Liora R. Halperin

TRADING SECRETS: CONSTRUCTIONS AND CONTEXTS OF TWO MIDDLE EASTERN JEWISH GUARDS IN THE EARLY PETAH TIKVA AGRICULTURAL COLONY

Abstract
Two Arabic-speaking Jewish guards worked in the European Jewish agricultural colony of Petah Tikva soon after its founding, northeast of Jaffa, in 1878: Daud abu Yusuf from Baghdad and Yaʿqub bin Maymun Zirmati, a Maghribi Jew from Jaffa. The two men, who worked as traders among Bedouin but were recruited for a short time by the colony, offer a rare glimpse of contacts between Ashkenazi and Middle Eastern Jews in rural Jewish colonies established in the last quarter of the 19th century, colonies that are often regarded as detached from their local and Ottoman landscape. The article first argues that Zionist sources constructed these two men as bridges to the East in their roles as teachers of Arabic and perceived sources of legitimization for the European Jewish settlement project. It then reads beyond the sparse details offered in Ashkenazi Zionist sources to resituate these men in their broad imperial and regional context and argue that, contrary to the local Zionist accounts, the colony was in fact likely to have been marginal to these men's commercial and personal lives.

Keywords: Jews; Ottoman Empire; Palestine; settlement; Zionism

Yehuda Raab, one of the early settlers in the newly founded European Jewish agricultural colony of Petah Tikva, recalled in his memoirs an unexpected visitor who appeared one night in the winter of 1878–79, the first since the colony's founding in Ottoman Palestine. A man appeared on "a white horse larger than [any] I had ever seen," recalled Raab, a Hungarian Jew who had lived in the traditional Jewish community of Jerusalem before moving to the newly purchased lands fourteen kilometers northeast of Jaffa. In language that recalls other Orientalist encounters with the East, he noted the man's big nose, scars left from an old bout of boils, and "big black eyes," and assumed he was a local Arab from one of the many Bedouin tribes that resided in the area. The man, whose purpose for visiting remained unclear at that point, left without speaking. The following night, the Bedouin on horseback returned and told Raab in a "strange Arabic dialect," "*ana Israʾili,*" I am Jewish. To prove his status as a coreligionist, he then "recited the *shemaʿ* prayer while lifting his eyes up." Raab immediately invited the man in and

Liora R. Halperin is an Associate Professor in the Jackson School of International Studies and the Department of History, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash; e-mail: lhalper@uw.edu

hired him as a guard for the new colony, where he stayed for a year before leaving.[1] The man was Daud abu Yusuf and he was a Baghdadi Jew who came to Palestine while working as a trader among Bedouin. He would be one of two Arabic-speaking Jewish guards hired by Petah Tikva around the same time; the other, Yaʿqub bin Maymun Zirmati, was a Jaffan Jew of Moroccan Sephardi extraction.

Early European Jewish colonies regularly hired Arabic-speaking non-Jewish guards, typically Maghribis, Circassians, or Bedouins, but on a few occasions, they hired native Arabic-speaking Jews. Among these, Yemeni Jews, who became resident in some of the colonies as early as 1882, have received the most attention but less as guards than as farm laborers.[2] A spate of scholarly work in the past decade has considered Jews from Arab lands and their political and quotidian relationships with both Ashkenazi Jews and Arabs in Palestine's urban centers (especially Jaffa and Jerusalem), in light of an evolving post-1908 Ottomanism, a rising Arab nationalism, and the growth of Zionist politics.[3] These inquiries, however, are constrained both temporally and spatially. They are largely unconcerned with the period prior to 1908, before urban Ottoman subjects began to share and promote an emerging identity as Ottoman citizens. And in focusing on urban space, they overlook the sparse but still occasional contacts between Arabic-speaking Jews and small-scale European Jewish agricultural settlements in the last quarter of the 19th century. More often, they assume that these European settlements represented a new and separate mode of Jewish settlement and economic practice that would be more fully concretized in the Labor Zionist factions and their separatist "Hebrew Labor" ethos of the early 20th century.[4] Nationalist histories of Zionist settlement, interested in chronicling a Jewish historical break with the urban past, also overemphasize this spatial and temporal divide from existing pre-Zionist or non-Zionist Jewish communities of Palestine and the region, despite the fact that the early colonists were in continual contact with the urban centers where they went to purchase supplies, sell produce, or seek rabbinical opinions.[5]

Nonetheless, encounters between settler and nonsettler Jews occurred not only in the cities but also in the rural spaces of the colony. Abu Yusuf and, as we will see later in this article, Zirmati, crossed between urban and rural spaces of the empire. They add a heretofore-lacking aspect to discussions about the Arabic-speaking Jewish world and its occasional encounters with this new form of European Jewish settlement.[6] This highly localized, individualized vantage point might both encourage scholars to dig for further examples of such contact and to consider the place of Arabic-speaking Jews in the European rural settler context from perspectives that move beyond the largely two-dimensional and inherently self-serving narratives offered by settlers themselves.

The remainder of this article brings together two analytical approaches. The first explores the role of the Middle East Jewish guards from the perspective of the founders of Ashkenazi Jewish colonies or their descendants. More than simply securing the colony's housing and plantings, the Arabic-speaking Jewish guards offered a model of Jews embedded in the Middle East to which European Jews felt they could aspire. Veteran members of these colonies, communities based on individual ownership and bourgeois private initiative, saw these "Sephardi brothers," as they sometimes called them, as intermediaries who could impart to European Jews mastery of Arabic and familiarity with the local rural surroundings. Ashkenazi representatives of the colonies evoked their ties to Sephardi Jews over the course of the British Mandate and early Israeli state periods to claim their own pride of place not only as Zionists but specifically as the

population of European Zionists with (they felt) the longest and most durable relationship with Palestine. By purporting to have attained coexistence already in the 19th century on the basis of capitalist relationships with Arab employees, they attempted to rebuff their competitors to the left, who claimed to be more committed to Jewish–Arab relations and to be fighting against labor exploitation.

While looking at these farmers' rhetoric about their own past helps us understand the workings of collective memory and subnationalist identity within the history of Zionism, it can lead us to pay heed to the stories of figures such as Abu Yusuf and Zirmati only insofar as they became relevant to the Zionist project. Such an approach reifies Raab's perception that Abu Yusuf simply appeared one day out of the desert and mysteriously receded back into it at the end of his stint in the colony. The second approach of this article, then, inquires into the place of the colonies in the larger experience and life narrative of the guards. Recognizing a methodological blind spot in much Zionist historiography, I consider Abu Yusuf and his coguard Zirmati as microhistorical subjects whose brief presence in Petah Tikva, though badly documented and visible in large part through the mechanisms of Zionist memory, can help begin to resituate Petah Tivka within its Palestinian and broader Ottoman contexts and reveal the erasures at the heart of the project of Zionist collective memory. Both guards were Ottoman, both in the sense of being Ottoman subjects who were objects of evolving imperial nationality and citizenship legislation in exactly this period[7] and in the sense of operating within larger Ottoman imperial networks that transcended the boundaries of any one regional space. I mine the Zionist sources for glimpses of the guards' backgrounds and experiences beyond the colony and explore these characters in light of commercial patterns and migrations in Baghdad, Jaffa, and the Levantine hinterland. The minimal biographical details offered in the narratives of colony commemorators, intended simply as a backdrop to their Zionist transformation, suggest a broader context of regional commerce and migration to Palestine from the Middle East, religious contacts between the moshavot and the holy cities, and the significance of the colony's location within the Jaffa region.

Locating these guards within a broader regional network of horse and camel trading not only challenges the Zionist perception that rural Arabic speakers, Jewish or otherwise, simply came out of the desert onto the doorstep of the colonies, but also, crucially, pushes back against the idea, promoted by both Jewish settlers and Arab observers, that the colonies existed at a remove from their local Jewish context. Despite all their protestations to the contrary, the settler colonies were by necessity embedded in the space not only because they sought to appropriate aspects of it, but also because they became part of life narratives that transcended and often did not center on them.

Terminology for Jews from the Arab world is notoriously complicated. Finding unifying language for a specific pair who came from two separate geographic origins, one Iraqi and one Moroccan, is even trickier. After 1948, the term Mizrahi (Eastern) came into wide use in Israel for most non-Ashkenazi Jews and has since become a conventional term, particularly in Israel, for Jews from Arab lands. The term "Mizrahi," however, like "Middle Eastern," postdates the period in question here and directly obscures the fact that the Moroccan Jewish community, where Zirmati originated, was often called the "Maghribi" (Western) community, following the Arabic word for "Morocco." The term "Jews from/of Arab lands" has sometimes been suggested as an alternative, however it excludes Jews from non-Arab lands as well as Moroccan Jews with Berber origins.

Some scholars, mainly of Iraqi origin, have suggested the term "Arab Jews" or "Arabized Jews," marking the possibility and reality for people to be Jewish by religion and Arab by language and culture.[8] However, this term can exclude those who would not have accepted the ascription of them to a shared Arab culture. In the late 19th century, the term Sephardi, originally meaning Jews of Spanish origins, was often used for all communities following the Sephardi religious rite and system of Rabbinic interpretations, including many in Palestine without Spanish origins. It emerges in this article in the phrase "Sephardi brothers." But it can misleadingly suggest Spanish origins where none exist. Finally, the term "local" Jews highlights a distinction between relative newcomers and those embedded in the region, but without further qualifiers could also reference Ashkenazi religious Jews who may have also been in Palestine for several generations by that point. I've chosen to use the term "Arabic speaking" in this article as a way of foregrounding the centrality of Arabic language skills in this group's engagement with local Muslim and Christian populations and in providing linguistic and cultural translation services for a linguistically alien European Jewish settler population. I also occasionally use the term "Middle Eastern," although it is anachronistic, in order to make a distinction between Jews from Europe and those from parts of the region we now call the Middle East.[9]

ARABIC-SPEAKING JEWS AND THE ZIONIST TURN TO THE EAST

The European Zionist narrative, writ large, imagined a return to the ancient homeland and the remaking of the diasporic European Jew into a rooted Semite. This vision coexisted uneasily with the reality of foreignness and alienation from the Palestinian landscape. Retrospective stories of the first European Jewish agricultural colonies are suffused with attempts to collapse this distance by emphasizing European individuals who were able to acquire spoken Arabic and gain familiarity with local custom, well before Zionist organizations more formally recommended Arabic language study during the Mandate period. Over time, discourses of Zionist settlement would reflect settler colonial practices, primarily described in the North American and Australian contexts, in perceiving a "void that needs to be filled," following Lorenzo Veracini, where "the settler operates in the context of a genuine primal scene since he is deeply convinced that the indigenous person is ultimately the intruder." But Jewish settlers also perceived an "'otherness' that need[ed] to be appropriated, subjugated, and mobilized," that is, not an absence of population or a virgin soil but a presence of valuable and necessary but inaccessible local knowledge.[10] In a uniquely Zionist twist, this otherness was understood to be the alienated essence of ancient Jewishness that had long been essential to Jewish collective memory and which needed to be recast and recovered in a modern key. To become both like and knowledgeable about the Arab other, in part through the acquired methodologies of continental European Orientalism, was to become more like one's national self.[11]

   Zionist settlers of all stripes claimed to have established an early relationship to Palestine and the East. Such claims are particularly associated with Labor Zionists.[12] But discourse about European Jewish assimilation into the East also must be understood as fodder in an internal conversation between the "first" wave of European Jewish settlers in the later 19th century—in colonies such as Petah Tikva—and their successors, the

Labor Zionists, who became politically dominant in the 20th century. The late 19th-century colonies, known as moshavot and retroactively associated with a period called the "First Aliyah," or first ascent (typically dated 1882–1904), had an ambivalent place in the historiography of Zionism, and were often accused by labor factions of being not fully nationalist and even exilic. Generally religious, bourgeois, politically disengaged, and inclined to hire Arab labor, they seemed inimical to the emerging Labor hegemony based around a "Hebrew Labor" mantra. Subsequent scholarship has often assumed a lack of ideological commitments on the part of the colonists: historian of Zionism Anita Shapira writes that the community of farmers like Yehuda Raab were "mute, or, at least, half-mute" because they had "an absence of historical consciousness" and were a "people of action" who lacked "an ideological formulation of Zionism."[13] For Shapira, these limitations rendered the "First Aliyah" inferior to and less historically notable than the Labor-oriented Jews who followed it. Those in the "First Aliyah" colonies, sensing denigration from Labor leaders after the latter's arrival, however, emphasized both their nationalist bona fides and the relative lack of conflict with Arab Palestinians during the early years of their settlement. Their lack of commitment to the exclusion of Palestinian Arab workers per se has led some Palestinian scholars to regard the first colonies as more benign than those that followed. Rashid Khalidi argues that the first Jewish colonies created an "uneasy but at least temporarily manageable situation" that became decisively worse with the onset of later "Hebrew Labor" or Jewish-only labor practices.[14] A Zionist community seeking to prove its worthiness interpreted this relative calm as a sign of their superior approach to settlement.

Colonists, looking backwards at their own pasts, attributed some of their acquired language capacity to contacts with local Arabic-speaking Jews who helped mediate their understanding of the land, landscape, and local non-Jewish population. In July 1946, Zerubavel Haviv, the son of one of the founders of Rishon LeZion, which vied with Petah Tikva for the title of first modern Jewish agricultural colony,[15] published an article in the centrist Hebrew newspaper *ha-Boker* (The Morning) calling on fellow Ashkenazi Zionists to renew their commitment to Arabic-language instruction at the grade school level. "Knowledge of the language of our neighbors is an elementary obligation," he wrote, "and shared lives will not be possible in this land and in the vicinity without a common language."[16] Haviv evoked an earlier, lost period in which positive Ashkenazi–Arab relations reigned: "We must not forget," Haviv wrote, "that the first immigrants [to Palestine] from the West to stake a claim in the land of our forefathers . . . were received in brotherhood and friendship by the Arab residents of the land, with the help of our Sephardic brothers who commanded both Arabic and Hebrew."[17]

Haviv's sketch of the late 19th century as a time of positive Ashkenazi–Arab relations mediated by "Sephardic brothers" flew in the face of the claims of Labor Zionists, who often took sole credit for commitment to Arabic-language courses for Jews during the Mandate period. By the 1940s, several such Zionist organizations, most notably ha-Shomer ha-Tsaʿir (The Young Guard), ha-Kibbuts ha-Meʾuhad (United Kibbutz Movement), and the Labor-led political department of the Jewish Agency, were promoting Arabic-language study among Jews for a variety of contradictory purposes.[18] But Haviv resented the dominance these organizations had attained by the 1930s and 1940s. Why, he asked, did Labor-leaning arrivals, "never [stop to] wonder about the acts of the first settlers [*maʿase rishonim*] and think that the entire Hebrew Yishuv

[Jewish community] was founded upon their own arrival?"[19] For Haviv, the late 19th-century settlement past was not the antithesis of an improved period of Jewish knowledge of Arabic under a 20th-century Labor Zionist economic model, but rather a relevant model of coexistence that had, regretfully, been forgotten by the dominant political party. This mediation would continue in various forms within the emerging security and defense apparatus, and even among Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, who often promoted themselves as potential bridge figures.[20]

While Haviv reflected only generalities about the past, others marshaled more specific stories that delineated the role of such "Sephardi brothers." Raab's story about Abu Yusuf is one of them. Abu Yusuf was said to have appeared in Petah Tikva soon after it was founded in the late summer of 1878.[21] He arrived at a difficult time, when the colony was experiencing despair and failure more than growth and confidence after a foolhardy decision to settle in a malaria-plagued location near the Yarkon ('Ouja) River. The first settlers quickly realized their folly: by the end of 1880 malaria was taking its toll and winter rains were damaging the first Jewish houses. The colony was abandoned and most of its founders returned to Jerusalem. Petah Tikva was revived again only in 1883 with the support of a new cohort of Jews from Bialystok. In a context of struggle and failure, the colonists felt they needed a bridge to the land—and in retrospect claimed to have found it.

The most immediate connection to the land was physical and achieved through farming, precipitated by the ideologies of productivization that had motivated Russian and Austro-Hungarian Jews to seek agricultural land purchases as the means of revitalization.[22] Raab credited himself in his memoir, dictated in the 1940s but published posthumously in 1956, with plowing the first (Jewish) furrow (*ha-telem ha-rishon*) in the land of Petah Tikva. He called his memoir "The First Furrow" in recognition of this defining act. The obsession with Jewish firsts, presented uncritically as firsts writ large, pervade other writings about the colonies.[23] The anniversary of this first furrow, marked on the seventh of the month of Heshvan (October/November), became a local holiday of its own that celebrated an eroticized (re)union with the land.[24] But if Raab "knew" the land (the sexualized sense of physically breaking and entering it is not hidden), he did not know its inhabitants or culture. His only initial encounter with them was approaching them "rifle to cheek / to chase off an enemy from a meager hut," as his daughter, the noted Hebrew poet Esther Raab, put it.[25] While Yehuda is celebrated for knowing how to crack the land's physical surface, Abu Yusuf emerges as the intermediary who can crack its cultural codes.

Before Abu Yusuf arrived in Petah Tikva, Raab wrote, "we were still trainees in the ways of the Ishmaelites."[26] Abu Yusuf, in representing a world largely (but not fully) alien to the technologically literate Raab, immediately demonstrates Raab's own ignorance; his texts render Raab illiterate. Learning the "ways of the Ishmaelites" meant mastery of a set of behaviors, a politics of interaction and custom, inward and outward masculinity and, ultimately, language. Writes Raab:

I learned from him how to behave with Arabs: with strictness, with *siyyasa* [Ar. political savvy], with cunning and self-effacement [*hester panim*], and with heartfelt welcoming of guests, "give and take" [*metah ve-harpeh*—probably alluding to Ar. *shaddun wa-jadhbun*] in their language. And all this mixed with the charm of riding horses Arab style, the bravery [*gevurah*] done for

boasting, and the truly heroic acts that aren't done specifically for boasting. From him [Abu Yusuf] I learned how to fight for life and death, ceremonies of different kinds of sacrifices, and fluent knowledge of Arabic.[27]

Implicitly, Arabic is not just the language of communication (which Raab seems to have already mastered on a basic level); it is a social code, the steps to a carefully choreographed dance. Raab presents it as a deeply contradictory dance, of firmness and kindness, cunning and welcoming, true bravery and boasting for show. Learning Arabic meant, according to this Orientalist understanding, learning how to be convincing in one's performance of subterfuge, becoming someone else, but a someone else who could act fluidly and at times unethically to achieve one's goals.

If Raab sees Abu Yusuf as a linguistic bridge, Moshe Smilansky, a resident of the Rehovot colony (founded in 1890) and himself a leading Hebrew fiction writer who published under the Arabic pseudonym Khawaja Musa, ascribed to Abu Yusuf a more allegorical role. Smilansky, who became the most prolific chronicler of the "First Aliyah" period, called Abu Yusuf an "almost mythological character" in his 1939 *Perakim be-Toldot ha-Yishuv* (Chapters in the History of the Yishuv). Whereas Raab explains Abu Yusuf's Bedouin affect with a relatively quotidian (and historically plausible, as we will see) story about his commercial work with the Bedouin, Smilansky forwards a more mythical story in which Abu Yusuf's Baghdadi background is entirely elided and he is instead "one of the remnants of the Jewish-shepherd tribes who lived in the Sinai with Bedouins."[28] The belief that there remained a Jewish tribe in the Arabian Peninsula, called Bene Rekhav, was reflected in the stories of Hebrew writers Hemda Ben Yehuda, Ze'ev Yaavetz, and others, and motivated an adoption of Bedouin aesthetics among the earliest Ashkenazi Jewish guards, a style later promoted by the members of ha-Shomer after 1909.[29] Abu Yusuf, regardless of his urban origin in Baghdad, could become a perfect object of this discourse, bearer of a founding myth of Jewish continuity from primitive Bedouin tribes through the Zionist present.

Implicit in both of these framings is the notion that Abu Yusuf bears an authentic Semitic masculinity that is the sine qua non for navigating the East. Raab mentions Abu Yusuf's policy regarding weapons among the "codex devoted to laws and customs that Abu Yusuf maintained." In Abu Yusuf's opinion, "it was a disgrace to use a weapon that even a woman could use to kill the most heroic among the heroes. He would make do with his spear and his sword, a Damascene sword [*jawhar*] from the Middle Ages, which he got as an inheritance from many generations back." Raab recalled an instance in which Abu Yusuf met a Bedouin Arab and fought with him, after which the Bedouin said "*bi-allāh inak jidda*" (by God you're a hero). The implication, clearly, is that Abu Yusuf had acquired this heroic masculine status on Arab terms, through his facility with traditional Arab weapons used with an appropriate amount of restraint.[30] Mentioning the legacy of the sword adds to Abu Yusuf's "authenticity": he did not "borrow" or acquire it (nor the knowledge of how to use it) from others but received it through his own native family inheritance. Smilansky modifies Raab's narrative somewhat, saying: "He didn't have a gun or a rifle, saying 'Even a woman knows how to defend with things like this.' Instead, he would use a heavy sharp sword and a long metal spear and this weaponry to instill fear in marauders."[31] Zirmati, the fellow guard from Morocco via Jaffa, had similar weaponry skills to impart to the European colonists. Smilansky said of

Zirmati that he "initially worked leading mules from Syria to Egypt," so "he was used to crossing deserts." And as a result "he knew the desert people, and knew how to be protected from them and they also knew [the force of] his hand [*yadʿu et yado*]."[32] Both men represented a kind of traditional masculinity and idealistic form of conflict reflected in training, physical strength, and agility, one that, coupled with language skills and cultural finesse, could (in the Zionist mythic imagination) enable Ashkenazi Jews to win over even the most recalcitrant Arab neighbors and opponents. Perhaps the two guards even cultivated this image as a way of seeing employment in the colonies—it is hard to know. The assimilation of Abu Yusuf to the colony and the colony to Abu Yusuf's Ottoman world also helped Petah Tikva assert its place within a Zionist narrative from which it was often excluded or within which it was being marginalized.

The encounter with the undefined visitor also offered Raab an opportunity to clarify identities and reaffirm the transformation of both European and Ottoman Jews into national Jews (whom Zionists often called Hebrews). Raab had misidentified Abu Yusuf at first: the man's appearance, clothing, and horse made Raab think he was a Bedouin, a category that he did not assume was compatible with Jewishness. But the misrecognition, it turned out, was mutual. On his journey through Palestine, Abu Yusuf recounted later to Raab that he had spent the night in Faja, a village close to Mulabbis, the site of the new Petah Tikva. There, he was told of a new Jewish village in the area. Intrigued, Abu Yusuf went to find it, but returned after this first visit confused and dismayed. He insisted to the shaykh that the people he had seen were *faranj*, Europeans. The Shaykh replied that "these *faranj* were Jews" whereupon Abu Yusuf returned the second time, at which point he revealed his identity to Raab.[33]

The story starts with the two Jews located on either side of a neat European/Arab dichotomy who recognize one another as coreligionists: to the Jew from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Arabic-speaking Jew is simply Arab; to the Jew from Baghdad, the Ashkenazi Jew is simply European. Such a dynamic is an example of what Aviva Ben-Ur, writing about Sephardi Jews in America as members of an American Jewish ethnic group, has called coethnic recognition failure: "a person's denial of a fellow group member's common ethnicity due to mistaken identity."[34] Raab presents a nationalist "resolution" for this intra-Jewish estrangement: Abu Yusuf is appropriated by a newly revived Jewish national community and ostensibly removed, though only partially, from his Arab linguistic and cultural context. Upon learning that the Europeans were his revitalized coreligionists, Abu Yusuf "went to Petah Tikva to see his brethren," wrote Rehovot colony settler Moshe Smilansky.[35] Abu Yusuf's very profession reinforced the newly reconfigured identity categories: as a guard or defender he became the archetypical boundary marker between Jews and Arabs in the early colonies. From a position of Jewish national identity, he would be able to use his local knowledge to ward off the dangerous East and thus seal the colony's place within the lineage of European Zionist settlements that would coalesce in the years after World War I.

As the business of guarding expanded with the growth of the colonies, intermediary figures in Petah Tikva—Arabic-speaking Jewish urbanites who worked among Bedouin before resettling in the Jewish colony—gave way to a new configuration of guards in the moshavot as the turn of the century approached. Local commemorative literature provided multiple descriptions of a cadre of Ashkenazi Jewish guards who transform themselves from Europeans into nativized men knowledgeable in Arabic and Arab

customs. As the colonies began to take on more and more Palestinian Arab, Circassian, and Maghribi guards, men such as Sender Hadad (1859–99) and Avraham Shapira (1870–1965) from Petah Tikva oversaw these employees' work or accompanied them on missions. With their Arab headdresses, horsemanship, and facility with typical Arab weapons, they can be considered the precursors to both 20th-century groups like ha-Shomer and the more general European Zionist tendencies to appropriate Arab clothing and culture as a symbol of authenticity and collective transformation. Though few narratives of their lives include mention of their predecessors, those few that do indicate that Abu Yusuf and Zirmati served as larger-than-life exemplars of a kind of native Jewish heroism which these newer Ashkenazi guards wondered if they could fully achieve. Ultimately, however, the Middle Eastern Jewish guards were eclipsed by their Ashkenazi successors in local commemorations of the past.

Sender Hadad, who became known for his defense of Petah Tikva during an 1886 grazing conflict between Petah Tikva and the Arab village of Yahudiya,[36] appears to have been influenced by an element of Abu Yusuf's legendary weapons policy: he was known to tell fellow guards not to fatally injure attackers, saying "It's better that way. Why would we want the business of blood revenge?"[37] In the legend of Sander Haddad, this principle meant avoiding guns: "He didn't like live weapons and would depend on his own hands."[38] While the text suggests that the tradition of blood revenge limited the number of murders during this early period in any case, the personal example of Haddad in this same paragraph glorifies a particular kind of nonlethal violence carried out by strong men with traditional weapons, men like Abu Yusuf.

The stories of Abu Yusuf and Zirmati also figure in the memoirs of Avraham Shapira, head of the local guards in Petah Tikva after 1890. As presented in Yehuda Idelstein's 1939 biography of Shapira, written on the basis of Shapira's testimony, Shapira grew up hearing the colony's founders recalling the heroism of the colony's first guards: "Yehuda Raab, the Bedouin Daud abu Yusuf from the Arabian desert, and Yaʿqub bin Maymun Zirmati from Jaffa." As Shapira listened to these conversations "the desire burnt in his heart to be a hero like them." But Shapira wondered whether his early acts of bravery, repelling attackers with a stick, really counted: "Is this really heroism? Is that it? . . . And they told tales about Abu Yusuf and Yaakov Zirmati, certainly they managed to do things greater than he, and still it wasn't true heroism. So, he continued striving for it."[39] The native Arabic-speaking heroes had a legendary quality and Shapira, himself made a legend through stories of chases on horseback or negotiations with Bedouin tribes after crimes were committed, increased his own image through reference to them.

In 1954, Avraham Shapira's testimony about his Middle Eastern Jewish predecessors appeared in Ever ha-Dani's *Meah Shenot Shemirah be-Yisraʾel* (One Hundred Years of Guarding in Israel), a genealogy of Hebrew guards and guarding built on testimonials from those who served:

Memories are like smoke—they rise up and are gone. I was a child of ten and I still remember Maimun, Yaʿakov bin Maimun Zirmati, one of the first guards in the colony. Before he came to us he would drive mules to Egypt for sale. He came to guard for us of his own will, and he was with us for two years before he returned to Jaffa, to commerce. He was a man, strong and brave and honest . . . I heard the legend about Daud Abu Yusuf the Baghdadi, who appeared and disappeared as if in a dream, but I never saw him.[40]

Shapira was ten when he moved to Petah Tikva in 1880, so he is claiming that his earliest memory of Zirmati was among his first memories of the colony. Abu Yusuf and Zirmati were the fleeting models, the image of the "true heroes" whom Shapira was trying to emulate, men who themselves were intermediaries for a more distant bravery associated with Bedouins. Shapira is both confirming and calling into question his own place in the lineage of Jewish heroism in the land.

Abu Yusuf and Zirmati thus serve a highly ambivalent role in narratives about early Ashkenazi Zionists learning Arabic and Bedouin custom: they are conduits for local knowledge, and specifically rural local knowledge that could transform their Ashkenazi counterparts into competent, Arabic-speaking, local defenders; they also reveal a basic lack of confidence about the colonies' ability to effect this transformation, doubts that are deeply rooted in Ashkenazi Zionist concerns about bravery and masculinity. But in these Ashkenazi Zionist texts, these figures are instrumentalized within a narration of a European Jewish return to the land.

RETURNING ARABIC-SPEAKING JEWISH GUARDS TO THEIR REGIONAL CONTEXT

Zionist texts choose features about Abu Yusuf and Zirmati that fit into their project—specifically, these men's ability to convey relevant local knowledge to Ashkenazi settlers and their own transformation into participants in the Ashkenazi-led Jewish national project. However, this conventional reading, in which European Jews become Semiticized and thus (re)nationalized through contact with and appropriation of Arab culture while Middle Eastern Jews become civilized and nationalized through contact with Europeans, is not the only way to conceptualize these encounters. Assumptions about the colonies' alienation from the landscape and distance from the pre-Zionist Jewish community in Jerusalem and Jaffa obscure the fact that the early moshavot, tiny and unstable, were necessarily linked to Palestine's local Jewish and Arab communities through labor and commercial ties. Their narrative of historical break and heroic self-sufficiency, so important within a broader retrospective Zionist narrative of national rebirth, must be reconceived as a construct of 20th-century Zionist collective memory, one that occurred in part through selective readings and obscuring of the Jewish colonies' regional ties and Ottoman context. The stories of Abu Yusuf and Zirmati, though they are maddeningly incomplete and colored by the ideological priorities of their Ashkenazi narrators, nonetheless reveal some of this regional context.

Despite inherent source limitations, the Zionist texts, when read against their stated ideological purposes, also provide biographical insights that can help us recover Abu Yusuf and Zirmati as historical actors in their own right. This oblique reading can in fact complicate a narrative that gives outsized importance to the colonies—here, Petah Tikva—and presumes they are islands of transformation within a larger Palestinian landscape reflexively regarded as "desolate." Abu Yusuf's and Zirmati's work in Petah Tikva did not likely constitute a defining period for them. Rather, it was a short stint within longer lives lived in a vibrant and evolving commercial sphere within the sprawling Ottoman Empire. Their brief appearance in the Zionist texts thus suggests linkages to broader regional trends and integration into a regional economic network. These details allow us to consider several characteristic features of them: the urbanite engaged in rural

commerce, the traditional Jew, the Jew embedded in contemporary Arab culture, and the rural strongman as urban spectacle.

THE URBANITE ENGAGED IN RURAL COMMERCE

Abu Yusuf and Zirmati came from two different geographical backgrounds but shared a key biographical feature: they were engaged in commercial sectors that took them outside their cities and into contact with Bedouin in the hinterland. Abu Yusuf was from Baghdad and worked buying wool and camel milk from among Bedouins. He arrived in Palestine after following a stolen horse to Damascus. Zirmati was born in Jaffa in 1838 to a Moroccan Sephardi family two years after their arrival in Jaffa, where he grew up and lived most of his life. He worked as a horse trader.

During the 19th century, Jews worked as traders throughout the Middle East and North Africa and participated in a vibrant and evolving set of commodities markets. Sometimes these contacts led to situations where Jewish traders were indistinguishable (at least to European observers) from the Bedouins among whom they worked. In describing Abu Yusuf as a Bedouin, Smilansky was relying on a mythical "Hebrew Bedouin" tradition that seemed to suggest Jewish authenticity and continuity in the Middle East,[41] but the fact of cultural convergence was real. Jewish traders from small North African towns, Joshua Schreier notes, sometimes appeared to observers to be practically indistinguishable from Arabs and were in fact called Arab or Bedouin Jews: as a French consul in Tunisia noted in 1845, they live "exactly the same life as the Arabs, armed and dressed as them, mounted on horses and making war like them, these Jews are totally mixed with the rest of the population that it is impossible to distinguish [the Jews] from them."[42] These French observers, like Smilansky in Palestine, saw such Jewish transformations as forms of static authenticity, not as evidence of Jewish participation in a vibrant and changing Ottoman commercial context.

Urban Jews became involved in rural commerce in the Levant as this sector grew in importance. Beshara Doumani, focusing on the Jabal Nablus region, traces growing urban domination over the rural sphere during the period leading up to the end of the 19th century. Merchants built local and regional networks and competed with other regional and foreign merchants. These networks developed not only in response to European or European Zionist penetration, as has sometimes been assumed, but through the insertion of local commodities (cereal grains, oil, soap) into the global economy.[43] Merchants, located in cities, were at the heart of these regional networks and they facilitated key economic interactions between peasants or Bedouin and urban power brokers. These networks were "multilayered and, by today's western standards, fairly intimate negotiations among a large number of actors whose consent was absolutely crucial for the movement of goods and people."[44] Such methods continued even after moves toward more centralized control in the wake of the Tanzimat reforms. Zionist narratives influenced (though were not the only component of) historical accounts that overstate the divide between urban and rural populations and presume that rural actors were a passive force who lacked agency. The system might have seemed static because the perception of tradition and personal connections drove many market interactions, but these networks were actually in flux.[45]

Animals played a central role in these processes. Aside from providing commodities such as milk and hair, camels and horses were the essential motors of the economic

system. Ann Norton Greene, writing about horses in the American context, notes that whereas to the modern reader horses seem to be the opposite of technology, in the 19th century they were "living machines" whose power "reinforced other kinds of power—aristocratic, military, political, sexual, religious."[46] The economic importance of horsepower was as clear in the Middle East. In the early 19th century, up to 2,800 camel loads of alkaline soda, a key component in the manufacture of Nablusi soap, came to Nablus every year.[47] Camels would also be used to carry goods to the port cities of Haifa and Jaffa.[48] Horses were chief modes of individual transportation, and a sign of prestige. In some instances, horses and camels were valued against one another, with shifting rates of exchange, particularly as some Bedouin tribes became more sedentary and less involved in camel herding.[49]

As in other commodity markets, urban traders developed close personal bonds with the Bedouin tribes they worked with—they would contract with a particular shaykh to distribute and sell commodities, in exchange for protection from this shaykh. In the case of Iraq, with its strong Jewish merchant class, some of these traders were Jewish (others were Christians or Shiʿi Muslims). The famed Sassoon family of Baghdad who operated a transnational trade network in India and the Far East, appears to have sent some of its own agents to the countryside.[50] Perhaps Abu Yusuf was one of them—we cannot know. During the 19th century, as Iraq became more economically integrated with the West via the British Empire, Iraqi Jews became involved in trade networks that stretched as far as India, China, and Hong Kong, while remaining embedded in regional networks.[51]

Within the horse trade in Iraq, a resident trader would likely have been primarily responsible for getting the horses overland to market, usually via the ports of Basra or Muhammara in Iraq, or to distribution centers in Syria such as Deir ez-Zor, Tadmur (Palmyra), and ʿAmid.[52] Egypt was also an important hub in the horse-trading markets in the 19th century. Horses also played a key role in the "unprecedented militarization" of Egypt from the middle of the 19th century onwards, notes Alan Mikhail, and were important in the royal family's public displays of power. Bedouins would use them to participate in raids.[53] This context helps us understand Shlomo Shva's account of Zirmati, the horse seller: "He would go to the desert of Syria, to Tadmur, to buy noble horses and would move them through Sinai to Egypt and sell them there, and no one would hurt him on the roads on his long journeys because his heroism [*gevurah*, also "manliness"] was known everywhere."[54] This context also contextualizes the processes that Raab describes having brought Abu Yusuf to Palestine: he came after following a stolen horse to Damascus, and once in the vicinity decided to visit Jerusalem.[55] The fact that he stayed in Faja for the night, just east of Mulabbis/Petah Tikva, suggests that he probably had preexisting trading connections there and that, more generally, he had traveled to and through Palestine in the past in connection with his work.

NARRATIVES OF RELIGIOSITY

Abu Yusuf seems to have tarried in Palestine in part to visit the graves of his ancestors in Jerusalem, and along the way learned of the new Jewish colonization efforts. As Moshe Smilansky writes:

Once, his horse was stolen and he went to find it and he went until Damascus to get it back. And on the way back he was going to go to Jerusalem to lie on the graves of his ancestors but he got to the

Yarkon [River] and heard from the Bedouin about the new *Yahud* [Ar. Jews] who were building a colony and were not *bene mavet* [Heb. Children of Death] like the Jews of Jerusalem and Tiberias and Safed. And he went to Petah Tikva to see his brethren.[56]

Raab points to Abu Yusuf's Jewish religiosity while enumerating the belongings he unloaded when he moved to Petah Tikva:

A rababa [a primitive Arab violin], his phylacteries bag, and a book of poems written in both Arabic and Hebrew in strange-looking letters. Immediately he started his work together with me and Yaakov Maimun [Zirmati], and he became my teacher and rabbi in the ways of guarding and neighborly-relations.[57]

Both the grave visits and the phylacteries mark Abu Yusuf's Jewish traditionalism despite his resembling (and being hired because he resembled) a Bedouin. The combination of nationalist bravery and religious traditionalism was a mark of pride and distinction for the "First Aliyah" colonies in general, and cited particularly by Petah Tikvaites as a way of distinguishing themselves from the more secularized Socialist Zionists who followed in the early 20th century. Where treatments of Labor Zionism have emphasized the religious, often messianic content within an ostensibly secular (and antitraditional) ideology,[58] bourgeois colony histories offer a competing synthesis of more traditional religiosity and narratives of national revival. This synthesis could even be used to appeal to religious Jews otherwise outside the Zionist project. For example, when raising funds for the publication of the Shapira memoirs, David Tidhar reached out to the Ultra-Orthodox community, which was opposed to or agnostic towards Zionism, reminding them that Shapira was Torah observant and would not travel on Shabbat without assurance from the rabbi that this travel was necessary to save a life. He would insist on Jewish dietary restrictions, Tidhar said, when dining with Arab compatriots, and even insisted that the Baron Rothschild have kosher food at his table. Moreover, he would not leave for a journey "without tefillin in his pack." The Haredi community, therefore, "had a special obligation" to contribute to "this important project, both nationally and religiously."[59] The mention of Abu Yusuf's tefillin, then, puts him in good company with the largely religious Ashkenazi community of Petah Tikva who sought to combine traditional observance with national rebirth.

Thus, the religiosity of the visiting guard could be recast as an indication of Zionist longings. Initially, Abu Yusuf is unaware of the modern colonies. He learns about the colony from Bedouin who (in Smilansky's telling) present the very story that the colonies themselves would have wanted to present: these were "new Jews" rather than weak or despised "children of death." The term "children of death" is ubiquitous in Zionist texts about this era, usually in one of several transliterated versions of the Arabic *awlād al-mayyita* or *awlād al-mawt*. These texts present a received belief that Palestinian Arabs regularly used this term to describe the Jews of the traditional holy cities who, it was believed, came to Palestine just to die and be buried there, and also used to describe the first modern agricultural settlers.[60] Significantly, Abu Yusuf's original trajectory had mirrored that of the non-Zionist religious Jew: he was carrying phylacteries (tefillin) and was on his way to Jerusalem to visit graves and, moreover, intended to lie on them, as was part of a traditional pietistic practice. But he is diverted by the shaykh himself, who recasts traditional Jews as "children of death" and redirects Abu Yusuf

onto a different historical axis, that of the European Jewish agricultural colonies. Though he is presented as deeply rooted in the Bedouin tribes, his "ancestors" are buried in Jerusalem, which constitutes his true motherland and which he resolves to visit. This religiously defined proto-Zionism inexplicably drew Abu Yusuf to Jerusalem, despite being defined elsewhere (and praised for) his integration into an alternative authentic culture, that of the Bedouin.

In practice, however, the mutual religiosity of the Arabic-speaking Ottoman Jews and the colonists was likely less an indication of imminent nationalist transformation and more a source of similiarity—as the recitation of the *shemaʿ* prayer in Raab's narrative suggests. If the first conceit in the story of Raab and Abu Yusuf's mutual nonrecognition was Abu Yusuf's utter lack of familiarity with European-looking Jews, the other was the premise that the first farmers of Petah Tikva looked so European in their appearance that they were no longer identifiable as Jews. Raab may have been the outlier in this respect, as he had a penchant for German literature and seems to have dressed in European fashions. His daughter Esther wrote: "He was like a goy [non-Jew]. They called him 'Yehuda Goy.' He came wearing fancy clothing from Europe."[61] But founders of Petah Tikva as a whole were religious Ashkenazi Jews from Jerusalem, marked by their beards and sidelocks, who maintained strict Jewish observance even in their new agricultural setting. They did not share the ideology of casting off all vestiges of exilic Jewishness that some later Zionists did. As Yisrael Bartal points out, the founders of Petah Tikva were participants in a broader discourse of Jewish productivization, shared by some Jews in Eastern Europe before the beginnings of any form of Zionism, and they remained strongly religious.[62] The narrative of nationalist transformation, therefore, not only flattens Abu Yusuf and obscures his own likely relationship to modernizing currents in Iraq and the Middle East; it also imparts to the Ashkenazi settlers an image of total Europeanness. This flattening obscures important continuities between the colonies and the traditional Ashkenazi communities of Palestine during this period, both among the first founders and among later arrivals in the 1880s and 1890s who relied on the religious communities of Jerusalem and Jaffa. Many new settlers married members of long-standing Ashkenazi religious families, relied on Rabbinic advice from that community, and did their shopping in the cities. The non-Zionist religious connections of the agricultural colonies is obscured by a simple reading of Zionist texts.

GUARDS CARRYING MARKERS OF ARAB CULTURE

Abu Yusuf combines his tefillin with two other items: a rababa, and a book of poetry in Hebrew and Arabic. The rabab (without an "a") was an Arab fiddle that existed in several variants around the Middle East. The oldest of these, the Bedouin rababa, has a single string and is made from a rectangular wooden frame covered with a skin; there also existed a four-string Iraqi version, which may have been what Abu Yusuf had, given Raab's comparison to a violin.[63] Abu Yusuf may have picked up the rababa from Bedouin with whom he was trading.

If the tefillin derived from Abu Yusuf's religiosity and his rababa from the time he spent among the Bedouin, the book of Hebrew-Arabic poetry firmly marked him as a member of the educated Baghdadi, Jewish urban classes: despite how he appeared to Raab and how he perhaps was consciously presenting himself, Abu Yusuf was an

urbanite doing work among Bedouin in the hinterland, not a Bedouin himself. During the 19th century, Jewish elites spoke Arabic, and wrote in Hebrew, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish. Poetry had been an important area of cultural exchange between Jewish and Muslim intellectuals and Abu Yusuf's possession of one of these texts, probably in manuscript form, demonstrated his literacy and may have suggested that he was engaged in some way with this culture, though, as a horse trader, certainly not as an elite practitioner.

THE JEW AS URBAN STRONGMAN

Zirmati, for his part, was also embedded in an urban context, that of Jaffa. He came from city's North African Sephardi community. A census from 1866 suggests that the oldest Jewish natives of Jaffa listed as family heads were twenty-eight years old, born in 1838, the year of Zirmati's birth, making him one of the first native Jews in Jaffa.[64] The year 1838 was the same year that Ibrahim (Avraham) Chelouche, the father of one of the most important Sephardi families in Palestine, left Oran for Palestine, where he and his son Aharon acquired lands around Jaffa. This wave of Moroccan Jewish migration was driven by the French war to conquer Algeria, starting in 1830, and the expansion of rights for non-Muslims under Muhammad ʿAli (who ruled Palestine from 1831 to 1841). Maghrebi Jews were some of the most prominent members of the Sephardi community of Palestine and often advocated for themselves as a community against the Ashkenazim and other Sephardi groups.[65] Along with the Chelouches, the Moyal family arrived from Rabat in 1860; some of them became prominent publishers and writers.[66] In the 1840s and 1850s there were very few Jews in Jaffa (possibly fewer than 200—most Jews lived in Jerusalem and the holy cities); the Zirmati family, along with the Chelouches, therefore helped establish a community that wouldn't grow significantly until the 1870s and 1880s.[67] Later in the century, his community would actively identify as Ottomans. Some would come together in 1913 to form a society called The Shield to defend Jews against attacks in the press and promote Jewish–Arab understanding (though there is no specific indication that the Zirmati family was involved).[68]

Unlike Abu Yusuf, Zirmati was a native of Palestine and a religious minority in a city that became increasingly culturally diverse over the course of the 19th century. He also differed from Abu Yusuf in being known to the founders of Petah Tikva and being actively recruited from Jaffa to come and work there. As Shlomo Shva recalls, "The people of Petah Tikva heard of Zirmati and decided to offer him work as a guard of the Moshava." Three of the Ashkenazi founders, Yehoshua Stampfer, David Meir Gutman, and Yoel Moshe Solomon, went out on donkeys to look for him in the Jaffa market.[69] Raab, who generally claims his own firstness, wrote that he brought Zirmati to the colony, aware that "he was known as a man of valor [*ben hayil*]."[70] They had heard that he had both knowledge of Arabic and "unusual bravery." Zirmati's house in Jaffa, it seems, had become a space of mediation between parties in conflict; he would intervene when a stronger man was beating a weaker one, and would stand up for Jewish communal rights. One story involves him hitting a guard in the face when he would not allow the Jewish community of Jaffa to bring in a Jewish corpse from Gaza to be buried.[71]

In his study of Jaffa, Mordechai Elkayam recounts Zirmati's successful sparring fight against a fighter from Isdud (Ashdod) during the Nabi Rubin festival, which became a

point of pride for Jaffans, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.[72] The Nabi Rubin festival, Menachem Klein has shown, was a massive celebration that drew 40,000 to 50,000 participants from multiple religious backgrounds in the early 20th century. Participants would ride camels and pitch tents. Cooks would supply food to the visitors and by the height of the celebration in the 1930s and 1940s there were orchestras, radios, and cars and busses. Zirmati died in 1928, before these technological innovations to the festival had become prominent, but he contributed to the more traditional part of the festivities, which included camel and horse races and storytelling. Yizhar Smilansky, the great nephew of Moshe Smilansky and a prominent Labor-affiliated Ashkenazi writer who published under the name S. Yizhar, also recalls attending and watching "the gyration of the dervishes, and the colorful stands of sweets," and being mesmerized by "the undulations of the belly of a gypsy woman."[73] Smilansky's family, along with other agriculturalists in the colonies, had likely been attending these events for years, and through them had become acquainted with Zirmati and his physical strength.

From the perspective of the colony, Zirmati's move from Jaffa to Petah Tikva appeared to be a change in lifestyle towards a more settled state: "he left his dangerous wandering ways and came and settled [*hityatsev*, lit. "became stabilized"] as the guard of the colony."[74] But the evidence from both Jaffa and Petah Tikva suggests a much more organic flow of people between these two sites that belies the ideology of transformation layered onto both Zirmati and those who hired him.

By the time of his death, Zirmati was continuing his commercial ways in a more urban context, perhaps with less personal travel. He seems to have become a seller of *etrogim*, the citrons used ritually on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot[75] As Constanze Kolbe has shown, Palestine had become a key hub in a broad international trade network dominated by Sephardim extending from the Mediterranean across the Jewish world.[76] Indeed, what we know about commercial patterns in the late Ottoman period suggests that embeddedness in urban cultures, whether expressed through poetry in Baghdad or festivals near Jaffa, could coexist with travel amongst Bedouin. The urban–rural divide that felt so salient to the Petah Tikva settlers who had dared leave the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem and then taken the step of pursuing agricultural settlement, was less absolute within the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire or in the commercial classes of Palestine as a whole.

Eventually Zirmati died on 18 February 1928 at the age of ninety, but not before sitting to be photographed for Petah Tikva's first anniversary volume (Fig. 1).[77] The photograph, taken in a Jaffa studio, depicts the nearly ninety-year-old Zirmati posed in his *dishdash* and a long jacket. The scene is remarkably dissonant with the imagery of him as a consummate outdoorsman in the desert, or even that of an urban tough guy ready to beat someone up at a moment's notice, suggesting a degree of embellishment in the post facto narratives. The props are interior and domestic. He rests his hand on a book, evoking an image of a scholar more than a man known for machismo. The photograph offers no indication of his itinerant ways or his "transformation" into a guard for colonists.[78] This is not a typically Zionist image, in other words, but one styled according to the urban, cosmopolitan conventions that mark much urban photography in Palestine during this period, for example in a World War I–era photograph of Saʿid al-Shawwa, Gaza notable and grain exporter, which depicted al-Shawwa in a nearly identical pose as Zirmati, with similar props and staging. (Fig. 2).

יעקב בן־מימון זרמתי
נולד בשנת תקצ״ח ביפו ונפטר בכ״ז שבט תרפ״ח ביפו.

FIGURE 1.   Yaʿqub Bin Maymun Zirmati (c. 1927). From M[ordekhai] Harizman and J[acob] Poleskin, eds., *Sefer ha-Yovel li-Melot Hamishim Shanah le-Yisud Petah Tikva: 638–688* (Tel Aviv: Defus Etan ve-Shoshani, 1928 or 1929), 148.

And so the photograph's appearance in Petah Tikva's anniversary volume, in a section on "Petah Tikva's First Guards," seems incongruous. Far from the representatives of a wholly new reality, the conduit to muscular break with the past that the Zionist narratives suggest, Zirmati's presentation as an Effendi evokes these characters' urban experiences and characteristics and, in turn, Petah Tikva's embeddedness in larger realities. By looking more holistically at these guards, we see the colony's position outside Jaffa, its ties to a network of Jews far larger than the number of its settlers, and its integration into the economic frameworks of the Jaffa region and Ottoman Empire.
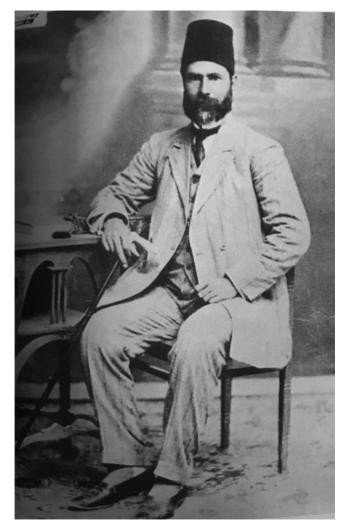
FIGURE 2.   Saʿid al-Shawwa, Gaza notable and grain exporter, undated. From Walid Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984), 77, photo 73, Wasif Jawhariyya Collection.

Abu Yusuf and Zirmati, distinct from one another but drawn together both by a regional commercial network and the labor needs of the early Petah Tikva colony, link the Ashkenazi Jews of the agricultural colonies not only to Palestine's Bedouin landscape but also to the broader world of the late Ottoman Middle East, with its commercial patterns, Jewish religious norms, cultural practices, and local festivals. These men are compelling historical figures not only because they "knew" Palestine, and not because of their particular rootedness in Palestine itself, but because they have connections within the broader region from Baghdad, to Damascus, to Cairo, to the many rural villages in between those metropoles. When Abu Yusuf and Zirmati disappeared from Petah

Tikva it was not back into the undefined, primordial desert as depicted in the Orientalist imagination of some of the Zionist literature, but back into the urban and rural commercial realms of Jaffa and the broader Ottoman Middle East. Ironically, it seems, they had the capacity to represent a primitive, authentic existence to the European Jewish settlers precisely because they were deeply embedded in itinerant commercial practices that were actively undergoing development and change during this period. These unusual, fleeting moments of encounter between coreligionists who only barely recognized each other, however sparsely documented, offer historical opportunities not only to reconstruct the ambiguous place of non-Ashkenazi Jews in a Zionist narrative that unfolded over the course of the Mandate period and beyond, but to deconstruct that narrative by resituating it in its otherwise obscured regional contexts.

NOTES

[1]Yehuda Raab, *ha-Telem ha-Rishon: Zikhronot, 1862–1930* (Jerusalem: ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit ʿal yede ha-Histadrut ha-Tsiyonit ha-ʿOlamit, 1988), 67.

[2]See, for example, Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, *Traditional Society in Transition: The Yemeni Jewish Experience*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism, v. 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and Eraqi-Klorman, "ha-Yahas el ha-'Aher' be-Tarbut ha-Politit shel ha-Moshavah: Mikreh Rishon LeZion," in *Lesoheah Tarbut im ha-Aliyah ha-Rishonah*, ed. Yaffa Berlovitz and Yosef Lang (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbuts ha-Meʾuhad, 2010), 157–75. Yemeni Jews have particularly been noted as objects of attempts by European Jews to promote Jewish labor in Zionist colonies while continuing to pay the lower wages typically given to Arab workers.

[3]Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011); Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist–Arab Encounter* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014); Itzhak Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim: ha-Sefaradim be-Erets Yisraʾel ba-Tsiyonut u-va-Tehiyah ha-ʿIvrit ba-Tekufah ha-ʿOtmanit* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsvi, 2007); Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2016); Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014); Moshe Behar & Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "The Possibility of Modern" Middle Eastern Jewish Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studie*s 41 (2014): 43–61.

[4]See, for example, the introduction of *Sefer ha-ʿAliyah ha-Rishonah,* ix.

[5]Yisrael Bartal has encouraged an interpretation of the proto-Zionist agricultural colonists that moves beyond a nationalist/Zionist framework and reads their productivization rhetoric in light of similar trends in Eastern Europe in the mid to late 19th century. Derek Penslar and Ran Aharonson have evaluated their agricultural and economic model in light of their French and German colonial influences. Gershon Shafir extensively evaluates the history of labor in the colonies in light of Ottoman developments, but does not consider cultural trends or personal interactions. Yisrael Bartal, "Al ha-Rishoniyut: Zeman u-Makom ba-ʿAliyah ha-Rishonah," in *Lesoheah Tarbut im ha-ʿAliyah ha-Rishonah,* ed. Yaffa Berlovitz and Yosef Lang (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbuts ha-Meʾuhad, 2010), 15–24; Bartal, "Petah Tikva: Ben Shorashim Raʾayoniyim le-Nesivot ha-Zeman," *Katedrah* 9 (1978): 54–69; Ran Aharonson, *ha-Baron ve-ha-Moshavot: ha-Hityashvut ha-Yehudit be-Erets Yisraʾel be-Reshitah 1882–1890* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsvi, 1990); Derek Jonathan Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870–1918* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[6]See Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, "Ha-Yahas el ha-'Aher' be-Tarbut ha-Politit shel ha-Moshavah: Mikreh Rishon LeZion," in *Lesoheah Tarbut Im Ha-ʿAliyah Ha-Rishonah*, ed. Yaffa Berlovitz and Yosef Lang (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meʾuhad, 2010), 157–75; Yehoshua Kaniel, "Ha-Poʿalim ve-Irgunehem ba-ʿAliyah Ha-Sheniyah u-Kelitat ʿole Teman ba-Moshavot (1904–1914)," *Shorashim* 9 (1996 1995): 114–22.

[7]Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3 (2016): 277–98.

[8]Yehouda A. Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*, Cultural Sitings (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews," *Social Text* 21 (2003): 49–74.

[9]See Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008): 452–69; Emily Gottreich, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008): 433–51; Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893–1958* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2013); Harvey Goldberg and Chen Bram, "From Sephardi to Mizrahi and Back Again: Changing Meaning of 'Sephardi' in its Social Environments," *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (2008), 165–88; and Moshe Behar, "What's in a Name? Socio-Terminological Formations and the Case for 'Arabized-Jews,'" *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 15 (2009): 747–71.

[10]Veracini, Lorenzo. "The Imagined Geographies of Settler Colonialism," in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. Tracey Banivanua-Mar and Penelope Edmonds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 190; Veracini, Lorenzo, "Settler Colonial Expeditions," in *Expedition into Empire*, ed. Martin Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2014), 59. See also Patrick Wolfe, "Structure and Event: Settler Colonialism, Time, and the Question of Genocide," in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 102–32.

[11]Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); R. Robertson, "'Urheimat Asien': The Re-Orientation of German and Austrian Jews, 1900–1925," *German Life and Letters* 49 (1996): 182–92.

[12]Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); Yitshak Ben-Tsvi et al., eds., *Sefer ha-Shomer: Divre Haverim* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1957).

[13]Anita Shapira, *ha-Maʿavaḳ ha-Nikhzav: ʿAvodah ʿIvrit 1929–1939* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University; Ha-Kibbuts Ha-Meʾuhad, 1977), 102–3.

[14]Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 100.

[15]Yehoshua Kaniel, "ha-Vikuah ben Petah Tikva le-Rishon LeZion ʿal ha-Rishoniyut ba-Hityashvut u-Mashmaʿuto ha-historit," *Katedrah* 9 (1978): 26–53.

[16]Zerubavel Haviv, "ha-ʿArvit be-Vet ha-Sefer ha-ʿAmami" *Ha-Boker*, 2 July 1946, 2.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Joel Beinin, "Knowing Your Enemy, Knowing Your Ally: The Arabists of Hashomer Hatsaʿir (MAPAM)," *Social Text* 28 (1991): 100–121; See also Liora R. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015), chap. 4.

[19]Zerubavel Haviv, "Ha-ʿArvit be-Vet ha-Sefer ha-ʿAmami," *ha-Boker*, 2 July 1946, 2.

[20]Yonatan Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel*, Palgrave Studies in Languages at War (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Jacobson and Naor, *Oriental Neighbors*.

[21]Petah Tikva was particularly active in producing such volumes, in part because of its contested status as the "first" colony. (Rishon LeZion, founded four years later in 1882, also claims this distinction.) On the politics of local memory volumes see Yosef Lang, "Sefarim ve-Yovlot: Petah Tikva Mitmodedet ʿim ʿAvarah" in Lang, *Le-Fetah Tikvah* (Petah Tikva: Oded Yarkoni Petah Tikva Archive, 2012), 10–50.

[22]Yisrael Bartal, "Petah Tikva: Ben Shorashim Raʿayoniyim le-Nesivot ha-Zeman," 161–75.

[23]Jean O'Brien has suggested that this trend is typical of the New England settler colonists recalling their 17th-century origins from the vantage point of the 19th century; Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[24]See, for example, the nearly ten-page list of "firsts" in the 1948 anniversary volume of Petah Tikva; Eleazar Trope, *Reshit: Li-melot 70 Shanah le-Fetah Tikvah (638–708)* (Petah Tikva, 1948), 36–45.

[25]Esther Raab, "la-Av," cited in Adriana X. Jacobs, *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Hebrew Poetry* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 56, translation by Harold Schimmel.

[26]Raab, *ha-Telem ha-Rishon*, 68–69.

[27]Raab, 68–69.

[28]Moshe Smilansky, *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Yishuv* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1939), 2:97.

[29]Yael Zerubavel, "Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the 'Hebrew Bedouin' Identity," *Social Research* 75 (2008): 315–52. See Hemda Ben-Yehuda's story "Havat bene rekhav."

[30]Raab, *ha-Telem Ha-Rishon*, 69.

[31]Smilansky, *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Yishuv*, 2:98.

[32]Ibid., 97.

[33]Raab, *Ha-Telem Ha-Rishon,* 67.

[34]Ben-Ur uses this term to describe the experience of Levantine Jews who came to America and found that the denial of shared ethnicity cost them jobs and led Sephardi immigrants to found new newspapers and institutions to serve their needs. This recognition failure was real (not simply a result of prejudice): Ashkenazi Jews genuinely did not recognize their coreligionists as Jews. Aviva Ben-Ur, *Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 108–9.

[35]Smilansky, *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Yishuv,* 2:97.

[36]See Natan Schechter, "Pogrom Petah Tikva 1886," *Keshet He-Hadashah* 6 (2003): 137–52.

[37]Shaul Avigur and Ben Zion Dinur, eds., *Toledot ha-Haganah*, Mahadurat ʿAm ʿOved., vol. A part 1, ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit (Tel Aviv: Maʿarakhot, 1954), 75.

[38]Moshe Smilansky, *Mishpahat ha-Adamah,* book 1 (Tel Aviv: ʿAm ʿOved, 1951), 40.

[39]Idelstein, *Avraham Shapira (Sheikh Ibrahim Mikhah)*, 1:41.

[40]ʿEver Hadani, ed., *Meʾah Shenot Shemirah be-Yisraʾel* (Tel Aviv: Y. Tsʾetsʾik, 1954), 106.

[41]Zerubavel, "Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the 'Hebrew Bedouin' Identity."

[42]Cited in Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria*, Jewish Cultures of the World (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 12.

[43]Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995), 3–4.

[44]Ibid., 55.

[45]Ibid., 92–93.

[46]Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 5.

[47]Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 203.

[48]Ibid., 131.

[49]Hala Mundhir Fattah, *Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 88–89.

[50]Ibid., 168–69.

[51]Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012), 20–21.

[52]Fattah, *Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq*, 168–69.

[53]Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 156.

[54]Shlomo Shva, *Ho ʿIr, Ho Em* (Tel Aviv: ha-Hevrah ha-Amerikaʾit-Yisreʾelit la-Moledet, 1977), 158.

[55]Raab, *ha-Telem ha-Rishon,* 67.

[56]Smilansky, *Perakim be-Toldot ha-Yishuv,* 2:97.

[57]Raab, *ha-Telem ha-Rishon,* 68.

[58]Israel Kolatt, "Religion, Society, and State during the Period of the National Home," in *Zionism and Religion*, The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series 30 (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998); Anita Shapira, "Religious Motifs of the Labor Movement," in *Zionism and Religion*, 251–72.

[59]Vaʿad ha-Yedidim le-Hotsaʾat Zikhronot shel Avraham Shapira, Letter to religious Jewish community institutions, 13 February 1939, Petah Tikva Archive 003.002/12.

[60]One of the earliest uses of this term in Hebrew comes from 1903, Y. Goldfarb, "Wilad al-Miyetah," *Ha-Tsofeh,* 18 Nisan [15 April] 1903, p1. It becomes standard in authoritative Zionist accounts about the history of Jewish settlement and the development of militaristic Jewish organizations. See, for example, Yehuda Slutsky, *Kitsur Toledot ha-Haganah* (Jerusalem: Misrad ha-Bitahon-ha-Hotsaʾah la-Or, 1978), 11.

[61]Esther Raab, "Sihah be-Tivʿon, 12 December 1980," cited in Adriana X. Jacobs, *Strange Cocktail,* 58.

[62]Bartal, "Petah Tikva," 161–75.

[63]Ellen Koskoff, ed., "The Bowed Fiddle: Rebāb," in *The Concise Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 779.

[64]Ruth Kark, *Jaffa: A City in Evolution, 1799–1917* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsvi Press, 1990), 183.

[65]Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014), 207–9.

[66]Johann Bussow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 241–42.

[67]Kark brings data suggesting a population of thirty to sixty Jewish families in the 1840s and early 1850s, and starting to climb beyond 1,000 only in the mid-1870s; Kark, *Jaffa*, 147–50.

[68]Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 163–64; Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005), 50.

[69]Shva, *Ho ʿIr, Ho Em*, 148.

[70]Raab, *ha-Telem ha-Rishon*, 65.

[71]M. (Mordekhai) Harizman, *Gevurat Rishonim: Toldot Yisud Petah Tikvah u-Meyasdehah* (Jerusalem: ha-Histadrut ha-Tsiyonit be-Siyuaʿ Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 1945), 105.

[72]Mordekai Elkayam, *Yafo-Neveh-Tsedek: Reshitah shel Tel-Aviv: Toledot ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Yafo me-Reshit ha-Meʾah ha-19* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1991), 121–22. See also context on Nabi Rubin in Klein, *Lives in Common*, 89.

[73]Klein, *Lives in Common*, 90.

[74]Harizman, *Gevurat Rishonim*, 105.

[75]Shva, *Ho ʿIr, Ho Em*, 148.

[76]Constanze Kolbe, "Crossing Regions, Nations, Empires: The Jews of Corfu and the Making of a Jewish Adriatic, 1850–1914" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2017), 105–53.

[77]Harizman, *Gevurat Rishonim*, 105.

[78]Ibid., 148.