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Auto-Emantzipazioa: ikuspegi dekolonialak Israelgo Mizrahi eta Sefardien erakunde autonomo politikoetan

אוטו-אמנציפציה: פרספקטיבות דה-קולוניאליות על ארגונים פוליטיים עצמאיים מזרחיים וספרדים בישראל

Auto-Emancipation:

Decolonial Perspectives on Autonomous Political Mizrahi and Sephardic Organizations in Israel

1948-1967

تحرير الذات: وجهات نظر في تفكيك الاستعمار في المنظمات السياسية المستقلة لليهود الشرقيين والسيفارديم في إسرائيل

Auto-Emancipación: perspectivas decoloniales sobre organizaciones políticas autónomas de Mizrahies y Sephardies en Israel

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Abstract

The premise of this dissertation sees western colonization in the last 500 years as the central factor in shaping modern reality today. In the regional context, it perceives of the Zionist project as a colonial enterprise in the Middle East, in addition to being a national liberation movement of European Jews. The theoretical premise of the research is based upon contemporary developments of postcolonial theory, especially among Latin-American social scientists, named by some, "the decolonial turn". The decolonial perspective is especially useful for conceptualizing social and political struggles of ethnic groups that have been oppressed by colonial power relations. The research uses the decolonial terminology to examine autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political organizations in Israel, in order to elicit decolonial aspects in their activity and discourse, and examine the conditions that limited their decolonial potential, as well as their activity at large.

The research examines different political organizations of Sephardim and Mizrahim in Israel, from the establishment of the state of Israel until its territorial expansion in the Six Day War. The study is based on historical documents and newspapers of the different organizations, and focuses on the activity of the Council of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem under the leadership of Eliahu Eliachar.

The dissertation outlines a Mizrahi political field with a unique dynamic of its own, which at times diverged from the Ashkenazi political field in its interpretation of the social reality and in its reactions to Middle-Eastern political developments. The decolonial conceptualizations and tools were applied in the analysis of the discourse and practices of different political organizations within this field. The investigation focuses on the organizations' attempts to establish a collective identity for Sephardim and Mizrahim in Israel, and on their discourse and activity regarding the surrounding Arab countries, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian minority in Israel. The dissertation emphasizes seeds of decolonial thinking that emerged among certain activists and organizations in certain moments, and will also follow the multifaceted ways these organizations had been oppressed and marginalized.

In the 1950s, the main independent political organization in this research is the Council of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem, which attempted to represent the Sephardic and Mizrahi public in the parliament. The unique organizational culture of the Community Council will be examined, as well as the notions of honor that guided its politics. In these years the Sephardic border-thinking tilted towards western modernity, due to the animosity created between Israel and the Arab world. This sterilized any positive and reliable contents from the collective identity which this organization attempted to produce and represent.

In the 1960s the Mizrahi political field diversified enormously, but the Zionist power structure vacated from meaning the organized Mizrahi action, recreating it as narrow "political ethnicity"

focused on questions of representation. The restrictive political climate allowed for some activists' circles to develop discourse with decolonial characteristics, with the aim of influencing Mizrahi public discourse, rather than interceding directly in the Israeli political field. During this period, in the journal *In the Battle*, a vision of autochthonous eastern Zionism was developed, based on an aspiration for a Merger of Diasporas project as an "ecology of knowledges". This project urged for an Inner-Jewish dialogue that relied on the heritage of the Sephardic Golden Age as common to all Jews, and as the foundations from which to construct an intercultural Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.

A separate examination is dedicated to the activity of the Iraqi cadre in the Israeli Communist Party until 1965. The rigid loyalty of the party to the USSR prevented the Iraqi cadre from advancing in the party, and from contributing to it their unique perspectives and skills, which were expressed during the Jewish-Arab split of the party.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the development of the decolonial theoretical perspective in the context of the Middle East, and to the construction of a legacy of such thinking in Israel today.

תקציר

נקודת המוצא של מחקר זה רואה את הקולוניזציה המערבית של שאר העולם בחמש מאות השנים האחרונות כדינמיקה המרכזית בעיצוב העולם המודרני כיום. בהקשר המקומי, המחקר תופס את התנועה הציונית כפרויקט של קולוניזציה במזרח התיכון, בנוסף להיותה תנועת שחרור לאומית של יהודי אירופה. הבסיס התיאורטי של מחקר זה הינו התפתחויות עכשוויות של התיאוריה הפוסט-קולוניאלית בעיקר בקרב מדעני חברה לטינו-אמריקאים, הנקראות לעיתים "המפנה הדה-קולוניאלי". הפרספקטיבה הדה-קולוניאלית תורמת נקודת מבט המתאימה להמשגת מאבקים חברתיים ופוליטיים של קבוצות אתניות שדוכאו דרך מבני כוח קולוניאליים. מחקר זה ישתמש בהמשגות הדה-קולוניאליות לחקר ארגונים פוליטיים עצמאיים מזרחים וספרדים בישראל, על מנת לזקק היבטים דה-קולוניאליים בפעילותם ובשיח שהם פיתחו והפיצו. כמו כן ייבחנו התנאים שהגבילו את הפוטנציאל הדה-קולוניאלי של ארגונים אלו. המחקר בוחן ארגונים שונים מהקמת המדינה ועד הרחבתה הטריטוריאלית במלחמת ששת הימים. המחקר מתבסס על מסמכים היסטוריים ופרסומים של אותם ארגונים, ומתמקד בפעילותו של ועד העדה הספרדית בירושלים תחת הנהגתו של אליהו אלישר.

עבודה זו מתארת שדה פוליטי מזרחי בעל דינמיקה מסוימת משל עצמו, שלעיתים חרג מהשדה הפוליטי האשכנזי בפרשנויותיו של המציאות החברתית ובתגובותיו להתפתחויות פוליטיות במזרח התיכון. הכלים התיאורטיי ם הדה-קולוניאליים שולבו בניתוח השיח והפרקטיקות של הארגונים השונים. המחקר מתמקד בדרכים של הארגונים לבסס זהות קולקטיבית של ציבור ספרדים ובני עדות המזרח בישראל, ובשיח ובמעשים שלהם ביחס לעולם הערבי, לעם

הפלסטיני ולמיעוט הפלסטיני בישראל. בתוך ניתוח זה, המחקר מדגיש את התנאים אשר אפשרו צמיחה של חשיבה דה-קולוניאלית בקרב ארגונים ופעילים פוליטיים מסוימים; כמו כן נבחנות הדרכים המרובות שדרכן דוכאו ארגונים אלו.

במהלך בשנות החמישים, הארגון העצמאי העיקרי במחקר הוא ועד הספרדים בירושלים, אשר התמודד לבחירות לכנסת בתור נציגו של ציבור הספרדים ובני עדות המזרח. נבחן את התרבות הארגונית הייחודית של מוסד ועד העדה ואת מונחי הכבוד שאפיינו את הפוליטיקה שהוא הנחה. בשנים אלו, נראה כיצד מחשבת-הגבול שאפיינה את ההנהגה הספרדית הוותיקה נטתה לכיוון תפיסות מודרניות-אירופאיות בשל העוינות שנוצרה בין ישראל והמדינות הערביות. אלו מנעו יציקת תוכן חיובי ואמין לתוך הזהות הקולקטיבית אותה ניסה ועד העדה לייצג ולייצר.

בשנות השישים התגוון ביותר השדה הפוליטי המזרחי, אך מבנה הכוח הצליח לרוקן ממשמעות את כוח ההתארגנות המזרחי ולייצרו כ"עדתיות פוליטית" מצומצמת וממוקדת בשאלות של ייצוג. אקלים פוליטי פנימי זה עודד מעגלי פעילים שונים לפתוח שיח בעל גוונים דה-קולוניאליים, במטרה להשפיע על השיח הציבורי המזרחי ולא ישירות על השדה הפוליטי הישראלי. בזמן זה, בירחון "במערכה" התפתח חזון של ציונות ילידית מזרח-תיכונית, המבוססת על שאיפה לפרויקט של מיזוג גלויות כ"אקולוגיה של ידעים". חזון זה שאב את כוחו ממורשת תור הזהב הספרדי, שנחשב כנרטיב היסטורי כלל-יהודי הנחוץ על מנת לפתח דיאלוג פנים-יהודי, שיוכל לתרום לכינונה של מדינה יהודית רב-תרבותית בישראל/פלסטין.

כמו כן המחקר בוחן בנפרד את פעילותו של חוג העיראקים במפלגה הקומוניסטית הישראלית עד לפיצולה בשנות 1965. הנאמנות הבלתי מתפשרת של מק"י לאידיאולוגיה הסובייטית פגם ביכולתו של הקאדר העיראקי הן להתקדם במפלגה והן לתרום ממאפייניו הייחודיים, אשר באו לידי ביטוי בזמן הפיצול היהודי-ערבי במפלגה.

מחקר זה מבקש לתרום לקירובה של הפרספקטיבה הדה-קולוניאלית להקשר המזרח תיכוני ולפיתוח מורשת של חשיבה פוליטית כזו בישראל כיום.

ארגונים:

ועד העדה הספרדית בירושלים, תנועת ליכוד מזרחים, האיחוד הלאומי, ליכוד יוצאי צפון אפריקה, המפלגה הספרדית הלאומית, ישראל הצעירה, אחווה, חוג נאמני התורה, תא הסטודנטים למיזוג גלויות, חוג העיראקים במפלגה הקומוניסטית הישראלית.

ملخص

ترى فرضية هذه الأطروحة أن الاستعمار الغربي في الخمسمائة سنة الماضية هو العامل المركزي في تشكيل الواقع الحديث اليوم. في السياق الإقليمي، ترى المشروع الصهيوني كمشروع استعماري في الشرق الأوسط، بالإضافة إلى كونه حركة تحرير وطنية لليهود الأوروبيين. تستند الفرضية النظرية للبحث إلى التطورات المعاصرة لنظرية ما بعد الاستعمار،

وخاصة بين علماء الاجتماع في أمريكا اللاتينية، والتي أطلق عليها البعض "تحول التفكك الاستعماري". إن منظور تفكك الاستعمار مفيد بشكل خاص لتصور النضالات الاجتماعية والسياسية للمجموعات العرقية التي تعرضت للقمع بسبب علاقات القوة الاستعمارية. يستخدم البحث مصطلحات نظرية تفكك الاستعمار لفحص المنظمات السياسية لليهود الشرقيين والسفاردية المستقلة في إسرائيل، من أجل استخلاص الجوانب الاستعمارية في نشاطهم وخطابهم، ودراسة الظروف التي حدت من إمكاناتهم الاستعمارية، وكذلك نشاطهم بشكل عام.

يدرس البحث المنظمات السياسية المختلفة للسيفارديم واليهود الشرقيين في إسرائيل، من قيام دولة إسرائيل حتى توسعها الإقليمي في حرب الأيام الستة. تعتمد الدراسة على الوثائق والصحف التاريخية للمنظمات المختلفة، وتركز على نشاط مجلس جماعة السفارديم في القدس بقيادة إلياهوإلِيشار.

تحدد الأطروحة مجالًا سياسيًا مزراحياً بديناميكية فريدة خاصة به، والتي اختلفت في بعض الأحيان عن المجال السياسي الأشكنازي في تفسيره للواقع الاجتماعي وردود أفعاله على التطورات السياسية في الشرق الأوسط. تم تطبيق المفاهيم والأدوات الخاصة بنظرية تفكك الإستعمار في تحليل خطاب وممارسات المنظمات السياسية المختلفة في هذا المجال. يركز البحث على محاولات المنظمات لإرساء هوية جماعية لليهود السيفارديم والشرقيين في إسرائيل، وعلى خطابهم ونشاطهم فيما يتعلق بالدول العربية المحيطة، والشعب الفلسطيني والأقلية الفلسطينية في إسرائيل. تؤكد الأطروحة على بذور تفكير التفكك الاستعماري التي ظهرت بين بعض الناشطين والمنظمات في لحظات معينة، وستتبع أيضًا الطرق المتعددة الأوجه التي تعرضت فيها هذه المنظمات للقمع والتهميش.

في الستينيات، تنوّع المجال السياسي لليهود الشرقيين (المِزراحي) بشكل كبير، لكن بُنية القوى الصهيونية نجحت من إفراغ قوة التنظيم المزراحي من المعنى وصوّرته "كطائفية سياسية" ضيّقة منحصرة في قضايا التمثيل. هذا المناخ السياسي الداخلي المقيّد دفع دوائر نشطاء مختلفة لتطوير خطاب ذو طابع مناهض للإستعمار بهدف التأثير على الخطاب العام المزراحي، بدلاً من التوسط مباشرة في الحقل السياسي الإسرائيلي. خلال هذه الفترة، في مجلة *In the Battle* ، تم تطوير رؤية للصهيونية الشرقية المستقلة، بناءً على طموح لإنشاء مشروع "دمج الشتات كبيئة معرفية". استمدّت هذه الرؤية قوّتها من تراث العصر الذهبي للسفارديم، الذي يُعتبر سرد تاريخي مشترك لجميع اليهود، وحثّت على الحوار الداخلي اليهودي الذي يمكنه المساهمة بتأسيس دولة يهودية متعددة الثقافات في إسرائيل / فلسطين.

كذلك سنخصص بحث منفصل لنشاط الكادر العراقي في الحزب الشيوعي الإسرائيلي حتى تفكيكه سنة 1965. ولاء الحزب الشديد لاتحاد الجمهوريات الاشتراكية السوفياتية منع الكادر العراقي من التقدم في الحزب ومن المساهمة فيه برؤيتهم الفريدة التي انعكست في الإنقسام اليهودي-العربي للحزب.

تهدف هذه الرسالة إلى المساهمة في تطوير المنظور النظري للتفكك الاستعماري في السياق الشرق أوسطي، وفي بناء إرث فكري سياسي في إسرائيل اليوم.

Laburpena

Ikerketa honen premisak mundu osoko mendebaldeko kolonizazioa azken 500 urteetan jotzen du errealitate moderno garaikidea moldatzeko faktore nagusia. Tokiko testuinguruan, proiektu sionista Ekialde Hurbileko proiektu kolonial gisa hautematen du, baita Europako juduen askapen nazionalerako mugimendua ere. Ikerketaren premisa teorikoa teoria postkolonialetan garaikide garaikideetan oinarritzen da, batez ere Latinoamerikako zientzialari sozialen artean,

batzuek izendatuta, "txanda deskolonial". Kolonialismoaren ikuspegia bereziki erabilgarria da botere harreman kolonialen bidez zapaldu dituzten talde etnikoen borroka sozialak eta politikoak kontzeptualizatzeko. Ikerketak deskolonial terminologia erabiltzen du Israelgo Mizrahi eta sefardiako erakunde politiko autonomoak aztertzeko, alderdi deskolonialak beren jardueran eta diskurtsoan azaltzeko eta beren potentzial dekoloniala mugatzen zuten baldintzak aztertzeko, baita beren jarduera orokorrean ere.

Ikerketak sefardim eta mizrahim erakunde politiko desberdinak aztertzen ditu Israelen, Israel estatua ezarri zenetik sei eguneko gerran lurralde hedapenera arte. Ikerketa hainbat erakundetako dokumentu historiko eta periodikoetan oinarrituta dago, eta Eliahu Eliachar-en zuzendaritzapean, Jerusalemgo Erkidegoko Sefardiako Kontseiluaren jardueraren inguruan oinarritzen da.

Tesian Israelen Mizrahi eremu politikoa dago, dinamika propioa izan zuena. Batzuetan Ashkenazi arlo politikotik desbideratu zen errealitate sozialaren interpretazioan eta Ekialde Hurbileko gertakari politikoen erreakzioetan. Tresna deskolonialak arlo horretako erakunde politikoen diskurtsoaren eta praktiken azterketan aplikatu ziren. Ikerketak erakundeetan saiakerak egin ditu Israelen sefardia eta Mizrahi identitate kolektiboa ezartzeko, baita inguruko arabiar herrialdeekin, Palestinako herriarekin eta Palestinako gutxiengoarekin ere. Tesian zenbait aktibista eta erakunderen artean zenbait momentutan sortu zen pentsamendu deskolonialaren haziak azpimarratzen dira, eta erakunde horiek zapaldu eta baztertu zituzten modu anitzak jarraitzen ditu.

50eko hamarkadan, ikerketa honetako erakunde politiko independente nagusia Jerusalemgo Erkidegoko Batzorde Sephardikoa da, parlamentuan sefardiak eta mizrahi jendaurrean ordezkatzen saiatu zuena. Kontseiluaren kultura antolamendu bakarra eta ohorezko nozioak gidatu zuen politika aztertu zen. Urte horietan, sefardiar mugako pentsamenduak mendebaldeko modernitatearen aldera jo zuen, Israel eta mundu arabiarraren artean sortutako animismoaren ondorioz. Honek, erakunde honen identitate kolektiboaren eduki positiboa sortu eta ordezkatzeko saiakeraren eduki positibo eta fidagarri oro esterilizatu zuen.

1960ko hamarkadan, mizrahiren esparru politikoa izugarri dibertsifikatu zen, baina botere egitura sionistak, mizrahi ekintza antolatua, zentzu gabe utzi zuen, errepresentazio gaietan oinarritutako "etnizitate politikoa" bezala utziz . Giro politiko murriztatzaileak, aktibisten talde batzuei, Israelgo esparru politikoan zuzenean parte hartu beharrean., mizrahien diskurtso publikoan eragiteko aukera eman zien. Garai horretan, *In the Battle* aldizkarian, ekialdeko sionismo autoktono baten ikuspegia landu zen, "Diasporaren Fusioa" proiektuarn oinarrituriko "ezagutzaren ekologia" gisa hartuta. Proiektu honek judu guztientzako ohikoa zen urrezko aro sefardarraren ondarean oinarritutako juduen barne-elkarrizketa eskatzen zuen eta Israel/Palestinan kulturarteko estatu judua eraikitzeko oinarriak gisa.

Israelgo Alderdi Komunistan 1965. urte arte izandako irakiarren jarduera bereizita berrikusi da. Alderdiaren SESB (Sobietar Errepublika Sozialisten Batasuna) ekiko leialtasun zurrunak alderdiaren aurrera egitea galarazi zuen, beraien ikuspegi eta gaitasun paregabeak lagatuz, alderdiaren judu-arabiar dibisioan adierazi zirenak.

Tesi honek, Ekialde Hurbileko testuinguruan ikuspegi teoriko deskolonialen garapenean eta gaur egun Israelen horrelako pentsaera ondarea eraikitzen lagundu nahi du.

Resumen

La premisa de esta investigación considera la colonización occidental del resto del mundo en los últimos 500 años como el factor central en la configuración de la realidad moderna contemporánea. En el contexto local, percibe el proyecto sionista como un proyecto colonial en el Oriente Medio, además de ser un movimiento de liberación nacional de judíos europeos. La premisa teórica de la investigación se basa en los desarrollos contemporáneos de la teoría poscolonial, especialmente entre los científicos sociales latinoamericanos, nombrados por algunos, "el giro decolonial". La perspectiva decolonial es especialmente útil para conceptualizar las luchas sociales y políticas de los grupos étnicos que han sido oprimidos por las relaciones de poder coloniales. La investigación utiliza la terminología decolonial para examinar las organizaciones políticas autónomas mizrahi y sefardíes en Israel, a fin de exponer aspectos descoloniales en su actividad y discurso, y examinar las condiciones que limitaron su potencial decolonial, así como su actividad en general.

La investigación examina diferentes organizaciones políticas de sefardíes y mizrahim en Israel, desde el establecimiento del estado de Israel hasta su expansión territorial en la Guerra de los Seis Días. El estudio se basa en documentos históricos y periódicos de las diferentes organizaciones, y se centra en la actividad del Concilio de la Comunidad Sefardí de Jerusalén, bajo el liderazgo de Eliahu Eliachar.

La tesís traza un campo político mizrahi en Israel, que tuvo una dinámica propia, que a veces divergió del campo político ashkenazi en su interpretación de la realidad social y en sus reacciones a los acontecimientos políticos del Oriente Medio. Las herramientas decoloniales se aplicaron en el análisis del discurso y las prácticas de diferentes organizaciones políticas dentro de este campo. La investigación se centra en los intentos de las organizaciones de establecer una identidad colectiva sefardí y mizrahi en Israel, y en sus discursos y actividad con respecto a los países árabes circundantes, el pueblo palestino y la minoría palestina en Israel. La tesís enfatiza las semillas del pensamiento decolonial que surgió entre ciertos activistas y organizaciones en ciertos momentos, y también sigue las formas multifacéticas en que estas organizaciones han sido oprimidas y marginadas.

En la década de los 1950, la principal organización política independiente en esta investigación es el Concilio de la Comunidad Sefardí de Jerusalén, que intentó representar al público sefardí y mizrahi en el parlamento. Se examina la cultura organizativa única del Concilio, así como las nociones de honor que guiaron su política. En estos años, el pensamiento fronterizo sefardí se inclinó hacia el lado de la modernidad occidental, debido a la animosidad creada entre Israel y el mundo árabe. Esto esterilizó cualquier contenido positivo y confiable de la identidad colectiva que esta organización intentó producir y representar.

En la década de 1960, el campo político de Mizrahi se diversificó enormemente, pero la estructura de poder sionista dejó vacante de significado la acción organizada mizrahi, recreándola como una reducida "etnicidad política" centrada en cuestiones de representación. El clima político restrictivo permitió que algunos círculos de activistas desarrollaran un discurso con características decoloniales, con el objetivo de influir en el discurso público de mizrahies, en lugar de intervenir directamente en el campo político israelí. Durante este período, en la revista *In the Battle*, se desarrolló una visión de un sionismo autóctono oriental, basado en la aspiración de un proyecto de "Fusión de las Diásporas" como una "ecología de los saberes". Este proyecto instó a un diálogo judío interior que se basara en la herencia de la Edad de Oro sefardí como común a todos los judíos, y como las bases para construir un estado judío intercultural en Israel / Palestina.

La actividad de los iraquíes en el Partido Comunista Israelí hasta 1965 esta revisada por separado. La rígida lealtad del partido a la URSS impidió que los iraquíes avanzaran en el partido y contribuyeran a él con sus perspectivas y habilidades únicas, los cuales se expresaron durante la división judío-árabe del partido.

Esta tesis tiene como objetivo contribuir al desarrollo de la perspectiva teórica decolonial en el contexto de Oriente Medio, y a la construcción de un legado de tal pensamiento en Israel en la actualidad.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter that lays ahead is divided into four segments, each disclosing other facets of the academic and political concerns that have directed the formulation of this dissertation. The first part will explain the personal process that brought this investigation into being, and conclude by presenting the questions of investigation. Afterwards, there will be a presentation to the definitions of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewries, followed by a review of the different themes related to them within contemporary Israeli politics. Next, I will explore the role of Israel/Palestine in global politics today and attend to the implications of writing the historical account of this research in this context. Finally, I will explain the title of the dissertation, will present shortly its main findings and conclude by depicting the structure of the paper.

Much of the historical research about middle-eastern Jewries, named here Mizrahim and Sephardim, and about their political activity in Israel, has been written in English in Anglo-Saxon universities. Notwithstanding, the relation between my university and my topic of research has raised eyebrows around me throughout all the years of research. I find it useful, then, to first and fore mostly explain how this research developed into being, and explain the way my Bilbao-Jerusalem axis of movement in the past years has designed the very tools and questions of inquiry.

The point of departure upon this adventure was a seminary class held by Ramon Grosfoguel for graduate students in the Social Science and Communication Department of the UPV/EHU. In this series of lectures, Grosfoguel gave words, terms and a theoretical framework for what I had been trying to explain as my main interest of research during the whole period of my Master's degree: with key words such as global power relations and political solidarity, centering geographically in Palestine/Israel. Following these classes, I decided to be the one to bring "the decolonial turn" that Grosfoguel presented to us to my native context, thus hoping, of course, to redeem the lost Israeli left from its poor communicative abilities with Palestinian Arabs, helping to bridge the tragic abyss between these populations in their common struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. My initial research proposal included an ethnographic study of movements of Israeli radical left, a grand majority of which are of upper-middle class European Jews, and their solidarity with Palestinian Arab national struggles in the West Bank. I spent a year in the Basque Country preparing for this research, mainly by attaining a good level of spoken Palestinian Arabic. When I arrived to perform the field-work in Palestine/Israel, however, I found the field of research replete of people documenting the activities, journalists and others, who at times outnumbered both Palestinian and Israeli activists. The kind of political action I aimed to examine had been way past its peak, about 10-15 years ago. I also discovered

that as a field of research, this solidarity activity has been utterly exhausted by American and European graduate students who have examined exactly the same reduced circles and activities I was so eager to examine. The exhaustion of this research field by MA and doctorate dissertations is a reflection of the central and symbolic place of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in western global-capitalist politics, and of the search of those western leftists after a way to contribute to struggle against the injustices these politics produce. It also reflects their identification with the solidarity of those western Israelis with the Palestinian struggle, that is, the social similarity of these leftists. I diverged the research to writing the historical genealogy of Ashkenazi solidarity with Palestinians, observing Mizrahim's place in it as well. After a year, I could clearly see the abyssal gap present nowadays and in the past between the European Israelis and the Palestinians, the colonizers and the colonized, and saw clearly the many mechanisms that reproduce the abyssal inequality. This dissertation would have been dedicated to the analysis and recording of these mechanisms, had I not stumbled upon the writings of the Sephardic notable Eliahu Eliachar. Eliachar enchanted me with the depth of his emotional overtone, intoned to touch the hearts and transform and souls of Jewish folk. I discovered other native intellectuals of Sephardic and Mizrahi origins and saw how their pre-1948 discourse, their particular way to oppose the Zionist leadership and the kind of inter-cultural horizons they imagined for their homeland, reverberated much of the discourse of the Latin-American theorists I had been studying. Finally, I found the empirical phenomenon that could most benefit from the translation of the decolonial perspectives into the Middle East.

Many of the writers who have contributed to developing "the decolonial turn" are third-world intellectuals producing knowledge from western universities. This geo-cultural position is understood to have an advantage in the development of a thorough critique within western academy, one that goes beyond inner-modern critiques of modernity, as postmodernism and Marxism (Grosfoguel 2012). This is because this position enables expressing epistemological critique, using the tools and patterns of western university, which allow it, in fact, to be legible by it. Writing from the borderlines of western modernity may allow the expression of voices and epistemologies that had been silenced by western science, negated the stature of being considered knowledge and truth. The anti-colonial writer Frantz Fanon discussed quite broadly the phenomenon of "native intellectuals", referring to the layers in the colonized society that during the period of decolonization had begun a dialogue with the bourgeoisie of the colonialist country (Fanon 1965:43). The native intellectuals do not belong to the colonizing layer, but also not entirely to the colonized society. Much of this research will indeed focus on the discourse and practices of such Mizrahi and Sephardic native intellectuals, who aligned their intellectual critique with organized groups who had aspirations to gain power in the political field. It is of no surprise that a contemporary version of native intellectuals, as the ones writing out "the decolonial turn", can be found to correspond appropriately with the subject of study of

research, and that they resonate each other's analysis of reality, political conceptualizations and socio-cultural political critique. It is not a coincidence either that the geographical point of departure of the colonization processes both groups of native intellectuals rebel against are located in the Iberian Peninsula, where this dissertation is from.

This dissertation relies upon the conceptualization of western colonization of the rest of the world, since 1492, as the central factor in shaping modern realities today: colonial oppression and modern emancipation are understood to be co-constitutive. According to this narrative, in 1492 the ideological apparatus that purged the Spanish kingdom crossed the Atlantic, and modern racial hierarchies started to get formulated in a globally encompassing manner. This progressively led to the formulation and justification of a whole apparatus of global domination of the west everywhere else. 1492 then can be viewed as the beginning of Orientalism in the Occident (Shohat 2017). In the local geo-political context of this research, this inquiry departs from the conceptualization of the Zionist project as a colonial enterprise: created by and for European Jews, supported by western powers and based upon Orientalist conceptions that presume the superiority of western modernity. Zionist ideology also contained a certain aspiration to re-invent a Hebrew native identity that is anchored in the east (Eyal 2005), and nurtured a myth of an eastern autochthonous Jew (mainly by appropriating the nativity of Palestinian Arabs) (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). However, with the establishment of the state of Israel through war with its surrounding countries, most of the ambiguity regarding the nature of the Jewish nation disappeared. The state was establishment as a western country, distinct from its middle-eastern environment, and mostly preoccupied about better fortifying its armored walls (see in Eyal 2005). These walls separated the western from the eastern, and excluded the indigenous non-Jewish population in the land. Throughout this research we will see the conditions that allowed these walls to expand to include Jews indigenous to the region, i.e. Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews. The research aims to perform an analytical historical investigation of autonomous political discourse and practices of Sephardim and Mizrahim in Israel. If the mere existence of Jews in Israel/Palestine as a nation has relied on colonization and re-colonization, the questions of research are:

1- Did Sephardic and Mizrahi groups and individuals opposing coloniality develop within the Zionist settler-colonial society? If so, how did they come into being?
2- To what degree did they succeed in challenging and opposing Zionist-colonial frameworks, or creating alternatives to them? Why did they fail to create a viable alternative to Zionism?
3- Why did they fail to construct an independent political camp?
4- Under what circumstances has this opposition strengthened at certain moments, and

what made it weaken at others?

Towards the end of the introduction some of the answers to these questions will be reviewed briefly. Following, an explanation as to who are Mizrahim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim will be proposed, reviewing how these identities got consolidated historically. Then the important themes this ethnic division represent in contemporary Israeli society will get highlighted, especially those relevant to the Israeli political sphere.

Jewish Diaspora   under the Crescent and under the Cross

The simple way to explain the category of Mizrahi (in Hebrew: eastern) and Sephardic Jewries would be to recur to history and heritage. These are Jews whose origins, for several generations, had been from Muslim countries -in Western Asia and North Africa- or from the Balkans. As an ethnic division in the Jewish world, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews can be seen as another Jewish stream than Ashkenazi Jews, whose origins, for several generations, has been from eastern and central Europe. Otherwise understood, it is a division between Jewish heritages that had developed under either Christian-European or Muslim-Arab centennial rule, two sides of Judaism as culture and as religion, that have constructed different mental patterns and conceptions of Self (Pedaya 2015, Cohen 2005). However, as the study of ethnicity consistently shows, such definitions are rarely as neat or encompassing as could be desired by researchers and readers alike. Sephardim have actually lived under both Christian and Muslim rule, and there were also Ashkenazi communities living in Muslim territories, for instance in Egypt since early 19th century. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the term "Jews of Muslim countries", or some acronym of it, is the most accurate way to refer to Mizrahi Jewry (Pedaya 2015, Ben Dor 1999). However, this title or the suggested acronyms never caught, and both in the academy and in popular discourse it is common, in different contexts, to apply either the terms Sephardim or Mizrahim to refer to the entire population of non-Ashkenazi Jews.

Sefarad is the Hebrew name of Roman Hispania, Muslim Al-Andalus and contemporary Spain. Though Jews inhabited the Iberian Peninsula since the 3rd century (Weksler 2005), their last seven centuries in it charged their historiography in a way that the term Sephardic was coined, and later got analyzed broadly across various spatial, temporal and subjective contexts (e.g. Halevi-Wise 2012, Evri 2013). The myth of harmonic *convivencia* of the three monotheistic religions in Al-Andalus has made Sephardic history a useful metaphor for a variety of artists,

and a source of inspiration for academics concerned with peace and war, identity politics and international reconfigurations, from the 18th century to nowadays (Halevi-Wise 2012, Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, Aizenberg 2005). For world Jewry, Sephardism provokes the imagery of the Jewish Spanish Golden Age, a period of remarkable intellectual, artistic and religious creation. The Medieval Sephardic aesthetic and knowledge productions was intertwined in extraordinarily profound manners with the language, content, forms and genres of the Arab cultural bloom of the time and place, built upon rationalist and humanist Muslim, Persian and Greek foundations (Tubi 2011, Bineart 1992, Yosef 1991, Asis 1991).

After the 1492 expulsion from the new united kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula, some Sephardic Jews got dispersed in different European countries, but most of them ended up under Muslim rule. They took prominence within different Jewish communities all over the Mediterranean Sea (David 2005, Bunis 2005). In the northern parts of the Mediterranean Ottoman Empire, the native Jewish communities got assimilated into Sephardic culture and language. With the invention of print, the Sephardic prayer book (Siddur) spread across other Jewries in the Muslim world (Pedaya 2015), and "Sephardic" became an adjective to particular liturgics, customs and rabbinical authority (Zohar 2001). Other customs and also languages varied within Jewries in different parts of the Muslim world. Therefore, all Jews under Muslim rule could in different moments or contexts be considered as belonging to a Sephardic Halachic and prayer tradition (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994, Pikar 2003). Since early modernity, then, it can be claimed two branches of Judaism were getting marked, Ashkenazi and Sephardic.

Some researchers ask to contest this historical perception, claiming that relations and influences always existed between all Jewish communities, and that there was no self-perception of autonomous branches of Judaism in early modernity (Frenkel 2015, Zohar 2001). Notwithstanding, there are other researchers who toiled to define the substantial differences between Sephardic/Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jewries (e.g. Elazar 1986, Zohar 2005, Schorsch 2012). According to these last, the differences are not only marked in liturgy, styles of rabbinical education and some customs, but most importantly in the different structure of opportunities created for minorities under Islam versus Christianity. While Islam accepted the rights of other monotheistic religions to live under its rule under a special protected status, for Christianity Jews remained historically responsible for murdering its god[i], and persecutions and humiliations of the Jewish minority population were much more widespread and recurring. Consequently, European Jewry developed quite introverted and closed communities. In contrast, Jewries under Islamic rule were involved in their societies in quotidian ways and could even share with their societies customs and beliefs. In late modernity, significant Jewish movements grew in Europe, marking unequivocal differences with Jews under Muslim rule.

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[i] I Thank Ramon Grosfoguel for pointing out to me this additional point.

The secularizing effects of Enlightenment on Ashkenazi Jewish society created a reactionary response among some religious streams, which developed radically introverted ultra-orthodoxy. In contrast, in Muslim countries modernization did not develop as a struggle between secularity and religion in a way that threatened religious authorities. The respectable stature of rabbis was generally maintained (Zohar 2001) and reactionary conservative orthodoxy was rare (Leon 2010). Also, in Europe alone, as consequence of the recurring persecutions, and by inspirations of European colonialism and "spring of nations", Jewish modern/colonial nationalism grew and got consolidated in the form of the Zionist movement.

In the state of Israel: Mizrahim

The state of Israel was established by the Zionist movement, which perceived itself as a national liberation movement, asking for the auto-emancipation of European Jews. During most of the 20th century, the hegemonic current in the Zionist movement was the Labor movement, which was secular and socialist, and represented an ambition to modernize both the Jewish people and the Holy Land. This allowed the Zionist movement to assume a self-image of a socialist national movement, while putting into effect a settler-colonial project. The establishment of the state of Israel through war and violence between the Zionist colony and the surrounding Arab countries, forced the immigration of Jews living in Arab countries to the nascent Jewish state. This occurred despite the initial aspirations of the Zionist movement, which had little to do with these Jewries.

Non-Ashkenazi Jews that resided in Palestine/Eretz-Israel[i] before the Zionist immigrations, were considered Sephardic in the social system of the Jewish colony (Tsur 2007a, Bezalel 2007). After the establishment of the state, the weight of immigrants from Arab countries grew in Israeli society, and gradually the tag of Sephardic gave way to the tag Mizrahi (Tsur 2007). In this process, the European Sephardic communities, e.g. Bulgarian or Italian Jews, dropped out from this category (Tsur 2000). The Sephardic natives and the Mizrahi immigrants got marginalized and were discriminated against within the Zionist-colonial state mechanisms, which were designed with a purpose of adapting these Jewries to the modern European patterns of the state (Sternhell 1995, Levy 1998, Hever et.al. 2002). These mechanisms silenced Sephardic and Mizrahi cultures, heritage and history, considering those at best as obsolete

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[i] Though the administrative unit of Palestine did not formally exist from the 12th century and until the British mandate started in 1920, this name will be used here, since there are records identifying the land or parts of it with this name beforehand as well (e.g. the newspaper Palestine since 1911) (Porat 1976). The Jewish name that was often used to describe the same land was Eretz-Israel (Land of Israel). When addressing the land in question prior to 1920, "Eretz-Israel" might be used when applied to a Jewish perspective, and "Palestine"- when applied to a Palestinian perspective, or for emphasizing colonial actions. However, the double name will be most commonly used.

folklore. In those first years of the state, an ethno-class structure was formed that is prevalent until today, which placed Mizrahi Jews in its disadvantaged layer. Their way to get included in the Jewish national collective, as designed by the Zionist movement, had the price of socio-economic, cultural and spiritual subjugation. In the political sphere, all Israeli political parties in the period of study, with the exception of the communist party, were a continuation of parties already active within the Zionist movement. Following Chetrit (2004), I will refer to them throughout this research as Zionist parties of Ashkenazi hegemony. All Jewish parties in Israel in this period, including the communist party, were established, led and controlled by Ashkenazim. As Shohat (1988) claimed, the locus of struggle in the Israeli political sphere was, and remains, focused on sharing power among various Ashkenazi groups, expressing various Jewish-European identity dilemmas, and has had very little space for Sephardic and Mizrahi aspirations.

The process of a partially forced immigration of middle-eastern Jewry into the Zionist colonial state has been described as a violent tear, a disastrous fracture, indeed a catastrophe bestowed upon these Jewries[i], devised by a structural complicity that was established between Zionist and Arab national governments (Behar 2007, Shohat 1999, Ben Dor 2004, Snir 2006). At least in those initial years, this left these Jewries without an appropriate place under the sun. Following Shohat (2017), throughout the dissertation this process will be sometimes referred to as the Rupture. The Rupture that occurred in 1948 upon the establishment of the state of Israel propagated new identity barriers in the Middle East, reorganized cultural identities and affiliations, and by the way destroyed the collective self-confidence of a Judeo-Muslim civilization (Snir 2006) with millennial pride (Shohat 1988). In the state of Israel Mizrahim became degraded to poverty and crime, and were tagged negatively in a way that made many reject their non-European culture of origins. These cultures were considered illegitimate in the state of Israel: inferior and similar to those of the enemy. There was a subtle process of coercion, where Mizrahim were made to feel ashamed of their skin color, mother languages, music preferences, pronunciation, traditions and customs, within what may be considered a cultural massacre of immense proportion of a rooted eastern civilization (Shohat 1988). In the period of study, Mizrahi cultures continued to develop in Israel only "underground", limited to Mizrahi geographical enclaves (Tsur 2000).

Until the 1980s Mizrahi Jews were estimated to consist of about 50% of the Jewish population in Israel (Mizrachi & Herzog 2012), at present day the number is unknown, since the Statistical Bureau does not collect data about grandparents' countries of origins (Cohen et.al. 2013). Speaking of ethnic divisions between Jews in Israel has always been taboo, transgressing under

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[i] Meir Buzaglo about Moroccan Jewry, in Qedar (14.5.15).

the national ethos that perceives the state as the country of all the Jews. Therefore, despite the fact that some statistics and research reflect an ethno-class reality in Israeli society, much of the socio-economic political discourse about Mizrahi, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews is limited to particular political groups, circles of activists and to the academy. In recent years there has been an explosion of discourse about Mizrahim in the media, as an important component to be considered in the Israeli political sphere. Otherwise in popular discourse, references to the different Jewish ethnicities are described usually as cultural or religious differences, for instance in different traditional food or distinct burial arrangements, as well as other stereotypical characteristics (see in: Sagiv 2014). There are also different stereotypes attributed to specific countries of origins rather than to an Ashkenazi/Mizrahi divide. Mixed marriages[i], certain class mobilization (Cohen & Leon 2008), large waves of immigration from Russia and Ethiopia in the 1990s and the Statistical Bureau's policies, are all factors that aid to blur a contemporary existence of an Ashkenazi/Mizrahi divide. Different researchers pointed out that certain Mizrahi cultural patterns, and especially Mizrahi music, have acquired alternative symbolic capital, and some have become parts of Israeliness, also changing certain cultural patterns of Ashkenazim, at times developing a sense of connection between Arabic and Israeli western oriented culture (Snir 2006, Yaar 2007, Sagiv 2014, Sasson-Levy & Shoshana 2014). As Tsur (2000) mentioned, Israeli national culture has a positive relation to the exotic and primeval elements of Judeo-Arab culture. I would add that this is as long as these elements can be contained in Israeli Eurocentric culture. Popular perceptions exhibit an almost opposite picture than research, since many consider that the class breach between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim have already been overcome, while cultural differences still prevail (Sagiv 2014), as well as political ones. As Brubaker (2004) reminds us, ethnicity is not an actual thing in the world; rather it is a perspective on the world. As such, the term Mizrahi prevails today in public discourse over more than dozen other titles available to define this public, each concealing a different historical and political perspective (Shohat 2004). The term Mizrahi alludes to the homogenization that Jews from Muslim countries went through in the state of Israel; an *"Israelization"* process (Bashkin 2017), that also has been named the *"Zionist civilizing process"* (Shaul 2016): achieved by oppression, humiliation, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination. These oppressive processes left a heritage of political protest, as well as a deep sensation of insult that has been inherited by the following generations (Leon 2009). This is true even among those that have already got integrated into Ashkenazi middle-class: geographically and in terms of education there are already many of those (Cohen & Leon 2008). Schwartz (2015) summarizes the usage of the category Mizrahim in Israel today as such:

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[i] Nowadays, about 20% of native Israeli are ethnically mixed, born to Ashkenazi and Mizrahi parents, according to Sagiv (2014) and Mizrachi & Herzog (2012).

"Social boundaries between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim gradually grew permeable and non-salient but have been reformulated as cultural boundaries, based on ethnically marked classed habitus, behaviors, and cultural preferences…Many Mizrahim [have been admitted] into Israel's mainly Ashkenazi hegemonic group, while retaining the stereotypical identification of Mizrahiness with lowbrow tastes and uncivil behavior… In Israel, historical discriminatory policies in education, employment, and housing led to enduring underrepresentation of Mizrahim among the upper-middle class and cultural elites, although high intraethnic variance exists… Class, culture, and ethnic categories (which overlap only partially) are used alternately and strategically…"

The fact that the Mizrahi category was developed by almost exclusively negative experiences from the 1950s and 1960s (Tsur 2000) makes it a rare source of self-identification. Though the term Mizrahi permeated public discourse, as a source of self-identification it remains a privilege of upper-middle class intellectual Mizrahim: those who are not threatened by the connotations of this term to mark them as inferior (Shiran 2005, Gutman 2008, Mizrachi et.al. 2013, Sagiv 2014). This is in fact the social layer that coined this term, in order to define their own political identity in the 1990s (Shohat 1999). As any other historical attempt to define the ethnic divide in Israel, the term Mizrahi causes feisty public debates and common refutations of the very divide itself, since "we are all Israelis" (Michael 1984, Adut 2006, Raz-Krakotzkin 2005, Sagiv 2014, Mizrachi et.al. 2013). Many scholars have claimed that studying Mizrahi identity can only be done per country of origin, and not as a collective identity (Ben Sasson 1979, Ben Dor 1999, Dahan-Kalev 2006, Michael 2005, Levy 2005, Shoshana 2013). The term Ashkenazi, however, does not arouse heated debates in the same manner, it is not refuted as an adjective for all Jews of European origins, and can often be an object of self-identification, since this ethnic marker does not imply humiliation and suffering. For more religious or traditional publics, the term Mizrahi often translates into the adjective Sephardic (Sagiv 2014). The term Sephardic is a more popular source of self-identification; it does not raise antagonism as the title Mizrahi does. That is because of its objective basis on the Sephardic religious heritage, anchored in written materials that are related to a high heritage, one of rabbinical grandeur and intellectual splendor. Another reason for the smooth usage of the term might be related to the modern/colonial structure of Israeli society: Sephardic, eventually, is also European (Kimmerling 2004, Shohat 1999, 2004, Sagiv 2014).

Mizrahi Judaism and This Bridge Called my Back[i]

Despite the difficulty to grasp and prove the existence of a Mizrahi or Sephardic social group, there are some sociological particularities of this sector of the population that are common

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[i]*This Bridge Called my Back* is the title of an anthology of feminist writings edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga. It was published in 1983 by Kitchen Table-Women of Color Press, and in 2015 was re-published by State University of New York Press.

knowledge, and also attract researchers' attention. Next, the characteristics necessary to understand the place of Mizrahim in the Israeli political sphere will be briefly review, and in following chapters some of these will get explored more profoundly.

Firstly, the fact Mizrahi Judaism developed under Muslim rule had shaped its particular relationship to religious authorities and faith, downplaying both abstract laws and rabbinical hierarchy (Shohat 1988), in a way that simply cannot be addressed by the hopelessly modern European dichotomy of religious versus secular. An epistemological prosthetic was therefore invented: the category of "traditionalist" [*masorti*] (Shenhav 2006). This term describes an interactively easygoing and conservative religiosity (Leon 2011), sympathizing with but not necessarily committed to rabbinical authority (Yadgar 2010). Today, around 25% percent of Jewish Israelis identify themselves as "traditionalists", a category that was added by the Israeli Central Statistical Bureau to the scale that previously only asked participants to identify as secular, religious or ultra-orthodox. According to Yadgar (2010), the grand majority of the traditionalists are Mizrahi/Sephardic, and the majority of Mizrahim/Sephardim are traditionalist[i]. Being traditionalist means conserving a basic loyalty to Jewish laws and customs, because of the way that they have been passed down through the generations, and not out of belief that this is god's will. Therefore, this kind of commitment allows for a personal selective attitude towards the Jewish religious laws (Leon 2009: 34). This pattern of Judaism construct a conventional view of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewries as balanced, easygoing, tolerant, moderate, nobly simple and respectable, anti-fanatic, placated, versatile and adaptive (Michael 1984, Evri 2013, Elazar 1986). In addition, the heritage of belonging to Arab cultural linguistic realities (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994) had shaped also a certain tradition of openness to it (Tubi 2011). Despite the aggressive de-Arabization processes Mizrahi Jews have endured in the state of Israel (Alcalay 1993), Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews are carriers of a heritage of common cultural and spiritual values with Arabs and Muslims. This is the reason their locus of enunciation is sometimes understood to carry a potential to deconstruct the Israeli modern dichotomies of secular/religious, as well as those of Jew/Arab. It is this perception of Mizrahi and Sephardic Judaism that attracts leftist political activists and intellectuals to view them as *"a natural bridge for peace"* (Shohat 2017a), and attempt to empower (and therefore define) a collective Mizrahi identity. The need for a theoretical conceptualization of a Mizrahi position in the colonial reality of Israel stems precisely from the lack of its practical expression in the Israeli political field.

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[i] In 2016, 45% of Jewish population defined their lifestyle as secular, 25% as traditional, 16% as religious and very religious and 14% ultra-orthodox. Among Arabs, who conformed 20% of Israel's population, 11% defined their lifestyle as secular, 57% as traditional and 31% as religious and very religious. Central Bureau of Statistics (2018, June). *Report #10*.

Mizrahim in the Israeli Political Field

The general stereotype of Mizrahim in Israeli society is of "Arab haters", and loyal to the right wing party Likud, which has been ruling Israel since early 2000s. There is a popular consensus, substantiated by some academic research, that Mizrahim were crucial in the governmental "turnover" in 1977 from the leftist Labor movement to right wing Likud. According to Rimon-Or, it was in the 1977 campaign that verbal violence against Arabs came to the front of public stage, especially by Mizrahi publics. It is a popular conception that Mizrahim are prone to anti-Arab and nationalist positions, as a way to purge themselves from the Arab component of their identity. Between the 1940s and 1960s identity borders between Arabs and Jews were getting consolidated in different countries in the Middle East, and the need to establish them in Israel by ideological affiliation was sharpened. Nowadays, researchers still claim that the Arab-hating stereotype is based on Mizrahim who have internalized Ashkenazi oppression and absorbed the Zionist logic, which excluded Mizrahim that did not westernize properly: *"Arab hatred almost always disguises self-hate"* (Shohat 1999, also see: Rimon-Or 2002, Peres 1976, 1984, Chetrit 1999). Tsur (2000) pointed out that grudge towards Arabs has often been designed by individual Mizrahim's experiences in their countries of origin:

"More than fifty years ago Baghdad got fixed in my consciousness...just as I left it...we have been completely disconnected. I have not thought of it nor did I miss it. Even if it was revealed in my hallucinations, once in a while, it aroused in my heart a bitter feeling of disappointment and rage. Maybe it is because it degraded my identity, negated my existence, denounced my citizenship and made me escape for my dear life... Iraq...was and remained an incubator of terror against its citizens and neighbors."[i]

Israeli sociologists suggested other explanations to Mizrahim's tendency towards the right wing, usually examining from different angles the way it consists of a counter-reaction to Labor political parties of Ashkenazi hegemony, which until 1977 ruled the country, creating and enforcing the institutional, economic and discursive exclusion of Mizrahim (Swirsky 1988, Peled & Shaffir 2005, Horowitz & Lissak 1990, Chetrit 2000, Dahan-Kalev 2006, Filk 2010, Leon & Cohen 2011). As Shohat (1988) pointed out, the difference between Likud and Labor politics towards Arabs is one of discourse only, and the more important difference is the firsts' populist appeal to Mizrahim as part of the nationalist Jewish collective, versus the elitist Eurocentric condescension typical of Labor Zionism. Mizrachi (2011) pointed out that the reaction-based explanations of Mizrahi right wing tendencies ignore an independent Mizrahi *"world of signification"*, in which solidarity and feelings of national belonging prevail over liberal values of social justice and universal equality (also see: Kimmerling 2004). Eventually, the Mizrahi answer to the colonial inferiority imposed on them in the state of Israel has been Jewish nationalism: As Tsur pointed out, Mizrahim identified the Jewish state with themselves

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[i] Patel (2003): 356.

and with god's grace, more than with the Ashkenazi ruling elites. Still, the in-accomplishment of the promise for national equality was a source of great disappointment and deep frustration (Tsur 2000). That is where the power of colonial relations plays an important role. Shaul explored the seeming contradiction between the oppression Mizrahim experienced by the state of Israel and their tendency to nationalist patriotism. She found that the Mizrahim's narratives about the oppression in the early years of the state was often shadowed by the narrative of their own accomplishments and agency to succeed despite the difficulties. Part of these accomplishments was the ability to live up to the state's expectations of them, to become productive and loyal citizens (Shaul 2016).

Notwithstanding, the Mizrahi frustration and disappointment from the Ashkenazi hegemony in the state, of both right and left wing streams, has found a stable political expression with the rise of Shas in 1984. Shas is the only Mizrahi autonomous organization that has ever succeeded to position itself as a political party with a stable electorate. Its success has often been explained in research by emphasizing different shades of Mizrahim's commitment to Inner-Jewish solidarity and to the ethno-national ethos of citizenship, over universal values. Shas is an ultra-orthodox party, born to struggle over the blunt discrimination against Sephardim in Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox educational institutions and society. Shas relies on a network of social-aid institutions which, along with other tools, are designed to convert its public into ultra-orthodoxy. Shas' cultural construction of the conversion to religion [*hazara be-tshuva*] consider it to be the appropriate answer to the catastrophe bestowed in Israel on Sephardic Jewries (Chetrit 2004). This way, Shas' target audience is of a broad spectrum of Mizrahim, who consider this enterprise as part of a tendency of religious renewal and transformation (Leon 2009). Peled (2002) explained Shas' popularity among non-ultra-orthodox publics in its ability to challenge Israeliness on basis of Judaism and not over class or ethnic matters, thereby relinquishing any implicit base of solidarity between Mizrahim and Palestinian Arabs (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). In a similar way, Chetrit (2004) suggested that Shas embodies Mizrahi collectiveness by its success to define a comprehensive alternative to the Jewish Zionist-Ashkenazi nationalism. What is clear from empirical reality is that Shas is the last most successful Mizrahi/Sephardic autonomous political organization to represent this public's world views and supposed interests.

It might be the rise of Shas that stimulated the consolidation of something that might be called a Mizrahi left in early 1990s. Dominated mainly by Iraqi intellectuals, Israeli social and political sphere has been seeing the rise of new discourses and organizations attempting to formulate a Mizrahi identity option, which ask to overcome intra-ethnic differences, and oppose European Zionism beyond the a traditional-religious context (Chetrit 2004). This "New Mizrahi discourse", as defined by Chetrit, carries a socio-cultural critique of Israeli society and politics, meeting Shas' Jewish-religious critique back-to-back in the attempt to re-define Israeliness.

This discourse includes another new component, of internal examination of the place and forms of religiosity in the Mizrahi social action (Chetrit 2004). Within the attempt to define a Mizrahi left, it is crucial to point out that the division between right and left is not less Eurocentric than the divide between religious and secular. Historically and contemporarily, radical left in Israel, for instance Israeli Marxist parties and activists, have usually struggled in solidarity against the oppression of Palestinian Arabs, while ignoring the oppression suffered by Mizrahim (Chetrit 1999, Swirsky 1988). In its radical as well as its moderate variation of Labor-Zionism, the Israeli left has been dominated by Ashkenazim and has not tended to address the problems of Mizrahim. Mizrahi intellectuals' attempts to formulate an Israeli identity option in an emancipatory way, one that goes beyond Eurocentric constructions of secularity/religion, left/right and Arab/Jew, has not yet found a stable political organization through which to get expressed. It is this very lack that urges the need to draw the genealogy of Mizrahi attempts to do so. Bashkin (2017) claimed Mizrahi revival is currently taking place, expressed, among others, in the fact that almost every day an article, essay or a piece of art that deal with the ethnic differences between Jews in Israel gets published. Indeed, the Mizrahi struggle for equality has probably never enjoyed such broadband legitimacy, and the Israeli political sphere certainly includes Mizrahim today in much more diverse manners and forms than in the period of study of this research. This broad inclusion is a product of processes that began after 1977, and is also indebted to the activity of the mentioned Mizrahi intellectual elite.

In summary, Zionism was based on a Jewish desire to assimilate into the west, and its process of colonization required transforming colonized Jews, and embodied their assimilation into the position of the colonizer (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). The result of this was the erasure of a Mizrahi identity as potential carrier of positive content and connotation. Any intellectual attempt to define a Mizrahi public is inevitably perplexing (Ben Dor 1999, Dahan 2007, Adut 2006), another symptom of the crisis of this public itself (Shohat 2004). Perhaps the only factor that is not contested is the religious differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and indeed this difference molded the sole historical opportunity to mobilize politically Mizrahi/Sephardic identity and interests. Any secular attempt, by sociologists, intellectuals or social activists, to speak about socio-economic and cultural oppression along ethnic lines, has resulted quite different from the story Israeli society tells about itself (Sagiv 2014). Nonetheless, leftist activists and researchers as myself are attracted to inquire into Mizrahi and Sephardic identity in a non-religious manner, because it is understood to embody an emancipatory alternative to the aggressively exclusive Israeli society and state. Next we will explore the meaning of such emancipatory alternatives, and suggest the importance of the study of history for the process of their contemporaneous elaboration.

East and West

When examining the Zionist movement as a colonial enterprise, it is important to note the similarities and differences between the two main groups who conform its victims. Palestinian Arabs, as the natives of the land who the settler-colonial project sought to replace, in certain senses, have endured its dynamics of annihilation and dispossession, from their property, lands and national political rights. By contrast, towards middle-eastern Jewries, the Zionist movement acted through dynamics of coercion and erasure, dispossessing them from their own identity, and indirectly also from their property and lands. There is no symmetry between these processes, but they both stem from the same historical process designed by the Eurocentric "ideal-ego" of Zionism: its insistence to perform as a prolongation of Europe, located in the Middle East, but not as part of it (Shohat 1988). When comparing the two colonial dynamics, the processes endured by Mizrahim may seem rather benign (Shohat 1988). Shohat (2017) suggested the Israeli racialization patterns are reminiscent of the Indian and the black of Euro-American discourse: the indigenous people whose land was taken are compared to the Palestinians, and the Africans who were forced to migrate and were enslaved are compared to Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews. From a North American perspective, rather popular in social discourse and research about Israel/Palestine, this comparison can be quite enlightening. Notwithstanding, from another perspective, the historical processes of erasure and silencing of Mizrahi knowledge, heritage and identity may seem more similar to the processes endured by indigenous people under Spanish rule, while the processes deployed over Palestinian Arabs by Zionist colonization may be seen simply as one of the successes of the imperial-colonial enterprise the west has been imposing on the east since late modernity. This enterprise has entailed continuous military, economic and political interventions, guided by implicit racist notions of non-westerners as inferior and yet threatening Others, not fully human, whose lives are worth less because of their alienation and threatening animosity. Since the decolonization of the Middle East in mid-20th century, Israel has been a determining factor in much of western politics in the region. The situation in Palestine/Israel is one of the last remains of political colonization, which was replaced in the 21st century by other types of imperialism or coloniality (Quijano 2000). That is why it is highly emblematic of the oppressive policies made possible by these power relations (Grosfoguel 2009). In many political spheres in the world, Israel functions as a symbol of what Hardt & Negri (2009) named *Empire*: the dispersed control apparatus that wields a massive power of destruction and oppression, registering around the globe in political, economic and cultural dimensions that penetrate to the depth of social realities. For this reason, it is of no surprise then that the Palestinian struggle has become one

of the symbols of the counter-movement (Collins 2011), which Santos (2007) called counter-hegemonic globalization, a global movement of striving for emancipation from multiple types of oppression that are bound up in complex and multi-scale power relations. Palestine/Israel attract broad international media coverage, huge flows of aid funds and war technologies, involvement by Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas, US administrations, EU and Arab League diplomats, and massive international solidarity activists and projects. All these place Palestine and Israel in the heart of contemporary global politics.

Since 2001, the east-west axis of global politics has deteriorated into deeper forms of violence, following the USA into what Collins (2011) described as an ongoing, pseudo-democratic, state-sponsored violence. The Wall of Separation that has been built over the past twenty years between Israel and the Palestinian autonomic enclaves is a physical emblem of these dynamics. Palestine has become a laboratory for new forms of warfare and social control, offering new ways of colonization of humanity by techno-scientific methods that have global implications (Collins 2011, Zureik 2016), within global politics that have declared the east by the west as the enemy of the free world (Chetrit 2004). Arabs, Muslims and the Middle East are constructed as an Other civilization that is dangerous to the west: in political terms, as an inherently deposit space, in religious terms, as strictly fundamentalist (Santos 2006). Being in the heart of these global dynamics allows the Israeli occupation in Palestine to deepen its patterns of exploitation and annihilation towards Palestinians, erasing any glimpses of hopefulness from the historical memory of the diplomatic negotiations of the 1990s.

The deepening animosity increases desperation, and this is reflected in a growing interest in research in the past few decades in "the could have-beens" of history (Shohat 2017), in all the roads not taken of Arab-Jewish relationships in this land. This line of inquiry has often investigated the discourse and practices of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, assuming that *"examining Arab-Jewish relations through perspective of Sephardic and Oriental* [Mizrahi] *Jews sheds other light on complexities and nuances of conflict and on the Zionist perspective on it"* (Jacobson & Naor 2016).

Writing History of Resistance

The North American sociologist Norman Denzin (2009) suggested viewing 9/11 as a defining moment in critical social investigation, as he called for this generation to change the language of critical social research to a language of possibilities. This language should attempt to exceed the role that social science has played in maintaining western hegemony in the universities and beyond. This is the point of departure for the decolonial theoretical perspective in social research. The decolonial perspectives do not reflect a paradigm or a theoretical framework per

say, and they are not integrated in this dissertation through entering into theoretical discussions with their formulators, nor by performing comparisons with empirical cases that other researchers using the same theoretical guidelines might have studied. Rather, the decolonial perspective conformed the guidelines of all the choices I made throughout this research, from the questions of research to the materials chosen to enter into dialogue with. The decolonial perspectives form part of an epistemological transition inside the academy in the past decades, reflected in a variety of studies and fields, that is much in debt to feminist debates and to a vast array of social and political movements in the west and in Latin America (Mignolo 2003, Martinez et.al. 2012). The aspiration to use investigation as a transformative emancipatory tool is the point of departure of all critical research (Burgos-Ortiz 2011, Kinchele & McLaren 2000). Using the particular critical angle of the decolonial spectacles has directed this research to look purposely in history after the discourses and practices that rise from the margins of Eurocentric modernity/coloniality, which are understood to perform as potentially viable alternatives to it.

The Feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa spoke of the importance of knowing the struggles of the past, in order to construct a history of resistance, that can strengthen the different emancipatory struggles by highlighting what unites them: human suffering caused by unnecessary and humiliating human initiatives (Santos 2008). A history of resistance allows to unite different struggles, and transcend the ignorance that separates between people, creating prejudice and allowing subordination, disfiguring and whitening history (Anzaldúa 1987/2016: 145). The decolonial perspectives emerge from the way that modernity has consistently failed to fulfill its promises of solidarity, liberty and equality. These failures created a planet filled with modern problems that do not have modern solutions (Santos 2006). Santos claimed that by the 1990s it was clear that the solutions had to come from the margins of modernity. However, the only way to recognize these margins is by their opposition to modernity, that can mostly be seen post-priori (Santos 2010), in human initiatives, rather than in abstract ideas of progress (Santos 2008: 129-154).

The Israeli historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (1993), among others, returned to Walter Benjamin's Theses on the Philosophy of History[i], where he described the history of progress and civilization as co-constitutive with the history of barbarity, one conforming the testimony of the other. Since history is written by the winners, it serves the interests of the rulers and the oppressors, and makes the memory of the oppressed irrelevant. Present reality is constructed by this oppression and its denial is part of this reality. That is why turning to the voices that have been oppressed is vital in order to construct emancipatory processes: the memory of suffer and pain has the potential to construct praxis for present day struggles (Raz-Krakotzkin 1993).

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[i] Written in 1942, this essay is available in: https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html (last accessed on 16.12.19).

Raz-Krakotzkin reviewed the relevance of this concept of history in our local context, noting how Jewish-Zionist historiography has *not* used Jewish suffer in order to construct a history of the oppressed, critical or subversive of European history. Rather, it is a typical national history, comprehensively Eurocentric. Raz-Krakotzkin (2005) asked to write Zionism from a Jewish perspective, *"where criticism of Zionism can take a constructive form in redefining Jewish collectivity in Palestine"*. Mizrahi history is a privileged point of view from which to attempt to write Jewish history in a critical way, because it emphasizes the roots of the Jewish people in the east. Raz-Krakotzkin suggested that writing the history of Mizrahim allows Jewish historiography to emerge right from the borderlands between east and west, from an ambivalent place, which relies on the perspective of the colonized as well as the colonizer. This in-between place is also privileged for liberating the binary oppositions of east/west and colonizer/colonized (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). Writing Jewish history from a critical perspective entails the aspiration to provincialize Europe and the Ashkenazim in the history of Zionism. In this sense, this research is an endeavor to fill some gaps of Jewish history in Israel/Palestine, by telling the story of some groups that have lost their power and therefore remained outside of the collective memory.

Auto-Emancipation   **About this Research**

In 1882 the Polish-Russian Jewish intellectual Leon Pinsker wrote a pamphlet titled *Auto-emancipation!* The pamphlet was translated into many languages and dispersed among European Jewish communities. Many historians mark this pamphlet as the inception of modern Jewish nationalism, that is, of the Zionist movement. The emotional overtone of the pamphlet in the moment of its publication, instigated, supported and inspired innovative actions among European Jewry.

"In seeking to fuse with other peoples, they [the Jews] *deliberately renounced to some extent their own nationality. Yet nowhere did they succeed in obtaining from their fellow-citizens recognition as natives of equal status…the greatest impediment in the path of the Jews to an independent national existence is that they do not feel its need. Not only that, but they go so far as to deny its authenticity. …. **this desire** [for national independence] **must be awakened and maintained in time if they do not wish to be subjected forever to disgraceful existence** …The Jews are aliens who can have no representatives, because they have no country.… Like the Negroes, like women, and unlike all free peoples, they must be emancipated… The legal emancipation of the Jews is the culminating achievement of our century. **But legal emancipation is not social emancipation, and with the proclamation of the former the Jews are still far from being emancipated from their exceptional social position** …. The emancipation of the Jews is required as a postulate of logic, of law, and of enlightened national interest, but it can never be a spontaneous expression of human feeling. Far from owing its origin to spontaneous feeling…it has never yet taken root so deeply that further discussion of it becomes unnecessary… 'You are foolish, because you stand there non-plussed and expect of human nature something which it has never produced - humanity. **You are also contemptible, because you have no real self-estimation and no national self-***

respect' *...The proper, the only solution, is in the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil,* ***the auto-emancipation of the Jews; their return to the ranks of the nations by the acquisition of a Jewish homeland.*** *We must not persuade ourselves that humanity and enlightenment alone can cure the malady of our people. The lack of national self-respect and self-confidence of political initiative and of unity, are the enemies of our national renaissance."*[i]

In the end of the 19th century in Europe, the need for the self-liberation of Jews became evident to many European Jews, a need designed by the social and political conditions of their environment, which was divided into nation states, many of which allowed formal legal status for Jews, but still discriminated against them. As the quote explicates, a Jewish nation state was perceived as necessary in order to allow Jews to fully and equally participate in the family of (European) nations. In Israel of the 1950s and 1960s, the conditions ripened for Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews to claim the same kind of self-liberation. Although there were such Sephardic claims in earlier periods as well, these two decades are of particular interest. The realization of the Jewish-European national ambition included Mizrahim and Sephardim in a formal legal way, but discriminated against them in many other ways, and in a much more brute manner than ever beforehand or afterwards. The autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations of this period were formed in a way that was much inspired by the European Zionist endeavors of self-liberation, under a notion that it was now "their turn" to get their auto-emancipation, after the Ashkenazim had fulfilled theirs. These autonomous frameworks aimed to include Mizrahim and Sephardim as equal participants in the Zionist enterprise, none of them asked to dismantle its basis. The autonomous framework was understood to be the way to re-establish the same self-respect and self-confidence Pinsker wrote about among Mizrahim and Sephardim, after the degradation of their humanity within the newly established state. Throughout the research, we will see how some Sephardic and Mizrahi political activists grasped this period to be the appropriate time for their communities to adhere to some form of unity, in order to gain political power, and take a significant role in designing the face of the modern Jewish nation. Those who propagated for autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations understood that the real emancipation of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewries in Israel required something much beyond an equal legal status, and that this somewhat-obscure something could only be achieved by the unison and empowerment of these publics. For this reason, many of the autonomous organizations used the quote of the Jewish sage Hillel the Elder, which Pinsker incorporated in the title page of his essay, *"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if not now, when?"*

The research will suggest a historical review and analysis of the political discourse and practices of autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi political organizations in Israel. This is the site where I

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[i] Emphases mine. From: Pinsker, Leon (1882). *Auto-emancipation! An appeal to his people.* Retrieved from: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-auto-emancipation-quot-leon-pinsker (last accessed on 15.12.19).

understand the potential alterity of Mizrahi discourse to reside, most easily distinguished from the modern Zionist one. The analysis suggested will rely on the meanings and forms of decolonial knowledge production, and its goal is to make visible Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectual construction of oppositional theory, while observing practical projects that had the potential of setting alternatives to the Zionist colonial frameworks, and noting their limitations. The decolonial perspective directed me to highlight practices and discourses that mark emancipatory horizon and contribute to the nurturing of universal liberation, peace, equality and justice in my homeland. I focused on the construction of collective Sephardic and Mizrahi identity and on references made in relation to Palestinian Arabs and Arabs in general. To my understanding, these are the sites where the potential alternative of Mizrahi-led politics lies, versus the dead-end politics that Ashkenazi modern coloniality has led Israel to. The analysis presented in this research will attempt to keep a careful balance between two main arguments: one claiming that as part of the national group of the colonizers, the activity of Mizrahi autonomous political organization only amounted to struggles over privileges within the colonial system, and therefore only reproduced colonial power-relations, and had no alternatives to suggest to modern/colonial Zionism. On the other end, there is the argument that claims that any Mizrahi autonomous political organization, by its very existence, formed part of a history of decolonial Mizrahi resistance, because the mere ambitions to have natives of the region in positions of power potentially disrupts the Eurocentric nature of the state. The tension between these arguments had led me to inquire about the extent to which the Mizrahi autonomous political activity was able to create viable alternative to Zionism, in any practical or discursive way. The alternatives that were found are not exempt of incoherencies, inner-contradictions, and present limited horizons of emancipation, as stemming from the activists' simultaneous position as colonizers and colonized.

The research will draw an independent Mizrahi political sphere, that while functioning as a sub-sphere of the Israeli political sphere, had dynamics of its own, and was influenced by international, regional, national and local politics in ways that at times deferred from the general Israeli one. The Mizrahi political sphere included activists from all ideological tendencies, independent activists, autonomous groups and also activists that belonged to political parties of Ashkenazi hegemony. These reacted to each other and often constructed their actions and discourse as response to others in this sub-sphere. Notwithstanding, an independent Mizrahi political camp was not established within the Mizrahi political sphere, mainly due to the highly restrictive structure of political opportunities in the period of study. The research will detail the ways in which colonial power relations prevented the autonomous organizations from accumulating political power and discredited the legitimacy of the very autonomy of these organizations. The research will unfold the colonial Zionist structure of power and the ways in

which it penetrated the autonomous organizations and dismantled their attempts at constructing a Mizrahi-Sephardic political camp.

Notwithstanding, the research will show that Sephardic and Mizrahi groups and individuals opposing coloniality did develop within the Zionist settler-colonial society. These were mainly intellectual activists, who shared a sense of nativity, of coming from the Middle East and being of the region. They succeeded in challenging and opposing Zionist-colonial frameworks inasmuch as they developed discourse which rejected racist views of western superiority, and to the extent to which they asked, even hesitantly, to embrace certain aspects of the east, and integrate it into Israeli society and culture. At times of warfare, as the first half of the 1950s, this kind of political discourse was silenced entirely. In the 1960s, the structure of political opportunities for autonomous Mizrahi action was closed even further, in a way which allowed for traces of decolonial discourses to emerge, simply because their formulators could not nurture political aspirations per se. The closed structure of political opportunities allowed for safe spaces for intellectual exploration to open up without getting their epistemic base illegitimated by the colonial ruling elites. Changes in the internal regimes of the surrounding Arab countries were another important factor in strengthening the decolonial hints in the political discourse of the native intellectual activists. We will see how hints of decolonial discourse emerged within the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1960s in the Middle East, often in a way that reverberated the influence of this atmosphere in the west, and taking its legitimacy from western intellectuals. From these borderlines of western modernity, in the 1960s some Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectual activists formulated a theory of autochthons Zionism, which relied on the trope of *Sefarad* for constructing decolonial horizons for Palestine/Israel. The heritage of *Sefarad* was used as a metaphor for a reproducible space and time that can allow eastern and western civilizations to fertilize each other, merge into new forms of creativity, develop Jewish spirituality in its highest forms for both Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and include Arabs within the modern Jewish state without diluting or jeopardizing Judaism as a religion and as source of identity. The main character in this research is the figure who was most active in attempting to put this autochthonous Zionist theory into practice. Eliahu Eliachar was called by Chetrit (2004), the precursor of radicalism of the Mizrahi struggle for equality. Jacobson & Naor (2016) marked his activity and discourse as the most prominent example of the potential alternative roads that were not taken by Zionism, and Dikla Rivlin-Katz's dissertation about his original contribution is to be published shortly[i].

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[i] The doctoral dissertation "From the Ottoman to Israeli Space: the national consciousness and spatial identity of Eliyahu Eliachar", by Dikla Rivlin-Katz, has been written in parallel to this research project. Rivlin-Katz used archival and published sources to identify the influence of three factors on Sephardic local identity: spatial perceptions and connections that developed between different middle-eastern Jewish communities, Sephardic urban traditions of Jewish and non-Jewish relations and pre-modern perceptions of nationality.

None of the groups or activists in this research had ideas similar to those of the Jewish Israeli Anti-Zionist left, which asks the state of Israel to shed its Jewish identity in order to become an inclusive democracy that can foster plurality. In general, the comparison between the discourses presented here to any kind of leftist ideology should be made with much precaution, and should be mainly used in order to engage in dialogue with Eurocentric leftist movements[i]. The tag of "left" carries the risk of appropriating the decolonial critique in inappropriate manners, which replicate colonial power relations from the left, under leftist forms of coloniality (Grosfoguel 2012). The Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations had a national discourse, which asked to root the nation within the Middle East and change its Eurocentric characteristics, but as a Jewish nation. In this sense, the goal of every autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi political action in this period was to gain equal privileges in the Jewish state. Notwithstanding, the aspiration to write Jewish history in Israel/Palestine from a critical perspective has directed me to examine closely the phenomenon of autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. The close examination revealed some historical traces of Mizrahi and Sephardic decolonial, rebellious construction of knowledge, which this study emphasizes in order to contribute to a genealogy of a Mizrahi history of resistance. The assumption here is that there is a need for contemporary Israeli social movements and political activists to have more knowledge about this past. This exploration is therefore understood as contributing to decolonizing efforts in Palestine/Israel. This research project is an extremely limited expression of the search for ways for Israel to open up to the east, allowing it to envision an intertwined future with Palestine in a non-destructive fashion, and suggest a possibility of a transformation of the local relationship between east and west.

Structure of the Dissertation

The research presented here is divided into two introductory chapters and four historical chapters. Chapter 2 explores the theoretical framework of the research, and includes a literature review of previous relevant studies. Chapter 3 explicates the methodological framework, reviewing the process and limitations of research, its terminologies and periodization.

Chapter 4 conforms the historical background of the research, explaining the relevant historical developments prior to 1948, which is the point of departure of this research.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the autonomous political activity of Mizrahim and Sephardim in the 1950s and the 1960s, respectively. Each chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is a historical introduction to the decade, depicting the relevant international, regional and local political events influencing the period. This part outlines the structure of political opportunities

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[i] See for instance Shiko Behar's lecture about "The Mizrahi left from 1896 and until today" to the Israeli Communist Party, which took place in *Hagada Hasmalit,* Tel Aviv, on January 15th, 2017.

that the autonomous Mizrahi organizations faced and the political field from which they grew. The second part will review the activity and discourse of the autonomous organizations. The third and final part will constitute of a discussion, analyzing the empirical data of the organizations' activity with sociological, decolonial and anti-colonial theoretical debates.

Chapter 7 constitutes of a review, based on many secondary sources, of the Iraqi cadre in the Israeli Communist Party, over almost the entire period of research. This chapter will be divided into two: a historical review of this circle's activity and discourse, followed by a theoretical discussion on the matter.

Last but not least is the concluding chapter, which will summarize the empirical data and theoretical debates reviewed throughout the historical chapters, and highlight the contribution this research can offer for social research and Israeli activists today.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines a theoretical framework for the decolonial historical study of Mizrahi and Sephardic autonomous political organizations. It is divided into five sections that are organized in two parts. The first part is a theoretical exploration, and the second part grounds the theorization in the local context, and contains a review of the relevant literature that has prepared the ground for this inquiry. The first part commences with a short introduction to the contemporary decolonial theoretical perspective, followed by examination of some of its sources of inspiration and genealogy. Afterwards, some of the basic and most relevant decolonial terms and conceptualizations will be elicited. The next section will review ways of theorizing political activity. The development of Social Movement Theory will be explored, mainly in order to justify its irrelevance for this research. The first part will conclude by eliciting what decolonial perspectives may mean to the study of collective action.

The second part begins with a brief review of decolonial thinking in the Middle East, and then in scholarly productions of Jews. This will lead to the discussion about the question of framing Zionism as a form of colonialism. We will attend to the settler-colonial paradigm that reigns this line of research, and later address the question of the modern/colonial scales created among Jews along Jewish history. After that, we will attend to the literature review. Firstly, we will examine the different ways in which Mizrahim and Sephardim in Israel have been studied, which is in fact an examination of the development of Israeli critical sociology. We will describe its relation with critical historiography, and its engagement with Anglophone postcolonial theories. Then there will be a review of what I interpret to be decolonial theoretical endeavors to conceptualize Mizrahiness in Israel, which this research attempts to contributes to. Lastly, there will be a literature review of previous studies of Mizrahi and Sephardic political activity, marking the lacks I found in research, which called the need for this very investigation. The final section will define some theoretical tools required for approaching this empirical historical study.

PART I: GLOBAL DESIGNS

1. DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

In the past two decades or so, a group of scholars mostly of Latin American origins, have had a series of intellectual exchanges, in the form of seminars, articles, conferences etc., from which a more or less coherent system of concepts was developed and categories and theoretical focuses were constructed. Some of those have been incorporated into the academic language in Latin America (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). Some called this line of thought, "the modernity/coloniality research program" (Escobar 2007), others named it "the decolonial turn" (Restrepo & Rojas 2010, Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007). In order to appeal to the repeating claim that it is not a *"single theoretical school, but rather… a family of diverse position that share a view"* (Maldonado-Torres 2011), this theoretical proposal will be referred to as decolonial perspectives or thinking.

Decolonial perspectives have roots and have been contemplated from and between different disciplines, including philosophy, political-economy, literary critique, sociology, anthropology and international relations. Their theoretical predecessors are just as varied: debates of Latin American critical thought such as dependency theory, philosophy of liberation and Participatory Action Research; postcolonialism, Marxism, black and Chicano feminism, cultural and communication studies, African and Muslim philosophy, post-development studies, world system theory and postmodernism among others (Escobar 2007, Restrepo & Rojas 2010, Florez 2010). Following, we will elaborate on those theoretical lines that correspond with and precede contemporary decolonial thinking, and are thought to be of most relevance for this research.

Genealogy and Predecessors

Postcolonial Theory

In the 1950s and 1960s, in the height of the struggle between two empires to extend their influence over the entire world, anti-colonial writings were developed by westernized intellectuals in what got nominated then as the "third world". These intellectual activists were involved in different ways in the "third world's" wars and processes of decolonization. They were concerned with questions of cultural imperialism (e.g. Cabral 1973/1994), and wrote about the ontological consequences of the inequalities between colonizers and colonized

subjects (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). These writings pointed out the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of European civilization, and explicated the existential and psychological consequences, for both colonizer and colonized, of the oppressive colonial violence, and of the dehumanization that justified and based the colonial rule (e.g. Cesaire 1972, Fanon 1965, Memmi 1965, Du-Bois 1903/1968). These writings accompanied the Bundung conference in 1955 of African and Asian states, various national liberation struggles, and the ideologies of Negritude, Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism and Pan-Arabism (Shohat 2006, Aydin 2007, Kaiwar 2014).

Ahmad (1992) claimed that it was Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, that brought the dichotomist analysis of colonizers versus colonized into terms that Anglophone academy could endorse. By drawing on a variety of historical texts and Foucauldian post-structuralism, among other approaches, Said widened the epistemological inquiry of colonial power relations. He drew attention to questions of knowledge production of colonial authorities, and showed how it portrayed the Orient in colonial texts as a simultaneously inferior and threatening Other. *Orientalism* inaugurated a new era of academic research of colonial discourse (Williams & Chrisman 1994, Ahmad 1992). Indian and British-Indian scholars carried on this line of research, influenced by the historian Ranajit Guha, who established the Subaltern Studies Group in early 1980s. This group was inspired by the writings of the Italian scholar Antonio Gramci, and was dedicated to the analysis of historical texts about rural history and farmers' revolts, in order to create a counter-hegemonic Indian historiography. Their intention was to rescue the subaltern's perspective from historical moments of insurrection and autonomy, in order to contrast the nationalist history focused on the elites (Ludden, 2002, Chatterjee 2010). This was until the Indian feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak (1988) published a critique that pointed out the inability of such researchers, methods and sources to rescue any form of whole subaltern experience. Then the group shifted to analyzing literary texts, and changed its main inquiry to questions of colonial representations of subalterns. This poststructuralist shift gained the group recognition in North American universities, within the field of knowledge known as Postcolonial Studies (Chatterjee 2010, Kaiwar 2014).

Postcolonial theory developed as a theoretical niche in Anglophone universities, drawing on postmodern and post-structural theories, and centrally anchored in literary critique. The "post" here may stand for few things, but significantly it is post the anti-colonial era, and therefore it rejects the binaries of "third world" militancy and its maintenance of essentialist colonial terms (Williams & Chrisman 1994, Shohat 1992, Shohat & Stam 1994). Mainstream postcolonial theory tends to challenge the western-modern truth discourse by its own theoretical tools of anti-essentialist post-structuralism (Shohat & Stam 1994), asking to dismantle its entourage of binaries, as self/Other, center/periphery, metropolis/colony (McClintock 1994, Spanos 2009). Many of the postcolonial writers attempted this way to re-organize the relation between geo-

historical location and production of knowledge, criticizing domination and favoring the subaltern point of view (Mignolo 2000: 94). Not unlike the postmodernist perspective, this line of study opposes the view of modernity as a lineal process of progress, through which modernity was conceived in Europe and then spread to rest of the world, which must now advance in order to "catch up". Rather, many postcolonial writers emphasize multiple modernities in various places, insisting that colonialism is not a "mistake" of enlightened modernity, but a plain part of it for most of humanity. The political decolonial value of this academic inquiry lies then in undermining and obfuscating the colonial power relations, rather than in suggesting theories of struggle (Shenhav 2004). Homi K. Bhabha is a good example of this approach. This scholar wrote in philosophical terms about the unstable, ambiguous, ambivalent and always bi-directional and contradictory power relations that exist between colonized and the colonizer (Bhabha 1994). Through this kind of critique, postcolonial theory got to revolve much around terms of fragmented identity, hybridity, syncretism, mimicry and liminality: most usually referring to the lived experience of the colonized, and perceiving European identity as a coherent whole (Kaiwar 2014, Ahmad 1992). Some claimed this type of postmodern analyses is the only one providing accessibility to postcolonial theory in metropolitan universities, as it is essentially reassuring and safe for the colonizers (Mishra & Hodge 1994), part of a theoretical discourse controlled and formulated by the white academy itself (hooks 1994). Kaiwar (2014) claimed the *Geist* of postcolonial studies, as well as its impasse, is precisely this motion between cultural essentialism and the postmodern celebration of "fragments". Shohat & Stam (1994) locate this impasse in the relation between academy and political movements: while theory deconstructs totalizing myths, activism nourishes them. Intellectuals that are activists and academics, dismiss theoretically essentialist identities, while in practice they premise political actions on their basis. Ways out of this impasse have been pointed out, for instance by the term "strategic essentialism" attributed to Spivak (1988). "Strategic essentialism" addresses the need of nations and minorities to imagine a communal past striped of colonial domination, in order to forge collective resistance (Shohat 1992). hooks (1994) suggested this was a necessary phase, which allows for a later phase, of criticism of essentialism, to emphasize the authority of the experience of the oppressed. Therefore, the essentialist phase allows for the diversity of experiences of different social classes of oppressed ethnicities to get accounted for. It allows for hybridity and syncretism to be studies critically (Shohat 1992), examining their diverse modalities and the circumstances of their creation (Santos 2010).

The blurred lines between theory and practice become more evident when dealing with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is an Anglophone paradigm for policy making, which has been criticized for basing the representation of the political, social and cultural fields in terms of an un-politicized multi-chrome mosaic of monochrome racial, ethnic, or cultural blocs

(Shohat & Stam 1994, Brubaker et.al. 2004). According to Mishra & Hodge (1994), this policy key-word translates into practice the theoretical formations of theories of hybridity, in its uncritical adulation of pluralism. Although it may seem as contradictory to the hybridity/syncretism paradigm, both paradigms share the tendency of celebrating plurality in a way that ignores the violence that has shaped it. This makes them easy to integrate into policy and discourse that maintains contemporary colonial and imperial power relations within capitalist globalization (Kaiwar 2014). They do not, however, lend themselves easily to geopolitical critique or to transformative struggles (Shohat 1992, Fraser 1993). Postcolonial theory was criticized for having gained a prestigious and stable academic niche in price of de-radicalizing the political movements on which it was based, and thereinafter carrying depoliticizing potential, for its refusal to theorize clearly domination and its opposition (McClintock 1994, Kaiwar 2014, Shohat 1992). The postcolonial inquiry of syncretic and fluid identities, just like the multicultural policy of endowing superficial representation to different ethnicities, both *"run the risk of sanctifying the 'mission accomplished' of colonial violence"* (Shohat 1992). Anti-colonial writings have been criticized by postcolonial theorists for reproducing colonial logics, leaving them intact and also reversing them. Therefore, much of mainstream postcolonial knowledge production deals with dismantling the meanings of colonial power relations by revealing their inner contradictions. This tendency was criticized by politically committed intellectuals for undermining the very stance against colonial relations. This is a political debate, but also a theoretical one, about the limits and potential of academic production to challenge western modernity by its own tools (Charkarbarty 1992, Spivak 1988).

Race and Ethnicity Studies

A parallel and sometimes congruent line of theoretical inquiry with postcolonial theory developed in Anglophone universities, in order to conceptualize racial and ethnic identities, experiences and dynamics in metropolitan societies. This body of knowledge examines both institutional and subjective everyday constructions of race, racism, ethnicity and nationalism. For instance, Balibar & Wallerstein (1991) showed the intrinsic relation between racism and nationalism as a cycle of historical reciprocity, and noted the roots of this relation in 1492 in Spain and Latin America. Race and Ethnicity Studies focus on race as a social construction, and follow historical and contemporary racialization processes (e.g. Omi & Winant 1986, Banton 1970). To encompass the all-temporal dimensions of racialization, Bonilla-Silva (1997) suggested emphasizing the structural nature of race, as an organizing principle of social life within racial social systems. However, such structuralist approaches are easily refuted and negated by social actors themselves. Abstract liberalism, the belief in individual choice and

equal opportunities, is the dominant cognitive framework in the west, and it is the foundation of the naturalization of the racial system. Abstract liberalism produces white colorblindness that is recruited for preserving racial hierarchies (Segrest 2001, Rasmussen 2001), within a racialized social system that maintains *"racism without racists"* (Bonilla-Silva 2006). In order to resolve the discrepancy between sociological analysis and actors' own interpretation of social life, some researchers focused on everyday practices and discourses that create and maintain ethnic boundaries (Wimmer 2008, 2009, Lamont & Molnar 2002). Empirical research within this perspective dealt with everyday interactions or with institutional, political and historical practices of power (Brubaker et.al. 2004). Some authors raised questions related to the elusive nature of ethnic identities, usually among social minorities. These asked to dismantle the understanding of ethnicity as related to ontological "groups", and pointed out cognitive processes behind the creation of ethnic terminology. Banton (2011) suggested using categories, Brubaker (2004) suggested viewing ethnicity as an epistemology, a perspective on the world. The empirical study within this cognitive approach inquires how, when, and why do people interpret social experience in racial, ethnic, or national terms (Brubaker et.al. 2004). Feminists of color integrated these debates more profoundly with class, gender and other oppressions, by suggesting intersectional analysis of experiences, representations and identities (Crenshaw 1991). If relating to this line of this research separately from its feminist branches, however, it can be noted that it lacks epistemological commitment to social transformation, and therefore is liberated from critiques of its failure to undermine colonial or racial power relations. Race and Ethnicity Studies and postcolonial theory form part of the point of departure of the decolonial perspectives, but it has had different trajectories, emphases and questionings (Restrepo & Rojas 2010).

Latin American Critical Thought

According to Bialakowsky & Gentilli (2012), one of the fundaments of Latin American critical thought is dependency theory, that showed how *"international and internal structure… leads [Latin American countries] to underdevelopment, or more precisely, to a dependent structure that deepens and aggravates the fundamental problems of their people"* (Dos Santos 1970). This paradigm, along with African underdevelopment theory, raised criticism about multinational corporations, capitalist countries and global multilateral organizations, examining how they generate wealth for the "first world" and poverty for the "third world" (Shohat & Stam 1994). From this base further critique developed in post-development theory (Escobar 1995). The narrative about the modern world system that Wallerstein (2004) elaborated, tracks down its origin to the Spanish and Portuguese Conquest of Latin America.

These initiated the establishment of institutions, power relations and ways of thinking that ended up legitimating a Eurocentric domination over the world (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). Through these lenses, capitalism can cease to be seen as born in Europe and later expanding to the rest of the world, as part of a linear exponential narrative of the history of modernity. Rather, modernity is understood as a result of a specific interactions which have involved the entire world from their very inception, in form of global accumulation of capital and an unequal international division of labor (Florez 2010, Restrepo & Rojas 2010, Grosfoguel 2011).

Latin American social movements conform part of the non-academic genealogy of decolonial thinking (Mignolo 2007). Decolonization, after all, is not an abstract theory, but has been the axis of struggle of indigenous peoples everywhere, including in the Americas, ever since the first *conquistas* (Walsh 2008, Maldonado-Torres 2011, Resrtepo 2007). In the 1980s, when the USA supported the installment of dictatorships in Latin America, the philosophy of liberation was developed from the theology of liberation, and got to form a constitutive part and fundamental pillar of Latin American critical praxis[i]. The philosophy of liberation recognizes an epistemic and political privilege of the oppressed, and defines the struggle to liberation as much against the oppressor as it is against the fear of the oppressed from liberation, which is the result of dominating structures: liberation, then, is of both (Dussel 2003). This philosophy can be seen as a project of cultural liberation (Dussel 2005), which requires self-reflexivity in order to avoid inverting relations of domination (Restrepo & Rojas 2010).

Since early 2000s, indigenous movements have been gaining more public and academic visibility in Latin America, as leftist and center-left governments were established in many countries, and Ecuador and Bolivia formulated new constitutions, which incorporate indigenous values and terminology. From the Zapatistas' theoretical revolution (Mignolo 2000: 149) to other movements from *"the base and periphery of society"* (Fals-Borda 1992) all around the region, innovative projects rise, as well as self-reflexive manners to express them throughout state, regional and global networks. These serve as a source of inspiration to activists worldwide[ii] (Hoetmer 2009), and became an important referent for academics studying collective action (Martinez et.al. 2012). These movements and organizations stand against militaristic, authoritarian and monopolistic statehood, foreign intervention, and social and economic development in its current configuration, as conducted by the rich countries and through local oligarchies. These social movements do not only organize protest, but also practice alternative ways to organize, develop, educate, do democracy and treat the

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[i] For example, it is considered related to Popular Education, a pedagogical attitude and set of institutions attributed to Paulo Freire, as directed to lower classes and based on dialogue and exchange between the educator and students.

[ii] The Brazilian based Via Campesina has its networks in Palestine, and the Zapatistas' struggle has also had certain resonance in Israel and Palestine. For example, see: Faris Giacaman, "The Sadness of Post-Militance: Some Reflections on Brown University's 'New Directions in Palestine Studies' Conference", 6.4.14. Retrieved from: https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30491 (last accessed 29.4.20).

environment. This way, they achieve breaking sectarianism and unite different leftist fractions (Fals-Borda 1992), based on specific paradigms as feminism, Marxism and anti-racism (Chinchilla 1992). In fact, the respect to differences and recognition of diversity is the key point of departure of many movements, practicing "identity-politics" combined with a substantial tolerance to other identities (Hoetmer 2009). The inner space of the movements becomes an arena of struggle between different actors over the construction of alternative institutions, practices, concepts, imageries, and political projects of education, means of communication and economic organization (Alvarez 2009). These projects are seen as having a deep potential to develop alternatives to today's modern problems, since the movements do not emerge primarily from the urban educated middle-class, but rely on a synthesis of modern emancipatory values with indigenous cosmologies and rural liberation struggles. The political culture constructed through these movements are of particular interest for the academic world, because of new theoretical, conceptual and analytical frameworks that are emerging and being used, not only *about* but also *from* the movements, and often through innovative forms of exchange between the academy and movements (Walsh 2001, Martinez et.al. 2012). By emphasizing and elaborating on notions like horizontality, emancipation, interculturalism and autonomy, contextual and specific knowledge is produced, interpreted and re-interpreted to the benefit of weaker populations (Walsh 2001).

It is within this context, and out of this atmosphere of exchange of theory and action, that contemporary academic decolonial perspective has developed. It is part of intellectual endeavors that have existed since the very inception of modern forms of colonization (Maldonado-Torres 2011), and yet a result of specific exchanges of the last decades. These exchanges take place after decades of remapping of the political and cultural possibilities available for resistance, when *"substantives such as revolution and liberation transmuted into adjectival opposition- counter hegemonic, subversive and adversarial"*. The macro-narrative of revolution of the middle of the 20th century has shifted into decentered multiplicity of localized struggles (Shohat & Stam 1994: 338-342). Intellectual debates in Latin America, Africa and the Arab world have been replacing reactive identity affirmation in humanistic, moral and political critique of cultural colonization. Essentialist debates about identity and ideology shift to critical thinking about democracy and agency (Kassab 2009). Feminist writings, especially of color, substantiated the relation between such debates and academic theoretical production. The decolonial perspective developed from this kind of relationship. By drawing on Latin American economic critique of imperialist capitalism and on Anglophone structural and cultural critiques of colonialist subjugation (Castro-Goméz & Grosfoguel 2007), it dismantles the theoretical, economy versus culture dilemma[i] (e.g. Fraser 1993, 1998).

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[i] I thank Prof. Yehouda Shenhav for highlighting this point to me.

Decolonial Questionings and Concepts

Modernity

The major challenge in conceptualizing modernity from a decolonial perspective are its inherent contradictions and ambivalence, centrally, the way it had set the conditions of oppression as well as the horizons for liberation (Quijano 2000). Modernity bears liberating concepts like development, democracy and human rights, but these have been used also to reproduce and severe patterns of domination. These concepts then are as indispensable as they are inappropriate in order to imagine emancipatory horizons (Santos 2011). A key image of decolonial thinking regarding modernity is seeing it as co-constitutive with coloniality as its "dark side", another side of the same coin, which does not deny the existence of the lit side (Quijano 2000, Luther 1964).

Some decolonial efforts have been dedicated to rewriting the history of modernity, relying on systemic analyses of world history. These narratives ask to refute the narrative of the isolated development of modernity in Europe, by showing how colonialism has historically shaped modern philosophy, politics and culture (e.g. Shohat & Stam 1994), and by stressing horizontal and vertical links between communities and histories that lay in a conflictual network (Shohat 2002). The fact these historical narratives can be contested, as any other, is not as relevant to their inquiry, as their oppositional stance to the Eurocentric narrative: this way of relating to history is aimed at giving a point of reference and a positive macro-narrative for the victims of modernity (Dussel 2007). The Eurocentric narrative of modernity, of a rational emancipation process conceived in Europe for the rest of the world, is seen as a myth, a local history whose real power, beyond its technological advancements, is the unprecedented ability to impose its cultural, political, economic and ontological particularities as a model for the entire planet, consisting as the center of global designs of other local histories (Mignolo 2000). This ability was achieved through domination, violence, often military, and exploitation (Dussel 2005). This violence must be present in any analysis of modernity, in order to refute the Eurocentric myth of modernity, which obscures the irrationality and violence through which modernity is constituted, and justifies European domination over all its Others (Restrepo & Rojas 2010).

The way Eurocentric modernity has monopoly over academic theory and canon has motivated different writers to defy this limit, among them Dussel when he developed Transmodernity: a project of south-south theoretical and political exchanges (Mignolo, 2000: 201-214, Dussel 2005), which he vigorously exemplified in his career and writings (e.g. Dussel 2008). The first phase in the project of Transmodernity is gaining appreciation and recognition for the autochthonous culture that has been denied legitimacy, and was inferiorized and silenced by Eurocentric modernity. The second phase includes inner criticism by the hermeneutic

possibilities of that same culture. This should be carried out by critics that come from its borders, with bicultural and bilingual backgrounds. Afterwards, there is a process of resistance, maturity, and accumulation of strength, in order to advance dialogue that criticizes modernity from the plurality of its periphery: a pluriversal inter-cultural critical dialogue composed out of many universalities (Islamic, Taoist, European, Latin American etc.) (Dussel 2005). The challenge here is reinventing emancipation without a totalizing theory, but within oppositional postmodernism. Oppositional postmodernism shares the Eurocentric, "celebratoty", postmodern critique about essentialism, universalism and meta-narratives, as well as its emphasis on heterogeneity and plurality. However, oppositional postmodernity centers on collective projects (Santos 2010), and aims to learn from the south, which is understood as a metaphor of human suffering caused by capitalism/colonialism in a variety of places. It is a project based on the attempt to think liberation and self not through liberalism (Mignolo 2003).

Coloniality

The term coloniality represents an advancement from postcolonial theory, because it helps distinguish between historical political-administrative colonialism and colonial structures of power that are still in vigor nowadays, under new economic and inter-subjective relations (Quijano 1995). Quijano wrote about the coloniality of power: *"a global hegemonic model of power in place since the Conquest that articulates race and labor, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of white European peoples"* (Quijano 2000). This term integrates multiple hierarchies, or heterarchies: of class, age and gender, sexual, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, epistemological, aesthetic, pedagogical, ecological and spatial hierarchies that in an interrelated manner compose the coloniality of power, but have race and racism as an organizing principle (Grosfoguel 2011). Capitalism is understood this way as historical structural processes that construct a global ethnic-racial hierarchy and division of labor. Superstructure and structure go together, as do culture or economy. The coloniality of power is a matrix of power, with an institutional structure (like nation states) and both spatial and epistemological implications (Mignolo 2000: 17). It is related to the naturalization of Eurocentrism as a global common sense, which divides the world into west and the rest, implicitly and constantly flattering Europe in the way of defining of nations versus tribes, religion and culture versus superstitions and folklore, arts versus artifacts, demonstrations versus riots and defense versus terrorism (Shohat & Stam 1994). From the coloniality of power derives the coloniality of being, which relates to the lived experience of those who have been dehumanized, and also of those who have been generated as superior, or as a model of humanity. The coloniality of being is part of the mechanisms that grant a status of universal

norm to rational-instrumental thinking (Walsh 2008, Maldonado-Torres 2007). The coloniality of knowledge also derives from these mechanisms, and forms part of the coloniality of power. The coloniality of knowledge refers to the different mechanisms of inferiorization of knowledge and their implications. This term asks to emphasize autonomous theoretical productions of knowledge that do not draw their validity from scientific standards (Santos 2007). It is useful to address knowledge that has been silenced, ignored, excluded, and omitted throughout capitalistic hegemonic globalization (Grosfoguel 2011), disqualified as non-conceptual, insufficiently elaborated, naïve, inferior; below required erudition or scientific standards (Foucault 2003). It draws attention to knowledge that is deemed particular, intuitive, understood as beliefs and opinions: knowledge that is not considered knowledge, but subjective understanding. The coloniality of knowledge is most evident in the various development recipes subscribed by the west to "cure" the "illnesses" of formerly colonized societies (Escobar 1992).

Coloniality, therefore, can be seen analytically through these three dimensions: political (of power), epistemological (of knowledge) and ontological (of being) (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). In any such analytical axis, the meaning of coloniality remains, as a reminder of the violence inherent in modernity. This violence has been conceptualized as epistemic violence by Spivak[i], as epistemicide by Grosfoguel, and as genocidal logics of conquest of the ego-conquiro by Dussel. The violence inherent in coloniality is essential to include within intellectual endeavors to democratize and reconstruct modernity (Quijano 1995). The inventory of traces[ii] that colonial violence has left on its victims, the existential realities of pain, anger and resentment it has shaped (Shohat & Stam 1994), are compacted within the term, the colonial wound. The colonial wound is closely related to the colonial difference: the irreducible epistemic difference between cultures, often obscured as simple "cultural differences" when the colonial wound is not being attended to. The colonial difference is a product of the coloniality of power, of being and of knowledge (Maldonado-Torres 2007). It is confirmed by the recognition of groups of people by their lacks or excesses in relation to the classifier (Mignolo 2003). These classifications and the pain they have produced created a particular locus of enunciation, a geo-political and body-political location from which subjects speak (Grosfoguel 2011). The colonial difference is an epistemic site, which consists of the vital experiences of those who have been inferiorized (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). This does not refer to a social, "objective" location on the oppressed side, but to an epistemic location of opposition of those excluded from the creation of the modern/colonial world system, who may mark alternatives to hegemonic forms of knowledge (Mignolo 2000, Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007). For these alternative knowledges to realize, translations and exchange of knowledge are deemed indispensable, especially between

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[i] This term of Foucault was used by Spivak (1988) to describe the production of the colonial subject as Other, whose knowledge is made subaltern, perceived as naïve, underdeveloped and not ready for the task of self-government.
[ii] Antonio Gramsci's term, quotes in Ahmad (1992).

various subaltern knowledges. Thinking through the colonial difference means thinking through non-Eurocentric epistemologies, and that is where alternative categories and politics may emerge (Walsh 2005).

Decoloniality

The question of alternatives raises the question of the possibility of exteriority and alterity to modernity. Since the entire world is infiltrated by western modernity, exteriority to modernity cannot be understood as ontological or absolute, but as the position of marginality in its structures of power (Restrepo & Rojas 2010). The exteriority to modernity is reflected in a historical location on the margins of the modern world system, which therefore allows access to non-modern knowledges, which have been deemed inferior by Eurocentric rationality. This kind of thinking is opaque from the western point of view and the scales it has created, and has the right not to be known entirely, nor to be pretended or desired to (Maldonado-Torres 2011). The Mind in modern epistemology has been appropriated and universalized by the very concept of Reason. Notwithstanding, thinking remains universal and local at the same time, responding to local and material needs. Alternative epistemologies might be seen as replacing the hegemonic imagination that has the head as the center of the body (Mignolo 2000: 81). This leads to an aspiration to change not only the content of production of knowledge, as perhaps anthropologists have been doing all along, but to transform the very terms of the conversation, challenge the very way universities and schools give preference to western-scientific thought. From here rises the need of the decolonial writers to establish new categories and concepts (Mignolo 2000).

Like the postcolonial theoreticians, many writers quoted above are "third world" intellectuals producing knowledge in colonial languages and often from western universities. This geo-cultural position is understood as privileged in order to develop an Other epistemology, that goes beyond inner-modern critiques of modernity, like postmodernism and Marxism, which have been inspired by the social and economic conditions of the center of the modern world system. The Moroccan scholar Abdulkbir Khatibi wrote about the 'double criticism' that can develop from this position, a critique of one's own culture along with critique of modernity from its margins (Mignolo 2000). The feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2016) dedicated much writing to describing these geo-cultural borderlands, as epistemological spaces where different cultural frames of reference clash and collide. People who live the borderlands have the potential of opening more inclusive perspectives, and grow tolerance to contradictions and ambiguity. From the borderlines border-thinking may develop, as an epistemology that redefines the emancipatory rhetoric of modernity from the cosmologies of the subaltern, from

the colonial difference and the pain and anger entailed in it. Border-thinking utilizes dichotomies, but not in order to organize the world by them (Mignolo 2000), but in order to visualize projects that transcend them, that subsume and redefine concepts of citizenship, democracy, human rights, humanity and economic relations (Grosfoguel 2008).

As Salbodsky (2014) mentioned, the notion of border-thinking that is attributed to "third-world" intellectuals corresponds with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of a "third space", as these intellectuals' place of enunciation. According to Bhabha (1994: 36-39), the third space holds the mutual effects of all cultures, and the hybridity of any historical identity. For Bhabha, the concept of a third space of enunciation carries the potential to transform the meanings of western colonial heritage into liberatory significations, by disposing of restrictive notions of culture which people use to construct visions of political change. This is a good point of comparison of the postmodern stream of postcolonial theory with the decolonial proposal. In contrast to Bhabha's ideas of what constitutes of liberation, a decolonial perspective might claim that essentialist notions of culture might be restrictive in some senses, but they are crucial for the strategic struggles for liberation of the oppressed, just as crucial as critique of Eurocentric power structures (Shohat & Stam 1994). Border-thinking is not about combatting dichotomous arguments for the sake of theoretically dismantling western hegemonic constructions, but it uses these dichotomies in order to explore alternative knowledge negated by western discourses (Slabodsky 2014), and create cultural maps out of diverse knowledges (Naylor 2006). Thinking through the colonial difference can mean thinking through non-Eurocentric epistemologies, which makes possible the construction of alternative categories and politics[i].

Mignolo (2000) viewed border-thinking, coloniality and Transmodernity as complementary terms. The three define the limits of inner-modern critique of modernity, whose claims for universality establish leftist forms of coloniality (Grosfoguel 2012), as long as they do not engage in a critical dialogue with critiques arising from the colonial difference (Escobar 2007). This critical dialogue can lead to what Shohat & Stam (1994) called, polycentric multiculturalism, a parallel term to De Sousa Santos' ecology of knowledges. The ecology of knowledges is the practical expression of border epistemologies in inter-cultural struggles. Its point of departure is the principles of differentiation and relationality, in order to construct equal though diverse epistemologies in the world. The ecology of knowledges is a practical term, a way to bridge between different categories that groups of different backgrounds bring into a collective action. It means to identify common concerns, and inherent lacks in different knowledges, and therefore search for complementary focuses or recognize contradictions. The ecology of knowledge does not search for harmony, but for a self-aware reflexive dialogue within and between cultures (Santos 2007). The idea is of reciprocal relativization of diverse

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[i] Walsh in Restrepo & Rojas (2010).

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cultures, which when placed in play, each could come to perceive the limitations of their social and cultural perspectives. It is a matter of seeing other perspectives, see how your own is seen, recognize and acknowledge it, take it under account, and come prepared to get transformed by this exchange (Shohat & Stam 1994). The ecology of knowledges can permit choosing a strategy for collective action based on the knowledges most suited to pursue a certain goal, rather than privileging certain knowledge for its position in the power relations between the groups. This shifts the focus on collective action into a theory of inter-cultural translation. Within his endeavors to build such a theory, De Sousa Santos points out that incommensurability or reciprocal unintelligibility, as long as they do not impede communication, can lead to unsuspected forms of complementarity, that *"identify common concerns, complementary approaches and, of course, also intractable contradictions"* (Santos 2007).

2. THEORIZING POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Academic (Eurocentric) sociological research recognizes a series of theories as Social Movement Theory (hereinafter SMT), which has been the basis for much research in the west about specific kinds of self-organized collective political action. The SMT framing might define "social movements" as *"a result of collective action, carried out by the sum of formal and informal interactions that are established through a plurality of individuals, collectives and organized groups that share to some extent a feeling of belonging or collective identity, and the structures of interaction they establish with other political and social agents with which they enter into conflict, through appropriation, participation or transformation of the power relations or the social goals that need to be reached; all this through the mobilization of certain sectors of society"* (Tejerina 2010: 19). McAdam, Tarro & Tilly (2001) noted that SMT has worked best for analyzing a single unified actor in democratic states, in a particular contentious moment. It does not work well for analyzing dynamic and interactive sequences of contention, and provides weak guidelines for explaining actions, actors, identities, trajectories or outcomes. That is, it does not fit all kinds of collective action, and is not precisely made for developing a historical view of those. Moreover, most SMT literature implicitly or explicitly focuses on different aspects of the effectiveness of the mobilization, even when incorporating more cultural, constructivist and symbolic questions (e.g. Smith et.al. 1997, Benford & Snow 2000, Morris & Mueller 1992). Therefore, this theory does not usually provide proper tools for analyzing initiatives that failed or have remained largely marginal. From the different points of

view that search to conceptualize the effectiveness of the movements' practices and discourses, the organizations in this research would be irrelevant, since they never gained power position, became popular, nor achieved their goals. However, and since collective political action is a natural site for decolonial inquiry, SMT in its entirety cannot get discard. For the study of the political organizations of this research, some dialogue will be created between SMT concepts and framings and decolonial concepts and framings, following other researchers such as Escobar (2004), Florez (2007) and Aguilar (2015). Following, there is a short introduction to the historical development of SMT, highlighting some concepts and questionings that will be used throughout this research. Afterwards, some concepts for framing collective action from a decolonial perspective will be suggested, as elaborated also from dialogues established between the decolonial perspectives and SMT, and, perhaps more importantly, between academics and social movements. The final part of this chapter will address specifically the terms that will be used from these theoretical framings in the historical inquiry of Sephardic and Mizrahi political organizations.

Social Movement Theory

According to Ibarra (2000), the study of social movements in North America during the 1950s and 1960s, under the reign of functional-structuralism sociological research, generally saw social movements as a reaction to a structural break or tension, not approachable through norms of social control. Social movements were seen as a basically irrational mass-collective construction, in whose analysis psycho-social elements were prominent. This view was contested by more instrumentalist thought in the 1970s and 1980s, when social movements was defined rather as rational and reflexive collective behavior. Resource Mobilization Theory was fomulated in order to address the ways movements mobilize human, organizational, material and other kinds of resources in order to realize rational strategies, arguably seeking to predict by this inquiry the cycle of life of collective action. Incorporating the state into the analysis developed the theory of Political Structure of Opportunities, which focused on the way movements model and adjust their resources and strategies of mobilization and discourse according to their particular political context. The rise of human rights, pacifist, ecological, gay and solidarity movements, as well as continuation of feminist and indigenous ones, inspired another line of research in the 1980s, named New Social Movements. It can be noted that the adjective "new" may actually adhere more to the theory rather to than the movements themselves. Within this line of research, the mentioned movements were perceived by contrast to Labor movements, organizing mainly in turn of issues of identity rather than of work and class. This tendency is often referred to as "identity-politics": groups that claim

acknowledgment for the singularity of their identity and attempt to define rights that derive from it. This type of movements drew theorists' attention to the discursive construction of collective action and identity, and to the production of ideas and meanings. Movements were seen hence as an alternative collective cultural-political everyday behavior, producers of "politics of signification" (Benford & Snow 2000). Ibarra affirms that by the end of the 1980s, two main schools of thought were consolidated, instrumentalists who focus on the question of *how* movements organize, versus culturalists whose question was *why* they get organized. The importance of both points of view was recognized and towards the 1990s an analytical model was consolidated, which recognized the importance of the different points of view and wished to encompass as many variables as possible in order to examine movements, mainly through five guidelines: strategic framing processes, activists' identities, mobilization structures, resource mobilization, structure of political opportunities, and repertoire of contention (McCarthy 1997). Ibarra (2000) notes that in practice, the different focuses were not easy to integrate into one research, and this led to mostly partial analysis of specific movements in the paved path of SMT in its variants (Eyerman & Jamison 1991).

During the 1990s new challenges faced societies all around the world. These years saw the further consolidation of global neoliberal capitalism by multilateral institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. According to Hoetmer (2009), the reforms and laws that were established in this decade transferred the state's economic power to transnational companies and financial institutions, while keeping the state responsible for managing the population. Democracy was hence separated from the market, and global, economic-based citizenship was created. Global economy and global organization of violence also became interrelated this way (Escobar 2004). Some authors think that these processes changed profoundly the social practices of movements (Florez 2007, Martinez et.al. 2012, Hoetmer 2009, 2009a, Bringel & Cairo 2010). These authors noted that organizations are increasingly developing horizontal and solidarity-based organizational structures, performing with their practices a more integral criticism of relations of power and domination in society. Some claimed these movements act as laboratories in the alternative construction of social practices and relationships (Martinez et.al. 2012). Some authors suggested this shift might require new theories and epistemologies of collective action (Bringel & Echart 2010), which go beyond questions of institutions, identities, frames or cycles (Toal 2010).

Until now, the historical development of SMT has been described as closely related to changing political contexts and the contemporaneous activity of social movements in the west. However, the strength of any theory lies in its potential to be relevant beyond its particular moment of production and the particular context in which it is anchored. SMT has been largely developed in the framework of western societies (McCarthy 1997, Wiseidman 2000), and therefore,

unsurprisingly, has kept the Eurocentric view of modernity depicted in the previous section[i]. Florez claimed that SMT have suppressed, in both a theoretical and epistemological sense, the potential of peripheral struggles to criticize modernity. It is not that that researchers from the global periphery did not participate in the production of this theory. The problem is that the concepts and terms of debate remained intact, despite of their participation (Florez 2007). In order to allow a decolonial view over the organized political activity of this research, it is necessary to expand the horizons and terminology that can be used to address it. This can be done by entering into dialogue with the Eurocentric terms, but much more importantly, with contemporary movements themselves.

Decolonial Perspectives in the Study of Collective Action

Melucci (1995) claimed social movements address the cultural foundations of society, because they challenge dominant models through the production of alternative cultural models, creating new representations, new ways to imagine, define and understand reality. Eyerman & Jamison (1991) agreed on this point, but thought the movements were not only challenging existing models, but also constructing new perspectives and ideas, that are in fact innovative knowledge. Activism itself can be seen as a form of theorizing, a practical testing of ideas (Shohat 2002), what Eyerman & Jamison (1991) called "cognitive praxis". The production of knowledge that occurs through organized collective action expands symbolic universes, constructs new concepts of human dignity, and this way contributes to socio-historical projects of change (Santos 2010). Therefore, when studying collective action from a decolonial perspective we could try to apply De Sousa Santos' notion of "hermeneutics of emergence". That means, *"making more visible and credible the diverse forms of organizations, movements and communities that resist capitalist hegemony, and recognize economic alternatives that are founded in non-capitalistic logics (equality, solidarity, protection of nature) …even if they're simultaneous with capitalist logics and contradictory…when they address the complexity of problems that are being confronted"[ii]*.

Using the hermeneutics of emergence in the study of collective action, would direct research to study the way in which collective political action enacts practices of social, economic and cultural-political difference, which can be thought of as alternatives to modernity (Escobar 2004). This shifts the attention of research to the way collective actions and political actors re-

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[i] For example, New Social Movements were generally perceived as responding to modern globalization, challenging and complicating the enlightened modernity narrative. Indigenous Latin American movements, who often struggle for material basic needs, were frequently not included in this theoretical structure, because they were seen as movements that arise from traditional societies, which struggle for achieving European modernity itself and therefore not (yet) in a position to be criticizing it (Escobar 1992, Florez 2010). This way, Social Movement Theory has often preserved colonial hierarchical dichotomies of center/periphery and modern/traditional (Florez 2007).
[ii] De Sousa Santos quoted in Florez (2010).

conceptualize and re-establish diverse, egalitarian relations, logics, practices and ways to live, behave and think (Walsh 2008). Decolonial study of collective actions may shift our attention to the way local, state and global power relations are interrelated. For instance, viewing the ways in which movements expand, or change profoundly the frameworks that gives meaning to reality (e.g. the nation state), or the ways in which movements destabilize the hierarchies produced by modernity (e.g. between west and east) (Florez 2007).

Auto-emancipation

Using the hermeneutics of emergence to study collective action perhaps inevitably directs researchers to coin terms and theorize concepts as they rise from dialogues between academics and social movements or political organizations. For instance, some studies asked about the possibilities and tendencies that strengthen notions like emancipation, autonomy and interculturalism in the movements' practices.

The notion of *autonomy* directs research to emphasize movements as forms of self-organization (Escobar 2008). Autonomy points to the ability to live according to rules that are collectively defined for and by the people that are affected by them. The autonomy of a political organization gives it the capacity and disposition to take responsibility over its own entire system of institutions, practices and discourses[i]. Self-governed politics are achieved through multiple agreements, and imply negotiation and management of differences. The autonomy of a political movement is threatened by opportunities to become too institutionalized, and thus lose its subversive edge, by entering a game where the powerful sustains the power. This is in contrast to another danger, of conserving autonomy to the point of remaining marginal and losing any potential to influence society (Adamovsky 2009, Chetrit 2004).

The notion of *emancipation* is attributed to any action that asks to denaturalize oppression, conceiving it not only unjust but also an unnecessary and reversible product of human actions (Santos 2008). Martinez et.al. (2012) defined an emancipatory process as transformation of personal and collective practices and relations of discrimination, which subordinate people in everyday life, in sexist, racial, classist, linguistic and other manners. Emancipation is then a never ending process that strives to structural change in the relations of power.

Another such terms which movements and academics can exchange is *interculturalism*, which puts more direct emphasis on the question of diversity. As developed by the Ecuadorian indigenous movement and elaborated by Catherine Walsh, interculturalism does not refers to a principal of communication between cultures, but to a political, social, epistemological and historical project for respect to the diversity of different ethnic, social and economic groups.

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[i] I thank Sara Eugenia for helping me define autonomy.

Rather than working towards inclusion, interculturalism aims to change the monoculture hegemonic character of the state's institutions, structures and relations. The ambition is to transform both hegemonic and subaltern cultures, through relations and negotiations where each particularity can contribute from its different world view and understanding (Walsh 2007, 2008).

Interculturalism can be seen as the goal of actions that are based on the ecology of knowledges. However, for this ecology to occur there is need of intercultural translations. The exercise of translation aims to identify and potentiate what is common in the diversity of the counter-hegemonic drive (Santos 2008). It requires trans-cultural dialogues which relay on mutual interpretation of cultural *topos*. This collective, interactive and inter-subjective process of production of knowledge may incubate self-reflexive consciousness about the incompleteness of every culture. However, in the study of collective action, it is important to recognize the tensions, disagreements and power relations at play. These mark the limits of the solidarity, loyalty and friendships collective actions can generate (Santos 2006, 2007, 2010).

If we review struggles for basic needs, such as health, employment, food, education and land, through the lenses of emancipation, interculturalism and autonomy, we might often find that they do not necessarily imply adopting western models of modernity, democracy and development. In fact, taking a decolonial perspective about such struggles would explicitly demystify this misconception by addressing the colonial wound. Nonetheless, it must find a fine balance between the colonial wound and excessive victimization, which removes the agency of the oppressed from the course of history (Florez 2010). The victimizing discourse runs the risk of maintaining a Eurocentric view, by focusing on the west as responsible for all the evil in the world (Shohat & Stam 1994). A way to attend to the careful balance required, might ask to trace the genealogy of the certain collective actions to pre-Enlightenment revolutions and uprisings. Recognizing the transformative value of past mobilizations or organizational cultures in the trajectory of local histories, may help elicit more clearly an autochthonous narrative of emancipation, which does not depend on interpretations of liberalism or Marxism, and can open research to more diverse themes (Florez 2010). In order to distinguish between this way of giving importance to local traditions and what Grosfoguel (2010) called, "third world fundamentalism", we can use the concepts of emancipation and interculturalism. These make the distinction between movements that employ self-aggrandization that is in fact turned against others (Memmi 1965), and the kind that has a need to co-exist with the diversity of others.

In sum, taking a decolonial perspective over collective action, in social movements and political organizations, shifts the attention away from the empirical focus on repertoire of protest, and away from the underlining questions of either how or why do movements organize or produce

meaning. Rather, it makes the underlining question of research, the very motivation to investigate, to see what decolonial lessons the collective action examined can entail, by searching for hints of behaviors, relations, practices and discourses that can overcome colonial power relations in a local setting. Using decolonial spectacles shifts the focus of research to questions about the way movements enact concepts of emancipation and autonomy, portray their geo-historical trajectory and location, challenge multi-scaled power relations, and perform translation between cultures and struggles. This is the point of departure of this research, which views political organization as potential agents of cultural, political and social change, and thus aims to concentrate on the possibilities of decolonial transformation they can propose, while addressing the inner contradictions and partiality of their practices and discourses.

PART II: LOCAL HISTORIES

1. DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL

The articulation of decoloniality explored in the previous part has been developed largely in Latin America, and in light of political projects there, which combine Marxism or socialism with indigenous cosmologies. The internationally remarkable projects of this kind are the autonomy created by the Zapatistas in Mexico, the institutions developed by the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* in Brazil, and Bolivian and Ecuadorian constitutions acknowledging indigenous notions of nature. Since parallel political projects are hardly as visible in our area of concern[i], we must review then at large some geopolitical differences between these intellectual developments and the ones allowed by the historical trajectories and contemporary positions of the Middle East, as encompassing Western Asia and North Africa. Since these geographical regions experienced other processes with western modernity/coloniality, decolonial voices have also taken different shapes and sounds.

Decolonial Perspectives in the Middle East

Critical thought about modernity/coloniality in the Middle East has developed in light of the centuries in which the Islamic empire was a leading civilizational force, competing and exchanging with other Asian civilizations. The imperial succession from east to west in the 15th century (Santos 2006) did not entail the loss of eastern knowledge: it was written and it remained intact, and was not destroyed by western coloniality as in Africa and the Americas. For this reason, it is the geographic region that maintains nowadays epistemological and political rivalry with the west. Therefore, unlike the stigmatization of primitive and inferior south, the east received the honor of being the Other to the west (Quijano 2000). Whereas the south was perceived by the western empire as part of nature, to be controlled by civilization, the east-west axis entails much more conflict. Because the east has been delimitated as a threatening civilization by western epistemology, it has to be controlled because it is feared (Santos 2006). The closer geographically it is to the west, the more acute is the threat, and the bigger is the need for control.

Throughout the centuries of first modernity, as Europe was gaining power and richness through genocide-epistemicide and enslavement, the Ottoman Empire was in constant contact with

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[i] The exception is the Kurdish autonomy achieved in Rojava and the remarkable decolonial horizons it marks for the entire Middle East. I choose not to refer to it within this theoretical review because it is quite a recent development over which we still lack historical perspective.

Europe entities, within diverse systems of encounters, exchanges, cooperation and conflicts. According to Aydin (2007), in these years the Ottomans selectively adopted some modern European ideas, techniques and methods and dismissed others. A qualitative shift occurred after the industrial revolution and the rise of nationalism. In Asian second-modernity, Europe became conceived as a civilizational unit worthy of emulation, a constant reference for ideas and reforms for Asian politicians and intellectuals. The white "civilizing mission" was at first reclaimed in order to get included equally in a universal civilizational order. The falsity of emancipation entailed in European modernity was soon unveiled, and Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian ideologies grew, opposing the "civilizing mission", and trying to accumulate moral, political, cultural and economic power. These were anti-western ideologies, that nonetheless demanded to fulfill the narrative of Enlightenment and to universalize modernity, make it their own, in order to participate equally in a new civilizational order (Worringer 2007, Hopwood 2000), viewing western modernity as inevitably universal (Aydin 2007).

According to Aydin (2004), from the beginning of the century and until today, much of the progressive and humanist content of Islamist critiques has not entered a mutually critical dialogue with other emancipatory struggles, but rather rebounded into political justification of nativist agendas. These agendas have often translated politically to rivalry and quests for power that could avenge Europe's humiliation of the Arab-Islamic civilization (Kassab 2009). This is the base for Islamic fundamentalism, which wishes to reverse Eurocentric fundamentalism: instead of European, it wishes to put Islamic cosmology and epistemology as superior and as the only source of truth (Grosfoguel 2010). To differentiate from strategic essentialism and other affirmative identity and self-valorization ideologies, Grosfoguel (2006) defined "third world fundamentalism" as this epistemological reversal, which tends to lead to political authoritarianism and discard most advantages entailed in western modernity. According to Kassab (2009), comparing to anti-colonial debates in Latin America and Africa, it seems fundamentalism has expanded more in the Arab Muslim world thanks to its relative physical and cultural integrity in terms of religion and written cultural heritage. Here, themes of genocide-epistemicide and slavery do not play part, whereas in Latin America and Africa the quest for empowerment does not rely on past superiority that could replace the western one. Still, in all regions decolonial debates arise, searching for intellectual independence, emphasizing the provincial particularity of western scholarship, and attempting to adapt Marxist economic critique to local realties, combined with humanistic, moral and political critique (Kassab 2009). The operative decolonial terms in Western Asia and North Africa have more to do with religion (e.g. Abu Zayd 2010), whereas in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa the question of race is more prominent (Shohat 2002). Therefore, this review will now

focus on some Jewish decolonial thinking of the past century, leaving apart the growing body of knowledge about Muslim decolonial thinking[i].

With the dawn of first modernity and the conquest of black and indigenous subjects, Christian religious discrimination against Jews in Europe developed its forms and meanings into dehumanizing and racial notions. This shaped centuries of Jewish experience in Europe as racialized subjects. These notions developed into modern European anti-Semitism (Gordon et.al. 2009), which culminated in the Nazi Final Solution, which reflected into Europe the genocidal logics of modernity/coloniality. The rise of Hitler has been viewed this way as a result of inserting dehumanizing colonial-racial notions from the colonies into the existing religious discrimination patterns in Europe (Cesaire 1972, Arendt 1973). According to Slabodsky (2014), the need to assuage this inner European violence led to the final approval of the Jewish-European settler-colonial project in Palestine and to the establishment of the state of Israel. If Zionism had had the aspiration to re-invent the Jewish people as a European nation (as will be discussed in continuance), in many senses it seems it succeeded even beyond its own expectation. Military and financial alliances made between European and American Jewish and non-Jewish elites, in Israel and abroad (Gordon et.al. 2009), join other political and social processes that have made the Jews *"become white"* (Brodkin 2004). After 1945 and 1948 a commonplace conception of Jews got spread as a new part of western hegemony (Gresh, 2011, Memmi 1976, Slabodsky 2014). Contemporary Israeli collective consciousness remains attached to the past experience of dehumanization of Jews in Europe, which help it to repudiate consciousness of its new position of power. This is driven by political needs, and derives from the ability to capitalize on the victims' consciousness (see Chaumont 2000). Israel's ability to present itself as vulnerable is exactly its source of strength as a spearhead of western imperialism in the Middle East. The fears of the west allow it to construct the east as a space to be controlled, along the way allowing its exploitation by war and commerce (Sanots 2006). Zionism uses the history of suffer and victimhood to justify its actions, while adopting a narrative and consciousness of "history of victors". This fully European and typically national narrative lacks any traces of universal lessons that might have been learned from the history of victimhood (Raz-Krakotzkin 1993). In the 1960s, anti-colonial writers still recognized the Jews as part of the racialized subjects of color made inferior by the West (Dussel 1969, Fanon 1967). Today, Anti-Jewish anti-Semitism in the west has been marginalized, as the Jews no longer consist of its main threat or scapegoat. This position was smoothly replaced by Arabs and Muslim (Said 1978, Gresh 2011), and Jews became central advocators of anti-Muslims/Arab

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[i] Contemporary Muslim decolonial thinking is exemplified for instance in the relatively new journal "Re-orient". This is not to claim that Jewish and Islamic decolonial thinking must necessarily be seperate.

anti-Semitism (Gordon et.al. 2009). Moreover, Jews are not anymore passive receivers of anti-Jewish Anti-Semitic hate, but active agents in social arguments, discourses and tensions around it (Wieviorka 2008, Gresh 2011, Gordon et.al. 2009). It is a radical inversion of the position of Jews in the last decades, from victims of European racism to complicit in contemporary imperialism, in a new articulation of a supposedly historical and western Judeo-Christian civilization (Slabodsky 2014, Gresh 2011).

Despite the fact Anglophone postcolonial theory is the more usual framework for conceptualizing Jewish and Israeli anti-colonial stances, Slabodsky (2014) claimed Francphone and Hispanophone anti-colonial theory has had more historical interrelation with Jewish decolonial counter-narratives. From this assumption, Salbodsky departed into a review of decolonial Jewish writings throughout the 20th century, contrasting it with the decolonial debates presented above. First, he analyzed Marxist theoretical developments as arising from Jews' positions within Europe, holding access to its society's theoretical tools but understanding its inherent systemic contradictions, inscribed within the bodies of theoreticians like Marx, Luxemburg, Horkheimer and Marcuse. He conceptualized Jewish border-thinking within the writings of Walter Benjamin and Immanuel Levinas, who combined Jewish sources with modern-western philosophy to create their social critique. Lastly, he showed the limits of Levinas and Albert Memmi to engage fully with the inner-cultural dialogue of the second phase of Dussel's Transmodernity project. Their Inner-Jewish critique was limited by their inability to recognize the renewed positionality of Judaism as part of western civilization. Their endeavors to conceptualize Zionism as an emancipatory decolonial project remained limited to Inner-Jewish debates with anti-Zionists, and lacked dialogue with other critics of southern epistemologies of resistance (Slabodsky 2014).   Slabodsky's conclusions pointed out that understanding Zionism as a form of colonialism is pivotal in order to conceive and construct any decolonial alternatives to it.

Zionism as Colonialism

Zionist ideology mostly conceived the land of Israel/Palestine as an empty land, "a land without a people". According to Said (1992), this entailed a natural right for Europeans to own the land, because of their ability to bring progress to the depraved natives: their control and subordination was not only considered possible but also justified[i] (Said 1992). These conceptions of superiority, and the real power balance on which they are based, have been designing the relationship between Palestinian Arabs and Jews since the beginning of Zionist immigration

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[i] See Bar Yosef (2006) and Veracini (2006) for two distinct types of contextualization of Zionism within imperial concepts and dynamics: the first examined the historical Zionist proposal to settle Eastern Africa instead of Palestine/Israel; the second compared the Zionist case with the South African one.

and until today (Zureik 2016). Zionist politics have mainly ignored the concrete and particular existence of Palestinian Arabs, viewing their politics of resistance as an irrationally violent and inexplicable disruption to the Jewish national narrative (Raz-Krakotzkin 1993).

Since the inception of Zionism immigration to Palestine/Israel and until today, Palestinian Arab discourse has based its objection to the Zionist immigration and to the practices of the state of Israel on basis of resistance to global imperialism and European colonialism (Said 1992, Zureik 2016). In the 1960s the conceptualization of Zionism as colonialism entered the political discourse of some Israeli political groups as well, and after 1967 this debate also infiltrated western academy (Rodinson 1973). Israeli academy also started to address this concept in the 1980s[i] (Kimmerling 1983, Shaffir 1989). Although many Israelis -in the academy and beyond- refute the colonial perspective on Zionism on moral grounds, claiming it undermines the legitimate existence of the state of Israel (Halamish 1999, Ram 1993), it has recently been becoming a more legitimate approach in Israeli academy for analyzing Israeli/Palestinian historiographies and societies[ii] (Zureik 2016).

The arguments that refute the paradigm of Zionism as form of colonialism rely on its political and economic particularities, as well as its self-conception and ideological discourses. On the first level, there is the claim that Zionism did not have a concrete mother-country initiating colonization and benefitting from it. Therefore, the Zionist colonial situation cannot be resolved by the ultimate solution that Memmi (1965) suggested to the colonizers' dilemmas–just as the solution popular Palestinian discourse propagates- of the return of the colonizers to their mother country. Another argument relies on the motivations of Jews to immigrate to Palestine/Eretz-Israel, claiming it cannot be considered as colonialism since it was not in order to exploit cheap native labor and get hold of valuable resources (Memmi 1975, Aharonson 1996). On the level of discourse and purpose, there is the claim that immigration, expansion of settlements, and the construction of an exclusively Jewish labor market in Eretz-Israel/Palestine were all about decolonizing Jews, meant eventually for their auto-emancipation (Memmi 1976, Eyal 2005, Boyarin 2002). In addition, there were different kinds of Jews that also shaped the Jewish collective in Palestine, as the Sephardim, who had non-colonial relations with Palestinian Arabs, and other basis of bond to the land (Cohen 2013, Eyal 2005). Eyal dedicated his research to the construction of knowledge about the east in Israel since the beginning of the Zionist settlement. His conclusion challenges the view of Zionism as a form of colonialism, claiming the Zionist encounter with the east was one of *"an opened horizon and reincarnation*

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[i] See Ram (1993) for a fuller account of these developments.

[ii] For instance, in the annual conference of the Israeli Sociologists Association in 2017, several seats were dedicated to the question of settler colonialism. In contrast, those who wrote of it in the 1980s did so with caution (Kimmerling 1983) and in English. For more about the historians' and sociologists' debates of the 1990, around this question as well as others, see Ram (1993), Weitz (1997), Shaffir (2004), Pappe (1993).

of identities", where contradictory views about the east were easily integrated and woven together, such as a will to mimic and merge into the east as well as a need to liberate it (Eyal 2005: 23-26). Nonetheless, quite commonly the objection to the colonial paradigm relies on Jewish national sentiments, which make researchers ignore the historical power relations between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs, and present their common history only as *"a conflict between two ethnic groups and their national movements, which demand for themselves a place under the sun on the same land"* (Genosar & Bareli 1996).

     i.   *The Settler Colonial Paradigm*

Many of the empirical arguments that distinguish Zionism from European colonialism do it by comparing it to the widespread academic research about French and British colonial models (e.g. Aharonson 1996, Memmi 1975, Halamish 1999). However, more recent research frames Zionism as another form of colonialism, settler-colonialism. Settler-colonialism has a different principal logic than the exploitation of the natives and the land in order to generate wealth for the mother country. Rather, it expropriates the territory and asks to eliminate the natives in order to replace them (Wolfe 2006). Wolfe (2006) claimed that settler colonialism is best understood as a structure, rather than as an event: a structure that works upon logics of elimination. The structure transforms radically the territory in question, by the destruction of indigenous social fabrics, creating a mechanisms of privileges that fabricates and classifies identities on a hierarchal scale. Settler-colonialism as structure is not related to actors' actions, discourses or intentions, subjective self-perceptions or motivations. Rather, this structure is created by processes that are set in motion by alliances made between elites -foreign and local- and farmers who carry out the act of settlement[i]. The settler-colony is extinguished not when the colonizers depart, but when the indigenous ultimately remains permanently (Veracini 2011). Under this paradigm, assimilation is one of a range of strategies of elimination (Wolfe 2006).

According to Shaffir (1989), from early 20th century and until 1967, Zionist settlement followed a "limited pure settlement colony" model, similar to the Australian or New Zealand colonial projects. This type of colonization is based on ethnic segregation and dispossessing local land and labor. The exploitation of the natives is a side effect of this structure and not its principal goal. The case of Eretz-Israel/Palestine before 1948 answers a "limited" model because a pure,

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[i] Gadi Algazi,"Settler-colonialism as a historical process: a comparative view about place" (kolonialism shel mityashvim ke-tahalikh histori: mabat hashvaati 'al makom), The 48th Annual Conference of the Israeli Sociologists Association, The Open University, Raanana, 31.1.17.

separate Jewish labor market was not achieved. Moreover, Zionist colonization could not expand over the entire territory, but merely purchase some strongholds (Shaffir 1989). Although the Zionist settlements were not an outpost of a particular empire, they benefited from western material capital that provided for the settlement project, and from western symbolic capital that legitimized it in eyes of the western nations (Said 1992). The main factor to limit Zionist settler-colonization at this stage was basing the motivation of settling the land on biblical-historical heritage: definitely a unique characteristic of this colonial movement (Shohat 2006a, Zreik 2016). Many have compared the pre-1948 stage of Zionist colonization to Christian missionaries who settled the land earlier in the 19th century by similar types of western privileges (e.g. Pappe 1997). Zionist pre-statehood colonization was also compared to the crusaders, conceiving the spatial dimension of the land as biblical text, within a paradigm of *"sacred geography"* (Eliaz 2008). The Zionist destination was set upon not dissimilar ideological, religious and emotional grounds as previous Christian-European settlements in Eretz-Israel/Palestine, but the difference is that Zionism chose the land also for fulfilling national aspirations. The land itself had no particular economic or strategic advantages (Kimmerling 1999), and was not particularly convenient for territorial expansion: until 1917 it was part of the Ottoman Empire, and it was populated with farmers and not nomads as were territories of some other settler-colonies. This meant all its lands were bureaucratically regulated and owned. Therefore, lands had to be purchased in a slow rate (Shaffir 1989). According to Zreik (2016), since the territory of Palestine/Eretz-Israel was also part of the Arab world, as a culture and nation of the entire region, coherent resistance to colonization rose from its inception, which further limited its expansion. Zionist Jewish nationalism came as an answer to oppressive dehumanization, and asked for self-purification from negative colonialist Orientalist stereotypes. This liberation was to be achieved by returning to the homeland, Eretz-Israel, where a Jewish kingdom stood a couple of millennia beforehand. However, my claim is that these Zionist particularities did not design an ultimately different structure of settlement other than a settler-colony, driven by logics of elimination of the native. Though some Zionist movements and discourses expressed the desire to become indigenous, their aspiration to imitate the natives was driven by an ultimate will to replace them (Kimmerling 1999, 2004, Raz-Krakotzkin 1993).

In the end of World War I, right when colonialism was getting out of fashion, the Zionist colonial project got the opportunity to obtain its very own step-mother-country (Pappe 1997). In 1916 France and Great Britain divided the Middle East to nation states under their influence. The latter empire got Palestine and gave the Zionist colonization project its patronage, though under dynamic and unstable conditions. The British did not treat the Zionists neither as natives to be exploited nor as a competing colonial-imperial power to be confronted with. The two colonial streams had a complicated relationship, which as a whole benefited the Jewish

settlement project, even if not as widely as the Zionists had hoped (Pappe 1997, Zureik 2016). The major complication derived from the Palestinian resistance, that could now more solidly base its pillars of struggle against imperialist maneuvers of colonial powers (Rodinson 1973). It was around this time that the Zionist leadership stopped purposely to use direct colonial terminology to describe their settlement project (Massad 2007), and Hebrew substitutes with softer connotations got spread (Kuzar 2015). To the empire, the Zionist leadership presented its settlement project as an extension of Europe, bringing progress and prosperity to the Middle East (Massad 2007). They also emphasized the unique, peaceful and non-violent character this settlement project will have (Shapira 1992).

It can be claimed that the pretension –though not self-presentation- of a peaceful character was discarded with the expulsions, massacres, confiscations and destruction of villages and homes that accompanied the 1948 war, that nearly erased Palestinian Arab presence from the newly founded Jewish state of Israel (Zureik 2016). By contrast, Shaffir (1989) claimed that the "pure settlement colony" model only radicalized after 1967, becoming a complete and not limited "pure settler colony". In 1967 Israel occupied, but did not annex, the West Bank and Gaza[i]. Since then, Israeli settlement and control started to appear more like British and French colonialisms, in terms of economic exploitation of human and natural resources, expansion by orderly military power, and the maintenance of two parallel legal systems that discriminate between rulers and ruled. Ever since 1967, Israeli right and left have been defined as those siding with either the complete or the limited model. The complete model assumes that it is possible to eventually eliminate or hold under control the Palestinian population, whereas the limited model prefers to give up territories in favor of ethnic homogeneity (Shaffir 1989). The Israeli colonial system is shaped by and has shaped Israeli society to be a proud rampart of Europe against the Middle East, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism (Slabodsky 2014). This is expressed in public opinion polls (Yaar 2007, Herman & Yaar-Yochtman 2010), in the state's geo-political, cultural and economic westward orientation, in the siege mentality it nurtures (Kimmerling 1999), and in the central political and economic support of North American Jewry and subsequently the USA itself.

The clear advantage of the settler-colonial paradigm for analyzing Zionism and Israeli/Palestinian histories and societies, is the comparative perspective it imposes. It contextualizes this case within a global context, which, for better and worse, undermines the uniqueness and the singular particularity of the Palestinian/Israeli case (Halamish 1999, Sharon 2012). Various authors pointed out that the importance of the settler-colonial paradigm is its ability to mark the steps that must be taken in order to construct a just and peaceful future for Israel/Palestine. The settler-colonial paradigm entails a moral recognition of the injustice

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[i] See map IV.

caused to Palestinians, and a political recognition of their right of self-determination (Ram 1993). However, unsurprisingly, different authors have arrived to different conclusions as to which practical solution is derived by this recognition (e.g. Reuveny 2003, 2005, Rodinson 1973, Piterberg 2010, Zreik 2016). Ram (1993) claimed that the distinctive uniqueness of the settler-colonial paradigm is that it takes the Israeli-Palestinian set of relations as a vantage point from which to examine Israeli society. Sharon (2012) claimed that the colonial dimension allows analyzing the differential relation of the national elites to various ethnic, religious and national groups within subjugated populations. However, and despite a growing popularity of the settler-colonial paradigm, Israeli sociologists still lack theoretical tools to analyze in an integrative way the multiple hierarchies that affect both Israeli and Palestinian societies (Erlich 1993, Shenhav 2002, Amor 2002, Hever et.al. 2002a, Offir & Azoulay 2008, Gillis 2016). In continuance, we will explore how the prism of modernity/coloniality can help conceptualize the colonial situation in Palestine/Israel in ways that can orientate research towards such an integrated approach.

ii.   The Modern/Colonial Scale of Ashkenization

According to the multidisciplinary scholar Haviva Pedaya (2015), Judaism as a religion and a culture, as well as Jewish identity and consciousness, for millennia has been centrally shaped by tensions and images of east versus west. The relational constructions of east and west, on a dynamic and relative scale, shaped the rise and fall of different spiritual and intellectual centers (Kfir 2014). Notwithstanding, what Ben Shalom (2010) called *"the image of a wise forefather in the east"* always persisted, as well as the spiritual centrality of Eretz-Israel, shared by Jewish communities everywhere. By the early Middle Ages different spiritual centers prospered, developing distinct Ashkenazi and Sephardic streams of knowledge production and liturgics (Bineart 1992). In late modernity, and with the development of colonial and national movements, the distinction between these streams changed its nature and got re-organized on a civilizational scale of "Europeanness" (Pedaya 2015). By the end of the 19th century, mutual prejudices between the communities, based on cultural and liturgical differences, got reformulated by colonial power relations (Tsur 1997). According to the constitutive narrative of the Israeli sociologist Aziza Khazzoom, the level of westernization became a central factor in setting the relationship between Jewish communities. Ashkenazi Jews who got acculturate and educated under the auspices of the Enlightenment recycled European dichotomous conceptions of east and west into modern Jewish discourse. Internalizing anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jewish culture as degenerated and inferior, they "orientalized" other Jewish communities who did not go through the same modernization processes as they did. This was

valid towards Eastern European Jews and in a very similar way towards Sephardic and Mizrahi communities as well. All these got stigmatized as culture-less, filthy and backwardly traditional. Many of these inferiorized communities internalized these conceptions and desired to westernize themselves (Khazzoom 2003). This stigmatization was part of the endeavor of Ashkenazi Jews to get integrated in western Europe, to become considered part of white civilization. Some elements of Sephardic Medieval heritage were appropriated into Ashkenazi Judaism as their own heritage and past, in order to prove Jews' compatibility with the emancipatory elements of modern Europe (Ben Sasson 1979). Notwithstanding, Judeo-Sephardic civilization, just as Muslim civilization, was considered to have frozen in time in late modernity, declining into contemporaneous primitiveness and passiveness (Raz-Krakotzkin 1998, Evri 2016). Since all Jews were nevertheless part of the same group of reference, missionary projects surged within and between Jewish communities in order to westernize the other communities and "uplift" eastern Jewries from their degeneration (Khazzoom 2003). Such projects were taken by German Jews in Eastern Europe, and by French and British Jews within Jews in Muslim countries. The missionary projects were spurred by Jewish national solidarity as well as French/British/German patriotism (see Tsur 2007). In the 20th century, Eastern European ultra-orthodox and religious streams also tried to gain hold within North African Jewries in order to save them spiritually, using a more direct discourse of salvation (Leon 2011). The European colonial regimes in North Africa improved dramatically the socio-economic situation of the Jews there. This process will be explained in the historical section. For now, it is sufficing to say that the foreign occupation over Muslim Arab countries in North Africa in many senses meant liberation for the Jews there (Pikar 2013). From a minority group under Muslim rule, Jews became that part of the colonized closer to the colonizer, much thanks to European Jewries' interventions and contacts. Colonial rule meant a newly acquired social mobility for North African Jewries, in different degrees in different countries, and of course with different repercussions for different social classes (Tsur 2010). Some North African Jews of influence and power could even obtain European citizenship. Tsur (2007) defined two other Jewish sectors that emerged in some countries, each containing a variety of social classes: the native and the westernized one. The westernized sector was composed by groups that got educated by the colonial regime, in order to intermediate the foreign rule to the local systems. These groups converted their local cultural orientation towards Europe, a process that was accomplished more fully much more commonly among Jews than among Muslims. The lasts' education contained more emphasis on modernization than on westernization (Tsur 2010). The Jewish westernized elites adopted a complete French habitus, culture and language, and detached themselves from their Judeo-Arab environment. A nativist sector of the population also emerged, whose elites developed and became closer in touch with the local high-culture: Arab for Muslims and Hebrew for Jews. (Tsur 2007). The colonial regimes in North Africa

created different trajectories to detach Jews from their Arab environment, whether by Hebrew national sentiments, not necessarily related to Zionism (Pikar 2013), or by getting westernized, Orientalizing Arab civilization at large, and increasingly getting identified as non-Arab (Khazzoom 2003). Jews in middle-eastern countries[i] went through similar processes of westernization, but the colonial effects were much more loose and Jews could stir between a variety of ethnic and national identities (Levy 2011). Iraq was the only place where conditions allowed Jews in a quite widespread fashion to strongly identify with the Arab component of their modern identity (Tsur 2010).

In Eretz-Israel/Palestine, since the beginning of the 19th century, as European imperialism foreshadowed the Ottoman Empire, Ashkenazi immigration increased, and by effect also grew in power. According to Tsur (1997), By the end of the century the traditional communal divisions in Jewish society became identified as unequal and essentialist cultural gaps, relying on colonial dichotomies of west and east, European Jews versus non-Europeans. There too, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries went through certain westernization processes through the intervention of their European brethren, but when the presence of Ashkenazi Zionists in the country got to be dominant, many of the westernizers adapted to the Zionist Ashkenazi culture (Tsur 2007, Ginio-Meyuhas 2014).

The process of ashkenization should be distinguished from westernization. Ashkenization might be considered as the particular, local, Inner-Jewish content of westernization, but in the following I will claim that this perception is more accurate if westernization is considered as the functioning of the coloniality of power, of being and of knowledge. In this sense, ashkenization would refer to the process that allows colonized subjects to blend with the colonizing powers by transforming their patterns of behavior, thought, speech and appearance. In other words, it is a self-representation as part of the hegemonic group, which occurs through processes of mimicry and in order to benefit from the privileges of the dominant group. Some researchers claim this entails undermining colonial dichotomies (Sasson-Levy & Shoshana 2014). Since Jews are also a religious group, ashkenization has religious, ultra-orthodox and secular versions. In the first two versions, as well as in other less obvious contexts that will be discussed immediately, ashkenization cannot be considered a version of westernization processes, in fact it collides with them and disturbs them. I would like to claim in the following that historically, ashkenization is best understood not as a local version of westernization, but as de-Arabization (Alcalay 1993): the uprooting of customs, patterns of thought, conceptions of self, and modes of being acquired by Jews in Arab countries. Ashkenization has had the

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[i] Whereas the Middle East may be considered to include North Africa, here I refer to Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

function of creating a basis for a Jewish national collective identity (Sasson-Levy & Shoshana 2014), which devises the productive and obedient civil body necessary for colonizing Palestine (Sharon 2012).

According to Tsur (1997), the Zionist movement was the only ethno-national movement to deal with an inner division between Europeans and non-Europeans. Zionist ideology was anchored in patriarchal/colonial dichotomies that had set orientalist conceptions about Jews in Europe as passive and backwards. It was a westernizing identity project that attempted to de-stigmatize Jewish identity as oriental (Khazzoom 2003). Since this attempt at decolonizing Jews was designed by European Jews, immersed in modern/colonial paradigms, and not by the Jews most oppressed by them, in practice and theory it only reproduced them. The Zionist project aspired for self-improvement and self-purification, for uplifting Jews' degraded and passive-feminine existence, re-inventing the Jewish people in the image of the White Man (Raz-Krakotzkin 1993, Shenhav 2006, Gluzman 2003). This project of westernization of Jews translated into a project of colonization in the east. Zionist immigration and settlement sought western support by claiming to bring civilization and progress into the wilderness of the orient (Boyarin 2004, Raz-Krakotzkin 1998). At the same time, the Zionist project, as a national project, had principals of national unity and equality, and thus it denied the possibility of internal Jewish differences (Tsur 1997). Zionist debates about Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries reproduced the German-Christian debates about the Jews' emancipation, debating whether their degeneration should be attributed to nature or nurture, the last implying the need of their modernization and re-education (Raz-Krakotzkin 1998, Sharon 2012). The Zionist society that was getting established in Palestine/Eretz-Isreal, by the hegemony of Jews of Eastern European origins, was constituted by unofficial norms of thought and behavior of Ashkenazi supremacy. These norms reflected real differences in economic power, average levels of life and class mobilization opportunities (Tsur 1997). The same norms of supremacy got established in the rabbinical and toranic spheres, where Mizrahi Jews were conceived as requiring perpetual salvation, that could be reached by integrating them into the Ashkenazi religious education system, as weakened and retracted subjects (Leon 2011, Amir 1984). Zionist leadership, intellectuals, public figures and messengers to Arab countries, exhibited simultaneous tendencies for integration and retraction towards Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewries (Tsur 1997), in a mixture of colonial mentality and national solidarity (Shenhav 2006).

The immigration of Mizrahim to the state of Israel after 1948 put the Ashkenazi ruling elite into demographic anxiety, especially because of the effect this immigration could have over the political order (Tsur 1997). The westernized sectors of North African Jewry went through the same processes as other Mizrahi immigrants, a process Shaul called, "the Zionist civilizing process". This entailed Mizrahim's de-urbanization, proletarianization, re-education and re-acculturation (Shaul 2016), in short, a dramatic decline in their level of life and potential social

mobility (Schwartz 2014). The westernization processes that Jews had gone through under colonial regimes in Arab countries made them distinct from their Arab environment by their own view, becoming, inconveniently, simultaneously colonizers and colonized (Memmi 1965). However, this was not so in Zionist eyes. Westernized North African Jews in Israel were not considered to have gone through the proper form of westernization, and did not acquire the required cultural capital in order to integrate with the Israeli hegemonic elites (Tsur 2007, Shaul 2016). It could be claimed that in the Zionist perception, they had gone through the kind of westernization process available to colonized Arabs, and not to colonizing Jews. Since they were conceived as incapable of managing with or contributing to a modern industrialized society, Mizrahi immigrants were required to change their forms of life, work and production, education and learning, acquire new contents, change from the base their culture, or as Ballas (1965) put it, transform their very souls.

In the fifth chapter we will see in detail how the Zionist civilizing process created economic privileges to the Ashkenazi public, forming an intrinsic connection between ethnicity and class in Israeli society (Schwartz 2014). Ashkenazi identity became an asset to be nurtured (Khazzoom 2003), a source of symbolic capital that enables access to further resources (Sasson-Levy 2008). Many Sephardim and Mizrahim went through ashkenization processes in the first decades of the state of Israel. The North African immigrants Tsur (2007) described as the nativist elite, whose modernization processes went through Hebraic high culture, and more so Mizrahi immigrants pertaining to the Zionist movement or closer to it, as well as the westernized sectors within the native Sephardic population in Palestine/Eretz-Israel- all these were often incorporated into Zionist institutions of Ashkenazi dominance. This allowed them upward socio-economic mobility, but had the cost of shedding any Arab components of identity (Shaul 2016). With the years, the socio-economic aspect of Ashkenaziness became rooted in Israeli society.

Different researchers examined subjective conceptions of Ashkenaziness and Mizrahiness, mainly through in-depth interviews. Sasson-Levy (2008) found that Ashkenaziness today is conceived mainly as a power position, without much performative or other ethnic content. Upward social mobility of Mizrahim in Israel is conceived by itself a practice of ashkenization. This term is epistemologically violent, and arouses connotations of shame. Those considered to be ashkenized subjects are considered doubly inauthentic, not really belonging to any social group: ruptured from their roots and in certain discordance with their socio-economic situation (Schwartz 2014, Dahan-Kalev 2017, Cohen & Leon 2008). However, ashkenization cannot be considered purely a question of socio-economic mobility. It should be here mentioned that in general, the terminology of social-classes is not very outspread or developed in Israel, neither in popular discourse nor in academic analysis (Schwartz 2014, Adut 2006). I would claim that the colonial structure of power relations is too dominant for social-classes language to grasp

reality comprehensively. Ashkenization then carries also cultural expressions, which can be traced in performance related to language, tone and volume of speech (Schwartz 2015), emotion management practices and cultural consumption patterns, mainly related to music (Sasson-Levy & Shoshana 2014). Perhaps ironically, for men it was found related with egalitarian gender practices, while for women it is related with the food they cook (Frenkel 2011)[i].

Researchers that disregarded colonial conceptualizations tended to interpret the behavioral codes and cultural consumption patterns that mark Ashkenazi identity as indications of Europeanism or of upper social class (Sasson-Levy 2014, Frenkel 2011, Sagiv 2014). I would like to suggest here that this is a somewhat tautological argument, and that decolonial concepts can contribute to defining the particularities of the ashkenization process. Ashkenazi identity is constituted by the colonizer's position in global and local power structures, and by the mental and behavioral patterns that stem from this position. As such, it is constituted by its dichotomy with the colonized. Some definitions of Ashkenaziness cannot be reduced to questions of social class or some general "European culture", but they basically signify everything that is distinctively different from stereotypical conceptions of Arab or middle-eastern behavioral codes and cultural preferences. Some of the aspects of Ashkenaziness that emerged in research can be understood by the classist paradigm, such as its identification with higher education, intelligence, politeness, condescendence and economic success. Other aspects can indeed be recognized as proceeding from Europe, for instance preference to European classical music, secularity and small families. However, some elements related to emotion management are only arguably reduced to elements of social class or Europeanism per se, such as emotional distance and tendencies to be introverted (Sasson-Levy 2008, 2014, Frenkel 2011, Sagiv 2014). In his ethnographic research, Schwartz (2015) found different elements in the definition of Mizrahiness that are on the seam line between class and ethnicity, part of the ethno-class structure of society. Such characteristics of Mizrahiness are, for instance, their *"sonic habitus"*[ii], substandard language, parenting styles and contempt for environmentalism. Cultural preferences, especially of Arab or Mizrahi music[iii], is one of the most recurring fundamental characteristics conceived as signaling Mizrahiness. Sagiv (2014) found the centrality of other kinds of esthetic tastes, for instance in ceremonies and interior design of houses, where Mizrahi styles and preferences are similar to Arab esthetic tendencies. Sagiv (2014) pointed at another central element related with Mizrahiness in Israel: the feeling of insult and shame (Dahan 2007), a result of *"the Mizrahization melting pot"* (Tsur 2010) of the 1950s and 1960s, the proletarianization, homogenization and negative stigmatization Mizrahim endured by Zionist

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[i] Frenkel investigated the conceptions of Mizrahiness and Ashkenaziness among mixed children, according to their views about their parents.

[ii] Schwartz (2015) referred to "sonic habitus" as the sum of speech volume, music preferences, sonic sensibilities and attitudes toward public space and its sonic regulation.

[iii] Arab pop music in Hebrew.

hegemony. Others also pointed out the negative stigma that marks the expression of the insult and shame as an act of moaning [*hitbahyenut*] (Pedaya 2005, Shoshana 2013). Pedaya (2005: 82-111) showed how the negativity entailed in the moaning-insulted stereotype, has to do with the self-disciplining of a western-modern self and the rejection of the oriental self, within a kind of "emotional coloniality", if we will[i]. The basic foregrounding, then, of the ashkenization processes can be better explained as part of a modern/colonial power structure. Historically, ashkenization meant taking the indigenous middle-eastern out of middle-eastern Jews, whitening them, placing them within disembogues religious patterns and in a disembogues position of colonizers. Nowadays, ashkenization mainly signifies upward mobility, signaling that the ashkenized subjects succeeded in getting positioned as colonizers and privilege from their share of the occupation of Palestine[ii].

In sum, the decolonization of European Jews was based on neo-colonialism, and the emancipation of Jews was functionally identical to colonization (Boyarin 2004). The west for the Zionist movement, was both a place to get liberated from and to get integrated into. The east was the space of backwardness and solace, but also the geographical origin, where Jews could reunify with history (Shohat 2006). That is, Zionism brought the Jews back to their historical roots in the east in order to westernize them and make them part of the west. As any colonial regime, Zionist colonial rule privileges a particular national identity that is viewed as part of a general western civilization, which is the dichotomous opposite of the native population. The patterns of hegemony in the state of Israel since its establishment and until today privilege an Ashkenazi-Zionist identity, which is best conceived as the opposite of indigenous middle-eastern identity. Within the colonial situation, Mizrahim's potential to simultaneously belong to both sides of the dichotomy has been intolerable for all parties involved: Ashkenazim and Mizrahim as well as Palestinian Arabs. All Jews were placed on a scale measuring Ashkenaziness, and the ones originating from Muslim countries either went through de-Arabization process, also referred to as ashkenization, or placed in the bottom of the scale through proletarianization processes. The scale of ashkenization is the particular local expression of the scales designed by modern/colonial global structures. This local scale served as unifying basis from which the entire Jewish population in Palestine/Israel could "orientalize" the Palestinian Arabs (Khazzoom 2003), and construct Israel as a European enclave in the midst of the Wild East.

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[i] "Emotional coloniality" may still be explored much further, following Pedaya's philosophical- oriented endeavors, and along the lines that examine the Mizrahi relation to Jewish heritage, tradition and religiosity.
[ii] For instance, Bashkin (2017: 199-220) wrote about the "Zionisation" process of Iraqi Arab-Jewish identity in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, and mentioned that a central component in this process was their involvement in managing and manipulating the Palestinian-Arab population. Even though substantial upward mobilization opportunities only opened to Mizrahim after 1977 (Cohen & Leon 2008), conquering the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 shifted the Israeli labor market, and up-scaled many Mizrahim's financial and occupational situation (Grinberg 2001: 641-697).

Taking a Jewish decolonial perspective on the history of Israel/Palestine means searching for the silenced voices throughout it that had the purpose of melting the walls of the Zionist modern/colonial fortress, and to open up the relationship between the colonized and colonizer to mutual influences, despite the inner-contradictions and external limitations such approaches have encountered. The Mizrahi and Sephardic locus of enunciation, as indigenous to the Middle East and colonizers in Palestine/Israel, makes their political activity a particularly fertile ground to examine the possibility of historical Jewish decolonial endeavors in this land. That is despite the fact that in contemporary Israel, the Mizrahi locus of enunciation leads more often than not to an antagonistic and uncompromising political stance towards Palestinian Arabs, as discussed in the introduction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Study of Mizrahim and Sephardim in Israel

Although no academic branch of Mizrahi Studies has even been announced, despite Ella Shohat's (1999) proposal, the study of the ethnic divide of Israeli society forms one of the main pillars of Israeli sociology (Adut 2006). Quite a few comprehensive reviews have examined the study of Mizrahim in Israeli social science[i]. Here we will not repeat these reviews but will point out some of the main characteristics of previous research that is relevant for the current study. Israeli sociology was developed in the 1950s and 1960s hand in hand with government policies of immigrant absorption. It was strongly embedded within the Modernization paradigm, and departed from an assumption of dichotomy between traditional Jews preceding of Muslim countries and modern Jews preceding of European countries (e.g. Eisenstadt 1967). In late 1970s young Ashkenazi researchers began criticizing their predecessors, and published research mainly from a materialist and often Marxist perspective about the circumstances and power relations that led to the creation of the ethno-class structure of Israeli society[ii]. Since the 1990s more Mizrahim participated in the critical production of knowledge, drawing the emphasis towards questions of cultural subjugation, incorporating postcolonial language and concepts. Ella Shohat (1988) carved this theoretical route in her essay *"Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the. Standpoint of its Jewish Victims"*, which delineated the structural oppression of Mizrahim, traced its historical origins in Israel and proposed a symptomatic analysis of the

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[i] Deshen (1979), Smooha (1984), Deshen & Shokeid (1984), Hever et.al (2002a), Tsur (2007a), Dahan-Kalev (2006).
[ii] The pioneering collective project in this regard was the independently issued "Notebooks of Research and Critique" (mahbarot le-mehkar u-le-bikoret) published by Deborah Bernstein, Henri Rosenfeld and Shlomo Swirsky, among others, since 1978.

discourse that perpetuates it. In this essay Shohat laid the foundations for comparing the structural oppression that Mizrahim and Palestinians endured by the Zionist colonial enterprise. Cohen & Leon (2008) summarized the variety of critical sociological approaches by *"the conclusion that Israeli society since the 1950s and until nowadays is characterized by dichotomous ethnic-classist power relations that are based on severe orientalist oppression that is successfully reproduced between generations"*. They drew five central arenas in which Israeli critical sociology examines the historical design of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations: economical, examining the processes of proletarianization the immigrants endured (e.g. Swirsky & Bernstein 1993), educational, observing the educational system's part in this process (e.g. Alexander et.al. 2013), geographical, studying the policies that designed the physical aspects of their social marginalization (e.g. Sharon 2012), the cultural, focusing on stigmatization of Mizrahi identities and material culture (e.g. Mizrachi & Herzog 2012, Gutman 2008), and the political, emphasizing the patron-client relations dominated by Ashkenazi decision makers (e.g. Chetrit 2000, Deshen 1970). Cohen & Leon (2008) themselves criticized critical Israeli sociology, claiming it related to the differences between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in a static and essentialist manner, disregarding the changes of the last forty years and to the growing Mizrahi middle-class since late 1970s. Hashash (2017), on the other hand, criticized existing research for not paying enough attention to the theorization of Mizrahiness in terms that can be relevant to questions of the deepening poverty and marginalization of lower classes in Israel.

In the study of Mizrahi history, an academic division of labor has been established, and also lamented, with sociologists on the one hand studying Mizrahim in the state of Israel, while historians on the other hand study Jewish societies in Arab countries (Behar 2007, Tsur 2010). Some studies have also overcome this rift and examined the continuum between the Arab and Israeli pasts (e.g. Tsur 2001, Ben Dor 2004, Perlson 2006, Behar 2007, Deshen & Shokeid 1984, Shokeid & Deshen 1999, Shaul 2016). This division of labor means that few historiographic accounts can relate to contemporary circumstances of Mizrahim born in Israel, and that sociological analyses tends to excessive homogenization of the Mizrahi experience, neglecting basic differences in backgrounds that had set different trajectories for contemporary Mizrahi and Sephardic groups and individuals. Israeli contemporary critical sociology and historiography share the tendency to attend to the trajectories and positions of Mizrahim within colonial power relations, whereas previous generations of investigators attempted to conceal the effects of global colonial heritage on Inner-Jewish relations (Tsur 2007).

Though much contemporary production of knowledge about Mizrahim has been made by Mizrahi intellectuals and activists, on the seam-line between academy and politics (Herzog 2005, Dahan-Kalev 2006, Hever et.al. 2002a), it has rarely engaged in questions of

decolonization through resistance. Postcolonial theory was adopted in Israel mainly through Anglophone academy, in its least radical and politically subversive version, which emphasizes post-structuralist writers (see Kaiwar 2014). Postcolonial concepts have been usually aimed in Israeli sociology to theoretically dismantle dichotomies of east and west, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, and define a Mizrahi identity that is hybrid, ambivalent, fluid, hyphenated and evasive; foreign and familiar, Arab and Jew, conformist and subversive (Shoshana 2013). Shohat explained that postcolonial theory was introduced to the Hebrew reader in an intellectual and political vacuum, lacking previous academic engagement with anti-colonial debates. This led to quite a monotonous adaptation of postcolonialism, applying it solely for the study of Mizrahim and not of other colonized populations[i], and using the concepts of hybridity, mimicry and Third Space as catch-all terms in the exploration of very diverse themes (Shohat 2006). The pioneers and leaders of this local adaptation of postcolonial theory are the sociologist Yehouda Shenhav and the literature critique Hannan Hever[ii]. Their approach was adopted by others who used this framework for historical exploration (e.g. Nurieli 2005) as well as for contemporary research (e.g. Gutman 2008, Rimon-Or 2002), especially one concerned with skin-color and performance of ethnicity (Hinsky 2002, Dahan-Kalev 2017, Sasson-Levy & Shoshana 2014). As other variations of post-structural theory, this approach was criticized for exercising "unworldly textuality" (Spanos 2009), being distant from people's everyday experiences and categories (Shoshana 2013, Sagiv 2014), irrelevant for the study of women (Hashash 2008), and obviating questions of class oppression in favor of engagement with cultural critique (Hashash 2017). Some researchers use terminology and concepts of Race and Ethnicity Studies in sociological analyses of Mizrahi identity and position within Israeli society. This approach led to research about subjective construction of ethno-class identities through everyday experiences, practices and discourses (Shoshana 2013, Sasson-Levy 2008, Mizrachi & Herzog 2012, Mizrachi et.al. 2013). Both these theoretical approaches have produced important empirical research, and have mainly dealt with theoretically conceptualizing different dimensions of ambivalence and contradictions inherent in the dynamic construction of ethnic identities.

Leon (2004) noted that much of the theory produced in research about Mizrahim in fact does not deal with Mizrahim themselves but with attempts to fill the category of "Mizrahiness" with content. In my view, this line of work can be seen as part of a decolonial intellectual endeavor, however restricted it may be within the modern/colonial structure of western academy in which they have been developed. Two approaches stand out in this line of inquiry, that are inter-

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[i] As far as I know, postcolonial theory has not been used for studying the occupation of Palestine, and very scarcely in research about Palestinian citizens of Israel.
[ii] e.g. Hever et.al. (2002a), Hever (2003), Shenhav (2002, 2004), Hever & Shenhav (2006, 2010).

connected but still distinguishable: on the one hand there are researchers who seek to define Mizrahi Judaism (e.g. Shokeid 1986, Elazar 1986, Buzaglo 2008, Pedaya 2015). On the other hand, those who attempt to *"formulate a non-religious Mizrahi identity-option"* (Leon 2004), which often leads to describing Mizrahiness in relation to Arabness (e.g. Snir 2006, Ben Dor 2004, Shenhav 2006, Shohat 1999). Both approaches have been used for the historical study of Mizrahim, and have attempted to challenge the Zionist modern regime of identities, searching within Mizrahiness for alternative decolonial identities, attempting to define a Mizrahi ontological experience and Mizrahi epistemology (Pedaya 2015, Shohat 2004, Hever et.al. 2002a).

Ben Sasson (1979) claimed that the approach that studies Mizrahi Judaism can only be attended to through anecdotal study of rabbinical texts in Arab countries. Researchers like Zvi Zohar (2001) indeed proved the fruit of such an approach within the discipline of Jewish Studies. Within disciplines closer to the social sciences, there have also been interesting attempts to discuss such texts. Pedaya (2015) opened a debate between Jewish sources and western philosophy, and conceptualized Mizrahi epistemology as based on rationalism, mysticism and the trauma of the Sephardic expulsion. Buzaglo (2008) conceptualized loyalty to tradition as a way to construct values and beliefs that is common within Mizrahi Jews. On the one hand, this loyalty does not relate to Judaism as a strict religion or nationality; On the other hand, it does not require renouncing to Jewish identity altogether in order to produce universal values that allow multi-cultural dialogues. Yadgar (2005) dedicated his research to explaining the practices, values and worldviews that design the everyday lives of 'traditionalist' Jews. He showed how this category overlaps with that of Mizrahim and insisted this form of traditionalism is part of the modern Mizrahi existence. His inquiry highlighted the moderate and flexible nature of this Judaism, and its respectful and yet critical attitude towards rabbinical authorities. Hence, even though Sephardic ultra-orthodoxy also developed in the state of Israel, it is not as narrowly closed as the Ashkenazi one. Leon's (2009) research after its forms and development led him to define it as *"soft ultra-orthodoxy"* [*harediut raka*]. It is different from Ashkenazi ultra-orthodoxy in that it does not close itself from contact with non-ultra-orthodox society (Pikar 2003), but addresses and includes a wide range of communities, families, and synagogues (Leon 2011). The inquiry after Mizrahi forms of tradition entails a search after a balanced approach to the sharp religious vs. secular dichotomy that was created within the framework of state of Israel[i].

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[i] See Yadgar (2005) and Maimaran (2013) about the role of the education system in constructing and maintaining such dichotomies.

The second decolonial approach, that can be called "the Arab-Jew paradigm", relies on the past of Jews in Arab countries, and is usually refuted by historians, because there were rarely any textual expressions of such an Arab-Jewish identity[i], certainly not one that crossed the entire Middle East. Rather, it was the decolonization processes, with the rise of nationalism in the Middle East, the uprooting and immigration of Mizrahi Jews, which has inspired the attempt to speak in name of all the Jews of Arab lands, the Arab Jews (Tsur 2010). This approach to the study of Mizrahiness has been proclaimed usually as an epistemological positioning, aimed at constructing a horizon of Asianization or Arabization of Israeli society, and challenge its role as a European enclave, in order to become part of Western Asia (Shohat 2004, Shiran 1984, Massad 2007, Levy 2011, Hever & Shenhav 2010, Mahleb 2007). The construction of an Arab-Jewish identity option is most commonly reflected in Mizrahi literature and poetry, as well as in literary and cultural critique. Unsurprisingly, it is led especially by Iraqi-Israeli intellectuals, who indeed carry this heritage from their ancestors much more than other Mizrahim[ii]. In these fields, as well as in social research, the sometimes implicit assumption within the Arab-Jew paradigm and epistemological positioning is that Mizrahiness has the potential to bridge between Arab and Jewish nationalisms, because of the way the last was designed by Ashkenazi elites (Alcalay 1993, Bashkin 2017). This term had also been used historically by Palestinian Arab national leaders in order to idealize Muslim-Jewish relations under Islamic rule before the beginning of Zionism (Jacobson & Naor 2016:141). As Jews, whose culture is Arab and have suffered from social exclusion, but are also subjects for inclusion in the Israeli national collective, Mizrahim have been analyzed as holding an intermediary position within Israeli Ethnocracy (Yiftachel 1998), between Ashkenazi Jews and Palestinian Arabs that are citizens of Israel. This Mizrahi location within the Israeli scale of orientalization or westernization can be seen as reflected in Israeli culture (Gutman 2005), socio-economic class stratification (Peled 2002, Peled & Shaffir 2000, Smooha 1993), and in land and settlement policy (Yiftachel 1998).

This positioning of Mizrahiness between Jews and Arabs and between Jewish religious and secular dispositions is the base of its decolonial potential, as a destabilizing factor of modern/colonial dichotomies. The search for alternatives to the multiple oppressive forms of Israeli politics is the base of not few books dedicated fully or partially to interviews with or monologues of Mizrahi political activists and intellectuals (Swirsky 1981, Michael 1984, Abutbul et.al. 2005, Lir 2007, Yona et.al. 2007). That is also an underlining motivation of many

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[i] The clear exceptions can be found within Jewish-Arab intellectual and literary movements in Iraq and Egypt, or of Jews in these countries that joined Arab national movements and therefore advocated such an identity as a way to get included in the national collective (Bashkin 2012, Snir 2005, 2006).

[ii] See for instance Snir (2005) and Bashkin (2017) about the demise of the Arab-Jewish identity among Iraqi Jews after their immigration to Israel.

of the investigations that have studied the political activity of Mizrahim in Israel, including this research.

The Study of Historical Mizrahi and Sephardic Political Activity

Much of the research about Mizrahim in Israel in the early years of statehood explored the multiple oppressive practices of the state's institutions. Nonetheless, there was also quite a lot of research that examined different aspects of Mizrahi and Sephardic political agency. This line has often focused on rescuing and visualizing Mizrahi practices of counter-hegemonic resistances, whether by highlighting acts of everyday resistance, or viewing the productions of ambivalently subversive discourses, which challenge the hegemonic construction of reality without rebelling against them. The first years of the state of Israel in particular have provided for many such accounts, when the massive waves of Jewish immigration from Muslim countries arrived to the newborn state. The state exercised its most oppressive practices in order to manage and control the population, therefore generating different kinds of resistance. The compilation of articles *Mizrahim in Israel: Critical Review*, edited by Hever, Shenhav & Mutsafi-Heler, collected some of these subversive accounts in the early 1950s and afterwards. Adriana Camp told about the varieties of acts of defiance and everyday empowerment of Mizrahi individuals, in their refusal to the population dispersal policies the state designed for them. Shenhav and Mutsafi-Heler each tell about a Zionist organization made up by Mizrahi intelligentsia, the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC, established in mid-1970s), and "the Union of Aram-Naharaim Youngsters" (1946-1951), correspondingly. These researchers emphasized the subversive potential of the discourse and proposals of these organizations, which undermined and challenged Eurocentric Zionism and the national and geo-political identity it shaped for the state of Israel.

Another reason the 1950s provide for relatively many accounts of subversive acts of Mizrahim is that the 1948 Rupture between Jews and Arabs was just in its process of institutionalization, and this left space for some ambivalence and flexibility around the borders. Nurieli (2005), for instance, wrote of a decade long struggle in the 1950s of the state to re-settle North African immigrants who settled on their own in a gated area that belonged to Palestinian Arabs before 1948. Nurieli interpreted the state's anxious struggle over the space and its orientalist discourse about it as a reaction to these immigrants' success in undermining the Zionist dichotomies of Arabs/Jews, thereby threatening the stability of the national ethos. Derry-Weksler (2013) wrote about Dr. Israel Ben-Zeev, an Ashkenazi native that worked within the state's institutions, who failingly attempted to establish a communal Arabic-language library, composed by books found in 1948 in Palestinian Arabs refugees' homes. Derry-Weksler showed other fields in which Ben-Zeev and his circle of Sephardic and Ashkenazi natives, that were integrated in the state's

establishment, had different, emancipatory ideas about how the state's affairs should be administered thanks to their expert knowledge and lived experiences as natives. In this case, Ben-Zeev attempted to challenge the Hebrew University libraries' monopoly over the "absentee property", and manifested other logics than the scientific modern logics of classification and education. Derry-Weksler in some senses continued Eyal's (2005) study about knowledge production in Israel about the surrounding Arab world. Eyal's study about the state's security and intelligence mechanisms dedicated special attention to native Jews and immigrants of Muslim countries, and the ways in which their particular knowledge was channeled for Zionist security needs.

These sociological works form part of a growing historical trend that engages with the scholarship and activity of native Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectuals in Eretz-Israel/Palestine before 1948. Social-historical accounts such as *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in early 20ᵗʰ century Palestine* (Campos 2011) and *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine* (Jacobson & Naor 2016), deal with the different ways in which Sephardic intellectuals handled the expansion of Zionism, and the rift it was carving between the native Jews and Arab in the land[i]. Through the study of Sephardiness, Evri (2013, 2016) broadened the perspective about these intellectuals, and the way they marked alternative historical roads not taken by the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. The line of inquiry of Jewish-Arab relations and Jewish-Arab identity, through the discourse and cultural production of Mizrahi intellectuals, has been further explored within the state of Israel by Efron (2005). Other researchers focused more specifically on Iraqi intellectuals, showing the continuity between their intellectual activity in Iraq and in Israel, because of the special way they were immersed in Arab high culture (Alcalay 1993, Snir 2005). The line of research examining Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectuals' writings and thinking may often overlap with the subjects of research presented in this work. However, this dissertation engages with intellectual activity only when it is related to autonomously organized collective action frameworks.

Much research was performed over non-autonomous political activity of Mizrahim and Sephardim, particularly over their quite limited activity in Zionist organization in different Muslim countries, especially before 1948 (e.g. Saadon 1992, Sehayek 1997). This line of study is often motivated by the desire to exhibit Jewish national unity, and weave Mizrahi historiography into the hegemonic Zionist narrative. However, not much research was conducted about the particular place and dynamics of Mizrahim in the Zionist parties in Palestine before 1948 (Katz 2007: 9-10). Somewhat more research was conducted about

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[i] The trend that focuses on the relation between Sephardim and Palestinian Arabs can be highlighted versus the line of historical research that focused on the relationship of Sephardim with the Zionist movement, e.g. Bezalel 2007, Haim 2000, Alboher 2002.

Mizrahim in Zionist parties after 1948, but still there is much to be explored. This line of research has characterized Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations within the parties, especially in the 1950s and 1960s and in the Labor movements' parties, as *"patronizing partnership"* (Leon & Cohen 2011) or as applying a *"custodian strategy"* (Meir-Glitzenstein 2004). Some research examined Mizrahi immigrants' relation to various parties and their voting patterns (Deshen 1970, 1972, Lissak 1972, Chetrit 2001). Other investigations examined Mizrahi membership patterns in a particular party. Meir-Glitzenstein (2004) investigated the ruling party Mapai, and showed the base of estrangement and mistrust of the Ashkenazi leadership towards the Mizrahi representatives they had nominated. Mizrahim were nominated to representative positions in order to recruit Mizrahi voters, and lacked any base of power within the party, and were therefore dependent in the party mechanisms. Therefore, for all public and external purposes they kept obedient and cooperative with the leadership's decisions and discourse, even when that went against their communities' interests (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). Tzur (1995) wrote about the ethnic department in Mapam, a Zionist-Marxist Labor party, and the condescending attitudes of its Ashkenazi leadership, which frustrated the attempts of its Mizrahi members to grow in the party and influence its decision making (also see Roby 2015). Meir-Glitzenstein (2000) wrote a somewhat similar account of Mizrahim's experience in non-Zionist communist Maki. Herzog (1986) mentioned how all the Labor parties delegitimized ethnic political organizations, stigmatizing them as separatists, although they used the segregation along ethnic lines whenever it served their interests, in special departments within the Zionist parties and institutions. The color-blind discourse which refutes any kind of difference between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, was enforced most strictly within the Marxist parties of Mapam and Maki. A similar kind of color-blind attitude, but from a different point of departure, was traced by Leon & Cohen (2011), in their research about Mizrahim in right wing Herut. Unlike the former investigations mentioned, they followed the circumstances, struggles and the meritocratic discourse that allowed Mizrahim to gain power positions within Herut in the decade before it succeeded in defeating the ruling Labor party.

Quite a lot of research has been dedicated to studying episodes of Mizrahi contention and mobilizations, and particularly the two large episodes of mobilizations of Mizrahi immigrants in state of social exclusion, in 1959 in and in 1971-1973 (Bernstein 1976, Dahan-Kalev 1991, Grinberg 2014, Lev & Shenhav 2010). Here, academic investigation adds to and is supported by much lay literature written by political activists or others involved agents. This line of research has been dedicated in great part to describing the events, and have often dealt more closely with the causes and effects of the mobilizations rather than analyzing their discourse or organizational dynamics. The reaction of other social and political groups has also been examined (Negri 2014, Yorman 1995), as well as the reaction of state institutions: the

oppressive structures that caused the protest, their receptivity to the protestors' demands (Dahan-Kalev 1991, Weiss 2007) and their methods of oppression of the protest itself (Lev & Shenhav 2010, Roby 2015).

Most research mentioned above has relied on theory and concepts drawn from North American political culture. Chetrit (2004) and Roby (2015) conceptualized the genealogy of Mizrahi protests by comparison to the African-American Civil Rights Movement. While Roby examined correspondences between Mizrahi discourse and the black one, Chetrit made a general mapping of all Mizrahi political mobilizations and organizations from 1948 to 2004, imprinting thus the notion of a general movement of a Mizrahi struggle, that despite not being led by a particular group or person, its development can be traced through time.

Mizrahi and Sephardic political organizations do surface in Roby's and Chetrit's reviews but they are not the focus of their attention as much as the collection of rebellious acts and discourses. Very little research was dedicated to the study of autonomous political organizations. Shlomo Deshen (1970, 1972, 1976) dedicated some of his ethnographic research within Tunisian immigrant to the matter. Levy (1998) wrote about the inner-dynamics of the political organization of the native Sephardic elites around the establishment of the state, and about its relation with the Mizrahi immigrants (Levy 2000). Herzog (1986) laid an important basis for the inquiry of autonomous political organizations, examining the construction of "political ethnicity" by the 54 Mizrahi and Sephardic political parties and factions since 1920 and until 1984.

Chetrit's (2004) and Herzog's (1986) studies are the two main comprehensive investigations that laid the platform for this research, by reviewing the *"skeletons of political-ethnic Mizrahi organizations"* that the closet of Israeli political history is so full of (Leon 2004). Chetrit mapped Mizrahi political activity according to its radicalism versus cooperation with the establishment, with the question of Mizrahi politics potentially forming alternative to hegemonic Zionism as the central axis of analysis. Herzog mapped the different fractions mainly by their grade of dependence in other parties. Though not relying on their categorization uncritically, it could be said that for this research the organizations chosen are of Chetrit's category of radical and of Herzog's category of independent. Choosing a shorter periodization allows deepening the analysis over each organization's discourse and practices, rather than making general observations about the nature of Mizrahi organizations. The attempt to do just this has inevitably led both researchers to the important inquiry of the ways that hegemonic discourse and institutional practices designed the discursive contents and practical possibilities of Mizrahi organizations. In the period of study, the hegemonic discourse mainly expressed delegitimiziation to the existence of the "ethnic organizations", by journalists and politicians. The main institutional practices were the negotiations tactics of Zionist parties for co-opting Mizrahi organizations and activists to their lines. These dynamics designed the basic motivation

to get organized as a Mizrahi, Sephardic or under a particular ethnicity such as Yemenite, as a way to gain better redistribution of economic and symbolic resources, always emphasizing the national interests and not asking for segregation (Herzog 1986, Chetrit 2004). If the underlining question of the study of the political activity of Mizrahim and Sephardim is the question of whether or not the organizations suggested alternatives to hegemonic Zionist discourse and practices, in the period at hand both these researchers have maintained that they did not. Chetrit (2004) claimed that certain foundations were placed in the 1960s for alternative Mizrahi models, activities and discourses, but only in the 1980s and 1990s they got developed to discourse against European Zionism, from two directions: the Jewish-Sephardic perspective and a more intellectual-secular perspective of *"the new mizrahim"*.

In sum, previous research that explored the question of Mizrahi organizations setting alternatives to Zionist hegemony, has often negated this possibility. The will of Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations to gain power positions within the Zionist political system, their use of its terminology, their refusal to speak of segregation: all these led to the conclusion that they did not offer any alternatives to the system (Chetrit 2004, Herzog 1986, Meir-Glitzenstein 2009, Tsur 2000). Much research found these organizations to be more about narrow identity politics, i.e. calling for self-representation of a marginalized community (Shohat & Stam 1994), but not in a subversive form, and without suggesting alternatives. Since all modern identities are a construction of the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world, identity politics does not constitute an epistemological alterity. It demands equality within the system rather than developing an anti-systemic struggle (Grosfoguel 2011). Identity politics asks for recognition in a way that may seem as merely symbolic remedy for injustice (Fraser 1998), when it does not engage in demands for transformative recognition, attempting to destabilize racial dichotomies and change the sense of self of the entire society. However, such transformative ambitions are usually far removed from the immediate interests and identities of the majority of racialized people (Fraser 1993).

On the other hand, previous research of Mizrahi political activity inevitably had at least touched the question, explicitly or implicitly, of Mizrahi political activity conforming of potential alternative horizons to modern/colonial reality in Israel/Palestine. As discussed so far, this relies on Mizrahim's intermediate position within the Zionist modern/colonial identity regime. The Mizrahi site of enunciation creates a contradiction in the inner-logics of modern/colonial Zionism, which has the potential of generating such processes of rebellion. The two sides of the modern/colonial coin are often coherently co-constitutive and complementary in local histories. Mizrahi history exposes the contradictions between the two sides of the coin, getting included in the modern national project but in the price of silencing their knowledge and ways of being. This colonial elimination took place mostly in the first two decades of statehood. In

the height of this process, we will observe what counter-hegemonic stances Mizrahim could generated from their very position. The Mizrahi position exposes the contradictions of Zionist consciousness, because it exposes the colonial racial components of the formal Zionist national ethos of unity and equality between Jews (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). Here I will claim that the subversive potential of Mizrahi political activity can be most easily observed using decolonial perspectives and concepts. The need for this theoretical exploration stems precisely from the lack of clear substantial subversive alternatives in Mizrahi political activity.

PART III
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE DECOLONIAL HISTORICAL STUDY OF MIZRAHI AND SEPHARDIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

A decolonial perspective over ethno-class inequalities in Israel inevitably views those as importantly intertwined with the mechanisms that allow and severe the occupation of Palestine. For various historic and contemporary reasons previously discussed, Israel de-facto sustains an ethnic voting pattern, where leftist parties' voters are mainly Ashkenazim, who compose the majority of anti-Zionist left as well, and many Mizrahim voting to the nationalist right (Herzog 1986, Horowitz & Lissak 1990). That is why a decolonial discussion in Palestine/Israel from a Jewish-Israeli perspective, must address the multiple hierarchies that affect Israeli society and the way they effect the dynamics with Palestinian Arabs.

Within Israeli sociology, the analysis of these multiple hierarchies is usually restricted to the state of Israel, and separate terms of analysis and empirical investigations are dedicated to the study of the military regime over the Occupied Palestinian Territories. That is despite the obvious continuity and importance of the scale of orientalization, beyond the official borders of the state of Israel, and despite the uncertain blurredness of the borders themselves (Offir & Azoulay 2008, Shenhav 2002, Gillis 2016). Within pubic political discourse as well the "ethnic problem" (of Mizrahim) and the "Arab problem" (of Palestinians) can rarely be addressed at conjointly (for instance as the "Zionist problem"), and discussion of one would often obscure the other[i].

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[i] When they do converge, it is usually in the framework of competition of victims (Chaumont 2000), see Kahlili (2016).

The principal contribution of decolonial theorization to our geo-cultural context is offering an integrated approach to the multiple hierarchies influencing the entire territory of Palestine/Israel. The decolonial concepts and prism can frame these hierarchies in an encompassing way, and may use one framework to address the changing historical situation since the beginning of Zionism and until nowadays, allowing to include under one conceptual umbrella the ethnic hierarchies of Israeli citizens and Palestinian non-citizens as well.

The Abyssal Line

The law sociologist Bonaventura De Sousa Santos conceptualized the irreducibility of the colonial difference -in its epistemological and legal manifestations- by an abyssal line. The Other side of the line is a realm of unofficial though recognizable law, conceived as lawlessness. The knowledge produced there is considered beyond truth and falseness, categorized as beliefs, intuitive or subjective knowledge (Santos 2007). Grosfguel expanded this term with Fanonian-Hegelian concepts, through which above the abyssal line there is what Fanon referred to as the Human, in the zone of being, which can represent the west. Under the line there is the subhuman, in the zone of non-being, which can represent the colonized, the rest of humanity. The term Human refers to forms of living, being, feeling, knowing, producing etc., which are considered the model of humanity, whereas the rest are inferiorized, hence, subhuman. In each zone there are conflicts and oppressions determined by class, gender, religion, sexuality, ethnicity or other factors. But there is a qualitative difference between being oppressed on each side of the line. In the zone of being, reign the social logics of emancipation and regulation. Most conflicts get resolved in non-violent ways, with violence occurring exceptionally. Discourses of equality and liberty constitute the institutional and legal management of such conflicts; the oppressed in the zone of being have a right to fight for their civil and human rights. On the other side, in the zone of non-being, reign social logics of violence and dispossession. The oppressed in the zone of non-being are not subjects of rights. They are treated as non-human, and conflicts are solved by violence in an openly shameless manner (Grosfoguel 2012). In the modern/colonial world order, the elementary forms of oppressions of social class and gender are organized legally by racial categorization. The racist application of law and rights determines the amount of violence that can be exercised over the subaltern.

HUMAN/ZONE OF BEING

   -OPPRESSED   *EMANCIPATION/ REGULATION*

SUBHUMAN/ ZONE OF NON-BEING

   -OPPRESSED (NON-HUMAN)   *VIOLENCE/DISPOSSESSION*

The zones of being and non-being are not concrete geographical places, but a position of power relations that occurs on different scales. These power relations are bound to racist-dehumanizing ideas, and have a concrete manifestation in customary and legal discrimination in rights. On a global scale, the zones of being and non-being conform to the First/ Third World or center/periphery, whereas on a city scale the zone of non-being can be a ghetto, whose inhabitants are racially inferiorized and are expropriated from many rights (Appadurai 2013). These ghettos, on a larger scale, can also be referred to as internal colonization, an enclave of the zone of non-being in the zone of being (Grosfoguel 2012, Santos 2007).

The abyssal line metaphor is especially useful for addressing the contemporary situation in Palestine and Israel, where the wall of separation make the abyssal line tangible, and where Palestinians suffer multiple oppressions and violation of many rights[i] (Grosfoguel 2009, Santos 2007). The place of Palestinians citizens of Israel can be conceptualized as that of internal colonization (Zureik 1979): the re-articulation of the colonial difference inside the nation state (Mignolo 2000), with a position of second-class citizenship (Grosfoguel 2012). This explains how despite inhabiting the privileged side of the wall of separation and having formal civil rights, Palestinians citizens of Israel still suffer occasionally, exceptionally, the violence and dispossession of the dehumanized of the zone of non-being. Thus, the October 2000 events, where 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed in demonstrations, can occur, while they still have more representation in higher education institutions than Mizrahim. A contemporary illustration of the abyssal line in Israel/Palestine may be portrayed as following:

> Ashkenazi(ed) urban middle-class   ZONE OF BEING
>
> Mizrahim and other oppressed groups (women, Ethiopians etc.)
>
> (Enclaves of non-being: Palestinian citizens of Israel, work-immigrants)

ABYSSAL LINE————————————————————————————————

> Palestinian political and intellectual elite   ZONE OF NON-BEING
>
> Farmers and other oppressed groups (LGTBs, Bedouins etc.)

The abyssal line is a graphic illustration of the colonialilty of power, and addresses the contemporary aspiration for an integrated analysis of the territory from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. Nonetheless, a scheme of the abyssal line might also be suggested to illustrate the state of Israel in the period of research and regarding the population of research. Here, the abyssal line marks the limits of the military regime imposed on Israeli Palestinian Arabs until 1966:

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[i] Among the human rights that are systematically violated in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are freedom of speech, association, movement, press, property owing and religion. See Paz-Fox (2010) for an example of the legal abyss in laws distributing lands in the occupied territories.

Ashkenazi urban middle-class   ZONE OF BEING

Mizrahi old timers

Mizrahi immigrants

(Enclaves of non-being: Druze and collaborative Arab sectors)

ABYSSAL LINE————————————————————————————

Israeli Palestinian Arab urban middle class   ZONE OF NON-BEING

Israeli Palestinian Arab farmers and internal refugees

The scheme presented here helps to conceptualize the *"sandwich existence"* (Mahleb 2007) of Mizrahim in Israel today and its continuity with the past, it relates their oppression to a wider context than Jewish Israeli society, and also illustrates the difference between the colonial oppression they have endured and the one suffered by Palestinians.

The same scheme could be displayed on a different scale in order to address the international actors that are enrooted in the local dynamics. This way the binary oppositions of power relations between Israel/Palestine can be contextualized within the binary oppositions of UN/Arab League, USA/Middle East, West/Rest, and Occident/Orient. With the concept of coloniality of power as encompassing multiple intersectional hierarchies, of gender, sexuality, class, age etc., we can see that this model enables to make a relatively non-reductive mapping of the multiple power relation that take part in our geographical province. Still, remembering that it is an analytical framework, and therefore requires to fix categories in order to approach the complexity of social reality (Martinez et.al. 2012).

A further note is required about binary oppositions. Social scientists do not tend to like them in general, for being too reductive and strict. Postmodernism constitutes the Eurocentric answer that was developed from this dislike (Maldonado-Torres 2011, Santos 2006). However, from a decolonial perspective, these dichotomies are required in order to conceptualize the struggle required against colonial structures of power. As De Sousa Santos (2006) explained, the role of the investigator in this inquiry in not to theoretically deconstruct dichotomies, but it is rather in exploring processes from below that construct subjectivities that rebel against their manifestations. This essentially reductive scheme can best be used in order to visualize different levels of socio-political and cultural struggles. One type of struggle is against internal colonization, others are against specific oppressions, but the struggle against the existence and reinforcement of the abyssal line itself is a different one altogether. It seems such a struggle would require collaboration from every step on this ladder of power relations and qualities of life. However, the first condition for creating post-abyssal thinking is to recognize the abyss: otherwise critical thinking will continue to produce it even when it asks to rebel against it, as happened with Marxism for instance (Santos 2007).

CONCLUSION: THE OBJECT OF RESEARCH

In this research the key category for speaking of political activity will be "organizations", because the empirical data is best arranged under this general definition. This category will apply to different kinds of movements, associations, interest groups and political parties, all considered as one empirical phenomenon: self-organized collective action, oriented for gaining power (Ibarra et.al. 2002).

The field of autonomous political organizations was chosen for research because I understand it to be the site where the Mizrahi locus of enunciation can be most clearly recognized and get translated into action, in ways that are relevant for potential actions nowadays as well. This is the site where some content inevitably gets poured into the category of Mizrahiness, because it is through this kind of organizations that collective identity gets formulated. It is within the need for autonomy and the attempt to get people organized in the political field where a group or a leader is most urgently required to the task of defining who they actually are, who do they aspire to represent and for the sake of whom do they wish to act.

Most Social Movement Theory about collective identity examine inner processes of construction of collective action, such as participants' motivations, the making of strategic choices and the cultural effects movements have on society (Polletta & Jasper 2001, Melucci 1995). In this research we will examine collective identity in a different way. Firstly, as a historical inquiry through documents, the research will examine only collective action frames (Benford & Snow 2000), that is, the discursive representation of collective action (Melucci 1995). Secondly, we will emphasize the products Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations attempted to create, rather than the inner processes of their construction. The product is the shared sense of "we" that corresponds with the sense of "collective agency", inviting audiences to take action (Snow 2001). This sense of "we" is what often stands behind identity politics (Fominaya 2010), and emerges in times of social and political straits or changes (Snow 2001), as in the period of study.

As Shohat & Stam (1994) pointed out, identity politics is fraught with personal and political tensions about who speaks, when, how, and in whose name. Eventually, much of this study of Sephardic and Mizrahi organizations explored certain leaders' discourses and actions. The leaders constitute the speakers of the organization, its representatives. Between the leader and the organization there is a metonymic relationship: the leader is part of the group and functions as a sign that represents the group (Bourdieu 1985). This focus in the speakers, assumes that behind the speaker there are networks of affiliation, anchored in shared cultural repertoires, through which speakers and groups design each other (Algazi 2011). These networks might share past and current cultural materials and traditions, as well as structural arrangements, interpretive frameworks and dramaturgical codes of expression and demeanor: the kind of

threads that weave collective identities (Snow 2001). We will follow the leaders' attempts to leverage their symbolic capital within these networks, in order to name a Sephardic and Mizrahi collective. This is part of their struggle over the legitimate public way to conceptualize the social world (Bourdieu 1985). The leader attempts to establish the collective *"through intense coordination, contingent improvisation, tactical maneuvering, responses to signals from other participants, on the spot reinterpretations of what is possible, desirable, or efficacious, and strings of unexpected outcome inciting new improvisations"* (McAdam et.al. 2001).

Bourdieu (1985) wrote in detail about the inherent gap between the intellectuals that take the role of the professionals of representation, and the public which they presume to represent (Algazi 2011). He described the process through which individuals with low symbolic capital dispossess themselves of power in favor of an organization, a juridical entity, in order for this entity to be conceivable as an active social force. The speaker of the group then, having gained the authority and power to speak for the group, in fact substitutes the group and becomes the group itself. This entails an inevitable process of alienation of the representative from the individuals who are supposed to form the collective (Bourdieu 1985). The political discourse speakers create is a euphemized and universalized expression of their habitus, their actual role and their conceived role in the social world (Bourdieu 1984). Speakers create strategical and perspectival truths as weapons, which will allow them to be victorious (Foucault 2003). In this research we will follow then the maneuvering and coordination of different speakers, centrally inquiring after their construction of a collective ethnic identity.

Searching for decolonial perspectives within the autonomous political activity of Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations continues former researchers' inquiry after Mizrahim's political activity as potentially setting alternatives to hegemonic Zionist political patterns. It also joins the effort of Slabodsky (2014) to weave the decolonial conceptual framework into critical Jewish history. By applying the hermeneutics of emergence, we will search for springs of post-abyssal thinking, proposals, logics or mindsets, that could still be relevant today as alternatives to colonial Zionism. That means, that within the autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political activity, primarily aimed for their own emancipation, we will search for rhetoric and action that is built upon intercultural perceptions of diversity and liberation. Their relation with and discourse about Palestinian Arabs naturally form a constitutive part of examining post-abyssal thinking. If Mizrahim are best analyzed as both colonizers and colonized (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005), the question of their potential to set alternatives to colonial Zionism by going beyond modern abyssal thinking can be answered primarily by the resistance to play both roles.

Post-abyssal thinking may mean different things in different historical contexts. This study has attempted to avoid analyzing the Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations by contemporary

standards of liberation and counter-hegemonic critique. In the decades of the cold war, after the Ashkenazi Holocaust and before revealing the Israeli archives about the 1948 war, Inner-Jewish critique that is not Marxist would have to rely on completely other tools and knowledge than the ones available for anti-colonial activists today. It is of no coincidence that both Herzog (1986) and Chetrit (2004) note only in their contemporaneous Mizrahi organizations the beginning of new discourses that goes beyond shallow identity politics, producing more comprehensive, coherent and challenging critique than the historical organizations they had examined (also see: Shenhav 2007, Chetrit 1999). That is despite the fact that still no Mizrahi movement has been able to articulate continuity with the Palestinian liberation struggle[i] (Honig-Parnass 2011, Bashir 2007, Dahan 2007). The fact that historical Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations worked in order to get incorporated in the state and not in order to dismantle it, as the fact that they appropriated Zionist terminology, does not by itself discard their entire discourse and political activity as reproducing colonial Zionist logics. Often movements and adversaries speak the same language, but from opposite perspectives (Melucci 1995). In anti-colonial struggles, the colonized fights in the name of the values of the colonizer, uses his technique of thought and methods of combat, because that is the only action the colonizer understands (Memmi 1965). The fact that national anti-colonial struggles use the imperial language in their resistance makes them seem dependent on western mainstream discourse. However, this is not the force of reality, and this assumed dependency is not always there (Said 1993). The collective action that collective identity instigates is largely based on production of knowledge. This production often relies on appropriation of knowledge that, at least partially, did not go through manipulation of the dominant mechanisms (Polletta & Jasper 2001). In order to change the colonial nature of the state, any political group would have had to first gain power within it by the resources it has and according to the political structure of opportunities it encountered. Within this dynamic, we will search for ways in which the Mizrahi site of enunciation allowed challenging the inner-logics of modern/colonial Zionism. If Mizrahiness is one of the only perspectives social analysis have found for decolonizing Palestine/Israel, it is worthwhile exploring within its historical political avatars, expressions -however limited and contradictory- for such decolonial horizons, especially ones that could still set viable alternatives to colonial Zionism today.

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[i] The last public attempt to do so, to my knowledge, was an attempt of Mizrahi supporters of Arab parties in Israel to form a kind of lobby within the united list of these parties, imposed on the three different Arab lists in the 2015 elections. The initiative of *mizrahit-meshutefet*: *Mizrahi-Palestinian partnership*, has not been functioning since 2016, as far as my knowledge goes.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter will lay out the epistemic base and methodological framework that preceded this research. First I will explicate the shortcomings of my toolbox and the limitations they have imposed on this research, and specify its methodological challenges. Afterwards, I will explain the choices I made throughout the investigation: first, regarding the translation from Hebrew to English, then regarding the selection of the groups, mentioning also some relevant groups that were excluded from this research. Then I will revise the materials chosen for review and explain the procedure of research itself. Lastly, I will attend to the periodization.

Limitations of research

In the last decades an epistemological transition is occurring within academic research, requiring researchers to reflect over their locus of enunciation. This is in order to produce knowledge conscious of the writers' position in the power structures, while explicating for whom and for what the knowledge is being produced. Being sensitive to the geo-politics (Dussel 2005) and body-politics of knowledge produced (Grosfoguel 2011), clarifies the emotional preferences of the scholar (Mignolo 2000), and their commitment to a socio-historical location (Dussel 2007). Therefore, the next section will be dedicated to explaining my locus of enunciation and its weaknesses, as well as the reach of my acquired tools and skills, and the limitations these have imposed on this dissertation.

The greatest limitation of this research, the main tool missing from its toolbox, derives from the slow and gradual focalization in the subject of research, as explained in the introduction. In my process of preparation for the research I did not get properly trained in reading literary Arabic, which would be necessary in order to include materials in Arabic in the research. Therefore, it is based only on Hebrew, English and Spanish materials. French would have also been very necessary for the study of some very relevant North African activists and groups that were left out of this research.

The greatest methodological challenge for this research was the writing an historical account from a sociologist perspective. The sociological tools are designed to generalize and take a broad view of a situation, in order to be able to formulate an argument about it, relating it to theoretical models developed from similar contexts. By contrast, the historian's subject is precisely the details of any studied phenomenon, revealing its uniqueness and its ever-changing nature. My attempts, then, to formulate theoretical arguments regarding the historical field

studied remain inherently incomplete, both for the theoretical discussion and for describing the historical reality. Historical documents inevitably reveal too little, and interviews disclose a too partial piece of reality, to make any kind of generalization about any historical phenomenon, with the complexity of relationships and conversations, the richness of scents and accents that it entails.

Furthermore, the mere assumption on which the research is based, that there can be decolonial discourse and practices found within the political activity of Mizrahim in Israel, is possibly based on not little Ashkenazi-biased romanticism. As an Ashkenazi, the attempt to make generalizations about Mizrahim, especially when examining this category in relation to the category of Arabs, entails a risk of reproducing colonial categories, homogenizing the two populations in indebted ways, and over simplifying the differences between different Mizrahim themselves, as conforming an irreducible alterity from the Ashkenazi point of view. The somewhat romanticized aspiration of Raz-Krakotzkin (2005), to write Mizrahi history as critical Jewish history, as presented in the first chapter, guided not little of this research. However, I believe my ability to write Jewish history in a critical way was limited by the politogolical perspective, inherent in the focus on political organizations and their formulation of a political Mizrahi identity. As Leon (2004) claimed, this is simply not precisely the principal perspective through which Mizrahi Judaism is constructed: this is not the sphere where its alterity is most demonstrated, nor does it best reveal the potential alternatives it encompasses for Israeli society and its relation with the other natives of the land and the region. The political perspective has been imposed to a certain degree by disciplinary divisions, hence my modern European scientific tools by themselves set limits for approaching the social sphere studied from a deeper decolonial perspective. However, it is possible for a deeper perspective to be developed using sociological tools by a researcher that has a more profound background in Mizrahi Judaism itself. Such backgrounds might have directed research to focusing on questions on the seam line between politics and spiritual culture. The entire research is tilted by my Ashkenazi identity, and its inquiries would not have been the same if I were studying the same social phenomenon from the motivation of writing up my own heritage of resistance. Decolonial perspectives taken from the south are more effective for re-formulating struggles of concrete groups over their own identity, much more than the point of view of the privileged, even when asking to perform an act of solidarity with these struggles. A decolonial research springing from carriers of Mizrahi heritage themselves, would perhaps be more interested in internal connections and differences within the Mizrahi political sphere studied: between Jews from different countries and regions of origins, between different immigration waves or between different generations. It is possible that this kind of information is the one more required in order to draw a deeper genealogy of the Mizrahi struggle: to understand the sources of today's struggle, to know from what point in fact this generation is picking the struggle up,

and to become familiar with the alliances that were possible in the past and the conditions that allowed them. Notwithstanding, the greater limitation of studying the Mizrahi political sphere as an Ashkenazi is the absence of the colonial wound in my personal inventory of traces. As a woman, I know something about oppression, and patriarchal and colonial power relations are interconnected and function eventually in mighty similar manners. However, I have not experienced the depth of the particular Mizrahi oppression, I have not suffered its pain in neither direct nor indirect manners, I know it completely from outside and not from any borderland. The problem of not being a carrier of the colonial wound rises from the irreducible colonial difference it has created, which is expressed in a difference between the critical knowledge produced by those who participated in building the modern/colonial world, and those who have been left out of the discussion (Mignolo 2002). It is about the emotive motivation of research, and about the limited ability of bringing to the foreground an alternative epistemic base that has been oppressed and discredited into silence. It is these kind of attempts *"to account theoretically for the 'structure of feeling', the deep current of rage against the Israeli establishment that united Sephardim, independent of their declared party affiliation"* (Shohat 1988), which has allowed for Mizrahi history writing to be ground-breaking.

By this, I do not mean to reduce academic writing to an essentialist product of the writer's identity. An epistemic position is not the same as social position; in fact, *"the success of the modern/colonial world system consists in making subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions"* (Grosfoguel 2011). However, positioning oneself epistemologically as subaltern while enjoying the social privileges resulting from a dominating position is somewhat more complex a task[i]. Mignolo (2003) called this positioning "weak border-thinking", exemplified in history for instance by Carl Marx or San Bartolomeo de las Casas. Shohat & Stam (1994) also discussed the role privileged participants can take in multi-cultural coalitions, and a whole paradigm of Whiteness Studies has been structured around this discussion in North America (Rasmussen et.al. 2001). Anzaldúa suggested for progressive whites who study other cultures the possibility to become intellectual mestizas. While I cannot be emotional mestiza, and certainly not biological mestiza, she suggested a room for empathy between people of color and progressive, politically sensitive and aware whites. However, that requires for research to connect with action and activism, and define clearly its ideological and political function (in: Keating 2009). This is where the crucial need arises to take into academic account practical

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[i] I believe the most comprehensive discussion in this question until today was written by Memmi (1970). Naturally, it is also a recurrent subject in Israeli activist-intellectual online magazines. For instance, Abergel (2019); Haluzin-Dovrat, Lin. "Share and not Divide: what was forgotten in the discourse about privileges?" (lahlok ve-lo lehalek. Ma nishkakh be-siah ha-privilegyot?) 9.9.13. Retrieved from: http://haemori.wordpress.com/2013/09/09/dovrat/ (last accessed on 12.5.20); Tahar-Lev, Itamar, "The Left is (sometimes) the Longing to Europe" (ha-smol hu [lif'amim] ga'aguim le-eropa), 31.3.15. Retrieved from: shorturl.at/ivEJ9 (last accessed on 12.5.20).
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knowledges of movements, whether they be of workers, women, racialized subjects, gays or simply anti-system (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007), by stepping down from the ivory tower and accompanying social movements, looking to delve in some aspects of their practices and bring comparable experiences from other emancipatory struggles (Santos 2011). While this aspiration for social research is somewhat limited within the discipline of history, within the social sciences there are some methodologies designed to face this challenge, as Participatory Action Research, Critical Ethnography and Critical Communicative Methodology. These methodologies are based on the ethics of scientific inquiry, while relinquishing hierarchies between the investigator and subjects of investigation (Cruz & Cornejo 2012), avoiding telling "one true story" about reality (Harding 1986) and seeing hierarchies as negotiable (Haraway 1992). In these methodologies, subjects of research are positioned in a strong and collective position of producers of knowledge, i.e. as participants in the research. This way, scientific knowledge is recreated, and objectivity is redefined as based on inter-subjectivity between researchers and social actors involved in a research (Gomez et.al. 2011). In this context, the scientific norm of *"individual knowledge seekers"* (Harding 1986) is losing some of its relevance, and collective research is found more productive. Within the dialectics Santos (2006) referred to between emancipation and regulation, this can be seen then as the last greatest limitation of research, in its aspiration to contribute to emancipatory struggles in Israel/Palestine: the very binding to the framework of the solitary construction of knowledge that consists of the process of the PhD project, limits its ability to constitute a more deeply liberatory search for knowledge.

Translating Hebrew terms and concepts

The challenge of writing this research in English forced some difficult choices because of the need to translate concepts that in Hebrew are self-explicatory or form part of general Israeli culture. This challenge also turned to a blessing at times, allowing me to coin expressions that I understand to be more liberatory, more supportive to the writing of a Mizrahi history of resistance. Notwithstanding, the main guideline for my choices of translation was to facilitate reading for those who are not immersed in the Israeli social field, whether as researchers or not. I decided to translate the Hebrew plural form into English, in words that have been used like this prior to me, as the terms kibbutzim, Ashkenazim and Sephardim. From this base I also used the less commonly used plural, Mizrahim. I tried not to overload the writing with Hebrew terms,

for instance by referring to *toranic academies* instead of *yeshivas[i]*, and *ultra-orthodox Jews* instead of *haredim.* A word I found difficult to translate was the word *'askan*, which I replaced sometimes with *activist*, *notable* or *intellectual activist,* depending on the context. Neither of these English terms convey the same negative connotation this word nowadays transmits in Hebrew, however it was not the only connotation I found for it in the period of research. I found the word *'askan*, without any negative connotation, to be quite an appropriate term to capture the variety in trajectories and degrees of political engagement of Mizrahim in this period. Another challenge was the concept of *'adatiyut*: By itself I found the translation to *ethnicity* to be quite precise, but it got complicated with its conjugations, as *'eda* or *'adati*. In later 1960s my main subjects of research used in English the adjective *communal* where I used *ethnic*. I decided not to largely adopt this term for the course of research because I found *ethnic* to be a more appropriately charged term to convey the power relations hiding under the construction of the term *'adati*.

The choice of the category of Mizrahim was the hardest to make. The category Sephardic was congruent with the self-definition of its subjects, but the term Mizrahi was only getting formulated at this time and had many other competitors for its name, first and fore-mostly the hegemonic term, *bnei 'edot ha-mizrah.* When I had to translate it directly I translated it to *eastern ethnicities.* In research in English, the most common translation of this category is *oriental,* but contemporary political sociology more commonly uses the term *Mizrahi*, and that seemed more appropriate for the political framing and purpose of this inquiry. Therefore, I decided to apply this anachronism within this socio-historical research. I usually referred to *"Mizrahi and Sephardic"* in order to encompass to the diversity of the field at hand. Sometimes, for purposes fluency in writing, I used *Sephardim* or *Mizrahim* as interchangeable terms to describe the entire population of Jews that lived under Muslim rule until World War I. However, most often I used the term *Mizrahim* to allude to post-1948 immigrants to Israel from Muslim countries, and *Sephardim* to those who immigrated from these countries beforehand, including several centuries ago. The word I was lacking to describe the objective empirical phenomenon I was investigating was some kind of word that could define *natives of the region*, people forming part of a Judeo-Muslim civilization (Snir 2006), autochthonous of the entire Muslim Middle East, including North Africa, versus the colonizers that arrived from Europe. Using the terms native or autochthonous is difficult because of the vast movement of people within the Middle East and the fluent exchange the region has had with Europe throughout the centuries. While colonial terminology helps shed certain beams of light over the local context, there is some inherent difficulty in using the native-colonizer binary oppositions within middle-eastern

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[i] *yeshiva* is the Jewish higher-education institution as it has been developed in Europe, a space for men to practice the holy work of studying the canonical texts of Jewish tradition.

history: that is part of the great difference between the Arab and Latin American colonial histories.

The selection of groups

The groups, leaders and texts chosen for observation in this investigation are those found most appropriate, and also accessible within my limitations, to answer the research questions: most likely to exhibit decolonial traces in their discourses and in their practices. I certainly did not exhaust all the groups that could be considered Mizrahi and Sephardic autonomous political organizations active in the period of study. Moreover, some of the groups chosen might not be considered as entirely autonomous organizations, and other organizations are not strictly political.

I excluded from this research the entire Yemenite political sphere: this sub-political sphere has an especially large array and variety of political organizations that had been active in Palestine/Eretz-Israel since 1920. I did not have sufficient time in order to explore its extensive historical trajectory, inner structure and internal dynamics, which could well deserve a separate research of its own[i]. The same can be said about the many local Mizrahi political organizations formed in towns of Israel's periphery since late 1950s.

Many autonomous Mizrahi organizations in the period of study were immigrant associations revolving around the common culture of a certain country of origins, functioning primarily for the sake of facilitating immigration and absorption processes. Many of the leaders of these organizations got absorbed into Zionist political parties, but many organizations kept an autonomy that was quite strictly a-political: for this reason, none of these organizations was included in this research. Some very relevant groups were not studied due to my language limitations. The most relevant group neglected for this reason is the circle surrounding Felix Matalon. Felix Matalon was an Egyptian-born Marxist and Mizrahi activist, who spent the first half of the 1950s immersed in the Marxist-Zionist party Mapam. He edited a Labor-oriented Mizrahi journal called *Hame'orer* for few years, starting in 1956. In the early 1960s he moved to an impoverished Mizrahi neighborhood in the outskirts of Tel Aviv where he established the group "*The Suhube*", called after the group of the prophet Muhamad's followers. This group continued to publish a journal called *Hed Hame'orer* independently, leading an anti-colonial and popular line. Despite much relevance for this research, this group's activity was not attended to, both for lack of primary material, and because of Matalon's extensive publications in

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[i] For some more information about the Yemenites organizations see for instance, Herzog (1986), Jacobson & Naor (2016:131).

French[i]. The investigation includes the Iraqi cadre in the Israeli Communist Party (ICP), but without reviewing their most relevant material for this research, that was produced in Arabic. Therefore, the chapter about this circle is highly limited, and its ability to respond to the research questions should be considered as less than partial. There was also a Bulgarian cadre in the ICP, i.e. of Sephardic origins. The Iraqi cadre was chosen for observation because their middle-eastern roots, Arab culture and command of Arabic language made their perspective, discourse and activity potentially liberatory in deeper decolonial ways than the Eurocentric communist discourse of the time. In contrast, and as far as my knowledge goes, the Bulgarian cadre never tapped into their Sephardic heritage for formulating political discourse that was relevant to the local reality.

The autonomous organizations forming part of this research are firstly all those who participated in parliamentary politics. Those which are not, were chosen each upon different bases. The Student Cell for Merger of the Diasporas (SCMD) was chosen as a social experiment in politics that was allowed within Israeli academic campuses. Not engaging with the public sphere outside the campus allowed it to experiment with practices and discourses that did not evolve in the 1960s in the Mizrahi political sphere. The Torah Loyalist Circle was incorporated for this research because of the way this Circle later evolved, to be today's primary political party to represent an autonomous Sephardic collective voice, ultra-orthodox Shas. If the Torah Loyalist Circle was reviewed due to its future, the activity of the Committee of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem (CSCJ) was reviewed thanks to its past. In 1955 this body quit electoral parliamentary and municipal politics, but its activity continued to be of central interest to this research. In the 1960s Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectuals in Israel were influenced by anti-colonial discourse in the Middle East, and the CSCJ supplied an autonomous Sephardic intellectual stage to incorporate these spirits into the Israeli political sphere.

Procedure of research

Before investigating the groups and activists chosen for review, I first studied secondary materials regarding international and national occurrences of each historical period, and elaborated the historical background of each historical period. Then I attended to the study of particular groups. First, I searched in libraries' search engines for any secondary materials about the group. The next step consisted of reviewing their own publications if they had any, usually going through the entire publication and choosing to focus on certain articles according to their

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[i] See in: CZA S62/576; 430A/210/3 & 4. For more about his biography, see Matalon (2002).

title[i]. The next step was searching in relevant archives for any primary materials produced by the groups themselves or by their leaders. Pamphlets, posters, political propaganda, and journals were analyzed as texts used to define and distribute political discourse, and were also reviewed as testimony of public activity and projects. I also examined meeting protocols, personal journals and letters, as testimonies for negotiations and reflections of the process of formulation of the public action and discourse, which sometimes also revealed the emotional worlds behind the choices of the actors. I also looked for interviews with Mizrahi activists, mainly of those with a trajectory of seeking autonomous organizations. Within the primary materials, I searched after mentions of Palestinian Arabs, refugees, the military regime, Arab countries and Israeli-Arab politics. I also followed materials about the category Ashkenazim, analyses of the problems of Mizrahi immigration, testimonies of Mizrahim's protests and of developments of the autonomous political organizations. I observed the ways in which different organizations constructed the collective identity of their audience, their political heritage and regional politics. In some cases, I also examined the mainstream press' discussions about the groups and activists, often following in the general press threads of debates found in the groups' own publications. Some groups and activists, whom I found little primary material about, got searched in two newspapers' search engines: *Maariv* on JPRESS and in the *Yedioth Aharonot* archives. These are two of very few newspapers that did not have an official party affiliation at the time. When materials were still scarce I searched also in party's newspapers on JPRESS, namely *Herut*, *Haboker*, *Al Hamishmar*, *Davar*, and more rarely, *Hatsofe*.

The case of The Student Cell for Merger of the Diasporas was different. I had the opportunity to go through Yosef Tubi's personal archives and to obtain in-depth interviews with him and with Tuvia Sulami. Being the youngest of the activists of the period studied, both gentlemen were still in the prime of their intellectual activity and the interviews with them have been very enlightening for me to better understand the first Mizrahi generation graduating from Israeli universities. I held shorter interviews, without recording, with academics and activists in different degrees of relation to the CSCJ circle. I interviewed Adina Bar-Shalom, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's daughter, about his contacts with the CSCJ. She enlightened me about Mizrahi ultra-orthodoxy, and the ways it served as a source of strength in her father's public work. The interviews at large helped me understand the emotional world that derived autonomous Mizrahi political activity, and supplied rich descriptions of the lived experience that shaped the perceptions and beliefs of the actors involved.

The study of the Iraqi cadre in the ICP should be explained separately. Since I started the research, three very relevant books to their study were published, as well as a whole trove of

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[i] Only by the very end of my investigation time, two very relevant publications were uploaded to the JPRESS website, the journal Bama'arakha of the Committee of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem, and the communist Hebrew daily, Kol Ha'am was uploaded until 1965.

their documents in the National Library Archive. The ICP was a main part of the previous research program I had about the Ashkenazi left. This chapter, the shortest of them all, had been written in three layers and its writing accompanied all the years of research. This is the only group whose material I did not get close to exhaust, just because of its sheer quantity. After reviewing the secondary sources, I reviewed the booklets of the national Committees held every few years, searching after members' comments, any mention to culture, and reviewing some of the political discourse. I searched *Kol Ha'am* around key moments when I thought discourse about Arabs and about Mizrahim could be found. I did not, however, review *Kol Ha'am* during the Wadi Salib events, because I felt different authors have already exhausted this topic and did not find it necessary to add another point of view. After the change of focus of research to Mizrahi autonomous organizations, I searched materials of local ICP branches and provinces of the Jewish periphery and the Iraqi areas of concertation in the center. I chose to review the years that were more likely to speak about Mizrahi, Palestinian or other Arab issues. Regarding the 1965 split in the party, I only reviewed the Bnei-Brak branch, as the only one that was available to me of the ones likely to have a high Iraqi concentration. I also went through relevant correspondences, and got some letters translated for me from Arabic. Lastly, I was able to get an interview with Menashe Khalifa, who was the head of the Bnei-brak branch during the split: his central role in maintaining the branch alive after the split and his coherent ideology throughout the discussions preceding it, left an impression on me, and I was glad to get his and his daughter's consent for an interview.

Periodization

1948 was chosen as year zero of this research, even if it was not the inception of the Zionist colonization process nor perhaps the most important inflexion point in it, according to some analysis. This year was chosen also despite of the artificial way in which this choice detaches Mizrahim's trajectories in Israel from their pasts in Muslim countries, perpetuating this way, within academic research, the epistemological Rupture that history bestowed upon these Jews. In this sense, although the research writes history from a sociological perspective, it does not contribute to the attempts to overcome the division of labor of Israeli academy between historians and sociologists criticized in the previous chapter. As Offir (1999) claimed, choosing 1948 as the zero hour for critical social research, helps to undermine the unquestionable acceptance of the state's law and its principles of policing, and generates a confrontation between those and the claims of its victims. The research departs from the 1948 Rupture, and in this way it asks to emphasize the dimensions of the earthquake that the establishment of the state of Israel through war with the entire Arab world signified for Jews in Muslim countries.

For those who commenced their immigration process in that year, the element of Rupture is quite evident. Throughout this research I will demonstrate how this was a moment of Rupture for the native Sephardic elites as well, and I would claim that even for those Mizrahim who immigrated later on, 1948 also had significant importance, indefinitely changing the political climate for Jews in most Muslim countries.

1956 was an important year, because of the Sinai Campaign of Israel, France and Britain against Egypt, a milestone in middle-eastern colonial/imperial history, and in the historiography of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was also important in the Mizrahi political sphere, since lack of warfare is historically the first condition for Mizrahi rebellious discourse and action to arise, and wars have always put an end to Mizrahi protests in Israel (Herzog 2005, Shokeid & Deshen 1999). However, the first period of research terminates in 1957, and the second period begins in 1958 and until 1967, dividing hence the periods of research almost perfectly into two decades. This choice derived from the empirical material, which reflected a shift in 1958 in the parts of the Mizrahi political sphere examined in this research.

The choice to end in 1967 was imposed by lack of time, as the initial ambition of this research project was to cover the entire period that Israel was dominated by Labor Zionism and by the party Mapai, until the 1977 turnover in government to the right. As mentioned, this turnover is mainly attributed to Mizrahim's vote, mainly as a counter-vote against the Labor movement: an electoral pattern that certainly still influences Israeli politics. Even those who claim that Mizrahi vote was not the most crucial factor in the 1977 elections, see this year as a crucial turning point in Mizrahi political history: as Ben Dor (2004) claimed, it liberated them from 30 years of a particular Ashkenazi oppression, and changed radically the conditions of Mizrahi integration, especially in politics but also in Israeli-Ashkenazi society at large. The early 1970s saw the most known Mizrahi political movement, The Black Panthers, which fabricated interesting relationships with the radical Marxist left, the communist party and Palestinian Fatah leaders. The research, however, concludes in 1967, even though it is arguable if it was a crucial inflexion point in the Mizrahi political sphere: it certainly was not as crucial as it was for the Zionist colonization enterprise, for the Palestinian national movement and for the collision between the two. However, ending the research in 1967 is also justifiable. The 1950s and 1960s are designated by many researchers as distinct from the rest of Mizrahi history in Israel. In these two decades the discourse about modernization, in light of functionalist social theory was very influential, and the inequality between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim was especially brute and systematic (Shoshana 2013). The unequal distribution of economic and symbolic resources in this period designed the multiple fields from which Mizrahim in Israel are still, at least partially, excluded. Grinberg (2001) claimed that 1967 was a turning point also in the social and economic situation of Mizrahim in Israel, following the dramatic increase in Israel's economy,

with the incorporation of a large territory with its captive population, both as workers to exploit and as a market to sell to. After 1967, Bashkin (2017:223) claimed that Mizrahi population got more deeply divided along socio-economic lines, separating those who could benefit from this economic growth and those who remained in the cycle of poverty. The situation of those last probably worsened after 1967, having to compete in the labor market with poorer Palestinian Arab workers with no civil rights. 1967 is also important for anything related to Jewish-Arab grassroots initiatives, because it re-opened a new potential space of Jewish-Arab action (Efron 2005), reuniting the territory once again for free movement of people, ideas and goods. Following, a review of the periods demarcated in this research is presented, explaining the choice of years more concretely and framing each period's most important events.

Chapter 4: 1492-1881

This chapter outlines the relevant developments in global, Jewish and middle-eastern history in the centuries that precede the research, required to understand the heritage and roots of the political dynamics revised in the research itself. It is divided into two parts. The first part starts in 1492 and attempts to define, in very broad brushstrokes, a decolonial interpretation of the history of world Jewry in the modern age. This part explores more deeply the development of two or three distinct Jewish sub-diasporas: Ashkenazi in Europe and Sephardic and Mizrahi mainly in the Middle East. 1492 was chosen for marking the beginning of what the philosopher Dussel (2005) called first modernity, when the modern hierarchical perception of race and ethnicity got conformed through changes in global politics. In the end of the first part, and the beginning of second modernity, this global perspective will be landed into the local reality, in order to understand the social, cultural and political trajectory of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in Eretz-Israel/Palestine, as well as to understand the background of their organized action prior to Zionism.

The second part of this chapter begins in 1881, with the inception of the Zionist colonization enterprise, and ends with its culmination in the establishment of the state of Israel. In the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire fell, and the Middle East got divided into new territorial units under French and British influences. Tsarist Russia was replaced by the communist regime, and Fascist and racist ideologies gained power in Europe. After World War II and the Jewish Holocaust annihilating most of European Jewry, The USA and the USSR were established as two global super powers, wrestling each other in the Cold War that would overshadow the entire period studied. During this period, both the Palestinian-Arab national movement and the Zionist movement, understood simultaneously as a Jewish-national movement and a colonization enterprise, were in the process of consolidation. In this part we will follow the Sephardic and Mizrahi autonomous political activity and organizations, within

the internal political dynamics of the Jewish settler-colony in Palestine, and the growing conflict between the Zionist and Palestinian-Arab national movements. We will see how some among the elites of the indigenous Jewish population, sustained a rival opposition to the Zionist movement's colonial practices, while holding an alternative notion of Zionism. Some development of the Palestinian Communist Party will also be attended to, as well as relevant occurrences in Europe and milestones in the processes of colonial modernization of Jewries in Arab countries.

Chapter 5: 1948-1958

In 1948 the state of Israel was established, through the event called the Catastrophe (Nakbah) by Palestinians, and the War of Independence by Israelis. In this war almost a million Palestinian Arab became refugees and were denied re-entering the country ever again. 150,000 Palestinian Arabs remained within the boundaries of the state of Israel, received formal citizenship but were places under a military regime. Hundreds of thousands of Jews from Muslim countries immigrate to Israel, and were received under discriminatory conditions that would determine their socio-economic status in the working-class of the new state. The party ruling over the Zionist colonial/national enterprise, Mapai, enhanced and enrooted its apparatus of domination in the framework of the newborn state. In this period, we will follow the activity and discourse of one main organization, the Council of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem (CSCJ), as the only body from among the indigenous elites to have sustained the autonomy from and rivalry with the Labor movement and other Zionist parties in this period.

Chapter 6: 1958-1967

This decade was exempt of great wars and movements of population that dramatically influenced the country. However, the Middle East went through inner turmoil. During this decade, regimes in Arab countries fell and changed, looking for different recipes for consolidating national independence through modernization and development, using egalitarian ideologies that challenged traditional status quos. As this periodization insinuates, it seems this regional climate had a greater influence on the Mizrahi political sphere than the direct occurrences of the Israeli conflict with its neighbors. In this decade, the research will focus on the activity and discourse of quite a few Mizrahi and Sephardic autonomous organizations, as this sub-sphere of Israeli politics bloomed in that decade. Many of the organizations examined in this inquiry were short lived political parties, there is one student organization from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an ultra-orthodox Sephardic organization. We will continue to follow the activity and discourse developed by the CSCJ in this decade as well, and

see how their discourse retook some of its pre-1948 features for challenging the colonial Zionist regime.

Chapter 7: 1948-1965 The Iraqi cadre in the Israeli Communist Party

A separate and shorter chapter is dedicated to reviewing the activity of Iraqi communist immigrants who joined the Israeli Communist Party. Despite not forming an official autonomous organization, the activity of this circle is included in this research because of its high relevance in regards to the research questions. Communism was a main anti-colonial ideology of the time and place, despite the inner-contradiction it displayed in its attempts to bring this Eurocentric form of emancipation to the Middle East. Because of the vast materials in Arabic language this cadre has produced, this chapter is a short and non-encompassing review of their activity and discourse and is largely based on secondary resources. Because of this limitation, and the distance -though not complete separation- of this circle from the Mizrahi political sphere, and in order to tell the Jewish point of view of the story of this circle in a continual manner, their chapter is separated from the rest of the research and covers a larger span of time: from the establishment of the state and until the split that occurred in the communist party between Jews and Arabs in 1965.

CHAPTER 4

DECOLONIAL INTERPRETATION OF MODERN JEWISH HISTORY

PART I: JEWISH DIASPORA IN MODERN TIMES

First Modernity   **1492**

When the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in the 4th century AD, the Jewish kingdom of Judea, that had its center in Jerusalem, had already ceased to be center of world Jewry[i]. Instead, the Jewish community in Babylon was gaining more importance, thanks to its grand learning center (Zohar 2005). In the 7th century, Islamic rule took over the area, leading a policy that tolerated the existence of Christian and Jewish minorities within the Caliphates[ii]. About a century after the establishment of Abbasian Caliphate in Baghdad in 750, the important Jewish toranic academies moved there, and received pupils and funds from all world Jewry. Until the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in the 13th century, the importance and reach of the Halachic productions in Baghdad gradually formed what some historians see as a shared Judaic tradition, a single cultural orbit stretching from Spain to the Indian ocean. Baghdad became a center of reference for world Jewry. The Baghdadi academies formed strong local rabbinical leadership, who guided communities dispersed around the Muslim world with certain uniformity (Gerber 2003).

According to Yosef (1991), the way Jewish high-culture got developed in the east under Muslim rule, gave legitimacy for Jews in the other end of the empire, in Al-Andalus, to open up and receive deep influences from Muslim culture. From the 10th to the 12th century in particular, Jewish courtiers adopted Arab cultural tastes and lifestyles, artists and poets took inspiration from their Muslim equivalents, leisure activities and modes of religion received influences from the Muslim environment (Gerber 2003). Sephardic Jews were culturally involved and got influenced by their rulers also in the slowly expanding Christian areas of the Iberian Peninsula (Asis 1991). This period, known in Jewish historiography as The Golden Age, remains unique not only for the substantial cultural, Halachic and scientific developments Jews reached throughout it, but also for the depth to which Jewish high-culture was absorbed in its environment and contributed to it. According to Asis (1991), perhaps the most

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[i] A mixture of the Biblical narrative with other archeological findings compose the main body of knowledge of Jewish history until this time. The kingdom of Judea, that had Jerusalem as its capital, probably existed since around the 8th century BC and until its conquest by Babylonians in the 6th century BC. Jews later returned to hold varying degrees of sovereignty in Jerusalem and its surroundings until the Roman conquests of the 1st century AD.

[ii] As "people of the book" [*ahel il-kittab*] they were protected, under the *dhimmi* status. This status allowed for freedom of occupation and movement, as well as autonomy for all matters of faith, which were most public and community affairs. However, this status implied legal and juridical disqualifications, such as prohibition of certain rights or paying special taxes. These disqualifications, and the burden they implied for the everyday lives of Jews and Christians, varied along the centuries, as they were subjected to the interpretation of the different rulers (Gerber 2003, Laskier 1994).

distinct feature about this period, is the way Sephardic Jews were able to incorporate the Andalusian Muslim culture into part of their own heritage for generations to come. In 1391, the conquest of the Almohades of Al-Andalus brought an end to this period, as they established a reign of persecution and violence towards minorities, and expelled Jews from Cataluña and Mallorca. This was precedence for 1492, when the kingdom of Castile united with the kingdom of Aragon.

The decree for the expulsion of the Muslim and Jewish population from the Iberian Peninsula was issued on March 31st, 1492, nine months before Columbus' ships first embarked on the island thereafter named Hispaniola. Shohat & Stam (1994) quoted scholars that speculate that the wealth expropriated from the expulsed is what funded the overseas journeys. From their critical decolonial perspective, Shohat & Stam underscored the tight relation between the ethno-religious cleansing of the kingdom of Castile and the new formulas of colonialization and exploitation abroad, as two forms of state violence which tied together Christian religion and the white race. Shohat & Stam (1994) explained how feudal religiosity prepared the way for the racialized conquest that created new global hierarchies, a global system with one center and one principle trade route, which became dominant over a multiplicity of routes and centers. In Castile, old religious oppression was endowed with new racial meanings. From this perspective, 1492 symbolizes a new juridical and institutional abilities of governments, which constituted another thanatopolitics: another logic that allows the sovereign to kill, let die, or threat with death or expulsion (Agamben 1998).

As for Jewish history, some have claimed that the expulsion was the propeller of Jewish modernity, instituting modern Jewish consciousness and reality (Pedaya 2015, Yosef 1991). The Jews that emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula throughout the following century were officially welcomed to settle in the Ottoman Empire, and many indeed complied. By the end of the 16th century almost half of world Jewry was residing in the Ottoman Empire (Gerber 2003). In places to which Sephardim arrived in large numbers to an existing Jewish community, as in the Balkans and Turkey, they became dominant in it; in other areas they intermingled with the native Jewries and were gradually absorbed into it, as in Tunisia, Syria and Palestine (Gerber 2003, Laskier 1994, Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000). Sephardic Jews also emigrated to other areas: mainly to North-Western Africa or to different locations in Europe (Laskier 1994). The Sephardim in exile often maintained a separate community with parallel institutions to the native Jewries, but historians agree that they attained hegemonic stature everywhere they arrived, assuming spiritual and social leadership, forming an elite in both politics and in economy[i] (Gerber 2003, David 2005, Ben Sasson 1979, Laskier 1994). In North-Western Africa, despite attaining these leadership roles, Sephardic Jews were gradually absorbed in the local communities and started to use the local dialect (Benbassa 1992). In the Ottoman Empire, they conserved a cultural, intellectual and political interest in the Hispanic world, and nurtured feelings of proximity and nostalgia towards it (Asis

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[i] Similar processes occurred within Muslim North African communities with the Muslim expulses (Benbassa 1992).

1991), in manners that Jews did not tend to conserve for their hosts societies. Benbassa & Rodrigue (2000) claimed that it was the stability of the Ottoman Empire that allowed for the development of a distinct Judeo-Hispanic cultural unit in it. This based an ethnic-religious identity of Hispanic customs and liturgy, with Judeo-Spanish as its common language (Asis 1991). The intellectual and rabbinical life of Ottoman Jewry flourished, holding newspapers, educational systems and libraries (David 2005). Ottoman Jewry was developed as what Benbassa and Rodrigue (2000) referred to as a "cultural area" of its own, which conserved a Judeo-Hispanic high culture. At the same time that this particular identity was formulated and nurtured, it can be claimed that the hegemonic stature of Sephardim in Jewish communities in Muslim countries contributed to the formulation of a larger Sephardic sub-diaspora in the Muslim world in early, pre-Enlightment modernity. The evidence and vehicle of this identity was the Sephardic Siddur[i], which consolidated and dispersed Sephardic liturgy. This Siddur grew out of the modern/colonial reality the expulsion created: the territorial dispersal from Spain, the availability of techniques for printing in Hebrew the exiled Sephardim brought with them, and the tendency for textual canonization, that according to Pedaya (2015), were part of early modernity. The Siddur spread unified contents of Sephardic liturgy and customs throughout the Sephardic exiles, as well as to other Jewish communities under Islamic rule in today's Yemen and Iraq. This contributed to forming a distinction between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewries as two perceivable sub-diasporas (Noy 2014, Yosef 1991), the first dominant within Christian Europe's Jewries and the latter dominant within Jewries under Islamic domain, from Morocco to Iraq (Cohen 2005). These two sub-diasporas had distinct liturgy, origins, and languages. Some Sephardim were also under Christian rule, and many Jews under Islamic rule were not actually themselves descendants of expulsed Iberians.

Second Modernity and Emancipation   **1700-1830**

Dussel (2005) referred to late modernity as a second phase, where processes initiated in 1492 matured into their modern form. By late 16th century, Europe's power had increased in a way that allowed it to start seizing Christian territories off the Ottoman Empire. According to Shohat & Stam (1994), this was achieved through the use of forced labor from the Americas and Africa, massive injection of wealth from the Americas, the opening of new overseas markets and the establishment of new European trading routes. Enlightment was developed in Europe under the influence of the religious and philosophical turmoil that followed colonization and the image it created of the savage Other. Colonial exploitive economy matured into global capitalism, and Europe was being gradually transformed into a single

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[i]Siddur is the book that assembles all the prayers Jews use for their everyday lives and for festive events, used in synagogues and in homes.

center of reference for the entire globe (Shohat & Stam 1994). Some authors have claimed that the presence of Sephardim in Europe had a constituting influence on the development of European modernity, which has not yet been studied properly (Ben Sasson 1979, Halevi-Wise 2012). Asis (1991), for instance, suggested Sephardim contributed to the impulsion of the European Renaissance movement by their central role in translating scientific and philosophical texts from Arabic to Romance languages in Christian parts of Spain, prior to the expulsion. Modern Europe, as a rising center of global reference, held reason and rationality at its epistemological root and as its ontological justification. However, this tendency was not attributed to previous developments in Islamic scientific and rational thinking, but rather served as basis to a *"scientifically buttressed system of racial hierarchy"* (Schorsch 2004). Mignolo (2000: 49-64) marked these processes as the first radical transformation of the Occident, which created new geo-political imageries of the world system. The development of Occident as Europe and the Americas, as its extension, simultaneously created the Orient as its ultimate Other.

According to Schorsch (2004), by the 18th century Sephardic Jews in Europe firmly implanted themselves in the new Atlantic world system, and served as a model for other European Jews, who were incrementally distancing themselves from Jewish tradition and searching for integration in their home societies. Since the end of the 18th century, the process of Jewish Emancipation began in Europe, and Jews were given more civil rights across the continent. This slowly contributed to the dismantling of many Jewish communities and increased secularization among them. Schorsch (2012) investigated the processes of modernization of German Jews, and showed how central were Sephardic Jews to its development. The campaign for granting Jews equal rights in German society relied on the model of the prosperous Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam, London and Bordeaux. After gaining certain rights, a German-Jewish movement of Enlightment developed [*haskala*] and spread to Eastern Europe. Jews increasingly received secular education, and contributed to a scholarly and literary bloom in Hebrew, which until then in Europe was mainly used for liturgical and religious purposes. Within this process, the Sephardic Golden Age served as a model and source of inspiration for constructing a Jewish religious posture that did not contradict cultural openness, philosophical thinking and appreciation of aesthetics. The Sephardic heritage of cultivating rational knowledge and using language as an esthetic tool gave German Jews a classical heritage to rely on, which could be formulated as common with German culture (Schorsch 2012). It served them as a useable past, a proof of their heritage being part of European culture (Evri 2013). Emancipated Jews in Europe found in Sephardic heritage a source of pride and an instrument of rebellion within Jewish tradition, one that did not jeopardize their Jewish identity. As Schorsch (2012) put it, *"paradoxically, contact with Islam made Judaism part of the Western world"*.

At the same time, Jews living under Muslim rule were already more integrated in their societies. Within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish communities, as other minorities, had a certain social and cultural autonomy that gave them religious, financial and educational liberties, which were conditioned

by certain civic discrimination that enforced the superiority of Islamic rule (Tzimhoni 1996). Despite holding a different faith, Jewish communities in Muslim countries shared the Arab religious culture, mythology and popular rituals (Leon 2009, Shokeid 1986). These basic socio-cultural differences between Jewish sub-diasporas shaped the distinct development of modernities for Jews under Islamic and under Christian rule, which would become ever more evident with the increase of power of Europe over the Ottoman Empire and the spread of French and British colonialism in the Middle East.

Western Imperialism in the Middle East   1830-1881

Throughout the 19th century the Ottoman Empire was undergoing an uneasy process of modernization. This was propelled by a series of military defeats to European powers, which at the same time was accompanied by certain enthusiasm for the universal values, institutions and international norms entailed in the European idea a modern civilization. According to Aydin (2007), by the beginning of the 19th century these processes had consolidated Europe as a sole model for the Ottoman state and society. The empire began sending its notable youths to get educated in Europe, which cultivated different generations of reformers who wished to change, reorganize and modernize the empire's military and civic mechanisms (Campos 2011). The modernizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire increased civic equality in ways which strengthened communitarian ties of minority populations. It formalized different ethno-religious affiliations into secular positions, granting minorities an official name [*millet*], formal representation and official authorities of self- organization (Tzimhoni 1996, Bernai 1986). Since these processes supported the Jewish elites in the empire and strengthened their status, Jewish religious leaders developed an open and flexible reaction to European modernity. Modernity created more opportunities for the Jewish elites, allowing their incorporation to the Ottoman administrative system and enhancing their social, cultural and economic ties with the Arab Muslim elites (Lupo 2004, Glass & Kark 2007).

According to Tsur (2010), the influence of these processes of Ottoman Jewry on Jews in Arab countries outside the empire's borders, as in Iraq, Yemen and Morocco, have not been studied enough. Sephardic Jews held a hegemonic stature among these Jewries, but these last were much more deeply a part of their Arab environment, in many aspects of material and popular culture, though not in the production of high-culture. Throughout the 19th century, the Arab retort to European Enlightment developed in the *Nahda* movement, which spread scholarly and literary texts in Arabic across the Arab speaking world. This movement, which crossed communal, ethnic and religious communities in the Middle East, was a central part in the processes that formulated modern Arab identities. Most Jewish communities in the

Middle East did not participate in this Arab cultural movement, as their language remained confined to particular Judeo-Arab dialects or to Judeo-Spanish (Levy 2011).

The French colonial occupation of growing parts of North Africa, and the growing influence of colonial economy in the Middle East throughout this century, also brought dramatic changes to the lives of these Jewish diasporas: according to Leon (2009), in many ways these changes brought an end to 1400 years of Jewish-Muslim symbiosis. Perhaps the main factor influencing the entire sub-diaspora of middle-eastern Jews since the second half of the 19th century, was the *"meteoric spread"* (Tsur 2010) of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, a Jewish-French colonial school system that wished to spread modern secular education among middle-eastern Jews. According to Tsur (2010), Alliance had a decisive effect on middle-eastern Jewish identity and culture, acting as *"the imperial mutation"* of the classic western identity model. Through the increasing involvement of European Jews with middle-eastern Jews, the last became increasingly westernized, and converted their interest and involvement in the local culture with interest and involvement in European cultures. However, Tsur (2010) asks to distinguish these westernization processes and the modernization processes which Muslims in the same countries went through by acquiring western education. For the Jews, as modern economy and structures were developing under colonial auspices, the westernizing tendencies gave tools for social and economic mobility. The deep and wide expansion of the French identity option among North African Jews cut many ties between Jews and Muslims, since it gave the formers tools to enter the west (Roumani 2012). Jews started to distance themselves from Arab self-identification (Levy 2005, Tsur 2010), and became increasingly identified with the foreign rulers (Bezalel 2007). In North Africa, Jews gradually obtained a status of intermediators between the colonial regimes and the local population (Aydin 2007, Bar Yosef 1959). When Balkan countries were gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire, Greek and other national identity options were opened to the Jews there as well. Throughout the 19th century, then, certain aspects of the Sephardic Jewish identification all across the Middle East was gradually getting replaced by competing identity options (Roumani 2012, Asis 1991, Benbassa 1992).

This process of Jewish secular colonization had a parallel religious process that Lupo (2004a) referred to as *"toranic colonization"*, propelled by the intervention of Eurocentric ultra-orthodox rabbis among North African Jews. In order to understand the particularities of this modern/colonial process we must again return to Europe. As mentioned earlier, the increasing spread of secular scholarship among Jews in Europe crumbled and weakened many Jewish communities, encouraging Jews to become integrated in their surrounding societies. This, in turn, stimulated a protective reaction among some religious communities, mainly in Eastern Europe, strengthening religious orthodox tendencies with the purpose of closing the community to external changes, including to Jews who assimilated into the majority society. Jewish ultra-orthodoxy was developed this way, designing a religious culture which holds the study of Torah as the highest value. Toranic academies [*yeshivas*] took the place of other traditional communal organizations, and the heads of the academies and rabbis gained a role of political and moral leadership, on top of the traditional religious one (Lupo 2004). Within Muslim countries, rabbis hardly

ever developed a similar reactionary response to the social and cultural changes modernity brought along, because these changes did not threaten as much the communities' religious faith, nor did they pose an immediate threat to the respectable posture of rabbis within their communities[i].

Lupo (2004) told the story of an ultra-orthodox toranic schooling network that started to function in Morocco half a century after the first Alliance school was established. This was part of a network of European toranic schools and academies which took up the mission of attracting and incorporating students from Morocco, in order to combat the secularizing effects of Alliance and teach the students Ashkenazi style ultra-orthodox Judaism. According to Lupo, the moral justification and cultural reasoning for this project were identical to the modern/colonial mission of Alliance: the aspiration to save middle-eastern Jewries from their degenerated state under Muslim rule, and try to assimilate them in the superior Ashkenazi Judaism, by westernizing their religious culture and toranic knowledge. Lupo (2006) claimed that this missionary approach would become the most substantial factor in the development and design of the Sephardic toranic world throughout the 20th century.

Sephardic Jewry in Eretz-Israel/Palestine

Throughout the 19th century, Palestine/Eretz-Israel was populated with mainly Arab Muslim population. There were many ethnic and religious minorities in the land, including different Muslim ethnicities, Shia communities, nine different types of Christian denominations[ii], and a Jewish minority as well. Over 75% of the population was rural. Most of Christian and Jewish populations lived in the cities, along with Muslims as well[iii].

The greatest concentration of Jews was in Jerusalem (McCarthy 1990). Eretz-Israel was one of the few places where Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews lived side by side, but there were some important differences between these populations. First, Sephardim were generally Ottoman citizens while the Ashkenazim often were not. Ashkenazim, in general, were characterized by stricter religious devotion, its strictness expressed in a rather reactionary attitude towards modernity and change, as described above, while the Sephardim usually held pragmatic and tolerant attitudes towards the transformations of the time (Bezalel 2007, Meyuhas-Ginio 2013). The Sephardim were part of the general social, cultural and economic fabric of the society and many commanded Turkish and Arabic. The Sephardic public and the notables in particular were prone to join and cooperate with the French-Jewish initiative of the Alliance school to spread and develop modern European education. In Eretz-Israel, Alliance as

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[i] A reactionary approach to modernity was developed among some middle-eastern rabbis in certain places. See Leon (2009): 23-27 and Pikar (2003): 23-26, about such rabbis, the differences between them and the Ashkenazi approach, and about the different factors that can explain the general lack of religious reactionary response within middle-eastern Jewries.

[ii] These included, according to the Ottoman Census, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian, Armenian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestants, Maronites, Syrians, Caledonians and Gypsies (McCarthy 1990).

[iii] 87% of the population was Muslim, 9.3% Christians and 3.2% Jewish. The data is based on the 1879-1880 Ottoman census, in: McCarthy (1990).

well as other Sephardic education institutions combined traditional-religious and secular modern European tutelage (Bezalel 2007:81, Morag-Talmon 2000). In contrast, some researchers claim that the Ashkenazi communities were characterized by their relative isolation from their surroundings: they depended on funding from their home communities in Eastern Europe and learned later the local languages (Kaniel 1981, Mendel 2014). The borders between Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities were naturally also penetrable, and mutual influences, organizational partnerships, and individuals affiliated to other communities were also part of this reality (Aliav 1982, Gaon 1937/1982). As in other places in the Ottoman Empire, since 1841 the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem had the official role of representing the Jewish community [*millet*] in the district of Jerusalem[i]. The Sephardic economic elites served as the administrative and organizational support for the different tasks this representation required, from taxation to education and welfare (Kark & Ben-Yaakov 1996). A main institution that organized the work of these elites was the Council of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem[ii] (CSCJ), that was established, according to its own tradition, as early as 1267. The head of this institution was the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem. Some of the Sephardic elites were incorporated in the Ottoman administrative bureaucratic system, and some carried out their affairs or their public's affairs in the framework of "notable politics". This entailed unprofessional occupation in administration and governance that relied on their social status and capital (Weber 1978: 291), that is, their contacts and intermediating skills with other elites in the land. The young generation of this elite attended the new western universities in Cairo and Beirut, and some of them got to form what Fanon (1965) called native intellectuals. The western-modern education combined with a traditional local upbringing would potentially develop among many of these elites the tools of border-thinking, allowing them to think from and criticize both western and non-western epistemologies, in a way that challenges the very dichotomy of viewing these forms of thought as two sides of a border (Mignolo 2000: 84-86).

Since mid-19th century waves of Jewish immigration from different places, most notably from North Africa, undermined the authority of the CSCJ and formed their own organizations. These communitarian organizations, made by and for communities of certain cities or countries of origins, gained different degrees of autonomy; the Ashkenazi community even succeeded to informally represent itself to the empire's authorities (Kaniel 1981). The rest of middle-eastern Jewish communities maintained an economic and symbolic dependence in the Sephardic elites[iii]. As the Sephardim were usually of higher socio-economic status, the institutional dependence was accompanied by certain social

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[i] The central representative of the Jewish *millet* in the Ottoman Empire was the Chief Rabbi of Kushta, Turkey, around whom two councils gathered, composed by the Sephardic elites of all provinces: a spiritual council and a worldly one (Bernai 1986, Campos 2011).

[ii] *va'ad 'edat ha-sfraradim be-yerushalaim*. The English translation relies on the organization's letterhead in the period of research, after 1948.

[iii] These communities included the Ladino speaking Sephardim, the Maghrebis [m*a'araviim*], Aleppians [*halebim*], Babylonians, Persians, Bukharians, Yemenites, Georgians, Caucasians, Kurds and Orphals. These different ethnicities are distinguished by their Jewish dialect, Hebrew writing and pronunciation, patterns of religious ruling and a variety of customs. However, all these were nominated Sephardim since they were under the hegemony of the Sephardic Jews (Bezalel 2007: 39-40).

condescendence. The dependence and patronizing attitude were a continuance source of struggles, rivalries, and mutual accusations of neglect from the one side and lack of responsibility from the other (Morag-Talmon 1991, Aliav 1982, Sharabi 1984). The Sephardic elites held a hegemonic regional-political role within the middle-eastern Jews in the land, but their prestige went also beyond the empire's borders (Bezalel 2007: 47-48). The Sephardic rabbinical elites had a spiritual-religious authority, related also to the sacred and central place of Jerusalem and Eretz-Israel in Judaism. This spiritual-religious status was implemented by sending messengers to middle-eastern Jewries to collect funds for the communities in the land and disperse its rabbinical developments (Tubi 1986, Bar Asher 1986, Shenhav 2006).

PART II: ERETZ-ISRAEL/PALESTINE 1881-1947

Auto-Emancipation: Zionism   1881-1917

The important twists in our plot began in Eastern Europe, towards the end of the 19th century. A series of unfavorable laws and violent riots against Jews in Russia inspired a Russian Jew named Leon Pinsker to write in 1881 an essay titled "Auto-emancipation!", where he asked to incite European Jewry to realize their true emancipation, claiming civil equality could only be realized within the framework of a Jewish national movement, that should begin by organizing European Jewry and their immigration to Eretz-Israel (also known by the name of Zion). The essay got rapidly translated to many languages and dispersed within European Jewry: apparently, it reflected the spirits of the time. The land in question is recorded in the Old Testament and in other Jewish scripts as the land promised to the Jews by God, where a Jewish kingdom had once stood. In Jewish religious understanding, this land was mostly perceived as a mythical place, where the Jewish kingdom will revive upon the arrival of the messiah (Shapira 2012). European modernity impacted this traditional Jewish concept in two different ways. First, as Baer (2004) interpreted, the repeated persecutions of Jews in Europe became understood within the prism of a linear history. In line with the modern secular and national tendencies of the time, this rendered Jewish history in Europe as leading to progress in the form of a national revival in Zion. Second, European military superiority made it legally possible for Europeans to purchase lands in Palestine and settle them (Pappe 2006). These factors apparently helped recruit Jewish capital owners, as Baron Edmond Rothschild and Sir Moshe Montefiore, to support the Jewish settlement project in

Palestine by investing heavily in it[i]. Eastern European Jews started getting organized and immigrating to Eretz-Israel. In Europe, the Zionist movement was getting consolidated, founding institutions and recruiting some high positioned individuals, who vigorously sought after diplomatic ties and financial investors. Different Zionist political parties were formed, reflecting different ideological stances within the international Zionist congresses. Most of the immigration in early 20th century was organized by parties that held socialist and Marxist nationalist ideologies, and presented themselves as the spearhead of the Hebrew Labor movement, which formed part of the Zionist movement. The Zionist parties were based in Europe, and in Eretz-Israel functioned as self-help organization, taking care of instrumental, economic and cultural needs of its members (Horowitz & Lissak 1979). By the beginning of the 20th century, the Zionist immigrants intended to establish an autonomous Jewish economy by advocating for Hebrew Labor only (Shapira 1977).

During this period, there was also immigration to Eretz-Israel of Jews from Muslim countries. These immigrants were not derived by the same ideology, but the increasing Zionist immigration, as well as occurrences in different middle-eastern countries, stimulated this immigration in various forms. At large, with growing Jewish immigration, the land was perceived more than ever as a place where Jews could hold uninterrupted social and traditional life[ii] (Tubi 1986, Bezalel 2007:19). These immigrants usually got incorporated to self-help religious institutions, or at other times created them, under varying degrees of affiliation to the Sephardic institutions. The European Zionist movement reached only few individuals in Muslim countries, usually in order to recruit funds and not with the purpose of promoting immigration like in Europe. Some Zionist associations were formed in Muslim countries, but these did not perceive Zionism as the modern secular national movement that it mostly was, but as another form of Jewish traditional settlement in the land that required funding from abroad, just like the Sephardic organizations (Abitbol 1989, Shenhav 2006).

Neither the indigenous population nor the Ottoman authorities were pleased by the Zionist waves of immigration, because of their declared national intentions and the separate economy they were attempting to construct. In 1908-1909 freedom press was introduced in Palestine, and the new newspapers made public the bitterness, resentment and fear that Zionism evoked among some of the local population, and exposed the political significance of these feelings (Campos 2011). Lamdan (1994) claimed that among the Arab socio-political elite, the most dominant pattern of objection to Zionism was related to what Campos (2011) called "civic Ottomanism". Within this model of citizenship, Zionism was understood mainly as separatism and disloyalty to the empire. This attitude was shared by many of the Sephardic elite across the empire. They were taken aback by Zionism, for

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[i] See Lehman-Wilzig (1976) about previous attempts to recruit Rothschild and Montefiore to do so. See Shilo (1994) for the interests and considerations of these capital-owners.
[ii] The most unique case was that of the Yemenite immigration in 1910, as documented for instance in Shaffir (1993), Gorny (2003). For other experiences see Ettinger (1986).

the same reason many Jews everywhere also were: they saw themselves as loyal citizens of their countries and thought that the nationalistic tendencies were separatist and give Jews at large a dubious reputation (Campos 2011, Shapira 2012).

Notwithstanding, many of the Sephardic elite in Eretz-Israel itself had a different philosophy. As some said, they were born in Zion and therefore, born Zionists (Bezalel 2007). Being a native in the land painted the Zionist project in utterly different colors. For the Sephardic elites, like others in the native population, the immigrants' foreign customs and secular ways of life were inconvenient, and were even perceived as a threat to the local Jewish population[i] (Gorny 1985, Cohen 2015). Nonetheless, the project of Jews from everywhere settling the land, creating a united nation and becoming a local majority was often deemed desirable. Zionism, for those who were in favor of it, was understood as strengthening cultural, spiritual and economic aspects of the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel. Different Sephardic individuals and associations did a great deal in order to spread the usage of Hebrew (Aliav 1982, Campos 2011). Some of the Sephardic notables saw their role as cultural and instrumental intermediaries between the Jewish European immigrants and the local population and authorities. They helped the immigration by facilitating land purchases and advocated for the immigrants' favor where necessary. However, they could also understand the resentment this organized and ideological immigration raised in the local population, and were greatly concerned about its explicit expressions in the press. At this point of this developing conflict, they were accomplices of both sides. They attempted to act as *"a senior factor, guiding and orientating, that influences both sides from its experience and understanding"* (Cohen 2015). As Cohen (2015) explained, these Sephardic notables found themselves between contradictory conceptions, interests, loyalties and solidarity alignments. They believed they could prevent the animosity towards Zionism from growing if the immigrants understood how to treat the local population -for instance by not advocating for Hebrew Labor- and if the Arabs could understand the modernizing benefits the immigrants could bring to the land. They often claimed to promote mutual understanding and respect, but in fact they propagated for the Zionist narrative to be understood by Arabs, and for Arab culture to be respected by the Zionists. This native Sephardic attitude was recorded in numerous publications (Jacobson 2003, Bezalel 2007), and in initiatives like *Hamagen* association, whose main goal was to translate and write articles about the Zionist project and Judaism in Turkish and Arab press, as well as about Islam and Ottoman legislation in the Hebrew press, for the benefit of the "shared homeland" [*moledet meshutefet*] (Jacobson 2011). Different Sephardic notables advocated rapprochement and fraternity between Jews and Arabs and encouraged the Zionist immigrants to learn Arabic and Arab customs and culture. This line of advocacy reflected first and fore mostly the interests of this elite to maintain and enhance its power in the changing reality. However, it is worth noting that it was based on respect to Arab nationalisms, great appreciation to Islamic

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[i] See Chelouche (1931): 45-48.

civilization, and on a Jewish-national point of view. This national perspective was not a modern European secular one, but one that sought continuity with Jewish tradition and its yearning for redemption (Jacobson & Naor 2016). The immigration of the European Jews to Zion was conceived as a Jewish *return* to the East, allowing to recover an ancient Jewish national past within a modern framework: a process that could bring cultural fusions and changes for all those involved. The land, its native people and its languages were therefore viewed as an integral part of the Jewish national revival in several senses (Noy 2014, Bezalel 2007: 366). Sephardic and other native notables presented their own identity as a harmonious synthesis of east and west, a model Zionist ideology should naturally aspire to follow (Eyal 2005). Campos (2011) named this native national advocacy *"cultural Hebraism"*, while Jacobson (2011) called it *"inclusive Zionism"*. The Sephardic national perception was not based on the modern European experience, of nation states based on exclusive ownership rights over a certain territory. Rather, the nationalist sentiments of this public were anchored in the local Ottoman fabric of statehood, in which a plurality of minority groups had autonomous status that gave a legal framework to religious solidarity affiliations, side by side with others. The experience of ethnic plurality allowed a national sentiment of solidarity exempt of modern dichotomies and strict borders: territorial, epistemological or identitarian.

The advocacy of these elites did not get too far, though. The Zionist leadership overlooked the Sephardic insights and generally ignored the question of the Arabs in the land[i]. As modern colonizers, they were satisfied with the promise of modernity they were bringing to the land, and certainly did not think they had anything to learn from the indigenous Jewish population. This induced a dynamic of cultural and political rivalry between the two groups (Eyal 2005).

The rising hostility and the increasing prospects of collision between the local Arab population and the Zionist immigrants turned the Sephardic elites' border-epistemology into a political tool. Many of the younger generation of Sephardic elites proclaimed their border identity (Eyal 2005), claiming it could serve as a bridge between the political rivals. The native identity became symbolic capital for the notables that supported the Zionist ideas (Noy 2014). The main resource used to define the Sephardic identity as a political position was their relation to the east and to Arab culture (Evri 2013). Under the Ottoman regime, this rivalry was not yet defined as between Jews and Arabs, that is precisely what these elites saw as preventable in this stage. The rivalry they were bridging was between east and west: between eastern and western mentalities, manners and lifestyles; and between Zionist European colonial ambitions and local-patriotic, civic-ottoman or Pan-Arab ideological tendencies (Lamdan 1994). There were also Zionist newcomers who, from different predispositions, held similar views about the need for

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[i] The Zionist leadership assumed that the tension with the local Arab population would cease once they see that the European Jews were bringing modern economic prosperity to the region, benefiting them as well. The leaders abroad were diplomatically focused, seeking support from the super powers for the Zionist project. The concern of the Zionist settlers in Palestine was a practical one, of constructing the forms and organization of Jewish settlement, and much energy was invested in debating the proper interpretation of socialism in everyday life and the way it could fit a national aspiration for a dispersed nation such as the Jews (Shapira 1992, 2012, Merhav 1980).

Zionism to integrate in the Middle East. Few of those were convinced by the Sephardic self-presentation, and held them as a role model for Ashkenazim to follow (Jacobson & Naor 2016, Eyal 2005: 33).

The Beginning of British rule in Palestine   1917-1929

After World War I and the failure of the League of Nations, new western solutions were suggested to the crisis in European international order. One was the Bolshevik revolution, and the other was US president Wilson's Fourteen Points document. This statement of principles that was to guide the peace treaties after the war, promised a new era of self-rule in which foreign western mandates will be installed in a temporary manner over the new states that were perceived unprepared to govern on their own. This was the capitalist-imperial answer to the Bolshevik revolution and to anti-colonial unrest (Sahpira 2012). Both these western solutions strengthened the discourse of western versus eastern civilization, and they both inspired anti-colonial national movements worldwide (Aydin 2007).

In 1920 the Allies held a conference in San Remo in Italy, in order to re-draw the maps of the fallen Ottoman Empire[i]. This conference, along with others that followed, divided the entire Middle East into territorial nation states, where institutions for local governance would get constructed. A French mandate was exerted over Lebanon and Syria, and a British mandate over Palestine and Iraq. Abdullah Hussein, one of the sons of the Sharif of Mecca, received control over the eastern bank of the Jordan River, which became the Kingdom of Transjordan. The British Balfour Declaration[ii] got an official approval by the western super powers, giving hence official permission to the Zionist movement to construct a Jewish "national home" in Palestine. This in fact allowed a foreign Jewish minority the right to sovereignty in the entire land, which thereby consisted of a significant turn in Arab-Jewish relations (Khalidi 1997). The British managed the local population by dividing representation between Muslims, Christians and Jews (Kabha 2010), never representing the Muslims as the absolute majority that they were. As in other nascent Arab countries in the Middle East, the official name and borders gave the framework to what was becoming a Palestinian Arab national movement (Khalidi 1997). The Mufti (religious leader) of Jerusalem was nominated as the political representative of the Palestinian Muslim community. The Mufti cooperated with the British on educational, administrative and economic matters, but refused to any kind of political cooperation, as a protest to the discriminatory mandate commission (Pappe, 2006). The British built industries in a way that caused growing impoverishment

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[i] See Map I.
[ii] This declaration of the British intentions towards the Jews in Palestine was achieved thanks to successful lobby-building around the British Jewish Baron Rothschild. According to Shlaim (2000), it was based on British miscalculations as to the amount of power Jews actually held in revolutionary Russia.

and proletariat despair among many young Palestinian Arabs. This was a process which occurred in many places across the world: following improvement in sanitation and hygiene since the beginning of the 20th century, rural population increased in a way that made many people leave their villages, while in the cities there was not enough work or housing. British colonial policies of taxation, pricing and commercialization of agriculture augmented the urbanization and proletarization tendency (Yazbak 2000).

In contrast to the nascent Palestinian national movement, the Jewish national movement, i.e. the Zionist movement, had large foreign investments supporting its institutions[i] (Grinberg 2001) and had already been in the midst of building a national society from scratch. From the first days of the British Mandate, Jewish "national institutions" were constructed, establishing a sort of state within the mandatory state (Bernstein 1957). Pappe (2006) mentioned that the mandatory system had no civilizatory mission towards the Zionists, and the capital they brought helped maintain a good relationship between the Zionist and British colonial systems. The formal representation of the Jews in Palestine passed from the hands of the Sephardic elites' institutions to the Zionist movements' institutions abroad. The mandate cancelled the Sephardic elites' statutory privileges, and collapsed their institutions, which had already been suffering from reduced prestige for some decades (Tubi 1986, Bezalel 2007). Furthermore, the British split the main Sephardic rabbinical authority between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

The political structure of the Jewish colony in Palestine

The Zionist movement created a complex assembly of "national institutions" within two frameworks: in Europe and in Palestine. These institutions managed funds collected abroad and allocated them for land purchase, settlement construction and immigration certificates. These resources were distributed within different Zionist parties according to a party-key, corresponding to the parties' representation in the Zionist institutions (Lissak & Horowitz 1986). Essential themes like housing and employment were also allocated by the political parties, as well as education and cultural activities. So the way the party-key distributed wealth and power influenced every aspect of the Jewish colony in Palestine (Horowitz & Lissak 1990). The Zionist movement constructed a Jewish community-government for the Jewish population. Though it had no legal authority, it held an executive committee as a government, a national assembly of elected political parties as a parliament, and a tax collection system. Different political parties and workers' unions composed the Labor movement, which in Palestine got united in an institution named the *Histadrut*[ii], through which it established educational institutions, companies, cooperatives and factories. The Histadrut served as the institutional infrastructure of the Labor movement, managing employment and providing healthcare to members of the Labor movements'

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[i] Jewish philanthropic organizations and individuals, many that were not even Zionists, funded different aspects of the Zionist institutions, especially in establishing health centers and aiding weapon acquisitions (Shapira 2012).

[ii] *ha-histadrut ha-klalit shel ha-'ovdim be-eretz Israel*: The General Workers' Union of the Workers in Eretz-Israel.

parties (Horowitz & Lissak 1990). The Labor movement also established a military organization, the *Hagana*[i], which at first was mainly a passive-defensive military organization, not very well organized or equipped (Perliger & Weinberg 2003, Shapira 1992). The Labor movement represented a collection of eclectic ideologies, noted to be full of contradictions (Gorny 1985, Shapira 1992, Morris 2000). Its discourse addressed the benefit of the workers and propagated for proletariat struggles. As Grinberg (2001) explicated, this rhetoric corresponded very loosely to the reality of the colony. Nonetheless, the Labor movement successfully presented its goals as the general national goals, in terms of immigration, settlement and the creation of an exclusive Jewish economy. This self-image along with its organizational capacity helped it to gain coherency and strength within the Zionist movement. Because of the party-key system, most of the Zionist resources were hence used for the interests of the Labor movement. This caused rivalry, struggles and dispute with other sections of the Jewish public in Palestine, including the Sephardic elites (Shapiro 1971, Lissak & Horowitz 1986). The first elections to the national assembly were held in 1920 and revealed the political map of the Jewish colony, which Horowitz & Lissak (1979) interpreted by four different blocs[ii]. Other than the bloc of the Labor movement, the biggest in representation, there was the ethnic bloc, the religious bloc, and the bloc of the center and right wing parties. This last contained the "civic circles", formed by different organizations of farm owners and businesspeople, representing most of Eastern European middle-class in the land. The "civic" organizations held conservative or liberal political-economic worldviews, sustaining that private capital, rather than philanthropic donations, should be the preferred and sustainable way to increase Jewish immigration and settlement in the land. They opposed both the party-key and the elections mechanism, but unlike the Labor movements' affiliates, the leaderships of these organizations were not guided by organized ideological prism, but rather oriented their interests around instrumental and economic concerns (Shapira 1977). Like the parties of the ethnic bloc, most of them did not have representation in the European Zionist organizations (Shiloah 2003, Drori 1991), and they also had similar political-economic tendencies as the Sephardic notables leading the "ethnic" organizations. Another common interest of the two kinds of political leaders was advancing immigration of Jews from Arab countries: for the "civic" circles these were conceived as cheap Jewish labor force (Shapira 1977). They also objected the boycott the Labor movement promoted on Arab labor, and held economic relations with Palestinian Arab businesspeople and farm owners. The General Zionists party can also be considered as part of the "civic" bloc, although at this stage its representation was limited to the European Zionist institutions, representing within them capitalist-conservative or liberal political-economic tendencies. Another political movement on the right of the political map of the Jewish colony was the revisionist movement, led by Zeev Zabotinsky, giving voice to capitalist, nationalistic-belligerent political tendencies. In 1923 Zabotinsky published his famous article "The Iron

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[i] The Defense.
[ii] See Table II.

Wall". The article expressed recognition of Palestinian Arab national ambitions that the Labor movement was yet to express, and it also entailed a very real-politik attitude towards it. Armed with non-apologetic western superiority concepts, Zabotinsky claimed a violent and military clash between the Zionists and the indigenous Arab population was inevitable. He therefore advocated for the militarization of Jewish society in Palestine and asked to rely more heavily on the super powers. According to some authors, this feeling of inevitability of a violent clash would slowly trickle to the Labor movement as well, and would especially be normalized amongst the second generation born in Palestine (Heller 2003, Shapira 1992). Lastly, there was also a communist party established by Russian Jews in Palestine between 1921 and 1923. The Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) identified Zionism as a bourgeois movement, tightly linked with British imperialism. It was illegal throughout most of the British mandate period. In 1924 PCP got thrown out of the Histadrut for having consistently protested against its policies and its very existence. The party's ideology and the Russian institutions it was committed to, obliged it to attain Palestinian Arab members and leaders (Laqueur, 1953). This need led the PCP to purposely seek partnerships with Sephardic and other indigenous Jewish workers, which were seen as an inter-cultural and linguistic bridge to the Arab population (Ben Zaken 2006). Nonetheless, the PCP found recurring difficulty in addressing the local population, Jews or Arabs. Ben Zaken (2006) claimed this was due to the activists' foreign culture and manners, and their uncompromising ideology, that understood communism to be a universal and objective scientific truth. Rekhess (1988) emphasized the proletariat, atheist and democratic communist values, which did not fit well with the central role of religion and notable's politics in local society.

Sephardic and Mizrahi initiatives and organizations

For the Sephardic notables, the British Mandate signified an abrupt degradation in their official status. It removed them from their former leadership roles and placed them within a Jewish political system on whose contents and aspirations they had little say (Morag-Talmon 2000). The "ethnic bloc" generally represented organizations led by these the native notables or by middle-eastern immigrants who did not participate in the Zionist parties. These organizations were not usually included in the resource distribution system of the party-key, nor did their leaders get any significant positions in the "national institutions" of the Jewish colony. The Labor movement's modern/colonial ethos perceived the indigenous Jewish population as inferior, non-modern, frozen in time and unripe for leadership positions (Levy 1998, Noy 2014). Many of the Labor leadership considered that Sephardic Jewry in Palestine would require profound changes in order fit into to the advanced, modern European national and secular society they had envisioned. The east in general and the Sephardic and Mizrahi traditional lifestyle in particular, were getting marked by a new hegemonic discourse as inferior and irrelevant in the national Jewish society in Palestine. This had far-reaching epistemological and ontological

implications on this crowd's personal and collective self-image, and caused deep feelings of deprivation, frustration, pain and insult, which only rarely got to be expressed explicitly (Noy 2014, Haim 2000).

Cohen (2015) suggested that there were three typical reactions of the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics and elites to the new political and normative systems: alienation from the Zionist movement, expressed in indifference and non-participation in the system; competition of the elites over seniority over the Jewish public in Palestine, while insisting to preserve their identity and values; and adaptation to the Zionist modernist perceptions, which was accompanied by attempts to change culturally to become more like Ashkenazim, in order to get integrated in the new system. Most Sephardic and Mizrahi public work throughout this decade continued to advocate for cultural integration and rapprochement of the European Jews to the Arabs, envisioning a process of mutual spiritual enrichment and learning. Jacobson & Naor's (2016) studied the *"great diversity of facets and versions of rapprochement"* (p.54), apparent in the political activity of Sephardic and Mizrahi activists. They showed the ambivalent work of the several individuals that were incorporated into the Jewish "national institutions" in positions that dealt with issues related to Palestinian Arabs. They also presented the particular Sephardic perception of Zionism, as it was expressed in articles of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in Zionist newspapers in Arabic, published in Palestine and in other middle-eastern countries. Jacobson & Naor claimed that while these newspapers are usually considered by historians as pure propaganda, since they mostly revolved around explaining the benefits of the Zionist movement to the Middle East, in fact the Mizrahi and Sephardic writers used them as a different sort of platform. Through these newspapers, the young educated natives expressed their identity, on the border between the Palestinian-Arab and Jewish national movements. They used the newspapers to express their unique interpretation of Zionism, that was based on a view of cultural, linguistic and political mediation between Jews and Arabs in the land (Jacobson & Naor 2016). The initiative of the Histadrut of Pioneers of the East[i] is another such ambiguous example. This organization was established as soon as 1917 by some of the Sephardic notables' youth, in order to promote Sephardic and Mizrahi youth joining the Zionist institutions, pay the Zionist taxes and spread the modern national idea amongst Sephardic and Mizrahi populations (Haim 1981). The organization also advocated for a Jewish-Arab cultural dialogue, and thought the native Jews had an important role in creating it (Jacobson & Naor 2016). Eliahu Eliachar, that would later lead a rival-competitive political stream which will be our main concern, also joined it. He recorded the organization's activity as also related to spreading Arabic among Jews and Hebrew among Arabs, as well as meant to reproach Arab youth in general[ii].

The line of advocacy that asked for rapprochement between Arabs and Jews was increasingly challenged throughout this decade. In the first years of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Sephardic self-representation as on the borders between the two national movements was challenged by both

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[i] *histadrut halutsei ha-mizrah*.
[ii] Eliachar (1975): 13-14.

movements themselves, and the Sephardic leaders had to choose and declare their loyalty to one or the other. Different Palestinian leaders made anti-Zionist declarations in which they excluded the native Jews, in order to show the political and non-essentialist nature of their opposition (Tamari 2004). The Mufti even sent appeals to the native Jews to join Palestinian Arab national initiatives. According to Jacobson & Naor, this forced the Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders to choose between a local-territorial identity, that was part of joint homeland for Jews, Muslims and Christians, and a Jewish ethno-national identity. In each such opportunity, they chose the last, and *"loudly refuted"* any affiliation to what was increasingly becoming the enemy camp (Jacobson & Naor 2016: 19-23). In 1921 the first large-scale violent clash occurred between Jews and Arabs in Jaffa, when a nationalist belligerent Jewish parade and a nationalist-religious Muslim rally collided. The Sephardic leadership in Jaffa took initiative to calm the spirits[i].

The main organized expression of the stream of Sephardic and Mizrahi notables that were determined to struggle over their lost political power was the political party the older generations of Sephardic notables ran to the first elections of the national assembly in 1920. Some of the Mizrahi organizations formed other parties and together they formed the "ethnic bloc" that succeeded in attracting the votes of most of the Sephardic and Mizrahi population in the land, becoming the second biggest bloc[ii] (Herzog 1986). The struggle of the Sephardic elites over seniority and prestige in the new colonial power structure centrally revolved around the mentioned vision of a different future, led by a process of mutual Hebrew-Arab spiritual enrichment, cultural integration and educational cooperation: this process would require this elite's intermediation skills, inherent in their knowledge and their tradition of mutual exchanges with Palestinian Arab elites (Alboher 2002, Jacobson & Naor 2016). This position often used the metaphor of the Sephardic Golden Age, to imply that the historical mission of Zionism was to establish a new Golden Age in Eretz-Israel/Palestine, creating again a synthesis between east and west as well as between Judaism and Islam (Eyal 2005). In 1918 a periodical was established to give stage to this position, with the simple and direct title of *East and West*. The periodical also published ethnographies and research about Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries outside Palestine (Noy 2014). This way the periodical took part of another field of struggle over power in the growing Jewish colony, which started perhaps with the establishment of the Hebrew University in 1925, within which was established the Institute for Eastern Studies[iii]. The mostly German gentlemen[iv] that composed this institute

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i Chelouche (1931): 378-382.

ii See Table II. See Table I for the population ratio between Mizrahim and Sephardim and Ashkenazim in this period.

iii *ha-makhon le-limudei ha-mizrah.*

iv The same gentlemen also founded an organization directed to encourage rapprochement with Palestinian Arabs, called *Brit Shalom* (Covenant of Peace). This was a closed association that served as a debating club mainly for German and Czech European intellectuals (Ratzabi 1997). Like the Sephardim, many of these intellectuals saw Zionism as a movement that should aspire to create a new Hebraic culture based on a fusion of east and west (Gorny 1985), rather than focusing on the effort to establish a nation state. According to Maor (2007), they objected European colonialism, and also to nationalism as a colonial product, and preferred nurturing religious identities as the way for liberation from the identity the colonizer imposes. Like the Sephardic notables, Brit Shalom objected the Zionist ambition to construct a western enclave in the Levant.

established some contacts with the Sephardic intellectuals, but these last remained excluded from the academic establishment (Jacobson & Naor 2016). Each group of intellectuals thought the others' ways to produce knowledge was not a valid way to base truths (Eyal 2005, Noy 2014: 139-140). The epistemological field was another battlefield the Sephardic elites will eventually lose, within the processes of the coloniality of knowledge. Noy (2014) showed how throughout this decade the presence of European writers and methodologies grew in *East and West*, as the struggle over truth-production was slowly being won by the colonial mode and the modern European scientific thought it sanctifies[i]. Another component of the Sephardic struggle for dominance included strengthening international Sephardic networks, since much of the Labor movements' source of strength came from abroad. The Sephardic autonomous organizations in Palestine intended to recruit funds and organize immigration of Jews from Muslim countries to Eretz-Israel. This attempt was never successful in uniting and drawing Mizrahi and Sephardic communities and capital, neither in Eretz-Israel or in Europe, and was even less successful in Arab countries. In some Muslim countries Zionist activity was illegalized, and the traditional donations to the Sephardic community in Eretz-Israel were also withheld. Most European Sephardic communities preferred contributing to the mainstream Zionist movement (Haim 2000).

The autonomous Sephardic organizations and newspapers formed in this period all intended to recruit the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics to the Zionist project through an autonomous framework. That is, they aspired to gain political power in order to take a significant and not marginal role in the Zionist movement. Two tactics can be distinguished in the activity of the stream of Sephardim that was struggling over Sephardic seniority in the land. One tactic involved leveraging their border-identity, and using its symbolic capital to claim for participation in the relations with the Arab population and leaderships. The other tactic tried to leverage the Sephardic traditional cultural and spiritual centrality within middle-eastern Jewry. According to Noy (2014: 143), *East and West* reflected an image of a Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish sub-diaspora, versus an Ashkenazi sub-diaspora, and placed the native,

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Some of these activists, notably Rabbi Binyamin of the moderate circle, did adopt enthusiastically an idea that came from within the Sephardic Community but was not very popular in it: Nissim Malul's idea of Semitic Nationalism. This concept envisioned a national project that would create and be based upon a cultural symbiosis and eventual assimilation of Jews in the Arab population (Gorny 1985, Jacobson 2003). Notwithstanding, Herman (1989) claimed that Brit Shalom "withdrew and recoiled from the concrete orient", and did not attempt to integrate their thought with the Sephardim's, nor did they seek their help as intermediaries. By contrast, Brit Shalom was quite active in searching after partners among Palestinian Arab intellectuals. There was a certain rivalry between the Brit Shalom and the Sephardic elites' circles because of its members forming such an important part of the Institute for Eastern Studies, and the Sephardic elites were mostly excluded from it. An ideological source of dispute was Brit Shalom's insistence on the Jews remaining a minority in the land, as a way to avoid a violent collision with the Arabs. This point was precisely where the Sephardic elites and Zionist movement were at complete accord, see Eliachar (1975).

[i] Another possible example of this colonial subjugation can be seen in M. D. Gaon's (1937/1982) introduction to his history book, that got to be canonical in the academic study of Jews in Eretz-Israel: *"The book by itself is far from being scientific and it is directed to the people...I know some of the readers will find in this book deficiency* [ta'am le-pgam]*, as it does not fit with the common scientific order...it is my duty to mention here that I am not a professional in the study of Eretz-Israel and only my observation of the state of the tribes of Israel in Eretz-Israel motivated me to write... a book. I am sure that this composition is not clean of disadvantages, mistakes, but I hold the impression myself that I filled the framework and content as well as I could".*

Eretz-Israeli Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectuals at this sub-diaspora's spiritual center. Noy noted that by the end of the 1920s, the epistemological construction of a Sephardic and Mizrahi sub-diaspora began to express grander aspirations of establishing a collective identity, a unified ethnicity or a federation of ethnicities, led by the Sephardim in Eretz-Israel. According to Haim (2000), the way this aspiration should be expressed in institutional terms in Palestine was a source of dispute between different Sephardic streams. Some thought the Councils of the Sephardic Community (CSCs) should function as mother-organizations for all the other ethnic organizations. In this decade, the most dominant tendency to enact as such a mother–organization was to include symbolic and minimal representation of different ethnic organizations within the Councils, always keeping a big Sephardic majority (Levy 2000). The struggles over resources and power positions between Sephardic and Mizrahi communities led sometimes to organizational splits, which at times were also induced purposely by factors within the Labor movement (Haim 2000). The patronizing claim of the Sephardim to represent the other Mizrahi organizations was in fact not very different from the Labor movement's attempts to represent all the Jews in Palestine. Like the Labor movement did to them, some Sephardim claimed that the Mizrahi Jews were not ripe for leadership, and also blamed their autonomous organization in causing damaging splits, just like the Labor movement claimed about the Sephardic organizations (Levy 2000). As elites go, the Sephardic notables held an elitist stature, which for some also relied on the prestigious value of a unique Sephardic identity. Some researchers claimed this posture was the central factor undermining their political attempts to gain power (Levy 2000, Peretz 2000). By the second elections to the national assembly in 1925 they had lost many of their votes[i]. This period saw Jewish immigration of both European Zionists and of Mizrahi Jews, but Ashkenazim already composed the majority of Jews in the land[ii]. The dominance of the Labor movement over Jewish life in Palestine allowed its parties to gain more strength in general, and among the non-Ashkenazi population as well (Herzog 1986, Cohen 2015, Alboher 2002).

As noted, during the 1920s The Zionist "national institutions" were focused on the active construction of the promised "national home", institutionally, politically, by land purchase and by increased immigration, in order to tilt the demography to the Jews' favor. The Zionist leadership assumed that when all conditions are ripe for a Jewish majority state to be founded, the British will allow it to happen (Shapira 2012, Kimmerling 2006). The Arab opposition to these ambitions was also growing in strength. A central source and symbol of the growing national dispute revolved around *Haram el Sharif/Har Habait*, a holy site located in Jerusalem which holds great importance to both religions. Some historians consider Palestinian national identity to be anchored in the Palestinian Arabs' role as the Muslim protectors of Jerusalem from foreign and particularly European influences, a role inspired

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[i] See table II.
[ii] See table I.

by the historic rivalry between the crusaders and Muslims (Gorny 1985). In August of 1929 the rising tensions between the national movements was brought to a violent peak around a recurring dispute in this holy site. A killing spree spread to different locations in the country, and had a total of nearly 300 casualties, including massacres of native Jews in the cities of Hebron and Safed (Pappe 2006). Historians agree that these events were a decisive moment in the development of both national movements and in the relations between them (Campos 2007, Sela 1989, Cohen 2013). From this point the economies, societies and housing of the two populations started to separate from one another, personal mistrust and negative stereotypes intensified and militaristic attitudes in both societies got strengthened and organized.

Before World War II   **1929-1939**

The violent events of 1929 clarified the common identity and fate of the native Jews and the Zionist settlers (Sela 1989). Cohen claimed that Palestinian Arabs recognized the potential of Jewish unity that had not yet been completely fulfilled by the Zionist movement, and this enforced its practical implementation. Political alliances between Jewish and Arab notables became an impossibility, and the Sephardic and Mizrahi discourse of a shared homeland got to be understood as farfetched (Cohen 2013). While many of Sephardic and Mizrahi notables saw the events as a proof of the dire need for their intermediary skills, the nature of this claim changed. The advocacy for Jewish-Arab spiritual and cultural integration was reduced, and *East and West* stopped publishing studies about Arab culture (Alboher 2002, Noy 2014).

In the inner politics of the Jewish colony, the 1929 events emphasized the importance of security and political issues and reduced the weight of social and economic disputes. The Sephardic political party weakened significantly and some of the notables joined other Zionist parties which opposed the Labor movement (Haim 2000, Alboher 2002). The political weakening encouraged the notables to threat to quit the "national institutions" altogether, which in turn allowed them to achieve a special arrangement for the 1931 election to the national assembly. This agreement made for a separate voting mechanism for the Sephardic and Mizrahi public, who elected a previously agreed upon number of representatives. However, this agreement eventually encouraged the creation of Sephardic lists in support of other parties, most notably the revisionist party (Herzog 1986). As for the "civic" circles, in this decade their organizations ceased to advance their socio-economic agenda within the "national institutions". Their interests, basically aimed at economical stability, were sought directly from the British authorities, bypassing hence the Zionist organizations. The General Zionists got formed as a party in 1931 and encouraged the "civic" activists to join it (Shiloah 2003).

In this decade the Labor movement was gaining more centrality than ever before. In 1930 the political party of Mapai[i] was established. As of this decade and until 1977, Mapai dominated both the European and Eretz-Israeli "national institutions" as well as the Histadrut. This way, Mapai was established as *"the national center"* (Lissak & Horowitz 1986), and the party's mechanisms functioned as the central apparatus handling most aspects of the Jewish colony in Palestine. The Jewish Agency was established as another piece in the Mapai-dominated apparatus, performing as the World Zionist Organization's executive arm in Palestine (Kimmerling 2006). Shapiro (1993) referred to Mapai's role in the colony as a *"dominant party system"*, in order to emphasize the lack of essential democracy it constructed in the colony's political system. Despite the diversity of political ideologies, parties, workers' unions and affiliations, and despite holding periodical elections, the entire system for allocating resources was designed and controlled by the one central mechanism of Mapai, headed by the dominant David Ben Gurion.

One of Ben Gurion's conclusions from the 1929 events was recognizing officially for the first time the existence of a Palestinian national movement (Sela 1989), and the need to address the question of its opposition to Zionism. For the first time he held meetings with Arab nationalist leaders (Shlaim 2000). Also for the first time, an official Zionist organization was established with the participation of several Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders: The United Bureau was formed, in order to examine options for rapprochement with the Palestinian Arabs (Jacobson & Naor 2016). This short lived organization recommended various political and economic steps that could ease the national tensions, such as different socio-economic cooperative projects, establishing a regime based on bi-national representation, stop advocating publicly for Hebrew Labor and support the Palestinian-Arab opposition to the Mufti. None of these recommendations was implemented[ii], and no real change occurred in the Zionist movements' policies towards the Palestinian Arab leaders or population, except for strengthening the existing policies. These basically included distribution of pro-Zionist propaganda, gathering intelligence information, and bribing different Arab factors to display support to the Zionist project (Sela 1989). The pivotal issue for discordance between the national movements was the question of limiting or advancing Jewish immigration, maintaining the Jewish population as a minority or pushing for it to become the majority. In this decade, the Zionist ambition to advance Jewish immigration gained the urgency of a security matter because of the rise of Nazism in Germany. This brought such waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine that by 1936 the Jewish population had doubled itself (Shapira 2012).

Throughout the 1930s the described modern/colonial processes that impoverished the Muslim rural population reached a peak, with 30% of Palestinian Arab rural population made landless. Inequality

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[i] Acronym for *mifleget po'alei eretz-israel*: Eretz-Israeli Workers Party.
[ii] Eliachar (1975): 24-25.

was rising between Jews and Arabs and between Arab cities and periphery. Some of the new Palestinian Arab proletariat found a leader in Islamist Azz ad-Din el Quassam, who in 1931 started organizing secret militias that attacked Jews and British. In 1932 a significant Pan-Arab party was established, *Al-Istiqlal*, which by 1933 was holding large and violent demonstrations against British presence (Sela 1989). The *Hagana* got restructured and improved its military infrastructure (Perliger & Weinberg 2003). In 1932 Zabotinsky formed the *Etzel*, a right wing national militaristic organization that supported militaristic activism and rejected the *Hagana*'s merely defensive attitude and its cooperation with the British regime (Shapira 2012). In mid 1930s the revisionist party quit the "national institutions" and formed a new international organization of its own.

In 1936 more violent outbreaks occurred, along with a long Palestinian Arab general strike, taken against both Zionist and British colonization. In local historiography, these events are referred to as The Great Arab Revolt, and many historians see it as a constitutive step in the formation of Palestinian Arab national identity. The events succeeded to recruit an unprecedented level of political solidarity within Palestinian Arab society, establishing cooperation between opposing sides of the urban elites and leaderships and with the rural population (Kimmerling & Migdal 1999). The Great Revolt was a real popular grassroots revolt, to which the leadership joined so as not to be left behind (Yazbak 2000). It was directed mainly against the British but included attacks against innocent Jews. In response to the revolt, Britain nominated the Peel Commission in 1936 to investigate the situation in Palestine and suggest solutions. In 1937 its conclusions were published: this was the first time the idea to divide the land between the national movements was suggested. The committee suggested to establish a small Jewish state and to annex the rest of the territory to Transjordan. This was unthinkable for both sides, though the Zionist leadership ended up tactically declaring its consent (Shapira 2012). The revolt resumed in its course, but the united Palestinian Arab front ended up disintegrating into a civil war. Urban notables were attacked and killed, over political stances as well as over old resentments and rivalries, and many of them escaped the country (Sela 1997). In 1937 the British expelled the Mufti and by 1939 they were able to enforce an end the Arab Revolt.

The *Hagana* kept a defensive position throughout the revolt, but the revisionist *Etzel* militia took an offensive line and attacked innocent Palestinian Arabs (Perliger & Weinberg 2003). Many of the "civic" organizations, as well as Sephardic and Mizrahi notables, supported the offensive line, seeing pure defense as an unwise demonstration of weakness. This did not necessarily lead to affiliation with the revisionist movement and its uncooperative line with the "national institutions" (Shiloah 2003). In fact, during the time of the revolt, many of the Sephardic notables asked the "national" leadership to hand them the authority to handle Arab-related politics (Alboher 2002). Some in the Sephardic and "civic" circles transferred weapons to Palestinian Arab notables that opposed the Mufti, in accordance with the

Hagana[i]. In this decade the intelligence services of the Labor movement got consolidated, through some native notables and youth. Some used their social networks with Palestinian Arabs to gather intelligence, pass it to the Jewish Agency and the *Hagana* and advise them how to act. This was a direct continuation of their notable's politics, both in practical terms and in the meaning they endowed their actions, conceiving of themselves as professional advisors and mediators (Eyal 2005). Sephardic and Mizrahi youth, especially from mixed cities and borderline neighborhoods, also conformed much of the base for intelligence. For some of this youth this was also as a path for integrating Zionist identity with their own: *"young men and women who grew up along the border between two cultures and two communities were hence recruited to cross the border to commit acts of murder and sabotage"* (Jacobson & Naor 2016: 158).

As happened in the United Bureau and in the security apparatus, also on the level of civil initiatives this decade brought a new level of cooperation between Ashkenazi and Sephardic elites, with the establishment of *Kedma Mizraha*[ii] in 1936. Some of the Sephardic notables cooperated with the German intellectuals mentioned earlier in order to found this association, which aimed at promoting cultural, social and economic cooperation of Jews and Arabs. *Kedma Mizraha*'s main activity might be considered a type of Zionist propaganda, since it dealt with writing and publishing articles that distributed information in Arab countries about the Jews' doings on the land. The declared agenda however also asked to influence the Zionist institutions to be actively involved in negotiations, and make some compromises in order to reach understandings with Palestinian Arab leaders. This association had members from all across the political spectrum and from such a diversity of backgrounds, that it was practically impossible to formulate a platform or decide upon a strategy. Mapai was exerting heavy pressures and the question of cooperation with it was a cause for dispute, which eventually brought the associations' dissolvent in 1938 (Rolef 1989, Gorny 1985, Heller 2003). In these two years of activity different individuals within the association promoted different projects: An Arabic newspaper, a joint Jewish-Arab publisher and establishment of *Kedma Mizraha* offices in Jewish communities in Arab countries. Excluding Morocco, in most of these countries the Zionist organizations that had been established in the previous decades dissolved throughout the 1930s for various reasons. Among these reasons were the Arab states' prohibition of Zionist activity, and the lack of support from the Zionist movement itself (Abitbol 1989, Tubi 1986). The events in Palestine were increasingly influencing the anti-colonial Arab national discourses in the Middle East. Despite the liberal and democratic logics that were the basis of most Arab national movements, throughout the 1930s the movements started to increasingly identify their country's Jewish population with the Zionist movement (Behar 2007).

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[i] Eliachar (1975): 66-70.
[ii] Roughly, "Orient Eastwards".

The growing Anti-Zionist tendencies in Arab countries continued to hurt the income of the Sephardic institutions, and the local and community-oriented Sephardic organizations were unable to recruit resources, affiliates and leaderships to build the independent organizational and bureaucratic systems they had aspired to construct. Therefore, they did not successfully compete within the Zionist party systems. They became dependant on this system and yet were excluded from its mechanisms of distribution of immigration certificates, positions and lands. Few Sephardim got incorporated in Mapai and in other Labor parties, but usually not in senior positions (Haim 2000, Morag-Talmon 2000). The exception occurred in this decade, when Eliahu Sasson became responsible over the *Hagana*'s intelligence network (Eyal 2005). The Sephardim in the Labor movement were often used for promoting the Labor parties' popularity within Mizrahi and Sephardic publics. That is, they served as representatives of their ethnic group inside these parties, but without being able to advance its own interest. As this last need was left unanswered, a Sephardic and Mizrahi workers' union was established in 1936. This was a unique organization within the Sephardic and Mizrahi public because it did not rely on the notables and held secular-oriented social and cultural events. It held militant and oppositional protests against the Mapai controlled mechanism, and even gained partial success in entering the party-key (Haim 2000).

The basic position of the Great Arab Revolt, as most of the Palestinian Arab protests against Zionism in the previous decade, recognized Zionism as an integral part of British imperialism. For communist Jews in Palestine, this caused some incoherencies which in turn caused for inner tensions within the PCP. The Jewish communists agreed with the imperialist interpretation of the Zionist project (Maor 2007), but themselves were Jewish settlers in the land, though they were drawn to it by other factors and not by Zionist ideology. The PCP generally supported the Palestinian Arab opposition to British imperialism, which in this decade caused it to reduce greatly its activity within the Jewish public, and start addressing Palestinian Arab publics more vigorously (Rubinstein 1985, Ben Zaken 2006). Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews were sought by the PCP, as they were considered to contribute to the Arabization of the party, a process demanded from the PCP by Moscow (Ben Zaken 2006). As mentioned, they were considered as potential mediators between the party's Ashkenazi members, its Arab members, and native Jewish workers. Jacobson & Naor (2016) suggested that the presence of natives in the party also helped Jewish PCP members resolve the contradiction between their anti-colonial activity and their being part of the colonial process itself. Throughout the Great Revolt the PCP supported the Palestinian Arab national movement and participated actively in it. According to Rubinstein (1985), since the Jews could not participate in guerilla warfare against other Jews, the leadership decided in 1936 to establish a separate Jewish Section. The aftermath of the Revolt weakened the party significantly: many Arabs were incarcerated, many Jews had left, many former Jewish leaders had already been expelled by the British, or imprisoned, exiled or executed in Moscow in the early 1930s. When the revolt ended in 1939

the Jewish Section was cancelled, though some Jews continued working together in two different communist groups, separately from PCP (Rubinstein 1985).

In 1939, with World War II breathing down their necks, the British suppressed the Arab Revolt forcefully, prohibited Jewish immigration entirely and announced supporting the right for majority based independence. Since Muslims were still a substantial majority in the land, this was in fact the long desired triumph for the Palestinian Arab national movement. However, this achievement was accomplished for a socially and institutionally broken society without present leadership. Other significant effects of the Great Arab Revolt were designing a pattern for the Arab countries' intervention in local politics (Sela 1997), segregating further Jewish and Arab economic activities, as had been advocated by both national leaderships (Pappe 2006), and strengthening Zionist militarism, letting an offensive ethos take the place of the defensive ethos it held until then (Shapira 1992). Gorny (1985) sums up the decade of the 1930s as a time of political achievements for the Palestinian Arabs but without advancement in forming an organized national force, whereas the Jews saw political losses but advanced in building an institutional, social and military infrastructure for their settlement project.

Towards Partition of the Land   **1939-1948**

During World War II Palestine served as a British military base, which created various employment opportunities and helped the economic and industrial development of the country (Pappe 2006). Economic cooperation between Jews and Arabs in business, trade and employment patterns resumed some of its course, even though it had reduced and went less smoothly than before (Asaf 1970, Shapira 1977). The Mufti, from his exile, supported the Axis powers, and was making diplomatic relationships within Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He remained a popular leader also from exile, though naturally other leaders were also getting stronger (Kabha 2010, Kimmerling & Migdal 1999). The armed national struggle of both movements was halted during the World War[i] (Asaf 1970).

Civil initiatives for rapprochement continued to get formulated. In 1939 the same intellectuals and activists from *Kedma Mizraha* established the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation (hereinafter: The League), along with some PCP members and some from the leftist edges of the Labor movement (Heller 2003). The League had sub-committees for studying the question of relations with Arabs in politics, economics, culture and education, social work and health. They published their stands and even detailed plans. Heller claimed that the League's heterogeneous base and mainstream affiliations made it succeed in gaining a certain momentum. The members presented their

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[i] Within the Jews this statement is not precise, since the *Lehi* split from the *Etzel* in 1940, in order to resume the armed activity against the British, which the *Etzel* had halted during the war.

ideas within Jewish settlements, organized Arab-Jewish meetings for professionals, and created Jewish-Arab leisure events like a "Peace Party" and an "East Week". In 1942 some of the more radical Ashkenazi intellectuals quit the League to create *Ihud*[i] (Heller 2003). *Ihud* declared its will to participate in the Semitic revival process in the Middle East, and meant to work against the creation of a Jewish-majority state (Gorny 1985). The establishment of *Ihud* drew much criticism of Sephardic notables. Their critiques blamed the European intellectuals in detachment from the land, and for holding baseless romantic and naïve views about Arabs[ii]. In some of this critique there was also reference to the entire Ashkenazi left, the communists and the more radical branches of the Labor movement[iii]. This critique entailed one of the last expressions of the Sephardic privileged position for finding a solution based on mutual respect to Arab-Jewish animosity. It was published in *Hed Hamizrah*[iv], a journal founded in 1942 as *Hamizrah*[v], edited and funded by Eliahu Eliachar[vi]. The journal served as stage for different issues of Sephardic and Mizrahi public interests (Meyuhas-Ginio 2014). By the way it advanced Eliachar's political position (Herzog 1986). Unlike *East and West*, that ceased issuing already in 1931, this publication did not usually deal explicitly with Jewish-Arab relations. In the first issue, the editors already admitted that *"the road for peace and understanding has been blocked from us, and we do not know how to reach it"*[vii]. Different projects some notables were attempting to promote for the sake of mutual respect and appreciation were not supported by the "national institutions"[viii]. The results of the Great Revolt left the Sephardic notables without viable political partners within the Palestinian Arab population[ix]. The notion of an inevitable violent clash between the two peoples was becoming established within most of the Jewish population in the land, including the native elites (Heller 2003). According to Levy (1998), by 1944 their advocacy about Jewish-Arab relations nearly disappeared. This was also due to the growing importance of inner Sephardic politics. Different Council of Sephardic Communities (CSCs) in different localities were opened and renewed since early 1940s, responding to the needs of the waves of immigration of middle-eastern Jews from the previous decades. The Council of Sephardic Community of Jerusalem (CSCJ) suffered inner rivalries between Eliahu Eliachar and David Abulafia which weakened its centralized authority. The Tel Aviv CSC was renewed and headed by Bechor Chetrit, and it grew and gained centrality among the Sephardic elites, also thanks to its good relationship with Mapai (Levy 1998). Eliachar and Chetrit battled over power within an attempt to construct a National Union of the CSCs, and the union was never able to become activate or implement

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[i] Unison.

[ii] Eliahu Eliachar, "Jews and Arabs" (yehudim ve-'aravim), *Hamizrah* 11.9.42, p. 3; Meir Dahan, "Jews and Arabs- Slogan and Reality" (yehudim ve-'aravim: sisma ve-metsiut), *Hamizrah,* 23.10.42, p. 3; Yosef Y. Rivlin, "Jews and Arabs" (yehudim ve-'aravim), *Hamizrah*, 29.9.42, p. 3.

[iii] Yosef Rivlin, "Jews and Arabs" (yehudim ve-'aravim), *Hamizrah*, 6.11.42, p. 3.

[iv] Eco of the East.

[v] The East

[vi] Eliachar (1980): 490-491.

[vii] "Our Stage" (bamatenu), *Hamizrah*, 10.6.42.

[viii] E.g. in Derri- Weksler (2013).

[ix] See Eliachar (1975): 82-95, 108-110.

any policy in practice (Haim 2000). The dispute entailed inter-generational tensions and different political-economic ideologies, but revolved mainly around the desired attitude towards the different Zionist institutions, that is, towards the Labor movement and particularly towards Mapai (Herzog 1986: 92). The dispute was over the best way to gain representation within the "national institutions" in order to affect the issues of the Sephardic and Mizrahi public. The Tel Aviv and Abulafia streams were characterized by a pragmatic attitude (Levy 1998), which was based upon a certain conviction in the superiority of the modern Zionist values: they sought incorporation by assimilation to the Labor movement. The Eliachar-led stream took an oppositional position, attacking the institutions for discriminating and depriving the Sephardic public from representation and attempting to erase the particular Sephardic identity and heritage. This stream was at friendly terms with the revisionist movement, since the revisionists did not express the same ideas about the need for Sephardim to assimilate in Ashkenazi identity, had always been in favor of Mizrahi immigration and also held a capitalist orientation (Levy 1998). Also, they coincided in that the militant revisionist stream usually interpreted Sephardic identity as encompassing the other Mizrahi publics as well (Haim 2000: 168). As mentioned earlier, non-Sephardic Mizrahi notables and communities had a changing relationship and position within the CSCs. Since the Tel Aviv and Haifa CSCs were more opened to receive Mizrahim into their lines (Herzog 1986), the Jerusalem CSC also became more flexible with its restrictions in these years[i]. Nonetheless, it was only in 1947, when a new CSC was elected in Jerusalem with Eliahu Eliachar at its head, that the elected Council got a majority of non-Sephardic members, to prove that *"the era of discrimination is over"*[ii]. The internal Sephardic rivalries caused stagnation in the activity of the Sephardic organizations through most of this period. The militant Sephardic and Mizrahi workers' union was absorbed into Mapai in 1946 (Haim 2000).

After the German invasion to Soviet territory in 1941, the common enemy drew the PCP closer than ever before to the Jewish public in Palestine. Both the communist and revisionist anti-British attitude changed in the years of war, and members even joined the British army. The PCP got legalized in 1942. In 1943 the Soviet internationalist body of the Comintern ceased working, consequentially leading to the demise of the internationalist structure of PCP, and the party split into its national Arab and Jewish components (Rubinstein 1985). Some of the communist Palestinian Arabs joined a recently born nationalist, socialist and democratic organization called the National Liberation League (NLL). According to Ben Zaken, the establishment of the NLL gave the Jewish communists legitimacy to identify with their own nationality, and some Jews established Zionist-communist civil organizations,

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[i] It removed the regulations that had restricted non-Sephardic representation in the committee to a third of the members. They also lowered the tax that had to be paid in order to participate in the elections, but raised the tax required for the right to get elected. This helped maintain their position of power, as the Sephardic population was usually better off than most of the rest of the Mizrahim (Levy 1998). See: Letter from the CSCJ to Jerusalem Region Governor, 19.12.43, CSCJA container 6329 file 1432.

[ii] Avraham Elmalih in Haim (2000): 171.

while others established the Eretz-Israeli Communist Party (ECP) in 1944, that took a rather non-Zionist line. The ECP supported for the first time Jewish immigration, a line that after the end of the war, and getting the information about the Jewish Holocaust in Europe, the NLL also agree on (Ben Zaken 2006). This brought to its expulsion from the Palestinian Arab national institution in 1946 (Rubinstein 1985).

The World War also affected Jewries in Arab countries, most directly in North Africa, where Nazi and Italian Fascist regimes spread. In some countries discriminatory laws were made against Jews. These were also made in middle-eastern countries that were not conquered by the Axis powers but were affected by the tensions in Palestine between Jews and Arabs. This hostile atmosphere culminated in lethal, popular riots against Jews in Iraq in 1941 and in Libya in 1945. For the first time since the dawn of Zionism, there seemed to be a real threat to the fate of middle-eastern Jewries, the kind of threat that until then was reserved for European Jewries. The magnitude of the danger European Jewry was facing in these years, the threat of its entire annihilation, was already made known in Palestine by early 1940s. Since the Jews in the Soviet Union were not allowed to immigrate, the Zionist movement was presented with a serious problem to its ambition to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine by immigration. In 1942 Ben Gurion presented a plan of immigration of the approximately one million Jews from Muslim countries (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). The Zionist movement then started to act seriously in these countries for the first time, dispersing Zionist materials and organizing training for immigration purposes (Abitbol 1989, Winberg 1989). In North Africa, the agents carrying out these missions were often Jewish soldiers in the British army (Abitbol 1989). In Iraq and Iran, they were often employees of *Solel-Boneh*, a big Zionist construction company contracted by the British for different tasks in these areas. The first substantial contacts between the Zionist movement and middle-eastern Jewries provide very concrete examples of how Zionism intertwined Jewish nationalism and European colonialism in the Middle East, a process Shenhav (2006) discusses in detail regarding Iraq. Another process set in motion in face of the near extermination of European Jewry, was the growing involvement of ultra-orthodox institutions within North African Jewry, once the war was over. This was mainly expressed in increasing the amount of youth from these countries that got sent to their toranic academies abroad (Lupo 2004). Some ultra-orthodox toranic academies depended on the recruit of these Jewries for their very survival (Horowitz 2000).

Once the war was over, decolonization processes in the Middle East were set in motion. These processes usually left the Jews excluded from the Arab national movements (Abitbol 1989). If in previous decades the identification between Jews and Zionism was mainly a matter of discourse some political movements had been expressing, in these years this identification became practical, and was induced by Zionist agents and governmental forces and by different kinds of cooperation between the two. The sociologist Moshe Behar suggested that there was a structural alliance between Zionism and the Arab national regimes, the results of which can outline a claim that Zionism contributed to the formulation of Arab nationalism along xenophobic lines, nurturing elements of religious affiliation rather than

democratic and civil principles (Behar 2007). In Iraq, for instance, this occurred despite the fact that Jews there were very much "Arabized" and part of the local culture (Bashkin 2017). There, as well as in Egypt and Syria, Jews conformed a substantial part of the communist movements, which had been holding anti-Zionist positions until this time (Ben Zaken 2006, Budeiri 1979, Abitbol 1989, Shenhav 2006).

When the war ended, The *Etzel* resumed the armed struggle against the British, even cooperating militarily with Palestinian Arabs against the common enemy (Asaf 1970: 115). Sephardic and Mizrahi youths were prominent in this decade in both the *Etzel* and its splinter organization, the *Lehi*. Another military organization of the Labor movement, the *Palmah*, opened a unit of young immigrants from middle-eastern countries whose role was to collect intelligence and perform other tasks that required them to disguise as Arabs. By the end of this period, the intelligence network formed by native notables in the previous decade got more institutionalized, and the notables became informants, rather than the role of mediators and advisors that they performed previously. Their evaluation and advice was no longer requested, but only the information they could achieve by their networks of informers within the Palestinian Arab population (Eyal 2005).

Jacobson & Naor (2016) researched the many different aspects of the border location of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews between the two national movements along the period of the British Mandate in Palestine. In their conclusions, they asked to challenge the dichotomy between the Sephardic and Mizrahi role as cultural and spiritual mediators and their role as political spies. They claim that for them, there was an inevitably close link between the cultural and educational activities that asked to bridge between Jews and Arabs, and the political and security objectives that de facto crossed these bridges for the benefits of the Jewish colony. In their particular and unique position within the Zionist movement as non-colonizers, natives of the land, there was a great diversity of facets and versions of the call for Jewish-Arab rapprochement. Since their Jewish identities contained also Arab components, the different types of activities did not necessarily contradict each other, even if that is hard to perceive within modern/colonial dichotomist perceptions. For instance, the importance of learning the Arabic language was emphasized at the same time both as a political tool and for purposes of a cultural bridge, with no seeming contradiction between the two (Jacobson & Naor 2016).

The international institution of the Arab League was established in 1945, without granting direct representation to the Palestinian Mufti (Pappe 2006). This helped to expropriated the Zionist-Palestinian dispute from the hands of the Palestinian Arab national movement. It became a matter of international politics, involving the western superpowers and the Arab states (Pappe 2006). In 1947 the UK passed the mandate of Palestine to the nascent United Nations. One of the very first actions of the UN was to appoint a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to decide over the fate of the land. While

Palestinian Arab national leadership refused to participate in the committee's procedures, different streams within the Jewish population got to present to it their political understanding of the situation, including Eliahu Eliachar and other Sephardic notables, who presented their stances in name of the Sephardic public. Eliachar mainly expressed concern for resolving the situation of Jewries in Muslim countries. UNSCOP's resolution suggested dividing the land[i]. Since the Soviet Union agreed to the UNSCOP partition plan, the Palestinian Arab NLL also ended up accepting it. That caused it further friction with the Palestinian Arab public and leadership. Eventually the Jewish and Arab communist parties united to form the Israeli Communist Party in October of 1948. Though this union was seen as a success of the communist principle of internationalism, the ICP's leadership was principally Jewish again, as in the 1920s (Ben Zaken 2006).

The UNSCOP partition plan was voted on in the UN by the 57 member countries in November of 1947 and was accepted by a majority. Consequently, a war erupted between the two national movements in Palestine. On May of 1948 Israel declared its independence, and then a war with the surrounding Arab armies broke out, which ended in 1949 by armistice agreements. These agreements again drew new borders to the territory[ii]. The war had most detrimental results for the Palestinian Arab population: by January 1949 some 800,000 escaped or were expelled from their homes. These events, like the land itself, also carry a double name: The War of Liberation in Hebrew, the Catastrophe in Arabic.

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[i] See map II.
[ii] See map III.

CHAPTER 5

THE COMMITTEE OF SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY OF JERUSALEM (CSCJ)
1948-1958

INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST YEARS OF STATEHOOD

The 1948 war resulted in the creation of a brand new geo-political entity in most of the territory of mandatory Palestine[i]. This was accompanied by the disintegration of all Palestinian Arab social and political structures. The Palestinians suffered many casualties, some by war, others by civilian massacres, and 75% of the population was displaced, dispersed into dozens of refugee camps in the surrounding Arab countries, including in the parts of Palestine that were conquered in the war by Jordan[ii] and Egypt. From this point on, these war refugees would depend on the specific country's policies and politics to determine their fate, and on UN aid to supply their basic needs and future opportunities (Morris 2000). The defeat of the combined forces of the Arab countries left their publics incredulous and their leaders divided. The Arab League declared an economic boycott on Israel, and declared Israel's responsibility over the refugee problem; and that it this problem could be solved only with their return to their land. This was in line with the UN resolution on the matter, though the UN allowed Israel to pay compensations instead of repatriation (Shlaim 2000). Israel could agree to pay compensations to individuals but negated entirely the possibility of refugees' return, seeing them as potential enemies, that will consist of a security problem to the new state (Fried 2018). The Arab League required from the refugees' host countries not to give them citizenship, so as to maintain their claim for return; this was convenient enough for the different regimes that for various reasons could not sponsor responsibility for so many misallocated people. Jordan was the only country to grant some Palestinian refugees citizenship, officially annexing the West Bank in 1950, though this annexation did not gain international recognition. The Gaza strip was left under Egyptian hands (Shlaim 2000, Pappe 2006).

From January to September of 1949 Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt held negotiations over the armistice agreements with Israel. Throughout and after the talks, the different countries conveyed offers for longstanding peace but Israel was unwilling to negotiate its newly achieved borders, the return of any significant amount of refugees or the status of Jerusalem. According to the 1947 UN Partition Plan, Jerusalem would have been an international area under UN mandate, due to its historical and sacred value for the three religions; Israel however wanted it

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[i] See map III.
[ii] In March 1948 Transjordan changed its name to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

as its capital (Shlaim 2000). This was despite much US and UN pressure; in fact, Israel only conceded to declare its consideration to negotiate these points for just long enough to get accepted as a member of the UN (Pappe 2006). However, neither the surrounding countries nor the Palestinian refugees saw the armistice borders as final, and Israel's use of the land and water in its borders was perceived illegal by these parties (Morris 1997). The Arab countries promised their publics a second round of warfare. The cause of liberating Palestine from the obtrusive Zionist state gained a stronghold in popular Arab public opinion as a mobilizing force (Shapira 2012, Pappe 2006, Shlaim 2000). As soon as the war ended, Palestinian refugees tried to infiltrate the new borders and return to their villages and their homes, reunite with family members left behind, harvest their crops, attain their belongings or take revenge in form of murder or theft. Israel took an uncompromising military stance against these infiltrations, which soon escalated to a reprisal policy, i.e. sending troops to infiltrate the borders and murder civilians on the other side. This deteriorated and increased the tensions not only with the refugees, who were getting better armed and organized in return, but also with Israel's relation with the surrounding Arab countries (Morris 2000).

150,000 Palestinian Arabs remained inside the Israeli state borders. They were residents of towns or villages that did not fight against the Israeli army, within a broad range of degrees of cooperation or resistance (Cohen 2006). About 15% of those were internal refugees, displaced from their homes and villages under a great diversity of circumstances, and could not usually get their properties back (Cohen 2000). All the Palestinian Arab population inside Israel was considered hostile and dangerous to the state (Fried 2018). They received an Israeli citizenship but a military regime ruled over their villages and towns, restricting harshly this population's freedom of movement and endangering other rights as well. A series of laws were made to ensure Jewish privileges in the state, mainly in terms of land ownership and citizenship-obtaining process (Pappe 2006). Since most of the remaining Palestinian Arab population was rural, the state's expropriations of lands vaulted up their levels of unemployment (Pappe 2011). Under the military regime, political cooperation with the authorities was rewarded with perks and privileges. Israel slowly constructed an extensive network of political cooperators and submerged spies within this society (Cohen 2006). Since this network required communicating in Arabic, much of the military regime mechanism relied on recruits of Mizrahi and Sephardic youth (Eyal 2005).

As for Jewish-Israeli society, and for many Jews abroad, the establishment of a Jewish nation-state evoked an enthusiastic history-making sensation. Political leaders and the public alike saw the results of the 1948 war as miraculous, having achieved the establishment of the Jewish state with a larger territory than originally assigned by the UN and with so many hostile Palestinian

Arabs made absent. Amidst the war Israel did not only declare independence but also started establishing government offices (Segev 1984). A provisional government ruled during the war and until the first elections that were held right on its end. The first elected government coalition did not last long and another elections was held by 1951.

The political map of the new state was still dominated by Mapai that was the biggest party of the Labor movement. On the on its right edges of the Labor movement was the socialist-religious Zionist party, Hapo'el Hamizrahi[i], and on its leftist edges was Mapam[ii], that represented a socialist-Zionist stream affiliated ideologically to the USSR, and consisted of the principal opposition to Mapai until 1955. Other political parties that held varying degrees of opposition to Mapai were the new revisionist party Herut[iii], the liberal General Zionists party, the ultra-orthodox non-Zionist Agudat Israel, and the non-Zionist Israeli Communist party. Despite the many ideologies and backgrounds this political map presents, all these parties had one thing in common: their Ashkenazi dominance. When Mizrahim or Sephardim were active members of one of these parties, it was usually in a subjugated manner, their incorporation mainly aimed at attracting Sephardic and Mizrahi votes, and not in order to incorporate their actual contribution to the party. The Ashkenazi dominance of the Israeli political parties was also related to the fact that they had an international structure and received western resources. Most of these parties also had representation in the (European) World Zionist Organization (Magil 1951). Hereinafter, these political parties, except for Agudat Israel and the ICP[iv], will be referred to as Zionist parties, a term which will encompass also their Ashkenazi hegemony.

The establishment of the state revealed the tensions between the Zionist movement, that represented particular groups, and the State and the Nation, which are supposed to represent broader interests of their own (Magil 1951). For this reason, once the main goal of the Zionist movement was fulfilled, and the Jewish state was established, prime minister David Ben Gurion asked to subjugate and incorporate the Zionist movements' mechanisms to the state and gain certain autonomy from world Jewry by implementing a principal of 'statism' (Kimmerling 1993). On the level of discourse, the statist approach implied the need to impose the supremacy of the state's symbols and institutions, and enforce loyalty to it and to its representatives, above any other political or civil body, whether economic, juridical, cultural, educational or political (Kimmerling 1999). On a practical level, the statist approach meant nationalization of much of the economy: just like the armed forces got naturally nationalized, so did important resources like the main construction company *Solel-Boneh* and the expropriated Palestinian lands and

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[i] The Eastern Worker.
[ii] Acronym for *mifleget po'alim meuhedet*, United Workers' Party.
[iii] Liberty.
[iv] Agudat Israel and the ICP did not take part of the World Zionist Organization, but had their own international support system of resources and affiliations, within Eastern European networks and the USSR, correspondingly.

property[i]. The statist approach was the main discursive tool to impose Mapai's hegemonic dominance in the new state. As Grinberg (2001) pointed out, in Israel, as often happens in post-colonial states, the state's institutions were built in a way that was meant to conserve the power of the elite that fought the war of independence, in a way that blurred the distinction between these elites and the state's apparatus. Mapai became a party that is also the apparatus of the state (Troen & Lucas 1995, Shapira 2012), in a kind of symbiosis between party and state (Kimmerling 1993). Mapai's empire relied on a tentacular set of institutions (Shohat 1988), as it dominated the Labor movement which dominated the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut. These two Zionist institutions were influenced by the political map and divided their resources between the Zionist parties according to their relative power. The Histadrut even held elections in which Zionist parties and the ICP participated. The bureaucratic apparatus of the state was also manned according to parties' strength (Horowitz & Lissak 1990). After 1948 the Jewish Agency continued its role as responsible over immigrant absorption and their settlement, and the Histadrut continued to function as a central mechanism for regulation of work and social welfare, providing health insurance, pension programs and much of the employment in this decade. Despite its declared nature of a voluntary mechanism, a workers' organization as it was, in fact the Histadrut had a monopoly over supplying much of the state's basic services in the 1950s: Grinberg (2001) explained the ways in which being a member of the Histadrut was often essential in order to attain some basic rights of any citizen. This entire system was constructed by Mapai for its own benefit and in order to conserve its power; it was built upon its alliances with Zionist parties and by the distribution quotas of power to its partners in the governmental coalition. This system of Zionist institutions, that were state and semi-state institutional networks, will therefore be referred to at times as Mapai's apparatus of domination. This effective apparatus relied on the immense power of its leader, David Ben Gurion, who enjoyed extraordinary powers in the political leadership and in dictating Jewish Israeli public opinion. Ben Gurion performed, almost uninterruptedly, as both prime minister and minister of defense until 1963.

The Grand Immigration and Dismal Absorption of Jews from Muslim Countries

The war between Israel and its neighbors increased and formalized expressions of hostility towards Jews among Muslim regimes and Arab publics, especially but not only in the countries that were directly involved in the warfare. This hostility was cultivated by local factors who had different interests in the Jews' departure, by Zionist messengers arriving from Israel and Zionist activists from these very countries. The Zionists urged the Jewish communities to

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[i] Most of the confiscated lands was placed under the authority of the National Jewish Fund, a non-governmental Zionist institution, which in this way gained certain power beyond the state.

immigrate to Israel by various ways, and spurred the already strengthening identification between Zionism and the Jewish communities of these countries (Chetrit 2009, Behar 2007). There were also many factors drawing this immigration to Israel, Tsur (2001: 48) mentions the historical narrative and mythical image of the land, and the prospect for moral and economic wellbeing that is entailed in the opportunity to belong to the ethnic-religious majority in a strong, modern/colonial country. Shohat (2004) claimed that the question of the passion and agency in this act of immigration often remained ambivalent, and varied in each case. She wrote about mixed feelings of terror, confusion and powerlessness that accompanied this decision, and mentioned how the Zionist movement manipulated the religious-messianic emotions that many immigrants projected onto Zionist secular nationalism. At the end of the 1948 war, immigrants from Muslim countries arrived to Israel in large waves, practically vacating some Muslim countries from Jewish presence during the 1950s[i]. The Jewish elite in many Arab countries had the means and disposition to immigrate to other western countries, and so it happened that many of the Mizrahi immigrants to Israel were of lower social stratums, and many also lost their property in the immigration process.

These years also saw large waves of immigration from Eastern Europe, mainly Holocaust survivors, but Ashkenazi and Mizrahi immigrants were absorbed in distinct manners, and that would determine much of the social stratification prevalent until today. From the point of view of the new Israeli leadership, the vast amount of immigrants from Muslim countries could undermine the cultural dominance of western modernity in the nation that the Zionist regime intended to construct. Within the racist-colonial dispositions of Mapai's leadership, this consisted of a danger to the cultural and spiritual level of the nation and the state. Therefore, Mizrahi immigrants were expected to dispose of their primitive and backward mental constructs and ways of life in order to fit into the modern state. These fears and colonial conceptions were applied through intrusively insensitive absorption policies that entailed both material and cultural expropriation; in some senses and in some cases, a continuation of the material and cultural expropriation the immigrants went through in their country of origin. For instance, Iraqi Jews had to leave behind them their property, as well as their millennia-old immersion and modern cultural contribution to Iraqi culture. Shaul (2016) showed the existential aspect of this double expropriation, when she observed the feeling of powerlessness and loss of control that accompanied both the emigration decision and the immigration processes of Moroccan Jews. In these years, centuries' long civilizations of Jews in different Muslim countries were abruptly

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[i] Many of these Jews emigrated to the Americas and Europe and not to Israel. Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya indeed got vacated from Jews in the early 1950s. In Syria, Iran, Morocco, Algiers, Tunisia and Turkey, the emigration rhythm varied and in some continued into the next decades. For instance, Morocco, which had the biggest Jewish population, saw different waves of emigration that depended on local political developments and on changing immigration policies in Israel. The biggest wave was after Morocco's independence, from 1961 to 1964 (Pikar 2009, Tsur 2000).

dismantled, from the grand structural to the most intimate levels of life (Chetrit 2009, Shenhav 2006). The processes of subjugation they went through in Israel entailed material and cultural, spiritual and ontological impoverishment.

In past years much research has been dedicated to demonstrating how the Orientalist frameworks of the leaders of the Labor movement led to brute inequality in allocation of state resources, and the kind of spiritual and cultural oppression that accompanied that. The state mechanisms created a complete dependency of the immigrants in the government offices, the Histadrut and the Jewish agency for employment, welfare and housing (Grinberg 2001). Private initiatives of immigrants to improve their lives outside these mechanisms were disallowed and castigated by these institutions (e.g. Kemp 2002). These institutions, however, allowed European immigrants to achieve better housing as well as employment, sooner and usually better: closer to the modern center of the country around Tel Aviv, or in well off country-side settlements[i]. The first European refugees received most of the abandoned houses of Palestinian Arabs[ii], and the rest of the immigrants were placed in transit camps in poor conditions until proper housing could be constructed. Mizrahi immigrants usually stayed in the transit camps for longer, got housing opportunities later[iii], usually in the periphery, often by deceitful promises and straightforward lies of the institutions (Pikar 2009). As the years went by the transit camps remained filled with Mizrahi population[iv], and carried certain similarities to the zone of non-being inhabited by Israeli Palestinian Arabs, under the rule of the military regime. The entry and exit of the camps was also limited (Gozansky 2018), and the colonial political oppression was not altogether dissimilar: Mapai used traditional leaders to control the Arab Palestinian population (Cohen 2006), and in the transit camps it nominated such leaderships in form of violent thugs[v].

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[i] These could be achieved through family members or acquaintances already in the country, through the Labor parties, which saw European immigrants as natural affiliates, and also due to direct governmental interventions (Segev 1984, Swirsky 1995, Pikar 2009).

[ii] Most houses, indeed complete villages were grinded to the ground already in the summer of 1948 so as to prevent refugees' aspiration to return and inhabit them (Pappe 2006, Morris 1997). Some urban houses that remained, got inhabited by Ashkenazim that could later get a chance to purchase them from the state. By contrast, Mizrahi immigrants had opportunities to inhabit deserted Palestinian properties in the big cities, but without the right to purchase the houses lawfully. These neighborhoods remained for many years without basic services and turned into slums. Such was the fate for instance of Musrara in Jerusalem, Wadi Salib in Haifa and Givat Amal and Kfar Shalem in Tel Aviv.

[iii] By the end of 1950 about 80% of the transit camps inhabitants were from Arab countries, by 1953 it was already 90% (Segev 1984). This despite being 14-37% of all immigrants in 1948 and 1952 (Tsur 2001). Most transit camps were dismantled before 1960, but it was not until mid-1960s, that all of them did (Segev 1984).

[iv] For more on this matter see the doctoral dissertation of Hila Shalem Baharad that is to get published soon: "Low-Heat Melting: inter-ethnic relations among immigrants in the transit camps" (hituk be-hom namukh: yahasim ben-'adatiim be-kerev 'olim be-mahanot ve-ma'abarot ha-'olim). Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

[v] This practice was often recorded in *Kol Ha'am*. E.g. "The Failure of Mapai's Plot in Or Yehuda transit camp" (kishlon 'alilat mapai be-ma'abarat or yehuda), *KH,* 4.5.52, p. 4. It was also recorded in novels such as Shimon Ballas's (1964), "The Transit Camp" (ha-ma'abara), Tel Aviv: Am Oved; and Sami Michael´s (1974), "Equal and More Equal" (shavim ve-shavim yoter), Bustan.

The next step from the transit camp for many Mizrahim was getting allocated to the newly built "development towns", where they supplied cheap manual labor for national or private industries[i] (Efrat 2009). These town had very limited employment opportunities, poor municipal services and a highly neglected education system, with mainly professional, non-academic education[ii] (Shapira 2012). Some development towns and other Mizrahi-majority settlements were often located near the frontiers. As a result, most casualties and property damage caused by the Palestinian refugees who infiltrated the new borders were suffered by them (Morris 1997). The Mizrahi immigrants, with little relation to their background education and professional experience, often remained unemployed or got channeled to manual labor in agriculture and in remote factories (Sharon 2012). Schools that were constructed in Mizrahi-majority settlements suffered from many aspects of negligence, which created an ethnic segregation within the Israeli educational system[iii] (Swirsky 1989). Mariuma-Marom (2010) studies the Israeli welfare system in the 1950s, and found that de facto two different welfare systems were being employed: one system for Ashkenazi immigrants, functioning through their incorporation in the Labor movements' companies and organizations, and the other for Mizrahi immigrants, designed as a kind of charity for unprofessional and incompetent workers, requiring aid but hardly deserving it. The Mizrahi immigrants, without much distinction between social classes, were considered subjects for an acculturation process, which Shaul (2016) denominated "the Zionist civilizing process". This process assumed that the Mizrahi immigrants were damaged in all aspects of life: from social habits, customs and world views to the most intimate values, beliefs and family relations. Different efforts, including all imaginable atrocities[iv], were made by the state apparatuses in order to save the "underdeveloped" immigrant children from their fates. Veteran Ashkenazim were sent to settlements or transit camps of Mizrahi majority in order to serve as role models for the Mizrahi immigrants, and manage a variety of issues, from education to political leadership (Sharon 2012). These messengers had a role of endowing the immigrants with emotional identification and loyalty to the national framework, as well as acceptance of the superiority of the Ashkenazi Zionist culture (Shaul 2016). In sum, the Mizrahi immigration processes entailed both material and cultural

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[i] Many of these towns were thought to serve as service centers near settlements of Ashkenazi majority, which enjoyed from higher quality of life, but this aspiration never got realized. Factories and companies were constructed there, creating employment opportunities of mainly manual labor. Most of these towns still consist of the country's poorest working-class areas (Shapira 2012, Swirsky 1995).

[ii] For instance, Shaul (2016) tells that in the development town Dimona, the first high school was opened in 1963, and only in 1966 did it start to include the possibility to get diplomas that grant access to universities.

[iii] Swirsky (1989) mentioned inappropriate facilities, a high proportion of disqualified teachers, incomplete curricula, and an alienated and sometimes even conflictual relationship between teachers and parents. These factors led to low scholastic achievements, a huge percent of drop outs and generally poor attendance.

[iv] As kidnapping and experimenting with children, especially of Yemenite origins, and hiding any information of it until nowadays. See Shovali (2007), Massad (2007).

expropriation[i], "calibrating the monetary and symbolic exchange values" of the entire baggage they came with (Adut 2006). The immigrants were homogenized, proletarized, de-urbanized, marginalized geographically to the periphery and to slums, their former training and education was considered worthless, and their culture- inferior, subject to indoctrination and transformation in the hands of modern/colonial state authorities. This deep institutional discrimination allowed veteran Ashkenazim to transform as well. Many left their employment in primary sectors, that required manual labor, and got installed in white collar jobs such as managers, business owners and public servants in the ever expanding welfare system, and the other developing state institutions (Rosenfeld & Karmi 1976).

As Tsur (2007) and Leon (2009) explained, the immigration to Israel entailed a shift for Mizrahim from one model of colonial modernity to another, under conditions of violence, rivalry and conflict, characteristic of historical encounters between east and west (Santos 2006: 118-121). The Zionist civilizing process was in fact also a battle against the Levant, carrying the intention to guarantee "Israelis" will become markedly distinct from Arabs (Dahan-Kalev 2006). An integral part of the emigration and immigration processes of Mizrahim entailed forming an oppositional stance towards Arabs: towards their historical narrative of their countries of origin, and against Arab components of their own identity (Shaul 2016). Some Mizrahim, especially those from countries that participated in the warfare in 1948, had the opportunity to maintain and even leverage Arab components in their identity –mainly the language- in order to serve the settler-colonial system, getting incorporated into Zionist institutions of Ashkenazi dominance that focused on Arab-Jewish relations (Jacobson & Naor 2016): namely, security services, the military regime's mechanisms, and Zionist propaganda tools, whose main purpose was to diffuse the resistance of the Palestinian Israelis (Bashkin 2017). As Ben-Dor (2004) put it, this was the only place where Mizrahim got an Israeli license to continue to be Arab. These employment opportunities were not as accessible for North African immigrants[ii]. As discussed in the second chapter, those North Africans whose modernization processes went through French language and high culture usually found their cultural capital to have lost value in Israel, quite against their own self-perception (Tsur 2007). They were often considered "Levantine" in public discourse, meaning that they had adopted superficially symbols of western culture, without proper assimilation to it nor absorption in its intrinsic values (Sharon 2012: 162). North African elites that had Hebraic high culture, as some rabbis, could sometimes get incorporated into Ashkenazi dominated institutions.

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[i] Lavi (2007), for instance, tells about the cultural relics of Yemenite Jews that were expropriated by the state authorities throughout the immigration process.
[ii] This is due to quite practical reasons. The dialects of spoken Arabic in the Maghreb is very different from the local one and the one of the surrounding countries, which also mostly form the immediate security threat.

Notwithstanding, many Mizrahi rabbis suffered a degradation of status upon immigration, and their position as community leaders was gnawed by Ashkenazi rabbinical authorities (Horowitz 2000). The political system handed monopoly over religious matters in the state to the Ashkenazi religious parties[i], which gave less and lower positions and prestige to Sephardic and Mizrahi rabbis. The encounter in Israel between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi rabbinical elites revealed to Mizrahi rabbis that, in fact, their position in their communities was ambiguous and unclear (Leon 2009). In comparison with Ashkenazi society, the religious affiliation of Mizrahi communities seemed incoherent and undefined, impossible to classify under the Ashkenazi neat division between secular, orthodox national-religious and *Haredim*, the ultra-orthodox stream- which all had political parties, public representatives, and their own educational systems. Ashkenazi rabbis had stable organizations and clear narratives, which had been getting formulated throughout their decades of conflict with modern secular Zionism. In contrast, Mizrahi communities had been going through what Leon (2009) called, soft processes of modernization. When traditional religious routines were changing with modernity, rabbis in many Muslim countries remained of distinguished status, and they had important roles in the spiritual ritual life. However, their social role was not anywhere as clear and defined as the Ashkenazi ones, that had effective roles in Israeli society. In Israel, where nationality replaced religion as basis for popular identification, the significance of Mizrahi rabbis' role was vacated (Leon 2009). Within this context, it was easy for Ashkenazi rabbinical elites to mark Mizrahi rabbis as disqualified and inferior, to exclude them of official status in the state's apparatuses and monopolize these for themselves[ii] (Leon 1999). The fact many immigrant community rabbis did not get nominated to official local roles of the rabbinate was perceived as a humiliating degradation, and made many rabbis desert their communities and move elsewhere. The vacuum created in spiritual leadership contributed to deeper processes of toranic colonization that went through the education system and got stabilized and widespread in the state of Israel (Lupo 2004a). Ultra-orthodox activists went to great efforts to expand their influence in the education systems of many transit camps of Mizrahi majority. This was a counter-response to the Zionist civilizing process, which among others also attempted to enforce secular-national education and identity on the immigrants' children (Leon 2004a). The ultra-orthodox modern/colonial identity option was often perceived by Mizrahim as a cure for the social and economic distresses the harsh immigration process entailed, and as suggesting

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[i] Ultra-orthodox Agudat Israel, Po'alei Agudat Israel and the orthodox national religious party, Hapo'el Hamizrahi.
[ii] Despite the Zionist leaders' ambitions to construct a secular state according to European models, they could never get a wide enough consensus within Jewish publics without the support of religious parties. Therefore, from the inception of Zionism, coalitions and negotiations were made to satisfy religious pressures. In the state, these solidified in its institutions: rabbinical courts received the exclusive authority over all marital matters; and the Minister of Religion, the Chief Rabbinate and local Religious Councils got exclusive authority over Jewish religious life in the state and in local governance. These institutions were manned by rabbis from the religious and ultra-orthodox parties mentioned above.

social mobility and empowerment (Leon 2009, Peled 2002). For many immigrants it served as a proper answer to the spiritual crisis caused by immigration into a modern-secular national society. As Leon (2009) put it, the encounter in Israel caused perplexity that turned into a consciousness of real crisis, only here, unlike 18th century Europe, the reaction to amend came from outside. By mid-1950s, Mizrahi immigrant children were the majority in ultra-orthodox schools (Horowitz 2000), receiving education by Ashkenazi study methods and studying Ashkenazi liturgy and dogmas.

The deep effects of the colonial process as a spiritual, cultural and identity crisis were hard to detect, and even harder to contest, as they were taking place. In contrast, the socio-economic inequalities and institutional discrimination were easier to mark and resist. The 1950s was a period of multitudes of protests discharging in Mizrahi immigrants' concentrations, whether in transit camps, development towns or the poor neighborhoods in cities. Protesting within the transit camps could endanger the protestors' access to work (Bashkin 2017), and at times the protests got disturbed by violent thugs hired by Mapai (Gozansky 2018). Demonstrations outside the camps also sometimes turned violent, weather for police violence or for protestors' initiative. These protests always demanded basic necessities and rights: employment, housing, the right to choose where to live, and the need to improve conditions in the transit camps and in governmental initiatives of arranged manual labors (Chetrit 2004). The basis for protest was the principal of equal rights for Jews in a Jewish state (Bashkin 2017), and did not usually explicitly address the ethnic basis of discrimination[i]. There were many different acts of resistance and protest, such as strikes, sabotage and roadblocks, petitions and letters to the authorities, refusal to participate in the military and refusal to settle the places they were sent to (Kemp 2002, Chetrit 2004, Roby 2015). However, these acts and demonstrations rarely got reported in the press, got criminalized by politicians, oppressed forcefully by the police, and delegitimized publicly for being unpatriotic (Shapira 2012, Roby 2015). In Roby's (2015: 73) research of these resistances he highlighted press reports that revealed especially excessive police retaliation against joint struggles of Mizrahim and Palestinians, organized by the Marxist parties, ICP and Mapam. Despite the violent oppression, the protests were found effective for fulfilling some concrete demands (Lehman-Wilzig 1992, Herman 1995). They did not usually get structured into organizations (Chetrit 2004, Roby 2015).

The socio-economic inequalities and distance that were formed between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim geographically and through the education system, made the military a central tool in constructing Jewish-Israeli national society. Participating in the military is what made new

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[i] Bashkin (2017) mentions that many petitions and letters complained for receiving violent treatment by the police because of the country of origins.

immigrants belong to the national collective, since the military had such a central role in the realization of the national-colonial project (Swirsky 1995, Levy 1999). The military was conceived as a tool for social integration, capable of modernizing Mizrahi Jews, and creating social cohesion in the overly heterogeneous Jewish population. Ben-Eliezer detailed how Mapai's 'statist' ideology included cultivating militaristic attitudes in Jewish-Israeli society. During the 1950s social inequalities were formed within a 'nation in arms': "a cultural construct used by political and military elites to justify solving political problems with military means, used to recruit the whole population into war" (Ben Eliezer 1994). Ben Gurion and other high rank security personnel conceived of Arab hostility as unavoidable, and the main ambition of the Israeli leadership was to be the ones determining the timing and conditions of the promised second round of warfare (Shlaim 2000). Most of Jewish Israeli society perceived the situation with the Palestinian Arab refugees and the Arab neighboring countries –the infiltrations and reprisals, the growing tensions and threats, the non-war non-peace status- in line with this hegemonic belligerent stream. The general atmosphere of emergency and everyday violence encouraged solidarity inside the newly founded state, helping it feel more like a proper nation (Ben Eliezer 1994). Nonetheless, the military regime imposed over Israeli Palestinian Arabs was opposed by most political parties, since it was used by Mapai to monopolize Arab voters, and make this population dependent on its ominous apparatus.

The continuous violence around the borders soon indeed brought a second round of warfare. In 1956 Israel aided France and Britain to seize the Suez Canal from Egypt after its nationalization and conquered the Sinai Peninsula. The successful attack was condemned by both USA and USSR and all three allies were compelled to retrieve (Shlaim 2000). On the same day the attack broke, the Israeli military regime cast a curfew on its Palestinian Arab citizens. In many villages farmers had already gone out to the fields before the declaration of curfew. In Qufer Kassem 43 farmers that were returning from the fields after the curfew had already entered in vigor were shot to death by IDF soldiers. The aftermath of the Qufer Kassem massacre increased the opposition to the military regime in public opinion and among politicians (Herman 1995). The military campaign in Sinai allied with the former colonial powers, influenced Middle East politics in various ways. It established a decade of relatively few Palestinian Arab infiltrations to Israel, but also positioned Israel definitively as an aggressive extension of western imperialism to the Arab states (Zureik 1979).

War and State Building: The Predicament of Zero-Sum Zionism   **1948- 1949**

The 1948 war left the city of Jerusalem divided between Israel and Jordan, as the only mixed Jewish-Arab city located on the very borderlines of the armistice agreements[i]. This meant that the war brought a simultaneous transfer of populations from both sides of the city. The Jews transferred from east to west were mainly Mizrahi and Sephardic[ii]. The beginning of warfare in the city was marked by Jewish-targeted riots in a mixed Jerusalemite shopping center in December of 1947. Some of the local Sephardic elites lost their property in these events[iii]. Later on, explosions occurred in the Jewish city center, and the offices of the Council of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem (hereinafter CSCJ) got partially burned. During the war, the CSCJ lost more than half its property, and the most historical and sacred of it[iv]. Many of its benefactors became refugees in the population exchange in the city, and CSCJ members themselves lost private property and old family inheritance[v].

During the months of battle over the city, the Jewish population in it suffered from isolation. It got isolated both from its *"economic and financial home front and base"*[vi] of the surrounding Arab villages and cities, and also from other concentrations of Jewish population, since the roads leading to it were under Arab militias' control during much of the war. This limited the Zionist military supplies and personnel and isolated Jerusalem from the state-building process that was taking place during that year[vii]. as some said, *"a siege was laid on us by the enemy and by the state of Israel"*[viii]. Zionist militias like *Etzel* and *Lehi*, that opposed the hegemonic Labor movement, gained popularity within the Jewish residents of Jerusalem. Some CSCJ members were also affiliated to these militias, most notably David Siton that would become Eliahu Eliachar's right hand in the upcoming decade.

1948 was a crucial year in designing the CSCJ's relation to the Zionist institutions. The war united the Jewish population in Israel like nothing else could:

"*We have known what is one people: the enemy's bullet does not differentiate"*[ix].

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[i] See map III.

[ii] Kark & Oren-Nordheim (2001): 7-25; Gaon (1937/1982).

[iii] See Eliachar (1987).

[iv] "Memorandum" (tazkir), 23.12.49, CSCJA container 6212 file 76.

[v] Eliahu Eliachar himself claimed he lost 75% of his family property. Knesset Protocols 1950 (4), p. 962.

[vi]"Our stance in the Jerusalem Municipality- Eliahu Eliachar's lecture in the branch club" ('emdatenu be-'iriyat yerushalaim. hartsaato shel eliahu eliachar be-mo'adon ha-snif), *Kol Habira* 3, 16.2.54.

[vii] See Eliachar (1987): 72; and Ben Gurion's own declaration about the difficulty of drafting soldiers to the city's defense: Security Council Protocols, 15.10.48, SA 435/20-8.

[viii]"Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyaney ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 12.11.48, p. 2.

[ix] "Third meeting of the Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (yeshiva shlishit shel moetset ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), 5.10.50, CSCJA container 6238 file 14.

"The entire Yishuv is united in the idea that there is no escape from a collision with the Arabs and it must prepare for battle."[i]

Both the Sephardic and Zionist leaders saw the war as a fortunate occasion to incorporate Sephardic representatives in the "national institutions", especially due to the massive military recruiting needs. Eliachar was nominated to the temporary Security Council, as well as a member of Agudat Israel, who represented the non-Zionist ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi public[ii]. When the temporary government was established in May of 1948, Bechor Chetrit of the Tel Aviv CSC was appointed as Minister of Minorities and Police. The Jewish Agency opened a department for arranging immigration of middle-eastern Jews[iii]. These ways to include the Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the national institutions and politics were historical developments, much a result of the pre-state struggle for Sephardic representation in those institutions[iv]. The public figures who got incorporated into the few key positions the Zionist leadership designated for Sephardic representatives were all tending towards the Labor movements' values and posed no threat to Mapai's reign (Derri-Weksler 2013). The CSCJ leadership of the Eliachar stream did not get as much power as they had expected[v], which might also be related to Eliachar spending much of 1948 in expeditions abroad, a fact he would regret until the day he died[vi]. In these crucial moments of state building, the CSCJ under Eliachar's leadership only weakened its position, and this strengthened this institution's mistrust towards the newly established reign of Mapai. The CSCJ published posters condemning Ben Gurion and the government, denouncing the appointments made to state institutions as "*secret plotting*"[vii], and one poster even cited Ben Gurion's personal letter to Eliachar[viii]. During the transition of state mechanisms from the British government, the Israeli state institutions were "*purified*"[ix] of Sephardic clerks under accusations of corruption and were manned by

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[i] Fortnight Intelligence Bulletin #57, p. 3-4, SA 150, 66/44/G.

[ii] Security Council Protocols, 19.10.47, p. 17, SA 0179:1. The first attendance of Eliahu Eliachar and of Moshe Shapira, Agudat Israel's representative, was in the meeting that discussed general drafting for The People's Watch (mishmar ha-'am). Security Council Protocols, 20.11.47. SA 0179:1.

[iii] See correspondence between Eliahu Sasson and Yaakov, 6.10.48. BGA, 252509.

[iv] See Ben Gurion's reasoning for adding a Sephardic in the Security Council, in order to refute claims of discrimination and Ashkenazi control. Security Council Protocols, 28.10.47, p. 6, SA 0179:1.

[v] That is, a role in the new government, which was entrusted to Bechor Chetrit, or a role in Jerusalem's municipality, to which David Abulafia got appointed. The mentioned department in the Jewish Agency was led by an Ashkenazi official. Eliachar also hoped to be part of the military governor offices of the Jerusalem district, during the military regime Israel imposed over the city for few months after the war had ended. See correspondence between Bechor Chetrit and Moshe Ben Ami, 2.8.48, CZA 53a.

[vi] Interview of Eliahu Eliachar by Margalit Bajerno, 1980. Oral History Archives of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

[vii] The expression "nirkam be-hashai" was repeated in the poster, "Elected and not nominated institutions" (mosdot nivharim ve-lo memunim), 1948. CSCJA container 6327, file 35/387; also see letter from Moshe Meir Levi to the Jewish Agency, 21.3.48, CZA S25/8922.

[viii] "Proper Response" (tshuva ka-halakha), CSCJA container 6218 file 143. Another example of this established mistrust can be seen right after the war in 1949, when the political party of the CSCJ's blamed the government for attempting to damage its electoral campaign by keeping its key activists drafted for the elections period. "Discrimination in this field too?" (haflaya gam be-shetah ze?), *HH*, 24.12.48, p. 2.

[ix] Knesset Protocols 1949 (1), p. 318.

Ashkenazim instead. The hostility and mistrust between the CSCJ and the Zionist establishment was hence reinforced and in some ways aggravated within the new state's framework. Nonetheless, this established rivalry should not undermine the main meaning of the war for the CSCJ, that was dedicated to the project of Jewish nationalism. The war and the establishment of the state were described in their publication, *Hed Hamizrah*, as a miraculous and glorified event, with a precious and sublime result[i]. For the first time in its centuries-long history, the CSCJ acted in an all-Jewish city, and the public it represented became part of the ethnic majority of the new state. For an ethnic minority group that always had to struggle for its place and for the representation of its interests with majority groups and imperial governments, this meant an opportunity to finally take part of the ruling elite[ii]. They had hopes that within the new state there would rule *"a Jewish hegemony of all the tribes and not just* one."[iii] After the war ended, these hopes were proven false. The new political reality disconnected Jerusalem from its former environment and tied all diplomatic exchanges and community matters to the state mechanisms. The Sephardic notables' politics were hence made largely irrelevant. Some Sephardim extended their linguistic and social skills to the state's service, for purposes of security and intelligence work within the Palestinian Arab population in Israel. Throughout this period, these skills would develop into the tricky governance expertise of the military regime (Eyal 2005). Other Sephardim got incorporated into Zionist parties in a subjugated manner. The CSCJ circle was excluded entirely from the ruling elites' circle within the new state, and Eliachar's diplomatic contacts and skills were rejected by the state institutions[iv]. During Eliachar's voyage to the Americas, he held several conversations with Arab leaders in Lake Success, New York. In his extensive repertoire of writings, he never wrote about the content of these informal conversations, but he did mention getting more understanding from the Arab leaders than "*any of the democratic diplomats*"[v]. It can be assumed that Eliachar proposed to these leaders the initiative the Sephardic elites were advocating throughout the armistice negotiations of 1949. The idea was to initiate a formal population exchange between Palestinian Arab refugees and Jews residing in Arab countries[vi]. The numbers were similar[vii]; the Arab League was involved directly in the war over Palestine, and the war itself put the Jews of these countries in varying

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[i] "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH,* 2.6.49, p. 2; "Itamar Ben Avi and the Vision of the state" (itamar ben avi ve-hazon ha-medina), *HH*, 13.4.49, p. 8. "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 14.1.49, p. 2.

[ii] Avraham Elmalih, "From Arab to Hebrew Municipality" (mi-baladiyat el-quds le-'iriyat yerushalaim), *HH*, 28.1.49, p. 3.

[iii] Eliahu Eliachar, "The Ethnic Problem, Part two" (be'ayat ha-'edot- helek bet), *HH*, 13.10.50.

[iv] E.g., Ben Gurion turning down Eliachar's suggestion to intermediate a meeting between the Exterior Minister and the French Counsel. Security Council Protocols, 29.10.48, p. 9. SA 435/20-9.

[v] Eliachar (1975): 169, 181.

[vi] See Segev (1984). E.g. Eliachar (1975): 170-200; (1980): 295-300. E. Eliachar, "The problems of our public in the Knesset" (be'ayat tsiburenu ba-knesset), *HH*, 16.3.49, p.3; "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 8.4.49, p. 2.

[vii] There were around one million Jews in Arab countries and the Palestinian refugees are estimated at 700-900,000.

degrees of physical and civic danger[i]. This initiative, however, did not fit the negotiations made by the Israeli exterior ministry[ii], who chose not to include the question of the refugees in the negotiations (Fried 2018), and other spheres of diplomatic exchanges no longer had any validity.

During the war and right after it massive waves of immigration began to arrive to the new state, from Europe and from Muslim countries[iii]. The new immigrants were seen by all parties as a potential electoral base, as were also the Palestinian Arabs that became part of the new Israeli state. The Labor parties Mapai and Mapam both opened Arab and Mizrahi departments within their lines in order to address these populations. The CSCJ and the Tel Aviv CSC were able at the last moment to get organized in a common faction that ran to the elections held in early 1949. Though Eliachar wanted the faction to address the middle-class elites, the CSCJ determined to turn to the new immigrants as a supposedly natural electoral base. Thus the campaign focused on different forms of ethnic discrimination, particularly condemning numerical and status discrimination in work places and in governmental positions. This last was what allowed the cooperation with the Tel Aviv CSC, which tended towards the Labor movement and its socialist, workers-oriented discourse[iv]. The party got four out of the 120 parliamentarians[v]: Bechor Chetrit, Eliahu Eliachar, Moshe Ben Ami and Avraham Elmalih. In the new government, Bechor Chetrit, the head of the Tel Aviv CSC, got to keep his previous appointment in the temporary government as a minister, but got degraded to be only the Minister of Police, a role that as Meir-Glitzenstein explained, carried almost no real authorities of its own, and was chosen for Chetrit precisely because of its perceived marginality (Meir-Glitzenstein 2004).

Right at the end of the war Telem[vi] was founded, an organization led by young Jerusalemite Sephardic elites affiliated to the CSCJ circle. Telem aspired to become a national political party, by first forming a broad movement within the Sephardic and Mizrahi immigrants and natives[vii]. Telem certainly reminds of the Histadrut of Pioneers of the East, which was established at the very beginning of the British Mandate. Eliahu Eliachar was partially involved

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[i] E.g. Pikar (2013) about the situation in North Africa; Bashkin (2012) about Iraq.

[ii] See Eliachar (1980).

[iii] Over 340,000 immigrants, about 60% from Europe. See, "The immigration to Israel according to country of origin and year of immigration" (ha-'aliya le-israel le-fi erets motsa ve-shnat 'aliya), May 1948- end of 1953. Matah Virtual Library, retrieved from: http: //lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?Item= 19970 (last accessed 12.3.20).

[iv] "Executive Committee Meeting" (yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 1.1.49. CSCJA container 6320 file 28/299.

[v] See table IV.

[vi] Movement of Mizrahim's Unification (tnu'at likud mizrahim). As Chetrit (2004) mentions, this was the first movement to use the term Mizrahim, much before it became commonplace.

[vii] "What is Telem Movemnet" (mahi tnu'at telem), undated, CSCJA container 6214, file 12/103; Letter from A. Toledano to Meir Ben Kiki, 24.9.50; CSCJA container 6214, file 12/103.

in both initiatives, and both expressed a very quick understanding of the new political order and of the actions required in it by an autonomous Sephardic organization.

Nonetheless, in the new reality formed between Israel and the Arab world it was somewhat harder to propose a significant role for the Sephardic and Mizrahi notables to play, other than roles related to security and intelligence services within the state's apparatus. Not including Eliahu Eliachar or other Sephardic notables in the state's exterior diplomacy in its most crucial time during the armistice negotiations, invalidated the Sephardic pre-state claim for a mediating position with the Arab world[i]. Eliachar (1975) would later claim that the leadership *"…told us what to vote on these issues"* (p. 335), and *"treated us as minors and not as adults"* (p. 512). Others later said that these notables could contribute to Israeli diplomacy their native knowledge and skills to create *"diplomacy of respect"*[ii]. After all, they knew not only Arabic, but also the

"language of appeasement of the Arab gesture, the sound of the voice and intonation of the words …the [Jewish] *sons of the east use the same manners and style within themselves and with the Arabs… A whole doctrine is necessary for us in these days to set the relations between a person of Jewish origins and an Arab person. Even more so in diplomatic relations between countries…We must know not only the language of our Arab interlocutor but also the mentality in him"*[iii].

Notwithstanding, the Sephardic public who often understood Arabic was exposed to the radicalization of the public discourse in the Arab world, which after the war continued to exhibit strict objection to the existence of Israel. This prompted an uncompromising stance in return, *a la* Jabotinsky's 1923 Iron Wall article. Throughout 1949 *Hed Hamizrah* displayed vehement right wing opinions, uncompromising positions towards the Arab population in Israel and outside it[iv], and dehumanizing despising discourses about Arabs, that expressed deep contempt and animosity:

"I understood the mindset of the enemy from listening to the radio waves that sent any useless utterance made by Arabs this morning…from reading Arab press you cannot be mistaken that any change occurred from the previous framework of vain glorification, superficiality and hypocrisy I used to find in the past. As far as I'm concerned, the Arab intellectual stayed exactly the same: he learned nothing and does not

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[i] There was an exception to this: Eliahu Sasson, that served as the head of the Arab affairs department of the Jewish Agency from 1933, and from 1948 as the head of the middle-eastern department in the Ministry of Exterior. He was part of the delegations that conducted the armistice negotiations in 1949. A specific research about Sasson's activity is still pending in order to view to what degree he was able to bring his particular, Sephardic or middle-eastern perspective into his work, and to what degree he complied with the Labor-Zionist perspectives, as designed by the dominant Ashkenazim in it. His particular Sephardic standpoint was elaborated, for instance, in: G. Cohen, "How to Speak with the Arabs" (eikh ledaber 'im ha-'aravim), *Maariv*, 16.8.63, p. 6.

[ii] Y. A. Abadi, "Sephardic Judaism and our Political Battle" (ha-yahadut ha-sefardit ve-ma'arhtenu ha-medinit"), *Shevet Va'am* 1954, p.23. Also see Eliachar (1980): 209-211.

[iii] Y.Y. Rivlin, "Our Relation to the Arabs" (yahasenu el ha-'aravim), undated [approx. Autumn, 1949]. JCA, container 2717. My gratitude to Yohai Ben Gdalia for helping date this document.

[iv] "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah"), *HH*, 2.6.49, p. 2; 4.3.49, p. 2.

wish to learn… Its [Al Bia'at, a specific newspaper] *words are built on emotions alone. And the emotion is expressed in empty phrases. This is the character of any Arab newspaper in this country or anywhere."*[i]

This quote might reflect the habitual mainstream discourse in Israeli media about Arab countries, which, according to Efron (2005), tended to emphasize these countries' corrupt and inferior nature. In this period, *Hed Hamizrah* sometimes translated to Hebrew from foreign western press articles which reflected this racist attitude, as if the fact those papers published it gave it an extra validity:

"The only thing that blossoms there [in *"the part of Eretz-Israel occupied by Arabs"*, i.e. the West Bank] *is schemes and quarrels of families…Israel for the falah* [farmer] *is an important economic advantage- for the purpose of smuggling... The Arabs do not know how to work the land."*[ii]

David Siton, the co-editor of *Hed Hamizrah*, along with Eliachar, had a regular informative column about Arab politics during the 1948 war. During the period of the armistice negotiations this column appeared less and less frequently. Both on press and in the parliament, Sephardic activists insisted peace with the Arab countries was not a possibility[iii] and strictly opposed Israel receiving any Palestinian Arab refugees back[iv]. They supported the military regime imposed on the Israeli Palestinian Arabs and opposed them receiving equal rights[v]. These uncompromising political positions were often soaked with hateful discourse, perhaps also for being exposed to hateful and dehumanizing discourses on the other side. The rise of Arab nationalist discourses, which often excluded Arab-speaking Jews from the national collective and treated them with hostility, found this way its mirror image among Arab speaking Jews in Israel.

Another factor that possibly designed the Sephardic elites' attitude towards the Arabs during this period is the role that Mizrahi immigrants played in the hegemonic Zionist imagination. Some Jews in Arab countries identified with Arab nationalisms and were declared anti-Zionists, but some of those would also be compelled to immigrate to Israel (Bashkin 2017). The Zionist leadership's perception of the immigrants was influenced by this factor, by the immigrants' Arab customs and manners, and by the leaderships' own modern/colonial orientalist and alienated mental frameworks (Eyal 2005). As Eyal claimed, the immigrants were seen as carrying hybrid identification, and the Zionist leadership did not know to what degree they could be trusted to maintain the new strict identity borders created between Jews and Arabs, and to play by the new rules of the zero-sum game. Since the hybrid identity was part of the Sephardic notables'

[i] A. Michaeli, "The Arabs are Scheming Plots" (ha-'aravim horshim mezimot), *HH*, 18.2.49, p. 7.

[ii] Sunday Times Reporter in Jerusalem, "The Arabs in Israel", (ha-'aravim be-israel), *HH*, 17.2.50, p. 6.

[iii] E.g. Eliachar (1980): 304-310.

[iv] Y. Y. Rivlin, "The Problem of Arab Refugees", (be'ayat ha-plitim ha-'aravim), *HH*, 19.8.49, p. 5; "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 2.6.49, p. 2.

[v] "Matters of the Hour", (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH,* 2.6.49, p. 2; 4.3.49, p. 2.

self-presentation in the Ottoman and Mandatory periods (Eyal 2005), and because of their stated rivalry with the Zionist ruling elites, the CSCJ had to clarify the limits of its opposition to the government, to frame the terms of their rivalry, by stating their loyalty to the state[i]:

"Today is not like beforehand, when it was possible to [rebel]…today there is a state and [we] must not do against it."[ii]

As Eliachar observed, *"the merging of Sephardim and Arabs puts the Jewish society at risk and contaminates government policy"*[iii]. The need to set the framework of rivalry with Mapai within terms of loyalty to the state was also reflected in the Sephardic leaders' hesitance in confronting the government about the fact the Jews in Arab countries were in danger due to the establishment of the state, *"innocent victims of the state itself"*[iv]. Though a considerable amount of struggles and speeches were made in upcoming years in order to advance the immigration of Jews in Muslim countries, this argument for the state's responsibility over these Jews would almost never be used[v]. The need to demonstrate loyalty to the state and the sever identity borders it molded, could have been another factor that encouraged the open manifestation of animosity and contempt towards the Arabs.

Yosef Yoel Rivlin, a native Ashkenazi intellectual close to the CSCJ circle and to the revisionist party, had his own take on the matter. He explained this discourse among the natives Jews as a response to the Orientalist-romantic image of the Arabs that the Jewish Israeli left exhibited. He wrote of *"the sons of the land"*, whose

"Flag, as discovered, is not usually of special sympathy to the Arab. The first cause to that is the words of praise whose foundation is but an imagination, exaggerations about the virtues of the Arab…the character the [Ashkenazi] *'peace people' bestow to the Arab, from lack of knowledge and from far-reaching imagination…On the other hand, as is the nature of things,* [the Mizrahi Jews] *know the Arab's disadvantages from up close…this created the response of those who know the real thing…and* [they] *take it to the last extreme…by the way it must be mentioned that the same characteristics that exist within the Jews of the east did not attract the attention of the Jews of the west… When those exist in his Jewish brother they seem as disadvantages and sometimes even as incapacities."*[vi]

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[i] For instance, when writing the declaration of the Israeli branch of the Sephardic World Federation, the CSCJ circle thought fidelity to the state must be stated, whereas others that were incorporated to the Zionist institutions saw such a declaration as humiliating. "Protocol" (protokol), 14.4.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

[ii] "Executive Committee Meeting" (yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 1.1.49, CSCJA container 6320 file 28/299.

[iii] This was said in what seems to be a cynical manner, to explain why the responsibility over minorities was expropriated from Bechor Chetrit. "Third meeting of the Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (yeshiva shlishit shel moetset ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), 5.10.50, CSCJA 6238-14.

[iv] Eliachar, Knesset Protocols 1949 (1), p. 267.

[v] For instance, Binyamin Sasson, representative of the Sephardic faction in the second parliament assembly (as of 1951), made this statement in the parliament and then apologized and withdrew from it: Knesset Protocols, 9.7.52.

[vi] Y.Y. Rivlin, "Our relation to the Arabs" (yahasenu el ha-'aravim), undated [approx. Autumn of 1949], JCA, container 2717. His notion in this text about the centrality of the "peace people" in setting the Israeli public discourse was probably somewhat tilted not only by his political tendency, but also by his own social and

What Rivlin mentions as marginal in his argument might well be the most important factor for the Sephardic elites: the fact that the romanticist, positive orientalist attitude within a leftist minority among the Ashkenazi Jews was reserved to Palestinian Arabs alone, and was not found in their perception of the Mizrahi or Sephardic Jews: these last were expected to change and integrate into the Ashkenazi modernist mentality of the new Zionist regime.

This attitude of leftist movements like the party Mapam, was also expressed in its chase after Israeli Palestinian Arab affiliates and voters, that was more avid and integral than their chase after Mizrahim and Sephardim. From the Sephardic elite's perspective, the proof for this tendency was verified in the composition of the first parliament, that had more Palestinian Arab MPs than Sephardic ones[i]. Perhaps partly as response to this tendency, *Hed Hamizrah* encouraged Israeli Palestinian Arab autonomous organization and representation:

"It is our duty to ensure that minorities have representation in the ... [parliament] that will be established…these Arabs should have the freedom to choose their own representatives…If there is a Minority Department in the government it is its duty to guide the Arab voters towards self-consolidation and organization."[ii]

This argument perhaps mostly reflected inner Sephardic struggles for hegemony between the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv CSCs[iii], but it also expressed the Sephardic historical experience in the Ottoman Empire as an ethnic minority that held certain political autonomy, and reflected their unique native understanding of how a state apparatus can work in the heterogeneous Middle East with regards to ethnic and religious minorities.

In sum, the regional Rupture of 1948 enforced a zero-sum game between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, a game the Sephardic notables were drawn into despite efforts to prevent it. Eventually they lost from both sides: they lost their personal and economic relations with the Arab world but did not gain a higher stature in return. Instead, they lost most public positions and valuable assets. Becoming part of the national majority of the new Jewish state did not entail becoming part of its ethnic majority. The social and numerical Ashkenazi majority would include them in the national collective only in the price of their subjugation and not as equal partners of the ruling elites. This consisted of an insult, a slap in the face of this honorary elite. The native elites were excluded from the role of intermediaries, their native skills and knowledge either discarded or drafted to be used to control and spy after Palestinian Arabs.

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professional circles; and his status as an Ashkenazi native to the land, affiliated to both Sephardic and Ashkenazi elites. I thank Hanan Harif for pointing this out to me.

[i] There were three Palestinian Arab MPs and two non-Ashkenazi Jews representing Zionist parties in the parliament, besides the four members of the Sephardic faction.

[ii] "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 10.12.48, p. 2.

[iii] It was basically used while Bechor Chetrit headed the Ministry of Minorities. See also "Matters of the hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 7.1.49, p. 2.

Even the orientalist-romantic views that prevailed within certain sectors of the Israeli left were applied to the Arabs and not to this population, adding insult to injury. Of course the Sephardic notables had little experience in national or international politics, but they felt entitled to this role by their stature and heritage:

"The government and the Histadrut like a body with a sole are working to distance the Sephardim from the network of political rule and administration…it is unthinkable…that the Jewry that is the first in the land and on which the entire Jewish settlement relied in the period of establishing the state will become miserable by discriminations."[i]

The native elites of Labor tendencies who got included in the ruling elites got marginalized to powerless roles as the Minister of Police (Meir-Glitzenstein 2004), or recruited for security purposes. 1949 was a year of general disillusionment of the Jewish public from the prospect of Israel resolving its contradictions with the Arab states through the armistice negotiations, and getting accepted as part of the region. But it turned out that the role of the Iron Wall was not finished with the 1948 war, as some might have hoped. The Sephardim suffered a double disillusionment: one from the hope that the Jewish state would get accepted as part of the region, another from the hope they themselves would get accepted equally as a part of the state. The 1948 zero sum game entailed for the Sephardic elites the loss of their native rights and their entitlement for elitist stature.

The Years in the Parliament   1950-1955

In 1949 The Sephardic faction joined a very broad coalition that Ben Gurion composed. The faction was composed by different CSCs around the country, as was the Sephardic Countrywide Union, that in some senses was the central institution of the faction[ii]. However, some members of the Countrywide Union belonged to Zionist parties, and therefore the nature of the relation between the faction and the Countrywide Union was never agreed upon[iii]. Telem was expected by some from both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem CSCs to take charge of the Countrywide Union[iv], but that never occurred. In March of 1950 Eliachar quit the government coalition on his own,

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[i] "Manifesto to the Jews of Arab lands and Sephardic Jews" (giluy da'at le-yehudei artsot 'arav ve-yehudei sfarad), 1948. CSCJA container 6238 file 393.

[ii] "The Countrywide Union of the Sephardic Jews" (ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-yehudim ha-sfaradim), 1949. CSCJA container 6238 file 14.

[iii] While Eliachar insisted that the CSCs should be the base for electing the Countrywide Union and exclude other parties' members, the Tel Aviv leaders sought opened elections to it. See "Protocol of the council elected by the executive committee" (protokol mi-yeshivat ha-va'ada she-nivhera al yedei ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 8.6.50, CZA 430A/60.

[iv] Ibid. and "Protocol of the executive committee of the Jerusalem Community Council" (protokol ha-va'ad ha-po'el shel va'ad ha-'eda be-yerushalaim), 18.9.50. CSCJA container 6236 file 34/378.

following a disagreement about the budget. This move was perhaps mainly aimed to draw a clear distinction between a Jerusalem line of opposition to the government, versus the Tel Aviv pragmatic line of cooperation. This difference between these two political lines was also marked by ideological political-economic tendencies: Tel Aviv CSC's Labor-socialism and Jerusalem CSC's liberalism. The Countrywide Union, that never really got active in any practical sense, dissolved before the next elections that came soon in 1951. The big CSCs of Tel Aviv and Haifa declared their withdrawal from electoral politics as an organization[i]. Their heads, Bechor Chetrit and Avraham Khalfon, joined Mapai. Eliachar formed a Sephardic faction inside the liberal-oriented General Zionist party (hereinafter GZ). This decision was taken without consulting with the younger cadre of the Telem activists, to their dismay[ii]. This embitterment escalated into a full scale conflict, perhaps encouraged by Mapai infiltrators in the movement[iii]. Telem split between Eliachar's supporters and his opposition, and consequently ceased functioning as a political movement. The Sephardic faction within the GZ got two parliamentarians in the 1951 elections, while the GZ got twenty, becoming the second largest party. The faction also gained representation in Jerusalem's municipality. *Hed Hamizrah* stopped publishing after these elections, and in fact it practically stopped publishing in the period of preparation for new elections as well, besides two issues of propaganda right before it. This is probably due mainly to financial difficulties, but may also be related to a responsible decision to lower the flames of the conflicts with other Sephardic and Mizrahi circles outside the direct CSCJ circle, or at least to minimize public exposure to them.

Eliahu Eliachar's career as a parliamentarian was not his main interest. He often travelled abroad, and put much of his efforts into rebuilding the international Sephardic communities' network, most prominently within communities in Paris, London and Buenos Aires. The World Sephardic Federation (hereinafter the Federation) was established between different circles of Israeli and Diasporic Sephardic elites, holding international conferences in Paris in 1951 and in Tel Aviv in 1954. Eliachar's attempt to set its center in Jerusalem was not accomplished, nor was his stubborn endeavor to organize it to compete with the Jewish Agency. This would have made the Federation a resource-raising mechanism for encouraging and absorbing immigration to Israel of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry from all over the world. However, many activists and capital-owners opposed this bold defiance of the hegemonic national-Zionist institutions[iv].

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[i] "The Countrywide Sephardic Union has been Dismantled" (purak ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim)*Davar*, 16.3.51, p. 1.

[ii] Letter from Meir Matza to Eliahu Eliachar, 11.11.51, CZA 430A/34a.

[iii] About this conflict see in: Herzog (1986): 135; "Trial over Violence in Telem Council" (mishpat 'al makot be-mo'etset telem), *Herut*, 10.9.51, p. 2. The reasons to suspect Mapai's involvement here will be clarified with more detail in chapter 6.

[iv] E.g. "Protocol of the management of the Sephardic Federation" (protokol yeshivat hanhalat ha-federatsia), 3.11.53, CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

Eliachar also raised funds from the international Sephardic community for the CSCJ's electoral campaigns[i]. Another purpose for which he raised funds was for the project of the Great Mativta, that consisted of a toranic high school and academy. The construction of the Great Mativta was the most central project of the CSCJ in this period, meant to educate Sephardic *"spiritual leaders":* rabbis, other ritual community roles and community leaders, worldwide[ii]. The Great Mativta project was probably the principal public action to respond and set an alternative to the slowly expanding process of toranic colonization. The building was planned in honor of the Chief Sephardic Rabbi, and was designated to be his residence.

As notable politics goes, the role of member of parliament for Eliachar was just another thing that he did, another one of his positions, another activity he engaged with along other private businesses and public projects. In the parliament, he most consistently and vigorously fought for his line of political economy, encouraging liberal economy, free markets and capital investments. This was against Mapai's policies that concentrated the entire economy around the party's mechanisms, while nurturing dependence in large donations from abroad. Eliachar also fought for specific issues related to Mizrahi immigration, mainly for increasing its quantity and quality. The motivation for this struggle was coherent with his other politics. He was moved by honest anxiety for the wellbeing of communities he conceived to be under danger of losing life, rights or property- usually the last. He was also greatly concerned by the fact that most Jewish community leaders and capital owners from different Arab countries did not immigrate to Israel, and thought that attracting their immigration should be a great priority, for the communities' and the country's sake. Therefore, the phenomenon of immigrants returning to their countries of origins and *"slandering Israel"*[iii] was also a consistent topic of his concern.

Meir-Glitzenstein (2004) claimed the Sephardic members of Mapai did not foresee the deep ethnic inequality that was getting woven into the history of the state of Israel in those years, perpetuating a geographical and social distance between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. In general, Sephardic activists in Zionist parties more often complied with their parties' view of Mizrahi immigrants, their need to change and shed their Arab costumes and culture[iv]. The Sephardic party led by Eliachar certainly did see the inequalities getting formed and rooted, and emphasized consistently that the governments' treatment of Mizrahi immigrants was creating a problem of national and historical standards. Evidently, social inequalities by themselves was not the main interest of this circle of notables. The assumption of backwardness of the crowds

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[i] Interview of Eliahu Eliachar by Margalit Bajerno, 1980. Oral History Archives of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

[ii] "On Your Walls, Jerusalem. Document of the Problems and Activity of the CSCJ" ('al homotaih yerushalaim. kovets 'al be'ayoteha u-pe'uloteiha shel va'ad 'edat ha-sfaradim be-yerushalaim), 1957, Jerusalem: Azriel.

[iii] "The Subcommittee of the Interior Committee against Permanent Emigration from Israel" (va'idat ha-mishne shel ve'idat ha-pnim le-meni'at yerida me-ha-arets), 30.12.53, CZA 430A/86a.

[iv] See for instance, "Merger of Ethnicities in Israel- How?" (mizug ha-'edot be-israel: ha-keitsad?), *Hame'orer* (the organ of Tel Aviv CSC), January & February 1954.

of lower-stratum immigrants was also shared by the Sephardic notables. The issue that was so intolerable for the CSCJ circle was the reflection of this backwardness in the Israeli public discourse as racial matter, which thus reverberated on the notables as well.

By the end of 1952 the immigrant transit camps had a clear Mizrahi majority, at least according to numbers, because this was an issue practically no public or political body in Israel raised[i]. The CSCJ's proposed solution to the inequalities in immigration absorption was by a just redistribution of political power, which would combine Sephardic and Mizrahi notables in key positions in the immigration process: these positions were reserved to Ashkenazi experts and technocrats. Researchers have tended to dismiss this Sephardic political goal as self-interested (e.g. Derri-Weksler 2013, Chetrit 2001, Levy 1998). This was of course the case, but it was also a battle between different kinds of expert knowledge, different types of experiences that made for different bases for legitimacy to handle a certain problem (Eyal 2005). The Sephardic notables' claims were based on a correct assumption, that they would treat the immigrants with more sympathy, from a position that understands the immigrants' *"hearts and…spirit and* [most importantly] *language"*[ii]. Though the CSCJ had quite limited contacts with the new immigrants, when addressing their needs, they often exhibited empathy and closeness. Their attitude was not one of patronizing pity, but displayed sensitivity to the immigrants' cultural, spiritual and psychological straits[iii]. *Hed Hamizrah* publications often expressed honest proximity to these immigrants' experiences and backgrounds:

"These immigrants come here from a country of Arab-French culture… with a noble Jewish honor… They come here and everything they had imagined changes. If on the boat they decided to be religious- when they reach the transit camp or to some combat unit they see it is not easy… They get mocked at for their accent, their lifestyle. If on a certain moment when happiness strikes they respond with expressions of happiness of their own, in their songs and dances and laughter- they get mocked at. All this inserts in the immigrants feelings of inferiority and mental depression that later affects their thoughts and worldviews."[iv]

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[i] For statistics see: Miriam Kachensky. "The Transit Camps" (ha-ma'abarot). Retrieved from: http://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=12939&kwd=789 (last accessed on 13.3.20). The CSCJ mentioned it rarely in their meetings and in their publications, but they probably avoided making it a public issue because that could harm their attempts to attract further immigration. Only in 1957, when the newspaper *Haaretz* published this matter did the CSCJ spread that article broadly: "The Blacks and Whites" (ha-shhorim va-ha-levanim), CZA 430A/33b. Also see, Y. Kalderon, "Opened letter to Avraham Abas man of Mapam" (mikhtav galuy le-avraham 'abas ish mapam), *HH*, 10.3.50, p. 12.

[ii] "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyaney ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 17.6.49, p. 2.

[iii] Examples for this can be seen in the series of articles by Dan Hason about this immigration in the Autumn of 1950, in *Hed Hamizrah*. The journal also published the fact that all cultural events in the immigrant transit camps were of European orientation, and stressed the extremely significant issue of food in the transit camps being inappropriate for the immigrants from Arab countries. "The Ways of Absorption of Mizrahi immigrants" (le-darkei ha-klita shel ha-'olim mi-'edot ha-mizrah), *HH*, 7.1.49, p. 15; "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyaney ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 28.1.49, p. 2.

[iv] Shimon Shalem, "The Problems of Moroccan Youth in Israel" (be'ayot ha-no'ar ha-marocani be-israel", *HH*, 29.7.49, p. 14.

The struggle for Sephardic inclusion in the state's immigration mechanism was one of the principal ways to fulfill the alternative Sephardic vision of the Merger Diasporas. This was a central ethos of the Zionist institutions in their course of formulating the nation-building project they faced. In practice, this term was employed as an almost technical mission, left in the hands of clerks and social scientists that were entrusted to modernize and reeducate the immigrants from Muslim countries to fit into the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist identity. The Sephardic activists also tended to see the answer to this immigration's problems in education, but many of them, including the ones incorporated in the Labor movement, thought education should be aimed at raising leadership and nurturing elites within the immigrants' populations[i]. The main project of the Federation in this period was to establish a system of scholarships for Sephardic and Mizrahi youth, but this initiative was thwarted by the central Zionist institutions[ii].

A further difference between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Zionist elites was in the diagnosis of the problem. As some progressive Ashkenazim, the CSCJ circle did not challenge the perception that the immigrants had a "low cultural level", but they did not see it as an inherent quality. They considered it solvable by intensive investments of funds, organizations and personnel that should be provided by the local Sephardic and Mizrahi elite as an initiative of state authorities. The attitude that perceived the Mizrahi immigrants as inherently inferior was understood to be "defeatist" and racist by the CSCJ circle[iii]. These notables had an alternative perception of the meaning of the Merger of Diasporas. For them, it was about *"Sharing with the Diasporas"*[iv]economic and symbolic resources, including them in *"designing the nation's image"*[v], and in the *"building of the nation and revival of the people"*[vi]. That is, setting institutional, spiritual, organizational, cultural and educational policies. That would mean some modern Eurocentric patterns of the state would have to change, and Ashkenazim would require reeducation as well[vii]. However, this claim was rarely made directly, either for cautious or for lack of coherency. What was usually emphasized was that the alternative conception of the Merger of Diasporas rendered the Sephardic and Mizrahi native elite indispensable: *"the*

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[i] "Merging of the Diasporas- How?" (mizug galuyot- ha-keitsad?), *Hame'orer*, Janurary and Feburary 1954.

[ii] "Protocol" (protokol), 14.4.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417. "Committee of preparation of the Sephardic world conference" (va'ada le-hakhanat ha-kongres ha-sfaradi ha-'olami), 11.2.54, CZA 430A/58a

[iii] Y. Ben Shimon, "The Defeated and the non-Defeated" (ha-nikhna'im ve-habilti nikhna'im), *HH*, 21.1.49, p. 13; "Maroccan Jewry Looking Towards Israel" (yahadut marocco tsofiya le-israel), *HH*, 22.7.49, p. 12; E. Eliachar, "The problem of Absorption of North African Immigrants. Was Mr. Gelblum Right?" (le-be'ayat ha-klita shel oley tsfon afrika. ha-nehona da'ato shel mar gelblum?), *HH*, 29.4.49, p. 8; "What is Telem Movement" (mahi tnu'at telem), undated, container 6214, file 12/103, CSCJA.

[iv] *shituf galuyot*. E.g. Eliahu Eliachar in "Meeting #9" (yeshiva tet), 12.5.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417; Knesset Protocols 1953 (2): 667.

[v] *dimuyo shel ha-'am*. Moshe Ben Ami in Knesset Protocols 1949 (1): 113.

[vi] "Preface" (ptah davar), *Shevet Va'am* 1954.

[vii] B. Arditi, "The Problem of all Problems: Discrimination" (be'ayat ha-be'ayot: aflaia), *Shevet Va'am*, 1954.

merger will not stand without us"[i]; because *"even…if there was a Sephardic government, the ones ruling would be from the intelligentsia, as it is among the Ashkenazim"*[ii]. Only towards the end of the second parliamentary term it seems Eliachar realized that immigrants' organizations themselves should also play a central role in this vision[iii].

During 1950 and 1954 Eliachar insisted to hold serious conversations with Mapai and the GZ leaders, respectively. This was to be a deep conversation about the Sephardic and Mizrahi problem[iv], in which this broad vision was probably meant to get clarified and made concrete, in order to recruit the relevant political elites to the missions required. However, the Ashkenazi Zionists leaders did not respond to this petition, which caused him great bitterness and created friction, first with the parliamentary coalition of 1949-1950 and afterwards within the GZ. Eventually the GZ formed an immigrants' department for spreading elections propaganda in 1955. It was mainly aimed towards Eastern European immigrants, and did not count with Eliachar's participation[v].

Another department of the GZ Eliachar did not get incorporated to was the Minorities' Department, aimed at gaining an electoral base among Israeli Palestinian Arabs. The party tried to designate this role to him[vi], and many of his colleagues from the Federation formed part of this department at a certain point[vii]. Eliachar did not decline but neither was he inclined to take responsibilities within the department. The politics of intermediating between the government institutions and other ethnic minorities had very little to do with the Sephardic faction's political interests and priorities[viii]. If they were concerned about the Israeli Palestinian Arabs, it was mainly due to the humiliating fact that there were more Arabs in the parliament than Sephardim and Mizrahim[ix].

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[i] Eliahu Eliachar in "Protocol" (protokol), 19.3.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

[ii] B. Arditi, "The Problem of all Problems: Discrimination" (be'ayat ha-be'ayot: aflaia), *Shevet Va'am*, 1954.

[iii] "The Subcommittee for Merger of Diasporas" (ha-ve'ida le-mizug galuyot), 7.6.55, CZA 430A/81.

[iv] "Meeting of the Executive committee of the Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el shel ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), undated, CSCJA 6238 file 14; Letter from Eliahu Eliachar letter to P. Bernstein, 15.8.54, CZA A430/88b.

[v] "The committee for clarifying the problem of new immigration in the party" (ha-va'ada le-berur be'ayot ha-'aliya ha-hadasha ba-miflaga), 28.1.55, CZA A430/88b. Previous attempts to construct a department for Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in the GZ did not pull through. As apparent from different correspondences, some GZ leaders treated Eliachar with much more respect, as equals, than Mapai's leaders and other parliamentarians. They shared a social class and ideology, and the ethnic division was less of an obstacle in this relationship. However, the GZ did not give any institutional backing to the Sephardic faction unless it was for elections propaganda.

[vi] Letter from A. Ben Zeev to Eliahu Eliachar, 22.4.53, CZA A430/88a.

[vii] "Minorities Department" (mahleket ha-mi'utim), in: booklet of 19th Committee of the General Zionists, 3.4.52, CZA A430/88a.

[viii] Eliachar made various attempts to discover what the line of the department was when was during this process, as can be seen in various correspondences in CZA A430/88a and CZA A430/253. On 24.10.54 Eliachar wrote to Y. Tamir of the GZ to remind him that he would wait for a serious discussion about the Sephardic and Mizrahi problem before attending the committee related to minorities, in CZA A430/88b.

[ix] "Protocol of the Meeting of the General Committee" (pirtei-kol, yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-klali), 25.5.55, CSCJA container 6237, file 35/387.

Since Jerusalem was ethnically cleansed and physically cut off from Palestinian Arabs, and most Jerusalemite Palestinian Arabs notable had escaped before or during 1948, the CSCJ circle had quite limited relations with this population[i]. Nonetheless, the natives of the land could fully appreciate the magnitude of destruction that had stricken the Palestinian Arab society that remained in Israel. This based political attitudes that fluctuated between mistrust and commiseration:

"It is difficult now for the Jew in Eretz-Israel to set his relation to the Arab, and it is even harder to express these things, even if we had them clear within ourselves. The Arab that is beaten now, whatever you may say to him would be like comforting the bereaved with the dead still in front of their eyes… From 'time to hate' there is no direct transfer to 'time to love', or to 'time for friendship'…"[ii]

I believe the confusion described in this quote characterized many of the Sephardic and native elites during this period. Even though there were various attitudes as to the proper way to handle the new reality of the military regime, many of the Sephardic notables were unclassifiable in terms of the Zionist parties. The CSCJ barely ever referred to the Israeli Palestinian Arabs, but when they did it was with a mixture of rivalry and respect, superiority and proximity[iii]. The patterns of superiority were not dissimilar to the CSCJ's discourse of the Mizrahi immigrants, at least towards those sectors of these populations that were mostly of the same, lower social stratums.

Since the death of the Chief Sephardic Rabbi in 1953, the CSCs and most Sephardic rabbis had been struggling to influence the election of the new Chief Sephardic Rabbi, an authority that belonged to the Ministry of Religion, commanded by the religious Zionist party of Ashkenazi hegemony. In 1955 the ministry appointed the rabbi that most Sephardic leadership opposed[iv]. The new Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim undermined the CSCJ's Great Mativta project, and initiated a lawsuit against the CSCJ because of the funding they had used for it[v]. This caused much damage to the CSCJ's public image. This case reflected their distance from the religious institution at large, distancing them further from more religiously observant crowds and greratly

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[i] Some old acquaintances or their acquaintances contacted Eliachar for help as MP. E.g. Letters from Eliahu Eliachar to Eliezer Angel, 12.2.50, 6.3.51, CZA A430/239/6.

[ii] Y.Y. Rivlin, "Our Relation to the Arabs" (yahasenu el ha-'aravim), undated [approx. Autumn of 1949], JCA, container 2717.

[iii] "Nazareth Beyond the Jewish Jurisdiction" (natsrat mi-huts la-thum ha-yehudi), *HH*, 25.9.50, p. 18; Moshe Rabi, "An Arab School in the state of Israel" (bet sefer 'aravi be-medinat Israel), *HH*, 27.5.49, p. 11. Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to D. Grad 17.5.55; and to GZ ministers, 20.4.55, CZA A430/88b. Also see Derri-Weksler's (2013) analysis of some of the other Sephardic elite's relations with this population.

[iv] As compensation, Moshe Toledano, the CSCs' nominee and the head of the Sephardic Rabbinical Organization, that was supported for this nomination by most Sephardic leadership, got appointed in 1958 as the Minister of Religion without belonging officially to any political party.

[v] See "What is Sacred in the Sacred Property?" (ma kadosh be-hekdesh?), *Ha'olam Haze* 31.5.56; "On Your Walls, Jerusalem. Document of the Problems and Activity of the CSCJ" ('al homotaih yerushalaim. kovets 'al be'ayoteha u-pe'uloteiha shel va'ad 'edat ha-sfaradim be-yerushalaim), 1957, Jerusalem: Azriel, pp. 32, 44-59.

undermined their public credibility[i]. This affair probably put the final seal on the CSCJ's lowered prestige and determined its political marginality. By the 1955 elections, the CSCJ's faction did not get any representation in the parliament or in Jerusalem's municipality.

Beyond National Politics: Politics of Honor   **1956-1957**

During the entire period studied in this chapter the CSCJ gave great importance to its own traditional honorary status[ii]. Taylor (1997) defined the notion of "politics of honor", as those politics based on an understanding of identity as constructed from social positions that are fixed in class hierarchies. The centrality of the politics of honor was one of the points of dispute between the CSCJ and Sephardic notables of Labor tendencies. This was reflected in various discussions of the Countrywide Union and the Federation, and most explicitly in the insistence to maintain Jerusalem's traditional central position and make it the central branch of activity of these institutions. The more pragmatic Sephardim, as the members of the Tel Aviv SCS, obviously would not benefit much from elevating the CSCJ's status this way, but they were also more eager to integrate in the apparatuses of the state as constructed by Mapai. Unlike the British Mandate, and despite the ethnic discrimination between Jews, the plundering of Israeli Palestinian Arabs and the practices employed in the military regime, Mapai's apparatus of domination carried a somewhat misleading discourse that depicted the state as a modern socialist democracy. In this political culture, the politics of honor were discredited as "effendism", belonging to a feudal backwards system. While most of the Labor-tending Sephardic elites adopted this notion, within the CSCJ circle the traditional notions were conserved. The honor of the Council for them was one with the honor of the Community, and Eliachar's personal honor was also intertwined in it: up to these last years, he practically *was* the Council. This made his rivals accuse him of being motivated only by his own personal interests and honor.

Since 1955, the honor of the Community Council was constantly put on stake by different trials and lawsuits, centrally the one of the Chief Sephardic Rabbi. The diversity of private businesses and public activity typical of notable politics inevitably mixed private and public capitals: social, human and economic. Therefore, accusations in embezzlement or corruption were a brute offence in these circles, however it was almost always possible to claim, and could mainly

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[i] Part of the problem was that their degree of religiosity was itself questionable by some. "Rally in a Tel Aviv Hotel" (asefa be-malon be-tel aviv), June 1956, CSCJA 6236 34/379.

[ii] E.g. "Protocol" (pirtei-kol), 20.1.53; "Meeting. Management of Sephardic Federation" (yeshiva. hanhalat ha-federatsia ha-sfaradit), 25.9, CSCJA container 6239 file 417; letter from Rabbi Uziel to Eliahu Eliachar, 14.2.51, CZA 430A/88a; "Protocol" (pirteikol), 18.3.59, CSCJA container 6266 file 638.

be avoided due to the established respect and trust acquired to the people in question. Lacking such personal respect opened the door to numerous types of accusations[i]. The wave of conflicts and trials in this period made the CSCJ concern for its honor become ever more central in these years. One of the first actions of the new executive elected in 1957 was to establish a *"Public Committee for Restoration of the Community's Honor"*[ii]. Other than these issues, the CSCJ was mainly occupied with the building of the Great Mativta[iii], and other small-scale projects on the seam-line between business, charity and community development[iv]. It continued to advocate against different aspects of ethnic discrimination, with somewhat more emphasis on the rabbinical and cultural-religious spheres.

The final retirement from national politics, the recurrent failures of Eliachar to politicize the Federation[v], or perhaps the fact he left Jerusalem[vi], all led to an institutional change of attitude towards the CSCJ circle. The 1956 Sinai campaign also did its share. According to Siton,

"The government and Jewish Agency reached a turn after the Sinai campaign in their approach to the role eastern ethnicities… can play in the political field. At the time, there was a question about what would happen in a time of war with 'second Israel' that is composed especially of eastern ethnicities. The army includes now many of the immigrants whose conceptions are different than ours. And there, a pleasant surprise, they stood to the test, their spirit stood strongly and made a revolution. Also in the field of propaganda [hasbara] *and intelligence we have succeeded thanks to the immigrants that speak the Arabs' language and we used it for propaganda mainly in Gaza Strip. For the first time we heard in the Agency that they understand that the matters related to these* [Egyptian] *Jews can only be treated by people who understand their language and spirits, and that it was a mistake not to understand it until now. They now want to recruit these factors and activate them. We were invited to set in motion the Federation to a series of activities, the Sephardic public must be alert and guide this proces*s.*"*[vii]

Siton's description of the immigrants' participation in battle as a revolution, a test and a surprise might reflect his perceptions of them as incapable and inapt agents, in congruence with the hegemonic Ashkenazi perceptions. However, it also reflects a central concern of the native Sephardic elitist circles, not yet publicly addressed in this period, that the discrimination the

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[i] E.g. "Protocol. Meeting number 24" (pirteikol. yeshiva mispar 24), 30.3.59, CSCJA container 6266 file 638. Such accusations were also made around the split in Telem, see correspondence of Mr. Alankwa, Achva Press and the manager of the Balilius Fund in CZA 430A/40.

[ii] *va'ada tsiburit le-hahzarat kvod ha-'eda.* "Protocol. Sixth meeting" (pirteikol. yeshiva shishit), 16.6.57, CSCJA container 6266 file 638.

[iii] Most of the CSCJ's resources were put into the Great Mativta, see budget in: "On Your Walls, Jerusalem. Document of the Problems and Activity of the CSCJ" ('al homotaih yerushalaim. kovets 'al be'ayoteha u-pe'uloteiha shel va'ad 'edat ha-sfaradim be-yerushalaim), 1957, Jerusalem: Azriel.

[iv] For instance, a sowing school and a private equity.

[v] E.g. "Protocol of the management of the Sephardic Federation" (protokol yeshivat hanhalat ha-federatsia), 3.11.53, CSCJA 6239-417.

[vi] Eliachar (1980): 341.

[vii] This was stated in the context of the need to transit Egyptian Jewry to Israel. "Protocol. Meeting of the General Committee" (pirtei-kol. yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-klali), 4.8.55, CSCJA container 6237 file 387.

immigrants suffered within the Zionist regime was so dire that it would impede their loyalty to it, and would encourage them to help its enemies.

As seen in this quote, it was once again the Mizrahi unique contribution to the manipulation of Palestinian Arab civil population which won this public some positive points, and its participation in warfare allowed the Zionist institutions to imagine its incorporation into influential positions in it. The de-politicization of the Sephardic activists was also the very basic condition for getting the ruling elites to cooperate with their institutions. By the end of 1957 the Federation won a long standing struggle it had had with the Jewish Agency, and got to receive the desired 25% percent of all the funds recruited from Sephardic communities in the world by the Jewish Agency[i]. The Federation was designed to create and maintain contacts between all Sephardic Diaspora, in Israel and abroad, in service of certain elitist circles. It was an organization around which Sephardic elites of all party affiliations gathered. Some of its goals were still getting defined and negotiated over between the parties involved in these years. In practice, it focused on production of knowledge about Sephardic and Mizrahi folklore and history, by organizing cultural events and publishing the journal *Shevet Va'am*[ii] since 1954. As mentioned, the grand aspiration of the Federation was to raise independent funds from Sephardic communities abroad, in order to provide scholarships to Mizrahi and Sephardic youth: high school in this period, not to mention university, required paying high tuition fees, and this elite's top priority was to supply the next generation with tools for social-economic mobility in the modern world. This goal was practically the only thing that united the entire cadre of the Federation, but until this year the Jewish Agency strictly opposed any form of such distributions of its own funds, and also acted against their independent recruit of funds[iii]. Eventually, Mapai succeeded to compel all the CSCJ's organizations to its terms, by fragmenting it and piling obstacles in its way, as it attempted to do to all its rivals.

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[i] "Protocol" (pirteikol), 19.1.58, CSCJA container 6266 file 638.
[ii] Roughly meaning, Tribe and Nation.
[iii] E.g. in "Protocol" (protokol), 19.3.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417; "Review of the activity of the CSCJ for the year 1953" (skira me-pe'ulot va'ad ha-'eda ha-sfaradit be-yerushalaim li-shnat tashyag), CZA 430A/33a, letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Peretz Bernstein, 15.8.54, CZA 430A/88b.

NOTABLE POLITICS   Autonomy and the Coloniality of Power

Since the late Ottoman period, the CSCJ was the only institution in the country to have had the role of spiritual and symbolic leadership of the entire imagined community of Sephardic, North African and middle-eastern Jews. This was the base of social legitimacy for the CSCJ's claims to represent this public. For them, it was unimaginable that another kind of organization could have legitimacy to represent this collective, or at least it was considered highly unlikely to work. This was mainly a question of honor and social legitimacy, but also a question of organizational culture.

Traditionally, the CSCJ functioned as a mother organization, patron of smaller organizations, each for different Mizrahi ethnic-cultural origins. These small organizations depended on the bigger one as a potential source of funds. Since 1947 the executive council kept safeguarded places for the different ethnic organizations' leaders. Organizations formed by new immigrants after 1948 almost never cooperated with the CSCJ in any sense. Immigrants often wrote to Eliachar for aid, and were benefactors of the CSCJ women organization's charity and education institutions, but they hardly ever became members or got included in the patronage system[i].

Each of the ethnic organizations incorporated to the CSCJ kept its autonomy. According to one view, the Sephardic ethnicity was a patron of the rest of the ethnicities, in a sense due to its superiority, while another view understood it to represent a "general" ethnicity that is the sum of all the other ethnic identities. Eliachar held the last view, which brought the reform in the executive in 1947 (Haim 2000). Nonetheless, his practices and style of an exalted capital-owner could reflect either attitude. The system of patronage left much room for mutual insults and accusations of discrimination or of passivity[ii]. These accusations were not uncommon in the relationship of Mapai with other parties as well. In fact, there are other comparable aspects between the CSCJ's political culture and the Israeli political culture dominated by Labor Zionism. Such was the basic political ambition of any particular elite circle to unite and represent an entire public, by nurturing dependence of other groups in the elite circle, as part of its struggle to hegemony. However, the essential difference between the Ashkenazi-Zionist and Sephardic elites was that the CSCJ was formulated in the context of the multi-ethnic Middle

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[i] This observation is based on contrasting official address lists with the population dispersal tendencies of immigrants and old-timers in different neighborhoods. "Names of members of Bnot Yerushalaim association" (shmot ha-haverot be-agudat 'bnot yerushalaim'), CSCJA container 6228 file 628. "List of Needed Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (reshimat nizkakim mizrahim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), undated, CZA 430A/34g. "List of suffrage holders" (reshimat boharim), 1957, CSCJA container 6215 file 7.

[ii] For example, see the bitter correspondence in 1953 between Eliahu Eliachar and Nahum Yaakov Mizrahi, a representative of the Union of Kurdistani Jews in the Council's executive, in CZA 430A/34a.

East, it was accustomed to managing diversity, and its organization required the other groups maintained their autonomic representation. Mapai, in contrast, tried to dismantle any competing organization and absorb it. The main distinctive feature of the CSCJ circle between other Sephardic activists was that it did not intend to fight for the crumbs left to it by the Ashkenazi Zionist leaders. Rather, it intended to lead a comprehensive change in the state's institutions themselves. The main tool for this struggle was self-organization, maintaining an autonomous organization not dependent in the Ashkenazi-dominated Zionist institutions:

"Cancelling discriminations depends on our ability to get organized and ensure representation in state institutions"[i]

"…Two peoples are getting created here... I get letters from many different places that describe the relations getting created between the different tribes… If we by ourselves by auto-emancipation will not reach merger we will not accomplish this task. This state needs another Sephardic arm or it will be lost"[ii]

"I respect Mapai as a rival but not as a partner in our public work because it wants to extract [la'akor] *both Chetrit and me from the* roots*"*[iii]

This was the essence of the efforts of the Federation to raise its own funds, and of all of CSCJ's factories, that attempted, on small and highly limited scale, to create autonomous systems that would consist of practical alternatives to the huge apparatus of Mapai's domination. This strive for autonomy was the main tool in the decolonial Sephardic struggle, because it was the only way to make things work as they saw fit, and differ from the modern/colonial practices of the ruling elites.

As mentioned previously, in the framework of the Jewish state, the Sephardic notable politics became irrelevant to the role of intermediaries with the Arab world. This pre-statehood claim was replaced after 1948 in a claim to intermediate between the state institutions and the immigrants. Despite some researchers' observation that the Sephardic public was of a mid-stratum social class between the Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, and held customs that were also mid-way between these two populations[iv], the CSCJ did not succeed to translate this position to a viable political claim. It was not able to create networks that would attract the multitudes of lower-stratum immigrants that lacked notables' leadership. They had no significant allies in the transit camps and very few allies within the immigrants that arrived. This is another reason that much of Eliachar's work in the parliament was aimed at advancing the immigration of

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[i] Document undated and untitled, a platform to explain joining the General Zionists in 1951. CZA 430A/60.

[ii] Eliahu Eliachar in "Protocol" (protokol), 19.3.52, CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

[iii] Eliahu Eliachar in "Protocol of Countrywide Union executive meeting" (pirteikol mi-yeshivat ha-ihud ha-artsi), 27.8.50, CSCJA container 6238 file 14.

[iv] See: Baharad (2011), Gurevich, A. (1940). Bulletin #21. *Demographic Survey. The Jewish Settlememt in Eretz-Israel* (skira demografit. Ha-yeshuv ha-yehudi be-erets Israel). Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency Statistical Department, p. 26.

Mizrahi elites. Moreover, the politics of honor that was the base of their notable politics was not justified in the ethos of a modern-western democracy Israel was nurturing. The CSCJ, unlike other circles of Sephardic elite, did not aspire to unlearn its practices and change its ways and worldviews in order to fit into the Israeli political system, and the ominous apparatus of Mapai's reign was certainly not a good example of how a liberal democracy should work. From the Sephardic marginalized place, no wonder they considered it a *"wretched disease from the west: the sickness of political parties"*[i], and that they thought that the combined power of all the CSCs might be able to challenge the political culture of the Zionist regime:

"We represent more than our own powers [le-ma'ala mi-kohenu]*, more than a democratic body can represent… [since] we have been uplifted beyond the Community and became an organization. That is why the path of the Union is only through the Councils"*[ii].

Even if the CSCJ attempted at times to compete by the rules of the new game, it could not really lead any other form of autonomous organization other than a Community Council: they did not have the organizational tools, the schemes of habitus or the social contacts or skills to build another kind of social legitimacy.

Bourdieu (1984) reviewed the reasons for unequal participation in electoral politics between social classes and sexes, and emphasized the way in which technical competences and social competences nurture each other, reducing this way the possible participation of people who do not already have the disposition to participate in politics. People's habitus is another expression of their dispositions: the way people claim physical space, their presence and bearing, gestures, postures, body language and words. Using Bourdieu's logic, it is clear that the Sephardic notables' very sense of entitlement to approach the political field, their perceived authority to talk about public affairs, was directly related to the kind of political culture that they were immersed in and nurtured from. Their technical competences, their discourses and ways of action were rooted in it, and their social competences and habitus allowed them to gain respect among certain circles and make alliances. Notables are made notables by their public recognition as an important and respectable people, but they must also be noted as such by an official, universal authority. Eventually, it is the state that holds the monopoly over the official recognition of the proper social classification (Bourdieu 1985). The Sephardic classification as notables was entirely disqualified by the state. This led some Sephardic elites to acquire the technical and social competences required for competing successfully within the new political

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[i] Moshe Ben Ami in "Third meeting of the council of the Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (yeshiva shlishit shel moetset ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), 5.10.50. CSCJA container 6238 file 14.

[ii] Eliahu Eliachar in his opposition to free elections to the Countrywide Union, "Protocol of the Executive committee of the Jerusalem Community Council" (protokol ha-va'ad ha-po'el shel va'ad ha-'eda be-yerushalaim), 18.9.50. CSCJA container 6236 file 34/378.

culture. However, the CSCJ's very sense of entitlement to be concerned about the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics arrived from applying their own political culture: their notable politics, even though disqualified, was indispensable in guiding their political participation, and so was the autonomy expressed in the CCs' structure. The CC structure was imperative for an autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi organization in order to manage the diversity of this public, handling the identity and class differences in it while guarantying its unity. Unity was necessary for gaining power against the Zionist-Ashkenazi coloniality of power. The Zionist coloniality of power, its matrix of control, created a system of multiple hierarchies that benefited the entire Ashkenazi population economically, geographically, professionally and culturally, ethnicity functioning as an organizing principle. These Heterarchies (Grosfoguel 2011) were woven into the institutional structure of the Zionist regime. The historical party-key, that redistributed most jobs and housing, was the most important institutional tool in this process. The party-key was the strongest mechanism to prove to the Sephardic and Mizrahi public that autonomy was not worthwhile: the CSCJ was simply not enough of a political party to ever get the chance to get included in it.

Unlike the older generation of Sephardic notables, the younger generation that was organized in Telem did imagine anew and had the inspiration to construct a different kind of political organization that would express Mizrahi autonomy. I believe the main obstacle for Telem was the old generation's politics of honors, inherent in their notable politics.

The technical details concerning the nature of relationship between the CSCJ and Telem, like the relationship between the Countrywide Union and the Sephardic parliamentary faction, were never entirely agreed upon, and so the relations between the institutions were conceived differently by the different agents involved [i]. This eventually brought the split and the end of Telem, because it was not able to establish its autonomy from the CSCJ, neither in term of action nor by sources of funding[ii]. Eliachar was the one who held relationships with Sephardic notables abroad who were potential funders of autonomous Sephardic action in Israel. Telem remained dependent, bound to give the CSCJ an honorary position within the movement and follow the politics it dictated. Under these conditions, Telem could not transform itself into a progressive democratic tool for broad Mizrahi publics. The CSCJ would certainly not fund or support any organization that did not give it centrality: its pro-Sephardic and Mizrahi ambitions were a weaker component in its ideology than the honor and heritage of the CSCJ itself. This central concern of the CSCJ for "symbolic aspects of existence" was a direct expression of its

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[i] "Protocol of the council elected by the executive committee" (protokol mi-yeshivat ha-va'ada she-nivhera 'al yedei ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 8.6.50, CZA 430A/60.
[ii] Letter from Shlomo Bahar to Eliahu Eliachar, 21.9.49, CSCJA container 6214 file 12/103; Letter from Meir Matsa to Eliahu Eliachar, 8.12.53, CZA 430A/236a/5.

social class, "freed from more brutal forms of oppression and exploitation" (Bourdieu 1984). However, the struggles were inherently intertwined: the honor of the CSCJ was perceived to be as one and the same with the honor of the Sephardic public. The pride of the Community was measured in power positions of the Council's members in the state's mechanism, but also in the dignified acceptance of the Mizrahi immigrants in the state, on both a discursive and practical level. The demands for personal honor towards the notables and for dignity for their perceived broader public were interconnected in the core.

BORDER THINKING   and the Coloniality of Knowledge

Eyal (2005) wrote about the different types of institutions established in Israel since 1948 that monopolized three types of Orientalist expert knowledge. Production of knowledge about Mizrahi Jews was entrusted to social scientists, knowledge about the surrounding Arab states was monopolized by state Intelligence, and the military regime concentrated knowledge about Israeli Palestinian Arab population, mostly gathering information of how to exploit and encourage socio-political schisms in this society. After the establishment of the state almost all mediation skills or expertise related to Arabs got framed as security-oriented knowledge, or were used for the purpose of attracting electoral votes. As mentioned, this had a significant effect on the trajectories of Jews from Arab countries, as the military regime recruited mostly Mizrahi immigrants from middle-eastern Arab countries because of their language skills, Intelligence also recruited many. The Sephardic notables' native expert-knowledge and skills were mostly not regarded as relevant expertise for any other mechanism of the state (Eyal 2005). The violence that compromised the Israeli-Arab borders between 1949 and 1956 kept Israel in a status of constant, low-key war: the kind of persistent tension that makes citizens more loyal to the state, that makes it taboo to speak against the government, because it is supposedly doing its best to secure its citizens lives. It could be claimed the CSCJ endorsed this taboo, since it avoided almost entirely from voicing opinions about Arab related politics in this period. However, I believe that in fact, they simply did not know what to say. Their particular potential contribution, the claim to serve as a bridge to Arabs, the possibility of founding regional and local cooperation, all lost their validity. As Bourdieu (1984) suggested, their indifference to the field of exterior politics was a simple manifestation of their incompetence: their approach to the issues of appeasement was irrelevant under the constant warfare.

For this reason, the CSCJ's claim for expert knowledge switched its object of knowledge from the Palestinian Arabs to the Mizrahi immigrants: this was the field where they could still claim for a power position as the educated native elites, despite the little to null contact they actually had with new immigrants. This claim exempted them from dealing with issues of national

security, thus also releasing them from the need to prove their loyalty to the state. This claim, however, collided with the social scientists' role. Even though the last had the official, scientific seal of experts, during this decade they were challenged at times by the Sephardic intellectual elite. Eliachar and others criticized the social scientists' inaccuracy and insufficient knowledge to address the Mizrahi and Sephardic problem[i].

The battle over the experts' position about the Mizrahi immigrants reflected the Sephardic border-thinking, which enabled them to think from and to criticize both western and non-western forms of knowledge. Within this intellectual elite there were autodidactic social scientists, which continued a Jerusalemite-Sephardic tradition of producing ethnographies of Mizrahi Jewry (see Noy 2014). There were others who casted doubt over the relevance of the academic establishment and held extra-academic research projects[ii]. Still though, the immigrants were measured by the tools and standards of western modernity, evident in the Sephardic recurring concern over the immigrants' "low cultural level"[iii]. At the same time, their experiences and life styles were understood and accepted, and they were not often estranged or thought of as inherently inferior. I agree with Noy (2014: 47) that in a certain sense, the Sephardic elitist condescendence was "completely different from missionary or colonialist attitudes", as it perceived the immigrants as brothers in a common project, whom they recognized, were compassionate for, and felt responsibility over, in contrast to the fear, pity and authoritative attitudes common among the Ashkenazi elites.

Nonetheless, the perceived inferiority of the Mizrahi public by the Zionist ruling elites was not something the Sephardic notables could afford getting themselves contaminated with, and this tilted their border-thinking further towards the hegemonic European modernist patterns. As much as the Mizrahi immigrants were getting stereotyped negatively by the ruling discourse, the CSCJ circle nurtured further a feeling of superiority[iv] (Peretz 2000):

"This journalist exposed without fear or restriction what he saw in the camps…above all there is a serious problem, and that is the lack of any ability to get accommodated to the country, first and fore mostly- chronic laziness and hate of work. All of them, without exception, are without a profession and of course extremely poor. They will all tell you that in Africa they were 'merchants', that is, petite traders… Hundreds and thousands of African sit, therefore, in camps, and claim that they are being discriminated against by the Ashkenazim…But this is not intentional discrimination…its simply easier to

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[i] "The situation of Mizrahi Jews" ('al matsavam shel yehudei ha-mizrah), *HH*, 12.8.49, p. 11; "The Subcommittee for Merger of Diasporas" (ha-ve'ida le-mizug galuyot), 7.6.55, CZA 430A/81.

[ii] These could get published for instance in *Shevet Va'am*; also see for instance, Moshe Rabi, "Shabbat Prayer with Immigrants from Morocco" (tfilat shabat 'im mehagrim me-moroko), *HH*, 13.4.49, p. 15.

[iii] E.g. Letter from A. Toledano to Meir Ben Kiki, 24.9.50, CSCJA container 6214, file 12/103; Eliahu Eliachar, "The Problem of Ethnicities in Israel" (be'ayat ha-'edot ba-arets), *HH*, 25.9.50, p. 5.

[iv] See Baharad (2011) for these processes among Sephardim in the transit camps in the early 1950s.

organize the rest and more difficult to organize the Africans."[i]

The new social order made the Sephardic elites closer than ever before to the ruling Ashkenazi elites. After all, the Jewish population that lived in the land for the past decades shared not few important, constitutive experiences, that designed a certain collective mentality and certain shared ideological commitments (Bashkin 2017). This reality got translated into the state mechanisms, which used administrative division of population data according to the categories of old-timers, or veterans, versus new immigrants, the Statistical Bureau collecting data only of individuals' country of birth and not of their parents or origins. As shown by Bonilla-Silva (2004), the Social Census forms an important part of states' "racial governability", and has far reaching and profound effects on individuals' subjectivity and self-understanding. The ways in which states count, classify and identify their citizens through the categories the Census uses can have the effect of "making up people" or "nominating into existence" new kinds of persons for individuals to be. In the new Israeli state, Ashkenazi veterans were identified as "the natives" who receive the foreign immigration (Efron 2005). The state's reality created new "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1995), another corporal position from which to construct particular knowledge, a position from which the Sephardic elites shared more attributes and had more in common with the Ashkenazi elites than ever before. While for many Sephardim and Mizrahim of the elites the identification with Ashkenazi elites was a conscious choice they purposely sought, the case of the CSCJ circle emphasizes the involuntary nature of the processes of cultural assimilation, enforced by institutional expressions of the structures of power.

This process did not start in 1948 but it certainly got institutionally stable in this period, and was reflected in certain battles yielded to the ruling elite. For instance, one struggle of the CSCJ circles in this period was for Sephardic elites to get qualified and hired by the Zionist institutions for the different immigration-related tasks in Israel and abroad[ii]. While before 1948 the struggle was for gaining positions within the Zionist institutions in order to provide guidance or at least mediation, now the elites asked themselves to be guided by the Zionist institutions. The force of the coloniality of knowledge was also evident in some of the CSCJ's political demands, language and practices. They greatly emphasized any Ashkenazi who claimed against discrimination, as a cutting proof for the very existence of ethnic discrimination. This entailed certain adaptation of the quoted person's terminology, and raised demands the CSCJ did not dare utter beforehand[iii]. Some could claim that the mere adaptation of the ethos of Merger of the Diasporas is an example of this, though I would claim that the

[i] "The Problem of Absorption of Mizrahi Jews- is Mr. Gelblum Right?" (le-be'ayat ha-klita shel oley tsfon afrika. ha-nehona da'ato shel mar gelblum?), *HH*, 29.4.49, p. 8.

[ii] E.g. "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 3.2.50, p. 2; 8.7.49, p. 2; Eliachar (1980): 311.

[iii] For instance, the following article reverberated widely in *Hed Hamizrah*, and increased the use in the term "hegemony" in the journal: Y. Shprintzak, "Talk to the Sephardim" (ledaber 'im ha-sfaradim), *Davar*, 11.9.50. Also see: "The Blacks and the Whites" (ha-shhorim ve-ha-levanim), 1957, CZA 430A/33b.

Sephardim often creatively appropriated it, as in Eliachar's claim for "Sharing with the Diasporas". As a political faction, the CSCJ also attempted to imitate certain aspect of the Zionist parties' political culture. It democratized its inner elections regulations[i] and invested in "constructive factories". This Zionist Ashkenazi term was adopted to relate to different projects the CSCJ established in order to supply financial loans, work and education opportunities to the public, that would not be framed as charity[ii]. Their resources allowed them to fulfill projects only on tiny scales, and these were not fully adapted to the new political system anyways: the Sephardic "factories" functioned more like small businesses, and it is not clear that the users were obliged in any way to become members of the CSCJ or encouraged to vote it on elections, as in Mapai's apparatus of domination. The Federation focused on production of knowledge about Sephardic and Mizrahi folklore and history. However, as some researchers showed, this kind of knowledge production did not necessarily empower these cultural heritages, but mostly led to their folklorization and academization (Behar 2007: 14, Eyal 2005: 143). In fact, it would bring the near erasure of Sephardic culture as a live culture from the next generation born in Israel (Meyuhas-Ginio 2014).

The processes of the coloniality of knowledge might also be told as "a creative process of a live community" that entails exchanges of knowledge and learning (Behar 2007). What made it colonial is that the exchange was not mutual, and that this process of learning and adapting necessarily meant the unlearning of the Sephardic political discourse, culture and practices. Despite rejecting cultural-political ashkenization of the style of Labor-tending Sephardic elites, the CSCJ circle also sought ways to keep high stances within the Zionist colonial westernization scale. A principal way for these activists to do so was first to mostly mark Arabs as inherent enemies during 1949, and then to ignore Arab-related politics for the rest of the period. This designed their particular process of ashkenization, as a process of de-Arabization. For many immigrants from North African countries the rejection of similarity to Arabs completed a process that began in their countries of origins (Tsur 2007). By contrast, for many immigrants from middle-eastern countries, setting Jewishness and Arabness as antonyms was cause for "profound and visceral schizophrenia" (Shohat 1992). Slabodsky (2014) wrote about this process of self-rejection among colonized native intellectuals, and the ways it entails an attempt

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[i] The central institutions were opened for women, the tax for voting was lowered and was removed altogether for the right to get elected. See "General Elections to the CSCJ" (bhirot klaliyot le-va'ad ha-'eda ha-sfaradit be-yerushalaim), *HH*, 16.2.51, p. 8. A tax was placed again for getting elected in their internal elections in 1957. "List of Contributors" (reshimat tormim), CSCJA container 6218 file 145. Also, if before statehood there were restrictions on the form in which non-Sephardic groups could enter, in 1951 the only requirement was *"any Sephardic or Mizrahi that would abide to the authority of the Community and its decisions"*, *HH* ibid.
[ii] The Great Mativta project was considered a constructive factory. In the first half of the period mainly Telem and Bnot Yerushalaim association run such "factories", after 1957 the CSCJ initiated more "factories" that concentrated on finance.

to assimilate into a system built upon racial constructions that the self-rejecting subjects attempt to ignore. While the CSCJ did not at all ignore the ethnic inequality between Jews, their withdrawing from discourse about larger middle-eastern politics, and avoidance of opining about the Arabs inside Israel as well, was an important factor designing their ashkenization as a process of de-Arabization. This is because it neutralized them as subjects of alternative knowledge to the dominant Ashkenazi one. The story of the CSCJ's political decline, accompanied by the tilt towards the modern European side of their border-thinking, is the story of the slow infiltration of the coloniality of knowledge. This was the meaning of their growing identification with the Ashkenazi Zionist elites. It is a demonstration of the coloniality of knowledge at work, in its process of fragmentation of knowledge and swallowing of identities. This is the reason the Sephardic elites lost in their competition with Ashkenazi social scientists, and the reason they depended on Ashkenazim for developing their own discourse. The coloniality of knowledge undermined the unique value of their potential contribution to policies and discourse regarding Mizrahi immigration, and silenced them altogether with regards to exterior politics.

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY   and the Coloniality of Being

To use Social Movement Theory language, it can be said that Israel's separation from the Arab world in general, and Jerusalem's division in particular, closed the CSCJ's political structure of opportunities and also reduced significantly their resources. The political system itself was very limiting to all the rivals of Mapai, and those not included in the party-key had even less chances to attract followers. On the other hand, the waves of immigration from Muslim countries opened the CSCJ's political structure of opportunities considerably. This opening was not well exploited, both because of the lack of resources and also for bad resource mobilization, an effect of the political culture of notable politics in the field of the Zionist political culture. Another considerable obstacle in the CSCJ's political trajectory, which Social Movement Theory points at as well, was the need to create a collective of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, immigrants and old-timers[i], indeed to generate a collective identity that they could actually represent.

As mentioned, the creation of a modern/colonial Jewish state entailed the discrediting of traditional middle-eastern politics of honor. According to Taylor (1997), with the rise of the identity of the individual within modern European states, the notion of honor was replaced with the modern notion of dignity, which is equal for all. As Taylor explained, this change in

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[i] This was the name of the Sephardic faction for the third parliamentary elections, see table IV.

modernity entailed the birth of the politics of difference, which has as principal demand the recognition of unique identities:

"The convention addresses the management of the party in a demand to renew and expand the special department of Sephardim and eastern ethnicities in the state, in order to take care of the urgent and special problems of the public."[i]

The politics of difference and the politics of equal dignity are both universal, explained Taylor, and therefore they collide, since the first actually asks for recognition and status for something that not everybody shares. The antagonism this request may arouse within democratic institutions can well be seen in Eliachar's performance as MP. So for instance, in response to Eliachar's complaints about his opinion not getting considered in a parliamentary discussion, the parliament's chairman replied:

"I have no claim for a Member of Parliament that cannot fit himself into the framework of parliamentary technique. I have no claims. And slowly he will fit… (laughter) but this inability must not be made into privilege. The parliament cannot be run this way."[ii]

The politics of difference and the politics of equal dignity, both based on respective equality, may contradict and interfere with each other. From the same assumption that dignity is shared by all, some promote recognition in the value of the uniqueness of a group, while others call to abolish distribution according to groups' specificity (Fraser 1993). In fact, denying the relevance of race in politics is the norm of nationalist discourses worldwide (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick 2006). The national elites demand blindness to difference, while ethnic groups may request recognition and fostering of particularity. Each mode of politics delegitimizes the other, claiming it forms a basis for discrimination (Taylor 1997). Of course, often the discourse requiring blindness to difference asks to eliminate only certain kinds of difference, those of the groups that compete with the groups who compose the elite. However, that does not necessarily make this discourse any less effective on the groups that have less power. Despite the clear racist practices of the state, the Ashkenazi elites maintained a rhetoric of national equality between Jews, and from this standpoint often accused the CSCJ of causing separatism and creating discriminatory politics by their very discourses about ethnic discrimination. This conduced much of efforts of the CSCJ's political faction to the defensive front, centered on legitimizing the very existence of the autonomous organization and attempting to disprove the negative stigma. The struggle over legitimacy was not very successful, considering the limited structure of opportunities under the reign of Labor Zionism (Herzog 1986: 109-110). Many of the native elites soon got convinced that there was not only no utility, but also no moral

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[i] Y. Elakana, "To the Sephardic and Mizrahi activists of the General Zionist Organization" (el pe'ilei ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah be-histadrut ha-tsiyonim ha-klaliim), 31.5.53. CZA 430A/88a.
[ii] Knesset Protocols, 7.3.50.

justification to hold a Sephardic or Mizrahi autonomous organization or struggle. A major obstacle for the CSCJ to credibly confront these assaults was the lack of a collective identity to give its discourse positive ideological content. In lack of such positive content of a collective identity, the politics of difference the CSCJ developed was mostly for the sake of the Sephardic and native notables, expressed in their main struggle for representation in the state institutions. The Federation, which concentrated more on the cultural struggle, could not form a collective identity either. The activity it promoted was mainly intellectual, focused on education, cultural events, publishing and research. The cultural struggle was based on giving stage to past heritage, folklore, culture and history: in the cultural struggle, the fragmentation of the Sephardic-Mizrahi collective into its different countries of origin is inherent[i].

The economic struggle was the primary source of split and not union within this Sephardic activist circles, because of their dispute about the solution for Israel's economic issues, which surmounted to alliances with different Zionist parties. The only way opened to attempt to establish a collective identity could have been by emphasizing common liturgy and rabbinical schools of thought. The spiritual-cultural sphere indeed was a central platform of struggle of the CSCJ by the end of the period, with the toranic academy of the Great Mativta their main project during most of it. The Eurocentric rabbinical system would eventually win this struggle as well, as we will see in the next period.

The very notion that there was a collective identity that the CSCJ represented relied on an earlier imagination of a Sephardic and Mizrahi Diaspora, versus an Ashkenazi European Diaspora, which had Jerusalem as its spiritual base (Noy 2014). Bartel (1997) said Eliachar had a vision of an alternative middle-eastern Zionism, whereas Herzog (1986) claimed the Sephardic parties did not present a unique ideology that challenged the existing order with an alternative. I agree with both. The CSCJ certainly nurtured an ideology based on a middle-eastern collective identity, which could be elevated to cause deep changes in the Zionist regime of the state of Israel. Nonetheless, this ideology was not formulated coherently. I believe one of the difficulties in explicating the meaning of a middle-eastern Israeli identity was the established detachedness between Israel and the Arab world:

"We will not determine here our exterior-politics orientation [ha-orientatsia hamedinit shelanu]*…but discuss it, because that requires seriousness* [koved rosh]*…and perhaps with time we can clarify to ourselves concepts that are blurred nowadays."*[ii]

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[i] See for instance the closed event -for Sephardim only- that hosted a lecture about Maimonides, which the CSCJ arranged in the framework of the gathering of the World Federation in Israel in 1954. See various correspondences and invitations in CSCJA container 6329 file 1432.

[ii] David Siton, "Deepening Eastern Consciousness among Us" (le-ha'amakat ha-toda'a hamizrahit bekirbenu). *Shevet Va'am* 1959.

A middle-eastern native identity without any contact to the Arab world would be devoid of substantive positive content, it would have little to rely on if Arabic language or Arab customs cannot play in it a positive part. The need of the Sephardic notables to shake off the negative stereotypes of the Mizrahi immigrants prevented the CSCJ from explicating a defense to their Arab culture and costumes. Arabic was rarely used in the CSCJ campaigns, and knowledge about the Arab world was hardly ever used to claim any postures. Criticizing Israeli policies related to Arab countries was precisely the limit the CSCJ members put to their critique on the government, within the effort to prove their loyalty.

The work of the coloniality of knowledge, the de-Arabization and ashkenization that shaped the tendency towards the modern European side of the Sephardic border-thinking has a significant ontological dimension: the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007). The coloniality of being shaped the CSCJ's activists' growing identification with the Ashkenazi Zionist elites, and distanced them from the immigrants they presumed to represent.

This ontological dimension was directly related to the miraculous establishment of the state by the resources and initiative of the Ashkenazi Zionist movement. The Zionist colonial project could have hardly contained a native middle-eastern collective identity. This identity could exist even less in the state of Israel, in the solitary fortress of European modernity that was hurriedly formed on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. In the new reality formed by the violence of war, *"historical circumstances"* handed Ashkenazi Zionists *"the primogeniture over the people"*[i].

Itamar Ben Avi, an Ashkenazi native affiliated to the CSCJ, was one of the prominent activists for respectful integration of the Jews in the Middle East in the pre-state period. After his death and after the establishment of the state, a *Hed Hamizrah* article wrote about him:

"He felt himself an Israeli citizen even before the Hebrew settlement was independent, even before the existence of the state. While all the other settler' hearts were abroad and the vision of independence was far from them, he already walked in every corner of the land, and in his every step he felt as a native, a member of 'Free Judea'… all his manners here were of a Hebrew man that tasted the built homeland… He already felt himself in those days a citizen of the following generations."[ii]

In this text, we can see the ceding of the primogeniture rights over the land from the native Jewish population to the Zionist movement and its accomplishments. The independence and national freedom achieved by the following generations is what allowed the indigenous Jews to become the *de facto* owners of the land. After centuries of existence as a minority group under foreign rule, the CSCJ became part of the ruling majority:

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[i] Eliachar (1980): 483.
[ii] "Itamar Ben Avi and the Vision of the State" (itamar ben avi ve-hazon ha-medina), *HH*, 13.4.49, p. 8.

"Our entire business here was to cease to be a minority"[i]

"[the Jerusalem municipality] will fulfill its roles as a municipality that represents all its residents, who are entitled to enjoy municipal services, exercise its language in all the fields of its work, nominate its functionaries without discriminations and percentages, and manage its issues as required towards its residents without fights and struggles…. in the mixed municipality…for every little thing they had to struggle forcefully with their "colleagues", the Arabs, which perceived the municipality as the inheritance of their fathers…"[ii]

Tsur claimed that for Moroccan Jewry, the victory in the 1948 war realized a secret wish of the Jewish minority: not only to become equal, but superior to their Muslim neighbors. The establishment of the state of Israel symbolized exactly this turnover in power relations between Jews and Arabs (Tsur 2000). I believe that the Sephardic notables shared this secret wish, but having lived the violent process of its gradual realization, and seeing how it entailed their own subjugation, designed a complex approach to minority-majority relations in Israel/Palestine. However, in this period, the complex approach of this native minority became redundant by the fact that the Zionist movements' diplomatic policies, economic base and institutional structures was what allowed the establishment of a Jewish majority in the land. Since the Zionist movement was structured by the binary categories of western modernity, its middle-eastern politics could only be structured in terms of superiority or animosity. Any other orientation towards the Middle East was excluded. As Ben Gurion retorted to Eliachar in another context, *"If you want this kind of regime- you build it"*[iii].

The loss of the primogeniture right- the native's right to design the state formed in its land, the calibrating of the value of native thinking and its contribution to this state- this was the action of the coloniality of being, the ontological dimension of the victory of Zionist colonialism in the 1948 war. The coloniality of being expresses the inter-subjective colonial relation. It refers to the lived experience of the colonized and the colonizer, their modes of being, lifestyles and conceptions. It refers to the self-image of the subalterns, that has been rendered inferior and demeaned, and of the colonizers' generated as superior, as a model of humanity. It entails in it the process of erasing and fragmenting of Other forms of creating, thinking, living, interacting and producing goods. In this case, what stands out is the way the coloniality of being undermined these activists' very ability to define and establish an independent understanding of the new geo-political reality. The physical borders drawn by the violence of the 1948 war permanently established identity borders, keeping outside complex middle-eastern identities,

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[i] "Matters of the hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *HH*, 13.4.49, p.2.
[ii] Avraham Elmalih, "From Arab to Hebrew Municipality" (mi-baladiyat el-quds le-'iriyat yerushalaim), *HH*, 28.1.49, p. 3.
[iii] Security Council Protocols, 11.12.47, p. 22, SA 0120.

fixating anything related to Arab culture, knowledge and customs as undesirable and inferior. Without nourishment from their Arab and Muslim roots, the Sephardic and Mizrahi native elites could not construct a middle-eastern collective Jewish identity to serve as basis of their political struggle. Despite of themselves, they yielded the power to define the collective identity of Jews at large to the ones who had had the power to establish the Jewish borders of sovereignty.

CONCLUSION   **Sephardic Zionism 1948-1958**

In the pre-state period, the Sephardic alternative, inclusive form of Zionism has been emphasized mainly with regards to their discourse about Palestinian Arabs. In the first years of statehood, it can be emphasized that this inclusive attitude was also expressed in their relations with Ashkenazim. Despite forming certain rivalry with the Ashkenazi Zionist elite, the Sephardic notables accepted them as brothers since the beginning of Zionism, allowing an opened exchange, seeking to guide the immigrants but were also opened to be guided by them (Bezalel 2007). With the installation of the British Mandate, this exchange became unequal, gradually subjugating the native elites to a modern/colonial rule, expressed by the coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being. This rule became permanent with the establishment of the state of Israel when it became grounded in its institutions. The state institutions and their domination by Mapai, the party that constructed and ruled them, became a stable fact. Not only the government, the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut, but also the administration, the military, the Chief Rabbinical Authority and the Supreme Court- were all under the dominant power of the Labor movement, perpetuating Ashkenazi majority and superiority in them.

In these first years of statehood, the CSCJ was an address and home for some Sephardic and Mizrahi activists and intellectuals who tried to struggle against different forms of coloniality. As a tool for organizing political action, the CSCJ metamorphosed throughout this period, trying out different recipes. First it battled over the leadership of a Sephardic faction based on a union of the national CSCs, and aspired to support a cadre of younger activists on the beginning of their public career. Then it maintained itself the faction inside the General Zionists party, in a unique structure of a bonded autonomy (Herzog 1986: 134-146). It also held municipal factions, some small scale social initiatives, and participated in the World Sephardic Federation. The CSCJ circle led by Eliahu Eliachar was the only one in this period to hold and maintain an autonomous Sephardic political action. The final failure in gaining political power in 1955 was the end of a long process, which started in the first colonial victory of Zionism with the installation of the British Mandate's colonial rule:

"We uprooted from the base the old [vatik] *tools of public work and we did not build other institutions. We were a majority in the country right after the Belfour declaration. Since then we became a minority. Our Ashkenazi brothers took control over the institutions and we lost from both sides. This expropriation process developed further... We must educate the generation to modern Zionism, train the new Sephardic generation. Did we get any real encouragement? We didn't get a penny for our old* [vatikim] *organizations and institutions… I have looked into this problem: the complex of fear from the Sephardim, the belief that it is not in their reach* [ein be-yadam] *to create and make bloom…I was born here and my family arrived 600 years ago. I will not have my son become a second-grade citizen in the state of Israel"*[i].

This quote summarizes most of the aspects discussed of the crisis of the Sephardic elites after the establishment of the state. The Sephardic organizational culture became irrelevant in the political game by the coloniality of power: Mapai's apparatus of domination was so effective that it excluded them from the very ability to compete in the political field. The coloniality of being and of knowledge increased the identification of the Sephardic notables with the modern/colonial patterns of Ashkenazi Zionism. This designed their demands in a way that expressed mainly a desire for social recognition, as proleptic identification with the dominant classes (Bourdieu 1984). This took away their moral and epistemological grounds to represent the Mizrahi immigrants. They became an irrelevant minority group that represented only its own limited circle, their most coherent demands expressing the liberal-conservative approach of dominant classes under threat that their next generation's capital will not be able to reproduce its properties and maintain its status (Bourdieu 1984). The coloniality of being and of knowledge entailed the loss of coherency and legitimacy of any alternative, non-modern practices, discourses and visions this native minority group had for the region and for the state. Both the Sephardim and Ashkenazim lost this way the ability to participate in an equal and creative cultural exchange, and lost from view alternative political models grounded in the native middle-eastern experience.

Naming this a "loss" is not in order to idealize the Sephardic organizational culture or their intermediating capabilities. The same way, Sephardic Zionism should not be considered as carrying some ideal alternative for a peaceful and harmonious Middle East. From a critical Marxist or socialist perspective, the CSCJ's politics were despicably classist, and certainly this circle did not offer any liberatory prospects for women. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to observe the alternative native politics they had, in order to search within it emancipatory horizons, within the practice of the hermeneutics of absence and emergence. Within this mode of analysis, the attempt is to recognize alternative politics that has been deemed as an irrelevant and erased by the wheels of history, and yet can still form concrete possibilities understood to be relevant in the horizons of present reality (Santos 2006).

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[i] Eliahu Eliachar in "Third meeting of the Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" (yeshiva shlishit shel moetset ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), 5.10.50, CSCJA 6238-14.

The alternative native politics the CSCJ advanced were based on the Sephardic elite's self-presentation as carrying an advanced, respectful, tolerant and moderate heritage, seeking to promote a similar ideology in both political terms and in religious-cultural norms[i]. This heritage was anchored in what according to Taylor (1997) are non-modern notions of honor, and was reflected in the demand for equal dignity in the state for the native elites, Mizrahi immigrants and less pronouncedly, for the Israeli Palestinian Arabs. The Sephardic notion of honor was also the base of the alternative nationalist perception of Sephardic Zionism, after all they were *"born and raised in Zion and therefore… Zionist"*[ii]. The centrality of the politics of honor was the essence of this Sephardic circle's alternative Zionism, it is what made the CSCJ a proud part of the Jewish national collective, and at the same time guided its insistence on self-organization. Sephardic Zionism was not based on modern European national theories, but on the importance of the honor of one's own collective, expressed in a central and consistent ambition to elevate its stature. The fact their nationalism was not based on ideology or on dichotomist modernist categories made it questionable by the Zionist regime and possibly by some in the Arab world as well[iii]. This alternative nationalism contained strong group identification, along with a combative disposition to strengthen the group's status and improve its conditions on the expense of other groups. However, there was an important difference between the modern/colonial nationalism of Ashkenazi Zionism and the Sephardic native nationalism: the possibility of getting inspired and learning from the east and from the surrounding Arab world:

"Let us learn from a country which is similar to us in its population and size more than other countries with whom we do not have common traits. In the comparison I mean our neighbor the Lebanon.."[iv]

The different national dispositions also entailed occasionally different tactic considerations as to when and how should force be exercised over the Arabs, within the state and outside it[v]. The Sephardic faction did not take any stand regarding exterior politics or Israeli Palestinian Arabs, but it had some unique ideas. No other political party in Israel spoke of population-exchange between Palestinian Arab refugees and Arab Jewry or about autonomous representation for the Israeli Palestinian Arabs. This last was essentially the same expectation for the Israeli Palestinian Arabs as for the Sephardim and Mizrahim, reflecting their native experience of how multi-ethnic societies can be managed under a central rule. The multi-ethnic organizational

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[i] E.g. "The Way of the Rabbi Nissim" (le-darko shel ha-rav nisim), undated, CZA 430A/33a, also see in Eyal (2005).

[ii] "Meeting #9" (yeshiva tet) (of the Federation and the Jewish Agency), 12.5.52. CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

[iii] See Herzog (1986): 152, and with more detail in chapter 6.

[iv] Eliahu Eliachar about economic issues, "The Subcommittee for Merger of Diasporas" (ha-ve'ida le-mizug galuyot), 7.6.55, CZA 430A/81. In another occasion he claimed the situation between ethnicities in Israel is becoming like there, "Meeting. Management of Sephardic Federation" (yeshiva. hanhalat ha-federatsia ha-sfaradit), 25.9, CSCJA container 6239 file 417.

[v] E.g. "Nazareth Beyond the Jewish Jurisdiction" (natsrat mi-huts la-thum ha-yehudi), *HH*, 25.9.50, p. 18; Security Council Protocol, 18.12.47, 13-18, SA 0120.

culture was also reflected in the CSC structure that contained various autonomous ethnic organizations.

I believe many Sephardic and Mizrahi native elites in this period, in many senses lived and sustained *"un mundo donde quepan todos los mundos"*[i], as the Zapatista saying goes. They had a pluralistic vision of what the Zionist project could achieve, and in principal, they awarded equal value to European and middle-eastern ways of knowing, being, producing, doing politics and creating economics, at least among the elites. Their own personal trajectories were designed by a mosaic of sources, modern and non-modern, European, Jewish, Arab and Ottoman. Their consciousness was designed as what Gloria Anzaldúa called the Mestiza consciousness. They grew up in the Borderlands, with the socio-political position and accumulated knowledge to make links, serving as different kinds of bridges, able to translate and mediate between Ashkenazi and Arab people (Keating 2009). According to Anzaldúa, the Mestizas are a product of this ability of theirs to transfer cultural and spiritual values from one group to the other. This creates a personality that has multiple facets, which makes their surroundings uncomfortable, and therefore makes the Mestizas uncomfortable as well. They may encounter colliding voices that cause them ambivalence and perplexity, lack of confidence and lack of decisiveness (Anzaldúa 1987/2016). In the context of the violent conflict of this period between the two sides of these Mestizas' Borderlands, this perplexity and ambivalence led to complete paralysis in anything related to these activists' potential role as mediators. In the most acute moment, during the 1949 armistice agreements, there was an intentional, hyperbolized and declarative withdrawal from the Borderlands to the one, secure side of the borders. During this period, Israel was getting established as a "modern Sparta" (Bashir 2007) and a new colonial reality was getting formulated and stabilized. This new reality gradually clarified that the Sephardic elite's Mestiza consciousness, with the organizational and leadership patterns, knowledge and skills, identity and modes of being that it contained, lost relevance in the political field.

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[i] A world where all worlds have room.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SECOND DECADE
1958-1967

INTRODUCTION: STABILIZATION AND REVOLUTION

The period of late 1950s and early 1960s was the heyday of global political decolonization. By early 1960s most of Asia and Africa consisted of independent nation states. Garavini (2012) wrote of how these countries in this time were attempting to reformulate, by themselves and for themselves, the meaning of modernity and their desirable models of internationalism. The Algerian war of independence, ending in 1962, was especially important for Palestine/Israel. In France's determination to put an end to this revolt, it tightened up its relationship with Israel, first around supplies of arms, and then around various forms of political and military cooperation, including the Sinai Campaign of 1956. In 1957 it also supplied Israel with nuclear energy (Shlaim 2000). This relationship deepened the identification of Israel with European imperialism in the Middle East to Arab eyes. In the neighboring countries, nationalist and modernizing revolutions were taking place using socialist rhetoric[i]. These revolutions affected frictions and tensions that rose between Israel and Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, within a dispute over common water resources, which all countries aimed to exploit for developing their national infrastructure (Shlaim 2000). The Palestinians national liberation movement was also getting reorganized and re-acknowledged internationally. In 1964 the Arab League established the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the official representative of a "Palestinian entity", and the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) as the military portrayal of this entity, trained and supported by several countries (Shemesh 2004). In mid 1960s, the Palestinian Fatah[ii] movement started challenging the dependency on the Arab states and resumed autonomous Palestinian actions, in form of *fedayeen* activity: infiltrating across the border and committing

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[i] Since 1957 the US intervention in the region grew with the implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Consequentially, the governments of Iraq, Lebanon and Syria were replaced in 1958 by ones less cooperative or opposed to western intervention. In 1963 other coups d'états took place in Iraq and Syria by the Baath party of each country (Rodinson 1968, Petran 1972). Hinnebusch defined Baathism, similarly to Nasserism, as a socialist but not communist regime, backed by Pan-Arab ideology. These regimes were constructed by the nationalist elites for state building in the post-colonial era. The Baath regimes were supported by a small middle class, based on military command and bureaucracy, and sought above all to consolidate national independence by modernization and development. The ideology behind these regimes was egalitarian, challenging traditional and privileged status-quo, and attempting to mobilize, and yet control, popular participation. That is why its actual benefit to the lowers strata can be placed in doubt (Hinnebusch 2002).

[ii] The Fatah movement was composed of the young generation of university students and graduates Palestinian refugees. It is considered the first Palestinian movement to construct an orderly ideology and strategic plans for the national struggle.

different types of hostile acts and sabotage, centrally on new Israeli infrastructure (Shemesh & Tlamim 2002).

In this period, the charismatic and influential figure of Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser got to his peak of power and popularity. In 1958-1961 a political union was made between Syria and Egypt, within the United Arab Republic (UAR)[i](Ronald 2009). This union also expressed the growing strength of Pan-Arab ideology, which especially in this period of decolonial successes, entailed an existential threat to the Jewish-European state. Rodinson (1968) explained how Israel was perceived as an outpost of western imperialism that blocked Arab territorial continuity, and had humiliated the Arab nation by seizing its lands and defeating its armies. The existence of this state was a problem for Arab leaders of the neighboring states, and many reiterated statements about the future destruction of Israel, and these threats eventually developed into military tensions as well. Nonetheless, this period of reforms and revolutions in the Middle East, led by fresh and young spirits of nationalist modernization, influenced Israeli intellectuals, as well as some political and cultural groups, like the Semitic Action[ii], to encourage openness to the Arab world. Efron (2005) showed how in this period there were some marginal yet impactful trends in Israeli press and literature, that involved some opening of curiosity about the Arab world, and about the question of Israel's relationship with it.

Since 1958 the restrictions imposed on Israeli Palestinian Arabs by the military regime got gradually alleviated, until its final abolishment in 1966. Even with the official abolishment, however, restrictions on individual activists and on collective freedom of speech persisted (Jiryis 1976). The loosening of the abyssal line between Jews and Arabs in Israel, did not mean liberation to Israeli Palestinian Arabs from their situation as an internally colonized population, in enclaves of non-being: Zureik (2016), for instance, details the Israeli policies of population management and territorial control which ensure until today perpetual Jewish dominance in the country.

The alleviation of the military regime was related, both as cause and as effect, to the beginning of Mapai's weakening. The party suffered from internal discussions and certain decrease in popularity (Kimmerling 1993). In 1963 Ben Gurion left the premiership to Levi Eshkol, and constructed a new party on the right of Mapai named Rafi. However, not even Ben Gurion's dominant figure was able to dismantle the mighty, centralist apparatus of domination he himself had constructed, and his party was not able to disinherit Mapai from its position in the political system. The central state institutions, its public services and the Histadrut continued to

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[i] *Il-jumhuria il-arabiya il-mutahida*.
[ii] *ha-pe'ula ha-shemit*. It was established in 1958 around Uri Avnery, the editor of the anti-establishment journal *Ha'olam Haze*; but held its own journal called *Etgar*. Its cause was to open and integrate Israel in the Middle East.

distribute resources by the relative power of Zionist parties of Ashkenazi hegemony in them (Horowitz & Lissak 1990).

During this decade Israel invested in developing massively its industry, infrastructure and housing. This brought economic growth and reduced unemployment (Dahan-Kalev 1991). According to Grinberg (2001), the almost full employment in the labor market until 1965 weakened the mechanisms of control of both the government and the Histadrut, as workers were able to struggle and gain better conditions regardless of both, strengthening organizations and leaderships not related to the Labor movement. The Jewish Agency also lost some of the importance it held in the previous decade of massive immigration. In 1965 there was an economic crisis that was followed by a recession policy, which increased unemployment mainly in concentrations of Mizrahi immigrants, hurting the lower stratums and increasing inequalities (Dahan-Kalev 1991). This was the background of many workers' struggles, not necessarily Mizrahi, which would continue until the end of the period. Different authors agree that if it was not for the 1967 war, this popular discontent would have brought far-reaching results (Tsur 2000, Grinberg 2001). The recession redrew the political map, as the revisionist and the Liberal party (formed from General Zionists) united to form Gahal, and Mapam and Mapai united to form the Ma'arakh. Two blocks were created: a "left" meant to control the Labor institutions, representing the managers of state and semi-state organizations, owners of Histadrut companies, the workers organized through the Histadrut and the new Ashkenazi middle class, formed by the state's establishment. The "right" represented the opposition to this centralized control mechanism, in the form of private capital owners and the less organized, weaker layers of workers (Grinberg 2001).

The economic growth in the beginning of the period created new proletariats within the industrial and agricultural sectors, that is, within Mizrahi immigrants both in big cities and in the periphery (Tsur 2000). Even with a high percentage of employment, 80% of the beneficiaries of the welfare system were of Mizrahi origins. The welfare system got more regulated in this period but it reserved its stringent and deterring characteristics, as well as its hostile attitude, and served, as Mariuma-Marom (2010) claimed, as another mechanism that perpetuated Mizrahi poverty, and inscribed Mizrahi youth to manual labor. Some transit camps were still standing in this period, populated almost exclusively by Mizrahi immigrants. Mizrahi and especially Moroccan immigration continued in this period[i], and was often sent to populate one of the many "development towns" that were built and expanding in the periphery (Tzameret & Yablonka 2000). These towns of Mizrahi majority are a central part of the colonial policies

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[i] Between 1960-1964 the same amount of immigrants from North Africa arrived as between 1948 and 1960, about 100,000 people (Tsur 2000).

of territory and population management designed to benefit Ashkenazim. With the declared aim of modernizing Mizrahi immigrants, these policies pulled Mizrahim into conditions of under-development, which strengthened the socio-economic gap and the spatial segregation between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi populations[i] (Sharon 2012, Cohen & Leon 2008). Since 1956 different changes in policy in the educational field ended up excluding most Mizrahi youth from high school education. Over 70% of Mizrahi youth did not graduate high school in this period (Chetrit 2004: 123). One reason was the gradual increase in tuition fees along the decade[ii], which made high school inaccessible for most Mizrahi families[iii]. During the 1960s, the education system created differential educational frameworks to train high skilled workers and low skilled manual workers and clerks, in order to accommodate the developing industry needs. Mizrahim were often sent to the latter kind (Swirski 1995), without necessarily considering the youths' own skills and tendencies.

Different authors have studied the way these government policies were advised by social scientists influenced by Modernization Theory and European superiority concepts (Swirsky 1989, Sharon 2012, Bernstein 1976). In the second half of the 1960s there was an evident increase in scientific knowledge production about Mizrahim and Sephardim in Israel. A consensus was getting formulated among social scientists, declaring the 1950s policies a mistake since they expressed an expectation that the immigrants would immediately integrate into "modern Israeli society". In this decade, social scientists advised a slower and more gradual integration process. Public discourse about Mizrahim was changing from one dealing with an "absorption problem" to one of "gaps" (Shapira 2012): a socio-economic problem that would gradually be solved by the education system. In reality, it can be claimed that the beginning of the end of the transit camp period marked a transition into permanent and institutionalized oppressive practices. The Zionist myth of creating an equal and united Jewish nation in Israel was getting undermined, and a clear gap was getting marked between the official Zionist discourse about the Merger of Diasporas and the reality experienced by Mizrahi immigrants. This reality, along with the scientific discussions and developing public discourse "reflected the growth of a new Jewish ethnic group, to which different minorities, which never saw themselves as one collective identity, got related" (Tsur 2000): Israeli Mizrahi identity was getting formulated and stabilized by hegemonic discourse.

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[i] Mutzafi-Heller (2012) referred to these towns in the context of employment opportunities as concrete boxes, rather than a glass ceiling.

[ii] A. Yishai, "Will High School Education Become a Privilege?" (ha-yehafekh ha-hinukh ha-tikhoni le-nahalat bnei ha-yekholet bilvad?), *IB*, 5.4.62, p. 7; Eliahu Eliachar, "Who Will Carry the Weight of the Budget for Reducing Educational Gaps" (Mi iisa be-'ol ha-taktsiv le-hisul ha-pa'ar ba-hinukh). *IB*, 11.1.63, p. 3.

[iii] High school tuition was subsidized to families with many children and of low economic abilities, however these subsidies depended on the student's academic skills, and were not sufficient for many families to afford sending all their children to high school, also due to families' need for the extra financial support the children could supply. See, Mordechai Zar, "The Consciousness of Education Spreads to the Wide Public" (toda'at ha-hinukh hoderet la-tsibur ha-rahav), *IB*, 26.5.64, p. 6; A. Yishai, ibid.

At the same time, in this decade new routes for ashkenization were breached for Mizrahi immigrants. Ashkenization went through increasing co-optation of Mizrahim in Zionist parties, which also gradually increased the representation of Mizrahim and Sephardim in mainly local Labor institutions like the Histadrut, workers organizations, and in municipalities[i] (Deshen 1972, Tsur 2000). The economic growth of early 1960s also improved the economic status of many Mizrahim, who got established within the middle-class bourgeois, a process often accompanied by adaptation to Ashkenazi standards and norms. Upward social mobilization was more common among middle-eastern Jews than North African ones, sometimes thanks to positions that they could gain within the military regime and the state's security apparatus. Tsur (2000) claimed that immigrant communities that had more westernized elites within them, as Iraqis and Egyptians, got classified in higher ranks in public imagery. North African children, because of their vulnerable place in society, were often objects of another type of ashkenization processes, of toranic colonization (Lupo 2004a), getting incorporated massively into Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox religious schools. Different forms of covert and overt discrimination between Ashkenazim and Sephardim prevailed in all fields of religious life. As in secular Zionist Ashkenazi society, in the ultra-orthodox sphere Mizrahim also had limited opportunities for attending higher education institutions. As recalled, the way political parties dominated the official local religious institutions left many immigrant communities without the guidance and support of their own rabbis, which was source for a spiritual crisis on a community level as well as on a personal level (Leon 1999). Many religious practices of Mizrahi immigrants were abandoned in Israel, but unlike the secularization processes that took place in Europe, these were not accompanied by changes in faith and belief. Therefore, the immigration process was often accompanied by a "general and pervasive feeling of dejection, failure, and self-depreciation in religious matters which affects the devout and less observant alike" (Deshen 1972a). The process of religious subjugation and assimilation advanced so, that by the end of this period there were already many Mizrahi young adults graduates of these systems, immigrants that got their spiritual identity converted into the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox socio-cultural model, in a manner that perpetuated low economic abilities as adults[ii] (Leon 1999). Mizrahi adults could be found wearing ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi uniform, and using Yiddish

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[i] Abraham Abbas, "Between Gathering of Diasoporas to Merger of Diasporas" (ben kibuts galuyot le-mizug galuyot), *Shevet va-'am*, May 1958.

[ii] This is because the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox model developed in Israel created a vast "learners' society" that depends on welfare and support from the state, allowing most men to dedicate themselves for many years, sometimes for their entire lives, exclusively to religious studies. Before statehood, this privilege was conserved only to few that were supported by their community's charity (Leon 1999). Both Yosef Tubi and Tuvia Sulami mentioned this point in their interviews, claiming the ultra-orthodox education system does not prepare its graduates well for modern life, and therefore perpetuates poverty.

phrases and terms. Sephardic and Mizrahi rabbis started to develop similar fundamentalist-conservative discourse and logics as Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox rabbis.

The Fatah movement was supported ideologically and economically by Syria, and so its activity was source of escalating tensions on the Syrian-Israeli border throughout this decade (Shlaim 2000). In 1966 a large scale Israeli reprisal action in the West Bank, against what Israel perceived as a village of Fatah supporters, became an aggressive military confrontation with Jordan. This turned the formerly cooperative Jordanian government against Israel (Shemesh & Tlamim 2002). As the tensions grew with Syria and Jordan, Egypt was also forced to take position as a counter-response (Shlaim 2000). Tensions and threats of immediate war rose until the 6th of June of 1967, when Israel attacked its three neighbors, in six days conquering large areas from under their control. This war is perhaps the most important point of inflexion in the history of Palestine/Israel. It set Israel's status as a regional superpower, and initiated the system of military colonial rule over millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, which got known as "The Occupation", prevailing until today.

Between 1956 and 1958 tens of thousands of immigrants from Eastern Europe arrived to Israel and got allocated directly into permanent housing in the center of the country (Pikar 2013), on the expense of long term dwellers of transit camps. This affair got published widely within Mizrahi and Sephardic publics as a bitter symbol of unjustifiable and indisputable discrimination based on the ethnic origins of immigrants[i]. Mizrahim's protests started taking more violent form, for instance by increasing sabotage to Mapai properties (Roby 2015). The rise in discontent might have been what led Mapai to yield to the Sephardic political and rabbinical elites a great public achievement in 1958: the nomination of Rabbi Moshe Toledano as the Minister of Religion, without requiring him to officially belong to any political party[ii]. It would not take even a year for this victory to go sour, and for Toledano to become another tool in Mapai's apparatus of domination[iii]. In these years organized Mizrahi political activity increased, perhaps as a result of the reduced heat around Israel's borders. Another, perhaps more significant reason for this, was the simple fact of having passed a decade since the establishment of the state[iv]: politicians' discourse of Israel being a newborn state under immediate threat, which could not afford to attend to the sordid life conditions of its own poor, was losing credibility:

"After 10-12 years we started to see that much of the slogans are not getting implemented. The principals the state was talking about were not being implemented equally to everybody…and the years go by… it started creating tension and criticism, among activists and in the public, there was bitterness…You can't fool me all the time, eventually you must implement what you say!"[v]

The decade that passed had another implication on the Mizrahi political field, because it meant that many immigrants had already established certain stability in the country and had been gaining experience in Mapai's apparatus of domination and the political culture it had constructed. By 1958, there were dozens of autonomous Mizrahi local organizations that

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[i] "Unjustifiable" is in Ben Gurion's own words, in Weiss (2007): 93. See Pikar (2009) for the justifications that were nonetheless provided. About the resentment it aroused, see for instance, Giladi (1990); Shoshana Arbili, "The Duty of Israeli Intelligentsia" (hovata shel ha-intiligentsia be-israel), *Shevet Va'am*, May 1958; Letter from David Ben Harush to David Ben Gurion, 22.5.59, BGA: 127908. "Who is Really to Blame?" (mihu ha-ashem ha-amiti?), *EM*, 28.7.59, p. 1; "Protest Against 'Preference in Housing'" (mohim neged 'ha'adafa be-shikun'), *Maariv*, 3.3.57, p. 8.

[ii] See "Word of the Battle" (dvar ha-ma'arakha), *IB*, 13.8.61, p. 2.

[iii] Y. Betzalel, "Rabbi Toledano Suggested We'd Form an Ethnic List" (ha-rav toledano hetsi'ah lanu leyased reshima 'adatit), *Maariv*, 21.8.59, p. 5.

[iv] Two autonomous Mizrahi publications, *Shevet Va'am* and *El Hamizrah*, started publishing (or re-publishing) around the 10th independence day. On this issue also see Avner Shaki, "The Question of 'Jewish Consciousness'" (le-sugiyat 'ha-toda'ah ha-yehudit'), *Shevet Va'am*, Nov 1958; A. Yanai, "We are a million- we are the majority in Israel" (anahnu million-anahnu ha-rov ba-arets), *Maariv*, 18.7.59, p. 2.

[v] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.

provided for cultural and educational activities, social mutual help and religious services. These organizations were usually formed by specific communities according to places of past origins and present residence[i]. The CSCs formed part of these networks, but organizations of old timers and immigrants' were more often than not separate[ii]. Some organizations attempted to form nation-wide coalitions for a specific profession or place of origin[iii]. Some initiatives spread across the country, as a volunteers-based free evening school for Mizrahi immigrants[iv]. Mapai's apparatus of domination incorporated and infiltrated these organizations and annulled their autonomy, using means other political parties also adopted (Bernstein 1976). Any emerging Mizrahi leadership was drawn into different parties' stages as "votes' brokers", with no actual influence within the parties' mechanism (Lissak 1972, Chetrit 2004:101-115)[v]. The Zionist parties, most notably Mapai and the National Religious Party, made protégé ethnic lists in order to gain votes of immigrants of specific countries of origin. Indeed, many Mizrahim voted for their ethnic representatives (Deshen 1972, Lissak 1972). In some localities these protégé lists rebelled and protested, some constructed independent lists and others got better positions in the same party this way[vi].

The defeat and subsequent retirement of the CSCJ from parliamentary politics left a vacuum, opening the structure of political opportunities for the younger generation to attempt represent the collective identity of this public, and in the second half of the 1950s new initiatives emerged on local and national scales[vii]. Between 1956 and 1958 autonomous initiatives attempted quite directly to inherit the CSCJ, requesting its support in form of funding and endorsement[viii]. Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon was the first activist to get inspired to national politics by the CSCJ's demise[ix]. Cohen-Tzidon was a young lawyer born in Egypt, who completed his higher

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[i] For instance, in Haifa in 1959 there were nine such Sephardic and Mizrahi registered organizations. See Nachmias & Spiegel (2009): 113.

[ii] "Report of Special Investigation Committee to the Wadi Salib Events Affair" (doh va'adat ha-hakira ha-tsiburit le-'inyan meora'ot vadi salib), 9.7.59. For an example of cooperation between old timers and immigrants: Yosef Shavit, "Yeitiv Makes a Factory" (yeitiv ose mifa'al), *Davar* 13.5.58, p. 4.

[iii] Abraham Abbas, "Between Gathering of Diasoporas to Merger of Diasporas" (ben kibuts galuyot le-mizug galuyot), *Shevet Va'am*, May 1958; "12 organizations convened in Haifa" (ve'ida shel 12 irgunim hitkayma be-heifa), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 8.

[iv] "Entry to Sephardim Only" (haknisa le-sfaradim bilvad), *Davar*, 13.2.59, p. 18; "Protocol" (pireti-kol), 5.8.58, CSCJA container 6266 file 638.

[v] Purchasing votes, for instance, seems to have been a regular practice. See "Report of Special Investigation Committee to the Wadi Salib Events Affair" (doh va'adat ha-hakira ha-tsiburit le-'inyan meora'ot vadi salib), 9.7.59.

[vi] "Upheaval of Sephardim and Mizrahim in Mapai in Lod, Beer Sheva and Jerusalem" (tsisat ha-sfradiim mizrahim be-kerev mapai be-lod, be-er sheva ve-yerushalayim), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 8; "Sensitive Matters and Discoveries" (nosim ve-giluyim 'adinim), *EM*, 3.4.59, p. 1; Abraham Abbas, ibid.; "We united and still haven't decided" (hitlakadnu ve-'adain lo hehlatnu), *Maariv*, 16.6.61, p. 9; Shlomo Nekadimon, "'The Sephardic Party' Dismantled" ('ha-miflaga ha-sfaradit' purka), *Herut* 3.10.58, p. 8.

[vii] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Merger of Diasporas- Only a Slogan" (mizug galuyot- sisma bilvad), *Hame'orer*, February 1956.

[viii] E.g. Y. Betzalel,"Will the Ethnic Lists Succeed in the Elections?" (ha-yatslihu ha-reshimot ha-'adatiyot ba-bhirot?) *Maariv*, 7.8.59, p. 4; Letter from David Siton to Mr. Cohen Solel, 25.3.57, CSCJA container 6237 file 390.

[ix] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Merger of Diasporas- Only a Slogan" (mizug galuyot sisma bilvad), *Hame'orer*, Feburary 1956; Sh. Cohen-Tzidon, "What is the idea, who are we fighting for and how?" (mahu ha-ra'ayon, le-tovat mi anahnu neevakim ve-eikh levats'o?), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 1-2.

education in Tel Aviv and was active in Mapai for a short while[i]. The initiative led by Cohen-Tzidon started with a conference of prominent activists from the entire country held in 1958. The participants, from all over the country, mostly had higher education, were of different ideological tendencies, and included both native elites and immigrants. Rabbi Toledano noticeably abstained[ii]. This was the widest attempt to create a network for the Mizrahi and Sephardic public on a national level since the attempt to unite all CSCs in "The Countrywide Union" in 1949-1951. Though a political party was not established then, the activists could define some common goals for the Mizrahi and Sephardic public[iii]. The conference was used as a launching pad for *El Hamizrah*[iv], a newspaper directed to the Mizrahi and Sephardic public. Two months after issuing the publication, a new political faction, named the National Union[v], was declared by the initiators of the conference and others. Many of the members of the new faction had already acquired some experience inside the Zionist parties' mechanisms, and "*the old parties had been a school for the ethnic activists*"[vi]. For this reason, nothing demonstrates better the Zionist parties' methods of espionage, infiltration and collapsing of autonomous ethnic organizations than this group's caution in incorporating new members. Membership was endowed not by payment, as in the CSCJ, but by signing a legal statement of loyalty[vii]. Recurring alarms were made about the courting and temptations presented to the Sephardic and Mizrahi activists of the National Union by other parties[viii].

Another group formed in this period that made its members swear loyalty to it over other political parties, was the Unification of North African Immigrants[ix] (hereinafter UNAI). However, theirs was not a legal statement written up by certified lawyers, but an oath taken verbally over the bible[x]. This organization started functioning in early 1959, and would be the

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[i] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon participated in Egypt in the Zionist movement. He immigrated to Israel in 1949 at the age of 26, and completed his qualification as a lawyer. He resided in Tel Aviv, and during the 1950s was active in the Union of Egypt Descendants, and later in Mapai.

[ii] Rabbi Toledano was in the original meeting for planning the conference Cohen-Tzidon and others organized in 1958. However, within few months he withdrew from his approval of autonomous organizations and did not arrive to the conference itself. Compare, "Consulting Meeting of the Sephardic-Mizrahi Activists" (yeshivat hitya'atsut shel ha-'askanim ha-sfaradim-mizrahim), *EM* 22.7.58, p. 1; with "Thinking out-loud" (hirhurim be-kol ram), *EM* 25.12.59, p. 2.

[iii] "The Organization of Sephardic and Middle Eastern Descendants" (irgun yotzei sfarad ve-hamizrah ha-tikhon), 7.4.58, CZA 430A/210/c.

[iv] "To the east", very similar in sound to CSCJ's *Hed Hamizrah*, "eco of the east".

[v] *ha-ihud ha-leumi.*

[vi] Immanuel (1964): 39.

[vii] "Declaration" (hatshara), MSA 2-013-1959-441.

[viii] E.g. "Editoial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM* 2.9.58, p. 1; "Plenty of Compliments but No Representation" (shefa mahmaot ve-yitsug en), *EM*, 18.11.58, p. 1.

[ix] *likud 'olei tsfon afrika.*

[x] "A Leader Born" (leidato shel manhig) *Ha'olam Haze*, 29.7.59, p. 5; Cohen (2009); "Wadi Salib Events" (meora'ot vadi salib), undated, MSA 2-013-1959-406. This last document was made by Mapai's spies, and documented the oath to be over a bible and a gun. However, it also mentioned that members paid an astronomical amount of money each month (1.500 Israeli pounds), a fact completely refuted by members' own testimonies.

only one in this period to not only attempt to defend the weaker social stratums of Mizrahi immigrants, but to actually be entirely composed by them.

UNAI got organized in the northern city of Haifa around David Ben-Harush, a young immigrant from Morocco, where he had been in the beginning of a Frenchization process (Tsur 2007). Immigrating to Israel was part of this quest for upward socio-economic mobility through westernization and modernization[i]. However, the cultural capital he had accumulated in Morocco was not the correct one in order to blend with the Zionist elites (Tsur 2007). As many others, he found himself going through the opposite process of social mobilization and his level of life worsened in Israel. For years, Ben Harush had been contesting the proletarianization processes imposed by governmental and municipal policies by various paths[ii]. Under the title of the UNAI, Ben-Harush wrote letters to governmental institutions, attempting to provoke emotional responses within officials in key positions, and making specific demands to improve immigrants' conditions, including recognition in UNAI and allowing it representation in different institutions[iii] (Tsur 2000, Marinsky 1992). On the other hand, UNAI attempted to gain trust and public recognition in the organization within their Haifa neighborhood. Wadi Salib was one of the old neighborhoods inhabited by Palestinian Arabs before 1948, which after 1948 was used to relocate new immigrants. Governmental neglect allowed the neighborhood to become a refuge for Mizrahi immigrants, mostly North Africans, who refused to settle in the remote and small places that the government and Jewish Agency had designated them[iv]. The neighborhood populated much more people than the original population and in very hard living conditions. Very soon it became an overcrowded rundown slum, with "*crime…and poverty that was also cultural, intellectual poverty*"[v]. UNAI supported local struggles and printed out posters of encouragement in their favor[vi]. At least on one occasion, their advocacy led to a violent clash between this group and organized thug troops of Mapai[vii].

In the summer of 1959 UNAI initiated its first demonstration, gathering hundreds of Wadi Salib residents. The demonstration had a militant tone and it turned violent in an exceptional way, raiding Ashkenazi private property in a nearby neighborhood, damaging cars and window-

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[i] See for instance his ambition to open a modern Café with an espresso machine and modern decoration, as in the upscale neighborhoods in Haifa (Weiss 2007:58).

[ii] As others, like Yitzhak Yeitiv, he started his social activism by using his writing skills in Hebrew to help individuals to write letters to institutions in order to solve different bureaucratic problems. He also met with some local officials to try to promote housing solutions. See Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59; SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34.

[iii] E.g. letter from David Ben Harush to David Ben Gurion, 22.5.5, BGA:127908

[iv] See Wesis (2007): 84-96; Avigdor Eshet's testimony to the investigation committee in: SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34. For other cases see for instance Nurieli (2015).

[v] Moshe Fish in Meyuhas et. al (14.7.16).

[vi] See in MSA: 2-013-1959-406.

[vii] These thugs were organized through Mapai's "Workman´s Companies" (plugot ha-po'el). This clash was described most in details by Marinsky (1992). Compare to "Wadi Salib Events" (meora'ot vadi salib), undated; MSA: 2-013-1959-406.

shops, as well as Mapai-related property. This kind of rioting aroused Ashkenazi collective memories from the European Holocaust[i]. Press coverage and public interest in the demonstration grew, which in turn legitimated increased police presence in the slums and many arrests in the following days and weeks:

"They made it like a war for us here, closed down electricity and water, what not."[ii]

The existence of an organization behind the protest sparked the alarms of the government[iii]. Parliamentary elections were only few months ahead. The occurrences that followed had been described in detail by various authors and are recorded as the "Wadi Salib events" or "Wadi Salib revolt". The next ten weeks saw various acts of protest in different locations in the country, mainly in concentrations of North African new immigrants in the heyday of their proletarization process. Giladi (1990) rightfully called it an *Intifada*[iv], because the main effect of these demonstrations was shaking off of oppression and lifting up of heads. The protests were accompanied by varying degrees of violence: threats[v], police and protestors' violence and forceful oppression by massive police forces. The growth in violent tension within impoverished North African immigrants, was accompanied by certain turmoil within the more established and old timer North Africans as well:

"The reign of fear that they had imposed on Wadi Salib puts us in place where anyone that has pride and self-respect has to act…"[vi]

However, many of the Mizrahi intellectual elite abstained from making commentaries about these events (Efron 2005: 202). There were also different attempts to get this turmoil organized on a national level, some through contacts UNAI members had from before immigrating to Israel (Dahan-Kalev 1991)[vii]. The mutual fear of the government and UNAI from each other brought to increasing violent tensions which eventually exploded in another round of riots in Wadi Salib, which brought to the immediate arrest of UNAI leaders (Cohen 2009). The far from fair trail that was held (see Marinsky 1992) pushed UNAI to declare candidature for national elections. This was contemplated mainly as an act of protest against the aggressive unfair

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[i] To be precise, Haifa's mayor Aba Hushi stated publicly that it reminds of the Nazi *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 1938. See Cohen (2009), Grinberg (2014), David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, 13.2.84, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451, part 9.

[ii] Anonymous interviewee in Sharonk (15.4.17).

[iii] Also because it was a moment Mizrahim were making independent lists to the Histadrut elections.   A. Sfaradi,"Sephardim and Liberals" (Sfaradm ve-liberalim), *Niv ha-hma'arakha*, 8.6.61.

[iv] From the Arabic verb *ntafad*, to shake off; used to describe Palestinian revolts against the military control of Israel in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 and 2000.

[v] It seems for instance that some Ashkenazim living in Wadi Salib were threatened by some in the angry crowds. See Speigel & Nachmias (2009): 196; Shalom Cohen, "Black Thursday" (yom hamishi ha-shahor), *Ha'olam Haze*, 15.7.59, p. 4-5.

[vi] Moroccan bourgeois testimonies, in: Shalom Cohen, "After the storm-fear" (ahrei ha-se'ara- pahad), *Ha'olam Haze*, 12.8.59, p. 8-9.

[vii] Also see, Yosef Galili, "The struggle of Mizrahi ethnicities belongs to the entire working class" (ma'avakan shel 'edot ha-mizrah shayakh le-ma'amad ha-poalim kulo), *Al Hamishmar*, 28.7.59, p. 2.

treatment of state authorities and was part of the attempt to establish stature of leadership. The main campaign suggested electing UNAI candidates in order to release them from prison by popular support[i].

The organization was able to run to elections in November with Ben Harush still imprisoned, but it had already been crushed by Mapai by mid-August (Speigel & Nachmias 2009:64). This was achieved in various ways: from forceful oppression by threats, extortions and direct pay-offs, to what Dahan-Kalev (1991) referred to as short-term cover-up solutions to the neighborhood's inhabitants' structural problems, such as a summer camp for the neighborhood's children. The organization was infiltrated by crossing loyalties and disconnected from its local base[ii]. That is, if UNAI would not win a parliamentary seat in the elections, it would no longer have any base from which to resume its oppositional activity. It seems that in Wadi Salib itself the party got about as many votes as the members who took the oath of loyalty[iii]. The networks the activists were trying to construct around the country were also crumbled down by Mapai infiltrators by various techniques[iv]. The wide de-legitimation and criminalization of the organization by both politicians and the press was very damaging as well (Chetrit 2004, Dahan-Kalev 1991). However, from the point of view of the activists, the best counter-propaganda was handing a reduced sentence to Ben Harush but few weeks before elections[v].

These events of the summer of 1959 caused general political embroil among Mizrahi activists. Parties raced to recruit Mizrahim to their lines and more Mizrahi and Sephardic lists split and got formed. A competing party of North African immigrants ran to elections, supported by

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[i] It should be mentioned that despite the many books and essays written about the events, this factor in the decision to go to elections has been widely overlooked. See untitled undated document, MSA 2-013-1959-406; Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to David Ben Gurion, 3.1.60, CZA 430A/251; M. Misels, "26 Lists in Search of Voters" (26 reshimot mehapsot boharim), *Maariv*, 9.9.59, p. 2; "Ben Harush's People Go to Elections" (anshei ben harush holkhim le-bhirot), *Haaretz*, 23.10.59; "Dear Reader" (kore yakar), *Ha'olam Haze*, 31.10.59, p. 2.

[ii] According to Mapai's report, towards elections the synagogues in the neighborhood still distributed posters of UNAI but did not agree to help in any other way (for instance, gathering funds or allow speeches or meetings). "Union of North African Immigrants" (likud yotsei tsfon afrika), MSA 2-013-1959-406.

[iii] According to Negri (2014), UNAI got 159 votes in Wadi Salib (out of 4000 votes in total); before the events it seems over a hundred people took the oath, though the report that established this is not particularly reliable: "Wadi Salib Events" (meora'ot vadi salib), MSA: 2-013-1959-406. It seems most of the neighborhood's votes were bought by money, or by other indirect incentives, as mentioned above. See Shalom Cohen, "After the storm-fear" (ahrei ha-se'ara- pahad), *Ha'olam Haze*, 12.8.59, p. 8-9; A. Markowitch, "Ben Harush: I refused to ask for amnesty and mercy" (ben harush: seravti levakesh hanina ve-rahamim), *Maariv,* 20.1.60, p. 10.

[iv] The journalist Shalom Cohen (ibid.) wrote of how the de-legitimation and oppression of protest was such that many people were not even sure that they were allowed to protest. However, what the government was most afraid of was not sporadic protest but organization, and therefore a variety of techniques were employed in order to separate and spark dispute between different groups. Some efforts were less successful, and some were more. For instance, UNAI had a strong support base in the Jerusalem slum of Musrara, in a group led by David Vaaknin with whom they had social contacts in Morocco before immigration. Mapai infiltrators report a complicated and changing relationship with this group. Eventually they ran to the Jerusalem municipality under a different name, while Vaaknin was on the UNAI's list for parliament. "Wadi Salib Events" (meora'ot vadi salib), MSA 2-013-1959-406, "The Union of Egyptian Descendants Denies a Report of the Newspaper Al-Yawm" (hitahdut 'olei mitsraim makkhisha yedi'ah she-hofi'ah be-'iton el-yom), *Herut*, 6.8.59, p. 4. Mapai's techniques of oppression had been studied broadly, among others by Bernstein (1976), Dahan- Kalev (1991) and Chetrit (2004).

[v] Ben Harush in: "After the 'revolt'- a mystery" (ahar ha-mered, ta'aluma), *Maariv*, 16.6.61, p. 9.

Mapam, formed mainly in order to steal votes from UNAI[i] (Herzog 1986). Indeed the name was so remarkably similar that the press often got confused between the two, and unsurprisingly so did some voters[ii]. This puppet-party was still able to gather some significant local North African leaders and groups from across the country[iii]. On top of the National Union, there was yet another group, formed by Jerusalemite young educated immigrants and natives and led by Avner Shaki. This group formed a coalition with one of the groups from the National Union[iv] and on this base formed a party, not with a dissimilar title: the Sephardic National Party[v]. Like the National Union, this group was based on intellectuals of both native and of other middle-eastern immigrant ascendency, graduates and students of Israeli universities, involved in themes of education and youth. Despite a similarity in program and discourse, and despite having held several discussions about uniting, Mapai infiltrators were able to prevent such union from occurring[vi].

An Old-New Discourse

The three autonomous organizations postulating the representations of the Mizrahi and Sephardic public for the 1959 elections all had similar programs. Their demands were formulated on a collective Israeli level and with a progressive spirit. Instead of denouncing discrimination, they presented numerous practical proposals in the fields of education, economy, housing and employment[vii]. The national spirit reflected in the names of the two parties was expressed also in various demands: extinguishing the category of country of origins from official state forms[viii], appointing one Chief Rabbi for all, instead of one Ashkenazi and

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[i] See the account in "The embittered is not bitter anymore" (ha-memurmar hadal lehitmarmer), *Maariv*, 16.6.61, p. 9.

[ii] If the full name of the UNAI would be translated as Union of North African Immigrants, the other list would be Unity of North African Descendants, independent. [*likud olei tsfon afrika* versus *ihud yotsei tsfon afrika, bilti tluyim*]. In Jerusalem's municipality UNAI got a vote despite not running to elections there: Gabriel Shteserman, "The GZ representation in Jerusalem depends on one vote" (netsigut ha-klaliyim be-yerushalaim tluya al kotso shel 'tsaddik'), *Maariv* 28.1.60, p. 10.

[iii] For instance, in Bat Yam with Matityahu Ganim and Akka with Maurice Ben Shushan, both have established successful independent lists for the Histadrut elections few months beforehand. "The Ethnic Lists" (ha-reshimot ha-'adatiyot), 16.9.59, MSA 2-013-1959-460.

[iv] Led by Shmuel Cohen-Solel, who gathered around him a group in Netanya. "Born for Greatness" (ehad she-nolad le-gdolot)*, Davar,* 4.9.59, p. 24.

[v] *ha-miflaga ha-sfaradit ha-leumit*.

[vi] "Report Summery" (sikum yediot), 23.8.59, MSA 2-013-1959-441.

[vii] This was noted also by Y. Betzalel,"Will the Ethnic Lists Succeed in the Elections?" (ha-yatslihu ha-reshimot ha-'adatiyot ba-bhirot?) *Maariv*, 7.8.59, p. 4

[viii] "Manifesto of the National Sephardic and Eastern Ethnicities Party, Netanya Branch" (giluy da'at shel ha-miflaga ha-leumit ha-sfaradit ve-'edot ha-mizrah snif natanya), MSA 2-013-1959-441.

another Sephardic[i], and merge Sephardic and Ashkenazi liturgy, synagogues and rituals[ii]. The demands in the spiritual field were sometimes conditioned by the end of the monopoly of political parties over religious institutions[iii].

These groups ran for elections without the charter of any important religious authority. On the contrary, some criticized the Sephardic rabbis for their subjugation to the National Religious Party[iv], although that was the only way they could even have a right to have an authority. This criticism was an important and not simple step in the process of shaking off the authority of Zionist Ashkenazi elites. It was also an essential difficulty in building public legitimacy and coherent discourse[v]. Emotional declarations about *"a chance for Sephardic Judaism to retrieve its past glory* [lahzor le-mlo tifarta]"[vi], and *"the noble values of the Sephardic and Mizrahi tradition"*[vii] were left without content: these activists would not have the religious authority or knowledge to detail the actual meaning of Sephardic Judaism and tradition. They could and did struggle over rabbinical representation in state and local institutions, and had support of local synagogues that spread their propaganda[viii].

Lacking any historical status as the CSCJ's, these groups had to invent public legitimacy from scratch. An interesting step they took for this purpose was to insert in their programs the old claim the Sephardic notables had abandoned in 1948, about the positive role Sephardim and Mizrahim could play in relations with the Arab world[ix]. This was also one of the five things agreed upon in the conference Cohen-Tzidon organized with Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel in 1958[x], and few months afterwards David Siton wrote a constitutive article about that[xi]. Reclaiming a role for Mizrahim and Sephardim within middle-eastern politics was perhaps abandoned as a political line of the CSCJ, but Mizrahi Marxist activists wrote about it in Arabic

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[i] Gadi Algazi, "A Voice from the Past: Wadi Salib Revolt. For the memory of Hannah Shem Tov" (kol min ha-'avar: mered vadi salib: le-zikhra shel hana shem-tov), 3.12.08. Retrieved from: shorturl.at/yHJ02 (last accessed on 12.5.20).

[ii] "Manifesto of the National Sephardic and Eastern Ethnicities Party, Netanya Branch" (giluy da'at shel ha-miflaga ha-leumit ha-sfaradit ve-'edot ha-mizrah snif natanya), MSA 2-013-1959-441; "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM* 30.6.59, p. 2.

[iii] E.g. "The Decisions of the First Conference of the Council of Eastern Ethnicities" (hahlatot ha-kenes ha-rishon shel mo'etset 'edot ha-mizrah), *EM* 3.4.59, p. 3.

[iv] E.g. Shalom Moial, "Our Problem is the Problem of the State" (be'ayatenu be'ayat ha-medina), EM, 27.5.58, p. 1.

[v] The National Union, for instance, solved this difficulty by declaring its orientation on religious matters as according to the Sephardic Rabbinical Organization.

[vi] "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM* 30.10.59, p. 1.

[vii] "The National Party" (ha-miflaga ha-leumit), undated, MSA 2-013-1959-441.

[viii] *El Hamizrah*'s only advertisement was of their affiliated synagogue. Also see, "Report Summery" (sikum yediot),23.8.59, MSA 2-013-1959-441; "Union of North African Immigrants" (likud yotsei tsfon afrika), MSA 2-013-1959-406.

[ix] E.g. "Ben Harush's People Go to Elections" (anshei ben harush holkhim le-bhirot), *Haaretz*, 23.10.59; "The National Party" (ha-miflaga ha-leumit), undated, MSA 2-013-1959-441; Dov Goldstein, "A Party Born with Slogan of Discrimination" (miflaga nolda be-sismat kipuah), *Maariv* 25.8.59, p. 2.

[x] "The Organization of Sephardic and Middle Eastern Descendants" (Irgun yotzei sfarad ve-hamizrah ha-tikhon), 7.4.58. CZA 430A/210/c.

[xi] David Siton, "Strengthening Eastern Consciousness Among Us" (le-hizuk ha-toda'ah ha-mizrahit be-kirbenu), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958.

throughout the 1950s[i], and in 1958 this kind of discourse was also developed among some circles of the Ashkenazi left, most notably the Semitic Action. However, the National Union and the National Sephardic Party emphasized their distance from both these Ashkenazi streams[ii]. The secularist rhetoric of the mainly Ashkenazi leftist groups collided with the respect these activists gave to Jewish tradition. Moreover, the Marxist rhetoric of proletariat pride was not relevant for these activists, who were seeking for social mobility, and whose main struggle was precisely against the ethnic channeling into a proletariat status.

The discourse about the Arab countries or about Israeli Palestinian Arabs was not a central issue for these groups. In fact, the National Union in its mouthpiece froze the discussion about these issues during the elections period. Before the elections period, it criticized harshly the Zionist Ashkenazi exterior politics, reflecting ignorance about the Middle East and expressing an attitude of European superiority[iii]. This line of discourse was influenced by Arab anti-colonial discourse: Cohen-Tzidon, who was its main formulator, seems to have been informed by Egyptian Nasserist Arab-national, "third world" oriented press[iv]. Following his lead, this circle advocated for Israel to integrate in the *"Afro-Asian space"*, since Israel was *"an eastern country, with Mizrahi population its grand majority"*[vi]. This discourse marked the Israeli regime as colonial and related Mizrahim's internal oppression with Israel's failures in middle-eastern politics[vii].

"…The regime could change completely if the Sephardim-Mizrahim will play their designated role as citizens of equal rights…the term 'regime' includes here both opposition and coalition. It refers to all the bodies that benefit from the foreign and oligarchic structure of the state…is not the situation of the Sephardim-Mizrahim like the blacks in a colonial country?...the source of the failure of the efforts of the

[i] Not few intellectual Mizrahi Jewish immigrants, especially from Iraq and Egypt, wrote in the Israeli-Arabic press affiliated to different parties. All the ones that wrote in oppositional parties' press -Mapam, Maki and Herut- related the discriminatory policies against Mizrahi immigrants to the military regime imposed on Israeli Palestinian Arabs (Kabha 2006); which as Snir & Einbinder (1991) and Roby (2015) claimed, implied also their struggles were inextricable. While all Jewish writers in Arabic press promoted fraternity and co-existence, there were some like David Cohen in Mapam that also aspired for Israel to shed its colonial nature and become part of the Middle East (Roby 2015). While the native Sephardic notables mainly ignored anything to do with middle-eastern politics during the 1950s, there were also exceptions; e.g. Yitzhak Abadi, "Sephardic Jewry and Our Political Battles" (ha-yahadut ha-sfaradit be-ma'arkhtenu ha-medinit), *Shevet Va'am* 1954.

[ii] "With a Grain of Salt" (be'eravon mugbal), *Davar* 9.8.59, p. 2; "The Decisions of the First Conference of the Council of Eastern Ethnicities" (hahlatot ha-kenes ha-rishon shel mo'etset 'edot ha-mizrah), *EM* 3.4.59, p. 3.; "Ahdut Ha'avoda Requires Additional Mizrahi-Sephardic Strength" (ahdut ha-'avoda zkuka le-tosefet koah sfaradi-mizrahi", *EM* 21.4.59, p. 6; Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "The Happiness of the Sephardim and Mizrahim is the Happiness of the State" (oshram shel ha-sfaradim ha-mizrahiim- osher ha-medina), *EM* 16.10.59, p. 1; "The National Party" (ha-miflaga ha-leumit), MSA 2-013-1959-441. Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34.

[iii] E.g. "Middle Eastern Matters" (pinat 'inyaney ha-mizrah ha-tikhon), *EM* 2.9.58, p. 2; Avraham Danino, "The Question of the Essence" (le-sheelat ha-mahut), *EM*, 30.1.59, p. 2.

[iv] Evident for instance, in his article "The Policy of India and Egypt in the United Nations" (mediniyut hodu ve'mitsrayim ba-um), *EM*, 18.11.58, p. 1.

[v] E.g. "Middle Eastern Matters" (pinat 'inyaney ha-mizrah ha-tikhon), *EM* 24.6.58, p. 2.

[vi] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM*, 9.6.59, p. 1.

[vii] Rabbi Haim David Halevi, "The Peace: important clues to Israel's policy in our country" (ha-shalom: remazim mealfim le-mediniyut israel be-artsenu), *EM* 21.4.59, p. 5.

state of Israel towards Jewish-Arab rapprochement and for our integration in the Afro-Asian space is anchored in this fact."[i]

"It appears as if all the residents of the country are of European origins. That is called a 'colonial' regime, and that contradicts the aspiration to merge the Diasporas"[ii]

El Hamizrah marked the regime as its adversary and emphasized its colonial facets. This perspective was inspired by the international anti-colonial discourse of the time and the way that other Asian and Arab countries viewed Israel and its role in the region[iii]. However, unlike leftists Ashkenazi-dominated Israeli groups that were influenced by this international atmosphere, *El Hamizrah* did not go as far as imagining the Arab revolutionary forces as potential partners[iv]. Still, it opened cracks for learning from the political experiences of the Muslim world[v]. The National Union's discourse appropriated and transported anti-colonial theories and attitudes into the Israeli context. It could be claimed that the mere name of the National Union was inspired by the Egyptian ruling party of the UAR, established only few months before the Israeli group[vi]. However, despite this group's attempts to challenge the Zionist colonial westernization scale, it was also struggling to advance in it. This limited its Arab orientation, as was expressed for instance in its stronger affiliation with French language than Arabic[vii].

UNAI was the only group whose platform reflected the kind of concern for the welfare of Israeli Palestinian Arabs that comes from actual contact with people, asking to *"improve the level of lives of the villagers* [bnei-hakfarim]"[viii]. Within the state of social exclusion of these Mizrahi immigrants, they maintained cultural contacts with the Arab world and with the neighbor Arab

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[i] "Editoial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 1.

[ii] ""Editoial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM* 3.4.59, p. 1.

[iii] E.g. Avraham Danino, "The Question of the Essence" (le-sheelat ha-mahut), *EM*, 30.1.59, p. 2.

[iv] In general, it seems these activists were corresponding with the Semitic Action and with the journal *Ha'olam Haze*, as they used similar language. However, while the editor of the hournal and leader of the group, Uri Avnery, supported the revolutionary regimes in the Arab countries, *El Hamizrah* did not, assuming that only a change of regime to the next generation of intellectuals could compose a government that would be a possible partner for peace with Israel. See: Uri Avnery, "The Subject: To the Jordan" (ha-nidon: la-yarden), *Ha'olam Haze*, 7.4.54, p. 4; Erel (2006): 61-64; Shalom Moial, "The Problem of Israeli-Arab Relations" (be'ayat ha-yahasim shel yisrael-'arav), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 2; "Middle-Eastern Matters" (pinat 'inyanei ha-mizrah ha-tikhon), *EM*, 10.6.58, p. 2. Other Ashkenazi groups that could imagine certain Arab forces as their allies are of course Marxist groups as the communist party or The Third Force (*ha-koah ha-shlishi*).

[v] E.g. "The integration of Sephardic and Mizrahi in government and administration as Ataturk in Turkey" (shibutz ha-sfaradim ve-'edot ha-mizrah ba-shilton u-ba-minhal dugmat ataturk be-turkya), *EM* 23.12.58, p. 2.

[vi] "*al-ittiḥād al-qawmi*" versus "*ha-ihud ha-leumi*": both translate to English as "the National Union". The Egyptian National Union was the temporary name, within a series of names, of the party led by Nasser between 1958-1961. After 1961 it changed its name to "The Arab Socialist Union" (*al-Ittiḥād al-Ištirāki al-ʿArabi*), which lasted in power with this name until Nasser's death in 1970. See Arafat (2009).

[vii] *El Hamizrah* started as a duo-lingual journal in French and Hebrew; however, the National Union claimed to print its platform in all three languages. "The Essence of the National Union's Platform" (tamtzit matsa ha-ihud ha-leumi), *EM* 30.6.59, p. 3.

[viii] The term of villages in Israel is used mainly to refer to Arabs, and in this paragraph it came along with the demand to cancel the military regime. Gadi Algazi, "A Voice from the Past: Wadi Salib Revolt. For the memory of Hannah Shem Tov" (kol min ha-'avar: mered vadi salib: le-zikhra shel hana shem-tov), 3.12.08. Retrieved from: shorturl.at/yHJ02 (last accessed on 12.5.20).

population: many preferred listening to the radio from neighboring states or were obliged to use Israeli Palestinian public transport[i]. However, this kind of proximity did not base much political solidarity of the oppressed, but rather tended to evoke dynamics of rivalry. This was related to what Tsur (2000) called "the cosmic rivalry" between Muslims and Jews, based on the experiences of these Jews as minority groups in their countries of origin. In Israel this rivalry sharpened, influenced by recent experiences of decolonization of the countries of origin, which were accompanied by affirmation of Arab-Muslim national identities, which excluded minorities like Jews or Christians, or at least considered them as conditioned co-nationals. These tendencies were accompanied also by growing domination of Arab-Muslim cultural patterns:

"'The Jews, that considered themselves proper French for any purpose, were insulted in their national feelings by the [imposition to wear] Arab fez…and they couldn't buy alcohol in the bars…so I arranged a fez sale to purchase alcohol-and got kicked out of the navy. Already then I couldn't stand discrimination', told Ben Harush"[ii]

This rivalry received new significance in Israel, in the context of the violent oppression of the demonstrations, because Druze policemen, belonging to a Palestinian Arab religious minority, usually used to suppress the Israeli Palestinian Arab population, were brought to Wadi Salib to control the revolt. This equation between the populations was a source of humiliation and rage:

"They brought many policemen and that made a mess because they hit people, and besides they brought Druze policemen- and that's what stirred up the crowd. That is what hurt because what are Druze officers doing here, where there is a problem of discrimination. What are Druze officers doing here, aren't there enough Jewish policemen? Maybe it's that Ben Gurion went to some village and had to be protected so there were not enough policemen and they had to call the Druze?"[iii]

"We were shocked by the cruel means the police used to oppress our brothers, the Jews of North Africa, men, women, and children, and especially for activating Arab Druze against our brothers"[iv]

The choice to use Druze policemen to suppress the Mizrahi immigrants' protests can be thought to have been designed within a 'divide and conquer' strategy. Using Druze officers to suppress Mizrahi protest was significant in sharpening the distinctions between those excluded and those included in the national collective. The native population that was anyway excluded from the Jewish national collective was divided and conquered this way, it's more collaborative parts- for instance the Druze- distinguished from non-collaborative sectors of Palestinian Arabs,

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[i] "The Riots in Migdal Ha'emek on 19.7.59" (ha-mehumot be-migdal ha-'emek mi-yom 19.7.59), MSA 2-013-1959-406.

[ii] "A Leader Born" (leidato shel manhig), *Ha'olam Haze*, 29.7.59, p.4.

[iii] Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59; SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34.

[iv] Quoted in Gidi Weitz, "What did the founding fathers really think of the Mizrahim?" (ma beemet hashvu ha-avot ha-meyasdim 'al ha-mizrahim), *Haaretz*, 13.2.14.

within different levels of exclusion. In Wadi Salib the same collaborative native population was brought to discipline rebellious immigrants into the order of the national collective. This was a somewhat ironic manner to draw the borders of the Jewish national, immigrant collective, depending not only on religious-ethnic affiliation, but also on obedience to the ruling elites of the state. This distinction was of great importance to the state. The surrounding Arab regimes had been evoking a political alliance with the oppressed Mizrahim through the radio, which were covering with interest the 1959 revolt[i] (Roby 2015). The immigrants' Arab language, culture and physical appearance, and especially the high levels of social and economic exclusion they revolted against, all these were good reasons to consider the Mizrahi immigrants as potential enemies of the state; occasional proof could even be found[ii]. In this sense, the nationalist components in Ben Harush's discourse were not merely an act of "reconciliation and socialization with the Ashkenazim" (Tsur 2000). The national discourse reflected genuine sentiments of pride and belonging to the Jewish state, and it also fulfilled the state's requirement to demonstrate loyalty to it. The demonstrators had to prove that they *"do not have a fight with the state"*[iii] itself, that they wanted to keep their civil status and to struggle within the limits of the Jewish state. In fact, they had nowhere to go[iv], no other country suggested them such an opportunity to belong to the national collective. Therefore, the struggle asked to fulfill the formal status of equal citizens with the adequate content, a demand to fulfill the Zionist promises of citizenship and modernity: equality within a modern national collective in a way that enables equal opportunities for upward social mobility.

The Socio-Economic Breach

The risk of getting marked as a threat to state security was not shared by the same generation of Mizrahim within the more accommodated classes. Unlike the notables of the CSCJ in the previous decade, they did not have the need to prove their loyalty to the state in this way anymore. Within the rebellious spirit that surged, the intellectuals in fact expressed the same

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[i] See David Ben Harush's (Another one, from Halisa) testimony to the investigation committee, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq36.

[ii] For instance, in the big demonstration in Wadi Salib some wanted to express their allegiance to the King of Morocco over their allegiance to the state, however they were stopped by the organizers. "Who are the Leaders of the Revolt?" (manhigei ha-mered- mi hem?), *Ha'olam Haze*, 31.10.59, pp. 8-9; David Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34. In a different context: *Giora Yosftal, Life and Work*. Mapai Ltd., 1963, p. 148. In another moment of UNAI's activity, they attempted to recruit soldiers with weapons, but that was most likely for defense against the police. See Marinsky (1992); "Meeting", MSA 2-013-1959-612.

[iii] David Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34.

[iv] Since 1956 Moroccan passports were revoked from immigrants upon arrival to Israel, because emigration to Israel became illegal in Morocco (Shaul 2016).

concern about the proletarized stratums of immigrants, using this concern to leverage their own demands[i]:

"This population is easy to incite…. In a time of emergency, a fifth column can approach the deprived multitudes and tell them to ease down on the national effort, since they do not take part in the governance. Those who understand Arabic and listen to our enemies' broadcasts in Damascus and Ramallah know that more than once our enemies tried to exploit the discrimination claims. Their efforts are in vain… we must destroy every truth that will help our enemies come between us"[ii]

The fear from national betrayal or of a violent revolution of the lower social stratums of impoverished immigrants will continue to worry Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectual elite throughout the period at hand. This concern created a sort of breach between the struggles of Mizrahim and Sephardim of different socio-economic stratums, which was evident in *El Hamizrah* since its beginning: unlike the CSCJ's discourse, the National Union did not pretend to represent the poverty-stricken multitudes[iii]. However, in 1959, the National Union and the National Sephardic Party were able to establish some bases in poorer peripheral areas[iv]. The National Sephardic Party exhibited a similar attitude to the old Sephardic and Ashkenazi elites, in the ambition to rescue or guide the *"faltering social layers* [shkhavot nekhshalot]"[v]. By contrast, the National Union saw their platform for national elections, unlike the one for local elections, as strictly conserved to members of the intelligentsia, for practical and tactical reasons. The leaders were afraid that speech produced by proletarized subjects might sound like hatred towards Ashkenazim, and saw the "extremists" as a potential *"danger to the people and the security of the state"*[vi]. On the practical level, the ability to speak eloquent Hebrew and remain economically independent was seen as essential for leading a Sephardic-Mizrahi autonomous organization[vii]. This was part of a more general debate about who could and who was proper to represent this public.

"It is dangerous to abandon the problem in the hands of hasty people, who lack experience and knowledge, who do not even master [shgura al pihem] *the language of the state, the holy language"*[viii]

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[i] E.g. Letter from David Ben Gurion to Eliahu Eliachar, 3.1.60; CZA 430A/251; Mordehai Kadosh's testimony to the investigation committee, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq36.

[ii] Cohen-Tzidon (1956): 36-37; also see Shalom Moial, "Editor's Note" (dvar ha-'orekh), *EM* 18.11.58.

[iii] *dalat ha-'am* or *ha-hamonim*. For the CSCJ's approach, see "Matters of the Hour" ('inyanei ha-sha'ah), *IB* 9.8.60, p. 2.

[iv] This is apparent mostly in the local elections results. Also see Y. Betzalel,"Will the Ethnic Lists Succeed in the Elections?" (ha-yatslihu ha-reshimot ha-'adatiyot ba-bhirot?) *Maariv*, 7.8.59. p. 4.

[v] "Manifesto of the National Sephardic and Eastern Ethnicities Party, Netanya Branch" (giluy da'at shel ha-miflaga ha-leumit ha-sfaradit ve-'edot ha-mizrah snif natanya). MSA 2-013-1959-441; "The National Union reached out, the small bodies refused the proposal" (ha-ihud ha-leumi hoshit et yado, ha-gufim ha-ktanim dahu et ha-hatsa'ah), *EM* 1.9.59, p. 1; compare to Eliahu Eliachar's letter to Mr. Ramba, 29.11.61, CZA 430A/250/a.

[vi] "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *EM,* 11.8.59, p. 1.

[vii] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Frank Words to Mizrahi Activists" (dvarim gluyim le-'askanei 'edot ha-mizrah), *EM*, 23.9.58, p. 1.

[viii] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "The Happiness of the Sephardim and Mizrahim is the Happiness of the State" (oshram shel ha-sfaradim ha-mizrahiim- osher ha-medina), *EM* 16.10.59, p. 1

"Has the Sephardic tribe… reached such a low level? [To support] an ignorant that cannot even write a short letter…He is not the proper man, does not have the talent, social ascription, culture, education or grand personality to stand in front of the most powerful people of the nation [gdoley ha-uma] to represent this tribe called by honor and glory the Sephardim"[i]

This debate was so important that Mapai infiltrators succeeded to avoid unification of the two National parties around the question of which role could the impoverished social stratums play in a united list for elections[ii]. Even UNAI presented a similar discourse when needed:

"Most [people] that tried to use our help were surprised by my appearance, I don't look like a head of an organization…We were afraid of getting organized because we lack education and experience. That's why we established the organization as a mutual-aid organization and not a political one. I do not think we are ripe to run for the Parliament"[iii]

The fact that UNAI did get organized politically was a result of a deep disappointment from and mistrust in the North African educated elites: both the leaders abroad that chose to immigrate to more comfortable countries and the local native elites who *"had forgotten the people in the neighborhoods…and…were sold out to the regime"*[iv].

In sum, the Wadi Salib revolt sharpened the distinction between Mizrahi socio-economic stratums, *"the poor* [dalat ha-'am], *and the wide circles of Sephardim and Mizrahim whose conditions are not lower than the Ashkenazim's, but feel outside the camp"*[v]. The impoverished social layers were considered by the younger Mizrahi elites as possible political allies: not considering them so would be replicating the CSCJ's mistakes[vi]. But the intelligentsia organized in the National Union made a direct relation between activists of impoverished social layers and what they called, extremism, demagogy and blind hatred. Therefore, they could only cooperate if this new proletariat remained in local or non-political organizations, and not by proposing them political representation on the national level.

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[i] A letter (replete with spelling mistakes) to Eliahu Eliachar (about Moshe Yishai) from Brakha Sh.David, Shmuel Saporta, Moshe H.Ben Adon, and Haim Konfino, 7.8.61, CZA 430A/39.

[ii] The National Sephardic Party was formed by unification with "the Netanya group", led by Shmuel Cohen-Solel who had less socio-economic mobility. Unity between the groups could only be achieved by giving him a leading role, which the National Union opposed. However, the possibility to reach compromise was thwarted by Mapai's infiltrators. See: "The National Union reached out, the small groups refused the proposal" (ha-ihud ha-leumi hoshit et yado, ha-gufim ha-ktanim dahu et ha-hatsa'ah), *EM* 1.9.59, p. 1; "With a Grain of Salt" (be-'eravon mugbal), *Davar,* 9.8.59, p. 2; "Report Summery" (sikum yediot), 23.8.59, MSA 2-013-1959-441. This report by Mapai infiltrators informs that "we have succeeded to prevent union", in a serious negotiation between the leaders.

[iii] David Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34.

[iv] David Ben Harush's testimony to the investigation committee, 26.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34; "A Leader Born" (leidato shel manhig), *Ha'olam Haze*, 29.7.59, pp.4-5; "Ben Harush's People Go to Elections" (anshei ben harush holkhim le-bhirot), *Haaretz*, 23.10.59.

[v] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to David Ben Gurion, 29.7.59, BGA 127651

[vi] See "Letters to the Editor" (mikhtavim la-ma'arekhet), *EM*, 9.6.59, p. 2.

The CSCJ's Relations to the Organizations

In general, this CSCJ circle was disappointed by the emerging Sephardic and Mizrahi leaderships' inability to unite. The disappointment was increased by the fact that the best results in elections were gained by the organization that represented merely North Africans and not a collective Sephardic or Mizrahi public[i]. Those who did pretend to speak for such a collective could not even unite with each other, and either way all failed on the national scale.

As mentioned, the failure of the CSCJ in the 1955 elections opened the structure of political opportunities for other groups and leaderships who wished to fill the vacuum. This vacuum was expressed in the two National parties' slogan, which used the traditional Jewish phrase "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me".

The main activists in the National Sephardic Party had a bitter history with Eliachar and the CSCJ[ii]. The National Union activists had a better experience of cooperation with this circle[iii], but they decided to exclude the *"old Guardia"*[iv] from the organization. The CSCJ's endeavor to maintain autonomy within the General Zionists was not perceived by the next generation as different enough from other partnerships their elite's made within the different Zionist parties, a tendency all the groups denunciated[v].

"Ben Harush emphasized in the name of the organization the word immigrants ['olei] *and not descendants* [yotsei] *in order to emphasize the needs of the immigrants and block entry to the old community leaders* [parnasim vatikim] *that mostly had already been sold out to the regime."*[vi]

The younger generation also kept its distance from the older elites because of their notable politics and the centrality of the politics of honor for them, which did not allow free election of leaders (Zenner 1967). As seen in the previous period, in this period younger people in the CSCJ were still encouraged to lead only under the elders' authority[vii], and the gap between the

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[i] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Aharon W., in: Goldstein (2005): 287.

[ii] In 1957 Avner Shaki, the National Sephardic Party's leader, along with some ex-CSCJ members, established "The Union of Sephardic Communities" (hitahdut kehilot ha-sfaradim). Probably by the support of Rabbi Nissim, this organization tried to compete in certain ways with the CSCJ. It expressed dismay from Eliachar's dominant leadership in such a hateful way that the CSCJ sued them for slander. See "Statute of the Union of Sephardic Communities (takanon hitahdut ha'kehilot ha'sfaradiyot), undated, CZA 430A/53/1; "Protocol of Executive Committee Meeting" (pirtei kol yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 19.4.57, 28.4.57; CSCJA container 6266 file 638. Notwithstanding, Sidi Toledano that was closer to the CSCJ also took part of The National Sephardic Party.

[iii] Firstly, Eliachar was included in their 1958 activists' conference, and Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel took a writing course with Siton before 1948. David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, 29.1.84, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451. also see "Consulting Meeting of the Sephardic-Mizrahi Activists" (yeshivat hitya'atsut shel ha-'askanim ha-sfaradim-mizrahim), *EM* 22.7.58, p. 1

[iv] Y. Betzalel,"Will the Ethnic Lists Succeed in the Elections?" (ha-yatslihu ha-reshimot ha-'adatiyot ba-bhirot?) *Maariv*, 7.8.59, p. 4.

[v] "By 'Mapai's Orders'?" (le-fi 'horaot mapai'?), *EM* 9.6.59, p. 3; Letter from Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel to Eliahu Eliachar, 24.4.57, CZA 430A/53/2.

[vi] "A Leader Born" (leidato shel manhig), *Ha'olam Haze*, 29.7.59, pp.4-5.

[vii] See for instance, "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirteikol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 1.3.65, 18.8.65; CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

CSCJ's discourse about democracy and the reality in the institution was eminent[i].

However, the CSCJ's legacy and Eliachar's charisma were not overlooked altogether. The National Union was inspired to national politics not as consequence of the Wadi Salib revolt, but by the heritage of the CSCJ. Even after shaking off the affiliation to any of the old elite circles, both National parties fought over the right to use the letter "S" used by the CSCJ as their electoral letter[ii]. The younger generation of activists in the National Union saw themselves as successors to the CSCJ as reformers of its ways, with a responsibility to break through its authority and lead by themselves. They paid certain respect to the traditional institution, but they also insulted it and altogether did not consider it a viable political partner[iii]. This generation, that had matured and been educated with Ashkenazim, was also inspired by Ashkenazi leftist anti-institutional discourse, as the periodical *Ha'olam Haze*[iv]. The "national" in National Union corresponded with an ambition to change the nation's nature, by participation in the public debate and in the making of policies that determine the face of the Jewish national society and culture. This was not different from the CSCJ's aspiration, but the young organization had learned from the elders' mistakes. Rather than insisting on the abolishment of institutional discrimination, they tried to attribute content in form of specific demands to what correct Merger of the Diasporas should mean, apart from the right of the same activists to gain power positions:

"We do not know at all the original cultural creation of the Jews of Muslim countries, as is necessary for a proper Merger… in many fields -Jewish culture, intelligentsia, initiative- there are differences in the forms and the content between the different ethnicities, but not differences of level. In other fields like western education there is a difference of level. But education for adults has to be based first and foremost on mutual respect and any overtone of insincerity that there is, is outrageous and sabotages… We are planning and carrying out a huge social and human revolution but we are not consistent in our talk, our ways of life and our deeds."[v]

"We must remember that the term Merger of Diasporas cannot be done but through coupling… and not assimilation…. In all the levels of management of the Ministry of Education we must give preference to Mizrahim and safeguard positions only to them…they must get preference in teachers' training."[vi]

By using explicit demands, the National Union's discourse was able to escape essentialist ethnic discourse, as the CSCJ's could sometimes come through, and could speak beyond mere

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[i] See for instance the one and only list to the institution's elections, in CSCJA container 6218 file 147.

[ii] That is, the letter written on the notes in the ballot box on elections day. The letter S was probably chosen to symbolize Sephardic.

[iii] Letter of Moshe Elharif, "Letters to the Editor" (mikhtavim la-ma'arekhet), *EM*, 28.7.59, p. 2.

[iv] "Thinking out-loud" (hirhurim be-kol ram), *EM*, 25.12.59, p. 2. All these organizations raised much interest among Ashkenazi extra-parliamentary oppositional groups, as the Semitic Action, the New Regime and the Third Force.

[v] M. ktron. "The Warning" (ha-azharah), *EM*, 25.12.59, p. 1.

[vi] Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel, "It is time to include the Sephardim and Mizrahim in Managing Education" (shituf ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah be-nihul ha-hinukh- tsav ha-sha'ah), *EM* 10.6.58, p. 3.

"mathematical representation… asking to send 'Sephardim' only because they are 'Sephardim'"[i].

During election campaign, much of the direct criticism of the National Union disappeared. That means that they were not sure what would draw the crowds, but comparing to the CSCJ's faction they had more confidence to raise discourse that their formers either feared to make explicit or could not make coherently enough.

"I will not be afraid of rebuking the Ashkenazim [lehatif musar] *and educate them about the Merger of Diasporas, a term that had lost all practical meaning to them."*[ii]

To summarize, the National Union attempted to inherit the CSCJ by correcting its past mistakes. They sharpened discourse that the CSCJ left ambivalent, waged for positive rather than negative claims, and expanded their lines to include immigrants of deprived socio-economic stratums, though in quite a limited manner.

Throughout the 1959 rush of parties to nominate Sephardic and Mizrahi candidates, the General Zionist party nominated the son of the CSCJ's prime enemy, Rabbi Nissim[iii]. From this point the circle of activists of the CSCJ was consciously searching for routes to influence and different ways to become a proper extra-parliamentary lobby. A central path was through the Sephardic Federation and its struggles within the international Zionist institutions[iv]. On a practical level, the Federation was not very different from other Mizrahi associations that maintained and established relations with their particular Diasporas. The difference was that the Federation held the theoretical pretension to represent the entire Sephardic and Mizrahi imagined collective in the sphere of higher international Zionist politics. This made it an oppositional organization to Mapai, and it could not get its backing as other associations did. The Federation gave a common platform to the CSCJ circle and the native elites of Labor tendencies. Its activity was followed by the young native Sephardic generation as well. Through the tense summer of 1959 the major focus for the old notables' activity was the Jewish Congress in Stockholm rather than the riots and revolts around the country. Just like most political groups in Israel (Yorman 1995), the CSCJ also saw the popular discontent as an opportunity to promote the Federation's agendas. At the same time, though, Eliachar recognized the potential of this revolt, perhaps also due to the international Jewish-Sephardic attention it got (Dahan-Kalev 1991). Though still seeing the Sephardic elite's role as intermediating between the Ashkenazi elite and the lower social stratums of immigrants[v], he could already see a more significant role

[i] Cohen-Tzidon (1956): 33.
[ii] Letter from Y.M. Immanel to Eliahu Eliachar, 9.5.57, CZA 430A/53/b.
[iii] See correspondence between Eliahu Eliachar and Salman Shina, CZA 430A/251.
[iv] David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 6, 30.10.83. CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.
[v] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Ben Gurion, 6.10.61, BGA: subject files, container 42 file 245.

these immigrants could take in leading and establishing Sephardic autonomy[i]:

"If Ben Harush would declare he would vote for changing the [voting] system…it would be an opportunity for Ashkenazim and Sephardim as one to vote for him as a strong [harifa] *protest of the severity of the verdict against him and his friends."*[ii]

Conclusion   the 1959 Turn

The impact of the Wadi Salib events and its meanings have been described and analyzed from many different angles. On the long term, it has established a collective rebellious Mizrahi memory (Negri 2014), but in the 1960s the state's counter reaction was more significant.

Perhaps the most important impact for our concern is the way the lifting up of heads in the summer of 1959 effected that years' election campaign, by publicly exposing the way Zionist parties used threats, extortions and bribes in order to recruit activists and dismantle autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political organizations[iii]. Along with the general rebellious atmosphere, this encouraged even more activists inside Zionist parties to apply their own extortions and threats in order to gain higher positions inside their local parties and institutions[iv]. In the 1959 elections, very few cities did not have at least one group and often more than one running for municipal councils, representing Mizrahim, Sephardim, or certain Muslim country of origin[v]. Many achieved representation in municipalities and local councils. On both municipal and parliamentary levels, most Zionist parties added Mizrahi and Sephardic representatives or at least pushed some to higher positions in the list[vi] (Herzog 1986). This way not few towns got Mizrahi mayors[vii]. As Chetrit (2004) pointed out, collective confrontation against the establishment bore fruit mainly for those who did not participate directly in it, but rather collaborated with it, since they are the ones the establishment was willing to negotiate with. None of the autonomous Mizrahi parties that ran for parliament gained representation, UNAI was the only one that got mighty close.

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[i] Letter from Eliachar to Ben Gurion, 29.7.59; BGA: subject files, container 42 file 245. Afterwards he would always stress the contribution of the lower stratums of immigrants to the state building and guarding. E.g. Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to H. Hahelgi, 28.11.65, CZA 430A/210/4.

[ii] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to *Haaretz* editorial. 25.10.59, MSA 2-013-1959-406.

[iii] E.g. M. Tenenbaum, "The 'Yekke' Grandfather of Sephardic Miki" (ha-saba ha'yeke' shel miki ha-sfaradi), *Maariv* 26.10.59, p. 6.

[iv] E.g. "The Babylonian List" (reshimat ha-bavlim), 20.10, MSA 2-013-1959-441.

[v] "Jerusalem Broke Record: 16 Lists" (yerushalaim hesiga et ha-si: 16 reshimot), *Maariv*, 2.10.59, p. 2.

[vi] M. Misles, "'The Sephardic' Revolution" (ha-mahapekha 'ha-sfaradit'), *Maariv,* 10.9.59, p. 2.

[vii] Mainly, but not only, "development towns" like Dimona, Sderot, Qiryat Shmona and Bet Shean. See "Summery of the Meetings of the 16th and 18th of June of the year 1961" (taktsir shtei ha-yeshivot asher hitkaymu ba-yamim 16 ve-18 le-yuni shel shnat 1961), MSA 2-013-1961-782.

This was one main implication of the Wadi Salib events: Mapai realizing, subsequently and gradually making other parties realize, the importance of making the symbolic gesture of inclusion towards Mizrahi Jews. As a *"brave Ashkenazi"*[i] suggested, eventfully the impact of the revolt on the political system was similar to the impact of the communist struggles on capitalism: social capitalism. The political system started to trickle Mizrahim and Sephardim into it. More representation was gained for Mizrahim in state and municipal institutions through Zionist parties (Negri 2014, Bernstein 1976, Dahan-Kalev 1991), which accompanied by personal benefits. The Zionist system gave space for including the struggle that could have been against it, right into a struggle inside the system. This struggle was over limited and mainly local matters, which therefore entailed implicit acceptance of the foundations of Ashkenazi Zionism. Thanks to this moment of shaking off and rising of a Mizrahi-Sephardic autonomous voice, it was now publicly known that parties exploited their Mizrahi and Sephardic members to divide, extort, threaten and purchase other Mizrahi and Sephardic groups and activists. This exposure throughout the 1959 election campaign threatened the apparatus through which Mapai concentrated its domination. Mapai then had to find another way to co-opt the emerging leaderships, instead of gathering "votes-brokers" (Lissak 1972) and recruiting "mukhtars" and "fist men", i.e. notables and bullies. The main consequence then of the Wadi Salib events was an increased "business" of trading Mizrahim and Sephardim in political positions. For many of the Mizrahi and Sephardic intelligentsia this was a significant lesson in Israeli democracy and its manipulation. The second decade of statehood opened a new path for Mizrahi and Sephardic activists to participate in the political game: getting organized in a democracy (Lissak 1972: 269)

"The secret of organization-this secret that is a valuable asset became…the property of many youngsters in different parts of the country that want to get organized in a movement".[ii]

Many of this generation had not been politically active in their countries of origins, and some countries did not yet have parliamentary elections when the immigrants left them. As limited as democracy was under Mapai's apparatus of domination, organized political collective action could influence the system. Naturally, this was known to Mizrahi activists before the revolt[iii], but the resonance of this protest on the national level made this path ever more popular. Mizrahi and Sephardic activists started gaining some limited influence by forming "*pressure groups in the parties, like the industry owners or the kibbutzim"*[iv]. Lacking funds and mechanisms, activists got organized in order to enter different parties and gain positions in them. There was

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[i] "The Opinion of a Brave Ashkenazi"(da'ato shel ashkenazi amits lev), *EM,* 30.10.59, p. 1.
[ii] Immanuel (1964): 10.
[iii] E.g. Letter from Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon to Golda Meir, 25.5.55; and to M. Eliakim, 5.6.55. MSA 2-013-1955-352.
[iv] Avner Shaki in "We united and still haven't decided" (hitlakadnu ve-'adain lo hehlatnu), *Maariv,* 16.6.61, p. 9. The National Union also declared it would cancel its candidature if parties gave representation to Mizrahim. "Editor's Note" (dvar ha-'orekh), *EM*, 1.9.59, p. 2.

no other way for them to reach audiences of thousands in order to speak about their burning issues. Therefore, many of the activists and leaders who surged in or before the summer of 1959 found themselves zigzagging between different parties and organizations. Quitting coalitions and parties in order to form independent lists became a widespread tool for gaining political positions. As Herzog (1986) claimed, getting organized was explored as a way to make manipulations inside the political system, rather than as a way to gain autonomy. In a sense, the relative success in this struggle over political representation realized the demand of "real Merger of the Diasporas", which all Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations called for. However, it was a subjugated realization of this ethos, from a position that maintained Mizrahi inferiority in the system. Representation became a purpose by itself, a struggle to get included in the regime that sanctified Ashkenazi superiority, and not at all to transform it.

Moreover, the path that opened for incorporation in the Zionist parties often went through creating political animosity between activists of different places of origins. It was a form of *"collective ethnic separatism"*[i] (by countries, regions or cities of origin), introduced to the political and public spheres because of the structure of political opportunities. Activism for one's own specific community was a principal way to achieve and maintain political support and public legitimacy. The relative success of the North African UNAI in the ballot-boxes was the best proof of that[ii]. The need to organize apart is typical of immigrant societies, which share,

"tongues and ways of lives, customs and manners, opinions and beliefs and even liturgy and traditions… these became sacred to them with the passing of the generations…"[iii]

However, in the political climate that was created, the result was "mobilization of ethnic identities in latent and indirect ways, without opening a political space to discuss or formulate these identities" (Grinberg 2014). In 1970 the Anthropologist Shlomo Deshen concluded half a decade of ethnographic research in a South Tunisian immigrant community. He documented how different ethnic groups were seeking representation in parties not in order to promote particular policies, but as a question of social prestige and recognition *vis-à-vis* other Mizrahi ethnic groups that were already represented in it (Deshen 1976). He wrote of how Zionist political parties designed politics empty of contents, except for conjuring purely sentimental reactions, which often underlined, channeled, manipulated and deepened ethnic differences between groups, and fed hatred between rival ethnic groups (Deshen 1970: 213-216). Deshen (1974) named this "political ethnicity", characterized by power struggles that have been

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[i] Eliahu Eliachar, "Conclusion from Past Failures" (maskana mi-kishlonot ha-'avar), *IB,* 7.7.63, p. 3.

[ii] UNAI received over 8,000 votes, three times more than the National Union (the next in popularity). Cohen-Tzidon also started his political career in an Egyptian immigrants' association. It is probable that his decision to quit Mapai and initiate an independent party around 1957-1958 had to do with the Egyptian immigration in 1956, which supplied him with some public base.

[iii] Y. M. Immanuel. "The Sephardic Problem in the Educational Field" (ha-beaya ha-sfaradit be-ma'arakhot ha-hinukh), *Young Israel,* 1.2.62, p. 1.

emptied of further significance. As David Siton said about the Federation, *"there was no ideology but only dynamics"*[i], power struggles that by the way deepened the competition and rivalry between different ethnic groups within the Mizrahim and Sephardim (Bernstein 1976), creating "a new repertoire of ethnic misrepresentation by tribal challenging of collective feelings of fear, hostility and vengeance" (Grinberg 2014).

The Wadi Salib events and its aftershocks solidified processes that took place since the establishment of the state, crystallizing the vacuums of leadership and identity within the Mizrahi and Sephardic publics (Bernstein 1976). Zenner (1967) claimed that the fact that the emerging leaderships tried to lead their communities by representation in Zionist parties and without rabbinical guidance, reflected the deep crisis caused by the lack of spiritual leadership that was created by the immigration process. The fact that Rabbi Toledano, in his role as "rabbi-minister", changed his skin from a supporter of Sephardic autonomy to one of Mapai's envoys reflected the same crisis, as was the general incorporation of old timer Mizrahi rabbinical elite into the Religious National Party under Ashkenazi hegemony. Given all of the above, it is of no surprise that that the percentage of voting for "ethnic parties" got lower and lower as much as the decade advanced (Tsur 2000).

1960-1961   **The Corollaries**

One result of the summer of 1959 was prime minister Ben Gurion learning the discourse of addressing the "non-Ashkenazi" public's special issues and miseries. This led him to appoint a new role in the government, a PM Consultant for Merger of the Diasporas, which was a sort of a parallel position to the PM Consultant for Arab Affairs. This latter was never an Arab but rather some high ranking official in the security mechanism, who was in charge of coordinating different bodies that managed the civilian life of Israeli Palestinian Arabs (Ozacky-Lazar 2006). The nomination of a PM Consultant on Merger of the Diasporas corresponded with an old demand made by wide circles of native elites, to construct an official representative body for this public by the state[ii]. The question of who should be included, how they should get elected

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[i] David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 6, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451. Also see Meir Chetrit in Michael (1984).

[ii] This request was made since early 1950s. See Y. Nitsani, "For Establishing an Institution to Merge the Tribes" (yakum mosad le-mizug shvatim), *Shevet Va'am*, May 1958. Also see Y. Yeitiv, "Paradoxes in Our Social Life" (paradoxim be-hayeynu ha-hevratiim), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958; Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to David Ben Gurion, 29.7.59, BGA 127651; David Ben Gurion's journal, entry of 21.2.60, BGA 217390; "Demanding an Office for Merger of Diasporas" (tov'im misrad le-mizug galuyot), *Davar,* 27.7.59, p. 6; Ezer Abutbol's testimony to the investigation committee on 30.7.59, SA ISA-PMO-WadiSalibRiots-000jq34. The latter investigation committee

and how could such a body take care of this publics' interest was a source for dispute between different organizations[i]. The role of the PM consultant was designed as a symbolic gesture, and was appreciated as such by most activists' circles. The consultant André Shoraki was indeed left without real competences or authority. The role was dismissed by Ben Gurion as unnecessary before long[ii], and by 1963 got cancelled altogether.

Many of the prominent activists of the four lists that ran for parliamentary elections in 1959 pursued their political career. Some entered to, exited from or switched between Zionist parties, others eventually found their place in one party (Deshen 1970). Ben Harush left Wadi Salib about a year after he got released from his six months sentence, got disenchanted with the public struggle, and never resumed it again[iii]. Other activists continued to pursue unification in an autonomous framework, seeing that the accumulated votes of all the parties could have probably assured two parliamentarians[iv]. These last constructed again a "Countrywide Union"[v], carrying the very same title as the organization all the CSCs had in 1949-1951, and also asked for Eliachar's endorsement[vi]. Since elections soon came in 1961, another wave of negotiations that included temptations, threats and extortions began between this Union and the Zionist parties[vii].

Another group involved in this kind of negotiations was a network of different groups of Iraqi immigrants that had achieved representation in different municipalities in the center of the country[viii]. This network was formed within a climate of public cultural-intellectual activity of the Iraqi immigrants elites, considered by some as *"the intellectual and financial aristocracy of the Mizrahim"*[ix], organized through a club and a newspaper (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). The leader of the political initiative, Abraham Avisar, was from Ramat-Gan, which was the center of this sort of activity throughout the 1950s. This network was in a sense an attempt to develop this cultural activity into the political sphere, but that made all the difference:

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adopted this request into its recommendations. See "Report of Special Investigation Committee to the Wadi Salib Events Affair" (doh va'adat ha-hakira ha-tsiburit le-'inyan meora'ot vadi salib), 9.7.59.

[i] E.g. Letter from David Ben Gurion to Babilonian Community Council, 8.3.61, CZA 430A/236/1/1.

[ii] Letter from David Ben Gurion to Eliahu Sasson and Bechor Chetrit, 11.10.62, BGA: subject files, container 42 file 245. Uri Avnery, "The Subject: The Equator" (ha-nidon: kav ha-mashve), *Ha'olam Haze,* 19.12.62, p. 4.

[iii] "The Leader Abandoned the Wadi" (ha-manhig natash el ha-vadi), *Maariv*, 17.2.61, p. 18.

[iv] ; M. Misles, "A Sephardic 'Headache' for the Parties" ('keev rosh' sfaradi la-miflagot), *Maariv*, 15.6.61, p. 3; also see "Spirits of Renewal and Re-Consolidation" (ruhot hidush ve-gibush me-hadash), *EM*, 25.12.59, p. 2.

[v] "The Countrywide Union of the Sephardim and Mizrahim in Israel" (ha-ihud ha-artsi shel ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah be-israel), *IB*, 14.7.61, p. 19.

[vi] Letter from Sidi Toledano to Eliahu Eliachar, 8.12.59, CZA 430A/53/2.

[vii] E.g. M. Misles, ibid.

[viii] "Meeting of 16.6.61. Secret" (yeshiva mi-yom 16.6.61. sodi), MSA 2-013-1961-782.

[ix] "Sensitive Matters and Discoveries" (nosim ve-giluyim 'adinim), *EM*, 3.4.59, p. 1.

"Our public got spread in other parties, not for ideology…we did not think about it from 1952, but the same educated people of the community were deliberating [hitlabtu] *other questions until 1955…the people we represent we've liberated them from parties that took their voice in some way".*[i]

Founded by activists that had gone through the "schooling" of the Zionist parties, this group at this stage sought ways to increase representation of Iraqi immigrants in state institutions[ii].

Cohen-Tzidon, along with others, left the National Union and joined an initiative to re-establish the General Zionists party, now named the Liberal Party[iii]. Off the sphere of parliamentary politics, he maintained his support in anti-colonial struggles, joining a small initiative to support Algerian independence (Erel 2006: 102), and was prominent in other struggles with a clear Mizrahi agenda:

"His presence in the liberal party was technical, because his public work was militant, in the Mizrahi ethnic field of rights and so on. The fact he was in the Liberal party was more a lever to reach, say, the political level, namely the parliament…He was no propagator of the Liberal ideology. That is negligible…[he needed it to] struggle against the establishment".[iv]

The National Union's number two, Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel, took dominance in the autonomy-seeking circle that remained. Just like in the network of the National Union, this activist was always trying to make networks with other groups, and was one of the engines behind "the Countrywide Union"[v].

The National Religious Party was quite behind most parties in terms of gestures towards the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics, especially because of its objection to Rabbi Toledano's nomination as Minister of Religion in 1958. Since early 1959 it had been having inner struggles over Mizrahi representation, which resulted in a group splitting from it to run to the 1961 elections separately, led my Moshe Yishai[vi]. While Yishai enjoyed the support of the Sephardic Rabbis Organization, and therefore had certain backing from the CSCJ as well, his main goal was to gain better representation inside the National Religious Party[vii].

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[i] "Meeting of 16.6.61. Secret" (yeshiva mi-yom 16.6.61. sodi), MSA 2-013-1961-782. In Hebrew the word *kol* means both vote and voice, reinforcing the idea of representation. Therefore, this quote expresses beautifully the role of political parties in the democratic system, as the tool created in order to speak for the voters, rather than taking away their voice.

[ii] At least, this was the demand that was explicitly repeated in an organized meeting between different activists of these local groups and Mapai's Iraqi MPs: "Meeting of 16.6.61. Secret" (yeshiva mi-yom 16.6.61. sodi), MSA 2-013-1961-782.

[iii] The Liberal party merged with *Herut* to create *Gahal* in 1965. Cohen-Tzidon formed part of the Liberal Party's central committee, and as of 1966 he was MP for *Gahal*, and responsible within it to relations with the Mizrahi development towns, particularly for making parliamentary questions and also as a speaker in these towns before elections: a kind of an up-scaled "vote-broker", then.

[iv] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18

[v] Moshe Nekadimon, "Elections Journal" (yoman ha-bhirot), *Herut,* 14.6.61, p. 2.

[vi] Sh. Quedem, "Conflicts in the National Religious Party over 'the place in the list'" (sikhsukhim ba-miflaga ha-datit leumit 'al 'ha-makom ba-reshima', *Herut*, 26.8.59, p. 1.

[vii] Moshe Nekadimon, "Elections Journal" (yoman ha-bhirot), *Herut,* 14.6.61, p. 2.

Mapai branches in many other municipalities had been going through similar inner turmoil in these years. This happened in concentrations of Mizrahi immigrants, where external Ashkenazi party officials were brought to rule municipalities, and most notably in the two big cities of the south, Ashdod and Beer Sheva[i]. Mizrahi groups were formed behind major Mizrahi activists in these municipalities and clashed with the Ashkenazi heads in order to obtain power and positions[ii].

The CSCJ

As new Sephardic and Mizrahi leaderships were emerging, discovering new ways in which getting organized can exert pressure in order to gain representation, the CSCJ was doing its proper exploration in its attempt to become an extra-parliamentary pressure group. A natural path was to publish a periodical. In August of 1960 the CSCJ, by David Siton's initiative, started publishing a journal, which by July of 1961 got to be a steady monthly titled *In the Battle*[iii] (hereinafter *IB*). The *IB* was almost a direct continuation of *Hed Hamizrah*, in its contents and form. It published mainly medium-length theoretical and informative articles about the problems of Mizrahi and Sephardic representation, along with articles by or about Sephardic lay and religious public figures, and reviews of Sephardic and Mizrahi customs, heritage and folklore. Unlike *Hed Hamizrah*, this was not a mouthpiece of a political party, but was simply meant *"to show that this old* [vatik] *institution has a line and has a stand"*[iv]. The magazine was sent to wide circles of the Sephardic and Mizrahi elites as well as to Ashkenazi decision makers[v]. The journal was a tool for the CSCJ's struggles, as well as a way to maintain the honor of the CSCJ as an institution dealing with public affairs. The first and most important struggle of the CSCJ with state institutions was over the Chief Sephardic Rabbinate. Reflecting over the period, Siton could not emphasize enough how this battle alone kept the institution alive in those years, *"filling [it] with content and form and [making it] take actions the Sephardim had not thought of"*[vi]. According to the conservative perception of the CSCJ, it was its own traditional role to determine the identity of the Chief Sephardic Rabbi, for laws that had legality beyond the state[vii]. This struggle allowed them to join forces with any rival of the Ashkenazi-

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[i] Uri Porat, "Conflicts and Conspiracies Destroy Ashdod" (tkhakhim u-mezimot horsim et ashdod), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 1.7.63, p. 4.

[ii] E.g. "Storms and Conflicts in 'Happy' Ashdod" (se'arot u-tkhakhim be-ashdod ha-'meusheret'), *Yediothh Ahronot*, 27.10.61, p. 4; "Matters of the Hour" (le-'inyanei ha-sha'ah), *Hed Ma'arakhtenu*, 26.3.61, p. 2.

[iii] *ba-ma'arakha*. Another possible translation is, "on the battlefield".

[iv] David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[v] "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirteikol yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 6.11.60, CSCJA container 6236 file 380. Yehezquel Sofer, "Words to the Intelligentsia" (dvarim el ha-intligentsia), *IB*, 11.10.61, p. 2.

[vi] David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, Part 3, August 1983, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[vii] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to *Haaretz* editor, 26.1.61, CSCJA container 6227 file 6.

dominated religious parties, creating some coalitions that indeed bore fruit[i]. Nonetheless, they did not abandon altogether the struggle over representation of the Mizrahi and Sephardic elites in other state institutions. Part of this struggle even included a short episode of supporting Mapai for the 1961 elections[ii].

By the end of 1961, "The Countrywide Union" was disintegrated, and its place was taken by a "Union for Merging of Diasporas", where the old elites were somewhat more dominant[iii]. Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel started publishing a newspaper called *Young Israel* and to lead a group by the same name, with a clear political cause to grow and maintain organized until the next elections, foreseen to 1965. This caused a breach between him and the CSCJ[iv]. By the end of 1961 there were two journals that declared themselves as "the one and only stage for the Sephardic and Mizrahi public in Israel": *In the Battle* (*IB*) and *Young Israel*.

1962-1967   **Autonomous Organizations**

Young Israel

Young Israel had one main goal: to gather around it people from all generations, social stratums, and Sephardic and Mizrahi communities, and if possible also Ashkenazim[v]. This was somewhat over-ambitious and caused some contradictory political dynamics. For instance, they called to annul the CSCs but negotiated unification with *In the Battle*[vi]. Young Israel supported rhetorically struggles of proletarized immigrants, but they only really invested efforts in defending old timers' rights[vii]. They had certain success making pacts with local groups and struggles (Herzog 1986), and they also cooperated with the CSCJ around specific actions[viii].

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[i] David Siton, in his interview to Mati Ronen, mentioned a few of these coalitions. The most important achievement they gained this way was getting rabbi Moshe Toledano to cancel the lower status of municipal Sephardic rabbis. CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[ii] "The Sephardim and Mizrahim and the Parliamentary Elections" (ha-sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah ve-ha-bhirot la-kneset), *IB*, 13.8.61, pp. 4-5.

[iii] *ihud le-mizug galuyot.* See Letter from Yitzhak Cohen to Eliahu Eliachar, 18.1.62, CZA 430A/53/2.

[iv] Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel wrote to Eliahu Eliachar in a less respectable manner, and Eliachar reproached him for publishing the magazine. See correspondence between the two on December 1961, CZA 430A/250/1; and in that Autumn in CZA 430A/53/2.

[v] "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *Young Israel*, 18.4.63, p. 1.

[vi] Victor Chetrit, "Cancel the CSCs, Unite the Sephardim" (yevutlo va'adei ha-'edot, yitahdu ha-sfaradim), *Young Israel*, 21.6.62, p. 4; "What is Happening in the Movement" (me-ha-mitrahesh ba-tnu'ah), *Young Israel,* 18.4.63, p. 4.

[vii] One of their main public struggles was over the poor infrastructure of Grin neighborhood in Holon, "the first in the city". "Grin neighborhood" (shkhunat grin), *Young Israel*, 23.12.62, p. 3.

[viii] For instance, a protest in the Zionist Congress in Jerusalem in 1965; "The Problems of the Sephardic Public" (be'ayot ha-tsibur ha-sfaradi), *IB*, 29.1.65, p. 23. They also informed the *IB* about the movement's development.

However, the ambition to address the entire Sephardic and Mizrahi publics often resulted in unwarranted appropriation of other struggles and superficial building of alliances through a dominating authoritative attitude[i]. Though continuously making contacts and connections with other local groups, Young Israel broadly united forces with others only around the struggle over the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv[ii].

When Young Israel succeeded the National Union, they continued the struggle for autonomous Sephardic representation and maintained the support of the same synagogue, managed by the father of its now number two, Shalom Moial[iii]. Young Israel continued with some of the same discourse as the National Union's, but without Cohen-Tzidon it mainly reproduced hegemonic Zionist discourse[iv]. The cadre's tendencies, the attempt to speak to many different publics, including to progressive Ashkenazim, and the political context in which it was working reshaped the same arguments and contents from the past in a more superficial and less coherent way. Young Israel aspired to become the umbrella-organization that many Sephardic and Mizrahi activists were repeatedly asking to structure[v], though it was usually proposed as a non-party institution with official recognition from the government. For this reason, it kept an apolitical tone, and sustained quite a shallow political discourse.

Their propaganda contained mainly repetitive calls against discrimination and deprivation of Mizrahim and Sephardim. In 1964 a racist book named "The Ashkenazi Revolution" got published, containing racist propaganda against Mizrahim and Sephardim[vi]. This book gave Young Israel a serious boost in motivation, and they even perceived it as preparing their ground for success in elections[vii]. Their discourse about the Arab world also demonstrates the way this group used the National Union's discourse in more shallow and superficial manners. The National Union criticized Israel's middle-eastern politics, but silenced much of this criticism

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[i] For instance, by claiming that leaders of a certain protest were Young Israel activists, while they denied it. Avraham Rotem, "The Tenants Burned the Trash" (ha-dayarim sarfu et ha-ashpa), *Maariv*, 24.8.64, p. 22. Another example of this tendency of this group may be seen is their relationship with the Fraternity activists, a relationship in which Young Israel repeatedly took credit for not taking credit over their activity: E.g. M. Avi Eyal,"The Lessons from Beer Sheva and Ashdod" (lekah beer sheva ve-ashdod), *Young Israel* 15.9.63, p. 1.

[ii] E.g. M. Avi Eyal,"Order on Probation" (tsav 'al tnai), *Young Israel*, 28.9.62, p. 4.

[iii] See Immanuel (1968).

[iv] For instance, in the booklet "The Sephardic Revolution" (ha-mahapekha ha-sfaradit), which was an important propaganda tool for the movement, Immanuel wrote of the how the environment Mizrahi immigrants came from *"had no meaning to these [full democratic] rights, [they] did not know the paths of industrial society, did not know to exploit opportunities and did not know how to advance…in the economic life. They were not trained in professions that are required in this society, and therefore too many remained in the bottom of the social ladder and a depriving reality was created. The principals of western democracy of the regime in the state of Israel, despite its good intentions, were foreign to the Sephardo-Mizrahim…"* (Immanuel 1964: 7-8).

[v] E.g. "Union and Unity: the movement united with the National Sephardic Party" (ihud ve-likud: ha-tnu'ah hitahda 'im ha-miflaga ha-sfaradit leumit), *Young Israel* 4.11.62, p. 4.

[vi] The book was written by Kelman Katzanelson, Russian in origins, that was a journalist and activist in the extremist right circles of the revisionist movement.

[vii] Y. M. Immanuel, "Before the Leap" (likrat zinuk), *Young Israel*, 18.11.64, p. 1. This book gave a boost of activity to Sephardic and Mizrahi public action in general: it was written by certain acquaintance with this sub-political sphere, addressed particularly some activists of the old Sephardic elites and adopted Young Israel's terminology, referring to this public as Sephardo-Mizrahim. This terminology will be discussed further in continuance.

towards elections. In contrast, Young Israel added positive clauses about Arabs to its agenda only towards elections, and probably just in order to attract some Israeli Palestinian Arab votes[i]. Before elections they demonstrated little more than mistrust and contempt towards Arabs, and Immanuel insinuated to the press that they would obtain Arab votes thanks to a good position one of its members in the military regime[ii].

Immanuel was a teacher, and the *Young Israel* newspaper focused much on education, usually from a progressive humanist perspective that some Ashkenazi intellectuals also expressed. This attitude defended the Mizrahi immigrants' backwardness as merely cultural, and not biological, and therefore fixable by resource allocation. However, Immanuel accepted the Zionist educational goals and perceptions that required these immigrants to change profoundly[iii]. This was somewhat ironic, since just few years beforehand Immanuel rebuked Eliachar for being too afraid to preach to the Ashkenazim to change[iv]. In fields of education and economy *Young Israel* defined certain particular collective needs of the "Sephardim-Mizrahim", that were in fact the needs of the poor. However, they also opposed the discourse that portrayed the problem as a mere class issue[v]. Attempting to capture audience from all social stratums and political tendencies sterilized most of their critique towards Ashkenazi hegemony. Even Zionist Mizrahi MPs found occasions to carry more direct political critique about the need of Ashkenazim to change and act with humility[vi]. However it is also true that any hint of hostility Young Israel would dare show towards the state institutions could be interpreted by some Sephardic intellectuals as alarmingly violent, potentially fanatical and possibly disastrous[vii].

The two main leaders of Young Israel were of accommodated native Sephardic families, and their motivation to get organized was rooted in this social and political world. Young Israel saw itself as carrying the voice of a Sephardic-Mizrahi collective identity, part of a certain heritage of autonomous political organizations[viii]. They were indeed encouraged to keep an autonomous organization by practically all possible circles, because it was a way of exercising constant

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[i] Concretely, they got one vote in the Bedouin village of Ibtin. In general, in small settlements they did not get more than 3 votes in one place. See "High Participation in the Elections for the 6th Parliament" (hishtatfut gvohah ba-bhirot la-kneset ha-6), *Hatsofe*, 3.11.65, p. 1.

[ii] M. Misles, "Young Israel Returns to the Collection of Parties" (israel ha-tse'ira hozeret le-ma'arakh ha-miflagot), *Maariv*, 30.7.64, p. 10.

[iii] E.g. Immanuel (1964): 15-16.

[iv] Letter from Y. M. Immanuel to Eliahu Eliachar, 9.5.57, CZA 430A/53/b.

[v] E.g. Y. M. Immanuel, "What is the Problem?" (mahi ha-be'aya?), *Young Israel*, 26.8.63, p. 1.

[vi] "The Source of the Mizrahi Problem: lack of Equal Opportunities for All" (mekor ha-aflaya shel 'edot ha-mizrah he'ader hizdamnuyot shavot la-kol), *IB,* 25.12.64, p. 14-15; Roby (2015): 160.

[vii] For instance, see in Rejwan (1964). Nissim Rejwan was part of the Iraqi intellectual's political networks and also had contacts with the CSCJ circle. This critique about Young Israel was in line with the general prudence Sephardic intellectuals exhibited against extremism and potentially disastrous Mizrahi movements. E.g. Sh. Cohen-Tzidon, "Against the incitement against the Sephardim-Mizrahiim" (nokhah masa'a ha-hahasata neged ha-sfaradim mizrahiim), *IB*, 18.9.63, p. 4.

[viii] Apart from learning from the mistakes of the CSCJ, they also learned from the National Union's errors. For instance, they were more transparent about their deeds and members, whereas the National Union kept these more secretive in order to appear stronger and bigger than what they actually were.

pressure on the Zionist parties to include Sephardic and Mizrahi representation[i]. However, the older conservative elites did not fully endorse the movement. Despite coming from the same social sphere, the generation that got educated in the Zionist-Ashkenazi dominated education system had been too ashkenized to gain the older elites' support. In their form of organization they attempted to copy the dominant Ashkenazi model alone, and did not follow the autochthonous Sephardic precedence[ii]. Their discourse about the older elites was too arrogant and their attempts to approach them were not courteous enough to gain their support. The younger generation's process of lifting up its head was too antagonistic towards the older generation, having internalized cultural coloniality: they saw their parents' generation just as the Ashkenazi Zionist elites did, as old-fashioned and irrelevant to the systems of the modern state (see also: Levy 1998). This formed an obstacle for Young Israel's attempts to build public legitimacy, because they were deprived of the older generation's support, both intellectually[iii], financially[iv] and symbolically, of endowing acknowledgement to the movement.

Young Israel hanged its hopes in cooperation with the independent elected forces in municipal elections, especially the mentioned Iraqi network. Some negotiations were held with this network before the 1965 elections, but these were unsuccessful[v]. The latter gained more votes, though both groups remained outside the parliament. Some of the network's activists did not see self-organization as a cause but rather as means and therefore were not proper partners[vi]. Before the 1965 elections a hot piece of news got unfortunately related to Young Israel: a spy for Egypt was caught within their ranks. Shmuel Baruch was new in the organization and had promised to raise its funds. He was arrested and judged, leaving the party with a need to keep a low profile and without an economic plan in the year before elections. There is certain basis to believe that he had joined Young Israel as an additional and marginal part of his spying activity, namely in order to pass information about the grievances and struggles of the Mizrahim, for Egypt to try recruiting them against the state[vii].

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[i] E.g. M. Levi, "Wishing Success to the Ethnic Lists in the Elections" (derekh tsleha ba-bhirot la-reshimot ha-'adatiot), *IB,* 26.9.65, p. 16.

[ii] "Interview with Prof. George Harar" (reayon 'im prof. george harar), *Young Israel*, 24.9.65, p. 3.

[iii] See Immanuel (1968a): 387-392.

[iv] For instance, almost the only advertisement in *Young Israel* periodical was of the synagogue that supported them, whereas the *IB* had all their circles' businesses supporting the periodical through advertisement.

[v] Some negotiations about uniting the two groups started already in 1962. "The Occurrences in the Movement" (me-ha-mitrahesh ba-tnu'ah), *Young Israel*, 1.2.62. About this failure also see "To Our Brothers Votimng in Ashdod" (el ahenu ha-boharim be-ashdod), *Young Israel*, 15.9.63, p. 4; Y. M Immanuel, "Sephardic and Ashkenazi Leadership in the State of Israel" ('al manhigut sfaradit ve-ashkenazit be-medinat Israel), *Young Israel*, 15.9.63, p. 3.

[vi] E.g. Y. Aviam, "Negotiation and Contacts for Coalitions in the Local Elections" (mum ve-gishushim le-koalitsyot ba-rashuyot ha-mekomiyot), *Maariv,* 7.11.65, p. 22.

[vii] At least the Palestinian Liberation Organization that was based in Egypt was definitely interested in that, according to Roby (2015): 157. Baruch was caught with an economic report he was preparing for the movement's newspaper, and at the same time he was making such reports for his operators. The main plan of the operators was different though. Some of the materials he passed to the Egyptians were fabricated, and others did not entail

After the 1965 elections, and probably mainly for lack of funds, the newspaper almost ceased completely to issue, and Immanuel invested himself in the project he has been trying to develop since early 1960s, books about Sephardic heritage, as well as about *The Gap* (Immanuel 1968a), just as the institutional framing of the problem between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim was referred to throughout this period[i].

Fraternity

The network of Iraqi municipal leaders that got formed following the 1961 elections continued to expand and articulate, and developed countrywide aspirations. In the beginning of 1963 an organization was officially formed, and in that summer it got a boost of activity within sudden municipal elections in the two southern cities Ashdod and Beer Sheva[ii]. These elections were urged following clashes between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi local Mapai leaders, which received broad media coverage. The Iraqi and Egyptian Mapai activists who led these struggles were of lower social stratums, and sought the support of this network, despite the geographical distance and socio-economic difference, and the network recruited itself totally, as well as Young Israel, in what was described as a rare moment of intra-ethnic solidarity:

"In the Beer Sheva elections was the first time ethnic solidarity was put into work: owners of factories and workers, people from all across the country opened their pockets and hearts, Young Israel agreed not to run its own list. This was the first time that the inner communal wrangling was blocked… inter-city inter-communal solidarity…"[iii]

Within this turmoil, Fraternity was established, based on the previous network of municipal leaders, and as a movement/party/faction/network of municipal factions, each conserving its own autonomy. "The List for Fraternity and Progress" ran failingly to the 1965 general elections, but it gained some small victories under various trademarks in different localities. Meir-Glitzenstein (2009) claimed that since many of the local lists did not enter municipal coalitions but remained in the opposition, the enthusiasm from it subdued in the second half of

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any security threat. He was released after serving 10 out of the 18 years of his sentence, and continued to live in Israel, keeping a low profile. See Yossi Melman, "During Some Months in the Years 1964-1965 He Was a Famous Spy" (le-meshekh kama hodashim, ba-shanim 1964-1965, hu haya meragel mefursam), *Haaretz* 22.8.11; "'Sam' Baruch Aspired for a 'Public Position'" ('sam' barukh shaaf le-'ma'amad tsiburi'), *Maariv,* 1.12.64, p. 2; "This is How Sam Planned Conquering the Government of the State of Israel" (kakh tikhnen Sami et kibush ha-shilton be-medinat Israel), *Herut,* 3.12.64, p. 2; Gideon Reicher, "Sami Baruch's Speed Trial" (mishpat ha-bazak shel sami barukh), *Yedioth Ahronot* 10.1.65.

[i] See Y. Maas, "The Silence Conspiracy" (kesher ha-shtika), *IB*, 10.3.63, p. 10.

[ii] Arieh Avnery, "An Anonymous Governmental Official is 'Shraga Netzer' of the Mizrahim" (pakid memshalti almoni hu 'sharga netser shel 'edot ha-mizrah), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 17.1.63, p. 7; Arieh Avnery,"A New Political Movement was Established Today in Israel" (tnu'ah politit hadasha kama ha-yom be-israel), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 7.8.63, p. 6.

[iii] Immanuel (1964): 39. Immanuel also got invited to speak in a conference of Fraternity. "The Words of Young Israel in a Conference of Fraternity in Ramat Gan" (dvar tnu'at israel ha-tse'ira be-kenes ha-ahva be-ramat gan), *Young Israel*, 26.8.63, p. 4.

the 1960s, and it ended up disappearing. Indeed after 1965 some of its prominent activists started zigzagging between different Zionist parties, searching for a position that would give them political influence[i].

Still though, some observations can be made about this short lived network. The title of Fraternity and Progress was strikingly similar to titles of Israeli Palestinian Arab parties' affiliated to Mapai[ii]. Fraternity was also a name of a cultural-political community-club made by Moshe Yishai in 1965, independently from the Religious National Party, and enthusiastically supported by the CSCJ and other Mizrahi activists[iii].

If Young Israel inherited the National Union, which continued the CSCJ, the electoral list of Fraternity was in some senses inheritor of the UNAI (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009), mainly because of its relative success among the impoverished social stratums of immigrants. It had some charismatic local "street-leaders", and it expanded its bases by attracting ex-Mapai bullies to its rows, offering them constructive political activism, just like Ben Harush also did[iv]. Its program was also composed by progressive egalitarian clauses directed to the entire population, including equal rights to the Israeli Palestinian Arabs[v]. Curiously enough, both groups suspected the ballot box results, but Fraternity had the social resources to also apply for a recount[vi]. Fraternity was also an organization that was constructed upon certain disappointment from the elites of the community, as shown previously. The main difference between the groups was that the spokespeople of Fraternity were acculturated and educated, and nobody found reasons to discredit them (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). Another difference is that this group could not raise enough popular bases by simply addressing the Iraqi community, which was smaller in size and often better-off than other Mizrahi communities. Therefore, in the national list and in some of the local ones, they included representatives of other places of origins, mostly of other middle-eastern countries, who participated in the initiative and felt it as their own[vii] (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). However, they were not able to shake off their image as an Iraqi movement, established to promote the interests of this particular ethnic group[viii]. As for the CSCJ, not much cooperation or relations were found between these groups. Fraternity's Jerusalem municipal list

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[i] "In Ashdod They Ask, To Who's Side is Mr. Robert Haim?" (be-ashdod shoalim: le-tsad mi po'el mar robert haim?) *Maariv*, 6.9.65, p. 16.

[ii] One was Progress and Development, another was Fraternity and Participation.

[iii] "The Activity of the Fraternity Club" (pe'ilut mo'adon ha-ahva), *IB*, 28.2.65, p. 15; Eliahu Eliachar (in pseudonym *ha-mashkif*), "Contradictions of Cultures in Israel" (nigud tarbuyot be-israel), *IB,* 6.5.65, p. 16; "Moshe Yishai and Prof. Hirschenberg in an evening about North African Jewry" (moshe yishai ve-prof. hirshenberg be-'erev 'al yahadut tsfon afrika), *Hed ha-me'orer*, 1966, p. 14. CZA S62/576.

[iv] Arieh Avnery, "An Anonymous Governmental Official is 'Shraga Netzer' of the Mizrahim" (pakid memshalti almoni hu 'sharga netser shel 'edot ha-mizrah), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 17.1.63, p. 7.

[v] Arieh Avnery, ibid.

[vi] "Demandng to Make Re-Elections: in Three Ballot-Boxes (doresh la'arokh bhirot hadashot: be-shalosh kalpiyot), *Maariv*, 22.11.65, p. 1. Chetrit (2004) said that about the popular discourse around the UNAI.

[vii] Yehiel Limon, "The Heads of Fraternity List in the Capital: We will get two representatives in the municipality" (rashei reshimat ahva ba-bira: yihiyu lanu shnei tsirim ba-'iriya), *Maariv*, 20.10.65, p. 18.

[viii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18

had Yitzhak Tusia-Cohen in its head, who was the lawyer leading the lawsuits against the CSCJ in late 1950s. However, as Fraternity's prestige was declining, around 1966, some cooperation was sought between the two groups by the intermediation of Nissim Rejwan[i], within the CSCJ's efforts to expand the distribution of the *IB*[ii].

The Student Cell for the Merger of Diasporas (SCMD)[iii]

In the 1960s, Israeli student cells were organizations formed in universities often by political parties. The student cells were spaces in which young people could experiment with politics, often for the first time, and without the obligation to fulfill their aspirations in the public sphere outside the campus. This is also due to the ephemeral nature of participation in the cell, which lasted only during the students' period of study, and often even exclusively during the years of the BA. In early 1960s in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem there were very few Mizrahi students. Therefore, it was somewhat natural for them to find each other's company. Some of those formed the Student Cell for the Merger of Diasporas (hereinafter SCMD), which represents the youngest organized group covered in this research, composed by university students in their early twenties.

The SCMD got formed within Mizrahi students of Humanities and not of Science, that is, by students who searched in the university expansion of their horizons rather than a direct professional trajectory. The founding core of the organization were students of the Institute for Oriental Studies[iv], that taught Islamic history, culture and literature. The institute functioned as part of the state's training apparatus for cadres for military intelligence (Mendel 2014: 75), but for these Mizrahi or Sephardic students these studies were also way to explore their own history and heritage, which could not be found in departments such as Jewish Science or History. By the end of the academic year of 1960/1961 some of these students, that shared "*perplexity*

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[i] Nissim Rejwan in fact reminds in his writing of Nissim Malul, who was active before 1948 in different Sephardic organizations. Malul promoted a radical ideology of Jewish-Arab cultural and spiritual symbiosis (Bezalel 2007). From 1959 Rejwan was the editor of the Mapai Arabic newspaper *Al-Yawm*, where he extensively wrote about Mizrahim's problems. He published his articles in many different newspapers in Israel and also in Arab countries. According to Efron (2005), he was interested in identities created by colonial modernity in Muslim Arab countries, and saw the Sephardic Golden Age as a model for Israel to cooperate with Palestinian Arabs. He got fired from *Al-Yawm* in 1966 and started seeking cooperation within the CSCJ's publications. He edited the bulletin *Israel's Oriental Problem* after Michael Selzer, and wrote in the *IB* about the need for Mizrahi culture to get reconnected with its Arab roots. His insistence upon the existence of a Jewish-Arab identity eventually got him fired from there as well. See: Sh. Ya'akovi,"Why was Nissim Rejwan Fired?" (madu'a putar nissim rejwan?), *IB*, 14.9.66; and David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 7, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[ii] Letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar, 24.7.66, CZA 430A/42/3/2; Letter from Nissim Rejwan to Eliahu Eliachar, 27.1.67, CZA 430A/237/4.

[iii] *ta ha-studentim le-mizug galuyot.*

[iv] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18, and interview with Yosef Tubi, 12.11.17.

[mevokha] *and anxiety*"[i] by the current socio-political situation of Mizrahim, turned informal scholarly conversations and gatherings into a semi-formal student cell[ii] . In the first year of the cell's activity, 1961/1962, it functioned mainly as a space for different Mizrahi students to gather and learn. They shared information about the heritages of different countries of origins and about the problems of Mizrahim in Israel, especially but not only in the field of education[iii]. Because of the vast array of political orientations of its members, this was the only way to outline the common goals such a circle could have: in its second recorded meeting, the only thing all members could agree on was that *"there is a problem",* but the content or name of the problem could not even get agreed upon[iv]. The meetings took place in the student dorms and expanded only through acquaintances, never making special efforts to recruit new members.

In its second year of existence, 1962/1963, the circle defined its title[v] and therefore its mandate as a group of students with the ideological cause of national unity. They represented this cause using the official Zionist language that called for Merger of Diasporas, maintaining the state ideology and its discursive framework. The now defined SCMD expanded its milieu and repertoire, first by hosting or getting hosted by affiliated scholars or government workers from the field of education[vi], and then by organizing public events meant to bring ethnic-social issues into greater public awareness[vii]. It also mobilized its members to actions and demonstrations around cases of blunt and explicit discrimination[viii]. In its last year of activity, 1963/1964, a North African student-group officially joined the cell, and there was an attempted to publish a regular bulletin on campus, containing members' articles, called *For Your Information*[ix]. In this final year the cell also focused more on mutual-aid activity, such as teaching Hebrew and handing books to high school immigrant students[x].

Despite this group constituting de facto a Mizrahi organization, its leaders did not support the idea of autonomous Mizrahi political parties, neither in theory[xi] nor in practice[xii].

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[i] Yehezquel Shemesh, "The reader to the editor" (ha-kore el ha-orekh), *IB*, 8.4.63, p. 23.

[ii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18. and interview with Yosef Tubi, 21.1.18.

[iii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18, "Protocol of meeting num. 2" (protokol shel yeshiva mis. 2), 27.2.62; "Protocol num. 3" (protokol mis. 3), 5.3.62. TA.

[iv] "Protocol of meeting number 2" (protokol shel yeshiva mis. 2), 27.2.62, TA.

[v] Undated draft in handwriting of an article directed to new members of the SCMD, TA.

[vi] Yehezquel Shemesh, ibid. Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18, interview with Yosef Tubi, 12.11.17.

[vii] Among others, in their interviews (ibid.), Tuvia Sulami for instance told about a public conference with Moshe Sharett, that at the time was head of the Jewish Agency, and Yosef Tubi told about a meeting with Andre Chouraqui, the special PM advisor for Merger of Diasporas.

[viii] As Sulami (ibid.) emphasized, these got active in cases where Ashkenazim expressed shamelessly racist opinions. The CSMD mainly got reactive around two cases, both involve direct racist expressions against Yemenites. See for instance: List of ten actions to do in the case of Yosef Yam, untitled in handwriting; "To our Yemenite Brethrens!" (el ahenu ha-teimanim!), poster signed by the residents of De-Haz street, 6.7.62, TA.

[ix] *le-yediatkha.*

[x] Undated draft in handwriting of an article directed to ne members of the SCMD. TA.

[xi] Shlomo Abayo, "Required: New Leadership" (mevokeshet: manhigut hadasha), *FYI*, 1.9.63, TA; Yosef Tubi's journal, entry of 10.3.62, TA.

[xii] Yosef Tubi, for instance, was simultaneously active in a Mizrahi faction inside the Religious National Party for the Jerusalem municipality.

Notwithstanding, the way Mizrahim and Sephardim were getting included in the Zionist parties was seen as harmful and wrong. The justification for their own self organization could be summarized by a small piece of data that repeated in several debates: the fact that their generation had fewer Mizrahim and Sephardim with higher education than the previous generation, both the native ones and from the different Muslim countries of origins. This piece of data encompassed the entire story of "inter-generational collective trajectory of descent" (Bourdieu 1984). This proved that Mizrahim were not inherently inferior, but were made inferior in the state of Israel, because of an absorption process that did not discriminate between different social classes and educational levels[i], but did discriminate on ethnic basis. Therefore, and this was another central point for these young scholars, there was no justification to exclude Mizrahi and Sephardic heritage and history from the educational curriculum, in fact, this knowledge should be strengthened for the process of Merger of Diasporas. For many of these youngsters, this was the first space in which such discrepancy with the narrative of hegemonic Zionism was raised and heard:

"This was actually the first place in which we started revising the first model that was the melting pot, that is actually an Ashkenazi [pot]. We said…we won't agree... Merger of Diasporas- yes, where everybody brings everything, not a melting pot to make us ashamed of what we have and destroy it and let go of it…this was the first time... we started to talk in the cultural aspect about multi-culturalism…a society that respects the roots and heritage of everybody."[ii]

From meeting protocols and from the interviews conducted, it is apparent that there were two trends in the group. Some adopted the dominant Ashkenazi interpretation of the Merger of Diasporas as assimilation, and some gave it a different interpretation, one that required mutual change[iii]. The difference was usually set according to the lived experiences of the individuals. Those who immigrated in a young age and got settled through dependency in Mapai's institutions, tended to think assimilation and mimicry of Ashkenazim was the proper path for Mizrahim to enter modernity and climb out of poverty[iv]. On the other hand, Yosef Tubi, Tuvia Sulami and others, who were second generation of Yemenites in the country, were more militant, their perspective relying on closer acquaintance with Ashkenazim and on the accumulated experience of discrimination of the past generation. This allowed them to see more clearly the inter-generational deterioration, the expansion of socio-economic gap in

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[i] This last in particular was a central point for Yosef Tubi that repeated several times in his journal and in his public writing. See: Letter from Yosef Tubi to Israel Yeshaayahu, undated, TA; Yosef Tubi, "The social gap in the state of Israel" (ha-pa'ar ha-hevrati be-medinat Israel), June (sivan) 1963, TA. Also see: "Protocol of meeting num. 2" (protokol yeshiva mis. 2), 27.2.62; untitled undated document in handwriting containing data, TA.

[ii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.

[iii] "The Goal of the Cell of Mizrahi Students" (matrato shel ha-hug le-studentim bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), Yosef Tubi's journal, entry on 5.3.62, TA.

[iv] "Protocol of meeting num. 2" (protokol yeshiva mis. 2), 27.2.62, TA.

opportunities, and the way *"Ashkenazim mostly avoid and evade"*[i] the problems of Mizrahim. Also, there were more militant voices emerging from graduate students of Iraqi origins that joined the circle, represented perhaps most loudly by the Marxist scholar David Tzemah[ii]. These immigrants had had been politically educated in their country of origins, influenced by Arab nationalism and communism rather than Zionism:

"You could see it, everybody got connected. For instance, the Iraqi Jews…were very connected to the Arab culture, they would stick to Arab culture and Arab language more than to the Jewish parts…In the last generations there was very strong secularity and their Jewish part was not nurtured as within Yemenite Jews that were so very observant. So for instance in our forums they would quote proudly from Arab poetry, in the meetings!... We would sit and listen to Arab music, we [Yemenites]…it would never occur to us."[iii]

Unlike the assimilated immigrants, these activists brought to the SCMD's meetings meaningful cultural baggage from their countries of origins[iv]. The Iraqi communists that joined also brought a Eurocentric modern ideological orientation that was not Zionist. In the local Zionist-colonialist context, the kind of cultural colonization they had gone through in Iraq carried the seed of decolonization (Ben Zaken 2006: 24-25), even though it was foreign as *"a winter coat on a steaming-hot Tel Avivian day"*[v]. As an organization, however, the cell distinguished itself from the communist party, which was conceived as anti-Jewish and anti-patriotic[vi].

In the SCMD, students from different backgrounds were able to find a common ground and formulate it by different authorities. The organization encompassed activists from a great variety of ethnic origins, and for many this was a first space to meet different types of immigrants or natives[vii]. In its meetings, the SCMD in fact experimented with the future multi-cultural society it aspired to live in. In a protected and limited space and time, the SCMD lived up to the fusion that the ideology of the Merger of Diasporas implied. The encounter with immigrants that were still very much connected to their heritage and roots, along with the data about the deterioration of Mizrahi middle-class, got Mizrahi Zionist activists to conceive of the Ashkenazi Zionist enterprise as an *"unjustified cultural war"*[viii]. Then the organization attempted to create *"a synthesis of action of all ethnicities"*[ix]: a political platform drawn from the diverse experiences of its participants: their diverse geographical backgrounds before

[i] Yosef Tubi's journal, entry of 23.3.63, TA.
[ii] Interview with Yosef Tubi, 21.1.18.
[iii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.
[iv] Phone-interview with Tuvia Sulami, 4.2.18.
[v] Shlomo Abayo, "Required: New Leadership" (mevokeshet: manhigut hadasha), *FYI*, 1.9.63, TA.
[vi] Yosef Tubi and Tuvia Sulami explained in their interviews that they added a clause of loyalty in the platform of the SCMD in order to distinguish themselves from communist ideology. Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18; interview with Yosef Tubi, 21.1.18.
[vii] This is also due to the fact that few members of this group attended to their academic studies as part of a military program which recruits to the army after completeing the BA (*'autuda*).
[viii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.
[ix] Avraham Sofer in "protocol num. 3" (protokol mis. 3), 5.3.62, TA.

immigration, and the processes they endured in Israel since. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the political platform designed out of the convergence of this diversity was no other than asking the fulfillment of the official state's goals. As other Mizrahi organizations of the time, their goals were defined in national-patriotic terms, and their tone *"attempted to maintain statist, meaning, not to be unruly, neither in speech nor in action"*[i]. That was despite the fact that some thought this tone might vitiate them and make their principles too abstract and generic[ii]. This choice of tone was not only a result of the diverse positions between the cell's members. As Sulami suggested, since the speakers of the establishment kept their own racist discourse obscure and *"wrapped with pretty words"*, it forced such discursive terms also on those wishing to challenge it[iii].

In the very end of 1964 some of the original leaders had finished their studies and moved to Tel Aviv, where they continued working for the same goals in the framework of a new journal called *Afikim*[iv]. *Afikim* re-defined the SCMD's goals in its sub-title as a threefold purpose: spiritual and social revival, meaning giving stage for young Mizrahi writers, poets and researchers; defense of rights, meaning publishing public struggles and articles against discrimination; and Merger of Diasporas, meaning giving stage for people of all ethnic origins[v]. Nissim Rejwan aided *Afikim* as a backstage advisor and a close friend of the editorial, and used to participate in their closed ideological debates and decision making, as well as in *Afikim*'s public events[vi]. The Marxist scholar Shlomo Swirsky later on also contributed to the journal[vii]. For Tuvia Sulami, who led the SCMD in its first two years and then edited *Afikim* in its first six years, *Afikim* was the realization of the SCMD ideology and goals in the public sphere. Even though its milieu of writers and readers remained mainly Yemenite intellectuals, and its subject matter mostly focused on issues of the Yemenite community, it succeeded in bringing together a diverse spectrum of Yemenite communities and political orientations in a manner that is unique for this ethnic community, characterized by multiple organizations[viii]. *Afikim* abstained completely from parliamentary politics[ix], which gave it public credibility and allowed it to

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[i] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, ibid.

[ii] Letter from Ar.i.s.to to Cadet Tubalkiahu (from Tuvia Sulami to Yosef Tubi), 11.8.62; "Meeting 3" (yeshiva 3), 18.3.62, TA.

[iii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, ibid.

[iv] Horizons or Routes. *Afikim* was established when a central group from the Yemenite journal *Da'at* quit the editorial. *Da'at* was established in March of 1963 and Sulami and Tubi probably spent more of their time contributing to it than in the SCMD, from its inception.

[v] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, ibid.

[vi] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, ibid.; phone-interview with Tuvia Sulami, 4.2.18.

[vii] Interview with Yosef Tubi, 21.1.18.

[viii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18, Phone-interview with Tuvia Sulami, 4.2.18.

[ix] This was the main reason for establishing *Afikim*, as *Da'at* was considered by *Afikim*'s editorial members as directed to the personal political gain of its chief editor. See "Every operation hurts but heals" (kol nituah koev akh merape), *Afikim*, 28.12.64.

continue publishing until nowadays[i]. By 1966 it became a central tool for uncovering the systematic abduction of Yemenite and other newborn children in Israeli transit camps in the 1950s, which according to Sulami, brought to the establishment of the first governmental investigation committee on the matter in 1967[ii].

Young Mizrahim that were graduates of the Institute for Oriental Studies often found the path for upward socio-economic mobilization by joining the state's security services. This path neutralized them politically -both practically and ideologically- because it entailed total identification with the state and its causes. Many of the participants in the SCMD indeed got incorporated into this route, and quit any public activity. Sulami quit *Afikim* in 1969 when he joined the security services as well. Some continued to other types of public positions, in the academy or in municipal politics. In the first case that also entailed certain withdrawal from public struggles[iii]. One of the members of the younger Iraqi immigrants, Eli Amir, became a famous novelist. His occupational biography can be brought as an example for the way the Ashkenazi-dominated institutions absorbed such Mizrahi activists. By 1964 Amir had a government job at the office of the PM's Consultant on Arab Affairs. He remained within governmental institutions all his life, serving the settler-colonial system either by managing absorption of Jewish immigration or by managing the control over Palestinian Arab population.

The Torah Loyalists Circle[iv]

During the 1960s an autonomic Sephardic retort rose against the process of toranic colonization, which has been influencing Sephardic spiritual sphere since the 1940s. Conjuring this autonomic retort was a slow process, difficult to grasp in progress: "concealed, dim, quiet and hard to hear" in its initial stages (Leon 1999). Retrospectively, it is clear that this process matured in the 1980s into the political party of Shas, serving as a political home for many Sephardim and Mizrahim still today.

The protagonists of The Torah Loyalists Circle were graduates of Porat Yosef, which might be considered the main Sephardic ultra-orthodox toranic academy in Israel[v]. During the 1930s and

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[i] Nowadays it is published roughly yearly, and mainly online, with just few paper editions printed and sent out to subscribers. The last issue was published on December 2015.

[ii] Eli Aliahu, "The poet Tuvia Sulami is convinced that the Ashkenazim have exaggerated" (ha-meshorer tuvia sulami meshukhn'a she-ha-ashkenazim hegzimu), *Haaretz*, 14.7.16.

[iii] Interview with Yosef Tubi, 21.1.18.

[iv] *hug neemanei ha-tora.*

[v] Porat Yosef is still considered the central Sephardic ultra-orthodox academy. It was opened in 1923 in the old city of Jerusalem, closed in 1948, and re-opened only in 1957 in an ultra-orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem (*Geula*). It was different than other Sephardic toranic academies in various manners, for instance by being dedicated to toranic studies exclusively and promoting a severe Halachic life-style. It was rather an exception in the climate of Muslim countries in its aggressive orthodox reaction to modernization and secularization (Leon 2011). After 1967 it re-opened a branch in the old city which was considered its more prestigious wing, where the system of teaching was completely Ashkenazi. Therefore, it became another Sephardic center that the main Sephardic component in

1940s Porat Yosef comprised what Leon (2013) called proto ultra-orthodox circles, which expressed Sephardic reactionary-conservative conceptions and practices, under varying degrees of influence from Ashkenazi reactionary-conservative conceptions and practices. The main characteristic of reactionary-conservative, ultra-orthodox Judaism [*harediut*], is the rejection of modernity, viewing it as a secularizing force that threatens Jewish tradition and religion[i]. For our purpose, the important sociological difference between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic reactionary-conservative view is the Ashkenazi obligation to beware of external influences and remain within closed communities, while the Sephardic conservative's vocation is to guide and incorporate broad publics[ii] (Leon 2013, Horowitz 2006, Pikar 2003). The Sephardic toranic academy of Porat Yosef indeed aspired to serve the community rather than constitute a segregated enclave (Leon 2011).

Those graduates from Porat Yosef who saw orthodoxy and ultra-orthodoxy as a proper answer to Israeli modernity, were still few and marginal in this decade. Along with others, some of them established the Circle of Sephardic and Mizrahi Torah Loyalists in 1962. It started issuing a monthly called *Kol Sinai*[iii], which was distributed in toranic academies and synagogues of Mizrahi immigrants (Leon 2009). The Circle's aspiration was to develop a mass movement with educational, charity, women and youth organizations, directed by a council of great scholarly rabbis[iv]. In the 1980s, similar sociological circles would indeed succeed in developing these institutions around a Sephardic political movement (Leon 1999). In this decade, however, this remained a mere ambition. The group functioned more like a think-tank, a circle for deliberating, discussing and theorizing, and developing inner-coherency: not unlike the CSCJ's activity around the *IB*. If the *IB* produced historical, sociological, ideological, literary and folkloric knowledge, *Kol Sinai* produced Halachic and Toranic knowledge. Like the CSCJ and Young Israel, the Torah Loyalists also aspired to create a united Sephardic-Mizrahi organization and identity in order to achieve better representation, but the purpose of representation was utterly different. The Torah Loyalists wanted to elicit and promote Sephardic and Mizrahi "toranic aspirations" and "toranic rights", within a certain, theoretical ambition to create a non-democratic Halachic-Jewish state[v]. Since Sephardic and Mizrahi

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it is the student body, established as way to prevent them flooding Ashkenazi centers. The Porat Yosef graduates that established the Torah Loyalists circle and wrote in *Kol Sinai* were more prominently graduates from before 1948 (Leon 2013).

[i] As explained shortly in chapter 4, Jewish ultra-orthodoxy developed mainly in Europe as a reaction to the Enlightment and emancipation of Jews. In Hebrew, the ultra-orthodox are named *Haredim*, meaning "the anxious ones": anxious for the conservation of religion and tradition from the changes of modernity.

[ii] Leon (2011) called this, broad ultra-orthodoxy (harediut rehavat shulaim), based on the inclusive attitude of principal of extending to the public (*zikuy rabim*) teachings and knowledge.

[iii] Sinai Voice.

[iv] "Platform" (mats'a), *Kol Sinai*, December 1961 (kislev-tevet tashkab).

[v] As Brown (2012) explains, *Haredi* political thinking does not treat this kind of long term large scale institutional ambitions. On the one hand, they are aware to the fact that democracy is what allows their safe existence, and no concrete vision for a theocratic state has ever been adopted by a political *Haredi* movement. On the other hand,

Jewries did not go through the same secularization process most European Zionists did, they were conceived by this circle as the relevant public from which such a political force can be constructed: a natural political force that could democratically endow more power to the Torah over secular liberal values in the state[i].

For such a goal they certainly did not have any political partners among the other progressive Sephardic and Mizrahi organizations examined here. Rather, their main comrades in this quest were Ashkenazi dominated orthodox and ultra-orthodox political parties and activists. These were their main groups of reference (Leon 1999, 2009, 2013), their only potential political partners to create a "*toranic camp against the secular camp*"[ii]. They were all part of the same basic global Jewish stream[iii] (Horowitz 2006). By this stage, however, it was already publicly known that there is opened discrimination against Sephardim and Mizrahim within ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi society, expressed mainly in limitation in Mizrahim's acceptance to Ashkenazi toranic academies, an inferior status of Sephardic rabbis' rulings and Ashkenazi refusal to mixed marriage[iv]. *Kol Sinai* never openly attacked these discriminatory policies or the underrepresentation of Sephardim in the state's religious institutions, which is part of what makes the autonomous Sephardic voice so difficult to detect in this period.

Leon (2009) presented a discussion between researchers who see Sephardic ultra-orthodoxy as an external force imposed on Sephardim and Mizrahim, and researchers viewing it as an autonomous, albeit late, response to the modern secularity the immigrants faced in Israel. These last tend to emphasize the conservative tendencies that had already existed in Muslim Diasporas. I agree with Leon that this debate might well be concluded by examining *Kol Sinai*. The journal certainly uncovers an independent Sephardic reactionary-conservative voice, that is shaped both by experiences in the Muslim countries of origin and by current occurrences and movements in Israel. For instance, one of the motivations for issuing the periodical, as other Sephardic and Mizrahi initiatives, is the Ashkenazi coercion through the Zionist civilization project (Shaul 2016)[v], and its expressions within youth and in the education system. These were themes *Kol Sinai* focused on, covering occurrences within youth of kibbutzim and in the cities. The Torah Loyalists presented an approach of their own about Zionism and the state, which could be viewed as a middle way between the anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox and Zionist-orthodox theological conceptions of the state. They reflected an ironical approach towards the state and

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their basic principles contradict the legitimacy of secular and people-based rule, since in their view the only sovereign is God and the only authority are the great rabbis. The orthodox streams of Religious Zionism, in contrast, do promote the political ambition to establish Israel as a non-democratic Halachic state.

[i] E.g. Eliahu Ben Zimra, "In the Margins of Kol Sinai" (be-shulei kol Sinai), *Kol Sinai*, April 1962 (nisan tashkab).

[ii] "Proper Representation for the Sephardic and Mizrahi Public Loyal to the Torah!" (netsigut holemet la-tsibur ha-sfaradi ve-'edot ha-mizrah neemanei ha-torah!), *Kol Sinai*, July 1965 (tamuz, tashkah).

[iii] See letter from rabbi Schibel to Eliahu Eliachar, 16.3.64, CZA 430A/38/1.

[iv] E.g. Letter from M. Elitov to Eliahu Eliachar, 22.9.62, CSCJA container 6263 file 587. Also see Deshen (1970): 188.

[v] "Versus the Ashkenazi Revolution" (mul ha-mahapekha ha-ashkenazit), *Kol Sinai*, March 1964 (nisan tashkad).

Zionism, that was nonetheless intertwined with unmistakable national pride[i]:

"it is only thanks to us [the Sephardim] *that we arrived to the beginning of redemption… the message* [besorah] *of Zion neither Herzel nor "Zionism" brought us to the Diasporas of the east…a vision of generations… [brought us] to Zion…but this was not for…copying the regime of corrupt European life into Zion…we blame all the different parties. [Their] programs and criterions are ideas and ideologies of the peoples and parties of Europe and other foreign countries… With god's will the Torah Loyalists will be an original Israeli movement."*[ii]

A similar ironic approach was reflected at times in their usage of the category 'religious' [*dati*][iii], as a European category per se (Shenhav 2008, Leon 2009, 2013, Horowitz 2006). This category was not usually used at all: *Kol Sinai* normally referred to its public as those Sephardim and Mizrahim loyal to the Torah. Also, often the contributors used the adjective toratic, and not toranic, to refer to organizational frameworks, character[iv] and Judaism[v].

As Leon (2009) illustrated, the journal was also openly encouraging an outreaching approach to broader publics. *Kol Sinai* was a tool for constructing an independent Sephardic extremist-conservative voice. It was constructing it in order to convince Sephardim and Mizrahim of this voice's validity, for the purpose of gathering force in order to enable the formation of egalitarian coalitions with Ashkenazi conservatives.

The Torah Loyalists Circle was well aware of the unfavorable structure of political opportunities this decade entailed for autonomous Sephardic initiatives[vi]. Therefore, it strictly refrained from party politics of any kind, and abstained from the struggles over Sephardic representation in religious institutions. This way it gained legitimacy and respect from its peers, the ultra-orthodox Ashkenazim[vii]. Towards the 1965 elections, these peers were given broad space for spreading their world-views and propaganda:

"So that the non-party-affiliated Torah loyalists will know the positives and negatives in these movements, out of hope to arouse a toranic Sephardic movement."[viii]

Due to the closed structure of political opportunities, this circle focused on building inner Sephardic strength. This focus was also expressed in Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's career. Ovadia

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[i] See also front and back cover of *Kol Sinai*, May 1967 (iyar tashkaz).

[ii] "The Torah Loyalists" (ne-emanei ha-torah), *Kol Sinai*, December 1961 (kislev-tevet tashkab).

[iii] "Bring About Visionaries and Action People" (havu anshei hazon u-ma'as), *Kol Sinai*, Janurary 1962 (shvat tashkab); "Lights and Shadows in the state of Israel" (orot ve-tslalim be-medinat Israel), *Kol Sinai*, October 1963 (tishrei tashkad).

[iv] E.g. "Lights and Shadows in the state of Israel" (orot ve-tslalim be-medinat Israel), *Kol Sinai*, October 1963 (tishrei tashkad).

[v] E.g. A. Ben-Haim, "Time for Action!" ('et la'asot!), *Kol Sinai*, August 1963 (av tashkag).

[vi] Eliahu Ben Zimra, "In the Margins of Kol Sinai" (be-shulei kol Sinai), April 1962 (nisan tashkab).

[vii] E.g. D. Ainer, "A Voice that Deserves Getting Heard" (kol she-raui lishom'a), *Kol Sinai*, July 1962 (tamuz tashkab).

[viii] Front page, July 1964 (av tashkad).

Yosef[i] was the main rabbinical figure around which the Torah Loyalists Circle was formed, a recognized Halachic genius, considered one of a kind in his generation. He viewed the center of rabbinical life in guiding the public, rather than learning in a "ghetto" of learners (Leon 2011). Most Sephardic rabbis and the CSCJ had been wanting to nominate him Chief Sephardic Rabbi, or at least Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, since 1960. However, he refused to present candidacy to these positions until 1967, and centered on writing and teaching instead (Horowitz 2000).

By 1965 rabbi Menashe Halevy, *Kol Sinai*'s editor, became the administrative headmaster of the CSCJ's toranic educational institution of the Great Mativta. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef became its pedagogical head, expanding the Mativta to include an academy for toranic judges[ii]. He was handed complete authority over the entire institution[iii]. The Mativta included a toranic high school which also taught "secular studies" [*limudei hol*]. Its graduates could thus attend universities as well as toranic academies. This was completely in contrary to Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox academies, but in accordance with the type of education developed within Jewries in the Middle East and North Africa since the 19th century. the National Religious education system also teaches these two types of knowledge. Ovadia Yosef referred to the toranic academy and the high-school in the Mativta as two separate entities (Lau 2005), but by joining the Mativta he in fact enabled its continuity: the CSCJ needed his endorsement in order to grant prestige to the institution, within a dire competition over resources between the Mativta and Porat Yosef[iv]. The political choice of some native intellectuals to identify with traditional or religious leaders was noted by Amilcar Cabral, the African anti-colonial fighter. He wrote of how for those assimilated colonized native intellectuals, this identification compensates for their cultural alienation from the colonized people. The traditional or religious leaders are considered to have maintained a certain level of cultural "authenticity"(Cabral 1973/1994). The CSCJ indeed required this identification with religious leaders, but a major ideological breach marked the two different camps of progressives and conservatives, making their potential collaboration quite limited. The two publications these circles published mainly ignored the other, even though some of the contributors and many of the advertisers coincided. The collaboration that did exist between the circles was based on the common aspiration to "retrieve past glory" to Sephardic Jewry. They shared certain aspects of the analysis of the situation of

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[i] Ovadia Yosef was born in Baghdad in 1920, and his family immigrated to Jerusalem in 1924. He studied in Porat Yosef and after graduation, between 1947-1950, he served in rabbinical positions in Cairo. For more about rabbi Ovadia Yosef's special views and professional trajectory, see: Horowitz (2000, 2006), Lau (2005), Pikar (2003). For more about his public activity and popular figure, as seen from his contemporaries, see for instance, "The Genious Rabbi Ovadia Yosef Shalita" (ha-rav ha-gaon rabi 'ovadia yosef shalita), *Young Israel*, 23.12.62.

[ii] The Israeli court system is comprised by religious and secular courts, the religious ones encompassing exclusive authority over anything to do with marital relations and can also be used for other matters to applicants' discretion.

[iii] Letter from M. Levi, David Siton and Eliahu Eliachar to Ovadia Yosef, 13.2.66, CSCJA container 6300 file 890.

[iv] See letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar, 15.6.62, CSCJA container 6263 file 587; Leon (2013).

this Jewry in Israel, as the danger of losing their essence for lack of proper leadership:

"*Eastern Judaism that was saturated with simple and complete faith was left without a shepherd and leader, and does not have anybody to illuminate its eyes to the light of Judaism and its treasures. This is why the phenomenon of utter assimilation has strengthened.*"[i]

The end and means for retrieving past glory was even generally agreed upon: nurturing wide knowledge and profound consciousness within Sephardim and Mizrahim of their traditional roots, in order to allow them to participate in building the new nation:

"*In front of those crying about discrimination and deprivation, stand hundreds of Sephardic and Mizrahi toranic academy students- they are the way for a unified cultural creation.*"[ii]

However, there were more factors that differentiated the groups than those uniting them. The notables of the CSCJ were considered a certain danger, like all those

"*standing outside, listening to [toranic] explanations distant from the truth and relating it to Jewish faith* [emunat israel], *finding justifications to their assimilating view and behavior*".[iii]

The Sephardic ultra-orthodox advocacy naturally contradicted in many senses the CSCJ's liberal views. They collided when the *IB* opposed Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox forcing education on Mizrahi children, a phenomenon *Kol Sinai* denied as fictitious[iv]. Another example for the liberal/conservative breach can be illustrated with the visit of the Pope to the holy land in 1964. While the Torah Loyalists Circle helped prevent the Pope's meeting the Chief Sephardic Rabbi and opposed his entire visit[v], Eliachar was advocating the Chief Jerusalem Rabbi to at least be able to have the honors of meeting the Pope, in order to fix that perceived injustice[vi]. Another example can be seen in the discourse about the Arab World. Yitzhak Abadi wrote in the *IB* about Marxist Aharon Cohen's book "Israel and the Arab World" as an instructive example for alternative Arab-Jewish relations[vii]. The Torah Loyalists, in turn, used Cohen's figure as an example for national treason[viii].

Notwithstanding, during the 1960s both circles needed each other in order to achieve their common meta-goal. The CSCJ needed Ovadia Yosef to endow legitimacy and prestige to the

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[i] Letter from M. Elitov to M. Hacohen titled, "The educational way of the Mativta" (le-darka ha-hinukhit shel ha-mativta), 11.5.62, CSCJA container 6261 file 564.

[ii] "Versus the Ashkenazi Revolution" (mul ha-mahapekha ha-ashkenazit), *Kol Sinai*, March 1964 (nisan tashkad).

[iii] Here assimilating means to become as people of non-Jewish faith. For a live example of this tendency and its consequence for Sephardic rabbis see, Eliahu Eliachar's correspondence with Y.M. Schiber between March and May of 1964, CZA 430A/38/a.

[iv] See "Word of the Battle" (dvar ha-ma'arakha), *IB*, 13.9.61, p. 1; "Lights and Shadows in the state of Israel" (orot ve-tslalim be-medinat Israel), *Kol Sinai*, October 1963 (tishrei tashkad); March 1962 (adar bet tashkab).

[v] "Lights and Shadows in the state of Israel" (orot ve-tslalim be-medinat Israel), *Kol Sinai*, October 1963 (tishrei tashkad),

[vi] See Eliahu Eliachar's journal, entry of 5.1.64, CZA 430A/233.

[vii] Y. A. Abadi "Our Way to the Arab World" (darkenu la-'olam ha-'aravi), *IB*, 26.9.65, pp. 4-5.

[viii]" "Manifesto of the Sephardic and Mizrahi Public in Jerusalem" (gilui da'at mi-ta'am ha-tsibur ha-sfaradi ve-'edot ha-mizrah be-yerushalaim). *Kol Sinai*, November 1963 (heshvan tashkad).

Mativta in order for it to work: to raise funds and recruit students, and Ovadia Yosef could use the Mativta to gain autonomy for his Sephardic judges school[i] (Leon 2004a, Lau 2005).

The CSCJ

Immediately after autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi organizations went out of fashion, Eliachar became again a point of reference for organizing collective action for a variety of activists[ii]. Since the CSCJ failed to make any actual impact by leveraging the public atmosphere of 1959, a somewhat innovative tactic was explored very briefly. Some of the native elites, most probably Haifan Yitzhak Cohen along with Eliachar, led younger crowds, most probably composed of North African immigrants and Sephardic natives, into an action with tactic and discourse that was inspired by a combination of UNAI, the CSCJ and the Jewish anti-British underground organizations of the 1940s[iii]. Around September of 1962 they hanged three posters in the three big cities in varying degrees of a militant tone. The first poster presented the organization behind the posters, "The National Front for Equality", as a militant organization with different troops named after Mizrahi impoverished neighborhoods where revolts had occurred (Wadi Salib and Sha'araim)[iv]. The second poster recycled the old claims of the native elites for representation in all the Zionist and state institutions, using somewhat different language of more pathos than what was widespread among these elites[v]. The press called it an underground organizations and attributed to it characteristics used to describe UNAI as well, such as bitter and hot headed. The third poster was used to speak against this press coverage, and particularly the one in the *IB*[vi]. The clandestine organization indeed got the attention of the

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[i] Letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar, 15.6.62, CSCJA container 6263 file 587. According to David Siton, Ovadia Yosef needed the CSCJ to advance in the rabbinical world as well, and leaned on it for building his initial status. David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 14, 10.9.84, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[ii] See letters to Eliahu Eliachar from: Y. M. Immanuel, 10.7.63; Leon Danon, 14.1.62; Yitzhak Cohen, 20.3.62, Umberto Boaron, 18.6.62. CZA 430A/53/2.

[iii] Shalom Cohen, "An underground organization that aims to fight" (mahteret ha-mitkavenet lilhom), *Ha'olam Haze*, 19.9.62. I base my assumption of the involvement of Eliachar and Cohen on evidence from the following documents: David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 1, August 1983, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451; Letter from Yitzhak Cohen to Eliahu Eliachar, 17.8.61, CZA 430A/39. Shalom Cohen, ibid. However, correspondences found in CSCJA (container 6263 file 587) indicate that Eliachar should have been in New York at the same time the leader of this organization was interviewed on Israeli press in person. From my acquaintance with his archives, though, I would not hold it as a definite proof of his non-involvement. Rather, it could very well may be a deliberate misleading of his part, of both his contemporaneous circles and in order to manipulate the archives.

[iv] Shalom Cohen, "An underground organization that aims to fight" (mahteret ha-mitkavenet lilhom), *Ha'olam Haze*, 19.9.62.

[v] The second poster was printed only a night after the first, CZA 430A/236/1/5.

[vi] CZA 430A/33/2. It also refuted the police's announcement about catching members of the organization. Compare to Yehezkel Zamir, "Merger of Diasporas and Security. One Versus the Other" (mizug galuyot ve-bitahon. ze neged ze), *IB*, 2.12.62, p. 9. In between the printing of posters, a threatening letter was sent by the organization to (possibly) one of the members' employer. Y. Kalderon,"I will not fall Silent for the Truth" (le-ma'an ha-emet lo ehshe), *IB*, 1.10.62, p. 30. It is likely that Yaakov Kalderon, who publicly defended the receiver of this letter- his manager- was involved in this initiative. In this case the letter was a mere tactic to prove his innocence in case people had suspected his involvement in the group. He was in the CSCJ, and one of the establishers of Telem, that

press, but it only had a short term action plan that was made even shorter in reality[i]. This is quite likely because of the high risk involved, and the negative resonance it got from the native elite's circles[ii]. Even though it seemed the posters were attempting to conjure popular rage, it was neither the intention nor within the scope of capabilities of its leaders[iii]. In a sense, it seems that as in the case of Telem, here too there was a harmful monopolization of old leaderships of a potentially popular and innovative action[iv].

In these years, not only Eliachar, but also the institution of the CSCJ was going through a "political soul searching" (Zenner 1967). The institution imvited to its lines different Sephardim and Mizrahim who held positions within Zionist and governmental institutions[v]. Though this was not an easy combination of forces, it worked to a certain extent[vi]. In these years David Siton was leading the CSC in practice, as chairman of the executive committee, while Eliachar remained the president: in the backstage, as the financial back, and also on the front, as its official representative. Siton democratized the institutions in some senses but it was still very much patriarchal and hierarchical[vii]. Though it got some new members and even sprinkles of

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is, he had a trajectory in activism within the younger natives of Jerusalem, and had a good relationship with Eliachar. However, later on, in his role as the CSCJ as "honorary secretary", he tended more to charity than to politics (and clashed with Siton over it).

[i] Eliachar spoke in an interview about a plan for three months. Uri Saraf, "First Interview to the Commander of the 'Equality Underground Cell'" (reayon rishon 'im mefaked 'mahteret ha-shivyon'), *Haboker*, 14.9.62, p. 1.

[ii] Eliachar said in an interview that the whole point of secrecy was against the fear of getting infiltrated and dominated by the governmental bodies. Indeed, six people got arrested. Shalom Cohen, "An underground organization that aims to fight" (mahteret ha-mitkavenet lilhom), *Ha'olam Haze*, 19.9.62. For negative resonance see for example: Yehezquel Sofer, "The National Front and Around it" (ha-hazit ha-leumit u-mi-saviv la), *IB,* 1.10.62, p. 2; "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *Young Israel*, 4.11.62, p. 1.

[iii] The Front's leaders suggested their next step would be a popular struggle in the streets, which is exactly what the posters sounded like they were attempting to conjure. However, they did not intend for this popular struggle to involve the weaker social stratums, which they conceived as angry mobs. See Shalom Cohen, ibid.; Uri Saraf, ibid.

[iv] The discourse the Front continued publishing in the press throughout October lost much of its militant revolutionary overtones. It seems that later on, the younger generation in it attempted to continue to act, but the older leadership detained them. See, "Word of the Battle" (dvar ha-ma'arkha), *IB*, 7.7.63, p. 2. The National Front for Equality drew the hearts of publics like the readers of *Ha'olam Haze*, but after getting exposed to its editor, the journal lost interest in the Front. Young Israel of course was also drawn to their activity. As a movement, they disdained from it officially, but they recognized the Front as part of the same struggle, an acknowledgement the CSCJ never got from them publicly. See "Readers Write" (korim kotvim), *Ha'olam Haze* 24.10.62, 14.11.62, 21.11.62; "In the State. Ethnicities" (ba-medina. 'edot), *Ha'olam Haze*, 14.8.63. "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *Young Israel,* 4.11.62, p. 1. Years afterwards, Young Israel might have been inspired from the Front to call for a "march of equality". See ad in *Young Israel*, 24.9.65, p.4; compare to another poster of the National Front for Equality, undated, CZA 430A/210/2/2.

[v] The Labor MPs Mordechai Zar and Victor Shem-Tov, for instance.

[vi] E.g. "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirtei kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 31.12.63; 5.5.64, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[vii] "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirtei kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 1.3.65; CSCJA container 6236 file 380; "A New Council was Elected to the Sephardic Community in the Capital (nivhar va'ad hadash la-'eda ha-sfaradit ba-birah), *IB*, 24.4.67; Letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar, 27.5.62, CSCJA container 6263 file 587.

new discourse[i], its cadre was becoming irrelevantly old[ii].

The journal *In the Battle* (*IB*), however, was flourishing, around debates such as the correct terms to refer to the questions of the Sephardim and Mizrahim and the different goals most urgent to be faced. Many wrote in it about questions of rabbinical representation and status, the party system and the relation between the two. Eliachar and others invoked the need to change the electoral system[iii], others wrote in specific or general manners about the special values and knowledge of Mizrahi Judaism and about how and what is to be learnt from them[iv]. The *IB* was an intellectual stage, promoting debate about what was the Mizrahi and Sephardic battle and what were its tools. At the same time, it was also promoting the CSCJ's institutional battles. Eliachar and Siton engaged in other kinds of lobbying for the CSCJ's public and private causes within the state authorities, taking whenever they could the attitude of *"speaking directly to the responsible and not to the delivery boys"*[v]. The CSCJ maintained various institutions, but its crowning glory continued to be the Great Mativta. This was until a young man named Michael Selzer arrived to Israel, and for about two years marked Eliachar, the CSCJ and the Sephardic struggle in general as his personal goal, in both militant and professional ways[vi].

Selzer was of German origins, grew up in India and Pakistan, got educated in London and by 1964 was working for the periodical the Jewish Observer. His interest and project was to transport Asian anti-colonial discourse and practices to the Israeli context. He did so by writing in the *IB*, instigating public actions inspired by Gandhi, and by distributing CSCJ's materials within the impoverished socio-economic stratums of immigrants, as well as within certain sectors of Ashkenazi left[vii]. The Sephardic and Mizrahi anti-institutional discourse had been getting positive resonance within some sectors of Jewish Diaspora[viii], supporters of the anti-

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[i] For instance, some started using "Sephardic and Mizrahi" instead of just Sephardic or other combinations. See "Action Plan of the New Council, 1963" (tokhnit ha-pe'ula shel ha-va'ad ha-hadash, 1963), CZA 430A/33/2.

[ii] For instance, it stands out that most of the CSC meetings began with eulogies; and though there were younger people involved in the institution they did not assume many responsibilities or lead the general direction. When they attempted to, it did not end well. See for instance, "Protocol of Executive Committee (pirtei kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 8.12.65; 1.3.65; 18.8.65, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[iii] Eliachar was part of a group trying to influence and change the voting system, so that local elections would gain more influence over national elections instead of the system that strengthened the opposite, since local elections depended on the results on the national level. This would be perhaps the only way new local leaderships could influence national politics. David Ben Gurion also supported this move after he quit Mapai.

[iv] E.g. Shimon Marcus, "The Assimilation of Ashkenazim in Sephardim" (tmia'atam shel ashkenazim be-sfaradim), *IB*, 14.9.66.

[v] Letter from Yitzhak Cohen to Eliahu Eliachar, 18.1.62, CZA 430A/53/2.

[vi] See initial letter of Michael Selzer to Eliahu Eliachar, 24.9.64, CZA 430A/42/2. At around March of 1965 he already had an official paid role, the CSCJ's "liaison officer". By February of 1966 he left Israel for good, and joined an American Anti-Zionist organization. In that summer he lost his CSCJ's payroll position. See Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Lea Ben Dor, 14.3.65, CZA 430A/42/1; and multiple correspondences between Eliahu Eliachar, Micheal Selzer and David Siton in CZA 430A/42/3/1 & 2.

[vii] E.g. Letter from M. Selzer to E. Eliachar, 4.7.65, CZA 430A/43/3; Letter from M. Selzer to E. Eliachar, 14.9.65; CZA 430A/50/4; Michael Selzer, "Why did I decide to fast?" (madu'a hehlateti latsum), *IB*, 25.12.64, p. 3.

[viii]E.g. T. Bavli, "Don't Patronize Mizrahi Jews" (bal tihiyu apotrofosim le-yehudei ha-mizrah) (translated article from *Jewish Observer)*, *IB*, 11.10.63, p. 8.

colonial struggles in Africa and of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA[i]. By the end of 1964 Eliachar and Selzer started issuing a militant bulletin in English called *Israel's Oriental Problem* (hereinafter *IOP*). The *IOP* was sent abroad and it even reached Arab press[ii]. The bulletin published the Sephardic theoretical perspectives that were developing in the *IB*, as the aspiration to make Israel an oriental country. This would be achieved if Ashkenazim shared responsibilities with the Sephardim and did not attempt to subjugate them nor merge their culture into Ashkenazi culture. It also referred to the positive effect this would have for Israel's relations with the Arab world[iii]. Within the 1960s revolutionary anti-colonial climate in Europe and the USA, the bulletin did not fall on deaf ears. In fact, this bulletin turned out to be the best strategy the CSCJ had developed in decades. The institution became a reference for some western scholars and journalists, who came to hear lectures and asked it for materials. Finally the CSCJ got the Ashkenazi recognition and base for legitimacy it has been searching for the past decades[iv]. This caused alarm within the government and the Jewish Agency. Selzer was called for questioning and the editorial was searched by the police[v]. Eventually, Selzer got marked as the radical, and the CSCJ as an institution worth negotiating and reasoning with. This opened a track to friendly relations with Zionist institutions and their funding, using the bulletin as quite an effective tool for exerting pressure on the Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Exterior[vi]. The Mativta expanded its funding from the Ministry of Education and the *IB* expanded its funding for distribution abroad[vii]. The *IB* got distributed also in poorer areas of immigrants' concentration, in some of which strikes and local revolts had been taking place

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[i] In the *IB* the possibility of comparing between African-Americans and Mizrahim in Israel was debated, some made this comparison while others rejected it. For instance: Eliahu Eliachar, "After the Elections in Ashdod and Beer Sheva" (be-'ikvot ha-bhirot be-ashdod u-be-beer sheva), *Haaretz*, 29.10.63; M. Abraham "The Ethnic Problem in Israel and the Race Problem in the US" (be'ayat ha-'edot be-israel u-be'ayat ha-gza'im be-artzot ha-brit), *IB* 28.5.67; Sh. Yerushalmi, "Why Not Ethnic Lists?" (madu'a lo reshimot 'adatiyot?), *IB*, 25.12.64, p. 13; David Siton, "Los Angeles and Wadi Salib", *IB*, 26.9.65, p. 3.

[ii]"My Country Right or Wrong", *IOP*, November 1965. An important part of this strategy was also to disperse a *"frank and cruel"* booklet that was handed to all the delegates to the 26th Zionist Congress in Jerusalem 1965. *"Danger, Jewish racialism! Israel's Sephardim: integration, or disintegration?"* 1965. Jerusalem: Council of the Sephardi Community of Jerusalem.

[iii] "The Knesset Debate on Integration", *IOP*, February 1965.

[iv] "Letter from Philadelphia" (mikhtavim mi-filadelfia), *IB,* 1.11.65, pp. 4-5; Eliahu Eliachar (psed. Mashkif), "Eshkol and the Sephardic Problem" (eshkol ve-ha-be'aya ha-sfaradit), *IB*, 6.8.65, p. 9; David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 7, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[v] Letter from E. Eliachar to M. Nurock, 11.4.65, CZA 430A/42/1.

[vi]See Chetrit (2004: 38) about the ability of radical groups to bring success to other more moderate groups in their negotiations with the establishment. The negotiations also brought to a long pause in publishing of the *IOP* for almost the entire year of 1966. For the use of the *IOP* for lobbying, see letters from M. Nurock to E. Eliachar, 27.12.66, CZA 430A/42/3/2; 2.8.65, CZA 430A/42/1. For the success of this strategy see "General Committee Meeting" (yeshivat va'ad klali), 8.12.65; "Protocol of Excecutive Committee" (pirtei kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 8.2.66; CSCJA container 6236 file 380; "Word of the Battle" (dvar ha-ma'arakha), *IB*, 9.7.65, p. 1; David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 7, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451; Letters to Eliahu Eliachar from M. Nurock, 2.8.65; and from Lea Ben Dor, 3.2.65, CZA 430A/42/1.

[vii] See various correspondences with the Jewish Agency's Bureau for Communities and Organizations (lishka le-kehilot ve-irgunim), CZA S76/163/2.

more often from 1965 and until the end of this period[i]. By 1966 the CSCJ gained some public appreciation from the Young Israel activists, the Torah Loyalists Circle and others, around the Federation's struggles for representation in the international Zionist institutions[ii]. However, through the same struggles and the hard line Eliachar took, he lost some of his confidence within his own crowd[iii].

Since 1962 Eliachar had been very mildly involved in various platforms of Ashkenazi Zionist leftists for cooperation and fraternity with Arabs in Israel and beyond[iv]. During the 1960s Ashkenazi leftists, both in Israel and abroad, developed growing fascination with the idea of Sephardim and Mizrahim serving as cultural bridge to the Arab world[v]. This interest gave legitimacy for the Sephardic and Mizrahi intelligentsia to treat again themes of diplomacy and middle-eastern politics. It might also be claimed that the discursive campaign in early 1960s that distinguished between Mizrahi social stratums, and marked the lower stratums as the potential security threat, also aided the elites to return to reclaim stances on Arab issues, as it could no longer undermine their patriotic status. Notwithstanding, the most important factor to enable such discourse to rise was probably the relative calm across Israel's borders until late 1966. Throughout the 1960s, a distinctively Sephardic discourse about the Arab world strengthened and developed within the pages of *IB* and in public speeches of intellectual activists[vi]. Eliachar resumed handing public and private advice to decision makers about Arab-related diplomacy[vii]. He and other Sephardic native elites again highlighted the need to insert Mizrahim and Sephardim into high-level positions in the ministry of Exterior and state diplomacy, in order to influence policy and decision making, as the only ones that would be capable of *"saving Israel from its isolation in the region"*[viii].

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[i] Letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar, 7.7.65, CZA 430A/68/1. Roby (2015) tells about some of these revolts, and the *IB* also reported some strikes since 1965.

[ii] Letter from Felix Matalon to Eliahu Eliachar, 19.7.66, and from Y. M. Immanuel, 18.8.66, CZA 430A/210/4; "The 'Ashkenazi' Zionist Congress" (ha-kenes ha-'ashkenazi' ha-tsiyoni), *Kol Sinai*, January 1965 (shvat tashkah).

[iii] David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 1, Augost 1983, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[iv] These were a sort of grassroots response within the institutional Zionist left to the growing involvement of Ashkenazi radical left in the struggles of the Palestinian Israeli Arabs. First, there was The Israeli Council for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement (ha-mo'atsa ha-yisraelit le-hitkarvut yehudit-'aravit), then it became The Israeli Association for Jewish-Arab Cooperation (ha-aguda ha-israelit le-shituf pe'ula yehudi-'aravi); and then it became The Israeli Association for Jewish-Arab Understanding and Friendship (ha-aguda ha-israelit le-havana ve-yedidut yehudit 'aravit). See Letters to Eliachar from these organizations, 13.1.63, CZA 430A/42/4; 5.4.65, CZA 430A/109/1. Apart from that, both he and Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon were involved in the club of Bnei Brith, a kind of a Jewish (mainly Ashkenazi) version of the Freemasonry, a world-wide membership-based organization with a focus on education.

[v] For instance, the list of The Israeli Council for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement entailed many of the intellectual Sephardic elites. CZA 430A/42/4. Also see for example F. Falls' and N. Bentwich's response to Y. A. Abadi's article, on *IB,* 29.10.62, pp. 8-9.

[vi] E.g."Tiferet Hall hosted the second issue of 'spoken In the Battle'" (ne'erakh be-ulam tiferet gilayon sheni shel 'ba-ma'arkha be-'al pe'), *IB*, 10.3.63, p. 9.

[vii] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to David Ben Gurion, 15.3.62, BGA 110567; E. Eliachar, "Should we act against Lebanon?" (ha-nifa'al neged levanon?), Letters to the Editorial, *Haaretz*, 5.2.65.

[viii] Sh. Cohen-Tzidon,"The Sephardim and Mizrahim and Changing the Regime of the State" (ha-sfaradim ve-yotsei ha-mizrah ve-shinuy ha-mishtar ba-medina), *IB*, 11.10.61. Also see e.g. Y. A. Abadi, "The Problem of Problems in

However, despite claiming these power positions for the immigrants and natives, these intellectuals did not see their role in formulating political maps and conclusive solutions, as Zionist groups under Ashkenazi hegemony did[i]. For them, the negotiations for peace were not "*merely a question of political gain or loss*"[ii]. Rather, they suggested state policies to create a public climate that would reduce the Arab states' objection to the existence of the state, "*creating tools and means to break the wall in various paths and roads*"[iii]. As in the pre-state period, their proposals focused on strengthening studies of Arabic and Arab literature, aolong with a comprehensive change of attitude in the cultural psychology of diplomacy[iv]:

"Declarations about peace and arrogant [declarations] about military victories cancel each other…a positive psychological change for us and for them… education and journalism that emphasize the common past and not to be ashamed of these chapters of history."[v]

This discourse of the Sephardic and Mizrahi elites did not usually influence Israeli Ashkenazi discourse, accept for the only Sephardic demand that was indeed in the same discursive level: presenting the Palestinian refugee problem as a "population exchange" with the Mizrahi immigrants, which occurred by mutual hostility, and therefore compensation and rights should be equally granted to both types of refugees. The practical suggestions made by Zionist leftists to achieve peace were not incorporated into the Sephardic discourses either. As mentioned, some peace initiatives of Ashkenazim invited Mizrahi intellectuals to join platforms for rapprochement and peace, but it seems they did not usually consult nor share decision or discourse making with them[vi].

Some of the Ashkenazi left in Israel was getting more involved in struggles against the military regime, imposed on Palestinian citizens until 1966. As part of this struggle, the role of political-cultural bridging between Israel and the rest of the Middle East was attributed also to the Israeli Palestinian Arabs. This line of discourse did infiltrate somewhat the Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectual discourse, both in the *IB* and in *Young Israel*. However, no group in this research clear-cuttingly demanded to abolish the military regime, but mostly rather expressed mistrust

our Exterior Policy" (be'ayat ha-be'ayot be-mediniyutenu ha-hitsonit), *IB*, 1.10.62, p. 3; E. Eliachar "Israel-Arab Relations. Before the UN General Assembly Session (yahasei Israel 'arav. likrat moshav 'atseret ha-um), *IB*, 1.12.64, p. 3.

[i] For instance, the Semitic Action, which called to establish a Semitic federation in the Middle East.

[ii] Y.A. Abadi, "Our Way to the Arab World" (darkenu la-'olam ha-'aravi), *IB,* 26.9.65, p. 4.

[iii] David Siton, "Strengthening Eastern Consciousness Among Us" (l*e*-hizuk ha-toda'ah ha-mizrahit be-kirbenu), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958.

[iv] E.g. A. Meir, "Us and Our Neighbors" (anu ve-shkhenenu ba-merhav), *IB*, 29.1.65, p. 4; Y.A. Abadi, (Is There a Plan to Israeli Exterior Policy?" (ha-yesh tokhnit le-mediniyut le-huts le-israel?), *IB,* 11.4.65, pp. 4-5; Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, Jewish-Arab Rapprochement in the Cultural Field" (hitkarvut yehudit 'aravt be-shetah ha-tarbut), *IB* 29.10.62, p. 12. The Great Mativta also intended to teach Arabic as well as Latin languages and English. See "Curriculum" (tokhnit ha-limudim), CSCJA container 6261 file 564.

[v] E. Eliachar "Israel-Arab Relations. Before the UN General Assembly Session (yahasei Israel 'arav. likrat moshav 'atseret ha-um), *IB*, 1.12.64, p. 3.

[vi] Letter from Yaakov Cohen to Eliahu Eliachar, 13.1.63, CZA A430/53/2.

towards the Israeli Palestinian Arabs[i]. I suspect this was an outcome of closer knowledge of the anti-Israeli tendencies in the Arab states at large, and less of Israeli Palestinian Arab society itself. In general, the Israeli Palestinian Arabs were not a concern to the circles of Sephardim and Mizrahim we are treating. If anything, just like in the past decade, they had the opposite concern. For the autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi groups, the way the Ashkenazi left was implicated with the Israeli Palestinian Arabs' political struggles, rather than the Sephardic and Mizrahi ones, was straightforwardly outraging. They often pointed out that Labor parties and the ICP gave representation for Palestinian Arabs in the parliament, but not to Mizrahim[ii]. Some in this elite might have conceived of the Mizrahi and Israeli Palestinian Arab struggles as related on some theoretical level, but practically the struggles were clearly and completely separate, and their own responsibilities and priorities were clear[iii]. Nonetheless, the discourse about Israeli Palestinian Arabs was spread in a way that made even less convinced groups and activists incorporated positive clauses about Israeli-Arab relations and the Palestinian minority in Israel as part of their electoral programs[iv].

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[i] E.g. "Manifesto of the Sephardic and Mizrahi Public in Jerusalem" (gilui da'at mi-ta'am ha-tsibur ha-sfaradi ve-'edot ha-mizrah be-yerushalaim). *Kol Sinai*, November 1963 (heshvan tashkad). "Word of the Battle" (dvar ha-ma'arakha), *IB*, 10.3.63, p. 1. Cohen-Tzidon was one of the only ones to sustain the Ashkenazi request to eradicate the military regime, but he was part of Gahal, which as all parliamentary forces, wanted to release the captive Palestinian-Arab voters from Mapai's control.

[ii] E.g. "The Torah Loyalists" (neemanei ha-torah), *Kol Sinai*, December 1961 (tevet-kislev tashkab); Yehezquel Sofer,"Ashkenazi Hegemony in the Israeli Parliament" (hegmonya ashkenazit be-kneset Israel), *IB*, 1.11.64, p. 2. Young Israel activists felt this gave Arabs more power in Israeli society than Mizrahim, and therefore the Israeli Palestinian Arabs had the responsibility to reach out to them. See "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *Young Israel*, 23.12.62, p. 1.

[iii] "The Israel Museum", *IOP*, May 1965; "Principles" ('ekronot), *Young Israel*, 1.2.62, p. 2.

[iv] Avner Shaki, "The Sephardic and Mizrahi Public in Israel as a Cultural Bridge between Israel and the Arab Countries" (ha-tsibur ha-sfaradi ve-ha-mizrahi be-israel ke-rosh gesher tarbuti ben israel ve-'arav), *IB*, 11.1.63, p. 13. In Fraternity, see: Yeshaayahu Aviam, "A New Political Party: The Movement for Fraternity" (miflaga hadasha: ha-tnu'ah le-ahva), *Maariv*, 8.8.63, p. 14; "The Candidates of the New Lists" (ha-ratsim ba-reshimot ha-hadashot)*, Maariv*, 15.9.65. In Young Israel, see: Y. M. Immanuel, "Before the Leap" (likrat zinuk), *Young Israel*, 18.11.64, p. 1; this position was probably induced by the joining of an older immigrant, George Harar, to their lines towards elections, versus Shalom Moial's habitual views.

PART III: DISCUSSION

In the period at hand, achieving representation became the ultimate goal of autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi political groups. The greater purposes that representation was meant to achieve became less relevant, and almost any means was justified in order to achieve this goal. In other words, Mizrahi and Sephardic autonomous political discourse focused more on symbolic resource redistribution of representation and less on its purpose of socio-economic redistribution and spiritual-cultural recognition. Other kinds of political discourses were produced in Mizrahi and Sephardic journals that avoided getting involved in representational politics. These journals allowed different authors to re-examine some aspects of the colonial premises of the state, criticizing the privileges it awarded to European modernity over its eastern habitat. However, these discourses remained theoretical, and did not inspire or influence any form of political action.

The discussion presented below is divided in three sections. The first section will address the possibility of a Mizrahi collective identity in the historical period at hand. First, the terminologies different groups used to address the Mizrahi and Sephardic public will be examined, as well as some practical projects that attempted to contribute to the construction of such a collective identity. We will see how the term "ethnic" [*'adati*] was inserted in the public political discourse of this period in order to capture the homogenization and subjugation of Mizrahim. The second part of the first section will examine some Mizrahi and Sephardic struggles in the spiritual field, related to rabbinical representation and synagogues. This part will address the ways the discursive level and the practical level of struggle co-constructed each other, in a way that resulted in a weakened and fragmented, yet collective, Mizrahi identity. This section corresponds with the fourth research question, observing the external factors that weakened Mizrahi political activism in this period, within local and regional power relations, as designed by the Zionist coloniality of power.

The second section will commence with an exploration of the discourse developed on the pages of the *IB* in this period, suggesting that the intellectuals contributing to it were constructing a theory of an alternative, regional-autochthonous Zionism, which asked to challenge the colonial foundations of the Zionist state. This section corresponds with the first research question, specifying the conditions under which Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectuals that opposed certain forms of coloniality could come into being within a settler-colonial society. Consequently, corresponding with the second research question, we will discuss the extent to which these intellectual writings in fact undermined Zionist coloniality, and specifically the coloniality of knowledge. This section is aimed at making visible the Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectual

construction of oppositional theory and rebellious knowledge, comparing it to De Sousa Santos' conceptualizations about the meaning and forms of decolonial knowledge production. The concept of "ecology of knowledges" will be put into dialogue with the native intellectuals' perceptions about the Zionist project of Merger of the Diasporas.

In the third section, we will mind the gap between the theoretical critical discourse developed in this period and praxis, by entering dialogue with Franz Fanon's writing about national consciousness in anti-colonial struggles. The role of essentialist perceptions of identity in such struggles will be revised, and it will be suggested that the coloniality of being prevented the development of such essentialist concepts among the intellectuals that framed autochthonous Zionism, forming an obstacle to the development of praxis from this theory. This corresponds with the third research question, examining the particular substructure that prevented autonomous Mizrahi theories from developing into a practical, viable political alternative to colonial Zionism. On the other hand, we will show how the climate of global anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s enabled this oppositional theory to develop at all. This corresponds again with the fourth research question, inquiring after circumstances that strengthened Mizrahi opposition in certain moments.

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY   and the Coloniality of Power

What's in a name?

The Sephardic and Mizrahi independent activists of this period faced a public that was more clearly stratified socio-economically and divided by different places of origin: in the end of the transit camps era, these divisions were not considered temporary anymore. These social and cultural fissures got channeled into the Zionist political system and became a tool in it. Stressing ethnic identities in politics as an empty vessel was proved an effective tool for struggling over resources and positions within Zionist parties. The attempt of individuals and group to regain dignity, by getting equally included in Jewish national ethnicity and citizenship, was transformed into an inter-ethnic competition and a narrow race for representation. Within this public atmosphere, there were different circles that invested their efforts in developing contents to a Mizrahi and Sephardic collective identity, which could construct this public as a public with its own political project. This was a way of building inner-strength and inner-coherency,

which was accompanied for some by an effort to cultivate the next generation of leaders[i]. Each circle and group took different steps and applied different discursive categories in order to capture the collective identity they attempted to construct. While the most commonplace term to address this public persisted, as in the previous decade, to be the hegemonic term, "Sephardim and Eastern Ethnicities" [*sfaradim u-bnei 'edot ha-mizrah*], some groups inserted other discursive categories, through what Benford & Snow (2000) called discursive processes, which produce different terms and titles for a collective identity.

UNAI's strategy of addressing North African immigrants helped spread the practice of targeting separately publics from different countries of origin inside Zionist parties in this decade. Just few years after UNAI, its "successor" Fraternity already did its best to shake off its Iraqi stigma, and emphasized the inclusion of other ethnicities (including Ashkenazim)[ii]. The Torah Loyalists Circle had it easiest, since it aimed at formulating a conservative-religious collective identity, and could rely on what was known and accepted as Sephardic rabbinical traditions and Halachic view versus the Ashkenazi ones[iii]. Still though, they usually emphasized addressing both Mizrahim [*bnei 'edot ha-mizrah*] and Sephardim. The Student Cell for the Merger of Diasporas used the term easterners [*mizrahiim*] versus westerners, or eastern ethnicities [*'edot ha-mizrah*] versus western ethnicities [*'edot ha-ma'arav*][iv]. This was their way to signal Ashkenazi identity on par with Mizrahi one: as the hegemonic identity, Ashkenazi identity was transparent, considered as simply the general Israeli identity. The term "Sephardic" was hardly ever used by this circle to address the general Mizrahi public, except by its prominent Sephardic member, Shlomo Abayo[v].

The CSCJ's practical attempts to construct a collective identity had two tracks. In the long run, they planned the project of the Great Mativta, and on a medium term, they published the journal *In the Battle*: these two projects conformed the institution's *"spiritual and public work"*[vi]. The CSCJ aspired for the *IB* to gather around it all Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectuals, but it remained a stage that was somewhat limited to certain circles of the elite. Activists who aspired to reach wider circles produced other stages and publications when they could[vii]. The *IB* did

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[i] David Siton, "Strengthening Eastern Consciousness Among Us" (l*e*-hizuk ha-toda'ah ha-mizrahit be-kirbenu), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958. David Siton in interview to Mati Ronen, part 6, 30.10.83, CSCJA container 6330 file 1451.

[ii] "Equal Rights- to all Ethnicities" (shivyon zkhuyot: le-bnei kol ha-'edot), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 1.11.65, p. 15.

[iii] "Versus the Ashkenazi Revolution" (mul ha-mahapekha ha-ashkenazit), *Kol Sinai*, March 1963 (nisan tashkad).

[iv] *FYI*, August (elul) 1963, TA.

[v] E.g. Shlomo Abayo, "Required: New Leadership" (mevokeshet: manhigut hadasha), *FYI*, 1.9.63, TA.

[vi] "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pireti kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 1.3.65, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[vii] Such was the case of the SCMD youngsters publishing *Afikim*. Y.M Immanuel and Shalom Moial with *Young Israel* and Felix Matalon, who published *Hed ha-me'orer*. These last two journals started publishing after failed negotiations with the CSCJ. Both intended to make more popular publications, with accessible language and content. Michael Selzer, who also wanted to expand the circles to which the *IB* reaches, ended up publishing the *IOP*.

not succeed as a tool for popular leaders to *"solidify this public"*[i], but it did solidify a certain Sephardic and Mizrahi ivory-club, a real, live alternative to the academic ivory-tower, albeit without the scientific seal. This figurative club was a safe space for theory to develop without getting its epistemic base undermined[ii]. An autonomous intellectual Sephardic-Mizrahi collective identity was formulated on the *IB* pages, but it did not relate to or inspire any practical struggle, nor was it successful in reaching out to wider circles. Perhaps the main hindrance of the *IB* was that it never acted to fulfill its title in an organizational manner. Though the CSCJ withdrew from politics, the *IB* still acted as an organ serving this one institution, and did nothing to create inter-generational allies with other Mizrahi autonomous organizations. It could be claimed that this was due to caution: in this period of so much suspicion and mistrust in every autonomous organization, any mistake an organization could make would mark it and its allies for good. However, the main reason was probably related with the CSCJ's honor: they expected young organizations to turn to them as a relevant stage, and would not approach in the other direction, no matter how much respect young organizations might have attributed to the CSCJ, as for instance the native youngsters of the SCMD indeed did[iii].

*"They never hugged us or anything, and they were the señores... are we in a competition? .... They were not in our temperament, not in our spirit of struggle, and not in our emphases... they wore ties, they were older...most of them, a whole different generation! ...an organization in this age that sees a new movement with a temperament that it doesn´t have, has to hug us, look for us, come to us and hand us a stage, a page just for us to write whatever we want and so on... I mean they treated it more at a ceremonial level, [as if] we are supposed to come to them. That's nonsense, what do **we** care? ... supposedly with the IB we did not have any differences, but they were looking for the respect..."*[iv]

While the ideologues of the National Union and then Young Israel also had the explicit and central goal to create a collective Sephardic-Mizrahi identity, for Young Israel this was a much more complicated task. By 1961, this collective identity had been crushed in such a way that as a political force, Mizrahim became

"dust-of-man [avak adam] *subjugated to manipulations...by the hegemonic forces and by the Sephardic-Mizrahi intelligentsia that shakes off its roots* [mena'eret 'atsma mi-tzur mahtsevata] *and searches for ways* [mahalakhim] *to get assimilated within this hegemony."*[v]

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[i] Yehezquel Sofer, "Problems of the Hour" (be'ayot ha-sha'ah), *IB*, 30.6.64, p. 2.

[ii] Y. Maas, "'Principals in Organizing our Public" ('ikarim be-hilkhot hitargenut tsiburenu), *IB*, 11.1.63, p. 10.

[iii] E.g. Yehezquel Shemesh, "The reader to the editor" (ha-kore el ha-orekh), *IB*, 8.4.63, p. 23.

[iv] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18, emphasis in origin.

[v] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Felix Matalon. 7.8.66, CZA S62/576.

Already in the preliminary stages of forming the National Union, this circle of activists coined the term Sephardim-Mizrahim [*sfaradim-mizrahiim*] or Sephardo-Mizrahim[i] [*sfarado-mizrahiim*] in order to construe the collective identity of their public. Their perseverance using these terms allowed them to spread into wider circles as well[ii], but they never really caught. Armed with this terminology, this circle could usually avoid referring to the existence of different ethnicities: it did not emphasize the origins of its members, nor did it usually urge fraternity or solidarity between different ethnicities[iii]. Just before elections, though, the countries of origin were evoked, along with ethnic pride about being or "Truth Jews"[iv] or "Pure Sephardic"[v]. This proud Sephardic term was very rarely referred to within the circles of the CSCJ; in fact, the spreading of this term in this period was much at Eliachar's dislike[vi]. Eliachar usually persisted to refer to the term "Sephardic" to include all Mizrahim. He also often resorted to Ben Gurion's terminology of "non-Ashkenazim", particularly when writing to Ashkenazim[vii]. Despite being defined by negation, at least this term was perfectly understandable and could not be disputed. As for Young Israel, despite coining the brilliant term of Sephardo-Mizrahim, they still had problems defining the common denominator of their public: its own potential will, its mentality and culture, language and prayer, or the institutional discrimination, which crossed all socio-economic stratums[viii]. As many researchers noted, the institutional discrimination was indeed the only thing that actually made Mizrahim into a collective (Tsur 2010, Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). It was visible and tangible in ghettos like Wadi Salib, but felt real for the elites as well, in glass ceilings they encountered in most spheres of life[ix] (Meir-Glitzanstein 2009). However, somewhat similarly to the CSCJ in the 1950s, Young Israel's militant calls against discrimination were repetitive and empty, far from reflecting the emotional side of the estrangement and exclusion that could unite different social stratums over feelings of *"resentment, growing social distinction, bitterness and emotional cleavage"*[x]. The formulation of a collective identity on basis of discrimination was therefore also not successful, and did not materialize in political terms. The inherent difficulties in cooperating between different

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[i] This term came into use in Young Israel's publications after Kelman Katzanelson coined it in his racist book, *The Ashkenazi Revolution*.

[ii] "The Question of Ethnic Representation" (le-sheelat ha-yitsug ha-'adati), *Davar*, 2.9.62, p. 3; A. Meir, "Commentary from the Margins" (he'arot min ha-tsad), *IB*, 5.4.62, p. 9; Y. Nitsani, "Problems of Merger of Diasporas" (be'ayot mizug galuyot), *Shevet Va'am* 1960.

[iii] See one such rare moment in Ezra George's ad in the *EM*, 30.10.59, p. 3.

[iv] Truth, AMT, standing for Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia. "Interview with Prof. George Harar" (reayon 'im prof. george harar), *Young Israel*, 24.9.65, p. 3.

[v] E.g. Arieh Avnery, "the Sephardic Revolution" (ha-mahapekha ha-sfaradit), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 5.7.64, p. 5.

[vi] Eliachar (1967): 28. For more about the development of the term Pure Sephrardic in Israel see Baharad (2011).

[vii] E.g. *Danger, Jewish racialism! Israel's Sephardim : Integration, or Disintegration?* 1965. Jerusalem: Committee of Sephhardic Community of Jeruslem, p.1.

[viii] Shalom Moial, "The Other Side of the Coin" (ha-tsad ha-sheni shel ha-matbe'a), *Young Israel,* 28.9.62; Ben Yaakov, "The Principles of the Movement" ('ekronot ha-tnu'ah), *Young Israel*, 5.4.62, p. 1; Immanuel (1964).

[ix] Moshe Nahmias, "Abolishing Discrimination" (le-bi'ur neged ha-aflaya), *IB*, 13.8.61, p. 7.

[x] "*Danger, Jewish racialism! Israel's Sephardim : integration, or disintegration*?" 1965. Jerusalem: Council of the Sephardi Community of Jerusalem.

generations and inclinations joined an intensified political rivalry between different ethnicities. In the CSCJ's attempts to gain recognition for the Federation as a non-party umbrella organization for the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics, the only possible allies they could think of were the old dysfunctional CSCs[i]. Young Israel also aspired to perform as this mother organization, but they also wished to be liberated and distanced from the same circles from which their ideology grew[ii]. A solution that was proposed by all extra-parliamentary activists, was that the Mizrahi and Sephardic MPs would construct this organization, since they were the only ones that had established enough public legitimacy on a democratic base[iii]. In this claim the two sides of the colonial/modern coin are exemplified simultaneously. The Sephardic and Mizrahi autonomous leaders recognized that the elected Mizrahim and Sephardim were appointed in ways that were quite far from democratic, getting nominated to positions without a valid popular base or social position, but simply because they were deemed cooperative or forced to cooperate with the Eurocentric elites[iv]. Some compared them to collaborators with oppressive colonial regimes[v] (Roby 2015). The expectation from Mizrahi MPs to take responsibility over the desired mother organization for the Sephardic and Mizrahi publics, exemplifies the crisis created by the omnipresent quality of the coloniality of power of Zionist Ashkenazi hegemony in this decade, and its exclusive power in determining the conditions of the social and political common sense. This power structure was dominated by Mapai and its ability, as it were, to divide and conquer:

"Our own arguments and our fights [merivotenu] *within ourselves- are countlessly more numerous than our fights* [rivenu] *with the different racists in the people* [ha-giz'aniim ba-'am le-minehem]*... we are a dispersed and crushed public...[with] no unified language"*[vi].

As mentioned, the hegemonic language to define this public was the language most commonly used, despite the alternative suggestions raised to challenge this hegemonic framing. In this decade the adjective "ethnic" [*'adati*] got widespread in the political sphere. Instead of Sephardic or Mizrahi, there were ethnic activists, or ethnic functionaries [*'askanei/pe'ilei 'edot*][vii], ethnic politicians [*sarei 'edot*][viii], ethnic organizations [*irgun/miflaga adati/t*] and even

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[i] "Protocol of Executive Committee Meeting" (pirtei kol yeshivat ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 10.11.63, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[ii] At the same time, Immanuel was greatly disappointed when these circles did not actively support the movement and his other initiatives. See Immanuel (1968a).

[iii] E.g. Immanuel (1968): 36; M. Selzer "Culture Clash in Israel" (hitnagshut tarbuyot be-israel), *IB*, 4.4.66.

[iv] Y. M Immanuel, "Sephardic and Ashkenazi Leadership" (manhigut sfaradit ve-ashkenazit), *Young Israel*, 15.9.63, p. 4. Eliahu Eliachar, "After the Elections in Ashdod and Beer Sheva" (be-'ikvot ha-bhirot be-ashdod u-be-beer sheva), *Haaretz*, 29.10.63; Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to The Jerusalem Post Editorial, 10.1.65, CZA 430A/68/1.

[v] Sh. Yerushalmi, "Why Not Ethnic Lists?" (madu'a lo reshimot 'adatiyot?), *IB*, 25.12.64, p. 13.

[vi] Oriental Jew, "The Sin of our Shortcoming" ('al het mehdalenu), *IB*, 8.2.67.

[vii] E.g. Avraham Alters, "Our Non-Action was a Sin to the Ethnicities" (be-i ma'asenu hatanu klapei ha-'edot), *EM*, 10.6.58, p. 1.

[viii] E.g. Sh. Gamliel, "The alignment of Ethnicities and the alignment of Parties" (ma'arkh ha-'edot u-ma'arakh ha-miflagot), *IB*, 24.4.67.

ethnic people [*anshei ha-'edot*][i]. The adjective "ethnic" became widespread in this decade of competitive identity-politics between different ethnicities. A wide variety of local activists were now representing Iraqi, Tunisian, North African, or other communities inside Zionist parties. Yet there was a need to define all of them in one word. The long adjective common in the 1950s to describe in one term such activists, *bnei 'edot ha-mizrah,* literally: sons of eastern ethnicities, was shortened into one word for language efficiency, a process as old as language itself. Nowadays the shortened adjective is Mizrahi, but in the 1960s it was *'adati* (ethnic). The arbitrary signifier of this elusive referent (De Saussure 1959) changed along different socio-political moments in history. It is no coincidence that under Labor Zionism's apparatus of domination, "Mizrahi" was dropped, and the term used was the one vacant from actual reference to the identities of the communities themselves. Though the longer adjective can also be considered as generalizing and unflattering, at least it did not entail by itself the denial of Mizrahim's spatial heritage. Shenhav (2006a) claimed the term *'adati* has a reductive meaning, because it creates a non-political discussion in ethnicity, bounding ethnicity to issues of local cultures and folklore. This apolitical term was used in the political context by Ashkenazim in a derogatory sense, marking separatist and essentialist tendencies. Our activists also understood it this way: no organization proudly defined itself as ethnic[ii]. As some Mizrahi intellectuals noted, the term "ethnic" invisiblized the Ashkenazim as an ethnic group, leaving them as generic unmarked category[iii] (Segrest 2001). The occasional critique of the term did not prevent it from getting widely adopted even by the same criticizers. This term finally gave a name to this public and granted it de-facto with a collective identity.

The consolidation of this term marks the conclusion of a racialization and inferiorization process of this population. The particular Orientalist colonial processes of the Middle East, marked Mizrahim, Mizrahi Judaism and Mizrahiness as the opposite of the west, and established western modernity as entailing the correct and desirable ways to live, and on the right side of history. The Zionist matrix of domination, the coloniality of power, in its system of absolute domination of the Zionist parties of all fields of life, infiltrated in the fissures between the different collective identities of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa. It transformed these fissures into empty struggles of power between essentialist identities, and then pasted together all these absent fragments in a unified jumble, described by an insulting

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[i] E.g. M. Selzer, "For Levantization" (be-zkhut ha-levantizatsia), *IB*, 11.4.65, p. 19.

[ii] E.g. Avner Garin, "How do the Party Candidates See the Future of the City of the Future?" (ekh roim mu'amadei ha-miflagot et 'atida shel 'ir ha-'atid), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 26.7.63, p. 33. In the *IB* this adjective was sometimes used in a positive manner, though usually it was used to refer to auto-organization as pressuring Zionist parties meant to gain representation.

[iii] E.g. Y. Oz Ari,"Two Cultures and One People" (shtei tarbuyot ve-'am ehad), *IB*, 18.9.63, p. 7; "Eastern Ethnicities- A Boiling Pot. Etgar Talk with Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon" ('edot ha-mizrah: sir 'al ha-esh. sihat etgar 'im shlomo Cohen-Tzidon", *Etgar,* 4.10.62; "A New Political Party: The Movement for Fraternity" (miflaga hadasha: ha-tnu'ah le-ahva), *Maariv*, 8.8.63, p. 14.

reduction with racist significance. This careless patchwork was the precise opposite of the Sephardic and Mizrahi understanding of Israel and its Merger of Diasporas project, depicted rather as a harmonic mosaic of cultures, woven together as a beautiful Persian rug (in: Meir-Glitzenstein 2009: 336).

The Spiritual Struggle

The terms used to form collective identities are mostly visible when they allow framing of struggles, accompanying strategic processes that produce tactics. The terms, titles, strategies and tactics are all necessary for constructing collective action (Benford & Snow 2000). In this research it certainly stands out that in practice, the main struggles that united varied Sephardic and Mizrahi activists into collective action were the struggles for equal status in rabbinical authorities: the national Chief Rabbinical Authority and the local Religious Councils. Indeed, many nominations and improvements of status of Sephardic rabbis were a result of public struggles, and such struggles were also often necessary for the opening and equipping of synagogues[i] (Deshen 1970). These struggles, on the different geographical scales, were a central mobilizing force of Mizrahim and Sephardim in the 1950s and 1960s. The groups that aimed for national representation focused on the struggle for representation on national and municipal institutions, and various local groups fought for local representation, for the *Sabbath* to get respected by the municipality (Shaul 2016) and for constructing synagogues for the communities (Bashkin 2017:171-2).

On the local level, it is clear how the struggles over these issues were a factor that necessarily impeded the construction of a collective Mizrahi and Sephardic identity. The fact that each ethnic community had to struggle for getting funds for a proper synagogue might have been a principal factor leading to the aspiration of each community to get organized by itself and gain representation. Synagogues had a certain role in getting independent Sephardic and Mizrahi political activity organized, as places to spread propaganda and gather people (e.g. Bashkin 2017: 169). Synagogues were perfect spaces for these activities because they were autonomous and self-organized spaces of communities and sub-communities of Mizrahim. As Leon explained, synagogues are safe spaces for live practice of entire symbolic universes and cultural world views. The purpose of "ethnic synagogues'" is conserving the culture of the country of origin (Leon 2009). The institution at large is all about continuity, sense of belonging and space for stabilizing identities (Leon 2006). By themselves, synagogues strengthened *"cultural*

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[i] E.g. Sh. Recanati, "We Will Unite to Struggle" (nitahed le-maavak), *Young Israel*, 18.4.63, p. 1; Letter from David Siton to Rabbi Sh. HaCohen Vingerten, 7.11.63, CSCJA container 6261 file 564.

islands"[i]: a positive element for the same communities, but an inherent obstacle for any political project constituted upon a collective identity of Sephardim and Mizrahim. In the 1960s, Zionist parties also used synagogues in their political campaigns, many times in dishonoring and instrumental manners, which according to Deshen (1970), profaned and secularized religious language, ceremonies and entire systems of values and cultures.

The CSCJ aspired to challenge these dynamics by the Great Mativta project, which aspired to unite Sephardic and Mizrahi synagogues under its authority, and raise *"spiritual leaders with a common language to the young intelligentsia"*[ii]. Since the CSCJ activists had no toranic authority, gathering different synagogues within an organizational framework would have been a way to impose this circle's imagination of a Sephardic collective identity, in a way that also gave political power to this institution[iii]. Just by taking up the Great Mativta project, as well as by its desired contents, the CSCJ attempted to challenge western modernity/coloniality, which marked clear borders between the religious and the secular. Even though these borders had not been so well demarcated among non-western Jewries, in Israel in the 1960s Sephardic rabbis were developing such understanding of these borders with ever greater vigor. Among the groups examined here, however, there were many who had alternative views to the hegemonic one about the relations between religion, state and society:

"…Only then [with proper representation] *will Sephardic consciousness come before Jewish consciousness, since Jewish they have enough of. A statist Jewish consciousness has to be inserted in our Ashkenazi brothers. The Sephardic consciousness will bring profound changes in the systems of education and in our cultural life at large. This is not just a matter of representation."*[iv]

"The Sephardic voter…is astonished in face of the pure secularity of Herut and Mapai. It is obvious to him the signature of religion must be in the state to make the existence of the Jewish people possible"[v]

"the people of Israel is not like all peoples…it was always independent in all its years in the diaspora…it kept its spiritual independence…Do not distort the true exhibition of the people of Israel's independence by turning it to an exhibition of weapons and military power, because in this field we will never win… our enemies… were condemned [hitabrakhu] *to live upon their swords* [ve-'al harbekha tihiye]...*"*[vi]

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[i] Y. M Immanuel, "Abolishing Ignorance in Israel" (hisul ha-ba'arut be-israel), *Young Israel*, 28.2.63, p. 3.

[ii] Letter from Rabbi Ventura to Rabbi Toledano, 23.7.58, CSCJA container 6300 file 890.

[iii] "The Organization of the Institutions of the Community Council" (irgun mosdot va'ad ha-'eda), 29.10.62, CSCJA container 6263 file 587; "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pireti-kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 9.2.64, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[iv] Moshe Nahmias, "The Sephardim and the Elections to the Parliament" (ha-sfaradim ve-ha-bhirot la-kneset), *IB*, 14.7.61, p. 6.

[v] A. Meir, "The Sephardim, the Elections and the Parties" (ha-sfaradim, habhirot ve-ha-miflagot), *IB*, 13.9.61, p. 6.

[vi] "Independence or my strength and power" ('atsmaut o kohi ve-'otsem yadi), *Kol Sinai*, May 1962 (eiyar tashkab). This view is similar to Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox views.

With the exception of the Torah Loyalists Circle, many of our activists emphasized the tolerance, flexibility and moderation of Sephardic Judaism as holding national spiritual value[i]. This image of Sephardic Judaism, though, was getting infiltrated by toranic colonization. Progressive political activists only contested this form of colonization when there was suspicion of Mizrahi and Sephardic children getting taken forcibly to Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox schools. Otherwise, they usually adopted an approach similar though not identical to the extremists-conservative Sephardim, viewing it as a positive way to save the immigrants' children from assimilating into secular Ashkenazi identity, and a way to make sure the proper upbringing of the next generation of Sephardic rabbis[ii]. Though in its contents Ashkenazi ultra-orthodoxy is perhaps not modern[iii], it is a product of reaction to western modernity, its reversal, and this is evident in its modern form, and the way it is based upon strict binary oppositions between secular and religious identities and lifestyles. The struggles of "secular" activists over representation in rabbinical authorities, by itself undermined the modern/colonial dichotomy between secular and religious, and was used as an opportunity to show respect to rabbis or to emphasize the particular characteristics of Sephardic Judaism:

"... [the Sephardic] rabbi is of general authority that is impossible to undermine…In front of the Sephardim's rabbi everybody comes, conservatives and otherwise [shomrei mitsvot ke-mekelim be-mitsvot]. The Sephardim are not interested in an extremist rabbi that would distance the multitudes."[iv]

Through the processes of toranic colonization, the binary secular/religious categories got inserted not only within extremists-conservatives within the Torah Loyalists Circle, but also into the high positioned Sephardic rabbis and their decision making. The fact that Sephardic rabbis had to go through certain ashkenization in order to attain stature in the state, emptied the struggles over representation in rabbinical authorities of any independent Sephardic Halachic or cultural contents. Therefore, these struggles did not do much to define a Sephardic and

[i] E.g. Y.Y.Rivlin, "From Hed Hamizrah to In the Battle" (me-hed ha-mizrah ve-'ad le-ha-ma'arakha), *IB*, 14.7.61, p. 3; Sh. Cohen-Tzidon, "The Makers of Politics from Religion" (ha-'osim politika me-ha-dat), *IB*, 2.10.64, p. 9. For more about Sephardic Judaism see: Y. Y. Rivlin, "The Workshop for Sephardic Sages' Spirit" (beit ha-yotser le-ruah hakhamei sfarad); *Shevet Va'am*, 1960.

[ii] Still there was a difference between the progressive and conservative approach: the last saw the Ashkenazi intervention as a blessing and a source of pride (Leon 2009, Horowitz 2000), while progressive Sephardim saw it more as the force of reality, the better option between worse ones. It should be mentioned that Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon became publicly known for a case he took as a lawyer, against the forceful kidnapping of Yosi Shumakher by ultra-orthodox Jews. For comparing the progressive and conservative responses see: "The Savior of Toranic and Charity Institutions in Israel" (moshi'am shel mosdot ha-tora ve-ha-hesed ba-arets), *Kol Sinai*, June 1962 (sivan tashkab); Letter from David Siton to Eliahu Eliachar 27.5.62, CSCJA container 6236 file 587. Also see for instance E. Eliachar, "The Sephardim after the Elections" (ha-sfaradim ahrei ha-bhirot), *IB*, 13.9.61, p. 4; M. Farush, "Mizrahi Representation in the Parliament" (netsigut 'edot ha-mizrah ba-kneset), *IB*, 1.12.64, p. 19.

[iii] This is nothing I would have the knowledge to assert, since that would require broad knowledge of Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox canon as well as careful analysis of Jewish writings and historical canonical developments.

[iv] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "The Elections for Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv" (ha-bhirot la-rav ha-rashi be-tel aviv), *IB*, 8.12.61, p. 7.

Mizrahi collective identity, but rather, were restricted to official issues such as number of representative rabbis or their formal authorities.

The CSCJ had their own struggle in these matters, with their claims to become involved in electing the Chief Sephardic Rabbi[i]. Jerusalem's chief rabbi Eliahu Pardes *"firmly objected"* this move, which led them to propose systems of rabbinical election through popular-democratic bases, for instance through synagogues or by direct elections[ii]. The modern/colonial dialectics is perfectly visible in this move. Rabbi Pardes opposed secular agents getting involved in religious politics, in accordance with the axioms of Israel's modern/colonial politics, which left monopoly over religious affairs to religious parties. The notables' entire motivation was aimed against these axioms of Israel's politics about religious matters. Their claim for involvement was a reactionary claim, exhibiting their concern about their loss of status, but at the same time it was a way to struggle against the Zionist matrix of power and the way it influenced the spiritual sphere. As recalled, the implication of the monopoly of Ashkenazi political parties on the rabbinical sphere had a significant role in creating the spiritual and leadership crisis of Mizrahi immigration, making hundreds of immigrant rabbis banished from their communities by the circumstances created by state authorities (Leon 1999). This crisis of leadership (Bernstein 1976) "shattered previous ethnic order" and "caused an existential crisis to many and entire communities" (Deshen 1979). At the same time, Deshen (1979) explained how this process had certain emancipatory aspects, because it ended patriarchal patterns that caused dependence of communities and their rabbis in a few wealthy individuals and families, also since the status of these last changed after immigration. Here, as in the CSCJ's move, the dialectics of the modern/colonial coin are evident, exemplifying how colonial oppression and modern emancipation are co-constitutive. When the CSCJ's traditional status was undermined by their authority of reference, Rabbi Pardes, for his adaption to the modern/colonial mindset, the CSCJ activists developed their own modern-emancipatory proposals for democratic and egalitarian ways, detached from the Zionist parties, to elect the religious authorities in state institutions.

The coloniality of power of the Zionist apparatus of domination -the omnipresence of Ashkenazi-dominated parties in regulating all fields of life- was discussed here on two levels that complement each other, in relation to the production of collective identity: a discursive level that dealt with the terminology used to refer to this public, and a practical level, referring to the central collective actions that had power to unite this public. I suggest that the limits

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[i] "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirtei-kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 24.11.63, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

[ii] "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirtei-kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 19.1.64, CSCJA container 6236 file 380. The suggestions of a Yemenite and Maghrebi community to establish a separate rabbinate, though, seemed to them extremist. "Protocol of Executive Committee" (pirtei-kol ha-va'ad ha-po'el), 24.11.63, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

Mizrahi immigrants put to the coloniality of power were where it entered the public spiritual/cultural/religious sphere. Unmet needs in this field were perhaps the most important mobilizing force in those years, expressed, among others, in struggles of communities for the right to get funding to construct and improve their synagogues. This was a factor aiding particular ethnic communities to get organized in the sphere of local politics, and this process led the way for Sephardim and Mizrahim to gain positions in local and national Zionist parties. The struggles of separate ethnic communities impeded the creation of a positive collective identity for different Mizrahi or Sephardic communities. Since collective identity can only be constituted when it gains recognition by others (Melucci 1995), the result of the numerous struggles of ethnic communities was a reduced and degraded ethnic, *'adati*, Mizrahi collective identity. The term *'adati* was formed through the exchange between the hegemonic frames and their contention. According to Melucci (1995), the capacity for collective action is defined by the ability to produce collective identity. The emptied collective identity formed by this exchange, then, limited the scope and ability of a Mizrahi and Sephardic collective action. Along with the crisis of the Sephardic rabbinical world, this left the religious/traditional/cultural/spiritual struggle on the national level reduced to the same kind of empty struggle over representation as in other state institutions, a struggle over form and not over contents.

AUTOCHTHONOUS ZIONISM   **and the Coloniality of Knowledge**

In the 1960s the *IB* served as a stage for writers to make theoretical and practical suggestions for an alternative atmosphere to the animosity, hatred and condescending attitudes within Israeli society towards the Arab world. This was intertwined with denouncing the public spirit and policies that required the Mizrahi immigrants to shed any Arab cultural baggage. This critical discourse at times reflected the anti-colonial discourse of the time, for instance in renouncing *"cultural and educational feudalism"*[i] and *"Culturecide"*[ii]. It unfolded more commonly among intellectual immigrants or older-native activists, and less within the younger generations of natives, that had been raised in the Zionist colonial society:

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[i] Mizrahi Jew, "In the Depth of Mizrahi Statistics" (be-nivhey ha-statistica ha-mizrahiit), *IB*, 10.6.66.

[ii] Shimon Yaakovi, "Zalman Aran's Communal Problem" (ha-be'aya ha-'adatit shel zalman aran), *IB*, 28.5.67; also see "*Danger, Jewish racialism! Israel's Sephardim : integration, or disintegration*?" 1965. Jerusalem : Council of the Sephardi Community of Jerusalem.

"The youth that grows up in Israel does not better absorb neither understanding nor knowledge of what is happening around us, and in the day that the desired peace will come, we will lack this priceless baggage [mit'an yakar] *for good neighboring relations with the peoples fate had assigned us to live by."*[i]

Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, as MP for Gahal, raised in the parliament various issues reflecting his concern about this gap in knowledge created between the young generations in Israel and the Arab world[ii]. The "priceless baggage" of knowledge, and therefore appreciation, of Arabic and Arab cultural productions had political value for the older native and immigrant intellectuals. It served them to confront matter-of-factly the establishment's tactics to undermine the political value of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries. For instance, a common Ashkenazi discourse to justify Ashkenazi domination conjured anxiety from the "levantization" of Israel: the danger that if Mizrahim and Sephardim had real power, the state would be assimilated with the Arab world and *"would not have value for the Jewish* people"[iii]. Young Israel attacked this argument in inconsistent ways that never undermined the attribution of inferiority to the Levant[iv]. In contrast, some of the older natives and immigrant intellectuals could use their cultural baggage to make comprehensive arguments against this Ashkenazi claim[v]. An intrinsic relation was presented between the project of empowerment of the Mizrahi and Sephardic publics, the need for the Ashkenazi-dominated state to have a more flexible character towards the east, and Israeli-Arab rapprochement:

"The Jews of the east have adapted a special way of life through which they could accomplish co-existence with the Arabs for many generations. When they felt estranged in this country [zarutam ba-aretz] *they tried to adapt the same way of life with the Ashkenazim, of course with less success. The disrespect* [zilzul] *did not persecute them in Muslim countries, but in the land of the Jews it persecuted them into their intimacy* ['ad le-hadrei hadarim]*…Now people begin to study their past, learn about what happened to them in Israel* [ba-arets]*, and to express their feelings* [rahashei libam] *and respond on press to the said and written about them and against them…the burden of prejudice within, indicates* [noten ototav] *the exterior policy"*[vi]

Cohen-Tzidon and Eliachar believed the *IB* itself should be dedicated, among other issues, to Israeli-Arab rapprochement[vii], and contributed to developing it as such. Unlike the Marxist

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[i]Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to David Siton, 7.6.65, CZA 430A/42/1.

[ii] Knesset Protocols, 29.3.67, 31.5.67.

[iii] Letter from David Ben Gurion to Moshe Shlush, 25.10.62, BGA: subject files, container 42 file 245.

[iv] E.g. "Editorial Notes" (dvar ha-ma'arekhet), *Young Israel*, 4.11.62, p. 1; Aharon Shmuel Moial, "The Riots and Conflicts in Beer Sheva's Municipality" (ha-mehumot ve-ha-tkhakhim be-'iriyat beer sheva), *Young Israel*, 1.2.62, p. 2. The same kind of arguments were also published in the *IB.*

[v] E.g. David Siton, "Strengthening Eastern Consciousness Among Us" (le-hizuk ha-toda'ah ha-mizrahit be-kirbenu), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958.; Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, Jewish-Arab Rapprochement in the Cultural Field" (hitkarvut yehudit 'aravt be-shetah ha-tarbut), *IB* 29.10.62, p. 12; "The Millennium", *IOP,* April 1965; Eliachar (1967).

[vi] Oriental Jew, "The Failing and Faltering" ('al nehashalim ve-koshlim), *IB*, 28.5.67.

[vii] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Singular View: The Military Regime is not Justified" (da'at yahid. kiyum ha-memshal ha-tsvai be-yisrael eino mutsdak), *IB*, 5.4.62, p. 5. See permit to publishing *Hed Hamizrah*, 12.1.64. in this permit it is

approach to Jewish-Arab rapprochement, the *IB* contributors wrote about an Inner-Jewish process, not based on practical cooperation with Palestinians or any other Arabs. More than a process, in fact it was an ethos, which they developed in order to impose it on the state's nature and image[i]. This ethos, a vision perhaps, was based on conceptions of Jewish Redemption [*geula*] and proposed a profoundly different state. It had to do with the purpose of the Jewish people in their land and the role the Jewish state should play in the Middle East. That is, it was an alternative Zionist theory, that asked to design Israel as a Jewish "Oriental country".

This alternative Zionism was developed through comprehensive critical thinking that tied several epistemological, ontological and political questions together. As mentioned, many wrote in the *IB* about Mizrahi and Sephardic culture and heritage. Some preached to the political project of knowing its positive values[ii], and others complimented this demand by writing up its contents: folklore, customs, rabbinical productions and history. As *"natives of the region"*[iii], the project of producing knowledge about Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewries was the same identity-related spiritual-cultural political project as spreading knowledge about the Middle East. It had to do with the definitions of the external and internal nature of the state: the nature of the Jewish people, its mission there and then, and its relation to its geographical region. It was an autochthonous nationalism that relied on Biblical times and on the glory of the Sephardic Golden Age[iv]. This view can be seen in the writing of several authors, but its most eloquent formulator was Yitzhak A. Abadi[v], whom different activists in this research recommended, in different stages, for candidature for presidency of the state[vi]:

"[There is] a deep psychological abyss between us and them…understanding the abyss… would require us for a deeper and wider change, not only in our attitude to the Arab world, to the Arabs as humans, to the Arabs as our closest neighbors… but also to our very mission in this part of the world. This is the

kind of change that in itself requires a spiritual rebooting of systems [shidud maarkhot ruhani]…*what does the Israeli child know about the Arab world, its language, lifestyle, ambitions, culture…this is required in order to design citizens that are loyal to their people and land with a Jewish consciousness…"*[i]

"In such a [historical] view, spiritual and cultural Jewish-Arab cooperation will not seem as utopia and false dreams, but the force of history… We seek [hotrim] *to create an original culture of our own, and such culture will not be real* [lo yehe ba mamash] *if it does not nurture* [tinak ve-tizon] *from its natural ground* [adama]. *Such natural ground is in the Middle East, that is all Arab, and is also seeking* [hoter] *to design itself new tools of culture and spirit instead of yesterday's tools that go and sink in forgetfulness* [holkhim ve-metuba'im be-yam ha-shikheha]. *What then is more understandable and logical than cultural and spiritual cooperation between us and them…we do not have any passion to copy and imitate to our country values of others that do not fit our national character. But obviously, we do not have any passion, or ability, to stand for long as an isolated island distinct from its entire environment and…pretend it simply does not exist…In our press the president of Egypt will never be mentioned in his title, President of Egypt…but [just] in order to emphasize his supposed tyranny. Who are we trying to fool?"*[ii]

As we see in the last quote, the hegemonic Zionist discourse was criticized for misrepresenting and underrepresenting the Arab world in its totality. The discourse of politicians and the media, as well as the academic study of the Arab world, were disputed as unprofessional and equivocal in aims[iii].

The Merger of Diasporas as Ecology of Knowledge

The very same claim made about the academic study of the Arab world was made about the hegemonic Zionist discourse about Mizrahim, as it was getting reformulated by Ashkenazi *"educators, ministers, politicians, writers, sociologists and journalists"*[iv]. This decade was marked by growing "academization" of "the ethnic problem", in spheres where Ashkenazi social scientists took prominence. In some cases, these professionals might have informed some of the Sephardic elites about their doings, but they never attempted to get informed by the native intellectuals of this public. By the *IB* and other means the CSCJ attempted to instigate the opposite direction of distribution of knowledge[v]. The academic conferences and publications

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[i] Y. A. Abadi, "The Problem of Problems in our Exterior Policy" (be'ayat ha-be'ayot be-mediniyutenu ha-hitsonit), *IB*, 1.10.62, p. 3.

[ii] Y. A. Abadi "Our Way to the Arab World" (darkenu la-'olam ha-'aravi), *IB*, 26.9.65, p. 5.

[iii] David Siton, "Strengthening Eastern Consciousness Among Us" (l*e*-hizuk ha-toda'ah ha-mizrahit be-kirbenu), *Shevet Va'am*, November 1958.

[iv] Letter from E. Eliachar to H. Hahelgi, 28.11.65, CZA 430A/210/4.

[v] See the booklet that was sent to the chairmen of all the universities' student organizations: Eliachar (1967), CSCJA, container 6256 file 537.

about "the ethnic gap" were source of continuous dispute in the *IB* over their scientific validity, underlining motivation and their general value for society:

"The failure of these scientists to keep abreast of modern sociological thought, and to pass these findings to political and administrative circles in the country, is a major cause of the present gloomy ethnic situation in Israel. Their attempts to understand the ethnic confrontation are equivocal, superficial and evasive…and construct a circular argument"[i]

"…They sailed off to ideological spheres… from which the [ethnic] problem of the communities was pushed aside [nidheka le-keren zavit] *… An investigative approach …[using] categories of the majority, instead of practical categories…[it] only sets a diagnosis in a superficial, ornate* [melitzi] *and declarative manner and does not speak about treatment"*[ii]

The critics wrote about how the academic discourse was impractical, damaging, emanating from Ashkenazi bias, setting racial categories[iii] and returning to questions the Sephardic and Mizrahi elites had already exhausted, over *"clarifying the terms and defining goals"*[iv]. This scientific production of knowledge had absolutely nothing to do with what Ashkenazim were required to do: *"turn down their arrogant tones* [ton ha-yohara]*"*[v] and uproot their *"pretentious dispositions* [hilchei ruah]*"*[vi]; taking instead a tolerant, egalitarian and flexible attitude, in order to become one people in the land[vii]. The Inner-Jewish process, which is what autochthonous Zionism was all about, the path for becoming a people and building a nation, required a process of Merger of Diasporas, but Sephardim and Mizrahim had a different definition of this process than the hegemonic Ashkenazi one. Popular and intellectual, progressive and conservative Sephardic and Mizrahi perspectives all appropriated the Zionist ethos of Merger of Diasporas (Lissak 1972), to conceive it as a process of *"mutual and fair conceding"* of customs and traditions[viii], where both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim *"learn from one another, merge into each other and not cancel one in favor of the other"*[ix]. This shared understanding of the meaning of the Merger of Diasporas is what united Mizrahi and Sephardic activists of all spheres of activity, except for those who were more fully assimilated into Zionist parties and internalized the Ashkenazi view toward the east. Some researchers saw the Mizrahi discourse about Merger of

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[i] "Israeli Sociology", *IOP*, June 1965.

[ii] A. Yishai,"The Ethnic Problem in Mapai´s Convention" (be'ayat ha-'edot be-veidat mapai), *IB*, 8.11.63, p. 4.

[iii] E.g. Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to *Maariv's* editor, 20.6.65, CZA 430A/42/1; H. Eitan, "The Soft Spots of the Ethnic Problem" (nekudot ha-torpa shel ha-be'aya ha-'adatit), *IB*, 5.8.63, p. 6; Eliachar (1967): 3, 9-18; A. Oron, "The danger of Wadi Salib had not passed" (sakanat vadi salib terem halfa), *IB*, 25.11.66. "Versus the Ashkenazi Revolution" (mul ha-mahapekha ha-ashkenazit), *Kol Sinai*, March 1964 (nisan tashkad).

[iv] For instance, in *Shevet Va'am* and other publications. "Reflecting in the Press" (be-rei ha-'itonot), *IB*, 11.1.63, p. 15.

[v] Eliachar (1967):15

[vi] Eliachar (1967):23

[vii] Eliahu Eliachar, "Is it Really Whites Versus Blacks?" (ha-omnam shhorim mul levanim?), *IB*, 10.2.63, pp. 3-4.

[viii] Yosef Tubi's journal, entry of 5.3.63, TA.

[ix] H. Shimoni, "In Front of Locked Gates" (bi-fnei sha'arim ne'ulim), *IB*, 10.12.63, p. 4. About the popular counter-hegemonic framing of the Merger of Diasporas see Peres (1976): 100; and in political activity: Lissak (1972).

Diasporas as expressing dependence in Ashkenazim (e.g. Meir-Glitzenstein 2009). However, there were Mizrahi groups and public figures who in fact expressed an autonomous voice, by contextualizing this vision of Merger of Diasporas within a broader geo-political view. This autonomous voice developed as a result of the socio-economic background and past lived experiences of its carriers[i]. This background constructed an autochthonous theory of Zionism, which presented the Merger of Diasporas as a project that can be seen as parallel to what Bonaventura De Sousa Santos called "the ecology of knowledges". Superficially, it seems that the ecology of knowledges could be interpreted as the popular Sephardic-Mizrahi claim for a *"cultural merger that crystalizes into one system all the good and beautiful in the traditions of all different ethnicities.."*[ii] However, as De Sousa Santos pointed out, mere recognition of cultural diversity is not the same as recognition in epistemological diversity, which is what this ecology stands for (Santos 2007). The ecology of knowledges is based on a principal that sees all systems of knowledge as incomplete, science as well as other symbolic universes and wisdoms. Ecology stands for the possibility of non-destructible relations between systems of knowledge (Santos 2006): not as abstract theories but as knowledge practices. Ecology of knowledges is reflected in the possibility to develop strategies according to the knowledges most suited to pursue a certain goal (as the Merger of Diasporas), rather than through privileging scientific knowledge simply because of its position in the power structure (Santos 2007). Unlike the search for harmonious relations between communities, this is about entering dialogue to which each form of knowledge contributes in relation with its own lacunas, if we will (Santos 2006)[iii]. As shown, the "monoculture" (Santos 2006) of Ashkenazi scientific knowledge production about Mizrahim and about Arabs was contested in the *IB* for the same subjective and practical reasons De Sousa Santos pointed out.

De Sousa Santos (2006) emphasized the dangers of reproducing colonial power relations when different movements from different cultures enter epistemological dialogue and attempt to create practical cooperation. When indigenous and western knowledges enter dialogue there is continuous danger that the latter will annex and dominate the first (Foucault 2003, Keating 2009, Bhabha 1994). Therefore, different authors, including our activists, noted the importance for the subaltern culture to first get empowered, regain cultural bearing and self-esteem and recover its autonomous dignity. This can be done by making forms of knowledge had been made absent visible, and creating an "inventory" of the traces that historical processes left on

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[i] Established socio-economic background and higher education allowed such a view because these intellectuals could claim for themselves or for their circles to take power positions in diplomacy. Impoverished social stratums of immigrants could not develop this claim because they could not claim positions in diplomacy, that is, it would not be their autonomous voice.
[ii] Undated untitled document in handwriting, seemingly a draft for the SCMD platform, TA.
[iii] See Santos (2006, 2007) for more about ignorance in the ecology of knowledges, other types of related ecologies and inter-cultural translation.

the self[i] (Memmi 1965, 1998). This inventory is necessary in order to create a dialogue that nurtures such ecology. For this reason, autonomous production of knowledge was an obvious starting point for all kinds of autonomous Sephardic and Mizrahi organizations of the time in their quest for Merger of Diasporas, not merely of the political organizations. The construction of inner-strength of this imagined community was essential in order to allow its very participation in the ecology of knowledges. The empowerment of Mizrahi identity was required in order to construct a better bargaining position, so to speak, in the process of national unification. Contextualizing the project of empowerment of Mizrahim within ecology of knowledges that included explicit references for learning from the Arab world, though, was not a trivial move, and had to be formulated with caution and precision. Many of those most consistently writing about it in the *IB* used pseudonyms, like "Oriental Jew". Groups as the SCMD lacked inner-coherency to allow addressing such sensitive topics, and *"would not enter things that are none of [their] business and are controversial"[ii]*. On the *IB* pages in this period, conditions had ripened again to formulate a vision of an intercultural state, nurtured by ecology of Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi and Arab knowledges. No type of knowledge was discarded or adopted in its totality. The Ashkenazim brought technological developments of late modernity, the Sephardim held the heritage of grand Jewish thought of early modernity, and the Arabs knew how to combine the two knowledges, getting modernized without losing their identity[iii].

This discourse remained mainly as a theoretical debate, and had no practical implications. It expressed an aspiration for such an ecology of knowledge, but did not entail in any sense its realization. Educational projects that were meant to instigate a mutual and egalitarian Merger of Diasporas process generally did not succeed in fulfilling this mission in this period. This was the case of the Great Mativta. It seems the Great Mativta did not start functioning in a continuous manner until 1964[iv], and even then it did not materialize its essence. Despite its purpose of performing as space for empowering and conserving Sephardic Judaism, the colonial power balance penetrated its very essence. Since the toranic Sephardic world has been going through its own processes of colonization by Ashkenazi Judaism, the institution did not transmit Sephardic liturgy and heritage but Ashkenazi ones. That was despite having Rabbi Ovadia Yoef as its headmaster. That is, there were no Sephardic rabbis of stature able to perform such rabbinical-Sephardic pedagogical work[v]. This failure is probably what inspired

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[i] Antonio Gramci in Said (1978).

[ii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.

[iii] Mizrahi Jew, "In the Depth of Mizrahi Statistics" (be-nivhey ha-statistica ha-mizrahiit), *IB*, 10.6.66; Eliahu Eliachar (pseud. Mashkif), "Inaccuracies of the Minister Aran" (i-diyukim be-fi ha-sar aran), *IB*, 9.7.65, p. 10.

[iv] Sh. Ben-Shimon, "The School Year in the Toranic Academy-High School was Opened" (nifteha shant ha-limudim ba-yeshiva tikhon), *IB*, 26.9.65, p. 31.

[v] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to Michael Selzer, 24.1.65, CZA 430A/43/3; "General Committee Meeting" (yeshivat va'ad klali), 8.12.65, CSCJA container 6236 file 380.

Eliachar to concentrate his efforts, by the end of this period, on the construction of an "institution for communal relations". This institution was meant to serve also as the archives of the CSCJ, and to function as an autonomous academic sphere for knowledge production about and by Sephardim and Mizrahim[i]. This was a response to the general growth in knowledge production about these issues, and specifically to the Ashkenazi way of framing the socio-economic problems of the Mizrahim within the academy, always within the narrow prism of modernization theory.

III. NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS   and the Coloniality of Being

The anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s often relied on an essentialist perceptions of identity of the colonized subjects, glorifying the inferiorized subaltern culture as superior. This tendency has often been regarded as preserving the colonial discourse that imagines colonizers and colonized as essentialist dichotomies, and for merely reversing colonial Eurocentric logics, rather than challenging or dismantling them. Fanon (1965) criticized this tendency of the Negritude movement, and Grosfougel (2010), in what he called Third World fundamentalism. Ahmad (1992) named these tendencies third wordlist cultural nationalism and Valldejuli (2007) referred to these tendencies as "nativism". As reviewed in chapter 2, the concept "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1988) suggests that this way of formulating the identity of the oppressed in a positive way, as essentially superior to their oppressor, is a necessary phase in order to construct a political power that can oppose colonialism (Shohat & Stam 1994). Essentialist views of identity are sometimes leveraged into identity-politics (Bernstein 2005), that demand acknowledgement of the singularity of a groups' identity, and define rights that subsequently derive from it. In certain senses the CSCJ tried to make this form of politics central in their parliamentary politics in early 1950s, only they could not quite define clearly enough or in a positive manner the collective identity which they aimed to represent. Not participating in parliamentary politics generally exempted this intellectual circle from the need to define and struggle for such an identity. The pages of the *IB* were not entirely devoid of identity-politics or essentialist conceptualizations of Sephardic and Mizrahi identities as superior, but as ideologies, these did not develop to the extent that other ideas did. Frantz Fanon expanded on the essentialist phase in the development of the anti-colonial discourse, as part of the native intellectuals' process of formulating national consciousness. As recalled, "native intellectuals" are often carriers of border-thinking or Mestiza consciousness, not belonging to the colonizing

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[i] Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to the Hebrew University, undated, CSCJA container 6230 file 291; Letter from E. Eliachar to Mr. Nurock, 18.4.66, CZA 430A/43/3; "Action Plan of the New Council, 1963" (tokhnit ha-pe'ula shel ha-va'ad ha-hadash, 1963), CZA 430A/33/2.

layer but also not entirely to the colonized society. The first phase in their construction of national consciousness, according to Fanon, consists of the native intellectuals' efforts to prove their ability to assimilate within the colonial culture. Zureik (1979) referred to this phase as entailing "the adoption of language of politics that is detrimental to their struggle: individualism, compromise, competition, political parties". Slabosdky (2014) wrote of the imposition in this stage of a "European veil", entailing self-rejection and attempts to ignore the racial constructions of the system to which the intellectual attempts to assimilate to. The next phase is self-acceptance (Slabosky 2014), an essentialist and romantic return to the roots, abandoning individualism (Zureik 1979), becoming immersed in the native people and abandoning all western knowledge. This phase allows border-thinking to flourish, as the intellectuals re-appropriate their knowledge and culture to construct a counter-narrative of their heritage (Slabodsky 2014). It is in this phase that, according to Fanon, nativist politics and discourse can get generated.

"...What is clear is that even when [Mizrahim] got themselves education, let go of all their traditional and ethnic values, they could not get absorbed within Ashkenazi society, which is in fact the recognized Israeli society. And so, these youngsters lost from all side [yatzu kerhim mikan umikan], *they burnt on purpose their bridge to the ethnic society, willingly or unwillingly, but the transition to the Ashkenazim these last are not willing to hand. And so there is a danger of drowning...Now every person is pushed by their will to exist. Largely, they try to rebuild the burnt bridge and then in certain cases they become not only Ethnic-Mizrahi patriots, but also ethnic chauvinists... they return to speak in their Mizrahi language, in the presence of Ashkenazim and foreigners at large, and they are more interested in the history and culture of their ethnic group and in their demand for unification of the people of Israel and cancelling 'second Israel'"*[i]

The third phase, according to Fanon, is expressed in literary productions, and aims at "arousing the public" by way of emphasizing their people's cultural achievements. However, Fanon reminds us, since the intellectual is not truly a part of the people he reproduces mainly "exoticism". In our context, these are mainly theoretical and intellectual texts about customs and folklore, writings that do not reflect the real needs of the people (Fanon 1965). This famous theory of Fanon has been criticized for the inaccuracy entailed in the strict division into consecutive stages (Williams & Chrisman 1994). Said (1993) suggested that these are not necessarily consecutive phases but rather congruent. In fact, these stages can even exist simultaneously in one individuals' discourse. The Jewish Tunisian writer Memmi (1965), described two phases in the construction of anti-colonial liberation struggles, very similar to Fanon's first and second phases. He claimed that the realization of the second phase of returning

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[i]"The Goal of the Cell of Mizrahi Students" (matrato shel ha-hug le-studentim bnei 'edot ha-mizrah), Yosef Tubi's journal, entry on 5.3.62, TA.

to the roots, for Jews was likely to be expressed through Zionist ideology, as the principal form of Jewish national liberation (Memmi 1975). Kassab (2009) and Hall (2006) also noted two phases in decolonial cultural critique and in the construction of ethnicity-based politics, respectively. In their analysis, the first phase is an elevation of an essentialist identity, whereas later on, wider humanistic critiques develop that include demands for rights for other groups as well.

The first phase of assimilation that Fanon mentions can certainly be claimed to fit with the processes reviewed over the native intellectuals of the CSCJ in the 1950s, which included certain abandonment of their border-thinking in favor of the colonizer's side of the border. The development of autochthonous, eastern Zionism of the 1960s entailed a re-appreciation to the advantages of this circle's border-thinking, developing a critical theory from the unique position of both colonizers and colonized. Eastern Zionism bears more similarities to the third phase of Fanon, of intellectual text productions, also expressing wide humanistic critique, than to a stage of promoting essentialist-nativist identities, although considering Memmi's suggestions, it could be seen as encompassing both. However, it seems more correct to suggest that the phase of strategic essentialism was mostly eluded by this elite.

The avoidance of the essentialist phase in the Mizrahi struggle has been implicitly noted by other researchers who explored Sephardic and Mizrahi mobilizations and organizations. Research tends to dismiss the transformative value of Sephardic and Mizrahi political activity because their aim was to get included in the national collective as designed by Ashkenazi Zionists. Here, I suggest that the fact that this was the goal of autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political activity does not necessarily cancel the potential transformative value of their discourse. Furthermore, I would suggest that the inability of the political discourse of the time to construct identity-politics separately, developing an essentialist-nativist perspective, had more to do with the 1948 Rupture than with the desire to participate equally in the colonial national collective. If Mizrahim in the state of Israel are both colonizers and colonized, it was not necessarily taking the side of the colonizers that prevented them from developing anti-colonial identity-politics based on essentialist nativist identity, although that certainly was the case for many organizations. In other cases, explored here, it was the ontological and physical fracture that occurred to these immigrants and natives in 1948 that prevented their anti-colonial discourse from developing into strategic essentialism. Leon (2010) pointed out the physical and mental barriers with the Arab world and their influence over the development of Mizrahi ultra-orthodoxy. The same barriers also prevented the Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectuals-activists from constructing their own form of nativism, and use images within their own roots in Islamic civilization. Articulating an essentialist superiority of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries as a whole would necessarily rely on praising the tolerance and grandeur of Islamic civilization. The activists in question were not afraid of pointing out the advantageous characteristics and beauty

of Islamic civilizations, and neither of identifying it as related to themselves. However, due to the anti-Zionist exterminatory rhetoric of Arab nationalisms, they certainly could not build an essentialist image of themselves on this civilizational base, not once Muslims and Jews have declared each other mortal enemies. Specifying the contents of an essentialist Mizrahi and Sephardic collective identity would inevitably result either in superficiality[i], or in praise of those who declared a desire to destroy the Jewish nation.

Instead of developing an essentialist Judeo-Islamic collective identity that would help design an anti-colonial struggle, the native intellectuals' writing in the *IB* toiled at developing an alternative national theory embedded in broader humanist critique, that was meant to design an alternative Jewish collective identity based on spiritual eastern Jewish pillars, rather than the national European pillars imported by the Zionist movement. These eastern pillars, somewhat ironically, were rooted in the very western end of the Mediterranean Sea, in *Sefarad/Al-Andalus*: the Jewish return to the east was understood as translating that time and place to present reality and region. This space-time translation was an act of inter-cultural translation (Santos 2006): the writers chose the most relevant knowledge base in their own culture to establish decolonial alternatives within a dialogue with the colonial culture. By translating the heritage of *Sefarad*, they avoided emphasizing components of the east that would be too dangerous to present in the contact with the colonial culture, but chose the most inclusive version of historical Judaism, the one that can be considered as a common base for Ashkenazi and Sephardic Judaism as well as Islamic civilization.

Fanon (1965) pointed out that native intellectuals tended to conceptualize entire civilizations as the basis for their anti-colonial nationalisms, such as Negro-African and Muslim-Arab civilizations. In a similar manner, Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectuals conceptualized The East. By treating the east as one civilizational unit, the activists-intellectuals could construct certain continuities between their culture and Islamic civilization, and to demand respect for both. The conceptualization of the Jewish state's place within eastern civilization was the basis for an alternative national theory to modern/colonial Zionist theory. This last had long been materialized into a matrix of colonial power over the eastern lands and populations. By contrast, autochthonous-regional, eastern Zionism was a theoretical debate. It did not develop into praxis; it did not directly inspire or relate to any political group or practical struggle, nor did it designate a route to trickle out to society. Despite their political aspirations and active involvement in the political field, the activists who developed these intellectual writings did not exceed from the line of the critical intellectuals of the time, who were dedicated to the cause of

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[i] E.g. Avner Shaki,"The Sephardic and Mizrahi Public in Israel as a Cultural Bridge between Israel and the Arab Countries" (ha-tsibur ha-sfaradi ve-ha-mizrahi be-israel ke-rosh gesher tarbuti ben israel ve-'arav), *IB*, 11.1.63, p. 13.

anchoring Israel in its geo-political cultural surroundings, but from an intellectual-cultural niche, inspiring thought and not action (Efron 2005). The intellectual activists' avoidance of the essentialist phase can be considered then as a proof of its importance for the development of decolonial political action.

Moreover, the lack of this essentialist attitude was another factor distancing the intellectual activists from wider spheres of the politicized public they presumed to write to and about. According to Fanon (1965), and to our intellectuals' own observations about the impoverished social stratums of immigrants, the people who bore the burden of the liberation struggles in practice -those initiating protests and those practicing numerous acts of everyday resistance- tended towards demagogy based on essentialist nativist perspective of particular ethnicities: "the emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity" (Fanon 1965: 211). The previous part reviewed the wide span of the phenomena of elevating essentialist Mizrahi ethnic identities in the political field in this decade. However, the degree to which such an approach was directed against Ashkenazim is hard to tell for lack of primary material: it seems it was more prevalent among the lower stratums of society, and was usually verbal or physical and therefore left little textual evidence[i].

"After the disturbances started we didn't leave the house for one week, we were afraid. Any Ashkenazi that would be seen would not finish well."[ii]

"[there is] acute bitterness and sometimes even real hatred in the relation of the eastern ethnicities to the western ethnicities. This becomes more acute [mahrif] *as much as you descend to the poor and uneducated stratums of the people"*[iii]

Yosef Tubi referred to these tendencies of the time as "ethnic patriotism" or "ethnic chauvinism"[iv], carried out by "professional Yemenite nationalists"[v]. Tubi explained the danger of feelings of inferiority, which can cause aggressiveness and the need to revenge, to *"become over"* the others[vi]. As mentioned, from the perspective of our intellectual activists, the violent tendencies that accompanied the essentialist-nativist discourse only granted them more responsibility over the lower social stratums of immigrants:

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[i] For some reports or references of such attitude see also: "Editorial Notes" (dvar Ha-ma'arekhet), *EM,* 11.8.59, p. 1; B. Arditi, "Who Nourished Ethnic Hatred?" (mi metapeah sinaah 'adatit?), *IB*, 10.12.63, p. 5; Yehezkel Zamir, "Merger of Diasporas and Security. One Versus the Other" (mizug galuyot ve-bitahon. ze neged ze), *IB*, 2.12.62, p. 9.

[ii] Emil Mimel in Meyuhas et.al. (14.7.16).

[iii] Letter to the journal "The Young Generation" (ha-dor ha-tsa'ir), Mapai Publishing, Jerusalem. Undated and unsigned, TA.

[iv] E.g. Yosef Tubi's journal, entry of 6.3.62, TA.

[v] Interview with Yosef Tubi, 12.11.17.

[vi] Ibid.

"Who will take care of the problem? Not hot-headed, unrestraint people without any responsibility towards the nation and the state, but responsible people. The Sephardic intelligence has to join around the movement"[i]

"If a danger is spotted to dress [the Mizrahi struggle for equality] as a national struggle, those who take care of the issue attempt to divert away [le-hitrahek] *from any such theme"* [ii]

The last quote of Cohen-Tzidon reflects the spirits of the time and region, where essentialist conceptions of identity were promoted along with the group's superiority over others, in order to gain national liberation. As colonized subjects, Mizrahim might have developed "national" sentiments of an essentialist, particular ethnic identity, superior to other ethnic groups and especially to Ashkenazim. However, from Mizrahim's position as colonizers, part of the Zionist national collective, such sentiments might have been directed towards Arabs as well, as some secondary sources reflect (Peres 1976: 93-97). The intellectuals that conceptualized autochthonous-regional Zionism, based on their Mizrahi and Sephardic backgrounds, did not treat the seeming paradox such a tendency could imply. Some perhaps dismissed this popular hatred to Arabs as an ephemeral or marginal phenomenon. In essence, even if there was growing hostility towards the Arabs within the impoverished social stratums of Mizrahim, this was not a paradox for the inclusive political project of regional-autochthonous Zionism, exactly because it did not perceive Sephardic and Mizrahi identity in an essentialist manner. Therefore, for instance, the Andalusian Golden Age was more often perceived as the foundation of Judaism at large, to serve as the basis of the Jewish state, and not merely as a tool for empowering a distinct Sephardic identity[iii].

The ontological dimension of Zionist coloniality, the coloniality of being, constructed spiritual and mental barriers of hostility between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, raising fortified walls equipped with the best tools of European modernity, from its arrogant mental constructions to its latest technological advancements. Jews whose heritage was part of Islamic civilization got uprooted by Zionist and Arab national movements, and in the 1960s we saw their attempts to get re-rooted in the new reality formed. Mizrahi Judaism was gradually adapting to the modern/colonial environment, as particular rituals and customs that were enrooted in the countries of origin got popularly abandoned (Deshen 1972a). Sephardic rabbinical guidance changed its patterns, and rabbis were developing conservative responses to the changes by adapting to Ashkenazi patterns of Judaism and accepting its superiority. In *Kol Sinai* the roots of the Israeli people and of Sephardic Judaism were imagined in the Torah and

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[i] Y. M. Immanuel, "Before the Leap" (likrat zinuk), *Young Israel*, 18.11.64.

[ii] "Eastern Ethnicities-A Boiling Pot. Etgar Talk with Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon" ('edot ha-mizrah: sir 'al ha-esh. sihat etgar 'im shlomo Cohen-Tzidon", *Etgar,* 4.10.62.

[iii] E.g. Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Singular View: The Military Regime is not Justified" (da'at yahid. kiyum ha-memshal ha-tsvai be-yisrael eino mutsdak), *IB*, 5.4.62, p. 5; N. Rejwan, "Masterpieces of Jewish-Arab Culture" (yetsirot mofet me-ha-tarbut hayehudit 'aravit), *IB*, 25.12.66.

the Halacha in a strict sense, which until then had never been popular or central in Sephardic Judaism (Zohar 2001). The native intellectuals of the time, from their place of enunciation as natives to the region, intended to challenge the coloniality of being by developing a competing Zionist theory, drawing a Zionist project inspired by their own image, which embodied an organic continuity between their past in the Arab Middle East and the Israeli present (Efron 2005). The two intellectual endeavors in the *IB* and in *Kol Sinai* to construct an autonomous modern Mizrahi voice remained theoretical in this decade, they had no chance -and therefore no ambition either- to develop strategy for action. In fact, they had to be careful not to seem politically opportunistic: forming any kind of political organization could only undermine their claims[i]. As the project of organizing Sephardic ultra-orthodoxy in a movement will advance, it will bear more similarities to nativist anti-colonialism, directed against Ashkenazi ultra-orthodoxy (Zohar 2001). In the period studied, however, the essentialist strategy in the political field was exactly what guided the local groups who got organized on basis of specific ethnicities. The coloniality of power limited the essentialist strategy to a context that did not threaten its domination, but rather served it. The local ethnic identities did not need to rely on their spiritual roots in Muslim environment, because they were so very specific, they were organic collective identities formed by the process of immigration:

"*Now it happens here like in the Diaspora, when Jews were looking for Jews, [so here] Yemenites are looking for Yemenites. You want to be with people with the same orientation, the same courtesy, the same problems, the same ways to think and you don't have a doubt whether it's in friendly terms or not.*"[ii]

These organic collective identities were manipulated in the political sphere in this decade, in a way that inhibited the development of praxis to the projects of autochthonous-regional eastern Zionism and of the eastern Judaism of Sephardic ultra-orthodoxy.

In late 1966, as tensions were soaring between Israel, the surrounding countries, and the emerging Palestinian Fatah organization, the *IB*'s contributors maintained almost complete silence regarding these issues. Again it became clear that the fact that Ashkenazi Zionists had succeeded in establishing the nation state, weakened the Sephardic claim regarding the benefits that could have been achieved had they played a more central role in Arab-Israeli politics[iii]. From another perspective, it can be claimed that having established a Jewish state on such rocky pillars exempted those that did not participate in its establishment from coming up with creative solutions when these pillars were under threat of falling apart. In the 1960s, the unexplored role

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[i] "*Danger, Jewish racialism! Israel's Sephardim : integration, or disintegration*?" 1965. Jerusalem : Council of the Sephardi Community of Jerusalem. See Fanon (1965): 223.
[ii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18.
[iii] E. Eliachar "Israel-Arab Relations. Before the UN General Assembly Session (yahasei Israel 'arav. likrat moshav 'atseret ha-um), *IB*, 1.12.64, p. 3.

of Sephardim as cultural-political intermediaries was not reclaimed as loudly as before 1948, rather there was more emphasis on recollecting diplomatic paths not taken before the establishment of Israel[i]. When military combat and exchanges of violence with Palestinians and with Arab countries resurged, autochthonous-regional Zionism had no practical suggestions to offer. The intellectuals had no public critique towards the government's military policies, such critique was expressed only in private spheres[ii]. If coloniality and modernity are two sides of the same coin, then by June of 1967, the positive side of the colonial/modern coin, the side lit by a democratic nation state that has modern military power, shined brighter than ever. It allowed the Israeli public at large, including the Mizrahi and Sephardi activists and intellectuals at hand, relief and protection in face of the Arab rhetoric and goal to extinguish the state[iii]. Autochthonous Zionism was meant to prevent arriving to the state of war, it was not constructed to handle it.

CONCLUSION   **Mizrahi Autonomous Organizations 1958-1967**

In the period at hand, the subjugation of Mizrahi population got consolidated, as many of them found a stable place in the lower stratums of a new socio-ethnic class structure. For large sections of this population, the establishment of towns of Mizrahi majority in the periphery stabilized patterns of geographical, economic, religious, spiritual, social, cultural and political marginalization. This stability allowed developing organizational capacities from the same discontent that in the 1950s was expressed in sporadic upheavals and protests. This generation of Mizrahi political activists was struggling inside a colonial system that oppressed acts of contention by sophisticated as well as violent means, and rewarded collaborators with partial inclusion and certain opportunities for upwards social mobility. The Zionist colonial system was socially, politically and economically oriented westward, in a way that allowed devaluing, exploiting and expropriating the eastern subjects involved in the system. Palestinian Arabs suffered from these dynamics in a very direct manner, whereas for Mizrahim these power relations were concealed behind Jewish national discourse, which maintained an appearance of offering routes for partial inclusion in the colonial system. Since those Mizrahim opposing the system did not want to lose altogether the possibility to get included in it, they could not get

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[i] E.g. Eliahu Sasson, "Syria Suggested Direct Negotiations between Jews and Arabs", *IB*, 14.9.66.
[ii] See letter of Eliahu Eliachar to Michael Selzer, undated (Apr. November-December 1966), CZA 430A/42/3/2; Letter from Eliahu Eliachar to D. Khazzoum, 16.3.67, CSCJA container 6263 file 583.
[iii] See Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon´s intervention in Knesset Protocols, 30.5.67.

organized against its colonial aspects. The stability of this period allowed the phenomenon of ashkenization to deepen and expand:

"Many find relief to the nerves of the material and spiritual siege held upon us by dismissing the cultural, artistic, moral and historical values of the eastern man, they dismiss his language, past and worldview. This way estrangement [zarut] *and distance grow, and on top of that are added inferiority complexes. people who wish to appear as Europeans and westerners and even to dress us forcefully with European cloths, even though it does not fit most of us and endangers our future and our very existence"*[i]

The last sentence is a reference to the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox outfit, and so this is a critique of toranic colonization, and of the profound consequences of the coloniality of knowledge and of being. In this quote Mizrahim form part of the colonial matrix of power, both as its victims and its exercisers, showing their own agency in choosing to assimilate to Ashkenazim.

The revolt in Wadi Salib in 1959 opened a period of shameless bartering and trading in the power of organized ethnic communities. Representation of Mizrahim and Sephardim in state institutions was in continuous growth, and the way to maintain it growing seemed to have been found: politically strengthening specific ethnic communities, while qualitatively vacating them from any political content, creating an empty competition between different groups. The adjective "ethnic" became widespread to signify the homogeneity of these political propositions. This new political game became focused on expanding and materializing the paths for inclusion, and any struggle against the dominant colonial aspects of the Zionist system lost political relevance.

"Most of these fractions, one of their problems is that they were immediately suspected -rightfully of not- as coming to promote a political or personal agenda. And the Mizrahi public was completely allergic to this. They would always be suspected…the public was completely burnt on these matters."[ii]

Empty struggles over power positions between different ethnic groups became so popular that any autonomous collective ethnic struggle or leader were automatically suspected of promoting a hidden interest, either of their own ethnic group or directly of the leader himself, to gain personal privileges or to get better positioned in an existing party. The press of the period reflects a dire conflict of Mizrahi groups and leaders who gained power positions, between the expectation that they serve the interests of their communities, circles and families, and their commitment to democratic principles or to their party[iii]. Notwithstanding, after 1961 the autonomous groups generally abandoned the discussion about these contradicting expectation.

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[i] Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon, "Ways to Relief the Animosity Between Israel and Arab Countries" (drakhim le-hafagat ha-eiva ben israel le-artsot 'arav), *IB*, 8.4.63, p. 9.

[ii] Interview with Tuvia Sulami, 24.1.18

[iii] E.g. "The Question of Ethnic Representation" (le-sheelat ha-yitsug ha-'adati), *Davar*, 2.9.62, p. 3; Uri Porat, "You can't tell me to go home" (atem lo tagidu li lalekhet ha-baitah), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 2.7.63, p. 4; M. Levi, "Good Luck in the Elections to the Ethnic Lists"(derekh tsleha ba-bhirot la-reshimot ha-'adatiot), *IB*, 26.9.65, p. 16.

Questions that beforehand were significant, of who was fit to represent this public and how should this representation be expressed, were left hanging without proper debate.

This political atmosphere then presented major obstacles for groups who attempted to formulate an autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic voice. These groups also had to prove the legitimacy of their existence despite the growing phenomenon of acculturation toward the dominant Ashkenazi-Israeli pole, and despite the commonplace public discourse conceiving of the "ethnic problem" as a mere class issue with no specific cultural grounding[i]. The autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic groups dedicated much efforts just to explain to themselves and to argue in front of the dominant elites that there were racist aspects -cultural, epistemological and social- to the discrimination that was enacted by the state.

The different groups found few bases for cooperation, despite some common grounds, and usually in struggles that were not about systematic and profound changes. The main struggle that easily united several groups was the one over the inferiorized status of Sephardic rabbis in state institutions. However, the coloniality of power infiltrated into Mizrahi spirituality, enforcing and unfolding the coloniality of being, directing the struggle over representation in the rabbinical sphere, as in other political spheres, to quantitative rather than qualitative questions.

In this period, Mizrahi political activists who had ambitions to uproot the colonial base of the structure of power had to keep out of politics. Decolonial thinking in this period could only arise from organizations that loudly declared themselves as non-party and non-political. In this period, the publication, *In the Battle*, along with other publications of the CSCJ, gathered intellectuals who were "natives of the region", who developed writing and theory that constructed a vision for a regional-autochthonous, eastern Zionism. This theory tied the popular Sephardic meaning of the Merger of Diasporas project with a wider geo-political ambition for integration in the region. The intellectuals and activists who contributed to this line of thought were responding to the coherency and strength of the Ashkenazi Zionist ideologues in the beginning of the 19th century, who shaped the ethos and image of the Israeli state. The alternative, regional-autochthonous Zionism tied together the critiques of the subjugation of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewries and of Arabs under one civilizational unit of 'The East', in order to portray the image of the Jewish nation, re-define the meaning and the goals of the Jewish state in the Middle East, as well as its very justification to exist there:

"What gives the Jews the right to establish a state in a land that belonged to the Arabs until not long ago (except for few thousands of Jews)? The Balfour declaration? That's nonsense. Who gave the British the

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[i] This was declared by Ben Gurion, see letter from David Ben Gurion to Eliahu Sasson and Bechor Chetrit, 11.10.62, BGA: subject files, container 42 file 245; Uri Avnery, "The Subject: The Equator" (ha-nidon: kav ha-mashve), *Ha'olam Haze,* 19.12.62, p. 4.

authority to decide that? The UN? The value of this statement is dubious in principal. There was no continuous settlement of Jew in Eretz-Israel. What then? Only one thing. The promise given to the people of Israel on the land and the fact they did not give it up in its years of exile after getting expelled from the land."[i]

This thinking had been developed by the native elites as well as by immigrants who had had the chance to get educated in a mixed Arab, Jewish and western environments. Their perspective derived from this diversity in knowledge sources, which allowed them to build a non-Eurocentric logic of the Zionist Merger of Diasporas project that was nurtured from their border-thinking and aspired towards an ecology of knowledges. They got inspiration and tailwind from Asian and African national anti-colonial struggles, especially through their influence over western-progressive circles in Europe and the United States[ii]. The legitimacy for Mizrahi and Sephardic political activists to structure an inclusive discourse towards the Arab world relied on this international atmosphere, its influence on Israeli public spirit, and on their autochthonous identity in the region, which allowed them to claim a stance of intermediaries between Arab and Israeli cultures and knowledges. This discourse did not construct any base for political action. It could be claimed that the closed structure of opportunities for political action is in fact what allowed the development of such decolonial political discourses: the intellectual freedom to write about Israel-Arab rapprochement was allowed by the lack of intention to take political action with regards.

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[i] Letter from Yosef Tubi to MP Yisrael Yesha'ayahu, undated, TA.

[ii] This is evident in different articles quoted in the IB, and also for instance in the increasing usage in the adjective oriental (*orientali*) rather than eastern (*mizrahi*), which might reflect the influence of western theoreticians on the development of such theory among the intellectual activists in this research. Direct references to Arab anti-colonial discourse were usually used as an excuse for reclaiming positions of power in circles of Israeli diplomats, as a perceived antidote to Arab anti-colonial discourse, a way to eradicate Israel´s stereotype as an imperialist and colonial force in the Middle East.

CHAPTER 7
IRAQIS IN THE ISRAELI COMMUNIST PARTY (ICP)
1948-1965

PART I

This chapter reviews the role of Mizrahi communist in elaborating decolonial perspectives and struggles in Israel during almost in the entire period of study of this research. The reason for dedicating a separate chapter for them is mainly due to the limitations of this review, which is based only on Hebrew, English and Spanish materials, while the principal bulk of existing documents of interest for this research is written in Arabic. Since this research is dedicated to the study of autonomous Mizrahi political organizations, a more comprehensive investigation of the present subject would probably tell the story of the development of the Iraqi Forum, a contemporary socio-political association created by ICP activists. In the past decades, the Forum has formed part of Hadash, the conglomeration of bodies which the ICP has been leading since 1977.

The Israeli Communist Party (ICP) was formed in October of 1948, from the unison of the Jewish "Palestinian Communist Party" and the Arab-Palestinian "National Liberation League". This chapter ends in 1965, with the split that occurred in the ICP, which discomposed the party back into these two national components. Notwithstanding, some Jews, including Mizrahim, joined the Arab-majority splinter. Efron (2005) claimed the split marked an end to an era of a joint Arab-Jewish struggle, after which the ICP became and remained until nowadays a party of Arab majority, addressing primarily Israeli Palestinian Arabs. This is only partially true, as the Jewish minority has significant weight in the party, which is expressed, among others, in safeguarded seats in the parliament. The review presented in this chapter is based on documents that to the best of my knowledge have yet to been investigated, which demonstrate the particular position of Iraqi ICP members in the process that led to the split[i].

The communist party, as a revolutionary force for uncompromising equality, and by its internationalist class ideology, is naturally positioned against any kind of ethnic discrimination that is expressed in economical oppression and exploitation. The ICP indeed had an important role in accompanying and leading lower-stratum Mizrahim's struggles for equality throughout

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[i] Here I refer mainly to the meeting protocols of the Bnei-Brak branch, which was of Iraqi majority and was one of the two Jewish branches of the party to join the Arab-majority party in the split (Nahas 1976). These protocols were found in troves of documents that were made public in 2015: NLIA V1272-3 & 4. These troves also include a testimony of a meeting of the heads of the Israeli Communist Party and the Jordanian Communist party; a meeting which has apparently been significant in igniting the occurrences that eventually caused the split in 1965.

the period of study (Roby 2015, Gozansky 2018, Bashkin 2017). However, the Mizrahi component of these struggles is generally indiscernible, concealed under the class terminology that dominates the ICP's historical documents. Both ICP members and its press almost exclusively only referred to class and social nominators such as immigrants, unemployed [*muvtalim*, *mehusarei 'avoda*], residents of transit camps, slum dwellers [*dayarei skhunot ha-'oni*], or the catch-all term, neighborhood dwellers [*bnei ha-shkhunot*]. Shohat (1988: 26) criticized this Marxist allusion to generic "Jewish workers", as "a simplification roughly parallel to speaking of the exploitation of 'American' workers in southern cotton plantations". The ICP expressed explicit protest against ethnic discrimination only when the oppression was explicitly so, and in some other rare occasions, as around the Wadi Salib events. Bashkin (2017: 128) claimed that in such key moments, the party neglected the struggles against Inner-Jewish racism and reaffirmed the exclusivity of class oppression.

The ICP is the continuation of the PCP, which since its establishment in 1923 has been anti-Zionist, viewing Zionism as a form of western imperialism. This position has limited greatly the constitutions under which the party was operating. Under Mapai's reign, the ICP and its members were treated as a national pariah (Bashkin 2017), and belonging to the ICP had far reaching consequences for the personal life of its members. Jews belonging to the party were considered national traitors and were denied employment and housing opportunities that were controlled by the state. Just like independent Mizrahi activists, every communist was put to a personal test of fidelity to their political cause, challenged by a series of pressures, temptations and threats transmitted by Mapai messengers (Gozansky 2018). Arab members were susceptible to worse forms of oppression, as internal exile to other cities, administrative arrests, house arrests and simple imprisonment[i] (Cohen 2006). In fact, one of the declared purposes of the military regime was to prevent communism from spreading within the Israeli Palestinian Arab population. This task was fulfilled also by contracting people to do counter advocacy, and violently break communist rallies and demonstrations[ii] (Cohen 2006). These last practices were also commonplace in Mizrahi communist protests and rallies during the 1950s, which often got violently disturbed by thugs hired by Mapai or by the police[iii] (Gozansky 2018: 37). There was a race/class difference, then, in the forms of governmental oppression towards ICP members. The lower-stratums of Arabs and Mizrahi immigrants suffered physical violence in the streets, while the higher-stratum Ashkenazim and Arabs fought in the courts and the parliament, mainly

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[i] For instance, in 1955, 102 Arab Maki members had already spent time in prison. See Tawfiq Toubi, "Report" (doh), YTA Districts: 35-14/8.

[ii] E.g. "Ramle Arabs protest the anti-Arab terror" ('araviyei ramle mohim neged gal ha-teror ha-anti 'aravi), *KH* 14.3.52, p. 1; "The anti-Arab terror continues" (ha'teror ha'anti áravi nimshakh), *KH* 19.8.54, p. 2.

[iii] E.g. "The police disturbed an immigrants' protest next to the Agency's building in Tel Aviv" (ha-mishtara par'ah be-hafganat 'olim leyad binyanei ha-sokhnut be-tel aviv), *KH* 23.6.52, p. 1.

against different governmental attempts to limit the freedom of speech[i]. Not only did class differences infiltrate the party that had absolute equality as its organizing principal, but so did the ethno-class division of Israeli society: while the highest ranks of the party included Arabs and Jews, the Jewish leadership was exclusively Ashkenazi.

This chapter examines the role of Mizrahi and mainly Iraqi Jews within the Israeli Communist Party. Just like Mizrahim in the state of Israel held the potential of serving as a political and cultural bridge between Ashkenazim and Palestinian Arabs, within the ICP Mizrahim also held such a potential role, and here too colonial power relations prevented them from realizing such a position. In order to explore the circumstances that constructed the role of Mizrahim in the ICP, first the relations between Jews and Arabs in the party will be illustrated. This will be followed by a non-encompassing description of the trajectory of Iraqi Jews in in the party. Subsequently, the role of Iraqi communists in the 1965 split in the party will be discussed, after which the empirical material will be met with theorizations that are relevant for this research. This review will show how the ICP reflected the structure of power of the Zionist state, despite its consistent opposition to it. It will show how the ICP reproduced colonial power relations within its lines, by forming part of the imperial power that the Soviet involvement in the Middle East implied in this period. The position of Mizrahim in the 1965 split, and in the party at large, unveil the Eurocentric nature that Ben Zaken (2006) illustrated of communist ideology and practices. Their position exemplifies the hindrances and contradictions communism faced when operating in the multi-ethnic Middle East.

Jews and Arabs in the ICP

The Soviet support in the partition of Palestine in 1947 was crucial in designing the trajectories of the communist parties in this land. The Palestinian Arab "National Liberation League", formed in 1944, supported the Soviet stance, quite against the grand majority of Arab national stances. When the Arab defeat in the 1948 war became evident, the NLL appealed to the Jewish communist party (ECP) to join its ranks, in a process that included not little humiliation in certain cases[ii]. As for the Jews, communist not only fought the war, but also had a crucial role in getting Czech weapons that helped win it (Magil 1951). Some Palestinian Arab communists who were expelled during the 1948 events were allowed to return to Israel, even if it took years

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[i] E.g. "Strom in the parliament in the debate over the law of treason and espionage" (se'ara ba-knesset be-diyun 'al hok bgida ve-rigul), *KH* 14.11.56, p. 1, 4. These struggles of the ICP in the Supreme Court, made the precedence for the definition of Freedom of Speech, making the state formulate the legal definition of Israel as a democratic country.

[ii] See Emile Touma's 1949 scripture of self-criticism (including Meir Vilner's corrections of the text) in NLIA V1272-3-245.

of legal and public struggle[i]. Beinin (1990) claimed that by joining the ICP, the Israeli Palestinian Arabs were the only Arab communists to de facto recognize the 1948 war results as final. The leader of the Jordanian Communist parties expressed the general incongruences between the Arab communists' position and the ICP's:

"It is true that there are declarations to annihilate Israel by the Arab rulers. We oppose these declarations. They should not be exaggerated, and should be seen on the background of the Arab tragedy...the basis for peace should be the [1947 borders], including the return of refugees...We more or less agreed on that in the Prague Conference of the communist Arab parties...We ask for clarification: you support the return of refugees to where? And also the subject of the right of self-determination of the Arab people is not clear, from [your] materials..."[ii]

As their Arab comrades, Palestinian Arab communists largely held different conceptions than the Jews in the party about various pivotal matters, such as the 1949 borders, the right of return of Palestinian Arab refugees and the right of self-determination of the Israeli Palestinian Arabs. This incongruity in positions kept the party's official position quite obscure about these issues. The differences in positions could at times be discerned by comparing the Arabic party newspaper, *Al-Ittihad*[iii], with the Hebrew daily, *Kol Ha'am*[iv]: both Jews and Arabs in the party were simply concerned about transmitting the Soviet positions about Israel and Palestine in a way that would be most attractive to their respective societies, who took opposite parts in a violent national conflict:

"Arabs in the village used to call my father a traitor for agreeing on the 1947 borders"[v]

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[i] For example, see the case of the Al-Ashhab family. Ouda Al-Ashhab was of the leadership of the Arab Workers' Congress, and ICP fought successfully for his and family's return and citizenship right. See, "The minister of interior authorizes the denial of the Al-Ashhab family's right to return to Israel" (sar ha-pnim measher et shlilat zkhuta shel mishpahat al-ashhab lahzor le-irsael), *KH* 17.1.51, p. 4; "ICP's representative demanded to protest against the threat of expulsion of Miriam Al-Ashhab" (netsigat maki darsha limhot neged ha-iyum be-gerush Miriam al-ashhab), *KH* 27.7.54, p. 4. Also see the central committee's request for Jewish members to attend court discussions of Arab members for "entering and exiting without permit." "Central committee decisions" (hahlatot ha-va'ad ha-merkazi), 22.11.53, YTA Membership 35-1/2.

[ii] "Protocol of all the conversations between ICP's delegation and the delegatio of the Jordanian Communist party, Moscow. First Meeting" (pirtei kol ha-sihot ben mishlahat maki u-mishlahat ha-miflaga ha-komonistit ha-yardenit. moskva. ha-yeshiva ha-rishona), 25.7.64, NLIA V1272-4-33.

[iii] The Union.

[iv] Voice of the People. For example, the Arabic party newspaper reclaimed the 1947 UN resolution borders and spoke clearly about the right of return for Palestinian Arab refugees, whereas the Hebrew newspaper maintained a more ambiguous position. Other matters of dispute were also the automatic right of citizenships for all Jews in Israel and also the mere recognition in the state. See Cohen (2006), Greenstein (2014), central committee discussions, YTA Congresses: 35-4/2; Shmuel Mikunis, "The Political Report of the Central Committee" (ha-doh ha-politi shel ha-va'ad ha-merkazi), *12th Party Congress*, Amal Publishers; Samir Marid, "The Myth and Reality of 'The Second Round'" (ha-agada ve-ha-metsiut shel 'ha-sivuv ha-sheni'), *KH* 10.1.50, p. 2; "Members Speaking" (haverim medabrim), *13th Party Congress*, Amal publishers.

[v] Former MP Saleh Salim in Migners (18.5.15).

"I understand that the problem of the refugees is crucial but there are people that came from Poland or from Czechoslovakia that do not understand this problem because there they expelled the Germans and there are no problems."[i]

The acuteness of the differences between Jews and Arabs in the party depended throughout the years on developments in middle-eastern politics. In 1965 the differences became crucial, and the party split into its two national components. This split was a reflection of the rising tensions between Israel and the socialist-oriented Arab republics, especially Egypt and Algiers.

In the period of study, despite being of Jewish majority, the ICP was the main political body in Israel to lead the struggles of Israeli Palestinian Arabs: against the military regime, the discriminatory pro-Jewish laws, the practice of administrative arrests, post-1948 expulsions and the highly problematic legal situation of internally displaced people[ii]. Unlike its propaganda to the Jewish public, the party addressed the Israeli Palestinian Arab population on a national-ethnic base rather than class base (Kaufman 1997, Beinin 1990). This increasingly raised support to ICP within this population, as the communist way was the only legal way to express national demands (Nassar 2011, Rekhess 1988, Cohen 2006). In accordance with Marxist-Leninist pillars, the ICP demanded for Israeli Palestinian Arabs the rights of a national minority by equal civil and national rights. The meaning of "national rights" was one point not usually fully clarified, whether referring to the right of self-determination or merely for the right to use Arabic in state institutions and the right for separate development of education and culture[iii]. The internationalist structure of the party was very central, and a source of great pride to the party:

"The heart of the soul [tzipor ha-nefesh] *of the party is Jewish-Arab unity"*[iv].

The ICP bore the slogan of "Jewish-Arab fraternity" and had two Palestinian Arabs representing it in the parliament, about half its representation. Notwithstanding, and despite the fact that *Kol Ha'am* published daily news regarding specific Israeli Palestinian Arab struggles and troubles, there was hardly sufficient information provided about them or about occurrences in the Arab world in general[v].

"The racist persecution against the Arab minority got to vandalism…Sheikh Jamal Adin Asaad from Jaffa who has been running a struggle for the last five years…A month ago he proved that he was not an

[i] "Branch meeting" (asefat snif), 7.4.65, NLIA V1272-3-59.

[ii] Cohen (2006) mentions that one of the declared purposes of the military regime was to prevent communism from spreading among Israeli Palestinian Arabs.

[iii] E.g. "The report of the political committee for the XI congress of the Israeli Communist Party" (ha-din ve-heshbon ha-politi shel ha-va'ad ha-merkazi la-ve'ida ha-XI shel ha-miflaga ha-komunistit be-israel), *KH* 24.10.49, p. 3-7.

[iv] "Haifa branch meeting" (yeshivat snif heifa), 23.12.64. NLIA 218-2-1272.

[v] "Meeting with Haifa District for establishing work program, May-August 1956" (pgisha 'im mahoz heifa kedei lehagdir tohnit 'avoda, mai- ogust 1956), YTA Districts: 35-14/5.

absentee and got his property back. Two weeks ago tractors from neighboring kibbutzim got on his orchard… They also took the water motor…This is an offense to the honor of the state, which puts civil rights in grave danger".[i]

Kol Ha'am rarely gave a comprehensive picture of the situation of Arab countries or of Palestinian Arabs in Israel, leaving Jews to feel little informed[ii] and Arabs to feel misrepresented[iii].

All the difficulties the ICP faced in its attempts to construct unison beyond the Jewish-Arab national breach were understood by its members and leaders as challenges to overcome by international solidarity. The party reclaimed Israeli Palestinian Arabs rights eventually in order to be able to include them in the Israeli collective, along with respect to their difference. By contrast, diverse Jewish ethnicities and particular culture-related problems were rarely acknowledged and certainly not fought for. According to Marxist-Leninist theory, such ethic identities within a nation were mere manipulations meant to separate the workers[iv]:

"The [Mizrahi] way to get organized has its final and declared goal in attaining small and temporary achievements by reducing the exploitation and deprivation of Mizrahim ['edot ha-mizrah] *as compared with the general cruel exploitation and deprivation…as long as it does not advance the general interest this way to get organized is of no danger to the existing regime.."*[v]

"In Mapai there existed such a thing as an Iraqi sector…we didn't have any such thing, everybody [were] together."[vi]

Nonetheless, when many Iraqi immigrants joined the party, their particular experiences did shape other needs and perspectives, leading them to construct circles of their own inside the party.

Iraqi Communists

With the end of World War I, the Middle East got divided into national units and national movements rose in the new countries. In Iraq, more than in any other Arab country, many Jews felt identified with the Arab Iraqi national movement and were part of the developing national

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[i] "Thousands of fruit trees were uprooted from an orchard around Akka that belongs to an Arab resident". In: "A few facts about the government policy toward the Arab population in Israel" (kama 'uvdot 'al mediniyut ha-memshala klapei ha-ukhlusiya ha-'aravit be-israel), March 1954, Amal publishers. MALI IV104-85-130.

[ii] "Haifa district committee meeting" (yeshivat va'ad mahoz heifa), "Meeting with Haifa district to establish work program, May-August 1956" (pgisha 'im mahoz heifa kedei lehagdir tohnit 'avoda, mai- ogust 1956), YTA Districts: 35-14/5.

[iii] "Members speaking" (haverim medabrim), *13th Party Congress*, Amal Publishers. Also see Emile Touma's intervention there.

[iv] E.g. Esther Vilenska, "Sounds of Alert" (otot az'akah), *KH* 5.5.50, p. 2; Esther Vilenska, "The Struggle of Oppressed Ethnicities" (le-ma'avak ha-'edot ha-mekupahot), *KH* 7.8.59, p. 2.

[v] Yaakov Kujman, "There is no hope for the inciters" (ve-la-mesitim lo tihiye tikva), *KH* 14.8.64, p. 2.

[vi] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.

culture. With the rise of Iraqi nationalism, communism also became a prominent source of political identification for many young Iraqi Jews. Zionism was another political identity many Jews adopted (Snir & Einbinder 1991). After World War II, communist Jews established an anti-Zionist League in Iraq, denouncing the aspiration for a Jewish state as causing more problems than solutions[i] (Meir-Glitzenstein 2005). Iraq participated in the 1948 war over Palestine, and before and after it the government developed increasing mistrust towards its Jewry. It applied different restrictive measures and institutional discrimination towards them, and anti-Jewish sentiments rose among the nationalist right wing (Bashkin 2012). Eventually, the two enemy states of Israel and Iraq found a common ground for agreement, and forged a process which practically forced the emigration of Iraqi Jews. It is a common belief that the Iraqi-Zionist underground cell, commanded by secret agents sent from Israel, even planted bombs in Jewish centers in order to create hysteria and catalyze immigration (Shohat 1988). This led to the mass exodus of Jews from Iraq in 1951, including quite a few anti-Zionist communist Iraqi Jews who found themselves channeled to immigrate to Israel. Many of those joined the Israeli Communist Party. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the ICP used to make contact with uprooted Jewish communists in Eastern European countries before their immigration to Israel, in order to absorb them in the party's mechanism upon arrival: not very much unlike Zionist parties. However, the ICP did not have the same information and contact with the Iraqi communist party, and the Iraqi communists had to take their own initiative to find and join the party upon arrival (Gozansky 2018). For many of those, the ICP was a natural base from which they could continue their contact with Arab people and especially with the language:

"In 1950 when we arrived to Israel, it was simply that we were looking for something to read in Arabic, and then we found one that they said has an Arabic newspaper Al-Ittihad [the Arabic ICP newspaper]. *So I went to ask in Haifa...I took the paper, and took a few other papers as well and started to distribute them in Sha'ar Ha'aliyah among Iraqis. And since then I've been involved."*[ii]

Many researchers mentioned how the main attraction for Iraqi communists to join and remain in the ICP was its bi-lingual essence, which created the conditions for these immigrants to preserve their Arab cultural roots (Bashkin 2017: 86):

"I remember I used to distribute Al-Ittihad already in the army… [they] would see a paper in Arabic, everybody wanted to read…the officer would ask, what is this, where did these papers come from? And I said everybody came from Baghdad with their own newspaper"[iii]

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[i] Sami Michael in Samir (2006).
[ii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.
[iii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.

In Iraq, many Jewish communists contributed to the literary and journalistic scene. Upon immigration, they sought continuance to this within the Arabic communist daily *Al-Ittihad* and in the literary communist journal *Al-Jadid*. The involvement of Iraqis in the Arabic communist press was also an outcome of the vacuum left in Palestinian society after the expulsion and escape of such a large percent of the Palestinian Arab educated elite in 1948 (Snir & Einbinder 1991). In the period of study, the mentioned journals were crucial sites of creativity and protest against the military regime and the restringing political conditions of Palestinians (Baskin 2017:206). Bashkin (2017: 17) wrote: "being a prominent cultural hub, which counted many Palestinian writers and poets among its members, it [ICP] attracted educated Iraqi Jews and former Iraqi-Jewish communists. [ICP's] Iraqi intellectuals addressed Palestinian issues in their writings and discussed themes common to all Arab writers, such as the Arab struggle against colonialism, while also deliberating their problems as poor Jewish newcomers from Arab states."

In the communist press, Iraqi Jews wrote about what happened in Iraq, and compared it to Israeli reality. They wrote about and against the dismissal and oppression of Arab culture in Israel and for the undisturbed development of Arab culture and peoples. They also wrote in Arabic about the problems of Mizrahim in Israel, the hardships in the transit camps and the economic and cultural oppression they endured. The resemblance in racist oppression and the shared suffering of Mizrahi and Palestinian Arabs was also raised at times (Bashkin 2017, Kabha 2006). This sentiment of shared oppression was raised in *Kol Ha'am* quite rarely[i]. In 1958, there existed a short lived "Circle of Arabic literary adherents in Tel Aviv". This circle was composed of writers in Arabic language, Jews and Arabs, which were mainly communist Iraqi and Palestinian Arabs[ii].

Other than the Arabic communist literary scene, the Iraqi communist immigrants also gained prominence in leading struggles in the transit camps. As Gozansky (2018) explained, communist immigrants that joined the party were very valuable activists: they knew the language and customs of people of their own country of origin, had a common language with other immigrants as well, also for sharing some of the same vital experiences, and they had experience in public struggles, and some even in leading them. Bashkin (2017: 178) claimed the Iraqis brought with them the spirit of the Wathba- the wave of protests in Iraq before 1948 against the state's pro-British policies. In the 1950s, Iraqi communists gave continuance to that energy by organizing, leading and participating in the many struggles and protests for improving the basic conditions in transit camps (Meir-Glitzenstein 2005, Roby 2015). The ICP

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[i] E.g. "The Eastern Ethnicities and the Elections" ('edot ha-mizrah ve-ha-bhirot la-asefa ha-mekhonenet), *KH*, 10.1.49, p. 2.

[ii] *hug shoharei ha-safrut ha-'aravit be-tel aviv*. The circle published some of their activity in the journal *al-jadid*, and was active for about two years in mid 1950s. See Ballas (2009): 44-46; Somekh (2008): 45-53.

considered these struggles as a valuable tactic (Bashkin 2017) and backed them by publishing materials, hiring activists as party employees, and organizing weekly protests in Tel Aviv for housing and employment for the immigrants (Gozansky 2018: 55). The party platform incorporated the immigrants' issues, but usually did not place them as central in its agenda[i]. Along with other parties, the ICP initiated a Parliamentary Committee for Transit Camps Issues[ii]. The Iraqi immigrants made various efforts to weave the isolated struggles of each transit camp into a broader network. Representatives from 18 transit camps met in a conference that was held in 1952. More conferences followed, as well as some struggles of solidarity between transit camps, and a publication in Arabic was distributed throughout 1954-1955 in transit camps, covering their different struggles (Gozansky 2018, Kabha 2006, Meir-Glitzenstein 2005, Bashkin 2017). This publication had changing titles and was scarce and disperse: some claimed that the party's central mechanisms discouraged it (in: Meir-Glitzenstein 2005); others claim that it was the government that limited their distribution (Gozansky 2018).

The Iraqi communists were prominent in creating the energy of struggle among the immigrants in the transit camps, but the struggles did not highlight the ethnic characteristics of the protestors, and were held "*without any difference of party*"[iii] either (Roby 2015, Gozansky 2018):

"In the head of the struggle there were communists, not as messengers of their party coming from the outside, but as an integral party of the public."[iv]

The Wadi Salib events exemplify well the ICP's relation to the issue of Mizarhim's struggles at large. Even before the Wadi Salib events, as the general discontent was rising and more ethnic organizations were getting formulated, the Iraqi communists asked the central institutions of the ICP to recognize the special problems of Iraqis and their need to form a separate framework, but the leadership refused to this "ethnic sectarianism" (Bashkin 2017: 129). The Wadi Salib events were covered closely and fondly by *Kol Ha'am*, in a way that was nearly unique in Israeli press. However, it was framed as a class struggle whose ethnic causes are secondary (Gozansky 2018). Bashkin (2017:109) claimed that this was the party's way to appease the anti-Ashkenazi spirits of the events, which thereby dismissed its radical potential. Nonetheless, the protests of the summer of 1959 made the ethnic character of the class structure so evident, that even the ICP started to address the issues of Mizrahim separately and started speaking more of ethnic

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[i] "Party platform" (mats'a ha-miflaga), 1955. MALI IV 104-85-15: in this draft of the platform all demands regarding the immigrants' issues was omitted. In the official platforms it was usually mentioned among the last subjects, as well as the stance against ethnic discrimination.

[ii] "Urgent need to dismantle the transit camps" (hisul ha-ma'abarot- tsorekh dahuf), *KH,* 28.8.54, p. 4.

[iii] "Branch Meeting" (asefat snif), 29.4.65, NLIA V1272-3-60.

[iv] Ballas (2009): 86.

discrimination[i]. Towards the 1959 elections, MP Esther Vilenska proposed holding a meeting of all Iraqi ICP members in the country (Bashkin 2017: 126). The proximity of the Wadi Salib events to the anniversary of the 1958 revolt in Iraq is perhaps what allowed the communist Iraqis to celebrate the anniversary in a huge conference, despite not getting permits to do so from the police, and receiving wide coverage in *Kol Ha'am*, as well as the presence of its leader, Shmuel Mikunis[ii].

The end of the transit camp period marked also an end to a period of Iraqi involvement in the ICP. In the second half of the 1950s many of the prominent Iraqi members left the party (Meir-Glitzenstein 2009, Snir & Einbinder 1991). Even though some prominent Iraqi communists *"took positions in the [permanent] housing projects"*[iii] where the state settled Mizrahi immigrants, in some branches, the dismantling of transit camps left *"nothing to struggle for"*[iv], and made some very active branches dismantle and disperse across the country[v]: according to Gozansky (2018), this was not accidental. The 1956 Sinai campaign influenced in general Jews in the party, since the ICP took a stance in favor of Egypt. This stance raised its popularity among Palestinian Arab population, and made it more isolated than ever among Jewish Israeli public. This strengthened Jewish-nationalist sentiment among some members and led them to leave the party. Some branches, including some of the Iraqi dominated ones, started to disintegrate following this positioning of the ICP[vi]. Some of the Iraqi anti-Zionists activists, who were forced to immigrate to Israel, left the country whenever they could and emigrated elsewhere (Meir-Glitzenstein 2005):

"Albert-... the responsible members in the party say he's right. He was thrown from Iraq to Israel, asked to exit Israel…why do they tie his problems with all the problems…"[vii]

According to some testimonies of members that left in that period[viii], the main problem for Iraqis in the ICP was that despite the Marxist ideology, the party leaders held the same racial-

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[i] For instance, a search in *Kol ha-'am* after the term *'edot ha-mizrah* (eastern ethnicities) has 82 results in 1959; in comparison to around 10 in the entire decade of the 1950s and around 30 in the 1960s.

[ii] "Rally for the Iraqi Revolution"(le-ma'alah me-alpaim ish be-'atseret 'amamit bi-mlot shana la-mahapekha ha-'irakit), *KH* 19.7.59, p. 1, 4; "Grand Response to the Celebration of the Iraqi Revolution in Or Yehuda" (hed rav le-hagigat mahapekhat irak be-or yehuda), *KH,* 20.7.59, p. 2.

[iii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.

[iv] "Lowland District Meeting" (yeshivat mahoz shfela), 25.3.57, YTA Districts: 35-15/5.

[v] "Lowland District Meeting" (yeshivat mahoz shfela), undated, YTA Districts: 35-15/3; "Decisions of South District Committee" (hahlatot ve'idat mahoz darom), 27.7.57, YTA Regions: 35-16/9/1. It is plausible that the Iraqi leadership in the struggles in the transit camps is part of what allowed most Iraqis, including the communists, to attain permanent housing in the center of the country, rather than in its geographical periphery. This was a significant factor allowing for increased socio-economic mobility for these immigrants, which in turn would weaken the communist trends among them.

[vi] "Lowland District Meeting" (yeshivat mahoz shfela), 25.3.57, YTA Districts: 35-15/5.

[vii] "Order of the day of Petah Tikwa secretary meeting" (seder ha-yom, yeshivat mazkirut petah tikva), undated, YTA Protocols: 35-6/3.

[viii] E.g. in Meir-Glitzenstein (2005); Ina Shapiro, "Rosa Luxemburg from Baghdad" (rosa Luxemburg mi-bagdad), *Haaretz,* 8.6.00.

ethnic prejudice as Mapai leaders. This was reflected in the Ashkenazi composition of the central party institutions, and the fact that none of the Iraqi leaders was incorporated in them: since 1953 there were many Iraqis holding district and municipal leadership positions[i]. The lack of advancement opportunities in the party's central mechanisms reflected to Iraqi activists certain condescendence of the leadership towards them (Meir-Glitzenstein 2000). This discrimination against Iraqis in the ICP is explicated in many investigations about Iraqi communists in Israel in this period (Efron 2005, Bashkin 2017, Meir-Glitzenstein 2005). Following, this recurring argument in research will get developed and explored.

Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in the ICP

Throughout the period of study, the central institutions of the ICP were composed by a large majority of Eastern European and Russian Jews with some representation of Palestinian Arabs[ii]. The central party institutions had a very low turnover, but in 1954 they incorporated Moshe Sneh, the leader of "The Left" fraction which had split from Mapam the previous year. This was cause for much bitterness and insult for local Iraqi communist leaders, and led to a feeling that the lack of advancement opportunities within the ICP was accompanied by ethnic discrimination:

"Then came Sneh. Suddenly a member of the political bureau. Why not one of the Iraqis…we asked why none of the Iraqi leader got nominated…. but only put in the end of the list…and there were leaders!… When there were elections to the local councils we got in in many councils…our friends were leading the struggle but they didn't want to give them positions, that was the problem."[iii]

Prominent Iraqi activists that left the party later blamed the leadership for exhibiting condescending attitudes and treating them as backwards[iv] (Meir-Glitzenstein 2005). However, at the time, this issue was hardly ever spoken about, and denied fiercely by the Iraqi members when the rumor of discrimination inside the party got published[v]:

"we didn't want to assassinate the party, that was anyway small and unloved, and for us to come and…we felt it [discrimination], and this feeling chased away many members"[vi]

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[i] See letters of the Central Committee, YTA, Protocols: 10-16/5/1.
[ii] Until 1965 the majority of party members were also Ashkenazi: 54.6% born in Europe and 25.7% Palestinian Arabs. *14th Party Congress*, Amal Publishers: 117.
[iii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.
[iv] "Hertzelia Branch Meeting" (yeshivat snif hertseliya), YTA Districts: 35-15/3. Also see Sami Michael´s testimony in: "Immigrant in his own land" (mehager be-tokh artso), 28.6.12. Retrieved from: shorturl.at/dhru0 (last accessed on 12.5.20); Ina Shapiro, "Rosa Luxemburg from Baghdad" (rosa luxemburg mi-bagdad), *Haaretz,* 8.6.00.
[v]David Cohen, "There will be no hope for the inciters from Maariv" (la-mesitim mi-ma'ariv lo tehe tikva), *KH,* 11.8.64, p. 3.
[vi] Yosef Algazi, "Soda pop, 'Kol ha-'am' and a bridge to Baghdad" (kos gazoz, 'kol ha-'am' ve-gesher le-bahgdad). Retrieved from: http://www.defeatist-diary.com/index.asp?p=articles_new10086&period=10/10/2011-12/12/2011 (last accessed on 20.3.18) (published in *Haaretz* on 12.2.99).

Further than leadership positions, the privilege of Ashkenazim in the party was also structured in the principal tactic the ICP implemented in order to reach new immigrants: establishing Friendship Leagues with different Eastern European countries. The Friendship Leagues held newspapers, clubs, social events and parties for people that emigrated from specific countries. These in fact performed as a kind of ethnic-cultural organizations within the party, but without carrying such a title, and in a way that was legitimate within the Marxist internationalist political perspective. The Friendship Leagues provided cultural and social needs of absorption in the new country. However, they were not enough for assuring long term affiliation to the party. Faced with political isolation, employment difficulties and social and economic bans, many ICP members who joined the party shortly after their immigration, also left it after a short period[i]. This process also occurred within Iraqi communist immigrants, who joined the party as a natural base for getting absorbed in the country, and left it after finding better trajectories for absorption that did not go through such high degrees of social and political isolation (Meir-Glitzenstein 2005). Notwithstanding, The Friendship Leagues created a certain privilege within the party for Eastern European immigrants, since getting organized on an ethnic or national basis was disallowed or badly seen for any other group[ii]. Special rallies and propaganda were used to attract any wave of Eastern European immigrants well into the 1960s[iii]. The Friendship Leagues were considered a very valuable tactic to attract members, voters and affiliates, and the cultural events they held indeed reached very wide publics. These events spread Soviet culture, obviously more attractive to descendants from Eastern Europe[iv]. The multi-lingual communist press was an indispensable tool for the ICP to attract members, since the ICP's language of communications was often very high and dry, transmitted in extremely long speeches and heavy articles. *Kol Ha'am* was a dense newspaper that required some theoretical communist knowledge in order to decipher:

"The subscribers claim- the paper is not interesting, it does not fit me, it has to be written in an easier manner, not to write such good Hebrew not to search words in Aramaic."[v]

In areas of North African concentration of population, there was inconsistent distribution of a French publication. The inconsistency of the French newspaper was a main and constant cause

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[i] See Shafran (1983), p. 25-26; "Summery of Action Plan of Lowland District" (sikum tokhnit ha-pe'ula shel mahoz ha-shfela), NLIA V1272-3-137.

[ii] "Haifa Committee Meeting" (pgishat va'ad heifa), undated; "South District Committee Meeting" (yeshivat va'admahoz darom), undated; YTA Protocols: 35-4/1. Israeli Palestinian MP Tawfiq Toubi criticized the "ethnic-patriotism" of the Leagues as well, claiming it makes each country-based sector to believe its communism was the only true one. In: "The Organizational Report of the Central Committee" (ha-doh ha-irguni shel ha-va'ad ha-merkazi), *11th Party Congress*, Amal Publishers.

[iii] E.g. letter from Central Secretary to South District Commission, 29.7.57; "Meeting with Secretary of South District" (pgisha 'im mazkirut mahoz darom), 26.2.57, YTA Regions: 35-16/9/1; "Branch Meeting" (asefat snif), 18.6.63, YTA Regions: 36-4/2; "Tel Aviv Yafo District Report" (doh mahoz tel aviv- yafo), 1962. YTA 35-9/5.

[iv] E.g. "Members' meeting about cultural actions" (pgishat haverim le-gabei pe'ulot tarbutiyot), undated, YTA Regions: 35-3/3.

[v] "District Secretaries Meeting" (pgishat mazkirei mehozot), 21.5.64, NLIA V1272-3-119.

for ICP members to feel they were not doing enough to attract this population[i], despite the deep oppression they endured and their disposition to struggle for their rights[ii]:

"we must repeat again what different members said that lacking French language press limits the dimension of our distribution and disconnects us from the public of French speakers with which we meet everywhere we go."[iii]

Despite the party already publishing Arabic press and propaganda within Palestinian Arab population, these were discouraged in the concentrations of Mizrahi population, especially after most transit camps had been dismantled:

"A worker that works with me always reads Al-Ittihad. We let him read twice KH and now he's a subscriber."[iv]

It is somewhat peculiar that *Al-Ittihad* was not distributed in areas of Mizrahi population[v]. While many North Africans perhaps did not read literary Arabic, in towns like Ramat Gan and Bnei Brak, which had a big Iraqi cadre, it seems that it was not so easy to get *Al-Ittihad* distributed in a regular manner[vi]. This could raise the suspicion that it was the disparity between the Jewish and Arab interpretation of the communist ideology that the ICP was attempting to protect the immigrants from. Either way, it is another evidence that proves Bashkin's (2017) claim, that the Ashkenazi communists did not understand the cultural dilemmas of the Iraqis, which Palestinians in the party openly contained. Some Iraqis' involvement in literary Arabic circles was even frowned upon (Bashkin 2017: 207).

Notwithstanding, in the 1960s in these areas of Iraqi concentrations, Iraqi cultural and political events took place regularly. An Iraqi ball was held all through the night almost on a monthly basis, with typical music, clothing and food. The Arab MPs would sometimes honor these gatherings with their presence. Important events of revolutionary Iraqi were celebrated[vii]:

"we always mentioned here the rebellion that was there…I remember, we were in big halls, Emil Habibi and Tawfiq Tubi [ICP Arab MPs] would come…we would bring an Iraqi orchestra, meet and sing, we used to sit together until morning and then go home"[viii]

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[i] "Negev District Report" (doh mahoz ha-negev), 8.12.64, NLIA V-1272-3-135

[ii] "Meeting with Lowland District Secretary Committee" (pgisha 'im va'ad mazkirut mahoz ha-shfela), undated. YTA Regions: 35-15/5; "Decisions of South District Committee" (hahlatot va'ad mahoz darom), 27.7.57, YTA Regions: 35-16/9/1; "Meeting with South District" (pgisha 'im mahoz darom), 18.5.56, YTA Regions: 35-16/3.

[iii] Moshe Zaks, "Report of ICP Activity of Negev District" (doh pe'ulot maki mahoz ha-negev), 7.2.64, NLIA V1272-3-227.

[iv] "South District Active" (aktiv mahoz darom), 14.10.62, YTA Regions: 35-16/2.

[v] "Newspapers' Distribution" (tfutsat 'itonim), NLIA V1272-3-119. In this document of early 1960s it seems the Arabic newspapers were only distributed in areas of Palestinian Arab population.

[vi] Menashe Khalifa testifies that they did used to receive the paper regularly, but meeting protocols seem to suggest otherwise; see for instance Bnei Braki branch meetings protocols of 17.8.62 and 6.7.64, NLIA V 1272-3-58.

[vii] E.g, Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 8.5.61, NLIA V 1272-3-58; or various Bnei brak branch meetings protocols in NLIA V1272-3-59.

[viii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.

These cultural events were parallel to the kind of cultural activity that the Friendship Leagues held as well. The main difference is that the Iraqis in the ICP had to initiate and build themselves these kind of spaces after having settled in permanent residence, whereas the Friendship Leagues were encouraged, funded and invested in by the ICP since early 1950s. That is, the Friendship Leagues were prompted by the central leadership, while the Iraqi circles were a grassroots initiative without a formal framework within the central party mechanisms. It seems that beyond the cultural activity, these circles could have also served for political debates and questionings.

The case of the Iraqis within the ICP shows how the party's rigid loyalty to the Soviet ideology made it reproduce within its ranks the inequalities of the colonial Zionist state and privilege Ashkenazim. The party privileged Ashkenazim by allowing them for cultural safe-spaces that were not provided for the Iraqi cadre, and in the way it did not include any of the Iraqi leaders in the party's central institutions. This last point hid a much more substantial problem. Just like Palestinian Arabs, Iraqi communists had particular views and perceptions about middle-eastern politics, which had been shaped by their lifetime experience in the region as well as their contemporaneous ability to get informed by Arabic press[i]. Despite having more fully informed views, though, these did not get expressed in the party's official line, that was consistently and firmly loyal to official Soviet positions. For example:

"We evaluated positively…Algiers and Egypt that can eventually bring a socialist regime…did this evaluation get expressed in Kol Ha'am? It has been many months since Kol Ha'am published any article with positive things getting done in the Arab world. And if it appeared- it wasn't as it should be told…. How can you say that…Nasser is a dictator…He contributed greatly against…imperialism and Fascism….The danger is the pro-imperial policy of the Israeli government"[ii]

"In the party they did not know Jamal a-din el-Afgani that for middle-eastern communists was like Jean Jack Rousseau"[iii]

Iraqi Shimon Ballas, for instance, was in charge for a while of the Hebrew column about middle-eastern politics in *Kol Ha'am*. He gave advice about these matters to his districts' members and even gave the party head Mikunis some Arabic lessons. However, he still felt frustrated for getting his articles cut and his analysis discarded if the official Soviet *Pravda* had different views. Towards the end of the period of study, in 1964-1965, the dispute in views became much more acute, as the Soviet Union supported the Iraqi regime, that persecuted communists in Iraq. This emphasized the unique position and views of Iraqis in the party:

[i] Ballas (2009): 54-66. See for instance "Jerusalem Branch Meeting" (asefat snif yerushalaim), 20.10.56, YTA Districts: 35-1/2, for examining the disparity in knowledge between Russian and Arabic reading members.
[ii] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 26.5.65, NLIA V1272-3-234.
[iii] Shimon Ballas in Samir (2006).

"The title and article in Al-Ittihad about Aref was a mistake. He doesn't deserve such an article in our newspaper. His hands are dirty with the blood of our friends in Iraq."[i]

The Iraqi ICP members became so disgruntled that they let the leadership know their dismay about the party's blind pro-Soviet positions, and demanded the incorporation of one of them to the Political Bureau[ii].

The Split

The argument that led to the split of the ICP is of interest to this research, because it revolved around definitions of colonialism and imperialism in the Middle East, in a way which eventually evoked national feelings in both Arabs and Jews and broke the internationalist composition of the party.

In the summer of 1964 the party's general secretary Shmuel Mikunis met in Moscow with comrade Fuad, who I assume to be Fuad el-Nasri, the combatant Palestinian Arab refugee who was general secretary of the Jordanian Communist Party[iii]. This was the first time such an official meeting took place since 1947, and it was invoked following a summit of all the Arab communist parties and before their next summit. The ICP was not invited to any of those meetings. Though maintaining the conversation in friendly terms, there were tensions revolving the correct definition of the regimes against which each party was confronting.

"you spoke about the Arab liberation movements and about the Palestinian [original: Eretz-Israeli] *problem...you said we should not dismiss [their] difficulties. Why do you think we dismiss the difficulties? Secondly I wish to emphasize the difference between the Arab messengers of imperialism and the Israeli rulers- the second are much more dangerous in terms of their cruel aggressiveness and racism...- more similar to the rulers of South Rhodesia, South Africa or the French in Algiers. Their responsibility for the Palestinian* [original: Eretz-Israeli] *problem is much harder than the Arab rulers...Mikunis sounds like he is trying to justify occupation of territory and expulsion."*[iv]

"you cannot compare the people settled in Israel to the French settlers in Algiers etc. This is a people with a right for self-determination, most of them only came recently and are not responsible for the situation of Arab-Israeli relations. It is hard to blame the population in Israel for agreeing to the current

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[i] David Shlomo in "The first session of the countrywide congress" (moshav alef shel ha-kinus ha-artsi), NLIA V1272-3-121.

[ii] M. Hanania. "Iraqi Descendants in the ICP Complain of Discrimination" (yotzei Iraq be-maki kovlim 'al kipuham), *Maariv*, 5.8.64.

[iii] While the protocols only name Comrade Fuad, it is highly likely that the participant in these conversation is Fuad el-Nasri, as it is logical that it was the general secretary of the Jordanian Communist Party that was to meet with the general secretary of the ICP. *Kol Ha'am* reported his presence in Moscow on the month beforehand. "The Delegation of the Jordanian Communist Party Held Talks with the CC of the CPSU (mishlahat ha-miflaga ha-komonistit ha-yardenit nihala sihot 'im ha-v'ahm shel ha-mkbm), *KH* 12.6.64, p. 1.

[iv] Comrade Fuad in: "Third Meeting" (pgisha shlishit), 25.7.64, NLIA V1272-4-33.

regime."[i]

The basic content of this meeting could represent any conversation many Jewish Israelis would hold with many Arabs in the world. At some moments, Mikunis expressed blunt condescendence, but in essence he was simply asking El-Nasri to recognize the right of Israel to exist. Mikunis was expressing eventually a popular Jewish Israeli sentiment: fear that recognizing that the state of Israel was established in sin, and continues to perform as a colonial project, will undermine Jews' very legitimacy to live in Palestine/Israel. Few people, after all, wish to participate in an ongoing crime. For Palestinian Arabs, not recognizing the coloniality of the Zionist state undermines the very legitimacy of their claims for the land. The recognition in this perspective for many Palestinians has to be the common denominator of any basic political understanding between Jews and Arabs. For many Israeli Jews, the basic common denominator is recognizing the legitimacy of the existence of the state, which reflects to them their very right to live where they do. In the 1960s, a decade of decolonization when colonizers were made to leave settler-colonies in different locations, this debate was ever more acute. The fear of the colonizer from evacuation and the struggle of the colonized to liberation has led the Palestinian/Israeli political national-colonial rivalry into a dead end. Mikunis and Fuad also reach a certain dead end, but under the centralist direction of the USSR it was resolvable. The Jordanian Communist Party ended up yielding to the cry of help from the ICP. Fuad promised to pass the message to the other Arab communist parties, and in later platforms of the JCP it did not refer to Israel as an imperial bridgehead[ii]. It seems that this was the seal of approval Mikunis was waiting for, because a month after this meeting, while still in Moscow, he wrote an article that was so controversial inside the ICP that the discussions over it brought the split in the party within a year. In this article Mikunis condemned the revolutionary Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella for undermining Israel's right to exist, as an artificial imperialist entity that is a constant threat for world peace [iii]. The argument this article aroused in the ICP revolved around the question of whether or not the party should tolerate declarations of anti-colonial Arab leaders, namely Nasser and Ben Bella, that define Israel as an imperialist spearhead in the Middle East, directly or indirectly implying the need to vanquish the state of Israel. This led to questioning the nature of the Arab regimes:

"this movement [in Egypt and Algiers] cannot be revolutionary and advanced because it comes from Feudalism. Different forces were its partners, they work with the bourgeois, the national bourgeois… they brought…a spiritual baggage. There is also nationalism there which became stronger along the struggle for liberation…this we must see… but it also has the faltering part, this is how I can explain the

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[i] Shmuel Mikunis in: "Third Meeting" (pgisha shlishit), 25.7.64, NLIA V1272-4-33.

[ii] "Pieces from the program of the Jordanian Communist party to the upcoming period" (kta'im mi-tohnit ha-miflaga ha-komonistit ha-yardenit la-tkufa ha-nokhehit), undated, after 1967. NLIA V1272-4-33.

[iii] Shmuel Mikunis, "To Amhad Ben-Bella's Ears" (be-oznei ahmad ben bella), *KH* 20.9.64, p. 2.

things to people. I'm afraid of the influence that these declarations have on my people and on the Arab peoples"[i]

As the quote above can reflect, the question of the definition of the Arab regimes was related to the question of the role of the ICP in Israeli society. In essence, the last debate continues to accompany the ICP until today: as an anti-Zionist party enrooted in Israeli Palestinian Arab society, some of its Jewish cadre question their role in the party, and aspire to do more to appeal to Jewish-Israeli society. This aspiration has a pragmatic aspect: the need to gain influence in a Jewish majority state. However, it requires from the party to de facto defend the interests of the colonial settlers. Within this ever-going argument, the split in stances in 1965 had a clear-cut ethnic nature, in at least one of the Jewish ICP branches that had Iraqi dominance[ii]:

"There was an argument and we said ok, please vote, and there was a division like this, as if ethnic. Ashkenazim apart and Iraqis apart"[iii]

"the comrades of the east appear along a certain line and other comrades appear with others. Because the comrades they read Arabic and listen to Arabic radio stations"[iv]

The question was one of principals and ideology, but these were shaped by the activists' lived experiences and knowledge. The Jewish communist that ended up after the split in a Jewish communist party, could not assimilate the simultaneous position of being anti-colonial colonizers. For Iraqi communists it might have been somewhat easier, since they were placed in the simultaneous role of colonized and colonizers upon their very arrival to Israel. Moreover, their cultural proximity to the colonized Arabs released them of any kind of a superiority complex. The difficulty of Ashkenazim to assume the colonizer's role can be reflected in this appeasing declaration Mikunis made to Fuad:

"It is a constant pain for me and my comrades to be acting and struggling in the shadow of the tragedy of the Palestinian [original: Eretz-Israeli] *Arab people. We do not doubt that this historical injustice will be repaired and instead of it will rise a solid base for Jewish-Arab fraternity, which will enrich both peoples in cultural and scientific ways on the basis of fructiferous cooperation."*[v]

The meeting protocols of the Bnei Brak branch show clearly how the different stances were informed by Arab versus Israeli press, and by the lived experience of Ashkenazim versus Iraqis. Ashkenazim, closer to holocaust survivors, tended not to exhibit any tolerance towards the statements of Arab leaders for the extermination of Israel, as an ideological stance, but also and as a tactic aimed to appeal to the broad Jewish-Israeli public:

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[i] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 7.6.65, NLIA V1272-3-234.
[ii] Also see Tzadok Tzadok's testimony, in: http://maki.org.il/2012-10-03-18-06-03/ (last accessed 29.10.19).
[iii] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.
[iv] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 14.2.65, NLIA V1272-3-59.
[v] Shmuel Mikunis in: "Third Meeting" (pgisha shlishit), 25.7.64. NLIA V1272-4-33.

"We cannot say to the people that statements don't kill, the people here are sick from the fear of extermination. If I want [people] to believe me I must give expression to their anxiety from these things"[i]

Iraqi members, on the other hand, like Israeli Palestinian Arabs, thought the actual threat implied in these declarations is marginal, and that anyway the state of Israel deserved to be threatened this way:

"I learned from the party that it's not us that follow the public's slogans but the public follow our slogan...are we lacking imperialism here? Why would I search for imperialism in Arab countries?... And the problem of a million refugees that will grow. Standing in line for milk and seeing their land in front of them. Also me I say from declarations you don't die. What do you want them, to not even make declarations?"[ii]

The degree to which this stance of Iraqi members was accorded upon in meetings that they held of the Iraqi cadre remains unclear in the span of this research[iii]. However, as Bashkin (2017) insinuated, the lived experience of the Israeli Iraqi communists had made them particularly allergic to expressions of nationalist sentiments, having the imposition Arab and Jewish nationalisms played in setting their fates, in contrast to their own beliefs and struggles:

"we had a serious argument... We always since Baghdad had a Jewish-Arab slogan, so we came here so now we have to be above them?"[iv]

The only Jewish branches to join by majority to the ICP splinter of Arab majority were Bnei Brak and Petah Tikwa (Nahas 1976), but according to testimonies, Iraqis from all branches joined as well[v]. However, other branches with large Iraqi presence, like Ramat Gan, joined the Jewish splinter.

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[i] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 24.3.65, NLIA V1272-3-5.

[ii] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 24.3.65, NLIA V1272-3-5.

[iii] In the Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols there is recurrent reference to The Forum, as a space where politics were debated apart from the branch meetings. However, I was not able to gain any further information regarding these meetings.

[iv] Menashe Khalifa in interview, 21.3.18.

[v] Tzadok Tzadok claimed most Iraqis joined the Arab splinter. In: http://maki.org.il/2012-10-03-18-06-03/ (last accessed 29.10.19).

PART II: DISCUSSION

In the period of study of this research, there was no organ that struggled against Zionism in a more direct, explicit and persistent manner than the ICP, at great personal cost for all its members. The members were blocked from receiving housing and employment opportunities by Mapai's apparatus of domination, and the ICP itself channeled members' housing and employment at the party's interest, and dominated most of their free time. Active members indeed sacrificed their entire lives for a dire struggle for peace and equality, at the service of the party. Taking this into account makes the case of Mizrahim within the party particularly interesting for observing the ways in which mechanisms that reproduce colonial inequalities function by themselves, without intention nor remedy. This section will firstly demonstrate the reproduction of Zionist-colonial dynamics within the ICP, by examining the conditions that both allowed and limited Mizrahi autonomous collective actions within the ICP. In this way, the research questions will be revised, but instead of relating to the dynamics of Mizrahi autonomous organizations within the Zionist state, they will relate to their dynamics within the ICP.

Notwithstanding, the dynamics within the ICP in this period reflect not only the omnipresence of Zionist coloniality, but also of the imperiality of the Soviet Union, the political and ideological hegemony of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the international communist movement (Ben Zaken 2006). Ben Zaken wrote about the development of communism in the Middle East as a form of cultural imperialism, referring to the rhetoric fields of language and ideology, Marxist values and education, as well as to science and technology. Marxist-Leninist ideology privileged European cultural symbols, such as European languages, science and progress, and contempt to cultural traditions and to religion. It reflected European political economy in the primacy it gave to the party and to the industrial working-class. The liberation struggles in the Middle East headed by Eastern European immigrants and by local leaders that assimilated Marxist ideology, were designed to rebel against "eastern tradition" as well as against the western-liberal model of progress, while serving the USSR's interests. However, Marxist discourse was not presented as the product of European culture and history that it was, but as scientific, objective and universal truth (Ben Zaken 2006). This was its way to formulate the aspiration to liberation in a way that could transcend the diversity of the worlds' cultures.

The ICP faced the need to put the universalist ideology of Marxist internationalism to trial by fire. This was the basis over which it asked to reconcile under one ideological umbrella two sides of a dire and violent national conflict, but also the base over which Jews from all countries and cultures intended to create a solid common ground:

"We were a very diverse bunch: new immigrants from Poland listened with pleasure to Hebrew songs of the multitude of children…oriental music of Iraqi immigrants got exchanged with Russian and Polish songs."[i]

However, just as Ben Zaken (2006) showed, when examining the ICP's Marxist ideology in cultural parameters of knowledge, representation and history, it becomes evident that it was based on Eurocentric assumptions. This was expressed for instance in the shared supposition of the Jewish-Israeli leaders about the meaning of the Hebrew National Culture, conceiving of its source and strength as belonging to Jewish Eastern European developments:

"we must pay special attention to the great cultural values in Yiddish language…the fact that the most and the best of the popular cultural values of the Jewish people in the last century were created in Yiddish, and the fact that most its speakers…were destroyed by the Hitleric Fascism… makes it all the more necessary to absorb in the national Israeli culture.."[ii]

These suppositions, however, were a source of estrangement from the party for non-European Jews:

"I am not attracted to the literary page of Kol Ha'am. The Jewish people are not united neither in language and nor in culture".[iii]

This understanding of the national culture helped perpetuate Orientalist views among party members and leaders: "a paternalistic attitude, diluted with a certain measure of humanism and identification with the suffering of the people of the east" (Ben Zaken 2006):

"In Israel the situation is that about half the people is in a low cultural and technical level… there are now in Israel about 400 thousand illiterate people... most of the Jewish people do not know what is Zionism…"[iv]

The Eurocentric understanding of Jewish national culture was a channel through which the party reproduced within its lines the same colonial Zionist power structure against which it was committed to struggle. For instance, the party was concerned about spreading knowledge about Hebrew national culture in poor immints' area[v], as part of its endeavors to nurture Israeli patriotism[vi]. Patriotism was another top value of Marxism-Leninism, which like

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[i] Yehuda Lahav, "City of Tents in the Forest" ('ir ohalim ba-ya'ar), *KH* 16.5.58, p. 2.

[ii] "The Israeli Communist Party in the Struggle for Peace, Independence and Socialistic Advancement. Chapters for the 13th Congress" (ha-miflaga ha-komunistit ha-israelit ba-maavak le-shalom, le-bitsur 'atsmaut Israel ve-le-kidma sotsialit. rashei prakim la-ve'ida ha-shlosh 'esre), *KH* 19.9.56, p. 7. The defense of Yiddish language and culture was part of the decade long anti-Zionist struggle of communist Jews against the imposition of Hebrew as the exclusive national language.

[iii] Tzadok in "Branch Meeting" (asefat snif), 24.2.65, V1272-3-59.

[iv] Shmuel Mikunis in: "Third Meeting" (pgisha shlishit), 25.7.64. NLIA V1272-4-33. For other orientalist expressions see e.g. Albert Benny, "Transit Camp to Poverty" (ma'abara le-dalut), *KH* 17.8.50, p. 2; "Health administration gives medical aid to 650 thousand people, its budget 7 million LI" (Kupah megisha 'ezra refuit le-650 elef nefesh- taktsiva 7 milion li), *KH* 21.12.50, p. 4.

[v] "South District Committee Meeting" (pgishat va'ad mahoz darom), undated, YTA Districts: 35-16/3.

[vi] Bnei Brak branch meeting protocols, 14.2.65, NLIA V1272-3-59.

internationalism, created for the ICP contradictions and difficulties most European communist parties did not have to face. The interpretation of ICP's Jewish members and leaders of the value of patriotism put in contingent risk their ability to fully identify with the ICP's anti-Zionist and internationalist values:

"It is but a mistake that it says the 1948 war. There is no problem in calling it the War of Independence."[i]

Communist Israeli Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand, suffered from a different kind of contradiction. Though they had certain space within the party to propagate for their own national culture and self-determination, this space was limited by the comradeship with Jewish Israelis. The Palestinian Arabs' basic positions did not influence the official party line as deeply as the Arab leaders aspired (Greenstein 2014), and as ICP members they were in many senses isolated from other Arab communist parties.

"we are blamed for identifying with the national Arab movement.... We responded about Abdul el-Nasser…when he spoke against communism… everybody that was in festivals remembers how [we] stood... Arabs arguing with [other] Arab delegations"[ii]

These factors made the ICP yield to the positions of the CPSU and keep blind loyalty to it, in order to maintain the internationalist structure of the party. Nonetheless by the end of the period this structure lost validity, even before the need to take stance about the 1967 occupation of Palestine[iii]. Yosef Algazi summarized his point of view about the 1965 split as such:

"After leaving the party 21 years ago, I got to the conclusion that the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict poisoned not only the relations between the two peoples, but it also created complicated situations, in the crucial way in which it created (and creates) nationalist tendencies among communists that have declared and still declare their ambition to solve the conflict without bias and without preferring one nation over another in this tragic conflict."[iv]

If the ICP ever had the aspiration to constitute "*a bridge to Arabs*"[v] for Jewish Israeli society, by force of its internationalist ideology, under the auspices of the Soviet Union's stronghold it evidently did not succeed in that. The role of the Iraqi communists within the party sheds further light over the colonial and imperial conditions that prevented the Marxist ideology from performing as such a bridge. Certainly, the potential role of the Iraqi cadre as a cultural, linguistic, epistemological and ontological bridge between the Jews and Arabs in the party did

[i] Bnei Brak meeting protocols, 12.5.65, NLIA V1272-3-234

[ii] Bnei Brak meeting protocols, 26.6.65, NLIA V1272-3-234.

[iii] In 1967 there were still two communist parties in Israel as formed by the split. After the Six Day War the Jewish splinter defended the occupation as a defensive act of Israel, whereas the Arab splinter condemned it. This brought the Soviet Union to withdraw its support from the Jewish splinter.

[iv] Yosef Algazi, "Soda pop, 'Kol ha-'am' and a bridge to Baghdad" (kos gazoz, 'kol ha-'am' ve-gesher le-bahgdad). Retrieved from: http://www.defeatist-diary.com/index.asp?p=articles_new10086&period=10/10/2011-12/12/2011 (last accessed on 20.3.18) (published in *Haaretz* on 12.2.99).

[v] Yafo branch meeting protocols, 7.10.64, NLIA V1272-3-10.

not escape neither the Iraqi cadre nor the Ashkenazi leadership[i]. In his autobiography, Shimon Ballas described his first meeting with MP Vilner:

"He surprised me when he asked some banal question about Syria…it truly embarrassed me coming from a leader like him. Syria was… all over the headlines but was still foreign to Israelis…and even to a leader of a Jewish-Arab party… I realized the role I and people like me would have to play in order to reduce the estrangement between Israel and the Arab world."[ii]

However, the particular Iraqi identity, skills and special needs were largely denied by the party leadership, despite the recurring pleas Iraqi activists made for such consideration throughout the period. The party refused to open a space for them to articulate their vision. Within the strict interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, there was no room for them to develop or formulate their unique position in a way that could tie their identity to class issues, as the party did for Palestinian Arabs[iii] (Bashkin 2017). The role of cultural-political intermediaries was never comprehensively suggested to them, their cultural particularity was largely ignored, and their knowledge was not regarded as of any particular value for the correct functioning of the ICP within middle-eastern politics. This stands in bleak contrast to the way the party did take under consideration the special needs of Eastern European immigrants and of the Palestinian Arab population. Both by the state's apparatus and by the party's mechanism, Mizrahi immigrants were expected to shed any particular identity. This was a theoretical request for all communist affiliates, but it was implemented in practice only for these immigrants. Other affiliation groups found stable spaces for reinforcing their cultural particularity, and had theoretical justification for it within Marxist doctrine or within USSR loyalty. The Mizrahi communists, however, were limited to the molds of ideology, discourse, culture and mental frameworks designed by the Ashkenazi elites of the party. The main problem with this discrimination is the repercussions it had on the party's political line, which missed the opportunity to embody the added value that the Arabic speaking, educated activists, well informed in middle-eastern politics, could have supplied for the ICP's frameworks.

These reflections can be seen as corresponding with the first research questions, inquiring after the conditions that allowed Mizrahi activists to develop comprehensive opposition to the strong coloniality trends within the ICP. It was their roots and base of knowledge that designed their opposition both to the ICP's eurocentrism as well as its political dependency in Moscow. These allowed the ICP eventually to participate, albeit from the margins, in the Zionist state's colonization process. These factors point out to the third research question, which inquired after the conditions that inhibited Mizrahim's ability to construct an autonomous framework within

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[i] Shmuel Mikunis quoted in, "Grand Response to the Celebration of the Iraqi Revolution in Or Yehuda" (hed rav le-hagigat mahapekhat irak be-or yehuda), *KH* 20.7.59, p. 2.
[ii] Ballas (2009): 40.
[iii] See Ella Shohat in Samir (2006).

the party. The second and fourth research questions direct to examine the degree to which the Iraqi activists succeeded in creating alternatives to colonial frameworks within the ICP, and the external circumstances that supported or weakened their anti-colonial opposition. With regards to these questions it should be noted that the dire conditions of the transit camps in the first half of the 1950s presented auspice conditions for the development of Mizrahi decolonial alternative frameworks. The struggles led by the communist Iraqis in this period crossed ethnic, party and national affiliations. The discourse developed around these struggles at times formulated continuity between Mizrahi and Palestinian Arab colonial-racist oppressions, and served as a base for a de-facto autonomous Mizrahi framework within the ICP. In the context of these protests it is important to emphasize the mutual influences of the Iraqi communist cadre with the general Mizrahi political sphere, despite its apparent detachment from it (Chetrit 2004: 117). This is also exemplified in their petition for an autonomous framework in 1959, when other Mizrahi groups were also constructing their autonomy. I suspect that another principal condition that shaped the Iraqi cadre's trajectory within the ICP were international developments within Arab communist and socialist regimes, as shown before the 1965 split. However, this supposition diverges from the span of this research.

The case of Iraqis within the ICP, and especially the role some of them played throughout the 1965 split, is a good example of the repercussions of the Eurocentrism of the left that Grosfoguel (2009a) criticized. Grosfoguel wrote about the westernized left -referring to all the streams that follow western paradigms- which by privileging western political philosophies reproduce epistemological racism/sexism, and eventually discard nonwestern epistemologies as inferior. The universalist imperatives that directed Marxist-Leninist ideology reproduced ethno-racial colonial logic, because of the monolithic Eurocentric conception of liberation they reflected (Grosfoguel 2009a). The course of events in the Bnei Brak branch during the 1965 split shows the epistemic basis of the split in the ICP, and the degree to which it was related to the lived experience and the access to knowledge of natives of the Middle East. The split was not merely a result of a "stammered cultural dialogue" (Ben Zaken 2006) between the world of knowledge of Eastern European Jews and Arabs, or of Marxist ideology and subjects indigenous to the region. The place of Iraqis within the ICP in the period of study reveals the way the ICP was imprinted by colonial racist hierarchies, which for decades have been preventing leftist parties from performing as real projects of liberation (Grosfoguel 2009a). Colonial power relations infiltrated the party, right through the discourse of total equality for all, because this very demand made the ICP blind to the epistemological diversity necessary for a truly revolutionary struggle.

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter the questions that guided the research will be revisited in light of the historical materials reviewed and by using the theoretical conceptualizations that have led this inquiry. The conditions that allowed glimpses of a decolonial attitudes to emerge within Mizrahi and Sephardic political discourse in the period studied will be reviewed, and the main characteristics will be highlighted. In the end, some thoughts regarding the relevance of this research to current social research and to potentially decolonial Israeli struggles will be suggested.

The Mizrahi Political Sphere, 1948-1967

This research examined different formulas of Mizrahi autonomous organizations that participated in the Israeli political field in the 1950s and 1960s, the years in which discrimination against Mizrahim in Israel was at its peak. Colonial-racist perceptions directly designed state policies, in a way that shaped socio-economic inequalities that prevail in Israel to this day. In these two decades, the research has outlined a Mizrahi and Sephardic sub-political sphere within the Israeli one. This sub-sphere included all those who attempted, to varying degrees, to combat the systematic discrimination and humiliating discourse against Mizrahim. This sub-sphere included Mizrahi and Sephardic activists affiliated to Zionist parties of Ashkenazi hegemony, and also many more bodies and organizations not included in this research. This review certainly did not exhaust all the possible organizations belonging to this sphere, not even all the ones that can be considered autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic political organizations. A separate research can be dedicated to local groups and leaders, and observe the kind of politics they promoted in municipalities and local councils of Mizrahi concentrations of population, where many were successful in gaining power positions in the 1960s. The autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations reviewed in this research were born as direct and indirect responses to developments within the Mizrahi-Sephardic political sphere. The dynamics of this sphere were conditioned by international, regional, national and local politics, the combination of which eventually shaped its own particular dynamic. In some years, as in 1958, this sphere reacted to the arrival of Eastern European immigrants, the decimal anniversary of the state's independence and developments in the internal regimes of the surrounding countries in different ways than the mainstream Israeli-Ashkenazi political sphere. The 1948 Rupture and the 1959 Wadi Salib events also had their particular, long lasting influences over this sphere.

All Mizrahi and Sephardic activists and intellectuals in this period aspired and called for equality within the colonial state. Their main motivation was a simple one, that within Jewish-Israeli society, *"the least happy camp will not have ethnic characteristics"*[i]. Many of them quit the political struggle when they found personal solutions that allowed them, as individuals, to live according to their values, and attain a level of life that fulfilled at least economic equality with Ashkenazi middle-class. Others gained small power positions, that allowed them to influence some limited, mainly local parts of the Israeli public sphere. Many were incorporated to the service of the settler-colonial mechanisms of domination, either by co-producing the Zones of Non-Being of Palestinian Arab population, or in order to strengthen the walls of the colonial villa in the middle-eastern jungle, by contributing to the security and intelligence mechanisms. Not few within the Mizrahi elite got incorporated into diplomatic institutions of the state as ambassadors: to my understanding, this was a way for the Ashkenazi elites to exclude talented activists from gaining influence over the state's internal affairs or having an actual say over its diplomatic policies: rather, they were incorporated to its rhetoric defense. The groups reviewed in this research established autonomous Mizrahi-Sephardic organizations due to their unwillingness or inability, sometimes temporary, to attempt to gain equal status in the settler-colonial state in any of the ways mentioned above. Many of the SCMD activists, for example, after graduating their BA, were incorporated into the state's institutions through one of these paths. The Mizrahi political sphere was constructed by Sephardic and Mizrahi activists of different political and cultural tendencies and associations, but all searched for the conditions that would allow them to become equal contributors to the debate about defining the face of the nation. All of them wanted to annihilate the *"the gap and the abyssality"*[ii] between Jews in the Jewish state, and aspired to conserve the national identity border. The natives searched for ways to fulfill the prospect of belonging to the ethnic majority of their homeland; the immigrants searched for a new national belonging in a world that became of nation states, where Israel was the only place where they had the possibility to become equal members of a modern national collective. Some of the observed groups did not form an official autonomous organization, as the Iraqi cadre in the ICP, others did not nurture strictly political aspirations, as the Torah Loyalist Circle. The thread weaving the groups and texts together was their aspiration to formulate an alternative national project to the hegemonic Zionist one, which would respect their culture and include them in an equal manner, without losing their identity or having to recognize their inherent inferiority. These aspirations were considered within this research as the basis from which decolonial thinking could emerge. Previous research of Mizrahi autonomous political organizations claimed that they only reproduced Zionist hegemonic

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[i] "Organization of Sephardic and Middle Eastern Descendants" (irgun yotsei sfarad ve-hamizrah ha-tikhon), 7.4.58, CZA 430A/210/3.

[ii] Y. M. Immanuel, "Before the Leap" (likrat zinuk), *Young Israel*, 18.11.64, p. 1

discourse and did not suggest alternatives to it (e.g. Herzog 1986). In this research, I demonstrated how the coloniality of power, of being and of knowledge designed the activity of these organizations and created their limitations. Notwithstanding, I attempted to excavate here, from the practices and discourses of Mizrahi activists and formulators of independent Mizrahi political agenda, traces of decolonial alternatives that could be viable in the settler-colonial Zionist state today.

Summarizing the Research

Right after the 1948 Rupture of middle-eastern Jewries from their native environments, a rupture that occurred both with or without immediate geographic displacement, organized Mizrahi politics were limited to organizations that had already been established before 1948: the CSCs and the Communist Party. For many Iraqi communists, the 1948 Rupture entailed a dramatic shift in their lives and political trajectories, forcing them into a new geo-political reality in which they had to carve new paths to equality and justice. In the first period of research, Iraqi immigrants belonging to the ICP uplifted a spirit of revolt within Mizrahi immigrants in the transit camps, leading the struggle for dignified absorption into the colonial state. Through the party's mechanisms, they contributed to the cultural resistance of Arabic language and press in Israel: this was a way for them to pursue their anti-colonial aspirations while satisfying their cultural and intellectual needs.

By contrast, for the Sephardic notable elites, the Rupture was not as acute, since it entailed for them an emancipatory promise, inaugurating a new era where they could share the sovereignty over their own geographical space for the first time. The disillusionment from this promise in the first years of statehood, along with the consequences of the Rupture, directed the CSCJ's discourse into a non-compromising, untrusting and hostile political line towards issues regarding the colonial state's relations to Palestinian and other Arabs during 1949, the year of the armistice negotiations. After that year, under the continuous status of low warfare of the early 1950s, their political activity and discourse largely evaded exterior or interior Arab-related politics: after all, those who did not participate in establishing the state could hardly resolve the violence its very establishment had aroused. Notwithstanding, evading Arab-related politics obstructed the CSCJ's ability to play a significant role in the Israeli political sphere. In the first period of research, the CSCJ was subdued by the colonial mechanisms of the Zionist state: at first abruptly, and later in subtler manners. The shreds of its political influence gradually dissipated. Under the deep colonial mechanisms of the modern Zionist state - bureaucratic, military, economic, political, epistemic and ontological- they became identified in new ways with the Ashkenazi elites, which undermined the institution's very base of

legitimacy to get involved in the political sphere. The CSCJ circle was epistemically subjugated by the ruling elites, and eventually yielded to the Zionist leaders the primogeniture right to set the tones and actions of the settler-colonial state.

In the second period of research, a decade after the 1948 Rupture, most Mizrahi immigrants had already settled in permanent housing. In some senses, this marked a stabilization in the socio-economic ladder of opportunities, and allowed for some of the more accommodated social stratums ways to become incorporated into Ashkenazi society under conditions of inferiority. This stabilization and the recession in warfare, allowed for new leaders, as of 1958, to attempt to organize Mizrahi political forces, creating an immensely more varied and diverse organized Mizrahi-Sephardic political sphere in the second period of study than the first. The Iraqi cadre in the ICP also became more direct in its petitions for representation within the party's directive institutions. In the summer of 1959 one Mizrahi organization, UNAI, captured the attention of politicians and the media, leading to a summer of public turmoil around the Mizrahi struggle. This turmoil showed many Mizrahi activists involved in Zionist parties, the way to leverage organized political action within Mapai's apparatus of domination. This apparatus efficiently co-opted to its benefit this bloom of organized autonomous Mizrahi activity, formulating Israeli "political ethnicity" (Deshen 1974, Herzog 1986), which vacated the Mizrahi struggle for equality from contents that were not related to representation itself. The case of the National Union is emblematic of this transition from the 1950s to the 1960s. While in its inception the National Union transmitted some decolonial values, its 1960s avatar, Young Israel, was dedicated to maintaining Mizrahi autonomy in parliamentary politics practically merely for the sake of doing so. This way, it helped the entire network of Mizrahi political activists to maintain a better bargaining position within Zionist political parties. The political network of Fraternity had a similar function in the sphere of local politics, allowing local activists to gain some power positions in municipalities and local councils. The SCMD grew between the walls of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, bringing together the few Mizrahi and Sephardic university students who were interested in their own heritage and culture, and functioning as a social laboratory for the educated young generation to formulate a collective position about their degraded place in Israeli colonial society. The communist Iraqi cadre started in this decade to gather for celebrating together their cultural roots. These gatherings could have contributed to the formulation of a particular Iraqi stance among some of the cadre, when the ideological differences between Jews and Arabs in the party became more acute. The bodies that had long term, deep ambitions to change the colonial nature of the state, largely avoided in this decade participating in direct forms of political action, but rather were occupied with constructing internal coherency. This was the case of the Torah Loyalist

Circle, who published a periodical that formulated Sephardic ultra-orthodox stances, which very carefully avoided forming any kind of rivalry with the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox elites.

The CSCJ remained the main focus of research in this period, mainly thanks to its leader's renewed determination to tie the question of integration of the Jewish state in the Middle East with the struggle against Sephardim's discrimination, "Sephardim" here carrying the widest most inclusive significance. In the second period of study, the CSCJ also focused on constructing internal coherency as an oppositional lobby group. It maintained a pseudo-academic "ivory-club" for many of the native and immigrant intellectual elite around its publication "In the Battle". This safe epistemic space allowed the native intellectuals to formulate decolonial stances that tied together critique of the racist dynamics against Mizrahim within the settler-colonial state, with its hostile positioning towards its surrounding, Arab environment. Communist ideology also allowed to tie these two questions together, within the paradoxical dialectic of communism in the Middle East, within which it served both as instigator of anti-western colonialism and as an active agent of Eurocentric culture, promoting unintended cultural imperialism (Ben Zaken 2006: 24-29). In fact, in the 1960s, tying the two questions together became a rhetoric tool many groups included as a clause in their platform, without granting it much further significance. This was a reflection of the international atmosphere of this period of decolonization of Arab states, and formed part of a general tendency of Mizrahi political discourse of the period to use discursive formulas without filling them with much further content.

Recurring to the Questions of Research

Regarding the first research question, about the conditions that allowed Sephardic and Mizrahi groups and individuals opposing coloniality to develop within a settler-colonial society, this research, as others before it, showed the relation of this particular Mizrahi and Sephardic discourse with the indigenous identity of its speakers: Sephardic and Mizrahi intellectuals from the Middle East, who had been educated by diverse educational institutions, and were exposed to and appreciated diverse intellectual sources. The activists reviewed here were rooted in the region, felt part and parcel of it in a wide sense. Their motivation to get organized, as well as their very sense of entitlement to approach the political field, was anchored in their dismay at being discriminated against and enclaved within the fortified walls of the Zionist state.

The second research question opens the discussion as to the degree in which these activists succeed in challenging and opposing Zionist-colonial frameworks or creating alternatives to them. In this respect, it should be noted that tying together Israel's internal mechanisms of

exclusion with its exterior politics is the first thing that allowed Mizrahi and Sephardic discourse to view Israeli reality as similar to other colonial contexts, and therefore it was the basis from which decolonial perspectives could emerge. Without viewing the two questions as related to each other and to a wide geo-political context, the Mizrahi struggle for equality was plainly seeking only to gain as many privileges as Ashkenazim in the settler-colonial system. In the period of study, Israel was a place where people who were Jewish gathered together, but there was not a people, nor a nation, not just yet. The debate about the Merger of the Diasporas was the main discursive tool through which different activists tried to fulfill the invitation of the Jewish state to participate equally in building the nation and shaping its features. For some, this quest might have been simply about assuring a fairer divide of the privileges of the settler-colonial state, and they used this hegemonic Zionist terminology while reproducing Eurocentric Zionist logics. However, this term also lent itself easily for appropriation by innovative autonomous ideologies, and by those who had deeper aspirations to intercede the hegemonic debate, and contribute their own view of what character should the Zionist state have. This kind of activists propagated for a comprehensive change of attitude of Israeli politicians and society: remove the pride of functioning as a modern European enclave in the Middle East. At the very least, that would entail expressing an aspiration to become part of the region. In certain moments, conditions ripened for these activists to develop discourse that demonstrated decolonial glimpses, daring to imagine beyond the colonial reality. Over the *IB* pages we can see a claim for the Merger of the Diasporas that aspired towards an ecology of knowledges: aspiring that the practices of the state be informed by more diverse sources of knowledge, privileging knowledge that can bring peace and equality over modern European knowledge which perpetuated violence and war. This discourse drew inspiration from the trope of *Sefarad*, in order to advocate for the immense civilizational value that is potentially entailed in a dignifying *convivencia* of the Jews in the Middle East. *Sefarad* served as a metaphor for fusion between Jews, Christians and Muslims as well as between east and west. By constructing the east as one civilizational unit, the intellectual activists could construct certain continuities between their culture and Islamic civilization, and to demand respect for both. Embracing the heritage of *Sefarad* and reviving it in Israel of the 1960s was understood to have the power to promote different kind dynamics between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, and a different kind of diplomacy between Jews and Arabs, based on respect to the east, and allowing for plurality of faiths and ethnicities to co-exist in a non-destructive way. This vision of an ecology of knowledges was characterized by social and political inclusivity and plurality of knowledges, cultures, faith and communities. The fulfillment of this claim did not require actual contact with Palestinians or other Arab people, but only the equal participation of Sephardim and Mizrahim in the debate that defined the face of the nation. The supposition of some among of the educated immigrant and native elites was that their very incorporation to the debate over the face of the

nation -not as its subjugated executers or informers, but as equal contributors to debates over policy and decision making- would in itself allow for Israel to integrate better in the Middle East. The aspiration to re-construct Israel as part of its geographical environment was evoked as an Inner-Jewish process. As such, it required just exactly what any other egalitarian Inner-Jewish process required in Israel in this period: the emancipation of lower-stratum Mizrahi immigrants and the shattering of the glass-ceiling the elites encountered in diplomatic, political and academic institutions, by gaining public appreciation to their particular knowledge and skills. This was not merely a demand for power positions, nor merely a protest against being treated in a degenerating way. It was based on a presumption that Mizrahi and Sephardic elites had particular ways of behaving, of believing and of being, of knowing, getting organized, of producing and of communicating, that have a grand potential to contribute to the wellbeing of the state of Israel.

As for the third research question, I find that the first factor inhibiting the construction of an independent political camp was the corollaries of the Wadi Salib events within the Zionist coloniality of power, which turned the Mizrahi political sphere into a battlefield that spurred competition rather than solidarity between ethnicities. This Mizrahi struggle focused on increasing representation of Mizrahim inside the Zionist political parties, and the quest after representation became detached from the larger goals of inclusion that increased representation was aimed to achieve. The inter-ethnic competition was encouraged by the parties, which expanded the practice of nominating different representatives for each place of origin. The press also contributed to form the dynamics of rivalry in the Mizrahi political sphere by classifying the autonomous Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations according to their followers' and leaders' origins.

Efron studied Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectuals who acted in the literary sphere and with its tools. She explained how in "the lyrical arena", the intellectuals felt confident that their experience and their cultural capital made them appropriate for the task of cultural and knowledge intermediaries with the Arab world. They based their legitimacy to act in the public sphere on their intimate knowledge with Arab people and their natural belonging to the Middle East, on their roots and epistemic basis, on their very identity as natives to the region (Efron 2005). They were not very different from the intellectual activists studied here, As Eliahu Eliachar, Yitzhak Abadi and Shlomo Cohen-Tzidon. However, these roots and identity did not establish any base of legitimacy at all for acting in the political arena of modern/colonial Israel. Furthermore, it formed rather an elusive base over which to structure the political argument for equal participation, and it had little tools to express itself in the direct language of real-politik, it did not easily lend itself for making actual political demands. This is because it required an organization or at least a person to embody it as the appropriate participant in the debate, the

legitimate representative of this particular Mizrahi-Sephardic perspective and skills. That was the stature that Eliahu Eliachar and the CSCJ failed to attain in the 1950s. After the failure of the "old guardia", and in the aftermath of the Wadi Salib events, the way to increase representation of Mizrahim and Sephardim in state institutions had been found, and this way did not require adding any ideological significance to the representation. It did not require pointing out the added cultural, social or spiritual value Mizrahi participation could have in decision making. Each activist and group in this research had to prove their own base for legitimacy for reclaiming political influence. Even the institution that was perhaps the most confident one, the CSCJ, also depended on Ashkenazim's commentaries for legitimizing radicalization of their discourse. In this sense, the ICP mirrored Israeli society: the Iraqi cadre within it wanted representation in order to intercede in the decision-making of the party, well aware of the unique value their contribution could have for integrating the party in middle-eastern politics. However, communist ideology did not equip them with the base for legitimacy to express this claim directly.

As to the fourth research question, regarding the circumstances that allowed decolonial opposition to strengthen at certain moments and weaken at others, I find that international and regional politics were the most crucial factor allowing hints of decolonial discourse to emerge in the political discourse of Mizrahi and Sephardic organizations and leaders. The 1960s was a period of decolonization in the Arab world. The Algerian struggle succeeded in portraying itself as progressive to western eyes (Garavini 2012), and the UN had expressed official support in national decolonialization at large (Strang 1991). When the internal regimes within Arab countries seemed to promise emancipatory possibilities for their peoples, it was more likely for Sephardic and Mizrahi political discourse to advocate for integration in the Middle East. The revolutionary spirits of the 1960s in the Middle East penetrated this way the Mizrahi-Sephardic political sphere. This discourse on intellectual platforms was often mediated by western liberals' endorsement of Arab leaders' emancipatory promise. This demonstrates the encompassing influence of western public discourse on Israeli society, and it also demonstrates the deep roots of Sephardic and Mizrahi elites within European cultures, as developed since the 19th century's processes of European cultural colonization in the Middle East. The internal Zionist political sphere also had its share in designing the structure of political opportunities that allowed decolonial discourses to emerge. The fact the Mizrahi political struggle became vacated from content made some Mizrahi and Sephardic intellectual activists retire from the political sphere, and that allowed them to develop the traceable buds of decolonial discourse we saw in this period. The nativist-regional claims described here as autochthonous Zionism was based on emotional foundations that are not easily incorporated into political action per say, and are more easily reduced into cultural initiatives. These claims were developed in another discursive level,

and within other epistemic spheres, than the ones of Zionist politicians and policy and decision-making elites, and therefore it could hardly intercede at that stage with Israeli politics.

To summarize, this research has demonstrated how some Sephardic and Mizrahi groups and individuals weaved into their political discourse threads of opposition to Zionist coloniality, which were manufactured from their material roots, their identity as natives of the region of the Middle East. This kind of opposition could manifest itself when the cannons of war were silent, and when Arab internal regimes could be perceived as making the Middle East a potentially emancipatory space to integrate into. The discourse developed in the *IB* in the 1960s imagined a viable alternative to the Zionist regime on an intellectual level, but these remained on a different discursive level, based upon other epistemic foundations than the ones leading the modern European Zionist political discourse and logics. These spirits could not amount to creating a political action, nor a political camp, that would express these aspirations in the colonial Zionist political sphere. Mapai's apparatus of domination was highly effective in disintegrating its opposition in the period studied, by playing different cards of exclusive inclusion in the modern/colonial regime it constructed. Threads of decolonial political discourse emerged in this period only in spheres that did not aim to participate directly in the political sphere, and purely intellectual activity remained limited as a way to instigate political action.

Lessons from the Angel of History

In the researched period, as well as nowadays, the most dominant Mizrahi claims in the modern Zionist political sphere have been claims against socio-economic oppression and for the rights of the poor. In fact, it could be claimed that whatever universal social rights exist in Israel today are due to the continuous Mizrahi protest movement. The sphere of the cultural struggle remains limited to the sphere of intellectual writing and educational projects. Mizrahi organized political action against cultural oppression prevails today in some senses mainly within ultra-orthodox politics. Ultra-orthodox politics, which in basis aim against the modern Zionist state, redeemed Mizrahim and Sephardim in the period of study in some senses from the hegemonic Ashkenazi standards, which set them as primitive and not modern enough. Toranic colonialism has not demanded Sephardim to modernize and change the essence of who they were in order to fit in. They have accepted Sephardim as they were, even if it was in order to subjugate them into the doctrines of Ashkenazi ultra-orthodoxy and incorporate them in a subjugated manner into this social sphere. Chetrit (2004) marked the beginning of Mizrahi opposition to modern European Zionism in the 1980s and 1990s, by two trends: the religious Sephardic-Jewish trend, marked by the rise of the ultra-orthodox party Shas in 1984, and the secular-intellectual trend, that has

achieved the peak of its political organization with the establishment of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow in 1996[i]. This research delineates the origins of both trends in the Israeli political sphere to the 1960s, to a time when the two had a bit more relationship[ii]. I would like to emphasize here that the main issues observed in this research that allowed for collective Mizrahi action were themes related to Sephardic Judaism: from struggles over furniture for synagogues to the struggle over the status of the Sephardic rabbis. As Chetrit (2004) noted, the spiritual life is the most protected Mizrahi space. It gives positive content to a distinct Sephardic identity, that otherwise is best recognized mainly through the "Mizrahization melting-pot" (Tsur 2010): the injustice and discrimination of the modern/colonial homogenization processes, led by the Zionist regime, caused by its ignorance and violence.

There are quite a few lines of research that directly stem from this investigation: first and foremostly, its completion by the inquiry of materials of autonomous Mizrahi groups written in Arabic and French, research of the Yemenite organizations, and of the variety of local Mizrahi groups and leaders, in light of the decolonial perspective and frameworks. I suspect that some contemporary Mizrahi leftist intellectuals could have benefited more from a historical research focused on leftist -socialist and Marxist- Mizrahi activists, like Felix Matalon or Shalom Cohen. This kind of intellectual political activists, most active during the 1970s, were immersed in European, Israeli and Arab cultures, from which they developed a universal system of values that was based on anti-religious, revolutionary, and anti-colonial ideologies, where their eastern background was interlaced in a cosmopolitan identity. Questions of cultural heritage of tradition and religion did not form part of their thinking and practice[iii]. However, in the activity around the CSCJ circle, which this research focused on, one can observe a kind of political activism that sprang from an identity that combined Jewish heritage with certain identification with Arab culture. This identity was shared by many Jews under Muslim rule. In Muslim countries Mizrahi Judaism often combined modernity and tradition in non-exclusive ways, in a combination the liberal intellectuals reviewed in this research very much aspired to. However, the memory of diaspora of Judeo-Islamic civilization (Snir 2006) was stained by more recent modern experiences, marked by a growing rivalry with Muslim-Arab national identities. This

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[i] This organization combined practical struggles for distributive justice with emancipatory demands for recognition in Mizrahi heritage. It had partial practical successes in changing laws regarding distribution of lands and housing, and it advanced different struggles in the educational field as well. The Mizrahi Rainbow presented quite a coherent and broad approach to the changes required in order to transform the cultural character of the state and the ethnic structure of inequality that prevails in it.

[ii] In recent years, Mizrahi members of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel entered organized dialogue with members of Shas, following Mizrachi's (2011) critique about human rights discourse in Israel, and regarding Mizrahim's place in it in particular. This initiative demonstrates the need for the dialogue between these two social groups. However, as far as my knowledge goes, the initiative has currently ceased its activities.

[iii] I thank Amos Noy for helping me clarify this point and characterize these activists.

can project onto the collective memory of these Jewries of earlier experiences, emphasizing for instance the degraded status of Jews under Muslim rule as an ethnic minority. This is the reason the trope of *Sefarad* was such a powerful tool for the intellectual activists in this research: it captured the potential of mutuality of influences and exchanges between Judaism and Islam, and between east and west, which got interwoven into both cultural heritages. *Sefarad/Al-Andalus* sets a precedence to the kind of transformation Jewish culture is required again to perform in order to become part of the Middle East and resolve the imminent war in Israel/Palestine. This transformation is about the selective election of culture and identity components from various sources, which unlike European leftist ideologies, does not convert the loyalty to Jewish identity into a new loyalty to a universal secular identity. The experience of Jews in Muslim countries, from *Sefarad* to modern times, from their ways of organizing to the contents and tones of their writing, are the kind of diasporic memories that if re-produced in contemporary reality, can support the decolonization of Jewish-Israeli consciousness. Raz-Krakotzkin (1994) wrote of how "a collective Jewish identity that is anchored in the consciousness of Diaspora, allows disconnecting sovereignty from the national definitions, without renouncing collective needs, certainly not collective memory". The conclusions of this research suggest a dire need for a deep inter cultural dialogue within Jewish Israeli society.   In such a dialogue, the heritage of the Diaspora of *Sefarad/Al-Andalus* can serve as the significant common heritage of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewries. The cultural transformations and dialogues that were made possible in this Diaspora signal the way to some emancipatory horizons in the Middle East, pouring contents into what an ecology of knowledges can mean in this region, what kind of inter-religious inter-civilizational dialogue is required. The trope of *Sefarad* is key for a decolonial Inner-Jewish dialogue, and can influence Israel's exterior policies as well.

Recently, the Sephardic World Union[i] started a series of lectures called, "East and West: A tradition of a thousand years". The first conference was titled "The Value of Peace in Sephardic Judaism and Peace in Hebrew Law". In this conference, different speakers emphasized the peaceful principals of Sephardic Judaism, and suggested Sephardic Judaism should be leading the dynamics of Israel with its neighbors and with its Palestinian Arab minority. The philosopher and activist Meir Buzaglo spoke of this Judaism's enrooted self-confidence in its heritage, whose basis in *Sefarad* has allowed it to be opened to humanist ideas and science, without its faithful roots being jeopardized or threatened. He also spoke of the inherent short-

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[i] Unión Sefardí Mundial is a separate organization than the World Sephardi Federation which this research has slightly followed, and which still exists today. They both serve, among others, as a platform for different Sephardic communities worldwide.

handedness of western secular liberal principals of democracy to accomplish reconciliation or a sense of shared life of Jews and Arabs in the Middle East:

"As if… now we need to find a way, through civil rights and this sort of things. [But] this is a connection related to the roots:… Jewish-Arab heritage. There is no liturgical poetry [piyut], *no Jewish art, without deep affinity to the Jewish-Arab heritage."*

According to Buzaglo, because Sephardic Judaism does not have the conception of sectarianism [*mahanaut*], it holds the keys for leading the Inner-Jewish process Israeli society so desperately requires: its role should be to instill the value of "togetherness" in Israeli society. Buzaglo claimed Mizrahi protest movements held humanist values because these were enrooted in them, that they have been "polite" and "so very nice", and that Mizrahim in Israel have contained and 'swallowed' a lot: as is required from the responsible adult[i].

The study and distribution of knowledge about the heritage of *Sefarad* in light of decolonial conceptions can help highlight the factors and facets in this heritage which can construct a political discourse that relies on non-colonial understanding between Jews and Arabs: emphasizing their common heritage and mutual influences, highlighting the ways the two religions contributed to each other's development, and analyze the variety of ecologies of knowledges that have existed between them throughout their common history, as old as Islam itself. This emphasis, if spread outside intellectual circles, might replace the strengthening emphasis in Israeli Zionist discourse on factors of rivalry and animosity between the two nations and religions. For instance, in the same conference, Rabbi Naftali Rotenberg suggested emphasizing Muslim influences in the canonical texts of Sephardic rabbis, which are being studied in toranic academies and in the formal education system everywhere in Israel[ii]. A more daring and sensitive line of research might focus on 1948, and attempt to draw a common line, along decolonial concepts, to the Palestinian Catastrophe and the Mizrahi Rupture, which in this research emerged as a central experience of the Jewish Zionist nation. Shohat noted that the only legitimate Sephardic and Mizrahi claim regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has ever been "to parrot the standard rhetoric of population exchange" between the Palestinian refugees and Mizrahi Jews, an exchange which de-facto occurred within this regional crisis. As a political claim, it is highly problematic, because it erases the abyssal difference between these experiences and can be easily manipulated into negating the urgent claims of Palestinian refugees. However, it is possible and necessary to view the connection between the establishment of the state of Israel, the dispossession of Palestinians and the dislocation of

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[i] Dr. Meir Buzaglo, lecture on 31.12.19, in the conference "The Value of Peace in Sephardic Jewry's Heritage and Peace in Hebrew Law" ('erekh ha-shalom be-yahadut sefarad le-doroteha ve-ha-shalom ba-mishpat ha-'ivri), Unión Sefardí Mundial, The Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

[ii] Rabbi Naftali Rotenberg, lecture on 31.12.19, in the conference "The Value of Peace in Sephardic Jewry's Heritage and Peace in Hebrew Law" ('erekh ha-shalom be-yahadut sefarad le-doroteha ve-ha-shalom ba-mishpat ha-'ivri), Unión Sefardí Mundial, The Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Mizrahi Jews in a non-reductive way (Shohat 1988). That means giving the memory of 1948 as a regional Rupture a more central place in Israeli collective memory. It had been practically taboo to express this perception in public at the time of this research, but I believe today Israeli national collective consciousness might be consolidated enough to handle these dark sides of 1948.

In recent decades, the foundations of Israeli coloniality has become rooted more profoundly in the mentality of its society, as they have been receiving a more heavily armored expression in middle-eastern politics. Since the post 9/11 security regime of a western low-intensity war on terrorism (Grinberg 2008, Offir & Azoulay 2009, Hajjar 2005), culminating with the recent combats with Daesh, the exterior political conditions have been the least favorable for establishing respect in Israeli society towards the environment surrounding it. This research demonstrated that historically, regional and international politics have had a significant influence over the Israeli political sphere, and the Mizrahi political sphere in particular. Therefore, the conclusions that arise from this research might suggest a potential role for Israeli intellectuals and activists: producing and distributing knowledge about revolts and protests that carry emancipatory horizons in the surrounding countries[i]. Middle-eastern initiatives that promote respectful co-existence within heterogeneous communities and states might entail valuable lessons for the Israeli/Palestinian context, and contribute to a culture of peace that is based upon a just distribution of resources and rights.

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[i] See for instance Amir (2019). It is with some delay that Hebrew press have started in the past couple of years to report and get informed about the Kurdish decolonial feminist regime constructed in Rojava. If this regime will not get annihilated by the warfare that threatens it, I hope information about and solidarity with Rojava can expand in Israel, to inspire political activists to imagine a reality for Israel/Palestine beyond European modern coloniality.

ANNEX: MAPS AND TABLES

MAP I: 1917[i]
Palestine after World War I
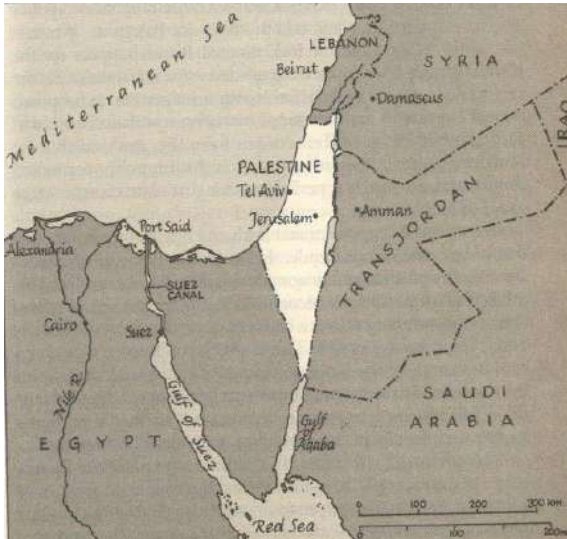
MAP II: 1947
The United Nation Partition Plan
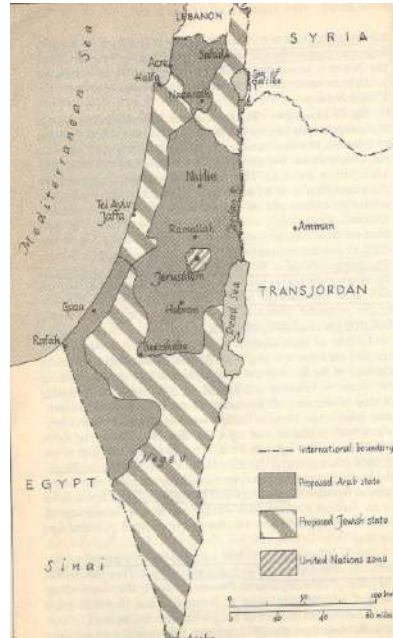
MAP III: 1949
The Armistice Agreements

MAP IV: 1967
Israeli conquests in the Six Day War

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[i] Source: Shlaim (2000).

Table I: Jewish Population in Eretz-Israel/Palestine (percent)[i]

	1895	**1918**	**1936**	**1947**
Sephardim	40	19.4	9.2	9.5
Mizrahim[ii]	-	21.5	14.1	13
Ashkenazim	60	59.1	76.7	77.5
Total Jews in population	13	7	27.7	33
Total Palestinian Arabs	87	93	72.3	67

Table II: Elections to the National Assembly[iii]

	1920		**1925**		**1931**		**1944**	
Political Blocs	**Number of factions**	**Percent of voters**	**Number of factions**	**Percent of voters**	**Number of factions**	**Percent of voters**	**Number of factions**	**Percent of voters**
Labor bloc	3	37	3	36.5	4	42.3	4	59.1
Center and Right wing bloc	9	19.7	16	42.1	4	32.4	7	21
Religious bloc	3	20.3	4	8.8	1	7	5	16.6
Ethnic bloc[iv]	6	25	2	16	5	14.85	3	3.5

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[i] Sources: Asaf (1970), Tractober (1958): 50, Aliav (1991): 17-39, Ben Arieh (1988): 7-8. UNSCOP Report (3.9.47), retrieved from: https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/07175DE9FA2DE563852568D3006E10F3 (last accessed on 20.6.16).

[ii] The main groups here are: Maghrebim, Yemenites, Babylonians, Persians, Bukharians, Georgians, Caucasians, Kurds, Orphals and Aleppians (Bezalel 2007: 39).

[iii] Source: Horowitz & Lissak (1979): 66, 117.

[iv] Source: Herzog (1986): 198.

Table III: Ethnic Composition of the state of Israel (percent)[i]

	1949	**1951**	**1952**	**1957**	**1963**
Sephardim and Mizrahim	20	29	35.6	42.8	44
Ashkenazim	66.4	60	49	41	44.4
Muslims, Christians and Druze	13.6	11	11	11	11.6
Total population	1,174,000	1,577,000	1,629,500	1,976,000	2,436,000

Table IV: The Sephardic faction in the parliament[ii]

	1949	**1951**	**1955**
Name of list	National Union of Sephardim and the oriental sectors (headed by Bechor Chetrit)	Sephardim and the oriental sectors old timers and immigrants (independent list within General Zionists)	Sephardim and the oriental sectors old timers, immigrants and non-party affiliates. (independent list within General Zionists)
Parliamentary seats	4	2	0
% of voters	3.5	1.8	0.8

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BGA- Ben Gurion Archive in Sde Boker.

CSCJA- Community of the Sephardic Council of Jerusalem Archives in Jerusalem City Archives.

CZA-Central Zionist Archives.

JCA- Jerusalem City Archives.

MALI- Shmuel Mikunis' Personal Archive in Lavon Institute.

MSA-Moshe Sharet Archives in Bet Berl College.

NLIA- National Library of Israel Archives.

SA-State Archives.

TA- Yosef Yuval Tubi's Personal Archive.

YTA- Yad Tabenkin Archives.

ABBREVIATIONS OF QUOTES PUBLICATIONS

EM- El Hamizrah

HH- Hed Hamizrah

IB- Bama'arakha

IOP-Israel's Oriental Problem

KH- Kol Ha'am

FYI- Leyediatkha

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