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The Jerusalem chamber of commerce, industry, and agriculture, 1909–1910: an early attempt at inter-communal cooperation

Joseph B. Glass^a and Ruth Kark^b

^aSchool of Advancement, Centennial College, Toronto, Canada; ^bDepartment of Geography, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel

ABSTRACT

The founding of the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in 1909 and its short term of activity represent a pioneering and unique attempt at inter-communal cooperation with the purpose of developing the local economy and improving the infrastructures that would support economic expansion and improve the conditions of the local population. The chamber of commerce brought together prominent Muslims, Christians and Jews, both local Ottoman and foreign, who engaged in commerce, industry and agriculture. This all was happening during a time of uncertainty, change and optimism following the Young Turk revolution and the restoration of the constitution in July 1908. The Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce fostered horizontal linkages across religion and ethnicity through Ottoman citizenship and the pursuit of modernist economic and social goals. The discussion details the founding and the activities of the Jerusalem chamber of commerce. Highlighted are the concerns of local businessmen and their plans for infrastructure development and their promotion of better economic regulations. The discussion draws upon eight issues of its bulletin and underscores the unique resources found in the short-lived publication and evaluates their reliability.

The founding of the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (JMCC)¹ in 1909 and its short term of activity represents a pioneering and unique attempt at inter-communal cooperation with the purpose of developing the local economy and improving the infrastructures that would support economic expansion and improve the conditions of the local population. The chamber of commerce brought together some prominent Muslims, Christians, and Jews, both Ottoman and foreign, who engaged in commerce, industry, and agriculture. This all was happening during a time of uncertainty, change, and optimism following the Young Turk revolution and the restoration of the constitution on 23 July 1908. The JMCC fostered horizontal linkages across religion and ethnicity through Ottoman

CONTACT Joseph B. Glass  josephbglass@yahoo.com

¹The name of the chamber of commerce is inconsistent and varied in its own publications. We have used the English translation of its French name 'La Chambre de Commerce, d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Jérusalem' that appears in its founding statutes: *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine*, 1(1) (July 1909), p. 1.

citizenship and the pursuit of modernist economic and social goals. The study of the JMCC constitutes an example which can add to the growing literature from recent years on the great hopes for the development of a shared Ottoman civilian vision in Palestine after 1908. Recent researchers have approached the topic through political, social, and economic lenses. A range of studies into the political changes have addressed local politics, the emergence of civil society, political organizations, parliamentary elections, policies towards Zionism and Arab nationalism, governance, and the implementation of new legal practices and paradigms. Social research highlighted community organization, changes in education, the role of the press in the Young Turk civilizing mission, and changing identities and attitudes of segments of the population. Economic studies focused on trade, agricultural development, and the introduction of new technologies and infrastructure in efforts to achieve modernization.² The JMCC fits within the economic realm but also falls within the discussions of political and social changes following 1908. The following discussion details the founding and the activities of the JMCC before World War I. Highlighted are the concerns of local businessmen, their plans for infrastructure development and their promotion of better economic regulations. In our discussion we draw upon eight issues of the *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine* (see Figure 1). This underutilized resource was located in the collections of Stanford University, the National Library of Israel, and the Jerusalem Municipal Archive,³ and provides unique details of the scope and breadth of its activities. The analysis of the bulletin points to the key players in the JMCC and their areas of interest. The discussion underscores the unique resources found in this short-lived publication and evaluates their reliability.

The founding of the Jerusalem chamber of commerce

Chambers of commerce essentially provided merchants, traders, craftsmen, and industrialists with a public forum to discuss issues facing the business community and foster business connections and networks. Chambers of commerce were usually established along bilateral lines, connecting traders in a specific country, region, or city with traders in another country. Chambers of commerce had been in existence in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt for a couple of decades prior to the founding of the one in Jerusalem. On 19 January 1880 the first chamber of commerce in the Ottoman Empire was founded in Constantinople.⁴ Later chambers

²Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio, eds., *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Bedross Der Matossian, 'The Young Turk Revolution: Its Impact on Religious Politics of Jerusalem (1908–1912)', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 40 (Winter 2009/10), pp. 18–33.

³Nine issues of *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine* were published from July 1909 to September 1910. Four were single month issues, four were double issues for two months and one was for three months. All issues with the exception of 1(2) (August 1909) and 2(8–9) (August–September 1910) are found at the National Library of Israel. Two issues—1:6 (December 1909) and 2:8–9 (August–September 1910)—are located in Jerusalem Municipal Archives (JMA) in box 1779. Stanford University Libraries has a copy of issue 1(1) (July 1909), <http://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4434925> (accessed 1 July 2015). Other researchers located some of the issues in other archival collections. Issue 1(1) (July 1909) is found in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), Nantes, Jérusalem, Série B, Carton 7 or 8, as quoted in Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), p. 187, n. 73; p. 224, n. 38. Issue 1(3–4) (September–October 1909) is found in MAE, CADN, Constantinople, série E, carton 549, as quoted in Vincent Lemire, *La soif de Jérusalem: essai d'hydrohistoire, 1840–1948* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010), Chapitre 7, n. 5, <http://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/796> (accessed 29 June 2015) and in the Israel State Archives (ISA) RG67/P/456/5, as quoted in Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, p. 290, n. 39; p. 291, nn. 40, 48–49.

⁴Johann Bussow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 523.

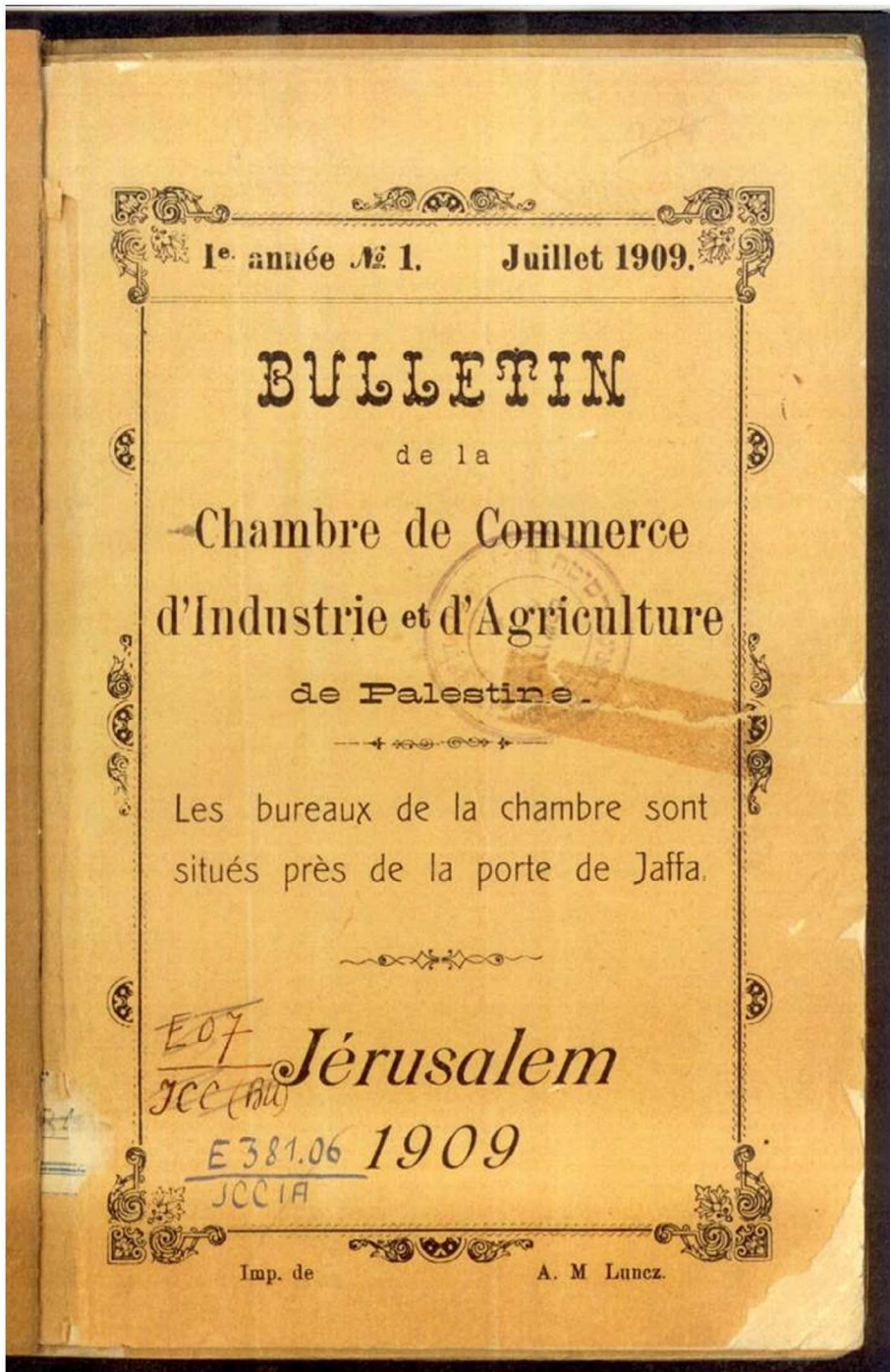


Figure 1. Cover of *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine*, 1(1) (July 1909). Source: National Library of Israel (NLI), PV 3856, 1909.

of commerce brought together merchants in the large port cities of Izmir and Beirut, as well as in Bursa and Cairo, who had connections with a specific trading partner, countries such as France and Holland. Chambers of commerce were seen as effective tools in the fostering of stronger bilateral connections. A comment in *Le Jacquard* from 1892 explained that the creation of a French chamber of commerce in Beirut, similar to those that existed in Constantinople and Izmir, was the first effective way to centralize French commerce locally and to facilitate the promotion of stronger relations with France.⁵

The establishment of a chamber of commerce in Jerusalem in 1909 represents a unique situation which reflected the special nature of Jerusalem as a city of religious interest, growing numbers of pilgrims and tourists, and Western and local interest in its economic and infrastructural development. The JMCC did not have specific associations with any foreign nations. Instead, it was the manifestation of Ottoman civil activity and brought together segments of Jerusalem and its vicinity's business community from different religious, ethnic, and national groups. Three foreign consuls in Jerusalem—the Russian consul general, German consul, and Austro-Hungarian consul—subscribed to its bulletin.

The first issue of the bulletin declared that the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture was established in Jerusalem at the initiative of His Excellency Subhi Bey, the governor of the *mutasarrıflık* of Jerusalem. The chamber of commerce commenced its operations on 27 January 1909 and received ministerial approval on 10 Nisan 1325/23 April 1909. The JMCC had the support and cooperation of the authorities in Constantinople, the local government, and representatives of foreign governments.⁶

Subhi Bey was of Albanian origin and prior to the appointment in Jerusalem, he had held the position of the director of commerce at the Ministry of Public Works in Constantinople. He was well connected in the capital. His first cousin was Ferid Pasha, the Minister of Interior, and Subhi Bey was a very good friend of deputy Hodja Münir Bey.⁷ Subhi Bey differed from his predecessors in that he came from the civil service and not Abdul Hamid II's Palace staff.⁸ Following the Young Turk revolution, Subhi Bey was appointed *mutasarrıf* of Jerusalem by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). He replaced Ali Ekrem [Bolayır] Bey who served as governor in the years 1906–1908, and had requested a new appointment. There were stark differences in the governors' backgrounds, attitudes, activities, and interactions with the local populations during the terms of Ekrem Bey and Subhi Bey. Regarding the former, Kushner pointed out:

Although he was efficient in levying taxes, Ekrem Bey seems to have devoted less time to developing the economic resources of the province. He did make some improvements to Jerusalem's water-supply system, which had been in disrepair, communicating his concern about the frequent droughts which occurred in the province and making some suggestions for remedying

⁵*Bulletin mensuel de la Chambre de commerce française de Constantinople* (1895); *Bulletin de la Chambre de commerce néerlandaise de Smyrne* (1904); *Bulletin mensuel de la Chambre de commerce internationale* (Le Caire, 1904); *Revue commerciale du Levant: bulletin mensuel de la Chambre de Commerce Française de Constantinople* (Constantinople: Mourkidès, 1913); *Le Jacquard: Journal de L'industrie Lainière* (1892), p. 82.

⁶*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), pp. 1, 13.

⁷Yaacov Shavit, Yaacov Goldstein, and Haim Be'er, *Personalities in Eretz-Israel, 1799–1948: A Biographical Dictionary* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1983), p. 416 (Hebrew); Elizabeth Antebi, *Albert Antebi (1873–1919) ou la Religion de la France. Lettres* (Mémoire présenté pour l'obtention d'un Diplôme de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, section des Sciences Religieuses, Mai 1996), Deuxième Partie: Lettres, nos. 298, 346, 408, <http://www.antebiel.com/universite/memoirepdf/1894-1898.pdf> (accessed 17 November 2003).

⁸Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 62–63.

the situation. He succeeded in completing the long-awaited new customs pier in the port of Jaffa, and built a clock tower in Jerusalem, the only public building that was completely his own.⁹

In addition, Ekrem Bey brought about comprehensive administrative reforms that would facilitate Bedouin settlement in the Negev. His term was characterized by tensions with various elements of Jerusalem's leadership. He took a hostile stand against Jewish land purchases and settlement in Palestine. Ekrem Bey was antagonistic towards Sephardi Jewish leader Albert Antebi, who became the first secretary of the JMCC, for his support of Zionist activities. Numerous complaints were lodged in Constantinople against Ekrem Bey by Western nations' consuls in Jerusalem, local Jews, and Arab notables. He was still in office during the revolution and he expressed to his superiors, 'the idea that the newly acquired freedom was a mixed blessing, at best, particularly in his province, for it released forces of whose loyalty he could not be certain.' Furthermore, he 'voiced his lack of trust in the large, notable Arab families whom he saw as pursuing their own narrow interests, and he suspected that with the advent of freedom they would use it for their own benefit'.¹⁰ During Ali Ekrem Bey's tenure in Jerusalem, the atmosphere was not conducive to fostering the cooperation of Jerusalem's leaders under the governor's guidance.

Following the Young Turk revolution, there was an aura of hope in Jerusalem.¹¹ The American consul at Jerusalem, Thomas Ross Wallace, reported on the sudden change and explained that, 'here [Jerusalem], where the bitterest enmity has prevailed, and in Jaffa, where not long since a number were wounded in a riot between Moslems and Jews, the two races came together quite oblivious of their differences.' Wallace detailed the official celebration in Jerusalem on 8 August 1908 and elaborated upon an exceptional situation:

The popular jubilation continued far into the night and was renewed the next day and the day following, special trains bringing large contingents of Jews from the colonies to swell throngs. Bands of Moslem young men went into the Greek quarter, where they were entertained, they then bringing back numbers of the Christian young men into the Moslem quarter, where they rejoiced together. The Moslems then escorting the Greeks through the sacred mosque of Omar grounds, into which, hitherto, no Christian could enter except by official permission and accompanied by a soldier. The Christians also brought many Jews from their quarter and entertained them, and then took them through the church of the Holy Sepulchre, to pass in front of which even was heretofore as much as a Jew's life would be worth. An outcome of the extraordinary situation is that there is entire freedom of speech and of the press, of which good use is being made.¹²

Consul Wallace pointed to a more significant undertaking of inter-communal cooperation. A Jerusalem chapter of the 'Union and Progress' party was established in August 1908. He explained that, 'there was one courageous spirit among the Effendis who encouraged others to wire their congratulations to the Sultan, and to join him in his complaint of the Governor's [Ekrem Bey] inaction in not fixing a day for the public celebration.' A group of Moslems, Christians, and Jews rallied behind him. On 9 August 1908 a public meeting was held and a committee of 10—Moslems, Christians, and Jews—was selected. Wallace did not detail the

⁹David Kushner, 'Ali Ekrem Bey, Governor of Jerusalem, 1906–1908', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28(3) (1996), pp. 349–362, here p. 355.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Elie Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London: Cass, 1974), pp. 134–135; David Kushner, *To Be Governor of Jerusalem: The City and District during the Time of Ali Ekrem Bey, 1906–1908* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2005); idem, 'The Ottoman Governors of Palestine, 1864–1914', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23(3) (1987), pp. 274–290.

¹²Thomas R. Wallace, American Consul, Jerusalem, to Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, DC, 'The Present Political Situation in Turkey', 12 and 14 August 1908, United States National Archives T471/10, p. 4.

names of the 'young Effendi' and other committee members but they probably were drawn from the elites of Jerusalem's communities.¹³

The local Hebrew press expressed the reactions of the *yishuv* (Jewish community in Palestine) to the Young Turk revolution and the promulgation of the new constitution. There were diverse responses to the constitution, responses that even caused internal differences of opinion and conflicts within the *yishuv*. Noteworthy was the surprising lack of any immediate discussion of issues such as new opportunities to acquire land and increase settlement efforts. The preliminary reaction was one of hope and promise as expressed in the *Habazeleth*, on 10 August 1908:

At the end of their speeches [i.e. of the Pasha of Jerusalem and his senior officials] they said that now new schools will be opened in Jerusalem and its [i.e. the autonomous Jerusalem District's] cities, that the country's commerce will be uplifted, the status of manufacturing will be raised, steam power will take its rightful place, new railroads will be laid, and automobile wagons [term used in the original Hebrew], too, will be brought in.¹⁴

Following the appointment of Subhi Bey as governor of Jerusalem, there was less tension between the new governor and the local elites than with his predecessor. Subhi Bey was described as very positively impressed by the Jewish agricultural achievements. Acting upon his own authority, for a short time he allowed Ottoman Jews to purchase land and rescinded the restriction on Jewish immigrants settling on these lands.¹⁵

Campos highlighted an important public exchange between Subhi Bey and Dr Yitzhak Levi, a prominent Sephardi and director of the Anglo-Palestine Company's Jerusalem branch. The governor underscored his role in effecting change and supporting the development of the *mutasarrıflık*. This reflected early governance policies of the CUP which encouraged economic liberalism. He envisioned working in partnership with the local population.¹⁶

Subhi Bey wanted to leave his mark on the Jerusalem *mutasarrıflık* and encourage Ottoman civil activity. He strove to obtain the cooperation of prominent businessmen from all communities in the development of the district. This was in line with the general policy of the Young Turk regime to foster urban development in Jerusalem and Jaffa in order to consolidate Ottoman control. Subhi Bey saw certain benefits in Jewish settlement for the local population and the Treasury. However, his superiors viewed Jewish immigration and settlement differently and they summoned him to Constantinople in July 1909 for consultations.¹⁷

Albert M. Hyamson, an English Jew, historian, and long-standing member of the Zionist movement, visited Palestine in 1909. The *Busy Man's Magazine* of Toronto published Hyamson's report in which he quoted a letter from Subhi Bey, who described his first week in Jerusalem and the first steps taken towards its modernization:

¹³Ibid., p. 5; Ruth Kark, *American Consuls in the Holy Land, 1832–1914* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1994), pp. 331–332.

¹⁴'Simhat netinei hod malkhuto ha-sultan ba-konstitutzion hanitna lahem me'et hodo' [The Rejoicing of the Subjects of His Majesty the Sultan in the Constitution Granted by His Excellency], *Habazeleth* (10 August 1908), p. 2 [in Hebrew], in Ruth Kark and Nadav Solomonovich, 'The Young-Turks Revolution (1908) as Reflected in the Media of the Jewish Community in Palestine', in Ben-Bassat and Ginio, eds., *Late Ottoman Palestine*, p. 189.

¹⁵Martin Sicker, *Reshaping Palestine: From Muhammad Ali to the British Mandate, 1831–1922* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), pp. 107–108; Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, pp. 62–63.

¹⁶Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 166–168.

¹⁷Yasemin Avcı, 'Jerusalem and Jaffa in the Late Ottoman Period: The Concession-Hunting Struggle for Public Works Projects', in Ben-Bassat and Ginio, eds., *Late Ottoman Palestine*, p. 92; Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, pp. 62–63.

I have listened to and examined all complaints and all petitions presented to me, and have in each case given such decisions as are conformable to the laws. I have formed, under the presidency of Lieutenant-Colonel Noury Bey, Director of the Imperial Demesnes, a Commission composed of competent persons, whose duty it will be to investigate the agricultural needs of the province and to submit to me a report of the result of their investigations. I convened a meeting of merchants, with the object of creating a Chamber of Commerce which can serve as a consulting body, but acting on the suggestion of the Israelites, who begged to be excused from attending on account of their festivals then beginning, I have postponed the establishment of this Chamber of Commerce till next week. Being assured of the extreme need of water for the town, I have confided to an energetic man the consideration of a project to bring into Jerusalem the waters of the spring Arroub, and also the formation of a company which is to procure the capital necessary for the work. I have placed myself in communication with the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway Company, and have asked them to consider the question of a junction of their railroad with the Haifa-Damascus line, and am endeavoring to promote, by the construction of other railway lines, the easy and free access to all parts of the country of travelers arriving at Jaffa and Jerusalem. In conclusion, I have charged the municipality with the earnest consideration of the speedy sanitary canalization of the town.¹⁸

The JMCC was an initiative that came from above and brought together merchants, financiers, manufacturers, and agriculturalists from the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities of Jerusalem and other parts of southern Palestine. The founding board had broad communal representation. Its executive consisted of two Muslims, one Christian, and three Sephardi Jews. Its president was Hadji Yussef Effendi Wafa, a local Muslim merchant. The two vice-presidents were Michel Gerassimos, director of the Crédit Lyonnais bank in Jerusalem, and Selim C. Ayoub, who dealt with commissions, exchange, and titles. Its secretary was Albert Antebi, director of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) school. The councillors were the Jewish bankers Nissim Elyachar and Benjamin Kokia. Elections were held in the spring of 1910 with Wafa, Gerassimos, Ayoub, and Antebi retaining their respective positions. Newly elected were councillor Selim Benin, a Yemenite Jewish banker, and executive members Aref Faroun [Pharaon], a Muslim cattle merchant, and Habib Barakat, a Muslim fabric merchant. In September 1910, the bulletin informed the membership that new statutes for the JMCC had been approved by Imperial decree and that they differed from what had been published in the first bulletin. The bulletin did not provide any details of the changes but as a result new elections were to be held at a next meeting of the membership.¹⁹

By 1910, the JMCC had 75 members (full, alternate, institutional, and corresponding) and 3 subscriptions from foreign consulates. Its membership came from broad sectors of the local and foreign communities in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and other parts of southern Palestine. The religious composition of the membership was as follows: 44 Jews (58.7%), 16 Christians (21.3%), and 15 Muslims (20%). See Appendix 1 for their professions and the identification of their religious affiliations. There is insufficient information to subdivide the religious groups. Among the Jews there were members from the Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Yemenite communities and among the Christians there were members from the Catholic, Greek

¹⁸Albert M. Hyamson, 'The Regeneration of Palestine', *The Busy Man's Magazine*, 18 (Toronto, May 1909), pp. 83–86. Hyamson had been a British civil servant since 1895 and in 1921 he was appointed Commissioner for Migration of the British Mandate for Palestine.

¹⁹*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), pp. a–b, 15–16; 1(6) (December 1909), p. 20; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 58–59; 2(8–9) (August–September 1910), p. 76; Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 289–290, n. 32. We assembled a membership list using different lists in the bulletin. See Appendix 1. The list may not be complete and we are not certain as to whether they paid dues or were active. A financial statement of the JMCC has not been located.

Orthodox, Maronite, and German Templar communities. There is a noticeable lack of representation from the Armenian community.

From the prominent Jerusalem Muslim families, there were a number of notable names that were absent from the JMCC's membership list. While the Husayni, Khalidi, and Da'udi families had representation, the Nashashibis and Alamis, including Jerusalem mayor Faidi Al-Alami (1906–1909), were not involved.

The Young Turk revolution precipitated conflict and change in a number of religious communities. The revolution encouraged dissatisfied elements in Jerusalem's Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Sephardi Jewish communities to call for change in the dynamics of power. As Der Matossian explained, these were struggles 'taking place between secularism/religion on the one hand and between localism/nationalism on the other hand'.²⁰ This can explain why a few prominent Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewish families were not involved in the JMCC—the Valeros of Jerusalem, and the Chelouches and Amzalaks of Jaffa, for example; while at the same time, there were members of other distinguished Sephardi and Mizrahi families—the Eliachars, Kokias, and Mussiaoff. One can only assume that certain longstanding rivalries and hostilities kept certain important personages in the local economy from participating in the chamber of commerce. With Albert Antebi playing an executive role, it was quite improbable that Haim Aharon Valero, the owner of the oldest private bank in Palestine (established 1848), would lend his support. In 1906 Antebi and Valero had clashed over the Sephardi Community Council and the appointment of Jerusalem's chief rabbi.²¹

Bringing together these communities was not a simple matter, with their deep tensions and rivalries. Antebi, for example, attempted to bolster the Jewish participation in the JMCC. He also shared his personal opinions vis-à-vis three non-Jewish members, explaining:

I brought together the fanatic [Yussef] Wafa, the nationalist [Ismael] Husseini, and the papal catholic Patato [Hanna Batato] to sign a contract of transfer or association with Mr. Levontine [Zalman David Levontin, Director of the Anglo-Palestine Company] for the state enterprises and capital for Palestine. I nominated a Jewish majority, including foreigners, for the Chamber of Commerce and I am working on the nomination of a Jewish member to our administrative and general council.²²

Antebi was referring to 'La Société Commercial de Palestine' (also Banque Commerciale de Palestine). This joint Arab and Jewish venture with capital stock of £T25,000 (£22,625) was founded in September 1908. This was the natural offshoot of the JMCC. Husseini, Wafa, and Nissim Eliachar were the bank's directors. Selim Ayoub, an Ottoman subject and Persian consul-general at Jerusalem, was its manager in 1912. The bank operated for only a few years and did not succeed in attracting sufficient business or raising capital. The Anglo-Palestine Company held shares in the bank. Its director, Levontin, was of the opinion that a locally registered bank with an Arab management was more likely to acquire concessions for public works projects than a British-registered bank with Jewish management.²³ La Société

²⁰Der Matossian, 'The Young Turk Revolution', p. 29.

²¹Joseph B. Glass and Ruth Kark, *Sephardi Entrepreneurs in Jerusalem: The Valero Family 1800–1948* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2007), pp. 249–250; idem, *Sephardi Entrepreneurs in Eretz Israel, the Amzalak Family, 1816–1918* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991); Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass, 'The Valero Family: Sephardi-Arab Relations in Ottoman and Mandatory Jerusalem', *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, 21 (2004), pp. 27–40.

²²Albert Antebi, n.p., to Bril and [Meir] Dizengoff, Jaffa, 1 February 1909, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (CZA) J 85/618, in Antebi, *Albert Antebi ou la Religion de la France*, Deuxieme Partie: Lettres, no. 325.

²³Glass and Kark, *The Valero Family*, p. 98; Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, pp. 63–64; Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 176–180; Dolf Michaelis, 'One Hundred Years of Banking and Currency in Palestine', *Economic History*, 10 (1986), pp. 155–197, here p. 164; Zalman David Levontin, *To the Land of Our Fathers*, II (Tel Aviv: Itin & Shoshani, 1924–28), p. 171 (Hebrew).

Commercial de Palestine was not successful in obtaining concessions or achieving its goal of significantly developing projects in Palestine. Nevertheless, as Campos concluded, 'the story of the SCP and its efforts to promote local development is inseparable from its politically Ottomanist mandate of uniting the Muslims, Jews, and Christians of Jerusalem as a force for local progress and development.'²⁴

The JMCC was established at the initiative of Subhi Bey and its key players were vetted and approved by him. Despite differences, rivalries, and animosities, the governor was able to assemble key persons from the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities. His interaction with Albert Antebi was not a coincidence. Antebi had the respect of a number of prominent Arab families including the Husaynis, Khalidis, and Nashashibis. Furthermore, he was opposed to political Zionism and as a loyal Ottoman subject, he supported the building up of a renewed Jewish presence in Palestine through economic means. Antebi's letters provide his perspective and interpretation of the development and organization of the JMCC. We lack the perspective of other key players such as the chamber's president and vice-presidents.

The activities of the Jerusalem chamber of commerce

The JMCC established an office which was located near Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate, the city's economic hub. The exact location and the size of the offices are not known.

The 1909 statutes of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Jerusalem, divided into 46 articles, reveal certain details of the initiative and the individuals involved. At its founding it was composed of 21 members (14 Ottoman citizens and 7 foreigners). The members were merchants, manufacturers, and farmers with good reputations and financial solvency. Members needed to be at least 30 years of age and to have engaged in commerce for 5 consecutive years. Furthermore, they could not have committed any crime nor been in a state of bankruptcy. After members registered with the JMCC, they were classified into four classes by the board. Members paid their annual membership dues according to their class—500 piastres for banks or financial companies, 200 piastres for the first class of merchants, industrialists, and farmers, 150 piastres for the second class, 100 piastres for the third class, and 50 piastres for the fourth class.²⁵ No explanation was provided as to the criteria for the determination of the classes of membership.

The purpose of the JMCC was outlined in Article 9 of its statutes:

The aim of the Chamber is to be an intermediary between the Imperial Government and the merchants, manufacturers and farmers for all the operations or measures of general interest and to assure the execution of laws and resolutions made for the development of economic activities of the country.²⁶

Antebi provided his insights into Subhi Bey's expectations for the JMCC and the development of the Jerusalem district in October 1908. In his letter to Emile Franck, AIU representative in Beirut, Antebi details ideas and projects that were later discussed in the JMCC bulletin:

Tuesday last I saw H.E. Subhi Bey for the first time. It was very pleasant and he opened with a discussion of the political and economic situation of the Jews [...] Yesterday, H.E. commanded Béchara effendi to ask for my collaboration for the study of all the economic projects for the

²⁴Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, p. 181.

²⁵*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), p. 8. In 1909 Abraham Bril paid 42.20 francs for a first-class membership. CZA J15/6090, in Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 289–290, n. 32.

²⁶*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), p. 2.

development of the resources of the *sandjak* and in the evening, we met at Mohassebdji [civil servant of Finances] for three hours, where we reviewed in a rather thorough way various points.²⁷

They discussed the possibility of quickly realizing a number of projects. Four projects focused on Jerusalem and included: the construction of a sewer system; the opening of new roads as part of the municipal plan; the development of a tramway system; and the establishment of a water supply system. The other projects encouraged agricultural development in the *mutasarrıflık* and included: a free concession for the development of plantations in the dunes south of Jaffa; the adoption of a quinquennial land tax system supported by a cadastral survey; the drying of marshes and planting of the mountain *mahloul*;²⁸ and the long-term leasing of public grounds belonging to the municipality, *awqaf*, and state educational system. They identified other projects including a tramway system for Jaffa and the improvement and exploitation of the plain of Jericho, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea area. Antebi continued to detail his interaction with Subhi Bey:

Moreover, H.E insistently asked me to prepare all these projects and studies for him and to work to find purchasers, preferably Ottomans, but if need be, foreign companies provided that they are not affiliated with the Zionism. H.E. spoke to me very sharply about these vain noises which do more evil than good for the Jewish interests. Regarding the sale of land, H.E. will not even oppose purchases by foreign individuals. H.E. also gave me the responsibility to study the construction of a new Seraglio in Jerusalem and already instructed me to give him a talk on the industry and commerce of the country.²⁹

The JMCC intended to be proactive and make proposals to the government for measures in a wide range of activities that would ultimately benefit the economy. They included: the creation of commercial schools, modifications and reforms to commercial laws and customary tariffs, public works projects (construction of ports, inland navigation, extension of postal services, telegraph lines, and railway tracks, opening and repair of bridges and roads), establishing commercial markets, and the publication of commercial newspapers which would include economic statistics.

The JMCC looked to serve as a registry and regulatory body for merchants and businessmen. It sought to intervene in the local economy for the benefit of the local population. In order to stop unwarranted price increases and prevent monopolizing, the JMCC intended on keeping statistical records of the commercial, industrial, and agricultural commodities which were imported and exported as well as those in reserve in the town's shops. It proposed keeping a special register of bankruptcy declarations and discharges from bankruptcy of merchants affiliated with the JMCC as well as all criminal and delinquency convictions. They planned on keeping registration books with the price of goods, currency, and any other public titles and all objects related to commerce, industry, and agriculture. It hoped to confirm and legalize, free of charge, the degree of creditworthiness of deeds and certificates of guarantee relating to commercial, industrial, and agricultural affairs. It proposed registering judicial protests for non-payment of vouchers, promissory notes, and bills of exchange signed by merchants, manufacturers, and bankers with the local commercial court.³⁰ The JMCC stated that it would charge, although no rates were posted, for the following services:

²⁷Albert Antebi, to Emile Franck, Beirut, 1 October 1908, Archives AIU, Israël VIII E 25, n° 6264/7, in Antebi, *Albert Antebi ou la Religion de la France*, Deuxieme Partie: Lettres, no. 299.

²⁸*Mahloul* lands—literally vacant—were state land that reverted to the state for various reasons, such as not being cultivated by its holder, or the holder having no heirs.

²⁹Antebi, to Franck, 1 October 1908, in Antebi, *Albert Antebi ou la Religion de la France*, Deuxieme Partie: Lettres, No. 299.

³⁰*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), pp. 6–7.

- Certificates concerning the price of goods, public funds, currency etc.;
- Textual registration of contracts made by companies, other documents related to commercial, industrial, agricultural, financial, and maritime affairs, and documents of public works;
- Signature of merchants' books, up to 200 pages;
- Legalization of merchants' balance sheets upon request;
- Registrations of demands;
- Legalization of documents presented by merchants who are members of the Chamber whatever the number of signatures;
- Excerpts of company contracts and other pieces registered at the Chamber;
- Assistance of a delegate from the Chamber's Bailiff, estimates or sale of merchandise by auction; and reports concerning commercial transactions.

It is unclear as to whether any of these services were ever provided by the JMCC.

The JMCC reported on its first initiatives. From its publication, it appeared to be very active and even successful in some of its endeavours. One of its first concerns was the creation of a commercial court in Jerusalem and in other *kazas*. The JMCC sent an appeal to the government and it received a promise that the expenditure for commercial courts would be included in the public budget of the responsible ministry.³¹ On the other hand, the chamber of commerce did not succeed in other initiatives. It was unable to bring about the settling of the dispute over the boundaries of urban and suburban areas and reach an agreement with the municipality. The JMCC examined a number of issues and proposed developing a master plan for Jerusalem.³²

The JMCC discussed and investigated large-scale projects such as a water supply project for Jerusalem, the expansion of the railroad system, the construction of tramways in Jerusalem and Jaffa, and electrical lighting in Jerusalem. The chamber of commerce attempted to find ways to curb the high cereal prices. It examined the possible causes and subsequently petitioned the Commissioner of Public Works to facilitate better communications between Kerak, an important grain-producing region in Transjordan, and Jerusalem through the construction of a railway line or at least by the establishment of a road for vehicles.³³ These and other large projects supported by the JMCC were not realized before World War I.

The JMCC looked at the improvement of the area around Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem. It proposed the placement of the future *konak* [pasha's residence] near Jaffa Gate and the construction of shops on the site of Hezekiah's Pool. The chamber of commerce emphasized the need to improve the appearance of the city so that it properly impressed visiting tourists. The JMCC was willing to donate a beautiful building for the *konak* and develop several hundred beautiful shops. This development would improve sanitary conditions through the suppression of infectious outbreaks originating from the stagnant waters of the pool.³⁴

The JMCC attempted to intervene in agricultural development. It looked into conditions for the cultivation of tobacco in Hebron district and the planting of rice in the Jericho area.

³¹Ibid., p. 13.

³²Avci, 'Jerusalem and Jaffa in the Late Ottoman Period', p. 92, quoting: JMA, Minutes of Jerusalem Municipality, vol. XIII, 1324–1325 [1909–1910] and Public Record Office, FO, 195/2321, no. 54, E. C. Blech–G. Lowther, 24 June 1909; Ruth Kark and Michal Oren-Nordheim, *Jerusalem and Its Environs: Quarters, Neighborhoods, Villages, 1800–1948* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2001), pp. 35, 126.

³³*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), p. 14.

³⁴Ibid., p. 13.

It sponsored the evaluation of wholesale wine prices in the region in order to promote wine exportation despite the competition from foreign wines. Shaken by great losses caused by a cattle plague, the JMCC examined with a veterinary inspector and the agricultural bank measures for the production of serum on-the-spot and the provision of obligatory preventive vaccination to the contaminated villages. The chamber of commerce proposed the creation of an epizootic assurance with the help of the agricultural bank or any other financial establishment, with the goal of helping suffering peasants. The JMCC was concerned with the continued deforestation in Palestine. The high frequency of criminals cutting down trees, it held, was a result of the light punishments for the offence.³⁵

The Ottoman minister of Commerce and Public Works hoped that the JMCC would encourage industrial development in the region and promote Ottoman products at the 1910 Universal and International Exhibition in Brussels. In a letter to the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, the minister explained that the government had offered a financial incentive but to his chagrin only the chamber of commerce in Bursa consented to exhibit in Brussels.³⁶

The JMCC operated outside its mandate and assumed the responsibility for night guards, a serious pecuniary sacrifice. It took an interest in all factors concerning the assurance of the security of its members' property and the improvement of their well-being. In the same manner, it took on the responsibility for the watering of the streets. This kept the dust down for short periods of time. The JMCC could not be indifferent about the postal and railway services. It had suggestions for improvements that it intended on submitting to the qualified administrations at the suitable time and place.³⁷

The JMCC, in the end, did not achieve most of its goals. In many cases, it appears to have tried to overstep its boundaries and engage in activities that were not in its jurisdiction. The JMCC promoted projects that were the legislative and fiscal responsibility of the municipal council (*meclis-i beledye*), which was subordinate to the Jerusalem governor (*mutasarrıf*) and the district administrative council (*meclis-i idare*). The municipal council's budget was limited and the JMCC, for a short period, appears to have provided limited funding for municipal security and sanitation.³⁸

The bulletin: its content and reliability

The JMCC published a bulletin giving commercial statistics, lists of public works under consideration, as well as commercial, agricultural, and industrial facts concerning the world of the workers of the region and their correspondents abroad. The *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Industrie et d'Agriculture de Palestine* was first published in July 1909 and the last issue identified was from August–September 1910. This French-language publication was printed by A.M. Luncz. The first issue was priced at 0.25 francs. The bulletin accepted advertisements and announcements but the only advertiser was Banque Commerciale de Palestine.

³⁵Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶Ibid., 2(1–2) (January–February 1910), pp. 2–3; Serge Jaumain and Wanda Balcers, *Bruxelles 1910: de l'Exposition universelle à l'Université* (Bruxelles: Racine, 2010).

³⁷*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), p. 14.

³⁸Ruth Kark, 'The Jerusalem Municipality at the End of the Ottoman Rule', *Asian and African Studies* 14(2) (1980), pp. 125–139; Haim Gerber, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem 1890–1914* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1985), pp. 113–118; Yasemin Avcı, Vincent Lemire, and Falestin Naili, 'Publishing Jerusalem's Ottoman Municipal Archives (1892–1917): A Turning Point for the City's Historiography', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 60 (2014), pp. 110–118.

The choice of French as the exclusive language of publication represents a desire to promote the JMCC in the international arena. A certain proportion of the JMCC membership was fluent in French. It was the language of diplomacy and trade in the late Ottoman period but many JMCC members would not have been proficient in the language. The bulletin was clearly not intended for the general population of Palestine.

An analysis of the eight available issues of the bulletin, totalling 193 pages, found that the main topics discussed by number of pages in the bulletin were water resources (34.7%), trade, commerce, and transportation (18.1%), and agriculture (14.5%). The remaining content included: 3.1% devoted to lists of JMCC officers and membership; 3.1% was advertisements; 14% detailed the JMCC constitution and its activities; and 7.3% focused on the Jerusalem municipality. Although some of the topics were addressed in the foregoing discussion of the JMCC activities, emphasis here is placed on the contributors and the reliability of the information. It is important to emphasize that only 12% of the content was attributed to or signed by the authors. The two most prolific identified authors were the JMCC president Joseph Wafa and agronomist Abraham Bril, each contributing approximately 3.5% of the total content.

Water resources

The bulletin paid a disproportionately large amount of attention to the amelioration of the water supply to Jerusalem, accounting for over one third of the content. Water was a chronic problem and was growing more critical with the growth of the city's population and the increased numbers of pilgrims and tourists. Two issues were simply reports outlining plans for providing a stable water source for Jerusalem. The bulletin appears to have been promoting the interests of the management of the Banque Commerciale de Palestine (Ismael Husseini, Wafa, Nissim Eliachar, and Ayoub) in developing the infrastructure for the conveyance of water to Jerusalem. Two projects for supplying water from different springs were compared: Ain Arroub, to the south of Jerusalem, and Ain Fara in Wadi Kelt, to the north-east of the city. They reflected two schemes: the 1908 Franghia report and 1909 Magnus report. Georges Franghia, a Greek civil engineer in the employ of the Ottoman government, had planned and laid out a number of carriage roads in the late nineteenth century. Franghia prepared reports and plans for public works projects—the irrigation and cultivation of oranges in the vicinity of Jaffa in 1893 and the supply of water to Jerusalem from the Ain Arroub in 1889. His 1908 report updated the plans proposed almost 20 years earlier. Max Magnus was a German engineer and the director of the Carl Franke Institute of Bremen. Questioning the feasibility of Franghia's proposal, he held that Ain Fara would better serve Jerusalem's needs although it would require a pumping system to raise the water to Jerusalem's higher elevation. The Magnus proposal had the support of Arthur Ruppin, who headed the Palestine Office of the World Zionist Organization. In the end, neither proposal was translated into a concession from the Ottoman government. The bulletin later shared results of water analyses of water from Ain Arroub, Ain Fara, and a new cistern in Jerusalem, thus adding to the comparison of the two proposals. Banque Commerciale de Palestine funded the testing of samples in laboratories in Beirut and Paris.³⁹ Another report by Abraham

³⁹*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(3–4) (September–October 1909), pp. 1–27; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 54–58; 2(5–7) (May–July 1910), pp. 1–24; Avci, 'Jerusalem and Jaffa in the Late Ottoman Period', pp. 81–101; Lemire, *La soif de Jerusalem*, Chapitre 7, n. 5.

Bril discussed artesian wells. The bulletin provided rainfall data for Jerusalem from 1861–1862 to 1908–1909 which it received from the American Colony in Jerusalem. This data was another component of the water issue since most Jerusalemites were dependent upon the annual collection of rainwater in cisterns and pools.⁴⁰

Trade and commerce

The bulletin highlighted the commerce of the ports of Gaza and Jaffa and provided detailed trade statistics for 1908 and 1909. Trade statistics also related to trade with specific countries. Trade with Egypt and Great Britain was discussed. Trade data for Austria-Hungary and Romania was collected at the request of Bedros Halajian, the minister of Commerce and Public Works, in a letter dated 26 January 1909. The Ottoman government was concluding a treaty with Austria-Hungary to end the Bosnian crisis of 1908–1909. During the crisis there was an Ottoman boycott of Austro-Hungarian goods which ended with the conclusion of the treaty on 26 February 1909.⁴¹

The information provided by the JMCC on imports, exports, and the number of ships reaching the ports of Palestine differs from the information provided by the British consulate in Jerusalem. The variances were found to be quite significant. The JMCC reported on British trade through Jaffa and the British consular report provided very different data as seen in Table 1. In certain cases the differences can be explained by variations in exchange rates, rounding, or the inclusion of information for British colonies. Some differences are extreme. For example, the British figure for imports from the United Kingdom in 1909 was 275% of the figure provided by the JMCC. The British consular report explained that the significant increase in British exports from 1908 to 1909 was due to changes in the customs house's registration of the origins of goods. Previously, British goods arriving from Beirut or other Ottoman ports had not been registered as British. Statistics for imports from British colonies were affected by the aforementioned changes. The JMCC's statistics do not appear to reflect the change in procedure from 1908 to 1909.⁴²

Discrepancies in the data are also found in the numbers of vessels that called at the port of Jaffa for the years 1907 to 1909. The highest number of steamships recorded in one year was 773. Great differences in data are not expected with this data range and the nature of the object recorded. As reflected in Table 2, there is not a single occurrence where the data provided by the two sources—the JMCC and the British consulate in Jerusalem—was identical for a specific country in a specific year. It is difficult to determine which of the sources is more accurate at reporting on the volume and value of trade with Jaffa.

Furthermore, a comparison of the JMCC's data on imports and exports for Gaza in 1908 with British consular data exhibits great discrepancies for the value of goods and their ranking. According to the British report, the top three imports according to value were: rice £40,000, cotton goods £26,000, and woollen goods £10,500. The JMCC bulletin listed: sugar £56,595, rice £52,320, and coffee £25,607. For Gaza's exports the British identified barley

⁴⁰*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(6) (December 1909), p. 19; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 31–33.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 1(5) (November 1909), p. 14; 1(6) (December 1909), pp. 3–10; 2(1–2) (January–February 1910), pp. 8–10; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 21–31; Roman Kodet, 'Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire during the Bosnian Annexation Crisis 1908–1909', in Aleš Skřivan and Arnold Suppan, eds., *Prague Papers on History of International Relations* (Praha: Institute of World History, 2009), pp. 289–297.

⁴²No. 4471 Annual Series. Diplomatic and Consular Reports. Turkey. *Report for the Year 1909 on the Trade of the Consular District of Jerusalem*. Edited at the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, pp. 11–12.

Table 1. Comparison of trade figures between the United Kingdom and the port of Jaffa in 1908 and 1909 reported by the Jerusalem chamber of commerce and the British Consulate in Jerusalem.

	1908			1909		
	Chamber of Commerce		British report (English pounds)	Chamber of Commerce		British report (English pounds)
	(French francs)	(English pounds)*		(French francs)	(English pounds)*	
Exports to United Kingdom			164,000			158,090
Exports to British colonies			16,000			77
Total	4,327,411	173,096	180,000	4,573,066	182,923	158,167
imports from United Kingdom			80,000			321,348
Imports from British colonies			44,000			4629
Total	1,913,848	76,554	124,000	2,963,448	118,538	325,977

Source: *Report for the Year 1909*, p. 13; *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 30–31.

*Calculated based on exchange rate of 1 English pound equals 25 French francs.

Table 2. Comparison of data on Maritime Movement (number of vessels and flag) at the Port of Jaffa 1907–1909 reported by the Jerusalem chamber of commerce and the British Consulate in Jerusalem.

Country	British report 1907	Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce 1323 (1907)	British report 1908	Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce 1324 (1908)	British report 1909	Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce 1325 (1909)
British	167	163	199	204	233	232
Russian	110	102	109	106	143	153
Austrian	115	113	106	91	97	105
Italian—steam	39	45	96	99	92	89
Italian—sailing	2	6	1	n.a.	0	4
French	86	82	82	80	78	76
Ottoman—steam	26	39	17	36	32	33
Ottoman—sailing	393	1183	527	1380	481	1057
German	16	18	20	21	22	23
Greek—steam	39	38	30	41	27	22
Greek—sailing	3	6	3	n.a.	1	4
Other countries*	3	17	2	19	13	34
Total—steam	611	600	672	678	744	766
Total—sailing	398	1196	531	1380	482	1065

Source: *Report for the Year 1909*, p. 13; *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(5) (November 1909), p. 14; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), p. 34.

*Other countries include: Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Tunisia, and the United States.

Table 3. Comparison of trade figures for Gaza in 1908 reported by the Jerusalem chamber of commerce and the British Consulate in Jerusalem.

	British consular report	Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce	Variance
Exports	105,150	199,103	189%
Imports	206,240	312,515	152%

Source: *Report for the Year 1909*, pp. 17–21; *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(6) (December 1909), pp. 3–6.

£196,840, wheat £8400, and chaff £1000; the JMCC identified oranges and citrus £100,321, barley £80,191, and legumes £42,970. The total exports and imports from Gaza showed significant variance between the two sources as well, as detailed in Table 3.⁴³

These discrepancies raise the question of the reliability of the two aforementioned sources. If the JMCC data is correct, then the data provided by the British consulate comes into question. The British and other consular reports have been relied upon in numerous studies and have generally been viewed as trustworthy. If the data provided by foreign consulates is inaccurate, there needs to be a review of the economic research that relied on these sources.⁴⁴

Agriculture

There were discussions of the developments and issues pertaining to certain agricultural sectors. Abraham Bril reported on the bovine plague and almond cultivation. Agronomist Menashe Meirovich provided information on viticulture and the discussion was augmented by information from the directors of the wine cellars of Rishon Lezion and Sarona. Government agronomist, Théologos Pavlou, discussed vulnerability to an olive tree parasite and grape phylloxera. Most agricultural data can be considered quite reliable and drawn from trustworthy sources. The data provided by the agronomist Bril drew upon Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) resources. The tables provided by Meirovich outlining the financial returns for the cultivation of various crops and plantations in Judaea would be considered reliable as they too utilized JCA data and reports. Meirovich's one contribution to the bulletin is an illustration of his commitment to Ottoman modernism as argued by Dolbee and Hazkani.⁴⁵

Other topics

In addition to the three main topics, there were articles on the monetary system and banking, and transportation in Palestine. The latter was a publication of the 1909 annual report of the Société de Fer Ottoman de Jaffa à Jérusalem et Prolongements, the company that operated the railway between Jaffa and Jerusalem. Joseph Wafa, president of the JMCC, penned a report on fuel sources in Palestine. The bulletin reported on the activities of Jerusalem's municipality. In addition, the bulletin discussed a fine art exhibit held in Jaffa in August 1910. The bulletin reprinted an article from *La Vérité*. Five JMCC members (Antebi, Gerassimo, Pavie, Bost, and Loupo) were associated with the exhibition but there was no formal JMCC involvement.⁴⁶

⁴³No. 4222 Annual Series. Diplomatic and Consular Reports. Turkey. *Report for the Year 1908 on the Trade of the Consular District of Jerusalem*. Edited at the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, pp. 17–21; *Report for the Year 1909*, pp. 18–22; *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(6) (December 1909), pp. 3–6.

⁴⁴Haim Gerber, 'Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Palestine—the Role of Foreign Trade', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18(3) (1982), pp. 250–264; Gad G. Gilbar, 'The Growing Economic Involvement of Palestine with the West, 1856–1914', in David Kushner, ed., *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), pp. 188–206.

⁴⁵*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(5) (November 1909), pp. 12–13; 1(6) (December 1909), pp. 13–18; 2(1–2) (January–February 1910), pp. 6, 11–14, 19–20; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 36–39; Samuel Dolbee and Shay Hazkani, 'Impossible is not Ottoman': Menashe Meirovitch, 'Isa Al-'Isa, and Imperial Citizenship in Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47(2) (2015), pp. 241–262.

⁴⁶*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 2(1–2) (January–February 1910), pp. 14–18; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 41–48, 52–53, 60.

A larger part of the content of the JMCC bulletin consisted of recycled material. Some of the content was simply the reprinting of previously published reports and proposals. Some of the trade data raises the issue of its reliability when contrasted with data from foreign consular reports. Only a limited amount of the content provided some unique information that may not be found in other sources.

End of the chamber of commerce and concluding remarks

The JMCC started out quite energetically with a broad spectrum of economic and financial concerns as seen in the content of its bulletin. It looked at bringing about changes to the landscape of the city of Jerusalem and the province as a whole. The JMCC envisioned that it could play a role in the modernization of the infrastructure and the growth of the economy. In February 1909, according to Albert Antebi, Subhi Bey left Jerusalem temporarily due to his wife's health. Antebi tried to convince the governor to stay as he had studied proposals for various projects and had lent his support. In December 1909 Subhi Bey ended his tenure in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Antebi explained the reasons for his departure:

Unfortunately our governor Subhi Bey leaves after tomorrow, nauseated by an egoistic and anti-Semitic movement taking shape, he gave his resignation and the Minister of Interior Department hastened to accept it. Our adversaries triumph with their control over the rabble which pursues us, but their joy will be of short duration, because by their misdeeds, they will cause general distaste. Our personalities will have their revenge but the Jewish cause will have lost enormously.⁴⁸

After Subhi Bey's departure the JMCC continued to publish its bulletin until September 1910. The last issue was mainly devoted to disputing certain claims made by Mr F. Fenech, an employee of the Ottoman Bank and journalist. His article in *La Vérité* from 7 September 1910 pointed to the corruption connected to the granting of concessions in Jerusalem. The JMCC responded with a letter to the editor which was published on 13 September 1910. The letter was signed with the initials J.D. which does not correspond to any known member of the JMCC. He accused Fenech of a lack of knowledge due to his short time in Jerusalem and a biased view since he represented a group of investors seeking concessions in Jerusalem. Fenech rebutted and refuted the accusations. Another letter from J.D. was published in *La Vérité* on 29 September 1910 providing further details refuting the allegations of corruption and mismanagement. In the following pages, the bulletin listed specifications for the concessions for water supply, tramways, electric lighting, and sewerage in Jerusalem as well as a telephone system connecting Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jaffa.⁴⁹

The JMCC may have continued some of its activities. The *American Jewish Year Book* reported that on 17 February 1911, 5 Jews had been among the 12 members elected to the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce. It is not clear when it ceased its operations.⁵⁰ Another chamber of commerce was in existence in Jaffa in 1913 but no information has been located determining its date of founding, its activities, and membership with the exception of its officers.⁵¹

⁴⁷Albert Antebi, Jerusalem, to A. Bril, Administrator of the Colonies, Jaffa, 26 February 1909, Archives AIU, Israël IX E 26, n° 2282, in Antebi, *Albert Antebi ou la Religion de la France*, Deuxième Partie: Lettres, No. 329.

⁴⁸Albert Antebi, Jerusalem, to Chief Rabbi [Jacob Meir], [Jerusalem?], 13 December 1909, CAFHJP, dossier AIU, J/75, p. 142, in Antebi, *Albert Antebi ou la Religion de la France*. Deuxième Partie: Lettres, No. 376.

⁴⁹*Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 2(8–9) (August–September 1910), pp. 61–73.

⁵⁰*American Jewish Year Book*, 13 (1911–12), p. 189.

⁵¹Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 289–290, n. 33.

In August 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I in Europe, the Jewish community organized the Jerusalem Merchants Association (JMMA). It was reacting to inflated food prices and increased unemployment. This short-lived attempt intended on uniting the Jewish community, intervening in the local food supply and prices, supporting community members with loans and credit, and assisting in finding employment. The association does not appear to have realized its proposed activities. In 1916, the JMMA was reconstituted under a different leadership with the support of the *Majlis 'Umumi* (general council of Jerusalem established in 1913). The reconstituted association, which included representatives from local institutions, proposed providing food and support for Jerusalemites of all faiths. Despite its apparent failure, the association in its second incarnation expressed an attempt at inter-communal economic and philanthropic cooperation in the final years of Ottoman rule in Palestine.⁵²

Under British rule, the JMCC was re-established. Sir Ronald Storrs, governor of Jerusalem 1918–26, wrote in his memoirs: 'Some time also in that first year I founded the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce (still in vigour, and long with the same Hon. Secretary).'⁵³ He was made its lifetime honorary president. The executive and membership of the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture for Jerusalem and the District included Christian, Muslim, and Jewish members. In 1936 tensions between Arabs and Jews resulted in the creation of two separate organizations: an Arab chamber of commerce and a Jewish chamber of commerce. The two continued their activities through the end of the British Mandate and then on the respective sides of the Green Line that divided Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967. The two continued to operate in Jerusalem following the 1967 Six Day War.⁵⁴

The JMCC when it was established in 1909 was a first for Palestine and in certain terms the first of its kind in the Ottoman Empire. Other chambers of commerce had been established in Constantinople, Izmir, Bursa, and Beirut but they dealt with bilateral relations with particular European nations, while the one of Jerusalem was not country specific. It would appear that the decision to establish the chamber of commerce in Jerusalem was initiated from above, by the governor of Jerusalem, Subhi Bey. During his term of office he was favourable to receiving the suggestions from the JMCC and acted on a number of its proposals. When Subhi Bey was replaced in 1910 by Nâzım Bey, the JMCC became less active. Possibly the JMCC and its leadership no longer had the interest and support of the governor. Furthermore, one could presume that there was dwindling interest in the JMCC. Members would have seen few concrete benefits from their membership dues as the JMCC did not take on the numerous roles that it had intended. In addition, the spirit of Ottoman brotherhood⁵⁵ that drew together religious and national rivals was met with disillusionment with the CUP within two to three years.

The story of the JMCC is a fascinating episode in the Jerusalem *mutasarrıflık*'s administrative, economic, and social histories. Although the sources detailing its activities are limited, the analysis of its bulletin has provided insight into the hopes and aspirations of the local economic leadership. Riding on the post-Young Turk revolution wave of optimism, the

⁵² Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), pp. 44–45; Nathan Efrati, *The Jewish Community in Eretz-Israel during World War I (1914–1918)* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications, 1991), pp. 54–55 (Hebrew).

⁵³ Ronald Storrs, *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: Putnam, 1937), p. 333.

⁵⁴ Rochelle Davis, 'The Growth of the Western Communities', in Salim Tamari, ed., *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighbourhoods and Their Fate in the War* (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 2002), p. 40.

⁵⁵ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*.

ambitious chamber of commerce hoped to bring about the resolution of certain festering issues (Jerusalem's water supply, grain prices, transportation system, etc.), ameliorate the conditions in Jerusalem for its residents and visitors, and create an environment for a prosperous economy. Administratively, the JMCC sought to take on a key role in local commerce and finance by becoming the provider of important registrations and services. It also proposed changes in the local Ottoman administration and successfully lobbied for the creation of a commercial court in Jerusalem. Socially, the JMCC brought together businessmen from different religious communities and from ethnic groups within the larger religious groups. Members included Muslims, Christians (Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, German Templer), and Jews (Sephardi, Yemenite, Ashkenazi). There was a common goal of improving conditions in the Jerusalem district and an expression of the short-lived support of Ottoman modernism. In all, establishment of the chamber of commerce provides a socioeconomic window/perspective, through which one can view leaders from Jerusalem's different communities coming together briefly for the advancement of issues for the benefit of the whole population in Jerusalem and southern Palestine. However, communal and nationalist tensions arose again and this and other expressions of Ottoman brotherhood faded almost as quickly as they had arisen. Some of the JMCC's far-seeing plans materialized only decades later (i.e. the first pipe to convey water to Jerusalem in 1933, and the light train in 2011).

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Appendix 1. Annotated list of chamber of commerce membership and subscriptions

Name/company	Economic activity	Religion/nationality	Other info
Abouchdid, Btech & Sitton	Manufacturing	Jewish—Sephardi	
Achour, Ahmed	Clothes industry, gramophones	[Muslim]	
Albert, Singers, Nachfolger (heirs)	Commission & transition	Christian	Full member 1909
Anglo Palestine Company	Bank	Jewish—Foreign institution	
Antebi, Albert	Director, Alliance Israélite Universelle Technical School	Jewish—Sephardi, b. Damascus	Secretary 1909. Elected secretary 1910
Austro-Hungarian Consul		Christian	Subscription
Ayoub, Selim C.	Commission, exchange, and titles	Catholic, Ottoman	Vice president 1909. Elected vice president 1910
Barakat, Habib Effendi	Silk garments, draperies, woollen garments	Muslim	Full member 1909. Elected executive member 1910
Barazani, Isaac	Colonial products	Jewish	
Batato, Hanna (Jean)	Leather, colonial products	Christian—Catholic	Alternate member 1909
Benin, Selim Effendi	Commission and bank	Jewish—Yemenite	Full member 1909. Elected councillor 1910
Berman, J[oshua].	Flour	Jewish—Ashkenazi	
Blum & Levy	Hardware and ironwork	Jewish	
Blum, M.	Merchant	Jewish	Alternate member 1909
Bost, Vve. & Son	Construction material	French Catholic [in Jaffa?]	
Bril, A[braham].	Agronomist, Jaffa	Jewish—Ashkenazi	Corresponding member 1909
Bril, M. (probably the same person as above)	Administration of the settlements of Judea	Jewish—Ashkenazi [Jaffa]	
Chako [Chaco], Daoud	Lace trade	Jewish—[Sephardi?]	
Chehebar, Emin & Cie	Colonial products	Jewish—Syrian	
Cohen, Behor & Eliaou	Lace trade	Jewish	
Cohen, Ezra	Tailor	Jewish	
Cohen, J. & Moise Yechaia	Merchants, tailors, and confections	Jewish	New member December 1909
Cohen, Mendel	Miller	Jewish—Ashkenazi	
Damiani, Barnabe	Novelties and glasses	Christian	
Daoudi, Abdel Muhsen	Oil shop	Muslim	
Daoudi, Rabah Effendi El	Oil shop	Muslim	Full member 1909
Deutsche Palästina-Bank	Bank	Christian foreign institution	
Eliachar & Heffes	Banker	Jewish—Sephardi	
Eliachar, Isaac (Shmaiya) & Cie.	Colonial products	Jewish—Sephardi	
Eliachar, Joseph	Colonial products	Jewish—Sephardi	
Eliachar, Raphael	Mill and bank	Jewish—Sephardi	
Elyachar, Nissim Effendi	Banker	Jewish—Sephardi	Councillor 1909
Feinstein, David	Manufacturer	Jewish—Ashkenazi	Alternate member 1909
Gabché, Moustafa	Colonial foodstuff	[Muslim?]	New member December 1909
Gerassimos, [Michel]	Director, Crédit Lyonnais Bank, Jerusalem	Christian—Greek	Vice president 1909. Elected vice president 1910
German Consul		Christian	Subscription
Halebi, Daoud Mikhail	Piety objects	Christian	
Hassidof, Mair	Manufacturer	Jewish	
Husseyini, Ismail Bey el-Kahn, Marcus	Agricultural and industrial owner	Muslim	Alternate member 1909
	Commercial councillor	[Jewish?]	New member December 1909
Kalil, Mouhamad	Farmer	Muslim	New member December 1909

(Continued)

Appendix 1. (Continued)

Name/company	Economic activity	Religion/nationality	Other info
Kalouti, Hadj Baker	Cattle merchant	Muslim	New member December 1909
Khalidi, Nazif Bey El	Engineer, 1st Commissioner of Railway	Muslim	Full member 1909
Kokia, Benjamin Effendi	Banker, discount house	Jewish—Sephardi	Councillor 1909
Kokia, Ezra & Pinhas	Discount house	Jewish—Sephardi	
Kokia, Schalom	Manufacture	Jewish—Sephardi	
Lampros, Anastas	Novelties and jewellery	Christian	
Levy & Hazan	Ironmongery and iron store	Jewish	
Levy, Enoch, Samuel		Jewish	
Lipkin, M. A.	Exchange	Jewish	
Loupo, S[amuel].	Director of Mikveh Israel (1902–1903)	Jewish—born in Bulgaria	Corresponding member 1909
Macheoff, Yankel	Merchant	Jewish	Alternate member 1909
Maierowitch [Meirowich], M[enashe].	Agronomist, Rishon Lezion	Jewish—Ashkenazi	Corresponding member 1909
Marasch [Marrache], Jacob & Sons	Manufacturer	[Christian?]	
Marroum, M. Francois	Piety objects	Christian— [Maronite?]	
Meki, Hadj Halil	Colonial products	Muslim	
Meo, A. Selim	Manufacturer and novelties	Christian—Catholic	
Mizrahi, Haim	Merchant	Jewish	Alternate member 1909
Mizrahi, Rahamim (may be the same person as above)	Military supplier	Jewish	
Mouaket, Suleiman	Colonial products	[Muslim?]	
Moussaioff [Mussayoff], A.	Owner	Jewish—Sephardi	
Nicodeme, Freres	Novelties and plates	Christian	
Pavie, A. [De]	Works manager, Jaffa–Jerusalem railroad company	[Christian—Catho- lic?]	New member December 1909
Perlman[n], M.	Ironmongery and iron store	Jewish—Ashkenazi	
Pharaon, Aref (also Faroun)	Livestock merchant	Muslim	Alternate member 1909. Elected executive member 1910
Pinhas, Hanania	Manufacturer	Jewish	
Russian Consul		Christian—Russian Orthodox	Subscription
Tagger, Jacob Effendi	Beds and furniture	Jewish—Sephardi	Full member 1909
Tagger, Salomon	Changer and tobacco seller	Jewish—Sephardi	New member December 1909
Taher, Daoud, Effendi El-	Colonial products	[Muslim]	Alternate member 1909
Terzis, Andre & Sons	Oriental articles and silk	Christian—Greek	Alternate member 1909
Wafa, Hadj Jussef Effendi (also Joseph)	Colonial products	Muslim	President 1909. Elected President 1910
Wafa, Suleiman, Abdallah	Colonial products	Muslim	
Wieland, Hugo	Construction materials, Wallhala	Christian—German Templar	
Yano, Ezra & Raphael	Ironmongery	Jewish	
Yechoua, Samuel	Exchange	Jewish	
Yedid, Selim	Lace trade	Jewish	
Zuback, Ascher	Wood	Jewish	

Source: *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce*, 1(1) (July 1909), pp. a–b, 15–16; 1(6) (December 1909), p. 20; 2(3–4) (March–April 1910), pp. 58–59.