39] Specifically, that the theosophical association met in the mixed company of men and women, with Jewish women appearing unveiled.[40] Furthermore, as Menasche Anzi argues, the local Muslim society perceived the theosophist movement, imported to Iraq by pro-British Westernized Jews, as a threat to monotheism and as a threat to Iraqi independence.[41] As a result, the theosophy controversy was largely a Jewish communal affair in which the Iraqi government and the Rabbinate were in agreement. Cohen frames the controversy as a power struggle between a traditional older generation and a younger, more modern generation. This point is confirmed by newspaper debates from the period, one of which refers to the youth who joined the theosophists as, "the young generation … drifting from one precipice to another".[42] This statement alludes to the idea that those involved in the controversy were concerned that the youth would use their secular education to stray from Judaism.

Cohen, however, does not develop the role of the international Jewish networks in his analysis, such as, the roles Rabbi Jung of New York, the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire and Chief Rabbi Ouziel of Tel Aviv.[43] That the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv weighed on this controversy is significant, as it shows the Baghdadi Rabbinate's desire to obtain a widespread consensus on their ruling (and that consulting with Jews in Palestine was not perceived as problematic in this instance). As such, it is possible that the Rabbis in Baghdad wanted further religious agreement not simply limited to Ashkenazi halakhic opinion on the matter. If this was the motivation for including Rabbi Ouziel, it attests to Zvi Zohar's observation that from a halakhic perspective the

38 Cohen "Jewish Theosophists in Basra," 407.
39 Anzi, "Theosophy and Anti-Theosophy in Basra," 7.
40 Cohen "Jewish Theosophists in Basra," 407.
41 Anzi, "Theosophy and Anti-Theosophy in Basra," 7.
42 IM, August 1, 1931, 8.
43 Ibid.

"Babylonian Rabbis identified themselves as Sephardic."[44] Finally, this affair provides a small window into the transnational network of Sasson Khadduri, who is generally associated with his staunch 'Iraqi Orientation.'

This transnational factor in the controversy demonstrates that local communal affairs in Basra and Baghdad were not only of interest to those with no filial connection to Iraq, but that the writings and ideas outside of Iraq were also of importance to the Iraqi Jews. In fact, the English writings of Jung against the theosophists were translated into Arabic and published by a Yemenite-born Jew, Isaac Natan, who had immigrated to Iraq, possibly to reassure non-Jewish Iraqis that the communal leadership was anti-Theosophy.[45] Cohen attributes the failure of the theosophists to the weakness of the younger generation, an analysis with which I only partially agree. The younger generation was not unified in its view of theosophy, as demonstrated by Rahamim Sion, a Yeshiva University educated young man from Basra who was critical of both the Baghdadi Rabbinate and the Basra Theosophists.

This incident is indicative of many other trends within the among Baghdadis during the Mandate. Technically, the controversy was between the Chief Rabbis of Basra and Baghdad and the breakaway Jewish Theosophical society in Basra, but the controversy had many Jewish global actors who expressed themselves through the Jewish press. As my next case study demonstrates, the Jewish (and non-Jewish) foreign press were also an important forum of discussion for conflicts between the Jewish community and the Iraqi state.

2. E. Levy: Zionism, Foreign Press, and Censorship

The second case study is situated in the aftermath of the Mandate period, which ended in 1932 and was followed by the death of King Faisal in 1933. The 1930s were an uneasy time as the new state experienced political instability and unrest. Although not to be compared with the political turmoil and violence of the 1940s, for the Jewish community of Baghdad there was a perceivable difference in state policy after the Mandate ended. These changes included more government intervention in Jewish

44 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 63.

45 Nattan had lived in India where he studied English, he then immigrated to Iraq, studying at Beit Zilkha and later teaching at the Wataniya school in Baghdad and the AIU schools in Basra and Amara. Anzi "*Theosophy and Anti-Theosophy in Basra*," 4.

schools, unofficial quotas for Jews employed in the civil service, the official banning of Zionism (in 1935) as an ideology, greater anti-Jewish sentiment in the local press, and the censuring of both Jewish periodicals and mail from abroad destined for Jews residing in Iraq. This case study looks at the events surrounding the arrest and trial of E. Levy,[46] a Baghdadi bookseller, who in 1934 was thrown in jail for defaming the Iraqi government in a British newspaper, demonstrating the importance of foreign Jewish and non-Jewish press to members of the community and the sensitivity surrounding access to these foreign newspapers. It demonstrates the continued importance of imperial and non-state actors for the Jewish community regarding their relationship with the Iraqi government.

I have used internal correspondence from the British Foreign office that discusses the incident to understand how the Jewish community reacted on an official level to these new restrictions and how they used their connections with foreign Jewish communities, foreign governments, and the Iraqi government to protest the Iraqi state. To understand the reaction of the communal leadership, I have used a yet unpublished, secret report written by a member of the Baghdad Jewish lay council delegate to the Iraqi parliament, Ibrahim Nahum. Nahum had the letter smuggled out of Baghdad by an unnamed non-Jewish English friend. The letter is unique in that it presents Nahum's detailed views of the Jewish situation in Iraq divorced from concerns of censorship.[47]

Close government control of newspapers and censorship had always been part of print culture in Iraq, causing local writers and publishers to self-censor. The Iraqi state used the Ottoman Laws regulating print culture almost word for word, only changing the currency stipulated for fines, from Lira to Rupee, and finally to Dirham. As Bashkin explains in *The Other Iraq*:

> Every publisher had to submit a memorandum to the Ministry of Interior stating the titles of the newspaper or periodical, place of issue, and the subjects under discussion; the name, age, residence, and nationality of its publisher and editor; and the language of the publication in which it was the paper would be published. Publishers had to send two copies of each newspaper,

46 In the English language press and private correspondence both Levy's first and last name appear in different formats. Publications refer to him as Ephraim or Eliahou and his last name as Levi, Lewi, Lawee.

47 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15, see appendix C.

> daily, or periodical to the Ministry of the Interior. Sellers of newspapers, books, pamphlets, pictures or other printed material needed permits from the state.[48]

Failure to abide by these laws put publishers and booksellers at risk of having their businesses shut down. Further, a set of defamation laws was put in place, citing defamation of religious communities, the nation, state officials or anything going against public morality. Transgressing these laws would result in jail time and possible fines.[49] This meant that although printing and publishing flourished during the Mandate and early years of the state, the scope of public discourse was heavily weighted toward pro-government publications, literature and areas not perceived as politically sensitive. Due to this the foreign press and particularly the non-Arabic press became extremely important in providing information on areas which the government was susceptible to censor.

If a large portion of Iraqi Jews by the 1930s were able to read in multiple languages, this was due to the sizeable portion of the Jews in Baghdad who had received instruction in French, English, Hebrew and Arabic (to varying degrees),[50] making the community significantly more literate than the general Iraqi population of the time.[51] Given the multilingual nature of Jewish education in Baghdad it is not surprising that many members of the Jewish community subscribed to both Jewish and non-Jewish foreign press, in addition to the local press in both Arabic and English. Based on the list of censured Jewish newspapers from 1934, we know that there were at least sixteen foreign Jewish newspapers with subscribers in Baghdad that year. Of these newspapers, nine were published in Hebrew, four in English, one in Arabic and, surprisingly, one in Yiddish.[52] The majority of these newspapers came from Mandate Palestine, and others were published by Jewish communities in Beirut, Cairo, London, Bombay, and Shanghai. In particular, the periodicals of the satellite communities had a specific interest in Jewish life in Baghdad carrying original reports on Iraq, opposed to syndicated pieces from the JTA. Many of these special pieces on Iraq were anonymous and it is highly likely that they came from Jews in Iraq.

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48 Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 37–38; Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

49 Ibid.

50 Goldstein-Sabbah, "Jewish Education in Baghdad."

51 Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, 44.

52 CO/733/275/4.

By 1934 there were no longer any self-described Jewish newspapers. This is most likely a consequence of the heightened censorship in the post-Mandate era and concerns of accusations of conflicting loyalties. During the Mandate period, although censorship existed, there are no records of censorship specifically targeting members of the Jewish community or the foreign Jewish press. Examples of Jewish newspapers in the 1920s include *al-Burhan* (1928–1930), *al-Dalil* (1929), and *al-Misbah* (1924–1929). In the case of *al-Misbah*, its second editor, Salman Shina, was an avowed Zionist and identified *al-Misbah* as a Zionist paper without causing scrutiny from the censors.[53] In the 1930s, numerous literary reviews continued to be owned and edited by prominent Jewish intellectuals within Baghdad, but there was no official publication of the Jewish community or a publication specifically dedicated to reporting Jewish news in Baghdad within Iraq by 1934.[54]

Due to the lack of a local Jewish newspaper I argue that Iraqi Jews went to the foreign press for information on news related to the Jewish world, and specifically to gain information about topics sensitive to the Iraqi state and therefore not often discussed in the Arabic language press. Additionally, many Jews subscribed to the English language *Iraq Times*, a paper often cited in this period as the primary print source for general foreign news in Iraq. While Arabic newspapers were also widely read and subscribed to, particularly ones edited by local Jewish intellectual elites, these are rarely cited as a source of news. Instead they were referenced for their interesting discussions of Iraqi society and innovative literary styles.[55] By 1934 it was becoming more difficult to get foreign Jewish journals into the country due to an increased vigilance for anything purported to have Zionist sympathies. British foreign office reports first mention the censoring of foreign Jewish publications in Iraq in September, 1934,[56] stemming from inquiries sent to the Foreign Office by the editors of Jewish newspapers from London and Palestine. These newspapers had received notifications that their Iraqi subscriptions had been cancelled due to a ban on the publications. Although no exact reason was given by the Iraqi authorities, all parties infer that the issue is transmission of Zionist ideology. During the same period, the Bombay-based *Jewish Tribune* wrote directly to the Postmaster General of Iraq, the

53 Bashkin, "Misbah (Baghdad), al-," EJIW.

54 For example, *al-Hasid* a weekly literary periodical. The editor, Anwar Sha'ul openly attacked the Nazi and fascist ideas in Europe, but the periodical did not specifically represent the Jewish community. Orit Bashkin "al-Hasid (Baghdad), al," EJIW.

55 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*.

56 CO/733/268/6.

Minister of the Interior and other Iraqi officials in regard to their paper not being allowed into the country. The *Jewish Tribune* never received a government response.[57] That it is the publishers of these newspapers inquiring about their importation status suggests that the subscription numbers were significant as it is unlikely that the canceling of a handful of subscriptions would have raised any notice from the publishers.

Upon request from the publishers of the Jewish newspapers and the AJA, the British Foreign office began to make inquiries into the status of the foreign Jewish press in Iraq. This was carried out discretely so as not to draw attention to a sensitive subject, the standard approach by foreign and local Jewish groups when making possibly controversial inquiries of the Iraqi government. The issue of foreign Jewish newspapers being prevented from entering Iraq became public on October 2, 1934 when a letter sent to the editor of the Manchester Guardian regarding the same concern was published. Unlike the abovementioned inquiries this letter came directly from a Jew in Iraq:

> Sir, – Iraq has become an intellectual prison; liberty of thought and belief have become a myth. Apart from the strict censorship and muzzling of the local press, all letters from Palestine are opened by the postal authorities before being delivered to their owners.
>
> Anti-Zionist and hence anti-Jewish, feeling (all Jews are suspected of Zionist tendencies) is running high. A whole sale [sic] ban has been placed on Jewish papers or on papers in defense of the Jews from all over the world. Papers from England, America, France, Egypt, and Palestine have been confiscated without legitimate reason. All books written in Hebrew are also suppressed. Books addressed to the Chief Rabbinate of Bagdad have been confiscated.
>
> The banning of Communist propaganda literature and of books of an obscene nature is quite understandable; but to ban all Jewish papers published in England, America, and France is an outrage which no-liberal minded individual can tolerate. – Yours, &c, E. Levy.
>
> Al Rashid Library, Bagdad, Iraq September 24

Levy, the letter's author, was the owner of the Al Rashid bookstore in Baghdad, and the letter itself is surprising in its candid description of censorship targeted at the

57 "Iraqi Consulate Established in Bombay: Special Interview with Consul-General for India", JT, March 1935, 34.

Jewish community of Baghdad. Looking beyond the very direct message the letter communicated, it also provides information about Levy, the Jewish community of Baghdad, and Iraqi society at that time. Although little personal information about Levy is available beyond that he was a modest bookseller of Persian origin.[58] This fact is relatively unremarkable as many Jews living in Iraq at this time were of Persian origin. I have included this point only because it was explicitly noted in the Foreign Office files. we can assume several points. We can assume that he was generally well aware of foreign press as his bookshop was responsible for importing the censured Jewish newspapers. It is also probable that, given his profession and ability to write in English, he received a secular education. Finally, we can assume that he is squarely positioned in the middle class. As the owner of a bookstore, he would not have been considered a member of the elite, a spot reserved for those who controlled large import/export businesses or the few who held important government positions. This characterization of Levy is confirmed by descriptions of him in British Foreign Office correspondence and by Ibrahim Nahum.[59] Had he been a member of the elite, it is unlikely that he would have opted to protest the policies of the state in such a public manner, choosing instead to discretely approach government officials himself or, perhaps, opted to lobby the government through back channels by requesting help from foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations or local consuls, which is the course the lay council was taking when Levy's letter was published.[60]

The communal leadership was hesitant to publicly criticize the state during this period, or link themselves as individuals or on behalf of the community with anything related to Zionism. The clearest example of this can be seen in a letter written by Sassoon Khadduri in the local newspaper *al-Istiqlal* in which he condemns Zionism and shows support for the Arab population in Palestine. That letter was sent less than a year after the Levy letter was published in the *Manchester Guardian*.[61] Despite this public declaration of support by the Chief Rabbi, in private the community continued to maintain links with individuals associated with the Zionist movement both in Mandate Palestine and elsewhere. Many Iraqi Jews, for both business and leisure, continued to travel to Palestine until the dissolution of the community, and Solal Boneh, the Jewish construction firm associated with the *Histadrut*, sent

58 CO/733/268/6.

59 Ibid. See next section on Ibrahim Nahum.

60 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

61 *Al-Istiqlal*, October 8, 1936. Reproduced in English in Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 389.

hundreds of Jewish engineers and technicians to Iraq to work on British contracts.[62] The public language of the community remained nationalistic and patriotic during this period, but in private correspondence individuals appear much more conflicted by the political reality and their individual affinities to both the Iraqi state and the Jewish people.[63]

A more central question is what prompted Levy to act as such a maverick in writing this letter, and why to the *Manchester Guardian* in particular? What did he hope to gain from writing such a critical piece in such a public space? Did he think that this would lift the ban on Jewish newspapers or that the government would stop opening letters addressed to Jews from abroad? And was he concerned that there would be consequences in publishing a letter so critical of the Iraqi state? Although none of these questions can be definitively answered, by beginning to explore them we can understand how members of the very diverse Jewish community of Baghdad negotiated the shifting political scene and public opinion of the Jewish community in Iraq.

In hindsight, Levy's letter to the *Manchester Guardian* was a complete folly as the letter was published under his name.[64] That Levy chose to sign his name to the letter makes it unique as other letters like his had been published before and after this particular incident, but they were published in Jewish newspapers with a smaller readership base and, more important, usually appeared as anonymous letters under signatures such as "an Iraqi Jew" or "Well Wisher",[65] even for much less contentious letters such as the suggestion that Iraq should have its own Jewish newspaper.[66] Levy's letter is unique but there is never any doubt of its authenticity in private correspondence, government records, or newspaper articles.

The JTA reported that Levy sent his letter to the *Manchester Guardian* only after it had been rejected by all the Arabic language newspapers in Baghdad.[67] While it is possible that some newspapers in Iraq were sympathetic to Levy's stance, none were willing to risk the repercussions that would have ensued from publishing such a letter under the strict censorship laws regarding defamation of the state. Publishing the letter in a foreign Jewish newspaper would also have been an affront as Jewish

62 For information on Solal Boneh in Iraq see—Bondy, *The Emissary*, 192–206.

63 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 15–57.

64 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15; CO/733/268/6.

65 These two examples come from letters to the editor in the December 1936 issue of the Jewish Tribune, Bombay.

66 Ibid.

67 JTA, November 7, 1934.

newspapers were very receptive to these types of letters. In fact, once the story was picked up by the JTA, copies of Levy's letter were republished in the *Jewish Chronicle* and in the Hebrew and English language Zionist press in Palestine. It is unclear whether this was Levy's doing or if the newspapers simply copied the letter from the *Manchester Guardian*.[68] It is my belief that Levy specifically sent this letter to a non-Jewish foreign newspaper as a result of his frustration in being censored in the Iraqi press, and also to protest to the Jewish communal leadership which was not publicly addressing the issues of censorship or challenging the state to reform its policies regarding the opening of mail. Finally, as Levy had a vested interest, central to his livelihood, in the importation of foreign Jewish press, he had more to lose from a financial perspective. As Nahum notes when discussing Levy, his "business has severely suffered through the suppression of certain Jewish newspapers in Iraq."[69] Unlike others who were imposed on by these bans but founds ways to smuggle letters and newspapers in and out of Iraq using non-Jewish friends and colleagues, Levy's business depended on the importation of Jewish newspapers,[70] a point recognized by Nahum in the above quote.

Levy's letter, very precise in its focus on censorship, stated that he found the current government policies unfair in equating Jewishness with Zionism, but that he did not find the idea of government censorship as a whole to be problematic. Positing that the banning of communist and obscene literature was understandable gives the impression that he wanted to demonstrate that he was not against the Iraqi state and its policies in their entirety, only their specific targeting of the Jewish community on this particular issue, which he found misguided. Additionally, he chose not to bring up other issues afflicting the Jewish community, notably the dismissal of some Jewish civil servants, the denial of travel visas to Palestine for Jews and a sharp rise in anti-Jewish writing in the Arabic language Iraqi press.[71] All of these issues were noted by the British Foreign Office and Nahum, grouped together with the issue of censorship, as hardships befalling the Jewish community. The construction of the letter is such that one wonders if Levy was naïve to the gravity of the situation and the possible consequences, an opinion which Nahum would have most likely supported

68 JTA, November 18, 1934.

69 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

70 For example, Ibrahim Nahum smuggled his report on the state of Iraqi Jewry to the Kadoories with the assistance of an English acquaintance. KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

71 This anti-Jewish writing is also technically illegal under the Iraqi censorship laws. Bashkin, *The Other* Iraq, 36–39.

as he called the letter "a folly".[72] Another possible explanation is that Levy was testing the limits of personal freedom of expression in Iraq, hoping his letter would incite international criticism of Iraq's censorship policies and pressure the Iraqi government to reconsider its actions.

2.1. *Consequences of the Manchester Guardian Letter*

Levy was successful in drawing attention to the Iraqi state's treatment of the Jewish community, inciting international criticism of its policies. Shortly after the publication of his letter, many Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers published related stories.[73] The other immediate outcome of his letter is that Levy was thrown in jail and charged with "intended libel and defamatory remarks damaging to Iraq's integrity".[74] His arrest was covered in the Jewish and non-Jewish foreign press and by the Arabic language press in Baghdad. The foreign press sympathized with Levy and the local press defended both the state's actions in regard to Levy and its general policies in regard to censorship. On November 7, 1934 a short article was distributed by the JTA regarding the Levy letter. The piece noted that Levy had been arrested and jailed after publishing his letter in the *Manchester Guardian*. It went on to note that Levy had sworn affidavits from a number of Jews on the banning of Jewish newspapers and on the opening of registered mail sent to them from other countries.[75] Finally, it mentioned that the president and council of the Baghdad Jewish community had protested to the government against the anti-Jewish tone of the Arabic language Iraqi press. However, the Iraqi government took no steps to halt the anti-Semitic agitation.[76]

The key point in the JTA story was that Levy was not alone in his complaint. The article notes that Levy had sworn affidavits stating that his accusations were true, meaning that others were willing to confront the government over this injustice, although no names were ever given in print. Further, the piece raised an additional issue confronting the Baghdad Jews, namely the anti-Jewish tone of the Arabic press, an issue which Levy exacerbated by publishing his letter, playing right into the initial

72 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

73 Jewish newspapers carried information through JTA syndication. Many English periodicals also followed the story such as the *Manchester Guardian* which ran the original letter and the *Daily Telegraph* which published the letter on November 16, 1934.

74 'Arab Teacher in Iraq School Beats Children,' JTA November 7, 1934.

75 Ibid.

76 The letter specifically refers to the term anti-Semitism; KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

Zionist accusations of the Iraqi press.[77] Although the article went on to note that the community president and lay council were protesting the anti-Jewish tone in the Iraqi press, there was no defense of Levy's actions from the lay council. In private, Nahum, a member of the lay council, shows frustration with Levy's piece stating that:

> [...] no sooner than published, the vernacular papers have immediately translated the letter with storms of criticism, much of which were furious attacks against the Jews. Among the criticism, the Jews here were convicted of Zionism, their fidelity of national feeling was seriously doubted and condemned. This conviction [Levy's] has now become the common guilt of the Iraqi Jew.[78]

In private, many Jews probably admired Levy for standing up for his beliefs and questioning the state in such a public forum. This point is confirmed by the aforementioned affidavits supporting Levy and anonymous letters defending him written by Baghdadi Jews published in foreign Jewish newspapers.[79]

This conflicted nature of Baghdadi Jewish reactions to the letter is also evident in Nahum's letter. Although he stated that Levy's actions were inappropriate, further aggravating a tense situation, he did not defend the state's actions but only noted that the consequences of Levy's actions were as to be expected. Nor does Nahum question the validity of Zionist ideology, but only mentions that he understands why Zionism is unacceptable to the greater Arab population. Nahum also asserted that the foreign press were sensationalizing the whole event, although it is unclear in his letter whether he actually believed what he was saying or was simply trying to reassure the Kadoories (and possibly himself).

The British Foreign office also made inquiries to the Iraqi government about the Levy case and the censorship issue, the origin of the inquiries coming from the AJA. I have not found any documents in the AJA archives regarding the impetus for contacting the foreign office, but the most likely scenario was that they received a request from the lay council to help de-escalate the situation with the Iraqi government.[80] This construction was not unusual as the lay council regularly asked the AJA to intercede with the Foreign Office on its behalf.

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77 'Arab Teacher in Iraq School Beats Children', JTA November 7, 1934.

78 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

79 JT, March 1935, 33.

80 CO/733/268/6.

Beyond the inquiry from the British Foreign Office, the Iraqi government was most likely concerned about foreign newspapers' continued interest in Levy. Two days after the JTA piece, the *Manchester Guardian* provided an update on the Levy case,[81] giving additional information not mentioned in the JTA notice of Levy's arrest. The *Manchester Guardian* contacted the Iraqi legation in the United Kingdom for comment on the Levy affair, and the legation stated that their only knowledge of the case was derived from newspapers and they were thus unable to comment on the matter. It is plausible that they had been informed not to make any public statement as an attempt to de-escalate the incident. The newspaper also contacted the Foreign Office, and they too stated they had no information, noting that they would not be informed on the matter as Levy was not a British subject. Archival records suggest that the Foreign Office was lying about their knowledge of the affair: their records include a private narrative of the Levy case that contradicts the public narrative given in the press.[82]

The correspondence from the Foreign Office on the foreign Jewish press ban in Iraq prior to the publication of the Levy letter was bundled with general observations on the increasing difficulties faced by Jews in Iraq such as dismissals from the public service, harassment in the street and, in a few cases, trouble in immigrating to Palestine, none of which were mentioned by Levy in his letter.[83] As reports from F.H. Humphreys of the British embassy in Baghdad made clear, both the Foreign Office and the Jewish communities of England and Iraq, using the Foreign Office as an intermediary,[84] were closely watching the situation and negotiating with the Iraqi government about these restrictions. After the letter's publication and during Levy's subsequent trial, the Iraqi government did not intervene when the Iraqi press criticized Levy or the Jewish community of Iraq. Although criticizing a particular religious community was forbidden under the censorship laws, the government initially chose not to react either in defending the Jews or publicly commenting on the situation.

The one exception I have found to this in the English language press is an article summarizing an interview with the Consul General for Iraq in India, for the *Jewish Tribune*, which discussed the unease of the community. The *Jewish Tribune* in Bombay interviewed Iraq's Consul General in India on the subject of the Levy case, asking

81 *Manchester Guardian*, November 16, 1934, 14.

82 CO 733/275/4.

83 CO 733/275/4; KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

84 CO/733/268/6; FO 371/20016.

questions about the anti-Jewish sentiment in the Iraqi press, and more generally about anti-Jewish sentiments in Iraq.[85] This interview demonstrated the interest amongst Jewish communities abroad in events in Baghdad, but was also an example of the Iraqi government's desire to improve how they were viewed in the foreign Jewish press. The interview revealed a certain openness, but also a lack of coherence from the Iraqi government in that they were willing to allow the consul to be interviewed by a Jewish newspaper that had previously been banned in Iraq under the pretense of Zionist sympathies. The Iraqi state most likely underestimated the international reaction to the Levy case and therefore the interview can be interpreted as an attempt to de-escalate the tension surrounding the censorship issue.

In the article, the interviewer questioned the Consul General on the censorship of the Jewish press, the Levy trial and Zionism. The interviewer also stated that 'the Jewish situation in Iraq concerned the Jews of the world, more particularly those in India, as the majority of Jews in India either hailed from Iraq or descended from Jews who were at one time born in Iraq.'[86] The response from the consul general was extremely limited. On the censorship of newspapers he replied that he was unaware of the bans or the protestations from the community surround these bans; on the Levy trial he stated that he "had no business criticizing his country in the columns of a foreign paper," and he refused to discuss Zionism.[87] Thus this interview was typical of the Iraqi government's attempts to de-escalate the growing unease outside Iraq toward the treatment of the Jews in Iraq, without actually addressing any of the issues.

In his report to the Kadoorie family in Asia, Nahum postulated that the "silence of the Government, whether from weakness or negligence, to counteract the press has developed an extreme position".[88] In the summer of 1934 Prime Minister Jamil al-Mafdai resigned after less than ten months in office and 'Ali Jawdat al-Ayubi accepted the position of Prime Minister. Jawdat came into office barraged by pressing issues, particularly growing sectarianism from tribal groups. There was also the issue of managing a new king who was considered less capable than his father and finally there was ongoing discussion over Iraq's relationship with Britain.[89] Compared to these topics, the problems of the foreign Jewish press were minor.

85 JT, March 1935, 33.

86 'Iraq Consulate Established in Bombay: Special Interview with Consul-General for India', JT, March 1935, 33.

87 Ibid.

88 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

89 Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, 238–240.

The initial ban on Jewish newspapers and the reaction to the Levy letter must therefore be understood in the context of a weak government trying to manage many potential crises. It is possible that the initial ban on foreign Jewish press had been a poorly conceived attempt from the state to minimize any Iraqi Jewish involvement in the Zionist movement and shield the Jewish community—albeit in a paternalistic fashion—from accusations of disloyalty. Given the negative press this policy garnered from abroad after the publication of the Levy letter, however, it had the opposite effect by drawing attention to the Iraqi Jewish community and giving the local press fodder to accuse the Jews of Zionist leanings, further degrading the Jewish position in Iraq. After the publication of the letter, the Iraqi government most likely wanted to de-escalate the situation as quickly and as quietly as possible with a goal of minimizing sectarian tension and drawing as little negative attention as possible from the West.

2.2. *The sentencing of Levy*

The actual sentencing of Levy was indicative of this desire to de-escalate and the government's incapacity to do so in a diplomatic manner. Levy was first sentenced to one year of hard labor followed by one year of police surveillance.[90] This sentence, on appeal, was then litigated and retried several times in the months following the initial conviction.[91] After he was released, the case was reopened when an Iraqi merchant residing in London claimed that his business suffered due to Levy's letter, resulting in the loss of 2000 pounds sterling. The Iraqi High Court chose to fine Levy an additional 75 pounds in damages.[92] The case was again reopened when Levy appealed, and the charges were dropped at one point and then revised. Finally, in June, 1935, eight months after publication of the letter, the fine was dropped and his prison stay was shortened to six months, three of which had already been served after his initial conviction.[93] That Levy was able to appeal his case and that his punishment was consistently changed, was indicative of the governmental chaos during this period and, in particular, the ever changing policies towards the Jewish community.

Throughout the trial the official government message was consistent: Levy was tried as an Iraqi citizen for his public critique of the state. Although directly after the publication of the letter the government did not censor the Arabic language press in

90 *Israel: Hebomodaire Juif Independent*, Cairo, May 5, 1935, 3.

91 *Palestine Post*, Jerusalem, December 24, 1934, 5.

92 CO 733/275/6.

93 *Israel: Hebomodaire Juif Independent*, Cairo, June 20, 1935, 4.

their attacks on the Jewish community, as the affair dragged on the government took measures to assuage the fears of the Jewish community and key diplomatic partners, such as the British government, about the safety of Jewish life in Iraq. This included temporarily banning, due to its anti-Semitic articles, the Arabic language newspaper *Hedaya* and closing down another anti-Jewish newspaper, *al-Ikab*, ten weeks after its founding.[94] These actions reassured the Jewish community that the government was responding to the complaints which the lay council had articulated over unfair coverage in the press.[95] These actions also were intended to calm international concerns. From a pragmatic perspective, the Jewish community was one of the most visible and internationally connected minorities in Iraq due to their transnational networks and commercial importance. If the government needed to demonstrate to that it was a reliable and stable developing country, it was essential to end the conflict quietly.

Both Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers reported the banning of the anti-Jewish newspapers, interpreting this as a symbol of the government's desire to protect the Jewish community. Within a global context, these actions were particularly significant when compared to the opposite actions at the same time that Germany was taking towards its Jewish community, a point not missed by the Jewish and non-Jewish press.[96] Specifically, the Iraqi state was seen as taking measures to protect the Jewish community by shutting down anti-Semitic factions in the press and, in general, distancing itself from anything that could be perceived as anti-Semitic. This could be seen, moreover, as an attempt by the Iraqi government to prove to Europe that it was capable of maintaining a pluralist nation in which all minorities had equal rights as citizens.

In March, 1935, the short-lived Jawdhat government dissolved, and after a two week return to office by Mafdai, his government fell as well, events that confirmed the instability of the Iraqi government and helped explain the regularly changing policies on censorship. In April, the JTA noted that the new government, under the leadership of Yassin Pasha al-Hashimi, "consists of broad-minded ministers many of whom are very friendly and disposed toward the Jews," a point confirmed in internal documents from the British Foreign Office which concluded that the Levy crises was coming to a close. It also noted that it was now possible for the banned newspapers to be allowed back into Iraq. And yet, whatever minimal impact Levy's letter may have

94 JTA, December 4, 1934.

95 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

96 CO 733/275/4—JTA bulletin 94.

had on censorship policies, the changes were short lived as new bans on the foreign Jewish press were issued in March, 1936. The new ban, as part of the new laws against Zionism, focused on newspapers with a Zionist philosophy. Levy's letter, ultimately, was unsuccessful in its objective of lifting the ban on Jewish periodicals.[97]

The Levy case demonstrates the agency one man in Baghdad had by bringing to an international audience what he perceived as a social injustice. His letter forced both communal elites and the Iraqi government to publicly address the issue of the Jewish community's relationship to other Jewish communities, especially in Palestine, which was growing in importance. It is unclear if Levy knew of the communal leadership's lobbying the Iraqi government in regard to the censorship of Jewish newspapers or the inquiries made by the AJA via the British Foreign Office on behalf of both the foreign publishers and the lay council. Had he known, perhaps, about their work he may not have risked compromising himself by writing such a critical public letter. The international attention should not be perceived as emboldening the Jewish community as no one in Iraq besides Levy published signed letters protesting the actions of the Iraqi government. Instead the Levy case should be seen as highlighting the shared media space between Iraq and foreign Jewish communities and the reticence of official the Jewish leadership to make public declarations in this period.

The incident also forced members of the Jewish community to consider how the Iraqi nation would evolve in the post-Faisal era. For all of the pluralist discourse of the state, this incident reminded the Jewish community of its relative weakness as a religious minority and the limits of the help their brethren abroad could offer in mediating such situations. Finally, this incident demonstrates that by 1934 Palestine had already become a central issue in the Iraqi public sphere and was influencing the Iraqi perception of the Jewish community.

On a larger scale, this event illustrates the complicated predicament entangling the Jews of Iraq both on a communal and an individual level. Years of cooperation with foreign Jewish organizations had built strong ties to foreign Jewish communities, some of whom were benefactors for local charities and many of whom interceded with the Iraqi government on the community's behalf. In particular, the AJA during the Mandate had become an important political advisor and negotiator for the lay council. In the post-Mandate period, however, certain factions of the Iraqi government began to consciously distance themselves from Britain. That the Jewish community maintained their strong ties with Britain—particularly via the AJA and Baghdadis

97 Ibid.

residing in the British Empire—was another factor beyond Zionism leading to their loyalty to the Iraqi state being called into question.

The story of Levy's public protestation of Iraqi government policies and the conflict that ensued illustrated the emerging dichotomy of the Iraqi Jewish identity, whereby being an Iraqi citizen and a Jew—with transnational Jewish connections—increasingly were seen as mutually exclusive. The censorship of Jewish newspapers and the opening of letters was not only ideologically upsetting, and from a security perspective unsettling, but potentially problematic for commercial interests. This incident shows the complexity of how the Jewish community interpreted the changing political scene in Iraq and their desire to reassure themselves of a stable long term outcome. For example, anti-Jewish articles in the Iraqi press led the Iraqi Jews to compare their predicament to the political situation of Jews in Germany (and later Europe as a whole). The Iraqi Jews were reassured when the Iraqi government took steps to protect the community by banning local anti-Jewish newspaper.[98]

Finally, this episode shows that the Jewish communal leadership, although generally loathe to engage in public political statements or directly confront the government, was willing to defend members of the Jewish community even regarding sensitive subjects a testament to their feeling of responsibility for all Iraqi Jews. Ironically, in many ways Levy's letter was successful in that it led some members of the Jewish community and the Iraqi government to confront the issue of Zionism. The letter contributed to a temporary lifting of the newspaper ban and the censorship of foreign Jewish mail. And yet the outcome was frustrating in that it never fully addressed reconciling two loyalties which were quickly coming into conflict: those of the nation (Iraq) and those of the transnational Jewish community.

3. Ibrahim Nahum: The Kadoorie Agent in Baghdad

Throughout this thesis I have made mention of Ibrahim Nahum, a nephew of Elly Kadoorie (1867–1944) and a cousin of Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie. Unlike the Sassoon family, who used a non-Jewish British subject (Mr. M. Maynard) to manage their assets and charities in Iraq, the Kadoorie's employed Nahum to represent them in Iraq, the Levant, and Iran.[99] Nahum's correspondence with his Kadoorie uncle and

98 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15, December 25, 1934.

99 KA B4A1/ November 1945 to January 1957, December 19, 1951.

cousins in Shanghai and Hong Kong is unique. Over the course of two decades one can read of the changing fortunes of the Baghdadi Jews from both the personal level, in regard to his family's future in Iraq, and the communal level, in regard to his leadership role in the community. Nahum was part of the ruling elite and he enjoyed many additional privileges as the agent of the Kadoories. His important position within the community as a member of the lay council and as a member of the Iraqi parliament gave him access to government officials and he most likely had greater ease in obtaining travel visas. Intellectually, however, Nahum can be considered representative of many middleclass Baghdadi men who did not subscribe strongly to any one political ideology—such as Zionism, Communism, or Arab Nationalism—but was active in both Arab and Jewish civil society.

Unlike men such as Ezra Haddad, Anwar Shaul, Mir Basri and Heskell Sasson, he published no written works and made no public political statements. Beyond correspondence with his cousins, he left no writing of any note and there is very little on him in the public record.[100] Nahum represents the generation of Iraqi men who spent most of their adult lives within Iraq and came of age during the early years of the Mandate, a generation that preceded men like Sasson Somekh, Nissim Rejwan, and Naim Kattan. Thus, Nahum's reflections on the events unfolding around him were those of an adult aware of the full implications of the changing tides in Iraq. Unlike the autobiographies of the men cited above, Nahum's reflections cited in this section were written contemporaneously with no knowledge of how the future would unfold.

Although the details of Nahum's life prior to the 1930s are relatively vague, some biographical facts are known.[101] In his years-long correspondence with his cousins, he indicates that he was educated at one of the AIU boys' schools, perhaps Albert Sassoon, sometime in the 1920s. In addition to his role as the Kadoorie's agent in the Levant, Nahum participated in many other social, political and commercial activities. His letterhead stated that he maintained a *Khan* for importing and exporting goods. Nahum spoke and wrote easily in French—although his spelling and grammar cannot be considered fluent and the style makes clear that he never lived in a francophone

100 Nahum is mentioned once in an article in *Paix et Droits* in relation to the opening of an AIU school and once in issue 70 of *The Scribe* October 1998. However, his name does not come up in the IJA archives.

101 The Kadoorie archives are not complete; much was lost first during the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in late 1941 and later during the Communist Revolution in China beginning in 1946 when much of the Shanghai archives were destroyed.

country—he was able to read and speak English,[102] and if his cousins are to be believed, he also spoke some Hebrew.[103] Prior to working for the Kadoorie family he worked as a portfolio manager and chief cashier at the Ottoman Bank.[104] Nahum was married to Lulu, who managed the Laura Kadoorie Atelier in Baghdad for 25 years, but no other biographical information about her parents or siblings are mentioned. Like Nahum, she came from an established Baghdadi family which had spread around the globe. They had two children, a boy named David and a girl named Rachel, each of whom was educated in the AIU and AJA schools. David died in his late teens of an unnamed illness, but his sister emigrated to Israel with their parents. In Israel she married a fellow Iraqi Jew who had lived for a few years in Egypt. Nahum's profile and what we know of his life is similar to that of Sasson Somekh's father as they each received a similar education, held similar bank jobs, read the same newspapers and had similar experiences upon resettling in Israel and finding work.[105]

Ibrahim Nahum acted as the Levant-based eyes and ears of the Kadoorie family for most of the 1930s and 1940s, as his correspondence with the family demonstrates. He began working for his cousins in Asia sometime in the mid-1920s,[106] subsequently taking on a more official and structured role as the years progressed and the Kadoorie philanthropic activities in the Levant and Iran expanded. A 1932 article in *Paix et Droit* mentioned that Nahum attended the placing of the cornerstone for the Kadoorie AIU School in Damascus on behalf of his uncle, whom he was regularly asked to represent at public gatherings.[107] In 1938, he was granted power of attorney for the Kadoorie family and in the same year he was appointed commissioner for foreign affairs in the Iraqi Parliament.[108] His responsibilities included managing the financial and legal affairs of the Kadoories in the Levant, negotiating land purchases and arranging trusts, wills and other official documents.[109] Nahum also acted as a trustee for several synagogues and *awaqf* which he had set up for the Kadoories in Baghdad.[110]

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102 In his correspondence with the Kadoories he cites the English language *Iraq Times* as his primary source of news.

103 The Nahum files contain no Hebrew documents. When referring to Hebrew documents it is unclear whether the author is referring to Hebrew or Judeo-Arabic. KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—August 14,1951.

104 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002 December 22 1937; KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—August 14, 1951.

105 Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday*, 19–26.

106 KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952, October 12 1951.

107 *Paix et Droits*, September 1, 1932, 5.

108 *A Philanthropic Tradition*, 13.

109 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003.

110 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003—December 12, 1937.

Well-traveled, Nahum and his family regularly went to the mountains in Lebanon for their holidays, as did many Iraqi Jews.[111] In his capacity as the Kadoorie's agent in the Levant, Nahum traveled throughout the region visiting AIU schools in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.[112] These journeys were intended to help develop new AIU schools and assure that the Kadoorie family money was used responsibly, and his routine correspondence with the directors of the AIU schools put him in regular contact with many Jewish communities in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. He also made several trips to Palestine, mainly to visit schools[113] and to take his wife to see medical specialists at Hadassah hospital, which Nahum stated was very common for Baghdadi Jews with chronic illnesses unable to be treated in Iraq.[114] Nahum's correspondence shows that he had intimate knowledge of these Jewish communities and close ties with individuals in Palestine.

3.1. *The Lay Council & Iraqi Politics*

In the 1930s, Nahum became a member of both the lay council of the Jewish community and a deputy of the Iraqi Parliament.[115] He was thus heavily invested in both Jewish life in Baghdad and Iraqi civil society, his roles in both positions in many ways inextricably linked. He was granted audience with King Ghazi—as a representative of the Kadoories—to try to convince the king to preside over the opening of the Reemah Kadoorie Hospital.[116] On a more personal level, in a letter on a trip to Tehran to visit the Kadoorie AIU schools, Nahum mentions paying a visit to his "*ami intime*", the Iraqi ambassador to Iran, immediately upon arrival. The visit was intended to discuss the AIU school in Iran and the role of the Iraqi diplomatic presence in the country.[117] He mentions in another letter, when discussing issues surrounding building permits for a new Jewish school building in the province, that the governor of Basra is a close friend.[118]

111 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003—June 23, 1937.

112 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—August 17, 1938.

113 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—April 15, 1935.

114 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—August 7, 1934; KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—July 8, 1935.

115 Nahum officially represented Mosul, although I have found no record that he ever lived in either the province or the city.

116 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—January 1, 1935.

117 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—November 6, 1938.

118 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002—January 31, 1938.

In 1934 Nahum wrote to the Kadoories that before the dissolution of the parliament in 1934 he had been approached by Nouri Pasha to become a deputy in the Iraqi Parliament. Elly Kadoorie replied that he found the idea "neither to your advantage nor ours if you are elected". Kadoorie then went on to present many reasons to avoid entering politics including financial, personal and social conflicts, but ended by stating that this was his private opinion, wishing Nahum much luck and success if he decided to accept the offer,[119] Nahum did not heed his uncle's suggestion. The act of agreeing to join the government suggests that in 1934 Nahum still believed in Iraqi democracy and his personal agency as a government official, despite the crisis around censorship and Zionism as discussed in the previous section.[120] Nahum would be reelected to the Iraqi Parliament in 1937 under Premier Jamal al-Mafdai, evidence of his ability to be perceived as neutral while maneuvering the complex political terrain of the 1930s.[121]

In his correspondence with the Kadoories it is clear that he was closely monitoring the situation in Palestine, often noting that the trouble in Palestine was affecting the wellbeing of the Jewish community in Baghdad.[122] The first crisis discussed in the surviving correspondence is the Levy case (1934–1935) that was discussed in the previous section.[123] Nahum states in his report to the Kadoories, that issue of censorship could be resolved, but that he felt that the Palestine issue would not go away. The years of the Arab revolt in Palestine (1936–1939) galvanized pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic movements, further increasing tension for local Jewish communities around MENA, Iraq being no exception. Palestine had thus become an ever present source of stress for Iraqi Jews by the late 1930s. In Nahum's correspondence, the focus is on the general state of Iraqi Jewry, beyond the political tensions caused by Palestine.

Nahum's concerns came from larger, disconcerting trends he saw emerging within Iraq that led him to question the future value of the Jewish community in Iraq to Iraqi society as a whole. As Nahum noted, with the improvement of public education and a growing Arab Muslim[124] educated middle class, there was less need for Jews in the civil service, a process he saw as already having started with the dismissals

119 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—September 27, 1934.

120 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-001—November 9, 1934.

121 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002—December 22, 1937.

122 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003—December 23 1937.

123 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

124 Nahum, in his writing, generally refers to Arab Muslims as Arabs. I interpret his use of the term Arab here to only refer to Arab Muslims and not Arab Christians who he refers to as Christians.

of Jewish government officials in the 1930s.[125] According to Nahum, this trend would spill into the private sector as other Iraqis began to speak European languages, leading to a decrease in the need for Jews to act as cultural bridge. Furthermore, Nahum noted that, "I think it is important that we should not forget that the Government of Iraq is an Islamic Government, and by nature it must be inherently inclined to give appointments to people of its faith rather than trusting them to people of another creed."[126] This quote suggests that Nahum doubts the true integration of the Jewish community in the eyes of the Iraqi state.

And yet, even with the pessimism expressed in his letter, when considering the problems which faced the Jews of Iraq, he reaffirms the place of the Jewish community in the Iraq nation, essentially stating that Jewish communities elsewhere had bigger problems. He argued that the situation of Jews in Baghdad had been sensationalized by the foreign press, citing Muslim newspapers in Syria and Palestine as examples, giving the West an inaccurate perspective. He also mentioned the persecution of Jews in Germany, a constant theme throughout the Levy affair, insisting that the situation of Jews in Iraq was nothing like that of the Jews in Germany. Nahum's letter to the Kadoories was contradictory in nature. In the first paragraphs it recognized the troubles facing the Jewish community and questioned the future of Jewish life in Iraq. Later in the letter Nahum tried to downplay those problems by providing excuses and justifications for the predicament of the Jews.[127] This contradiction of ideas was perhaps an attempt by Nahum to process these events in Iraq as they unfolded. Furthermore, I would argue that in the 1930s the idea of a mass exodus of Jews from Iraq was inconceivable to most Iraqis, and thus in recognizing the problems facing the Jewish community he still believed that solutions could be found to ensure their future in Iraq.

Following the Levy case, the reports from Nahum indicated a cycle of uncertainty and violence, followed by moments of calm and renewed hope in a better future for the Jews in Iraq. In times of trouble Nahum found ways to smuggle messages out of the country, regularly avoiding the postal censors by using non-Jewish friends and acquaintances. He notes with malice the secret police surrounding the Laura Kadoorie club, ostensibly for the protection of its members but more likely to survey their

125 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

126 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

127 Similarly, Levy's letter is conflicted in that it compliments certain aspects of the Iraqi government and only choses to address one of the issues facing the Jewish community opposed to discussing the deeper issues causing the recent censorship.

actions.[128] Nahum's letters displayed an oscillating pattern in reporting the situation of the Jews in Iraq, which according to him is either in decline or improving. His letters, therefore, provide a personal barometer of the political insecurity the Jewish community felt between 1932 and 1951.

The dual role as member of the lay council and deputy in the Iraqi government became progressively more difficult for Nahum due to the issue of Palestine. The clearest example of this is the 1938 invitation Nahum received from the president of the Egyptian parliamentary commission for the defense of Palestine to discuss the situation in Palestine as one of the Iraqi representatives at the World Parliamentary Congress of the Arab and Muslim Countries for the Defense of Palestine.[129] In October, 1938 Nahum wrote the Kadoories about the situation, explaining that the Iraqi government had chosen a fifteen-person delegation, including thirteen Muslims, one Christian, and one Jew (Nahum). Nahum was upset about the invitation, noting that the conference was clearly anti-Jewish. Furthermore, he was perplexed that they invited him despite knowing his communal allegiances, citing his predicament as an example of the complicated situation of the Iraqi Jews. The letter further stated that the others appointed to the Iraqi delegation were people he appreciated, and this point makes him all the more uncomfortable. Ultimately, Nahum declined the invitation to the Cairo meeting, giving poor health as the official reason for his absence.[130]

Only two weeks after the invitation to the Egypt conference, he wrote to the Kadoories about anti-Jewish violence in Baghdad, a bomb had been thrown at the Shamash school on October 15, and there had been a bomb attack at the Laura Kadoorie school on October 22, in which several people were injured. Although Nahum praised the government as doing its best to protect the Jews, he notes that "Le peuple est empoisonné, et ce n' est pas seulement pour la question de la Palestine, mais une haine générale contre les juifs". Nahum partially attributed this as being inspired by Nazi propaganda on the Iraqi radio, but one gets the impression from his writing that

128 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—September 19, 1938.

129 The World Parliamentary Congress of the Arab and Muslim Countries for the Defense of Palestine was organized by King Faruq of Egypt in late 1938- early 1939. Its objective was to strengthen pan-Arabism through Muslim unity, with the Palestine issue used as a rallying point for Muslim unity. James Jankowski, "Egyptian Regional Policy in the Wake of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty 1936: Arab Alliance or Islamic Caliphate" in *Britain in the Middle East in the 1930s: Security Problems, 1935–1939* ed. Michael J. Cohen and Martin Kolinsky, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 90–91. KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—October 3, 1938.

130 Ibid.

he felt the tide quickly changing for the Jews in Baghdad.[131] Nahum mentioned in another letter that a bomb was thrown in a synagogue in Beirut around the same time, but that contrary to Baghdad, in Beirut the French immediately found and prosecuted the culprit.[132] The tone was already different from that of letters a few years earlier in which he described the Levy case. In Nahum we can witness the disappointment of a grown man as the threads of Baghdadi society began to unravel, although he did not abandon his communal work. For over a decade after these events he would continue to work to support and expand the communal infrastructure.

Sometime during World War II communication was cut off between Nahum and the Kadoories, and between 1940 and 1946 many documents of the Kadoorie archives were lost, leaving us with little knowledge of the actual contact between Nahum and the Kadoories during the war years. However, as Bashkin has demonstrated, the Jewish situation temporarily improved directly after the war.[133] In the case of both Nahum and the Kadoories they recommenced making plans for new schools, which suggests that they perceived an amelioration in the Jewish position in Iraq as well. The main reason that communal infrastructure projects slowed in the post-war period is not due to a lack of confidence in the future of Jews in Iraq, but instead relates to the state for world Jewry, as previously suggested. The Kadoories reallocated many of their resources to help the European Jewish refugees in the post-war period.[134] In fact, in 1946 Nahum, while in Israel on Kadoorie business, helped arrange transit to Iraq for some young Jewish Iraqi students who had been stranded in France during World War II, and sent to Palestine after the war.[135] Thus as late as 1946 middle-class Baghdadis still believed their future was in Iraq rather than Palestine. Furthermore, Nahum was still traveling around the Levant managing the Kadoorie funded Jewish schools and planning new projects, but this would change quickly in the next two years.

By June, 1948 the situation of the Jews in Baghdad was dire but correspondence still showed some signs of hope with smuggled letters stating that "when things will return to normal in Iraq," communal infrastructure could continue to expand.[136] By

131 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—November 2, 1938; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—November 13, 1938; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—November 22, 1938.

132 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—August 31, 1938.

133 Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 136.

134 KA A02/15-SEK-8C-002—March 26 1938.

135 See conclusion for more about this incident. Rachel Mahlad-Goren "The Late Jacob Mahlab" in *The Scribe*, No. 70, October 1998, 22.

136 KA B4A1/ Nov. 1945 to Jan. 1957—July 18, 1948.

1949 the situation had changed for the worse. Nahum saw the community dissolving and he was clearly distressed by his predicament and that of the community as whole. He informed the Kadoories of his situation by engaging a friend traveling to France to send a letter informing them of the situation and asking them to keep their direct correspondence with him as brief as possible.[137] After this, letters regarding the state of the schools and the accounts in Baghdad cease and correspondence turns to speaking in code about ways to liquidate holdings, and options for settling in another country. His letters from this period used the weather as a stand in for the situation of the Jews in Baghdad, referred to his family's health as code for their personal situation and boxes of Baghdadi sweets as symbols for assets and the various ways they were being transferred into other people's names or smuggled out of the country.[138] Clearly anticipating the demise of the community Nahum acted accordingly to the best of his abilities by trying to liquidate his own investments, transferring real-estate titles into the names of the Kadoories as they were English not Iraqi citizens, and finding ways to move important communal artifacts such as Torah scrolls out of the country. This all took place over a period of several months in 1951.[139] He arranged for an Iraqi Muslim, Farid Samra, to manage the Kadoorie affairs and did his utmost to smuggle all important artifacts and deeds of the Kadoories out of Iraq.[140] As soon as he was able to arrange a travel visa for his family, in the summer of 1951 they left Iraq for Italy under the guise of a taking a family holiday and, eventually, decided to emigrate to Israel in October, 1951.[141]

3.2. *Language and Identity*

Nahum was an adult for the entire arc of the Iraqi Jewish experience from 1920 to 1951, and was actively involved in building both the Jewish community and the Iraqi nation as whole. In Nahum's correspondence with the Kadoories there was no sign of a strong Iraqi nationalist sentiment or of a strong attachment to the Arabic language,

137 KA B4A1/ Nov. 1945 to Jan. 1957—December 15, 1949.

138 There is extensive discussion in the correspondence between 1950–1951 of sending and receiving boxes of Manna which goes beyond the usual correspondence of care packages sent from Iraq to China in the earlier period. It is my contention that Nahum used the boxes of sweets as a code word for important documents and letters. N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—March 1, 1951.

139 KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—August 1, 1951.

140 KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—March 1, 1951; KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—July 26, 1951; KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—July 30, 1951.

141 KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—November 22, 1951.

even though he was a member of the Iraqi Parliament. As previously cited, in one letter discussing the Iraqi government dismissing Jewish civil servants he noted, "I think it is important that we should not forget that the Government of Iraq is an Islamic Government,"[142] but his allegiance is first and foremost to the Jewish community of Iraq and the Kadoorie family. Nahum's feelings about language are most clearly seen in the approach he took to the education of his children. That he spoke Arabic and that his children spoke Arabic was a given, as this was both the home language and the language of the civil administration. He never professes in his correspondence, however, any attachment to the language or its importance to the Jewish community in Iraq, but instead focuses on the importance of knowledge in foreign languages. It is surprising that Nahum a member of the Iraqi parliament places little attachment to the Arabic language in contrast to Jewish intellectuals, such as Ezra Haddad and Anwar Sha'ul who ardently professed their love of the Arabic language. The position of Nahum highlights the difference of approach between he political and economic elite in comparison to the intellectual elites.

When writing to the Kadoorie's about his son's studies, he noted that instruction in Arabic was mandatory, but that as soon as his son had completed the mandatory certificate in Arabic from the Ministry of Education he would prepare for his London matriculation exam with the objective of attending university in England.[143] This exchange occurred in 1938, a time of great tension for the Jewish community in Baghdad, but Nahum's intention was not for his son to settle in England as he stated that being the only male offspring, he and his wife wished him to engage in commerce, as opposed to engineering, so that he could stay close to them in Iraq. Nahum felt that English was the most important language for his son's future professional success and there was no suggestion that his son should continue studies in Arabic once he had fulfilled the government requirements.

This view of English may have been a function of Nahum's social class, but I believe his opinion was typical of the majority of the middle class in Iraq (of any confession) at the time, especially those who had commercial interests. Put differently, learning foreign languages was perceived as a vital tool necessary for Iraqi socio-economic mobility. This choice was made for pragmatic reasons—as opposed to ideological ones—the Jewish community is an example *par excellence* of this phenomenon.

142 KA SEK 8C-001 A02/15.

143 His son also passed the French matriculation exam in 1940; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-005—June 6, 1940; KA E02/16-SEK-8C-004—July 7, 1938.

Nahum was also influenced by his time at the AIU, which cemented his attachment to French culture. In 1937 Nahum was awarded the Cross of the *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* by the French ambassador to Iraq, Paul Lépissier. The honor was awarded to him for his "work in supporting French in Institutions in Iraq."[144] In his letter to the ambassador accepting the honor he wrote:

> Il m'est agéable de vous dire que je considere comme un devoir sacré de travailler par tous mes modestes moyens a la deffusion [sic] de la langue Française, seul véhicule des plus nobles pensée que l'humanité ait put concevoir.
>
> Mon seul désir est de voir le français comme base d'enseignement dans toutes les institutions que l'éminent Sir Elly Kadoorie construit. Je me consacrerai entierement a la realisation de cet ideal.[145]

Given the context of the award and the knowledge that Nahum pushed his own son to pursue higher education in English not French, this speech naturally included a great deal of hyperbole. Similarly, the letters which his daughter wrote to the Kadoories showed an exceptionally high level of written English, so we can assume she received an education similar to that of her brother.[146] Thus we know that Nahum valued European languages for their pragmatic uses. Also, Nahum respected both the French and English empires as they were in many ways responsible for his personal success. These sentiments never appeared to conflict with Nahum's position as an Iraqi national and as a native speaker of Arabic. I would venture to say his ideal was a world where the Jews of Iraq could flourish in the city they had inhabited for generations under the protective eye of Western empires.

In contrast to these lukewarm feelings about Iraqi nationalism, Nahum wrote of great sympathy for the Jewish people and, particularly, for the Baghdadi Jewish community as is illustrated both in his letters and the letters of friends which were smuggled out of Iraq to the Kadoories. An anonymous friend of Nahum's writing to the Kadoorie's on his behalf stated, "the Jews of Iraq are grateful for all your family has done for them and for the other Jews in the East".[147] Nowhere in Nahum's correspondence does he seem to consider himself a Zionist. He consistently, however,

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144 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003—October 10, 1937.

145 KA E02/16-SEK-8C-003—October 25, 1937.

146 The Kadoories go as far as to congratulate her on her exceptional command of English in their correspondence. KA N.2-A-1/-1946–1952—December 19, 1951.

147 KA B4A1—July 18, 1948.

shows empathy for the Jews in Palestine and the Jews in Europe discussing possible ways to help German and Austrian Jewish refugees find work in either Iraq or the satellite communities.[148] Nahum held many different professional positions, each of which put him in the constant service of the Jewish community of Baghdad. In view of the overall argument of this thesis, Nahum's story provides an interesting case study as he was not an intellectual, but a representative of the secular elite. Nahum's later letters suggest that even given the loss of status and ongoing hardship, he was relatively happy in Israel, most likely because he had been able to reconstruct his social circle and no longer had to live in constant political uncertainty.

For Nahum, negotiating Jewish transnational networks was a way of life. He had family and professional relations on four continents, his livelihood was dependent on these networks, and he worked to improve the material and political status of the Jews throughout the Levant and Iran. None of this took away from his identity as an Iraqi citizen, but without these connections his life had little meaning. As the situation in Iraq became dire he left, both because his community was disappearing and because his nation had turned on him and his community.

4. Conclusions: Multiple Networks & Connections

In this chapter I have looked at specific of examples of how Jews in Iraq used transnational Jewish networks and the global Jewish public sphere to address local issues within their community such as reading and writing—in multiple languages—in the Jewish press, and engaging in intellectual debates about the nature of Judaism, Jewish modernity and Jewish identity while identifying as an Iraqi citizen and valuing this other aspect of one's identity through participation in the Iraqi society. Although this phenomenon had been observed among Iraqi Jews in the late nineteenth century, as discussed in chapter one, few researchers have looked at the ways in which Iraqi Jews engaged with transnational Jewish networks after World War I. Through these three case studies I have endeavored to provide a sampling of the ways Jews in Baghdad engaged with the greater Jewish world. My observations are intended to add to other scholars' work on Jewish participation in the Iraqi state and society by integrating the knowledge of how Baghdadi Jews used transnational Jewish networks to further our understanding of the complex position of Jews within Iraqi society.

148 KA SEK-8C-005—February 19,1940.

These case studies represent the arc of history for Baghdadi Jews from 1920 to 1951. The first, the controversy over the theosophical society is in the context of the Mandate period. It dealt with a communal matter: the role of the Rabbinate in defining Judaism and Jewish life in Iraq. There was little consideration of the place of Jews in Iraq as it was largely taken for granted, and transnational Jewish connections did not pose any issue with the state. The origin of the controversy was theological and the power struggle was internal to the community. The debate centered on the right of the Rabbinate to control Jewish communal organization, and their reaction to the influences of foreign Jewish communities. Of particular note is how the Iraqi Rabbinate used their own foreign connections to legitimize their position in the controversy. Although Sassun Khadduri was best known for his strong stance against Zionism and anyone remotely related to Zionism, this case demonstrated his connections to foreign rabbis, including a rabbi in Tel Aviv and his awareness of Jewish intellectual trends outside Iraq.

The Levy case dealt with the role of the media, foreign states and non-state actors at a time of political unease, but not crisis. This case study examines the inevitable decline of Baghdadi Jewry from the perspective of transnational Jewish connections, and the role foreign networks played in interceding on behalf of the community, both privately via the lobbying of the AJA and publicly through the coverage of the event in the Jewish press. Similarly, Zvi Yehuda provides examples of nineteenth century appeals to global Jewish public opinion, to intercede on behalf of Iraqi Jewry. These appeals were carried out in the Hebrew language newspapers of the *Haskalah*.[149] In what can be seen as a similar act, Levy's letter was published in both the general and Jewish foreign press, the only difference being the language of publication. Each of these appeals is an example the dynamic entanglement between the Jews of Baghdad and foreign Jewish communities.

Nahum was an archetypical non-intellectual upper class Baghdadi, heavily invested in the lay council, in the Iraqi state through his election as a member of the Iraqi parliament, and to the transnational Jewish World as the agent of the Kadoories in the Levant. Through Nahum we can see that his public spheres were highly intermingled politically, socially and economically, but still represent spheres which were at times at odds with each other. That Nahum, as late as 1946, was traveling to Palestine on behalf of the Kadoories to negotiate the repatriation of Iraqi Jews to Baghdad demonstrates that even in a time political chaos on all fronts, most Baghdadis still saw a future for Jews in Baghdad.

149 Yehuda, *New Babylonian Diaspora*, 230–237.

These three cases have a few elements in common. The first is language: in all three instances English and French, not Arabic or Hebrew, were the main languages for transnational Jewish communication. In the case of the theosophy controversy, the Jews in Iraq became aware of theosophy through their brethren in the satellite communities, via literature from European Jews, and through the English language Jewish press. In the Levy incident, he published his editorial in English because it was censored in Arabic. The majority of press coverage decrying the situation and following progression of the trial was also in English, although the case was also covered in French, Hebrew, and Arabic. Finally, in the case of Nahum, his decades of correspondence, communicating with individuals in Asia, Europe and America, was in a mixture of English, French, Arabic and occasionally Hebrew, but in none of the three cases was Arabic or Hebrew the central language. Although Zionist historiography often presents Hebrew as the unifying language of the Jewish people, in the period between 1920 and 1951 this was certainly not the case. For Baghdadi Jews, their linguistic connection to the transnational Jewish world was primarily in English, and to a lesser extent French, just as Arabic served the same purpose in the Arab public sphere. Without the ability to read and write in English, the Jews of Baghdad would not have been able to interact at such a high level with the Jewish World beyond the borders of MENA.

Both Levy and Nahum positioned themselves as Iraqi citizens and as part of a larger Jewish community. Each man's livelihood depended on his connections to Jews from other communities, Levy via the importation of Jewish press and Nahum from his employment by the Kadoories. In their writing, private government documents and the press, words such as "race", "minority", and "religious group" were interchangeably used in reference to the Jewish community of Baghdad. Their link to Iraq as a place—and also to the nation—was never questioned. Their identities, both as ascribed by others and through self-description, was never clearly defined, and Nahum was constantly changing his vocabulary based on language, audience, and current events.

The level of awareness of various actors in different Jewish intellectual projects. The theosophy controversy was about religious reform within Judaism. Levy defended the idea of being simultaneously interested in Zionism and a loyal citizen of another state. And finally, Nahum, the prototype of the upper-middle class Baghdadi Jew who is torn between his native homeland and the reality that Jewish life in Baghdad was coming to an end, ultimately chose life in Israel over offers to immigrate to Hong Kong or France. These conundrums, transposed in Jewish communities in Europe, Asia or North America would have been recognizable in other Jewish communities at the same period.

In each of the case studies the satellite communities were ever present. For the theosophy controversy, the foundational ideas came directly from Indian communities, and much of the discussion over theosophy played out in the newspapers of the satellite communities. It is remarkable that Elly Kadoorie of Shanghai became involved in de-escalating the conflict over the Basra theosophists despite his family's general avoidance of local Iraqi-Jewish politics. His knowledge of theosophy and of the Basra conflict mostly likely came from *Israel's Messenger*, that closely followed the controversy, as it was the local Jewish newspaper in Shanghai. In the Levy case, discussions about the trial and the state of Jews in Baghdad is found in the periodicals of the satellite communities.

The overlapping of issues and actors is also apparent in the sources. The only private records I came across discussing the events of the Levy case are in the Kadoorie archives. I suspect that if we discover other private family archives containing correspondence with Baghdad, they too will demonstrate the multi-layered connections between Baghdad and the satellite communities.[150] It is a shame that the Kadoorie archives only begin after the resolution of the theosophy controversy, because one can assume the Basra theosophists would be discussed as Nahum would likely have arranged for the funds to arrive in Basra.

This overlapping of individuals, events and sources highlights another theme which is often not contextualized. The Baghdadi Jews never numbered more than about 120,000,[151] a community small enough that an issue like Levy's imprisonment or the controversy in Basra would have been known to most members of the Jewish community. The involvement of foreign rabbinical opinions and appeals to foreign Jewish communities to intercede on issues of censorship would have been known throughout the community, thus reinforcing the communal awareness of the connection to other Jewish groups.

These case studies demonstrate ways in which Iraqi Jews were engaged with the larger Jewish world, and they also tie together the themes of the first four chapters—the importance of communal infrastructure, the role of the satellites, philanthropy, and secular education. The Jews of Baghdad between 1920 and 1951 lived in an environment dependent on and influenced by people and events outside the borders of Iraq. Many of the Jews in Baghdad had personal and commercial

150 The Sassoon Archives in Jerusalem also contain correspondence with Baghdad from abroad as does the IJA, however neither of these archives have been fully catalogued.

151 This estimate includes the satellite communities but excludes the Neo-Aramaic speaking Jews. See appendix for population figures.

ties to other Jewish communities, but since Iraqi independence had grown to see themselves culturally, linguistically, and socially as members of the Iraqi nation. It is unlikely that the majority of the population would have been willing to sacrifice one identity or relationship for the other, necessitating a constant effort to maintain an equilibrium between the two. The situation became impossible, however, and the Jewish community of Baghdad rapidly disintegrated between 1949 and 1952.

Conclusion

Three young Jewish women from Baghdad were sent to Paris in 1938 to study at the AIU teacher's training school. Soon after their arrival, France was invaded and Paris was occupied by the Nazis. The women fled to Toulouse and spent the rest of the war in southern France using false papers provided by members of the French resistance. At the end of the war, their passports having expired, the women were unable to return to Iraq. With the assistance of the JDC they were sent, instead, to Palestine as Jewish War Refugees. Ibrahim Nahum, who happened to be in Palestine in 1945 arranged to have their Iraqi passports renewed and they were finally able to return to their families in Baghdad. These women, like most Iraqi Jews, would leave Iraq for Israel between 1949 and 1952.[1]

The lives of Iraqi Jews in the Hashemite period were influenced by a complex network of Jewish organizations, institutions, and ideologies.[2] I have explored ways in which Iraqi Jewry connected to Jewish groups outside Iraq, arguing that these connections had important ongoing consequences not only on the organization of the community, but in the identity of its members. In the first four chapters I examined the emergence of new types of Jewish networks, including the relationship between Baghdad and the Baghdadi diaspora, global Jewish solidarity and philanthropy movements, the global Jewish press and secular Jewish education. In the final chapter, I presented three case studies demonstrating the ways in which the aforementioned themes intertwined via these overlapping networks.

The Mandate is a crucial moment in Iraqi Jewish history, represented by the openness of the Iraqi state in the 1920s. This period afforded Iraqi Jews greater socio-economic mobility that resulted in strengthening formal and informal Jewish networks through commercial and intellectual exchange (i.e. Jewish periodicals). In the 1930s as anti-British and anti-Zionist sentiment grew in Iraq, these connections became more problematic, particularly, those which linked Iraqi Jews to Britain or Palestine. Some Jews in Iraq, as a consequence, became vocally anti-British or anti-Zionist and the relationships between the Jews in Iraq with the British and Jews in Palestine were publicly downplayed. The transnational Jewish networks, however,

1 Rachel Mahlad-Goren, "The Late Jacob Mahlab" *The Scribe* (No. 70), October 1998, 22.

2 Although the specific details of article are impossible to verify, the dates, institutions and individuals are consistent with documented events. Nahum was in Palestine in 1946 and the JDC was responsible for bringing many Jews located in Vichy France to Palestine.

remained active and relevant up until the dismantling of the Iraqi Jewish community that coincided with the creation of the state of Israel.

1. English and French as Transnational Jewish Languages

Multilingualism determined how Baghdadis participated in the global Jewish public sphere. Although Arabic was the dominant language of communication in Iraq and Baghdadis overwhelmingly spoke Judeo-Baghdadi in family settings, multilingualism was essential for Baghdadi participation in transnational Jewish networks. The structural foreign relationships of the communal leadership, which brought the AIU, AJA, and JDC to Iraq, encouraged a multilingual Baghdadi community. This can be seen most clearly through the development of secular schools in which the majority of students studied three or four languages. Another important, and connected, driver of this multilingualism was the ever-present role of the Baghdadi Diaspora. English was not only used for communication with other Jewish sub-groups but also as an internal language for Baghdadis. English, and to a lesser extent French, became the dominant transnational languages of communication for Baghdadi Jews as they were the languages of communication with foreign philanthropic groups, the satellite communities and a large portion of the foreign Jewish press.

This linguistic shift is indicative of a larger transition in the main languages of transnational Jewish communication in the 20th century. In the pre-modern world—when communal languages such as Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Spanish, or Yiddish were not universally viable—Hebrew was the *lingua franca* of transnational Jewish communication. This was also the case for a brief period of time at the height of the *Haskala*. By the early 20th century, however, English and French had become the dominant languages of transnational Jewish communication largely due to Jewish philanthropic networks connected to the success of French and British imperial networks and the migration of Ashkenazi Jews to North American between 1881–1924. The Baghdadis were one small part of this linguistic transition due to their own migration and their participation in transnational Jewish networks.

To this day, as the importance of the AIU and French imperial networks has receded, English remains the dominant language of transnational Jewish communication. The main poles of the Jewish world, Israel and the United States, differ greatly from the more geographically and linguistically diverse distribution a century earlier. Although the state of Israel would like to present Hebrew as the unifying language of the Jewish people, English continues to dominate as the language of transnational

Jewish communication. This is unsurprising as the overwhelming majority of world Jewry studies English as either their first or second language. It should not be overlooked, however, that this trend began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century due to the emergence of Jewish internationalism, imperialism and mass Jewish migration.

2. A Transnational Identity: The Baghdadi Community

Iraqi Jews identified with a larger 'Baghdadi Jewish' community that in their minds extended beyond the borders of Iraq, in particular to the satellite communities of the Indian sub-continent and East Asia, but also the United Kingdom and other parts of MENA. Geographic delocalization engendered an identity that was fluid, transcending nationality and language, built on shared customs and traditions, linked to themes discussed throughout my thesis: intellectual exchange in Baghdadi periodicals; solidarity movements; and philanthropy. It was also enduring, having had relevance in the Ottoman Period, the Hashemite period, and after the exodus of Jews from Iraq. As early as the 1920s Jews in the satellite communities identified with Britain rather than the Iraqi State but continued to see themselves as Baghdadi Jews. Today, as Baghdadi Jews work to preserve their cultural identity in a multilingual and multicultural context, through cultural associations, synagogues, and publications. This trend can also be seen in other Jewish subgroups (such as Moroccan and Iranian Jewry) whose communities transcend language and nation.[3]

Preservation of communal identity in a transnational context has also, in the long-term, influenced how Baghdadis perceive themselves within global Jewry. In the Ottoman period there was little identification with Jewish groups beyond those in close proximity to Baghdad outside the sphere of religious law and practice.[4] This began to change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in large part due to interaction with other Jewish groups in the satellite communities and foreign Jewish travelers in Baghdad. In Iraq, unlike much of the Jewish world, there were never separate Sephardic or Ashkenazi communal institutions. Instead, Baghdadi Jews integrated foreign Jews into their community.

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3 Leah R. Baer, "Diaspora—Iranian," EJIW; Ruth Fredman Cernea, "Diaspora—Iraqi," EJIW; Mikhael Elbaz, "Diaspora—Moroccan," EJIW.

4 Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, 11–90.

The situation was different for Baghdadis outside Iraq as they were often confronted by separate defined Jewish groups which forced them to choose their associates, particularly in the racialized British colonial context. These interactions pushed Baghdadis as a whole to consider their position within the global Jewish landscape. Baghdadis overwhelmingly identified with Sephardim, understandable given the similarities in religious rituals and the importance of Baghdadi rabbis within Sephardic religious networks, but it was also a useful social strategy to position themselves as European with colonial authorities, without being associated with Eastern European Jewry.[5] This association with Sephardim eventually had consequences in Israel as it has brought Baghdadi Jewry, in many ways, under the aegis of Sephardic Jewry. In later periods this idea that has been reinforced with the centrality of Baghdad-born Ovadia Yosef and his roles as chief Sephardi Rabbi in Israel and the founder of Shas. Interestingly, the fusing of religious and political leadership in Israel has its antecedents in the connections between Sephardi and Baghdadi Jewry during the Hashemite period.

3. The Emergence of New Jewish Identities

I have endeavored to add another layer to our understanding of the complexity of Jewish life in Iraq by exploring how Iraqi Jews, during the Hashemite period, identified and interacted with world Jewry. I have also explored a new dimension in our understanding of transnational Jewish networks during the interwar period by demonstrating the diverse ways Baghdadis engaged with Jewish philanthropic organizations. Zionist activities, however, are largely absent from my analysis of Iraqi participation in transnational networks. Although the situation in Palestine was a constant stress on the Jewish community, Iraqi Jews viewed the Hashemite period as a time of optimism and prosperity in which the Jewish community felt they could overcome adversity and instability to ensure the continuity of Jewish life in Iraq. This faith in the secure position of Jews in Iraq in many ways parallels the aspirations of European Jewry a century earlier. For Iraqi Jews, the aid received from foreign groups and participation in the Jewish public sphere allowed them to be more productive Iraqi citizens, replicating the aspirations of Western European Jewry a century earlier and fulfilling the objectives of nineteenth century Jewish internationalism. In the

5 Ibid; Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*, 29–38.

twentieth century context of Jewish transnationalism this allowed Iraqi Jews to be active in global Jewish networks and local Iraqi civil society, nurturing a synergy between the two that allowed Iraqi Jews to identify as both Arab and Jew without any apparent contradiction. This twentieth century Jewish transnationalism and the secular Jewish identity it engendered is a logical continuation of nineteenth century Jewish internationalism.

In the Hashemite period Baghdadi Jews saw themselves as part of an international Jewish sphere, closely connected to Europe, an idea often missing in the historiography of Iraqi Jews. The examples provided throughout this thesis display Jews in Baghdad engaged in positive, constructive and respectful relationships with Jewish communities beyond the Baghdadi diaspora. Consider the reactions of Baghdadi Jews to the persecution of European Jewry leading up to and during World War II, which is in stark contrast to the experiences of the majority of Baghdadi Jews who, upon arrival in Israel, reported ill treatment and discrimination primarily at the hand of the Eastern European Jewish population.[6] Awareness of this post-migration shift in the collective memory of Iraqi Jews regarding intercommunal dialogue and cooperation between Baghdadi and non-Baghdadi Jews is thus central when trying to reconstruct the intersection between Baghdadi Jewry's participation in the Iraqi state and their participation in transnational Jewish networks prior to the trauma of their displacement.

In conclusion, Iraqi Jews were constantly embracing multiple identities as Baghdadis, Jews, Arabs, Iraqis and everything in between. These identities were fluid and rarely seen as contradictory. Furthermore, investigating the intersectionality between these multiple identities and their networks demonstrates the sophisticated ways Iraqi Jews were active participants in global Jewry in the first half of the twentieth century. It is my suspicion that more attention to the systemic cooperation of Jewish groups in MENA with transnational Jewish organizations and participation in the global Jewish public sphere will yield valuable knowledge of MENA Jewry's agency in these networks and provide greater understanding of how Jewish identity, religiosity, solidarity and belonging were transformed in the first half of the twentieth century.

6 Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Between Baghdad and Ramat Gan: Iraqi Immigrants in Israel* [In Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009).

APPENDIX A

List of Jewish Communal Organizations and Associations[1]

Where possible I have included foundation date in brackets.

Jewish Schools in Baghdad

- Midrash Talmud Torah (1833)
- Albert David Sassoon School (1865/1874)
- Laura Kadoorie School (1895)
- Haron Saleh/Noam (1902)
- Midrash Nuriel (1902)
- Rahel Shahmoon (1909)
- Gan Menahem Daniel/Gan Yeladim (1910)
- Atelier Laura Kadoorie (1922)
- Wataniyyah (1923)
- Kerem (1924)
- Shammash/Frank Iny (1928)
- Blind Institute (1929)
- Masuda Salman School (1931)
- Atelier Ezra Sassoon (during the British Mandate?)

Jewish Hospitals in Baghdad

- Meir Elias Hospital (1910)—Founded by Meir Elijah ben Solomon Davis and supported by community funds and open to Jews and non-Jews alike. In 1944 it had 140 beds.

1 This list has been compiled primarily from the following sources, Avraham Ben-Yaakov "Societies and Institutions in the Baghdad Community," 193–197; Sassoon, *A History of Jews in Baghdad*, pages 165–175; Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection*, 55–56.

- Reemah Kadoorie Eye Hospital (1912)
- Dar al-Shifa Hopsital (Founded sometime in the Mandate period)
- Meyassedey Beit ha-Refuah (1884)—originally founded to help poor Jewish patients, it eventually became a branch of the Meir Elias Hospital Baghdad providing treatment and medicine free of charge to those in need.

Jewish Charities in Baghdad

- Hevra Kadisha (Burial Society)—This society is most likely the oldest organized Jewish society in Baghdad as its existence is necessary for the preparation of the dead for burial.
- Shomrei Mitzvah Society (1868)—Its official aim was to provide preserve the religiosity of the community. Their religious actions included kosher supervision, checking mezuzot, preparing matzah at Passover. In practice the society also provided for the communal poor and supported education by assisting needy students and offering academic prizes.
- Kaveh Le'Atid (1885)—Society to support the moral development of the community.
- Hahknasat Orhim/Ovrim ve-Shavim Society (1894)—To provide and maintain communal housing for Jewish travelers in Baghdad, including emissaries from the holy land.
- Ahavat Shalom (1896)—Aid in the reconciliation of quarreling spouses.
- Torah Society (1912)—Support of poor scholars, real estate trusts and the lay committee.
- Zehut haRabim (1913)—Aid to the blind
- Ozrei Dalim Society (1914)—Providing vocational training to Midrash Talmud Torah Students.
- Girl's charitable sewing society (1929)
- Baghdad Jewish Ladies Committee—The earliest mentions of this organization appear in the first decade of the twentieth century. The committee provided material support to the Jewish schools.
- Committee aux secours aux ecoles/ Jewish Lay Council Schools Relief Committee—This committee provided material support to schools and was mostly likely founded in the early years of the British Mandate.
- Entr' aide Scolaire (1928)—Located at the Laura Kadoorie School it provided winter clothes to about 600 girls each year and organize extra-curricular activities for girls including cooking, singing, music, walking, and regular social gatherings.

Jewish Social Clubs in Baghdad

- Laura Kadoorie/Alliance Israélite Universelle Club (1925)—The main Jewish social club in Baghdad.
- Rashid Club—Founded sometime in the Hashemite period.
- Zawra Club—Founded sometime in the Hashemite period, this club was an important meeting place for the Zionist underground in the 1940s.
- Rafidian Club—Founded sometime in the Hashemite period.
- Ezra Menahem Sports Centre Battaween (1946–1951)

APPENDIX B

Baghdadi Population Estimates

These figures are cited from multiple scholarly works, they are at best estimates. The numbers come from a variety of consular censuses, travel diaries of European Jews, and self-reporting (for the satellite communities).

Iraq

- Iraq: 61,435 (1904);[1] 87,000 (1919);[2] 72,783 (1932);[3] 135,000 (1947–1948);[4] 2,500 (1970)[5]
- Baghdad: 1794 (2,500);[6]30,000 (1824);[7] 1877 (18,000);[8] 35,000 (1882),[9] 45,000 (1896);[10] 53,000 (1908);[11] 50,000 (1913);[12] 60,000 (1922);[13] 80,000 (1934);[14] 77,417 (1947)[15]
- Basra: 300—families (1828);[16] 30—families (1854);[17] 5000 (1914);[18] 6,928 (1919);[19] 10,000 (1947)[20]

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1 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1872*, 73.
2 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 5.
3 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1872*, 73.
4 Sergio DellaPergola, "Demography", EJIW.
5 Ibid.
6 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 248.
7 Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 127.
8 Ibid.
9 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juif de Bagdad*, 26.
10 Ibid.
11 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 248.
12 Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juif de Bagdad*, 26.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 248.
16 Orit Bashkin, "Basra", EJIW.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1872*, 73.
20 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 5.

– Mosul: 2000–3000 (1848);[21] 2000–3000 (1900);[22] 7,000 (1919);[23] 10,743 (1947)[24]

Satellite Communities

– Bombay: 350 (1837);[25] (2,264) 1881;[26] 1400 (1932); 3000 (1939);[27] 2500 (1950)
– Calcutta: 50 (1816);[28] 200 (1825);[29] 307 (1837);[30] 600–1000 (1860);[31] 2000 (1892);[32] 2500 (1912);[33] 1,820 (1920); 3500 (1939);[34] 4500 (1942);[35] 5000 (1946)[36]
– Rangoon: 1200 (1930);[37] 1000 (1939)[38]
– Singapore: 172 (1870);[39] 500 (1900);[40] 623 (1919);[41] 2000 (1939);[42] 700 (1945);[43] 500 (1960)[44]
– Hong Kong: 50–100 (1921–1939)[45]
– Shanghai: 153 (1893);[46] 50 families (1908);[47] 1000 (1939)[48]

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21 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1872*, 74.
22 Ibid.
23 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country*, 5.
24 Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1872*, 75.
25 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 276 n. 24.
26 Ibid, 66.
27 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxv.
28 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 25.
29 Ibid, 69.
30 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 276 n. 24.
31 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 64.
32 Ibid, 68.
33 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 71.
34 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxv.
35 Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 324.
36 Ibid, 14.
37 Roland, *Jews in British India*, 139.
38 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxv.
39 Bieder, *The Jews of Singapore*, 29.
40 Ibid, 39.
41 Ibid, 59.
42 Ibid, 109.
43 Ibid, 109.
44 Ibid, 135.
45 This is my own personal estimate.
46 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxv.
47 Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to Whangpoo*, 12.
48 Cernea, *Almost Englishmen*, xxv.

APPENDIX C

Ibrahim Nahum letter to Kadoorie Family 25 December 1934

This letter appears in file SEK 8C-001 A02/15 of the Kadoorie Archives. The letter was written by Ibrahim Nahum at a period of heightened unease among the Jews of Baghdad. The letter below was smuggled out of Iraq and translated from Arabic to English by an unmentioned Englishman. The Kadoorie archives do not contain an Arabic version of the letter.

Bagdad, 25th December 1934
Private and Confidential

Dear Sir Elly Kadoorie,

I have the honour to submit the following report conformably to your letter of the 16th Nov. last.

The post of the Jews here has not been altogether happy of late mainly since the present Cabinet took power.

At the very inception of its coming into Office, its attitude has been indicative of hostility to the Jews. Two or three important posts held by Jews have been abolished on grounds of economy. On the same grounds, other posts have also been abolished but they are not of any prominence. With this axing process, however, posts held by non-Jews, e.g. Mohammedans and Christians have been abolished. It follows from that it is rather difficult to judge to what extent the services of Jewish Officials have been dispensed with on grounds of anti-semism[sic].

A very unhappy incident has also occurred during the term of office of the present Cabinet. A certain Jewish bookseller by name of Lawee, whose business has severely suffered through the suppression of certain Jewish Newspapers in Iraq has committed the folly of writing a letter to the Manchester Guardian pointing to the unsatisfactory treatment which the Jews of Iraq receive from the Government, and authorizing the Editor to publish the letter under own signature.

The editor acceded to the request, and no sooner than published, the vernacular papers have immediately translated the letter with storms of criticism, much of

which were furious attacks against the Jews. Among the criticism, the Jews here were convicted of Zionism, their fidelity of national feeling was seriously doubted and condemned. This conviction has now become the common guilt of the Iraqi Jew. [End page 1]

The opportunity oh [sic] this incident has been bitterly explored against the Jews, and a sequence of the comments of the press which knew no end to it's very critical situation to the Jews has regrettably been brought about. The press has taken too wide a latitude with too much rope from the Government. Exhaustive editorials have appeared in practically all the Arabic papers which spoke very unfairly of the Jews. The criticisms were of course stupid and preposterous but they have not failed in their mischievous effects.

The criticisms were so varied in nature and cope, and were so constant and continuous that they ran the risk of monotony. They were the only them of the press for upwards of 8 weeks.

The personalities of the Jews endured the hammer blows of the press. Public opinion has been infuriated against the Jews, and the silence of the Government, whether from weakness or negligence, to counteract the press has developed an extreme position.

The Consistoire, of which I am a member wrote, wrote on three occasions to the Government drawing their attention to this highly unsatisfactory position. The result of this repeated communication has however proved of no avail. The position having reached its climax, the consistoire saw fit to depute a delegation out of its own members to meet the Premier Ministre.

The Premier received the delegation in his office, and listened well to its representations. Attention was drawn that the press went too far against the Jews with no justifying grounds. It has also pointed out that if Zionism was a crime, it was the least crime which can with justification be attached to the Iraqi Jews, who are neither Zionists or any of their promoters.[1]

The premier promised help, and verbal warning were made to the press to refrain from writing any further against the Jews. But no pressure was brough to bear against it to abandon its subject, and despite these warnings, the fact remained that the press still continued to its attacks.

In the meantime, some well known Jewish Papers issued in Palestine and other parts of the world were prohibited, semi- [End page 2] officially, to enter Iraq, and this went directly to confirm the press in its attitude towards the Jews.

1 Zionism was made a crime in 1935.

A strong resentment, ill-feeling and consternations were felt among the Jews, and a serious setback in the trade resulting from mis-confidence [sic] of the Jews apparent. The revenue of the Customs Department fell of considerably and in the Tapou Department transactions definitely stopped. The Government became conscious of its mistake, and endeavoured them to repair it.

The Premier, who is acting Minister of the Interior, deputed the Minister of Communications & Economics to meet the Consistoire with the object of reaching an understanding. The Minister conformably to his instructions met the Consistoire in its Office, and after lengthy exchange of views, he explained the intentions of the Government to give no differential treatment to the Jews whom they regarded as good citizens. The Minister further asked the Consistoire to co-operation in the restoration of Jewish confidence. That was at last the silver lining behind the clouds, and the press was official warned not to write any further. The papers which tresspassed [sic] on these orders [sic] were closed down, and the situation could only be smoothed over by effective handling on the part of the Government. The position immediately became normal, and there is at present nothing displeasing to the Jews.

Further, permission has been granted for the prohibited Jewish papers to be distributed to their subscribers.

To revert to the story of the bookseller, I would point out that he has been sent to the Court who passed a sentence of one year's imprisonment on the grounds that his letter to the Manchester Guardian was defamatory to the interests of the country. This sentence has been appealed, and the Appeal Court quashed it and remitted it for a re-hearing to the lower court. The case is now in the hands of the latter court pending the result of a re-hearing. In view of the latest move, I have every hope that he will be acquitted.

You will be able to observe fromm [sic] the foregoing that the news relating to the situation of the Jews in this country which have been circulated outside, have been considerably exaggerated. News cannot however travel without being widely engrossed, and to reach to the true position, one must subject them to a heavy discount.

You will also appreciate that the news cannot be correctly transmitted by people who are only too badly acquainted with the situation and who have no contact with the Government.

The result of this exaggeration has been for the situation to appear alarmingly desperate, when in reality, and at the end, there has been nothing more than unfair writing against the Jews in the press.

In the meantime, I think it is important that we should not forget that the Government of Iraq is an Islamic Government, and by nature it must be inherently inclined to give appointments to people of its faith rather than trusting them to people of another crede.

What is more serious that the public schools which are financed by the Government have so far proved their proficiency in turning out people who have the ability of becoming good officials only, and as year pass by, the need of the students who have complited [sic] their education for the appointment is becoming more crying.

It follows from this that Government service is and will become the least fruitful field for the Jews to explore. They must of necessity turn their eyes to other directionse [sic].

It is a truism that at the time when the English had to do anything with the appointment of Governmental personnel, the distribution of vacancies among people of different credes was fairer, but that time is now no longer, and the English have no more to do anything in t

So much for the present situation of the Jews in Iraq, I will report any further developments, which I sincerely trust will never occur, but before concluding, I wish to emphasize that, (a) The persecution of the Jews in German, and (b) the publication of unfavorable comments in Syrian and Palestenian [sic] Moslem papers cannot fail to have their re-actory effects on the Moslem section of this part of the world, but to say that the Jews have been subjected to [end of page 3] any persecutions or to any harsh treatment, as the rumours circulated is a statement which must totally be rejected as it has not the least foundation of truth behind it.

Yours very sincerely,

[Document is unsigned]

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Summary

This thesis traces the participation of Baghdadi Jews in Jewish transnational networks from the mid-nineteenth century until the mass exodus of Jews from Iraq between 1948–1951. Each chapter explores different components of how Jews in Baghdad participated in global Jewish civil society through the modernization of communal leadership, Baghdadi satellite communities, transnational Jewish philanthropy and secular Jewish education. The final chapter presents three case studies that demonstrate the interconnectivity between different iterations of transnational Jewish networks. Although chapters are presented thematically opposed to chronologically there is a mild chronological progression from the first chapter which deals primarily with the nineteenth century to the last chapter whose case studies are from the Hashemite period.

Chapter one focuses on the nineteenth century forces of modernization among Baghdadi Jewry. Beyond the *Tanzimat* reforms, which influenced all communities in Iraq, this chapter pays special attention to the rise of Jewish internationalism in Europe and its influence on Jews in Baghdad. Although limited to communal elites in the early period, I discuss the ways European Jewish intellectual projects developing in both Eastern and Western Europe had relevance for Jews in Baghdad. Furthermore, this chapter links the modernization of the Jewish community to changes in Jewish communal infrastructure and leadership in Baghdad. In particular, the evolution of transnational Jewish networks from the informal contacts of Jewish elites towards a formalized relationship with foreign Jewish organizations after the establishment of the lay council in 1879 would have important implications for the Jewish community during the Hashemite period.

Chapter two discusses the impact of the Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora by tracing its beginnings in the nineteenth century and presenting examples of its continued importance in the development of the communal infrastructure in the twentieth century. I also consider the importance of informal Baghdadi networks relating to family and trade and their influence on the Jews of Baghdad. This chapter argues that the satellite communities provided a model for Jewish modernization for the Jewish community of Baghdad. Finally, this chapter presents the idea that the Jewish community of Iraq and that of the satellites communities imagined themselves as one community, opposed to disparate groups, as they were bound culturally, filially, and economically.

Chapter three explores the role of transnational Jewish philanthropic organizations in Baghdad. Focusing on the roles of the three-leading actors in Baghdad the

Alliance Israélite Universelle (France), the Anglo-Jewish Association (United Kingdom), and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (USA) I provide histories of each organization's actions in Baghdad. I also analyze the role of foreign financial aid using communal budgets from the period between 1920–1950. This chapter demonstrates the continuity of the foreign Jewish organizations' participation in the development of communal infrastructure in Baghdad. It also discusses how the communal leadership in Baghdad used these organizations to further their agendas relating to education and social welfare for the Jewish community, challenging the idea of a top-down relationship between the aid organization and the Jewish community of Baghdad. Finally, this chapter contests the idea that the Jewish community in Baghdad willfully distanced itself from other Jewish groups in the 1930s by demonstrating the unbroken links to foreign Jewish organizations from their arrival in Baghdad in the 1860s until the dissolution of the community in the 1950s.

Chapter four discusses the history of secular Jewish education and what can be understood of Jewish society in Baghdad from its network of schools. This chapter discusses the different types of schools available in the Jewish school system in Baghdad and the public schools partially financed by the Jewish community. By analyzing the curricula of each school type and in particular the different languages emphasized in the different schools I draw conclusions on the status and usages of Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French in the period between 1920–1950. Through my discussion of the centrality of the Jewish school system in Baghdad, this chapter advances the idea that the Jewish community of Baghdad used its school system to assert it importance and distinction within Iraqi society.

Finally, Chapter five is a compilation of three case studies from the period between 1920 and1950. Each case study presents a different way in which Jews in Baghdad engaged with Jewish transnational networks. The first case study discusses the theosophy controversy in Basra in the period between 1927–1936. The second case study looks at the role of censorship and the importance of Jewish foreign newspapers in the early years of the Iraqi state. The third and final case study examines the life of Ibrahim Nahum the Iraqi agent of the Kadoorie family and member of both the lay council and the Iraqi Parliament. Beyond highlighting the interconnectivity of the themes of the first four chapters (communal organization, Baghdadi satellite communities, Jewish philanthropic organizations and secular Jewish education) these case studies demonstrate the centrality of multilingualism, foreign Jewish periodicals, and participation within the global Jewish public sphere for Jewish society in Baghdad.

In conclusion, Iraqi Jews were constantly embracing multiple identities as Baghdadis, Jews, Arabs, Iraqis and everything in between. These identities were fluid and

rarely seen as contradictory. Furthermore, investigating the intersectionality between these multiple identities and their networks demonstrates the sophisticated ways Iraqi Jews were active participants in global Jewry in the first half of the twentieth century. It is my suspicion that more attention to the systemic cooperation of Jewish groups in MENA with transnational Jewish organizations and participation in the global Jewish public sphere will yield valuable knowledge of MENA Jewry's agency in these networks and provide greater understanding of how Jewish identity, religiosity, solidarity and belonging were transformed in the first half of the twentieth century.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de participatie van Joden uit Bagdad in transnationale Joodse netwerken van het midden van de negentiende eeuw tot de massale exodus van Joden uit Irak tussen 1948 en 1951. Langs de volgende drie thema's worden verschillende aspecten van de participatie van Joden uit Bagdad in de wereldwijde Joodse gemeenschap bestudeerd: de modernisatie van de gemeenschapsstructuur, 'satellietgemeenschappen' van Joden uit Bagdad en transnationale Joodse filantropie en seculier Joods onderwijs. Het laatste hoofdstuk presenteert drie cases die de interconnectiviteit van verschillende iteraties van transnationale Joodse netwerken laten zien. De hoofdstukken zijn niet chronologisch maar thematisch opgebouwd, al is er een lichte chronologische progressie van het eerste hoofdstuk, dat voornamelijk de negentiende eeuw beslaat, tot het laatste hoofdstuk, waarin de casus de Hashemitische periode betreft.

Hoofdstuk 1 focuseert op de moderniserende krachten onder Joden in Bagdad in de negentiende eeuw. Naast de *Tanzimat*-hervormingen, die alle gemeenschappen in Irak beïnvloedden, besteedt dit hoofdstuk speciale aandacht aan de opkomst van Joods internationalisme in Europa en de invloed daarvan op Joden in Bagdad.

Ik bespreek de verschillende wijzen waarop de ontwikkeling van Europees-Joodse intellectuele projecten in zowel Oost- als West-Europa relevant was voor de Joden in Bagdad. Hierbij beperk ik mij tot de Joodse elite in de vroege periode. Daarnaast verbindt dit hoofdstuk de modernisering van de Joodse gemeenschap met veranderingen in de infrastructuur van de Joodse gemeenschap en het Joodse bestuur in Bagdad. In het bijzonder kijk ik naar de evolutie van transnationale Joodse netwerken van informele contacten tussen Joodse elites tot een geformaliseerde relatie met buitenlandse Joodse organisaties na de oprichting van de Joodse seculiere bestuursraad in 1879.

Hoofdstuk 2 illustreert de impact van de Joodse diaspora uit Bagdad door terug te gaan naar haar oorsprong in de negentiende eeuw en presenteert vervolgens voorbeelden van haar voortdurende relevantie in de ontwikkeling van de infrastructuur van de gemeenschap in de twintigste eeuw. Ik besteed ook aandacht aan het belang van informele familie- en handelsnetwerken in Bagdad en hun invloed op Joden in Bagdad. Dit hoofdstuk beargumenteert dat de satellietgemeenschappen als model dienden voor modernisatie van de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad. Tenslotte presenteert dit hoofdstuk het idee dat de Joodse gemeenschap in Irak en de satellietgemeenschappen

zichzelf als één gemeenschap zagen in plaats van als afzonderlijke groepen, omdat zij cultureel, economisch en door familiebanden met elkaar verbonden waren.

Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt de rol van transnationale filantropische organisaties in Bagdad. De focus ligt daarbij op de rol van de drie leidende actoren in Bagdad: de Alliance Israélite Universelle (Frankrijk), de Anglo-Jewish Association (Verenigd Koninkrijk) en de American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Verenigde Staten). Ik beschrijf de geschiedenis van elke organisatie in Bagdad. Ik analyseer ook de rol die buitenlandse financiële hulp speelde in het budget van de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad in de periode van 1920 tot 1950. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat de rol van buitenlandse Joodse organisaties in het ontwikkelen van de gemeenschapsstructuur in Bagdad van voortdurende aard was. Het hoofdstuk bespreekt ook hoe de leiders van de gemeenschap in Bagdad deze organisaties gebruikten om hun agenda te promoten op het gebied van onderwijs en het sociale welzijn van de Joodse gemeenschap. Dit gaat in tegen het idee van een top-down relatie tussen de hulporganisaties en de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad. Tenslotte betwist het hoofdstuk het idee dat de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad bewust afstand nam tot andere Joodse groepen in de dertiger jaren van de twintigste eeuw. Het laat zien dat de banden met buitenlandse Joodse organisaties bleven bestaan vanaf hun aankomst in Bagdad in de jaren 60 van de negentiende eeuw tot aan het uiteenvallen van de gemeenschap in de jaren 50 van de twintigste eeuw.

Hoofdstuk 4 bespreekt de geschiedenis van het seculiere Joodse onderwijs en wat we kunnen leren over de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad door het netwerk van scholen te bestuderen. Dit hoofdstuk kijkt naar de verschillende typen scholen in het Joodse schoolsysteem in Bagdad en de openbare scholen die gedeeltelijk door de Joodse gemeenschap gefinancierd werden. Door de curricula van elk schooltype te analyseren, in het bijzonder de rol van de verschillende talen, trek ik conclusies over de status en het gebruik van Arabisch, Hebreeuws, Engels en Frans in de periode van 1920 tot 1950. Ik bediscussieer de centrale positie van het Joodse schoolsysteem in Bagdad, en breng zo het idee naar voren dat de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad haar schoolsysteem gebruikte om zich te onderscheiden en invloed uit te oefenen binnen de Irakese maatschappij.

Hoofdstuk vijf vormt tenslotte een compilatie van drie cases uit de periode van 1920 tot 1950. Elke casus presenteert een afzonderlijke manier waarop Joden in Bagdad zich engageerden in transnationale netwerken. De eerste casus gaat in op de theosofische controverse in Basra in de periode tussen 1927 en 1936. De tweede casus kijkt naar de rol van censuur en het belang van Joodse buitenlandse kranten in de vroege jaren van de staat Irak. De derde en laatste casus bestudeert het leven van Ibrahim Nahum,

de Irakese vertegenwoordiger van de familie Kadoorie en lid van zowel het Joodse seculiere bestuur van Irak als het Irakese parlement. Naast het uitlichten van de interconnectiviteit van de thema's uit de eerste vier hoofdstukken (de modernisatie van leiderschap in de gemeenschap, satellietgemeenschappen van Joden uit Bagdad, transnationale Joodse filantropie en seculier Joods onderwijs) laten deze cases de centrale positie zien van multilingualisme, buitenlandse Joodse tijdschriften, en de participatie van de Joodse gemeenschap in Bagdad in de wereldwijde Joodse publieke sfeer.

Samenvattend concludeer ik in dit proefschrift dat Irakese Joden constant verschillende identiteiten omarmden: als inwoners van Bagdad, als Joden, Arabieren, Irakezen en alles daar tussenin. Deze identiteiten waren fluïde en werden zelden als tegenstrijdig opgevat. Dit onderzoek naar de intersectionaliteit van deze verschillende identiteiten en hun netwerken laat de geavanceerde manieren zien waarop Irakese Joden actief deelnamen in het Wereldjodendom in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw.

Curriculum Vitae

Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah obtained her Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies from McGill University in 2001 and her Master's degree in Israel and Diaspora Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in November 2002, she is originally from New York. Upon completion of her Master's degree, she worked in academic publishing for eight years managing numerous book series, journals, and major reference works. Her most notable project as acquisitions editor is *The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Brill, 2010).

In September 2012, she joined the Faculty of Humanities at Leiden University as a junior researcher (*promovenda*). During her Ph.D., Sasha has presented her research at many international conferences, published articles and reviews, and taught several seminar courses. Sasha is currently a Rothschild post-doctoral fellow and lecturer at the Leiden University Center for the Study of Religion and a member of the Universiteitsraad (Leiden University).