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EARLY FOREIGN PENETRATION IN THE HOLY LAND DURING THE LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD: THE ROLE OF BRITAIN

Khalid EL-AWAISI*, Emine YİĞİT**

ABSTRACT: *Western foreign interest in controlling the Holy Land throughout history has been successful in several occasions, such as the crusades and the British occupation in the twentieth century. However modern interest in occupying this land started practically with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt and with his failed attempt to occupy the Holy Land, during which he called for the 'restoration' of Jews to Palestine. His campaign had two long-term consequences, it instigated British interest mingled with the idea of "Jewish Restoration" to Palestine in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. Evangelical Christian groups were the first to promote the idea of an official political representation, which led to the opening of a British consulate in Jerusalem, during the occupation of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Other Western powers followed suit, with the aim of consolidating their influence and penetrating the region. The British were able to consolidate their influence and penetration of the region through initially establishing a consulate in Jerusalem and followed by many steps until occupying the Holy Land in the fall of 1917 and assessing in establishing a Zionist client-state that would serve western interest in the region.*

KEYWORDS: Britain, European, Imperialism, Zionism, Christian-Zionism, Foreign Consulates, Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

The French attempt at occupying the Holy Land in the late 18th century was a turning point in the history of the region as a whole. This occupation not only affected the Ottomans, but also worried the British, as its commercial routes in its eastern colonies were under threat, putting it at risk of losing its political superiority. For this reason, England did not leave the Ottomans alone in their fight against France, but helped pervade the existence of the Ottomans in this region for another century. This instigated in the British mind, for the first time since the crusades, the idea of bringing the Holy Land under its control once again. British penetration started with evangelical Protestant groups, who had little to no representation in the region. Thus, both politically and religiously, the Jews were a tool for Britain to gain a foothold in the region. Missionary groups, for

* Associate Professor of Islamic History, Social Sciences University of Ankara (ASBU), Turkey, khalid.elawaisi@asbu.edu.tr.
** PhD Candidate in History, Mardin Artuklu University, Turkey, yigit.emine.44@gmail.com.

religious reasons, wanted to both convert the Jews and take them back to this land in preparation for the second coming of Christ. Meanwhile, the political establishment saw that advocating the protection of the Jews would be their way in, just as France and Russia protected other minorities. Britain was only one of many Western players competing for control over the Holy Land in order to increase their influence and penetration (Owen 1981: 83; Buzpınar 2003: 108).

Britain capitalised on its influence over the Ottomans for political gains, especially after supporting them against the French and Muhammad Ali Pasha. It was able to establish a British consulate in Jerusalem (1838) and this was their first political step in creating a strong foothold in the region. This was swiftly matched by other Western powers. However, Britain was ahead in developing the idea of a buffer or client state that would preserve its colonial interests. Britain lobbied the Ottomans to allow Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestine, and through its consulate, extended protection to Jews in the region. Britain's scheme was not approved by the Ottomans, and although Palmerston was adamant to fulfil this project, he was not successful. However, he did manage to lay the foundations for subsequent measures. Britain continued to take a number of steps in this direction in the nineteenth century and was eventually able to occupy the Holy Land at the turn of the century. During its occupation or mandate over Palestine, Britain continued to push its scheme forward, and after preparing the Zionists, it handed Palestine over to them to act as a client state, which would continue Western imperialist and colonialist ideals. This paper will therefore investigate this early interest and the way Western powers, and particularly Britain, were successful in penetrating and imposing their influence in the region during the late Ottoman period. In doing so, it will set the historical background for the creation of the Zionist state in the Holy Land.

EARLY FOREIGN INTEREST IN ISLAMICJERUSALEM UNTIL 1840

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw major changes in Europe with the rise of new Western powers spreading their imperialist reach across the world. This, together with the decline of the Ottoman Empire politically and economically, as well as the reduction of its territorial spread, was capitalised on by Western powers to increase their influence. The weakness of the Ottomans and their increased dependence on foreign military intervention thus was taken advantage of. Western powers exploited Ottoman domestic affairs through intervention in its affairs and sought to establish direct links with minorities living within Ottoman territories (Al-Kayyali 1990: 22-24). The Capitulations signed with the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century was to become a tool for foreign penetration in the Holy Land and a way to assert their influences. Indeed, Russia extended its reach under the pretext of protecting Orthodox Christians, with France doing the same through protecting the Roman Catholics and so on (Friedman 1986: 281-282). France and Russia, in this respect, were more powerful

in comparison to Britain, which did not at the time, have any minority to protect and assert its influence.

The Holy Land or Islamicjerusalem since the late Ayyubid period remained under Muslim control until 1917. Yet the dream of reconquering the Holy Land never vanished from European minds. Christopher Columbus was determined to "save" Jerusalem from the Muslims, embedded with an apocalyptic belief of the "Second Coming" of Christ as a precondition together with the conversion of all people to Christianity (Delaney 2006: 261). However, European powers did not gain enough strength to attempt this until the late 18th century, starting with Napoleon's 1798 expedition into the East. Napoleon attempted to gain allies by stirring up anti-Ottoman sentiments. He even went further and invited Jews, while encamped at Acre, to reclaim Palestine and re-establish ancient Jerusalem. He claimed that they are the "*Rightful heirs of Palestine*", appealing to them that their "*political existence as a nation among nations*" needed to be restored (Dowty 2014). Although there was no rally of Muslim support against the Ottomans, nor was there a visible Jewish response to Napoleon's call to *restore* Jews into Palestine, only a few decades later, the situation became more viable for such a vision to become a reality (Dowty 2014:4; El-Awaisi 2019: 13). Napoleon's expedition had reignited memories of the crusades, which was reflected in the growth of orientalism in Europe (Hillenbrand 2004: 202), as well as in arousing British official interest in Palestine (Kayyali 1990: 22).

Foreign relations between the Ottomans and the French were affected unfavourably after their campaigns in Egypt and Palestine. Britain was instrumental in reducing French influence by allying with the Ottomans since the French presence threatened its colonial influence in Asia (Buzpınar 2003: 107). The British military involvement later lead to their increased interest in Palestine, both strategically and religiously. In the early nineteenth century, Britain aimed to gain a stronger presence in the region. Yet with no minorities to protect, Britain emulated French and Russian tactics in the region through establishing connections with minorities. It used the Jews in Palestine, the Druzes in Lebanon and the new Protestant churches as its way in. Behind the idea of protecting religious minorities *"lay the major political and strategic interest"* (Al-Kayyali 1990:23-24). These minorities were generally happy with such backing, as it gave them more leeway against the Ottomans. Britain, through its support of Protestant missionaries, closely connected with the idea of the 'restoration' of Jews to Palestine as a prelude to the return of the Messiah, was now gaining a foothold in the region. British institutions were established with the idea of converting Jews to Christianity and taking them to Palestine, such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1799 and the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews or the London Jews Society (LJS) in 1809. The latter had an influential role in Syria during this period and established a Palestine Fund in 1825 to encourage its activity (Talbot 2013; Buzpınar 2003: 109). These efforts were important in terms of the potential future presence of Britain in the region.

Britain also benefited from its position as allies of the Ottomans in terms of dominating trade in the region (Owen 1981: 83-84). A gradual penetration was initiated, and besides trade, missionary activities were also underway, followed by the establishment of a consulate, as well as archaeological and cartographical work, most of which was funded by the British Government (Bar-Yosef 2005: 2-3).

Since 1824, missionaries believed that it was necessary to have a British consul in Jerusalem; both Rev. W.B. Lewis and Rev. John Nicolayson considered it essential to establish an official presence in the city. These opinions did not however go further than the limited circles of missionary groups (Perry 2003:29). There are no records of official requests to the British Government on this issue. However, mentions continued to be made of this in missionary literature until the British government decided to establish the consulate, news of which was rejoiced by these groups. However, the extent of their influence over this decision is rather vague, as this was not well-documented until after the decision was made to establish the consulate.

The occupation of Jerusalem, Palestine and Syria in 1831 by Muhammad Ali Pasha under the command of his son Ibrahim Pasha, as well as the liberal climate created for non-Muslims, helped foster more foreign influence within the region. Capitalising on the bad relationships between Muhammad Ali Pasha and the Ottoman Empire, foreign powers were able to strengthen their foothold in the region. His rule gave hope to Western powers, as his son Ibrahim Pasha, the new governor of the region, abolished restrictions on Christians, Jews and foreign inhabitants. With these actions, he was hoping for Western support to gain independence from the Ottomans. There were demands for the establishment of missionaries and churches in the region, which would not have been possible earlier (Buzpınar2003:110,111; Satış 2013:211). Rev. John Nicolayson had come to the region on 3 January 1826 determined to establish a permanent seat in the Holy City for the Church of England. This was not possible until 1833, following the Egyptian Occupation. Nicolayson states: "*only when the Egyptian forces headed by Ibrahim Pasha first entered Palestine.... the Permanent Protestant mission in Jerusalem proper could first be founded only in 1833*" (Carmel 1986:111; Buzpınar 2003:111).

British Protestants freely engaged in missionary activities in the period of the Egyptian rule. The idea of a consulate was proposed a few times, as well as the establishment of a Protestant church. Before the end of Egyptian rule, Britain founded the first foreign diplomatic mission in Jerusalem in 1838 (Abu Manneh, 1990:9). With the consulate, Britain was in a stronger position than other foreign powers. Protestant missionary activities were also strengthened reciprocatively across the whole of Syria with the support of the British Consulate in Jerusalem. The inauguration of the Suez Canal and the subsequent British occupation of Egypt was an important turning point for the British strategic penetration of the

Holy Land and the occupation of Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bar-Yosef 2005: 2-3).

FOREIGN CONSULATES IN JERUSALEM

Prior to the Egyptian occupation of Syria, some Europeans and foreigners would come to the region but were unable to establish themselves there. However, the Capitulation between France and the Ottomans granted France the right to appoint consuls in the cities under Ottoman control. France thus appointed its first consul, Jean Lempereur, in Jerusalem in 1623. It was the outcome of lengthy negotiations between the French Ambassador and the Porte. However, this was short-lived, as it is alleged that the consul had supported the rebellion of the Druze Amir of Lebanon, Fakhr al-Din, and were presumably going to deliver the city of Jerusalem to him (Ze'evi 1996:21-22, 165; Avci 2004: 63). Based on these accusations, the consul was arrested and deported merely a year later (Ze'evi 1996: 63). It is argued that the reason for this failure was the fear of the local Muslim community in Jerusalem of a renewed crusade, which was recorded in a petition written to Sultan Mustafa I by notables and inhabitants of Jerusalem. In it, they stated; "*If the [French] consul is allowed to reside here… it will cause a great corruption, especially as our city is the focus of attention of the infidels, may God destroy them all… and we fear to be occupied as a result of this as has had happened in previous eras*" (Salhieh 2006:97). Successors of the first French consul did not have much luck either: Sébastien de Brémond (1699–1700) and Jean de Blacas (1713–1714) stayed in their positions for under one year in the Holy City (Mochon 1996: 932). Thus, foreign consuls could not establish themselves in Jerusalem prior to the Egyptian occupation. Influence was asserted through Catholic and Greek Convents, protected by France and Russia, within the city. This continued to be the case until the armies of Muhammad Ali Pasha came to the region, prompting Western powers to consider establishing consulates in Jerusalem (Eliav 1997: 16, 114).

Under the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha, Bayt al-Maqdis was opened up to foreign powers through the establishment of consulates, as well as permitting missionary activities in the region. Muslim inhabitants would not have had a say this time round, as the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his son was seen as a period of injustice against the local population, while conversely, a period of 'tolerance' to non-Muslims and foreigners. His oppressive policies against Muslims caused rebellions against his rule in the region of Islamicjerusalem. Many of the inhabitants saw the actions of Muhammad Ali Pasha as that of a Christian ruler and not a Muslim one. It is reported that many would say in this period that "*the country had become Christianised and the rule of Islam has ended*", as is recorded by Konstantin Bazili, in his history of Ottoman Syria and Palestine (Ilhami 2016: 10). There were a number of revolts in 1830s against his rule by the local population, but it is argued that they were more proto-nationalist revolts by the *fellahin* who happened to be overwhelmingly Muslim. In any case, the actions of

Muhammad Ali Pasha can be interpreted in his efforts to win over European powers to his side. In contrast Europeans, and particularly the British, wanted to exploit the situation to their advantage, politically, economically and demographically.

European powers, with their conflicting interests, desired to expand their influence in the region through not only extending their control over religious communities, but also by creating a political presence. Britain was the first to do so in 1838 and other countries followed suit and began to establish consulates in Jerusalem in subsequent years. Prussia founded a consulate in 1842 (Satış 2013:208), France and Sardinia in 1843, Austria in 1847, Spain in 1854. America followed suit in 1856 and Russia 1857 (Scholch 1990:229; Avci 2004:64). These consulates claimed that they were established to both observe and protect the rights of Christians and Jews in the region (Satış 2013:187,208; Leest 2008:35-36). Rivalry was apparent between these foreign powers (Eliav 1997: 17). Alphonse d'Alonzo, former attaché to the Consulate General of France in Jerusalem, wrote in 1901 that Russian and French Consuls were "*irreconcilable rivals*" (D'Alonzo 1901: 110).

THE ROLE OF MISSIONARIES IN ESTABLISHING THE BRITISH CONSULATE

The idea of establishing an official British presence was first proposed by missionary groups. Rev. W.B. Lewis, who had travelled to Palestine in 1824, emphasises *"the necessity of having a resident [British] consul in the Holy City"* in a letter written in 21 June 1825 (Talbot 2013:45; Madox 1834:357-360) This was also the position of the Danish Rev. John Nicolayson (Crombe 1998:45-46) put in writing on 23 May 1825 by Dr George Dalton in which he mentions that this issue was communicated earlier (Jewish Expositor 1826:76). This was published in *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel* in 1826, but acknowledging that the decision rests with the British government. Dalton expands on the issue following his visit to Jerusalem, and in his observations he includes the proposal for the appointment of a British Consul in the Holy City (Perry 2003:29; Jewish Expositor 1826:76). He tries to make the case for having the consul in Jerusalem and that it is worthy of serious consideration, then resting the case with the British government (Jewish Expositor 1826:76). However, there was no record of this being communicated to the British Government, as these proposals, as Perry argues, were limited to the audience of *The Jewish Expositor* (Perry 2003: 29).

Missionary groups found it relatively easier to operate under the liberal Egyptian rule during which they were able to secure a strong foothold into the region; this served their ambitions much more easily in later years. One of their aims was to spread British missionaries amongst the Jews with the aim of converting them to Christianity in preparation for the second coming of Christ. Protestant missionary activities however didn't succeed amongst the Jews in the region. They requested the establishment of a Protestant Church in 1833 and

continued to press for a consulate to give diplomatic support for their activities (Buzpınar 2003:111).

Official correspondence does not make it clear if there was any evangelical influence on the matter of establishing the consulate, and thus their level of influence on the decision-making is not clear. However, this continued to be on the agenda of the London Jews Society. It took over a decade before the British establishment was interested in establishing a consulate in Jerusalem through the insistence of Britain's Consul-General in Syria. No record of evangelical or missionary influences is found until after a decision was made by the Foreign Office to establish a consulate, after which these groups claimed credit for this accomplishment. However, this idea did originate from evangelists associated with the London Jews Society. It is likely that it would have reached officials within the British establishment well before they took the decision on creating a consulate and may have been in the back of their minds during the process. Thus, to negate their role completely would be inaccurate.

Indeed, the action taken by Syria's Consul-General, John William Perry Farren, in 1834 to appoint an agent in Jerusalem before consulting London may have been due to missionary influence and the change in the political climate. Farren, in making this decision, argues that one of the reasons for needing a consular agent is having two British families in Jerusalem. He does not mention them in his letter, but Verete states that the first was the family of the missionary Nicolayson and the second was a Jewish family. The evangelist influence could have also been behind the suggestion by Niven Moore, the British Consul in Beirut, that Nicolayson would be a perfect candidate for the British Consul in the city.

It has been argued that family relations between the Foreign Secretary of Britain, Palmerston (Levine 2003:47), and his evangelical stepson-in-law, Lord Shaftesbury, may have been a factor in the decision-making. Verete argues that Palmerston's decision occurred two years before Shaftsbury wrote about it in his diary. Thus, to negate any influence may not be accurate, as relations between Palmerston and Shaftesbury may have started before they became relatives through marriage to a mother and her daughter. Also, arguments that Palmerston was influenced by Shaftesbury's well-known ideas about Jews and Palestine at this early stage is possible. Shaftesbury writes about himself that he has always been "an Evangelical of the Evangelicals" (Tibawi 1961:34). Additionally, evangelists had been pushing for this issue a decade earlier, but only bearing fruit with Palmerston the second time he was in office as Foreign Secretary.

Still, Verete argues, due to a lack of evidence in official documents, that this decision was purely a political one based on a second letter of Farren to Palmerston on the increasing influence of Russia and France in Jerusalem and Palestine. It was therefore political reasons that were the driving factor for the establishment of the consulate (Verete 1970:330), and not because of the Jews or missionary activity. Fear may also have been involved, with this fear seemingly

justified, as in April 1840 the Russian Consul of Beirut openly told Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem that he anticipated a time when Palestine would be under Russian administration. Additionally, following the Ottomans regaining control of Jerusalem, the Russian Consul in Beirut came to Jerusalem with a *firman* from the Ottomans *"constituting him also consul in Jerusalem and its dependencies"* and tightened Russia control over Jews through appointing a *vakeel* or a representative (Friedman 1968:28; Tibawi 1961: 43). Young wrote of these developments to Palmerston (Tibawi 1961:43), who ordered Young to act *"in the same manner"* as the Russian consul had acted over Russian Jews. Yet Friedman argues that this idea did not originate in Palmerston's mind. Rather, it originated in evangelical circles (Friedman 1968:28-29). Moreover, Russia's influence was stronger in other places and Britain did not pay as much attention there. Moreover, the examples given by Verete do not correspond with any reason why Palmerston would accept the establishment of a consulate in Jerusalem. The dealing of Palmerston with the issue of a consulate in Jerusalem was strikingly different from appointing consuls elsewhere in Syria, where commercial considerations were taken into account, however, here none of these were even considered.

Verete's conclusion that nothing in official correspondence relates to the Jewish problem or the Jewish Return is accurate (Verete 1970:326-327, 334-335). However, these may have been communicated verbally and were in Palmerston's mind while taking the decision for several reasons. This possibility cannot be entirely dismissed, especially since Shaftesbury writes explicitly that he was the one who influenced Palmerston to arrive at this decision. However, again, there is no compelling recorded evidence (Verete 1961:336; Tibawi 1975). It could be argued that the establishment of the consulate was due to several reasons: both political and to appease evangelical groups, not forgetting the religious symbolism of Jerusalem in the British mind. Even if the reason behind the establishment was purely part of a political power struggle, it was something the missionaries wanted and benefited from greatly. Missionaries were keen on a consulate to give diplomatic cover for their missionary activities (Buzpınar 2003: 111-112).

Besides their idea of *restoring* the Jews to Palestine, the establishment of the Protestant Church in the Holy Land was of equal importance to such groups. Palmerston agreed in early March 1837 to intervene with Ottoman and Egyptian authorities to have a Protestant Church built in Jerusalem as requested by the London Jews Society (Verete 1970: 344). Col. Campbell gives another reason for the need to establish a consulate, namely inter-Christian conflict. He writes to Palmerston that if a Protestant Chapel was to be established in Jerusalem, then a consular agent must be present due to Christian sectarian differences, and not because of the Muslims or Jews. He states:

> It appears to me the appointment of a British Consular Agent there will be a matter of necessity to ensure a proper respect and support to the clergyman and other deservants of that chapel - as from what I know of the spirit of religious disputes in Jerusalem, the Protestant establishment, which I trust to see formed there, will meet with every possible opposition, not on the part of the Turks, but that of the Catholic, Greek and Armenian convents and their inmates (Verete 1970: 341-342).

Thus, the establishment of the Protestant Church was linked with that of the consulate. Yet, amongst the aims of this church was to push for local Jewish conversion into Christianity as well as the *restoration* of Jews, in serving the ideology of the second coming of Christ. Shaftesbury is quite blatant on this point and sees it as all part of divine providence. Shaftesbury records in his diary, concerning Young's appointment as consul in Jerusalem on 29 September 1838:

> Took leave this morning of Young, who has just been appointed Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Jerusalem! He will sail in a day or two for the Holy Land. If this is duly considered, what a wonderful event is this! The ancient city of the people of God is about to resume a place among the nations, and England is the first of Gentile Kingdoms that ceases 'to tread her down' (Hodder 1887: 233; Verete 1970: 316).

Furthermore, Shaftesbury saw Palmerston as the *hand of God* in supporting the Jews, and he is quoted as saying in 1840, that "*Palmerston has already been chosen by God to be an instrument of good to His ancient people*" (Hodder 1887: 310; Finlayson 2004: 114).

Missionaries were enthralled with the idea of the settling of a British consul in Jerusalem as it would undoubtedly strengthen their work (Joseph 1995: 48). Indeed, they were the first to encourage an official British presence and rejoiced and hailed the arrival of Young in Jerusalem as an important event. Following the success of establishing the consulate, Shaftesbury, on behalf of missionary groups, kept pressing and did influence Palmerston on a number of issues related to the migration and protection of Jews. Thus, due to the lobbying of the London Jews Society, the remit of the consul was extended to bear the protection of Jews (Tibawi 1961:33). Missionaries, as Tibawi argues, were the main promoters of the project of the consulate and they could not have found anyone more enthusiastic than Shaftesbury to influence Palmerston on this matter (Tibawi 1961:34). Shaftesbury even wrote to Palmerston, following verbal discussions with him, a detailed scheme for settling the Jews in Palestine under Ottoman control. Although this was not realised, Shaftesbury did not give up on his attempts, and neither did the evangelical groups, and both continued to push their ideas forward with the British government (Hyamson 1918:138-139; Verete 1970:316; Eliav 1997:29). They were successful in lobbying the government on a number of issues (Verete 1970:344).

It can be seen that there is a complicated relationship between Jews, England and Palestine. The British were interested in Palestine, as Talbot argues, for three reasons. The first is its attitude to Jews (biblical and diasporic), the second is its interpretation of biblical prophecy and the fate of the Holy Land. The third reason is in relation to the End of Days and the role of England in it. Moreover, the British consider themselves biblical Israelites and also the new Chosen People (Talbot 2013: 36-37). Thus, besides political and economic reasons, the main steering force behind England's policy in Palestine is the relationship between England, Jews and the Apocalypse.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BRITISH CONSULATE

Following the occupation of Muhammad Ali Pasha, lobbying for a consulate in Jerusalem began in earnest from 1833. In October 1834, John Farren, the British Consul-General in Syria stationed in Damascus, visited Jerusalem and saw that it was essential to have a Vice-Consul in the Holy City. He wrote to Palmerston in November 1834 on the necessity of consular services in Jerusalem. He mentions a few British subjects residing in the city as well as travellers who would not have anyone to turn to if problems arose. Also, he adds that, as Jerusalem is "*the chief and largest city in the extreme south of Syria and the centre of provinces which have [lately] attracted much attention and where it is desirable to have an efficient agent for reporting intelligence of public events*" (Verete 1970: 320). He also notes that the opposition of the local Muslims was now reduced under Egyptian occupation, thus it was timely to do so. Serapion Merad, an Armenian from Jaffa serving as Sardinian Vice-Consul in Jaffa, was supposedly requested to be the consular agent of Britain in Jerusalem. Farren requested permission from Ibrahim Pasha for Merad to enter into this office with the hope that the Foreign Secretary would approve it. However, there were reservations and instructions restricting Farren from appointing Consular Agents without the previous sanction of the Secretary of State and so the appointment was not sanctioned by the Foreign Office. The permanent Under-Secretary, John Backhouse, noted on this issue that British subjects in Jerusalem had no representative, but that there was a British Vice-Consul in Jaffa appointed by Egypt's Consul-General following the Egyptian occupation of Palestine. Jaffa being a port city and not far from Jerusalem was seen to be adequate. Although he frowned on the conduct of Farren, Arthur Wellesley (Duke of Wellington), Foreign Secretary at the time (November 1834 - April 1835), sought advice from the Consul-General in Egypt, Colonel Patrick Campbell, who since 1833 was England's senior representative in all areas under Egyptian control (Verete 1970: 319-324).

There was a series of lengthy correspondences between London and the British representatives in Alexandria and later Beirut. Campbell was asked about the matter but did not give a positive opinion, explaining his reasons for not necessitating the appointment of a British Agent in Jerusalem. When he despatched his response in June 1835, the Foreign Secretary was again

Palmerston, who expressed that he wished to hear from the new Consul in Beirut, Niven Moore, before making a decision on the matter. Moore did not forward any reports on the matter until spring 1836, and thus for a full year no developments took place on this issue. Moore, in preparation for Campbell's tour of Palestine and Syria, commissioned a survey sent to British subjects in Syria, with one of the questions being related to places where it was desirable to have a Consular Agent. Moore was of the opinion that it was desirable to have an agent in Jerusalem in order to provide services to British travellers, but more importantly Jerusalem was "*a garrison of considerable importance and intelligence from there would frequently prove both useful and interesting*". He nominated the missionary Nicolayson, but his proposal was rejected outright by Campbell (Verete 1970:319-324). Moors's recommendations for a number of Consular agents to be appointed in Syria were accepted in autumn 1836 by Campbell, especially in port cities, namely Tyre, Sidon and Acre, but he opposed the appointment of an agent in Jerusalem.

However, the situation was soon to change following a letter from Farren to Palmerston on 18 September 1836 (received 26 October) with the unfolding of certain events in Jerusalem and Syria as a whole. Farren wrote about matters regarding Russian and French religious influence in the region; as France had influence on the Catholic Christians and Russia had influence with the Greek Orthodox Arabs in trying to strengthen its influence. He ended his letter by asking Palmerston to confirm the appointment of the Armenian Merad to the Consular Agency at Jerusalem. Palmerston was now more inclined to the idea, but due to the close connections between Russia and the Armenians in Syria, as noted by Campbell, it seems that an Armenian candidate was not suitable for this post. Despite Campbell's and Backhouse's opposition, who both wrote unfavourable memorandums (7 October and 2 November 1836 respectively), Palmerston was now favourable to the idea, and responded to Backhouse's memorandum on 3 November 1836 that, "*I think it would be expedient to have an English Consular Agent at Jerusalem*" *(Verete 1970:325; Eliav 1997:113).* Directing him to instruct Campbell to choose someone suitable for this position, was the Inspector of the Consulate Services, John Bidwell, who wrote to Campbell on 29 November 1836 on the selection of a candidate (Eliav, *Britain*, 113-114; F.O 78/295). Campbell thus consulted with both British Consuls in Damascus (Verete 1970:337) and Beirut in order to choose a candidate. The Beirut Consul, Moore, was quick to nominate his business partner, William Tanner Young (Verete 1970: 325; Perry 2003:29). Through the directive of Moore, on 27 June 1837, Young wrote to Campbell offering his candidacy. Campbell accepted this on 5 August 1837 and Young applied to the Foreign Office directly (Eliav 1997: 24).

Campbell approached Muhammad Ali Pasha on the issue and was told that "*Jerusalem being one of the Holy Cities he could not take upon himself to sanction such an appointment*" (Verete 1970:339). Campbell was able to secure a conditional agreement of having a viceroy in Jerusalem in 1837 pending the

consent of the Sultan (Tibawi 1961:31; Hofman 1975:318; Eliav 1997:114). Muhammad Ali Pasha however doubted whether the Sultan would give such consent on religious grounds. It is clear that the religious factor was of immense importance in this issue. Thus, this matter was referred to the Porte, since issues of foreign affairs must be approved by the central government, as per the Kutahya Treaty, meaning that Jerusalem and Palestine were under a nominal joint Ottoman-Egyptian rule; *Ottoman in theory, Egyptian in practice (Hofman 1975:317-318)*. Campbell informed the Foreign Office of Muhammad Ali Pasha's response, together with the nomination of Young as a possible candidate for the job. He wrote that he was fit for the situation and "*strongly recommended to me both by Mr. Consul Moore and by the Rev. Mr. Nicolayson*" (Tibawi 1961:31; Eliav 1997:114). Palmerston then in a letter dated 11 November 1837 instructed his ambassador in Istanbul, Ponsonby, to procure a *Firman* from the Sultan (Eliav*1997*:115; FO 78/322; F.O.78/300). The reason presented for the establishment of the consulate, is quite peculiar, and Palmerston wrote:

> *Your Excellency will state to the Turkish Minister that frequent complaints have been made to H.M. Govt. by English travellers who have been at Jerusalem, that in a place which they felt so much interest in visiting there was no British Consular Agent to afford to them the ordinary assistance which British travellers expect to meet with in places of considerable note (Verete 1970:339).*

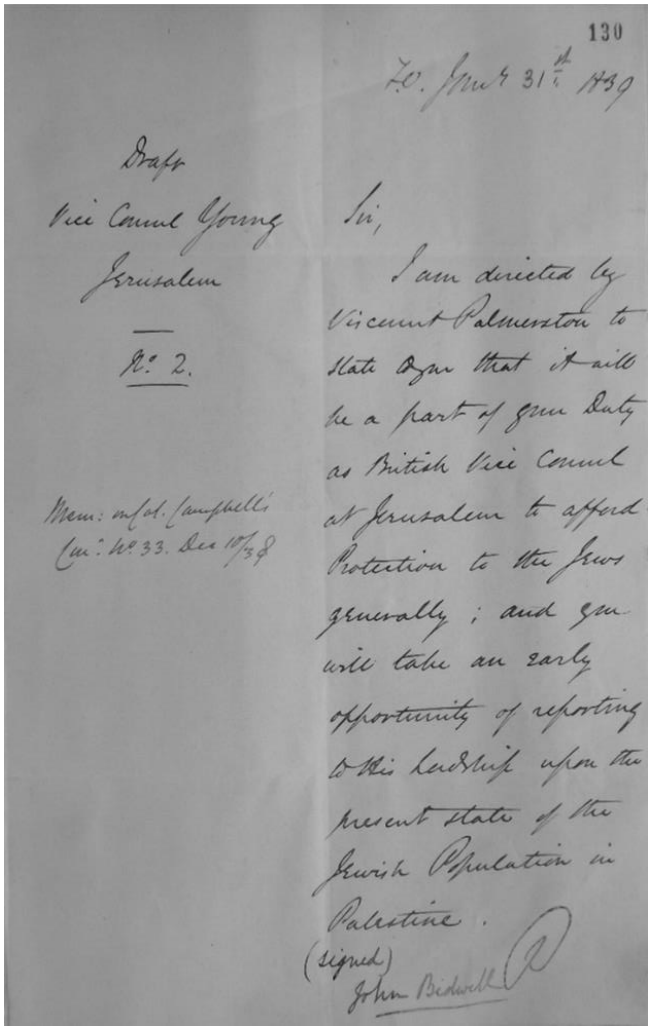
This is contrary to earlier correspondence where it was clearly noted that British subjects had no problem in Jerusalem (Verete 1970:323). Months went by and Palmerston wrote twice to Ponsonby that he was "*anxious to learn the decision*" and "*to continue to press the Porte*", especially as he was now being pressed by Shaftesbury, who, following many discussions wrote officially to him on this matter (Verete 1970:339,344).

Negotiations with the Ottoman government continued for months, and on 30 June 1838, the *firman* was issued. Britain, following the consent of the Ottoman government, commenced the processes of officially establishing the consulate in Jerusalem (Verete 1970:339; Hofman 1975:318). The *firman* was sent to Campbell by Ponsonby, as he was to be the superior of the new Vice-Consul (Eliav 1997:115-116). Young was ordered by Palmerston to set off to Palestine as documented in a letter dated 19 August 1838(Eliav 1997:115-116).

As the first proper foreign consulate in the region, Britain's role was of paramount importance to all foreign powers, as many requested the protection of some of their citizens from the consulate there (see next section). As Britain had no Protestant community in the region, it used the Jews as a way into the Holy Land. The Foreign Secretary of Britain Palmerston appointed William Young to Jerusalem as her Majesty's Vice-Consul in 1838 (Verete 1975:317; Talbot 2013:47). Young related to Jews of the region, and before setting forth to Jerusalem he brought to the attention of Palmerston the desirability of

maintaining *"a favourable impression"* towards England by cultivating friendly relations with the Jews in Palestine (Eliav*1997:*116; F.O. 78/340).

Following the arrival of Young in the region on 19 September 1838, Palmerston made it amongst his duties to push forth the idea of the protection of Jews generally. This is documented in a letter dated 31 January 1839. The letter written by Bidwell states, *"I am directed by Viscount Palmerston to state to you that it will be apart of your duty as British vice consul at Jerusalem to afford protection to the Jews generally and you will take an early opportunity of reporting to His Lordship upon the present state of the Jewish population of Palestine" (Tibawi 1961:3).*


130

F.O. Jan^{y} 31st 1839

Draft
Vice Consul Young
Jerusalem

No. 2.

Mem: m/ed. Campbell
Cir: No 33. Dec 17/38

Sir,

I am directed by Viscount Palmerston to state to you that it will be a part of your Duty as British Vice Consul at Jerusalem to afford Protection to the Jews generally; and you will take an early opportunity of reporting to His Lordship upon the present state of the Jewish Population in Palestine.

(signed) John Bidwell

Figure 1: Letter from British foreign office to the vice-consul in Jerusalem. F.O.78/368 (taken by author).

This instruction was a direct interference with Ottoman domestic issues, as foreign protection may be extended only to foreign national and not Ottoman subjects. This, however, was left to Young for implementation, and it is noted that he was offering protection to European Jews of different nationalities. In a correspondence with Palmerston, he stated that Britain was destined to be *"the natural Guardian"*, both of *"the Jews unto whom God originally gave this land for possession"*, and to the *"Protestant Christian, his legitimate offspring"* (Friedman 1968:25; F.O. 78/368 (no.8); Fig.1). This extended perceived protection of all Jews, including Ottoman Jewish subjects, which brought Young in conflict with the Ottoman Governor, *Muttasarif*, and he was warned by his superior in Egypt, Campbell, that he had no jurisdiction over the *ra'yah,* or subjects, of the Ottomans (F.O. 78/344; Eliav 1997 120-121). However, according to Young, this fitted with Palmerston's general instructions to show the Jews how kind the British Government was and its willingness *"to shield them from oppression of their neighbours, as well as the local Authorities"* (Friedman 1968:26). It may also be argued that this was part of England's bigger plan for the region, using the Jews as a tool to implement its policy in the region.

The establishment of the consulate prepared the ground for strong British influence in the region. Indeed, as Tibawi argues, British influence was to be exercised at all levels: politically through the consulate, and religiously and educationally through missionary activities (Tibawi 1961:43). This was carried out together with employing Jews for agricultural and cultivation of the land as a step towards the colonisation of the land, as well as archaeological and cartographical work (Joseph 1995:48-50). All of this was carried out under the diplomatic cover of the consulate.

CONCLUSION

Since European powers lost Jerusalem at the hand of Salah al-Din, the idea of reclaiming the Holy Land never vanished from Western imagination and Napoleon's expedition had reignited memories of the crusades. France was the first country during the Ottoman period to attempt the penetration of the Holy Land both through creating a political presence, and later through military occupation. Both these attempts failed, but it alerted another Western power, namely Britain, who was much more successful in its endeavour. Napoleon's military action into Egypt and Palestine was seen as a threat to Britain and its colonial interests in India, thus it took on this project and implemented it on its own. Britain succeeded where France failed; it created the first longstanding consulate and later managed to occupy the land (El-Awaisi 2019).

Napoleon failed in stirring up anti-Ottoman sentiments amongst Muslims and Jews. Ideas of nationalism were still not ripe in these communities. This was to change dramatically just over a century later, when Britain was able to capitalise on rising national movements and was successful in creating anti-Ottoman sentiments when it needed to do so. It forged alliances with the newly

formed movements of Jewish Zionism and Arab nationalisms in the early 20th century and managed, with their support, to occupy the Holy Land.

Britain, which had no foothold in the region -unlike France and Russia through their protection of Christian minorities- extended protection to the Jews in order to create a foothold therein. Missionaries with their own agendas were quite instrumental in the process of creating a British presence. They were indeed the first to promote the idea of establishing a British consulate, and whether it was purely a political decision or not, their lobbying would have contributed to the decision making. Indeed, they were successful in expanding the remit of the Vice-Consul to include the protection of Jews in the region. The complicated relationship between the British establishment, missionary groups and the Jews led to an intertwined policy towards Palestine. The establishment of a consulate in Jerusalem was a milestone in the creation of a British presence. Although many within the British establishment opposed the establishment of a consulate as it brings no commercial benefit, the religious factor seems to have been the driving force behind it. The consulate allowed Britain to exercise its influence, not only politically, but also gave cover to religious and educational as well as colonialist initiatives and activities. Other Western powers were to soon follow suit in emulating Britain, and rivalry broke out between these powers, especially over control of Christian holy sites.

Although the period of Muhammad Ali Pasha was one of extreme lenience towards the Christians and it was during his period that the British were able to open their consulate, Britain was anxious that his rising power would weaken the Ottomans and strengthen Britain's rivals. Thus, Britain stood by the Ottomans in curbing the power of Muhammad Ali and in forcing him out of Syria and Palestine. The British Foreign Secretary was also quite instrumental in Ottoman reforms. He also tried to push the idea of allowing Jews to migrate to Palestine and creating an entity for them under Ottoman sovereignty, but in the latter, he was not successful.

The theological discussions that necessitated the 'restoration of Jews' and created an entity for them as a prelude to the coming of the Messiah would have influenced British foreign policy on the matter. The British establishment tried to keep a distance from missionary propaganda and concentrate officially on its imperialist goals. Nevertheless, the influence –especially on Palmerston and Shaftesbury– of evangelical Christian ideas on the decision-making have been documented. The Jews were seen as a useful tool in the hands of imperialist powers, and in particular Britain, both for trade and military support in the region, as well as fulfilling the biblical prophecies.

British foreign policy bore its fruits at the beginning of the twentieth century and Britain publicly promised Palestine to the Jews in 1917, in what became known as the Balfour Declaration. This came as a result of continuous work and initiatives from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the

beginning of the twentieth century, in particular the work of the Consuls-General to Jerusalem, James Finn, who was part of the London Jews' Society. As well as the scheme of Laurence Oliphant and the work of the Palestine Exploration Fund, all of which are examples of "British Christian-Zionist Restorationist Projects". This was not however confined to Britain, as the Balfour Declaration was not only a British declaration; its text was approved by the American and French governments before it was issued, as well as the Italian government and the Catholic Pope who expressed their sympathy on this issue. Therefore, Britain gained on its side the support of other Western governments before issuing this declaration. The British then set forth from Egypt to take the Holy Land and General Allenby was ordered by the Prime Minister of the time, David Lloyd George, to capture Jerusalem by Christmas. The British did not shy away from evoking the crusading past although officially they were told not to engage in crusading rhetoric (Bar-Yosef 2001; Kitchen 2010). This illustrates the connection between the crusade and the British "liberation" of Jerusalem in its imperialist mind. Today, it is not surprising for the American President to continue in this direction, by choosing to announce the first Western embassy to be established in Jerusalem at the centenary of Balfour's declaration, showing continuity in the Western imperialist mind over the colonisation of the Holy Land.

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