



## **The Valero Family Sephardi-Arab Relations in Ottoman and Mandatory Jerusalem**

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This paper presents sections gleaned from our recently completed study of the Valero family that relate to the relationship between this particular constituent of the Sephardi elite and the Arab population in Jerusalem. The time frame of our study is the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods. We focus upon prominent members of the Valero family, their activities within the Jewish community, their relationships with other communities and local government, and their contributions to the economic development of Palestine, as well as describe the day-to-day life of the family. Our study opens in the 1830s, when Ya'akov Valero began his career as a young man in Jerusalem, and ends in 1948. Detailed are the lives of four generations of the Valero family in Palestine.

In the forthcoming book, the Valero family history is viewed against the background of the administrative, legal, economic,

urban, and rural transformations in Palestine between 1799 and 1948. Two central themes run through this research: the development of a local entrepreneur class in Palestine, on the one hand, and the Sephardi Jewish elite and its contribution to the process of change and modernization in the region, on the other.

This research continues the work initiated in our earlier study, *Sephardi Entrepreneurs in Eretz Israel: The Amzalak Family, 1816-1918* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991) and looks at the Valeros as a family unit during a period of change in Palestine. The work emphasizes the role played by this Sephardi family in Palestine's modernization. We contend that the modernization of Palestine began in the 1830s, earlier than held by certain historians, and that the local elite composed of Muslim, Christian Arab and Jewish families - such as the Valero family - played an instrumental role in this process. In our comprehensive work, greater attention is given to the family's social milieu, culture, and lifestyle in order to contextualise its business activities, relations with other populations and formal and non-formal authorities and bodies in Palestine and Jerusalem, and leadership roles within the Jewish community.

One important aspect of the framework of the family's social, cultural and economic networks were its relations with the Arab population. In this paper, we use the designation 'Arab' to refer to Arab Muslims and Christians. The following description is based mainly on family sources and interviews, and other primary and secondary historical and literary documents and publications, which reflect mostly Jewish, Sephardi and family perspectives. One of our intentions in publishing this work in the *Jerusalem Quarterly File* is to receive feedback and thus achieve a more comprehensive and balanced analysis of these relations.

### The Valero Family in Jerusalem: A Short Biography

According to family tradition and historical sources, the forefathers of the Valero family in Palestine were Marranos (forced converts) who took the name "Valero" when converting to Christianity. Some of them were expelled from Spain or left for Holland, where they returned to the fold of Judaism, and later moved to Turkey. Some members of the family settled in Palestine, coming from Turkey over 300 years ago.

In a lexicon published in 1929, compiler Arie Leib Frumkin mentions Ya'akov Valero, one of the *hakhamim* (lit. "wise men"; those well-versed in the religious literature) of Jerusalem in the eighteenth century. He died in 1761 and was buried in the plot called "Barak" in the Jerusalem Jewish cemetery. The inscription on his tombstone reads: "Tombstone of the industrious in the Torah [learning], God working, a stout fellow, the erudite scholar Ya'akov Valero, died 26 Adar 5521."<sup>1</sup>

The father of Ya'akov Valero (1813-1874), another forerunner of the family in Jerusalem - according to one family tradition - came to Jerusalem from Thessalonica in the early 1800s, and established a bakery in the city. According to a number of unsubstantiated lexicon sources (e.g. Moshe David Gaon, *The Mizrahi Jews of Eretz Israel*, Jerusalem, 1938), it was Ya'akov himself who came from Istanbul around 1835. In 1848 Ya'akov, a ritual slaughterer at the beginning of his career, established Jacob Valéro & Co., the first private bank in Palestine.<sup>2</sup> From then onwards, the economic history of the Valeros in Palestine concentrated mainly in banking and real estate.

### Relations with the Arab Population

Sephardi and Oriental Jews (Mizrahim) comprised the majority of the *yishuv* (the

Jewish community in Palestine) until the 1880s and dominated its culture and organization. Their proportion decreased gradually to about a quarter of the yishuv in the 1930s as the Ashkenazim eclipsed them in the leadership role.<sup>3</sup> Among the Jews of Palestine, the Sephardim, with their “Oriental background”, were considered to have the greatest affinity to the local Arabs. When relating to negotiations or the promotion of friendship between Arabs and Jews, Sir Ronald Storrs, the military governor of Jerusalem, observed in his memoirs that the Sephardim were “ideal agents for dealing or negotiating with the Arabs, with whom they have maintained a close and friendly contact ever since the Expulsion from Spain in 1492.” He added that in the period after World War I, he thought “that more use might and should have been made by the Zionists of the Sephardim” in promoting friendship between Arabs and Jews.<sup>4</sup>

Similar thoughts were expressed in a Memorandum of the Sephardi Communities in Palestine presented to the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine in 1946:

*[U]ntil the new racial doctrines have spread their poison among the Arab communities, Jews and Arabs were able [sic] to live in relations of sincere and genuine friendship.... As deputies of Sephardic Jewry, who by our mentality and our way of life are rather closer to the Semitic World, it may be permissible for us to declare before you not only on the strength of personal experience that the alleged “enmity” between Jews and Arabs is not at all inevitable and that without promoting and incitement from non-Arab quarters, the Arabs would never have come to racial persecutions.<sup>5</sup>*

Members of the Valero family maintained ties with the Arab communities in Jerusalem on three levels: with the elite families,

with business acquaintances, and with the common people. The Arab population was not homogeneous - the largest group comprised Sunni Muslims while the Christian minority in the city, mostly Arab, was divided into a number of communities: Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Roman Catholic, Maronite, Syrian Orthodox (or Jacobite), Coptic, and Ethiopian.

The following discussion details two types of ties - social and economic - that existed between the Valero family and the local Arab population.

### Social Ties

Arabic was a necessary (though not exclusive) means of communication in developing and maintaining social and also business ties with the Arab community in Palestine. It would appear that almost all of the Valero family could communicate in Arabic, but to varying degrees. Ya’akov’s son, Haim Aharon Valero (1846-1923), could speak Arabic, as testified by the episode with Ephraim Cohen-Reiss and Hajj Rashid Nashashibi (see below). It would appear that he could also read and probably write Arabic. Many of the third- and fourth-generation Valeros spoke Arabic, some of them taking classes in that language, which was the means of communication with their Arab friends, neighbours, and business associates. However, it should be noted that in certain milieus, communication between members of the Valero family and the Arab population was conducted in English (particularly during the period of British rule) or in French.<sup>6</sup>

During the nineteenth century, ties between Sephardi Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem were considered to be good; their relationship with the local Christians was more reserved. The Ashkenazi population, which often lived in separate courtyards and neighbourhoods, did not develop strong bonds with the



Muslims or Christians, and Muslims differentiated between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The closer relations between Sephardi Jews and Muslims can be put down to the fact that they often resided in close quarters, shared a common language, and had cultural similarities.

It appears, as Ya'akov Valero accumulated wealth and rose in social status, that the family moved at least once from one courtyard to another in the Jewish Quarter during the almost four decades in which they lived in the Old City of Jerusalem. They probably moved from one rented unit to another until finally purchasing a home of their own. The deed to a property belonging to the Valeros, located in the area of Bab Hutta on Sa'adia Street at the corner of Red Minaret Street, was found in the land registration office (*tapu*) by the family. Due to the rapid growth of the Jewish population and overcrowding in the Jewish Quarter during the late nineteenth century, Ashkenazi Jews settled in this northern section of the Old City near Herod's Gate, together with other Jewish groups, including Sephardim. This property may have been the Valero home in the Old City in the late 1860s until 1920 when this two-storey house was sold to a Christian Arab.<sup>7</sup> The Valeros rented out the rooms after moving out of this house to their new home outside the walls in the 1870s.<sup>8</sup> Living outside the Old City walls on Jaffa Road (near the present day intersection with King George V Street), the Valeros were at a distance from the large concentrations of the Arab population. As such, their interaction with Arab neighbours was limited.

Ya'akov Yehoshua, who documented the life of the Sephardi community in Jerusalem, pointed to many interesting ties: some Muslim women learned to speak Ladino; Jews circumcised some Muslim infants; orphaned infants were wet-nursed by women from the other community; Jews shared



Group portrait at the wedding of Ya'akov Voldero and Menuha Goldberg. Source: Shlomo Valero collection.

their *matzot* with their Muslim neighbours during Passover and were reciprocated by Muslims who provided their Jewish neighbours with freshly baked *pitot* at the end of the holiday; Jews welcomed their Muslim neighbours upon their return from the *haji* (holy pilgrimage) to Mecca; Muslims respected Sephardi rabbis, often showing them courtesies; during drought years, Muslim leaders called on Sephardi rabbis to pray for rain. Often the strong bonds between Sephardi and Muslim families were expressed through the protection that Muslims extended to Sephardim, and individuals from the two communities formed business partnerships. At the same time, some Muslims expressed hostility towards Sephardim by name-calling and acts of violence.<sup>9</sup>

During the periods when members of the Valero family lived side by side with Arab families, they had excellent neighbourly relations with them. Over the years, the Valeros interacted with Arabs in schools, businesses, and social events. Karin Moskona, a young descendent of the Valero family who interviewed her grandfather, Dr. Aaron Valero, reported that Ya'akov Valero, the founding father of the family line in Palestine, developed warm and friendly relationships with his Muslim neighbours. Ya'akov mentioned his business relationships with Jerusalem Muslims.

Although little is known of social interactions of the first and second generations of the Valero family in Jerusalem, the third generation, Haim Aharon's sons, enjoyed Jerusalem's nightlife. Haim complained that his eldest son, Ya'akov (1876 - 1928), was 24 years old and did not want to marry, his only desires being to dress up, eat, and go out. At the age of 30, he continued to spend every evening going out, returning home at midnight and sometimes even at four am. Details of where Ya'akov spent his evenings are not available. Author Ya'akov Yehoshua described the coffeehouses and drinking establishments of Jerusalem, social spaces in the public domain in which men used to congregate. Both Sephardim and Ashkenazim developed drinking establishments in the dark underground basements and small stores in the alleyways of the Old City. Jews, Christians, and Muslims met in these places, but separately. The clientele consisted mostly of labourers with but little money in their pockets. The Jewish coffeehouses were frequented by the Jewish poor. Arab coffeehouses offered other entertainment in addition to conversation and backgammon games. Some put on wrestling matches, while others provided belly dancers and music. Arab coffeehouses, on the other hand, catered to a wider range of the population - wealthy and poor, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Kahwat al-Ma'araf, a coffeehouse located near Jaffa Gate, catered to a more 'aristocratic' sector of the Arab population and probably the young men of the Valero family.<sup>10</sup>

Another of Haim Aharon's sons, Moshe Valero (1883 - 1945) was a member of the "Pax" Lodge of the Freemasons in Jerusalem. In 1929 - 1930 he was an office-bearer - holding the position of chaplain - of the lodge, which had been consecrated a year earlier. The membership of this lodge crossed religious and ethnic lines and included Jews (such as Daniel Auster and D. Abulafia),

Christian Arabs (S. T. Rock, Nagib Mansour, and Maurice Bassan), and Muslim Arabs.<sup>11</sup> His daughter Raya (b. 1920) remembers the secrecy around this topic at home. But even as a child she knew that they used to meet somewhere near the Bikur Holim Hospital (the Masonic Temple at 13 Ezrat Yisrael St.), and held many balls, in which the women also participated. His daughter also recalls notables from Transjordan who came to visit her father in their posh cars.<sup>12</sup>

In her memoirs, Victoria Valero (1900 - 1996) mentioned that she and her husband Gavriel (1886 - 1951) hosted members of the Arab community, including Rafik Bey Baydun, the deputy mayor of Haifa, who had studied with Gavriel at the University in Lusaunne, and friends from the Egyptian Consulate in Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup>

Atara Valero (b. 1915), who married Haim Aharon's grandson, and Raya, her sister-in-law, told us that on the Jewish holidays they went to the Valero family synagogue and that they celebrated Passover at the house of Moshe and Batia, to which many guests, including Arabs, were invited every year for the traditional *seder*.<sup>14</sup> For example, Moshe and Batia invited friends - Arab Justice Majid Abdul Hadi and British Justice Francis Horace Baker - to join them for one Passover *seder*.<sup>15</sup>

Fourth-generation Valeros continued to be in contact with members of the Arab elite. Some members of this generation of Valeros received their secondary education at schools with a mixed student body - Jerusalem Girls College (a Protestant institution) and Terra Sancta College (a Catholic institution).<sup>16</sup> The choice of schools, whether Jewish or not, reflects careful decisions by the parents regarding the type of education and environment they sought for their children. For example, the principle language of instruction at the Jerusalem Girls College

was English and the student body consisted of Arab and Jewish young women, while at the Hebrew Gymnasia the principle language was Hebrew and the student body solely comprised of Jewish young men and women.

Shlomo Valero (b. 1916) had a number of Arab friends, among them Anwar Nusseibeh of the well-known Jerusalem family. They both studied at Cambridge and remained friends upon their return to Jerusalem. Joseph Valero ("Jolly", 1920 - 1993) studied at the American University of Beirut with both Christian and Muslim Arabs. He kept in close touch with some of them, including one from Jerusalem, for many years.<sup>17</sup>

Social relationships also extended into philanthropic activities benefiting the Muslim community. Three acts of philanthropy by Haim Aharon Valero (1846 - 1923) may reflect an ongoing commitment. In 1908, he rented land inside Herod's Gate to the Rozat al-Ma'aref school. After receiving the rental fees, he donated them back to the school.<sup>18</sup> During the Italian-Ottoman War in 1911, Haim Aharon contributed 400 Francs (£16) to the "Ottoman Red Crescent, the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross."<sup>19</sup> In another instance Hajj Rashid Nashashibi, one of the Muslim dignitaries of Jerusalem, convinced an initially hesitant Haim Aharon to donate money for the construction and opening in Jerusalem of an Arab central public library.<sup>20</sup>

### Economic Ties

As a ritual slaughterer, at the beginning of his career in the 1830s, Ya'akov was involved in the sale to Muslims of the rear parts of livestock slaughtered by Jews. In order to make the hindquarters kosher, it was necessary to remove the sinews, a time-consuming process. Instead of going to this trouble, the meat was sold to Muslims, with the approval of their religious leaders.<sup>21</sup>

But the Valeros were best known for the bank they owned and operated from 1848 until 1915. The bank was located inside the Old City. The earliest sources that identify the location of the bank are from the 1870s. The 1876 *Guide de la Terre-Sainte* noted that the bank was located at "Sauekat Alloun" (today's David Street).<sup>22</sup> Judge Gad Frumkin (1887 - 1960) provided a map in his memoirs that located the bank two stores to the west of Christian Quarter Street.<sup>23</sup>

Many of Jerusalem's moneychangers were located along the western section of present-day David Street. Contemporary researcher George Hintlian offered the following reconstruction of economic life along this street:

*As we descend the Suwaiqat Allun we find shops filled with choice fruits and sweets. Further down on the same street the polyglot money-changers (sarrafs) are stationed, sitting with their small tables and with boxes covered with wire-netting and filled with coins. There was no constant rate of exchange and the sarrafs dealt in all currencies, whether the Ottoman majidi or the English sovereign, and they would accept a Russian imperial, an Austrian ducat, or Maria Teresa dealt gold coin.<sup>24</sup>*

This concentration of economic activity in one sector of the market was typical of many traditional Islamic cities of the region. Furthermore, the area in the vicinity of Jaffa Gate was one of the more important commercial nodes of the city in the nineteenth century. From the 1850s onward, it became the focus of tourist activities: hotels, hospices, souvenir shops, post offices, money-changing stands, and other services sprouted inside Jaffa Gate, and the area bustled with pilgrims and tourists.<sup>25</sup>

The Jerusalemite educator Yeshayahu Press

mentioned that in the late 1880s the bank consisted of two modest rooms whose windows faced the ancient Hezekiah's Pool. Frumkin, in his description of stores along David Street, provided additional details. Between two stores which sold vegetables and whose crates filled a large part of the street was a narrow entranceway which finally led to a number of spacious rooms, where Aharon Valero engaged in banking.<sup>26</sup>

The bank hidden away in an alley of the Old City was typical of late nineteenth century Jerusalem's very small and modest banks. In other parts of the Middle East - Cairo, Alexandria and Beirut - banks were already housed in modern and spacious buildings with impressive exteriors outside the older sections of the city.<sup>27</sup> In the early twentieth century, banks moved outside the Old City walls and were housed in more commanding structures along Jaffa Road. The *kavass* (guard) that stood before the Anglo-Palestine Bank and greeted the clients left an impression on Jerusalemites.<sup>28</sup> The Valero Bank, however, did not move outside the Old City from its original location. It would appear that towards the end of the nineteenth century, in order to allow for easier identification of its location, a sign for the Valero Bank was put up near the entrance to David Street.

The bank served various segments of Jerusalem's population. Avraham Shmuel Herschberg, who visited Jerusalem in 1899 - 1900, was critical of Valero's "lack of contribution to the people of the Land of Israel." He complained that Valero limited transactions to loans to Arabs and securing large-scale clients, and that this was in contrast to the Hamburger Bank which provided "great assistance to all of Jerusalem's merchants."<sup>29</sup>

Valero was a conservative banker who carefully evaluated the potential of his clients to repay loans, setting limits on the credit he



Letterhead of the Valero Bank, 1913.

Source: Shlomo Valero collection.

would extend. A list of names dating from 1907, with Haim Aharon's notes rating their credit, was located by the authors in a Valero family private archive. This list was given to Valero by an unknown party, apparently with the request that Valero comment on it. In three instances his response was "I don't know him," but in other instances he suggested credit limits. For example, he commented that François Jadalla Marroum, a German vice-consul in Jerusalem and Ottoman ambassador to Morocco, merited only 2,000 francs (£80) and the Joseph P. Albina real estate agency merited no more than 1,000 francs (£40). It is not clear whether those on the record were clients, but it does partially delineate Valero's business circle. The persons mentioned in Valero's list came mostly from notable Muslim and Christian Arab families.<sup>30</sup>

Certain customers were considered poor liabilities. The bank avoided extending loans to Arab peasants, despite the high interest rates that could be charged - 20 to 50 percent on average, or even higher. Loans to peasants were seldom repaid on time or often defaulted upon. This avenue of investment was almost exclusively in the hands of Jerusalem's Muslim elite.<sup>31</sup>

Ephraim Cohen-Reiss provides one of the few descriptions of the actual day-to-day



operations of the bank. Cohen-Reiss visited Haim Aharon at the bank in order to enlist Valero's financial support for a Jewish library in Jerusalem. When Cohen-Reiss was at the bank, Hajj Rashid Nashashibi arrived and he insisted that Cohen-Reiss conclude his business first. Valero and Cohen-Reiss' conversation in Hebrew turned into a heated argument. Nashashibi interjected into their conversation.

*- What are you arguing about - he asked and the Hajj guessed that the "rais" (the [school] principal) surely wants a loan and you are not willing.*

*- That is true - answered Valero who was happy to divert the conversation to another matter.*

*- And why won't you give him the loan? Is he not a trustworthy person?*

*- On what basis should I lend to him? - he answered - based on the real estate that he owns?*

*- Is it not possible to place your trust in a man based on his character and his trustworthiness?*

*- But the "rais" is a spendthrift - continued Valero with pleasure.*

*- So, I will be his guarantor - Hajj Rashid seriously decided.*

*- If you provide your guarantee, I will provide him with it with pleasure - answered Valero.*

*- "Ala Rasi." [Arabic, literally: "on my head"] And what amount did he request?*

*- Five hundred pounds. ...*

*- And for this amount you were arguing?<sup>32</sup>*

Valero's clerk, Itzhak Benvenisti, was called in and instructed to prepare a 500 pound note in Arabic for Nashashibi to sign.

In addition to the use of local and foreign currency, some groups and institutions created their own currencies in the form of metal or paper tokens. In Jerusalem there was a shortage of small denominations of coins, greatly needed for day-to-day transactions. Since the exchange from larger to smaller denominations came at a cost, coinage for internal community use was created. These coins were at times accepted and used even outside the community. The German Templar rural colonies and urban neighbourhoods produced tokens, as did the Sephardi Chevra Kaddisha (burial society), the Bikur Holim Hospital, and others.<sup>33</sup>

The Valero Bank also issued its own tokens. They came in one piastre and five piastre denomination paper notes.<sup>34</sup> The notes were printed in French with the denomination also in Hebrew and bore a printed emblem with the letters "JV&C" and its equivalent in Arabic. It is not clear how many of these tokens were in circulation. The use of Arabic writing for these notes does lend us to conclude that Muslim merchants would accept this script and that the notes were commonly used by all communities when shopping.

To many Jewish Jerusalemites, Haim Aharon Valero was "the Rothschild of Jerusalem, rich in real estate."<sup>35</sup> It is not clear what this perception really meant. The Valeros purchased key properties, which were central to Jerusalem's commerce - in the Mahane Yehuda market, property along King George Avenue, including the intersection with Jaffa Road, and near Damascus Gate - as well as plots of land in different sections of the city. The term "rich" may be referring to the quantity or value of the properties or both. Or, perhaps because of the central location of the Valero properties, Jerusalem's residents thought that the Valeros were the Rothschilds of the city's real estate market.



As Ottoman citizens, the Valeros were able to purchase land - a complicated process - without any serious hindrance. Ya'akov Valero started with the acquisition of the land for his house outside the Old City walls and other properties. From the 1880s onward, Haim Aharon continued to purchase land in the Jerusalem area. The Valero family is characteristic of the group

*...formed by members of the new, and slowly emerging, commercial bourgeoisie of the coastal towns and Jerusalem, consisting mainly of local and Lebanese Christians, of Jews, and of Europeans and European protégés. From 1867 in particular, they acquired plots in the vicinity of the towns and large stretches of land in the coastal and inland plains, either by direct purchase or as a result of peasant indebtedness.*<sup>36</sup>

The details of numerous real estate transactions are available in our full-length study. Two examples, a property to the north of Damascus Gate and a property in the village of 'Ain Karim, are provided to illustrate the complexities of the real estate ventures.

The Valeros owned close to five metric dunams of land in the vicinity of Damascus Gate. This was prime real estate during the late Ottoman period, for Damascus Gate was a centre of commerce. Haim Aharon Valero had ten or eleven stalls on this property, which were rented to merchants. In addition, he leased sections of the site: in 1909, it was reported that a Muslim Arab intended to establish an internal combustion engine-powered flourmill on one part of this property.<sup>37</sup> Following World War I, Charles Robert Ashbee (1863 - 1942; English architect, designer, and leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England; Civic Adviser in Jerusalem from 1919 to 1922) proposed the construction of a *khan* on this

property, to be developed by the Valeros. "The object here is not only to clear away the unsightly shops and corrugated iron buildings that obliterate the Damascus Gate, but also to accommodate the Bedouins and camels that enter the city here in great numbers.... Here, again, the Valero Family, who, it is suggested, shall build and hold the Khan as a private undertaking, have evinced a sympathetic interest in the work."<sup>38</sup> Despite Ashbee's plan, the Valeros could not develop the property during the period of British rule since Mandatory planning regulations and zoning reserved the areas around the Old City and on the Mount of Olives as "open spaces." Furthermore, a section of the property was expropriated in the 1930s for the widening of an adjacent road. The Valeros did not receive compensation; under Section 27 of the 1936 Town Planning Ordinance, compensation was not in order if the expropriated section did not exceed a quarter of the entire property.<sup>39</sup>

Haim Aharon Valero owned land in the village of 'Ain Karim, located in the environs of Jerusalem and today part of its municipal boundaries. According to tradition, the village is the site of the birthplace of John the Baptist. During the nineteenth century, various Christian groups purchased land in 'Ain Karim and developed institutions there. In 1945, Jews owned 1,362 dunams of the village's total area of 15,029 dunams. One seventh of a tract, over seven dunams in size, known as "Il Khas" was acquired by Haim Aharon through the foreclosure of a mortgage. He bequeathed the property to his four sons Ya'akov, Moshe, Gavriel, and Nissim. Later, Ya'akov's part of the land was sold by his heirs to the St. Anne Seminary in 1937 and part of his share was sold to Judge Moshe Valero. Gavriel and Nissim also sold their shares to the St. Anne Seminary, but when the convent offered to buy Moshe's share as well, he declined.<sup>40</sup>

According to Aaron and Shlomo Valero, many of the properties were acquired when loans extended to Arab landowners were not repaid and the owners transferred land to Haim Aharon in their stead.<sup>41</sup> When he passed away in 1923, he had in his possession numerous properties in Jerusalem and in the nearby villages of 'Ain Karim and al-Maliha, as well as property in Jaffa, Bethlehem, and Hebron.

Land that was not developed was sometimes used for agriculture and quarrying. In the mid-1930s, court litigation over a tract of land in Mahane Yehuda sheds light on the exploitation of undeveloped properties and continuous relationships with members of the Arab population. According to court records, Judge Moshe Valero testified that "at certain times Arabs .... (?) [sic] of Lifta ... and quarry to take stones and pay a consideration to my grandfather - I think they used to plough part of the land[,] all of the land was not poss[ible] to plough." The transcript of the trial continues with testimony of Ahmad Mustafa, the watchman of the property. His words, although poorly translated into English in the original, provided further details:

*Omar Scion quarried land 10 years before for space of ten years. I knew Hussein & brother once sewn barley in the land - I remember [Baruch] Steinberg (?) [sic] parking busses. I remonstrated & took him to Judge Valero & arranged he paid me two pounds rent - He continued to park for 5 yrs.*

Rian Mohd [i.e., Mohammed] Rian, also used the Valero property. Under oath he bore witness that "Late Valero was in poss. [i.e., possession]."

*Omar Scion was on land quarrying he asked too high rent. I went to Valero & he rented it to me we both worked*

*then - He also sewed barley before the war.... I paid rent per quarry megidi ½ [a unit of Turkish currency].<sup>42</sup>*

There were also domestic servants in the homes of fourth-generation Valeros. The household of Moshe and Batia had a cook, a cleaning woman, and a gardener. The persons filling these positions were Arabs and Jews, veteran residents and new immigrants. Victoria and Gavriel also had help at home.<sup>43</sup>

In summary, the business relationships between the Valeros and the Arab population of Jerusalem are visible in a number of areas. First, Ya'akov Valero as a ritual slaughterer sold meat to Muslim merchants. Second, there were ties between the Valero Bank and members of the Arab community. Third, the Valeros purchased lands throughout Palestine and in the Jerusalem area, in particular from large- to small-scale Arab landowners. Fourth, individual Arabs rented residential and commercial properties from the Valeros and paid money to farm and quarry lands belonging to the Valeros. Finally, a number of Arabs were in the employ of the Valeros as watchmen and domestic servants.

### New Paradigms

Our study has examined the Valero's relationship with mostly Christian and Muslim Arab society in Palestine, assessing this relationship as an important factor for the understanding of Sephardi identity. The Valeros spoke Arabic, studied, worked, and conducted business with Arabs, and also socialized with Arab colleagues and friends. This made them more understanding of Arab sentiments, customs and perceptions.

However, the relationship was not without its tensions. In 1876, members of the Arab community rioted in Jerusalem. That year, Sultan Abdulaziz was deposed due to the Balkan uprising and a severe famine, and then committed suicide. He was replaced

by Murad V who was deposed, on the claim of insanity, after only three months and succeeded by his brother, Abdulhamid II. These events heightened interdenominational tensions in Jerusalem and there were fears that violence would erupt in the city. Haim Aharon Valero was the individual who approached the Ottoman army commander and the mufti with the request that they protect the Jews in the city and restore the peace. The event passed without any serious repercussions.<sup>44</sup>

Simha Schwartzburg Valero (b. 1917) says in her memoir that relationships between local Arabs and members of the Valero family were strained by Arab acts of violence towards Jews:

*Some of our neighbours were Arabs and we seemed to get along well with them until I became aware of the riots that would take place periodically. They would suddenly go berserk with a religious frenzy and attack any Jew that happened to be close by. At such times we were warned not to go downtown or to their neighbourhoods especially on their feast days, like Ramadan. I shall never forget the effect the Hebron massacre<sup>45</sup> had on my family and us children.<sup>46</sup>*

It is rare to have access to the memoirs of a woman. Simha's reactions to well-known and well-documented events in the area's history seem rather mild compared with other sources regarding these events, which - like the Deir Yassin massacre for Palestinian Arabs - shaped Israeli Jewish memory of the Jewish Yishuv.

Despite the occasional tensions, ongoing connections allowed for the absorption of certain Arab influences. The modesty of the Sephardi class was most certainly a reflection of norms prevailing among the Jerusalem elite. This modesty is reflected in

the limited oral and written records of the Sephardi contribution to the development of Palestine and the Jewish Yishuv, unlike the Ashkenazi Jews who widely publicized their doings. This characteristic of the Sephardic and Mizrahi (Oriental) Jews may reflect a general trend among all the Jerusalem elites, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish alike, as pointed out in Ali Qleibo's discussion of the collapse of the Palestinian social structure. The collapse began during Napoleon's "Egyptian Campaign," which caused great destruction and disorder in Palestine. Qleibo believes that economic conditions did not improve until the British army arrived in 1917. "Even were God to 'smile' on a person, i.e. make him wealthy, it is ungodly and shameful to indulge in conspicuous display of wealth," writes Qleibo. "It is almost a social taboo to be a spendthrift. Until now Jerusalemites are criticized for this sense of puritan frugality; we are misconstrued as stingy, gloomy and miserly."<sup>47</sup> Other explanations for the limited coverage of Sephardi achievements are to be found within the framework of Zionist historiography and attitudes to Sephardi relations with the Arab majority. Ella Shohat explained this in the wider context of Mizrahim, or Jews from Islamic countries:

*The study of Mizrahim has largely been performed within the parameters of what Zionist scholarship constructed as a single Jewish History, a unified national past as a prelude to the State. I would argue for a re-articulation of Jewish histories, in the plural. A multi-perspective approach would see Jews not through their religious commonality but also in relation to their non-Jewish contextual cultures. Zionist historiography assumes the bifurcated discourse of "Arab versus Jew" without acknowledging either a hyphenated Arab-Jewish existence or a shared*

*Judeo-Muslim cultural space. The erasure of the hyphen was crucial to Zionist writing, since Arabness of Jews posed a challenge to the definition of a homogeneous national Jewish identity.*<sup>48</sup>

On the whole, the attitude of the Valero family towards their Arab neighbours was one of coexistence, cooperation, respect, and - in certain cases - even friendship. Moshe Valero's reason for providing his son, Shlomo, with private lessons in Arabic characterizes the family attitude. Moshe held that "someone who did not understand Arabic would not have a future in Jerusalem."<sup>49</sup>

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Arie Leib Frumkin, *History of Jerusalem's Sages, III* (Jerusalem: Salomon Press, 1929), 39, 83, 301, 311 (Hebrew); Rahamim Shealtiel Ya'akov Ninyo, *Jerusalem's Sun and Shield* (Jerusalem: Frumkin Press, 1893), 140-142 (Hebrew).

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Haim Aharon Valero, great-grandson of Ya'akov, the bank's founder, in: Myra Noveck and Gershon Gorenberg, "Jerusalem Aristocrats," *Hadassah Magazine* 23 (June-July 1989), 22-25; Aaron Valero, "Memoirs," in Moskona [Valero], Karin. "Valero Family in Jerusalem." A term paper tutored by Ya'akov Barnai. *Haifa: The Reali High School*, 1991, 35 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Moskona [Valero], "Valero Family in Jerusalem"].

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass, "The Jews in Eretz-Israel/Palestine: From Traditional Peripherality to Modern Centrality," *Israel Affairs* 4, no. 5 (1999):

73-107. See also: Rachel Sharabi, *The Sephardic Community in Jerusalem at the End of the Ottoman Period, 1893-1914* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Pub. House, 1989) (Hebrew) and Nathan Efrati, *The Sephardic Community in Jerusalem during the Years 1840-1917* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1999) (Hebrew).

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Storrs, *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: Putnam, 1937) 386-387.

<sup>5</sup> *Memorandum of the Sephardic Communities in Palestine to the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine*, Jerusalem, February 1946, Jacob Calman Hurewitz Collection, Box 16, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford.

<sup>6</sup> Ephraim Cohen-Reiss, *Memories of a Jerusalemite* (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Ha-Yishuv, 1967) 137 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Cohen-Reiss, *Memories of a Jerusalemite*]; Interview with Raya Ashkenazi (Valero), Ramat Hasharon, 24 April 2000; Victoria Vida Valero, *Memories* (Tel Aviv: Nahar, 1981) 22 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Valero, *Memories*.]

<sup>7</sup> Shabtai Zecharia, "H. A. Valero's Redemption of Land in Jerusalem during the Last Century," *Ba--Ma'aracha*, 312 (September 1986) 26 (Hebrew); Land Registry Office, Jerusalem, Book 1015, 4. The Land Registry Office recorded the transfer of the registration from the Turkish land registry in 1901 and the sale of the property on 31 October 1920. Ruth Kark and Michal Oren-Nordheim, *Jerusalem and its Environs: Quarters, Neighborhoods and Villages, 1800-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001) 66-73 [henceforth: Kark and Oren-Nordheim, *Jerusalem and its Environs*.]

<sup>8</sup> Charles W. Wilson, *Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem made in the years 1864-1865*. Southampton, 1866 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 1876), map 1:2,500.

<sup>9</sup> Ya'akov Yehoshua, *The House and Street in Old Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1966) 215-248 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Yehoshua, *House and Street*.]

<sup>10</sup> Haim Aharon Valero, *Diary* (Ladino), in Ruth Kark Archive, Jerusalem; Yehoshua, *House and Street*, 157-167, 236.

<sup>11</sup> Invitation to regular meeting of the "Pax" Lodge, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (CZA) A153/175.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Raya Ashkenazi (Valero), Ramat Hasharon, 24 April 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Valero, *Memories*, 46.



<sup>14</sup> Hand-written memoir of Simha Schwartzburg (English) delivered as an adult education talk at Temple Beth Shalom in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in October 1992. [henceforth: Hand-written memoir of Simha Schwartzburg].

<sup>15</sup> The traditional ceremony and meal conducted on the Eve of Passover.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Raya Ashkenazi (Valero), Ramat Hasharon, 24 April 2000; interview with Simha Schwartzburg (Valero), Jerusalem, 27 April 2000; interview with Shlomo and Jack Valero, London, 20 June 2000; letters of Rolli Efron, Tel Aviv, to Ruth Kark, Jerusalem, 17 November 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Shlomo and Jack Valero, London, 20 June 2000; interview with Simone Valero, Jerusalem, 29 January 2002.

<sup>18</sup> *Havazeleth* 38, no. 26 (10 May 1908): 192 (Hebrew).

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Kuds*, no. 267 (27 September 1911), noted in Ya'akov Yehoshua, *Between Present Time and Tradition: A Collection of Articles Dealing with the Sephardi Jewish Community of Jerusalem*. (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Sephardi Council: 1979) 154 (Hebrew).

<sup>20</sup> Moskona [Valero], "Valero Family in Jerusalem," 102.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Aaron and Miriam Valero, Haifa, 3 May 2000; Moskona [Valero], "Valero Family in Jerusalem," 75.

<sup>22</sup> Lièvin de Hamme, *Guide-indicateur des sanctuaires et lieux historiques de la Terre-Sainte*, 2nd ed. (Louvain: Imprimerie P. et J. Lefever: 1876) 119.

<sup>23</sup> Map in Gad Frumkin, *The Way of a Judge in Jerusalem*. (Tel Aviv, Dvir: 1955) 58 (Hebrew).

<sup>24</sup> George Hintlian, "The Commercial Life of Ottoman Jerusalem," in Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand (eds.), *Ottoman Jerusalem: The Living City, 1517-1917*, (I. Jerusalem, Altajir World of Islam Trust: 2000) 230.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Kark, "The Traditional Middle Eastern City: The Cases of Jerusalem and Jaffa during the Nineteenth Century," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 97 (1981): 93-108.

<sup>26</sup> Yeshayahu Press, *A Hundred Years in Jerusalem*. (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1964): 41 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Press, *A Hundred Years in Jerusalem*].

<sup>27</sup> Cecilia Robertson, "The Smell of Money," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 18-24 May 1995, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ya'akov Yehoshua, *Jerusalem in Days of Old* (Jerusalem, Rubin Mass: 1977, II) 138 (Hebrew) [henceforth: Yehoshua, *Jerusalem in Days of Old*]; Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century, II: Emergence of the New City* (Jerusalem and New York: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, and St. Martin's Press, 1986) 382-385.

<sup>29</sup> Avraham Shmuel Herschberg, *In the Land of the East*. (Jerusalem, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi: 1977) (facsimile ed. of Vilna 1910), 357 (Hebrew).

<sup>30</sup> "Renseignements don't l'annotation est confiée aux bons soins de Monsieur H. A. Valero, Jerusalem," possibly 1907, Shlomo Valero Papers, London (French and Ladino).

<sup>31</sup> Fred. M. Gottheil, "Money and Product Flows in Mid-19th Century Palestine: The Physiocratic Model Applied," in D. Kushner (ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem and Leiden, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and E. J. Brill: 1986), 222-224.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen-Reiss, *Memories of a Jerusalemite*, 137.

<sup>33</sup> Yehoshua, *Jerusalem in Days of Old*, II, 29-31; Shmuel Avitzur, *Daily Life in Eretz Israel in the Nineteenth Century* (Tel Aviv, Am Ha-sefer: 1972) 294-295 (Hebrew).

<sup>34</sup> Paper tokens issued by the Valero Bank, Shlomo Valero Papers, London. The tokens are not dated and it is unclear as to when they were in circulation or for how long as well as how many were in circulation.

<sup>35</sup> Press, *A Hundred Years in Jerusalem*, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Schölch, "European Penetration and the Economic Development of Palestine, 1856-1882," in Roger Owen (ed.), *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, Macmillan: 1982) 23.

<sup>37</sup> Israel State Archive, Jerusalem (ISA) 67/268H, letter dated 31 March 1909. Haim Aharon Valero, Diary (Ladino), in Ruth Kark Archive.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Robert Ashbee (ed.), *Jerusalem, 1918-1920, Being the Records of the Pro-Jerusalem Council during the Period of the British Military Administration* (London, John Murray: 1921, I) 24-25.

<sup>39</sup> S. Mizrahi, Jerusalem, to the High Commissioner,

Jerusalem, 3 October 1937; Chief's Secretary's Office, Jerusalem, to S. Mizrahi, Jerusalem, 31 October 1937, Moshe Valero Papers, Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> List of land transactions in 'Ain Karim, CZA A402/68. The list does not detail the size of the tract. The Valero share was 693 of 6,336 parts, of which 462 were sold; Hanna A. Atalla, Jerusalem, to Judge Musa [Moshe] Valero, Jerusalem, 14 June 1937; application of Moshe Valero to the High Commissioner for permission to transfer land in "Zones A and B," 27 October 1941, Zvi Shamir Archive, Jerusalem; Kark and Oren-Nordheim, *Jerusalem and its Environs*, 239.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Shlomo Valero, London, 20 June 2000; interview with Aaron and Miriam Valero, Haifa, 3 May 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Transcript of testimony, 1934, CZA A417/451.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Raya Ashkenazi (Valero), Ramat

Hasharon, 24 April 2000; interview with Shlomo and Jack Valero, London, 20 June 2000; Valero, *Memories*, p. 50.

<sup>44</sup> David Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv and its Builders, Personalities and Figures*, (Tel Aviv, Sifriat Rishonim: 1947-1973, III) 1215 (Hebrew).

<sup>45</sup> August 1929, resulting in 63 persons killed.

<sup>46</sup> Hand-written memoir of Simha Schwartzburg.

<sup>47</sup> Ali H. Qleibo, *Before the Mountains Disappear* (Cairo, Kloreus Book: 1992) 112-113.

<sup>48</sup> Ella Shohat, "The Shaping of Mizrahi Studies: A Relational Approach," *Israel Studies Forum* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 89.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Shlomo and Jack Valero, London, 20 June 2000.

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الدراسات الفلسطينية

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**أثر الانتفاضة**

**في الهوية الجماعية الفلسطينية**

محمود معاري

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مقابلات

"حماس" في ظل الاغتيالات

وتوقعات الانسحاب الإسرائيلي من غزة

زياد أبو عمرو • صخر يسيسو • سعيد صيام

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**المازق الفلسطيني والخيار الوحيد**

**للخروج منه**

علي الجرباوي

---

**نحو رؤية نسوية فلسطينية**

فيحاء عبد الهادي

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**الفلسطينيون في إسرائيل:**

**جدلية العدل والقوة**

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