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Jerusalem's Ottoman Municipality: An Actor in the Slow Transition from Communal Charity to Social Welfare?

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Abstract

As a privileged site for individual and collective acts of charity, Jerusalem witnessed an important increase in charity and poor relief institutions in the nineteenth century, many of them European-backed and related to missionary ambitions. Partly in response to the perceived threat of the latter, the municipality of Jerusalem gradually became a crucial actor in poor relief, in the framework of an evolving legal framework defining the social responsibilities of municipalities and the rights of citizens. Drawing on the archives of the municipality, as well as diaries and memoirs of Jerusalemites, this article examines this transformation particularly in the realms of social welfare and health services.

Keywords

Social welfare - Poor relief – Municipality - Ottoman Jerusalem – Tanzīmāt – Health care

With its symbolic dimension as a holy city for all three monotheistic faiths, Jerusalem has of course always been a privileged site for acts of charity of religious motivation.¹ During the Ottoman period, the city was considered one of the most important Muslim holy sites, alongside Mecca, Medina and Hebron (*Al-Khalīl*), and was endowed with a multitude of charitable endowments (*waqf, awqāf*),² from the famous soup kitchen (*imāret*) of Khasseki Sultan (also known as Roxelana, 1502-1558), the wife of Sultan Soliman the Magnificent (Sulaymān al-Qanūnī, 1494-1566), to the many public fountains (*sabīls*) bringing fresh drinking water to the city. As pointed out by Şerife Eroğlu Memiş, the direct endowments to the holy cities by Ottoman sultans contributed to their status as “guardian of the two noble sanctuaries” (*khādim al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn*). Jerusalem also benefitted from the Ottoman *surra* that accompanied the annual hajj caravan and brought charitable donations to the holy cities.³

Acts of charity also constituted a part of the religious practice of residents and pilgrims, who flocked to the city in great numbers, especially as travel became easier with the technical developments of the nineteenth century.⁴ Christian pilgrimages witnessed a particular intensification from the mid-nineteenth century onwards,⁵ partly as a result of increased European and American presence in the city. This presence had been facilitated during the decade of Egyptian rule from 1831 until 1840, marked by concessions to European interests and by the opening of an important number of consulates, churches and missionary organizations in Jerusalem, whose activities were concentrated in the areas of education and health. The city thus held an important place in the growing competition for influence between European powers, and charitable work – benefitting mostly Christians and Jews – became a means for asserting these powers’ claims and creating a foothold among the local population. However, as urban governance became organized in a reformed municipal form in the late Ottoman era,⁶ municipalities also played an increasingly important role in poor relief. This is particularly visible in Jerusalem, one of the Empire’s first cities to form a municipal council, and a vital center for charity and philanthropy because of its symbolic dimension as a holy city for the three monotheistic faiths.

There are two overarching social and political contexts for charity, philanthropy and relief initiatives in the late Ottoman era. The first one is constituted by the Ottoman state’s efforts to preserve social peace in order to ensure the political stability of this multi-religious and multi-cultural empire, which was of increasing concern in light of the loss of Greece (1821) and Algeria (1830) and the ambition for independence of other Ottoman territories, especially in the Balkans.⁷ In the second half of the nineteenth century, a

¹ See for instance: Pahlitzsch 2004; Singer 2002; Sroor 2010.

² See Memiş 2016. Also see Tamari 2018.

³ See Memiş in this volume.

⁴ See Pasternak 1997.

⁵ According to Alexander Schölch, during the 1870s the annual number of pilgrims was between 10,000 and 20,000 (Schölch 1993: 120).

⁶ See Lafi 2007.

⁷ See Mantran 1989.

second context emerges: on the one hand, a push for Ottoman citizenship as the organizing principle of Ottoman society,⁸ and on the other, Ottoman attempts to counter European, American and Russian interventions throughout the empire, including missionary activities concentrated in the areas of health and education. Both of these intertwined dynamics were accompanied by the centralizing impulse of late Ottoman policies and increasing control over populations through the issuing of personal identity papers, population censuses, public health and security policies.⁹

The evolving concept of citizenship in the late Ottoman era included a definition of the rights of the citizen vis-à-vis the state and the different levels of administration. That definition underwent an important transformation also on the municipal level, as the legal framework for municipalities became increasingly specific. The Municipal Code for the Provinces of 1877 represents an important turning point in terms of the approach to the citizens as beneficiaries of services, including social welfare. In this article, by drawing on the archives of the municipal council of Jerusalem, I will first situate the Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem in the socio-political context of the turn of the century, including the legal context of Ottoman reforms (*Tanzīmāt*, 1839-1878) on the local level, before analyzing the municipality in the midst of various actors of charity, relief and philanthropy present in Jerusalem, especially in the health sector. I will also examine the changes in Ottoman policy towards the urban poor after 1871 and their impact in Jerusalem, in order to reflect on the implicit objectives of these initiatives in the larger political context of Jerusalem. The analysis of the municipality's role in the crisis that befell the city during the First World War will show the growing ambiguities of this institution, namely by comparing the municipal council's minutes with the memoirs of two Jerusalemites.

I The Ottoman Municipality of Jerusalem as a *Tanzīmāt* Institution

Jerusalem was one of the first cities within the Ottoman Empire to form a municipal council (*majlis al-baladiyya*, *meclis-i belediye*)¹⁰ as such sometime between 1863 and

⁸ The Ottoman Nationality Law was passed in 1869 and created equal citizenship regardless of religious affiliation.

⁹ The late nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire was characterized by the drive for centralization and better control of relatively remote provinces in light of the loss of territories in Europe and North Africa. This period was also rife with financial difficulties that the state attempted to compensate for by improving the efficiency of its tax farming procedures. The Ottoman-Russian wars of that period (1853-1856, 1877-1878) placed a further strain on the finances of the Sublime Porte and created a need for conscripted soldiers. In this context, the population censuses conducted by the Ottoman state constituted an important tool for identifying potential soldiers.

¹⁰ In chronological order, the following publications have been devoted to the Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem: Gutmann 1968; Kark 1980; Avcı 2004; Avcı and Lemire 2005; al-Shunaq 2010; Büssow 2014; Avcı, Lemire and Naili 2015.

1867,¹¹ the latter year coinciding with an Ottoman law calling for the establishment of municipal councils. The Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem was of course not an *ex-nihilo* creation of the Tanẓīmāt, but rather an institution which succeeded other instances of old regime urban governance. In the earlier Ottoman period, urban governance was multi-layered and included several actors, such as the *qādī*, the *naqīb al-ashraf* and the *muhtasib*. The immediate predecessor of the Tanẓīmāt-era municipality was the *majlis al-shūrā* which was first established by the regime of Ibrahīm Pasha in the Bilād al-Shām and seems to have existed until the foundation of the municipality in 1867. This council united the different aspects of municipal action and institutionalized them. Under Egyptian rule, its role was to coordinate khedival administrative policies and the collection of tax revenues, but it also had a judicial function as well as an important role in urban governance. The *majlis al-shūrā* was in charge of fixing price levels, auctioning public charges such as customs, supervising army supplies and mediating complaints from the town's population. In that way, it was clearly an institutional precursor of the municipality.¹²

The evolution of a reformed municipality in Jerusalem, as elsewhere in the Empire, was further consolidated after the 1871 amendments of the Provincial Law (*Vilāyet Nizāmnāmesi*) and the Ottoman law on Municipalities in 1877.¹³ In the beginning, the municipal councils were composed of nominated members of the property-holding classes for a period of two years.¹⁴ From the 1880s onward, the municipal council was composed of nine to twelve members elected (by male suffrage restricted by a poll tax) for a renewable mandate of four years, in addition to a maximum of four *ex officio* members (engineer, doctor, veterinarian and head of police).¹⁵

The Municipality of Jerusalem was a major player in the modernization of the city, both in the realm of administration and in terms of improving infrastructure, while also assuming its traditional role of regulating conflicts and guaranteeing a certain level of social peace. It was a generally respected local authority with a wide scope of competences and also an important mediating authority between the Ottoman imperial impetus and local demands. Furthermore, the council represented an essential link between the local and the imperial level of politics. Mayor Yūsuf Diya' Al Dīn Al-Khālīdī (1842-1906),¹⁶ for example, was counted among the most crucial actors on the municipal level in Jerusalem

¹¹ In French consular archives the municipality is cited for the first time in 1867 (Report dated 6 December 1867, CADN/ consulat de Jérusalem/ B series/box no. 5).

¹² Several elements in this paragraph feature in the following publication: Naïli 2017b. See Muhtadi et al. 2018 for an analysis of the transition between the end of Egyptian rule and the return of Ottoman rule in Jerusalem. For the larger Ottoman context of urban governance, see Lafi 2019.

¹³ Young 1905: 69–84.

¹⁴ Sharif 2014: 54–56.

¹⁵ Büssow 2011: 72–73. The council members had to be Ottoman citizens and could not be *protégés* of foreign consulates. Muslims were the majority on the council, but the latter also always included Christian and Jewish members, represented according to Ottoman population census data and the censitary barrier limiting suffrage to the property-holding class. The Ottoman government chose the council president from among the elected members (*ibidem*), who, according to the 1877 law, was the only one to receive a salary (Sharif 2014: 84).

¹⁶ See Schölch 2005.

before becoming a vocal member of parliament in Istanbul in 1876. As an Ottoman provincial capital since 1872, Jerusalem thus played what Jens Hanssen has called an “interstitial role” between the imperial center and the provincial periphery.¹⁷

The Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem is a particularly good example of an institution which was shaped by the *Tanzīmāt* reforms and which in turn applied their spirit on the level of local government. The archives of this institution, partly preserved for the period between 1892 and 1917, provide many details about the work of the municipal council.¹⁸ These archives are part of the Historical Archives of the Jerusalem Municipality, kept today in the municipality building in the Musrara neighborhood in Jerusalem. They consist of notebooks in which the clerks noted the deliberations of the municipal council and were intended for the internal use of the council. Fifty-five percent of the council minutes available for the period from 1892 until 1917 are in Ottoman Turkish, the remainder is in Arabic. They offer a unique perspective into the urban development of Jerusalem and the workings of the administration in the last decades of Ottoman rule and provide a great wealth of information about social, economic, cultural, and political life during that crucial period of the city’s history.

The municipality applied measures decided on the imperial level, but also responded to local needs and demands in a continuous tension between autonomy and dependence. The minutes of the municipal council show that it had many responsibilities: there are minutes concerning public works and infrastructure (including lighting, street repair, water, etc.), the regulation of bread prices, warnings about counterfeit money, organization of vaccinations campaigns, and the construction of hospitals and pharmacies.¹⁹ During the *Tanzīmāt* period, municipal councils also played an important role in shaping the reform-agenda and actively engaged with the principles of reform on the basis of local realities.²⁰

II The Changing Actors of Charity and Welfare in Nineteenth-century Jerusalem

The actors and beneficiaries of charity and welfare in Jerusalem changed significantly during the second half of the nineteenth century. Demographically and geographically, Jerusalem witnessed important growth during these decades, increasing the need for charity and poor relief. The city’s population doubled between 1800 and 1870 and reached an estimated 70,000 inhabitants in 1914, equally divided between the Old City

¹⁷ Hanssen et al. 2002: 13.

¹⁸ The archives of the municipality have been deciphered and more than half of them translated in the framework of the “Opening Jerusalem’s Archives” project, which was funded by the European Research Council (ERC), and directed by Vincent Lemire. A selection of these translations will be published. I would like to thank my colleagues Abdul-Hameed Al Kayyali, Yasemin Avcı, Vincent Lemire and Hanna Borne-Monot for our years of fruitful and enriching collaborative work on those archives.

¹⁹ This has also been pointed out by Mahmoud Yazbak for the Ottoman municipality of Nablus: Yazbak 1999.

²⁰ See Naïli 2017b.

and the New City developing outside of the city walls.²¹ As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Jewish immigration to Jerusalem increased, namely from Central and Eastern Europe, changing the balance between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities in the city.²²

The earlier actors of charity and philanthropy in Jerusalem were local confessional institutions such as Muslim, Christian and Jewish pious foundations, Sufi soup kitchens (*takaya*), *imaret* soup kitchens, Christian churches and congregations as well as the Sephardi kolel (community organizations).²³ From the 1830s onwards, these actors had been joined by an increasing number of foreign missionary organizations catering to different communities living in Jerusalem and also by foreign philanthropists such as Sir Moses Montefiori (1784-1885), a British banker and financier. According to Philippe Bourmaud, in the second half of the nineteenth century in Jerusalem, institutional healthcare ceased to be organized on a denominational basis (such as, for example, a *waqf*-based *bimaristān* and a Franciscan pharmacy) and began to be mostly provided by Christian and Jewish institutions backed by European or American powers. As “works of beneficence”, they “catered to a specific religious community rather than health needs.”²⁴ This transformation is also exemplified in the difference of approach between the Sephardic Kolel and the English Mission Hospital, analyzed by Yali Hashash. The Sephardic Kolel was concerned primarily with the welfare of the learned poor in the spirit of favoring religious knowledge, but also maintained important financial ties with the other religious communities in the city, namely with the Muslim and Christian elite.²⁵ By contrast, the English Mission Hospital, established in 1844 by the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews (also known as the London Jews Society), only catered to the health and welfare needs of Jewish patients, who were thereby exposed to “Christian morality” as a way of encouraging their conversion to Christianity, a condition *sine qua non* for the Second Coming of Christ eagerly awaited by the evangelists of the London Jews Society.²⁶

The English Mission Hospital was one of seventeen hospitals in Jerusalem in the late nineteenth century and was considered a particular threat by the heads of the city’s Jewish communities. The British Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiori and the German doctor Simon Fraenkel founded a competing clinic in 1843, and four other Jewish hospitals were established in the following four decades. German, Italian and Austrian hospitals and hospices were among other foreign-backed health institutions created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.²⁷

²¹ Lemire 2013: 32.

²² See Wallach 2017.

²³ The Sephardic community was reestablished in Jerusalem in 1726 and was the sole representative of the city’s Jewish communities to the Ottoman authorities (Hashash 2018: 457). Kolel is sometimes also transliterated as kollel. Until the end of the nineteenth century the term denoted a community organization with a particular responsibility for the promotion of religious learning and assistance of the learned poor.

²⁴ Bourmaud 2018: 444-5.

²⁵ Hashash 2018: 465.

²⁶ See Perry and Lev 2003.

²⁷ Sufian 2015: 117-8.

*The Municipal Hospital and Pharmacy*²⁸

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the municipality became an important new actor in the provision of health care service to Jerusalem's population, "in keeping with the agenda of Ottoman reforms, which called for territorial and communal equality of access to state services."²⁹ Following chapter seven of Provincial Law of 1871, municipalities were held to establish a municipal pharmacy and a medical department, and to offer two days of free medical consultation with a municipal doctor, either in clinic/hospital or at home if necessary. This legislation constitutes "the introduction of the idea of the rights of the city-dwellers vis-à-vis their municipality, regardless of their financial situation."³⁰ According to this law, poor patients were to receive medication free of charge, but in the absence of clear income criteria, it was largely up to discretion of doctor or pharmacist to decide who would benefit from free health care services.³¹

Jerusalem's municipal hospital opened its doors in 1891. It was not only an important provider of medical care, but also an Ottoman reply to the intense investment of missionary medical institutions in the city. The Beiruti newspaper *Al-Bashīr* reported on the inauguration of this hospital in July 1891 at great length,³² and in the municipal council minutes for the following few years, we can find a number of items dealing with the day-to-day business of the hospital, such as this one from 1892:

"When one of the patients dies in the hospital, it is difficult to find persons to wash (the corpses), and consequently the burial is delayed. Therefore, the council has decided to appoint an officer for this task. The necessary qualifications have been found with Ibrāhīm Zahbki, therefore he has been nominated from the 13th of the month of Mart (1)308 with a monthly salary of three *riyāl majīdī*. In order to confirm this, this decision was taken on the 12th of Mart (1)308."³³

For 1904, there is an announcement of the municipal doctor's office hours for free vaccinations:

"We announce to all the people that the municipal doctor will be in his center in the municipal administration on Tuesday and Thursday of each week from the morning until noon in order to vaccinate children for free. Therefore these directions were published on the 15th of Tishrīn thānī (1)320."³⁴

Throughout the 25-year period for which most of the municipal council's minutes are available, many vaccination campaigns are mentioned, which were led by the municipality's doctors. In those campaigns, Jerusalem – as a provincial capital – had a

²⁸ Several elements in this section feature in the following publication: Nāili 2017b.

²⁹ Bourmaud 2018: 445.

³⁰ Sharif 2014: 77.

³¹ Sharif 2014: 75-77.

³² *Al Bashīr*, 1st of Tamūz 1891, vol 1071, p. 3, consulted at the Center for Archives and Microfilms, Library of the University of Jordan.

³³ HAJM, 12th of Mart 1308, from the Arabic text.

³⁴ HAJM, 15th of Tishrīn thānī 1320, from the Arabic text.

particular responsibility in terms of logistics and finances, as we can deduce from a decision taken in April 1892 and written in Ottoman Turkish.

Item of Vaccine	Number	Price	Total (<i>kurūsh</i>)
	500	5	2,500
Vaccinator's salary	40	300 (per each) x 40=12,000 12,000 x 3 (months) =26,000	36,000
			38,500

<i>Distribution of Cost</i>	
From the Income of Jerusalem Municipality	16,200
From the Income of Jaffa Municipality	8100
From the Income of Gaza Municipality	8,100
From the Income of Ramallah Municipality	4,050
From the Income of Hebron Municipality	2,050
	38,500

“As stated in the second appendix of the above-mentioned municipality doctor, it has been understood that there is a need for 38,500 *kurūsh* for the vaccination of all children within the subprovince (*sanjak*) of Jerusalem. The sum of money to be spent for vaccination is specified above, as distributed according to the income of each district (*kaza*) municipality. This decree requires that the cost of vaccination of the children living in districts with a lesser municipality income be covered by other districts with more municipality income. Thus, as the incomes of the municipalities of Ramallah and Hebron do not suffice for the vaccination of the inhabitants of the villages belonging to these districts, it is necessary to purchase the required vaccines and to send vaccinators. Although it has been considered that the sum of money allocated to each municipality to cover this expense should be sent to the *sanjak* center for approval, it is appropriate to relegate the matter to the *Sanjak* Administrative Council for renewed discussion. 12 Nisān 1308”.³⁵

³⁵ HAJM, 12th of Nisān 1308. This decision and all others taken from Ottoman Turkish decisions were deciphered and adapted by Yasemin Avcı and translated into English by Erkal Ünal, both of whom I thank very warmly.

In 1907 the municipal council decided to establish a pharmacy:

“In accordance with the decision of the district administrative council dated on the 28th of Tishrīn thānī bearing the number 1113 about the necessity of opening a pharmacy at the expense of the municipality (....). The needed space has been rented and the necessary medicine has been ordered, and a pharmacist and an assistant have to be hired. It has been found that Sulaymān Effendi, one of the military officers who has the legal diploma, and Bishāra Effendi Y’aqūb Lūrans have the needed qualifications for those positions. Their recruitment in the mentioned positions has therefore been decided. Sulaymān Effendi will receive 300 *qirsh* and Bishāra Effendi 150 *qirsh* as monthly salaries from the date on which they begin onwards. Accordingly, this decision has taken on the 8th of Shubāt (1)322.”³⁶

By opening a municipal hospital and pharmacy, Jerusalem’s municipality complied with Ottoman legislation and the Empire’s ambition of modernizing and centralizing the state. But these state interventions in the care for the citizens could also be seen as an expression of the biopolitics of the Ottoman state. This notion from Michel Foucault’s work elucidates how the state’s power in sustaining life (instead of taking it) penetrates and regulates the life of citizens to hitherto unknown degrees, turning them thereby into potential objects of knowledge and discipline.³⁷ One concrete example of biopolitics is the population census which enables the state to provide services, including health care, according to the actual needs of the population, but also facilitates conscription into the army, a link which did not escape many Ottoman citizens, who tried to avoid the census.

III Changes in Ottoman Policy towards the Poor between 1867 and 1877: From Charity to Welfare?

Malek Sharif has provided a very complete analysis of the development of the legislative framework for Ottoman municipalities in his book on the municipality of Beirut. It is particularly interesting to compare the relative place of the poor in the first municipal code for the provinces created in 1867 with the Law on Municipalities of 1877. The latter was published ten months after the promulgation of the Constitution of the Ottoman Empire by Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) in December 1876 and “represented the onset of modern urban institutional thinking in the Ottoman Empire.”³⁸

The municipal code of 1867 had stipulated the presence of the medical doctor of the district among the *ex officio* members of the municipal council,³⁹ a clear message as to the importance of public health for local government. The municipality was also held to maintain the hygienic standards on the city’s streets and ensure the safety and quality of

³⁶ HAJM, 8th of Shubāt 1322, from the Arabic text.

³⁷ See Foucault 1990.

³⁸ Sharif 2014: 80.

³⁹ Sharif 2014: 55.

basic food staples and of meat. Moreover, the municipal police force and inspectors were ordered to put an end to begging in the streets and markets of the cities. Beggars older than thirteen years were to be apprehended and given over to the provincial administration. Child beggars and female mendicants were to be sent back to their quarters whose inhabitants were held responsible for their upkeep.⁴⁰ According to Sharif, this law was “clearly conveying a picture of a society... which had not yet advanced from charity – personal or communal – to welfare as a basic right. The lawmakers tried to restrict the movements of the poor, hence, reducing their chances of receiving relief, without making the municipality responsible for providing the needy with an alternative welfare system.”⁴¹

In Henri Lefebvre’s terms, the urban poor thus did not have a “right to the city”⁴² and the city – embodied in the city council – had no obligations towards them. The obligation for their well-being laid with the social unit of the neighborhood or quarter. We can suppose that the neighborhood headmen (*mukhtārs*) had an important role in this context.⁴³

The Municipal Code for the Provinces of 1877 law represents a turning point in terms of the approach to the citizens as beneficiaries on the one hand, and in terms of actors of poor relief on the other. Article Three of the 1877 law enumerates the obligations of the municipality, among which were the construction, maintenance and improvement of all infrastructure, the supervision and organization of traffic flow and transportation, the control of weights and measures, prices and quality of food products, the regulation of lease contracts and the upkeep of a population register and a property register. Furthermore, the municipality had extensive responsibilities in the area of public health, including the construction of a municipal hospital inside the city and that of a slaughterhouse outside of the city limits, in addition to regular inspections of bakeries, butcheries, restaurants and coffeehouses. Last but not least, the municipality was now also responsible for social welfare: it was obligated to establish orphanages and cost-free vocational schools for orphans as well as deaf, mute, blind or poor children. In addition, it had to provide suitable work to physically able beggars and to educate their children in vocational schools.⁴⁴

The social welfare aspect in this legislation constitutes a departure from the former approach to city-dwellers: the 1867 law had not considered that the poor had rights vis-à-vis of the city’s administration; they were only the responsibility of their neighborhood community. The new law recognized a universal right of the city’s residents, regardless of their social and economic situation. Social welfare was now incumbent upon the municipality.⁴⁵ This shift in paradigm was also the Ottoman state’s reaction to the growing presence of foreign-backed charitable and philanthropic institutions, which were

⁴⁰ Sharif 2014: 58.

⁴¹ Sharif 2014: 64.

⁴² Lefebvre 1968.

⁴³ Massicard 2013.

⁴⁴ Sharif 2014: 86-87.

⁴⁵ Sharif 2014: 90.

particularly active in cities such as Jerusalem. According to Sharif, “this foreign interference was considered as a grave threat to the peace, stability and common loyalty of the heterogeneous Ottoman population.”⁴⁶

This new obligation of the municipality towards the poor entails the creation of a municipal officer position in charge of the needy (*masakīn*), as we can read in Jerusalem’s municipal council’s records for 1906 and 1907:

“According to the statement of the officer in charge of the needy, their place, which belongs to the municipality in Bīr Ayyūb, has been inspected with the knowledge of the municipality’s engineer Nasrī Effendi. Based on the inspection given from the engineer, we understood that the mentioned place needs a sum of 1280 piasters for repairs to prevent further damage. The council has decided to offer up the repairs of the place for Dutch auction, and after cessation of those interested the issue will be approved. Accordingly, this decision was issued on the 27th of Kānūn Awwal (1)321 (9th of January 1906).”⁴⁷

This council decision refers to a building designated for housing the needy in a village near Jerusalem. There are earlier references to similar structures in Jerusalem: for example, in 1894, the municipality decided to build housing units for the poor in the village of Silwān, in an attempt to meet its responsibilities for the social welfare of the inhabitants of the city.⁴⁸

The municipal officer in charge of the poor thus had an important responsibility vis-à-vis the citizens, and when he did not perform satisfactorily, the municipality had no qualms about replacing him:

“It is evident that Khalīl Sālīh Ashraf, the officer in charge of the poor, is not doing his work properly and there have been complaints about him. It appears that Jumu’ā Mustafa Abū Dīāb has the necessary qualifications for this job, and accordingly the council has decided to hire the registered Jumu’ā for this job. He will be paid the appropriate salary, which amounts to 100 piasters starting from the 15th day of the month of Shubāt (1)322. In order to proceed, this decision was taken on the 13th of Shubāt (1)322 (26th of February 1907).”⁴⁹

For the case of Jerusalem, it is thus possible to assert that the poor had a certain “right to the city” after 1877, as evidenced in the services that they could now legitimately lay claim to. A certain category of needy persons seems, however, to have experienced continued

⁴⁶ Sharif 2014: 90. Also see Deringil.

⁴⁷ HAJM, 26th of Tamūz (1)310 (vol 3), from the Arabic text.

⁴⁸ “We announce a Dutch auction for the construction of eight rooms for the poor in the village of Silwān. After agreement (*kafyad*) of the bidders, its amount was fixed at the level of sixteen thousand piasters in installments. Accordingly it was announced for three days from the date below. So whoever is interested in this bid should inform the municipality of Jerusalem within the specified period and should bid according to the rules. In order for this to be known, these procedures were published on the 26th of Tamūz (1)310 (7th of August 1894) at 10 o’clock Arab time.” (HAJM, 26th of Tamūz (1)310 (vol 3), from the Arabic text).

⁴⁹ HAJM, 13th of Shubāt (1)322, from the Arabic text.

exclusion even after this major reform in the relationship between the citizens and the municipality as a provider of services: the rural poor coming to the city. In a council decision dating from 1898, it is clear that the old principle of considering the urban poor as the responsibility of their neighborhoods continued to be applied to the rural poor:

“In the central town of Jerusalem and among the village folks, there are various panhandling poor *fellahs* and gypsies and it is clearly stated in the Reformation Commission’s bill that they must be sent away to their lands. Since they will gather tomorrow, i.e., on Friday, in Harem-i Şerif after the prayer, they must be apprehended and submitted to village *muhtars*. Since those escaping apprehension or those who cannot be found will be found in another corner of the country, it is appropriate to relegate the matter to the Police Department so as to explain that village *muhtars* shall be levied a fine if these people come back. The 8th of Tishrîn Awwal (1)314 (20th of October 1898).”⁵⁰

So the development from the principle of communal charity to public social welfare was not a straight line in Jerusalem. The urban poor had been recognized as part of the citizenry, but not the rural poor.

There are other continuations of older dynamics to be observed after 1877. Although the neighborhood responsibility for the poor had been ended, neighborhood *mukhtārs* continued to play an important role even after these changes. In many ways, they seem to have acted as relays or mediators for more institutional actors of public welfare, such as the municipal officer in charge of the needy. In a Jerusalem municipal council decision of 1910, this role becomes evident:

“It has been understood from the testimony dated on the 3rd of Sha’bān, which was presented by the headman (*mukhtār*) of the Ashkenazi, Māshar Labīb Ibn Dawūd Ersik, that the Ottoman Ashkenazi is a poor man with a large family, and now his wife gave birth to twins, whom he cannot afford to pay for. Upon report number 1 – 292, Khān, 26, which he brought, it has been decided to allocate a sum of 30 piasters for the mentioned person starting from Agustos. In order to pay the money on a monthly basis, this decision was taken on the 2nd of Agustos (1)326 (15th of August 1910).”⁵¹

Clearly, the reforms pertaining to poor relief and social welfare were no magic wand and did not transform established social understandings and roles immediately. In general, these reforms aimed at increasing social well-being have to be seen within the larger context of the Ottoman state’s centralizing impetus with its objective of better control of the Empire’s population and enhanced revenues through more efficient taxation and agricultural production. This objective became an even stronger imperative when the Empire entered the conflict that became the First World War.

⁵⁰ HAJM, 8th of Tishrîn Awwal (1)314, from the Ottoman Turkish text.

⁵¹ HAJM, 2nd of Agustos (1)326, from the Arabic text.

*The First World War in Jerusalem: The Municipality Faces a Major Humanitarian Crisis*⁵²

During the period of the First World War, the municipality, as a civilian administration, experienced important budgetary constraints, reducing its capacity for action in the face of increasing challenges. The municipal council tried nonetheless to maintain its role in the preservation of public space, in hygiene and in the maintenance of order, while taking part in the management of the socio-economic crisis resulting from the war. In parallel, the municipality participated in the organization of the conscription of soldiers and in the requisition of foodstuffs for the benefit of the army, which were clearly the most abhorred aspects of the Ottoman administration from the point of view of the population.

In 1915, the increasingly destitute population of the city had to face a massive invasion of locusts that exacerbated the effect of the requisitioning of foodstuffs by the military. From the perspective of the population of the towns and villages, this natural disaster was now added to the depredations committed by the Ottoman army. In his memoirs, the municipal officer Wāsif Jawharīyya⁵³ (1897-1972) explains that he was in charge of the office where the confiscated property was stored. Municipal guards participated in requisition rounds under the direction of an army officer and brought back all kinds of commodities and amenities to this famous room, including women's underwear and toys. Jawharīyya does not miss the opportunity to point out the absurdity of these confiscations, which he attributes to the desire for revenge of the Ottoman ruling class of this period, especially that of Cemal Pacha (1872-1922),⁵⁴ the commander-in-chief of the Fourth Division of the Ottoman Army and Governor of Greater Syria, dubbed Jamal al-Saffah (the murderer) for his bloody persecution of Arab political leaders in the course of the war years.

The conscription of army recruits was also conducted under the control of the municipality, by the municipal gendarmes.⁵⁵ The number of Jerusalemite men conscripted into the Ottoman army is estimated at 16,000 according to the American consular archives,⁵⁶ accounting for more than 40% of the male population. This number included Muslim conscripts who were sent to the front to fight (*nizamīyya*), and Christian and Jewish conscripts who were usually sent to labor battalions (*tawabīr al 'amālā*) to do the heavy work necessary to modernize communication and transport systems for the

⁵² This section draws on some elements from an article published earlier, Naïli 2017a.

⁵³ The memoirs of the musician and municipal employee Wāsif Jawharīyya (1897-1972) relate everyday life in Jerusalem between 1904 and the end of the Mandatory period. Wāsif was the son of Jiryis Jawharīyya, *mukhtār* of the Greek Orthodox community of Jerusalem, a lawyer and a member of the municipal council. The Jawharīyya family had a strong connection with the Al Hussein family, and after Jiryis' death, Husayn Hāshim Al Hussein, the mayor of Jerusalem from 1908 to 1915, played a quasi-paternal role for the young Wāsif (Tamari and Nassar 2003: xvii-xvii).

⁵⁴ Tamari and Nassar 2003: 188-189.

⁵⁵ Mazza 2009: 117-118.

⁵⁶ Jacobson 2011: 191.

Ottoman army,⁵⁷ unless they were able to pay the exemption fee (*badal 'askarī*), which was very high.

At the same time, in 1915 and 1916, the municipality continued its relief work with the poor and destitute, increasingly numerous in Jerusalem. In his journal, the Ottoman recruit Ihsān Turjmān (1893-1917),⁵⁸ who worked in the army headquarters in Jerusalem, reports that until the summer of 1916, the municipality distributed bread to the poor free of charge on a daily basis.⁵⁹ In 1916, the cessation of this distribution (or at least a major decrease in its frequency), the absence of bread, cereals and vegetables on the market, hunger, galloping inflation and the presence of contagious diseases plunged the population into immense distress.⁶⁰

The shortage of cereals is explained both in the impact of the locusts, which continued after their first invasion in the spring of 1915, and in the measures taken by the government and their consequences on the market.⁶¹ In response to the food crisis, grain unions emerged in the region. In Jerusalem, several public figures were among them, including the mayor, the member of the administrative council (*majlis idārat al liwa*) 'Alī Jarallah and banker Haim Valero. The union bought cereals east of the Jordan River, especially in the Kerak region, and transported them to Jerusalem. According to the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Herut*, the amount of grain brought to Jerusalem daily amounted to 25,000 kg in 1916.⁶² The presence of the mayor in this union, alongside bankers and merchants, shows both the magnitude of the crisis and the political imperative of municipal involvement in this initiative, in Jerusalem and also in Beirut.⁶³

The role of the municipality had thus become very ambiguous during the war years. It was spearheading relief activities at different levels (with minimal budgetary means), while at the same time facilitating conscription and the requisition of foodstuffs for army needs. The municipality's part in the executive of the biopolitics of state was thereby clearly visible in the war years.

⁵⁷ Jacobson 2011: 28

⁵⁸ The diary of the conscript Ihsān Turjmān (1893-1917). published by Salim Tamari under the title *'Am al jarād*, covers only the years 1915-1917, but it provides valuable descriptions of the daily newspaper in Jerusalem. Ihsān, born in the Old City of Jerusalem, was a clerk in the headquarters of the Ottoman army under the command of Ali Rūshen Bey.

⁵⁹ Tamari 2008: 319

⁶⁰ With the beginning of the maritime blockade at the end of 1914, exports and imports of food had stopped and the prices of staple foods had soared. The price of rice, pulses and coal for domestic use increased by 40-50% at the end of 1914 (Mazza 2009: 118).

⁶¹ Cemal Pasha's decision to ban grain exports from the Syrian countryside to the coasts (thereby preventing their sale to enemy armies), to collect agricultural in-kind taxes instead of collecting them in cash and ordering the purchase of cereals at government-fixed prices, led farmers to hide their crops and to seek to sell them at lower prices to private entrepreneurs (Jacobson 2011: 37-38).

⁶² Jacobson 2011: 38, 194.

⁶³ Tanielian 2014.

Conclusion

The Ottoman municipality of Jerusalem became an important actor in the area of charity and poor relief at a moment of increasing tension in the Empire in general and in Jerusalem in particular. The interventions of European powers in Jerusalem gradually intensified from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, especially in healthcare and education. The missionary ambitions behind most of these initiatives were eyed with much apprehension by the city's religious communities and by the Ottoman state, which feared losing the loyalty of the populations of remote provinces such as Palestine. Ottoman municipal services in general constitute an assertion of the municipality's role in public services and thus by extension, the state's role. The municipal council ensured a constant link to the "ahālī" (the people) of the city, contributing thereby to the preservation of social peace and ultimately to the consolidation of state power. In the context of the adoption of the organizing principle of Ottoman citizenship, the links between local government structures and the citizens were transformed in important ways. The increase in responsibility for the population's welfare from the 1867 to the 1877 legal framework for municipalities shows that the latter were an important player in the reform of the relationship between the citizens and the Empire.

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