

CULTURE CONTACTS AND THE MAKING OF CULTURES

Papers in Homage to
Itamar Even-Zohar



Edited by

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Gideon Toury

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Tel Aviv

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HIGH STATUS IMMIGRATION GROUP AND CULTURE RETENTION: GERMAN JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN BRITISH-RULED PALESTINE

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy

The case of the German Jewish immigrants in British-ruled Palestine raises questions of identity negotiations and culture conflicts in the context of immigration – in this case, not between different national groups but in a multi-ethnic situation within what is believed to be *one and the same* national society. Immigration research has dealt lengthily with questions of culture retention and asked if and how it correlates with ethnic segregation. The assimilationist view in the 1960s and 1970s saw a fatal bond between ethnic-cultural retention and problems of social integration. Today, on the contrary, a multi-cultural agenda prevails and ethnicity is being celebrated. However, students of immigration like Herbert Gans (1997), Mary Waters (1990) or Richard Alba (1990) have already argued against this clear-cut dichotomy and have shown that ‘ethnic options’ are often situational, influenced by their potential symbolic profits for the individuals, and do not necessarily go hand in hand with failed absorption.

While immigration research usually focuses on low-status immigrants, here I ask about a marginal-yet-high-status immigrant group. The critique of Israeli society mostly addresses the repression of ‘non-European’ groups through dominating *Ashkenazi* cultural machinery, but it often overlooks other formative identity battles that do not fit in this dichotomy, yet which were crucial for the westernization of the local culture. An intriguing case is the German Jewish newcomers (known under the popular nickname ‘*Yeckes*’) in their encounter with the veteran Jewish community (the ‘*Yishuv*’) in British-ruled Palestine (1918-1948).

Between 1933 and 1939, around 60,000 immigrants from Germany and German speaking territories arrived in Palestine.¹ Although they

¹ According to various sources, until 1928 the number of Jewish German immigrants in Palestine ranged between 1,000 and 2,132 people (Ben-Avram 1984). The estimated numbers vary for several reasons, such as the fact that not all the

constituted only about 24% of the massive immigration wave during these years, they were the dominant group in it (Eliav 1985; see detailed analysis in Gelber 1990).² At this point, the semi-autonomous Jewish society in Palestine was already in an accelerated process of formation. Although this has been a society of immigrants from its birth, the newcomers from Germany were specifically marked out as a foreign, culturally incompatible element. Their reputation – which has endured quite effectively to the present day – is that of ‘European aliens in the Levant’, that is, highly cultured people, deeply attached to their fatherland culture, who had hard time adapting to the local life. There is a whole folkloric lore about the *Yeckes*’ culture shock and inadaptability, that allegedly caused their segregation – how they suffered from the locals’ non-modern norms of public life, low hygiene and professional standard, bad taste, ignorance and lack of good manners – for all of which they called the locals ‘[primitive] Asians’.

But why and how deeply was their culture shock different (and so much harder) than that of those who came to Palestine from Eastern-Europe before and at the same time with them? It is usually taken for granted that it was their distinctive home culture, internalized firmly in their minds and bodies, which had prevented their assimilation. Yet, although much has been said about the peculiarities of the German Jews, their immigration story in Palestine still raises questions about identity formation, ethnic choices and culture estrangement. Obviously, the context of the *Yeckes*’ alienation in Palestine was *not* their encounter with a supposedly ‘native’, ‘oriental’ culture, but rather with that of mainstream Jewish community of predominantly East-European origins, who were the majority, and from whose ranks the political leadership and hegemonic Hebrew culture emerged (e.g., Ben-Avram 1984). Yet this encounter had a history: it was a continuation, and in a way a reversal, of the alienation with which German Jews approached the ‘Eastern Jews’ (*Ostjuden*) who immigrated to Germany ever since the 19th century (Aschheim 1982; Barkai and Mendes-Flohr 1996; Bloom

Jews who immigrated to Palestine from Germany were German citizens, or the fact that not all of them stayed in Palestine).

² The 5th *Aliya* is estimated to have comprised 245,000 people; this was a massive immigration wave, which actually doubled the Jewish population in Palestine, which in 1933 amounted to roughly 250,000 people (Eliav 1985)

2007; Volkov 2002; Weiss 2000; Wertheimer 1987). Only in Palestine the people from the East were now the veterans. Let me say my argument in advance: The *Yeckes'* retention tendencies and distinctive habitus were *induced* by an ongoing distinction process that involved the two parties, the immigrants and the veterans, and which was instrumental in – and not an obstacle to – their social integration. In what follows I will touch on some aspects of this dynamics, and then illustrate it by an example from the legal profession.

A few words of reservation are due: first, the material I have at my disposal, such as memoirs, autobiographies, popular anecdotes, newspaper articles and secondary literature, as well as some pilot interviews – all these discursive practices reflect the *image* of the *Yeckes* and not their actual performance. Nevertheless they all have created a mythology of the *Yeckes*, which is in itself a powerful social fact, to judge by the way it has been so intensely perpetuated. Second, there is certainly a problem of generalization here: the term *Yeckes* automatically brings to mind high cultured, urban liberal professionals and intellectuals; but this was just one layer (albeit relatively large) that amounted to roughly 10% of this population.³ All the others were merchants and retailers (roughly 30%), as well as blue-collar craftspeople and manual workers (roughly 20%; detailed analysis in Gelber 1990). Moreover, this large group of immigrants was sociologically diverse and stratified – there were Zionist and non-Zionist circles, secular and religious, those who came from the big cities or from small towns and rural provinces, highly educated and semi-educated, single young people and adolescents in groups, or families with capital and property. And as in other immigrant groups, their cultural options and integration strategies varied according to all these factors.⁴ Yet for all their stratification, they all

³ Their number amounted to around 7000 people (Eliav 1985, Gelber 1990: 57, and elsewhere), although in the beginning their share was higher and amounted to roughly 20% of the population of German immigrants. In spring 1933 the Jewish emigrants from Germany to Palestine were mainly medical doctors, lawyers and civil servants who suffered most drastically from the boycott on their jobs in Germany, and were able to receive an immigration certificate to Palestine as professionals (Niederland 1988; Barkai & Mendes-Flohr 1996).

⁴ In terms of socioeconomic background and motivation to immigrate, these immigrants are usually roughly grouped under three categories: the early Zion-

were tagged by – and readily embraced – a unifying stereotype of Prussian-like order freaks and cultural snobs. On the positive side, this stereotype includes self-discipline, integrity, perfectionism, diligence, efficiency and civilized good manners; yet at the same time it also conveys dogmatism, pedantry and obedience, bordering on inflexibility and mental rigidity, even blockheadedness (e.g., Ben-Avram 1984; Berkowitz 1997; Eliav 1985; Gay 1989; Gelber 1990; Getter 1979, 1981; Miron 2004; Niederland 1984; Reinharz 1978; Stachel 1995; Stone 1997).

And thirdly, regardless of this stereotype, by and large, the *Yekkes* had shown great ability to integrate socially and economically in many various fields, from commerce, industry or banking, not to mention medicine and the academia, to blue-collar professions and agriculture (e.g., Gelber 1990; Niederland 1984; Getter 1979; Stachel 1995). They were quite flexible in terms of occupational retraining and dispersion in the country – including in agricultural settlements and *Kibbutzim* (Gelber 1990, 173-257, 317-384; *Palestine and Jewish Emigration from Germany 1939*, 19-22),⁵ and even the rate of emigrants among them was not as high as commonly thought (Gelber 1990, 233-236; see also Erel, quoting Preuss 1989, 40-42).⁶

ists, who arrived during the 1920s, the ‘disillusioned’, or ‘belated Zionists’, who left Germany after the Nazis rose to power, and those who came as refugees after 1938 (Getter 1979; for an analysis of immigration patterns of German Jews in general, see Niederland 1996). Moreover, a critical distinction is usually drawn between the large wave of immigration of 1933-1939, which amounted to tens of thousands of people, and the small community of mostly Zionist German Jews who had settled in Palestine for ideological reasons already in the early 1920s; they came mostly from the urban, professional Jewish bourgeoisie, and later served as supportive and organizing elite for the newcomers during the 1930s. However, I suggest that age and marital status was a most important factor of distinction, as the inclinations to cultural closure of single young immigrants and adolescents were significantly weaker than these of older people who came with families and property.

⁵ There are different sources of data, but it seems safe to say that at least 15% of the German immigrants settled in rural communities. In other sources the number is even higher. According to the *Palestine and Jewish Emigration from Germany 1939* Report, 16,000 out of 50,000 German immigrants in Palestine settled in rural places of residence.

⁶ Walter Preuss reports about less than 10% of emigration among German Jew-

In spite of all this, however, they have never been considered by historians to be a central force in the formation of the Palestinian-Hebrew culture. An obvious reason seems to have been their relatively marginal political status, but this marginality is always explained in cultural term: The *Yeckes* are said to have been the proponents *par excellence* of a local civic bourgeois culture, which was allegedly not in line with what was seen as the core of modern Hebrew culture. It is widely believed that this culture was dominated by a socialist nation-building agenda which gave rise to a new, 'productive' society of workers and agricultural settlers, as opposed to – and at the cost of – an urban 'bourgeois' society. Apparently, this view was so compelling that it was taken a bit too much at face value to be a true reflection of reality (Ben-Avram & Nir 1995, Ben-Porat 1999, Bar-On and De Vries 2001).

However, as recent studies increasingly recognize, there was a growing Jewish urban middle-class in Palestine, even before the massive immigration of the Germans (Ben-Porath 1999; Karlinksy 2000). The majority of this community (about 80%) lived in towns already in the 1920s. They were predominantly low and middle middle-class people who sought in Palestine opportunities to improve their lives, many of whom were educated or semi-educated merchants, craftspeople and service employees.⁷ Among the 20% of Jews who lived in the rural frontiers,⁸ only small groups were actually experimenting the new life model as ascetic *anti-bourgeois* 'pioneers' in the spirit of the *labor-movement* Zionist ideals (Ben-Avram & Nir 1995, Ben-Porat 1999, Alroy 2004). But even the workers in the cities were often petit-bourgeois people who shared the same aspirations to modern, European-oriented secular values and life-standards that the German newcomers practically represented. Tel Aviv was already a fashion-aspiring town, and even if this did not apply to the entire population, when the German immi-

ish immigrants in Palestine until 1956, compared to over 25% of the general population in the years 1919-1931 (Cited in Erel 1989:14).

⁷ For instance, in 1922, 68,622 out of 83,749 Jews who lived in Palestine resided towns. The working Jewish population comprised of 19.9% agricultural workers, 18.4% in small factories, 14.5% in construction and 47.2% in the public services (Ben-Avram & Nir 1995: 54).

⁸ In 1922 it amounted to roughly 18% of the Jewish population; from 1924, with the 4th *Aliya*, the share of the Jewish urban population increased. (ibid).

grants arrived they could find in Palestine enough leisure facilities and well dressed, educated people like themselves. So that when Ziona Rabau, a known Tel Aviv Figure, herself a native of Palestine (1906) who married a German-born gynecologist, comments in her memoirs on her failure to meet the expectations of her husband's *Yecke* family that she wear bourgeois clothing – especially a hat (Rabau 1982: 105) – she is certainly exaggerating to make a point.

In light of this extant infrastructure, the cultural peculiarity of the German newcomers seem to have been a bit overstated, not because they were so totally different, but actually because of the *affinity* between them and the locals, the earlier immigrants (Sela-Sheffy 2006). In other words, the fact that the home-country repertoire is maintained by immigrants is almost trivial. As Even-Zohar has already established in his pioneering work on the construction of Hebrew culture in Palestine (1990 [1982]), even in cases of deliberate efforts to construct a new culture such as this one, much of the old culture still persists – if often unnoticed. The point with the *Yeckes* is that their retention tendencies have been *amplified and foregrounded* so as to serve their claim to *monopoly* on this repertoire.

Unlike cases of underprivileged immigrants, the *Yeckes* were in possession of resources – and not just economic ones. Their collective stereotype was quite profitable in the local 'market of symbolic goods', and therefore induced a dynamics of negotiating for its price.⁹ This negotiation is evidenced from many popular accounts where the attitude of the veterans wavers between recognizing the value of this behavior and delegitimizing it. Here is one example from a newspaper column by journalist Yaacov Gal (published posthumously, Gal 1952), which reported anecdotes from Tel Aviv law-court during the 1940s:

... I was going in a taxicab with a tourist down Herzl Street, a major traffic disaster especially during early noon. Suddenly an ambulance shrieked. None of the drivers were impressed, including our cab

⁹ Like other cases of 'symbolic ethnicity' (Gans 1979) their culture retention tendency was manifest in certain areas of life more than in others. While, as mentioned, they were known to be quite flexible, for instance, in occupation choices, their conservatism was more conspicuous in traditionally symbolic ethnic elements and matters of taste, such as, notable linguistic behavior, dress, music and leisure practices (as will be argued below).

driver. There was only one little car that seemed very obedient – it immediately turned to the side; the driver parked it and gestured to the ambulance to pass. Everyone else kept on driving without any effort to clear the way. ... The tourist commented: “I have never seen anything like this... only one person stopped their car”. To which the driver instantly replied: “Look at him and you can immediately see that he’s a *Yecke*. Only the *Yeckes* are such idiots.” (Gal 1952, p. 136; all translations are mine, R.S.)

This anecdote, which unbelievably resembles Israeli discourse of identity today (see Sela-Sheffy 2004), is typical for its ambivalence, in employing self-distancing techniques and implied admiration for ‘European-like civilized behavior’. It is told from two conflicting voices – the insider and the outsider. The taxi driver here reflects what the narrator sees as the default attitude of the locals: not only does the *Yecke* driver stand out from all the others in obeying norms of public order, but his behavior is actually mocked at as awkward and totally unfitting. To dissociate himself from the ‘faulty standards’ of the locals, the narrator mobilizes the perspective of a ‘civilized stranger’ – the tourist, who identifies with the *Yeckes*’ code of civil manners – and expresses astonishment.

On the other hand, many other reports were plainly aggressive and confrontational. Discussions of the ‘integration problem’ of the German newcomers were common in the local newspapers during the 1930s, where they were accused with opportunism and indifference to the nation-building project. Now, the same reproaching discourse had already been directed against earlier petit-bourgeois immigrants throughout the 1920s (e.g., Ben-Avram & Nir 1995). Yet in the case of the *Yeckes*’ it was tinted with resentment towards their cultural habits – and specifically their use of the German *language*, which was interpreted as a patronizing claim for cultural superiority.¹⁰ An article in *Hapoel Hatzair* in 1939 says:

¹⁰ The *Yeckes*’ linguistic resistance, namely, their inability or refusal to speak Hebrew, is a typical aspect of their mythology. I personally have heard the same generic story from two different persons, about their mother who was asked: ‘are you not ashamed that you live in Israel for so long and don’t know Hebrew?’ to which she replied: ‘it is easier to be ashamed than to learn this language!’

[The German immigrants] are absolutely certain, without any shame or embarrassment, that the Yishuv must adapt to them. They arrogantly speak German, in cafés and on the bus, in shops, everywhere in public. Moreover, they are deeply insulted and often retort in an insolent and aggressive manner if anyone refuses to respond in German ... The desire for a new life and a Hebrew culture, which is the driving force of our life here, is absolutely alien to them.... one often gets the impression that the 70,000 German speakers in the country are the 'majority' within the 300,000 Hebrew speakers in the Yishuv ... This is not a mere linguistic issue, but also a cultural-intellectual one. (Ben-David, 1939, p. 11)

However, German was by no means the only other language spoken by Jews in Palestine at the time. Asher Benari, a young German immigrant who arrived in Palestine with the group that founded Kibbutz HaZorea (1935), comments on this in his memoirs: 'We were newcomers [...still] knew very little Hebrew, and what was even worse – we did not speak Yiddish, the ordinary spoken language in the *Yishuv* which at that time was composed predominantly of descendents of Eastern-Europe' (Benari 1986: 82–83). Apparently, what was resented by the locals was not just the *Yeckes'* avoidance of Hebrew but specifically their use of *German*, understood as a token of snobbery.

From the viewpoint of the German immigrants, this was certainly a matter of distinction. While many of them may have been ambivalent about Hebrew, most of them abhorred Yiddish (e.g., Cohen 2000; this sentiment has hardly waned even until today, as emerges from *Yecke's* memoirs and interviews). This aversion was obviously rooted in the socio-cultural stratification of the Jews already in Germany. It was this self-distancing attitude on the part of the Jews aspiring to become German towards their brothers from the East, especially since many of these German Jews were themselves only first or second generation of Eastern-European immigrants in Germany (Barkai and Mendes-Flohr 1996, and elsewhere). Gerda Cohen, born and raised in a West German town, accounts for this situation most openly in her autobiographical book:

... Yiddish was despised and ridiculed [by her relatives and herself] and regarded as an aberration of German, far removed from Poetry and literature ... Most of the children [in the youth movement] were not entirely *Yeckes*, their parents had emigrated to Germany from Poland and brought along Yiddish and the books that they loved. But their children

learned very quickly to feel embarrassed for the broken German of their parents; they, themselves, spoke and read only good German (Cohen 2000: 18).¹¹

Now, many of these Germanized children from the East were also among the *Yeckes* who arrived in Palestine. This is a well known fact, but astonishingly left out as irrelevant to the story of the *Yeckes* in Palestine. Reading memoirs and biographies of these people one cannot fail to be struck by the rapid and quasi-natural acculturation of these Jewish families and their accelerated attainment of a sound sense of Germanness – with its modern, secular, highly cultured habitus – sometime within the span of *one generation*.¹² For these people, arriving in Palestine was the second immigration in their own or their parents' lifetime. Only this time they were immigrants with symbolic capital, and Germanness was *their* own prime asset. Precisely because they were newly arrived self-made Germans, they were obviously reluctant to give it up.

In short, while in many other cases it is the *Been Heres* who exercise culture distinction practices to dissociate themselves from lower-status

¹¹ The ancestors of the narrator herself were veteran Jewish families in the Rhine area. A child of petit-bourgeois family, a retailer and a dressmaker, in a provincial town near Dortmund, she nevertheless became very aware of this cultural distinction: 'In the Jewish school in Dortmund there were many children of people from Eastern Europe, they were called *Ostjuden*, and my mother did not like it. My father was easier. He worked not once with merchants who came from East Europe and he liked them [...] the question where the children should go to school was very disturbing [for my parents...]' (Cohen 2000: 7).

¹² One such typical story is that of Cessi Rosenbluth, a daughter of a highbrow wealthy family (a lawyer and an intellectual lady engaged in community work) from Berlin, whose two grandfathers came from provincial orthodox Jewish communities in Poland. Consider, for instance, her description of her uncle's (fathers' brother) self-fashioning trajectory (which resembles many other *Yeckes'*):

He left his parents' home [on the Polish border area] at early age. First he kept on with his father's business – a textile and haberdashery shop, and after some vacillations opened a large wholesale business of lacework and decoration, and moved most of his family – including my father – to Berlin. He did not have the basic formal education, but his whole appearance and conduct were those of a gentle noble man. He was expert in art, a perfect athlete, he particularly loved back-horse riding [...] (Rosenbluth 21-22).

invaders (I am thinking, e.g., of Norbert Elias' essay on *The established and the outsider*, Elias & Scotson 1994), in Palestine it was the German *Come-Heres* who controlled the culture index and were able to profit from monopolizing it as their own exclusive cultural baggage. In light of this, their retention tendencies seem to have been a resourceful strategy of 'gaining a seat at the common table' (Boyer 2001, Sela-Sheffy 1999) rather than just a matter of habitus conservatism.

Another topos to illustrate this point is the *Yeckes'* music-loving mythology. While music life flourished in Tel Aviv already in the 1920s (with the foundation of the Opera [1924] and the first music school [1912]), the *Yeckes* have been recognized as the real arbiters of musical taste. One of the many examples from the memoirs by Ziona Rabau divulges how music rituals worked for the *Yeckes* in creating distinction: it was not so much about participating in music consumption as it was a *contest* over the right musical style and way to consume it:

[The *Yeckes*] used to have 'record evening' parties in their apartments where they listened with great concentration, motionless, to pieces by Schoenberg or Bartok, who were held as modern composers in the avant-garde cultural world of those days. Once, ... I was invited to such a circle and was forced to listen to this music for a whole evening. Finally, I said naively: 'why precisely Bartok in such a Hamsin evening, why not playing a little bit of Mozart?' Well, they all raised their eyebrows, astonished, apparently, at my Sabra ignorance, and placed their judgment, too, and as a result of my straightforwardness I had never been invited to this admired circle again. (Rabau 1984: 110-111).

An example from the legal field

Let me now sketch briefly the instrumentality of yet another central topos in the *Yeckes'* mythology – their sense of professionalism (Ben-Avram 1984) – with an example from the legal profession (for detailed analysis see Sela-Sheffy 2006). The legal field seems, at first glance, to be a typical arena for examining this dynamics, if only because this profession was largely pursued by Jews in Germany, mainly in the big cities (Jarausch 1991, Niederland 1996),¹³ and also because the founders of

¹³ Over 10% of German immigrants to Palestine were professionals (e.g., Eliav 1985). According to Niederland, in 1933 there were 5000 Jewish lawyers in Germany; Jarausch notes that in Prussia their number amounted to 28.5% of the

Israeli legal system and its canonical historical figures were a group of German born lawyers (among them, Israel's first Minister of Justice, the first President of the Supreme Court, the first General Attorney, and first State Comptroller, Siegfried Moses). However, surprisingly enough, the *Yeckes* were *not* the majority of Jewish legal practitioners under the British rule. For one thing, the number of lawyers who emigrated from Germany to Palestine was small compared to their share in the Jewish population in Germany itself (Niederland 1988). Moreover, those who came to Palestine often failed to integrate in the legal system and were forced, at least in the beginning, to retraining.¹⁴ Whatever the practical reasons were, there was also a *cultural* reasoning to this absence; a *Yecke* lawyer who became a carpenter explains: '...the opinion [of my private Hebrew tutor] was that as a typical *Yecke*, I could never adapt to the 'corrupt' conditions in the country, that is, I will not be able to 'get on' with the officials, I will not understand the mentality of the local clients, and I would never know how to run a trial the way it should be run in Palestine ...'. (S. Wichselbaum, quoted in Gelber 1990, p. 447)

But even if many German professionals failed to actually practice their profession, their self-perception as 'professionals at heart', endowed with professional ethos and dignity, still persisted. This was true for all the professions, including the blue-collar ones (Ben-Avram 1984), but there was special aura attached to the legal profession, as an

general population of lawyers; in the big cities, like Berlin and Frankfurt, it reached over 45%, and in Breslau it was 35.6% (Jarausach 1991, 176-177; and compare with Barkai & Mendes-Flohr 1996, also Niederland 1988. On the share of academics and professionals among Jewish immigrants from Germany between the world wars see Niederland 1996, 86-87).

¹⁴ According to data presented in a review of the 'German *Aliya* in the *Yishuv*,' published in *Hapoel Hatzair* in November 1934, during 1933-1934 only 250 Jewish lawyers (out of 5000 who lived in Germany, and 600 who left Germany until June 1934; Niederland 1996) arrived in Palestine (compared to 550 physicians). Only 135 of them passed the local bar examinations or intended to take them; 175 underwent retraining, and the rest turned to farming (Brachman 1934, p. 13. See also Gelber 1990, 447-449). However, upon the establishment of the state, many of them managed to integrate in the judiciary civil service, which was to a large extent controlled by an elite circle of *Yecke* jurists (Gelber *ibid.*, and below).

icon of German Bourgeoisie's bureaucratic liberalism (Ledford 1996). So that when Journalist Gerda Luft, recounts the career of her husband, Zvi Luft, as the Secretary of the Agricultural Federation, she tells about his 'extraordinary organizing methods' in fighting for order and cost-cutting. Although Luft himself was born in Polish Galicia, his years of law schooling and practice in Vienna qualified him in her mind as a *Yecke*: 'It was the fight of a man from Central-Europe who studied law, with the impulsive man from Eastern-Europe, who came from the *Shtetl* and knew nothing about organizing a modern office' (Luft 1987: 63).

However, all evidence shows that the legal profession in Palestine served as an important habitat for a local bourgeois culture even without the intervention of the German immigrants. In fact, precisely for this reason it was so resented by the labor-party, to which it was a symbol of a non-productive, capitalist, urban Diaspora occupation, and a threat to the career choices of the younger generations (e.g., Neeman 1955; Löwenberg 1956, also Mash 1955 and Ankarion 1955).

Yet despite ideological criticism, the Jewish lawyers were rapidly growing as a professional guild. The Lawyers' Associations and the Federation of Jewish Lawyers in Palestine (which were operating ever since the 1920s)¹⁵ were struggling to establish unified ethics and working procedures, and to impose self-management and control. In their reports they used the national rhetoric, but only as a lip-service. In reality they had to cope with suffocated market and meager opportunities for Jewish professionals under the British rule (Shamir 2001, Bar-On and De-Vries 2001), and to fight all this they evoked *professionalism*. They preached 'the dignity of the profession', based on expertise and credibility, complained about corruption and advocated the type of lawyer that '[sees clients in his office and] conceives his duty as a man of law who fights with legal means' (*Report* 1944, p. 26). A pressing issue, for instance, was the adherence to unified and fixed fees. The strong symbolic effect of such professional regulations may be understood only in light of the fact that in the local culture they were regarded as uncommon and, along with other issues such as general stand-

¹⁵ According to Strasman (1984), the first Hebrew Lawyers' association was founded in Tel-Aviv in 1922 by eight lawyers (out of the 14 then practicing in Tel-Aviv). The first national convention of the Federation of Jewish Lawyers in Palestine was held in Jerusalem in the spring of 1928 (Strasman, 1984, 161-162).

ards of service, or regulated work and rest hours, they were seen as decent European norms of modern civic conduct.¹⁶

Furthermore, there was a whole repertoire of 'how to behave' as a professional *person*, which these organizations promoted, by caring for the lawyers' working conditions -- for instance, by upgrading office furniture, installing telephones, adapting their attire to the weather (short khaki uniforms for the summer), or establishing regular vacations and providing cultural needs such as seminars and lectures, trips etc. (e.g., *Review* 1944, p. 42).

The popularity of this profession can be inferred from the increasing demand for legal education in the 1930s and 1940s (Lissak 1994), and the expansion of legal training venues, in spite of the limited offer of jobs. Next to the only authorized British-Mandate Law School in Jerusalem, there was founded in 1935 a Hebrew School of Law in Tel Aviv. This school operated regularly and even expanded from its inauguration to its merging with the Hebrew University in 1949,¹⁷ with almost no support from the authorities. One reason for this was the fact that it was the only institute of higher education in Tel-Aviv.¹⁸ Even if most of the students eventually used the legal education as a springboard for entering other white-collar clerical jobs, the demand for this line of education suggests that it was treated as a desired milestone of an educated urban life trajectory.

And yet the German immigrants were hardly represented at the Hebrew Law School. The majority of the students were East-European

¹⁶ This judgment is suggested by the impressions recounted by veterans who marveled at the manners of German immigrants' in trade and service (e.g., Horowitz 1993, p. 26; see also Yithak Navon cited in Erel 1989, p. 14; also Gay 1989, p. 574).

¹⁷ Except for the war years (1942-1943), the number of students in the school grew steadily, from 119 in 1935 to 175 in 1947/48 (based on the 1947/48 *Yearbook*).

¹⁸ It was certainly regarded as such by the Tel-Aviv municipality. In a letter to the President of the Courts, Israel Rokach, Mayor of Tel-Aviv, writes: 'The school's scientific level is well known, and it meets an important need for higher education of the Hebrew *Yishuv* in Tel-Aviv and its vicinity. [...] As mayor, I wholeheartedly support their just request that local residents should have a venue for higher education in Tel-Aviv, without the need to travel abroad or to Jerusalem [...]' (Rokach 1945).

immigrants and natives of Palestine,¹⁹ and so were the faculty – they were mostly jurists from Eastern Europe, although many of them had acquired their education at least partly at German universities.²⁰ This demography is telling. For, despite the fact that German born lawyers did not represent the majority of the active legal community, there emerged an elite group from their ranks, who enjoyed the best reputation as owners of most respectable law firms (Rubinstein 1975; Saltzberger & Oz-Saltzberger 1998, Yadin 1990; Shachar 1991). I am referring, first and foremost, to Pinchas Rosen (then Felix Rosenblueth), Israel's first Minister of Justice; Moshe Smoira, the first Chief President of the Supreme Court; and Haim (then Hermann) Cohen, the first General Attorney.²¹ These prominent German personalities disregarded the educational-nationalist aspirations of the Hebrew Law teachers,²² and

¹⁹ According to the school yearbook for 1937, out of 120 students (both in the Law and Economics departments; the number of students in the Law department was normally twice bigger than in the department of economics) 45% were immigrants from Poland, 20.8% came from Russia and 10% were natives of Palestine. Only 2 students were born in Germany.

²⁰ 3 out of 11 professors in the first year of the school were Russian or Polish born who had acquired their legal education in German speaking universities – in Bern, Koenigsberg, Tuebingen and Vienna; only one of them, Fritz Naftali, was a German born *Yecke* (Tel Aviv Archive, folder 1826a).

²¹ Other German immigrants who held key positions in the state legal system upon its establishment were Uri Yadin (then Rudolf Heinsheimer), the first head of the Legislation Department (Cohen and Yadin also served as committee chairmen on the pre-state Judicial Council), and Siegfried Moses, the first State Controller, as well as several known Supreme Judges (Such as Menachem Dunkelblum, Alfred Vitkon, Moshe Landau, Yoel Sussman and Benjamin HaLevi. Dunkelblum and Sussman were regarded as *Yeckes* by their education and personal conduct, although they were born in Austrian-Galicia; Oz-Salzberger and Salzberger 1998).

²² Something about the clash between these teachers' scholarly-ideologist self-image and the 'plainly professional' mindset may be gleaned from a very bitter document penned by Zvi Rudy, a veteran faculty member of the Tel Aviv School of Law and Economy (Rudy 1959). Recounting the School's history, he characterizes the founding group of teachers and students as a select team of '[...] seekers of knowledge and teachings, who despite their desire for professional training of the highest academic quality, have never regarded establishing law practices and gold-raking bookkeeping firms as their ultimate goal'

had no problem cooperating with the British authorities. And still they were very much accepted by the Jewish political leadership as providers of professional expertise, in spite of their moderate Zionism which was at odds with mainstream politics. Eventually it was they, and not the proponents of the Hebrew Law School, that left a personal mark and later were called to occupy key positions in the legal system when the State of Israel was founded.

This example from the legal field then puts in perspective the sense of culture alienation of the German immigrants. It suggests that, beyond the political conjuncture that was at play,²³ it was precisely this already emerging civic-professional infrastructure that opened the channels for elite German-born lawyers to become so dominant in this profession. Paradoxically, their accentuated 'bourgeois' profile and marginal political position helped them become recognized as *the* representatives of this profession by the establishment and by the public at large.

No doubt, these influential individuals were quite aware of the value of their 'Germanness' as a social resource. In their memoirs and interviews they always rely very keenly on their shared experience with their *Landsmanschaften* and construct their communal memory (see e.g., Bondy 1990; Smoira-Cohen 1997; Yadin 1990; Shashar 1989; and others).²⁴ But their emphasized ethnic kinship – extensively expressed

(Rudy 1959, p. 2). For the 'rising stars' in the lawyers' milieu he has nothing but contempt, calling them opportunists, lacking Zionist vision and zeal, and craving money and titles.

²³ It is commonly argued that the reason for the appointment of Pinchas Rosen as Israel's first Minister of Justice in 1948 was political: prime-minister Ben-Gurion wanted to share power with the Progressive Party led by Rosen. Opinions differ, however, on whether this appointment indicates a lack of respect on Ben-Gurion's part for the justice portfolio (Baron 2001; Harris 2002; and Haim Cohen as quoted in Shashar 1989, p. 99).

²⁴ This social network naturally comprised a larger group of people who were not necessarily involved in the legal field. Some were not even of German origin. It is, however, possible to distinguish a pool of people, the majority of whom were of German origin, with whom this 'circle' of German lawyers maintained close contacts. Shlomo Erel counts in this list Arthus Rupp, Felix Danziger, Georg Landauer, Ludwig Feiner and Moshe and Esther Kalvari (Erel 1989, 186-187). The most prominent others in this circle include Haim Arlozo-

through collective pronouns such as ‘ours’, ‘one of us’ or ‘brothers’ – was not coupled with social isolation. On the contrary, it helped their access into the local Jewish elite. Gerda Luft, who was part of the ‘old German guard’ and associated with the Labor Party through her two husbands, Haim Arlozorov and Zvi Luft, describes this sense of belonging-through-distinction:

... Arlozorov had equal standing with the workers’ leaders right from the start. His advantage was his western education. ... Luft also had equal standing, mainly due to his organizational skills. ... Some of the leaders, ... I already knew from Berlin. ... But my closest contacts were with the *Yeckes*, who were already settled in Jerusalem, By the 1920s it was already clear that there were differences in style between Eastern and Western European immigrants. That difference clearly sharpened during the 1930s wave of German immigration. (Luft 1987, 81-82)

Let me conclude by citing from a series of conversations with the first General Attorney and later Supreme Judge Herman [Haim] Cohen (Shashar 1989). These conversations were conducted in the late 1980s, but they still reflect quite vividly this dynamics of integration through distinction: While Cohen was at home in the highest echelons of society, his incidental comments reveal ‘the importance of being German’ as an exclusive code on which his authority was built. He often reminds us that his clients were mostly *Yeckes* like himself, and throws here and there evaluative comments such as: ‘My client was a *Yecke* and it was inconceivable that he would not speak the truth’ (Shashar 1989, p. 201). And here is how he perpetuates the *Yecke* legend in describing his close friend (and former boss), the first minister of justice, Pinchas Rosen as against the background of the first government of Israel:

He was a *Yecke* down to the core, and that also was manifest in professional matters. ... He was a *Yecke* in appearance as well: always closely shaved and spotlessly dressed. You would never find [in his office] a piece of paper or a book lying about out of place, because he could not tolerate disorder. By the way, in this respect he found an ally in me. I am the same way That was another trait of Rosen – his thoroughness – unlike most of the other ministers. Ben-Gurion could be very thorough when he so wished, but only if he was sufficiently interested. Most of

rov, Kurt Blumenfeld, Max Tuchler, Erich Cohen, Moshe Landau, Gustav Krojanker, Azriel Karlebach, Julius and Johanna Rosenfeld, Zalman Schocken and Zalman Shazar.

the other ministers would make decisions ... without extensive research, rather unlike Rosen [Shashar 1989, 98-99]. ... 'Ben-Gurion selected Fritz Naftali and Giora Josefthal for cabinet membership only because of their professionalism, although they were Mapai supporters. Both were Yekke academics ... Ben-Gurion was amazed not only by [the Yekkes'] accents, but also by their professional and moral standards. He would often ask me where did the Yekkes (and the Yemenites) get such excellent talents from' (Shashar 1989, p. 79).

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