



PROTO-ZIONIST-ARAB ENCOUNTERS IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY PALESTINE: SOCIOREGIONAL DIMENSIONS

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Based on rarely used documents from archives in Israel and Turkey, this article offers a new approach for the study of proto-Zionist-Arab relationships in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century. It foregrounds the regional and sociological dimensions of the encounters between the two populations through focus on the Judean colonies southeast of Jaffa. These colonies, located relatively close together, maintained a close-knit network of mutual exchanges and gradually crystallized into a "bloc." Using a bottom-up approach, the article explores the developing coordination between the colonies and its impact on their relationships with their Arab neighbors. By the early twentieth century, the author argues, a distinct sociocultural identity had developed in the colonies and the close cooperation had begun to take on a nationalist coloration.

RELATIVELY LITTLE has been written about the daily relationships between Jewish colonists and the Arab rural population in Palestine during the early years of proto-Zionist colonization. Existing research focuses mainly on the ideological and political aspects of the encounter, with less attention paid to the actual interactions between the two populations in this formative period, designated in Zionist historiography as the "first *'aliyah*" (1882-1903).¹ Using a bottom-up sociohistorical approach, this article addresses these daily relations while focusing on the six "Judean colonies" (*moshivot Yehudah*) established southeast of Jaffa at the end of the nineteenth century.

In classical Zionist historiography, the early encounters between the two populations are often portrayed as just another set of obstacles that the first colonists had to confront and overcome. However, the contextual background of their multidimensional relationships and the broader regional implications of these encounters are largely ignored. Hence, it is often stressed that while the problems confronting the colonies with regard to their Arab neighbors were similar (arising from cultural misunderstandings and disputes over natural resources such as water, land, and grazing rights), each colony dealt with them separately according to its best understanding, judgment, and ability.²

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Some researchers even argue that a common pattern of interaction developed, from alienation in the beginning, through gradual reciprocal acceptance, to the development of friendly relationships.³

By contrast, I argue that despite the similarity of the challenges facing the Jewish colonists, their relationships with their Arab neighbors were neither uniform nor restricted to the local level. On the one hand, differences in the colonists' sociocultural backgrounds and in the colonies' physical conditions played a role in shaping these relationships. On the other hand, the Judean colonies, located relatively close together, maintained a close-knit network of mutual exchanges, cooperation, and coordination in various domains, and gradually crystallized into a "bloc"⁴—a development that had implications for their relations with the local rural population. Hence, this study, in addition to briefly discussing the particularistic nature of the Judean colonies, explores in depth their common activity and its effects on Jewish-Arab relations.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The bottom-up sociohistorical approach implemented in this research, which is grounded in a spatial analytical framework, makes possible a more nuanced analysis of early Jewish-Arab encounters and better accounts for their complex dynamics. This methodology, moreover, can serve as a model for examining Jewish-Arab relations in other regions in Palestine where Jewish colonization activity took place at the end of the nineteenth century as well as in later periods, especially given its tendency prior to 1948 to concentrate in specific regions. Arguably, this methodology can also be applied to the study of other cases of settlement in the Ottoman Empire.⁵

While a vast amount of primary material dealing with proto-Zionist colonization is available from the perspective of the Jewish colonists and Zionist organizations, it is a much harder task to trace the viewpoints of the Arab rural population. This stems from the destruction of hundreds of villages and the dispersal of their population during the 1948 war, the lack of organized Palestinian national archives to date, and the fact that most of the rural population was illiterate and therefore left very little written documentation behind.⁶ Despite the methodological constraints created by basing a study primarily on proto-Zionist and Zionist sources, a careful reading against the grain makes possible a critical understanding of the experiences of both Arabs and Jews in Palestine at the time.⁷

Of particular importance are the understudied primary documents found in the local archives of five out of the six former first *'aliyah* Judean colonies.⁸ These include materials such as logbooks, personal letters, receipts, contracts, maps, and pictures, which provide a unique firsthand account of the complexity and ambivalent nature of relations between the two groups. The logbooks of the colonies' managing committees, for example, provide detailed narratives of daily life in the colonies, particularly with regard to interactions with the neighboring Arab population. Other documents extensively used in this study

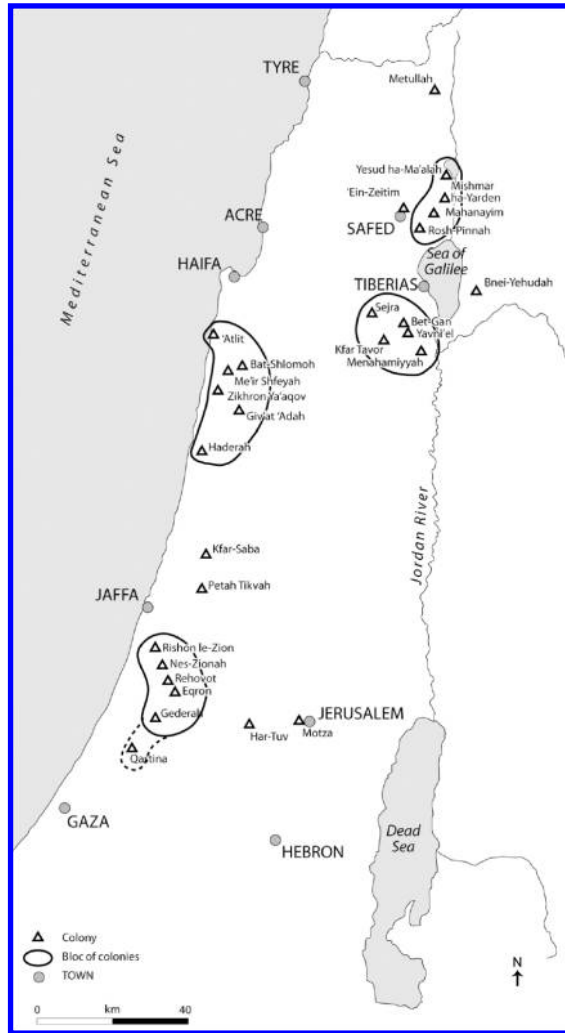
are from the collections of the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in Istanbul. These provide an instructive perspective on the historical setting within which early encounters took place and provide unexploited information about the ongoing transformations experienced by Palestine's rural Arab population in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They give us rare insights into the modes of behavior, sentiments, and attitudes of the Arab rural population throughout Palestine, including the regions where large-scale Jewish colonization activity later took place. Especially valuable are petitions submitted to the government by all segments of Arab society requesting protection in cases of unjust treatment by government officials or influential people, reduction in the amount of their tax burden, redress against dispossession, nullification of illegal changes in the status of land, and treatment equal to that accorded other populations.

SPATIAL OVERVIEW

Jewish colonization activity in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century and even much later was predominantly concentrated in the coastal plain and lowlands, regions that, relatively speaking, were not heavily populated.⁹ Whereas the first Jewish colonies were often established in an unplanned way, those founded in later years were located mostly in proximity to the first nuclei. By the turn of the twentieth century, there were four principal areas of intensive colonization: the fringes of the Hulah valley in the eastern Upper Galilee, eastern Lower Galilee, the coastal plain south of Haifa, and the coastal area southeast of Jaffa (see Map I).

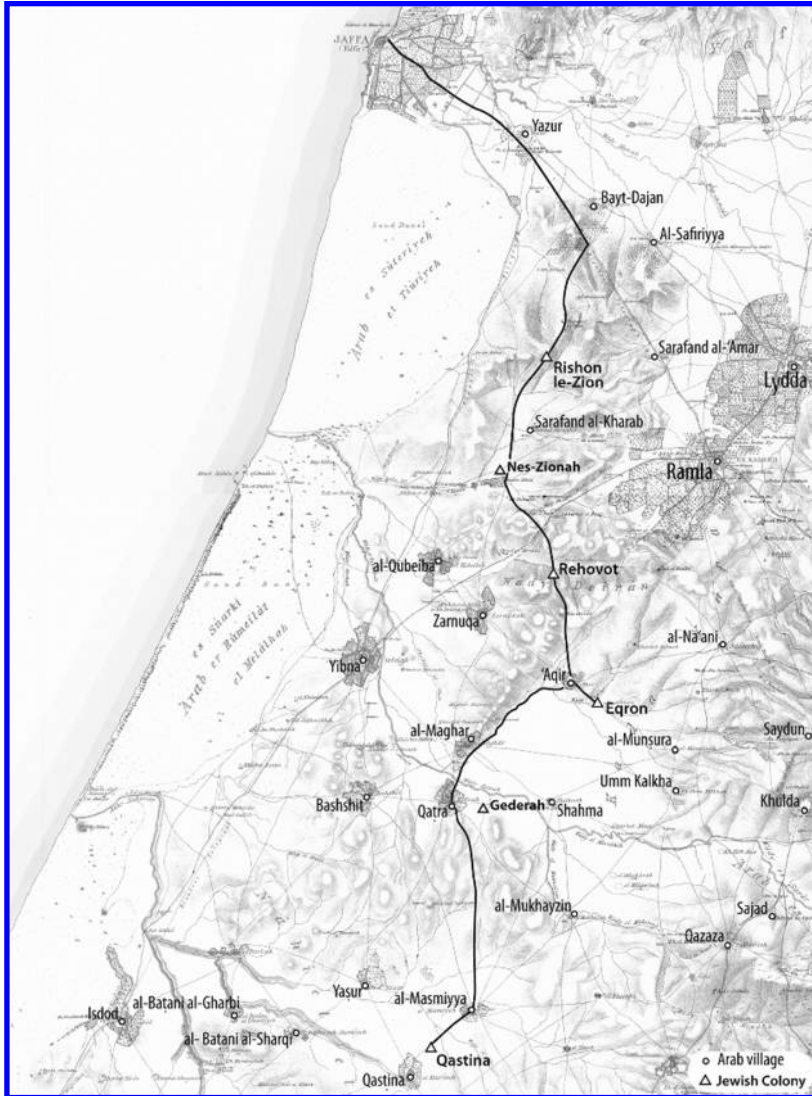
Prior to the beginning of proto-Zionist colonization in the early 1880s, the region southeast of Jaffa was not heavily populated (see Map II). Its western part, along the Mediterranean shore, consisted of sand dunes and had no permanent settlements. The core of the region included about a dozen small-to moderate-sized Arab villages, mostly of mud brick buildings, whose main sources of livelihood were subsistence agriculture, principally grain cultivation and the grazing of livestock.¹⁰ Besides Arab villagers, several small semi-sedentary bedouin groups were present in the area. In most cases they did not possess title deeds to the land where they grazed or resided, although eventually some went through a process of sedentarization.¹¹ Finally, about a dozen absentee landlords owned property in the region. These individuals, in many cases Christians from nearby Jaffa, sold the Jewish colonists much of the land on which the colonization activity in this region took place.

The six first *'aliyah* Judean colonies were established between 1882 and 1890. Four of them were founded in a two-year time span: Rishon le-Zion in 1882, Vadi Hanin (Nes-Zionah) in 1883, Eqron in 1883, and Gederah in 1884. Rehovot was founded in 1890, whereas Qastina, originally established in 1888 and soon deserted, was reestablished in 1896. Three of the Judean colonies—Rishon le-Zion, Eqron, and Qastina (in its first phase)—were under the direct management of an administration established by the French-Jewish philanthropist Baron Edmond de Rothschild. The others remained independent



Map I: Concentrations of Jewish Colonies Established during the First *Aliyah*. For more details on the first *aliyah* concentrations of Jewish colonization activity and for a slightly different division of the blocs, see Yossi Ben-Artzi, *Early Jewish Settlement Patterns in Palestine, 1882-1914* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), pp. 120-28, and especially the map on p. 130. In the Judean bloc, southeast of Jaffa, the special status of Qastina is noticeable, and as discussed in the article, it is questionable whether or not it was part of this bloc.

(including Qastina in its second phase), but they, too, received considerable indirect aid in various forms from the Rothschild administration.¹² The presence of the six colonies turned the region southeast of Jaffa into the area with the most intensive Jewish colonization activity in Palestine in the late nineteenth century (see Maps I and II). The importance of the colonies stemmed not only from their number but also from their relatively large size, their close proximity to each other, and the leading role they played in the development of the new Yishuv.¹³



Map II: Arab Villages and Jewish Colonies Southeast of Jaffa at the End of the Nineteenth Century. Source: Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), maps 13 and 16, scale 1:63,360 (prepared between 1872 and 1877, reduced to 40 percent from the original scale). The six Judean colonies, established between 1882 and 1890, were added to the map. Note the unpopulated dunes southwest of Jaffa and the region south of 'Aqir, along the banks of Wadi al-Sarar, an area which was flooded every winter and did not suit permanent settlement. Also noticeable are the vast orchards in the vicinity of Jaffa, Ramla, and Lydda.

IDIOSYNCRASIES OF THE JEWISH COLONIES

Despite similarities between the sources of tension the colonies confronted in their interactions with the Arab rural population, the nature of the relationships that developed between them differed in each case. Intercommunal

relations were affected by the colonists' social and cultural background and by each colony's social fabric and degree of internal cohesiveness, its distinct physical characteristics and location, the circumstances that led to its establishment (particularly the purchase of land), its proximity to Arab villages, and the presence of a strong leadership.¹⁴

The Judean colonists mainly came from Eastern Europe and had common reasons for emigrating. Nonetheless, they differed in age, economic and professional background, affiliation with various colonizing organizations, and ideological inclinations. These differences, which remained salient years after the start of Jewish colonization in Palestine, found expression in the colonists' attitude toward the Arab population and in the policies they adopted. Two contrasting cases, the colonies of Eqron and Gederah, illustrate how these factors contributed to the complexity of Jewish-Arab encounters.

The Eqronites, comprising for the most part middle-aged conservatives with extensive agricultural experience who immigrated to Palestine as families, were known for their moderate and peaceful nature and for their friendly relations with neighboring Arab villagers, particularly the adjacent village of 'Aqir.¹⁵ David Niman, the son of one of Eqron's first colonists, attributes these sound relationships to the colony's efforts to maintain peaceful coexistence with its Arab neighbors, and to the fact that, unlike most other colonists, Eqronites were used to living as farmers among gentiles, as they had in Eastern Europe. Niman adds that Eqron's colonists were not young and "hotheaded" as were, for example, the colonists of Gederah. Consequently, only minor incidents occurred with the neighboring Arab population.¹⁶

Two other factors help explain Eqron's good relations with its Arab neighbors. First, the ownership of 2,500 dunams¹⁷ on which the colony was established was not contested. Second, the colony was run by Baron de Rothschild's administration, a powerful institution that constituted a stabilizing factor in relations with the Arab rural population.

By contrast, the single, secular-minded young colonists of Gederah, members of the nationalist-socialist *Bilu* movement who had emigrated from Russia, often clashed with their Arab neighbors. Niman writes that many of these clashes could have been avoided had Gederah's young colonists been more moderate in their attitude toward the adjacent village of Qatra.¹⁸ A similar analysis is provided by Haim Hissin, a member of the *Bilu* movement, who blames the colonists for being unfair and arrogant toward their neighbors, humiliating them, and not understanding their manners and customs. Although Hissin also harshly criticizes the villagers of Qatra for their provocative behavior, he claims that in light of the colonists'

In some ways, the Rothschild administration fulfilled the role of a quasi-governmental institution for the colonies, similar to that played by the Jewish national organizations of the Mandate period.

attitude, it is not surprising that the situation between the two parties deteriorated so badly.¹⁹ Moreover, Hissin adds, following a quarrel with Qatra in 1887 (in the course of which a colonist was wounded while trying to prevent Arab herdsmen from grazing their flocks on the colony's land), the colonists deliberately started a fight in order to attract the attention of prominent Jewish activists in Jaffa.²⁰

Interestingly, Gederah's colonists called themselves pioneers (*balutsim*) and were often referred to as such by people involved in the Jewish colonization enterprise. The other colonists, on the other hand, were more often called settlers (*mityasbvim*), farmers (*ikarim*), or colonists (*kolonistim*).²¹ This demonstrates both the unique perception Gederah's colonists had of themselves, and the way in which their contemporaries depicted them. Their self-perception was rooted in the goals of the *Bilu* movement as expressed in its political manifesto, which proclaimed itself an avant-garde force whose mission was to carry the Jewish national flag forward and realize the dream of the political, economic, and cultural revival of the Jewish people in Syria and Palestine—aims that none of the other colonization societies expressed with such clarity.²² After settling in Palestine and being faced with the grim realities of the first colonies, the *Biluim* abandoned many of their lofty ideals and became more moderate. Nevertheless, the profile of Gederah's young *Biluim* and their militant approach contributed to the strained relations.²³

The ideological background of Gederah's colonists notwithstanding, several other factors worsened the colony's interactions with its neighbors. First, Gederah was established on land that had previously belonged to Qatra, a fact that increased the tension between the two sides from the very beginning. The Arab villagers had lost the land to debts but continued to cultivate it as tenants until the arrival of the Jewish colonists, who had purchased the approximately 3,000 dunams from a Frenchman named Philbert. To all intents and purposes, the villagers still perceived the land as theirs and strongly resented the arrival of the Jews. Second, Gederah's colonists themselves contended that their colony's small size, which made it vulnerable in cases of confrontation, was an obstacle to the development of friendlier relations, making it difficult to reach a *modus vivendi*.²⁴ Third, hostility between Gederah and Qatra was exacerbated by their close proximity. The villagers, who could see everything that was taking place in the colony, repeatedly complained to the Ottoman authorities about construction work there.²⁵ Another difficulty was that Gederah belonged to the subdistrict of Gaza, whereas the other Judean colonies (except Qastina) were in the Jaffa subdistrict. There are indications that Gederah's colonists found it difficult to mobilize assistance and obtain redress in Gaza for various problems they encountered because the Jewish presence in this town was limited, and finding local intermediaries to help negotiate with the authorities was harder than in Jaffa or Jerusalem.²⁶ Finally, Gederah was not managed by the Rothschild administration and thus faced greater difficulties in solving problems it faced

with both the local population and the Ottoman authorities than the Rothschild colonies.

THE ROLE OF THE ROTHSCHILD ADMINISTRATION

Although only two of the Judean colonies were directly managed by the Rothschild administration throughout the period under study,²⁷ its strong presence in the area—its regional headquarters were located in Rishon le-Zion—gave the colonists much-needed assistance and leverage with regard to both the local Arab population and the Ottoman authorities. In some ways, the administration fulfilled the role of a quasi-governmental institution for the colonies, and although Rothschild preferred that its activities not be seen as having any political meaning,²⁸ its role was very similar to that played later by the Jewish national organizations under the Mandate.²⁹ In this sense, and despite the opposition and harsh criticism its policies often elicited in the colonies,³⁰ the administration served as a unifying force for them. For example, it often turned to the local Ottoman authorities with requests to bring to justice Arabs who caused damage to the colonies or attacked colonists, and exerted its influence to make sure that measures had been carried out. Moreover, in the colonies it ran, the administration set the ratio between Jewish and Arab workers, fixed the workers' wages, established the rules of conduct vis-à-vis the Arab workers, negotiated the purchase of land from local landowners, and acted to resolve problems with the Arab villagers.³¹

The vast official and unofficial connections between the Rothschild administration and the Ottoman authorities at both the local and imperial levels have received little scholarly attention, yet they were often used to promote the Jewish colonization project by solving problems the colonies faced, protecting them in times of need, and seeing to the cancellation of orders issued against them.³² Rothschild himself had several audiences with Sultan Abdülhamid II as well as with senior Ottoman officials in Istanbul.³³ Moreover, the Rothschild Bank in London granted loans to the Empire, which desperately needed cash, although it is not entirely clear if the Baron himself was involved in these transactions or the extent to which they influenced the Ottoman Palestine policy.³⁴ When Rothschild visited Palestine, he often met with senior Ottoman officials with whom he cultivated personal ties, and made donations to local charity organizations in an effort to strengthen his hand with the Ottoman authorities.³⁵

Rothschild's chief administrator in Palestine, Elie Scheid, a French Jew from Alsace, also maintained excellent relations with Ottoman officials in Istanbul and throughout the Levant.³⁶ On each visit to the region, Scheid met with Ottoman officials in Palestine and Beirut, lobbied for the Jewish colonies, and worked to remove obstacles to the colonization project. He frequently submitted petitions and wrote letters to various officials explaining how the expansion of the Jewish colonies would benefit the Empire.³⁷ All these efforts partially explain why the Rothschild administration and the colonies were granted a large measure of autonomy to run their own affairs.

As will be discussed below, the Rothschild administration also critically influenced the economic activity of the colonies, an issue that had important repercussions for Jewish-Arab interactions. The administration employed agricultural experts who advised the colonists, hired Jewish workers and professionals, and established a winery in Rishon le-Zion, which from the mid-1890s processed the grapes cultivated in the Judean colonies and paid them subsidized prices. Indeed, the Rothschild administration became a unifying factor linking the economies of all the Judean colonies, including those not under its direct control.

THE JUDEAN COLONIES AS A BLOC

Despite the social, cultural, and economic differences surveyed above, the Judean colonies maintained a close-knit network of exchanges in various domains that enhanced feelings of security and strength, broadened the colonists' sociocultural milieu, and increased their options in all domains. The spheres of cooperation included guidance and support for newer colonies, the provision of services, cultural and social ties, and an array of economic exchanges. Two colonies in particular, Rishon le-Zion and Rehovot, emerged as the anchors of the Judean bloc and considerably influenced its development.

A network of roads built between the colonies strengthened their day-to-day connections and facilitated exchanges. Some roads predated the colonies and were gradually improved, while others were constructed afterward, sometimes leading to confrontations with the Arab rural population.³⁸ Numerous reports describe the interactions among the colonists as they traveled through the other colonies. For example, most colonists en route to Jaffa, the region's major town, passed through Rishon le-Zion,³⁹ while travelers from Rishon le-Zion south to Eqron, Gederah, or Qastina passed through Nes-Zionah and Rehovot. The colonists of Gederah habitually broke their journey to Jaffa in Rishon le-Zion to feed their horses, or stopped in Nes-Zionah while transporting their grapes to the winery in Rishon le-Zion to rest, drink tea, and chat.⁴⁰

Newly established colonies received logistical support, guidance, and advice from veteran colonies, facilitating the expansion of colonization into new areas. The latter advised on matters such as the location of the best land for settlement, the reasonable price to pay for it, what arrangements with the local population should be sought upon buying lands which were currently used for cultivation or grazing (and how to avoid conflicts with it), and the most suitable crops to be grown.

Rishon le-Zion served as the administrative and organizational center for all the Judean colonies. The fact that it was the first to be established, its proximity to Jaffa, its relatively large size both in terms of population and territory, and its hosting of the Rothschild administration's regional headquarters and its various enterprises, all turned Rishon le-Zion into the most important colony in the area.⁴¹

Rehovot, the last of the Judean colonies established during the first *'aliyah*, benefited the most in its early days from aid extended by the other colonies. Its settlement society consulted with colonists from Rishon le-Zion and other Judean colonies before founding the colony.⁴² A number of colonists from the area were involved in the purchase of the land on which Rehovot was established and advised on the transaction. Others even settled there, bringing their extensive experience. The preplanned way in which the colony was founded, the economic capabilities of some of its first colonists, the emergence of a strong and effective leadership, and the considerable economic benefits accruing from the presence of the winery established in Rishon le-Zion just two years earlier (the importance of which will be discussed in greater depth below), all contributed to rapidly turning Rehovot into a large and prosperous colony.

Both Rishon le-Zion and Rehovot provided various types of services to the other Judean colonies. Supplies were often available for purchase only in Rishon le-Zion and to a lesser extent Rehovot.⁴³ Health services in the Judean colonies were initially available only in Rishon le-Zion, where the Rothschild administration maintained a small hospital, a physician, and a nurse. The physician, whose official task was to provide medical assistance to the Rothschild colonies in the region, often visited other colonies for a fee and treated colonists who came to his clinic.⁴⁴ Later on, Rehovot also opened a small clinic and a pharmacy, and its paramedic regularly visited patients in Nes-Zionah, although many medical services were still available only in Rishon le-Zion.⁴⁵

When epidemics such as cholera broke out in the region, the colonies acted together, exchanged information, and monitored persons who moved between them. They also agreed on precautionary measures to be taken by each colony and prevented colonists from visiting Arab villages suspected of being contagious.⁴⁶

In the sphere of guidance, the colonists constantly shared expertise and experience with fellow colonists, for the most part on an informal basis, based on friendship.⁴⁷ As mentioned above, the Rothschild administration in Rishon le-Zion often sent agricultural experts to other Judean colonies to advise them on methods of cultivation, irrigation, and suitable crops.

The Judean colonies often banded together in their dealings with the Ottoman authorities to promote their interests and solve common problems. Some of these contacts took place during visits of senior Ottoman officials to the region. In other cases, colonies jointly petitioned the central government on matters of common concern. For example, Rishon le-Zion, Rehovot, Nes-Zionah, Eqron, and Petah Tikvah sent a petition requesting authorization to construct agricultural buildings in their colonies to house their livestock.⁴⁸ At times, administrative issues concerning several colonies were treated as one, such as in the case of obtaining building permits for synagogues in Rishon le-Zion, Eqron, and Petah Tikvah, three colonies under the Rothschild administration.⁴⁹

In addition to armed assistance, the colonies provided financial, material, and judicial support to each other when problems arose with neighboring Arab villages.

Extensive cultural and social ties between the Judean colonies contributed significantly to their crystallization into a bloc. The colonies often celebrated public and personal events together.⁵⁰ Romantic relationships between colonists from different colonies were very common.⁵¹ Kinship ties contributed to strengthening the connections between the colonies and were often mobilized to provide assistance in times of need.⁵² Colonists often rode or walked to nearby colonies to visit friends and relatives or for leisure activities. Sometimes school children took day trips to nearby colonies and played with the children there.⁵³ At times, colonists slept over in a neighboring colony while traveling, due to bad weather or for fear of attacks on the road.⁵⁴ On several occasions, colonists from different colonies established joint social organizations.⁵⁵ Organized cultural activities, too, brought together colonists from all over the area.⁵⁶ All these various interconnections reinforced the colonists' commitment to each other, creating a strong sense of community that sharpened their distinction from the rural Arab population in the vicinity.

Finally, visits by dignitaries gave the colonists an important opportunity to get together and helped promote their interests, publicize their achievements, and raise awareness of the challenges they were facing. Preparations for these visits required coordination among colonies in organizing the event as well as travel to meet the visiting dignitaries upon arrival.⁵⁷ Ottoman officials and European consuls generally visited Rishon le-Zion and sometimes Rehovot.⁵⁸ Over the years, many leading Jewish figures visited the Judean colonies, including Theodor Herzl, Ahad Haam, and Baron de Rothschild. The latter, who came to the area several times, used to stay in Rishon le-Zion,⁵⁹ where he met with representatives from the other colonies.⁶⁰ On most of his visits, he toured other Judean colonies and was escorted by horsemen from one colony to another as a gesture of respect.⁶¹ Journalists and reporters, too, often visited the Judean colonies with the aim of informing Jewish audiences abroad about their situation, prospects, and progress.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Economic cooperation between the Judean colonies played a particularly important role in their crystallization into a bloc, especially as of the mid-1890s. As the most important Judean colony, Rishon le-Zion provided many work opportunities for the region's colonists.⁶² The Rothschild administration headquartered there employed day laborers, builders, gardeners, teachers, and other professionals from all the colonies in the area.

The winery established in Rishon le-Zion by Rothschild in 1888 helped connect the economies of the Judean colonies in an unprecedented way since the mid-1890s.⁶³ Originally, the winery was intended to serve only Rishon le-Zion, but eventually it also processed grapes from the non-Rothschild Judean colonies of Rehovot, Nes-Zionah, and Gederah, in addition to Petah Tikvah.⁶⁴ In fact, Rothschild used the winery in Rishon le-Zion to subsidize the economic activity of the region's colonies and ensure their survival.⁶⁵ The wine itself was

distributed by a company called *Carmel* founded in 1896 by Rehovot's colonizing society, *Menubab ve-Nablab*.

In 1899, however, Rothschild decided to transfer all his business in Palestine, including the winery, to the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). Because of the decision's potential impact, representatives of the Judean colonies joined with other colonies and settlement organizations to negotiate the transfer with Rothschild, fearing a reduction in the quotas of grapes purchased by the winery and in the subsidies paid. Eventually, the JCA agreed to continue to subsidize the grapes, although at a lower rate. In this regard, even before the transfer of Rothschild's business to the JCA, the Judean colonies had planted more and more vineyards, beyond the winery's absorption capacity, a development that led the Rothschild administration to try to limit the planting of new vineyards. The JCA implemented a similar policy, even paying the colonists to uproot some of their vineyards. The economy of the Judean colonies was thus subjected to a measure of centralized planning.

After the JCA transfer, the Judean colonies continued to cooperate on matters concerning the Rishon-le Zion winery. Nonetheless, the reduction in subsidies paid by the winery and its limited processing capacity forced them to look for new production opportunities. Gederah, for example, produced cognac with the assistance of the Rishon le-Zion winery, which provided the necessary materials and tools. Rehovot, too, set up a small winery under the main winery's supervision.

In 1906, the Judean colonies, together with Zikhron-Ya'aqov, Haderah, and Petah Tikvah, established a corporation named *Hit'abdut Kormei Yebudab* to manage the wineries in Rishon le-Zion and Zikhron-Ya'aqov in place of the JCA. The creation of the new syndicate, headquartered in Rishon le-Zion, greatly enhanced the colonies' economic self-reliance. It also expanded the cooperation of the Judean colonies to include other Jewish colonies in Palestine, although obviously on a much smaller scale due to geographical limitations.

The fact that the economies of the Judean colonies were largely interconnected as of the mid-1890s contributed to the formation of a differentiated economic system. On the one hand, processing their grapes in the Rishon le-Zion winery considerably reduced the colonies' dependence on Arab sources for trade and business activities. On the other hand, economic connections with the Arab population predominantly revolved around the employment of low-wage day workers, especially during the high agricultural seasons, a situation which, according to some indications, created pockets of resentment among the Arab workers.⁶⁶

IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH-ARAB RELATIONS

There are indications that the close-knit network of exchanges between the colonies outlined above considerably influenced their attitudes and policies vis-à-vis the neighboring Arab rural population and made possible coordinated action against them in various ways. Given their close proximity, the

Judean colonies were able to rely on their Jewish neighbors for support in cases of local confrontations.⁶⁷ Knowing this in advance, one can argue, gave the colonists, who felt mutual responsibility for each other's safety, a sense of strength and confidence, which in turn allowed them to adopt tougher stands toward the Arab population—stands that isolated colonies did their best to avoid.

Massive clashes with neighboring Arab villagers were not common, but they did occur from time to time in several of the colonies (Gederah, Rehovot, and Qastina), culminating in injuries and even deaths.⁶⁸ The immediate causes were generally disputes over property boundaries and grazing.⁶⁹ The impact of these clashes, however, went far beyond the local level and contributed to shaping Jewish-Arab relations in the wider region. First, other Judean colonies would send reinforcements in conflict situations, and later acted together to punish and deter Arab villagers from carrying out similar acts, thereby turning local conflicts into regional ones. Then, news of such confrontations also rapidly spread throughout the Arab rural population of the region by word of mouth, a fact to which the colonists were well aware of (see below).

In addition to armed assistance, the colonies provided financial, material, and judicial support to each other when problems arose with neighboring Arab villages.⁷⁰ At times the colonies joined forces to put economic pressure on Arab villages. When Rehovot, for example, had a dispute with Zarnuqa over the price of manure purchased from the village as fertilizer, Eliyahu Levin-Epstein, the head of Rehovot's managing committee,⁷¹ urged Nes-Zionah to join Rehovot in boycotting Zarnuqa until it lowered its prices.⁷² He justified his request with the need "to keep a united front vis-à-vis the gentiles [*goyim*] and preserve the pride of our people."⁷³ In another case, Eqron asked Rehovot to stop employing two villagers from 'Aqir who were suspected of stealing.⁷⁴

Finally, the colonies cooperated in legal actions. In one highly instructive case, the same Levin-Epstein asked the Rothschild administration in Rishon le-Zion to help Rehovot in a trial against Zarnuqa following a severe clash between them sparked by a dispute over grazing rights.⁷⁵ Levin-Epstein claimed that the conflict with Zarnuqa was emblematic for all the Jewish colonies in the area, and that it was important to "teach Zarnuqa a lesson" in order to prevent other Arab villagers in the area from acting in a similar manner.⁷⁶

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The emergence of the Judean bloc contributed to the development of a shared vision for the future among the colonists, a vision colored by nationalist hues. This development found clear expression in an attempt made in 1902 to unite all the colonies under a unified leadership. At a meeting in Rishon le-Zion, representatives of eight colonies published a manifesto, *kol koreb*, addressed to all "our brothers who are vintners and farmers in the colonies of Judea and Galilee" urging them to unite under an umbrella organization

and establish a general committee to represent them in order to overcome the obstacles they confronted.⁷⁷ The manifesto's signatories called themselves "the sons of the people [*'am*] who were revived by the spirit of the nation [*le'om*]." This phrase, as well as the general spirit of the document and its proclaimed aims, reflects a nationalist agenda expressed in religious terms such as redemption (*ge'ulab*). Interestingly, five of the eight colonies that signed the document were Judean colonies (Rishon le-Zion, Rehovot, Gederah, Eqrn, and Nes-Zionah), vividly demonstrating their role in spearheading the development of the Jewish national community in Palestine. The fact that this early attempt to establish a united leadership for the colonies did not immediately bear fruit—it was only after World War I that the Yishuv was able to unite behind a single leadership led by the new Yishuv⁷⁸—in no way diminishes its importance.

Around the same time, territorial contiguity between the Judean colonies came to be seen as an important goal. Already in the 1880s and 1890s transactions by the Rothschild administration, various *Hoveve Zion* societies, and individual buyers involved the purchase of additional land next to existing colonies for cultivation and expansion. The Rothschild administration may already have aspired to create contiguity between the colonies, as indicated in the Baron's explicit wish, expressed in 1899, to see "the whole region [*bevel*] between Eqrn and Rishon le-Zion cultivated by Jewish workers and blooming."⁷⁹ The founding of Rehovot in 1890 on a tract of land at the "hub of the Judean colonies" brought the Judean colonies much closer together.⁸⁰ Indeed, one of the reasons why Rehovot's first colonists decided to establish the colony where they did was its location in the midst of the other colonies. As Levin-Epstein writes in his memoirs:

After long deliberations, we decided that the land of Duran was the most suitable and convenient site for our purposes because it was located between Rishon [*le-Zion*], Vadi al-Hanin [*Nes-Zionah*], Eqrn, and Gederah. It was important for us that our colony be located in the vicinity of other Jewish colonies, in order to be on the safe side with regards to the Arabs.⁸¹

About a decade later, however, land purchases near the Judean colonies for the first time became more consciously motivated by the desire to create land contiguity between them and to keep non-Jews from buying it.⁸² Aharon Aizenberg, a prominent activist from Rehovot, played a crucial role in these efforts. On several occasions he took steps to prevent land near Rehovot from being transferred to non-Jewish hands on the grounds that it would undermine efforts to create contiguity between the colonies.⁸³ Aizenberg was also involved in a company called *Ge'ulab* (Redemption) that concluded some land transactions in the vicinity of Gederah that almost succeeded in making Gederah and Eqrn contiguous. Additional lands were purchased near Eqrn, Nes-Zionah, and Rishon le-Zion, thus considerably increasing the Jewish territorial hold in the area.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, several Judean colonies opposed for the first time the lease of Jewish-owned land to Arabs. The rationale behind this policy was the widespread theft and damage to property in the colonies claimed to have been committed by the Arab rural population. During a meeting of Gederah's managing committee in 1903, for example, the colonists decided to stop leasing land to Arabs. The hard-line prominent Zionist leader Menachem Ussishkin, who attended the meeting, signed its protocol and urged the other colonies to follow suit.⁸⁵ Similar decisions were approved by Rehovot and Rishon le-Zion around that time in an effort to limit Arab presence in the colonies and reduce theft and damage to property.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

The crystallization of the Judean colonies into a bloc was a long and gradual process. Even at the turn of the twentieth century, some two decades after the establishment of the first colonies, they still did not constitute a monolithic group. Nevertheless, as the overall patterns of cooperation and coordination between them were enhanced, institutionalized, and regularized, the colonies were better positioned to overcome the crisis that followed the 1899 transfer of Rothschild's business in Palestine to the JCA and the latter's gradually declining sponsorship of the winery in Rishon le-Zion. Indeed, the colonies became more economically self-reliant in the following years.

Another result of the Judean colonies' crystallization into a bloc was an increased sense of social cohesion, "togetherness," and distinctiveness vis-à-vis the local Arab population. All these contributed to the emergence of a distinct socio-cultural identity, which in turn helped increase social control, reinforce shared norms, and preserve common interests. In a way, the colonies became an "imagined community" with a strong collective identity, despite the differences between them and the fact that they simultaneously belonged to wider communities (the Jewish colonies in Palestine, the Yishuv, Ottoman and world Jewry, and so forth). This development influenced Jewish-Arab relationships, since some of the policies adopted by the colonies were directly related to their ability to act together vis-à-vis the Arab population.

At the same time, the Judean colonies' joint activity helped shape the identity of the rural Arab population in the region, although it was by no means the only factor at work. Generally speaking, the issue of the regional identity of Palestine's Arab rural population has received little scholarly attention. One noteworthy exception is Beshara Doumani's seminal work on Jabal Nablus, which describes the complex relationships between the city of Nablus and its rural hinterland.⁸⁷ Unlike Jabal Nablus, however, the Jaffa region was not a distinct geographical area marked by natural boundaries, did not have a tradition of semi-autonomous rule, and had a much more heterogeneous population.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, there were many manifestations of regional identification in the Arab rural population in the Jaffa area. The annual celebrations in the shrines of al-Nabi Rubin and al-Nabi Salih, two religious festivals of countrywide importance, had

particular significance for the Arab inhabitants of the Jaffa region. Jaffa's elite had a growing influence on the town's hinterland in various domains. Several prominent figures in the region were widely revered by the local population, and their influence served as a unifying factor.⁸⁹ Finally, the fact that the villages belonged to the same administrative entity also had an impact.⁹⁰

In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that the Arab population in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century possessed multiple identities (Ottoman, Arab, Muslim, Christian, regional, local, and so on), which to a large extent overlapped and complemented each other.⁹¹ One can argue, with regard to Arabs in areas such as that southeast of Jaffa, that the intensive encounter with the Jewish colonists helped shape several dimensions of their identity. In other words, the cumulative effect of daily interactions between Jews and Arabs, including many cases of confrontation, at a time when extensive cooperation and mutual support among the Jewish colonies was manifest, strengthened awareness among the Arab population of their shared experiences and the feeling that they belonged to a distinct group, even though at this stage it was not yet well articulated or expressed in political terms.

NOTES

1. For several representative works focusing primarily on the ideological-political sphere see Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley: University of California, 1976); Gershon Shafir touches on the daily interactions between the Jewish and Arab populations, but does so as part of an effort to examine the applicability of theories about colonialism to the case of Jewish colonization in Palestine. See Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

2. See, for example, Yosef Lamdan, "The Arabs and Zionism, 1882-1914," in Israel Kolatt, ed., *The History of the Jewish Community in Eretz Israel since 1882* (Jerusalem: Israeli Academy for Sciences and Humanities, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 216-18; Yosef Lunts, "The Roots and Sources of the Arab National Movement in Palestine on the Eve of World War I," in Moshe Ma'oz and B. Z. Kedar, eds., *The Palestinian National Movement* (Tel Aviv: Misrad

ha-Bitahon, 1996), pp. 37-38 (in Hebrew); Yaacov Ro'i, "The Relations between Rechovot and Its Arab Neighbors, 1890-1914," *ba-Tsiyonot* 1, no. 1 (1970), pp. 150-203; and Ben-Zion Dinur, ed., *Sefer Toldot ba-Haganah* [The Annals of the Haganah] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1973), vol. 1, p. 70.

3. Lamdan, "The Arabs and Zionism," p. 218.

4. A "bloc" is an entity having both official and unofficial expressions and functions. During the period under study, the Judean bloc was not an officially recognized entity but rather an informal one. A few years later, however, an association of the Judean colonies, *Hit'abdut ba-Moshavot bi-Yhudab*, was established to promote the particular interests of the Judean colonies as well as the political interests of the whole Yishuv. See Waddesdon Manor—PICA Archive (henceforth WAD-PICA) 15/10, a letter in French from the executive committee of the Association of Judean Colonies to Mr. Frank, representative of the Jewish Colonization Association (henceforth JCA) in Jaffa, 26 January 1914.

5. Consider, for example, Transjordan and the Huran, two sites where Circassian settlement activity, which differed considerably from the local rural

population, took place at the end of the nineteenth century.

6. On the problem of finding reliable sources on the Arab rural population and the need to rely on foreign sources, often Zionist, see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 89.

7. This type of methodology has been shown to be instructive in the field of subaltern studies, which impressively reconstructs the history of Indian society using British imperial documents.

8. Today the Israeli cities or towns of Rishon le-Zion, Rehovot, Nes-Zionah, Mazkeret Batiah (Eqron), and Gederah.

9. David Grossman, *Arab Demography and Early Jewish Settlement in Palestine: Distribution and Population Density during the Late Ottoman and Early Mandate Periods* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004), pp. 222–23; On the factors influencing the pattern of early Jewish colonization activity, see Yossi Ben-Artzi, *Early Jewish Settlement Patterns in Palestine, 1882–1914* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), pp. 120–28.

10. C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography, and Archaeology* (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1883), vol. 2, pp. 407–14; V. Guérin, *Description Géographique, Historique, et Archéologique de la Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 18–28, p. 213; vol. 2, pp. 31–70.

11. For more information on the bedouins of the area, see Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), p. 356; David Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion: The Arab Village and Its Offshoots in Ottoman Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1994), p. 35; The bedouin group of al-Sitriyya on the land of Duran, where the colony of Rehovot was later established, sent petitions to the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul claiming to have been forced to leave land that it owned and was farming (*urabanın tabt-ı tasarrufunda bulunan arazi*) by “rich people” (*mütemevvilan tarafından*). See the Prime-Ministerial Ottoman Archive (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, henceforth BOA), DH. MKT.,

1795/85, 1308.Ca.15; DH. MKT., 1771/129, 1308.Ra.01.

12. Petah Tikvah, some ten miles northeast of Jaffa and partially under the auspices of the Rothschild administration, cooperated extensively with the Judean colonies but was not considered one of them. See Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds or Premonitions of a Bi-National Conflict?* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007), pp. 234–36.

13. There is debate among researchers whether the small colony of Qastina, located south of the other Judean colonies, should be considered part of the Judean bloc. See Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 236–37.

14. On the social and economic differences between the colonies, see Rothschild Bank Archive (henceforth RBA), OE 532 (“Rapport Préliminaire de Mr. E. Meyerson sur les Colonies de Palestine Soutenues par le Baron Edmond de Rothschild,” 1899, Paris).

15. David Niman, *be-Reshit Brov* [In the Beginning] (Tel Aviv: Private Publication, 1962/3), pp. 41–47.

16. Niman, *be-Reshit Brov*, pp. 42–43.

17. The Ottoman dunam (dönüm) was equivalent to 919.3 square meters; the metric dunam is equivalent to 1,000 square meters. This article refers to Ottoman dunams.

18. Niman, *be-Reshit Brov*, pp. 41–43.

19. Haim Hissin, *Masa' ba-Erets ha-Muvtabat* [Journey in the Promised Land, henceforth *Journey*] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1982), pp. 197–99.

20. Haim Hissin, *Mi-Reshumot Ebad ba-Biluyim* [Memories and Letters of an Early Pioneer, henceforth *Memiors*] (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1990), p. 168.

21. *Ha-Magid* 30 no. 31 (13 August 1886), pp. 258–59; *ba-Levanon* 20 no. 1 (2 June 1886), pp. 6–7; *Havatselet* 26 no. 9 (29 January 1896), p. 63.

22. Josef Salmon, “The Bilu Movement,” in Mordechai Eliav, ed., *The First Aliyah* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 118–25.

23. Israel Belkind, a member of the *Bilu* movement who settled first in Rishon le-Zion and then moved to Gederah, defines these relationships in his memoirs as among the worst in all the colonies. See Israel Belkind, *bi-Ntiv ha-Biluyim: Zikbronot Israel Belkind* [In the Path of

the Biluyim: The Memoirs of Israel Belkind] (Tel Aviv: Misrad Habitahon, 1983), pp. 139–40.

24. Yaakov Ro'i, "Jewish-Arab Relations in the First Aliyah Settlements," *The First Aliyah*, p. 250, p. 266.

25. For instance, see Shulamit Laskov, *The Biluim* (Jerusalem: ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1989), p. 240; For the close proximity between Gederah and Qatra, see Salman Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1948* (London: Palestine Land Society, 2004), p. 276.

26. About Gederah's difficulties to obtain redress in Gaza see Laskov, *The Biluim*, p. 241.

27. Qastina was under Rothschild administration only between 1888 and 1890, a year in which it was deserted. It was reestablished in 1896 with the help of *Hoveve Zion*.

28. Ran Aaronsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), pp. 270–75.

29. Aaronsohn, *Rothschild*, pp. 279–81.

30. The colonists often complained about the paternalistic attitude of senior officials in the Rothschild administration, accusing them of arrogance and unjust treatment. Some colonists also criticized the administration's policy, such as its preference for viticulture and orchards as the economic basis of the colonies at the expense of grain cultivation. Colonists in the independent colonies even argued that the Rothschild policies distorted the whole ideology behind Jewish colonization activity in Palestine.

31. Elie Scheid, *Zikbronot* [Memoirs] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1983), p. 89.

32. Scheid, *Zikbronot*, pp. 89, 185–86, 202.

33. Regarding these connections and the way in which they were perceived, see, for instance, BOA, Y.PRK. AZJ., 30/37, 1312.C.24, a letter sent to the sultan complaining about Rothschild's meeting with Grand Vezir (*sadr azam*) Cevat Pasha in which they allegedly discussed the Jewish colonization effort in Palestine. In addition, it is argued in the letter that the aides of Cevat Pasha assisted Rothschild. The letter warns the sultan about the harmful effects of Jewish activity in Palestine on the Empire's interests, and predicts that it will create a problem similar to the Armenian one.

34. For example see BOA, YA. Hus., 301/32, 1311.Z.22; 302/45, 1312.M.05; 323/74, 1312.L.8; 319/21, 1312.S.11.

35. For instance, see BOA, I. HUS., 31/1312-Ca-084, 1312.Ca.21. The sultan states that he heard with great satisfaction of Scheid's donation of 500 francs to a hospital, and called it a noble act.

36. Scheid even received a medal from the Empire, upon his request. See BOA, DH. MKT., 1471/65, 1305.R.9; the medal appears on the cover of Scheid's memoirs.

37. For instance see BOA, DH.MKT., 1530/17, 1305.Za.29, an order to the *mutasarrıf* of Jerusalem from Istanbul, following a petition made by Scheid, to let Jews who settled before the prohibitions on settlement activity came into effect and who accepted Ottoman citizenship to build their houses in accordance with the sultan's orders; BOA, HR.TO., 531/40, 20 October 1887, a letter from Scheid to the grand vezir asking him to order the governors of Damascus and Jerusalem to let Jewish colonists who became Ottoman citizens and who were loyal subjects of the Empire buy land and build houses and to stop creating obstacles in accordance with the sultan's promises that all the subjects of the Empire deserve equal rights (Scheid also enumerates the benefits to the Empire of their settlement); BOA, DH.MKT., 1475/47, 1305.R.21, a letter sent from the Ministry of Interior to the prime minister about building permissions for local and foreign Jews who settled in the "regions of Syria and Jerusalem" ("*Suriye ve Kudüs taraflarına hicret eden yerli ve yabancı museviler*") as part of a correspondence between Ottoman offices following a petition by Scheid.

38. For example, a fight broke out near Rehovot between colonists and bedouins over the construction of a road going north from the colony. The bedouins plowed the land over the road despite its extensive use by the colonists. See Eliyahu Levin-Epstein, *Zikbronotai* [My Memoirs] (Tel Aviv: ha-Ahim Levin-Epstein, 1932), pp. 242–43.

39. A second road, via Ramla, was less commonly used by the southern colonies.

40. Aharon Feldman (Ever Hadani), *Toldot Agudat ha-Kormim* [The Annals of the Association of Vintners] (Tel Aviv: Agudat ha-Kormim, 1966), p. 70 (told by Zvi Hochberg).

41. For example, see *Havatsalet* 20 no. 37 (20 July 1890), pp. 291–92; *ba-Magid*

31 no. 49 (22 December 1887), p. 391.

42. Ze'ev Gluskin, *Zikbronot* [Memoirs] (Tel Aviv: Agudat ha-Kormim, 1946), p. 57; Levin-Epstein, *Zikbronotai*, pp. 122-23, 129-30.

43. The Judean colonists purchased goods from Arab merchants from Jaffa, with whom they had close ties, and to a lesser extent from Ramla, Lydda, and Isdud. Colonists regularly visited Jaffa to purchase tools, goods, and supplies, sometimes on credit, and Arab merchants regularly visited the colonies to buy products and sell their own merchandise. At times, Judean colonists also traded with Arab merchants from more remote places, such as Jerusalem and Gaza. See Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 100-15.

44. Levin-Epstein, *Zikbronotai*, p. 105; see also *ba-Magid* 35, no. 3 (15 January 1891), p. 19 (about a visit by Rishon le-Zion's physician to Eqron, which was hit by an eye epidemic); Colonies where medical services were available provided their Arab day laborers with free medical service. In general, Arabs who turned to a physician, nurse, or pharmacist in the colonies received medical treatment, usually free of charge. At times, a clause was even added to contracts signed with medical personnel in the colonies obliging them to treat Arab villagers. Arabs could also purchase drugs in the colonies, but not for subsidized prices. See Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 123-27; See also BOA, DH, MKT, 1471/65, 1305.R.9, a letter by Scheid to the Minister of Interior in Istanbul, according to which colonies where medical services were available provided their Arab day laborers with free medical services.

45. Levin-Epstein, *Zikbronotai*, p. 184; Moshe Smilansky, *Nes-Zionab* (Nes-Zionah: Municipality of Nes-Zionah, 1953), p. 43.

46. The local archive of Rishon le-Zion (henceforth RLZ), incoming letters, 1902, 4 December 1902. Epidemics such as cholera broke out every few years despite measures taken by the authorities to control and prevent them. The colonies implemented their own restrictive measures, and the medical assistance offered to the local population stemmed partly from their understanding that improving health and sanitary conditions in the area would decrease the likelihood

of their recurrence. See Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 124-25; See also BOA, Y. MTV, 235/15, 1320.B.3, a telegram from the governor of Jerusalem's province to Yıldız Palace regarding the outbreak of a suspicious decease in the village of Faluja, south of Qastina, the preventative measures taken to prevent the spread of the epidemic, and the need for governmental aid (interestingly, the governor accused the bedouin tribes of spreading the epidemic); The same year, 1902, a very severe outbreak of cholera took place in the southern part of Palestine and badly damaged the region. See BOA, A. } MKT. MHM., 600/3, 1320.B.28; 583/11, 1320.R.27; 584/1, 1320.B.11; 584/7, 1320.§.22.

47. RLZ, incoming letters, 1901-1902, 21 February 1903, a suggestion to implement a new method of registration of Arab workers in the colony, as was done in Rehovot and Petah Tikvah.

48. BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ 40/37, 1318.M.4.

49. BOA, I. AZN., 19/1313/Z-11, 1313.Z.11.

50. To cite a few examples, the ceremony marking the establishment of Rehovot was celebrated by colonists from nearby colonies (*ba-Melits* 30, no. 72 [10 April 1890], p. 3) as was the expansion of Nes-Zionah in 1890, which was also commemorated by guests from Jaffa (Belkind, *bi-Ntiv ba-Biluyim*, p. 291); When Torah schools were opened in Rehovot and Eqron in 1905, representatives from these two colonies as well as from Rishon le-Zion took part in each other's celebrations. See *Havatsalet* 35, no. 24 (4 June 1905), p. 182; 36, no. 5 (10 November 1905), p. 37.

51. Moshe Smilansky, *Rehovot* (Rehovot: Dvir, 1949/1950), pp. 34-36.

52. For example, a colonist from Gederah named Leah stayed for a few weeks with her family in Rishon le-Zion to help take care of a newborn. See *ba-Magid* 34, no. 10 (6 March 1890), p. 78; In another case, one of Gederah's colonists received oxen from his relatives in Eqron so he could plow his land. See *ba-Magid* 34 no. 1 (2 January 1890), p. 5.

53. *Ha-Tsvi* 4, no. 23 (1 June 1888), p. 89 (about a visit of Rishon le-Zion's children to Nes-Zionah).

54. Aharon Feldman (Ever Hadani), *Me'ab Sbnot Sbmirab be-Yisrael* [A Hundred Years of Guarding in Israel]

(Tel Aviv: Tsetsik, 1954) p. 18 (told by two colonists from Eqrone); *ba-Magid* 32, no. 24 (21 June 1888), p. 191.

55. For instance, colonists from Rishon le-Zion and Gederah, together with two persons from Jaffa, founded a society called *Rodef Sbalom* to commemorate Baron de Rothschild's mother. See *Havatsalet* 16, no. 50 (24 September 1886), pp. 398-99.

56. For example, a Purim celebration in Rehovot was attended by colonists from the whole region. See *Ha-Magid* 35, no. 16 (16 April 1891), p. 126; For similar celebrations in Rishon le-Zion, see *ba-Melits* 38, no. 112 (5 June 1898), p. 3; When the play *Zrubavel* was performed in Rehovot, it attracted a large audience from all the nearby colonies, as well as people from Jaffa and Ramla. See *Ha-Magid l'Israel* 4, no. 17 (2 May 1895), p. 137.

57. For example, regarding a delegation from Nes-Zionah which went to meet Herzl in Rishon le-Zion in 1899, see Smilansky, *Nes-Zionab*, pp. 53-4; See also *ba-Melits* 38, no. 247 (21 November 1898), p. 2 (coordination between Rishon le-Zion and Rehovot before Herzl's visit).

58. For instance, *ba-Magid* 36, no. 22 (24 June 1892), p. 167 (a visit by the head of the province of Jerusalem in Rishon le-Zion).

59. See *Havatsalet* 17, no. 25 (13 May 1887), p. 188 (the Baron's visit to Rishon le-Zion and Eqrone in 1887).

60. See *ba-Melits* 39, no. 72 (12 April 1899), pp. 4-5.

61. See *ba-Melits* 39, no. 72 (12 April 1899), pp. 4-5; See also *ba-Magid l'Israel* 8, no. 14 (13 April 1899), p. 111 (thirty horsemen from Rishon le-Zion escorted Baron Rothschild from Nes-Zionah to their colony after visiting Eqrone and Rehovot); and 31, no. 22 (9 June 1887), p. 175 (Eqrone's colonists escorted Rothschild from Rishon le-Zion to their colony).

62. For example, for years some colonists from Nes-Zionah worked in Rishon le-Zion as day laborers because income from their own fields was not enough to make ends meet. See *ba-Magid l'Israel* 4, no. 19 (16 May 1895), p. 156; 6, no. 11 (11 March 1897), p. 87; 35, no. 13 (26 March 1891), p. 103. Some of Gederah's colonists also worked in Rishon le-Zion and occasionally stayed with relatives there because the daily commute

was too difficult. See Laskov, *The Biluim*, p. 279.

63. See RBA, OE 532, report by E. Meyerson on the colonies in Palestine prepared for the JCA in 1899: "C'est donc cette cave qui est, pour ainsi dire, le coeur non seulement de Rischon, mais encore de toutes les colonies viticoles de la Judée. C'est à elle que tout aboutit et c'est en cherchant à se rendre compte de son fonctionnement que l'on arrive le mieux à saisir les conditions actuelles de la vie économique de ces agglomérations."

64. Nes-Zionah Archive, protocol 1, n. 40; *ba-Magid l'Israel* 4, no. 5 (17 January 1895), p. 20 (Rehovot); 4, no. 12 (21 March 1895), p. 98 (Gederah).

65. Gluskin, *Zikbronot*, p. 91; Ever Hadani, *Toldot Agudat ba-Kormim*, p. 103 (a quote from Scheid).

66. For example, regarding an attempt by the Arab workers in Rehovot to obtain a pay raise and the strike they called, see Aharon Feldman (Ever Hadani), *Abron A. Aizenberg* (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1946), pp. 121 (1904), 126 (letters by Aharon Aizenberg to Ze'ev Gluskin).

67. To cite one example, in 1893 when a border dispute between Rehovot and the bedouin tribe of Sitriyya to its east deteriorated into a bloody fight, Rehovot asked the Jewish colonies in the area to send support. A group of armed young men duly arrived from Rishon le-Zion and joined the fight. According to Hissin's account of the incident, Rishon le-Zion's colonists were not afraid to fight the bedouins because they were convinced that the officials of the Rothschild administration in their colony would support them if problems with the Ottoman authorities arose. See Hissin, *Journey*, p. 244.

68. The worst incident between a Judean colony and an Arab village during the period under study took place in 1896, when a fight over land boundaries between the colony of Qastina and the adjacent Arab village of the same name led to the death of one villager and to the injury of ten colonists. The incident strained relations for a long period, until reconciliation was reached.

69. See Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 170-72.

70. For example, in 1904, Rishon le-Zion asked Rehovot to send help to Qastina, whose land "was about to fall into

Arab hands"; see the local archive of Rehovot (henceforth REH), folder 12, file 12, n. 1401, 5 December 1904. In another case, Petah Tikvah approached Rehovot and possibly other colonies with a request to help finance legal assistance during the trial of a colonist accused of killing an Arab who had allegedly attacked him; see REH, folder 11, file 10, n. 1163, 8 February 1904. Rehovot apparently participated in financing the trial; see REH, folder 11, file 10, n. 1197, 20 April 1904. In a similar case, Nes-Zionah asked Rehovot, and apparently other colonies as well, to help finance legal assistance for a trial against an Arab accused of kidnapping a Jewish boy from the colony; see REH, committee, n. 180, 7 October 1901.

71. Most of the colonies had managing committees, which were elected by the colonists and the colonizing societies. The Rothschild colonies were run by officials nominated by the administration, but after Rothschild terminated his direct involvement in Palestine in 1899, they also elected representative committees.

72. Central Zionist Archive (henceforth CZA), A-216/2, 8 December 1898, a letter from Levin-Epstein to the colony of Nes-Zionah; See also Ro'i, "The Relations," p. 173 (protocol of the general meeting of Rehovot's colonists from 19 December 1897).

73. CZA, A-216/2, 8 December 1898.

74. REH, box 12, file 12, n. 1351, 27 March 1904.

75. The dispute started over the issue of grazing. The colonists claimed that Zarnuqa's flocks damaged their vineyards while grazing in nearby fallow fields which belonged to Rehovot. In this case, because of a communication problem, the conflict deteriorated into a bloody clash.

76. CZA, A-216/1, 1894, n. 30, a letter from Levin-Epstein to the chief administrator of the Rothschild administration in Rishon le-Zion. *Havatsalet*, while reporting a clash between Rehovot and Zarnuqa, claims that the Jewish colonies should strive to reach a détente with the Arabs and be prepared to protect their interests by force if necessary; see *Havatsalet* 22, no. 24 (22 April 1892), p. 192.

77. RLZ, Jewish-Arab Relationships File, 1902.

78. Israel Kolatt, "The Organization of the Jewish Population in Palestine and the

Development of its Political Consciousness before World War I," in Moshe Ma'oz, ed., *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 211-45.

79. *Ha-Magid V'Israel* 8, no. 14 (13 April 1899), pp. 110-11.

80. *Ha-Magid* 34, no. 15 (18 April 1890), p. 118 (the newly established colony of Rehovot is called "the hub of the Judean colonies"); *ba-Melits* 30, no. 71 (9 April 1890), p. 2 (the establishment of Rehovot linked the other Judean colonies together).

81. Levin-Epstein, *Zikbronotai*, p. 125.

82. For instance see CZA, A-208/1, letters n. 114, 118, 127, 136, 140, 141, 175, 182, 184.

83. CZA, A-208/1, letters by Aizenberg on pp. 114, 118, 127, 136, 140, 141, 175, 182, 184, 204.

84. RBA, OE, 532, a letter from Baron Rothschild to the JCA management in Paris about negotiations to purchase land next to the Judean colonies and other colonies in Palestine, 18 March 1903; For a visualization of Jewish land acquisitions and the creation of territorial contiguity between the colonies see WAD-PICA, pic. 20/50/83, Carte Générale des Colonies de la Judée, scale 1/20,000.

85. The local archive of Gederah, protocols, n. 200, 16 February 1902; n. 217, 12 July 1903; Despite this decision, land continued to be leased to Arabs in Gederah, most probably newly purchased land that had been held in common and not yet divided. Thus, a second decision was made in 1908 by Gederah's committee confirming past decisions. See protocols, n. 301, 28 March 1908.

86. REH, managing committee, n. 65, 6 September 1903; RLZ, outgoing letters, 1900-1902, n.225, p. 160, 17 March 1903 (about prohibiting one of Rishon le-Zion's colonists from leasing his land out to Arabs for cultivation of watermelons, as he previously did, due to the fear of damage to nearby fields).

87. Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

88. For more detail see Ben-Bassat, *Local Feuds*, pp. 237-42.

89. A description in Hissin's memoirs of the funeral of a locally venerated religious shaykh from Qatra, which

apparently included also a Sufi ceremony, is worth quoting at some length, as it demonstrates the regional connections existing among the Arab rural population: "A while ago I had the opportunity to witness how the Arabs bury an important person. Such a large ceremony is rarely attended by a European. In Qatra lived an old respected man, member of a family considered holy by the Arabs. He had much authority among the villagers, who considered him a holy man. In all the towns and villages in the area, the most common swear was 'I swear in the name of al-Qatrawi.' Arabs came to him from far away places to settle disputes, get advice and blessings. . . . Not a long time has passed and processions came to Qatra from different places. From every village a festive delegation arrived. The flag of every village was carried at the head of the procession, followed by players who drummed and played various music instruments, and at the end marched the elder sheikhs and the most observant men in the village singing sad religious hymns." See Hissin, *Memiors*, pp. 139-41.

90. Among other things, this is illustrated by the joined submission of petition to the Ottoman authorities about shared concerns. In one instructive case, the villagers in the region of Qastina-Masmiyya in the district of Gaza jointly petitioned for a reduction of their land tax, pointing to two recent examples of land transactions in their region that allegedly demonstrated the true value of their land. The first case was vacant land (*mablul*) in Zarnuqa, which was sold at an auction (*müzayedede*). The second was land purchased by Jews in the nearby village of Qatra (probably the land on which the colony of Gederah was established in 1884). In both cases, the petition argued, the land sold was evaluated at lower prices than the villagers', although the price of these lands should have been similar. See BOA, HR. TO., 396/79, 24 December 1891; See also 395/104, 8 July 1891; 395/60, 29 January 1891; 395/61, 5 February 1891.

91. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp. 65, 84.