Open Jerusalem: The Orthodox Community in Jerusalem

Merav Mack, CRFJ, 18 June 2014

Open-Jerusalem Project
1825 baptism records in Arabic, 1928-1945
Questions and themes

- Geographical perceptions of the Orthodox community of Jerusalem:
  - The concept of Hometown and it’s misleading meanings
  - The transnational nature of the community.
  - What is “Greekness”?
  - Place of birth versus “hometown”
  - Place of baptism: church or home?
  - Patterns of migration
Religious landscape and sacro-space in Jerusalem
- Churches outside the Old City
- The role of the Holy Sites in the daily life of the Orthodox Community
- The Jordan River and the Nativity Church as places of baptism

Arabs and Greeks:
- What’s Greek about the Greeks?
- Degree of separation from the Arabs
- Degree of mixture between the communities
• First Names and their changes during the 20th century
  - male or female?
  - Christian Name or Real name?
  - more male names in the records.
  - Ethnic communities: Greek, Arab, Russian, Jewish, British
  - does the naming pattern fit-in with the conclusions from the marriage certificate list from the years 1918 -1924?

• Sickness, infants’ death and the numbers of healthy babies per family
Transnational community

Hometown of the baptised by region
Jerusalem (1109) excluded
“watan al mu´amad” – “hometown of the baptised”

• Perceptions of geography and space and the territorial boundaries of the community both as real and an imagined entity

• Jordan: the cities of al-Fuheis, al-Husun and Salt in Jordan are as familiar to the registrar as Amman and Madaba.

• Hums, Hama and Damascus (and “Suria” is an out of fashion female name – mothers’ generation)

• Compare with territory beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land: “America”, “England”, “Bulgaria”, “Russia” (and not the “the Soviet Union” or “the USSR”) and most importantly “Greece”

• Standing out in their absence: Istanbul, Izmir etc.

• We learn about the collapse of the Ottoman world in WWI, and how quickly new boundaries, real and mental were erected in its aftermath
Travel, migration and Greek identity

• Who were the 110 “Greeks”?

• Most (except 3) were born and raised Jerusalemites. 1/3 baptised at “home”.

I was born in Palestine (Jerusalem) and spent the first seventeen years of my life there: my childhood, boyhood and adolescence... I was surrounded by Arab and Jews in school, in my neighbourhood, in the streets, on the bathing beaches... I am, incidentally, neither an Arab nor a Jew.

What is significant perhaps is that a Greek home, a Greek school and the Greek Church made sure that no Greek growing up in the Holy Land – in Palestine – forgot for a moment that he or she was neither Arab nor Jew, but plain Greek.

Panayiotis Vatikiotis, *Among Arabs and Jews*, 
Sacred Geography (sacro-space)

Local churches of the Orthodox community in Jerusalem
The Religious Landscape of the Orthodox Community

Qatamon 16
Al Khader 8
Mar Elias 15
Church of the Nativity 1

Map based on Denys Pringle’s *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 3
Prosopography: Change in naming patterns

marriage certificates (1918-1926)

• From Ya’kub to Ilias
• From Jiris to George
• From Maryam to Maria
• New female names: Victoria, Alexandra and Julia
The baptismal records of 1928-1945

Mothers - top 20 names
“The Arab Awakening”

Girls - top 20 names

Other “new” Arabic names: Nadia, Nahida, Muna, Samira, Siham, Su’ad