Jerusalem in Diplomatic History

How to Transfer “Holy Russia” into the Holy Land
Elena Astafieva

The United States and the Struggle in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem
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“Our Country’s Prestige” . . .
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Marginal Diplomacy: Alexander Knesevich and the Consular Agency in Gaza
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The Italian Consulate in Jerusalem:
Roberto Mazza, Maria Chiara Rizoli, and Stephane Ancel

UNESCO’s First Mission to the Holy Land
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# Table of Contents

## Jerusalem in Diplomatic History

**Editorial**

Diplomacy in the Holy Land: New Sources, Themes and Topics ..........................3  
Roberto Mazza, Guest Editor

Russian Policy in Palestine in the Late Imperial Period,  ........................................7  
Or How to Transfer "Holy Russia" into the Holy Land?  
Elena Astafieva

The United States and the Struggle in  ...............................................................................................................19  
the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 1955–1960  
James R. Stocker

Greece in the Holy Land during the British Mandate ..................................................30  
Konstantinos Papastathis

“Our Country’s Prestige” .................................................................................................................................43  
The Status of France’s Representation in Jerusalem  
Dominique Trimbur

French Language Teaching in Palestine: A Diplomatic Stake ........................................59  
Clementine Rubio

The Disappointed Consul: Nageeb J. Arbeeley .................................................................69  
Linda K. Jacobs

Alexander Knesevich and the Consular Agency in Gaza, 1905–1914 ..................81  
Dotan Halevy

The Italian Consulate in Jerusalem .................................................................................................94  
The History of a Forgotten Diplomatic Mission, 1846–1940  
Roberto Mazza, Maria Chiara Rioli, and Stéphane Ancel

New Sources on the Ethiopian Christian Community ....................................................106  
in Jerusalem, 1840–1940  
Stéphane Ancel and Vincent Lemire

Vatican Diplomacy and Palestine, 1900–1950 .................................................................120  
Paolo Zanini

UNESCO’s First Mission to the Holy Land, 1957–1960 .............................................132  
Benedetta Serapioni

“Our Weapon Here Is the Prayer Rug” .................................................................................143  
Abd El-Raouf Arnaout

Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook, 2017: Summary ............................................................148  
Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

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According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, diplomacy is “the activity of managing relations between different countries,” while a diplomat is “a person whose job is to represent his or her country in a foreign country.” Though this may be a simplified definition of a rather complex matter, it highlights the fact that we often believe diplomacy refers solely to how countries relate to each other; in other words, it is a business of high politics. With this issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly*, we want to show other aspects of diplomacy, not necessarily related to high politics and often with direct consequences for the people living in a specific territory: in our case Jerusalem and, more broadly, Palestine. Foreign residents and diplomats have been often marginalized when discussing the local population, as if they were somewhat alien to the local environment in which they lived and operated.

The establishment of consulates in Palestine was a response to increased activity in the economic, social, and religious spheres of foreign subjects in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. The British consulate was first established in 1839, followed by the German in 1842, and then those of France, Italy, Austria, and Russia. Other smaller consulates opened at the beginning of the twentieth century, making Jerusalem a center of diplomatic activity that went beyond the borders of the city and the region. As representatives of their governments, consuls had to deal with both Ottoman authorities and the local population. Consuls were, in general, largely critical of the Ottomans and of the locals. Despite their latent and visible Orientalism, it was partly due to their constant pressure that the Jerusalem municipality worked to improve services like lighting, cleanliness, and public security. It is rather more difficult to assess the relationship...
between consuls and the local population; often, consuls did not report about these relations or chose some sort of isolation. However, regardless of the degree of relations with the indigenous population, consuls were, and still are, residents of the locations in which they serve, whether they liked it or not.

The articles presented in this issue of JO are for the most part devoted to showing the variety of interaction between consular missions and the local environment, shifting the gaze from the center to the periphery. Some of the articles seem to look away from Jerusalem and Palestine to focus on political aspects of consular representation, as in the case of Elena Astafieva discussing Russian policies in Palestine toward the end of the nineteenth century. This analysis shows that Russia and Palestine were closer than we may think, by examining how Russians imagined and interpreted Palestine as Holy Land. But it also gives a glimpse of the impact of Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem. These were men and women who may have looked upon local Jerusalemites with some suspicion – Astafieva reminds us of the shock many Russians experienced upon learning that the Holy Land was ruled by Muslims – but they could not avoid interaction with the ‘natives’, whether for business or other services.

Diplomacy and religion is a topic also discussed by James Stocker and Kostantinos Papastathis, as they look at the influence exercised over religious institutions by the United States in the first case, and Greece in the latter. Stocker brings back to light a neglected aspect of U.S. involvement in Jerusalem. In 1955, as the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem was involved in an internal struggle over the appointment of the patriarch, the Jordanians dragged the U.S. administration into a fight with which they likely did not want to engage. The end result was the appointment of Yeghishe Derderian – an anti-communist of a sort suiting American interests – who served until his death in 1990, shaping the life of Armenian community in Jerusalem for nearly thirty years. Papastathis, meanwhile, looks at the attempts of Greek diplomacy to influence the Greek Orthodox Church in Palestine during the British Mandate. Athens’s activities aimed at the preservation of the Greek character of the church, opposing the indigenous Orthodox who sought to Arabize the church hierarchy. Athens, in the end, may have lost the diplomatic battle; however, as the church failed to Arabize and the status quo remained untouched, Greek’s diplomatic goals were achieved through other avenues as suggested by Papastathis.

Articles by Dominique Trimbur and Clementine Rubio examine some murky features of French diplomacy. Both underline how often we are led to believe French influence was second only to the British. However, both also suggest that there was a great difference between perceived and real projection of power. Trimbur tells us the convoluted story of the French consulate, from its opening in the late nineteenth century until the 1930s, when a suitable building was finally found. The long-running saga of the search for an appropriate home for French diplomacy in Jerusalem was viewed as a matter of prestige with regard to both the diplomatic representations of other global powers and the local population. Though the French may have failed for decades to settle down in Jerusalem, they invested time, money, and effort in spreading the French language. Rubio shows how French was used as a form of soft power in order to influence the local population from the mid-nineteenth century. What the French called cultural diplomacy was an
attempt to create a link between France and the local population through the medium of French language, which was seen as the language of the *mission civilizatrice* and the *lingua franca* of the world. At the same time, however, a “language struggle in schools” was ongoing under the Ottoman, and later during the British, administration. Once the Vatican removed the French religious honors – briefly discussed by Paolo Zanini in his article on Vatican diplomacy– France settled for a softer presence in Palestine.

The works of Linda Jacobs and Dotan Halevy are groundbreaking, bringing back to life the agency of two individuals swallowed by the larger diplomatic history of the region. Linda Jacobs investigates the life of Nageeb Arbeely, a Syrian Christian who moved to the United States in 1878. Arbeely, who studied law and toured the country lecturing on “life in the Holy Land” and “Mohammedans customs,” managed to be appointed U.S. consul in Jerusalem, replacing the little loved consul Selah Merrill. Arbeely, however, was not confirmed, as Ottoman authorities could not allow an Ottoman subject, which Arbeely technically remained, to become the consul of a foreign power. Eventually, Arbeely returned to the United States without serving a single day as consul. Nevertheless, this is a fascinating story of an individual who tried to make a trip back to his native land invested with the authority and power of a foreign country. Dotan Halvey brings to us the story of the British consular agent in Gaza, Alexander Knesevich. A resident of Gaza, Knesevich spoke fluent Arabic and Turkish, and was acquainted with several European languages. Though an Arabized Austrian subject, he was eventually picked by the British as consular agent. Halevy, while detailing Knesevich’s background and career, highlights the necessity of looking at diplomatic networks in the region as a whole; Gaza was not isolated from Jerusalem, and the work of Knesevich and other consular agents needs to be reconsidered, as they often held strong local connections independent of their official diplomatic positions.

Reconsidering consular activity is the purpose of two co-written articles, the first by Maria Chiara Rioli and Stéphane Ancel, with a short contribution by myself, and the second by Stephane Ancel and Vincent Lemire. Both articles explore archives largely neglected – for different reasons. The European Research Council–funded Open Jerusalem project, under the initiative of Lemire, has brought to light a significant amount of material related to the history of Jerusalem from the 1850s onward. The article by Rioli, Ancel, and myself is dedicated to the Italian consulate, and shows the potential of the consular records preserved in Rome. Forgotten – in fact, abandoned in a corner of the Italian archives – the archival material recovered not only sheds light on the Italian consular mission, but, looking at the catalogue, it seems this material may yield more “juicy stuff,” as in the case of Zionist-Arab-Fascist relations in the late 1920s. The second article, by Ancel and Lemire, deals with new findings at the National Archives of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa and, more importantly, at the Ethiopian Archbishopric Archives in Jerusalem. At the beginning of the twentieth century, as the authors point out, Ethiopians in Jerusalem employed different interlocutors according to need and opportunity, making this yet unexplored material crucially important in the discovery of further details of the history of the city and its communities.

Two final articles examine the diplomatic role played in Jerusalem by international
organizations: UNESCO and the Vatican (the Holy See can hardly be confined to a nation-state). Paolo Zanini provides readers an overview of the development of Vatican diplomacy in Palestine through the first half of the twentieth century. The Catholic Church was and still is represented in Jerusalem by a large number of Catholic organizations, including the Latin patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land, but also the Arabic-speaking Melkite patriarchate and a variety of orders speaking a vast array of global languages. Zanini tells us that, with the advent of the British Mandate, the Holy See tried to get a grip on the various positions expressed by all those organizations and orders with the establishment of an Apostolic Delegation – in other words, a Vatican consulate in all but name. The Catholic Church was split over Zionism and Arab nationalism; the opening of the Apostolic Delegation would have allowed the Vatican to maintain neutrality, while its various affiliates would be able to express individual views. Benedetta Serapioni exposes another complex set of diplomatic relations in her discussion of UNESCO’s first mission in the Holy Land. Considering the controversies caused by UNESCO in the last few years over the definition of protected sites in the holy land and resolutions adopted, this article will present the readers with an overview of the hard beginnings of UNESCO in Jordanian administered Jerusalem. What UNESCO did in 1959 was to export a model of heritage conservation based on western standards and in time to establish a form of authority over the preservation of the holy places while claiming to be a super partes mediator.

This issue of Jerusalem Quarterly also hosts an article dedicated to recent events in Jerusalem. Abd El-Rouf Arnaout reports the events that unfolded in July of this year following the attack perpetrated by three young Palestinian citizens of Israel at the Haram al-Sharif, killing two police officers before being killed themselves. As the Israeli government decided to install metal detector at the entrance of the holy site, Palestinian Muslims decided to initiate what I would defined an act of “religious diplomacy,” praying in the open in the streets adjacent to the Haram al-Sharif. This sort of peaceful protest was unprecedented and triggered divisions among the Israeli establishment: the government would have pushed forward with these measures, while the military understood that it was better to remove the controversial metal detectors, as eventually happened.

An organic history of diplomacy in Jerusalem – one that integrates the local with the international, hard power with soft, the role of individuals with that of institutions – has yet to be written, and perhaps never will be, considering the number of challenges such work would need to overcome. Still, as guest editor of this issue, I hope that I brought to the journal and its readers a fresh perspective on the topic of diplomacy in the Holy Land, putting the city at the center of global diplomacy.

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Endnotes
Russia’s official presence in Palestine can be traced back to 1847 with the creation of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. This was part of a larger process: the large-scale installation of the leading European powers – Prussia, Great Britain, France, and Austria – in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. What Henry Laurens has called the “invention of the Holy Land” took place after the 1839 Egyptian invasion of Syria and the first plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem under the aegis of the main European powers.¹ This process also appears as a reaction to emerging secular ideologies – liberalism, socialism, and nationalism – that challenged the religious values of Western societies. It was also at that time that Palestine, part of the Arab periphery of the Ottoman Empire and land of the three Abrahamic religions, became a battleground for the leading European powers’ conflicting religious and political interests.

However, Russia’s installation in Palestine also responded to logics specific to the political and religious developments of the Russian Empire itself, such as the central place of religion (specifically the Orthodox Church) in the county’s self-perception; relations between the state, the Orthodox Church (“first and dominant”), and other religions; relations between Orthodoxy and science; and so on. It is in the nineteenth century, particularly its second half, that the idea of “Holy Russia,” conceptualized in medieval texts and presenting Russia as the “Second Jerusalem” or the “Third Rome,” was revived and given new expression.²

After the Crimean War in 1856, in order to reinforce the Russian position in the Levant and Europe after its military defeat, the Russian Empire decided to open, in 1858, the Russian consulate in Jerusalem and, in 1859, the Palestine Committee under the patronage of Grand Duke Constantine, Alexander II’s
brother and head of the imperial navy. In 1864, the committee became the Palestine Commission, reporting now to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These Russian institutions prepared the ground for the Orthodox Palestine Society, created under the patronage of the Grand Duke Sergei in 1882 (and renamed the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in 1889), and its various activities, particularly its scholarly work and the organization of pilgrimages of the Orthodox faithful to the Holy Land.³

This article will concentrate attention on these activities of the Palestine Society in the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the period when the idea of the “Holy Russia,” became a key element of the imperial ideology and policy.

More particularly, this article will show: How with its archeological excavations near the Holy Sepulchre – begun by Russian diplomats in the late 1850s, supported by members of the imperial family in the 1880s, and completed by “Orthodox Orientalists” (with the help of some European Orientalists) – the Palestine Society sought, despite the constraints of the Ottoman administration and the protests of the various Christian authorities, to appropriate for itself and for Russia the most important sacred symbols and spaces of Christianity in order to leave a Russian Orthodox mark on the Holy Land and to transfer “Holy Russia” to the Holy Land; and how, with its campaigns in Russia for pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the society transformed a religious duty of personal fulfillment into an instrument of policy in order to create an imaginary space that transcended the political bounds of the Russian Empire, and thus to integrate the Holy Land virtually into “Holy Russia.”

**Archeological Excavations near the Holy Sepulchre**

The idea of creating the Orthodox Palestine Society was expressed for the first time in the late 1870s in correspondence between Archimandrite Antonin Kapustin, head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, and Vasili N. Khitrovo, at that time a senior official at the Ministry of Finance.⁴ Whereas Khitrovo suggested creating a private Palestine Committee, on the model of the British Palestine Exploration Fund, Archimandrite Antonin, in his proposal to found a Russian Orientalists’ society, referred rather to the experience of German scholarly societies, particularly the Deutscher Palästina-Verein (German Society for the Exploration of Palestine). Antonin proposed to call on not only the best Russian Palestine experts, but also members of the imperial family – including Alexander II’s wife and the grand dukes Constantine and Nicholas Nikolaevich – to be honorary members of the society, just as members of the German imperial family were of the Deutscher Palästina-Verein. With this patronage, wrote Antonin:

> according to circumstances (war, peace, abolition of serfdom, renaissance of the Orient, intrigues of the Occident, hopes of Orthodoxy, the task of all-powerful Russia, the position of the Great Russian Church within the Orthodox world, the dawning of the Union of all believers under the Cross of Golgotha against agnosticism, etc. etc.), we shall need to publish appeals to all the Russian Orthodox faithful [to create this new society].⁵
However, it was not until 21 May 1882 that the Palestine Society was officially established, in the context of Alexander II’s assassination a year earlier, the pilgrimage of redemption to Jerusalem by part of the imperial family, the first wave of Jewish migration to Palestine after pogroms in the Russian Empire, and the launch by the French Assumptionist Fathers of a massive Catholic pilgrimage conceived in the spirit of what some in France called a “Ninth Crusade” against irreligion and secular republican values. Vasili Khitrovo, who had become the president’s assistant after the society’s creation, in a speech entitled “Zadachi nauchnykh issledovaniy Svyatoy Zemli” (The Tasks of Scholarly Research in the Holy Land), proposed his vision of the scholarly work to be undertaken by Russia in Palestine. Khitrovo sketched out the current state of research into the Holy Land completed by scholars of the various Christian confessions, from antiquity to the 1880s. He distinguished between two types of scholarly work devoted to the Judeo-Christian East: “Work that can be done in the silence of one’s study and work that must be done in the Holy Land.” The Holy Land could be considered, from a scholarly point of view, “a huge museum, a catalog of already collected knowledge that needs to be put in order.” The work was to be given “to us Russians,” Orthodox scholars, and not to Catholics or Protestants. He justified this allocation by the fact that the Holy Land had “belonged to the Byzantine Empire from the earliest years of Christianity, and Orthodoxy was, as it were, at home in that empire.” For this reason, the Orthodox were and continued to be the guardians of the ancient traditions concerning the Holy Land, unlike the Latins, who since the Crusades had identified and placed their mark on each site “on the basis of not only the canonical scriptures but also apocryphal texts and legends,” and unlike the Protestants, who, under the influence of “cold skepticism,” “have fallen into the other extreme,” refusing all traditions and claiming to construct their ideas solely on the basis of scientific principles.

“Scholarly work,” said Khitrovo, should be accompanied by work in the field; according to him, Russia should carry out excavations near the Holy Sepulchre, on the “Russian domain” (russkoе mesto) that was bought from the Copts in March 1859 by P. Mansurov, an official close to Grand Duke Constantine, and the Russian consul V. Dorgobuzhinov. Knowing that the plot contained historic remains, the consul decided to implement its cleaning. Two years later, V. Dorgobuzhinov wrote a report to Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich on the “archaeological discoveries” made on the “Russian domain” in the course of the cleaning. He pointed out that “to the north-east of the Russian site lie the ruins of porticoes and propylaea being part of Constantine’s basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.” He underlined the symbolic significance of the geographical situation of the “Russian domain” – “only 50 steps away from the altar of the Church of the Resurrection” – which emphasized the importance of “Russia’s future place in the Orthodox world,” but also “the need for the Russian pilgrims to have a shelter,” since they had to wait, “chilled to the bone” after nocturnal divine services at the Holy Sepulchre, for Jaffa Gate to be opened. Subsequently, he proposed to purchase more land close to the “Russian domain.”

The ultimate goal of this territorial extension was the creation of an architectural complex composed of a “hospice for the pilgrims” and a “consular house” with a “home
church” (domovoj khram). According to V. Dorgobuzhinov, this church would be built on “the ruins of the ancient basilica of the Emperor Constantine,” by “the energetic hand of a man of action [deiatel]” – namely Grand Duke Constantine – who “attracted the cordial attention” of the sovereign on the problems of the Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land. This construction would thus “immortalize the memory of all that has been done by the Russians in Jerusalem.” Although some parts of land that Dorgobuzhinov suggested be acquired were indeed purchased according to the grand duke’s instructions, the idea of erecting a consular building along with a church as a tribute to Constantine – the emperor and the grand duke – was abandoned for some time, as was that of undertaking archeological excavations.

Thus, Khitrovo’s first text on the tasks of Russian scholarly research in the Holy Land and his many memoranda addressed to Grand Duke Sergei brought about the opening of new excavations on the “Russian domain” in March 1883. Grand Duke Sergei asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for permission to re-open the digs on the “Russian domain,” offered 1,000 gold rubles for that purpose, and invited Archimandrite Antonin Kapustin, still head of the Ecclesiastical Mission, to carry out the excavations together with the German architect of Jerusalem, Conrad Schick. This is a perfect illustration of the interactions between “Orthodox scholarship,” represented by Archimandrite Antonin; Russian diplomacy, since the land still belonged to the consulate; and imperial authorities, who provided the funding for the archeological investigations and used the results to mark the presence of the Orthodox empire in the region.

It is also significant that the “Orthodox archeologists,” society officials, and Russian diplomats, working together in Jerusalem, were obliged to defer to local constraints imposed by the Ottoman authorities and other religious representatives on the spot – Catholic, Protestant, and even Orthodox. The Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Alexander Nelidov, in his secret memorandum on the affair, emphasized that discretion was necessary with respect to the Ottoman authorities and also because the excavations might arouse “delicate religious problems with the Catholics as well as the Turks,” as rumors were circulating that “the Russians have discovered a gate to the Holy Sepulchre, one of the three that existed in Antiquity,” which would enable them “to have a direct entrance to the Holy Sepulchre” from the “Russian site.” In his conclusion to the memorandum, Nelidov added that the projects of the grand duke and the Palestine Society were to proceed without great fanfare emphasizing their political and religious importance, “which would not, however, preclude making the work public after it was completed, and even more, drawing all the advantages from this affair, whether political, scholarly, or religious.” Nelidov did not mention another local player who might conceivably be affected and concerned by the large-scale Russian archeological digs: namely, the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, for whom major discoveries by the Palestine Society would risk attracting pilgrims’ attention to the russkoe mesto and “diverting” some of the donations of the Orthodox faithful to the Russian religious institutions erected beside the Holy Sepulchre.

Only nine months after the excavations began, the grand duke wrote:
Although the excavations are not yet completed, they have been highly successful. Not only have traces of the Second Wall of Second Temple Jerusalem been found, which confirms the authenticity of the place of Jesus’s burial, but there has even been discovered on the Russian domain the Gate that led from the City to Golgotha.\textsuperscript{21}

In volume seven of the \textit{Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik} (Orthodox Palestine Collection), published in October 1884, Archimandrite Antonin and society officials confirmed, largely based on the earlier research by the non-Russian scholars mentioned above, the grand duke’s statements and declared that they had discovered “the threshold of the Gate through which Christ climbed to Calvary.”\textsuperscript{22} With these discoveries, widely publicized in Russia and other countries, Russia wished to take symbolic ownership of two of the places most sacred to Christianity, the Way of the Cross (Via Dolorosa), and the Holy Sepulchre adjacent to the “Russian domain.”\textsuperscript{23} This ownership was to be crowned by the construction of a major edifice on the \textit{russkoe mesto} – probably a monumental church to be called the “End of the Way of the Cross” – for which the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and the church launched an “appeal to the Russian people” in January 1885.\textsuperscript{24} The archeological excavations and discoveries, and above all the idea of erecting an edifice near the tomb of Jesus Christ, imagined and supported by the imperial family, diplomats, and ecclesiastical scholars, were integral parts of imperial Orthodox Russia’s policy.

Indeed, as Richard Wortman shows in his analysis of the construction of the Cathedral of the Resurrection in St. Petersburg at the exact site of Alexander II’s assassination, Alexander III’s reign represented a new landmark in the construction of the Russian monarchical myth.\textsuperscript{25} From that time forward, the Resurrection and Jerusalem became the starting point of the sacred narrative of the Russian monarchy; what is more, Golgotha was transposed directly into Russia. But, as the history of the excavations on the “Russian domain” and its aftermath show, the imperial power also aimed to occupy the religious and political space in Jerusalem in order to transfer “Holy Russia” into the Holy Land, coveted at the time by all the major European powers and Christian confessions. This project met the Russian desire for a dominant role within the Near Eastern Orthodox world.

However, the findings of the excavations were contested in Russia. Boris Mansurov, one of the senior officials of the former Palestine Committee, now the Palestine Commission, expressed his doubts in his writings in 1885–1887, asking a crucial question: “Has the Palestine Society produced irrefutable evidence that the historic traces it has discovered date to the period before Jesus Christ . . . ?”\textsuperscript{26} He held that this question needed to be answered accurately and confidently “in order to leave no room for debate and doubt, because it is a matter of recognizing the authenticity of the Christian Holy of Holies.”\textsuperscript{27} Mansurov also stressed the need to ask the Orthodox Church for its position on this question, to be expressed by more than the mere presence of clerics on the board of the Palestine Society.

Mansurov’s remarks aroused discussion among Orientalists and Palestinologists and, more widely, among Russian archeologists and historians. Grand Duke Sergei himself requested an expert opinion from the Society for Archeology.\textsuperscript{28} This internal debate within
Russia, and local pressure from the Ottoman authorities, other confessions, and the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, prevented the society’s officials from erecting on the “Russian domain” an “imposing edifice marking the End of the Way of the Cross,” as originally intended. But they succeeded, nevertheless, in building the Church of Saint Alexander Nevsky on the russkoe mesto in the 1890s, dedicated to the memory of another Alexander – Tsar Alexander III, creator of the society – as well as buildings for the use and support of Russian pilgrims.

“Readings on the Holy Land” Meetings and Russian Orthodox Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

While scholarly research was a major part of the society’s work, at least at the start, over time organizing pilgrimage to Jerusalem became its main activity. To alert the Orthodox faithful to the situation in the Holy Land and persuade them to travel to Jerusalem, the society’s leaders founded a number of publications intended for various audiences, from the Orthodox Palestine Collection for the social and intellectual elite, to Readings on the Holy Land (Chtenia o Sviatoj Zemle) intended for illiterate peasants, as well as Conversations about the Holy Land (Besedy o Sviatoj Zemle), Palestine Papers (Palestinskie Listki), and so on.

I shall analyze the collection of brochures entitled Readings on the Holy Land, produced for that section of the population that was either literate but poorly educated or totally illiterate. By the turn of the twentieth century, the collection comprised more than one hundred brochures on various topics: sacred history; pilgrimage to Jerusalem, especially Russian pilgrimage; sacred geography and the route to Palestine; the present state of the Holy Land; the presence of other countries and confessions in the region; and so on. These brochures “for peasants” were not, in most cases, used directly by the peasants themselves; rather, they served as material for the presentations made during meetings called “Readings on the Holy Land,” organized by the society’s local departments.

The idea of these reading-meetings came from the peasants themselves: the tradition of conversation-meetings with a returning pilgrim was widespread in Russian culture in the nineteenth century. The society adopted this principle, extended the meetings, and laid down how they were to be run in its “Rules for Holding ‘Readings on the Holy Land’.” The “Readings on the Holy Land” meetings were only to be held during a clearly defined period of the calendar, beginning on 1 October and ending in the sixth week of Lent. They were held in churches and public buildings such as schools; admission might be free or might require an entrance fee. Local newspapers and priests were required to announce in advance the dates of these meetings during services.

The specific feature of “Readings on the Holy Land” meetings was that the participants (the population of a village or town district) were educated not by the written text, but by its presentation and interpretation under the leadership of society representatives. The “Rules for Holding ‘Readings on the Holy Land’” specified:
the session leader, inspired by his ardent love of the Holy Land, must force his listeners to travel in their minds to a place where most of us will never go – the cave where Jesus Christ was born, or the Garden where He prayed to His Father – to contemplate His Tomb . . . The one leading the session, moved by his convictions and the desire to see Orthodoxy triumph in the Holy Land, will arouse in his listeners’ hearts by his sincere, strong, and true words a deep feeling of regret and compassion for those born in that place, true sons of the Orthodox Church, who have succeeded in keeping the faith of the apostles in its purity to this day, despite the yoke of the Muslims and heterodox propaganda, and who need material and spiritual support and the fortification of expiring Orthodoxy, by the construction of schools and churches . . . As he tells the stories of the most famous pilgrims, the leader must arouse among his listeners a desire to fulfill the dream of praying at the Tomb of Jesus Christ.30

In other words, to more effectively carry out the mission of “showing the sad state of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land,” to “force” people to “fulfill a dream,” to “possess the hearts” of the Russians, to “prepare for the triumph of Orthodoxy,” the leaders of the reading-meetings appealed to their listeners’ imaginations, and helped them “see, hear, and feel the Holy Land.”31 In this way, the representatives of the society virtually prescribed the words that future pilgrim would utter at the meetings.

Analysis of local department officials’ reports on the reading-meetings reveals that the organizers paid close attention to the type of audience (“better prepared/less well prepared”). For example, the report from the Vyatka region (now Kirov Oblast), where there were not only Russians living, but also Cheremis (Mari) recently converted to Orthodoxy, notes that “for the Russians, the department chose the topic of the current state of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land; for the Cheremis, stories from Sacred History.”32 In the report from the Volhynia department, the authors wrote, “The organizer simplified some of the brochures to make them accessible to the peasants.”33 Study of the reports also shows that the speech about the Holy Land was often given in solemn surroundings, a church or official building, with the presentation of images, often very simple ones – a tree, an Orthodox church in Palestine – “enlivening” the narration, arousing “agitation, remarks, questions,”34 and pictures of member of the imperial family projected by “magic lantern” to the national anthem played by the orchestra, bells, prayers, hymns, and popular chants.35 The meeting leaders used all these rhetorical devices to arouse strong emotions – feelings of “joy and pride” in being Russian, Orthodox, and a subject of the Russian Tsar, “sadness for oppressed Orthodoxy in the Holy Land,” deep antipathy to Protestants, Latins, France, and hatred toward Muslims – that produced “sighs,” “tears,” “heart palpitations,” “softening of hearts,” “sorrow,” “regret,” “upset,” and “shock.”36 In addition to describing emotions and feelings, the reports reveal the geographical and political imaginary of the peasants attending the “Readings on the Holy Land” meetings: Before the reading, “some peasants were convinced that the Holy Land lay within the power of the Russian Tsar, and were amazed, indeed would not believe, that it came under the authority of
the Turkish Sultan, a Mohammedan; this news shook their religious feelings. These conceptions can also be found in pilgrims’ stories, with revealing anecdotes, such as the Russian peasant from Voronezh who tried to pay with kopecks in Jerusalem and could not understand why the tradesmen in the shops did not speak Russian or accept kopecks.

Analysis of the “Rules for Holding ‘Readings on the Holy Land’” and people’s reactions described in the reports prove that this staging of the Holy Land had three effects. By providing the audience with practical details and precise historical and geographical information about Palestine and how to get there – obviously with the aid of the society – the reading-meetings tended to destroy the illusion that the Holy Land was some mythical place outside geographical and political space; on the contrary, this land was now fully accessible, thanks to the Palestine Society and the work of its representatives in Russia and on the spot. The meetings brought this land psychologically close by enabling each listener to take possession of it through strong feelings: the nearness was not only geographical, but, even more, symbolic, because the Holy Land represented the heart of Orthodoxy, with Russia as its protector. Through this effect, the leaders extended the imaginary space of the Russian Empire outside and beyond its actual territory, integrating the Holy Land into “Holy Russia.” The sensations and emotions – individual, but shared – aroused by the organizers at the reading-meetings strengthened the participant’s feeling of belonging to a community that was first religious – Orthodox – and then political – the Russian Empire as a great power in opposition to the Ottoman Empire and the other European great powers, especially France.

The Palestine Society held reading-meetings on an impressive scale: for 1902–1903 alone, there were some 30,000 reading-meetings in 5,000 different places in Russia, attended by over five million people. The same year, the society sent out to its local departments 49,210 copies of Readings on the Holy Land and distributed free of charge 644,540 Palestine Papers and 640,000 plates of images and pictures representing the Holy Land, a total of 1,333,750 publications that reached every region in Russia.

This pilgrimage awareness campaign, and the creation in 1883 of the “pilgrim’s card” that reduced the traveling cost, had impressive results. A growing number of pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem as the decades passed: from 1,500–2,000 in the 1870s–1880s to 6,000–7,000 at the turn of the century, and 10,000 in the 1910s. “The simple people” (peasants and the poorest town dwellers) were 90 percent of the pilgrims, with the clergy making up 3.5 percent, and members of the nobility 3 percent. Most of the pilgrims were women (66 percent). The regions of central Russia – the governorates of Voronezh, Tula, Kaluga, Oryol, Kursk, Tambov, and Penza – provided the largest contingents, nearly 32 percent of the total. Of these, Voronezh sent most, but society members were unable to explain why. As Vasili Khitrovo noted: “neither by its demographic or economic dimensions nor by its piety does the Voronezh region differ from the others, but the number of pilgrims from this region is considerable . . . Tambov, which is second, comes far behind.”

These 6,000 to 7,000 Russian Orthodox believers appeared to be millions to the Catholic La Croix, the newspaper of the French Assumptionists, a congregation that, as mentioned earlier, had begun to organize mass pilgrimages in 1882 in the hope of
asserting “the religious values under threat in France and the Catholic faith in the Holy Land, against the Muslims and the Orthodox ‘schismatics’.” To seize the imagination of European Catholics, La Croix claimed that “Russia is spending millions to buy the land next to the sanctuaries.” These comments show, however, that the fear of Russian pilgrims was mingled with a certain admiration. Similar ideas can be found in the German press.

The Russian pilgrims aroused concern not only in Catholic circles but also, and not least, in European diplomatic circles, especially French ones. In the France-Russia contest to send most pilgrims to the Holy Land, Russia was well ahead. French diplomats on the spot – the consuls in Jerusalem and Beirut and the ambassador in Constantinople – expressed anxiety at the arrival of “whole regiments” of pilgrims and the appearance of Russian schools in the region, perceived as a real threat to French influence. The extent of their anxiety can be seen in the proposal to backpedal the rapprochement between the two countries that had been laid down in a large number of diplomatic agreements in the 1880s and 1890s. In other words, the rivalry between France and Russia in the Near East was so strong that it might affect cooperation between the two countries on the European scene. However, the two powers had a common enemy – Germany – which by the late 1890s was staking out its positions not only in Europe but also in Palestine-Syria. This became especially clear after Kaiser Wilhelm II’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1898, in the name of the interests of both Catholics and Protestants. Consequently, for all the suspicions and rivalries in Jerusalem, the understanding between the Russian Empire and the French Third Republic in Europe was not broken.

World War I and the Fate of the Society

The Palestine Society’s activity in the Arab periphery of the Ottoman Empire was halted by war in 1914, but as early as the end of 1914 and early 1915 its senior officials began to prepare its return to the region, as evidenced by a series of projects presented to the Holy Synod and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time. The projects were summarized in the collective report presented under the name of the person responsible for Russian institutions in Palestine, P. I. Riazhsky, titled Вопросы, связанные с восстановлением деятельности Императорского Православного Палестинского Общества в Святой Земле по окончании войны с Турцией (Questions Relating to the Reestablishment of the Activity of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the Holy Land after the War against Turkey). In the report – which begins with the significant sentence, “Russia must prepare to make a peace worthy of her great sacrifices” – the society’s officials requested, among other things:

I. The formal recognition of the Russian Government’s right to protect the Orthodox Church, all its religious, charitable and educational establishments and its right to safeguard the autonomy of these establishments with respect to their internal affairs;
II. The full, practical application of the principle of tolerance pursuant to the 1908 Act, not only toward the various Christian confessions, but even toward those Muslims desirous to convert to Christianity . . . ;

IV. The resolution of the Greek-Arab conflicts and the assertion of Russian interests in the Tomb of Jesus and the other pilgrimage sites in Palestine.51

The report’s fifty pages contain a number of other requests relating to the Russian society’s legal, economic, and financial position in Turkey after the war. It reveals Russia’s fears and hopes for the future: the fear of being overtaken by “minor Orthodox countries claiming to protect the Orthodox Church in our place,” and of seeing a weakening of “Russian power and consequently of Orthodoxy”,52 and the hope of being able to say “Divine Service officially in Slavonic in the Holy Sepulchre and throughout the Holy Land.”53 The hope of being able to carry out missionary work without restraint among the nomadic population of Turkey, “people who call themselves Christians, Muslims, or Druze but belong to neither Christianity nor Islam.”54 The hope that after the war, “the Holy Land may become the land of peace, Christian freedom and mutual respect.”55

The society officials’ dream of returning to Palestine after a “victorious war” came to naught. The collapse of the Russian Empire, the October Revolution, and the aftermath of World War I shuffled the cards in the region and the whole world. Russia’s relations with the Holy Land were interrupted. The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem remained until 1948 under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia. As for the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, it became the Palestine Society of the Soviet Academy of Sciences with the sole aim of pursuing scholarly research on the Near and Middle East.

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Endnotes
4 This correspondence was partially reproduced in Alekseï Dmitrievskii, Imperatorskoe pravoslavnoe palestinskoe obshchestvo i ego dieiatel’nost’ za istekshuiu chetvert’ vieka (1882–1907) [The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and Its Activity over the Past Quarter-Century (1882–1907)] (St. Petersburg: V. F. Kirshbauma, 1907), 125ff.
5 Dmitrievskii, Imperatorskoe pravoslavnoe palestinskoe obshchestvo, 133–34.


8 Khitrovo, “Zadachi nauchnykh issledovaniy,” 51.


14 However, in the 1860s and 1870s, Russian diplomats granted non-Orthodox scholars, such as Melchior de Vogüe and Charles Clermont-Ganneau from France and Charles William Wilson and Claude Reignier Conder from Britain, permission – either personally or as representatives of non-Russian institutions – to excavate and describe the sites.

15 See, for example, his note dated November 1882: AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 1–3.

16 AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 4.

17 AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 5. Schick, an architect from Württemberg, was asked not only because of his technical and scholarly talents, but also because, as the official architect of the city of Jerusalem, according to one of the Palestine Society’s officials, he could “be useful in case of any conflicts with the Turkish authorities that might be initiated by neighboring landowners.” However, as a member of the Palästina-Verein, the society officials asked him “to maintain confidentiality about any discoveries made.”

18 AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 15–18. The search for a gate – whether the secret gate to the Holy Sepulchre, as here, or the gate leading from Jerusalem to Hell, or the underground entrance to the direct route from Russia to the Holy Land – was a common topic in popular literature of the period, related in pilgrims’ stories. See, for example, the monk A. Botchkov, Russkie poklonniki v Jerusalime [The Russian Pilgrims in Jerusalem] (Moscow: [unknown], 1875), 30. See below concerning the discovery on the russkoе mesto of the gate “through which Christ climbed to Calvary.”

19 AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 18.

20 The story of the patriarchate’s reluctance to erect a church and a building for Russian pilgrims on the russkoе mesto some years later reveals the strained relations between the “three Orthodoxies” in the Holy Land – Greek, Arab, and Russian.

21 AVP RI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 593, 54–55.

22 See more the Antonin’s explanations about the archeological excavations and discoveries: Pravoslavnuy Palestinskij Sbornik 7 (1884–1887): 1–38.

23 The findings of the excavations were discussed in Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 7 (1884). See in particular the article by one of the supervisors, Conrad Schick, “Das altchristliche Taufhaus neben der Kirche in ’Amwas,” Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 7 (1884): 15–16.

24 Boris Mansurov, Russkie raskopki v Svijatym Grade Jerusalem pered sudom Arxeologicheskogo Obščestva [The Russian Excavations in the Holy City Jerusalem before the Court of the Society for Archeology] (Riga: [unknown], 1887), 12.


26 Mansurov, Russkie raskopki, 10. In addition to Russkie raskopki, Mansurov’s best-known books include Bazilikà imperatora Konstantina v sv. ge Jerusalime [The Basilica of the Emperor Constantine in Holy Jerusalem] (Moscow: I. N. Kushnereva, 1885).

27 Mansurov, Russkie raskopki, 10.


30 Pravila provedenii Tchtenij o Sviatoj Zemle [Rules for Holding “Readings on the Holy Land”], Soobshcheniia Imperatorskago Pravo-slavnago Palestinskago Obshchestva [SIPPO, Bulletin of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society] 13, appendix 6 (1902): 134–35 (in Russian). Each year, the Society’s local departments were required to present a report on the reading-meetings (detailing the number of meetings, audience, and so on).

31 In the report from the Volyn’ia local department can be found the following descriptions: “Father Daniel asked the peasants who could not travel to the Holy Land to visit and prostrate themselves before the Tomb of Christ in their imagination, in their thoughts and to give a few kopecks for the Orthodox believers in Palestine and the pilgrims to the Holy Land.” SIPPO 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 426.

32 SIPPO 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 429.

33 SIPPO 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 427.

34 It was these images that gave the participants the impression of really being in the Holy Land and made it visible. SIPPO 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 444, 459, 467. Often the of the Holy Land, distributed free of charge during and after the reading-meetings, were framed by the peasants.
and placed in the “red corner” of their homes, next to icons. *SIPO* 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 425, 459.

35 These were specially selected according to “topical” themes.


37 *SIPO* 11, no. 4–5 (1901): 474 (rapport from the local department of Chernigov).


40 For more detail on figures for 1860–1900, see: *SIPO* 11 (1900): 131. For later years, see the society’s annual reports.

41 According to Khitrovo, the creation of this “pilgrim’s card”, which in 1883 cost on average 75 rubles (prices varied by departure point in Russia and traveling class), enabled pilgrims to save 35 percent of the cost of travel. Concerning the earlier periods in the history of the pilgrimage, see: Eileen M. Kane, “Pilgrims, Holy Places, and the Multi-Confessional Empire: Russian Policy toward the Ottoman Empire under Tsar Nicholas I, 1825–1855” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005).


43 These are the data for the financial year 1908–1909. See *Otchet Imperatorskago pravoslavnago palestinskago obschestva, 1908–1909* [Report of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, 1908–1909] (St. Petersburg: Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, 1911), 99–109.

44 *SIPO* 11 (1900): 143. However, it should be noted that comparison of the various statistics shows that even in the regions that provided most pilgrims, the figure amounted to only 0.014% of the population.


47 The French ambassador to Constantinople, Paul Cambon, in a 15 August 1898 letter to the French minister of foreign affairs notes that “in Russia, alongside the Government’s official action, there is almost always that of irresponsible forces . . . As far as the Levant is concerned, this force is the Palestine Society . . . thanks to them [Russia] has spread in this country a propaganda that is both religious and political, greatly to the detriment of our influence . . . The Palestine Society would only listen to an order from the Tsar, and it is hardly likely that His Majesty would impose such an order on his brother-in-law, Grand Duke Sergej, president of the Society.” See *Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1929–1959), series I, vol. 14, n. 292, 453–54.

48 See the “virtual” discussion between two top-level diplomats in the telegrams sent by Gustave de Montebello, French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, and Paul Cambon, French ambassador to Constantinople, concerning the rivalry between Russia and France in the Levant and the need to keep the peace on the European stage. *Documents Diplomatiques français*, series I, vol. 13, n. 16, 30; vol. 14, n. 14, 25; vol. 14, n. 247, 368; and elsewhere. See also the consular documentation in the Center for Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nantes: f. “Ambassade à Constantinople” and f. “Consulat général à Jérusalem.”

49 Pavel Riazhskij, *Voprosy, svjazanny s voss-tanovleniem dejatel’nosti Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obsestva v Svjatoj Zemle po okonchanii vojny s Turciej* [Questions Relating to the Reestablishment of the Activity of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the Holy Land after the War against Turkey] (Petrograd: [unknown], 1915).

50 Riazhskij, *Voprosy*, 1.


54 Riazhskij, *Voprosy*, 5.

55 Riazhskij, *Voprosy*, 41.
This article analyzes the influence of the U.S. government on a series of events within the patriarchate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. Between 1955 and 1960, a struggle took place between two claimants to the position of patriarch. The context and the details of the surrounding events were complicated, involving various factions within the Armenian Church, transnational Armenian political parties, Jordanian government officials in Jerusalem and Amman, and regional and international governments. Local actors pleading their case often sought out the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, the U.S. embassy in Amman, and other centers of American representation in the Middle East. U.S. officials intervened in these events in a subtle but important way; by initially providing damaging information about one candidate, they created a precedent that local actors could point to again and again to justify decisions that were often taken for entirely different reasons. Thus, the U.S. role was influential, if not decisive, in determining the outcome of the struggle.

The Armenian Apostolic Church and lay community have long constituted an important part of Jerusalem. One of three communities (along with the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic) enjoying access to Christian holy sites, the Armenian presence in the city can likely be dated back to at least the fifth century AD.¹ The patriarchate of Jerusalem manages the affairs of Armenians in the Holy City, including Armenian access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, venerated as the site of Jesus’s crucifixion and burial. Its headquarters is the Convent of the Brotherhood of St. James, whose seminary produced many Armenian priests. Though the patriarchate acknowledged the authority of the historic spiritual authority of the catholicosate of Etchmiadzin (located at that time in the Soviet Union), it had
traditionally enjoyed an independent status and managed its own affairs.²

From 1948 until 1967, Jordan controlled the section of Jerusalem in which the patriarchate was located. Thus, Jordanian political institutions inevitably played an important role in local ecclesiastical politics. Jordanian laws and courts governed the procedures that led to the selection of religious leaders. Jordanian leaders, including King Husayn and various government ministers and magistrates, made important administrative decisions that impacted the struggle, in particular through their power to investigate alleged crimes, their control over residency permits, and the king’s traditional right to approve religious leaders selected by local religious bodies.³

Rival Claims to the Patriarchate

The two claimants to the position of patriarch, Yeghishe Derderian and Tiran Nersoyan, are not easily characterized. Neither was closely associated with any of the three dominant Armenian political parties, which at that time were in deep conflict with one another. The Tashnagtsoutioun or Tashnag party sought to take a pro-Western and anti-Soviet line, including opposing the main church in Etchmiadzin, which it argued was under the influence of the Soviet Union. By contrast, the Ramgavar and Hnchak parties tended to argue for preserving connections with the Armenian Church, including maintaining its loyalty to the historic church center in Etchmiadzin, in spite of its connections to the Soviet Union.⁴ In 1956, these parties became embroiled in a conflict over control of another important institution of the Armenian Church, the catholicosate of Cilicia. This catholicosate, located in the town of Antelias outside of Beirut, Lebanon, had traditionally administered to areas that included Lebanon and Syria. However, after the election of a Tashnag-supported candidate for catholicos, Zareh I, the catholicosate began to more explicitly reject the guidance of Etchmiadzin, while in turn seeking to expand its own influence in Greece, Cyprus, Iran, and the United States, among other locations.

Yeghishe Derderian was selected as locum tenens by the Brotherhood of St. James after the death of the previous patriarch in 1949. Although Derderian would normally have been required to hold elections within forty days, he had avoided holding them for reasons that are not entirely clear.⁵ In the early 1950s, Gevork VI, catholicos of Etchmiadzin, in fact named Derderian as his successor, though Derderian was not willing to accept this position. In 1952, Derderian was refused a visa to the United States, supposedly because of his ties to the Soviets.⁶ However, at the same time, Derderian had close relations with a variety of Jordanian government officials, several of whom were poker-playing companions. These connections gave him support inside of the Jordanian government.

Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan was the former head of the Armenian Church of North America. In the eyes of some in the U.S. government, he, too, was seen as a communist sympathizer, in part because of a book he wrote in 1941, entitled (unfortunately, he later claimed) *A Christian Approach to Communism*. The book, written and published in England at a time when the United States and United Kingdom were allied with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany, suggested that communism and Christianity shared
some common principles, and later led to Nersoyan being labeled a “clerical apologist for Communism.” Nersoyan himself, in conversations with American diplomats, always insisted that he was strongly anti-communist. In 1955, Nersoyan retired from his position as prelate of North America and returned to the Brotherhood of St. James in Jerusalem. There he requested that a variety of administrative and fiscal reforms be made, putting him on a collision course with Derderian. Expressed simply, Derderian had a somewhat entrenched position, whereas the older Nersoyan was seen as an upstart competitor with a so-called “modern outlook.”

Initially, according to U.S. consul reports, both the Tashnag party and its political opponents appear to have “strongly supported” Nersoyan in the dispute. However, this changed after the election of Zareh I as catholicos of Antelias. Just prior to the election, Catholicos Vasken of Etchmiadzin, the spiritual leader of the Armenian Church, travelled to Lebanon in an attempt to get a postponement in order to find a compromise candidate acceptable to all factions. After failing to do so, Vasken then attempted to travel to Jerusalem to hold a meeting about the election, but the Jordanian government refused to issue him a visa. Some have alleged that it was Derderian’s personal recommendation to the Jordanian government that resulted in the denial of Vasken’s visa. During this time, Nersoyan had actively encouraged the selection of a compromise candidate for the position, which Zareh and the Tashnags opposed. From this point onward, pro-Tashnag forces in Antelias, including Zareh, appear to have supported Derderian.

During the summer of 1956, the situation in Jerusalem came to a head. Nersoyan pushed for Derderian to hold an election to the patriarchate. Following this, Derderian reported Nersoyan to the ministry of the interior as having communist sympathies. On 28 July, Nersoyan received a deportation order from the Jordanian government. This order was stayed, but another was issued on 19 August. This time, Nersoyan responded by filing a slander suit in the Supreme Court. He won, resulting in the cancellation of his deportation order. To help resolve the dispute, Catholicos Vasken invited both Derderian and Nersoyan to visit Etchmiadzin. Derderian left for Etchmiadzin, while Nersoyan stayed behind in Jerusalem. In the meantime, yet another deportation order was issued to Nersoyan and in early October he was temporarily deported to Beirut, though he was allowed to return on 15 November following the election of a new Jordanian parliament dominated by a different political coalition. On 17 November, while Derderian was still abroad, the Brotherhood of St. James elected Nersoyan as locum tenens, effectively replacing Derderian, though the latter continued to file legal actions in the hope of displacing his opponent.

The United States Intervenes

Thus far, U.S. representatives in Jerusalem and Amman had had little influence on the actions of the Jordanian government. In fact, they seemed suspicious of both candidates. However, in early spring, the crisis flared up again, and the United States became more deeply involved. On 5 March 1957, the general assembly of the Brotherhood of St. James
voted to expel Derderian. Two weeks later, the general assembly elected Nersoyan as patriarch and made an application to King Husayn for his recognition. Derderian countered with a lawsuit, and in addition sent the prime minister a letter he claimed was written by Nersoyan to the Soviet ambassador to Lebanon that spoke of a secret agreement with Vasken I for Nersoyan to facilitate his readmission to Jerusalem. Nersoyan and his defenders argued that this letter was a bad forgery. In May, the Jordanian government requested the views of the United States on Nersoyan. Although the telegram providing this information remains classified, it is clear that the United States passed on potentially negative information regarding Nersoyan, but nothing comparable regarding Derderian. The military governor of Jerusalem and Hebron, Jamal Tuqan, told the U.S. consul William E. Cole that in light of the “telegram listing certain activities of Nersoyan favorable to Communism . . . the Jordan Government quite certainly will not recognize Nersoyan” as patriarch. Subsequent events would reveal that this may not have been the message that the State Department wanted to convey, but it was the message that was received.

Legal maneuverings in the late summer kept the outcome of the situation in doubt. On 1 August, a Jerusalem court ruled that Derderian’s deposition and Nersoyan’s subsequent election had been illegal. Nersoyan indicated his intention to appeal this decision. In the meantime, a representative of the military governor asked the new U.S. consul general, Albert Franklin, if Nersoyan was “still under American protection,” and if the United States would “come to his aid if requested.” The representative claimed to know of the information that the United States had provided to the Jordanian government and seemed to imply that there were plans for action to get rid of Nersoyan. In his report, Franklin noted that the Jordanians had misinterpreted the U.S. attitude, probably because Washington’s message “did not indicate that both Archbishops . . . were undesirable.” Since new instructions to make this point to Jordanian officials were still under discussion in Washington, the consul suggested that a demarche be made to King Husayn directly, rather than to the military governor. Thus, the State Department seemed to be considering actively urging the Jordanians not to support either candidate. However, they did not do so.

In October 1957, Jordan’s court of cassation dismissed the lawsuit against Nersoyan, which paved the way for him to assume his duties as patriarch, provided that the king recognized him. By this time, U.S. consul Franklin suggested to the State Department that, if the lawsuit was dismissed, the best case would be for the king to recognize Nersoyan, “which would minimize [the] tendency toward [a] split in [the] Armenian church.” Franklin had managed to get a copy of *A Christian Approach to Communism* and now argued that it was “anti-Communist in its intent.” In several communications to the State Department, the consul general made lengthy and balanced, but still recognizably pro-Nersoyan, arguments. Because of previous statements to the military governor, he maintained, the United States was “now on the side of the Tashnaqs [sic] and of their candidate, Derderian.” He warned of dire consequences if Husayn refused to recognize Nersoyan, including disaffectioning the local Armenian community, harming the position of the Armenian church in Soviet Armenia, and causing a “permanent split in the Armenian church and community.” The State Department responded that based on the information that it had, “there is little to choose between [Nersoyan] and Derderian,”
and they now did not want to get involved. This response ignored the consul general’s point that the United States was in fact already involved in the situation, because it had provided derogatory information regarding Nersoyan. The department did authorize the consul to “deny privately any allegation we [were] supporting Derderian”; at the same time, in response to a query from the U.S. embassy in Amman, it noted that “we believe development [of] opposition to [the] primacy [of the] Soviet dominated Etchmiadzin Catholicos and Armenian world community support for Catholicos Zareh of Antelias are in U.S. interest.” Since Zareh I appeared to be supporting Derderian and opposing Nersoyan, the State Department therefore seemed happy with its position, which was characterized by ambiguity and deniability on the one hand, and the perception of leaning toward Derderian on the other.

Over the course of 1958, supporters of both candidates and the Jordanian government increasingly sought U.S. involvement in the dispute. At the end of January 1958, the Jordanian ministry of the interior made a second attempt to deport Nersoyan, calling him “undesirable” and cancelling his residency permit. Franklin suggested to Foggy Bottom that bribes were the “real reason” for the attempt at deportation; he warned that if this were successful, it would “support Egypt-Syria propaganda [that King Husayn was] persecuting Christians,” while alienating the local Armenian community. The governor general of Jerusalem confided to U.S. officials that the main reason for the deportation attempt was a letter sent by President Camille Chamoun of Lebanon (probably at the behest of Tashnag parliamentary deputies, who had become Derderian’s political allies) to Husayn asking him to take action again Nersoyan and to support Zareh I and his allies. The governor general therefore sent troops to the Convent of the Brotherhood of St. James to remove Nersoyan. However, after massive protests, these forces were removed.

At this time, in order to avoid bloodshed, members of the Armenian community visited U.S. consul Franklin to request proof that Nersoyan was a communist. Nersoyan, they said, was “ready to recognize Zareh” by publishing a newspaper article that was mildly critical of Vasken I’s alleged interference in Antelias’s affairs. One Armenian church official and Nersoyan supporter, Torkom Manoogian, who later served as U.S. prelate and then as patriarch of Jerusalem, sought contact with members of the “American Intelligence Service” in Beirut, who “were, in his words, ‘responsible for the letter sent by President Chamoun of Lebanon to the King.’” This demonstrates how widespread was the viewpoint that the U.S. was behind the machinations within the Jordanian government, even if the only action U.S. officials had taken was the provision of information regarding the two candidates the previous summer. After being visited by a large delegation of Armenians, King Husayn agreed to cancel the deportation order and to receive Nersoyan and others within a few days to allow the latter to answer the charges against him.

When U.S. chargé d’affaires Thomas Wright met with Foreign Minister Samir al-Rifa’i in Amman on 7 February 1958, the latter maintained that Jordan had information that Nersoyan was a communist sympathizer and “therefore unacceptable.” The foreign minister had proposed to a delegation of Armenians that a new candidate be chosen other than Derderian and Nersoyan, after which Nersoyan would be allowed to stay in the country. However, this apparently was not communicated to the governor general of
Jerusalem, who after speaking with the U.S. consul asked the Americans to ask Rifa‘i whether these instructions had actually been sent to him. At some point a new message was sent to the governor general, who allowed Nersoyan to stay under the pretext of concerns about his health.

**Scandal, Bribery, and Deportation**

In the meantime, the dispute erupted into scandal. Derderian’s chambers – sealed since his departure from Jerusalem – were opened, and pornography and ladies’ lingerie reportedly found. This resulted in rumors that Consul Franklin felt sure would prevent Derderian’s return. In March, Nersoyan received a new residency permit, but the minister of the interior, Falah al-Madadha, told an Armenian delegation that it now recognized a third priest, Bishop Souren Kembajian, as being in charge of the affairs of the community and wanted the brotherhood to hold new elections. In the meantime, Nersoyan and his supporters hoped for a change in attitude from the Jordanian government. The former prelate was reported to have published articles praising Antelias, and at least one criticizing Etchmiadzin, as part of an effort to placate his critics. This effort failed and, in late August 1958, Nersoyan was deported again, this time permanently.

After Nersoyan’s deportation, he and his supporters appealed to the U.S. government to intervene on his behalf. As Ara Sanjian has revealed, King Husayn had indicated that if Prime Minister al-Rifa‘i could be convinced that Nersoyan was not sympathetic to communism, there might be a possibility of return. The prime minister suggested that a letter from the Americans or British might be helpful in this regard. During a meeting at the U.S. embassy in Beirut on 9 September 1958, Nersoyan gave several reasons for his deportation, including his refusal to pay bribes; the influence of Derderian’s “drinking and poker-playing cronies” in the Jordanian government; and a letter from President Chamoun of Lebanon, who had been persuaded by Tashnag deputies in parliament to contact the Jordanian government. Nersoyan also claimed to know that “the American intelligence agencies’ had him in their black books.” U.S. officials at the meeting insisted that the United States had adopted a neutral position in the dispute, and the following morning they told him that the U.S. government would express concern about his deportation to the Jordanian government.

Shortly thereafter, Nersoyan travelled to Washington to attempt to change minds. In a meeting with Stuart Rockwell and Richard Parker of the State Department’s Near East division, he maintained that there were “many indications that the State Department and CIA were supporting the church policies of the Tashnags,” thereby alienating many within the Armenian community. Rockwell denied that the U.S. was supporting the Tashnags, stating simply that “the strong opposition of the Tashnags to Communism coincided with our views,” and they had been “willing to provide us information and we had no reason to refuse this.” The Tashnags, Nersoyan said, had bribed government officials in Jordan to secure his deportation. When Nersoyan was asked why he had not tried “the same tactics in order to gain the support of someone higher than [deputy minister of the
interior and Derderian supporter Sa’d] Jum[‘a] Nersoyan responded that “he had tried and had almost but not quite succeeded.”\textsuperscript{38}

Nersoyan’s supporters continued to advocate on his behalf. In particular, a group of four pro-Nersoyan Armenian-American clerics in the Jerusalem diocese – including Shnork Kaloustian, who was serving as sacristan for the Brotherhood of St. James, and Torkom Manoogian – reported to American authorities that they had been under heavy pressure from the Jordanian ministry of the interior to hold an election to replace Nersoyan. After their refusal, they were threatened with deportation. The U.S. consul general suggested that the embassy in Amman express concern about its citizens to the government.\textsuperscript{39} In this case, the State Department authorized the embassy in Amman to tell Prime Minister Rifa‘i that internal Armenian Church affairs were not the concern of the U.S. government and that they were not knowledgeable about the priests involved; however, parts of the American-Armenian community were “already exercised and will be interested and concerned if deportation [of the] four priests occurs.”\textsuperscript{40} Before this message was delivered, the priests involved received letters from the minister of the interior that they could now obtain new residency permits.\textsuperscript{41} Several times over the next year, Consul Franklin suggested that a “discreet word” from an American source regarding Nersoyan might actually tip the balance in his favor, but the State Department continued to refuse to get involved.\textsuperscript{42}

The United States Establishes a Policy

At the end of 1958, the State Department finally decided to establish a policy on how to deal with such divisions within minority communities in the Middle East. It was actually a situation concerning another religious institution – the Greek Orthodox Church – that prompted this step. Over the previous few years, Greek Orthodox Church officials and government officials in various pro-Western countries had reported that the Soviet Union was attempting to expand its influence within the church. The election of the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church had drawn attention to Soviet attempts to influence the church, particularly through financial means. State Department officials feared this development, but also believed that there were limits on how much influence they could bring to bear on religious institutions. Thus, they felt that a “neutral policy of non-involvement” was the best policy, while issues related to minorities would be dealt with on an ad hoc basis. U.S. officials were therefore to “avoid actions that might compromise [this] basic policy of non-involvement with specific minority groups.” Exceptions would only be made when this would not be seen as harming the host government, and were “otherwise clearly in the positive interest of the U.S.”\textsuperscript{43} This policy was somewhat at odds with what the United States had done in 1958 in Jerusalem with its message regarding Nersoyan and Derderian, but it would be referred to repeatedly in subsequent years.

Later in 1959, National Council of Churches official and Nersoyan supporter Wilbur Parry visited the Holy Land, where he saw a number of Armenian and Jordanian officials. After his return to the United States, Parry sent Shnork Kaloustian a letter with details of
his conversations that contained sensitive details, including mentions of bribes paid by both sides to the Jordanian government. Parry, perhaps out of naiveté, also sent copies of this to various Jordanian officials, including the prime minister. In January 1960, Jordan deported Kaloustian, Manoogian, and another Armenian Church official. A U.S. embassy counselor in Amman saw Foreign Minister Musa Nasir, a Jordanian Christian, a few weeks later, and suggested that this “seemed rather harsh and abrupt.” Nasir promised to provide a document that would clarify matters. Confusingly, the document that he gave to the counselor provided little explanation, but instead struck embassy officials an excellent summary of the issue by a pro-Nersoyan advocate, later revealed to be Canon Edward Every of St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem.

Nasir most likely provided this document as an explanation for actions that he did not agree with, but had little power to influence. After the latest expulsions, numerous members of the Brotherhood of St. James were dismissed, giving pro-Derderian forces an advantage. Armenian and British sources told the U.S. consul that the Jordanian government had threatened to arrest other key leaders of the brotherhood if they did not support Derderian. On 26 March, the scheduled date for the election of a new locum tenens, Jordanian security forces surrounded the monastery and admitted Derderian, who claimed that no elections for this position were necessary, since he was the rightful locum tenens. Although the Jordanian government did not yet recognize this, the elections were nonetheless postponed, and Derderian remained on the grounds of the compound. Shortly thereafter, the ministry of interior appointed a pro-Derderian cleric as chief administrator, who began dismissing anti-Derderian members of the brotherhood. On 6 June, Derderian was officially recognized as locum tenens, and on 8 June 1960, he was elected patriarch of Jerusalem.

Some Jordanian leaders attempted to resist this intervention in the affairs of the church. Considering this an affront to his fellow Christians, Foreign Minister Nasir attempted to resign over the interference in the election, allegedly due to bribery, but then agreed to stay after King Husayn promised an investigation. However, the U.S. embassy in Amman expected that this investigation would be a “whitewash.” Indeed, nothing was done to reverse Derderian’s election. After the dismissal of a final court case challenging the Jordanian government’s right to intervene, Husayn recognized Derderian as patriarch on 10 August.

While the U.S. consulate was not directly involved during these final months, numerous parties assumed that the United States was. U.S. consul Lucien Kinsolving reported that “one of the most exasperating parts of the whole imbroglio has been the conviction, even among the Anglican clergy and our British consular colleagues, that the Department of State in general and this office in particular are in the whole mess up to the armpits.” After several messages from the consul general to Washington, the State Department referred to its 1958 policy on non-involvement and instructed its representatives to discreetly make this known, as well as to disassociate themselves from King Hussayn’s conduct in order to dispel the impression that the United States was responsible for these events. As we saw earlier, sending mixed messages allowed the impression of U.S. involvement to gain currency in the first place, and these denials would do little to dispel it.
Conclusion

The struggle over the patriarchate was by this point at an end, but it would have a lasting impact on the Armenian Apostolic Church. Yeghishe Derderian would serve as the prelate of Jerusalem until his death in 1990, a period of nearly thirty years, making him one of the longest-serving leaders in the history of the patriarchate. Tiran Nersoyan returned to the United States, where he helped found the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, which aimed to train new generations of Armenian priests, and continued his scholarly activities. In spite of the bitter legacy of the events of this period, in the early 1960s, there was a degree of reconciliation between various factions of the Armenian Church. Nonetheless, some tensions remain today.

During this dispute, U.S. representatives in Jerusalem had to navigate local, regional, and international challenges. All of the consuls discussed in this article seem to have come to the conclusion that the State Department had become part of an effort to influence the internal politics of the Armenian Church by disparaging Tiran Nersoyan. These individuals sought to correct this by moving the position of the United States closer to supporting Nersoyan. They believed that this would have a calming effect on a crisis within the Armenian community in Jerusalem. However, the State Department saw the issue differently. It did not see either candidate as particularly beneficial to U.S. interests, yet it was worried about what it saw as Nersoyan’s possible sympathy with communism and was moderately inclined to support his detractors in the catholicosate of Cilicia. Thus, even when presented with evidence to the contrary, the State Department refused to take steps to change its position. It was the difference in perspective, local and international, that explains these differences in position, but ultimately, Foggy Bottom’s position trumped that of the U.S. consul in Jerusalem. This lack of willingness to change course made it possible for Yeghishe Derderian to assume the position of patriarch of Jerusalem.

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Endnotes


3 On the latter, see the historical brief in Despatch Amman 1, 2 July 1960, 885.413/7-260, Central Decimal File [CDF] 1960–63, Box 2808, Record Group [RG] RG 59, U.S. National Archives [USNA], College Park, MD.


5 Tsimhoni maintains that it was to avoid appealing to either Israeli or Jordanian authorities for recognition. Daphne Tsimhoni, “The Armenians and the Syrians: Ethno-Religious Communities in Jerusalem,” Middle Eastern Studies 20, no. 3
The United States and the Struggle in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 1955–1960

(1984): 4. Sanjian confirms that Derderian gave the unresolved status of Jerusalem as a reason for avoiding an appeal to Jordanian or Israeli authorities for recognition. Sanjian, “Armenian Church,” 71. However, the possibility of an unfavorable outcome of the election is also a likely reason for Derderian’s delay.

6 See Despatch Jerusalem 103, 11 December 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.


8 Despatch Jerusalem 50, 17 August 1955, 884.413/8-1755, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.


10 Despatch No. 31, 21 August 1956, 884.413/8-2156, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

11 Despatch Jerusalem 103, 11 December 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

12 This and the subsequent paragraph draw heavily on a summary prepared by Canon Edward Every. “The Church of the Armenians,” undated, unsigned memo included in Despatch Amman 287, “Background Material on the Armenian Church,” 8 February 1960, 884.413/2-860, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA.


15 Every, “The Church of the Armenians.”

16 Despatch No. 31, 21 August 1956, 884.413/8-2156, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA. This cable refers to Despatch 156, which remains classified.

17 Despatch No. 167, May 17, 1957, 884.413/5-1757, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

18 Despatch Jerusalem 176, 3 June 1957, 885.413/6-357 CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA. The State Department’s instructions appear to be in Deptel 276 of May 22, 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, 885.413/5-1457, RG 59, USNA.

19 Despatch 19, 8 August 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

20 Despatch 19, 8 August 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

21 Telegram, Jerusalem 154, 6 December 1957, 884.413/12-557, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

22 Despatch 77, 30 October 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

23 Despatch Jerusalem 103, 11 December 1957, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

24 Telegram, State to Jerusalem, 15 January 1958, 884.413/1-958, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

25 Telegram, State to Jerusalem, 15 January 1958, 884.413/1-958, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

26 Telegram, Jerusalem 228, 20 January 1958, 885.413/1-3058, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.


28 Telegram, Jerusalem 240, 5 February 1958, 885.413/2-558, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

29 Despatch Amman 233, 13 February 1958, 884.413/2-1358, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

30 Telegram, Jerusalem 249, 16 February 1958, 884.413/2-1658, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

31 Telegram, Amman 1525, 18 February 1958, 884.413/2-1758, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA; Telegram, Jerusalem 254, 19 February 1958, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

32 Despatch Jerusalem 151, 20 February 1958, 884.413/2-2058, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

33 Despatch Jerusalem 189, 3 April 1958, 884.413/4-358, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.

34 Telegram, Amman 698, 30 August 1958, 884.413/3-3058, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.


38 Memcon, Nersoyan, Rockwell, Parker, “Armenian Church Affairs,” 19 November 1958, 861.413/11-1958, CDF 1955–59, Box 4733, RG 59, USNA.

39 Telegram, Jerusalem 48, 19 December 1958, 880.413/12-1858, CDF 1955–59, Box 4893, RG 59, USNA.

40 Telegram, State 1380, 24 December 1958, 880.413/12-1858, CDF 1955–59, Box 4893, RG 59, USNA.

41 Telegram, Jerusalem 224, 24 December 1958, 880.413/12-2458, CDF 1955–59, Box 4893, RG 59, USNA.

42 Telegram, Jerusalem 277, 5 March 1959, 880.413/3-459, CDF 1955–59, Box 4893, RG 59, USNA, referencing Jerusalem 228 [still classified]; Memcon, Nersoyan and Parker, 1 December 1958, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, CDF 1955–59; Despatch Jerusalem No. 11, 21 July 1959, 884.413/7-2159, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.
43 Circular, State CA-5459, 24 December 1958, 880.413/7-857, CDF 1955–59, Box 4893, RG 59, USNA.
44 Despatch Jerusalem No. 22, 12 August 1959, 884.413/8-1259, CDF 1955–59, Box 4928, RG 59, USNA.
45 Sanjian, “Armenian Church,” 80.
46 Despatch Amman 287, 8 February 1960, 884.413/2-860, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA; Telegram, Jerusalem 220, 19 February 1960, 885.413/2-1960, CDF 1960–63, Box 2808, RG 59, USNA.
47 Despatch Amman 287, 8 February 1960, 884.413/2-860, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA; Telegram, Jerusalem 220, 19 February 1960, 885.413/2-1960, CDF 1960–63, Box 2808, RG 59, USNA.
48 Telegram, Jerusalem G-26, 31 March 1960, 884.413/3-3160, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA.
49 Sanjian, “Armenian Church,” 82. See also Telegram, Jerusalem 313, 8 June 1960, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA.
50 Despatch, Amman 1, 2 July 1960, 885.413/7-260, CDF 1960–63, Box 2808, RG 59, USNA.
51 Telegram, Jerusalem G-2, RG 59, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, 11 August 1960, RG 59, USNA.
52 Despatch, Jerusalem 131, 11 February 1960, 888.413/2-1160, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, RG 59, USNA. See also Telegram, State 2792, 6 April 1960, 884.413/4-660 CDF 1960–63, Box 2799; Jerusalem 225, 7 April 1960, RG 59, 880.413/(no further info), RG 59, USNA.
53 Telegram, State 8159, 884.413, CDF 1960–63, Box 2799, 15 April 1960, RG 59, USNA.
Greece in the Holy Land during the British Mandate: Diplomacy and Religion

Konstantinos Papastathis

The Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest Christian institution in Palestine. It is autocephalous and administratively structured as a monastic fraternity, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, according to which the patriarch exercises absolute power over all of its affairs. The protection of the extensive Orthodox rights over the holy places, as defined by the so-called Status Quo agreement, is considered to be the primary duty of the institution. From the incorporation of Palestine into the Ottoman Empire (1516), the brotherhood was gradually subjected to the control of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the synod of which, in some instances, even appointed the Jerusalem patriarch. Overall, the hierarchical relationship between the two institutional agents, in conjunction with the Greek nation-building process, allowed the gradual Hellenization of the Jerusalem patriarchate. This development, however, meant that the indigenous clergy and laity were actually excluded from participating in the church’s governance. The Arab Orthodox population often reacted dynamically against this state of affairs, demanding the recognition of its rights over what it perceived to be its national cultural patrimony.

The opening of the Mandate period in Palestine raised the hope of the indigenous Eastern Orthodox community for the Arabization of the Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, within which the Greek element was dominant. The fulfillment of this demand became part of Palestinian nationalist ideology and was reflected in the overall involvement of the lay Orthodox in the Muslim-Christian Associations, as well as in the First Arab Orthodox Congress in Haifa (July 1923). To counteract this development, the Greek religious
establishment forged political alliances at a local level to protect its power over the church institution. At the same time, Greece, as the patriarchate’s national center, attempted to intervene both at the domestic and diplomatic level to secure its own ends.

The present article elaborates on Athens’s activities in this regard during the Mandate period. Within this framework, the role of Greek diplomacy in the affairs of the patriarchate was crucial, influencing the decision-making process of the religious establishment and intervening on its behalf in the international power centers with a twofold aim: the maintenance of the Status Quo; and the preservation of the Greek character of the patriarchate. More specifically, this article aims to explore critically: a) the form of, and the factors fuelling, the alliance between Greece and the patriarchate; b) the events that marked their dynamic relationship; and c) their practical outcomes at both intra-ecclesial and political levels. In addition to published records and secondary literature, the archival sources used for this analysis mainly derive from the Greek ministry of foreign affairs and the British national archives. Special mention should also be made of Sotirios Roussos’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis on Greece’s Middle Eastern foreign policy in the interwar years. This article is divided into three parts. The first provides a description of British policy in relation to the national and religious communities in Mandate Palestine, making reference to the social and political stakes of local and foreign players involved in general, and the Orthodox patriarchate and Athens government in particular. The second part examines the terms in which the Jerusalem hierarchy and Athens government portrayed their relations, focusing on the ideological features and political connotations of their discourse. Greek diplomacy’s attempts to influence patriarchal affairs, and its impact on domestic communal politics, is also elaborated upon here. The paper concludes with an overall assessment of the Greek strategy and its articulation within the British colonial project.

Religious Politics in Mandate Palestine

For a better understanding of the context within which the British administration set out its policy priorities, it is necessary to sketch out the framework within which the Christian communities of Palestine operated in late Ottoman times. Its major features were the millet system, the Status Quo doctrine, and the capitulations regime. According to the millet system, each religious community was under the supervision of its religious head (for example, the Orthodox/Rum millet under the Jerusalem patriarch), whose rights and privileges were stipulated ad hoc by the berat of investiture issued by the Porte each time a new leadership was elected. As regards the Rum millet, this system did not imply a national grouping, but rather had a religious meaning indicating the Orthodox community per se. The Status Quo doctrine regulated the custodianship rights of each church over the Christian holy places, as arranged by the firman of 1757. This normative frame was further acknowledged by the Porte in 1852, and recognized by the international community in the Treaty of Paris (1856) and the Congress of Berlin (1878). According to the Status Quo, the Orthodox Church acquired a predominant position in comparison to other denominations, which was a cause of constant antagonism between
them. Under the capitulations regime, foreign state powers were granted the right to protect their subjects residing in the empire, as well as affiliated clergy. Accordingly, this system established France as the protector of all Roman Catholic clergy, regardless of their nationality, and Russia of the Orthodox subjects, though this status was under question. By acquiring political competencies, Western countries actually exercised state powers within a foreign state. In effect, the door was opened to intervention in the affairs of the empire on the pretext that the rights of their co-religionists were being violated. For instance, the controversy between clergy about the guardianship of the holy places became fertile ground for foreign powers to exercise pressure on the Porte to advance their various objectives (as during the Crimean War, for example).

Within this context, British policy regarding the operation of the various religious institutions in Palestine was based on three strategic aims: the Balfour Declaration; the abolition of the capitulations regime; and the maintenance of the Status Quo. However, these faced a series of obstacles. Regarding the future creation of the Jewish National Home, the British had to handle the reactions of the indigenous population that threatened the legitimization of their rule. As elsewhere in their history, the British adopted a strategy for maintaining control that exploited or invented religious or ethnic differences within the colonized society. The development and political institutionalization of such a structural form allowed the British to keep for themselves the role of the “impartial” arbiter and represent their rule “as above or outside a ‘local’ conflict, rather than as part of it, or even the creator of it.” The difference between Palestine and other colonies where the British implemented the “divide and rule” doctrine was that in the former they found the ground already prepared by the Ottomans. In short, they did not have to construct new social distinctions, but could redesign the pre-existing millet system to their ends, at the same time blocking the developing Arab Palestinian national ideology from becoming hegemonic. In other words, to justify vesting the Jewish community with sovereign rights over Palestine, the British had to represent the society not as a coherent body with a shared collective identity, which despite the differences within it would form a modern polity on the basis of the nation-state frame, but as a juxtaposition of distinct communities divided along sectarian lines. At the same time, the preservation of the civil and judicial authorities ascribed to the religious leadership by the millet system opened the way for better understanding between the British administration and the Christian churches, whose support was necessary to counteract Arab resistance.

The capitulations question, too, was complex, since it involved the strategic interests of both France and Russia. On the one hand, the Sykes-Picot agreement stipulated that Palestine would be under international control, thus implying the continuation of French and Russian religious protectorates. On the other hand, the entrance of Italy (which disputed the French preeminence) into the Entente, as well as the withdrawal of Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, and the fact that the “boots on the ground” were British, eventually allowed London to take direct control of the administration, at the same time removing the constraints placed on its authority by the capitulations. Despite French insistence, the British prime minister Lloyd George, with the open support of his Italian counterpart, Francesco Nitti, made clear in the London Peace Conference (of February
1920) that the creation of an imperium in imperio within the boundaries of its Mandate could not be accepted.\textsuperscript{12} It should also be noted that Paris did not actually enjoy the support of its protégé, the Vatican, which was effectively cooperating with the new sovereign of Palestine.\textsuperscript{13} The San Remo Conference (of April 1920) officially marked the end of the capitulations regime.\textsuperscript{14} As regards the Status Quo, regime change opened the door for the Vatican to demand a new modus operandi in relation to the custodianship of the holy places.\textsuperscript{15} However, all state actors involved viewed the question as a potential source of constant and non-manageable conflict. Especially for the British, it would open the wineskin of Aeolus, allowing foreign powers to interfere in the affairs of their Mandate. In effect, the maintenance of the Status Quo was considered imperative.\textsuperscript{16} To this end, the British found a loyal ally in the Greek state, both at the diplomatic level as well as in the local communal landscape, via its influence on the Orthodox patriarchate.

**Greek Diplomacy and Mandatory Palestine**

The strategic aim of Athens was the preservation of the Jerusalem patriarchate’s Greek national character. Greece’s political positioning vis-à-vis this institution can be divided into two stages during the Mandate. The first, which roughly covers the period of 1917–1920, was characterized by Athens’s vigorous intervention into the affairs of the patriarchate. For Athens, regime change was seen as an opportunity to establish the national center’s direct rule over the patriarchate. However, the British blocked this attempt due to domestic as well as international considerations. Despite this, Greece maintained its central importance in religious administration throughout the rest of the Mandate period, but local authorities held primacy in decision-making. Greek diplomats followed developments within the institution, and got involved in various individual cases, but did not claim the right to fully control its affairs.

The ideological frame legitimizing the allegedly primordial Greek national character of the church was based on a paradigmatic shift in the hegemonic political orientation of the religious establishment from “universalism” to Greek ethnocentrism. To this end, the Greek state’s policy of promoting Helleno-Orthodoxia as the national narrative played a major role, along with the Tanzimat reforms and Russian penetration into Palestine.\textsuperscript{17} In brief, Orthodoxy was employed instrumentally as a means to construct collective loyalties and incorporate the Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire into the Greek national body.\textsuperscript{18} Helleno-Orthodoxia was based on the alleged historical continuity of the Greek nation and its identification with the Orthodox Church. In effect, one presupposed the other: Greek meant Orthodox and vice versa.\textsuperscript{19} The indigenous Christians, therefore, were not considered to be Arab, but rather Arabic-speaking populations (Arabophones) of Greek origin.\textsuperscript{20} However, since they did not identify as Greeks, and thus rejected their nation, they had no right to interfere in patriarchal affairs; the patriarchate should in principle be in Greek hands and the other Orthodox nations were viewed as “out-groups” upon whom were conferred an inferior status within the institution.\textsuperscript{21}

In political terms, this framework determined the subordination of the patriarchate
to direct rule by Athens. In other words, the Helleno-Orthodox doctrine presupposed that the self-fulfillment of the church rested on promoting the alleged “national good,” as defined by the national center. In this regard, the projection of the holy places as Greek national property had both an ethno-symbolic and a political value. First, this construction, highlighting the alleged linear continuity of the collective group to the so-called “Royal Race” (the Byzantine Empire), represented the imagined superiority of the Greek nation; since the Greeks protected the Christian holy of holies, they represented the new “chosen people.” Second, in conjunction with Russian withdrawal, it opened the door for Greece to promote its diplomatic status. Implementation of this policy depended on two conditions: the Greek composition of the brotherhood; and the cooperation of the religious leadership.

Within this context, the establishment of the British Mandate was a welcome development for Athens. First, it avoided the possibility of French or Italian rule over Palestine, which would likely have led to the promotion of Latin interests in the holy places. At the same time, the cordial relations between the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church meant that Greek religious objectives would have an ally in the decision-making center. Besides, Athens was pleased with London’s impartial position with respect to religious affairs, as well as Lloyd George’s self-proclamation as the protector of Orthodox rights. Second, at the beginning of the Mandate, Greek officials considered the new administration an ally in controlling the religious bureaucracy. Third, the British strategy to maintain the sectarian structure of political operations was thought to secure the dominant position of Greek religious officials. It was believed that the patriarchate’s national character would be further promoted by a future Jewish state, as stipulated in the Balfour Declaration, in preference to an Arab administration that would support the laity’s demands. In this regard, the Greek minister of foreign affairs Nikolaos Politis advocated the creation of a Jewish state as early as June 1917, while Consul Georgios Tzorbatzoglou was the first foreign diplomat in Jerusalem to affirm his support to the Jewish cause.

In addition to the potential positive effects for the Greek hierarchy, Athens’s pro-Zionist policy might also be attributed to three additional factors. First, it might be interpreted as a friendly gesture toward the pro-Ottoman Jewish community of Thessaloniki, which was incorporated into the Greek state after the First Balkan War (1912). Second, it was possibly founded on the strategic alliance with Britain. Based on the idea that “my friend’s friend is a friend,” since London endorsed the Zionist cause, Greece had to follow its political patron. Third, the Vatican’s active anti-Zionism might be thought as a “safety valve” for Greek interests in the holy places. Indeed, Politis discussed the question with Nahum Sokolow in Paris Peace Conference, where the Zionist leader stated his preference for an international commission responsible for the administration of the holy places “as against the French claim to exclusive French control.” Most importantly, he affirmed that the rights that “were vested in the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, who is a Hellene,” should be maintained.

In this regard, it should be stressed that the Greek administration did not interfere in negotiations regarding the holy places. London took the Status Quo system for granted as
a precondition for social order. The only time Athens became active in this issue was when the question arose of creating a commission to determine the rights of each denomination over the holy places, as stipulated by article 14 of the Mandate. Facing the dangerous proposition of a commission exclusively composed of Catholic representatives, Athens appealed to London to acquire a seat in the new political organ. However, the British turned down the Greek request. The British rejected altogether a commission so composed, as an official Greek claim to participation would have encouraged the Vatican to insist on the proposed scheme. This would have undermined Athens’s own interests, because potential Greek participation would not actually pose a threat to the Catholic majority, instead legitimizing its decisions. Thus, British officials asserted that Greek diplomacy had no reason to worry about patriarchal rights and should no longer get involved.28 In any case, the British only viewed the commission as a temporary instrument for the adjudication of minor disputes between the interested religious parties. Any suggestion of it having administrative responsibilities was unacceptable.29

On the other hand, without disputing the basic premises of Helleno-Orthodoxia at its core, two opposing groups emerged within the Jerusalem patriarchate in regard to its relationship with Athens. The first accepted Athens’s primacy and was affiliated with external church officials such as Meletios, the metropolitan of Athens, against Patriarch Damianos’s rule. For Meletios, a condition for patriarchal election should have been the Greek king’s approval of the nomination.30 The second faction believed the patriarchate should be allied with Athens, but, despite its Greek character, should not be dependent on the Greek ministry of foreign affairs. It should be autonomous and determine its own policies, while Athens’s role should remain auxiliary and consultative.

Dividing lines between these two groups had already been drawn during the patriarchal crisis of 1908–1910, when there was an unsuccessful attempt to depose Patriarch Damianos. Damianos’s forced retreat to Damascus, following that of the Ottoman army in 1917, provided an opportunity to again challenge his power. The general assembly of the brotherhood, with the support of Antonis Sachtouris, the Greek diplomatic agent in Alexandria, declared Damianos’s see vacant. This body had no legal or canonical foundation whatsoever, and thus had no authority over patriarchal affairs. Still, under Sachtouris’s guidance, the brotherhood declared in its resolution of 3 May 1918 the full transfer of control over all of its administrative and financial affairs to the Greek government.31 For the first time in history, the patriarchate openly declared its affiliation with Greece in political terms.32 Ideologically, it marked the loss of the patriarchate’s universality as the representative of Christian Orthodoxy, the end to its ecumenical presence in the Holy Land, and its transition to a political dependency on Greece.33 The conditions put forward by Athens for accepting the invitation were the deposition of Damianos and the election of Porphyrios, the archbishop of Sinai, as locum tenens (or placeholder) patriarch.34 Sachtouris supported the nomination of Porphyrios, who was associated with Ronald Storrs and Gilbert Clayton and, more importantly, had affirmed his adherence to Athens’s orders.35 In September 1918, the brotherhood deposed Damianos and nominated Porphyrios. However, the British administration denied the Greek plans. It did not accept the institutional validity of the brotherhood’s resolution, nor did it
recognize Damianos’s deposition. Nevertheless, the British accepted Porphyrios as *locum tenens*, since the patriarch, due to his forced stay in Damascus, could not serve his office.36 Moreover, the British consented to the delegation of two Greek financial advisors on the condition that the British administration would be fully informed about the patriarchal finances and that the Greeks would not take any action without the administration’s approval.37

In January 1919, however, the British decided to reinstate Damianos to his see. The pressure from the indigenous Arab Orthodox, as well as the support of both Amir Faysal and the Latin Church for Damianos, played a significant role in this decision.38 For Porphyrios, the Greeks were victims of a frame-up by the British, who self-represented their authority as respecting the rights of the indigenous population.39 The authorities were well informed about the Greek plans, as they controlled their correspondence.40 Moreover, Sachtouris, Porphyrios, and others had held discussions for eleven months with British officials who pretended to support the Greek plans, albeit unofficially.41 For instance, Damianos’s deposition and Porphyrios’s nomination took place with their tacit approval. Athens had no option but to comply with the new state of affairs. Politis’s order was to approach Damianos and reach an agreement to block the patriarch’s alliance with the Arab laity.42 Despite the lack of coordination between the central authority and the responsible diplomatic and religious officials, the strategy was to cooperate with Damianos, while at the same time cultivating the ground for his eventual expulsion.43 A growing financial problem provided such an opportunity.

At the beginning of the Mandate, the patriarchate found itself on the verge of bankruptcy, indebted for around 500,000 Egyptian pounds, which was put under moratorium.44 In 1919, to fortify its dominance within the institution, Athens proposed a loan to cover all of the debt, providing that Damianos would be deposed, the brotherhood would enact new regulations, and ecclesiastical property would be mortgaged to the Greek state.45 Athens’s aim was, first, to secure the transition of religious power and, then, to fully control the church at an institutional and financial level. As it was plainly stated, the patriarch should never act “without the knowledge and approval of the local representative of the Greek Government, to the orders of which [Damianos] had from now on to adapt his administrative policy. The Patriarchate should become a dependency of the Consulate.”46 However, Damianos, who had Arab support and remained dominant within the brotherhood, had no interest in accepting Athens’s plan. The British, who had no reason to accept the control of an institution in Palestine by a foreign state, also supported Damianos.47 For them, such a development would work as an argument for the French to maintain the capitulations regime. Further, it would provoke an Arab reaction during a period of social unrest resulting from the British support of the Zionist project. Not to mention that, rather than Athens, the British administration asserted its rule over the patriarchate via the creation of the Financial Commission, which took full control over its management.

After denying the Greek loan, it was clear to Athens that London would never accept its link to the patriarchate as having institutional justification. In short, Greece could not acquire the status of a protecting power in the place of Russia. From then on and until
the end of the Mandate, Greek policy focused on maintaining the Greek character of the patriarchate and interfering in its affairs in an unofficial way, without creating problems for domestic communal politics. This policy shift was determined by two factors. First, Athens could not exert any pressure over the Mandate authorities. Since the British were the sole administrators of Palestine, the only effective stance Athens could take to serve its objectives was to be moderate, avoiding any polarization that might promote the Arab Orthodox cause. Second, in geopolitical terms, Greece belonged to the zone of British influence. Athens could therefore not oppose the decisions of its patron, especially when London was Greece’s primary, if not sole, ally in the Greek-Turkish war in Asia Minor (1919–1922).

Within this context, Athens’s activity was, in practical terms, focused in two directions. The first was monitoring developments within the patriarchate, and intervening whenever Greek objectives were put into question. For instance, the Greek government unequivocally sided with the British against an Italian attempt to reopen discussions about the Status Quo in 1928, and did not dispute the Antiquities Ordinance (1929), which affected the operation of Christian shrines. Greek diplomacy had an influential role in effectively handling local mobilization, endorsing the brotherhood in its efforts to maintain its privileged status vis-à-vis the congregation’s demands, despite the fact that the British commission investigating internal affairs adopted a pro-Arab stance.

In the 1930s, the congregation put forward a claim for new patriarchal regulations that would upgrade its status within the church administration and increase its involvement in the financial management of the institution. Athens did not intervene directly— a protective right that the British did not recognize as being vested to Greece — but it was in close contact with the religious officials throughout the affair.

The second direction toward which Athens put its energies was attempting to control the power game within the Greek clergy, laying the groundwork for the nomination of its preferred candidate to replace Damianos. To this end, Athens paid special attention to the return to Jerusalem of all of the Greek ecclesiastics exiled by Damianos in the aftermath of the events of 1917–1919. The Greek state declined to contribute financially to repair damages incurred to shrines during the 1927 earthquake until several clerics belonging to the opposition party were restored. After Damianos’s death in 1931, Greek diplomats in London and Jerusalem galvanized in order to control the electoral procedure, attempting to block the involvement of the Arab congregation in the process. Athens supported the election of Meletios, but was actually ambivalent about whether his election would serve its interests. It seemed that it was more important for the Greek Middle East diaspora for Meletios, at that time patriarch of Alexandria, to stay in his office, rather than move to Jerusalem. The British favored Meletios as well, but abstained from interfering. They believed Meletios, viewed by local Arabs as the representative of Greek ethnophyletism par excellence, would be a constant source of communal strife. Eventually, in 1935, Timotheos, the archbishop of Neapolis, having the support of Damianos’s group and exploiting the tactical mistakes made by Meletios’s network, was elected. Timotheos’s election had to be ratified by the local authorities, however. This provided the British with an opportunity to obtain concessions from the new leadership with regard to Arab
demands. As Colonial Secretary William Ormsby-Gore stated, patriarchal confirmation presupposed acceptance of the reforms. To put it cynically, the link between the confirmation and the enactment of new patriarchal regulations was “a sort of blackmail,” as senior Greek diplomat Charalampos Simopoulos described it. Athens, for its part, demanded the immediate publication of Timotheos’s berat of investiture and focused on preventing the enactment of new regulations that would question the national character of the institution. To this end, the Greek side emphasized two interconnected themes: the patriarchate is structured as a monastic brotherhood and thus the congregation could not co-administer its affairs; and this administrative structure was part of the Status Quo of the holy places and any alteration would be a violation of the Status Quo.

When the British reached an agreement with Greece regarding the content of the new patriarchal regulations, the outbreak of the Arab Revolt, which was vigorously supported by the Orthodox laity, stymied Timotheos’s appointment. Moving ahead with his appointment would have jeopardized the authority of the communal leadership, whom the British anticipated would be a positive actor in negotiating an end to the revolt, or at least in influencing the congregation to withdraw its support for the national cause. The end of the revolt in 1939 opened the way for Timotheos’s appointment. British geopolitical considerations worked as an indirect factor, as well: On the eve of the Second World War, strengthening the alliance with Greece via symbolic gestures – such as not disputing the national character of the Jerusalem patriarchate – seemed more important than insisting on supporting the claims of the congregation, whose loyalty was questionable. As the head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, G. W. Rendel pointed out that the adoption of a sympathetic attitude toward the Greek clergy was “in the interests of Anglo-Greek relations, which we wished to keep as smooth and friendly as possible.”

The British did not alter this policy after the war, when the world was once more divided into zones of influence, those of the former allies and those of potential antagonists. Since London had forcefully placed its loyal political agents in Athens, controlling domestic elites and policy making, Greek rule within the patriarchate seemed a far better option than the Arab Palestinian alternative. It might have fatally damaged their interests “if yet another Greek Orthodox bastion against Russian influence is removed and transformed into a dependency of the Russian Church and Soviet State, as has happened in the past, and is now happening in the case of the Patriarchate of Antioch.”

**Conclusion**

Greek diplomacy viewed the regime change in Palestine after the First World War, in conjunction with the October Revolution, as an opportunity to establish itself as the protective power of Orthodoxy. However, after the termination of the capitulations regime, none of the great powers, and in particular Britain, would institutionally recognize such a status. Greece, as a state within the British zone of influence, did not have the power to react against the policy of its patron, whose support was a condition sine qua non for Greek success in the war against Turkey in Asia Minor. Taking into account British
assurances for the maintenance of the Status Quo in the holy places, Greece had to remain loyal and intervene in religious affairs only in unofficial ways, narrowing down its claims to the preservation of the patriarchate’s allegedly national character and its demands for the deposition of Patriarch Damianos.

The early pro-Arab policy of the administration, the main expression of which was the Bertram-Young Commission support of the Arab Orthodox claims for changing the Greek character of the patriarchate, and the retention of Damianos indicate that, during the formative years of the Mandate, Athens failed to effectively implement its strategy. However, events during the 1930s related to the patriarchal election and the enactment of new regulations point to Greece’s eventual success in effecting its agenda. Judging from the outcome, namely the ratification of Timotheos’s election without making important concessions to the Arab congregation that might alter the national composition of the brotherhood (whose maintenance was the prime objective of the Greek diplomacy), the affair was handled effectively. Despite Greece having no direct influence on policy making, and its inability to impose its will, the fact that both the Greek character of the institution and the Status Quo remained unaltered indicate that the strategy of accommodating British needs was to a large extent productive for Greece’s diplomatic goals.

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Endnotes
1 Within the Eastern Orthodox Church normative dictionary, the term autocephalous means the independent and sovereign church jurisdiction. To put otherwise, the Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem incarnates the supreme authority over his institution.
2 Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Historia tis Ecclesias Ierosolymon [History of the Jerusalem Church] (Alexandria: Ek tou Patriarchikou Typographeiou Alexandreias, 1910); Kallistos Miliaras, Oi Agioi Topoi en Palaistini kai ta ep’ auton dikaia tou ellinikou ethnous [The Holy Places of Palestine and the Rights of the Greek Nation over them], 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2002).


13 Pieraccini, *Jerusalemme, 207; Woodward and Butler, Documents*, vol. 13, 341.


18 Pantelis E. Lekkas, *Ta paichnidi me to chrono: ethniki smos kai neoterikotita* [The Time Game: Nationalism and Modernization] (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2001), 78–79; Paraskevas Matalas, *Ethnos kai Orthodoxia: apo to ‘El-

ladiko’ sto Voulgariko Schisma* [Nation and Orthodoxo: From the Greek to the Bulgarian Schism] (Heracleion: Crete University Press, 2002).


27 The National Archives (UK) [TNA], Foreign Office [FO] 608/98/8.
39 DHAG, File B/35 (8), reg. num. 2764 (22–12–1918), “Archbishop of Sina Porphyrios to A. Sactouris.”
41 DHAG, File B/35, Special File Jerusalem, Mission of Korizis (24 July 1918); DHAG, File B/35 (9), Special File Jerusalem, Mission of Korizis, reg. num. 5757 (27 July 1918); DHAG, File B/35, Special File Jerusalem, Mission of Korizis (9 October 1918).
43 DHAG, File B/35 (8), Special File Jerusalem, reg. num. 3455 (28 January 1919).
44 Bertram and Luke, Report of the Commission, 191. One Egyptian pound (LE) was equivalent to one British pound sterling.
46 DHAG, File 43, sub-file 4 (1920), “Statement of the General Consul of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. G. Tzorbatzoglou Conveyed to His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Mr. Damianos by Archimandrite Epiphanius, Secretary of the Holy Synod.”
50 Konstantinos Papastathis and Ruth Kark, “Colonialism and Religious Power Politics:
the Question of New Regulations within the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem during the British Mandate,” Middle Eastern Studies 50, no. 4 (2014): 589–605

DHAG, B/36, B’ Politics, File Jerusalem, 1929, reg. num. 3856, “Greek Ministry to Jerusalem Consulate” (15 December 1928); DHAG, B/36, B’ Politics, File Jerusalem, General File, 1930, reg. num. 558, “Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”


Rendel to Windsor-Clive, 10 November 1933, TNA CO 733/240/5; DHAG, File B/36/III, Sacristan’s Bequest (1934), reg. num. 7283, “Benetatos to the Greek Foreign Office” (31 July 1933); DHAG, File B/36, “Patriarchate of Jerusalem – General” (1934), reg. num. 8929, “Dendramis to the Greek Foreign Office” (23 August 1934).

DHAG, File B/36/1, “Patriarchal Election Jerusalem” (1934), reg. num. 12011, “Kapsalis to the Greek Foreign Office” (13 November 1934).

DHAG, File B/36/1, “Patriarchal Election Jerusalem” (1934), reg. num. 11382, “Kapsalis to the Greek Foreign Office” (30 October 1934); “Note of an Interview between the Secretary of State and the Archbishop of Canterbury on the 24th of November 1933,” TNA CO 733/240/5; Cunliffe-Lister to the Bishop of Gloucester, 9 March 1933), TNA CO, 733/240/5. The British preference for Meletios as the successor of Damianos was expressed as early as 1925 in the Confidential Supplement of the Bertram-Young Report (TNA CO 733/139/1).


“Note of Conversation with M. Simopoulos,” TNA CO 733/373/8.

Sotiris Roussos, “Greece and the Arab Middle East,” 199–204.


George W. Rendel, “Note: Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem,” 22 September 1937, TNA CO 733/335/1.

Germanos to Hall, 29 July 1946, TNA CO 733/478/4.
France has long been the most important foreign power in the Holy Land, or so it perceived itself. It indeed enjoyed a specific position, with the largest network of religious institutions, of many kinds, representing many denominations and lay tendencies. But despite its important and historical position, for a long period of time it lacked the proper standing conferred by an official presence on the ground. Proper representative diplomatic buildings only appeared by the middle of the nineteenth century, with diplomatic – and consular – professionalization at this moment, a situation shared by other countries throughout the world. But as rival powers sought France’s position and the local context became, by the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, more and more competitive, it was unthinkable that France should lag behind. Therefore, we note in the period a real preoccupation regarding two points: the status of the French representation in the Holy City, and the building hosting that representation.

The Rank of the French Representation in Jerusalem

Astonishingly, the historiography regarding the history of the French consulate in Jerusalem is limited, particularly when compared with other foreign representations in the Holy City. Some studies were produced by a vice consul and later consul general of France in Jerusalem, the archaeologist and diplomat René Neuville, but only deal with the ancient history of the post. The more recent history of French representation has been explored in Rina Cohen’s as yet unpublished PhD thesis. I have also written of the consulate, both indirectly through studies on various French institutions based in Jerusalem, and
more directly through the chronicle of one of the French representatives in the Holy City, Amédée Outrey (1938–1941).5 The consulate also appears in newer articles devoted to its specific status and fields of competences.6 And the wife of a former consul general, Stanislas de Laboulaye (1996–1999), dedicated a brochure to the history of the building and of the position, the content of which is now partly the base of what is available on the consulate’s web page.7 It is worth returning to this topic to put it into the framework of growing international competition, specifically in the collapsing Ottoman Empire. During this period, which witnessed the general development of international relations and was marked by international conferences and imperialism, diplomacy was given increasing consideration. Diplomacy had to be undertaken by professional diplomats, a position then becoming more seriously considered. In this era of professionalization, diplomats had to be hosted through the official expenses of their respective states, marking an end to centuries of “amateur” diplomacy, when diplomats had to cover their expenses. It became a matter of prestige, within the context of international competition, as France endeavored to return to the Orient in a position of power – a mission that drew on France’s past in the Holy Land and sought to revive the “Latin Kingdoms” and the Crusaders’ spirit in an era of colonialism.8

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the opening or reopening of foreign consulates in Palestine. In 1843, France was one of the first powers to do so, after Great Britain (1839) and Prussia (1842), and before America (1844), Austria (1849), and Russia (1857). In the French case, the 1843 opening was a reopening, after an earlier consulate in the sixteenth century and non-permanent consuls in the meantime. After some decades, the consulates were joined by other foreign institutions and quasi-official representations. In the Palestinian context, we have, of course, religious institutions of various kinds, but also, and more important in terms of prestige, post offices and banks.

Each achievement by a power had to be followed by the others, in an almost automatic way. If this was the case for post offices and banks,9 then it had obviously to be the case for the most important representation, the consulates. As respective consulates were upgraded in the rank, each step forward was obviously observed by other actors. As for France, reports pointed early to such moves from traditional rivals in the field. The topic became all the more dangerous when Germany, a growing rival, thought to advance a step ahead in the status of its representation. This was perceived with great sensitivity, since the general context was considered one full of threats to France’s position in Palestine. With the growing competition of rival denominations, Protestant and Orthodox, and behind them rival powers, Great Britain and Russia, respectively, France’s role as protector of the Latins became increasingly called into question. The French consul regularly had to deal with uncomfortable situations, whereby the Latin patriarch was yielding to the other consuls, who were willing to sidestep the mediation of the French consul, disregarding the ancient order of things.10 The archives of the French foreign ministry are full of correspondence from Jerusalem in which French representatives complain of their own weakened position.11
As a matter of fact, external factors prevailed in the French decision to upgrade the rank of the representation of the protective power in Palestine. The decision to upgrade the consulate to a consulate general was taken quickly, after the Greeks, heavily present in the Orthodox hierarchy, decided to do so, and the Russians contemplated such a change for their own representation. The French ambassador to the Ottoman Sublime Porte, Montebello, wrote on 8 October 1891 that one must insist:

on the favorable impact which would result from the transformation of the Jerusalem consulate into a consulate general, from the point of view of the situation of our agent in Palestine, toward his colleagues as well as toward the Ottoman authorities. . . . it would be particularly regrettable to leave our agent in Jerusalem in a lower situation to his colleagues of an Orthodox denomination.¹²

The French diplomatic upgrade was effective as soon as 1891, and became official in 1893. While the now consulate general remained dependent on the French embassy in Constantinople, Palestine remaining part of the Ottoman Empire, a service of an autonomous valise diplomatique was established, in order to ensure the confidentiality of any correspondence between the ministry in Paris and the consulate in Jerusalem.¹³ The elevation did not remain a mere administrative gesture. In a context where every change had to be shown in order to impress rival powers, Ottoman authorities, and local society, the move was noisily saluted. The periodical of one of the French religious communities based in Jerusalem, the Assumptionists, mentioned that the change was welcomed by the French people, and that the population had “squashed into the consulate, before which Saint Anne’s band played the Marseillaise many times.”¹⁴

The gesture was not only perceived as a contribution to the prestige of France in the Holy Land; it was also taken as proof of the importance attributed by official France to the activities of Catholic France in the Holy Land.¹⁵ Alternatively, some clerics considered that the upgrade reflected not so much the importance of French commercial activities in the Holy Land (judged “far less considerable”), but the growing presence of French institutions there: numerous institutions which allowed “to give added luster to our so often secular protectorate, to maintain it and increase it.”¹⁶ Indeed, the period was key for France’s position in Palestine as the protector of the Catholics: the following year, the Congrès Eucharistique International of Jerusalem was held, during which French clerics based in Jerusalem, or those coming to Palestine from Rome and Paris, played an important role in connection with the French diplomatic representative.¹⁷ And despite the disregard of the Assumptionists, France’s commercial share was about to become greater, with contemporary construction works and the forthcoming inauguration of the Jaffa–Jerusalem railway, funded with the assistance of French banks. When in 1898 Consul General Charles Ledoulx, the first to hold the new title in 1891, died in Jerusalem, the Dominican Father Le Vigoureux, who delivered a sermon at the funeral at the French church of Saint Anne, did not forget to recall the achievement represented by upgrading the consulate to a consulate general.¹⁸
The establishment of a post office in Jerusalem through France into a similar game of action and reaction to the respective policies of European powers in Palestine. After Kaiser Wilhelm II’s famous visit to Palestine in October and November 1898, Germany thought about the creation of such an office, following the Austrian example (1859). As soon as the move was known, France reacted and contemplated its own postal administration.19 The desk was opened shortly afterward.20 Germany followed France’s lead. Since all other great powers had a consul general in Jerusalem, Berlin decided it must also get its spot in the sun and did the same. The German consul in Jerusalem was nominated as a consul general.21 And though the German representation in Jerusalem initially remained a mere consulate, France nevertheless perceived this as a further political move.22

After World War I, the status of the French representation was again questioned. Though France was counted among the victors in the Middle Eastern theater, the prevailing power was the United Kingdom. French people and French officials faced a number of difficulties coming (back) to Palestine, due to British martial law and reluctance to accept any French interference on the ground. After a while, France was represented in Jerusalem in two ways: a military high commissioner and a consul. But this was no peculiar advantage for the French position and French prestige. The position of the French high commissioner was more or less that of an observer, overseeing the transfer from military to civil administration in Palestine. And the consul, officially designated, was not considered a consul as such, but rather a delegate to the French high commissioner. This situation lasted more than three years after the conquest of Jerusalem. In May 1920, the French foreign ministry wrote to the French embassy in London to return to the pre-war situation.23 It took until spring 1921 to reestablish the French position and prestige: the French foreign ministry instructed Consul General Rais to take on the sole title of consul general and to leave his other function, delegate of the high commissioner, which implied that the French representative in Jerusalem was subordinate to the new French high commissioner in Beirut.24 France had to be France in Palestine and Jerusalem again; the French consul general in Jerusalem had to reestablish his previous prestige.

A Proper Building for the French Consulate in Jerusalem

Regarding prestige, it was important that France be represented by a consul general, and not a mere consul, if only in order to be on the same level than rival powers and to face local authorities. But prestige also meant having a proper consulate, in the sense of a building to host French representation. This matter is a long story of requests, complaints, and confusion. France owned (and still owns) some plots in the Holy Land, the so-called domaines nationaux, with high-profile buildings or archaeological remnants over which the French flag waved (and still waves).25 But France did not possess a permanent building for the offices of the consulate or for the residence of the consul.

The confusing situation can be seen in the most important travelers’ guides to Jerusalem of various periods. The guidebooks’ maps of Jerusalem, over the whole of the period considered, show the difficulty of determining the precise location of French
representation. Five locations can be found, three of them in the Old City. The first to appear – in Baedeker’s 1875 guide – is a house on the Via Dolorosa, at the fourth station.26 The second, found in Liévin de Hamme’s 1876 guide, is at a crossing further west, directly beside the Holy Sepulchre, not far from the seventh station.27 The third, indicated on the maps of Baedeker’s 1912 guide and Meyers’s 1913 guide, is located behind the Latin patriarchate, in the northwestern corner of the Old City, close to the New Gate, and the so-called “French Quarter.”28 The following two locations are outside the walls of the Old City. The fourth location, noted in the 1912 Black’s guidebook and the 1936 Meistermann guide, is located between the walls and the Russian compound, on a plot where today stands the Jerusalem city hall (see figure 1).29 The fifth and final location is the current one, west of the city walls, which appears in the 1932 Guide Bleu.30 Part of the confusion comes from the failure of various guides to update the location on maps of Jerusalem from one edition to another.31 For example, the 1936 edition of the Franciscan (Meistermann) city guide locates the consulate near the Russian compound, while the Guide Bleu launched in 1932 correctly identifies the premises at a freshly built property on Paul-Emile Botta Street.

In any event, the general impression leads to the feeling that France did not have the place it deserved. This, of course, is the impression resented by France’s diplomats, eager to defend their own position on the spot, vis-à-vis representatives of rival powers, Ottoman authorities, and their own ministry in Paris. The idea of having a devoted building is at least as old as the question of the rank of French representation. As a matter of fact, the purchase of plots in Jerusalem was at the time a significant matter of competition,
especially because of the difficulty presented by the Porte’s policy limiting foreign appropriation of the holy city. For the French people, the constitution of a French network was important, and had to be visible through the construction of massive buildings within a limited perimeter in order to constitute progressively a “French Quarter.”

The objective was to compensate for the growing Russian presence in the holy city, embodied by the Russian Compound. The rivalry with Russia was at the time the most important one. In August 1889, when the New Gate was pierced through the northwestern corner of the city walls, the opening was considered a real victory by the French Assumptionists, despite a Russian “plot” aiming to install there “their own consulate in a particular place, which must be reserved, one day, for the consulate of France.” Russia went on to build its own consular building. Germany appeared as another rival power willing to build visible institutions in Palestine and the holy city. This was shown in connection to the famous visit to Palestine by Emperor William II, with the inauguration and later construction of four impressive German buildings in Jerusalem: the Church of the Redeemer in the Old City, the Dormition Abbey (Mount Zion), the Auguste Victoria building (Mount of Olives), and the Paulus-Hospiz (next to Damascus Gate). The Germans were also active elsewhere in Palestine, for instance in Jaffa. Last but not least, Italy, too, was observed with suspicion, all the more since the Italians were eager to better their position vis-à-vis France regarding the protection of Catholics.

In this situation, every move that could mean an improvement of French housing was
saluted and promoted. But until 1908, the situation remained unchanged: France rented a “rather average” house for its consulate. Once again, the French Assumptionists are a good source in order to observe the evolution. In 1892, shortly after the upgrading of French representation, the Assumptionists celebrated the consulate general’s relocation:

We learn with joy that the consulate general of France in Jerusalem moves from the house it occupied beyond the Russian establishments to another, closer to the city and to Notre Dame de France. The Berghem house, which is going to become the consulate of France, is situated on Jaffa Road, from which it is only separated by the new municipal public garden; it is close to the Saint Louis Hospital, to Notre Dame de France, and to the New Gate. So the French Quarter constitutes itself more and more.37

The optimism was not to last long. Ten years later, the same clerics noted, on the occasion of the arrival of a new French consul general, Daumas (1901–1902): “He lives, these days, at Notre Dame de France, after having stayed some days at Casa Nova [the Franciscan hostel], since, in April, the French consulate will have to relocate.”38 For the clerics, the situation constituted a sweet revenge: hosting the representative of France was a kind of surprise, coming some years after the same congregation was targeted for its role in the Dreyfus affair.39 But if it was in a way bizarre for a Catholic congregation to host the Catholic consul of an anticlerical France (no paradox in the specific situation of Jerusalem), the situation did not serve the prestige of France:

The previous residence of the mutessarifs hosts provisionally the representative of France. The premises that have been occupied by our consuls for many years belong to a rich Catholic British lady, Miss Bute. The owner has not renewed her lease to the government of the Republic... All great powers have their own consular building; let’s hope that France will have its own soon.40

A solution perceived as satisfactory for the prestige of France had been arranged, but a long-term solution had to be found. Once again, the French representative had to knock at the door of the Assumptionists to find a roof.41 In a strange and ongoing situation, a pavilion situated on the plot of the French Assumptionists became the place where France had to organize its main annual holiday on 14 July, and where the French consul lived until the beginning of World War I.42

Due to the difficult and humiliating situation, with a consul regularly relegated to the street while the owners of the houses in which he lived took them back, and the stain it constituted on France’s prestige, the consul advised that the best solution was to construct a building. This was finally undertaken by Consul Gueyraud (1908–1914). On his arrival in Jerusalem, he could do nothing but observe and complain of his miserable housing situation. Confronted with the situation, he proposed to have a plot purchased on which France would build a place dedicated to house the consulate.43 Willing to act
quickly, Gueyraud listed the available grounds.44 Depicting a difficult and ridiculous situation, he convinced the foreign minister to acknowledge the exceptional status of Jerusalem, writing:

acknowledging the interest that a permanent installation of our consular services in a building belonging to the state may provide for our influence in Palestine, I do not refuse to contemplate the possibility to have a consular house built in Jerusalem.45

One year later, a possible purchase presented itself: the Greek patriarchate was willing to sell a plot, southwest of the Old City.46 The deal had to take place between the patriarchate and France, and everything had to be done in order to avoid interference from the Ottoman local authorities, as if Jerusalem was not in the Ottoman hands at the time. By the end of 1909, however, nothing had been achieved and Gueyraud was confronted by the possibility of living in a place other than his offices. He described his dissatisfaction with this situation, since any incident disrupting the status quo necessitated speedy intervention based on the historical documents contained in the consulate archives.47 The context became even more disturbing with the approach of the official visit of the German prince Eitel Friedrich to Jerusalem to inaugurate the Dormition Abbey and the Auguste Victoria building. What would be the impact on the prestige of France if its consul general had at this moment no permanent housing? To save face, Gueyraud chose not to be present in Jerusalem during the stay of the Prussian prince.

Nevertheless, the matter of purchasing a plot for the consulate proceeded, and France eventually came into some luck. At the request of Gueyraud, a rich Frenchman, Count Michel de Pierredon, heir of a wealthy Levantine family and member of the Order of Malta, offered the 200,000 francs to purchase the plot.48 Such a gift made things easier, since the French foreign ministry was reluctant to have the matter discussed at the Chambre des Députés: in the anticlerical context of these years, the topic of the French protectorate in the Orient was subject to internal dissent, and the whole matter could have been endangered by such an official discussion.49 A French Assumptionist, Father Etienne Boubet, famous for the buildings he designed and built for several French Catholic institutions in Jerusalem, offered his services to design the building that would host the consulate.50

Meanwhile, the consul and the ministry continued consultations on the purchase in coordination with the French embassy in Constantinople: everything had to be prepared, every partner had to agree before the purchase was made official.51 France was not willing to experience a renewed humiliation if the local Ottoman governor should ultimately refuse the transfer of a plot from the Greek patriarchate to the French government.52 Things also had to be done quickly to prevent the Ottoman authorities, themselves contemplating the construction of a building dedicated to hosting the civil administration (serail), from requisitioning the property.53 Immediate action was required to get a plot large enough to correspond to France’s status in Jerusalem!54 In a traditional game of influences, things were arranged not on the spot, in Jerusalem, but in the Ottoman capital, where the French
ambassador Bompard sought to pressure Jerusalem’s governor through his superiors. In the meantime, Gueyraud still had to deal with a precarious situation and urged the French government to send an architect, writing that he “had to find a room in a hotel, and was only able to find for the offices a precarious rented location, not entirely without some serious inconveniences.”

The situation became all the more urgent since the Jerusalem municipality was also trying to get its share and a plot on the very same ground, threatening the French objective. Wishing to get the authorization to buy from the ministry, Gueyraud expressed an ambition to have the new consulate opened by 1911. Aided by local circumstances (the Muslim population preferred to have the serail next to the city, rather than in a “far” neighborhood), France continued to contemplate the option of a large plot on the spot called Nikophoria. After new talks with both the Greek patriarchate and local Ottoman authorities, Gueyraud agreed on a plot directly in front of Jaffa Gate, considered “the center of all business.” In November 1910, the purchase of 5,000 square meters for 90,000 francs was authorized. The official purchase is dated 10 January 1911. The acquisition took place and became official, even if the money provided by Count Michel de Pierredon had in the meantime been misappropriated by the same civil servant of the French foreign ministry in charge of accountability. All in all, after decades, or even centuries, France finally had a plot on which a proper consular building could be built. On 13 July 1911, the French parliament approved a credit of 100,000 francs to finance the construction (covering part of the funds that had been misappropriated).

The hopes to finally reestablish France’s prestige were great, and the jealousy of the other powers was obvious. Maps were drawn, but an initial architectural study by M. Joanny-Bernard was considered inadequate and rejected; a later estimate brought the costs to the huge amount of 495,000 francs. A request for new credit to that amount was produced on 24 November 1913, but no decision was taken before World War I. The otherwise hardened Catholic consul Gueyraud had to continue to live in a house belonging to the Assumptionists, where he remained until he had to leave Jerusalem in November 1914, after the declaration of war between Turkey and France.

Following the war, despite great ambitions, France faced a difficult new beginning in Palestine. On several occasions, France expressed its desire to get “back” the Holy Land, as a logical continuation of the disrupted history of the Latin Kingdoms. France, however, had no success in its aspiration to see Palestine back within a French sphere of influence. Palestine was from then on British, and the British did everything possible to prevent too quick a return of the French religious communities expelled by the Ottomans. The difficult new beginning of French religious activity mirrored a cruel reality: London confirmed the end of capitulations, the French protectorate, and thus, logically, the privileged position of the French consul general in Palestine (a loss reduced thanks to the 1926 agreement between France and the Holy See on liturgical honors). Even the limited French military presence in Palestine came quickly to an end.

France, conscious of its ongoing loss of prestige, fought against this development. In August 1918, for example, the French Jewish Orientalist Sylvain Lévi reported on his stay in Palestine, describing France in bad shape, the parent pauvre among the victorious
powers. Though at that time France enjoyed, in the context of the British military regime, representation through the person of a high commissioner, the pompous title did not reflect the reality of his status. This was made particularly clear through the high commissioner’s housing: “a ruins-like hovel, deep, of a miserable appearance exiguous. In this Oriental country, where a mirage is worth reality, the impact is shameful.” This contrasted with the British headquarters in Jerusalem, located in the huge (previously German) Auguste Victoria building, from which the administration imposed itself on the local populations. In the new, post-Balfour Palestine, Lévi noted that, worse still, the French were hosted next to Notre Dame de France, alienating both Jews and Muslims. The French clerics, traditionally close to the French officers, themselves typically conservative and close to Catholicism, felt the situation, too. While a mass was organized at the Holy Sepulchre on the occasion of 14 July 1920, the showing of the French flag was authorized again only after the installation of the British civil high commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel. By this time, there were two simultaneous embodiments of French representation: the consulate general and the high commissioner. But as Consul Rais, who fulfilled both functions, pointed out, this was not to last.

What was felt, once again, as humiliation prompted movement. As mentioned above, in 1921, the consul general became the only French representative in Jerusalem, and the title of a high commissioner was done away with. While the British established their institutions in buildings next to the Old City, France prepared anew to launch its diplomatic mission, seeking to reaffirm its role as a power worthy of prestige and respect, though adapting.

Figure 3. The French consulate general, with its jardin à la française, from the east, 1931. © G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (online at www.loc.gov/item/mpc2010007765/PP/).
progressively to the new Palestinian circumstances.\textsuperscript{78} The idea of constructing a proper consulate building was examined anew in 1925.\textsuperscript{79} Since between 1910 and 1925 the cost of lands had exploded, France contemplated selling the plot already acquired and using the profits to purchase an already existing building. Ultimately, however, the previously acquired plot was deemed preferable. Maurice Favier, a noted French architect was chosen to establish a project for the new building. His plan, with an estimated cost of 900,000 francs, was rejected in 1928, but accepted in 1929, and a new credit of 1,040,000 francs was approved in 1930. Work could begin on concretizing the wish to reestablish France’s prestige in Jerusalem on a solid base.

The new plan was now integrated with the development of a new neighborhood, west of the city walls. Several buildings had appeared in the vicinity in the years surrounding the French decision, becoming landmarks of the new Jerusalem panorama: the Pontifical Biblical Institute (1927), the King David Hotel (1931), and the YMCA (1933). France was thus part of the modernization of Jerusalem after the end of the Ottoman Empire. The motto was: go outside the walls to find better living and working conditions. But France was also attached to its status in the holy city, though attenuated by British policy and the difficult political environment. It was important for France to have its consulate general open at the same time the British high commissioner entered his new offices, on the Hill of Evil Counsel, south of the Old City (currently housing the United Nations headquarters).
After three years of construction, the new building was inaugurated on 26 March 1932, at Easter time, marking a kind of a resurrection of French ambitions in Palestine. The French colony was present, as were two groups of French pilgrims. If the mostly Catholic audience was traditionally, however, the architecture was definitely not traditional. Although Jerusalem stone was used (or rather, stone from Bethlehem in keeping with British Mandatory laws on Palestinian heritage protection), the new building’s appearance differed radically from previous French consular premises, illustrating so-called “international architecture.” In this case, the architect Maurice Favier offered the visage of a new, more modern France at a time when it was necessary to adapt to a fast-changing Palestine.

After many decades from the upgrading of its representation to the opening of its new consulate general in Jerusalem, France saw its prestige restored. After many difficulties, a plot had been purchased in 1910, and an impressive building established on it, inaugurated in 1932. In a way, the hope was to make out of it a symbol of France’s renewed prevalence, or future French domination, in Palestine – a territory whose status awaited definite settlement. Construction of the consulate building ended after World War II, with some improvements on the terrace. Generally well situated at the edge between both parts of the holy city, enjoying a wonderful view of the Old City walls, and seen well from there, the building was located within firing range of both Jewish-Israeli and Arab soldiers in the street battles of 1948. Though protected by sandbags, it was damaged during the war, and the impact of the fighting was repaired in 1950. In 1952, a second French representation opened in a rented house in Shaykh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, reflecting the new situation of the divided holy city. In 1953, the history of the reestablishment of French prestige in Jerusalem was brought to a close: a plaque was installed in the staircase of the building, expressing the perpetual gratitude of the French Republic for the generosity of Count Thierry Michel de Pierredon.

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Endnotes
2 The U.S., British, and Austrian consulates have had their histories written, especially through respective collections of documents produced therein.
5 “Fortune and Misfortune of a Consul of France in Jerusalem – Amédée Outrey, 1938–1941,”
Jerusalem Quarterly 71 | 55 |

10 According to the capitulations (beginning in 1535), a French protectorate prevailed, meaning that the French consul not only enjoyed a preeminent positions among his peers (for instance in the formal protocols regulating the holy places, particularly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem), but was also in charge of the defense of Westerners within the Ottoman justice system.
11 See, for instance, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry [MAE], Paris, Archives diverses politiques, Turquie, 1890.
12 Note for the minister, proposal regarding the transformation of the Jerusalem Consulate into a Consulat General, 8 October 1891, MAE, Paris, Archives diverses politiques, Turquie, 26 Jérusalem 1882–1892.
13 Note for the minister, organization of the service of a valise between the ministry of foreign affairs and the Jerusalem consulate general, 23 November 1891, MAE, Paris, Archives diverses politiques, Turquie.
14 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 13 (November 1891): 154.
15 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 14 (January 1892): 10–12.
16 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 16 (May–August 1892).
18 Allocution prononcée le mercredi 12 janvier 1898 en la Basilique Nationale de Sainte Anne aux obsèques de Monsieur Charles Ledoulx, Ministre plénipotentiaire, Chargé du Consulat Général de France en Palestine (Saint-Sébastien: Imprimerie Martin, Mena & C., 1898), 6.
19 Letter from Auzépy, French Consulate General, Jerusalem (8), to French Foreign Ministry, 26 February 1900, MAE, Paris, Nouvelle série Turquie Palestine, 131 Palestine 1898–1907.
26 Palaestina und Syrien: Handbuch für Reisende (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1875).
27 Liévin de Hamme, Guide-indicateur de sanctuaires et lieux historique de la Terre-Sainte (Louvain: P. et J. Lefever, 1876).


31 The costs and technical difficulties can of course explain the impossibility to update maps that at the time were drawn by hand.

32 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 1 (July 1888).


34 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 13 (November 1891): 153–54: “The house of the Russian consulate is finished, above us; it has only one story and does not hide the view.” Russia had already owned a proper building for its consulate, built in 1860.

35 Letter about constructing a home for the German consulate in Jaffa, in a quarter home to “German houses and installations,” from Potier, French Consulate, Jaffa (4), to French Foreign Ministry, 28 July 1913; letter about upgrading the German vice consulate to a consulate and the construction of the Deutsche Palästina Bank in Jaffa, from French Consulate, Jaffa (1), to French Foreign Ministry, 7 March 1914, MAE, Paris, NS Turquie Palestine.

36 Gueyraud wrote regarding the purchase of a plot for the Italian consulate, “I would tend to think that its purpose is the creation of an Italian center (somewhat like the Russian establishments).” According to Gueyraud, “we above all have to fear the moral impact of massive construction, the Orientals tending to appreciate based on appearances.” Letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (43) to French Foreign Ministry, 19 November 1910, MAE, Paris, NS Protectorat Catholique. On the Italian encroachments, the plot seems to have been dedicated for the construction of a children’s hospital, the first of its kind in Jerusalem; Banco di Roma also announced the opening of a branch in Jerusalem, which prompted predictable competition from the French Crédit Lyonnais. Letter from Gueyraud, French Consulate General, Jerusalem (9), to French Foreign Ministry, 14 February 1911, MAE, Paris, NS Protectorat Catholique. 

37 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 16 (May–August 1892): 77.

38 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 104 (April 1902). Diary of the Assumptionists, Jerusalem, Thursday, 8 April 1902: “The French Consul leaves today Notre Dame de France, and recuperates for good his new residence, the former one of the pasha.”


40 Échos de Notre-Dame de France 105 (May 1902): 77–78.

41 Diary of the Assumptionists, Jerusalem, Sunday, 12 December 1909: “Mr. Consul General, forced to move, asks for hospitality at N. D. de France. He lives at Sainte Monique [a small dependence of Notre Dame de France], expecting to leave for France for some months of vacation.” Saturday, 7 May 1910: returning to Jerusalem, “Mr. Gueyraud lives provisionally at our place, at Ste Monique.”


43 Letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (5), to the Accountability Department, 3 November 1908, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

44 List of the plots that could be purchased, 18 November 1908, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

45 Letter from French Foreign Ministry (9) to the Consulate General, Jerusalem, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

46 Letter from the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarch to Gueyraud, 30 October 1909; letter from Gueyraud to the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarch, 11 November 1909, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

47 Letter from Gueyraud, Consulate General, Jerusalem (14), to French Foreign Ministry, 27 December 1909, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire. According to some sources, the Sabbatarians, a protestant sect of German obedience who had hosted the consulate, then expelled it. See Comte Michel de Pierredon, Le protectorat de la France en Palestine et l’affaire du Consulat Général de France à Jérusalem (Paris: n.p., 1926), 57.

48 Note by Gueyraud, Paris, 26 January 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire. Gueyraud directly contacted Pierredon, a relative, while the latter was staying in Jerusalem. Pierredon acted on behalf of “the prestige of France,” wanting to avoid an “errant consulate, without fireplace and home, [which] could harm our country’s prestige.” A solution was found
to allow the acceptance of such a gift, since it was not possible to have the ministry receive the funds directly. It was decided to transfer the money directly to the benefit of the Jerusalem consulat via the Accountability Department of the ministry. Pierredon, Le protectorat de la France, 58–59.

49 Letter by Count Thierry Michel de Pierredon, with details regarding the financing by himself for the purchase of a plot and the construction of a building, undated (1919), Archives Nationales d’Outre-mer [APOM], Aix-en-Provence, 102, dossier 36.


51 Letter from French Foreign Ministry (3) to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 22 April 1910; letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem, to French Foreign Ministry, 24 April 1910; letter from Gueyraud to the Orthodox Patriarch, 12 May 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.


54 Telegram from French Consulate General, Jerusalem to French Embassy, Constantinople, 25 May 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

55 Letter from Bompard, French Embassy, Constantinople (37), to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 31 May 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

56 Telegram from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (6), to French Foreign Ministry, 20 July 1910; letter from French Foreign Ministry (6) to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 26 July 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

57 Telegram from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (7), to French Foreign Ministry, 3 August 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

58 Letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (3), to French Foreign Ministry – Accountability Department, 3 August 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

59 Letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (58), to French Embassy, Constantinople, 16 August 1910, marked very urgent; letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (10), to French Foreign Ministry, 9 October 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

60 Letter from Pinchon, French Foreign Ministry, to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 18 October 1910; letter from Gueyraud to the Greek Patriarch, 29 October 1910; telegram from Gueyraud, French Consulate General, Jerusalem (12), to French Foreign Ministry, 2 November 1910; telegram from French Foreign Ministry (11) to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 4 November 1910; telegram from Gueyraud, French Consulate General, Jerusalem (13), to French Foreign Ministry, 5 November 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

61 Letter from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (8), to French Foreign Ministry – Accountability Department, 5 November 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

62 Telegram from French Foreign Ministry (12) to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 7 November 1910; Telegram from French Consulate General, Jerusalem (14), to French Foreign Ministry, 8 November 1910; telegram from French Foreign Ministry (13) to French Consulate General, Jerusalem, 10 November 1910, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

63 Telegram from Gueyraud, French Consulate General, Jerusalem, to French Foreign Ministry, 10 January 1911, MAE, Nantes, Archives of the French Consulate General Jerusalem 140, Immeuble consulaire.

64 Pierredon, Le protectorat de la France. The matter is part of the greater financial misconduct of the ministry, as shown through a long debate at the French Senate, in May 1911 (Sénat, Année 1911, Session ordinaire, no. 165, “Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances chargée d’examiner le projet de loi, adopté par la Chambre des députés, portant fixation du budget général de l’exercice 1911 Ministère des Affaires étrangères), par M. Raymond Poincaré, Sénateur, 80–81). See also Hort, Architektur der Diplomatie, 474.

65 Sénat, Année 1911, Session ordinaire, no. 246.
“Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances chargée d’examiner le projet de loi, adopté par la Chambre des députés, adopté avec modifications par le Sénat, modifié par la Chambre des députés, portant fixation du budget général des dépenses et recettes de l’exercice 1911, par M. Gauthier, Sénateur.”

66 On the creation of a Jesuit Biblical Institute, to be built on a plot owned by the Italian Salesians, “not far from the place where our new consulate of France will be built, following a very beautiful plan,” see: Paul Parsy, “La création de l’Institut Biblique de Jérusalem et les Allemands,” L’Écho de Paris, 29 August 1913.

67 Letter from the German Foreign Ministry (III d 10798) to the German Consulate, Jerusalem, 29 September 1913, record group 67 (Archives of the German Consulates in Palestine), Israel State Archives.

68 Chambre des députés, 2ème séance du 24 Novembre 1913, 3547, 3564; Chambre des députés, no. 3240, session extraordinaire, Projet de loi relatif à la construction d’un immeuble consulaire à Jérusalem.

69 Chambre des députés, 1ère séance du 11 mars 1914, 1483–84; 1ère séance du 11 mars 1914, 2139, 2135.

70 Diary of the Assumptionists, Jerusalem, Monday, 16 November 1914. Some days later, the very same house was requisitioned by the Turkish army, in order to host the Damascus general staff. See also Paul Gueyraud, La chronique des Gueyraud – Contribution à l’histoire économique et sociale du XIXe siècle (Marseilles: n.p., 1976), 210–11.

71 Public events, like a Congrès français de la Syrie, were organized; some official missions (mission Huvelin, mission Dubois) were sent to the Middle East; some alternatives were searched for (Commission of the Holy Places) in order to settle French claims.

72 Note by S. Lévi on Palestine, August 1918, Levant 1918–1940, Palestine, I, dossier général, May 1918–April 1919, MAE, Paris.

73 Note by S. Lévi on Palestine, August 1918, Levant 1918–1940, Palestine, I, dossier général, May 1918–April 1919, MAE, Paris.

74 “Traditional protector of the Catholics in the Orient, France seems so to bond herself with them, and, doing so, to take sides against everyone else.”

75 Diary of the Jerusalem French Dominicans, 14 July 1919, Archives of the St. Etienne Convent (École Biblique) [ASEC], Jerusalem.

76 Diary of the Jerusalem French Dominicans, 14 July 1920, reception at the Consulate, in the new building, ASEC. Letter from Rais, Commissioner of the French Republic in the Occupied Territories of Palestine and Syria (59), to French Foreign Ministry, 27 July 1920, MAE, Paris, Levant 1918–1940.

77 Diary of the Assumptionists, 9 April 1924; “This week, the [British] high commissioner was transferred from William II’s German sanatorium to the German hospice next to Damascus Gate, where the governorate is already located.”

78 This is to seen within a renewed French cultural policy toward Palestine, inaugurated shortly before. See Dominique Trimbur, “L’ambition culturelle de la France en Palestine dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” in Laurent Jeanpierre, Alain Duboscard, Laurent Grison, Pierre Journoud, Christine Okret, and Dominique Trimbur, Entre rayonnement et réciprocité: Contributions à l’histoire de la diplomatie culturelle (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002), 41–72.


80 Diary of the Jerusalem French Dominicans, 26 March 1932.
The Holy Land, once called the “most French of Oriental lands,” has a long history of diplomatic relations with France. From the Crusades to the more peaceful capitulations, these relations found an embodiment when the French consulate in Jerusalem opened in 1843. Those relations have been studied in a number of works, which did not fully analyze the centrality of language to French diplomacy. This paper, written from a sociolinguistic and, more specifically, a language policies approach, focuses on how language is used by societies or states in social and international relations. This language-focused approach adopts a historical perspective on French diplomacy in the Holy Land from 1843 to 2000, and looks at the place given to French language in institutional policies, based on the interpretation of diplomatic archives.

It is almost impossible to determine the precise moment when the French language was introduced in the Holy Land. Though the Crusades might be considered the first occurrence of the spread of French in the Levant, it seems that the language remained within the Frankish community, and did not spread significantly in local communities. Later, the history of the French language in Palestine is similar to that in many other territories. The first period of language instruction and its spread among the local population coincided with the migration of French Catholic congregations in the mid-nineteenth century. During France’s secularization after French Revolution, many religious congregations were either forbidden inside the country or prevented from carrying on their main activities in schools, orphanages, or hospitals. Many were therefore forced toward exile and had to settle in Central Europe, Latin America, North Africa, and the Levant. As one can
imagine, Ottoman Palestine was more than just another destination. For these Catholic groups, it was the Holy Land, the home of biblical towns such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, or Nazareth, where their missions were of an even greater symbolical nature. When these religious groups landed in Ottoman Palestine, French had already been present (as mentioned above), and was in the Ottoman era, the second official language of administration. The establishment of those congregations enhanced its presence via “propagation” through numerous institutions (schools and orphanages where classes were taught in French). According to consular letters found in the diplomatic archives, French was the most widely spoken foreign language in Palestine at the end of the Ottoman Empire.7

The centrality of language in French diplomatic strategies, can be addressed through the concept of “soft power.” Joseph Nye first conceptualized the notion of soft power by dividing state action aiming to control other nations into two kinds of power: hard and soft.8 Traditionally, powerful states used military and coercive power (hard power) to “get others to do what they otherwise would not.”9 A shift toward soft power occurred when war, conquest, and military intimidation extracted too great a cost—human, but above all economic (in part because greater economic interdependence led to increased local repercussions of distant troubles). Simultaneously, private actors grew to have a more central role in global politics at a time when technologies, communications, and products became new instruments of power. These contemporary factors made power relations between states more complex and led Nye to conceptualize the notion of soft power. Rather than coercive force, soft power is about “co-optive power”: that is to say, “getting others to want what you want,” rather than “ordering others to do what you want.”10 The underlying conception is that “if [a state’s] culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow.”11

Nye’s analysis stemmed from the drastic changes in international relations and world trade, and the shift in U.S. policies, in the 1980s, in the historical and geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War. Nye’s definition thus drew mainly on U.S. examples, as it was theorized for that country’s foreign policy. Although it has become more common to apply the notion of soft power to French policy, one could argue that the French conception of power has to be bent to fit into Nye’s understanding.12 This gap between U.S. and French understandings of soft power is not surprising if we think of the gap between France’s and the United States’ foreign policy and maybe even the way each conceives of politics. Indeed, if the two countries share a similar notion of hard power (wielded by the state through the channels of military coercion, diplomacy, and economic threats), Nye’s soft power fails to fully transfer to the reality of French politics, though both countries politics have also been characterized by cultural and linguistic imperialism.13

Soft power’s focus on co-optive power and influence allows us to reevaluate French strategies. This analysis of the spread of French language in Palestine also relies on the concept of influence strategies. The specifics of the French language instruction network in Palestine (a territory never under official French authority) will help us define the exceptional quality of the relationship between French language and French policy. The Holy Land is quite an interesting case to address those policies, given the long history of relations with France, the long history of French language presence, and the fact the France
never had an official mandate over the country. Drawing on French diplomatic archives, the spread of French is to be understood here from the point of view of the “spreaders” or planners, rather than its effects – defined by Robert Phillipson as “the adoption of a given language by individuals.” Specific to French diplomacy and particularly pregnant in Palestine is the paradox that resides in the ties between secular France and French religious congregations, a paradox that revolves around the French language.

**Diplomacy and Religion: A French Paradox**

In the early years of the existence of a French consulate in Jerusalem, state and religion were not separated in France, nor in its institutions abroad. France even had a religious function in the Holy Land: secular France was the protector of Catholics. When the consulate opened in 1843, the first French consul in Jerusalem, Jean de Lantivy, was tasked with defending Christian interests. As he stated in one of his addresses:

> The King’s government, when it assigned me the mission to go to Palestine and defend the rights and interests of Christians, also gave me the order to pass through Rome and receive the Holy See. It is therefore as a consul and as a Christian that I lay down at the feet of the Holy Father my respectful and filial tribute and implore His benediction so that heavens give me the strength and courage to fulfill with success the high yet difficult mission that was confided in me.\(^\text{15}\)

The title of Protector of Christians and of Christian Holy Places was mainly inherited from the capitulations signed by French and Ottoman leaders, which granted a number of privileges (tax privileges, judicial privileges, and a certain protection) to French merchants.\(^\text{16}\) Those privileges were extended to French nationals, including those belonging to a French congregation and, as a consequence, that religious role grew to include a certain ambiguity in the definition of whether a congregation was French or not. Patrick Cabanel phrases this ambiguity as follows: “To be Catholic is to be French, protected by or a client of France (and vice versa) and even more to speak French.”\(^\text{17}\)

France never denied this religious role, though it diminished to become mainly symbolical nowadays, and the separation between state and religion in the twentieth century did not affect the bonds that had tied France to the congregations. The strongest of these bonds was, and still is, the French language. In the first decades of France’s diplomatic development after the establishment of the consulate, the French language was the third side of a triangle uniting language with religion and politics. In that sense, the roles played by school and catechism were not so different and both religion and language were considered part of a “civilizing mission.” A conference held in Jerusalem in 1900 was entitled “La mission civilisatrice de la langue” (the Civilizing Mission of Language), indicating the centrality of language in the implementation of French colonial ambitions and ideology in Palestine.\(^\text{18}\)
At the turn of the twentieth century, France officially became secular and it became impossible to speak publicly of an undifferentiated French and Catholic influence. However, even though France distanced itself from religion, relations with the congregations were unhindered. In fact, though they had been forbidden or expelled from France, these communities were largely supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the consular missions, in Jerusalem and the rest of the world. Léon Gambetta, a late nineteenth-century statesman, described this discrepancy between secular domestic and religiously supportive foreign policies by stating: “Anticlericalism is not an article of exportation.”

Diplomats saw in the presence of French language a powerful tool of influence, and that was significantly more important than the revolutionary creed of protecting state decisions from the church’s intrusion. As we will see, what happened was the opposite, with the intrusion of the state in religious affairs. For France, what was meaningful was that congregations made possible the spread of French language. Catholic schools, orphanages, and, to a lesser degree, hospitals were considered powerful instruments. In 1934, the French consul in Jerusalem said of les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, one of the first French congregations to open a French school and one of the most prolific in that regard: “These schools, though they are not as important and as well-handled as the ones in Egypt, are nevertheless quite useful to support our culture. Thanks to them, the knowledge and the use of French language continues in the business sector and in what can be called the elite of society.”

Religious schools were perfectly relevant institutions due to the fact that they welcomed not only Christians but also Muslim and Jewish students. The latter community’s presence decreased with the creation of Jewish schools by European Jewish immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century and during the British Mandate. Among these schools were those created by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), a French association and an important partner for France until the creation of Israel in 1948. Though relations between the consulate and the AIU were less advertised than those with Christian congregations, they were also considered an asset in the spread of French among the Jewish population.

It is worth noting that, though it played an important role in Lebanon and in French colonies, the Mission Laique (the “Secular Mission”) never really managed to settle in Palestine. This failure might be explained in part by the central role of religion in Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities where French was then taught.

The paradoxical bond between France and the religious instructors of French language can be explained by the strategy of influence. The French language was considered the bearer of significant potential power. Language had become a fundamental element of the definition of the French nation inside France’s borders (in a time when those borders were expanding), it was also a fundamental element of the imperialist ideology outside its borders.
Language and Soft Power

Compared to the American conception of soft power, France uses one main channel of co-optive power: cultural diplomacy. Indeed, the very concept of diplomatie culturelle was imagined to describe this French approach of diplomacy. This French diplomatic strategy emerged prior to the United States’ emergence to superpower status. In this conception of cultural diplomacy, the “products” are of a specific kind: networks of French cultural centers, academic scholarships, lectures, and, above all, as a star product, the French language. It is, therefore, understandable that when the notion of soft power is brought forward to speak about France, it almost inevitably refers to this cultural diplomacy, if not to French language itself. Two factors lie underneath this: the centrality of French in France’s identity and the centrality of France in the spread of the French language. It seems almost unconceivable in most consuls’ discourse that France’s influence could exist if not through French or in French.

Though U.S. soft power also relies on language, it does so to a significantly lesser extent. This can be partly explained by the variety of goods the United States spreads: cultural products are just one among a range of soft power instruments. Further, though the universality of the English language is an incontestably important instrument of power, it is not associated with a single source (though the United States has a stronger influence in the world, the British Council remains an important instrument for English language instruction), whereas France retains a central role in the spread of the French language and in the Francophonie itself. One could also argue that it is no longer necessary for the United States to engage in costly policies to promote English, since it is widely considered an essential, almost vital language. Therefore, though the United States and Great Britain had and still have an active role in the propagation of English, its spread is not as dependent on these countries’ policies as the spread of the French language is on French policy.

The second difference between U.S. and French mobilization of soft power that is apparent in the case of the Holy Land is the target of these policies. The most emblematic present-day examples of American soft power are McDonald’s restaurants, Coca Cola products, blue jeans, Hollywood movies, and American music. These consumer products (including cultural ones) are widespread geographically and socially. They manage to impact all social layers, especially popular classes, and enter even those countries most politically opposed to the United States. Nye qualifies the effects of these products, which do not necessarily produce a direct and univocal outcome, but which can impact behaviors: “Of course there is an element of triviality and fad in popular behavior, but it is also true that a country that stands astride popular channels of communication has more opportunities to get its messages across and to affect the preferences of others.” France’s politics, meanwhile, have always had a more restricted target: “elites.” This is made particularly clear in the consulate’s archives, where the strategy that emerges is to teach French to future economic and (primarily) political leaders. This choice of target is closer to the policy pursued by Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than the one pursued by the United States.
In 1881, for instance, the French consul in Jerusalem insisted, in a letter sent to the minister of foreign affairs, that schools were able to influence “the youth, who will modify the political destiny of their country.” Over the following decades, this policy never changed in Jerusalem, and though a few initiatives targeted refugees or non-urban citizens, they were never at the center of the French political agenda. As Jacques d’Aumale, consul in 1929, explained:

> French has never been the vehicular language of the common people, it will never be and it does not matter to our country’s prestige that some village girl or boy can recite “Le loup et l’agneau” or ask for a gratuity in French. . . . French can and should only be the language of the elite, as it has always been since the British occupation.

Until today, this is still the central target of France’s language strategy in Palestine. The main objective is quite clear: to have direct access, relations, or even control over potential future decision-makers in Palestine. This objective meets those describes by Nye in his definition of soft power, but the target is more restricted and more likely to have a direct effect on the country’s politics.

The difference in terms of the channels used (language and cultural products in France’s strategies, consumption and cultural goods in the U.S. case) and the public targeted (the elite versus all social classes) results in a more restricted scope of power. That limited scope is also a result of a centralized conception of power and control. When the French language became a substitute for what used to unite state and religion, it became not only the embodiment of a peaceful relationship, but was often leveraged to maintain or extend what is fundamental to French cultural diplomacy: control.

**Diplomatic Leverage**

The aforementioned gap between domestic and foreign policies meant that the consulate had to struggle with authorities at home and in country: with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to justify the contributions to religious bodies, and with local and religious authorities who might see French funding as a form of political interference. For the French authorities in Jerusalem, French language instruction was the one argument that could be used with all of these actors to justify support for these schools. France’s support materialized diplomatically and financially. On the diplomatic side, relying on (and reactivating) the consulate’s role as the protector of Christians, the consulate intervened in administrative matters, such as tax exemptions and judicial affairs. A significant example of this diplomatic action happened in 1945, when René Neuville, French general consul, sent a memorandum to the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine arguing that whatever should happen to Palestine (given the uncertainty that accompanied the end of British Mandate), the *œuvres françaises* should be preserved.

On the financial side, the consulate made decisions regarding grants and material
supplies. Financial support, which came either from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from organizations like the Alliance Française, was awarded to congregations through the consulate. With each decade, the application form that schools and centers had to fill became more precise, and the place and status of French became more important. French thus became the cornerstone of all negotiations between the consular mission and the members of the French teaching network. France turned the teaching of French into a condition for financial support. The amount of financial support was decided according to what schools declared in forms and reports and consular agents’ observations. Among the information sought was the number of hours of French language instruction and other school subjects taught in French, the number of French nationals on the teaching staff, the number of French diplomas delivered, and so on.

The schools themselves were talented in using this matter as leverage. In the Christian schools, the directors sometimes referred to their love of the motherland and mother tongue, then at other times threatened to “take shelter” in the protection of other nations if France’s support were to weaken. Indeed, this leverage game is to be understood in the context of competition between European powers in Palestine, and around the world more broadly. Colonial expansion, the French defeat in Prussia in 1870, and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire help explain this race for domination in “a powder keg of rival imperialisms.”33 Indeed, languages other than French were also used as leverage in a struggle for influence fought by the powers trying to obtain influence in Palestine (Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and so on).

The Israelite schools experienced the same process. In 1911, for instance, Germany offered a Jaffa school protection in exchange for the suppression of French in favor of German in its programs.34 The school chose French protection but they used this offer to underline how easily they could leave a realm of protection to join another. But these educational institutions did not hold all the cards. In fact, French language teaching was not only used to maintain ties between the consulate and religious schools, but could also be held up to remind these institutions of the frailty of this relationship. In 1914, for instance, when a Jewish school, the Gymnase Ibrit, asked for French protection, the consul responded: “I hear that French language teaching does not reach the intensity that we could expect in exchange for French protection.”35

State Control

Of course, French language alone was not enough to achieve influence and it is obvious that behind the “propagation of the language” lay the propagation of control. In other words, for this language spread to have the desired influence, France had to maintain some form of control. Consequently, French authorities considered the few attempts to run an institution partly independent from the consulate to be a threat. Indeed, France saw such initiatives, though they could be seen as another instrument to “spread” French (without spending any money), as a true problem. In 1906, the French vice consul in Jaffa wrote to the consul in Jerusalem regarding the creation of a Greek school. He described how
this could arouse fears regarding the future prosperity of the Frères’ school because of the Greek school’s “curriculum, which gives a significant place to the study of French language.”36 In this case, it is obvious that French language instruction was not enough to rejoice, for it was not accompanied by some form of control over the institution.

The “language struggle in schools,” as a local newspaper called it at the time,37 was the frame in which the consulate’s attempts to keep and increase its authority and domination over the French language teaching network developed. However, the underlying imperialism that motivated those considerations faced drastic changes in the mid-twentieth century. The British Mandate over Palestine, followed by the creation of Israel in 1948, and Egyptian and Jordanian control over what was left of Palestinian lands, meant tighter institutionalization of schools and cultural institutes by post-Ottoman sovereigns. Local authorities took control of educational programs and started questioning or even forbidding private and foreign funding. A number of France’s traditional partners started to distance themselves in order to be integrated into the new order: Catholic schools, to survive, often had to put English first during the British Mandate, then Arabic or Hebrew after the creation of Israel, in order to receive funds and the authorization to stay open and teach; and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which was originally anti-Zionist, integrated Israel’s national educational system into its curricula (one reason being that Israel forbade registration in foreign schools).

To counterbalance the exclusion or marginalization of French institutions, the consulate undertook a Francization movement: locally founded cultural associations teaching French were turned into French-managed Centres Culturel Français from the 1950s until the 1990s, while cooperation programs with universities were started to keep an eye on newly founded French language departments. This process of centralization is a symptom of another key difference between American soft power and French cultural diplomacy, which lies in France’s desire for control.

A core aspect of Nye’s soft power lies in the weight given to private actors. In the original understanding of the notion, power depends only partially on the role of state and is in the hands of a variety of actors: private companies, transnational actors, non-governmental organizations, cultural companies, immigrants, and so on.38 In the case of France, the decentralized conception of power is almost completely missing. As seen with French language teaching in Palestine, the network includes non-state actors (congregational schools, private schools, but also transnational organizations like Alliance Française or, more recently, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie or Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie), but the tendency has been toward centralization rather than the diversification of actors.39 Of course, this has to be put into perspective with France’s deeply centralized conception of state as opposed to a decentralized, federal, and more liberal U.S. model. Though France is a world economic power, its private actors are far less implanted worldwide than U.S. companies. For the latter, the private sector has become a strong stakeholder. This makes an essential difference when we think in terms of diplomacy, for the French version includes more political voluntarism, while the American understanding depends on more than one institutional planner. This is why former minister of foreign affairs Laurent Fabius speaks of French “influential power” rather than soft power.40
Conclusion

Due to the relationship between France and the Holy Land, an analysis of the entanglement between the dissemination of language and the desire for influence and control is particularly interesting in this case. Previous research has addressed the relationship between France and former colonies and the role played by language in these relations. In Palestine’s case, though it played a role as the protector of Christians, France was never an official authority. Focusing on soft power policies performed by an exogenous power (which never held sovereignty) thus sheds a different light on these political and linguistic strategies. Such attempts at ensuring control over a territory where one has no mandate to act raises the question of interventionism. French language is a core element of France’s definition of its identity; thus, wherever France’s imperialism reaches, French is present and even an active part in this process. The linguistic ideologies underlying these schemes imply that language, as an instrument of influence, is capable of producing change and ensuring control. In that regard, the bond between language and diplomacy, though it applies to other states as well, is certainly at its deepest in France’s case. Moreover, the specific historical case of a powerful country whose linguistic prominence declined explains both the scope of the cultural and linguistic network and the political voluntarism needed for that network to remain attractive and efficient. The spread of language through political voluntarism can be considered a strategy of soft hegemony, an intervention without violence; it exploits, however, not just any instrument, but one that is profoundly related to culture and identity and which can therefore affects deep national structures.

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Endnotes

2 The consulate opened in 1843, but French diplomatic missions had existed earlier, though discontinuously.
4 Diplomatic Archive Center (CADN) in Nantes, France.
5 At that time it was the parlers d’Oil or dialects of northern France.
6 French language was already present and to a certain degree spread in the Holy Land, but language planning policies were elaborated and carried out mainly from the mid-nineteenth century on.
7 French was the lingua franca in the region until the establishment of the British Mandate.

Jerusalem Quarterly 71 | 67 |


12 For examples of the application of the concept to the French context, see the articles in *Revue internationale et stratégique* 89, no. 1 (2013); Didier Billion, Frédéric Martel, and Laurent Fabius, *Diplomatie d’influence Entretien avec Laurent Fabius* (Paris: IRIS, Armand Colin, 2013).


17 Patrick Cabanel, *Une France en Méditerranée: écoles, langue et culture françaises, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Grane, France: Créaphis, 2006), 20.

18 Letter from the Alliance Française to the Consul, 1900, CADN, Jérusalem, Série A, dossier 120.


20 CADN, Jérusalem, Série B, dossier 187.

21 During the first years of existence of the AIU schools in Palestine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised the Consulate to give an unofficial support to its schools. That support, which was mainly material until the 1930s, became official and financial up until the creation of Israel.

22 The exception was a French cultural center (the Centre de Culture Française de Jérusalem) in the 1930s, which was closed a few years after opening.


25 Chaubet and Martin, *Histoire des relations culturelles*.

26 Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*.


28 Edward Said, in “Between Worlds,” describes in those terms the British school he attended in Cairo: “All my early education had, however, been in élite colonial schools, English public schools designed by the British to bring up a generation of Arabs with natural ties to Britain. The last one I went to before I left the Middle East to go to the United States was Victoria College in Cairo, a school in effect created to educate those ruling-class Arabs and Levantines who were going to take over after the British left.” Edward Said, “Between Worlds,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 556.

29 CADN, Jérusalem, Série A, dossier 88 (1881).


31 However, much as in the original meaning of soft power, targeting a wider and more popular public, the effects are almost impossible to measure.


33 Cabanel, *Une France en Méditerranée*, 12.

34 Lycée de Jaffa, CADN, Jerusalem, Série A, dossier 137.

35 CADN, Jérusalem, Série A, dossier 137.


39 This is in keeping with French language teaching networks elsewhere in this regard.

When President Grover Cleveland nominated Nageeb J. Arbeely to the post of consul of Jerusalem in 1885, it was startling in many ways. First and foremost, Arbeely was an immigrant from the Ottoman Empire, a member of the “first Syrian immigrant family” to the United States, and certainly the first Syrian-American to be awarded a diplomatic post. He was young – only twenty-four when he was appointed – recently naturalized, and not at all well known. Although he came from a Democratic state, he was not politically connected. How did he come to be appointed and why did he never serve?

The “First Syrian Immigrant Family”

Nageeb Arbeely was the fourth of six sons of Yusef Awad al-Kaloush (Arbeely) and Mary Durany. Shortly before his birth in 1860, the family fled strife-torn Damascus for Beirut. There Yusef established an Orthodox school for the sons of other Damascene exiles and worked with the American missionary Cornelius Van Dyck on an Arabic translation of the Bible. Two of his three elder sons attended Syrian Protestant College – which would later become the American University of Beirut – and became physicians, while Nageeb and his two younger brothers attended grammar and high school.

After almost eighteen years in Beirut, the entire family, including a niece, sailed to New York, arriving on 20 August 1878. Their arrival was noticed (they were wearing “native dress”) and on their third day a reporter from the New-York Daily Tribune wrote a long, admiring article about them, the content obviously provided...
Figure 1. Arbeely family portrait taken in Beirut, c. 1878. Seated from left: Nasseem, Mary, Yusef, and Habeeb. Standing from left: Abraham, Khaleel, Fadlallah, and Nageeb. Later annotation is by Nageeb. Image courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.
by the family; more than one of them spoke fluent English. Joseph, as Yusef came to be called, produced letters of reference from American missionaries (including Van Dyck) and other Western clergy and gave a full accounting of his escape from the “tyranny of the Turks,” as well as of his myriad accomplishments. He looked forward to his younger sons being educated in the United States. Three days later, it was reported that he and his older sons had filed their first naturalization papers. Joseph was offered a job teaching Arabic to missionaries-in-training at the Presbyterian college in Maryville, Tennessee, and two weeks after they arrived the family took the train west and settled down in Maryville, a rural town with a population of 1,100. Although the town had probably seen few foreigners, and fewer “Orientals,” the members of the family were treated with equanimity if not downright enthusiasm and they were quickly able to count several residents as friends.

They called themselves and were recognized as the “first Syrian immigrant family” in the United States. They took the role of pioneer seriously, hoping other Syrians would follow, and they spent the first decade of their stay searching for the ideal spot to found a Syrian colony (they never succeeded). A photograph of the family taken in Tennessee shows Joseph holding a sign in Arabic that reads, “Here my children and I are pleased with freedom” – clearly meant for their friends and relatives back home. They also felt it incumbent on them to present Syria in the best possible light to their American hosts, and their fluency in English as well as in storytelling furthered this goal.

Nageeb studied law at Maryville College and taught French there as well. Even before he graduated in 1882, he, his father, and one or two of his brothers began to
A Novel Entertainment.

An interesting exhibition on Palestine and Egypt by Native Arabs, will be given at the Second Presbyterian Church on the 7th inst., at 7:35 p.m. Khawagat Nageeb Yusuf and Habeeb Arbeely, of Damascus, in their illustrated discourse, will appear in the curious dresses of all the tribes of the Holy Land, men and women, and exhibit their Biblical Household Utensils, Furniture, Implements of Industry, Musical Instruments, and perform on them; Argelles, reciters, Books, Products, etc., so as to cause the hearer to be an eye witness to Oriental Manners and Biblical Customs. The Marriage Feast of the Druzes of Mt. Lebanon, which is so amusing and instructive, will be reenacted. A Mohammedan Prayer by a Howling Dervish from Jerusalem, will be given, with the history of Missionaries in Syria. Also the Famous Sword Exercise. Admission fee, 25 cents, and 13 for children under 13 years.

Figure 3. Advertisement for Arbeely performance, Register (Wheeling, West Virginia), 27 September 1883.

Figure 4. “Nageeb J. Arbeely, The Syrian Lecturer Dressed Like a Mohammedan Sheik from Damascus,” Washington, DC, c. 1883. Image courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

travel around eastern Tennessee and then all over the east coast giving lectures on “Life in the Holy Land,” or “Mohammedan customs,” often dressing up in Arab garb and demonstrating Muslims praying, sword fighting, or dancing. Admission was 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children. They were not the first “native” performers in America, but they were unique: Western-educated, Christian, “natives of the Holy Land,” and able to lecture in English as well as perform. On one of these tours (in May, 1881), Nageeb and his father visited the White House, accompanied by Quaker friends from Tennessee.

“Consul” Nageeb J. Arbeely

The three youngest brothers were naturalized together in Knoxville in January of 1884, and in July Nageeb wrote to President Chester Arthur asking that he be considered for the position of consul-general of Egypt. He submitted letters of support from various prominent citizens of both Tennessee and Washington, D.C., including the “entire Tennessee Delegation.” His file includes an announcement of one of his local performances, which he obviously thought strengthened his application. After Grover Cleveland took office, Arbeely had a meeting with him to press his case, and he went away thinking that the post was his, but in the end Cleveland nominated someone else. Undaunted, Arbeely wrote to Cleveland’s secretary of state outlining his qualifications for an alternative consular post. As he claimed to speak six languages and to “have lived at different times in Smyrna, Beyroot, and Jerusalem, and visited on business Tangier, Tunis and other parts of the French dominions,” he
felt he would be a suitable appointee to any of those cities. This second application was successful: on 15 October 1885, Cleveland nominated him to the post of Consul at Jerusalem. He was quickly approved by the Senate and received his diplomatic passport less than two weeks later.

He was to take the place of Consul Selah Merrill, a Congregational minister and archaeologist who had been appointed in 1882. Ruth Kark asserts that Arbeely’s appointment was purely political: Cleveland, a Democrat, was replacing all Republican appointees. There is nothing in Arbeely’s file that indicates his own political affiliation, but the “entire Tennessee Delegation” was Democratic, which was enough to recommend him. Another factor in Arbeely’s favor may have been Merrill’s propensity for making enemies in Jerusalem – not just among the “natives,” both Jews and Arabs, but among his own countrymen, especially those of the American Colony – who were trying to have him removed. They accused him of corruption, “falsifications of vouchers . . . neglect of official duties . . . bribe-taking, etc.” Merrill was employed by the English tour company Thomas Cook and Son as its agent in Palestine. Not an unusual arrangement in itself (many American consuls supplemented their salaries), it did leave him open to accusations (including from the American envoy in Constantinople) that he was liable to put his business interests ahead of his consular responsibilities and might be more loyal to Britain than America.

The American residents of Jerusalem were waiting anxiously for a new consul to be named. Rolla Floyd, a tour guide based in Jaffa, who was in fierce competition with – and hated – Merrill, grumbled, “If the old brute is not changed, I shall put the United States Government down as being quite as rotten as the Turkish, for a more mean scamp than the so-called American Consul in Jerusalem cannot be found.” He was told of Arbeely’s appointment in November: “His name is Doctor N. J. Arbeely of Tennessee (but he is a Greek). Let him be a Turk – it would be impossible to be worse than Selah Merrill, D. D.”

Nageeb left the United States in November of 1885, but instead of going directly to Jerusalem, he went to Constantinople at the urging of Secretary of State T. F. Bayard, apparently trying to head off what was already seen as a potential problem: the Ottoman government threatening to withhold Arbeely’s accreditation because the Ottomans still considered him an Ottoman subject. Arbeely’s letter to Bayard from Constantinople was not optimistic: “My being at a loss: what to do in case of my prospective failure to get an exequatur from the Turkish Authorities.” He must have still thought that he would be accredited, however, because he went on to Jerusalem, where he was welcomed by the American Colony and Jewish and Muslim residents alike as the incoming consul. Floyd thought Arbeely “a very nice man” and “well educated in 7 languages,” but he expressed his worry that Arbeely might not be acceptable to the Ottoman government, an indication that news of the problem had already been bruited about the city. A letter to Floyd from Samuel Cox, the American envoy in Constantinople, promised that if Arbeely was not confirmed, he (Cox) would do everything in his power to have Merrill replaced. Hedging his bets, Arbeely had already begun petitioning the American government to consider him for some other consular post if the Turkish government refused to accept him.

Despite Arbeely’s inclusion on the official list of U.S. consuls serving in 1885 and 1886...
(giving his salary as 2,000 dollars per year plus fees earned of 70 dollars, which would most likely have been drawn by Merrill, who remained at his post while Arbeely waited for accreditation) and being listed as consul in several guidebooks published in 1886 and 1887, Arbeely did not take up consular duties, nor did he move into the consulate. While the job was in limbo, Merrill continued to act as consul, much to Floyd’s and the American Colony’s disgust. Floyd blamed “Merrill & the Cooks brib[ing] the Turks to not give him affirmation,” but that seems unnecessarily conspiratorial, given that the Ottomans’ refusal to recognize its subjects’ American citizenship was something that had bedeviled U.S.–Ottoman relations throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Under the capitulatory system, foreign nationals were generally outside the jurisdiction of Ottoman law. But the question arose as to whether Ottoman subjects who became naturalized citizens of the United States and then returned to the Ottoman Empire fell under this exemption. The Ottomans claimed they did not, since Ottoman law stated that no one could become a citizen of another country without the Ottoman government’s express permission, while the Americans said they did: *jus sanguinis* versus *jus soli*.30
Much of the diplomatic correspondence between the American secretary of state and his envoy in Constantinople, the American envoy and the Ottoman government, and the secretary of state and the Ottoman legation in Washington concerned this issue. One can sense the diplomats’ frustration at the intransigence of the Ottoman position and their own government’s inability to resolve the issue, as other Western nations had been able to do.

As was its sovereign right, the Ottoman government refused to issue the exequatur for Arbeely’s appointment on the grounds that he was still an Ottoman subject and therefore could not represent the United States government in the Ottoman Empire. The U.S. secretary of state admitted privately that the Porte’s “refusal to receive Mr. Arbeely was not without ambiguity,” but averred that Arbeely’s legitimate claims as an American citizen could not take precedence over the Porte’s right of approving Arbeely as consul.31 The decision, he said, “cannot be questioned.”32

The American government’s acceptance without demur of the Porte’s position was not, however, quite as straightforward as it appeared. In January 1886, Merrill had written to the assistant secretary of state accusing Arbeely of all sorts of misconduct, such as pretending that he did not speak Arabic and lying about his birthplace; Merrill thought Arbeely was dissembling in order to convince the Ottoman authorities that he (Arbeely) was American-born and therefore acceptable as consul. It is unlikely that Arbeely would have denied his heritage, given that he had bragged about his fluency in Arabic and his Syrian birthplace in all his application documents, clearly considering them assets. Merrill also complained that Arbeely had paid a call on the mutasarrif of Jerusalem without informing or inviting Merrill: “His [Arbeely’s] conduct in this respect was a direct insult to the consul, to the United States consulate in Jerusalem, and to the United States Government by whose sufferance he had this opportunity of dishonoring it.”33 Merrill’s intemperate rhetoric seems out of proportion to this supposed “insult,” especially since Arbeely claimed his visit to the mutasarrif was a personal, not an official, call; but Merrill was often intemperate when it came to those he considered enemies.

Perhaps more damming was Merrill’s assertion that Arbeely, as an Arab, would be unable to act as an American consul should: “Among these Oriental people the ties of kindred and family are so strong that no cause of an American citizen and no American interest if brought before a native of the country acting as consul, for his decision could possibly receive justice, supposing such cause or interest were in conflict with the interests of his family or friends.”34 The patronizing tone of the letter shows clearly why so many residents of Jerusalem hated Merrill, yet it may have influenced the department of state’s refusal to fight for Arbeely.

Although it is unlikely that Arbeely had seen Merrill’s letter, the latter must have broadcast his accusations around town, because Arbeely wrote an 11-page rebuttal in February to Secretary Bayard, with the signatures of more than 65 Jerusalem residents, including Arab and American clergy, dragomans, merchants, lawyers, and teachers.35 It is rather impressive that in a few short months he was able to garner such support. When he received no satisfaction, he sent a desperate telegram to the secretary begging him to “delay transfer” until he could travel to Constantinople (“at my own expense”) to plead his case.36 Nageeb’s father also wrote a letter to Bayard complaining about the
“injustice” done to the young man.\textsuperscript{37} All fell on deaf ears. Whether the Americans could have changed the Ottoman position is debatable, but they did not try. Perhaps the American powers-that-be had remembered Arbeely’s well-known stage performances, in which he deliberately presented himself as “other,” reminding them, as had Merrill’s letter, that he was an Arab and not really American, and thus not deserving of any extraordinary effort.

Congress officially withdrew Arbeely’s nomination on 25 May 1886, simultaneous with Cleveland’s nomination of Henry Gillman of Michigan to the post. Arbeely submitted his final accounts on 25 June and made a last sightseeing trip in July, traveling with Floyd to the Jordan Valley. Gillman arrived in November, and Arbeely left soon afterwards. His health had been so adversely affected by the stress that he would have to go to Damascus to recover; to add insult to injury, he had to fight to be reimbursed for the expenses he incurred in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{38} He had been in Palestine for a year, struggling in vain for a position he never assumed.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{After Jerusalem}

Arbeely didn’t return to the United States for more than a year, perhaps reluctant to show his face in America so soon after the debacle.\textsuperscript{40} After his return in December 1887, with the wound still raw, he wrote a long letter to President Cleveland describing the humiliations he had suffered at Merrill’s hands: “My defeat was caused by a conspiracy connived at by some of these [consulate] employees together with ‘Cooks Tourist Company,’ which had acquired the actual control of the Consulate during my predecessor’s time.” But he also brought up the vexed question of the rights of naturalized citizens in the Ottoman Empire: “To abide by such a precedent would be to practically deny me with a large number of others, the invaluable rights of ‘American citizenship.’”\textsuperscript{41} He again begged the President for an alternative diplomatic appointment; this plea too went unanswered.

Despite what must have been a bitter disappointment, he resumed his life in the United States and made the best of it. He was ever after referred to as “Ex-Consul Arbeely” – perhaps he insisted on it – and was careful to keep the details of his defeat a secret. In an 1888 newspaper interview, almost two years after leaving Jerusalem, he said, “In 1885 President Cleveland appointed me Consul at Jerusalem, and I retained that position until a few months ago, when I resigned in order that I might devote myself to my pet project – the fostering of commercial relations between the United States and Egypt and Turkey.”\textsuperscript{42}

He settled in New York and resumed lecturing on the “Customs and Manners of the Inhabitants of the Holy Land,” now armed with first-hand knowledge. On one notable occasion, he assembled a troupe of Syrians to perform for 1,500 Shriners in New York’s Madison Square.\textsuperscript{43} He was hired as an interpreter at Ellis Island in 1890 and promoted to inspector in 1895, eventually earning a salary of 1,000 dollars a year. His growing family (he married in 1892) required that he supplement his Ellis Island salary: he imported and sold Syrian goods; purchased concessions at the many world’s
fairs, which he then rented out to Syrian merchants; acted as agent for various Syrian businesses; and worked as a notary public (“in six languages”), all of which he continued to do throughout his life.

He was one of only two Syrian members of the American Oriental Society. He claimed to have written and then translated a book on Syrian antiquities and to contribute regularly to the Cairo literary journal al-Muqtataf. Perhaps his greatest achievement and certainly his most lasting legacy, however, was founding with his brother Abraham the first Arabic newspaper in the western hemisphere, Kawkab America, in 1892. It was read all over the United States and its territories, in the Caribbean and in Central and South America, and in the Ottoman Empire itself. The newspaper promoted Syrian immigration and fostered dialogue both within the diaspora and between members of the diaspora and those still at home. Its press published the first Arabic books in the United States, including a massive Arabic–English phrase book written by Abraham. Nageeb became the person American reporters appealed to when they wanted an expert opinion on Syrian immigration or the cultural or political views of Syrians in America, and he wrote frequently to the New York papers, defending Syrians and the Syrian colony from aspersions cast on them. The fact that he spoke fluent English certainly helped, as did his willingness to opine on almost any subject. Nageeb thus fulfilled, in a way, his father’s dream of paving the way for Syrians in America.

Nageeb Arbeely suffered a stroke in 1900, forcing him to give up the newspaper and his job at Ellis Island. Planning to take up again the legal career he had abandoned

Figure 6. The front page of Kawkab America, 27 January 1893.

Figure 7. Memorial card for Nageeb, 1904. Courtesy of Habeeb Joseph Arbeely and Dania Arbeely, Houston, Texas.
in Tennessee, he was admitted to the New York Bar in October of 1903, but this career was cut short by his death a few months later at the age of 42. He died intestate, leaving assets worth less than 200 dollars. The family lost their Brooklyn home and the property Nageeb had bought in California, and his widow was forced to take a job at Ellis Island to support her six young children (the youngest born after his father’s death), a sad aftermath to the pioneering life journey of “Ex-Consul” Nageeb J. Arbeely.


Endnotes
1 The term “Syria” as used in this paper refers not to the present-day nation-state, but to Greater Syria, which included Lebanon and Palestine as well as parts of today’s Syria.
2 For a summary of the family’s life, see my blog, kalimahpress.com/blog/the-first-syrian-immigrant-family/.
4 At least that is what was reported in the American press. “Free at Last,” New York Herald, 25 August 1878, 4. The law stated that an alien had to be in the country two years before he or she could file first papers, so perhaps the newspaper mistook Joseph’s stated intention to become a citizen for the act itself.
5 It is not clear whether he had been offered this job before he departed Beirut or whether it came to him only after he arrived.
7 Indeed, this photograph comes from the Arbeely family in Houston, TX, the descendants of Yusef’s brother Habib who remained in Damascus.
8 He was credited with speaking between seven and sixteen languages, exaggerations he himself probably put about. In his first application letter, he claimed to speak six and read nine. Nageeb Joseph Arbeely to President Chester Arthur, 17 July 1884, Washington, DC (datelined “YMCA Building, New York Ave.”), in National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Hayes-Garfield-Arthur Administrations, Box 3.
9 Their performances are captured in a series of wonderful photographs housed at the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian Institution. See, for example, siris-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?&profile=all&source=~/siarchives&uri=full=3100001~!53952~!0#focus (accessed 30 November 2016). Most of these images are dated either 1887 or 1889, but judging by the brothers’ appearance, they were taken earlier.
10 Joseph and his two youngest sons, Habeeb and Nasseem, all attended Earlham College, a Quaker school in Richmond, Indiana, between 1885 and 1888; the young men became Quakers during that time. I have found no evidence that any other family members were Quakers.
11 Nageeb J. Arbeely to President Chester A. Arthur, 17 July 1884, Washington, DC (datelined “YMCA Building, New York Ave.”), in NARA RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Hayes-Garfield-Arthur Administrations, Box 3. The letter – beautifully penned (it seems not to be Arbeely’s handwriting) and in perfect English, with calligraphed Arabic salutation and signature – begins: “Encouraged by a deep conviction in your magnanimity as a sympathizing President who would not withhold encouragement from one of Syria’s struggling sons . . .” Where he got the idea to apply for this rather exalted post is not clear.
12 One of those he appealed to for support was James D. Porter, former governor of Tennessee, who became assistant secretary of state under Cleveland.
13 Nageeb J. Arbeely to Secretary of State T. F. Bayard, 9 October 1885, Washington, DC
Merrill was said to have “denounced every “Our Ex-Consul at Jerusalem,”
Dreams and Diplomacy in the Holy Land:
Ruth Kark,
Jerusalem,”
Hebraist, Palestine Explorer, and U.S. Consul in
Selah Merrill, Nineteenth Century Christian
“intense disdain” for the Jews. Shalom Goldman,
November 2016). Goldman also notes Merrill’s
and-diplomacy-in-the-holy-land/ (accessed 1
online at www.shapell.org/exhibitions/dreams-
Israel, Jerusalem, 19 March 2013–2 March 2016,
American Consuls in Jerusalem in the 19th Century,” an exhibition of the National Library of
Israel, Jerusalem, 19 March 2013–2 March 2016, online at www.shapell.org/exhibitions/dreams-
and-diplomacy-in-the-holy-land/ (accessed 1
November 2016). Goldman also notes Merrill’s
“intense disdain” for the Jews. Shalom Goldman,
“The Holy Land Appropriated: The Careers of
Selah Merrill, Nineteenth Century Christian
Hebraist, Palestine Explorer, and U.S. Consul in Jerusalem,” American Jewish History, 85, no. 2
(June 1997): 152.
Merrill was said to have “denounced every member of the Colony as immoral, declaring that the stench of their ‘goings-on’ was the most putrid odor in the nostrils of Jerusalem.” Alexander Hume Ford, “Our American Colony at Jerusalem,” Appleton’s Magazine 8, no. 6 (December 1906): 652. Bertha Spafford Vester details at length the antipathy Merrill exhibited toward the American Colony over the many years he served, as well as the colony’s decades-long attempts to have him censured if not removed. Bertha Spafford Vester, Our Jerusalem: An American Family in the Holy City, 1881–1949 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1950). In 1908, the American Colony noted that it had sought “relief . . . in vain through cablegrams, letters, petitions and affidavits of facts, from ourselves and many others on our behalf.” American Colony to Theodore Roosevelt, 8 March 1908, Jerusalem, online at www.loc.gov/item/mamcol.034/ (accessed 20 January 2017). See also Note 39 below.
“Our Ex-Consul at Jerusalem,” Washington Post, 5 April 1886, 2. Perhaps submitted by a member of the American Colony, this article appeared only a month before Arbeely’s appointment was rescinded, suggesting that his accreditation was still seen as possible.
In a letter to Rolla Floyd, Samuel Cox promised that he would “look after your interest as an American and will protest against the U.S. Consulate being all English—.” Envoy Samuel Cox to Rolla Floyd, 5 January 1886, Istanbul (datelined “United States Legation, Constantinople”), in Helen Palmer Parsons, ed. Letters from Palestine, 1868–1912 (n.p.: Privately printed, 1981), 100. The fact that Merrill was reappointed to the post not once, but twice, indicates that none of these charges was taken seriously.
Floyd to his sister Aurilla Tabbutt, 18 October 1885, Jaffa, in Parsons, Letters, 95–96.
Floyd to Tabbutt, 17 November 1885, Jaffa, in Parsons, Letters, 96.
In her one reference to Arbeely, Vester cites a letter from her mother written on New Year’s Day, 1886: “In the evening Mr. Arbeely, the new American Consul, came to tea and spent the evening. All of our Mohammedan friends came and were so glad to see him. They gave him a hearty welcome.” Vester, Our Jerusalem, 149. See also “Dreams and Diplomacy in the Holy Land,” online at www.shapell.org/exhibitions/dreams-and-diplomacy-in-the-holy-land/.
Floyd to Tabbutt datelined “Jaffa, January 24, 1886,” in Parsons, Letters, 99.
Cox to Floyd dated January 5, 1886, reproduced in Floyd to Tabbutt datelined “Jaffa, January 24, 1886,” in Parsons, Letters, 100.
Nageeb J. Arbeely to Bayard, 16 December 1885 (see Note 21 above) and note from one J. J. Coughlin to a Mr. Bartle, 4 January 1886, confirming receipt of the request. NARA, RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Cleveland-Harrison Administrations, Box 3.
Floyd to Tabbutt, 12 July 1886, Jaffa, in Parsons, Letters, 105.
For a description of the history of negotiations between the two countries, see Leland J. Gordon, “The Turkish American Controversy over Nationality,” American Journal of International Law 25, no. 4 (1 October 1931): 658–669.
Gordon, “Controversy,” 660. A number of American newspaper articles quoted naturalized Syrian-Americans about their unpleasant experiences when they returned to Turkey: they were taxed, harassed, threatened with the draft and had their American citizenship denied.
“We may no longer regard him as our appointed Consul, but we cannot cease to regard him as a citizen whom we are to protect in all lawful

Jerusalem Quarterly 71 | 79 |
exercise of his personal rights if they be called in question.” Bayard to Cox, 24 March 1886, Washington, DC (datelined “Department of State”), in NARA M77, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1906, “Turkey.”

Bayard to Cox, 29 April 1886, Washington, DC (datelined “Department of State”), in NARA M77, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1906, “Turkey.” There were several cases brought before the American envoy in Constantinople in which the envoy was forced to agree that, by Ottoman law, without specific authorization of the Turkish government, a Turkish subject’s American naturalization was considered null and void. In Arbeely’s case, however, this justification was unnecessary, since the Porte had the absolute right to refuse a nominated consul.

This was Mehmet Sharif Rauf Pasha, whom Merrill referred to as the “pasha of Jerusalem.” Merrill to Assistant Secretary of State Porter, 22 January 1886, Jerusalem (datelined “Consulate of the United States”), NARA M453, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Jerusalem, Palestine, 1856–1906, Roll 4, 2 January 1886–20 December 1889.

Merrill to Assistant Secretary of State Porter, 22 January 1886, Jerusalem.

Nageeb J. Arbeely to Bayard, 15 March 1886, Jerusalem (datelined “Hotel Fel”), in NARA M453, Roll 4. The letter is divided into three parts. The first was Arbeely’s defense. The second, signed by more than 50 men (with “Rolla Floyd, American Citizen” being the last and largest signature), stated in part, “His appointment to this post is regarded by us, and the community at large, as one of the best the American Government has hitherto made.” The third, with 15 signatures said, “Having known N.J. Arbeely, Esq. and his estimable family personally & their high standing in Syria, we can consider null and void. In Arbeely’s case, however, this justification was unnecessary, since the Porte had the absolute right to refuse a nominated consul.

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The third, with 15 signatures said, “Having known N.J. Arbeely, Esq. and his estimable family personally & their high standing in Syria, we can say that the unscrupulous misrepresentations and fabrications made against him by his opponents [sic] have only increased the love & respect of the people of Jerusalem towards him as they have their contempt & condemnation against his unprincipilled [sic] assailants.”

Transcript of telegram from Nageeb J. Arbeely to Bayard, 30 April 1886, Jerusalem, in NARA M453, Roll 4.

Joseph Awad Arbeely to Bayard, 27 June 1886, Indiana (on Earlham College stationery, datelined “Ind.”), in NARA, RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Cleveland-Harrison Administrations, Box 3.

Nageeb J. Arbeely to Department of State, 1 June 1886, Jerusalem (datelined “Consulate of the United States”), in NARA M453, Roll 4.

An intriguing footnote is an official letter dated 15 January 1886 from the committee on commerce of the U.S. Senate to the secretary of state requesting “all papers and information bearing on the conduct in office of Sela [sic] Merrill Consul of the United States at Jerusalem and touching the appointment of Nageeb B.[sic] Arbeely to that office.” A note records that Arbeely’s file was sent to the committee two weeks later, but there is no mention of Merrill’s having been sent. Was this request an indication that the American Colony’s complaints had been heard? There is no evidence that the committee ever considered the case. NARA, RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Cleveland-Harrison Administrations, Box 3.

Arbeely presumably met his future wife—a Greek woman from Alexandria—at this time. Kark says Arbeely was recalled to Washington only on 11 November 1887, which would jibe with his December arrival in New York but which was a full year after Gillman was in place. Kark, American Consuls, 326.

Nageeb J. Arbeely to President Cleveland, undated (early 1888), Washington, DC (datelined “Temple Hotel, 9th and F, City”), in NARA, RG 59, Letters of Application and Recommendation for Public Office for the Cleveland-Harrison Administrations, Box 3.

“In Aid of Turkish Trade,” New York Herald, 23 April 1888, 9. He was obviously covering up his defeat—understandably, as it must have been a source of embarrassment—but his grandiose claims to mercantile acumen in the article were also highly exaggerated.


Both of these claims, which I have been unable to verify, come from Arbeely; either or both could be false. See: “In Aid of Turkish Trade.”

The first four years (1892–1896) of the newspaper survive and are available online at dds.crl.edu/crddelivery/19879. For a description of the newspaper’s founding and its contents, see Linda K. Jacobs, Strangers in the West: The Syrian Colony of New York City, 1880–1900 (New York: KalimahPress, 2015), 263–270.


New York, King’s County Estate Files, 1866–1923.
Reading the history of the Ottoman Empire through the eyes of foreign consuls is a common practice among political historians. The accessibility, coherence, comprehensiveness, and, maybe most importantly, the language in which they are written make consular correspondence and reports extremely fruitful and frequently enjoyable sources for exploring Ottoman history. However, it has become a truism by now that in order to extract a truthful portrayal of the political, economic, and social realities on the ground from these sources, they better be taken by historians with more than a grain of salt.¹ When it comes to the Ottoman history of Palestine, in which Western religious and political aspirations tend to marginalize local narratives and views, this critique is even more appropriate.

With the advent of digitized archives and collections over the last decade, newly available sources allow historians to counterbalance and at times challenge traditional European perspectives on Ottoman political affairs. Newly discovered Ottoman archival documents, shari’a court records, and contemporary print journalism not only supply researchers with new data, but also demand a shift in the methods and approaches historians use to consult this data. As social and cultural histories gradually inherit the prominence enjoyed by political history, historians of the Ottoman Empire are exploring new meanings of concepts and institutions oft discussed, such as the consular court system, the capitulations regime, and even the millet system. Looked upon from the bottom up, through the eyes of the empire’s inhabitants rather than through outsiders’ eyes, historians are situating Ottoman affairs in a fresh and insightful context.
This is not to say that consular materials can be simply replaced or overruled in light of the variety of new sources accessible. On the contrary, now more than ever researchers are required to evaluate these sources candidly and synthesize them carefully with other existing materials in order to overcome their inherent biases. Such contextualization of consular documentation may suggest understanding consular activity as taking place not only within the sphere of high politics but also, and sometime foremost, within vernacular social settings. This article presents one way of going about this task, by shifting the gaze on consular activity from the center(s) of empire(s), typically characterized by extensive diplomatic bustle, to their fringes.

To this end, we shall delve into the experiences of a British consular representative situated at the overlapping of various marginal zones. First, within the consular hierarchy, our protagonist occupied the lowest diplomatic rank: the office of “consular agent.” While representing Britain and British interests, consular agents were somehow peripheral to the core of the consular service, not being necessarily British subjects or Britain-sent in first place. Consular agents were for the most part natives of their place of office and therefore, contrary to diplomatic representatives of higher echelons, also socially and culturally ingrained there. In 1914, the Oxford Survey of the British Empire explained the rationale of this system:

> British commerce has found its way into almost every market in the world, and agencies for the protection of our trade and traders have in consequence been established in hundreds of town throughout many countries. In some cases, the importance of the interests involved has justified the appointment of a salaried consul or vice-consul, a British subject, selected by the Foreign Office; but in others, it has been found sufficient to appoint an official, often a foreigner, who receives no salary but a small fee or allowance for office expenses.²

One such “other” case stands in the center of our discussion. This is the town of Gaza in the southwest of Ottoman Palestine – the second margin we will be exploring. The consul-general in Istanbul and the consul in Jerusalem both attained their positions as yet another step in a long diplomatic career. By contrast, the consular agent in Gaza – a town of much lower esteem – Alexander Anton Knesevich, was a Gazan resident appointed ad hoc. As the passage above suggests, moreover, he did not even have to be a British subject to win this position. In the late Ottoman period, Gaza did not fit the consular stereotype of a Levantine port-city where statesmen and entrepreneurs socialized at lavish dinner parties. Nor was it a cultural or religious hub drawing tourists and pilgrims. Gaza was a modest outlet for grains situated in sufficient proximity to the Mediterranean shore, occasionally visited by trading ships. From an Ottoman perspective, Gaza was a peripheral town situated in an area that since the Ottoman re-conquest of Syria in 1840 through the 1882 British occupation of Egypt gradually became the empire’s frontier.

This intersection of geographical and political marginalities makes the British consular agent in Gaza a liminal figure both politically and socially. An avid border crosser,
Knesevich took advantage of his situation where edge and center constantly alternated and conceptual and physical borders collapsed and reemerged. Being both a long-time resident of Gaza and a British official enabled Knesevich to cross the real and imaginary boundaries between Egypt and Palestine, the British and Ottoman empires, the official and the unofficial, and the personal and the political. The hybrid character of the consular agent is an ideal subject for new Ottoman histories seeking both the richness of consular sources and the bottom-up perspective given by cultural and social contexts. The careers of figures like Knesevich demonstrate the entanglement of small-scale social consequences and large-scale political developments. During his short term in Gaza, between 1905 and 1914, Knesevich’s personal needs, interests, and social relations tied him wittingly and unwittingly to some of the major controversies occurring at the time.

* * *

In January 1905, Alexander Anton Knesevich was appointed as the first (and, ultimately, the last) British consular agent in Gaza. Beside Jerusalem, where Britain held an official consulate, three other cities in Palestine hosted similar low-ranking representatives at the time: Jaffa and Haifa, due to their economic importance, and Safad, where a large number of Jews enjoyed British protection. At the turn of the twentieth century, the British expected Gaza to rise to a status of economic importance similar to Jaffa and Haifa. Interestingly, this anticipated growth in Gaza’s economic prominence coincided with its actual decline as an administrative center. In 1899, the Ottomans founded the town of Beersheba and the new eponymous sub-district on the expanse of vast territories formally under the authority of Gaza. This move marked the culmination of a half-century-old effort to sedentarize southern Palestine’s nomadic population. While this process undeniably experienced vicissitudes, one of its stable features was the tribes’ gradual shift from an economy based on supplying the annual Hajj caravans to one based on cash crop cultivation. The opening of the Suez Canal and the consequent shift of travel and trade from land to maritime routes pushed the tribes to shift their orientation accordingly. Looking westward, they found in Gaza a hungry market for their harvest. Gazan merchants exported the bedouin’s grains to Europe, primarily to the British beer-brewing industry that needed barley, creating modest yet promising economic growth around the town. Concurrently, the Ottoman authorities, who were more concerned with enhancing their surveillance of tribal affairs, subordinated their territories to the authority of Beersheba, which was situated close to the tribes’ encampments. The coastal town of Gaza was thus deprived from its former administrative position; yet, while its political status diminished, it became more attractive to merchants and shipping agents.

“Ships,” writes historian of diplomacy John Dickie, “in fact were the reasons why consuls came into existence.” The appointment of Knesevich as a consular agent in Gaza was no different. It is difficult, however, to pinpoint the specific time when British ships first called at the coast of Gaza, and when the need for a consular agent first emerged. British “shipping intelligence” reports and Ottoman correspondences between the district of Jerusalem and the interior ministry indicate that maritime trade between Britain and
Gaza was already routine in the 1880s. In 1897, the British consular agent in Jaffa, Haim Amzalek, drew the attention of British consul in Jerusalem John Dickson to the fact that a growing number of British vessels were loading grains at the coast of Gaza. Also an agent for the insurance firm Lloyd’s, Amzalek learned about the hardships that British merchants experienced in Gaza in dealing with local Ottoman authorities. He recommended, therefore, appointing a consular representative in the town.7 Amzalek even suggested that his son Joseph would take the job by traveling occasionally between Jaffa and Gaza, but Dickson preferred to find a more qualified candidate.8 In 1899, Amzalek presented his recommendation once again, and the following year the British shipping agent in Jaffa, Michel Berouti, further emphasized the need for a consul in Gaza, arguing that the grain trade in town, which comprised £120,000 annually, required that “the British flag shall have a better future” there.7 The Foreign Office was reluctant, however, to appoint a salaried official in politically negligible Gaza.10 Dickson thus sought a figure to take the lower position of consular agent. Unlike salaried diplomats, consular agents performed their duties voluntarily, for no official material gain. It was necessary for that reason to find a candidate that was not only acquainted with the local aspects of maritime trade, but also financially independent.

Alexander Knesevich was precisely this sort of person. Dickson first encountered him in Gaza in 1902. By then, Knesevich had worked for two decades as a dispenser for the British Church Missionary Society hospital in Gaza, and had recently started working as an agent for Lloyd’s in town.11 Oral traditions circulated among decedents of the Knesevich family suggest that Alexander first arrived in Gaza after his father, an Austrian medical doctor named Andrea Knesevich. Andrea moved there in order to work in the town’s quarantine. Previously, the family had resided in Tripoli, Lebanon, where Andrea married Jday Zalzal, and in Beirut. Alexander and several of his siblings were probably born in Lebanon. This biographical background satisfied the British criteria for the consular agent post. Alexander knew both Arabic and Turkish, and was acquainted with several European languages; he resided in Gaza and had experience in the local maritime trade; and though he was not a British national, he was not ethnically Arab or Turkish either. Knesevich was an Austrian subject filling a British position situated in the Ottoman Empire – an ideal intersection to perform the intermediary role required from consular agents.

Although nominated for the post in 1902, the British Foreign Office only approved Knesevich’s appointment at the end of 1904. The decisive factor here was probably a series of incidents wherein British subjects – members of the Jewish Arwas family – were involved in violent disputes, which required sending British delegates all the way from Jerusalem to Gaza.12 The Arwas family, also newcomers to Gaza from the 1880s, was drawn to the town by the developing grain trade and most likely knew Knesevich before his official nomination. The British consulate in Jerusalem officially appointed him as consular agent in January 1905.13 The Ottoman foreign ministry responded by revoking the appointment, arguing that the British had not presented Knesevich to the Ottoman authorities in advance as a required. Following a re-filing of the procedural process, the Ottoman government finally approved Knesevich a month later.14
Although appointed to facilitate economic relations, Knesvich’s first major task was political in nature. As we have seen, Knesevich’s nomination was prompted by wide transformations across southern Palestine area: Ottoman initiatives to penetrate deeper into the desert, the arrival of steamships in the Mediterranean, and the opening of the Suez Canal. These developments influenced more remote desert areas as well. In 1905, the Ottomans began to establish a port in the town of Aqaba. Traditionally a junction connecting several ground routes, in the age of steam the Ottomans conceived of Aqaba as the meeting point of a steamship line traveling through the Red Sea with a future branch of the Hijaz Railway. By 1904, the Hijaz Railway, starting at Damascus, had reached the town of Ma’an in southern Transjordan, only some 70 miles from Aqaba. For the British, that meant a direct threat to the Suez Canal. Not only would Aqaba become a convenient outpost for gathering military troops for a possible onslaught on the canal, but the linkage between rail and sea in Aqaba could potentially compete against the monopoly of the canal over maritime circulation.\(^{15}\)

This Ottoman challenge to British interests in the region was especially disturbing because there was no recognized border between British-ruled Egypt and Ottoman-ruled Palestine. For the Ottomans, the border ran along an imaginary line connecting al-Arish and Suez. This line left the lion’s share of the Sinai Peninsula under Ottoman authority and allowed an Ottoman approach to the Suez Canal. This demarcation relied on the 1892 sultanic decree (ferman) crowning the Khedive of Egypt Abbas Hilmi, which in turn reiterated the inheritance decree given to Mehmet Ali Pasha in 1841. By contrast, the British recognized a borderline further east, connecting Rafah to the Gulf of Aqaba and making virtually all of Sinai Egyptian territory.\(^{16}\) They based this border on Lord Cromer’s notes on the 1892 decree. Between 1892 and 1905, Egypt stationed guard posts in Sinai, ostensibly to protect the dwindling Hajj routes, while administratively Sinai remained Ottoman territory.\(^{17}\) Both sides, it seems, desired to avoid formalizing this issue to spare an overt dispute over an agreed-upon borderline.

Nevertheless, the 1899 Ottoman establishment of Beersheba made their ambitions in southern Palestine ever more apparent. The British in Egypt reacted by stationing more Egyptian troops in the area between Rafah and al-Arish.\(^{18}\) In 1902, British officers relocated two granite pillars that stood under a Sidra tree on a small mound named Khirbat Rafah, twenty-four miles east of al-Arish, and declared them the “official” northern marker of the Egyptian-Ottoman border (see figure 1).\(^{19}\) As this act did not directly interfere with their aspirations in Sinai, the Ottomans preferred to turn a blind eye to these unilateral measures. In January 1906, however, what started in the northern tip of the border spread to its southern end. In response to the Ottoman plans for Aqaba, Lord Cromer sent troops to erect military barracks along the Aqaba–Gaza road, the borderline alleged by the British. The Egyptian troops encountered an Ottoman force near Aqaba that prevented them from accomplishing their mission and ultimately banished them from the “Ottoman territory.” During the following month, Ottoman troops seized the town of Taba, occupied nearby Umm Rashrash, and reinforced Aqaba militarily in order to prevent further incursions by Egyptian troops. In February, the Ottomans and the British entered a fierce diplomatic dispute. The British demanded that a border be fixed, but the
Ottomans refused. In March, with diplomatic negotiations in a deadlock, the front line moved northward again. Exactly one year into his tenure, Knesevich found himself in the front row, watching as Ottoman-British tensions culminated in what would be later be termed the 1906 Aqaba Crisis.

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Most accounts of the Aqaba Crisis pay little attention to the events happening between the clashes of January 1906 and their conclusion, the British ultimatum of 3 May that same year. However, as the rival empires exchanged telegrams and dispatched solemn officials between Cairo and Istanbul, events on the ground continued to shape this dispute’s development. In March 1906, Knezevich could have sensed the tension growing around Gaza. Mid-month, rumors emerged from Rafah of an Egyptian-British aggression that occurred in the area of Gaza. Concerned by these rumors’ potential effect in such a sensitive time, the Foreign Office sent Consul Dickson to the Ottoman governor in Jerusalem to inquire about them. The alarming case turned out to be a local tribal controversy that happened to erupt on the disputed borderline. Located in Gaza, only a few hours’ walk from the border, Knesevich had access to more complete details. He reported to Consul...
Dickson that the rumors had begun after an Ottoman official responsible of the sultanic personal lands (*memuru'l arazi*) around Gaza approached a tribal territory near Rafah escorted by armed soldiers and demanded that the local dwellers vacate what he claimed to be the private lands of the Ottoman sultan. The locals responded by notifying the official of the presence of a “British gentleman” in one of the nearby tents. Upon seeing him “in his own eyes,” the official and his soldiers hastily departed for Gaza, where they declared that a British attack was on its way.22

Negligible as this story was for the British consul in Jerusalem, Knesevich’s point of view from Gaza helps understand how the Ottomans escalated the border dispute. The Ottoman Empire never accepted Rafah as the northern point of the border, insisting instead on al-Arish further west. The event described by Knesevich thus heralded an Ottoman effort to push the border westward, perhaps in order to change the facts on the ground, which might favorably shape a future settlement of the dispute. The Ottomans took decisive action in this direction the following month, sending troops to literally abrogate the border by pulling down the granite columns in Khirbat Rafah, smashing them to pieces, and uprooting the Sidra tree. “Now both columns and the tree have disappeared altogether, no trace of them could be found,” Knesevich wrote in his 30 April report. This was no mere symbolic gesture. Knesevich added that the number of Ottoman soldiers between Khan Yunis and Rafah had increased from sixty-four to 102, and that another two hundred soldiers were yet to arrive from Jaffa.23

This show of force buttressed the subsequent Ottoman offer of a borderline running from al-Arish to Ras Muhammad, which the British rejected.24 On 2 May, Knesevich reported the arrival of another eighty soldiers and that “Turks substituted eleven of their own telegraph posts for eleven Egyptian ones, which they have removed.”25 A day later, the British halted these Ottoman preparations for potential ground operations. Lord Cromer gave the Sublime Porte a ten-day ultimatum to accept the British dictates or risk war in the Aegean Sea. During these ten uneasy days, Knesevich continued reporting the accumulation of Ottoman forces near the border and the stir of Ottoman officials in Gaza.26 Yet on 16 May, the Ottoman sultan agreed to the British terms, virtually ending this volatile quarrel.

While forming a border agreement with the Ottomans, the British Foreign Office acknowledged Knesevich’s contribution of a better understanding of the reality on the border. In a letter to Knesevich, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey expressed “much satisfaction” with the consular agent’s zeal and the intelligence he dispatched, “furnishing the embassy with early and accurate information during the recent Turco-Egyptian frontier question.”27 Recalling the *Oxford Survey of the British Empire’s* definition of the consular service mission, Knesevich indeed fulfilled the role described there as “the eyes and ears of the state.”28 The *Oxford Survey* adequately encapsulates the significance of Knesevich’s position in a “previously insignificant port or town [that] becomes the center-point of an international difference.”29 This depiction touches upon the exact reason why Grey cherished Knesevich’s prompt reports. When a peripheral place like Gaza became overnight an axis in a political quarrel, such peripheral figures were invaluable in supplying accurate information about current developments.
Grey was probably also particularly thankful for another piece of information that Knesevich supplied. On 8 May, after the British presented their ultimatum but before the Ottomans replied, Knesevich experienced the more personal side of life on the fringes of the empire. In these alarming circumstances, Gaza’s notables invited him to a secret meeting on the seashore, about three miles from town. “They said that they are very displeased with the dealing of the Turks, and the cup of their injustice is pouring over, and the burden is heavier than can be borne,” Knesevich later wrote to Consul Dickson in Jerusalem. He informed Dickson that the Gazans suggested petitioning the British consulate in Jerusalem for protection. “They pray day and night that the Egyptian boundary may be again, to Ashdod as it originally was,” Knesevich wrote. “If that is impossible, they are willing to go down to Egypt after disposing of all their property . . . those ‘effendis’ speak not only for themselves, but also for their people in town and the fellaheen and the Bedouins.”

Was this secret address to Knesevich a candid request for British annexation of southern Palestine’s coastal plains to Egypt, or a maybe a canny method of preparing the ground in case such an event was already being planned? The lack of external sources does not let us probe deeper than what Knesevich recorded. It is not clear either to what “original” boundary in Ashdod (the village of Isdud, about 22 miles north of Gaza) the Gazan notables were referring. Were they thinking of the rule of Ibrahim Pasha in the 1830s or maybe of the ancient Egyptians? Either way, however, this case highlights the special character of frontier towns like Gaza where inhabitants share a collective memory of shifting political pertinence and geographical flexibility. As their town abruptly turned from a frontier to a front, Gazans foresaw the prospect of a sharp reorientation (or re-occidentation) of their political future. They knew that for a short while, Gaza stood at the center of imperial affairs rather than at the margin. In order for these events to ultimately turn in their favor, they had to make use of another liminal actor, Knesevich. They considered him an influential British official, but also a friend next door, a fellow merchant, with whom they could share their concerns, probably in their own language. The high-ranking British Foreign Office officials benefitted the most from these overlapping margins. The Gazans’ statement against the Ottoman government, originating from the Egyptian–Ottoman fault line, enabled the Foreign Office to begin considering and assembling potential advantages for the next border struggle.

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Knesevich’s attendance at this future-oriented Gazan convention speaks to his established relations with the local Muslim elite. Yet this group was not the only one that tried to profit from his standpoint on the border between identities and geographies. Knesevich’s nomination as a British official in Gaza coincided with ongoing Zionist efforts to lay down roots in the area. These efforts started in 1903, when a delegation representing the Zionist Congress arrived at Egypt to examine a proposal brought up few years prior for the establishment of a Jewish settlement near al-Arish. Although mostly arid land, in a Zionist framing this area seemed to enjoy multiple advantages. First, it was under de facto
Egyptian-British authority, presumably more compatible than the Ottomans with Zionist aims. Second, the Zionist delegation believed it to be peripheral, scarcely populated, and therefore not prone to potential land disputes. Third, they considered it to be within the boundaries of biblical Israel. The land’s overlapping marginality of being situated between Palestine and Sinai thus constituted part of its allure for Zionist aspirations.32

This 1903 visit ended with a British obstruction of Zionist ambitions. However, less than two years later, the newly appointed consular agent in Gaza, Knesevich, revived this hope. Together with two Gazan Jews also well ingrained in local politics, Knesevich addressed a group of Zionists in Jaffa with a suggestion to broker a land purchase with local tribal leaders in the area east of Rafah.33 One of Knesevich’s Jewish Gazan partners was the British national Musa Arwas, a son of the same family that required British protection in Gaza and eventually prompted Knesevich’s appointment. It is probable that Arwas and Knesevich not only knew one another prior to Knesevich’s nomination, but also recognized in advance the shared interest in supporting Zionist aspirations in the area. In his new capacity as a British consular agent, Knesevich turned especially useful for Zionist aims in the British-ruled land. A second delegation began surveying the proposed settlement area precisely as the Aqaba Crisis erupted in early 1906, and thus quickly abandoned the idea.

A year after the resolution of the Ottoman-British dispute, however, another group, this time of Jewish British subjects, pursued the settlement. The Jaffa-based “Anglo-Palestine Jews Club” sought to purchase land around Gaza to form a settlement of Anglo-Jews. The club saw no impediments to their initiative: they were British nationals, with a consular representative in town and a British-ruled state across a newly established border. Knesevich supported the project. “Your desire of forming a sort of colony of British Jews at Gaza or about the place is quite in place and time,” he wrote to the club in June 1907:

and it is the thing that Gaza needs to develop its trade and commerce. I heartily invite you to take courage and be strengthened and begin at once. I promise you any help I can afford, and as the colonialists will mostly be British subjects I will have the right to protect them. I promise to cooperate for the establishing and the good of your proposed colony. Only I wish you could begin at once to execute your intentions.34

The sense of urgency in Knesevich’s words was justified, given the hardships he anticipated in obtaining Ottoman approval for the deal. Indeed, the following year, negotiations with the local authorities reached a stalemate, and Knesevich suggested shifting gears once again to the other side of the border.35

This time, the process went well, due to a general British acquiescence. However, realization of the purchase was hindered this time at the buyers’ end. Since 1907, several different Zionist companies, serving different Jewish diasporic communities, joined and left the project.36 Finally, in 1910, approaching the deal’s materialization more closely than before, Knesevich and his Jewish partners in Gaza signed a sales contract with six different Zionist representatives. In the meantime, however, British authorities in
Egypt reassessed the meaning of approving a Zionist settlement in Sinai. British Zionist newspapers publicized the approaching deal, describing it as a continuation of the efforts that started in the Zionist Congress back in 1903. Later reiterated it the *Times*, these reports put British authorities in Egypt in an inconvenient position, as if brazenly promoting the Zionist cause on Ottoman land. Almost concurrently, in 1911, Gazan notables petitioned Istanbul and complained of, among other things, local authorities’ compliance with Zionist plans in the region. Apparently, Knesevich was simultaneously striking deals for Zionist land purchases in the areas of Gaza and al-Arish, symbolically abrogating the Palestine-Egyptian border he had helped set a few years back.

Anxious not to worsen their relations with the Ottomans (who continued to formally own the lands in Sinai) and with the Muslim population of Egypt and Palestine, the British decided to withhold the deal. Knesevich had already borrowed vast amounts of money in order to buy the bedouin lands and tried to convinced whoever he could that he had brokered the deal with assurances from the British governor of Sinai that Britain would not reject the project, but to no avail. Later, the British also determined that some of the lands Knesevich purchased from local tribal leaders were in fact unsaleable government land. Despite Knesevich’s intense efforts to bypass this determination, in 1913, Lord Kitchener insisted that the deal would not go through. Instead, he was willing to compensate Knesevich for his loses.

In this new context, Knesevich’s enthusiasm to assist the Zionists while causing British embarrassment looked quite odd. Some Jewish publications mistakenly even assumed that he was a Jew or a convert. Yet when asked about his motives, Knesevich plainly explained that as an unpaid consular agent he was obliged to take care of his own livelihood. Brokering sales agreements for wealthy potential consumers was simply one way of doing so. Land sales formed an important source of supplementary income for Knesevich when the Gaza barley trade proved insufficient. Knesevich’s balancing between the barley trade and land brokering was not officially part of, but most defiantly relied on, his capacity as a consular agent.

All of these activities complemented one another in the following manner. One of Knesevich’s basic duties as consular agent was to submit an annual economic report to the British consul in Jerusalem (see figure 2). Collecting the data and preparing these reports while simultaneously participating personally in this economic system, Knesevich could sense what others overlooked. It is apparent from his reports that while the British perceived Gaza as an emerging economic hub, its actual growth rested on shaky foundations. Knesevich warned in his reports that while Gaza’s trade relations seemed prosperous, a few arid winters in this drought-prone area would devastate the city’s economy. Hence, while continuing to act as a shipping agent, he also constantly pursued alternative sources of income, many of which relied on the credibility he gained among buyers and sellers as a consular official. In 1910, when Knesevich signed the fat contract with the Zionist representatives, the need for this source of income was especially grave. That year, Gaza suffered an overwhelming drought that almost completely destroyed its barely trade. Losing the Zionist contract in 1913 was thus a serious blow to Knesevich. Luckily enough, for his last year in office, the barley trade fairly recovered. This materialistic reading of
Knesevich’s work in Gaza does not suggest that we should rule out the prospect that he might indeed have sympathized with the Zionist efforts to establish themselves around Gaza. However, it does suggest that such sympathies, just like his consular activity at large, should not be considered in isolation from the way he understood his surrounding economic and social conditions. Most obviously, he could not foresee the political weight that would be attributed to such stances in hindsight.

* * *

The ordeal Knesevich experienced as the First World War erupted epitomized the course of his career as a consular agent. The war caught Knesevich yet again between two worlds: as British consular representative, he was associated with the rival Entente powers, yet as a private person, he remained an Austrian national – that is, an Ottoman ally. This dual position brought trouble. Soon after the Ottomans entered the war in October 1914, the Ottoman army captured Knesevich and brought him to Damascus for interrogation, intending to send him onward to Istanbul. After a short while in detention, the Ottoman interior ministry received a request from their allies in the Austrian consulate in Istanbul to treat their aging subject respectfully.

The Ottomans released Knesevich and allowed him to travel around the city, but required him to appear when summoned. It seems, however, that he did not stay in Damascus long. By the summer of 1915, he had begun sending letters to his son Emil from Egypt, where he had found asylum. Having been interrogated earlier that year by the Ottomans, Knesevich should have known better. Ottoman intelligence promptly intercepted his letters and immediately arrested his son Emil in Gaza. They brought Emil before a military court and sentenced him to the gallows for espionage. Here again, however, external intervention – this time by the American consul in Istanbul – saved a life. His sentence was first converted to penal servitude and later cancelled altogether by no less than the minister of war himself, Enver Pasha.

While Knesevich father and son were no longer in their town, it gradually became battlefield. In March 1917, a clash between the British and the Ottomans neared, and the latter ordered a rapid evacuation of Gaza’s entire populace. The frightened inhabitants were forced to abandon their homes, leaving their belongings and property behind to
be vandalized during many months of skirmishes. Upon the British conquest of Gaza in November 1917, an Australian officer found an intriguing object while roaming the desolated town: a book containing English-language documents. The officer took the precious finding with him as the Palestine campaign went on and eventually left it with a British woman in Jerusalem. He never came to reclaim this war booty and for unknown reasons the woman kept it for two and a half decades in her possession. Within this period, she relocated to San Francisco, where in 1941 she found the local British consul and passed the crumbling book on to him. The consul, in turn, sent the book to the British Public Record Office (today the UK National Archives), where its content was inspected and determined: it was the only vestige from what was probably the Gaza consular agency archive. It contained registration certificates describing briefly the whereabouts of British subjects residing in or visiting the border town. Ironically enough, as Knesevich was never a British national, his name does not appear even once in the only surviving remnant from his consular agency. In such instances, where it looks as though history conspires to marginalize places, figure, and events, what is left for the historian if not to explore and celebrate them?

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Endnotes
7 John Dickson to the Marquess of Salisbury, February 7, 1899, the National Archives (UK) [TNA] Foreign Office [FO] 78/5008.
9 John Dickson to the Marquess of Salisbury, 7 February 1899, TNA FO 78/5008.
10 Consul Dickson to the Foreign Office, 16 February 1902, in Eliav, *Britain and the Holy Land*, 290 (fn1); Lloyd’s Register of Shipping (1905).
11 John Dickson to Walter Townley, 16 December 1904, TNA FO 195/2175.


19 Biger, *Boundaries*, 33. The site was unofficially known since the days of Khedive Isma’il as the approximate borderline. The khedive visited Sinai in one of his journeys in order to inspect the boundaries of the Egyptian territory. Upon finding the columns in Khirbat Rafah, he asked to erect them and to engrave the details of his visit there. See: Consular Agent Knesevich to Consul Dickson, 30 April 1906, TNA FO 371/63.

20 Burman, 280-281.

21 Consul Dickson to Sir N. O’Connor, April 6, 1906, TNA FO 371/63.

22 Consular Agent Knesevich to Consul Dickson, 30 April 1906, TNA FO 371/63.

23 Consular Agent Knesevich to Consul Dickson, 30 April 1906, TNA FO 371/63; Sir N. O’Connor to Sir E. Grey, 1 May 1906, TNA FO 371/61.

24 Mordechai Eliav, “Pithat rafiyah be-toldot ha-hityashvut ha-yehudit” [The Rafah Salient in the History of Jewish Settlement], *Katedra* 3 (1973): 120.

25 Sir N. O’Connor to Sir E. Grey, May 7, 1906, TNA FO 371/61.

26 Anton Alexander Knesevich to Consul Dickson, 12 May 1906, TNA FO 371/63.

27 Sir E. Grey to Anton Alexander Knesevich, 18 June 1906, TNA FO 369/44.


30 Anton Alexander Knesevich to Consul Dickson, 12 May 1906, TNA FO 371/63.

31 Sir N. O’Connor to Sir E. Grey, 29 May 1906, TNA FO 371/63.


33 Yosef Braslavsky, *Ha-yadata et ha-aretz? [Do You Know the Land?]* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1946), 34–35.


43 Lloyd’s Register of British and Foreign Shipping (1907).


45 Talat to the Vali of Syria Province, 12 January 1915, DH.ŞFR48.328.1, BOA.


47 Sublime Porte to Enver Pasha, 26 September 1915, BEO4376.328135.1, BOA; “Notes and News,” *Quarterly Statement*, 52.


49 Counterfoils of Certificates of Registration: Gaza – Palestine, TNA FO 291/52.
The Italian unification is a long historical process that timidly started in 1815 after the Congress of Vienna and culminated with the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and the capture of Rome in 1870.\(^1\) The Risorgimento followed a long and controversial path that brought together people who shared history and culture, but also had been divided for centuries and often involved in bitter disputes and bloody wars. Diplomacy was at the heart of the creation of the Italian state that could not have emerged on its own or throughout war, however, Italian diplomatic missions outside Europe were fairly amateurish and often inconsequential.

This article, divided in three sections, will discuss the establishment of an Italian consulate in Jerusalem, its activities and role from its opening to the end of the 1930s, prior to its temporary closure due to the outbreak of the Second World War. If the first part is substantially descriptive, the second part looks into the massive amount of archival material belonging to the Italian consulate in Jerusalem that was recently discovered and catalogued after having been misplaced for decades in the archives of the Italian Foreign Ministry. The last part briefly delves into a practical example of how this new material may be employed, looking at the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. The overall aim of this relatively short piece is to bring back to life the history of the Italian consular mission in Jerusalem and, more importantly, to provide historians and researchers with a first overview on new perspectives from where investigating the recent past of the city and of Palestine.
The Consulate

An Italian presence has been visible for centuries in Jerusalem in the form of clergy and pilgrims; however, the size of this community did not match its political relevance, which was overshadowed by British and French consulates and communities, echoing the relative unimportance of Italy on the international stage. The Italian presence in Palestine has been mainly analyzed through three lenses: the history of the Italian religious institutions and personnel operating in the Holy Land; the life of the Jewish community in the Yishuv; and the attitude of Italian governments toward Palestine and, after 1948, their relationship with Israel and the Arab countries. Few works have been devoted to the study of the political, economic, social, and religious networks established by Italian local authorities and the connections between the consulate and the complex system of power in Jerusalem and the region. The lack of historiographical research in Italian and other languages is not only a reflection of the absence of primary sources before the inventory of the consulate records, but also of the tendency – particularly evident in the historiography on Jerusalem and Palestine – to differentiate and separate the subjects of study into a fragmented picture rather than providing an interconnected and wider portrait. This article highlights some of the areas that may greatly benefit from this new material, adding more nuanced approaches and opening new hypothesis to avoid nationalist interpretations, as well as reviewing some historical narratives.

In the only work dedicated to Italian diplomacy in Palestine, Lucia Rostagno was right to suggest that we should bear in mind that from Italy, Palestine was far away and not included in the colonial dreams of the new Italian state and certainly not as a destination for Italian migrants. At the end of the nineteenth century, Italian interests toward Palestine were mainly devotional. In fact, it can be safely said that little was known of the country: Italian Catholics and Jews did not share the same interest for the Holy Land as their British, French, or American coreligionists. The re-establishing of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1847 might have had triggered a renewed interest, although available evidence does not suggest this, and in any case the Terrasanta was an entity to pray for, not to conquer. Italy had no connection whatsoever with the local Eastern Catholic churches – a field left open to the French – and the Italian governments saw as the only justification to develop an interest in Palestine the Italian character of the Latin Patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land (both the Patriarch and the Custos were in fact Italian subjects). The Salesians had a substantial impact in Palestine, working with the local inhabitants. Similarly, the Franciscans, by far the largest Catholic group in Palestine, provided jobs and services to local Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike. Politicians and diplomats were still far away.

In 1843, Consul Lenchantin from the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia was sent to Jerusalem to protect the interests of its subjects and to challenge the French protectorate over Catholics. The material available at the state archives in Turin has been barely perused by scholars and, together with the material recently uncovered at the archives of the Italian Foreign Ministry, may paint a different picture; however, it is safe to say that until 1849 – when the consulate was “temporarily” closed – Italian diplomatic presence...
had limited influence. Adolfo Castellinarid, the second Sardinian-Piedmontese consul, left Jerusalem in 1849. The seat remained vacant and was filled again only a decade after the Italian unification process was completed.

The newly created Kingdom of Italy could not afford a wide and sophisticated diplomatic network. The lack of trained and trusted diplomatic officials was paired with the imperative of Minister of Finance Quintino Sella to avoid a deficit in the budget of the nascent state. However, members of the Italian parliament were fully convinced of the necessity of opening a consulate in the holy city. Eventually, an agreement was made and Vice Consul Alessandro de Rege di Donato was appointed consul in Jerusalem on 15 November 1871. Like his seven successors until the outbreak of the First World War, di Donato had no deep knowledge of the region, or its languages, religions, and peoples. It must be said, however, that the earliest Sardinian consuls had more experience in the region, as both Lenchantin and Castellinarid had served as consuls in the Ottoman Empire before their appointment to Jerusalem. It was only in 1911, with the impending Italian invasion of Libya, that the Italian Orientalist Leone Caetani passionately petitioned the Italian parliament and the Foreign Ministry to support the Oriental Institute in Naples as a place to forge young diplomats serving in the East. Rostagno suggests that consuls had no interest in local society, which never featured in their reports; however, new material may readdress this view and paint a more nuanced picture. A local dimension seems to emerge in the registers of correspondence with Constantinople, as many letters deal with local issues, particularly complaints against petty crime committed by local inhabitants.

A major change occurred with the appointment of Carlo Senni in May 1907. Though not an Orientalist, the young consul was a careful observer and in his reports gathered increasing amounts of information about the local communities and their intra- and interrelations. Senni reported on indigenous religious communities at length, offering suggestions on how to engage with them. Some of his comments may look naïve or poorly informed, as he did not possess a deep knowledge of local politics. However, the fact that he was not involved in any major local dispute or in any major scheme to control one or more groups provide a perspective that can contribute nuance to what we know of local politics and dynamics. Senni also provides invaluable information about Jerusalem during the First World War, as he remained in the city until the spring of 1915, reporting on a variety of subjects. As Senni left Jerusalem upon the Italian declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire, it is possible to say that he made the Italian presence in the region more relevant and at the same time brought Jerusalem and Palestine closer to Italy and Italians.

With the end of the war, Senni returned to Jerusalem for a short time, but everything had changed. Now the British were in control and the Italian government was involved in redrawing the Middle East. Despite the increased role of Italian diplomacy, both the British and French marginalized Italy, which they saw more as a nuisance than a challenge. Italian diplomacy, meanwhile, was unable to react quickly to the changes occurring in Palestine. Between 1919 and 1926, seven different consuls led the Italian consulate. Copies of the reports sent to Rome show the lack of diplomatic initiative
and a general superficial understanding of events unfolding in Palestine and Jerusalem, including the emerging national struggle between Arabs and Zionists. This diplomatic weakness was a reflection of Italian politics, as the fascist regime was slowly taking over. It is in 1926, with the appointment of Mario Zanotti Bianchi, that Italian diplomatic efforts became more substantial and visible.\(^19\)

Jerusalem and Palestine came to play a more important role for Italian diplomacy and politics. As Mussolini aimed at extending Italian influence over the Mediterranean, Palestine became a battleground against British influence in the region.\(^20\) One of the most interesting consuls yet to be fully analyzed is Orazio Pedrazzi. Appointed in February 1927, Pedrazzi was not a diplomat by profession, but a journalist and an expert on Middle Eastern politics. Likely he had a direct line with Mussolini and in his short tenure he emphasized the necessity to work with the Zionists, as they were going to dictate the future of Palestine. Though he was both anti-Zionist and Arabophobe, his main concern was to challenge British rule and thus he lost his job rather quickly. After Pedrazzi left, on the eve of the Wailing Wall riots of 1929, Mussolini changed direction and support for the Arab-Palestinian cause became more visible in terms of propaganda and help lent to local Palestinian elites. It would be interesting to discover in the papers of the consulate in Jerusalem the extent and quality of Italian-Zionist relations, which certainly did not altogether cease.\(^21\)

The man who helped bring some local Arabs to the Italian side was Mariano De Angelis. Appointed consul in 1932, De Angelis served until 1936 and worked publicly and secretly to transform the anti-Italian sentiments among the Arabs into feelings of sympathy. At the same time, De Angelis looked with favor to Jabotinsky and his hardliner Zionists. Though Mussolini never met Jabotinsky, it would be interesting to discover more about this relationship.\(^22\) Many works have dealt with the emergence of the alliance between Mussolini and the mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, and it is clear that Mussolini had to adopt different policies in Libya and show a stronger commitment toward the Arabs and Muslims in order to gain his friendship and to transform anti-Italian sentiments. By 1933, De Angelis had a good relationship with the Mufti and we hope the papers available in Rome may give us more details about the ways in which the shift occurred. De Angelis also wrote extensively about the possibility of an agreement between the Arabs and the Zionists and he hoped for Mussolini to become a peacemaker.\(^23\)

De Angelis left on the eve of the revolt that lasted from 1936 to 1939 and Quinto Mazzolini succeeded him until the consulate was closed with the outbreak of war between Italy and Great Britain. The years of the revolt marked strong Italian support for the Palestinian cause, but Italian propaganda was ultimately unsuccessful in turning the Palestinians against the British. The example of Radio Bari is illuminating: Arabic-language radio broadcasts targeting Palestine and Transjordan were heavily criticized by the British, who feared the local population’s rebellion against the colonial power. But though Arab listeners enjoyed programs in Arabic, it is also true that Radio Bari was not effective in its political mission.\(^24\)
Hopefully, the material recently found in Rome will help future generations of historians to reassess and rewrite the history of Italian diplomacy in Jerusalem and Palestine. There are multiple questions to be asked to this material, from the international to the intercommunal perspective and from internal Italian politics to intracommunal relations in the region.

The History of the Archival Material

The history of the Italian consular presence in the Holy Land is also the history of the consulate archives and its records. These records had not been catalogued and were located in different sections of the Foreign Ministry archives. In order to inventory the records dating before 1940 and make them accessible to scholars, Open Jerusalem and the Historical Archives of the Foreign Ministry (Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, or ASDMAE) established a partnership that has led to a range of interventions. These included retrieval of the files; analysis of the fonds; arrangement and reallocation of the files; envisioning a filing plan; and, finally, drafting a detailed inventory.

The fonds was divided into several deposits: 1936 (concerning records from 1843 to 1926); 1940 (1904-1940); 1974 (concerning records from 1876 to 1963); 1976 (concerning records from 1882 to 1977); 1991 (concerning documents after 1948); 1992 (concerning documents after 1873); 1993 (concerning documentation after 1947); 1994 (concerning documents after 1872); and 1995 (concerning records after 1948). The material is located at the Foreign Ministry archives in Rome, in the “Archivio storico consolati” section (F1, F2), and covers around 30 linear meters. Currently, 594 files have been catalogued and inventoried.

In order to trace the history of these papers and how they are now collected in the archives, we need to look at the figure of Quinto Mazzolini, an emblematic politician of the fascist period who served as consul from 16 September 1936 to 20 June 1940. In 1940, Mazzolini likely authored a three-volume confidential memorandum: Palestina e Transgiordania. Cenni storici. Periodo mandatario, possibile assetto futuro. The document formulated the Italian proposal for the future of the region: Transjordan and Palestine would be united in a federation ruled by King Vittorio Emanuele, who would add to his titles that of “sovereign of Jerusalem.” The future Arab federation would have been put under direct Savoy rule or would have become an independent state under Italian influence, following the model of British relations with Egypt and Iraq. Mazzolini imagined that the Sephardic Jewry could join this Arab federation while no favor was reserved for the Ashkenazi population.

Some studies highlight Mazzolini’s substantial adherence to the traditional pro-Arab position of his predecessors. However, he is mentioned in other sources in relation to the so-called “Jerusalem agreement” between Italy and Zionist paramilitary organizations like the Irgun and the Stern Gang, reached just before Mussolini’s declaration of war on 10 June 1940 and never signed by Italian diplomats. This agreement provided that,
in exchange for Italian acknowledgement of Jewish sovereignty over Palestine, the future Jewish state would ally with the Axis powers; moreover, Haifa would become the capital of the new state, while the Old City of Jerusalem would be placed under Vatican authority. The historiographical questions raised by Mazzolini’s diplomacy deserve further analysis based on the documents that are currently being inventoried in order to shed light on and possibly rewrite parts of Mandatory Palestine’s history.

The relevance of Mazzolini’s mandate is not only limited to politics. His contribution is essential for archival reasons: he was the first to deposit the records of the Italian consulate in Rome. During his staying in Jerusalem, Mazzolini actively worked to organize the papers of his office. The first part of the records was deposited in 1936, when he identified the material that he called the “old archive.” In 1940, after leaving Palestine, Mazzolini left other papers at the Foreign Ministry. As he had been forced to leave the consulate for security reasons, he tried to preserve part of the records. A cable dated 8 February 1951, “L’archivio del Consolato in Gerusalemme trasferito a Roma” (the Consulate archive has been transferred to Rome), shows the impact of the war on the history of this material. Mazzolini gave the order to partially burn the archive: the surviving list of documents that have been destroyed shows that these records were some of the most sensitive, as they discussed relations with Arabs and Jews. Another part was delivered to the Spanish consulate in Jerusalem, which had assumed the protection of the Italian interests in Palestine, and would have been returned by the Spanish authorities after the end of World War II. Other records were moved to Rome. In all likelihood, Mazzolini sent the missing part of the records to the Ufficio stralcio (the Removal Office, responsible for closing the work of discontinued institutions) to the Foreign Ministry archives in 1945.

The records cover a wide spectrum of topics: educational and cultural institutions; commercial, financial, and political relations; issues of privileges and protection of religious orders; and conflicts among different rites. This new fonds is extremely rich in important sources for reconstructing the relations between Jerusalem’s inhabitants and institutions at that time. A first look suggests that the papers of the consular archives can strongly contribute to urban history of Jerusalem. Traditionally, consular sources have been used by diplomatic historians; however, the consular machine involved different professionals, middlemen, and workers, men and women who created a variety of networks, making the consulate more than a diplomatic institution. The image of consulates as separate from the rest of the city changes in favor of a vision suggesting an intricate system of relations: consular sources allow us to overcome the “local versus foreign” dichotomy depicting a multifaceted portrait of the international exchanges in late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, as well as outlining Jerusalem as a global city. The variety of topics treated by the documentation collected in this fonds allows us to reconstruct the life of the consulate, its structure and activities, as well its economic costs. The personnel files clarify the role, conflict, and needs not only of the consuls or vice consuls, but also employees like dragomen and other workers. The difficulty of finding Arabic-speaking interpreters, for instance, appears to be a constant problem for consular officials.
Census records are a unique source to reconstruct the features of the Italians in Palestine. So far, the only detailed data available cover the period from 1935 to 1938. For this period there is a list of the Italians in Palestine and Transjordan, indicating their gender, profession, status (civil or religious), and city of residence; nevertheless, one should be wary of this material, as some minor contradictions emerge at first glance.

By 1 January 1935, the Italian community of Palestine was composed of 827 Italian civil nationals, 539 members of religious congregations, 750 colonial subjects, for a total of 2,116 people. The percentage of the colonials and religious subjects was thus significant. The majority of Italians in Palestine resided in Jerusalem (346 Italian civil nationals, 164 members of religious congregations, and 50 Italian colonial subjects).

Significantly, the holy city was followed by Jaffa, where 55 nationals and 8 members of religious congregations lived beside 500 Jewish Italian Libyans, in an urban microcosm of mixed identities worth further exploration. The comparison with the data concerning the nearby Tel Aviv is also interesting: 159 Italians lived in the city, with no “religious” or “colonial” figures. Haifa was the third city, inhabited by 235 Italian nationals, 57 members of religious congregations, and 50 colonial Italians.

In Jerusalem, the civil Italian population was mainly composed of artisans (shoemakers, builders, and cooks) but also professionals (doctors, engineers, lawyers) and merchants, as well as functionaries and employees in Italian societies and institutions (the Banco di Roma, the consulate itself and other private companies). Women were generally recorded as housewives or students. Jaffa, by contrast, saw an Italian population mainly constituted of merchants and employees. On the religious population, the data is particularly detailed: the consulate asked all congregations to send a list of their members. This inquiry produced a series of lists of names (both civil and that chosen after vows or ordination), including names of parents, place and date of birth, region of residence in Italy, and date of arrival in Palestine – information that opens research paths for a social history of the Italian religious population in the Holy Land.

By November 1937, the Custody of the Holy Land hosted the largest number of Italians, with 163 brothers or postulants. Preparing this list was in some way a nationalist exercise, aiming at reinforcing the patriotic sense, highlighting Italian roots and pro-fascist attitudes. On 22 November 1937, the secretary of the Custos, Fr Teofilo Bellorini, wrote to Mazzolini that, “while completing [the list of the Italian friars], I couldn’t help thinking about the image of Dante.” The material available for 1937 also shows names of employees of the Banco di Roma, their addresses in Jerusalem, and, more importantly, names of the owners of the houses where they lived. Italian companies did not necessarily have Italian personnel: only one of the employees at the Italo-Oriental Tourism Company, for example, was Italian.

The will of the consulate to increase nationalist feelings among the Italian population is evident also in the vast documentation concerning Italian cultural institutions in Palestine. Some files show the transformation promoted by the Education Ordinance of 1933: the Mandatory administration tried to impose common rules on the multifaceted educational landscape in Palestine at the time, in terms of teacher qualifications, numbers of students, and governmental inspections.
of Jerusalem, Luigi Barlassina, the Italian consulate acted as a spokesperson for religious institutions expressing their resistance to the implementation of common rules. In the end, Catholics, too, were obliged to produce detailed reports and data. The information collected in the school attendance return, for example, provides a fresh snapshot of the number of teachers and pupils and their classification by age group, gender, and religion. Reports prepared by Italian government inspectors also outline transformation in the school population: in particular, the data on Catholic school pupils’ religious affiliations shows a shift from a variety of confessions to a marked sectarianization as the most acute moments of the Arab-Zionist conflict approached in the mid-1930s.32

Another file shows the dissemination of the Montessori educational method in Palestine. Some Jewish teachers attended the courses that the Italian educator Maria Montessori held throughout Europe and the United States and applied her method in some kindergartens in Tel Aviv and Haifa. In the second half of the 1920s, Giovanni Gentile, former minister of education in the Mussolini government, and Mario Montessori, son of Maria, repeatedly wrote to the Italian consuls in Jerusalem encouraging local representation be sent to the Montessori congresses organized around the world.33 Lastly, another file documents the withdrawal of Italian teachers from Jewish schools after the promulgation of the racial laws in 1938.

An Example: The Ethiopians of Jerusalem

The Italian consular archives provide a glimpse not only of the Italian population, but also of the life of another community: the Ethiopians living in Jerusalem, often called “Abyssinians” in the sources. Traditional historiography presented the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries as a community in danger, isolated and without local support and links. This community was painted as involved in continuous conflicts with Copts, Armenians, and Ottoman authorities. Ethiopians, according to this view, could have been “saved” only by Western intervention through the European consulates in the city. At first the British (from 1850 to 1867), then the French (from 1881 to 1902), and lastly the Italians (since 1885) claimed the role of protector of the Ethiopians, acting as intermediaries between the community and the local government.

This vision was clearly expressed in the minutes of a report by the Italian consul in Jerusalem, Mina, to the Italian ambassador in Constantinople, Count di Collobiano, dated 11 May 1894:

In local religious issues, the Ethiopians do not count and cannot count now as a factor of any relevance. Humble, poor, without effective aid, often divided among themselves, deprived of their ancient sanctuaries, they are not able to exercise any influence or attract any attention.34
This historiographical interpretation is problematic, as it is based mainly on sources written by Western observers. Hence, the need to investigate ordinary life within the Ethiopian Orthodox community, to make visible the social networks they created or relied upon in the city, to hear their voices and not only those of their “protectors.” To this extent, it would be useful to juxtapose the sources gathered in the archives of the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem and Addis Ababa with records in other archives in Istanbul, Paris, Nantes, Yerevan, St. Petersburg, and, finally, Rome.

Relations between Italy and Ethiopia became intense from the end of the nineteenth century, after the creation of Eritrea. These events generated a mass of documents, including material concerning the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. The political and religious challenges in the Horn of Africa impacted relations between the Italian consulate in Jerusalem and the Ethiopians living in the city, especially when in 1902, after many years of negotiations with the Ethiopian kingdom and the Ottoman Empire and overcoming French and Russian ambitions, the Italian consulate obtained the right to become the official protector of the Ethiopians. This protection was mitigated by the fact that the Ethiopian residents continued to be under Ottoman rule. Nevertheless, the Italian consul was involved in a certain number of local issues on behalf of Ethiopians, especially those involving real estate.

The Italian archives relating to the Ethiopian community are rich both in volume and the period covered, and its records are essential to reconstruct the daily life of Ethiopians living or travelling to Jerusalem from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. These files show correspondence between the consulate, the Italian embassy in Istanbul, representatives of the kingdom in Asmara and Addis Ababa, and the Foreign Ministry in Rome, as well as letters sent by Ethiopians in Jerusalem, copies of legal acts signed in Jerusalem, and letters sent from Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taytu. The archives in Rome offer vast documentation on Ethiopian buildings between 1890 and 1910, confirming documents found in other archives. For instance, a bill dated 1896 was collected in the Ethiopian archives in Jerusalem: it is the receipt of the payment to the municipality by the Ethiopian community to use an oven and a garden for the so-called Karno House. According to the official history of the community, written by Ethiopian monks in a manuscript preserved in the Jerusalemite archives of the monastery, Karno was the ancient name of the current residence of the Ethiopian archbishop in the Old City in Jerusalem. The Italian records clarify that this house was purchased through the intermediation of a waqf granted by Jacob Frutiger, a well-known Swiss banker working in the city. The Italian purchase of this building on behalf of the Ethiopians raised protests from other consulates and the Ottoman authorities themselves, since Ethiopians were not Ottoman subjects and therefore could not have received this donation from the Italian authorities. The Italian consulate was also linked to the Ethiopian community through the use of middlemen, with strong and wide-ranging local links, in order to conduct their affairs in Jerusalem. Beside Frutiger, we find the architect Pascal Seraphin, who also worked as real estate agent. The Italian consulate hired him in 1902 to restore the house bought on behalf of the Empress Taytu (the Ungar House, named after its previous owners, and renamed the Taytu Palace).
After the Italian army’s occupation of Ethiopia (1935–1936), the Jerusalem consulate records provide relevant information on assistance to Ethiopians and Libyans from 1936 to 1940. Reports show details of the amount of money allocated by the Italian authorities in order to pay for the medical care of poor and ill colonial subjects, as well as the money assigned to repatriate them. The political use of this economic aid was clear to Italian authorities, who aimed to highlight this benevolent action toward Muslim populations.41 During the Italo-Ethiopian war, the consulate reinforced a network of espionage to keep Rome updated on the actions and movements of Abyssinian leaders and actively promoted actions of pro-fascist propaganda among the Italian community in Palestine, like in the case of the “Oro pro patria” (“Gold for the Fatherland”) campaign.42

**Conclusion**

As we saw, the census records, the educational sources, and the Ethiopian documentation are but a few of the various paths that can be explored using material from the Italian consular archives and which contribute to narrating the entangled histories of Jerusalem and Palestine. Italians may have not played a secondary role after all, and a century later, their consulate may prove more influential than ever.

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Although this paper is the result of joint work, Roberto Mazza was the author of the first section (“The Consulate”); Maria Chiara Rioli wrote the second section (“The History of the Archival Material”); and Stéphane Ancel wrote the third section (“An Example: The Ethiopians of Jerusalem”). Rioli also contributed to the third section and coordinated the archival work of Costanza Lisi.
Endnotes


4 Rostagno, Terrasanta o Palestina, 12.

5 It is important to highlight that, though Italians were not interested in relocating to Palestine, Vatican publications gave significant attention to the Holy Land. It is often hard to differentiate between Vatican and Italian sources, as both were written in Italian and Catholics were split over the loyalty to the state or the church.


7 See Giovannelli, La Santa Sede.


10 Material related to the Consulate of the Kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont in Jerusalem can also be found in ASMAE, Consolato Gerusalemme, Pacco 9.

11 Rostagno, Terrasanta o Palestina, 22–23.

12 See Adamoli, Cronache Marinare.

13 Rostagno, Terrasanta o Palestina, 27.

14 ASMAE, Consolato Gerusalemme, Pacco 3, Resigter Correspondence with Constantinople 1872–1892. Some miscellaneous registers in the same folder suggest a growing interest in the local economy, as more Italians became interested in opening businesses or dealing with local businessmen. However, the scope of this commercial venture at the end of the nineteenth century was rather small compared to other European countries.

15 Details of Carlo Senni can be found online at: notes9.senato.it/web/scrregno.nsf/d973a7c8686 18f05c12571140038286/ea6b98faa6aa56aa41 2564610068866?OpenDocument (accessed 21 March 2017).

16 See ASMAE, Consolato Gerusalemme, Pacco 8, Local and Foreign Religious Communities.

17 See ASMAE, Consolato Gerusalemme, Pacco 10, various correspondence in relation to the outbreak of the First World War.
See the case of the Lampertico school in Jaffa,

On education policies in Mandate Palestine

ASDMAE, Serie CGIG, File 197.

See Vincent Lemire, ed.,

Joseph Heller,

Quinto was the brother of the well-known

In archival science, a fonds in the aggregation of

See the websites of Open Jerusalem at openjlem.


See the websites of Open Jerusalem at openjlem. hypothesos (accessed 10 July 2017) and ASMAE at www.esteri.it/mae/it/ministero/servizi/uapsds/storico_diplom (accessed 10 July 2017).

In archival science, a fonds in the aggregation of documents originating from the same source.

Quinto was the brother of the well-known diplomat Serafino. Mussolini and it is diplomatic. La vita e i diari di Serafino Mazzolini, un monarchico a Salò (Catanzaro: Rubbettino, 2005). Beside the abovementioned work by Nir Arielli on fascist Italy’s involvement in the Middle East, see references to Mazzolini in Vincenzo Pinto, “L’Italia fascista e la questione palestinese,” Contemporanea 6, no. 1 (2003): 93–125; Daphna Sharfman, Palestine in the Second World War: Strategic Plans and Political Dilemmas (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex University Press, 2014), 11.


ASDMAE, Serie CGIG, File 197.

On education policies in Mandate Palestine see Nehemia Stern and Ela Greenberg, eds., Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); and Abdul Latif Tibawi, Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A Study of Three Decades of British Administration (London: Luzac, 1956).

See the case of the Lampertico school in Jaffa, directed by the Italian congregation of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (often called in the sources the “Missionary Sisters of Egypt”): “pupils are this year [1937] less than half compared to last year. Of the 180 pupils enrolled in 1935–39 (XIV) only 83 have enrolled so far. The attendees are 74, 2 Italian and 72 locals. According to the religion professed, there are 14 Catholics and 70 Muslims. Since last year 92 Jewish female pupils left as a result of the political tensions in Palestine after the events of 1936 as the school is in a mixed neighborhood with a large presence of Muslims. The events had also a negative impact on the academic achievements that have not been good.” ASDMAE, CGIG, File 430.


ASDMAE, CGIG, File 26.


Ethiopian Archbishop Residence in Jerusalem, Archives section, dossier “yä-leyu leyu guday däräseñño käzih yegäññalu.”

Ethiopian Archbishop Residence in Jerusalem, Manuscripts section, ms. JF692E, p. 289.

ASDMAE, Ministero dell’Africa Italiana, lettera del console Carletti al Ministro degli affari esteri, 3 luglio 1903, Gerusalemme, posizione 42–3.

Başbakani Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul, Dişişleri Bakanlığı, HR.HMS.ISO.176.44.

ASDMAE, Ministero dell’Africa Italiana, ricevuto per Pascal Seraphin, 20 November 1902, posizione 42–3.

See the cable/telespresso form n. 1353/544, Vice Consul of Jaffa G. Morcos to General Consul of Jerusalem Mazzolini, 30 September 1938: “It is a pleasure to state that the humanitarian aid provided by this Office has been given large publicity by the Arabs and it has been interpreted as the genuine expression of the disinterested and caring Italian politics toward its Arab-Muslim subjects.”

In November 1935, the League of Nations approved economic sanctions against Italy as a consequence of the invasion of Ethiopia. In order to react against these measures, the fascist government mobilized the population in a massive campaign of gold donation, especially of wedding bands.
The presence of Orthodox Ethiopians in Jerusalem is attested at least from the twelfth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ethiopian monks were mainly present in Dayr al-Sultan monastery, which they shared with Coptic monks, with a few other Ethiopians accommodated in Armenian or Greek communities. However, in the middle of that century, Ethiopian monks came into conflict with the Coptic community concerning the occupation and the management of Dayr al-Sultan monastery. Troubles arose between Ethiopian and Coptic monks and gradually the coexistence of the two communities in the same place came to be seen as impossible, with Ethiopians and Copts each claiming full ownership of the monastery. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, monks and authorities from the two communities fought each other. Concerning as it did the last institution in Jerusalem to host Ethiopian monks, this conflict could have jeopardized the Ethiopian presence in the city. But during the same period, the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem saw a great revival: the number of Ethiopians increased in the city and a number of buildings (churches and houses) dedicated to them were bought or erected. In 1876, Ethiopians received as waqf a house located in the Old City (on the same street as the Ethiopian monastery) and in 1896, a new church and monastery were completed outside the walls of the Old City (on Ethiopian Monastery Street, presently in West Jerusalem). From that moment, members of the Ethiopian aristocracy bought or erected a number of houses around the new church. In 1930, a large building accommodating the new
Ethiopian consulate completed the so-called “Ethiopian compound” of Jerusalem, part of the new neighborhood designated Harat al-Habash by Ottoman authorities from 1905.

The situation of Ethiopians during that period has been studied in a number of remarkable works. On the one hand are published collections of documentary materials compiled by historians or observers, including: Alexander Devine (in 1868), Enno Littmann (in 1902), Enrico Cerulli (in 1943 and 1947), and the Ethiopian Archbishop Philippos (in 1962 and 1972). On the other hand are essays and analysis of the collected and published documents. The first of these, in 1916, was by Hugo Duensing, and in 1965, Otto Meinardus attempted the first comprehensive history of Ethiopians in Jerusalem. However, our knowledge concerning the nineteenth- and twentieth-century situation of Orthodox Ethiopians owes much to the work of Kirsten Pedersen. As a member of the Ethiopian community, Pedersen had access to unpublished documents from the archives of the Ethiopian community and to her personal relationships with members of the community and used these to bring to light the extraordinary revival of the community at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century. More recently, several scholars used unpublished documents to examine specific events that occurred between 1840 and 1940, while other studies focused on the post–World War II situation of the community.

These historical works established inventories of available sources and clear chronologies of events. They represented an absolutely necessary step, but they also show the limits of their approach. Pedersen and her predecessors used the same methodology: to collect documents, identify events, and thus propose a chronology. But they offered no analysis of the methods or context of production of these documents. European sources, for example, raise questions as to the European view and discourse regarding Ethiopia and Ethiopian living in Jerusalem in a broader context of European discourse on Jerusalem and on Africa in general at that time. The risk (and unfortunately the result) is that studies on Ethiopians in Jerusalem described their situation through European eyes. Similar concerns apply to the uncritical use of Ethiopian sources. In addition to these methodological problems, other sources have not been mobilized to write the history of Jerusalem’s Ethiopian community. With a few exceptions, Italian and French consular archives do not appear. Even more prejudicial, Ottoman and Arabic archives have been totally ignored.

To be fair, previous works, despite limited documentation, managed important strides toward a better understanding of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. However, they did not fully present the complexity of the situation in Jerusalem or Ethiopia in the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. They established a chronology of the community’s development, but certainly not an explanation of this process. Indeed, they suggest a simplistic and exaggerated explanation: Because Ethiopians were poor and isolated in Jerusalem during the nineteenth century, they put themselves under Western consular protection; later, the Ethiopian emperor was able to improve the situation of the community mainly because of their piety and devotion. This explanation shows the influence of the discourses found in European and Ethiopian sources, devaluing the role of Ethiopian authorities and their weight on the international scene,
excluding the Ethiopian community from the context of Jerusalem’s development, and
avoiding comparison with the development of other Christian communities (including
Protestants, Russian Orthodox, and others). Finally, the Ethiopian community is
shown as a community essentially external to Jerusalem and Palestine, without any
connection with local daily life. Thus, the presence of Orthodox Ethiopians continues
to be considered an “exotic” phenomenon disconnected from the historical processes
that occurred in Jerusalem at that time. This only reinforces the situation whereby the
Ethiopian community does not appear, or appears only peripherally, in historical works
on Jerusalem.

A new approach is necessary: we must re-analyze known sources to offer an
explanation for the revival of the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem. However,
this will be not sufficient. New documentary material should be collected. But such an
endeavor cannot be the task of one scholar alone. The Open Jerusalem project, funded by
the European Council of Research, provides the opportunity to engage a new approach
and new thinking concerning the Orthodox Ethiopian community. This project aims at
collecting sources from archives of different communities’ institutions in Jerusalem, and
at connecting them in order to understand religious, sociological, or political dynamics
within the local population between 1840 and 1940. Open Jerusalem thus offers a new
framework for studying the revival of the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem
between 1840 and 1940. Neglected sources (Ottoman and local Arabic documents) can
be collected and analyzed; and newly available sources (Ethiopian) can be mobilized.

Concretely, members of the Open Jerusalem project have access to unpublished
documentary material from the Ethiopian archbishopric archives in Jerusalem and
from the Ethiopian National Archives in Addis Ababa. The archives of the Ethiopian
archbishopric preserve a heterogeneous set of documents, many of them concerning the
daily life of the community, as well as numerous manuscripts on parchment and paper. In
Ethiopia, the National Archives in Addis Ababa has recently accommodated the archives
of the Jerusalem Memorial Association of Ethiopian Believers. This is a small collection
dealing primarily with the association’s activities during the second half of the twentieth
century (especially the 1960s–1990s), but several documents concern our period. Open
Jerusalem also engaged in a large-scale investigation of the Imperial Ottoman Archives
in Istanbul to identify documents in Arabic, Ottoman, Amharic, or French. European
consular archives, especially those of the French and Italian consulates in Jerusalem,
are currently being examined to complete our knowledge of the documentary material
possibilities concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox community of Jerusalem between 1840
and 1940.

New Findings in the National Ethiopian Archives in Addis Ababa

Scholars have long been constrained by the small number of available documents
produced by Ethiopians concerning their community in Jerusalem. This situation can be
explained in part by the original characteristics of Ethiopian archives, particularly their
organization and their methods of preservation. Prior to the twentieth century, important documents were copied or recorded on blank leaves of parchment manuscripts, usually religious texts. These manuscripts were then preserved in different monastic institutions. This particular system of conservation led to a wide dispersion of sources. In 1908, Emperor Menilek II (1889–1913) embarked upon a significant reform and asked to all ministries of the kingdom to establish their own archives and to stop copying documents into parchment manuscripts. But nothing was decided concerning preservation or centralizing the process of archives collection until Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) created the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia in 1944. However, this institution did not collect archives preserved in the different ministries or institutions until 1999. Thus, Ethiopian archives remain extremely difficult to access. They are dispersed and preserved in different ways. Many sources are still preserved into their original ministry or institution and access to these is usually forbidden. Further, numerous archives disappeared (having been destroyed or simply lost) because of changes in the administrative organization of the Ethiopian state, or because of natural disasters, war, or political troubles. So the first aim of a scholar studying Ethiopian history is usually to look patiently for archives, to situate them, and, when their existence is confirmed, to negotiate access. This work entails an intensive process of investigation, one that is often unsuccessful.

Scholars saw a definitive opportunity when the National Archives in Addis Ababa recently received and inventoried the archives of the Jerusalem Memorial Association of Ethiopian Believers. Since its creation 1963, this association aimed to organize Ethiopian pilgrimage to holy lands. Inventoried in 2013 under the archival code 6.1, this collection is small, comprising seven folders (from 6.1.1 to 6.1.7), containing a total of 71 files. The documents preserved inside are mainly dated from the 1960s to the 1990s and deal with the administrative life of the association. However, the collection contains some unpublished documents dated to the 1920s and coming from Ethiopian institutions in Jerusalem. Particularly interesting is a document from the 1924 visit to Jerusalem by Ras Täfäri Makonnen (later known as Haile Selassie I). This is the original version of an agreement between the Greek Orthodox patriarch in Jerusalem, Damianos, and Täfäri Makonnen (files 6.1.1, figure 1). Written in Greek and English and signed on 17 April 1924 in Jerusalem, this agreement states that the Ethiopian community entered into full possession of a room inside the monastery of Abraham, connected by a door to the monastery of Dayr al-Sultan. In return, Ethiopians gave a piece of land to the patriarchate in Addis Ababa and its vicinity.

One can also find a copy of a deed of sale (file 6.1.3), dated 25 January 1928 and signed in Jerusalem, stipulating the sale of a piece of land (including a house and a garden) by a certain Paulos Menameno to Ras Täfäri Makonnen and his wife Mänän Asfaw, through their attorney Wäldä Mika’él. Folder 6.1.1 also contains a document containing an agreement signed in Addis Ababa between Empress Zäwditu (1916–1930) and Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov of Russia, the leader of imperial Russian forces who had taken shelter in Addis Ababa (figure 2). Dated 24 August 1925, written in French on a single flyleaf of paper, and signed by Grand Duke Alexander
Figure 1. Agreement between Damianos, Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem, and Ras Tafari Makonnen, 17 April 1924, Jerusalem. Addis Ababa National Archives, file 6.1.1.

Figure 2. Agreement between Queen Zawditu and Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov of Russia, 24 August 1925, Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa National Archives, file 6.1.1.
and Ras Täfäri Makonnen, this agreement states that in the event of Ethiopia’s full recovery of its ownership rights in Jerusalem, it would give two-twelfths of this property to Russia (though only if the Russia imperial government was reestablished). The association archives preserved also a 1966 report written by a certain Moulatou Kassaye of the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance concerning the accounting system used by the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem (file 6.1.7). This document gives us some information about the state of archives of the community at that time. According to the author, archives were in poor condition: the author pointed at the absence of any real organization, the loss of documents, and the incapacity of pious monks to classify documents properly. For a scholar interested in the period from 1840 to 1940, it is disheartening to read that already in the 1960s the archives of the Ethiopian community had deteriorated.

Revealing the Ethiopian Archbishopric Archives in Jerusalem

As far as we know, Kirsten Pedersen is the only scholar to have accessed the archives of Ethiopian bishopric in Jerusalem. But this access was restrained; she could not see and study the entire archive and, until today, these archives have not been accessible to other scholars. In an effort to change this situation, Open Jerusalem project members opened discussions both with Ethiopian authorities in Jerusalem and with the Ethiopian patriarchate of Addis Ababa. After hearing the scholarly goals of the project, the Ethiopian patriarch of Ethiopia Abunä Matthias and the Ethiopian archbishop of Jerusalem Abunä Enbakom enthusiastically granted access to the archives of the community in Jerusalem.

This paper reports only on Open Jerusalem’s initial investigation in these archives; others will be done in the near future. The archives of Ethiopian bishopric of Jerusalem, located in the archbishop’s residence in the Old City, are divided into two main sections: the archives proper, which preserve all types of administrative documents; and the manuscript section, where numerous parchment and paper manuscripts are carefully stored. At the time of writing, the “administrative” archives were almost fully examined, and the manuscript section only partially. (For the moment, no unknown documents have been found in the latter, though the text called “History of Der Sultan,” previously known but still unpublished and preserved in a large manuscript on paper, is deserving of reexamination.) The former preserves administrative documents concerning the community from the end of the nineteenth century until the present. The archives apparently underwent many changes in terms of organization over the last fifty years, and actual folders represent the latest in a long succession of rearrangements. Some of the oldest documents show marks of fire and attempts at conservation (see figure 3). These are clues to the poor condition of these archives until the 1960s, as described in the 1966 report found in Addis Ababa.

Among the folders stored in the place, seven contains documents produced during the time investigated here: folders 6, 154, 356, 358, 359, 360, and a last one titled in Amharic “yä-leyu leyu guday dăräseñoč käziḥ yegählenalu,” which contains different
types of unclassified documents. In addition to these folders, an Amharic manuscript book written between 1903 and 1906 is classified as “folder” 172, and a 1925 report is “folder” 216. Documents in these folders (about 150 documents total) include administrative and financial documents, such as payment receipts, checks, bank documents, financial reports, letters and correspondence concerning daily problems of the community, and so on. The vast majority of these are written in Arabic, English, French, and German. Amharic marginalia are often added to documents in order to give a clue to the topic of the document. Very few documents are fully written in Amharic. As a whole, these documents open a window onto the daily life of the community and their problems and opportunities concerning installation, supplies, access to public services, administration, and worship.

Ethiopians in Jerusalem employed different interlocutors, according to needs and opportunities. Each interlocutor offered the use of a specific language: for example, English with the British municipality, French with the Russian community, and various languages (Arabic, Greek, German, and French) with local merchants. Receipts and payment document are witness to Ethiopian involvement in local networks. A document written in French by Pascal Seraphin in 1913, concerning a house in Jericho, indicates that Ethiopians used middlemen from Jerusalem to search for houses to rent. Ethiopians’ use of dragomen is clearly stated in another document, written in Arabic (figure 4). This is a proxy given by the Ethiopian abbot in 1917 to a certain George Faris for bringing cereals from the municipality to needy people under the jurisdiction of Ethiopian authorities. Another document, in French, is a payment made by the Ethiopian community to the Russian community in 1914 for use of a water pump (pompe à eau) (figure 5), showing links between Ethiopians and other Christian
communities. We also find receipts and records of payment to the municipality of Jerusalem, including a receipt, in English and dated to 1934, for cleaning the cesspit of an Ethiopian building (figure 6).

Other documents present the Ethiopian community as the owner of houses rented to institutions or individuals, bringing to light the Ethiopian community’s role as a landlord in Jerusalem. On 14 March 1938, for example, the Emeth W’emouna congregation, which rented a flat on Abyssinia Road, sent a letter to the Ethiopian abbot complaining about the conditions of the building. Such documents are crucial to understand how the community built and managed its properties in the Holy Land. Managing places of worship in Jerusalem required great flexibility, in using specific languages with specific interlocutors, in establishing relations with different middlemen involved in local social network, in using specific networks of merchants for supplies, and ultimately in establishing the community itself on the Jerusalem scene.

Concerning Dayr al-Sultan monastery, the archives of Ethiopian bishopric of Jerusalem contain a 122-page manuscript on paper, written between 1903 and 1906 by an Ethiopian monk called Wäldä Mädhén, inventoried as “folder” 172 (see figure 7). Makonnen Zäwde gave a brief description of this book in the early 1970s, but Kirsten Pedersen did not have access to it. It likely represents the earliest Ethiopian discourse concerning the problem of Dayr al-Sultan’s ownership. Wäldä Mädhén probably aimed to report on what was known at that time, from the Ethiopian side, concerning Dayr al-Sultan monastery. In his manuscript,
Wäldä Mädhen describes a number of events concerning Dayr al-Sultan, including the destruction of Ethiopian belongings by Armenians and Egyptian authorities in 1838; and clashes between Copts and Ethiopian monks in 1863. Some events reported in that book are known thanks to the writings of British consul James Finn, who described his active participation in resolving such problems. Notably, however, this book does not mention the British consul, instead describing the role of Ottoman authorities.

Digging in the Imperial Ottoman Archives in Istanbul

The Ottoman Imperial Archives (Başbakanlı Osmanlı Arşivi or BOA) in Istanbul is one of the crucial sites for reconstructing Jerusalem’s history in the late Ottoman period because of the city’s direct dependence on the Sublime Porte, the richness of sources collected at the BOA, and its highly efficient archival management. These archives also contain many documents dealing with Ethiopia because of nineteenth-century Ottoman claims over several territories in the Horn of Africa and its confrontation with Christian Ethiopian kingdom. Open Jerusalem has engaged in a colossal collection of documents in the BOA. Under the supervision of Yasmin Avcı of Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Denizli, more than ten thousand files (“gömlek”) concerning Jerusalem and its administration for the period 1840–1917 have been collected. Among the files dealing with the Ottoman administration of Jerusalem (petitions, administration of justice, public works, and so on) one can find also many documents concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox community. More than 185 files (representing more than 600 documents) concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem have been found and inventoried to date.

Documents concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox community are preserved in archives of different sectors of Ottoman administration. They include letters, reports, or decrees produced by Ottoman officers as well as letters produced by Ethiopian authorities. Documents located during this initial survey are preserved primarily in fonds produced by Yıldız palace (code YA.HUS. or Y.EE.) and by Ottoman foreign office (code HR.SYS.; HR.TO.; or HR.HM.IŞO.), but also by the office of irade/decrees (code I.HUS.) and the office of correspondence of the grand vizier (code BEO.). A number are also found in archives produced by the ministry of domestic affairs (code DH.ID.), the office of judicial affairs (code A.DVN.), and the Ottoman conseil d’état (code ŞD.).

At the highest level, personal correspondence between Ethiopian kings and Ottoman sultans can be found in the archives from Yıldız palace. For example, Ethiopian emperor Yohannes IV (1872–1889) sent a letter to Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1882 to complain about a Coptic archbishop named Baselyos (figure 8). Letters from Menilek II are more numerous: a number of these are simply courtesy letters, while others mainly concern registration of Ethiopian dignitaries and Ethiopian ownership of property in Jerusalem. For example, in 1897 (sāne 1889 Ec), the Ethiopian monarch sent two letters to the sultan: the first recounts some steps relating to the conflict over Dayr al-Sultan monastery and the primary Ethiopian claims in this matter; the second thanks the sultan for his help and his personal involvement in resolving these problems. All letters from Ethiopia
are preserved in a file in which notes and comments by Ottoman officers can also be found. These documents are crucial for our understanding of the Ottoman point of view concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem.

Documents produced by different Ottoman administrative offices and preserved in the archives of the Ottoman administration itself (that is, outside Yıldız palace) are particularly interesting. These documents open a window onto our understanding of the Ethiopian Orthodox community’s relations with the Ottoman administration and its legal status in Jerusalem according to Ottoman officers’ points of view. For example, a document from the Ottoman foreign office states that, in 1894, Ottoman authorities were especially concerned to see numerous Ethiopians in Jerusalem bearing an Italian passport (figure 9). Often, different organs of the Ottoman administration were involved in the handling of a single event. For example, in 1904–1905, an Ethiopian delegation led by Däğğazmač Mässäša came to Jerusalem and Istanbul to present claims of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem and to negotiate a solution. Documents concerning this delegation can be found in archives of the ministry of domestic affairs (DH.MKT.907.10), the foreign office (HR.SYS.412.48), the office of irade/decrees (I.HUS.122.6), and in the correspondence of the grand vizierate (BEO.2552.191354). Thus, a large part of the administrative process of this delegation can be followed.
Despite previous studies, much work remains to be done in European consular archives, particularly in the French and Italian archives. Focusing on the French consular protection of Orthodox Ethiopians in Jerusalem, Alain Rouaud analyzed documents produced by the French consulate of Jerusalem and preserved in these archives. Yet, Rouaud admits that he could not conduct a complete inventory or analysis of all documents concerning Orthodox Ethiopian community in Jerusalem, instead undertaking what he called “carrotages” (“corings”) in order to give some glimpses of this phenomenon. In fact, these archives are rich and include a sub-fond dated from 1840 to 1947. This sub-fond is divided into four series: series A, gathering documents concerning holy places (1840–1914); series B, gathering thematic files created by consulate members (1840–1941); series C, gathering documents dated from 1941 and 1948 (and therefore fall outside the scope of this study); and series E, gathering all the registers from 1843 to 1947.

Series A includes a large number of documents dealing with Orthodox Ethiopian community. The problem posed by potential French consular protection of the Ethiopian community is well documented in that series and most of the documents used by Rouaud come from it. But many have not been studied yet, especially those concerning the Italian protection of Ethiopians, the different Ethiopian missions send to Istanbul by Ethiopian authorities, or the problem of Dayr al-Sultan. At least two archival boxes (134 and 135) encompass these documents. Series B is more difficult to grasp, because it gathers a large number of files organized by consular members at different time on heterogeneous topic, including water supply in Jerusalem, taxes, Ottoman laws and regulations, and so on. However this series deserves systematic analysis, because it is meant to be the continuation of the series A (series A and B originally belonged to the same series). This rich series remains basically unstudied. It comprises 71 archival boxes for the period from 1843 to 1914 and 234 boxes for the period from 1914 to 1941. The full description of this series by a member of the Open Jerusalem project is in progress.

Series E gathers all the registers in which consular correspondence is preserved. Representing 130 registers, this series has not been analyzed except for a few exceptions. Rouaud has shown that the register of correspondence to the department of political affairs contains material especially interesting for our topic. Further, a sub-fond in series D, which gathers the correspondence between the French consulate of Istanbul and other consulates, includes 17 archival boxes of correspondence with Jerusalem represent a sub-series with 17 archival boxes. Records of the different Ethiopian diplomatic missions from Jerusalem to Istanbul should appear in these documents.

The Italian consular archives offer similar possibilities. The historical archives of the Italian Foreign Office (“Archivio storico degli affari esteri”), especially the series concerning the ministero dell’Africa Italiana, have already been visited by scholars interested by Ethiopian history, of course. But the archives concerning Jerusalem and the Orthodox Ethiopian community there deserve a new systematic analysis. The archives of the Italian consulate of Jerusalem have been, for the most part, unstudied. In 2015, archivist Antonella di Domenicà inventoried a series from the archives of
the Italian consulate of Jerusalem, comprising 16 boxes for the years 1863 to 1925. Another series, corresponding to 17 boxes covering a period from 1878 to 1951, is now under investigation on the initiative of the Open Jerusalem project. Both series need to be studied more deeply. Additionally, two boxes (42-1 and 42-4) from the sub-fond of the ministero dell’Africa Italiana concern the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem, the first covering the years 1885 to 1890 and the second for the years 1904 and 1905. Another series seems to have been neglected by scholars: the archives of the Italian embassy in Istanbul (code Turchia Busta 72) contain files concerning the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem for the years 1894–1901.

Another valuable perspective is offered by the personal archives of British consul James Finn. Finn is known in Ethiopian studies thanks to his correspondence concerning the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem, written in the 1850s and 1860s. His official correspondence has been published, but nothing is known about the content of his personal diaries. The Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem has preserved many documents from James Finn’s personal archives, among them 39 notebooks containing notes written by the British consul between 1820 and 1872. Open Jerusalem organized an initial survey of these archives, under the supervision of two archivists from the National Archives of Paris (France), Emmanuelle Giry and Marie-Alpais Torcheboeuf. At first glance, these diaries permit to cross information found in his published correspondence about Ethiopians even if the Ethiopian topic seems not to have been one of the main ones. But some new little information can be collected, such as the arrest of the Ethiopian abbot in April 1863 by Ottoman authorities. Here again, a systematic analysis of this source will surely shed new light on the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem.

To Be Continued . . .

The collection and the analysis of archives of the Ethiopian archbishopric or those of the Ethiopian National Archives continue to bring results. But to establish an interconnected history of the Ethiopian Orthodox community of Jerusalem, the archives of the Ottoman administration and European consulates have appeared as keys opening the door to a fuller understanding of daily life for Ethiopians in Jerusalem between 1840 and 1940. Here again, preliminary investigations are yielding results.

Open Jerusalem’s investigations into other archives offer further perspective. First, the project has engaged in the collection and analysis of the Islamic court of Jerusalem, and this work is still in progress. Enrico Cerulli already highlighted the involvement of the Islamic court of Jerusalem in the conflict over Dayr al-Sultan, publishing copies of the court’s decisions of 1845, 1846, and 1848. Meanwhile, Dr. Adnan Bakhit and Abla Muhtadi in Amman are supervising the study of sijilat registers of Jerusalem’s Islamic court dated from the period 1837 to 1917. Such sources are particularly interesting for our study because of the Islamic court’s role as an appeal court even for cases involving Jerusalem’s Christian communities. The team is also involved in the study of waqf archives of Jerusalem, preserved in Abu Dis and the University of Jordan in Amman.
Further, Open Jerusalem project members have access to an incredible source: the archives of Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem. Seventeen notebooks contain notes written by the secretary of the municipal council. Written in Arabic and Ottoman, these notes correspond to minutes of the council (recording the council’s activities and decisions) from 1892 to 1917. Under the supervision of Vincent Lemire, Yasmin Avcı, Falestin Naïli, and Abdul-Hameed al-Kayyali, the analysis of these notebooks is underway. We hope to find within these archives some decisions concerning the establishment and development of the so-called Ethiopian compound.

The Open Jerusalem team has also launched investigations of the archives belonging to different Christian communities of Jerusalem, especially those of the Latin, Armenian, Russian and Greek patriarchates, in Jerusalem and elsewhere (Rome, Athens, Moscow, Yerevan). This work is, again, in progress. However, we know that a strong link united the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem and the Armenian patriarchate, Ottoman authorities considering the latter the official protector of the former. Among the consular archives being examined by the project (in the archives of France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, Spain, and the United States), those of the Russian consulate deserve specific attention because of the nineteenth-century attempt to establish a spiritual link between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem. Last but not least, Open Jerusalem is also engaged in the collection and analysis of documents from the British Mandate in the National Archives in London. Open Jerusalem is indeed an endless work, but through it we will be able, hopefully, to write a truly interconnected history of Jerusalem, in which communities such as the Ethiopian Orthodox of Jerusalem are given their proper due as a vital part of the rich tapestry of the city.

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Endnotes
Abba Philippos, *Know Jerusalem* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Salem Haile Selassie I Printing Press, 1972). We should note that the Ethiopian government, probably under the supervision of Philippos, published Alexander Devine’s documents and their translation into Amharic in 1961, through a publication called *Zena Ityopya*, under the title “The Correspondence Respecting Abyssinians at Jerusalem.”


6 For more on Open Jerusalem – whose full name is Opening Jerusalem Archives: For a Connected History of “Citadinité” in the Holy City (1840–1940) – see the project’s website at openjlem.hypotheses.org. For an example of the kind of work that Open Jerusalem fosters, see: Yasemin Avci, Vincent Lemire, and Falestin Naïli, “Publishing Jerusalem’s Ottoman Municipal Archives (1892–1917): A Turning Point for the City’s Historiography,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 60 (Autumn 2014): 110–19.

7 Pedersen, *History of the Ethiopian Community*, 41 fn90.


9 Pedersen, *History of the Ethiopian Community*, 13 fn35. See also: Pedersen, “Historiography of the Ethiopian Monastery.”

10 This work, still in progress, has been made possible by the full support and daily help of the administration and staff of the BOA, especially Önder Bayır, director of the Ottoman Archives, and Mustafa Budak, vice-general director of Turkish State Archives.

11 BOA, code Y.A.HUS.170.97.

12 The Ethiopian calendar, the liturgical year for the Ethiopian Orthodox church, begins in September in the Gregorian calendar. The additional gap of seven to eight years between the Ethiopian and Gregorian calendars is the product of differing calculations to determine the date of the Annunciation.

13 BOA, code Y.EE.62.36.

14 BOA, code HR.HMS.IŞO.179.19.


16 See, for example, Scholler, “Ethiopian Community.”


19 A2-28, entry of 21 April 1863.


21 Avci, Lemire, and Naïli, “Publishing Jerusalem’s Ottoman Municipal Archives.”
The aim of this article is to shed light on Vatican diplomacy’s interaction with events in the first half of the twentieth century to redraw the geopolitical map in the Middle East and especially in Palestine where, after thirty years of British Mandate rule, the state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948. What was the Holy See’s reaction to these developments and how did the Vatican’s envoys to the region analyze events and try to influence the rapidly changing picture?

In response to these questions it is necessary to bear in mind not just the changes that, in 1929 and 1948, led to a profound alteration of the Vatican’s structure in the region, but also, more generally, the organization of the Catholic church in the Holy Land since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The article is thus divided into five parts: the first looks at the consolidation of the Catholic presence from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries; the second examines the reaction of Catholic institutions to the revolutionary transformations after the First World War and the establishment of the British Mandate; the third addresses institutional and political changes that happened in 1929; the fourth looks at changes in Vatican policy during the 1930s; and the fifth deals with the Vatican’s reorganization of its presence in Palestine after the Second World War and the first Arab-Israeli war, and how it engaged the political and (especially important from a Catholic standpoint) theological novelty of Jewish sovereignty over the Christian Holy Land or part of it.
Nineteenth-Century Reorganization of the Catholic Presence in the Holy Land

The Holy Land has always held a central place in the Christian collective imagination. From the nineteenth century, cultural and political changes brought a full-blown renaissance of European interest in the Near East, which redefined the paradigm of the Holy Land itself. The “rediscovery” of the Holy Land led to a significant increase in pilgrimages, as these had become less dangerous thanks to the “liberal” attitude of the Egyptian government (whose rule extended over the entire region during the period of Muhammad ‘Ali) and made attractive by the draw of the romantic Orient. What is certain is that over the course of the nineteenth century, settlement of the Holy Land and the legal status of the holy sites of Christianity in Jerusalem became central elements in the more complex “Eastern Question” as determined by European powers’ desire to extend their influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, supplanting the moribund Ottoman Empire.

In the Near East, European powers sought excuses to intervene (and thereby increase their power) in the continuous interactions between national-political and religious aspects and, most of all, in the defense of the Christian population subject to the sultan. Thus, British politics in the region gained strength from the Protestant revival during the first half of the nineteenth century and the proto-Zionist sympathies of the more radical evangelical elements. Czarist aims were also realized thanks to the traditional role of Moscow, the “third Rome” of Byzantine tradition, in the protection of the Balkan and Middle Eastern Orthodox communities. In a similar way, France had protected the Latin and Eastern Catholic communities since the sixteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, the Holy See also took the initiative to affirm its role as guide of all the Catholics in the Middle East and to consolidate their presence in Palestine, which was contested by the growing Orthodox and Protestant influence. The most important decision in this context was the restoration – or, rather, the foundation – of the Latin patriarchate in Jerusalem, established in 1847 to counter the influence of an Anglican-Lutheran diocese set up few years prior by Great Britain and Prussia. The establishment of the patriarchate was not without pain, giving rise to long and bitter arguments with the Custody of the Holy Land: the Franciscan institution founded in the fourteenth century to protect the interests of the Catholics in the holy sites, which had hitherto been the main representative of Latin Catholicism in the region. Notwithstanding this, the Holy See could, from 1847 on, rely on a bishop who responded directly to it. This was even more useful when, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the presence of European, especially French, religious orders expanded exponentially, giving rise to a multitude of disputes around various initiatives according to deep national rivalries.

To complete the description of the Catholic presence in the Holy Land, which was by then plural and firmly established, we should not omit one last detail: alongside the Latin community, which was concentrated around Jerusalem, there were numerous Eastern Catholic communities, in particular Greek Catholics or Melkites, rooted in the Galilee, and, to a lesser degree, Maronites.
World War I and the New Regional Equilibrium

Until the First World War, despite its extraordinary religious importance, the Holy Land, divided into various administrative units under the Ottoman Empire, had remained a rather remote and sleepy region politically. Proof of this is the fact that the Holy See had no direct representative there, as the Latin patriarch himself was no more than a simple archbishop, albeit with the patriarchal seal, whereas contact with the Ottoman authorities was managed by the Vatican apostolic delegates in Istanbul or Beirut, where the Franciscan Frediano Giannini had become apostolic delegate to Syria in 1905.

The upheavals caused by the First World War – with the return of the Holy City to Christian hands, the Balfour Declaration, the beginning of the British Mandate, and the consequent intensification of Zionist penetration – gave local Catholic authorities some unexpected, significant, and urgent challenges. At first, the Vatican congregations – in particular the Secretariat of State, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, which were most involved in decisions regarding the Middle East – decided not to profoundly restructure the region’s church officers, believing it could adapt to the new situation by making a few simple adjustments. In keeping with the policy, launched by Benedict XV and made his own by Pius XI, of making the most of local clerics and indigenous episcopates, the Vatican congregations tried to reinforce and better structure the Melkite community, which soon showed its involvement in the nascent Palestinian-Arab nationalist movement, and stop local efforts by Latin institutions to Latinize all the Arab clergy.

This last aspect was particularly important because within the Latin Church, certainly the most cultured and socially dynamic part of Palestinian Catholicism, the old diatribes continued and got worse: as soon as the war ended, the patriarchate-custody dispute exploded anew, while the regular orders, especially the Italian and French, often seemed more sensitive to the “political” concerns of their respective governments rather than to Vatican directives. Relations with the British authorities were complicated from the outset, due to personal misunderstandings caused in large part by the political activism of the Latin patriarch, Luigi Barlassina, and by the general fear that the Mandate authorities would favor Protestant proselytizing and the Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches in their anti-Catholicism. Lastly, relations with the Zionist movement were awful, nor could they have been otherwise, as this was perceived by almost the entire Catholic community in Palestine, as well as European clerics, as a threat to the Arab nationalist cause, to the Catholic predomination of the holy sites, and to the maintenance of Christian beliefs and practices in the region, as Barlassina vehemently underlined several times.

If these were the main problems facing the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, it cannot be said that the first measures taken by the Holy See after 1918 did much to solve them. The Vatican congregations oscillated between contradictory positions. The Congregation of Propaganda Fide, led by the influential Dutch cardinal Wilhelm Van Rossum, worked to reinforce the role of the patriarchate, obtaining in 1920 a modus vivendi that was favorable to Barlassina and decidedly limited the prerogatives of the custody, a decision which was, however, already being reconsidered by 1923 in a measure providing the opposite.
new Congregation for the Eastern Churches, set up by Benedict XV in 1917, attempted to defend the Catholic Eastern rites against the aggressive Latinization policy adopted by the patriarchal clerics and by the majority of the European regular orders, with the notable exception of the French White Fathers of Saint Anne’s seminary in Jerusalem, closely tied to the Melkites. The houses of the religious orders, headed by the Franciscans, also tried to defend their positions in Palestine against the centralization policy conducted by the patriarchate following the wishes of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

The rather confused dialectic and the diverse, sometimes contradictory claims reaching the Vatican Secretariat of State contributed to paralyzing for most of the 1920s any decision regarding Catholic institutional arrangements. An initial phase of strengthening Barlassina’s position was followed by a diminution in the role of the patriarch, culminating in the nomination of a British deputy, Godric Kean, in 1924. This appointment, in the eyes of the Holy See, should have offered the British government a guarantee of moderation. However, it was immediately clear that this objective had been achieved only in part, as relations between Barlassina and the other Catholic authorities in the region, starting with the apostolic delegate, Giannini, who continued to reside in Beirut, now capital of the French Mandate in the Lebanon, continued to be complicated. For these reasons Giannini’s visits to the Holy Land became more sporadic and limited, with the result that Barlassina no longer recognized his authority, putting himself forward as the Vatican’s only direct representative in the region.

Faced with this situation, which gave rise to misunderstandings and incidents, the Holy See decided to send as apostolic visitor the Irish Franciscan Paschal Robinson, who had served the same function in the region in the early 1920s. The new enquiries by Robinson, which took place between October 1925 and April 1928, were particularly meticulous, concerning in various stages all the elements of the Catholic Church in Palestine, both Eastern and Latin, with a view to harmonize disputes between the various Catholic institutions there and establish more effective links with the Vatican. In the end, Robinson painted a far from flattering picture of the Catholic situation in Palestine. The greatest responsibility was placed at Barlassina’s door. He was to blame for bad relations with the Eastern Catholics, thanks to his Latinization campaign, and for the terrible relations with the British government. Nor did the other Catholic institutions escape censure. To remedy the endemic tension between the various Catholic institutions and improve relations with the British, Robinson suggested setting up an apostolic delegation in Jerusalem, allowing the presence there of a direct representative of the Holy See who, free from any pastoral duties, could take upon himself the function of relations with the government while at the same time coordinating the Catholic activities.

The Turning Point of 1929

At first, Robinson suggested creating an autonomous delegation in Jerusalem. He subsequently suggested joining the nascent delegation for Palestine, Cyprus, and Transjordan to the apostolic delegation in Egypt, with a commitment that the delegate
reside part of the year in the Holy Land. This solution would have allowed the Vatican to limit any periods of stasis and avoid excessive humiliation of the patriarchate, whose prestige would suffer from the permanent presence of a Vatican representative in Jerusalem. Nor should it be forgotten that Egypt was also a British protectorate, and therefore it should have been relatively straightforward to harmonize the needs of the Cairo and Jerusalem delegations.

This opinion resolved the Holy See to nominate the apostolic delegate in Egypt, Monsignor Valerio Valeri, who became also responsible for the whole of Palestine, Cyprus, and Transjordan in February 1929. This nomination came at a particularly important time in the history of Mandate Palestine. Just a few months later, massacres following violent riots that broke out over the rights of worship at al-Buraq/the Wailing Wall would lead to an abrupt deterioration of the political situation and endemic violence that would last throughout the 1930s, culminating in the great Arab revolt of 1936–1939.

From a Catholic standpoint, too, the events of 1929 can be considered a turning point. Valeri had come to the Holy City with a dual mandate. In church circles, he was to improve relations between the patriarchate and the custody, placing limits on the dangerous rivalry between various bodies, and coordinate the Eastern rites, paying special attention to the Maronites in Cyprus and the opaque administrative situation of the Melkite diocese of St. John of Acre. However, the Secretariat of State insisted that the delegate also play a diplomatic role, dealing with the British and putting an end to the numerous autonomous stands and incautious activism of Barlassina, which was damaging Catholic prestige in the region. The events of September 1929 and the consequent deterioration in the political situation added urgency to this second part of Valeri’s mission, pushing his role as referee between the various Catholic institutions into second place.

During his years in Jerusalem, before being nominated nuncio to Bucharest in 1933, Valeri helped to bring about a significant change in Vatican policy in the region. One of the first questions addressed by Valeri was pursued with considerable consistency: improving relations with the Mandate government. This relationship, while not as tense as it had been in the early 1920s, had been up and down throughout the latter part of the decade. Valeri’s opinions and assessments of Arab nationalism and Zionism were even more significant. From the beginning of his activity, Valeri did not demonstrate the proclivity of many of the Palestine church’s bodies for the Arab nationalist movement. Here, too, these inclinations were not as strong as they had been at the beginning of the 1920s, when urban Catholic elites were at the forefront of promoting Muslim-Christian Associations to fight Zionism. Still, toward the end of the decade, not only did the Melkite community and its leader Monsignor Gregorius Hajjar continue to be very close to the nationalist cause, but Barlassina and the majority of the patriarchal clerics also showed their radical opposition to Zionism and their open support for the Arab cause. The massacres of 1929 and the growing militancy of the nationalist movement led Valeri to recommend more caution to clerics and bishops, saying they should confine themselves to promoting peace and moderation amongst the parties. The growing Islamic character of the Palestinian nationalist movement, which began to show itself more forcefully at the beginning of the 1930s, was not lost on the apostolic delegate. In the second half of the
decade, during the great Arab revolt, this trend intensified, leading to the marginalization of Christians, and especially Catholics, within Palestinian nationalism.\textsuperscript{26}

Valeri also showed a new attitude toward Zionism. From his reports, it is clear that he did not share the anti-Semitic stereotypes that were so widespread among Catholic clergies in the Holy Land and Vatican diplomats. Moreover, he tried to get to know the characters in the Jewish nationalist movement at close quarters, displaying in general a certain equanimity of view and clear sympathy for the more moderate elements, led by the rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Judah Magnes, which were in favor of a federal solution and a bi-national state in Palestine.\textsuperscript{27} On this point, however, his actions could not lead to any concrete outcome that would affect the Vatican’s complex policy. This was essentially for two reasons. First, while he did not share in the blindest anti-Jewish prejudices, he agreed with the premise that Catholic and Zionist objectives in Palestine were fundamentally opposed. Second, within Vatican diplomacy and the Secretariat of State, opposition to Zionism, though not as virulent as in the early 1920s, continued to be deep-rooted, such that only a complete and profound policy rethink – beyond Valeri’s remit or intentions – could have called it into question.

The 1930s

Over the 1930s, the picture that began to emerge immediately after the 1929 riots became clearer. The Holy See tried to steer itself as widely as possible away from Arab nationalist initiatives, which had by then taken on a violent and specifically anti-British character and had found growing support from Italian foreign policy.\textsuperscript{28} From this standpoint, the Secretariat of State and the Vatican representatives in Jerusalem observed with growing distaste the nationalist activism of Hajjar who, albeit in alternating phases, continued his efforts to back the Arab cause. Meanwhile, questions hung over the administrative rectitude of the Melkite prelate, whose diocese was subject of an in-depth investigation headed by the apostolic delegate, Gustavo Testa, in the second half of the 1930s.\textsuperscript{29}

Notwithstanding the Greek-Catholic leadership’s low prestige in Rome, the Holy See continued its policy of encouraging Eastern Catholic churches and discouraging the Latinization effort that endured among the patriarchal clergies in Palestine and Transjordan. This pro-Eastern policy was pursued with renewed vigor after Eugene Tisserant became secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. The growing influence of the French cardinal during the final phase of Pius XI’s papacy can be seen in the important decision, taken in 1938, to entrust the supervision of all Catholics in Palestine to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, removing all Latin institutions from the control of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, which had held this responsibility to that point.\textsuperscript{30}

This change clearly showed the Vatican’s awareness of the temporary nature of British rule in the region and its preparation for the future. It thus tried to give the Catholic presence in the Middle East a clear Arab character without, however, tilting it too far in the direction of Palestinian nationalism, which, especially in the second half of the 1930s, was showing its more disturbing face. These contradictory needs meant that, in the short
term, the best solution was the continuation of the British Mandate and, in the long term, the hypothesis of internationalization, although in less dogmatic tones than those used by Cardinal Gasparri in the early 1920s. Relations with Mandate authorities had improved notably since the institution of the apostolic delegation and the strict limits imposed on Barlassina’s political initiatives. This process, which had begun with Valeri, continued with his successors, Riccardo Bartoloni and Torquato Dini – both of whose careers as delegates were cut short by death – and especially Gustavo Testa, who had a long run in the delegations in Cairo and Jerusalem.31 This improvement can be seen in the Holy See’s reaction to the July 1937 Peel Plan, in which the British government proposed for the first time officially the partition of Palestine.32 On that occasion, the Secretariat of State tried to limit as far as possible any embarrassment to the British government and to obtain the maintenance under the Mandate of the highest possible number of sanctuaries and other religiously sensitive areas.33 Catholics feared the idea that the holy sites, or parts thereof, could end up under Arab sovereignty, which sooner or later would have taken on an increasingly Islamic character. However, it was even worse to imagine the holiest Christian sanctuaries and the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth ending up under Jewish control. There was a dual hostility toward the Zionists. More traditional scriptural objections to the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land was still very much alive in many Catholic ranks and in Vatican diplomatic circles, and these were joined by more recent fears just as deeply felt. Catholic critics of the Zionist movement frequently referenced the immorality of Zionist claims, the collectivist nature of their agricultural communes (the famous kibbutzim), and the more or less explicit sympathy for communism, which, Testa emphasized in a report to the secretary of state, Eugenio Pacelli, in March 1936, risked being spread in Palestine as well.34

Facing the Birth of the State of Israel

Unlike World War I, the Second World War did not directly affect Palestine as a theater of combat. Rather, it can be said that first half of the 1940s was a quieter time for the region than the preceding half-decade, with its open guerrilla warfare, and the following one, with its renewed and decisive clashes between Zionists, Arabs, and the British, which brought the end of the Mandate and the birth of the state of Israel. Despite this, World War II did have some consequences for the region and, from our particular point of view, for the Catholic presence there, making contact with Rome more difficult and forcing the 1942 departure of Testa, who returned to Italy and began a long period of unwelcome diplomatic inactivity.35 At that point, the Holy See was without a direct representative in Palestine, if we exclude the visits of Monsignor Arthur W. Hughes, who operated from his base in Egypt as a sort of chargé d’affaires and who, being a British citizen, was able to move more freely during the war. Further, during the war years and those immediately following, some of the main protagonists of political-religious life in the 1920s and 1930s quit the stage for good. In November 1940, Monsignor Hajjar died. His replacement as
the head of the Melkites in Galilee, Georges Hakim, was no less nationalistic, but more flexible, and would in the 1960s become patriarch of the Greek Catholics under the name Maximos V.36 In the autumn of 1947, after a long and contentious patriarchate and with the region plunged into open warfare, Luigi Barlassina passed away.37 During the 1948 war, the Latin patriarchate thus found itself without a firm guide, while internally the endemic maneuvering and counter-maneuvering between clerics of European and Arab origin returned.

This paralysis of Catholic offices in the region on the eve of the United Nations’ decisive announcement in November 1947 should neither surprise us nor be taken as a sign of the Vatican’s lack of interest in the destiny of the region. Immediately after the Second World War, rather, the Holy See chose deliberately to maintain complete silence on matters related to the Holy Land’s political future. Instead, it allowed its views to filter out from time to time through the Catholic press or through the institutions that most closely followed the evolution of events: the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, which remained the only fully functioning Latin Catholic institution in Palestine during the most turbulent phases of the 1946–1947 guerrilla war and the 1948 war, and, most of all, the American Catholic Near East Welfare Association, led by Monsignor Thomas McMahon and inspired by Cardinal Francis Spellman, then at the height of his prestige and influence.38

There is no room here to examine the complex attitude of the Holy See and international Catholicism toward the hypothetical partition of Palestine in the years 1946–1947, nor the reactions following the UN resolution 181 of November 1947. Here it will suffice to remark that this decision, while dividing by statute the Mandate territory into an Arab state and a Jewish one, should not have been too unwelcome to the Vatican since it guaranteed an extensive international zone, including Jerusalem and the immediate surroundings, Bethlehem included. This may not have been the optimum solution, but it did guarantee the Catholic position and the special nature of the Holy Land though the creation of an international enclave that was geographically wide and, most of all, evocative from a symbolic standpoint.39

As we know, things turned out differently and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the first Arab-Israeli war led to the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Transjordan, making internationalization extremely difficult. Even before the formal independence of Israel and the subsequent diplomatic querelle about the status of Jerusalem, which saw the Catholic world oppose the Jewish state and, to a lesser degree, Jordan, the Holy See had decided to adapt its representation in the region to the emerging political equilibrium. In February 1948, faced with the now inevitable end of the British Mandate, the apostolic delegation in Jerusalem became fully autonomous and was definitively separated from that in Cairo, which was made an internunciature headed by Hughes. Gustavo Testa returned to the Holy City, ending the period of diplomatic inactivity to which he had been confined for some years.40 In keeping with the spirit of caution that then dominated in the Vatican, Testa received initial instructions to make no decisive political moves but to stick instead to “promoting peace and mutual tolerance between the two rival races, without appearing to favor one or the other.”41
Over the ensuing months, however, with the outbreak of war, the *de facto* division of Jerusalem, incidents causing damage to sacred sites and Catholic institutions, and, more generally, the stiffening in relations between the Holy See and the Israeli government, the apostolic delegate emphasized his reservations about the Jewish state. Like the custodian of the Holy Land and future patriarch, Alberto Gori, Testa showed himself to be highly critical of any possible direct dealings with the Israelis, toward whom other exponents of the Catholic hierarchy in Palestine – from Alberto Vergani, patriarchal deputy in the Galilee, to McMahon and, sometimes, Hakim himself – were more open. Testa’s attitude was certainly determined by the deepening disagreement between the Vatican and Israel regarding the future of Jerusalem and the question of the *corpus separatum*, which culminated in autumn 1949, when the city’s status was debated at the UN general assembly, which consequently approved resolution 303 in December 1949.

This strict attitude toward Israel was influenced by the personal convictions of the apostolic delegate, who since the end of the 1930s had shown himself to be particularly critical of the Zionist movement, its programs and progress. From 1949–1950, in any case, it would not be fair to overemphasize Testa’s influence on the evolution of the more general Vatican attitude. Between the summer of 1948 and the autumn of 1950, the question of Jerusalem and its internationalization was one of the issues that most alarmed the Vatican Secretariat of State and concerned Catholic public opinion worldwide. In this situation, views within the Catholic world coagulated around various persons and bodies present in Rome – where a majority that was critical of Israel and sympathized with the plight of the Arab refugees was opposed to the attitude of Cardinal Tisserant, more open to dialogue with Israel – while the diplomacy and representatives of the Vatican in various countries were directly involved in campaigns in favor of the internationalization of the Holy City, without any real chance of influencing general Vatican policy in the region.

We end with the independence of the apostolic delegation in Palestine, the birth of the state of Israel, and the diplomatic “battle” over the status of Jerusalem. From this point, Vatican Middle East policy entered a new phase, characterized by the need to guarantee the survival of Catholic institutions inside the Jewish state without alienating the uncertain sympathies of the neighboring Arab ones. This was a difficult balance to achieve and experienced many moments of tension and full-on crises until the beginning of the 1990s, when the end of the civil war in Lebanon and the mutual diplomatic recognition of Israel and the Vatican would signal the beginning of a new, though not necessarily less complicated, chapter in the history of the Holy See’s Middle Eastern policy.

Endnotes


3 On the issue of the holy sites, see, among others: Bernardin Collin, Le problème juridique des lieux-saints (Cairo: Centre d’études orientales, 1956).


5 On the issue of the holy sites, see, among others: Bernardin Collin, Le problème juridique des lieux-saints (Cairo: Centre d’études orientales, 1956).


13 On these contradictory decisions see Giovannelli, La Santa Sede, 89–94; Pieraccini, “Il custodiato,” 67–68.

14 On the reasons of this appointment and on the Vatican-British contacts regarding it see Hachey, ed., Anglo-Vatican Relations, 61; Pieraccini, “Il patriarcato,” 591–96.

15 With regard to the contrast between the two prelates, see Pieraccini, “Il patriarcato,” 599–600. On the incident that took place among them in June 1924 see Giannini to Respighi, 30 May 1924; Barlassina to Van Rossum, 18 June 1924, Archive of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (APLJ), B. Propaganda Fide 1921–1929.

16 See the long report by Robinson regarding the situation of the Latin community in Palestine, Secret Vatican Archive, Archive of the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem and Palestine (ASV, DAGP), B. 3, fasc. 13, ff. 1–31.


18 Memorandum by Robinson to Pope Pius XI, 6 June 1928, ACCO, Oriente, Rappresentanza pontificia in Gerusalemme e Palestina, Pos. 930/28, ff. 45–48.

19 On Friday, 23 August 1929, an Arab mob made a bloody attack on the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. During the following days, the disturbances spread throughout Palestine, becoming particularly virulent in Hebron and Safad. These disorders were the culmination of a period of increased tension, caused by rival Jewish and Muslim claims to the Western Wall – a problem for which the British government had been unable to formulate and enforce any solution, remaining stuck with the complicated situation of the Latin community in Palestine, Pos. 930/28, ff. 45–48.


21 On this enquire, see Fasc. 23 entitled “Situatione finanziaria della Diocesi di S. Giovanni d’Acri, Haifa e Nazareth,” ASV, DAGP, B. 5.


23 On a few months later, on 11 October 1933, he died there at the Italian hospital. Torquato Dini was appointed apostolic delegate to Egypt and Palestine in November 1933. On 26 March 1934, he died suddenly in Cairo, without having visited Jerusalem. Gustavo Testa, appointed on 4 June 1934, was thus the third apostolic delegate to
Egypt and Palestine nominated in a year.


34 Testa to Pacelli, 27 March 1936, AAEESS, Stati Ecclesiastici 4th period, Pos. 474 P.O., Fasc. 482, ff. 6–7.


38 On all these aspects see Ferrari, *Vaticano e Israele*, 40–54, 115–123.


40 On his reappointment see Testa to Roncalli, 2 April 1948, Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII (FSCIRE), FR, b. 106. More in general on these changes regarding the Vatican representatives in the Middle East see Ferrari, *Vaticano e Israele*, 38.

41 Ferrari, *Vaticano e Israele*, 248.

42 Ferrari, *Vaticano e Israele*, 71.

43 With regard to Tisserant’s attitude towards Israel see Fouilloux, *Eugène*, 444–46.

“UNESCO betray their mission and give a bad name to diplomacy and the international institutions. . . . I urge UNESCO to withdraw this bizarre resolution and to engage in protecting, not distorting, human history.”¹ With this statement on 13 October 2016, Isaac Herzog, chairman of the Israeli Labor party, commented on the umpteenth resolution passed at the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regarding Israel’s policies in Jerusalem. On that same day, fifty-eight members of UNESCO Executive Board had casted their vote on resolution 200 EX/25, titled “Occupied Palestine,” submitted by Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and Sudan.² Part one of the resolution regarded specifically Jerusalem: it deplored “Israel’s persistent excavations and works in East Jerusalem particularly in and around the Old City,” and condemned “the escalating Israeli aggressions” toward Jerusalem’s holy sites and their worshippers.³

Though similar resolutions had been passed at UNESCO since Israel’s occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, resolution 200 EX/25 received particular worldwide media attention and the immediate outcry of Israel’s government. At the center of the controversy was the uncompromising language employed in the resolution, accused of expressly failing to link Jerusalem’s holy sites to Judaism. Specifically, the text refers to the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) as a Muslim holy site only, with no mention of its Hebrew name, Har HaBayit, or its English equivalent, Temple Mount; similarly, the Western Wall or Wailing Wall is mentioned only as al-Buraq Plaza, followed by “Western Wall Plaza” in quotes. On the day after the vote, UNESCO’s director general
Irina Bokova released a statement in which, without mentioning the resolution explicitly, she highlighted that Jerusalem’s importance for the three main monotheistic religions was the reason for its inscription on the World Heritage List and warned that any attempt to “deny, conceal or erase any of the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim traditions undermined the integrity of the site.”

The director general’s reconciling statement aimed at deflecting accusations that UNESCO was betraying the purposes of the organization and failing its function. As a matter of fact, nothing unusual characterized this vote. The resolution was submitted, discussed, and voted on by the member states following the defined procedures. Further, it is worth mentioning that UNESCO’s resolutions are not legally binding, which means that UNESCO does not technically have the power to compel member states’ compliance with its resolutions. Nevertheless, what UNESCO does provide, in Michael Dumper’s words, is an “international platform for ‘naming and shaming’ states who fail to fulfill their responsibilities.” The definition of what UNESCO is and can do is clearly a central and difficult one. However, as Bokova’s intervention might suggest, UNESCO is not to be understood merely as a space where international actors fight multilateral “diplomatic wars,” but also as an actor with its own agenda and policy, existing beyond its member states’ mandate.

Much academic attention has been given to the study of international organizations and especially international intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) as “independent actors engaging in diplomatic activities.” Such scholarship moved away from the realist view of IGOs as mere tools of their member states or stages to showcase soft power and negotiate on cultural matters to pursue national interests, and instead examined IGOs as purposive actors whose authority “lies in their ability to present themselves as impersonal and neutral – as not exercising power but instead serving others.” UNESCO was established in 1945 as one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations in the belief that peace cannot be established only through political and economic agreements, but also “on the basis of humanity’s moral and intellectual solidarity.” In the case of UNESCO, the involvement of experts in outlining the organization’s agenda was crucial for generating the international legitimacy needed to establish UNESCO’s role worldwide. From the outset, the organization employed scientific experts and external advisory bodies in order to define the paradigms of cultural heritage and to reinforce its position as a neutral, “non-political” cultural arbitrator. Within this frame, this paper focuses on the early involvement of UNESCO in Jerusalem in the late 1950s. Through the analysis of one of the first experts’ missions sent by UNESCO to Jordan, it will highlight the role of the organization as an independent actor: a stakeholder in international matters related to culture, engaging in diplomatic activities to carry out its mandate.

In her study on the role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity, Irena Kozymka drew an important distinction between the classical notion of cultural diplomacy that has been mostly confined “to the promotion of one nation’s culture abroad to strengthen relations with other nations . . . or to promote national interest,” and the diplomacy of culture, an activity in which “culture is a field of international relations in its own right as much as a tool of foreign policy.” By applying the concept of diplomacy of culture
to non-state actors, UNESCO can convincingly be analyzed as an actor engaging in diplomatic activities for the purpose of culture.Employing the notion of diplomacy as “the established method of influencing the decision and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence,”11 this paper will shed light on the practices of UNESCO’s experts and bureaucrats involved in this early mission, and thus show their role in conforming Jordan to UNESCO’s Western academic practices and values in the field of cultural heritage.12

“A Mission to Study These Holy Places”

In 1957, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was in the process of undertaking planning works at the country’s historical sites, with the purpose of promoting tourism. In this context, the Jordanian government asked UNESCO for the support of specialized experts in the field of restoration and conservation of historical sites. The request aimed to gather together a mission of highly qualified experts who would advise the Jordanian government on the best measures to restore and preserve the numerous archaeological and historic sites situated in Jordanian territory, including Bethlehem and Jerusalem’s Old City in the Jordanian-occupied West Bank. Previously, in December 1954, Gerald Lankester Harding, a British archaeologist and previous director of the Jordanian department of antiquities, raised the possibility of UNESCO sending an architect to Jordan to assist in the reconstruction work at Jarash, and to inspect other ancient monuments. In his reply to Harding’s request, archaeologist and conservationist Jan Karel Van der Haagen, the head of the UNESCO Museums and Monuments division, informed Harding that UNESCO had, at its general conference in Montevideo, adopted an item stating that missions can be sent to member states, upon request, to advise them on the conservation and restoration of their monuments, archaeological sites, or the organization of their museums. Although similar missions of purely advisory nature had been sent to Lebanon and Syria in 1952, the general conference had formalized member states’ ability to demand supporting missions in all fields treated by UNESCO, and had doubled the budget intended for this purpose.

Aware of the UNESCO mission sent to Tripoli, Lebanon, in the early 1950s, Ali Adibi, the Jordanian acting resident representative of the United Nations Technical Assistance Board (UNTAB),13 wrote in October 1957 to the chief of the UNESCO bureau of relations with member states, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, to request UNESCO’s contribution to “a very important and pressing matter”:

As you know Jordan is the home of many holy and historical places of universal significance. In the course of improvement of some of these places to attract more tourists, the Government inevitably has come across some problems, which affect such features as, for example, the old wall and the gates of the old city of Jerusalem. . . . Upon the request of the government, I am writing to find out whether UNESCO can send to Jordan Government a Mission to study these holy places and give the Government their
recommendations for their preservation. I know of one UNESCO Mission which, some years ago, rendered similar services in connection with the city of Tripoli in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{14}

Adibi required the expertise of archaeologists and historians, reporting that UNTAB’s local experts in town planning admitted that the problem of preservation of the holy sites needed investigations and specific expertise beyond their competence.\textsuperscript{15} The Jordanian request was warmly welcomed within UNESCO, despite some reservations. On the one hand, Jordan’s demand was taken as nothing less than the opportunity for UNESCO to save the historic remains of the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, Malcolm Adiseshiah, UNESCO’s assistant director general, warned colleagues not to rush into action in light of the “sad and unlovely” outcomes of another mission that had not ended with the desired results. Adiseshiah referred to Cesare Brandi’s 1956 mission to investigate the Dome of the Rock’s mosaics. The mission had been requested in early 1956 by Gerald Harding, at the time director of the department of antiquities in Amman. However, the tensions that preceded the Suez Crisis and that eventually produced the pro-Egyptian and anti-British government of Sulayman al-Nabulsi and the termination of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty, also led to the abrupt end of Gerald Harding’s mandate.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, by the time Cesare Brandi arrived in Jerusalem in summer 1956, the political situation had completely changed. Brandi wrote in his notes that he had to face “a systematic obstructionism by the so-called Egyptian restorers,” and in September 1956 he was asked to leave the country by the consul general and the minister.\textsuperscript{18}

Despite Adiseshiah’s concerns, UNESCO – knowing the Jordanian government’s intention to carry on restoration works in order to encourage tourism – saw a chance not to be missed to direct Jordan’s conservation practices technically and aesthetically. Adibi’s letter was quickly brought to the attention of the interested departments. In less than fifteen days, Van der Haagen had submitted the Jordanian request to Rudolf Salat, director of the department of Cultural Activities, suggesting that UNESCO accept involvement in Jordan. Van der Haagen highlighted the serious risks posed by Jordan’s desire to encourage tourism, if measures were not “undertaken with a deep respect, a great knowledge, and sensible taste.”\textsuperscript{19} He insisted that only great experts in the fields of archaeology, history, architecture, and landscape preservation, with their knowledge and taste, could ensure that such precious sites would be respected, preserved, and promoted.\textsuperscript{20}

The wheels were set in motion. In November 1957, Salat wrote to UNESCO’s interim director general Jean Thomas to inform him of “the grave problem of preservation of holy sites in Jordan.”\textsuperscript{21} Before discussing the importance of UNESCO’s potential intervention in Jordan, Salat reassured the interim director general on the nature of the Jordanian request. He stressed that the problem of preservation was purely technical and absolutely not related to political issues arising at the time of the creation of the state of Israel, including proposals for the internationalization of Jerusalem and its surroundings.\textsuperscript{22} Further, to emphasize UNESCO’s neutral role when it came to political matters, he added that “this extremely delicate issue [the status of Jerusalem] was still the order of the day of the United Nations, and therefore it did not concern UNESCO.”\textsuperscript{23}
At this time, UNESCO was still constructing its international authority as the leading organization for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage. (The World Heritage Convention would only be drafted in 1971.) Therefore, active involvement in Jordan, and especially at holy sites such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, meant not only the expansion of UNESCO’s influence, but also considerable publicity for the organization. In fact, despite not having a financial budget planned for such intervention, Salat highlighted that:

“These holy monuments being of exceptional value for three great religious families of the world, I am certain that any help that UNESCO is able to bring to preserve and valorize these monuments, will be highly appreciated by the public opinion of the entire world.”

Despite UNESCO eagerness to send a mission of three experts to Jordan as quickly as possible, the mission started only in autumn 1959, two years after the first official Jordanian request, and was composed of only two experts: Hans H. Steckeweh, an architect from Hannover and a former official involved in the preservation of monuments in Germany; and architect Mohammed Abbas Badr, head of the Antiquities Service in Cairo. Steckeweh’s mission lasted four month, while Abbas Badr assisted only for five weeks, and covered several sites spread throughout Jordanian-held territory, including Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

“Everything Should Be Done to Preserve the Original Character of These Monuments of Outstanding Value”

UNESCO’s expert mission to Jordan produced one preliminary and one final report, as well as voluminous correspondence between Steckeweh and Van der Haagen. These sources reveal the importance that UNESCO placed on its independent role and interests in matters of cultural heritage conservation. The universal religious importance ascribed to Jerusalem and Bethlehem by Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and the consequent interest of pilgrims and tourists in visiting the sites was the main concern of the organization, manifesting in two ways: first, undertaking conservation according to what UNESCO believed to be tourists’ expectations; and second, protecting sites from the reckless development that tourism could eventually bring about. Both, Steckeweh and Van der Haagen agreed that preserving Bethlehem and Jerusalem meant stopping development and modernization in favor of maintaining the “picturesque narrow and winding streets of former days, used only for foot traffic.” Development was perceived as a threat to these medieval cities not only for the structural damage it could cause to significant monuments and buildings, but especially for the transformation of the atmosphere of the cities:

The expectations of a visitor with religious interests on visiting Bethlehem are considerable, for this “small town” has a place in the Christian regard, perhaps equal to that of Jerusalem. Certainly he will not expect to be confronted with a modern town. Until quite recent times these expectations
would have been gratified, but unfortunately this is now no longer the case. As with so many other towns in Jordan, the aspect of the city is rapidly changing the old to the new.29

Steckeweh was particularly shaken by the demolition carried out in proximity to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in order to clear space for visitor parking lots. He found that such works had seriously affected “the dignity of the site,” and that “in the absence of experienced architects, a simple remedial measure would be the planting of trees to screen the newly erected buildings and the adjacent demolitions.”30 In addition to a general feeling of mistrust for local practitioners and authorities, what emerges vividly from the UNESCO expert report and correspondence is the perception of local inhabitants being a threat to the medieval cities’ heritage.

In correspondence with Van der Haagen, Steckeweh expressed his frustration with public opinion’s general disinterest in issues of conservation. Even though Steckeweh viewed Jerusalem and Bethlehem as “the last remaining mediaeval town in the Near East that had resisted modernization,” he ascribed such resistance to the inevitable poverty and disinterest of its inhabitants rather than their conscious desire to preserve the ancient cities. Moreover, he feared that the inhabitants’ lack of awareness of the value of the cities’ medieval layout could easily allow dramatic transformations of Jerusalem, if these changes were presented as offering the chance for better living conditions.

In comparing Jerusalem’s public opinion with the educated one found in “any European countries,” the German architect claimed that anywhere else there would have been “strong public criticism about the aluminium imitation gold covering of the Dome of the Rock – while here [in Jerusalem] nobody cares.”31 The comparison between local and European/Western public opinions, as well as the comparison between these public opinions’ sensitivity to beauty, stands out in the notes of the UNESCO expert. In his letters, Steckeweh often highlights that the only people caring genuinely about the conservation of Jerusalem’s Old City are foreigners living in loco, who had no impact since they did not dare publicly criticize conservation policy.32 The concept of “good taste” used as evidence of a cultural lack of awareness of heritage value is present in the expert’s report and letters:

The poverty of the town makes advice on preservation illusory at present. There is hardly anybody amongst the people concerned who really understands what such advice is aiming at. Even simple matters of mere good taste, they simply don’t understand what I mean or why I worry. If you see their homes from inside, you will find some explanation: you see the most tasteless things mixed with others – you very seldom meet a man with good taste. Amongst the intelligencia of the country nobody really cares for antiquities, old cities and churches and similar things. To them “old” means “poor.” The only argument that counts is the tourist and his money. . . . So there is no public opinion to back an effort in favor of the preservation of the old town nor of the Mount of Olives.33
Steckeweh’s essentialist understanding of “good taste” suggests the existence of innate, universal parameters of taste, related to cultural and educational settings, which are indeed rooted in UNESCO’s vision of its own mission. In fact, questions regarding the existence of universally shared aesthetic parameters would become especially urgent with the development of the World Heritage Program, whose convention was adopted in 1972. For instance, the first page of the convention reads: “it is essential to adopt a convention establishing an effective system of collective protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, organized on a permanent basis and in accordance with modern scientific methods.” This key concept of “outstanding universal value” implies that value is an attribute intrinsic to a property. Such value must also warrant the employment of experts for its definition and conservation. In other words, if heritage at this early stage of UNESCO was understood as an object or a place whose value is intrinsic in its own “historical fabric,” the role of the expert, who possesses the scientific knowledge that enables him to identify properties’ value, assumes inevitable relevance.

In December 1959, during his mission in Jerusalem, Steckeweh contacted Van der Haagen searching for some guidance to deal with a Jordanian government plan to build a Hilton Hotel on the Mount of Olives. The Hilton was to be built south of the Carmelite convent, on terrain belonging to the Jerusalem waqf. Hans Steckeweh’s opposition to the construction of such a hotel confirmed his open mistrust of local cultural heritage policies.

As an architect, I feel that the project could be done according to the aesthetic requirements of the site; on the other hand it could be harmful. As a preserver of historical sites, I feel like Lord Allenby and his successors, who made the Mount of Olives a nature reserve. But they were backed by power, money, and public opinion, all of which is now on the opposite site. What I am really afraid of is the development, which under present conditions of control will follow the construction of a big and most fashionable hotel. The whole site, now a pretty poor village site, will become fashionable, prices of ground will rise, speculation set in, and building of all kinds will bring up beyond control and spoil the site beyond repair.

Van der Haagen was aware that UNESCO’s policy forbade the organization from giving instructions to their experts about specific technical problems, and therefore wondered to what extent and in what form he could offer his guidance. However, he shared Steckeweh’s concerns. In his reply, he agreed that if the plan for a hotel on the Mount of Olives were to go through, the entire character of the site would be dramatically changed. After expressing his concern about such a possibility, Van der Haagen wondered whether the Jordanian plan should note have been released to newspapers, predicting this would cause worldwide protests, particularly in the United States. The strategy of turning to international public opinion was not limited to putting external pressure on the Jordanian government; it also had an “educational” aim. UNESCO’s practitioners often released interviews and wrote newspaper articles to raise awareness and “educate” public opinion about the organization. Thus, Van der Haagen suggested a “popular educational article on
Old Jerusalem and its problems” to be published in the *Courier*, a magazine circulated by UNESCO since 1948 that by 1960 reached, according to Van der Haagen, more than one million readers throughout the world. He also advised that editorials be published in local Jordanian papers to sensitize public opinion to the fact that modernization would destroy the unique features of Old Jerusalem, and that tourists would not visit Jordan to see a city that resembled many other modern cities in the Middle East.

On the local level, Steckeweh tried to talk with local political and religious authorities in an attempt to find a common base of opposition to this plan. The expert found the mayor of Jerusalem, Ruhi al-Khatib, in agreement with his concerns, but afraid of being powerless to influence wider tourism plans outlined in Amman. Steckeweh found the religious authorities, on the contrary, not especially shocked by the plan. By the time Steckeweh wrote his final report, distributed in 1960, the plan to build the hotel had been put on hold, in part because of pressure from the municipality.

The practices of the UNESCO experts involved in the first official mission to Jordan and the Holy Land in 1959 show the approach of an organization willing to influence and educate countries according to Western academic standards of cultural (and natural, if we consider the Mount of Olives) heritage conservation. Indeed, a European interest in gaining the stewardship of the Holy Land’s biblical heritage was already evident in the early twentieth century, when European imperial powers competed among each other to gain the role of protectors of Jerusalem. During the British Mandate, authorities reinforced the imperial narrative of the city entering a redeeming era after having been neglected by its Ottoman rulers. Similarly, UNESCO’s agenda included the conformity of countries to an internationally defined set of values through its experts’ diplomatic practices.

**Conclusion**

The late 1950s and 1960s represented a transitional phase for UNESCO. In these same years, UNESCO launched the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. The Nubia campaign aimed to save ancient monuments in the Upper Nile Valley from being flooded by Nasser’s construction of the Aswan High Dam, and was the first collaborative international heritage rescue effort involving UNESCO. Even if in 1959 UNESCO’s World Heritage Program was not yet defined in the terms that are now associated with it, the Nubia campaign set the concrete ground for the idea that the international community shared the duty to safeguard the cultural historical heritage that testifies to the history of mankind, and helped define UNESCO’s public image of international authority in this field.

This paper focused on the first consultative expert mission sent by UNESCO to Jordan to advise the Jordanian government on preservation of its cultural heritage, especially of the holy sites that had fallen under its control since 1949, to explore UNESCO’s diplomatic activity in the Holy Land. As seen in Hans Steckeweh’s mission and reports, the practices of UNESCO’s experts “in mission” and “in office” can be analyzed as instances of UNESCO’s diplomatic activity in the Holy Land. UNESCO employed this
diplomatic activity to get the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to conform to UNESCO’s practices of conservation rooted in a Western academic set of aesthetic values. Experts promoted the organization’s idea of what heritage is, and how it should be preserved, by meeting with local experts and the local political establishment, by searching for the support of influential groups, and by releasing information to the international press to wind up public opinion.

The holy sites in general, and Jerusalem in particular, have become central to the Palestine-Israel conflict over the decades, and the Old City of Jerusalem especially has transformed into a symbol of legitimacy for the different interest groups involved. To justify historical narratives, Jerusalem’s Old City has been repeatedly demolished, excavated, rebuilt, and renamed, and as much academic literature has highlighted, archaeology and heritage practices have been increasingly exploited to serve political agendas and reinforce nationalist discourses. Within this frame, the question of UNESCO’s diplomatic role in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem in particular is of major importance. Especially in a case such as Jerusalem, where heritage – and its definition – has been used for decades to claim belonging by competing national groups, the role of UNESCO has increased in importance over time. Here, conflicting actors have benefitted from the involvement of an alleged super partes arbitrator, and UNESCO through its experts has increasingly shaped the knowledge framework within which the conflict has taken place to this day.

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Endnotes
1 Isaac Herzog’s Facebook page, 13 October 2016 (3:47 pm), online at m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1220814351294860&id=16164804544835 (accessed 29 June 2017).
2 Among the twenty-four countries that voted in favor, China and Russia stand out. On the other side, the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Estonia, and Lithuania were the only six countries opposing the resolution. Twenty-six countries abstained from the vote.
The United Nations Technical Assistance Board, 13
In-depth discussion of the notion of expertise, 12
Sally Marks and Chas W. Freeman, “Diplomacy,” 11
Irena Kozymka, “International Organizations and Diplomacy,” 10
UNESCO’s advisory bodies include the International Center of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and International Center for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). 12
In-depth discussion of the notion of expertise is beyond the scope of this article; however, throughout the paper the term will be understood according to UNESCO’s own definition, namely as “a recognized specialist with particular skills, expertise or knowledge,” contracted by the organization in advisory or consultative capacity. UNESCO, “Consultants and Experts,” online at en.unesco.org/careers/consultant%20and%20experts (accessed 5 January 2017).
The United Nations Technical Assistance Board (UNTAB) was created in 1949, when after the creation of the Expanded Program of Technical Assistance (EPTA), the United Nations General Assembly also created a mechanism for the participation of specialized agencies – the Technical Assistance Board (TAB). The board was comprised of the executive heads (or their representatives) of the UN and its specialized agencies and was the forum where technical assistance requests were discussed, progress reports given, and agency programs presented.
Adibi to Galindo Pohl.
Rashid Khalidi, “Consequences of the Suez Crisis in the Arab World,” in The Modern Middle East, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip Shukry Khoury, Mary Christina Wilson, 541.
Van der Haagen to Salat.
Van der Haagen to Salat.
“Il ne s’agit pas du problème politique qui s’est posé au moment de la création de l’Etat d’Israël quand on a envisagé l’internationalisation de Jerusalem et de ses environs ou du moins de certains monuments considérés comme lieux saints par les Chrétiens, les Juifs et les Musulmans.” Salat to Thomas.
Salat to Thomas.
The correspondence between Van der Haagen and Salat (30 October 1957), as well as between Salat and Jean Thomas (5 November 1957), expresses concern for the lack of funding in the case of accepting Jordan’s request. Van der Haagen wrote: “Je sais aussi qu’actuellement le budget pour le programme de participation dans le domaine de la préservation du patrimoine culturel de l’humanité est épuisé” (Van der Haagen to Salat); Salat wrote: “En réservant les détails qui doivent être étudiés très soigneusement soit du point de vue financier (car en effet aucun crédit n’est prévu dans le budget actuel), soit du point de vue technique (choix des experts)” (Salat to Thomas).
Salat to Thomas.
Steckeweh, Final Report, 15.
Steckeweh, Final Report, 15.
Steckeweh, Final Report, 15.
Steckeweh to Van der Haagen, 3.
Steckeweh to Van der Haagen, 2–3. Emphasis added.
Steckeweh to Van der Haagen, 2. Emphasis in the original letter.
“The various local authorities also should become convinced that it is the towns interest to maintain the old and to restrict modern construction. I think you are now trying to establish good relations with some of the influential people in the country to ‘educate’ them to this point of view.” Van der Haagen to Steckeweh.

Van der Haagen to Steckeweh.

Van der Haagen to Steckeweh. Van der Haagen wrote: “In 1960 it may be possible for the UNESCO Courier, read by more than one million people throughout the world, to publish a popular educational article on Old Jerusalem and its problems. . . . The Government should be aware of the fact that the main reason for which tourists will be more and more attracted to Jordan is to see that which is old and unique. They should understand that any radical modernization would destroy the unique features and would make them resemble many other modern cities in the Near East. Perhaps it will be possible that two or three editorials be published in local papers on this subject.”


As Laurajane Smith points out in her book Uses of Heritage, UNESCO was over the years able to construct what she defined as an “Authorized Heritage Discourse,” based on “narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, which reinforces ideas of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics.” Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage (London: Routledge, 2006), 299.

In the past five decades of conflict with the Palestinians, Israel has experienced several forms of armed, popular, and economic Palestinian resistance. But recently, Israel faced for perhaps the first time resistance by mass prayer. It began with hundreds then quickly expanded to thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of Palestinians from all over Jerusalem – and beyond – who took control of space around the al-Aqsa compound for thirteen continuous days, performing the five daily prayers. Hundreds performed dawn and noon and after noon prayers in the tiny road leading to the Council Gate (Bab al-Majlis in Arabic, also known as Bab al-Nadhir, the Inspector’s Gate) in the western wall of al-Aqsa Mosque, while Lions’ Gate (Bab al-Asbat) outside the northern wall was the favorite for thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of people during the evening prayers. People flooded the streets with prayer rugs on their shoulders, and Palestinian factional flags completely disappeared from the scene. “The Israelis were shocked and surprised because they had never witnessed such popular peaceful protests. They didn’t know what to do about it,” Ahmad Qurai’, head of the Jerusalem Affairs department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), told Jerusalem Quarterly.

The new Palestinian resistance has confused the Israeli police, which was heavily deployed in Jerusalem. On the one hand, they did not dare prevent prayers, and there was the sense that suppression of prayers would lead to the eruption of anger not just in Jerusalem, but perhaps in the rest of the Palestinian territories. On the other hand, Israeli police threw stun grenades and shot rubber bullets at the people on a daily basis, claiming that stones were being thrown at them. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, head of the Jerusalem-based Palestinian Academic Society for the Study
of International Affairs (PASSIA), told Jerusalem Quarterly: “If the goal was to limit the number of people, the answer was always more worshipers.”

It was not only the Israelis who were surprised, but also the Palestinians. Wearing the traditional uniform of Islamic clergy, Shaykh ‘Ikrima Sabri, head of the Islamic Supreme Committee in Jerusalem, told Jerusalem Quarterly: “It was a nice surprise, frankly. We were not expecting it.” He added, “People were fearing that Israel wanted to take over al-Aqsa, so they responded en masse to say, ‘The mosque is ours’.” Sabri noted in this regard the statement of Israeli public security minister Gilad Erdan, who claimed that “sovereignty is for Israel.”

How It Began

In the early morning of 14 July, three Palestinian citizens of Israel from the city of Umm al-Fahm opened fire and killed two policemen outside Remission Gate (Bab Hutta) before being chased down and killed by policemen inside al-Aqsa Mosque. Immediately afterward, Israeli police evicted worshipers and guards from the mosque, before closing it completely for two straight days, including for Friday prayers on the day of the incident, during which worship and the adhan were banned for the first time in five decades.

On the morning of 16 July, Israeli policemen were already installing metal detectors at the entrance of three of nine doors in the wall of the mosque. “No entrance through metal detectors!” shouted Wasif al-Bakri, acting chief justice of Jerusalem’s Islamic courts, that morning, surrounded by thousands of Palestinians outside Lions’ Gate. Allahu akbar (God is Great) echoed everywhere and immediately noon prayers began in the street, led by Shaykh ‘Umar Kiswani, director of al-Aqsa Mosque.

Birth of a New Leadership

Soon, Shaykh al-Bakri and Shaykh Sabri, together with the head of the Waqf Council in Jerusalem, ‘Abd al-‘Azim Salhab, and the grand mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories, Muhammad Hussein, were the stars of the protests. The sign of their unified leadership appeared for the first time on a statement titled “The Religious Institutions in Jerusalem,” which the four Muslim clerics issued from inside the shari’a court in Jerusalem. “It was important not to do it from a hotel, but rather from one of the Waqf headquarters. It is not appropriate to lead the street from a hotel,” said Abdul Hadi who was actively involved in meetings and drafting statements for the religious institutions in Jerusalem.

The statement read, in part: “In case the imposition of electronic gates at the entrances to al-Aqsa Mosque persists, we call our people to pray and worship in front of the mosque’s gates and in the streets and alleys of Jerusalem.” Palestinians in Jerusalem considered this a command and before evening prayers worshippers carried the four
Muslim clerics on their shoulders as a sign of support. “For the first time in years, this was a sign of respect for a local leadership in Jerusalem,” Abdul Hadi added. He noted that “the shaykhs were carried on the shoulders, their decisions were obeyed, and it was they who lead the prayers, creating a unique relationship.”

The Palestinian Authority (PA) and the PLO have several leaders in Jerusalem, but none have earned the same degree of trust from the city’s residents. Shaykh Sabri said, “We were listening to the youths. It was very important to earn their respect for our decisions.”

**Metal Detectors**

Palestinians refrained from entering al-Aqsa Mosque through the Israeli metal detectors, but insisted on their right to pray in the streets. In most cases, especially in the evenings, the large number of worshipers led to the closure of main streets around Lions’ Gate. “It was unprecedented,” the grand mufti, Shaykh Muhammad Hussein told *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

In the streets of Jerusalem the feeling was similar. Rami Natsheh, 49 years old, who was awaiting prayers outside Lions’ Gate, said he had “never seen such a thing, not in the first intifada or the second. I’m proud of it.” He added, while watching tens of thousands of worshipers, “This is huge.” Ahmad Shareef, 29 years old, said with pride: “Our weapon here is the prayer rug. We put it on the street and pray.”

For some, it was the first time to perform prayers. Youths were noticed asking elders about what to say during prayers and how to perform ablution (*wudu’*).

**One Family**

In the Old City, Palestinians behaved like one family. With the lack of public toilets, families offered help for people from outside the city. People donated cold bottles of water, while others offered food and sweets. “You didn’t have to ask for donations, people were bringing water and food and sweets everyday,” said Nasser Qos, a local activist in the Old City.

The African community in Bab al-Majlis played central role in helping people during the day. Christians in Jerusalem, and in the Old City in particular, also showed solidarity with the worshipers. A delegation from the Christian Quarter in the Old City visited the worshipers at Bab al-Majlis and Christian religious leaders also visited the Muslim clergy leaders several times. One Friday, Nedal Abboud, a Christian from Jerusalem, came to Salah al-Din Street wearing a cross and holding the Bible and stood in line with the worshippers.
Religious War

Palestinian leaders warned that the Israeli Right is pushing toward turning the political conflict into a religious one. In recent years, rightwing Israeli leaders began talking publicly about dividing the mosque between Muslims and Jews. Calls for dividing the mosque have come from Israeli ministers, including Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, and members of the Knesset, including Likud member Yehuda Glick. But these calls reached a peak when Israeli minister of public security Gilad Erdan stated, the same day the metal detectors were installed, that “Israel has the sovereign right to make and implement any decision at the Temple Mount.”

In reaction, Shaykh ‘Ikrima Sabri said, “The people felt that al-Aqsa is in real danger, especially when Erdan declared that Israel has sovereignty over the mosque.” This feeling was reflected at times in the slogans that people chanted during the two weeks, such as: “O Khaybar Jews, the army of Muhammad is returning.” But the general feeling after two weeks was that Israeli attempts to divide the mosque are not over, but merely delayed. Adnan Husseini, PA minister of Jerusalem Affairs, told Jerusalem Quarterly: “No doubt, what happened delayed Israeli plans to divide the mosque between Muslims and Jews, but the attempts are not over yet.” He added: “The developments in the course of the two weeks gave Jerusalemites the confidence that they can block these attempts with their unity and mass presence. This was one of the main lessons of the incidents.”

Bloody Friday

The situation looked tense at times, but it became especially bloody on the second Friday after the closure of the mosque. For the first time since 1967, the religious institutions in Jerusalem ordered the closure of small mosques in the city during the Friday prayers so as to gather the maximum number of worshippers possible around al-Aqsa. Tens of thousands of people responded and gathered in many streets throughout the Old City, which was heavily surrounded by thousands of Israeli policemen. “We are going through special circumstances, to pray in the streets and at the gates of al-Aqsa Mosque, but these conditions will not continue and we will return to pray in al-Aqsa Mosque,” Shaykh Hussein told a crowd of thousands of worshipers in Wadi al-Jawz.

Three Palestinians were declared dead and dozens wounded in clashes that erupted after the prayers in al-Tur, Ras al-‘Amud, and Abu Dis. Fears of more clashes the following Friday accelerated the diplomatic efforts by the Jordanian and Palestinian leadership in contact with the Israelis and Americans. After midnight on 24 July, Israeli police removed the metal detectors from outside the doors of the mosque, but kept metal bridges over some of the gates in preparation for installing cameras.
Victory

Palestinians insisted that everything be removed and that the situation be returned as it was on 14 July. Tens of thousands of Palestinians declared victory when the Israeli police removed everything the second day. Thousands took to the streets after midnight, fireworks lit up the city sky, car horns were heard blaring all over the Jerusalem, sweets were distributed, and young people chanted for al-Aqsa and Palestine. “After the long pain, it is time to celebrate,” said Rawhi Abu Sneineh, 49 years old, adding, “I never seen such a crowd in the streets of the city at this time.”

Celebrations continued in the streets of the Old City and its surroundings from midnight until afternoon prayers on Saturday, which were arranged by the religious institutions to allow the masses to enter al-Aqsa Mosque. But while tens of thousands of people were waiting outside Lions’ Gate to enter, news spread that the police were insisting on keeping Remission Gate (Bab Hatta) closed. “No entrance while Bab Hutta is closed,” shouted the crowd. A young man approached Shaykh Salhab. “Please, if we enter now they will never open it. Let’s wait, we are not in a hurry. We were here for fourteen days, we can wait one or two days more.”

Thunderous applause mixed with calls of Allahu Akbar was heard when the Muslim clerics decided not to enter until Remission Gate was reopened. Minutes later, the sound of the adhan was heard, accompanied by a crowd carrying Shaykh Hussein on their shoulders, signaling by hand that Remission Gate was opened. People rushed to Remission Gate, entering it for the first time in two weeks, with mobile phones high in the air to photograph and film the historic entrance. Dozens of people were seen kneeling on the ground of the mosque, thanking God for returning to the mosque; others began hugging each other, while some distributed sweets. The Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem estimates that around 100,000 entered the mosque at that moment.

A Trap

But the joyful moments soon turned to anger when Israeli policemen stationed at Mughrabi gate began throwing stun grenades and shooting rubber bullets at the large crowd. Women, children, and elderly people were seen running to the gates, which were closed by the police before they launched their attack on the worshippers. Some managed to get out through Lions’ Gate, the only open gate at that time. “Don’t fear them, we are heroes,” a woman told her daughter while leaving the mosque. Gradually, the police reopened the doors of the mosque and lifted age restrictions.

The incident has reenergized many Jerusalemite Palestinians, who have suffered mightily under Israel’s rule. “Before the incidents, I used to see a few people praying with the guards in the evenings, but nowadays they are more than five thousand daily, thank God,” said Shaykh Kiswani, the mosque’s director. Still, Kiswani warned: “This is a partial victory. Don’t forget that Jerusalem and al-Aqsa are still under occupation.”

Abd El-Raouf Arnaout is a Palestinian journalist resident in Jerusalem.
Editors’ Note: The following represents a summary statistical survey of the Jerusalem governorate produced annually by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). JQ thanks PCBS for providing this key document to JQ readers. JQ published material from the PCBS statistical yearbook for 2015 in issue 62; data in the 2017 statistical yearbook that has not been updated from the 2015 statistical yearbook – including sections on the Jerusalem governorate’s Living Standards, Information Society, Security and Justice, and Employers – has been removed in the interest of space. (The full statistical yearbook for 2017 can be found online at www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2274.pdf.)

Reflecting the fragmented situation in Palestine, PCBS divides its Jerusalem data into two areas, as follows:

- **Area J1** comprises those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed forcibly by Israel following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967, including: Bayt Hanina, Bayt Safafa, al-‘Isawiyya, Jabal al-Mukabbir, Jerusalem (comprising Bab al-Sahira, Ras al-‘Amud, Shaykh Jarrah, al-Shayyih, al-Suwwana, al-Tur, and Wadi al-Jawz), al-Sawahira al-Gharbiyya, Sharafat, Shu’fat, Shu’fat refugee camp, Silwan, Sur Bahir, al-Thawri, and Umm Tuba.

Under current Israeli law, PCBS, as an institution of the Palestinian Authority, is banned from operating in annexed Jerusalem, and thus from collecting data there. That it continues to try to do so is admirable, but this restriction necessarily limits some of its abilities, preventing it from conducting house-to-house surveys or from accessing municipal records that would allow for a more detailed evaluation of conditions in Jerusalem.

In comparing the data and analysis from the 2017 statistical yearbook to that from 2015, a number of dynamics are immediately evident: The impact of increasingly draconian Israeli restrictions on Palestinians’ Jerusalem residency status (discussed by Fadwa Allabadi and Tareq Hardan in their article “Marriage, Split Residency, and the Separation Wall in Jerusalem” in JQ 65, in a series of documents on punitive residency revocation in JQ 66, and elsewhere) can be seen in the steady decline of registered live births to children with Palestinian identity cards from 2011 to 2015. The health of Palestinians in Jerusalem governorate has declined. Between 2013 and 2015, the number of hospitals has decreased by two, while numbers of hospital discharges has increased by more than 15,000; the total number of hospitalization days has increased by more than 50,000; and the hospital bed occupancy rate has increased from 62.5 percent to 77.6 percent. The number of Palestinian university (for the 2015–2016 academic year) and college students (for the 2014–2015 academic year) in Jerusalem governorate declined in comparison to the 2013–2014 academic year. Although the number of mosques operating in the governorate increased slightly (from 102 to 110) between 2014 and 2015, the number of licensed cultural centers dropped by 25 percent, from 64 to 48.

The labor situation remains unstable, with the unemployment rate for Palestinians in the Jerusalem governorate around four times the rate in Israel. Between 2014 and 2016, the percentage of Palestinians in Jerusalem governorate who were employers declined, while the percentage of wage laborers and those self-employed increased. Israeli-imposed impediments to movement have had a significant effect on the transportation sector. In 2015, 787 employees were engaged in the formal transportation and storage sector in Jerusalem governorate, down from 933 employees in 2013. Similarly, the output value of this sector declined from 33.5 million dollars in 2013 to 24.5 million dollars in 2015, with the value added realized declining from 13.4 million dollars to 8.3 million dollars in this same period. The informal transportation sector was effected even more noticeably: whereas 253 vehicles and 253 employees engaged in the informal transportation sector in Jerusalem governorate in 2013, only 98 vehicles and 100 employees were so engaged in 2015; the output value of these vehicles declined from 8.7 million dollars to 4.9 million dollars in the same period. The tourism industry in the Jerusalem governorate also saw a sharp decline from 2014 to 2016. Although the number of hotels operating remained stable, the total number of hotel guests in the governorate plunged from 177,602 in 2014 to under 100,000 in 2016.

Two economic areas that did see improvement were the olive oil industry and the information and communication sector. From 2014 to 2016, the number of operating olive presses in Jerusalem governorate increased from 3 to 4, and the number of employees operating the presses increased from 27 to 29 – admittedly modest increases. However,
the output value of these presses increased by nearly 100,000 dollars and the value added realized by the olive press sector increased by over 116,000 dollars. Gains in the information and communication sector between 2013 and 2015 were even more notable: the number of employees in the sector in Jerusalem governorate increased from 9 to 82; the output value increased from 185,200 dollars to 1.6 million dollars; and the value added realized by activities in the sector increased from 150,700 to 749,400.

Meanwhile, land pressure – intensified by Israeli policies, notably closure and confiscation – was evident in statistics regarding the construction sector and housing density. Although the number of building licenses issued in Jerusalem governorate declined from 2014 to 2016, the number of employees engaged in the construction sector and the output value and value added realized by the sector ballooned. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Palestinians in Jerusalem governorate are increasingly living in apartments or independent rooms rather than freestanding homes: nearly two-thirds lived in the former in 2015, compared to less than 54 percent in 2013.

These are only some of the findings that can be drawn from the statistical surveys provided by the PCBS and made available in JQ – surely activists, scholars, and observers will make other connections and develop new analyses. JQ remains committed to providing readers with the data, analysis, and reporting that illuminates the contemporary state of Jerusalem and its people.

Population

- The total estimated population of Jerusalem governorate in mid-2016 is 426,533 persons: 216,748 males and 209,785 females. The population in Jerusalem governorate constitutes 8.9 percent of the total population of Palestine and 14.5 percent of the population of the West Bank.
- The sex ratio in Jerusalem governorate in mid-2016 was 103.3 males per hundred females, and is the same in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

![Figure 1. Estimated Population in Jerusalem Governorate by Locality, Mid-Year 2016.](image)
Vital Statistics

- The number of registered live births in the Jerusalem governorate with Palestinian identity cards was 3,239 in 2015; 3,475 in 2014; 3,453 in 2013; and 3,532 in 2012. Registered deaths for the same years were 318, 309, 327, and 286 respectively.
- 3,263 marriage contracts were signed in shari’a courts and churches in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.
- There were 614 cases of divorce in shari’a courts in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.

Figure 2. Distribution of Palestinian Population in Jerusalem Governorate by Area and Age Groups, 2013.

Figure 3. Median Age at First Legal Marriage by Selected Governorates, 2015.
Health

- There were 7 hospitals in Jerusalem governorate with 698 beds in 2016.
- The total number of discharges from Jerusalem hospitals was 50,555 in 2016.
- The total number of hospitalization days in Jerusalem hospitals was 197,629 in 2016.
- The bed occupancy rate in Jerusalem hospitals was 77.6 percent in 2016.

Labor Force

- The labor force participation rate of persons aged 15 years and above in Jerusalem governorate was 30.3 percent in 2016: 54.4 percent for males and 6.6 percent for females. For the years 2012–2015, the rate was, respectively: 32.7 percent, 30.5 percent, 31.0 percent, and 29.2 percent.
- Employment rates in Jerusalem governorate were 82.2 percent, 82.4 percent, 81.0 percent, 86.1 percent, and 84.6 percent, respectively, for the years 2012–2016.
- The unemployment rate in Jerusalem governorate of persons aged 15 years and above was 15.4 percent in 2016, compared with 17.8 percent, 17.6 percent, 19.0 percent, and 13.9 percent for the years 2012–2015, respectively.
- Employed persons in Jerusalem governorate distributed by employment status in 2016 were as follows: 3.7 percent employers, 14.2 percent self-employed, 81.6 percent wage employee, and 0.5 percent unpaid family member.

![Figure 4. Distribution of Employed Persons from Jerusalem Governorate by Employment Status, 2016.](image)

Education

1. Schools

In scholastic year 2016–2017, there were 258 schools.

- In scholastic year 2016–2017, there were 72,883 school students: 35,336 males and 37,547 females.
- In scholastic year 2016–2017, the average number of students per teacher was 17.2 in government schools, 22.0 in United Nationals Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools, and 15.7 in private schools.
- In scholastic year 2016–2017, the average number of students per class was 23.3 in government schools, 30.0 in UNRWA schools, and 23.8 in private schools.
2. Higher Education
- In scholastic year 2015–2016, there were 12,887 university students: 5,565 males and 7,322 females.
- In scholastic year 2015–2016, there were 318 college students: 53 males and 265 females.
- In scholastic year 2014–2015, there were 2,726 university graduates: 1,190 males and 1,536 females.
- In scholastic year 2014–2015, there were 121 college graduates: 21 males and 100 females.

Culture
- In 2016, there were 48 licensed cultural centers operating in Jerusalem governorate.
- In 2016, there were 4 museums operating in Jerusalem governorate.
- In 2016, there were 2 theaters operating in Jerusalem governorate.
- In 2015, there were 110 mosques operating in Jerusalem governorate.

Housing and Housing Conditions
- In 2015, the average number of rooms per housing unit in Jerusalem governorate was 3.5 rooms.
- In 2015, the average housing density in Jerusalem governorate was 1.5 persons per room.

Figure 5. Distribution of Palestinian Households in Jerusalem Governorate by Type of Housing Unit, 2015.

Agriculture and Land Use
1. Agriculture
- 8.6 percent of households in Jerusalem governorate had a garden as of 24 March 2015.
- 98.2 percent of households with a garden in Jerusalem governorate utilized it for agricultural activities during agricultural year 2013–2014.
- 3.5 percent of households in Jerusalem governorate reared livestock (domestic) as of 24 March 2015.
2. Population Density

- The total area of Jerusalem governorate is 345 km².
- The population density in Jerusalem governorate was 1,236 (capita/ km²) at mid-year 2016.

3. Olive Presses

- There were 4 operating olive presses in Jerusalem governorate with 29 employees in 2016.
- The output value of those presses was USD 350.0 thousand.
- The value added realized by the olive presses sector was USD 308.9 thousand.

Environment and Natural Resources

1. Water

- In 2016, 99.6 percent of schools in Jerusalem governorate were connected to a water network.
- In Ramallah/al-Bireh and Jerusalem Area J2, the water situation is very complex. In 2015, 23.8 million cubic meters of water were supplied to the domestic sector.
- The daily allocation per capita from consumed water for domestic purposes was 82.2 liter per capita per day (l/c/d) in Palestine: 84.3 l/c/d in the West Bank, with 95.5 l/c/d in Ramallah/al-Bireh and Jerusalem Area J2 in 2015.
- In 2015, 79.0 percent of households in Jerusalem governorate evaluated water quality as good.

* Analysis excludes primary data from Municipality and Culture Committee Schools in Jerusalem.
2. Electricity
- There were 108,265 subscribers of electricity services in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.
- Electricity consumption in Jerusalem governorate was 515.6 gigawatt hours compared to 461.8 gigawatt hours in 2014, 470.7 gigawatt hours in 2013, and 491.0 gigawatt hours in 2012.

3. Solid Waste
- During 2016, the local authority transported solid waste for 75.2 percent of schools in Jerusalem governorate.

4. Wastewater Services
- In 2016, 65.9 percent of schools in Jerusalem governorate used the wastewater network to dispose of their wastewater, 29.2 percent used porous cesspits, and 4.0 percent used sealed cesspits.

National Accounts
- In area J1 of Jerusalem governorate, the gross value added at current prices was USD 1,074.9 million for 2015 compared with USD 1,114.5 million in 2014.

Note: Value added within national accounts includes all value added incurred from all economic sectors including the informal sector.

Consumer Prices
- The consumer price index in area J1 of Jerusalem governorate decreased by 0.96 percent from 2015 to 2016, while it increased by 0.33 percent from 2014 to 2015, and by 3.84 percent from 2013 to 2014.
Transportation Sector

1. Informal Transportation Activities
   • There were 98 vehicles engaged in this sector in Jerusalem governorate with 100 employees in 2015.
   • The output value of those vehicles was USD 4.9 million in 2015.
   • The value added realized by the informal transportation sector was USD 2.8 million in 2015.

2. Transportation and Storage
   • There were 787 employees in this sector in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.
   • The output value in Jerusalem governorate was USD 24.5 million in 2015.
   • The value added realized by the formal transportation sector was USD 8.3 million in 2015.

Information and Communication Sector

• In 2015, there were 82 employees in this sector in Jerusalem governorate
• In 2015, the output value in Jerusalem governorate was USD 1.6 million.
• In 2015, the value added realized by the information and communication activities was USD 749,400.

Construction Sector

• In 2016, 116 building licenses were issued in Jerusalem governorate for residential buildings in area J2 with a total area of 71,900 m².
• There were 13 licenses issued for non-residential purposes in Jerusalem governorate area J2 with an area of 11,100 m².
• There were 138 employees in this sector in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.
• The output value in Jerusalem governorate was USD 14.6 million in 2015.
• The value added realized by the construction sector was USD 11.2 million in 2015.

Figure 9. Main Economic Indicators for Information and Communication Activities in Jerusalem Governorate, 2015 (Value in 1,000 USD).
Industrial Sector
- There were 5,051 employees in 2015.
- The output value of those enterprises was USD 441.8 million.
- The value added realized by the industrial sector was USD 280.4 million.

Tourism
- There were 24 hotels in operation in Jerusalem governorate at the end of the year 2016, with 1,462 rooms and 3,168 beds.
- The total number of guests in Jerusalem governorate hotels was 99,372 in 2016.

Service Sector
- There was 10,585 employees in this sector in Jerusalem governorate in 2015
- The output value in Jerusalem governorate was USD 251.3 million.
- The value added realized by the services sector was USD 188.3 million.

Internal Trade
- There were 11,313 employees in this sector in Jerusalem governorate in 2015.
- The output value in Jerusalem governorate was USD 772.4 million.
- The value added realized by internal trade was USD 703.1 million.

Registered Foreign Trade
- The total value of registered imports of goods for Jerusalem governorate in 2015 was USD 343.2 million and showed a decrease of 5.7 percent compared to 2014.
- The total value of registered exports of goods from Jerusalem governorate reached USD 55.5 million and showed an increase of 1.0 percent in 2015 compared to 2014.
**Israeli Violations**

- 26 settlements have been constructed on confiscated land in Jerusalem governorate, 16 of these in area J1.
- In 2015, around 292,555 settlers lived in the settlements in Jerusalem governorate and 214,135 of these were in area J1.
- During 2016, the Israeli authorities demolished 88 buildings in Jerusalem governorate.

![Figure 11](image-url)  
Figure 11. Number of Settlers in the West Bank by Governorate, 2015.
رام الله لعثمانية
دراسة في تاريخها الاجتماعي
1517 - 1918
سبيوع ممورة
تتغذى: سليمان سماري

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