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

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CHAPTER TWO

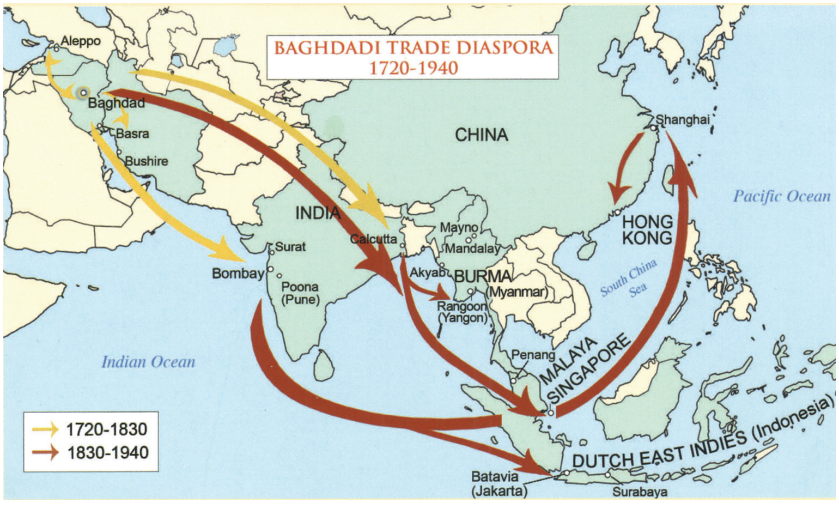
Transnational Networks and the Baghdadi Diaspora

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.