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Vincent Lemire, Leyla Dakhli, Anouk Cohen

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FAMILY LIBRARIES AND PRINTING PRESSES IN JERUSALEM (1840-1940): PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION AND RECEPTION OF MULTILINGUAL DOCUMENTS

27/11/2015 | OPEN JERUSALEM

by Vincent Lemire, Leyla Dakhli, Anouk Cohen

This post is a short abstract of the report written after a mission realized by Leyla Dakhli, Vincent Lemire and Anouk Cohen in Jerusalem for a week, from 8 to 14 June 2015. The goal of this mission was only to launch this fieldwork and to open future tracks of works. The focus was to investigate the circulation of printed documents in Jerusalem 1840-1940 and their position, while paying crucial attention to the different languages of their production and distribution. This approach aimed to have a better view of the possible and/or impossible connected practices of knowledge. To this end, the mission focused on two kinds of places of production and circulation of knowledge:

- **Family libraries:** the goal of this investigation was to understand what kind of books made up the libraries of scholars from the period in question with a particular interest in practical knowledge of languages (by paying attention to dictionaries for example).
- **Printing presses:** this investigation aims to study the type of books produced between 1840 and 1940 and the languages in which they were produced (from archival documents and letters cases left in the old printing workshops for example).

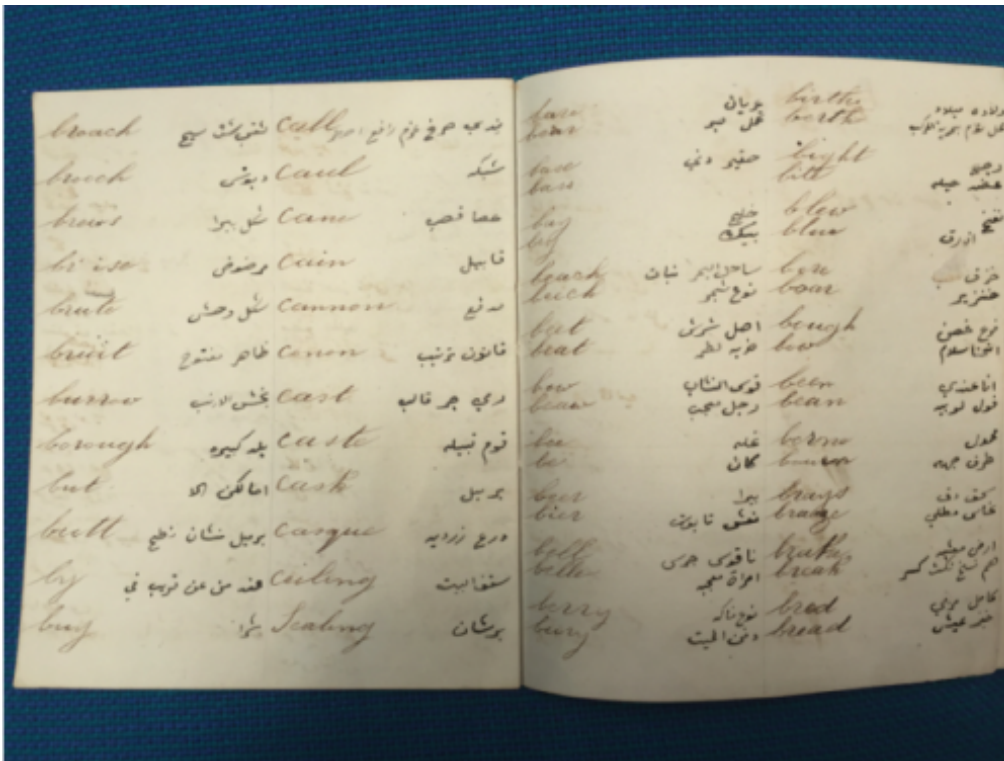
This mission sought to identify significant lieux de savoir¹ (i-e places of knowledge) and documentation centers (archival or otherwise) and attempt to capture gestures and operations, instruments and supports, expertise and practices, interaction modes and validation procedures, forms of registration and dynamic transmission that contribute, in their articulation, in order to

understand the concrete practices of shared and/or divided knowledge in the Holy city in the period 1840-1940.

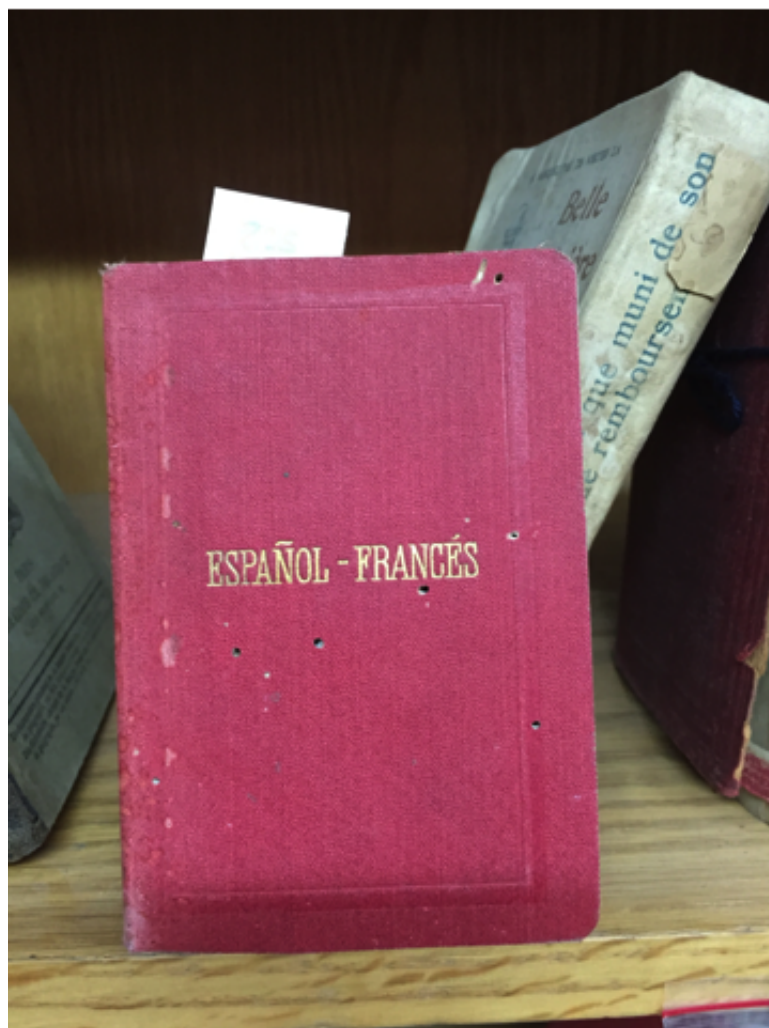
Family libraries

The Khalidi library

The Khalidi library is arguably the best-preserved privately owned manuscript library in the old city. The Khalidi library houses 1200 manuscripts, most of them microfilmed and stored in boxes in a temperature-controlled room in the attic of the old madrasa. We consulted the catalog of the collections of the library published in 2006 by Khader Salameh and Nazim Al-Ju'aba and prefaced by Walid Khalidi in Arabic². Then, we consulted Ruhi al-Khalidi's documents stored in an acid-resistant gray box³. These documents mainly consist of vocabulary books (organized into lists) and notes taken from various books including those of Ibn Khaldun. These notebooks may belong to his son (John al-Khalidi). Finally, we visited the room where 1900 books printed in Latin characters are stored, including many dictionaries, almanacs and guides that occupy an entire section of the bookcase.



Picture 1. Ruhi / or John al-Khalidi's vocabulary notebook



Picture 2. An example of dictionary in the Khalidi Library

Instruments of knowledge such as magazines, dictionaries, grammar books, encyclopedias, manuals, guides, almanacs, atlases, official publications (such as court judgments of the mandate that would allow us to understand how they developed their research), as well as printers and publishers' catalogs could be a very interesting material for future research.

From the Excel table of the Latin characters printed catalog (available on Khalidi library's website⁴), it would be possible to define several sets of data to grasp some publication policies as well as identify the major production centers. Moreover, this statistical study would allow to identify the number of languages and to create clouds of information. Finally, crosscheck this different sets of information would help to understand in which languages the different users of the library were reading and what were the main themes they were interested in. The type of crosstabs that would be interesting to develop are the followings: owners / dates, owners / themes / languages, owners / places of publication.

The Budeiri library

The Budeiri library

In this place, located next to the Haram esh-Sherif, we may distinguish three blocks of documents.

1) The old manuscripts: 1,166 manuscripts make up the collection. Today, 90% of them are digitized.

The manuscripts are safely kept in a small room inside iron storages. It is worth noting that this room is located near a zâwiya where the ancestor allowed students to study.



Picture 3. Manuscripts kept inside iron storages in the Budeiri Library



Picture 4. One of the manuscripts from the Budeiri Library

2) The printed books: there are 158 printed books dating from the end of Ottoman period and Mandate period, mainly written in Ottoman and Arabic. All of them have been inventoried, receiving a singular quotation. Compared to the Khalidi library, Budeiri library's collection has fewer books in foreign (specially European) languages.

3) The archives are well preserved under plastic cover and stored in about twenty files. This is an original documentation in regard to different fields, especially the history of the Jerusalem Jordanian municipality (1949-1967). There are also various policy papers, poetry and personal documents such as letters. Other documents dated 1950's consist in names of streets and locations. There are also maps, stamped collected letters and business cards.

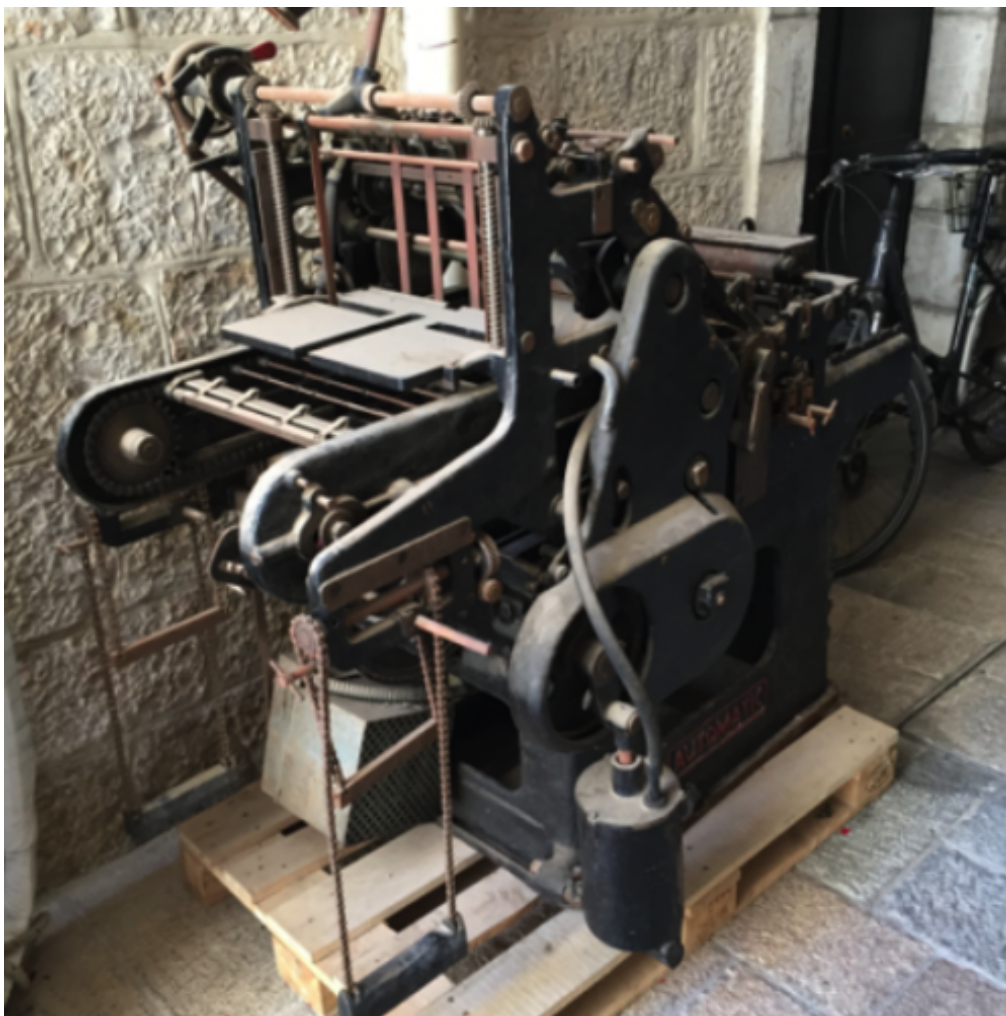


Picture 5. An example of map stored in the archives from the Budeiri Library

Printing presses

Franciscan printing press (FPP)

The Franciscan printing press (FPP) was founded in 1847, the first book printed this year was a catechism in Arabic. The old printing machines and letter cases are well preserved. With the exception of some of them that were displaced recently in Beitphage (the new site for FPP Franciscan Printing Press), three machines remained within the walls of Saint Saviour's Convent. One of them stands in the great hall of the Custody.



Picture 6. Printing press machine, 1860 (Saint Saviour's Convent)



Picture 7. Examples of letters cases in different languages (Saint Saviour's Convent)



Picture 8. Letter cases in Arabic (Beitphage)



Picture 9. Special stamps engraved in zinc (Beitphage)



Picture 10. "Our Father" printed by the FPP in different languages (Beitphage)

Thanks to Fr. Sergey Loktionov, archivist in chief at the Custody, the historical archives of the FPP are well preserved and perfectly described (under the category "Tipografia"). For sure, the Franciscan printing press was the largest printing press in Jerusalem during the period in question, especially (but not only) for books printed in Latin characters. Thereby, it's a sort of laboratory / observatory through which it's possible to see the way in which the city did functioned on a social and cultural level. Indeed, we found a lot of mentions of business cards, printed invitations to concerts, receptions, etc. In the archives there are also precise indications on the printing process, including of activities of production and its different stages. Here are some examples of the consulted files:

1. 1854 apr. 6 – 1888 dic. 27: "Difficoltà per la stamperia"
2. 1878 – inizi sec. XX: "Officine, operai"
3. 1922 giu. 1 – 1926 giu. 22: "censure di pubblicazioni – Imprimi potest"
4. 1899 ago. 1 – 1952 nov. 21: "Quietanze e note contabili"
5. 1908 apr. 12 – 1953 feb. 18: "Regolamento degli impiegati dell'officina"
6. 1866 mag. – 1873 dic. 2; 1955 feb. 10 – 1955 mar. 16: "Miscellanea"
7. 1879 May 7 – 1892 Sett 12: "Libri stampati al conto della Custodia".
8. 1880 January 5 – 1909 March 11: "Libri legati pel magazzino". This register lists all the activities from the Tipografia's bindery. It provides the list of bound books. We learn that for some books only

a few bound copies were printed. Also, the same book could be bound and/or not bound.

9. December 1917 – April 1919: “Registro dei lavori pel governo”. This register, which looks like an ordinary notebook, is of a great importance: it lists all the printed works produced by the new British power in 1918-1919. There are pell-mell passes, labels, administrative stationery, forms, posters, legal notices, a music program, blank passports, maps of prisoners, telegram forms, Post records, daily reports from hospitals (Hospital Report Daily), records of wanted persons, documents related to the police force, building permits, conversion tables (“money rate”), Passes to enter City Walls, contract forms, Medical Ordinance, Jerusalem School of Music. It also contains valuable information on the price of commodities. These data are particularly important because they provide information on the implementation modalities of the new British administration in 1918-1920. Indeed, the Tipografia custody, being the most important of the city, did functions at that time as a kind of official printing press; and thereby, for historians, as a main way of getting information).

10. 1857 June 15 – 1879 December 31: “Giornale delle prestazioni della tipografia”. By 1857, this register describes in great detail the work done by the workers during the months worked. Beginning ten years after the founding of the Tipografia, this register may be the first of its kind in a context of reorganization of the printing press.

11. 1847 – 1873: “Opere stampate nella Tipografia”. This register is composed of two parts: on the one hand, it shows all the documents printed from January 1847 to March 1873. 607 documents had been printed over 26 years. Besides books, there are also travel tickets (biglietti di viaggio) for “il Municipio”. A mention “biglietto di Transito” appears in 1871. On the other hand, are listed the outdoor expeditions to convents. Each page is devoted to one book [mostly catechisms, mass books, or Italian grammar books, etc.]. The main recipient cities are: Jerusalem, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Saida, Tripoli, Nicosia, Fajum [Fayoum] Tiberias, Caiffa [Haïffa]... Thus, the Tipografia of Jerusalem operated as the as an important production center throughout the Levant.

12. 1890 January 2 – 1909 January 11: “Stampi della tipografia”. This is the register of orders for commands or manufacturing of special characters. In one column, there appears the drawing of the new engraved character. This register is particularly interesting because it allows us to date the production or purchase of letter cases in different alphabets (Russian, Arabic, etc.). By leafing through the register, we learn which characters (and languages) were mainly produced at each period.

other places to include in the future dashboard of this fieldwork (Hebraic, Armenian, Greek, Russian, German, British Printing Press; old Hebraic libraries in West Jerusalem). It should be noted here that this mission not only helped to locate existing archives but also, through chance encounters with people, relationships and spontaneity of the search, gave birth to archives. With regards to future studies that could better seize on modalities for constituting public knowledge in Jerusalem during the period in question, two types of questions could be considered, focusing on family libraries or on the printing presses. For example, a case study of Khalidi or Budeiri library could focus on how knowledge materializes in a particular architectural feature or furniture, in a group of books or specific objects. Indeed, the architectural and physical environment of the library could be placed at the heart of the investigation in order to study its essential role in the representation or self-representation of scholarly activity or of a certain idea of knowledge itself. Libraries give to see a certain idea of knowledge, specialist or generalist, local or universal, and how they materialize a representation of culture within its limits and in its ambitions. An investigation on Printing Press and printers could inform the history of scholarly work that is actually determined by the development of techniques and instruments. Sites that attract considerable attention – for authors, readers, and technicians – printing presses are also diffusion locations, where knowledge is reticulated or radiated. At the crossroads of flow, they are devoted to the establishment of texts themselves and their reproduction. Thus, the study of printing would open the way to a dynamic approach to knowledge: in terms of spheres of influence, centrifugal and centripetal forces, but also in terms of circulation and translation. In this way, one would better understand the central nodes of a network in relation to the others, located in more distant peripheries. A huge challenge, to be continued!

1. Christian Jacob, « Introduction: Faire corps, faire lieu », Lieux de savoir, Tome 1, Paris, Albin Michel, 2007. [🔗]
2. Al-Ju'aba Nazmi, Walid Khalidi, Catalog of Manuscripts in Al-Khalidi Library – Jerusalem, Vol. 1 & 2, London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2001-2006. The website of the Khalidi Library: <http://www.khalidilibrary.org/indexe.html>. [🔗]
3. Ruhi al-Khalidi (1864–1913) was a writer, teacher, activist and politician in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. He was the nephew of Youssef Ziya al-Khalidi, who was one of the first mayor of Jerusalem. In 1908, Ruhi was one of three delegates elected to represent Jerusalem in the new parliament and become Vice-President of parliament (1911). [🔗]
4. <http://www.khalidilibrary.org/englishbookse.html> [🔗]

◀ ARCHIVES ◀ BUDEIRI LIBRARY ◀ FAMILY LIBRARIES ◀ FRANCISCAN PRINTING PRESS ◀ KHALIDI LIBRARY
◀ OPEN JERUSALEM ◀ PRINTING PRESSES ◀ SAINT SAVIOUR'S CONVENT