

PUBLIC SPACE AND PRIVATE SPACE
AMONG THE JEWS OF ISTANBUL
IN THE SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

This paper shows how the map of Jewish Istanbul changed in the 16th and 17th centuries, describes the Jewish neighborhood and the Jewish home, and examines the forces that shaped them. It examines the extent and the limitations of the influence of the surrounding Ottoman culture on the changing picture of Jewish space during this period.

A. HOW DID THE PATTERN OF
JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN ISTANBUL CHANGE ?

Ottoman, Hebrew and European sources give a detailed picture of Jewish Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest. The survivors and expellees from Jewish Constantinople were made to resettle as *sürgün* (i.e., exiled), with limited freedom of residence. Like the city itself, the congregation founded by these Jews was called "İstanbul" in Turkish; the Jewish sources called it "Poli," the Greek word for "the city."¹

¹ Mountains of suppositions were piled in the scholarly literature on the meaning of the word Poli. Although S. A. ROZANES already identified Poli as "the city" (*History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire* [in Hebrew]), (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1930) 1: 120-121, and so did A. GALANTE, *Histoire des juifs de Turquie* (hereafter GALANTE, *Histoire...*) (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, n.d.) 1: 27, later scholars tried to prove in various ways that Poli is none but the congregation of Apulian Jews originated in Apulia, in southern Italy, and see M. BENAYAHU, *Rabbi Eliyahu Capsali* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University,

M. Rozen est professeur à l'Université de Tel Aviv, Département d'histoire juive, Ramat Aviv, 69978 Tel Aviv, Israël

This congregation eventually split into two organizations. These were called Poli Yashan and Poli Hādash — a mixture of Greek and Hebrew meaning “the old city” and “the new city.” In Turkish, they were called *İstanbul büzürg* and *İstanbul küçük*, meaning Great Istanbul and Small Istanbul².

The first dwelling places of these two congregations were most probably near Mahmut Paşa³. All of the Jews and some of the Karaites who had resided in Galata before the conquest were transferred as *sürgün* to Eminönü after 1455⁴; some of the Karaites must have moved to neighboring Hasköy⁵. The greater part of the autochthonic Jewish population from areas already under Ottoman control in Anatolia and the Balkans

1983), 43, ref. 9; J. HACKER, “The Sürgün System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire during the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries,” in A. RODRIGUE, ed. *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and leadership*, (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1992): 63, ref. 179. Aside from the obvious identity between Poli-Istanbul-Qostandinah which emerges from the comparison between the Hebrew and the Turkish documents, see also R. Yosef BEGHI, *Igeret Qiryah Ne'emanah*, in J. MANN, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972) 2: 309 which describes how the people of Qostandinah assembled with others in the synagogue of Poli. In spite of that Mann also explained the name Poli is equivalent of Apulia...

² For the Turkish terminology see for example S. YERASIMOS, “La communauté juive d'Istanbul à la fin du XVI^e siècle,” *Turcica*, 27 (1995): 109-110. The dilapidated Poli Yashan (pronounced *Pulyasan* by the local Jews) still stands in Balat, and Poli Hādash serves as the workshop of a local artisan. For a picture of the site of the gate to the courtyard of Poli Yashan see M. C. VAROL, *Balat, faubourg juif d'Istanbul* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1989): plate 10. See also J. PERVITICH, *Plan d'assurance, Corne d'Or-Balat* (Istanbul, 1929): plates 27, 30.

³ S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 122.

⁴ H. İNALCIK, “Jews in the Ottoman Economy and Finances, 1450-1500,” in C. E. BOSWORTH, C. ISSAWI, R. SAVORY and A. L. UDOVITCH, eds., *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1991): 514; *id.*, “Ottoman Galata 1453-1553,” *Varia Turcica* (Istanbul - Paris: Éditions Isis, 1991): 43, 47, 56, 96-97; Ö. L. BARKAN, E. H. AYVERDI, *İstanbul Vakıfları Tahrir Defteri 953 (1546) Tarihli* (Istanbul, 1970): 17. The congregation named Galata, mentioned in the registers of 1540, 1545 which are cited by M. A. EPSTEIN, *Ottoman Jewish Communities and their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1980): 178 consisted of Jews deported from Galata to Istanbul. This conclusion is based on the fact that not even one single Jew was counted in the survey of Galata in these years (H. İNALCIK, “Ottoman Galata,” *art. cit.*: 103). On the Karaite center in the neighborhood of what is now the Yeni Camii-Eminönü, see A. DANON, “Documents Relating to the History of the Karaites in European Turkey,” *JQR* 17 (1926-1927): 197-198, 252-255, 277-280; A. GALANTE, *Les juifs de Constantinople*, 1^{re} ed. (Istanbul, 1941) in *Histoire*, I: 167-170. Galante cites the register of the Mehmet II *vakıf* copied in 1495. The register, no. 16/1141 at the Topkapı Palace archives, was described also by T. ÖZ, “Zwei Stiftungsurkunden des Sultan Mehmet II Fatih,” *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 4 (Istanbul, 1935): 25-28.

⁵ On the Karaite center in Hasköy and its ancient roots see A. DANON, “The Karaites,”: 192-193, 282, 284-287, 291-292. The 1595-1597 register cited by S. Yerasimos, *art. cit.*: 114 shows that a great part of the Edirne Karaites congregation lived at that time in Hasköy.

were also transferred to Istanbul as *sürgün*. All of these transfers were designed to repopulate and rebuild the empty and devastated city in order to make it a worthy capital for the new empire⁶.

Most of these transferees were settled in a trapezoid-shaped area formed by Eminönü, Sirkeci, Tahtakale and Mahmut Paşa; some settled further north in Zeyrek. A smaller number settled in the neighborhood of Balat, near Eğri Kapı⁷; others created a small settlement near Yedikule, on the shore of the Marmara Sea in Samatya⁸.

Most of the Ashkenazi Jews who immigrated to Istanbul from southern Germany in the 1470's settled in Hasköy⁹; however, their congregation was listed on the *tahrir defteri* (survey books) as *sürgün*. It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that their classification was changed to *kendi gelen* (those who came of their own free will)¹⁰. Perhaps the early Ashkenazi immigrants were classified as *sürgün* because the concept of Jews as *kendi gelen* may not have evolved until the massive Iberian emigration.

⁶ On the Ottoman *sürgün* in general, and the *sürgün* of the Jews to Istanbul in particular see H. İNALCIK, *The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973): 141-145; *id.*, "L'Empire ottoman," in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985): 85; *id.*, *EI2*, s.v. "Istanbul," 224-248; T. GÖKBILGIN, M. C. SEHABEDDİN TEKİNDAĞ, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Istanbul": 1180-1214; H. LOWRY, "From Lesser Wars to the Mightiest War: The Ottoman Conquest and Transformation of Byzantine Urban Centers in the Fifteenth Century," in A. BRYER, H. LOWRY, eds., *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society*, (Birmingham-Washington: University of Birmingham and Dumbarton Oaks, 1986): 261-274; J. R. HACKER, "Ottoman Policy towards the Jews and Jewish attitudes towards the Ottomans during the 15th Century," in B. BRAUDE, B. LEWIS eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Holmes, Meier, 1982) 1, *The Central Lands*: 118-121, 124-125; *id.*, "The Ottoman System of Sürgün and Its influence on the Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire," [in Hebrew], *Zion*, 55 (1990): 27-59; *id.*, "The Sürgün System," 1-23.

⁷ On the dwelling places of the transferees in the trapezoid shaped area see A. GALANTE, *Histoire, op. cit.*, 1: 25-27; İNALCIK, "Jews in the Ottoman Economy....," *art. cit.*: 513; U. HEYD, "The Jewish Communities of Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century," *Oriens*, 6 (1953): 311; S. YERASIMOS, "La communauté....," *art. cit.*: 121-125; SELANIKI MUSTAFA EFENDİ, *Tarih-i Selaniki (971-1003/1563-1569)* (ed. M. İpsirli) (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989), 1: 217. On Jews living in Arabacılar Meydanı (near Balık Pazarı) at the beginning of the sixteenth century see R. TAM İBN YAHYA, *Responsa, Tumat Yesharim* [in Hebrew] (Venice, 1622), 74: 39a. On the Jewish quarters founded in Balat by the transferees see S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 109. See discussion in my *Introduction to the History of the Jewish Community of Istanbul. The formative years, 1453-1566* (in preparation).

⁸ See discussion in my *History*.

⁹ Of 805 readable and dated tombstones from the early days of the Hasköy cemetery (1583-1647), 40 (5%) bore the family name Ashkenazi (TAU Documentation Project of Turkish and Balkan Jewry).

¹⁰ J.R. HACKER, *art. cit.*: 69-72; cf. M.A. EPSTEIN, *art. cit.*: 178-180. The Ashkenazi congregations cited in the 1540, 1545 registers are recorded still among the *sürgün* and not among the *kendi gelen*. See also discussion in my *History*.

Although a trickle had started even before the expulsion from Spain, the Iberian flood came in the decades after 1492. Jews from Spain, Southern Italy and Sicily settled mainly in the traditional trapezoidal area; smaller numbers settled in Balat and Hasköy.

New patterns of settlement can be observed around the 1550's. During the years after the foundation of the national Inquisition in Portugal in 1536, increasing numbers of Jews left for the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the first expellees, the Portuguese brought capital with them. They were imbued with the Christian culture in which they had been brought up, and they maintained close connections with Christian Europe¹¹. Some of them followed the traditional patterns of settlement, but others created new patterns. They settled in Galata, the center of trade with Christian Europe¹², and in several villages along the Bosphorus; the most important of these villages were Kuruçeşme¹³, Beşiktaş¹⁴ and Ortaköy¹⁵ on the European side, and Kuzguncuk¹⁶ on the Asiatic shore.

Another major factor in the changing settlement pattern was the overpopulation of the trapezoid; since it was the business center of the city and was located next to the Sultan's palace, the area had attracted too many people. This density lowered the quality of life and increased pollution and other health problems to such an extent that some people chose to make their homes elsewhere¹⁷.

The density also caused many fires in the trapezoid, since most of the buildings were made of wood. In 1569, a terrible conflagration consumed a large part of the neighborhood. The Venitian *bailo* saw the fire from his home in the hills of Pera. He wrote that the fire devastated the most populated and beautiful part of Istanbul in which the Jews lived, stretching three or four miles from the wall of the Sultan's palace to the Mosque of Suleyman the Magnificent, and from the *bedesten* to the sea

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The expellees settlement in the the old center between Eminönü-Sirkeci-Mahmut Paşa and Tahtakale is well demonstrated in the 1595-1597 survey, and see S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 124. On the settlement in Galata see Nicolaus DE NICOLAI, *Navigations et pèlerinages orientales* (Lyon, 1568): 77; Jean CHESNEAU, *Le voyage de Monsieur d'Aramon...* (ed. Ch. Schefer) (Paris, 1887): 32.

¹³ The register of 1595-1597 mentions 27 families in Kuruçeşme (S. Yerasimos, *art. cit.*: 119 cf. 113, 125). At one time he identifies Kuruçeşme with Bela Palanka in Serbia, later on he describes it as it was, a new Jewish settlement on the Bosphorus. On Kuruçeşme, see R. Shemuel DE UZIDA, *Işeret Shemuel, a Commentary on the book of Ruth* [in Hebrew] (Kuruçeşme near Istanbul: Reina Nası Printing House, 1597). See also A. YA'ARI, *Hebrew Printing at Constantinople* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1967): 144-146.

¹⁴ Pierre BELON, *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez, choses mémorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Judée, Égypte, Arabie, etc.* (Paris, 1555): 127a.

¹⁵ In the 1595-1557 register 6 families were counted in Ortaköy (S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 119). See also notes 42-44 below.

¹⁶ The earliest evidence on Kuzguncuk is a tombstone from 1562 at the local cemetery (GALANTE, *Histoire*, 1: 305).

¹⁷ On the density at that area see notes 25-26 below.

that separated Istanbul from Pera (i.e., the meeting place of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn). mosques, 15 synagogues, 12 hamams and many large buildings were burned — including the mansion of Mosheh Hamon, in which the ambassadors from Venice used to reside¹⁸.

Most of the destroyed Jewish homes had been rented from Muslim trust endowments (*vakıf*), and some trustees did not like the fact that the *hazaqah* regulations gave the Jewish tenants a status very close to ownership. Rather than rebuild the homes for rental, or let the former tenants rebuild, some trustees chose to use the land for different purposes¹⁹. Such a step broke the chain of the *hazaqah*. As a result, poor Jews moved into low-rent neighborhoods, and even rich Jews had to seek housing in other parts of the city²⁰.

Some of the endowments were for the benefit of Jews (especially Karaites) whose forefathers had set up trusts under Muslim law. These Jewish beneficiaries sometimes agreed to exchange a ruined home in the trapezoid for a home in another part of the city — an offer made by trustees of Muslim endowments who wanted to enlarge their holdings in the trapezoid²¹.

Jewish beneficiaries who did not receive an offer to exchange homes and could not afford to rebuild their homes simply abandoned them and moved to a smaller home or a less-expensive neighborhood²².

¹⁸ BNM, Venice, It. Ms. VII 390 (8872): 204r-204v [Marcantonio Barbaro Letterbook]. See also SELANIKI Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih*. 1: 217. I thank Prof. Benyamin Arbel for this reference. A scientific edition of this document is being prepared by the two of us.

¹⁹ On the development of the *hazaqah* in Istanbul see R. Avraham ben Mordekhai HALEVI, *Responsa, Ginat Veradim* [in Hebrew] (Istanbul, 1716), 1, rule 6.2: 153a-153b; M. BENAYAHU, "Ascarnot about Hezqat Hahazerot, Habbatim ve Hahanuyot in Salonica and the Juridical Decisions of R. Yosef Taitazaq and his Contemporaries," *Michael*, 9 (1985): 62-64. See also R. Yosef IBN LEV, *Responsa* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1959) 2, 75: 189-191; 80: 198-202; (Amsterdam, 1725) 3, 63: 32b; (Amsterdam, 1725) 4, 17: 7b; R. Yehoshu'a ZONZIN, *Responsa Nahalah li-Yoshu'a* [in Hebrew] (Istanbul, 1734), 2: 48a. On the effect of the fire of 1569 on the *hazaqah* see R. HALEVI, *op. cit.*: 153b, in which the communal judges of the *hazaqah* took it upon themselves not to judge in law suits presented before the Hebrew month of *Tishrei* 5330, i.e. the great fire of 1569. On the power of the *hazaqah* in later generations see for example R. Yehiel BASAN, *Responsa* [in Hebrew] (Istanbul, 1737), 91: 62a-b.

²⁰ *Three Commentaries on Canticum Canticorum* (in Hebrew) (Istanbul, 1575/6), in the introduction by Yizhaq ben Avraham 'Aqrish "Istanbul and everything in it was burnt. Its palaces were burnt, and so were its beautiful villas and all the objects of art in them. And the fire was enormous, ravaging days and nights, and no one is able to extinguish it. And I am at the heart of the fire... and I ran away like a bird from the trap, leaving my house and all my beloved books to burn [...] and I was lying stranded on the seashore five days and five nights, as did many others, and there is no rescue[...]" After a month I returned to Istanbul, to a place to which the havoc did not get, a place of very few people of Romaniot origin called Kastoria, and I stayed with them for four years in great poverty."

²¹ R. Mosheh BEN NISIM BENVENISTI, *Responsa, Penei Mosheh* (in Hebrew) (Istanbul, 1671), 2: 25: 5b.

²² *Ibid.*, (Istanbul, 1669) 1, 94: 237a.

So, for one reason or another, Jews moved out of their neighborhood and settled somewhere among families who may not have belonged to their original congregation — thereby breaking the connection between a family's ethnic origin and its place of residence. A Spanish family, for example, might find itself living among Romaniot Jews and eventually joining their congregation²³.

Although the fire of 1569 was not the most significant factor in determining the look of Jewish Istanbul, it did have some influence on subsequent steps taken by the Ottoman establishment. New regulations set a minimum width for the streets and limited buildings to two stories²⁴. In the 1590's, the idea of turning the area into a complex of religious, welfare and trade institutions began to take form. A detailed survey made between 1595-1597 established how many Jews were in the area and where they lived and worked²⁵. This was followed by the expropriation of some Jewish property for the construction of a mosque initiated by the mother of Mehmet III, Safie Sultan, on August 20, 1598. The residents in the requisitioned property were given homes in other parts of the city, most probably in Hasköy and Balat.

The death of Mehmet III in 1603 halted work on the mosque, and probably stopped the requisitioning of Jewish property as well. For half a century, from 1603 until 1660, the half-built mosque stood decaying.

In 1660, another huge fire devastated the area. In its wake, the mother of Mehmet IV, Valide Sultan Turhan Hadice, took it upon herself to have the mosque completed. There was a massive transfer of Jews from the older section of Istanbul, and the mosque (known to us as the Yeni Camii) was finished, along with a number of welfare and trade institutions²⁶.

This is how it came about that, between 1597 and the 1660's, the greater part of Istanbuli Jews settled in Balat, and that Hasköy obtained its Jewish character²⁷. Hasköy also absorbed the Jews of Samatia who had left the quarter for an unknown reason²⁸. This was also the time when the great Jewish settlement in Galata took shape. And in Ortaköy between 1628 and 1648, the Jewish settlement grew from a few score families to a major element with the active help of the Muslim landowners²⁹.

The map of Jewish space in Istanbul, therefore, was transformed from a dense concentration in the old part of the city to a network of quarters

²³ See note 21 above.

²⁴ A. Refik ALTINAY, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayatı* (Istanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1987): 91.

²⁵ S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 107-108.

²⁶ On the 1660 fire and its repercussions see U. HEYD, *art. cit.*: 313.

²⁷ See notes 30-31 below. See also Evliya ÇELEBİ, *Seyahatname*, 1, 413-414.

²⁸ For the Samatian Jews in Hasköy see my *History*.

²⁹ For the growth of the Jewish settlement in Galata see note 27 above. For Ortaköy see *ibid.*, and note 45 below.

scattered around the metropolis and its suburbs. The main goal of Mehmet II had been to repopulate and rebuild the ruined capital — but the changing considerations of the government and the continued flow of Jewish immigrants altered the picture.

To illustrate: at the end of the sixteenth century, 60% of the Jews of Istanbul were clustered in the trapezoid, while only 10 to 20% were in Balat, 5% in Hasköy, and the rest scattered among other neighborhoods³⁰. At the end of the seventeenth century, on the other hand, 31% lived in Balat, 21% in Galata, 12.2% in Ortaköy, 11% in Hasköy, 6.9% in Cebe Ali between Fener and Eminönü, 3% in Tekfür Sarayı, 2.7% in Beşiktaş, 2.5% in Kuruçeşme, a little less than 2% in Kuzguncuk, and the same in a new Jewish settlement, Üsküdar, on the Asiatic shore of the Marmara Sea³¹.

B. WAS THERE A JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD ?

It is well documented that Istanbul families of all three religions lived next to each other in mixed neighborhoods during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries³². The only clear restriction on where non-Muslims could live was that their homes could not be next to a mosque³³.

Since Jewish homes were mingled with non-Jewish homes, can we say that there was such a thing as a Jewish neighborhood ?

From an administrative point of view, the answer is yes. The Ottomans regarded the mahalle as an administrative unit of citizens who belonged to a specific religion; it was defined by their religion, rather than by the physical proximity in which they lived. The Ottomans dealt with each religious group in an area as a separate neighborhood, ignoring the fact that geographically the neighborhoods overlapped. Thus, people of different religions who lived next door to each other belonged to different mahalles, while people of the same religion who did not live in relative proximity could belong to the same mahalle³⁴.

The Jews took a similar perspective. The Ottoman mahalle was the Jewish congregation — in Hebrew, *qahal*. It meant a group of Jews who

³⁰ S. YERASIMOS, *art. cit.*: 121-25.

³¹ U. HEYD, *art. cit.*: 310.

³² See discussion in my *History*.

³³ M. E. DÜZDAĞ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları* (Istanbul, 1972): 94-95; Refik ALTINAY, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayatı*: 79; R. Eliyahu HALEVI, *Responsa, Zeqan Aharon* [in Hebrew] (Istanbul, 1734), 113: 70a; R.Y. IBN LEV, *op. cit.*, 3, 42: 20a.

³⁴ For discussion and sources see my *Introduction*. Only on rare occasions did the Ottomans tax a lone Jewish household residing in a non-Jewish quarter with his non-Jewish neighbors. On such occasions the community as a whole exercised all its power to make him join the nearest Jewish congregation, mainly to avoid losing him as a taxpayer. That was done without any connection to the Ottoman system (R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*), 6: 10a.

originated from a specific town or region, usually outside Istanbul, who prayed in a specific synagogue, and organized themselves to best serve their common interests³⁵. They usually lived next to each other, but the presence of people of other religions in their public space did not make any difference; the others were organized in their own mahalles, followed their own leaders, and prayed to God in their own ways.

Therefore, it is only when the administrative and geographic borders of the mahalle were relatively similar that we can talk about the existence of a “Jewish neighborhood.” The next question, then is what it looked like. Was there any difference between a Jewish neighborhood and a Muslim, Greek or Armenian neighborhood?

To begin with, we can turn to Rabbi Mosheh Almosnino’s *History of the Ottoman Kings* for a vivid portrait of the Jewish neighborhood in the trapezoid of old Istanbul. The description is contained in the part of the *History* called “Extremos y Grandezas de Constantinopla” (Extremes and Grandeur of Constantinople), written in Ladino in Hebrew characters during Sukkot in 1567

This was the most heavily populated part of Istanbul, he wrote. Not a single empty plot of land was available for construction in the quarter; the only way to add dwelling space was to build additional floors on existing buildings. The result was an area of very narrow streets, with wood houses rising upward on both sides. The best apartments were on the top floors, because their windows were open to the southwest breeze. On the other hand, the one-story houses and the first floors of high buildings were very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter, dark and unfit for human habitation. Since there was no sewage system, the residents of the upper floors threw their garbage and excrement onto the lower floors — so the lower floors and the street smelled very bad. The upper floors were occupied by the rich; the lower floors, by the poor. This was more than a matter of convenience and status; it also meant that to be poor was to be dirty, to smell, and to be more exposed to maladies³⁶.

Almosnino’s description of the congested neighborhood is corroborated by a firman issued on June 29, 1559, which noted that the Jewish community was building houses, shops and huts against the walls of the city — and, in a grim prophecy, warned that this practice endangered the well-being of Muslims, since a fire could break out in the accumulation of wood and other combustible materials³⁷.

The situation in the Jewish neighborhood in the old part of Istanbul was not duplicated in every detail in Balat. Nevertheless, many seventeenth-century Hebrew documents show that Balat, too, became overpopulated by the second half of the century and took on many charac-

³⁵ See *ibid.*, and especially IBN LEV, *op. cit.*, 1: 122: 184.

³⁶ R. Mosheh ALMOsnino, *History of the Ottoman Kings* [in Ladino] (Ms. in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, 126 (SUP) (35), microfilm in the Institute for photographing Hebrew manuscripts, National University Library in Jerusalem, 12037): 188.

³⁷ Refik ALTINAY, *Onuncu Asr-i Hicride İstanbul Hayati*: 87-89.

teristics of the old quarter. In essence, Balat became Istanbul's Jewish quarter of the seventeenth century³⁸.

A socio-economic assessment shows that in the middle class, each religion had its own neighborhood — which means that there was a middle-class Jewish neighborhood. On the other hand, very poor Jews and very rich Jews did not always live in Jewish neighborhoods. Instead, poor Jews lived in poverty-stricken neighborhoods among other poor people (most of whom were Muslims), and rich Jews lived in wealthy neighborhoods among rich people of other religions³⁹.

In the trapezoid, which was once a socially mixed but essentially Jewish neighborhood, the social margins were decimated. In the seventeenth century, its remains — the area near Balık Pazarı — became a mixed Jewish-Muslim neighborhood of *kayıkcıs* (boatrowers), soapmakers and day laborers. Balat became a very dense Jewish neighborhood in which poor, middle-class and rich Jews lived closely together⁴⁰.

The other axis of the Jewish social world was in the villages along the Bosphorus, where wealthy Jews lived next to rich Muslims and Christians in wood or stone mansions surrounded by large, beautiful gardens and orchards. Pierre Belon described these mid-sixteenth century *yalis*, with gardens touching the water on the left side of the road from Hayrettin Barbarossa's tomb in Beşiktaş. Many of them were owned by Spanish Jews⁴¹. The Nasi family rented a huge mansion in Pera in which 80 people lived and worked; eventually the family built or bought a house in Kuruçeşme, which was the richest Jewish neighborhood in Istanbul until the end of the seventeenth century⁴².

The Jewish neighborhood in Ortaköy was started by several wealthy Jewish businessmen who built shore palaces among the residences of Muslims and Christians. In 1619, for example, a Jew by the name of Hayim Sulam (probably of Italian origin, according to his name) bequeathed a great legacy to his family, including a house with the status of *mülk* (private property) in Ortaköy. He was married to a woman named Arkhondo (probably of Romaniot origin, according to her name). One of his neighbors was a rich Spanish Jew named Ibn Ya'ish; the other was a Greek named Kostanda. Hayim Sulam invested in bills of exchange with European merchants, and had other investments in the old *bedesten*. The value of the *ketuba*, Arkhondo's marriage contract, was 25,000 *akçe*⁴³.

³⁸ See notes 50, 60-62 below.

³⁹ For Muslim-Jewish poverty stricken neighborhood see R.Y. IBN LEV, *op. cit.*, 1, 122: 184; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 1, 42: 105a. For mixed wealthy neighborhoods see notes 41-46 below.

⁴⁰ Note 39 above and compare with the results of the 1691/2 survey as detailed in my "A Survey of Jewish Cemeteries in Western Turkey," *JQR* LXXXIII (1992): 100-101.

⁴¹ Note 14 above.

⁴² Hans DERNSCHWAM, *Tagebuch einer Reiser nach Konstantinople und Kleinasien (1554-1555)*, F. BABINGER ed. (Munich-Leipzig, 1923): 106, cf. notes 13 and 40 above.

⁴³ R. Yehiel BASAN, *Responsa* (Istanbul, 1737), 82: 54a-55a.

Evliya Çelebi, describing Ortaköy in the middle of the seventeenth century, supplies what might be anachronistic information about the ownership of houses; it may actually refer to the situation twenty years earlier, during the beginning of Jewish settlement in the village. Among the *yalis* that impressed him the most, he mentioned the house of Baltacı Mahmut Paşa, who had been a provincial governor at the end of the sixteenth century and may actually have been the *former* owner of that villa. Evliya also mentioned the houses of Şekerci Yahudi, the Jewish sugar dealer; Yizhaq the Jew; *mimar* Mustafa, the architect Mustafa; Safiye Sultan, whose name identifies her as an Ottoman princess; Ekmekcizade Ahmet Paşa, who had been a *defterdar* and died in 1617; Cahaloğlu Mahmut Bey; Kara Hasan Oğlu; Çelebi Kethüda and Nakkaş Paşa. The overall picture is that of a mixed neighborhood containing the higher echelon of Ottoman society and wealthy Jewish and Greek businessmen⁴⁴.

A legal document in Hebrew gives us a description of how the Jewish settlement in Ortaköy was created. In 1628, according to the document, the village was essentially an area of fields, gardens and orchards; the only Jews who lived there were the few wealthy businessmen who built their houses among those of the Muslims and Greeks. Every summer, a lesser class of Jews rented Muslim-owned houses in the village. The permanent Jewish residents feared that their relations with the Muslims who owned most of the land would be negatively influenced by the growing number of Jews, especially since the transients had a lower socio-economic status.

In fact, however, the Muslim landowners recognized that the trend presented a profitable opportunity; they built more houses for rental to Jews, this time for permanent residents. Within twenty years, the influx of Jews had created a need for several new synagogues. Moreover, when the synagogue in Ortaköy was temporarily closed by the authorities because, as a new synagogue, it was forbidden by the Shari'a, one of the Muslim dignitaries opened his own house to the Jews for use as a place of worship — declaring that in his house, he was king⁴⁵.

Although the original Jewish shore palaces in Ortaköy were similar to the Ottoman and Greek *yalis*, the houses built for rental must have been architecturally different. This distinction, plus the concentration of Jewish households, created what could be called a Jewish neighborhood.

Evliya Çelebi also gave a detailed but somewhat inaccurate description of the Hasköy neighborhood. He wrote of a beautiful area with some 3,000 houses of several stories each. The houses that faced the Golden Horn were scattered on the hillside and surrounded by gardens of apricots, peaches and pomegranates; some had attached greenhouses for lemon and orange trees. One of these houses belonged to the Hamon family⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Evliya ÇELEBİ, *Seyahatname*, 1: 451.

⁴⁵ R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh, op. cit.*, 1, 54: 98b.

⁴⁶ On Hasköy in the second half of the seventeenth century according to Evliya

In spite of Çelebi's characteristic exaggeration of the number of stately houses in Hasköy, his general impression apparently was true — since the few dilapidated ancient homes are still surrounded by the remains of these vast gardens. But most of the residents were far from wealthy. The *tahrir defteri* of 1691 shows that fewer than 4% of the Jewish households in Hasköy were taxed as rich, while almost 80% were taxed as poor. Therefore, although the residents of Hasköy may have enjoyed a better quality of life than did the residents of Balat (and certainly better than those of Balık Pazarı), only a few families in Hasköy could have owned princely villas such as the Hamon house; the others must have lived in much humbler homes⁴⁷.

The variegated population of Hasköy consisted mainly of Jews, Karaites, Greeks, and later Armenians⁴⁸. Since many of the Jews had non-Jewish neighbors, the Hasköy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like Ortaköy, cannot be defined *in toto* as a typical Jewish neighborhood — although those Jews who lived in homogeneous enclaves did form “Jewish quarters.”

In what way did a Jewish neighborhood differ from a Muslim or Christian neighborhood? Aside from their places of worship, what set them apart? This brings up our third major question.

C. WHAT IS A YAHUDIHANE?

Throughout the generations, Ottoman sources repeatedly used the term *yahudihane*⁴⁹, a Jewish house — yet I have never come across similar terms such as *türkhane* or *rumhane* or *ermenihane*. The immediate conclusion which comes to mind is that there was something conspicuously special about Jewish houses that distinguished it from any other house.

I studied a great number of verbal descriptions of seventeenth-century Jewish residences. Pictures would have been helpful in telling us what a *yahudihane* looked like, but we will have to make do with words.

Çelebi's description see *Seyahatname*, 1: 413-415. On the house of the Hamon family see H. DERNSCHWAM, *op. cit.*: 113. We cannot verify whether the house described by Dernschwam is the one in the old city, mentioned by Marcantonio Barbaro, or the one in Hasköy, mentioned by Evliya Çelebi.

⁴⁷ Compare with note 40 above.

⁴⁸ Refik ALTINAY, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayati*: 80; Evliya ÇELEBİ, *op. cit.*, 1: 413-415; Eremya Çelebi KÖMÜRCİYAN, *İstanbul Tarihi XVII Asırda*, H. D. Andreasyan, K. Pamukciyan ed. (Istanbul: Eren, 1988): 32-33.

⁴⁹ Ö. L. BARKAN, “Edirne Askeri Kassamına Ait Tereke Defterleri,” *Belgeler*, 3 (1966): 111; H. GERBER, “On the History of the Jews in Istanbul in the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries,” [in Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 12 (1982): 28-29. H. Gerber too noted the absence of a special designation for houses of other ethnic groups. See also *id.*, *The Jews in Izmir in the 19th Century: Ottoman Documents from the Shar'ia Court* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 1984): 24-25, 57.

The sources describe densely populated residential areas in which homes competed for space, air and view⁵⁰. Almost all of the buildings were constructed of wood, and were usually (but not always) covered with roof tiles. Some buildings had two floors, but most had three or more⁵¹.

The standard Jewish house was a three-story rectangle with an open courtyard in the center. The apartments faced the courtyard, and were connected by long verandas that ran along the four sides of the courtyard. On one side, a gateway led from the street to the courtyard. Access to the upper floors was by means of a ladder attached to the verandas; people who lived on the upper floors had to climb past the verandas of the homes on the lower floors and those of neighboring apartments. Sometimes the courtyard contained a tree or two, a pit for catching rain-water, and perhaps an oven⁵².

Since the central courtyard is identical in concept to the patio of an Iberian private house, one could argue that it was a Spanish-Jewish innovation. However, the same idea was used elsewhere in the Middle East and in Asia Minor, so its origin is not clear-cut.

A well-designed building had a cellar — a *zemlik* or *zirzemin* — for storing wine, cheese, wheat and other foodstuffs, and sometimes coal for heating the house in winter. Although the cellar was not common property, it was often used by all of the families that lived in the building⁵³. Well-off families had private kitchens in their homes⁵⁴.

In most buildings, the toilets were located on the first floor and were not private⁵⁵. When an innovative resident wanted to build private toilets on the third floor of a building in the middle of the seventeenth century, his neighbors were so repulsed by the idea that they sued him⁵⁶.

The front door of each home opened onto the veranda, and perhaps a window faced the courtyard as well. On the side of the building that faced the street, an enclosed balcony supported by a pair of diagonal braces projected out from most apartments, adding more interior space at

⁵⁰ R.M. ALMOSNINO, *op. cit.*: 188; Refik ALTINAY, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayatı*: 87; R. Mosheh SHILTON, *Responsa, Benei Mosheh* (Istanbul, 1712), 40: 82a; 41: 108a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, 36: 64a; R. Avraham ben Yehudah MEYUHAS, *Benei Avraham* (Istanbul, 1733), 20: 15a.

⁵¹ Refik ALTINAY, *op. cit.*: 89-90; R. M. SHILTON, *op. cit.*, 16: 331a; 51: 108a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, 49: 83a; Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *Responsa, Sha'ar Yehoshu'a, Hoshen Mishpat* (Jerusalem, 1982), 1: 23: 84; 29: 107; R.Y. BASAN, *op. cit.*: 111: 75b.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 111: 75b; R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh, op. cit.*: 16: 31a; 40: 82a; 51: 108a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh, op. cit.*,: 25: 45b; vol. 3, 49: 83a; Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1: 23: 84; 29: 107.

⁵³ R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh, op. cit.*: 51: 108a; R. Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1: 23: 84; 29: 107.

⁵⁴ R.Y. BASAN, *op. cit.*: 93: 23b; R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh, op. cit.*, 51: 108a.

⁵⁵ R.M. ALMOSNINO, *op. cit.*: 188-89.

⁵⁶ R. M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh, op. cit.*, 51: 108a and compare with R. Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1: 29: 107.

the expense of the public space. The Hebrew sources called this projection a *gardaki* or *gardak*, probably a distortion of the Turkish *çardak*⁵⁷. It was made of lighter materials, and had a window covered with a wooden crossbeam; people inside the apartment could see out, but the crossbeam made it difficult for people outside to see in, but did not prevent it entirely⁵⁸.

Some of these buildings were designed and constructed as apartment buildings by the trustees of the *vakif* that owned the land, for the purpose of renting out the homes to separate families⁵⁹. In other cases, a building started out as a one-story house for a well-off nuclear family which either bought the land or leased it from the trustees of a Muslim *vakif*. — Each time one of the sons of the family got married, an additional story was built on one side of the rectangle⁶⁰. When a member of the first generation passed away, the *hazaqah* on his apartment might be sold to someone outside the family — so that eventually the former one-family house evolved into a multi-family apartment building with little or no connection to the original founding family⁶¹.

In some cases, especially in buildings that started out as single-family houses, the founding family lived in the largest apartment. When the head of the family died, the eldest son would inherit the apartment — and his younger brothers would have to make do with smaller apartments. Sometimes an entire family lived in one room⁶².

Spacious apartments were divided into two sections; the *selamlık*, the external rooms, and the *haremlık*, the internal rooms. The *selamlık* was open to strangers. The *haremlık* was the exclusive domain of the family. Men outside the immediate family circle could not enter it, and the ideal virtuous woman did not enter the *selamlık* when men outside the family circle happened to be there. Naturally, only women of very high socio-economic status could afford the luxury of being that virtuous. Besides a spacious residence, the lady of the house would have needed several maids that would perform the household chores, if she wanted to maintain the lifestyle that such customs called for⁶³.

⁵⁷ R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 40: 82a; 51: 108a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 3, 49: 83a; R. Avraham ALEGRI, *Responsa* [in Hebrew] (Salonika, 1693), 32: 92b; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 2, 42: 74a; Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1, 23: 84; 29: 107.

⁵⁸ R.M. ALMOSNINO, *op. cit.*: 192-93; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 1 (Istanbul, 1669), 82: 105a.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 54: 98b.

⁶⁰ R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 16: 31a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 2, 25: 45b; 3, 49: 83a; Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1: 23: 84; R. Eli'ezer IBN SANJI, *Responsa, Dat va-Din* [in Hebrew] (Istanbul, 1726), 14: 52b.

⁶¹ R.Y. BASAN, *op. cit.*, 111: 75b; R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 40: 82a; 51: 108a; Yehoshu'a BENVENISTI, *op. cit.*, 1, 23: 84.

⁶² R.A. ALEGRI, *Responsa*, 32: 92b; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 2: 42: 74a.

⁶³ R.M. ALMOSNINO, *op. cit.*: 188-194.

The division between the external rooms and the internal rooms might create the impression that privacy was strictly kept in this society. However, the meaning of privacy was different in that society from what we understand it today. Building material was very light. Sounds and sights could not be silenced or ignored. Windows which faced the narrow street would usually face other windows, and be used as means of communication in spite of the crossbeam⁶⁴. Residents of the same court could not avoid passing each others doors and windows⁶⁵.

This is what the *yahudihane* looked like. A Jewish neighborhood must have been a collection of such high-density buildings. Since Muslims faced no restriction on buying real estate, we can assume that the average Muslim dwelling had more space per person than did the average Jewish home.

Although the Greek houses in the Bosphorus villages and Galata were very different from the *yahudihane*, the Greeks, too, were *Zimmis* and if they lived inside the city walls they faced similar problems as did the Jews. Consequently, the big Greek neighborhood of Fener was probably as densely populated as neighboring Balat, and the Greek homes there must have had much in common with the Jewish homes in Balat.

In sum: the major characteristics of the Jewish neighborhood were its multi-story buildings and high population density — but these characteristics were shared in certain places by the homes of other groups as well.

CONCLUSION

The changes in the map of Jewish Istanbul during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were influenced by two major forces: (a) the changing needs and interests of the Ottoman state, and (b) the continuing inflow of Jewish immigrants from Europe.

The typical Jewish neighborhood was characterized by multi-story buildings and high population density. These were dictated by (a) the tendency of Jews to live next to the major trade centers, and in relative proximity to their places of worship and (b) the restriction against non-Muslims residing next to mosques.

However, Jews whose socio-economic status enabled them to buy real estate, or even to build themselves on leased *vakif* land could live in a residence culture not much different from that of a Muslim of the same status.

And final observation: the conception of the *haremlik* and the *selamlık* was part of the Ottoman Muslim society. Neither Iberian Jews nor

⁶⁴ *Ibid*; R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 40: 82a; R.M. BENVENISTI, *Penei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 1: 42: 105a; 2, 36: 64a; 3, 49: 83a; R.A. ALEGRI, *Responsa*, 32: 92b.

⁶⁵ R.M. SHILTON, *Benei Mosheh*, *op. cit.*, 40: 82a.

Romanians adopted this conception before they encountered the Muslim-Ottoman culture. The fact that this conception found its way in mid-sixteenth century to Jewish homes of the upper class is but one expression of the assimilation of Muslim-Ottoman residence culture by Jewish society.

In the Hebrew sources from that period, all of the technical terms pertaining to architecture and construction were transcribed from Turkish. Since the Turkish language was seldom used in such documents, this unusual use of Turkish terms has special significance. It also indicates that basically the building culture of the Jews was deeply influenced by that of the ruling group — the Muslim Ottomans.

Minna Rozen, *Public Space and Private Space among the Jews of Istanbul in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-Centuries*

The changing geographical history of the Jews of Istanbul from the Ottoman conquest until the end of the seventeenth century is the framework of this paper, which discusses the political, social and cultural reasons for the changes in the map of Jewish residential areas. Since few restrictions were put on where non-Muslims were allowed to live in Istanbul, the question arises as to whether there was such a thing as a Jewish neighbourhood — and, if so, in what ways was it different from any other neighbourhood in the city. The Jewish public space in various parts of Istanbul is examined against the socio-cultural background of these quarters. In the Ottoman sources the term *yahudihane* (Jewish house) is mentioned quite often. The question arises whether the *yahudihane* was actually a typical Jewish house different from other houses in Istanbul. The discussion of Jewish homes and Jewish neighbourhoods in Istanbul entails central questions regarding cross-cultural trends and influences. An examination of these questions will help clarify how and to what degree the Jews assimilated Ottoman culture and mores — an issue that has received very little attention until now. The paper is based on rabbinical sources, Ottoman archival material, Ottoman published sources, books by European travellers, and reports by European diplomats.

Minna Rozen, *Espace public et espace privé dans la communauté juive d'Istanbul aux XVI^e-XVII^e siècles*

La carte de l'habitat juif à Istanbul a beaucoup changé de la conquête ottomane à la fin du XVII^e siècle. Cet article s'interroge sur les raisons politiques, sociales, et culturelles de ces changements d'habitat au sein des quartiers résidentiels de la ville. Si à Istanbul il y avait peu de restrictions de résidence pour les non musulmans, on peut néanmoins se poser la question de l'existence de quartiers juifs et, dans l'affirmative, se demander en quoi ces quartiers pouvaient être différents des autres. L'espace public juif dans les diverses parties d'Istanbul est examiné à la lumière du contexte socio-culturel de ces quartiers. Dans les sources ottomanes, le terme *yahudihane* (maison juive) est souvent mentionné : la *yahudihane* était-elle en fait une maison juive typique, différente des autres maisons d'Istanbul ? Le fait d'envisager l'existence de maisons et de quartiers juifs à Istanbul conduit à s'interroger sur les tendances et influences réciproques entre les cultures juives et musulmanes. L'analyse de ces questions permet de savoir dans quelle mesure les juifs ont assimilé les mœurs et la culture ottomane, ce qui a été peu étudié jusqu'à présent. L'article est fondé sur les sources rabbiniques, la littérature et les documents ottomans, les récits des voyageurs et des diplomates européens.