

Returning to Routes

The Emergence of a Moroccan Jewish Diaspora in the Twentieth
Century

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Abstracts

This thesis examines the formation of a global Moroccan Jewish diaspora in the latter half of the 20th century, arguing that “Moroccanness,” forged through multi-directional migration and the resulting shared history, memory, and culture, has served as a unifying force. The study demonstrates how this sense of shared origin, coupled with ongoing transnational connections, influenced the development of diverse communities, identities, and collective action across various hubs of Moroccan Jewish life. The thesis focuses on under-researched sites of Moroccan Jewish life and activities. It explores the experiences of Moroccan Jews in Israel’s peripheral development towns, where a Zionist counternarrative emerged, positioning them as Israeli pioneers. It delves into the complexities faced by educators within the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Morocco, navigating colonial and post-colonial contexts and striving for recognition as Moroccan state-builders. Additionally, it examines the ethnicization of Moroccan Jews as francophone Sephardim in Montreal and their engagement in transnational solidarity programs with their Israeli counterparts. By analyzing factors driving emigration from Morocco, including decolonization, along Canadian, French, Israeli, and Moroccan policies, and Moroccan Jews’ subsequent experiences in the countries where they settled, this work provides a novel understanding of diasporic identity formation. Ultimately, the thesis argues that Moroccan Jewish history transcends geographical boundaries and specific historical periods, with “Moroccanness” functioning as a unifying language that connects a global diaspora across time and space.

Cette thèse examine la formation d’une diaspora juive marocaine mondiale dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, soutenant que la « marocanité », forgée par des migrations multidirectionnelles et l’histoire, la mémoire et la culture communes qui en résultent, a servi de force unificatrice. L’étude démontre comment ce sentiment d’origine commune, associé à des liens transnationaux continus, a influencé le développement de diverses communautés, identités et actions collectives à travers divers centres diasporiques. La thèse se concentre sur des sites et des activités de la diaspora juive marocaine peu étudiés. Elle explore les expériences des Juifs marocains dans les villes de développement périphériques d’Israël, où un contre-récit sioniste a émergé qui les a positionnés comme pionniers. Elle explore les complexités auxquelles sont confrontés les éducateurs de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle au Maroc, naviguant les contextes coloniaux et postcoloniaux et luttant pour leur reconnaissance en tant que bâtisseurs de l’État marocain. De plus, elle examine l’ethnisation des Juifs marocains en tant que séfarades francophones à Montréal et leur engagement dans des programmes de solidarité transnationaux avec leurs homologues israéliens. En analysant les facteurs qui ont motivé l’émigration du Maroc, notamment la décolonisation, les politiques canadiennes, françaises, israéliennes et marocaines, et les expériences subséquentes des Juifs marocains dans les pays où ils se sont installés, ce travail offre une nouvelle compréhension de la formation de l’identité diasporique. En fin de compte, la thèse soutient que l’histoire juive marocaine transcende les frontières géographiques et les périodes historiques spécifiques, et que la « marocanité » fonctionne comme une langue unificatrice qui relie une diaspora mondiale à travers le temps et l’espace.

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The Emergence of a Moroccan Jewish Diaspora in the Twentieth Century

Roy Orel Shukrun

To Rosette, Makhlouf, Solange, and Prosper
who put down their frayed roots so we could climb the branches

List of Abbreviations

Organizations

AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle
AJCS	Allied Jewish Community Services
AJDC	American Joint Distribution Committee
ASF	Association Sépharade Francophone
CGT	General Confederation of Labor (Morocco)
CJC	Canadian Jewish Congress
DIP	Direction de l'Instruction Publique (Ministry of Public Education)
ENIO	École Normale Israélite Orientale
GAA	Golden Age Association
GJNA	Groupement Juif Nord-Africain
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Service
JIAS	Jewish Immigrant Aid Service
JVS	Jewish Vocational Service
MUCF	Mission Universelle Culturelle Française
UMT	Union Marocaine du Travail
UNFP	National Union of Popular Forces (Morocco)
YM-YWHA	Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association

Archives

BanQ	Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec
CAHJP	Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People
CJA	Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
JPL	Jewish Public Library Archives
OFKM	Ofakim Municipal Archives

Other

MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PASI	Project d'Action Social en Israël

Transliteration Notes

The transcription of commonly translated Arabic and Hebrew words reflect common English language orthography (e.g. *aliya*, *mellah*). Common names translated from Hebrew also follow common English language orthography (e.g. *Abutbul*, *Bittan*). Less common words and names reflect the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* standard transliteration. For modern individuals with Hebrew or Arabic names who have their own way of rendering them in Latin script, their spellings will be followed (e.g. *Levvey* and not *Levy*). Geographical names are given in their commonly used modern English form.

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לפז, איילי, נועם, גושן, אורן, נועה, איתי, אורי, עלמה, רז, עמית, גל, אוראל, זיו, זהבית, נטלי, אסף, מאיר, עינב, מרים אשר, ניסים, סימי, רחל, נתת לי עוד בית רק מעצם היותכם עצמכם. למיטל, איתן, ואורלי, עזרת לי לצמוח ותמכתם בי כשחיפשתי דרך להבין את המורשת המפוזרת שלנו. אייזק ושושי תודה על הכל. למילן, תודה על האומץ; עזרת לי להבין את ההיסטוריה המשפחתית שלנו בדרכים שבעיניים תמימות לא הייתי רואה. לכולם שלא זכיתי להכיר, דוד יצחק, חיים, איישה, זהרה, סבא יצחק, תודה.

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למכלוף ולרוזט, שהם למעשה ההורים השניים שלי, בנוסף לסבא וסבתא שלי. הבית שלכם הפך להיות שלי, ואני הילד שלכם, במשך שלושה חודשים ואז שנה שבה פנייתם לי מקום בחייכם, בהיסטוריה שלכם ובמחשבותיכם. סבתא, חשפת בפניי סיפורים שאחרת לא הייתי יכול לשמוע. ההומור שלך, הוודאות שלך והכוח שלך הם דברים שאני יכול רק לקוות שירשתי באופן חלקי. סבא, בקיץ הראשון הפכתי לנהג שלך, ואתה הראית לי את הנגב. במהלך השנה הפכתי לבנך, ואתה נגעת בי ללא הרף בדאגתך העמוקה למשפחתך, ובקבלתך את החלטותי, כל עוד הייתי מאושר.

לכל הסבים והסבתות שלי, אני יכול רק לקוות להיות רבע מהאנשים שעשיתם מעצמכם.

To my brothers and my sisters, who asked about my research and reminded me how wrong I can be about things. Thank you, Sean and Zoe, for giving whenever you can, happily and more than anyone could ask. Thank you, Ortai, for giving our parents the childhood we never had, and for caring so much for our family. Thank you, Shylie, for still being here, and for doing the hard work it takes to be yourself. Thank you, Ridge (my other half), for being there to understand me in ways no one else can. Though we are different people, it's been the most comforting experience to have something most people don't, which is so much of your own experience and life in another person. A special thanks to Wing and Peter, and Vanessa and Harry, who gave me family in the Netherlands.

להוריי היקרים, שנתנו לי את כל מה שהיה להם כדי שאבנה את חיי. אני יודע שאנחנו לא מסכימים לעתים קרובות שבמובנים מסוימים הדרך שלי הוא לא מה שהייתם בוחרים, אבל אני מודה לכם על ההכרה בערך של מה שבחרתי לעשות, ועל שתמכתם בי גם כשבחרתי לחיות מעבר לאוקיינוס, כפי שבחרתם לעשות לפני שנים רבות. בדרך זו, קחו בחשבון שאני הולך בעקבותיכם, ואכן, זה רק גרם לי להעריך הרבה יותר את כל מה שהקרבתם ואת הקשיים שסבלתם כדי להגיע למקום שבו אתם נמצאים. על כל זה, ועל האמונה שבסופו של דבר לשמור על המשפחה שלנו ביחד זה הדבר הכי חשוב בעולם, תודה.

Finally, to Edwina, to whom I could never begin to express my gratitude properly. Wow, Thanks! You have been with me at my highest and lowest points, through the difficulties of this dissertation, immigration, war, and the harsh realities which, just for being together, the world seems to always find a way to impose on us. Thank you for showing me the way so many times when things were uncertain, for your infinite patience with me, and for forever reminding me that we are responsible for each other in this world, even if we don't want to be. I have never met anyone who so deliberately takes it upon themselves to care about others. Though we have to keep saying it, I hope it comes as no surprise that I consider everything we have gone through, and anything we could, as being worth it.

Introduction

I am from my country, and all countries: Moroccan Jews as subjects of diaspora

At the inauguration of the Quinzaine Sépharade held in Montreal in June 1986, the Moroccan Jewish poet Bob Oré Abitbol performed an unfinished version of a poem called “Je vous avoue,” or “I confess,” soon after published in his first book, *Le Goût des Confitures*. Abitbol, born in Casablanca in December 1948, had immigrated to Paris at the age of sixteen, and then five years later to Montreal, followed by Mexico, and finally Los Angeles. In November 2021, Abitbol returned to Casablanca for the first time in nearly twenty years in honor of the book’s translation into Arabic by Saïd Ahed, a Moroccan Muslim and writer from El Jadida.¹ There, Abitbol recited a slightly different version of the poem, among others from the same book, and described his feelings of being back in Morocco. The poem’s published version reads:

I confess to you
I’m a little perplexed
It’s that my identity
Is a bit complex.
Judge for yourself if you can
And try to help me
I’ll tell you all about it.
In Morocco where I was born
I was told, you’re Moroccan:
No problem I said fine
You will be faithful to your king
You will honor your country:
I said that works for me
Then the French arrived
I was told you have to change everything
Protectori Protectorate
I don’t know the Arabs [Li z’arabes j’y connais pas]

Your ancestors are the Gauls
I said oukha [ok]
But be careful, don’t forget
Wherever you go, wherever you are
Jew you are, Jew you’ll die
I said hoorah
In France where I passed by
I was told if you want to be respected
Give up, give up your identity quickly
Or you’ll be an immigrant [immigré]
I said perfect
Arrived in Canada
I was told you’re Canadian
And immediately by the grace of God
It became the “land of my forefathers”
Careful! my friends told me: Be careful!

Don’t mess around, you don’t have a choice
In Quebec, you’re Quebecois
I thought, and why not?
With all that, don’t forget
I’m told wherever I am
Israel is everything to you
That’s why tonight
As a
Jewish-Marocano ex-Frenchman in transit
Quebecer Montrealer in exilio
Israeli and by my children a little Mexican
From this taste of jams
I hope you enjoy reading
Because on my own, I understood
I am from my country
And from all countries
Amen²

1 “Le Goût Des Confitures’ de Bob Oré Abitbol Traduit En Arabe,” SNRT News, October 19, 2021, <https://snrtnews.com/fr/article/le-go%C3%BBt-des-confitures-de-bob-or%C3%A9-abitbol-traduit-en-arabe>.

2 See the original French version in the Appendix.

Noting major developments in the construction of Moroccan Jewish identity, Abitbol begins with his country of origin, being told “you’re Moroccan [...] be faithful to your king [and] [...] honor your country” before the arrival of the French in 1912, after which he was told “you have to change everything [...] your ancestors are the Gauls”. Upon leaving France, Abitbol became Canadian, which “became ‘the land of my forefathers’”, a direct quote from Canada’s national anthem. There he also became Quebecois, part of the francophone national identity promoted by French Canadians in Canada’s French-speaking province, though he notes that everywhere he went he was reminded that Israel should be the most important thing to him.

Abitbol’s “Je vous avoue”, recited in Montreal in 1986 and in his native Casablanca in 2021, evokes the complexity of his identity, with its manifold attachments, as seen through the lens of twentieth century Moroccan Jewish history, as well as in the context of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora that developed over that time. The poem weaves together Abitbol’s personal experiences as a Moroccan Jew while appealing to perceived milestones in Moroccan Jewish history when the locus of this identity was reoriented. Setting aside the poem’s creative anachronisms—Abitbol was born in colonial Morocco, rather than before “the French arrived” in 1912—it is significant that the poem’s identity milestones are almost entirely products of diaspora. For example, the Alliance Israélite Universelle encouraged Moroccan Jews to think of themselves as the descendants of the Gauls, the Roman name for Western Europe used to describe France in the pre-modern era. The idea was rhetorical rather than literal, and was further popularized by Moroccan Jews in Montreal, where Abitbol spent his young adulthood.³ Similarly does the poem reference France, Mexico, and Israel. Even the poem’s nod to a national Moroccan identity is deliberately anachronistic, and in an interview given directly after the poem’s reading in Casablanca, Abitbol stated that “I remained Moroccan, but not only that, we became even more Moroccan abroad than here. I assumed my Moroccaness [*marocanité*] in Montreal, in Los Angeles, even in Mexico where I lived, I became very Moroccan.”⁴

This dissertation studies the over 330,000 Moroccan Jews who, like Abitbol, left Morocco in the second half of the twentieth century and their development into a transnational diaspora. From 276,000 who emigrated to Israel, more than 35,000 to France, more than 10,000 to Canada, and perhaps another 10,000 to Latin America, among others, Moroccan Jews constitute today a diaspora of nearly a million Jews, either born in Morocco, or of Moroccan descent. In practice, this thesis is an exploration of Jewish Moroccaness. My main argument is that this fluid register was forged through multi-directional migration, and the collective history, memory, connections, and culture that this migration engendered. I interrogate how those Jews,

3 Roy Orel Shukrun and Aviad Moreno, “Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism: Sephardism, Decolonization, and Activism between Israel and Montreal,” *American Jewish History* 107, no. 2–3 (April 2023): 672–73; Alma Rachel Heckman, *The Sultan’s Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 31.

4 Abitbol, Bob Oré. “Bob Oré Abitbol signe à Casablanca son dernier ouvrage ‘Le goût des confitures,’” *L’Observateur du Maroc et d’Afrique*, November 22, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUW6wHtDL0Y>.

between their lives in Morocco and those abroad, whether in Montreal, Israel, or France, came to express a notion of Moroccaness, whether intentionally or inadvertently through their ties to other Jews of Moroccan descent across the world. I thus treat “Moroccaness” as inherently a product of diaspora. In realizing its central goal of exploring how Jewish immigrants from Morocco emerged as a Moroccan Jewish diaspora, this dissertation is guided by the question: who and what counts as Moroccan in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first century Moroccan Jewish diaspora?

This dissertation uses case studies to explore Moroccan Jewish migration and history in the late twentieth century, focusing on overlooked aspects or those needing revision. It demonstrates that though Jewish life in Morocco came to a close in the decades following Israel’s establishment in 1948, these initial waves of migration did not represent the end of Moroccan Jewish history. Thus, one of its purposes is also to serve as a useful reference about the Moroccan Jewish diaspora. At the same time, each of the focuses represents novel research and aims to set a new baseline for understanding how migration and diaspora have informed what Moroccaness looks like. Specifically, I address four main geographical sites within the diaspora structure: the Israeli Negev and the city of Ofakim in particular, France, the Canadian province of Quebec and the city of Montreal in particular, and finally Morocco as site of return. In addition to these, I address two additional loci of Moroccan Jewish life, migration, and activities: the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) and ethnic activism.

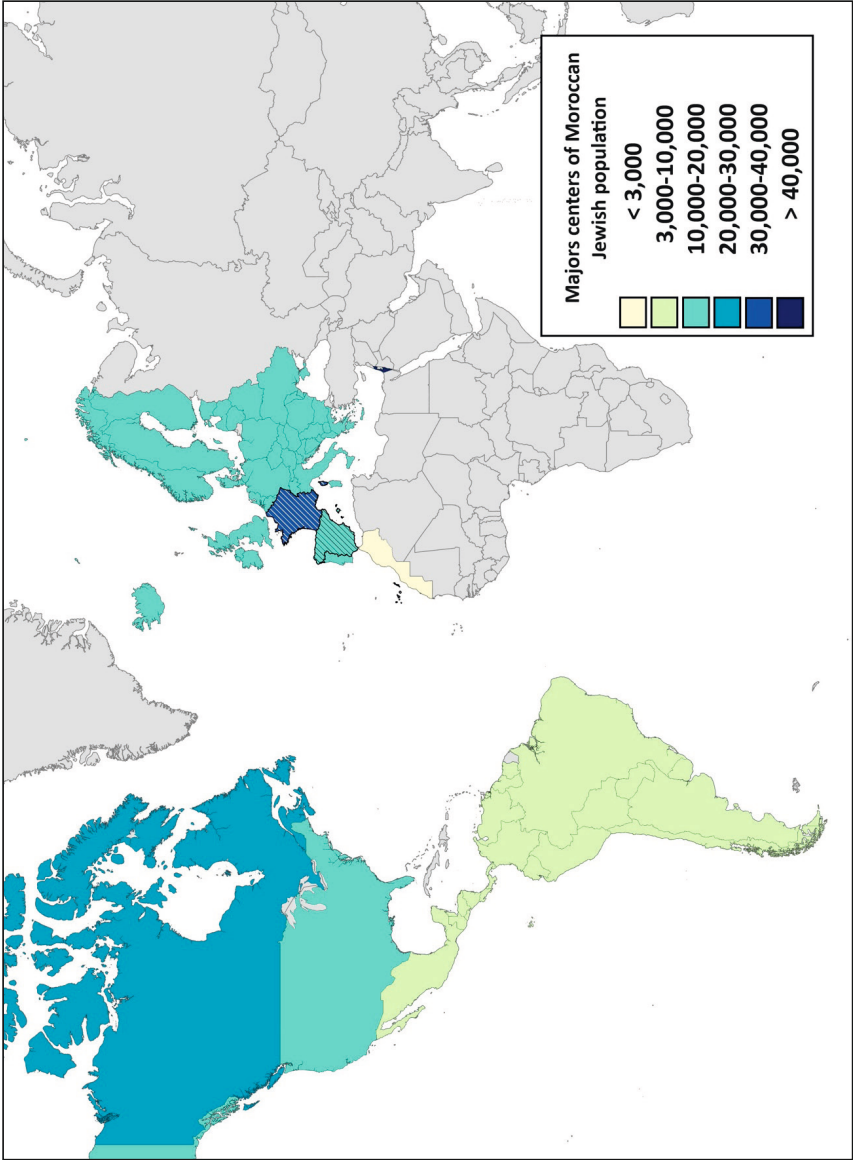
Region/Country	Number of immigrants
Israel	276,000
France	35,000–50,000
Canada	10,000
Latin America	10,000

Figure 0.1: Numbers of Jewish immigrants in the second half of the twentieth century according to destination.

Region/Country	Population
Israel	800,000
Europe	80,000
–France	40,000
–Spain	20,000
Americas	100,000
–Canada	30,000
–United States	20,000
Total	980,000

Figure 0.2: Numbers of Jews of Moroccan heritage in 2017 according to country or region.⁵

5 Aomar Boum, “Circuits Diasporiques : Les Communautés Juives Marocaines En Amérique Latine et En Amérique Du Nord,” in *Marocains de l’extérieur 2017* (Rabat: Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l’Étranger, 2018), 266; Mohammed Kenbib, “Les Juifs Marocains d’Europe: Passé et Présent,” in *Marocains de l’Extérieur - 2017* (Rabat: Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l’Étranger, 2018), 232.



Map 1: Major centers of Moroccan Jewish population according to region and/or country 2017: Morocco; Latin America; Canada; United States; Spain; France; rest of Europe; and Israel. Note that numbers in France and Spain are here separated from contiguous European countries.

The stories of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora are far more diverse than the countries in which these Jews settled, and this heterogeneity forms a natural barrier to constructing a cohesive description of global Moroccan Jewry. In this sense I take inspiration from Joel Beinin's classic work on diaspora, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, where he writes:

"The task of representing the heterogeneity of the Egyptian Jewish community has led me to compose this book somewhat unconventionally. It is a self-consciously interdisciplinary text structured not by an overarching linear historical narrative (though several of its chapters are historical narratives), but by the themes of identity, dispersion, and the struggle over retrieval of identity [...]"⁶

Beinin's "unconventionally" constructed volume has a clear drawback: it covers many diaspora locations that don't always have obvious connections. I argue, however, that the great advantage of his account is that the compilation of different sites, from Egypt, to Israel, and to the San Francisco Bay Area, brings to the fore diasporic continuities which are otherwise subdued.

Similarly, am I indebted to Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah's more recent *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*, where she writes:

"Iraqi Jews identified with a larger 'Baghdadi Jewish' community that in their minds extended beyond the borders of Iraq, in particular to the satellite communities of the Indian sub-continent and East Asia, but also the United Kingdom and other parts of MENA [Middle East and North Africa]. Geographic delocalization engendered an identity that was fluid, transcending nationality and language, built on shared customs and traditions, linked to [...] intellectual exchange in Baghdadi periodicals; solidarity movements; and philanthropy. This trend can also be seen in other Jewish subgroups (such as Moroccan and Iranian Jewry) whose communities transcend language and nation."⁷

These same arguments apply to Moroccan Jewry as it delocalized and sought to define itself across borders, languages, and even across the reality of diversity as it had existed in Morocco. As such, I do not contend that Moroccanness has crystallized into a homogenous transnational identity, but rather that it served and continues to serve as an underlying reference point, and a language, which ties together people, places, institutions, and actions under its broad heading.

6 Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 7.

7 S. R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, volume 69 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 221.

Along these lines, this dissertation only partially contributes to a post-1956 history of Moroccan Jews, and rather forms a compendium which can spur further research.

The notion, eloquently written by Bob Abitbol, that Moroccan Jews could easily be from their own country, Morocco, but also from all the countries where they have lived outside of it, describes well this thesis' argument. Moroccan Jewish life did not end with the establishment of Israel in 1948, nor with Moroccan independence in 1956, nor even with the waves of emigration which deprived the country of its only recognized indigenous religious minority and forever changed Moroccan society. Instead, mass emigration marked the beginning of a new period in Moroccan Jewish history in which Jews, much like the classic Sephardi expellees of 1492 before them, by and large became Moroccans.⁸ As Abitbol suggests, there is no one single manner in which this process unfolded. Rather, I argue that it occurred everywhere Moroccan Jews lived and maintained ties with their counterparts elsewhere, and that, crucially, each one site affected the other. The manifold ways in which this happened are the subject of this dissertation.

Review of Jewish History in Morocco

It is unclear when Jews first settled in what is today called Morocco. Certain Jewish communities, particularly those residing in the Atlas or pre-Saharan Oasis regions, trace their origins back to the destruction of the first temple in 587 BCE. In the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun theorized that the indigenous Jewish communities of Morocco were actually Amazigh converts to Judaism.⁹ This theory was later promoted by French colonial authorities and, despite its persistence, it has largely been dismissed by historians.¹⁰ Following the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal in 1492 and 1497 respectively, Morocco's local Jewish population, known as *toshavim*, was joined by significant influxes of Spanish and Portuguese refugees, or *megorashim*. Throughout the centuries, Morocco's Jewish community remained diverse, with localized identities often prevailing over overarching Jewish or Moroccan identities. Linguistically, many Jews were multilingual, conversant in local Moroccan Arabic dialects, various Tamazight or Berber dialects, and, particularly in the northern regions, Haketia, "an amalgam of pre-1492 Iberian Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew mixed with words in Moroccan Arabic and Tamazight

8 Jonathan Ray argues that a cohesive Sephardi identity was a product in the diaspora of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497, rather than a pre-exile identity. See Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2013).

9 Emily Benichou Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times* (London: Tauris, 2020), 22.

10 Colette Zytnecki, "The 'Oriental Jews' of the Maghreb: Reinventing the North African Jewish Past in the Colonial Era," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 41–50.

dialects.”¹¹ By 1945, the Jews in Morocco likely numbered between 250,000 and 300,000, dispersed across numerous localities spanning Morocco’s coastal areas to its hinterlands.¹²

Jewish communities long played pivotal social, economic, and cultural roles in Moroccan society. Primarily employed as artisans and merchants, Jews were regarded as Morocco’s sole recognized religious minority. Under Islamic law, Jews were *dhimmi*, a protected religious group with recognized rights to self-autonomy in exchange for paying the *jizya* tax and accepting certain, sometimes humiliating, restrictions. The quintessential Jewish merchant would traverse towns, collecting and trading goods, returning only for the Sabbath.¹³ So integral were Jews to Moroccan life that a popular adage there, still well-known amongst Muslims today, goes: “a market without Jews is like bread without salt.”¹⁴ From the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, exclusive Jewish quarters, or *mellahs*, emerged in major Moroccan cities, although most Jewish communities across the country did not live in defined Jewish quarters, even if they tended to live close to one another.¹⁵ Regardless of whether Jews lived in a *mellah*, numerous aspects of daily life was shared with their Muslim neighbors.

Following military and political conflicts with European powers, Morocco succumbed to a system of capitulations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, granting local Moroccans nationality and legal protection by foreign nations. While many Jews continued to operate within local Jewish and even Muslim courts, some elite Moroccans, including Jews, acquired foreign nationality, accessing consular courts and capitalizing on this legal pluralism.¹⁶ The onset of Spanish and French colonization in 1912 marked the end of this system, establishing colonial categories of law. France, which came to control most of the country under a French Protectorate, sought to avoid repeating in Morocco its Algerian “mistake”; where most Algerian Jews had been granted French citizenship in 1870, French colonial administrators sought to maintain Jews’ status as *indigènes*, indigenous subjects of the Sultan. In the process, Jews lost access to many of the legal options they had previously possessed.¹⁷

11 Aviad Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2024), 2.

12 For the 250,000 figure see Jamaâ Baïda, “The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948-1956,” in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 321–33; for the 250,000–300,000 figure, see Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 164.

13 Shlomo A. Deshen, *The Mellah Society: Jewish Community Life in Sherifian Morocco* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 30–45.

14 Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 15.

15 Emily Benichou Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco’s Red City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1–2.

16 See Jessica M. Marglin, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2016), 145–70.

17 Marglin, 197.

In the northern Spanish Protectorate, Spain cultivated strong pro-Spanish sentiment amongst the Haketia-speaking descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish expellees as a means to increase its claim on Moroccan soil. Northern Moroccan Jews came to strongly identify with their Spanish roots and over the twentieth century developed a specific Hispanic variant of Moroccan Jewish identity.¹⁸ Reflecting this reality, Reine Bendelac, a native of Tangier born in 1945 and who emigrated to France in 1968, told me in 2024, “in Israel they do not call us Moroccans but Spaniards.”¹⁹ Many Muslims, too, came to see Morocco’s Andalusian past as essential to Moroccan history and identity, and this notion influenced how nationalists framed their struggle for independence.²⁰ Significantly, the border between French and Spanish Morocco was porous, and Moroccans continued to traverse and organize across it. Though the field’s preference for French sources over Spanish ones can create the illusion that there existed two isolated Moroccos during the colonial period, this was far from the case.²¹

Whether from the north or south, for many Moroccan Jews the AIU, a French-Jewish organization, introduced significant modernizing influences through its French-language Jewish schools, the first of which was opened in Tetouan in 1862. If the French colonial residency in Morocco sought to limit Jewish assimilation to French settlers, the AIU sought to emancipate and modernize them by cultivating French language skills and modern habits among Moroccan Jews. Despite differing interpretations of the AIU’s impact, its schools played a defining role in shaping the modern experiences of many Moroccan Jews. Significantly, no such widespread access to modern education was available to Moroccan Muslims, and the AIU ultimately contributed to a cultural fissure between many Jews and Muslims.

The establishment of the protectorates in 1912 and the outbreak of World War I soon after took a heavy toll on Moroccan society, “upsetting everyday routines – shortages of food and matériel, the absence of able-bodied men sent to France for combat or work, the destabilization of social life.”²² The end of World War I brought with it the nascent Moroccan nationalist movement, young Muslims educated in Cairo, Beirut, and Paris, ready to take control of their collective destinies. An opportunity to fight came with the French promulgation of the “Berber Dahir” in 1930, one-hundred years after the French occupation of Algeria. The Dahir made explicit a separation between Berber law and Shariah law in Morocco, as imagined by French colonial officials. The Dahir inspired major demonstrations and protests which France

18 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 3–8.

19 E-mail from Reine Bendelac, 9 January 2024. Information about Reine Bendelac appears in Nadia Malinovich, “A Transnational History of the Students and Teachers of the Alliance Israelite Universelle after 1945” (unpublished manuscript, 4 December 2023).

20 See Eric Calderwood, *Colonial Al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

21 Calderwood, 17.

22 Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 121.

responded to “with beatings, deportations, and prison, giving many young activists their first lesson in the cost of civil disobedience.”²³ The French residency finally neutralized the law, giving the nationalist movement its first major victory.

Over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an elite group of Jews in Morocco increasingly Europeanized and urban Jewish residents began to leave the *mellahs* for the new European quarters occupied by French settlers. During World War II, the French protectorate, alongside Vichy France, enforced policies of *numerus clausus* (quotas) on Jewish professionals, compelling many to return to crowded *mellahs* from newly established European neighborhoods. A prevailing narrative, supported by both Muslim and Jewish Moroccans, alleges King Mohammed V’s refusal to comply with Vichy officials’ discriminatory policies against Jews. Daniel Schroeter notes the improbability of this story, though it endures as a significant interpretation of Moroccan history, embodying a potent symbol of Moroccan



Map 2: Morocco and cities. Credits: Esri, © OpenStreetMap Contributors, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS.

²³ Miller, 125–27.



Maps 3 and 4: Ceuta and Melilla. Credits: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, METI/NASA, USGS.

Jews' attachment to the monarchy.²⁴ Rural Jewish communities also faced wartime challenges including scarcity of staple goods and the establishment of labor camps in the countryside.²⁵ Despite these tribulations, Moroccan Jews were spared deportation to European concentration camps, with no German incursion into Morocco, in contrast to Tunisia.²⁶

In the postwar period Jews found themselves in a quickly changing world. The establishment of Israel in 1948 compelled Jews in Morocco, where Zionist activity had been limited over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to consider their connection to the new country. The rise of Arab nationalism, Nasserism, mounting tension between Jews and Muslims epitomized by anti-Jewish attacks in Oujda and Jerada in 1948, and Morocco's uneven adoption of Arabization and Moroccanization policies, stirred Jews to wonder whether they had a future in the country.²⁷ As the Jewish Agency, Israel's immigration arm, sought new immigrants to populate the country's borders and international Jewish organizations feared a Holocaust in North Africa, emigration from Morocco became streamlined.²⁸ Created in 1929 by the British Mandate government in Palestine to help build a Jewish national home there, the Jewish Agency had been allowed to select Jewish immigrants to Palestine within the mandate government's set limits. Following 1948, the Jewish Agency continued to fulfil this role and took an ever-expanding one in recruiting and settling the new country with Jewish immigrants.²⁹

In Morocco, colonial rule had drastically changed the country: "in the cities, a salaried proletariat had supplanted the artisan class, while in the countryside, much of the peasantry, still more than 70 percent of the population, had become a landless proletariat, beholden to a small, powerful and wealthy group of native landowners who would become even richer with the departure of the French."³⁰ The years following independence saw a power struggle between King Mohammed V, who had been successfully mobilized as a symbol of the movement for

24 Daniel Schroeter, "Vichy in Morocco: The Residency, Mohammed V, and His Indigenous Jewish Subjects," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 221–30.

25 See Aomar Boum and Mohammed Hatimi, "Blessing of the Bled: Rural Moroccan Jewry During World War II," in *The Holocaust and North Africa*, ed. Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 113–31.

26 Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *The Holocaust and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 7.

27 Jamaâ Baïda, "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948–1956," in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 323–24.

28 Avi Picard, 1951–1956 *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה, 1951–1956* (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951–1956) (Sde Boquer: The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2013), 284–85.

29 Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 119–26.

30 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 153.

decolonization, and the nationalist Istiqlal party. The nationalist movement splintered as the King maneuvered to conserve power and undermine plans for political reforms.

Independence in 1956 brought accords which saw France “continue to play a role in Morocco politically, economically and militarily”, while Spain maintained control of the Saharan towns Tarfaya and Sidi Ifni, as well as Ceuta and Melilla, the latter which are still Spanish territory today. With the help of his son Hassan, soon to be King Hassan II, the monarchy partnered with French and Spanish troops to disarm nationalist militias in 1956, and in 1957 a separatist movement in the Rif mountains was violently suppressed. Upon his father’s passing in 1960, Hassan II set out “assuring the political supremacy of the monarchy” in a country rife with corruption and in dire economic straits.³¹ Two coup attempts by the army in 1971 and 1972 “shook the monarchy to its very foundations”, leading the King to resume cooperation with the opposition parties.³² In the coming years, the monarchy would turn to its claim on the Western Sahara as the issue on which its reputation could be salvaged.

The economic and political instability of the country deeply influenced the decisions of Jews to leave. Within two decades of Moroccan independence in 1956, most of the country’s Jews had already left. Moroccan-born Jews and Jews of Moroccan heritage today reside in many countries, from Venezuela, to Israel, and from Australia to France. The diaspora is multilingual, with Moroccans preferring French in France, Hebrew in Israel, French and English in Canada, Spanish in Latin America and the United States, and with much overlap between them. Significantly, not all see themselves as part of a Moroccan diaspora or consider that their cultural characteristics are borne from factors which originated in Morocco. As this dissertation demonstrates, however, neither 1948 nor 1956 constituted the beginning or the end of Moroccan Jewish history and migration.

Diasporic roots, transnational branches: Pre-twentieth century Moroccan Jewish movement

Morocco’s 2011 constitution, adopted in response to the “20 February movement” protests during the Arab Spring, posited Jews, or rather “Hebraic influences”, as an inherent part of the Moroccan nation.³³ Yet the notion of a Moroccan nation, let alone one which included Jews, had little to do with the Jews who lived there prior to the nineteenth century. Daniel Schroeter traces the self-identification of an elite subset of Jews as part of a single Moroccan Jewish community within the geographical confines of the country known today as Morocco to the

³¹ Miller, 159–63.

³² Miller, 178.

³³ Morocco 2011 Constitution,” Constitution, accessed 23 July 2023, <https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco—2011#s1>.

development of notions of the nation-state in the nineteenth century, and to the subsequent institutionalization of Jews in Morocco throughout the colonial period.³⁴

From their arrival in the fifteenth century, Sephardim in Morocco continued to be highly mobile, but also developed a distinct dialect called Haketia. Northern Moroccan Jews generally spoke Haketia until the early twentieth century, when it was quickly replaced by modern Spanish due to the close similarities between the languages and the “re-encounter” between Jews and Spanish settlers which took place under Spanish colonial rule. Indeed, in Sephardi Moroccan Jewish communal documents, Haketia was simply referred to as *Español*, Spanish, before it was marked as a separate dialect in Manuel L. Ortega’s 1919 book *Los Hebreos de Marruecos*.³⁵

From the sixteenth century, the Sephardi refugees were well-positioned to mediate trade between Morocco and Europe, as they spoke Castilian Spanish, a prominent language for international trade. Moroccan Sephardim and their coreligionists based elsewhere worked in the grain trade between Morocco, Spain, and Portugal, and following the fall of the Wattasid dynasty in 1554 Jews took part in the arms trade, importing weapons from England for the Moroccan sultanate.³⁶ Early on we can see the institutionalization of this role whereby Jews, later officially titled *tujjar al-sultan*, or royal merchants, became direct intermediaries dispatched by the Moroccan Sultan abroad. Emily Gottreich cites an incident in 1606, where the Moroccan ambassador in the Hague “expresses his outrage over the injury done to ‘his’ Jew when a Dutch agent shaved off his beard.”³⁷ If in 1606, long before the invention of a notion of Moroccan citizenship, a Moroccan ambassador abroad interceded in defense of a merchant in the Sultan’s employ, we would naturally refer to the merchant as “Moroccan” insofar as the diplomatic proceedings of the day considered him to be.

By the late seventeenth century, enlisting Jews as the Sultan’s merchants became routine, and as Europe sought to encroach on the Sultan’s domain, the *tujjar al-sultan* remained key to maintaining Moroccan economic and political autonomy until they were increasingly supplanted by foreign protégés privileged by free trade treaties which the Sultanate was forced to sign in the nineteenth century.³⁸ By that time, Moroccan Jewish merchant colonies were

34 Daniel J. Schroeter, “How Jews Became ‘Moroccan,’” in *From Catalonia to the Caribbean: The Sephardic Orbit from Medieval to Modern Times*, ed. Federica Francesconi, Stanley Mirvis, and Brian M. Smollett (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 219, 232–36.

35 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 38–39.

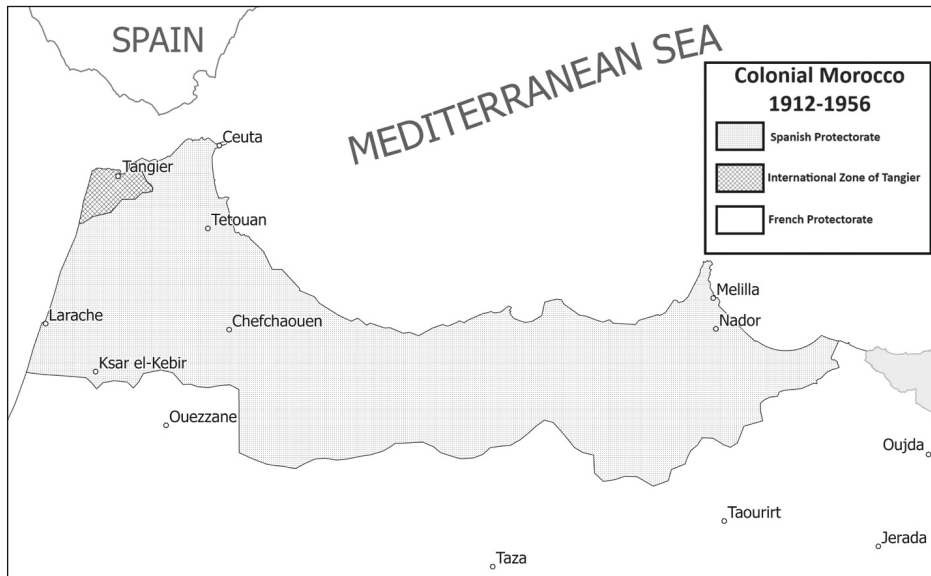
36 Jane S. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life*, vol. 6 (Brill, 1980), 161–67.

37 Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 208.

38 Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844–1886*, 168; see also Daniel J. Schroeter, *The Sultan’s Jew: Morocco and the Sephardi World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

well represented in major port cities and trade centers like London, Amsterdam, Marseille, Livorno, Oran, Tunis, and Gibraltar.³⁹

Not all Jews who travelled from Morocco flew under the Sultan's protection, but Jews could and did move between Morocco and other countries. In the twelfth century, Jews possibly from Morocco or Andalusia, identified as "Maghrebi", meaning "Westerner", traveled between Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine, and by the nineteenth century Maghrebi Jews had formed important communities in Ottoman Palestine.⁴⁰ Today, "Maghrebi" refers to people from the "Maghreb" region, which usually includes Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jews, particularly from the Draa valley, moved to Ottoman Palestine in response to "the rise of Lurianic kabbalah" led by Isaac Luria and his followers.⁴¹ Certain Moroccan Jews, particularly from the country's north, were especially well-traveled, such as U.S. abolitionist Moses Levy, born in Essaouira in 1782, and who was "at one time or another, a resident of Morocco, Gibraltar, the Danish West Indies, Puerto Rico, Cuba, England, and [...] the United States."⁴²



Map 5: Northern Morocco 1912-1956

- 39 Daniel J Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 50.
- 40 Alexandra Cuffel, "Call and Response: European Jewish Emigration to Egypt and Palestine in the Middle Ages," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 90, no. 1/2 (July 1999): 65-73; see also Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 41 Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 82.
- 42 According to C.S. Monaco, Levy's father had negotiated treaties with the U.S. on behalf of the Moroccan Sultan, and his son was the first Jewish senator in U.S. history. C.S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 14.

Jews from the north, the region in which Jews largely spoke Judeo-Spanish and would later become the Spanish protectorate, became one of Morocco's earliest and most mobile populations already by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the early nineteenth century, these "northern Moroccan Jews" were present in "mainland England, Bukhara, Sudan, Palestine, [...] the Azores, the Canary Islands, parts of the United States, the Caribbean Basin, and the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon basin."⁴³ To denote the particular history and self-identification of this subset of Moroccan Jewry, I will use the term "northern Moroccan Jews" to refer to Jews who lived along Morocco's northern border with Gibraltar and the Mediterranean, where Jews often spoke Haketia (and later Spanish) and which would come under the influence of Spanish colonialism.

Though they often also dominated the networks which brought Moroccan Jews to merchant colonies and as teachers in AIU schools across the Mediterranean, it was Latin America in particular which became home to a significant northern Moroccan Jewish diaspora. Northern Moroccan Jews began arriving as early as 1810 and working as river peddlers in the Brazilian Amazon. In the 1870 a rubber industry boom enticed northern Moroccan Jews to immigrate and work as rubber traders, and the wave propelled Jewish migrants as far as Iquitos, in Peru, where according to a traveling AIU teacher, storefronts displayed names like "Cohen, Toledano, Benmergui, Delmar, Serfaty, Benassayag, Elaluf, Pinto, etc.; exactly as in Morocco."⁴⁴ This nineteenth century northern migration, facilitated by the migrants' knowledge of Spanish, laid the foundation which later made Argentina and Venezuela the most popular emigration destination amongst Jews from northern Morocco in 1946 and 1950, respectively.⁴⁵

In the nineteenth century, the migration of northern Moroccan Jews to Latin America had borne the largest and most widespread diaspora of Jews conscious of their distinctive origin in their Moroccan hometowns. In his book, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas*, Aviad Moreno notes that wealthy Jews who had found success in Latin America became philanthropists who donated funds to their Moroccan hometowns, building synagogues, Jewish cemetery walls, and sending money back to support their families. Conversely, towns like Tetouan were indelibly marked by migration, where return migrants opened shops like "La Grand Bazar La Caraqueña, or The Caracas Native's Grand Bazaar".⁴⁶

A diaspora of Spanish-speaking Jews from northern Morocco thus formed in the nineteenth century, distinct from the rest of Moroccan Jewry. While part of this is explained

43 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 51–52.

44 Ariel Segal Freilich, *Jews of the Amazon: Self-Exile in Earthly Paradise*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society Philadelphia, 1999), 51–52.

45 Aviad Moreno, "Beyond the Nation-State: A Network Analysis of Jewish Emigration From Northern Morocco to Israel," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 13.

46 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 61–64.

by northern Morocco's separate colonial history, forming a Spanish protectorate and the Tangier international zone, northern Moroccan Jewry's distinct identity and migratory patterns preceded the colonial period and continued past independence. From Israel to Latin America, northern Moroccan Jews have sought to differentiate themselves from their Arabic and Tamazight speaking countrymen throughout the second half of the twentieth century, while still maintaining a strong attachment to Morocco.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most structured movement of Moroccan Jews to and from Morocco before 1948 was effected through the schools of the AIU. Young Moroccans, like other young Jews from around the Mediterranean, were recruited as teachers, studying at the AIU's teacher training schools, the École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO), and became themselves further mediators of Jewish migration.⁴⁸ Such was the case of Ruth Jouhet, an AIU teacher in Morocco and the central figure of Chapter 4. Nineteenth and early twentieth century educational networks in particular connected many Moroccan Jews across the Mediterranean through, but not necessarily to, France. This includes networks established by eastern European rabbis who established missionary movements amongst Moroccans in the early twentieth century and imported young Jews to learn in Yeshivas in France, England, the U.S. and elsewhere.⁴⁹ In the second half of the twentieth century, these same networks would facilitate the migration of numerous Moroccans to France proper.

In the end, though we have no hard statistics, we can assume that a relatively small percentage of Jews born in Morocco, or their descendants, lived outside the country prior to the colonial period and until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Though Jews left and maintained contact with their hometowns in Morocco before the colonial period, no overarching Moroccan Jewish diaspora existed long before the colonial period, and Moroccan Jewish identity, in its manifold applications across the world, is primarily a product of Jews in diaspora. And yet we must acknowledge that the roots which later grew into the tree of a global Moroccan Jewry were set in the centuries prior to the mid-twentieth century. The many northern Moroccan Jews who migrated to Latin America were utilizing widely used migratory routes established since the early nineteenth century. A significant number of Jews who settled in France utilized pre-existing educational networks who facilitated their relocation, as I argue in Chapter 4. Networks of migration continued to influence further migratory decisions, as for example Moroccans who immigrated to Israel who sent letters to their families back in Morocco either encouraging them to join, or lamenting that immigrating there had been a

⁴⁷ Moreno, 116–40.

⁴⁸ Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862–1962* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983), 103; see also Susan Gilson Miller, “Moïse Nahon and the Invention of the Modern Maghrebi Jew,” in *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories*, ed. Patricia M E Lorcin and Todd Shepard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 293–319.

⁴⁹ See Yaacov Loupo, *Métamorphose Ultra-Orthodoxe Chez Les Juifs Du Maroc* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).

mistake, as I show in Chapter 6. What is clear is that the decades following the end of World War II would see the sites of Moroccan Jewish life proliferate further than any period before.

Scholarship on Morocco, Israel, France, and Canada

The main sites of Moroccan Jewish migration addressed in this dissertation are Israel, primarily the former development towns of the Negev,⁵⁰ France, Quebec, Canada's francophone province, and Morocco itself. While other hubs of migration have held significant populations of Moroccan Jews, I do not delve deeply into the particularities of all of them, for example countries in Latin America where many Jews from northern Morocco migrated; these have received recent attention elsewhere.⁵¹ As noted above, I have opted to focus on aspects of this migration which have received relatively little attention, such as Moroccan Jewish migration to France, or whose scholarship is not well integrated into the broader field of Moroccan Jewish history, such as Moroccan Jews in Quebec and the Negev. This section summarizes some of the important scholarship on these three sites, in addition to a more general Middle East and North African (MENA) and Moroccan Jewish historical literature review.

During the large waves of migration in the second half of the twentieth century, more than 276,000 Moroccan Jews would migrate from the country of their birth to the State of Israel. Between 1948 and 1949 nearly 22,900 Jews left for Israel; between 1949-1957, nearly 110,000 immigrated; between 1957-1961, organized clandestine immigration brought 29,472; and between November 1961 and December 1964, as part of Israel's Operation Yakhin, 89,742 would make their way there. After the end of Operation Yakhin in 1964, immigration numbers sharply declined, but continued, so that between 1965 and the end of 1971, an additional 24,416 Jews left Morocco for Israel.⁵² In 2017, the number of Moroccan-born Jews and their descendants

50 Formerly "development towns", today municipalities like Ofakim, Sderot, and Dimona are cities in their own right.

51 See e.g. Maite Ojeda-Mata, "Jewish Tetouan: Place, Community, and Ethnic Boundaries from the Minutes Book of the Community Board, 1929-46," *Jewish Culture and History* 22, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 358-77; Maite Ojeda-Mata, "The Sephardim of North Morocco, Zionism and Illegal Emigration to Israel Through the Spanish Cities of Ceuta and Melilla," *Contemporary Jewry* 40, no. 4 (December 2020): 519-45; Susan Gilson Miller, "Kippur on the Amazon: Jewish Emigration from Northern Morocco in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, ed. Harvey E. Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 190-209; Jessica M. Marglin, "Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893-1913," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 574-603.

52 See Yigal Bin-Nun, "La Négociation de l'évacuation En Masse Des Juifs Du Maroc," in *La Fin Du Judaïsme En Terres d'Islam*, ed. Shmuel Trigano (Paris: Denoël Médiations, 2009), 311; Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 225; Moreno, "Beyond the Nation-State: A Network Analysis of Jewish Emigration From Northern Morocco to Israel," 2; Jewish Agency, Manuscript on Moroccan Jews (Hebrew). S6-10167, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA).

in Israel numbered approximately 800,000, making Israel by far the most populous hub of Moroccan Jews in the world.⁵³

The study of Moroccan Jewish migration to Israel has been burdened like many other destinations with ideological and politicized analyses. Indeed, this issue has pervaded the study of numerous MENA Jewish communities' migration to Israel in the twentieth century.⁵⁴ In Israel this ideological framing has practical consequences, so that, for example, migration to Israel is distinguished from other destinations by the term "aliya," and rather than immigrants, Jewish migrants to Israel are called "Olim." These terms carry weight in Israeli law and policy through the "Law of Return" and the corresponding "Oleh Hadash" package which eases new Jewish immigrants' moves to Israel through government subsidized housing, car purchases, and other tax breaks (*zkhuyot oleh*).⁵⁵

Early historiography tended to write about North African Jews only until 1948 or 1956. In the 1950s and 1960s, a pioneering cadre of historians tackled North African Jewish history, but often utilized national boundaries, such as Israel, France, and Morocco, as ready-made frameworks. Israeli historiography in this period aligned with the Zionist goal of the adoption of a new Jewish existence in Israel characterized by "shlilat ha'galut," or the "negation of exile."⁵⁶ Pioneers of Moroccan Jewish history and parochial Zionist historiography, such as Haim Ze'ev Hirschberg and André Chouraqui, tended to frame Jews' "exilic" experience as a long and relatively undifferentiated narrative of oppression at the hands of Muslim rulers before their rescue by the modern state of Israel or their transformation at the hands of the AIU.⁵⁷

The ideological framing of this migration eclipses the internally diverse stories of Moroccan Jewish life within Israel and the ways in which these Jews' origins in Morocco informed their lives in Israel, as well as the ways they continued to be connected to Morocco and other places where their families and friends had migrated. Early historical accounts tended to confirm the traditional, political Zionist narrative about the "ingathering of exiles". This view interpreted the waves of Moroccan Jewish migration as a natural return to the land of Israel

53 Kenbib, "Les Juifs Marocains d'Europe: Passé et Présent," 232.

54 For Iraq, see Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*, 5; for Yemen, see Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "Operation Magic Carpet: Constructing the Myth of the Magical Immigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel," *Israel Studies* 16, no. 3 (2011): 152–53; for Egypt and the MENA in general, see Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, 1998, 14–17.

55 See Sammy Smootha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel: A Comparison of the Failure of the Mizrahi Immigrants of the 1950s with the Success of the Russian Immigrants of the 1990s," *Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1–27.

56 Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study Based Mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1954).

57 André Chouraqui, *Marche Vers l'Occident: Les Juifs d'Afrique Du Nord* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952); *חיים זאב הירשברג, תולדות היהודים באפריקה הצפונית: התפוצה היהודית בארצות המגרב מימי קדם ועד זמננו. מוסד, 1952* (ביאליק: ירושלים, 1965).

after generations of longing and undifferentiated oppression at the hands of Muslim rulers.⁵⁸ This perspective, called the “neo-lachrymose conception of Jewish-Arab history,” attracted significant attention following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, when it became a prevailing method to counter and override Palestinian claims of dispossession.⁵⁹ This narrative supported the notion that Moroccan *aliya* organized by Israel, especially between 1961–1964, was one of Israel’s rescue efforts in North Africa and the Middle East, analogous to the state’s organization of Jewish migration from Iraq and Yemen.⁶⁰ A corollary to this view is often the intense religiosity or messianism which motivated these migrations.⁶¹

The dominance of the neo-lachrymose narrative has tangible consequences. It has been maintained by the Israeli government in its adoption in 2014 of the “Day to Mark the Departure and Expulsion of Jews from the Arab Countries and Iran,” which problematically lumps all twentieth century MENA Jewish migration into the same category.⁶² According to this narrative,⁶³ Moroccan Jews, along with all other MENA Jews, constitute “refugees,” a complement to this “neo-lachrymose” view which decidedly flattens the character of these migrations.⁶⁴ It has progressively been adopted in more popular media, and even has acquired a special significance with relation to Moroccan Jewish experience in Israel’s periphery, as in the Israeli TV show *Zagury Imperia* (Zagury Empire). The show tells the story of Aviel Zagury, a Jew of Moroccan descent who returns after many years to his Moroccan family in Be’er Sheva, who suffer many of the social and economic issues that Aviel escaped when he left the periphery. In one episode Aviel’s father, Bébert Zagury, even scoffs at the idea that Ashkenazi Jews in Europe had suffered more than Moroccans, saying that compared to the pogroms of Morocco, those in Europe were “pogroms for beginners.”⁶⁵

In contrast, Yaron Tsur points to the development of the postcolonial school following the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978. Subsequent studies in the 1980s reversed this “neo-lachrymose” perspective and determined instead that Moroccan Jews lived idyllic lives before Israel’s interference forced them to leave their homes, and that like Palestinians, Mizrahi

58 See e.g. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study Based Mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1954).

59 Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, 1998, 15–17.

60 See e.g. Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004); Meir-Glitzenstein, “Operation Magic Carpet: Constructing the Myth of the Magical Immigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel.”

61 Gil Troy, *The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland—Then, Now, Tomorrow* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2018), 236.

62 This narrative also serves to juxtapose the migration of MENA Jews to Israel with the expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine/Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

63 Political advocacy groups such as JIMENA (Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa) and Sephardi Voices adopt a similar narrative.

64 Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, 1998.

65 “Zagury Imperia” (HOT, 2014).

Jews, MENA Jews in Israel, were victims of Zionism.⁶⁶ The postmodern and postcolonial arguments also tended to treat MENA Jews, including Moroccans, as having been swept up in forces they could not control with the goal of highlighting the discrimination MENA Jews experienced at the hands of the Israeli government. Ella Shohat in particular, inspired by Edward Said, has pioneered a reversal of a historiography which muted the issues faced by MENA Jews in Israel.⁶⁷ Indeed, the prejudice faced by Moroccans and other MENA Jews in Israel is well-documented in the Hebrew literature, in particular the government's initiative in the mid-1950s, "From Ship to Village," which sent primarily MENA Jews, and in particular Moroccans, to the country's peripheral "development towns" and Moshavim (agricultural settlements).⁶⁸ Many Moroccans did not choose to live in these towns and regretted having gone there.⁶⁹

This counternarrative also finds expression in popular media, as in another episode of *Zagury Imperia* in which Aviel implores his family to stand for a moment of silence on Israel's Holocaust Memorial Day, but most of the family refuses. Angrily, his father Bébert explains,

"This is not my people. My people arrived to this country from wealth, palaces, and luxury, and they ruined our lives. [...] We lived in the dust! The dust! Do you ever hear of 'the day of the Ma'abarot?' No. [...] Why do I have to know all of the names of their places? About all the history of their writers and poets? [...] And I am not the history of the Jewish people? Do they know what happened to me? [...] When [they] make a movie about the ship Egoz, then, and only then, will I stand."⁷⁰

What is fascinating is that while the previous quote assumed a lachrymose understanding of Moroccan Jewish history, this one takes for granted that Moroccans came from "wealth, palaces, and luxury." As demonstrated by these two quotes from the same show, a consistent and simplistic understanding of Moroccans' experiences in Israel's periphery do not align perfectly with either the neo-lachrymose/Zionist nor the postcolonial/anti-Zionist perspectives. By focusing on how Moroccanness as a diasporic register has developed both in and out of Israel, this dissertation thus represents an important contribution to the field of Jewish studies, which still too often reverts to this binary understanding of Jewish history.

66 Yaron Tsur, "The Israeli Historiography and the Ethnic Problem," in *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 257–60.

67 Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 1.

68 Aviva Halamish, "Zionist Immigration Policy Put To the Test," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 119–34.

69 Avi Picard, "The Reluctant Soldiers of Israel's Settlement Project: The Ship to Village Plan in the Mid-1950s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 2013): 42.

70 "Zagury Imperia."

By the early 2000s, the field began to see another major shift. The Israeli journal *Pe'amim* began to publish articles critical of Israeli historians' lack of interest in the history of MENA Jews.⁷¹ The past decade has produced a new body of scholarship, often by scholars in North America as part of the MENA Jewish "transnational turn," which challenges researchers to look beyond artificial and national borders which obscure preceding dynamics and continuities. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel Schroeter's edited volume *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* seriously considered and laid out the methodological and political problems facing scholars of Jewish North Africa.⁷² Subsequently, Aomar Boum's study, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*, boldly targeted polemical narratives about "Arab nationalism" as a factor in Jewish emigration from Morocco's southern communities through Muslims' first, second, and third-hand memories of Jews.

The newest turn in Moroccan Jewish history has seen a willingness amongst scholars to bridge the colonial and postcolonial periods, as well as the pre- and post-1948 periods. Alma Rachel Heckman book, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, is one of the first of a new generation of scholars' responses to the state of the field. In an important way, Heckman's book builds on the last decades' methodological and theoretical developments and follows through with new research. Christopher Silver's book on North African music and popular culture, *Recording History: Jews, Muslims, and Music across Twentieth-Century North Africa*, describes Jewish belonging in the region through music production, including after independence. In his dissertation completed in 2022, Haim Bitton conducted the most thorough analysis regarding the transit camps present in Morocco, Algeria, and France, most notably the *Grand Arénas* camp in Marseille. Bitton determined that North African Jews' experiences in the transit camps significantly informed intra-Jewish relationships in their destination countries, primarily Israel.⁷³ Itzhak Dahan published in 2022 one of the first general books treating Moroccan Jewish migration through a global perspective.⁷⁴ Finally, a

71 Aviad Moreno and Noah Gerber, "חקר יהודי ארצות האסלאם בישראל: התפתחות ופיצולים" (The Study of the Jews of Islamic Countries in Israel: Development and Divisions), in: *ההיסטוריה הארוכה של המזרחים: כיוונים חדשים* (The Long History of the Mizrahim: New Directions in the Study of the Jews of Islamic Countries (in Honor of Yaron Tsur)), ed. Aviad Moreno et al. (Sde Boquer: Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2021), 7–39; *צור*, "Israeli Historiography and the Ethnic Problem / קהילה בין השמשות: מחנות המעבר באלג'יריה, מרוקו וצרפת, 1956–1947: מפגש וקונפליקט," *Pe'amim*, no. 94/95 (2003): 7–56.

72 Another incredibly important addition to the field which challenges the place of MENA Jewish history within the larger field of Jewish Studies is the following collection: Boum and Stein, *The Holocaust and North Africa*.

73 Bitton Haim (Hai), "קהילה בין השמשות: מחנות המעבר באלג'יריה, מרוקו וצרפת, 1956–1947: מפגש וקונפליקט" (A Community at Twilight: The Transit Camps in Algeria, Morocco and France, 1956–1947: Encounter and Conflict Between the Aliyah Emissaries and Moroccan Immigrants in the Process of Preparation for Absorption in Israel) (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2022).

74 Itzhak Dahan, *מהמגרב למערב: יהודי מרוקו בין שלוש יבשות* (From the Maghreb to the West: Moroccan Jews between Three Continents) (Resling Publishing, 2022).

new edited Hebrew volume by Aviad Moreno, Noah Gerber, Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, and Ofer Shiff, *The Long History of the Mizrahim: New Directions in the Study of Jews from Muslim Countries*, is the most ambitious and extensive collaboration to date which seeks to broaden our perspective of MENA Jewish life across two centuries.⁷⁵ The volume is also important for bridging the academic gap between the study of Jews in and out of Israel and fostering collaboration on the subject.

With regards to French historiography, the foundational research on the relationship of North African Jews to France had stressed their “emancipation” through the adoption of French culture, in Morocco at the hands of the AIU.⁷⁶ This process of francization and modernization was said to have naturally culminated in North African Jews’ migration to France.⁷⁷ Later accounts tempered this argument by noting, among other things, that the AIU’s success in “Francizing” Moroccan Jewry was partial at best, and that the French protectorate in Morocco had never truly supported assimilating Jews to French colonists, as had been attempted in Algeria.⁷⁸ And yet the notion that France was collectively a “dream come true” for Moroccan Jews has seldom been directly challenged, despite clear evidence that Moroccan Jews have exhibited diverse feelings about France, from strong condemnations of French antisemitism—both in colonial Morocco and in France—to feelings of affinity with France by Jews who were practically raised in all-French environments in Morocco.⁷⁹

The earliest studies regarding Moroccan Jewish migration to France, on which many numerical accounts are still based, were effected by French sociologists shortly following the first major waves of migration after Moroccan independence, in the 1960s and early 1970s.

75 Aviad Moreno et al., eds., *בהוקרה : כיוונים חדשים בחקר יהודי ארצות האסלאם* : *לירון צור* (The Long History of the Mizrahim: New Directions in the Study of Jews from Islamic Lands) (Sde Boquer: Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2021).

76 This amounted to a colonial notion that Moroccan and other Jews in Muslim majority countries had been modernized and rejuvenated by the AIU’s French influence. This notion has been resilient, and important texts have continued to use it. See e.g. André Chouraqui, *Marche Vers l’Occident : Les Juifs d’Afrique Du Nord* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952); for a later example, see Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Yaron Tsur’s influential volume depends on a somewhat two-dimensional category of “westernized” Moroccan Jews, though Tsur nuances this category in later works. See Yaron Tsur, *A Torn Community: The Jews of Morocco and Nationalism 1943–1954* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2001).

77 Doris Bensimon-Donath, *L’intégration Des Juifs Nord-Africains En France* (Paris: La Haye, Mouton, 1972), 27.

78 See e.g. Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 151; on how Moroccan Jews who attended the AIU “navigated their own paths to modernity”, see Jessica M. Marglin, “Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 574–603. An unpublished manuscript by Nadia Malinovitch analyzing the postwar AIU through the diaspora of its students and teachers will be a welcome addition to this literature.

79 The notable exception which directly challenges this narrative is Messika, *Politiques de l’Accueil*; for an analysis of interviews conducted amongst Moroccan Jews who had migrated to Paris (or Montreal), see Yolande Cohen and Martin Messika, “Sharing and Unsharing Memories of Jews of Moroccan Origin in Montréal and Paris Compared,” *Quest Journal*, no. 04 (November 2012).

These studies tended to focus more on Algerian and Tunisian Jews, particularly after roughly 100,000 Algerian Jews were “repatriated” to France on the eve of Algerian independence in 1962. Moroccan Jews, statistically far less significant, were included in surveys, but largely were not disaggregated from the emerging character of North African Jewry in France.⁸⁰ If perhaps fewer than 10,000 Moroccan Jews had migrated to France before 1961, Jacques Taïeb has estimated that some 25,000 joined them between 1962 and 1967, and another 20,000 after 1967.⁸¹

Important new studies in the 1980s included important transnational analyses of North African Jews, largely produced by proponents of an emerging francophone Sephardi community activism based in Quebec and France.⁸² Additionally important are Robert Assaraf and Haïm Zafrani’s wide-ranging histories of Moroccan Jewry.⁸³ Since the turn of the century, an important wave of research has attempted to give Moroccan Jews a dedicated place within the larger study of North African and general Jewish migration to and ethnicization in France.⁸⁴ More recently, in his 2020 book based on his dissertation, Martin Messika comparatively analyzed government and Jewish organizations’ policies regarding Moroccan Jewish migration to Canada and France, revealing the ways in which French colonial categories for North African Jews followed them to the metropole.⁸⁵

And yet, if in 1989 Nancy Green wrote that “[the] history of this most recent migration to France still needs to be written” regarding North African Jews in general, for Moroccans this

80 See Doris Bensimon, “L’intégration Économique Des Immigrants Nord-Africains En Israël et Des Juifs Nord-Africains En France (Essai d’étude Comparative),” *Revue Française de Sociologie* 10, no. 4 (October 1969): 491–514; Bensimon-Donath, *L’intégration Des Juifs Nord-Africains En France*; Claude Tapia and Jacques Taïeb, “Le Judaïsme Français Après l’immigration Des Juifs Maghrébins,” *Yod* 5 (1977); many important and newer studies still tend not to disaggregate North African Jews, e.g. Naomi Davidson, “‘Brothers from South of the Mediterranean’: Decolonizing the Jewish ‘Family’ during the Algerian War,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 33, no. 2 (2015): 76–96.

81 Jacques Taïeb, “Immigrés d’Afrique Du Nord: Combien? Quand? Pourquoi?,” in *Terre d’exil, Terre d’asile: Migrations Juives En France Aux XIXe et XXe Siècles* (Paris: Éditions de l’Éclat, 2010), 150–51.

82 Jean-Claude Lasry and Claude Tapia, *Les Juifs Du Maghreb: Diasporas Contemporaines* (Montreal, Paris: Presses de l’Université de Montréal-L’Harmattan, 1989); Claude Tapia, *Les Juifs sépharades en France, 1965–1985: études psychosociologiques et historiques* (*Sephardi Jews in France, 1965–1985*), Collection Histoire et perspectives méditerranéennes (Paris: l’Harmattan, 1986).

83 Haïm Zafrani, *Le Judaïsme Maghrébin: Le Maroc, Terre Des Rencontres Des Cultures et Des Civilisations* (Rabat: Marsam, 2003); Robert Assaraf, *Une Certaine Histoire Des Juifs Du Maroc: 1860–1999* (Paris: Gawsewitch, 2005); Robert Assaraf, *Mohammed V et Les Juifs Du Maroc À l’époque de Vichy* (Paris: Plon, 1997).

84 See e.g. important chapters such as the one by Yolande Cohen and Yann Scioldo-Zürcher in Frédéric Abécassis, Karima Dirèche, and Rita Aouad, eds., *La bienvenue et l’adieu 1: Migrants juifs et musulmans au Maghreb (XVe–XXe siècle)* (Centre Jacques-Berque, 2012); see also sections by Jacques Taïeb, Claude Tapia, and Martin Messika in Colette Zytynski, *Terre d’exil, Terre d’asile. Migrations Juives En France Aux XIXe et XXe Siècles* (Paris: Éditions de l’Éclat, 2010); see also Michael M. Laskier, “The Regeneration of French Jewry: The Influx and Integration of African Jews into France, 1955–1965,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 10, no. 1/2 (1998): 37–72; and Roumani, “Le Juif Espagnol: The Idea of Sepharad among Colonial and Postcolonial Francophone Jewish Writers.”

85 Messika, *Politiques de l’Accueil*.

is largely still the case.⁸⁶ In many ways additions to this field have been incidental rather than deliberate, and have emerged partially in response to increasingly politicized discussions of the place North African Jews occupy within mounting waves of antisemitism in France since 2002. Significantly, antisemitism in France has led to increasing waves of French-Jewish migration to Israel in recent years, more than 20,000 according to Israel's Aliya department, and perhaps between 75,000 and 100,000 Jews had left France by 2020, though some have returned.⁸⁷ Notably the 2018 Israeli documentary *Hatsarfokaim* addressed the discrimination faced by French Jews of Maghrebi origin in Israel,⁸⁸ while French Jews in Montreal who "fled antisemitism there" have expressed worry that Montreal is no safer amidst a sharp spike in antisemitism following the October 7th 2023 massacres in southern Israel by Hamas and the subsequent Israeli bombing of Gaza.⁸⁹

Historical accounts of Moroccan Jews who migrated to Canada are perhaps the least well integrated into the broader field of Moroccan and MENA Jewish history. Scholarship on Moroccan Jews in Canada began with MA theses published in the late 1960s and early 1970s primarily by Ashkenazi Jewish social workers and community officials seeking to better accommodate and integrate Moroccans into existing Jewish community institutions.⁹⁰ Though replete with stereotypical biases, many of these early documents include valuable information and even citations which to a limited extent reproduce the voices of early Moroccan immigrants to Montreal. Students who wrote these theses, like Phyllis Amber, would go on to become influential Montreal Ashkenazi community officials who would do much to improve Moroccan's access to social services and even support Moroccan communal initiatives.

In the 1970s these scholars were succeeded by a growing number of francophone Moroccan immigrants who sought to counter stereotypical perceptions about them through their own research.⁹¹ In general, English-language historical surveys and edited volumes produced

86 Nancy Green, "Jewish Migrations to France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Community or Communities?," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23, no. Fall (1989): 151.

87 Yaniv Pohoriles, "כמה עולים מצרפת יש בישראל" (Paris to Netanya: How Many Olim from France Are There in Israel), *Ynet*, July 27, 2018, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5297264,00.html>; Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin, eds., *American Jewish Year Book 2020*, vol. 120 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 315.

88 *הצרפוקאים* (Hatsarfokaim), 2018.

89 Jason Magder, "Parents Fearful Picking up Kids from Jewish School," *Montreal Gazette*, November 11, 2023, <https://epaper.montrealgazette.com/article/281638194924931>.

90 See e.g. Phyllis Amber and Irene Lipper, *Towards an Understanding of Moroccan Jewish Family Life: Including the Perceptions of Moroccan Immigrants to Montreal* (Montreal: McGill University School of Social Work, 1968); Marvin Julian Godfrey, "Achievement & Adjustment of Jewish Moroccan Students" (McGill University, 1970).

91 See e.g. Esther Benaïm, "Intégration Des Juifs Marocains à Montréal, Monographie de La Communauté Juive Marocaine à Montréal," PhD Dissertation (Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1976); Lasry and Bloomfield-Schachter, "Jewish Inter-marriage in Montreal, 1962-1972."

in Canada have tended to include Sephardim on the periphery rather than fully integrate them into broader narratives.⁹² A related, but separate field of French-language scholarship dominated by the works of Marie Berdugo-Cohen, Joseph Lévy, Yolande Cohen, and a set of the latter Dr. Cohen's former students working between Montreal and France, have tended to produce a more robust scholarship on twentieth century Canadian Sephardim.⁹³ An exception is an influential article by William Miles, whose clear analysis of Sephardim in Montreal is an important baseline for scholarship.⁹⁴ Several other innovative articles were written by Stephania Tara Schwartz, including a survey of scholarship treating Moroccan Jews in Canada co-published with Yolande Cohen.⁹⁵

With few exceptions, studies which treat Moroccans in Canada have tended to remain isolated within the local Canadian field,⁹⁶ the most notable exception being Martin Messika's volume, cited above.⁹⁷ For Moroccans in Israel, important new trends are emerging, but scholars overwhelmingly treat these Jews as historically isolated from the rest of the world, while

92 While making some important observations regarding Sephardim in Canada, their treatment in Gerald Tulchinsky's authoritative volumes is minimal. See Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1998); in edit volumes, the trend has been to include a single chapter on Sephardim. See e.g. Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, *The Jews in Canada* (Toronto Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); David S. Koffman, ed., *No Better Home? Jews, Canada, and the Sense of Belonging* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

93 See e.g. Marie Berdugo-Cohen, Yolande Cohen, and Joseph Lévy, *Juifs Marocains À Montréal: Témoignages d'une Immigration Moderne* (Montréal: Vlb Éditeur, 1987); Yolande Cohen, *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d'Exils Nord-Africains* (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017); Christine Chevalier-Caron, "De l'Alliance Israélite Universelle à l'école Maïmonide," in *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d'Exils Nord-Africains*, ed. Yolande Cohen (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017), 77–111; Christine Chevalier-Caron, "L'héritage Des Activités de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Dans Les Relations Entre Accueillants. Es et Accueillis. Es à Montréal et En France Des Années 1950 Aux Années 1980 : Le Cas Des Migrations d'origine Marocaine," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 34, no. Fall (2022): 112–29; Martin Messika, "L'accueil Des Juifs Marocains En France," in *Terre d'exil, Terre d'asile, Bibliothèque Des Fondations* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 2010), 171–87; Antoine Burgard, "Les Sépharades Dans Les Études Démographiques," in *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d'Exils Nord-Africains*, ed. Yolande Cohen (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017), 33–55.

94 William F.S. Miles, "Between Ashkenaz and Québécois: Fifty Years of Francophone Sephardim in Montréal," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2007): 29–66.

95 Yolande Cohen and Stephanie Tara Schwartz, "Scholarship on Moroccan Jews in Canada: Multidisciplinary, Multilingual, and Diasporic," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 50, no. 3 (2016): 595; Stephanie Tara Schwartz, "The Challenge of Jewish Difference in Québec," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 11, no. 1 (2018): 33–54; Stephanie Tara Schwartz, "Occupation and 20 Ans Après: Representing Jewish Activism in Montreal, 1968–1977," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 25 (2017): 60–78.

96 See e.g. Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Miles, "Between Ashkenaz and Québécois: Fifty Years of Francophone Sephardim in Montréal"; Jean-Claude Lasry, "Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Montreal," *Contemporary Jewry* 6, no. 2 (1983): 26–33; Marie Berdugo-Cohen, Yolande Cohen, and Joseph Lévy, *Juifs Marocains à Montréal: Témoignages d'une Immigration Moderne* (Montréal: Vlb Éditeur, 1987).

97 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*.

Moroccans in France are generally subsumed within the broader French Jewish community. In all, much work has been done, but still too few works address Moroccan Jews as part of an interconnected diaspora as much deeply embedded in their local contexts as in their transnational networks, and indeed this balance is difficult to achieve. This dissertation does not claim to have struck the perfect balance, but it constitutes a major reversal of the tendency to treat Moroccans only within one national context, and only up until 1948 or 1956 in Morocco. By challenging this trend, this dissertation also makes an important contribution to the field of Moroccan history by arguing that Moroccan Jewish history did not end in those years, but entered a new chapter.

Methodological approach: Who and what count as Moroccan?

For its 700th issue published in September 2023, the French journal *L'Arche*, one of France's longest running and most influential Jewish publications, adopted the topic “*les juifs du maroc*”, and included numerous articles on Moroccan Jewish history, cuisine, music, and literature. The issue also included short pieces on notable Jews of Moroccan descent, such as Orel Gozlan,⁹⁸ a comedian and hazan (synagogue cantor) born in Montreal whose comedy draws on his experiences with “my parents and my grandparents, as well as the Moroccan Jewish community of Montreal, which has remained very attached to its Moroccan culture.”⁹⁹ According to Gozlan, “[certain] neighborhoods of Montreal are even considered more Moroccan than the community in Morocco.”¹⁰⁰

In his comedy, Gozlan, who has 20,000 followers on Instagram, recreates fond and humorous memories of his family, stereotypically named “*Mémé*” (meaning grandmother amongst some francophone Moroccan Jewish families, as in parts of France), “*Bébert*” (from the French Albert) and Saada, among others. Some of the comedian's posts use Instagram's gendered filters and recall “typical Moroccan” jokes in a mix of French, Hebrew, English, and Darija (Moroccan Arabic). Others consist of memes invoking humor rooted in a sense of shared Moroccan habits and identity: “when Moroccans say someone is kind, they have to add poor/

98 Gozlan's career in many ways mirrors that of Gad Elmaleh, a well-known Jewish comedian born in Morocco who grew up in Montreal and later moved to France, and finally New York. Elmaleh's transnational career was heavily based in humour surrounding Maghrebi stereotypes and memories, but has since 9/11 largely abandoned this framing. See Samuel Sami Everett and Rebekah Vince, “Introduction,” in *Jewish-Muslim Interactions*, by Samuel Sami Everett and Rebekah Vince (Liverpool University Press, 2020), 1–20; for a broader discussion of Jewish representation in films in the context of postcolonial Morocco, see Oren Kosansky and Aomar Boum, “The ‘Jewish Question’ in Postcolonial Moroccan Cinema,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 3 (August 2012): 421–42.

99 Orel Gozlan, “Orel Gozlan,” *L'Arche*, no. 700 (September–October 2023): 123.

100 Ibid.

mskine at the end: He's a nice guy the poor thing. He's a nice guy mskine."¹⁰¹ Some of Gozlan's posts are specific to Moroccan Jewish interests, such as eating *dafina* on Shabbat, celebrating *hिलול* (the celebration of saintly rabbis on the anniversary of their passing), or posts in support of Israel, while others embrace a broader notion of Moroccan identity, such as reposts of memes and video clips by Moroccan Muslim content creators which have nothing to do with Jews or Israel. In his biography published by *L'Arche*, Gozlan writes that he is "proud of this culture which is part of my identity and I hope to transmit it to my children. And yet, I have never been to Morocco, it's the last piece of the puzzle which I am missing."¹⁰²

Another similar case is a popular Israeli Facebook group with 87,000 members, *Siman she'ata marokai* (a sign that you're Moroccan). The group, started in 2013 by Israeli-born Avihai Hazan from Ashdod and Gali Deri from Petah Tikvah, was meant "to prove how proud Moroccans are to be Moroccans."¹⁰³ According to Hazan, the group shared "memories, recipes, and traditions from the Moroccan house" and "created the sense that we all grew up in the same living room."¹⁰⁴ Also called *dialna original* (*dialna* in Darija means "ours" and *original* in Hebrew means "original"), the group consists primarily of Israeli-born Jews of Moroccan descent who share recipes and memes, in many ways similar to Gozlan's Instagram account.

Gozlan's biography and Hazan and Deri's Facebook group reveal the difficulties and the usefulness of studying Moroccan Jews as part of a highly connected diaspora, evoked by my dissertation's sub question: how can we identify a diaspora as Moroccan if most of its members have no familial, financial, or physical connection to the country? In reality, Jews of Moroccan descent have long utilized transnational networks to define, refine, and reimagine what it means to be a "Moroccan Jew", and Instagram and Facebook are only some of the newest tools which allow cultural transmission and reinvention to take place. For Gozlan, social networks offer a new opportunity for Jews to "recall [...] customs which are sometimes forgotten."¹⁰⁵ For Hazan, they offer important prospects even for Moroccan-born Jews, and notes that when another member of the Facebook group posted a picture of her school class in the Alliance Universelle Israélite in Casablanca, by coincidence her mother saw that she was in the same photo and connected with three other women who had been in her class. Such platforms play a predominant role in perpetuating networks which are thus infused with a self-aware "Moroccan" meaning and encourage those involved to identify these common experiences, customs, and habits as "Moroccan".

On the other hand, Gozlan, like most Jews of Moroccan descent alive today, was not born in Morocco and has never been there. Once examined, the problem grows even further, as

101 Gozlan, Orel (@orelgozlan). "La question du jour Pourquoi ils font ça???" Instagram, January 18, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2QEUNlrZss/>.

102 Gozlan, "Orel Gozlan," 124.

103 Netta Peleg, "Sign That You Are Moroccan - Original Dialna," *Yedi'ot Hanegev*, April 21, 2022, 39.

104 Peleg, 39.

105 Gozlan, "Orel Gozlan," 124.

evidenced by an interview I conducted with an Israeli woman of Moroccan descent living in Montreal. When asked whether she identified as Moroccan, the woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that she had never felt Moroccan, and that though she felt her parents had a “heavy Moroccan culture”, she felt only Israeli.¹⁰⁶ And yet, historians are sometimes exposed to twists which speak to the ironic and sometimes contradictory nature of historical work, sparks lost outside the boundaries of archives or interview transcripts. Indeed, as I sat in the kitchen of this woman who informed me that she had never felt very “Moroccan”, I watched as she used her hands to turn semolina into traditional Moroccan couscous.¹⁰⁷ If this woman, who does not feel Moroccan, but makes couscous by hand, and organizes every year a large Mimouna¹⁰⁸ celebration, is not Moroccan, then who indeed counts as Moroccan?

This dissertation posits that Moroccan Jewish identity has developed through multidirectional and multigenerational migration, and thus is inherently transnational and diasporic.¹⁰⁹ Specifically, I aim to address, on the one hand, scholarly developed categories which help to historicize notions of “Moroccan” and “Moroccanness” by grounding them in sources which reflect a longer history of attachment to a set of historical circumstances and cultural traits which can be termed “Moroccan” and which include Jews rather than only Muslims. Though I have tried to balance the academic discursive construction of what is considered “Moroccan” with contemporary expressions that exceed what can be found in the scholarship, ultimately my argument is based on archival sources and does not delve far into daily performances of Moroccanness, such as cooking, piyyut, material culture, or the celebration of *hilulot*, which inform the transmission of Moroccanness across generations. While these omissions constitute a silence, I believe the sources I used have served to raise other voices.

This approach necessarily opens itself to problems, but also affords possibilities. For example, though we unavoidably risk applying a constructed label, “Moroccan Jew”, to individuals who do not self-identify as such primarily or at all, we open up the opportunity of identifying divergences and continuities which otherwise would be subdued, even regarding

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous interview. 19 July 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Mimouna is a holiday traditionally celebrated amongst some Moroccan Jews; the holiday was traditionally celebrated on the final night of Passover, when Jews would invite Muslims to their houses in exchange for Muslims “buying” Jews’ leftover *chametz* for a nominal amount of money at the beginning of the holiday’s week.

¹⁰⁹ Though conceiving Moroccan Jewish identity as diasporic is not novel, few studies still connect multiple centers of Moroccan Jewish life to bear out this idea. Israel in particular is seldom conceived of as connected to the broader Moroccan Jewish diaspora; for a notable exception see Orit Ouaknine-Yekutieli and Yigal Shalom Nizri, “My Heart Is in the Maghrib: Aspects of Cultural Revival of the Moroccan Diaspora in Israel,” *Hespéris-Tamuda* LI, no. 3 (2016): 165–92.

stereotypical examples like preparing couscous.¹¹⁰ This approach is applicable to numerous diasporic groups, and in our case also allows us to focus on “Moroccan Jew” as a category which evolves intergenerationally and which both diverges and cross-pollinates between Morocco and the many hubs of Moroccan Jewish migration. We can thus include as an example the residents of Ofakim, a former development town in the Israeli Negev which was for a large part of its history made up mostly of Moroccan Jews. This example necessarily includes Jews born in Israel who primarily identify as Israelis, not as Moroccans. Through this application, we can identify “Moroccanness” as an important strand of a specific identity in Israel’s peripheral development towns which frames MENA Jews as Israeli pioneers, as I argue in Chapter 2.

We can also include the example of the AIU in Morocco, which for many Moroccan Jews was a defining aspect of Morocco for them, and which I thus argue can be considered a Moroccan institution. I also include the AIU’s Moroccan-born and foreign-born teachers, who can be considered Moroccan state-builders, as I contend in Chapter 3. Furthermore, as I do in Chapter 5, we can include the example of the Sephardi community in Montreal, which, while mostly made up of Moroccan Jews, sought to represent essentially any Jews not identified as “Ashkenazi” as “Sephardi.”

The problem of this dissertation is thus essentially to consider how the above cases and others presented in these chapters can be considered to involve individuals and groups who are branches of the same Moroccan Jewish diaspora. In some cases I follow broad, typical trends to sketch this diaspora, and in others, particularly Chapters 4 and 6, I examine case studies which exceed the norm to draw our attention to both the center and the periphery of this analysis. The conjunction of exceptional cases like Ruth Jouhet, in Chapter 4, and Kobi Ifrah, in Chapter 6, with more routine cases of immigration such as appear in Chapter 2 and 5, helps us to sketch the broad operative breadth of a diaspora in the making.

This approach is not perfect. Still, this elaboration of diasporic aspects of what can be considered Moroccan Jewish identity conforms to newer scholarly definitions of “diaspora” which reject a simplistic “solar system model” according to which members of a diaspora revolve around a single center or “homeland.”¹¹¹ We can thus include the case of Ruth Jouhet, a Jew of Moroccan descent born in Ottoman Palestine in 1914 who did not consider herself to be “Moroccan,” but could frame herself as belonging in Morocco when she thought it would serve her best interests, as I show in Chapter 4. Jouhet’s case is a good example of how this approach permits us to identify trends in who is considered “Moroccan”—if Jouhet was not considered Moroccan during her career in Morocco, today she certainly would be considered Moroccan. Finally, we can also include Chapter 6’s PASI, a program founded mostly by Moroccan Jews in

110 On the importance of culinary practice as it intertwines with migration, see Anny Gaul, “‘Kitchen Histories’ and the Taste of Mobility in Morocco,” *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 36–55.

111 Moreno, “The Ingathering of the Jewish (Moroccan) Diaspora: Zionism and Global Hometown Awareness among Spanish-Moroccan Jews in Israel,” 144.

Montreal to support mostly Moroccan Jews in Israel's Negev development towns, but which was not explicitly framed as a Moroccan enterprise.

In 1974, Shlomo Deshen and Moshe Shokeid published the aptly named and important book *The Predicament of Homecoming*, the result of their ethnographic research amongst North African Jewish immigrants to Israel, and documented the differences between the immigrants' conceptions and the reality of the State of Israel as their homeland.¹¹² If Israel has traditionally been considered the homeland of the broader Jewish diaspora, Morocco has since become a nostalgic homeland for many of the Jews who once resided there and their descendants.¹¹³ The Moroccan-born Israeli anthropologist André Lévy states that the Moroccan Jewish diaspora manifests differently and elicits tensions amongst what we might consider its different branches, such as interactions between Israelis and Jews who remained in Morocco.¹¹⁴ My use of "diaspora" is also problematized by Roger Brubaker, who warned against the meaningless proliferation of the term. For Brubaker, diaspora is "a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population" to a homeland state; my use, however, exceeds this boundary and in some cases involves layered attachments to multiple states, real and imagined.¹¹⁵

Deshen and Shokeid's seminal book was crucial in countering notions of North African Jewish "modernization" under Israeli influence, the dubiousness of which was acknowledged from the earliest days of the state.¹¹⁶ And yet we must acknowledge that differing perceptions of such intradiasporic hierarchies have long been present, and continue to be present amongst Moroccan Jews wherever they are. This fact is eloquently demonstrated by the figure of the stereotypical *Shleuh*, a word which denotes Berber- or Tamazight-speaking groups in Morocco, and which in common parlance amongst Moroccan Jews is often used derogatorily to signify uneducated and uncivilized people.¹¹⁷ On separate occasions, for example, a Moroccan-born Jew in Montreal whom I interviewed referred to Jews who had immigrated to Israel as *Shleuhs* in an informal conversation, while an Israeli Jew born in Morocco told me it was Jews who had gone to Montreal who were the *Shleuhs*, because at least Jews who had immigrated to Israel had been civilized through Israeli culture, while those in Montreal had immigrated there without undergoing the civilizing process of living in Israel. Thus, this dissertation is

112 Shlomo A. Deshen and Moshe Shokeid, *The Predicament of Homecoming: Cultural and Social Life of North African Immigrants in Israel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 35.

113 André Lévy, *Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslims, and an Israeli Anthropologist* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 169–72.

114 Lévy, 193–96.

115 Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 12.

116 See Yaron Tsur, "Carnival Fears: Moroccan Immigrants and the Ethnic Problem in the Young State of Israel," *Journal of Israeli History* 18, no. 1 (1997): 73–103.

117 For an extensive analysis of the use of the word, see Rachid Agrour, "A Contribution to the Study of an Itinerant Word: *Chleuh*," *Cahiers d'études Africaines* 52, no. 208 (October 5, 2012): 767–811; see also David Guedj, "'Jeune Israël': Multiple Modernities of Jewish Childhood and Youth in Morocco in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 2 (March 2022): 341.

cognizant that if diaspora invokes nostalgia for one or several homelands, diasporic identity and expression is necessary informed by local and transnational hierarchical considerations which layer diasporas from within. Even with relation to other MENA Jewish groups, the idea that Moroccan Jewish identity is exceptional has proliferated popularly and scholarly.¹¹⁸

Another important reference is the Mizrahi category which emerged in Israel amidst mass immigration to that country. “Mizrahi” developed in the first decades following 1948 as an analytical category employed by Israeli sociologists, primarily Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, and determined that MENA Jews hailed from “transitional” societies, between societies considered “modern” or “traditional.” Early Israeli sociologists, inspired by American sociologists, thus focused on how “oriental” or “eastern” Jews, Mizrahim, could be modernized by their proper absorption into Israeli society, a process “being built upon the values of modernity common to contemporary western nation-states, and led mainly by Jews of European origin.”¹¹⁹ By the 1970s, however, a new school of sociologists criticized the assumption of a “devalued” Mizrahi ethnicity which, they argued, was a product of ethnic exclusion by the state.¹²⁰ This phenomenon followed the ethnic revival movements of MENA Jews in Israel and around the world who sought to push back against the notions of their cultural inferiority through political protest and cultural productions.¹²¹ A second Mizrahi revival occurred in the 1990s, spurred by the signing of the Oslo accords and the hope by Mizrahi intellectuals in Israel that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would allow space to address Israel’s persistent intra-Jewish ethnic problem.¹²²

Finally, we must note that Moroccans in general, and not exclusively Jews, have become a massive, mobile diaspora. In 2017 it was estimated that between four and five million people either born in Morocco or of Moroccan descent lived outside the country across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.¹²³ Many Moroccan Muslims were recruited as labourers to the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, while French-speaking Moroccans found it easier to migrate to Quebec in the wake of the province’s nationalist Quiet Revolution. The registers of

118 Daniel J. Schroeter, “(Moroccan Jewry and the idea of Moroccan uniqueness in Israel: a long history) יהדות ההיסטוריה הארוכה של המזרחים: כיוונים חדשים זו,” *מרוקו ורעיון הייחודיות המרוקאית בישראל: ההיסטוריה הארוכה קריית שדה בוקר: מכון בן גוריון לחקר ישראל* et al. אביעד מורנו, ed. (בחקר יהודי ארצות האסלאם (בהוקרה לירון צור והציונות, אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב, 2021), 9–105.

119 Harvey E. Goldberg and Chen Bram, “Sephardic/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews: Reflections on Critical Sociology and the Study of Middle Eastern Jewries within the Context of Israeli Society,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 22 (2007): 228.

120 Goldberg and Bram, 228–29.

121 See e.g. Avi Picard, “Like a Phoenix: The Renaissance of Sephardic/Mizrahi Identity in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 1–25.

122 Tilde Rosmer, “Israel’s Middle Eastern Jewish Intellectuals: Identity and Discourse,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 65.

123 Mohamed Berriane, “Marocains de l’extérieur - 2017 Introduction Générale,” in *Marocains de l’extérieur 2017* (Rabat: Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l’Étranger, n.d.), 11.

Jewish and Muslim Moroccanness, as much as the streams of Jewish and Muslim Moroccan migration, often overlap, though the field of global migration studies has tended to exclude Jews from broader analyses of Moroccan migration.¹²⁴ Ultimately this dissertation focuses on how the particularities of Jewish history contributed to the development of a Moroccan diaspora, but by illuminating the Jewish section of the diaspora, it represents a valuable addition to the field of migration studies, as well. It is worth noting, however, that if Jews never constituted more than three percent of the Moroccan population, today they constitute perhaps twenty or twenty-five percent of Morocco's emigrant population. Thus, though Jews by-and-large no longer live in Morocco, they hold significant demographic weight in the broader Moroccan diaspora. As Moroccans, Jews are therefore exceptionally diasporic.

To move forward, I propose working definitions which this dissertation will use to bear out its arguments regarding diasporic identity and subdued intradiasporic interactions. "Moroccan Jew" will be used to refer to Jews born in Morocco as well as their descendants. "Moroccan Jewish networks" thus denote interactive possibilities between Moroccan Jews locally and transnationally, whether or not they explicitly self-identify as Moroccan. In numerous instances a differentiation between these two is necessary, in which case I will opt for the terms "Moroccan-born Jew" as opposed to a "Jew of Moroccan descent." In some cases, as in Chapter 5, I refer to North African Jews, which include Jews from Morocco, Tunisia, or Algeria. I have in general not chosen to use the term "Mizrahi," except for when it or an analogue, such as "eastern" or "oriental," was used by the individuals or groups I describe. This is because, though there is an important advantage to using the term to describe the Israeli political and cultural contexts, the transnational framing of this dissertation privileges Moroccanness, which forms a subset of Mizrahi identity in Israel, but which geographically exceeds it. Additionally, I use Mizrahi when it is useful to compare the experiences of different MENA Jewish groups in Israel, and when their collective memories coincide. Thus I use it in Chapter 2, where I explore the development of Moroccanness in Ofakim, since the two are entwined in that context. Chapter 2 then constitutes a contribution to Moroccan history as much as it does to Mizrahi historiography.

I also exclusively utilize the term "Sephardi" as it was intentioned by Sephardi activists from the 1970s on, to regroup Moroccan and other non-Ashkenazi Jews, and more particularly in Montreal to push back against stereotypical biases held about Moroccans. Indeed, Moroccans' institutional self-representation as Sephardim in Montreal poses yet another nomenclatural issue, given that the label "Sephardi" possesses an even longer history of strategic re-utilization than "Moroccan."¹²⁵ Whether in the early modern Sephardi trading

124 Moreno, "Beyond the Nation-State: A Network Analysis of Jewish Emigration From Northern Morocco to Israel," 6.

125 Harvey E. Goldberg, "From Sephardi to Mizrahi and Back Again: Changing Meanings of 'Sephardi' in Its Social Environments," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 170–74.

diaspora, the early twentieth century U.S. amongst Ottoman Jews or northern Morocco in the same period, or finally Moroccans in 1970s Montreal, the way distinct Sephardi reimaginings have informed each other becomes hard to disentangle.¹²⁶ To address this issue, I add two important aspects of Sephardi identity in the second half of the twentieth century as articulated by Naïm Kattan, a prominent francophone Iraqi Jew who immigrated to Montreal, and Claude Tapia, a Tunisian Jewish scholar living in France and a proponent in the 1980s of the neo-Sephardi identity championed in Montreal and France. For Kattan, writing in 2009, Sephardi identity was unrelated to its past designations which referred to “pure” Sephardim of Spanish and Portuguese descent. Rather, Sephardi in the contemporary moment “is used to represent a reality as it exists in ‘Israel, France, Canada, and elsewhere,’ and that this usage of the term has more to do with a relationship to ‘the Other’ than to history.”¹²⁷ Kattan expressly noted that “Sepharadism”, the adoption of a pan-Sephardi identity in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, reflects the global post-migratory condition of numerous MENA Jewish communities in Israel, Europe, and the Americas who in various contexts came into contact with other groups, primarily Jews amalgamized as “Ashkenazim,” and which became a globalized reference point amongst non-Ashkenazi Jews.

Tapia agreed with this, writing in 1986, that “[anyone] who wants to be Sephardi today relativizes and [engages in dialectical thinking about] their mode of belonging to Judaism with another mode that is heterogeneous to them.” And yet, while Tapia was open about the constructed nature of this use of the term Sephardi, he added that continuity was an important part of it as well; how, he asks, could one conceive of “a Jewish identity which is neither Sephardi nor Ashkenazi, neither European nor North American, neither Eastern nor Western?” For Tapia, “[anyone] who simply wants to be Jewish while remaining on the margins of this dichotomy puts in parentheses an important part of their Jewishness and the sources which nourish it.”¹²⁸ Tapia recognizes that reinventions of “Sephardi” and “Ashkenazi” are dialectical constructions, but he emphasizes that each reinvention seeks to be grounded in real Jewish sources which then become melded with their local appropriations. If many Moroccans adopted the category Sephardi in the twentieth century to transform something about themselves, by doing so they also succeeded in transforming what it means to be Sephardi. In short, this dissertation’s use

126 Roumani, “‘Le Juif Espagnol’: The Idea of Sepharad among Colonial and Postcolonial Francophone Jewish Writers”; Devin Naar, “‘Sephardim Since Birth’: Reconfiguring Jewish Identity in America,” in *The Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in America*, ed. Saba Soomekh (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2016), 75–104; Yuval Evri, *The Return to Al-Andalus: Disputes Over Sephardic Culture and Identity Between Arabic and Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2020); Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*.

127 Shukrun and Moreno, “Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism,” 681; Naïm Kattan, “Le Séfaradisme,” in *50 Ans Ensemble: Le Livre Sépharade 1959-2009* (Montréal: Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, 2009), 44.

128 Tapia, *Les Juifs sépharades en France, 1965-1985: études psychosociologiques et historiques* (Sephardi Jews in France, 1965-1985), 397–98.

of Sephardi, while specific and targeted, acknowledges that identity reinventions are always constructions, but that this does not necessarily imply that they are inauthentic.

In this way, I am inspired by Jonathan Ray's *After Expulsion*, in which he provides a needed corrective to western Sephardi history by positing that Sephardi identity was a product of diaspora rather than life in medieval Iberia. In the same way, I understand a diasporic Moroccan identity largely as a product of diaspora. The Jews of Morocco by and large did not consider themselves "Moroccan" upon leaving their country of birth and adopted this or another moniker depending on their circumstances. In the decades following the waves of emigration which depleted Morocco's Jewish community, as Moroccans in Quebec were confronted with the Quiet Revolution and the specter of assimilation, as Moroccans in France were suddenly able to express an ethnic identity more removed from colonial censorship, as Moroccans in Israel organized to improve their difficult conditions, the sense of a common experience of "being Moroccan" spread across these Jews' networks.

Perhaps the best example which justifies my use of Ray's Sephardi model is that Moroccans around the world themselves used this model to understand their experiences of diaspora. Overwhelmingly in the 1970s, informed by Sephardi history, mobilized by the common understanding of the disadvantaged position of Moroccans in Israel constituting the majority of Moroccan émigrés, and influenced by global anticolonial movements and rhetoric, "Sephardi" became a crucial term uniting Moroccans, and often other MENA Jews, around the world. The most important difference between the history Ray describes and the Moroccan case is that the need to define themselves in the context of diaspora coincided with the need to decolonize. For Moroccans and other North African Jews, defining themselves in diaspora was inextricable from the process of reimagining themselves as decolonized subjects.¹²⁹ Needing to redefine themselves in a way which was appropriate to their new contexts, Moroccan community activists across the world, from Montreal, to Israel, and to France, chose to become "Sephardi." This category freed them from the tainted characteristics of the new immigrant and positioned them favorably within the immense breadth of Jewish history, framing them as insiders rather than outsiders.¹³⁰ In a wider sense, this process has been done and redone throughout Jewish history, and Ray notes that even the intellectual elite of Andalusian Jewry reimagined themselves as Sephardi following the Arab conquest in Iberia for precisely this reason: to frame them as embedded inhabitants rather than vulnerable immigrants.¹³¹

129 Shukrun and Moreno, "Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism," 677; Angy Cohen and Yuval Evri, "Uncanny Belongings: An Essay About Language, Belonging and Colonialism in the Work of Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff, Jacques Derrida and Albert Memmi," *Azimuth: Philosophical Coordinates in Modern and Contemporary Age* 18, 2, 2021, no. 2 (2021): 182.

130 For Esther Meir-Glitzenstein's relevant analysis of the Israeli context, see "Zionist or Refugees: The Historical Aspect of the Uprooting of the Jews from Arab Countries and Their Immigration to Israel," *Justice* 50, no. Spring (2012): 21–28.

131 Jonathan Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain: A New History* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023), 48.

Studying Moroccan Jews as a diaspora does not imply that all of these individuals saw themselves as Moroccan, but rather that this group with common origins in Morocco have engaged in activities and possess traits which are derived from that common origin, or which are actively maintained or perpetuated due to their perception as being derived from that common origin—in short that they are performed as an ethnicity, as group membership, even when they are not perceived as such. Following the wisdom posed by many of the community activists described in this dissertation, I do not ask how historically accurate it was for Jews to be considered Moroccan, but rather how useful is it to describe them as Moroccan. Just as Sephardi activists in Montreal determined that it was useful to redefine themselves as Sephardim and how Ruth Jouhet found it momentarily useful to define herself as Moroccan, I ask how it can be useful to describe these Jews as Moroccan.

I adopt Daniel Schroeter's definition of "Moroccanness" as "the belief in being connected to the country that was home to an ancient Jewish population under the protective wings of a dynasty that goes back centuries", but add to this cultural characteristics and ethnic symbolism, broadly conceived, which though they are often associated with Morocco as a real and imagined homeland, may not be considered by an individual or group as being related to Morocco the country at all, but rather Morocco as a vague or even unnamed construct which exists as part of an individual's sense of their identity outside of Morocco. More succinctly, for Jews outside of Morocco, Moroccanness in some cases does not relate to the country at all.

I thus build on Schroeter's definition by combining it with Laura Wagner's conception of being "diasporically-Moroccan." Wagner writes that being "diasporically-Moroccan" can be observed in practices in which individuals "are not actively struggling to be categorially 'Moroccan'; when they are, more or less, 'being themselves' as 'diasporically-Moroccan'".¹³² It is in this sense that I can consider individual and group actions as "Moroccan" or constituting an expression of "Moroccanness" even as they are not identified by the actors as such. Consequently, in Chapter 6 I use the term "diaspora Moroccanism" to denote two cases in which Moroccanness is expressed through Moroccan Jewish networks and constitutes a group action, regardless of whether or not all or some of the actors consider the action to be "Moroccan".

Finally, a note about language. This dissertation does not make an argument about which language is central to Moroccanness, and in diverse contexts across space and time different languages come to represent Moroccanness for different people. For some, like Kobi Ifrah, CEO of Kulna Morocco, an Israeli organization introduced in Chapter 6, Moroccan Arabic or Darija represents their feeling of belonging to Morocco. For others, like those who reinvent themselves as francophone Sephardim in Montreal, French would be the language which symbolizes their Moroccan experience. For many northern Moroccan Jews, Spanish, or Haketia as a heritage

132 Lauren Wagner, *Becoming Diasporically Moroccan: Linguistic and Embodied Practices for Negotiating Belonging*, Encounters 8 (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2017), 128.

language, designates the distinct Spanish variant of their Moroccan Jewish identities. For the majority of Moroccan Jews in the world, Hebrew, and to a lesser extent, French, is now their common language, both in Israel and France and between generations of Moroccan Jews born abroad. As noted above, *Shleuh* has become a recurrent category to signify an intradiasporic hierarchy which separates Tamazight-speaking Moroccans from others. And for still others, like Orel Gozlan, the fact of expressing oneself partially in French, Arabic, Hebrew, and even English comes to define a specific subset of Moroccan history and identity which is common ground for different groups of Moroccans around the world. Rather than one specific language representing Moroccaness, Moroccaness itself comes to serve as a language which bridges the distance between different groups of Moroccans. The following section outlines the specific groups and case studies which this dissertation addresses.

Tracking a global diaspora: Dissertation focuses

This dissertation focuses on four major centers of Moroccan Jewish life in the twentieth, and limitedly the twenty-first, centuries: Morocco, the Israeli Negev, France, and Montreal. The choices of these hubs were made for several reasons. Firstly, one can scarcely speak of a Moroccan Jewish diaspora without referring to its most populated centers, which are Israel, France, Montreal, and Morocco. Second, my ability to access documents and communities depended heavily on language, and with English, French, and Hebrew, these locations were most available to me. Arabic could have been conceivably quite useful, particularly with regards to the under researched Arabic-language press in Morocco, but was outside my capabilities. Additionally, my personal connections to several of the regions I chose enabled me to access materials which otherwise would have been unreachable. It is my hope that these connections lend this dissertation an insider perspective which increases the overall quality of the analysis and which, perhaps more importantly, do justice to how the communities I write about would want to be understood.

In the end, a dissertation is written about what you find, and not necessarily what you plan. That being said, each hub of Moroccan Jewish life in this dissertation presented specific advantages for elaborating a Moroccan Jewish identity based in a global diaspora. Several locations addressed in this dissertation which exist on the margins of the field of Moroccan Jewish history and migration, such as Montreal, the Negev, and postcolonial Morocco, provided opportunities for repositioning the mainstream focuses of Moroccan Jewish life from traditionally addressed centers. Additionally, placing them side-by-side allowed me to draw connections which shrink the conceptual distances between, say, Ofakim and Montreal, Yeruham and Marrakesh, or Paris and Tangier, while expanding our understanding of Moroccan Jewish mobility. It is Ofakim and Montreal, however, which require specific justifications for their focus in this dissertation since numerous other locations, like Dimona and Caracas, could have stood in for either.

In addition to locations, I have focused on the AIU as a locus of Moroccan Jewish activity. I argue that the AIU, nearly since its founding, activated and empowered pre-existing networks of Moroccan Jews, and continued to serve as a network and political outlet for Moroccans into the colonial period and past Moroccan decolonization. For example, the AIU proliferated the movement of already highly mobile northern Moroccan Jews in the nineteenth century, and throughout its entire tenure in Morocco it allowed Moroccan Jews unparalleled access to options for mobility through the educational opportunities it provided. In fact, the AIU was not alone in this, and educational networks established by eastern European orthodox rabbis also facilitated Moroccan Jews' migration between their country of origin, the Americas, Europe, Israel, and particularly France. The aspects, noted above, on which I have focused in this dissertation can each tell us something about Moroccan Jewish history and "Moroccanness", as I have defined it, which has escaped the literature.

Why Montreal?

Choosing Montreal, my home city, presented an opportunity to describe a community which scarcely finds expression in the broader literature, while demonstrating the connection of the local, to the national, and to the transnational which is often absent from accounts of Moroccan Jewish history. Moroccans in Montreal were the most prominent francophone Jews, as opposed to hispanophones, who chose to reinvent themselves as Sephardim in the twentieth century, a process which was as much related to similar processes of ethnicization in France and Israel as it was to the nationalist Quiet Revolution in Quebec.

In 1956, North African Jews, mainly Moroccans, began arriving in Montreal and Toronto through a special immigration program. As they experienced numerous difficulties accessing social services, and fearing their children's assimilation or anglicization, newly arrived Moroccans sought a way to adapt to their host country while preserving their culture. In a historical twist, Moroccans began to arrive at the moment when Quebec began undergoing the social, legal, and cultural changes that became known as the Quiet Revolution. Moroccan community activists, inspired by the political context in Quebec, as well as the conditions of their counterparts in Israel, reimagined themselves as francophone Sephardim in a strong bid to improve their position vis-à-vis the Ashkenazi community.

This particular episode, largely unknown in broader histories of Moroccan Jewry, demonstrates how neither the local nor the global contexts are independently sufficient for understanding even narrow manifestations of Moroccan Jewish identity and ethnicization. The indispensability of diaspora for this identitary development is further demonstrated in the example of PASI, addressed in Chapter 6, a community aid program which mobilized mostly Moroccan Jews in Montreal to support mostly Moroccan Jews in the Negev, despite neither being identified as such by the program and its organizers. Montreal thus offers a

strong example of post-migration Moroccan ethnicization in a diasporic context which has received too little attention.

Why Ofakim?

The history of life on Israel's geographic and economic margins informs much about how Moroccans across the diaspora have understood the predicament of being Moroccan in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Despite this fact, Moroccan (and many other) Jews in Israel's periphery constitute a major gap in the English-language literature. In Israel being Moroccan, or more broadly Mizrahi, has come to be understood popularly through a specific relationship to Israeli and Zionist history, and to peripherality. This blind spot has much to do with political considerations related to Israel, since so much scholarship has tended to confirm either Zionist or anti-Zionist ideological narratives.

Much research on Jews in Israel's former development towns has focused on their right-wing orientation and, particularly for Moroccans, the relationship of marginalization to their instrumentalization in support of the Shas or Likud parties.¹³³ A corollary perspective has limited Moroccan early political participation in Israel's periphery to their instrumentalization by the labour party.¹³⁴ On the other hand, traditional Zionist scholarship tended to view Moroccans as inherently passive in being rescued by Israel. These top-down focuses make Moroccans in Israel's periphery a convenient choice to bear out either Zionist or anti-Zionist ideology, both of which conceive of them as perpetual victims and passive rather than agentic. In reality, Moroccan experiences in Israel's periphery do not uniformly fit either narrative.

Similar stories can be told about many former development towns in the Negev, like Netivot, Dimona, Yeruham, and Sderot. I chose Ofakim primarily because, like Montreal, another personal connection made this city the easiest to access, but also because they provided rich opportunities to demonstrate multi-sited diaspora making. As I show in Chapter 2, the development of a specific variant of Moroccan identity based in Jews' experiences in Israel's periphery demonstrates the centrality of migration to Moroccanness. Ofakim is located in the western Negev and Moroccans have since its establishment in 1955 formed one of the

133 See e.g. Elie Friedman, Michal Neubauer-Shani, and Paul Scham, eds., *Polarization and Consensus-Building in Israel: The Center Cannot Hold* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024); Marcela Menachem Zoufalá, "Racism Debate and Israel: Impact of Discriminated Groups on (Re)Forming of Israeli and International Discourses," in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Israel*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), 1–17; Sammy Smooha, "The Jewish Ethnic Divide and Ethnic Politics in Israel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society*, by Sammy Smooha, ed. Reuven Y. Hazan et al. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 195–210; Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan, "A Tradition without a Past," in *Site of Amnesia: The Lost Historical Consciousness of Mizrahi Jewry* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 78–87; Nissim Leon, "Ultrationalism and Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Case of Shas," *Politics and Religion Journal* 18, no. 1 (March 7, 2024): 77–103.

134 See Oren David Kalman, *1948–1965 מנהיגים עולים: מפא"י והנהגת עיירות הפיתוח* (Immigrant Leaders: Mapai and the Leadership of the Development Towns 1948–1965) (Ra'anana: Open University of Israel Press, 2023).

largest country-of-origin groups in the city. Conditions in Ofakim's first days were immensely difficult, with no running water, electricity, or proper housing. Reflecting its poor conditions and the racialization of its mostly MENA-origin population in Israel, Ofakim also acquired a negative reputation in the rest of the country as a backwards town populated by criminals, alcoholics, and drug-users.

Despite all of these handicaps, however, what is striking is how Ofakim's residents, often but not exclusively Moroccan Jews, fought against these currents and worked to improve conditions in the city. Additionally, the stories of migration to the Negev and the hardships experienced there have catalyzed strong and specific local identities informed by residents' origins in Morocco. Many Moroccans and other MENA Jews in the periphery have tended to criticize the state for not recognizing their contributions to building the country and have devised a specific Israeli identity which altered the Zionist narrative. If Israel had popularly been considered the result of Ashkenazi efforts in creating a European state in the Middle East, "local patriots" of the periphery express a counternarrative in which Moroccans and other Mizrahim or MENA Jews are the country's true pioneers for having built up the country's margins rather than landing more comfortably in "European" Tel Aviv. In this sense, Moroccanness in the Negev means legitimizing Moroccan Jews in Israeli history by urging the state and other citizens to recognize their agency and contributions, as well as to right historical wrongs and redistribute resources.

Migration to Israel's periphery is not only a Moroccan story. Consequently, applying the question "who and what counts as Moroccan" to the context of Negev development towns presents problems as well as opportunities. On the one hand, Ofakim and its counterparts are sites where Morocco is only part of the story, and where "Moroccan" is not the primary identifier used by residents. On the other hand, this means that Ofakim as a case study allows us to bring to the surface aspects of Moroccanness which are sometimes subdued in the context of Israel's periphery. This dissertation thus argues that we can speak about a Moroccan history of the Negev and demonstrates how the specifics of Moroccan migration to the periphery influenced what Moroccanness looked like in Negev development towns.

Why the AIU (again)?

Unlike Montreal and the Negev, the AIU is a locus of Moroccan Jewish activity which has not suffered from a lack of attention. The AIU is also not a physical location, but important vectors of Moroccan Jewish history can be told through it. As noted above, the historiography of the AIU in Morocco does not delve far past independence. As I show in Chapter 3, this limited view obscures the AIU's role in framing Jewish teachers, both those born in Morocco and abroad, as state-builders. By seeking to take part in building the Moroccan state, as well as having the history of their contributions to Morocco's youth and society recognized, I argue that the AIU's teachers sought to validate their actions as aspects of "Moroccanness". Crucially, the Moroccan

AIU's multinational teaching staff posited a heterogenous notion of Moroccanness based in Jewish migration facilitated by the AIU.

The AIU was founded in 1860 in Paris by recently emancipated French Jews whose self-proclaimed goal was to advance and protect the rights of Jews across the world. The chief vehicle for this mission was the reformation of Jews through modern Western and particularly French-language education. Driven by their motto derived from the Talmud, "all Jews are responsible for each other," the AIU was "the first international Jewish body founded" to "fight for Jewish rights in the international arena."¹³⁵ An important consequence of this was a developing awareness by Moroccan Jews as being part of a broader modern Jewish diaspora, connected by their Jewishness, a sense equally spread through the revival of Hebrew culture in the postwar period.¹³⁶ In many ways the AIU reflected and actively emulated France's colonial mission civilisatrice, the "civilizing mission", with its goal of modernizing backwards MENA Jews, though it differed from European colonialism in significant ways.

Most importantly, the AIU was not a government and did not possess the resources of one. From its founding, the AIU depended on funding from the local Jewish communities where it established schools, and in principle the AIU only opened schools where local communities invited it. In Morocco, the AIU primarily opened schools in the country's large urban centers like Tangier until the protectorate was established in 1912, and the 1924 funding agreement, along with France's gradual control over the country, permitted the AIU to begin opening schools in the Atlas Mountains.¹³⁷ Progressively over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many Moroccan Jews became embedded in the AIU's transnational networks, gaining access to new ideas of what it meant to be Jewish and modern in the MENA.¹³⁸ Over the first half of the twentieth century, Moroccans would come to dominate the AIU's schools, staff, and alumni.

The traditional understanding of the influence of the AIU on MENA Jewries has been one of a rupture with local society and a reorientation towards the "west", France in particular.¹³⁹ In postcolonial and nationalist understandings, the AIU laid the groundwork for these

135 Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 8.

136 See David Guedj, 1956-1912 *במרוקו העברית התרבות במערב אור* (*The Hebrew Culture in Morocco, 1912-1956*) (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2022).

137 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 23.

138 Miller, "Moïse Nahon and the Invention of the Modern Maghrebi Jew," 306-13.

139 See Aviad Moreno's article in which he describes the movement of Jews from "East to West" as a narrative of redemption for MENA Jews. Aviad Moreno, "Expanding the Dimensions of Moroccan (Jewish) Migration: Postcolonial Perspectives from Venezuela," *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2022, 6; literally translated as "march toward the West", as an example of this narrative of redemption, see Chouraqui, *Marche Vers l'Occident: Les Juifs d'Afrique Du Nord*.

communities' "uprooting" and eventual emigration.¹⁴⁰ In many ways this classic interpretation of the AIU as a foreign organization which came and detached local Jews from the daily realities of their traditional societies remains the dominant popular narrative. The AIU, however, was in many ways more a transnational organization than it ever was a French one. It is worth noting, as Aron Rodrigue has stated, that only the AIU's teacher training school, the ENIO, was registered as "an official body in Paris. Otherwise, the Alliance as an institution had no legal French status until 1975."¹⁴¹

In addition to local-born Jews who made up the majority of the AIU's staff in Morocco, other personnel had come from abroad in the second half of the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century, first from France, but then overwhelmingly from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans. All of these teachers had passed through the ENIO in Paris, and in the nineteenth century they were the AIU's missionaries of the so-called *temps héroïques* (heroic times), when teachers saw themselves as pioneers spreading modern education and the AIU's protection to Morocco's supposedly backwards Jewish communities.¹⁴² The teachers took an active role in the communities, aiming and sometimes succeeding in changing perceptions of girls' education and child marriage, and intervening on behalf of local Jews to the Sultan and European consuls.¹⁴³

As far as "uprooting," scholars have pushed back against a one-dimensional narrative, and for example, in her survey of Jewish education in Iraq, Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah concludes that the AIU provided Jews, especially men, with the tools to become participants in Iraqi society as it constructed a modern nationalist identity. Goldstein-Sabbah writes that "[the schools] did not perceive nationalism or secularization as a rejection of Judaism or contrary to the idea of situating oneself within a transnational Jewish community."¹⁴⁴ As students and teachers, the AIU offered MENA-born Jews, especially women, unprecedented opportunities for mobility, and these women often espoused more radical visions of feminism and emancipation than what

140 André Kaspi, Valérie Assan, and Michel Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours* (Paris: A. Colin, 2010), 403; Georges Bensoussan, *Juifs En Pays Arabes: Le Grand Déracinement* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012), 140; Yigal Bin-Nun, "La Négociation de l'évacuation En Masse Des Juifs Du Maroc," in *La Fin Du Judaïsme En Terres d'Islam*, ed. Shmuel Trigano (Paris: Denoël Médiations, 2009), 310; Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983), 346.

141 Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939*, 11.

142 Jonathan G. Katz, "'Les Temps Héroïques': The Alliance Israélite Universelle in Marrakesh on the Eve of the French Protectorate," in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 285-86.

143 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 66-74.

144 S. R. Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, volume 69 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 172.

the AIU or metropolitan France considered tolerable.¹⁴⁵ Though many Jews in Morocco became distanced from their Muslim neighbors through language, culture, and national orientation, the AIU's influence was complex and far-reaching, and cannot be reduced to "uprooting".

Similarly to Goldstein-Sabbah's argument, the AIU provided its teachers with the tools and an outlet to be politically engaged in Morocco, before, during, and after the French and Spanish protectorates. The AIU empowered foreign Jews and local alumni to spur far-reaching changes in the communities, and in many ways the postcolonial Moroccan Jewish society which emerged was one that these Jews had greatly contributed to building.¹⁴⁶ Thus, asking how the AIU can be considered "Moroccan" allows us to think critically about the role of Jews in shaping Morocco's colonial and postcolonial society, and how the AIU contributed to notions of "Moroccanness" in the diaspora. Between its foreign-born and local-born teachers, the AIU is thus a vital site for determining who and what counts as Moroccan.

Heritage archives and new directions

Completing a dissertation which traces Moroccan Jews across four continents required traveling to, accessing archives in, and conducting interviews on all four. Writing a diasporic history of Moroccan Jewry in the twentieth century is made difficult from the perspective of the physical relocation and languages required, which this dissertation has far from exhausted. I have primarily accessed archives whose documents were produced in English, French, and Hebrew, while sources in Spanish and Arabic for example, provide additional lenses not utilized here. Present in over a dozen countries from Israel to Venezuela, the spread of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora is exceeded only by the many diplomatic, institutional, governmental, and personal archives which house relevant information about it. What makes my dissertation a notable contribution to the field, I hope, is its analysis of newer archives and unused documents, such as the Ofakim municipal archives (OFKM), on the one hand, and its use of mature archives in new ways, such as the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). Indeed, the use of sources produced in hubs of migration which rarely coexist in scholarly texts, such as Montreal and the Negev, offer new opportunities for drawing the lines which connect a global diaspora, hitherto obscured to researchers.

I have primarily made use of archives in Canada, Israel, and France. In Canada, I heavily depend on documents from the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives (CJA), formerly the Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Public Library Archives (JPL), both essential repositories for research about Jews in Canada. Documents in these archives relevant to Moroccans, or Sephardim, as they are often referred to in Montreal, are not always classified

¹⁴⁵ Frances Malino, "Oriental, Feminist, Orientalist: The New Jewish Woman," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 104–9.

¹⁴⁶ Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 175–76.

as such and so were sometimes difficult to identify. And yet with regards to non-Ashkenazi Jews, the archives are tremendously underused, and they house institutional documents produced by Moroccans within the broader Montreal community as well as crucial information regarding the response of Montreal's primarily Ashkenazi community to the waves of North African Jews who arrived from the late 1950s.¹⁴⁷ Often this was in the form of reports compiled by officials within the Jewish community to study how its institutions could better adapt to the needs of the newcomers, but like most such reports produced in the 1960s, they are replete with the orientalist biases of the time. Nonetheless, they are indispensable sources for studying Moroccans from their earliest settlement in Canada. Both archives also hold a number of incredibly important interviews conducted amongst Moroccan Jews, particularly by Marie Berdugo Cohen in the late 1980s as part of the "Sephardic Oral History Project."¹⁴⁸ Other interviews I used were conducted by Yolande Cohen in 2015, some of which are only available as transcripts at the CJA.¹⁴⁹

Another important and underused repository in Montreal are the archives of the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, the official representative of Sephardim in Quebec. This archive is largely unorganized, and there remains an untapped treasure trove of documents, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s, which deserve to be the subject of further research. For this dissertation, I have limited myself to the previously unused issues of the Sephardi community's earliest publication in Montreal, *Présence*. While later iterations of this newspaper, under the name *La Voix Séfarad* and *La Voix Sépharade*, are available online through the Quebec government's digital library, BanQ, the earliest issues, from 1969-1977, can only be found in the possession of the Sephardi community in Montreal and in personal archives.

In France, I primarily made use of the archives of the AIU, which are indispensable when writing about Moroccan Jews anywhere in the world. No organization in the twentieth century, including the Moroccan and French governments, amassed richer information about the Jewish communities of Morocco. Furthermore, though the AIU mainly operated in the Mediterranean basin, it corresponded with and kept track of its former students and teachers across the world, and thus its archives serve as an inherently transnational repository of Moroccan Jewish life. The AIU's archives are not, as others, underused, but in fact are some of the most accessed Jewish organizational archives in the world. Michael Laskier's authoritative volume on the AIU in Morocco remains the most important, though numerous other researchers have continued to use the archives innovatively.¹⁵⁰ As noted above, however,

147 For example, the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives (hereafter CJA) holds the original reels for Jacques Bensimon's 1977 film *20 Ans Après*, including hours of unused footage which is fascinating, but expensive to make accessible.

148 See fonds CJC001, CJA.

149 See fonds P0293, CJA.

150 See e.g. Frances Malino, "'Adieu à Ma Maison': Sephardi Adolescent Identities, 1932-36," *Jewish Social Studies*, Sephardi Identities, 15, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 131-44.

few and far between are the studies which analyze the AIU's role in Moroccan Jewish life after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and Morocco's independence in 1956. Though its role and reach diminished progressively as its schools closed, the AIU remained the most important Jewish institution in Morocco for decades, and thus its archives merit a fresh perspective in light of this. This dissertation has primarily utilized documents from the AIU's archives after these years.

Notably, a substantial number of AIU's documents are housed in Jerusalem by the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP). The CAHJP holds documents from numerous international Jewish organizations besides the AIU, such as the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* and the ORT. Some of its AIU documents are copies, but many are originals which cannot be accessed in the Paris library. Indeed, the stories of the Moroccan AIU's teachers' unions, the subject of Chapters 3 and 4, first appeared to me in part at the CAHJP in Jerusalem and required me to travel to the archives in Paris to see the complete picture. In Jerusalem I also accessed the Central Zionist Archives (CZA), housing correspondence and reports produced mainly by the Jewish Agency. The documents used here were often produced by Jewish Agency officials seeking to organize Jewish immigration to Israel and to analyze and limit emigration from there. The Jewish Agency was also deeply involved in settling Moroccans in Israel's peripheral development towns, and many of those relevant sources are utilized, as well. I also use some documents from the Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archive housed in Beit Berl.

Another set of archives, severely underused in the field of both Moroccan Jewish and Israeli history, are the organized and unorganized municipal archives of the former development towns in the Negev.¹⁵¹ I also make use of a number of interviews conducted by Ofakim's municipal archive team which are accessible through the Ben-Gurion Archive, or through the municipal archive's YouTube page. From these municipal archives, this dissertation only makes use of the rich material from Ofakim, and in particular the Yehiel Bentov collection, which was solicited by Itzik Krispel and which I was lucky enough to be able to help organize for the archive. Yehiel Bentov, a Jew born in Morocco in 1930, was mayor of Ofakim from 1969–1978, and then again from 1983–1989. Early in his career, Bentov began archiving newspapers, correspondence, and other documents related to his work in the Negev and to his family's origins in Morocco. Bentov, like many Moroccan Jews, sought to document his Moroccan past and tie it together to his Israeli present, a feat which he accomplished in his self-published autobiography, *Forty Years in the Desert*, and which I make use of in this dissertation. Historians rely heavily on the work of non-academic enthusiasts like Bentov and Krispel who take it upon

151 See for example the important volume by Bryan Roby, who touches lightly on Be'er Sheva, but primarily studies state discrimination against MENA Jews in Israel's central cities rather than its peripheral development towns. See Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948–1966* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015).

themselves to document and preserve histories which do not always interest academic or state institutions, and this dissertation benefits greatly from their efforts.

I have made use of numerous newspapers from Israel, Canada, Morocco, and France, many of which were available online through the Historical Jewish Press hosted by the National Library of Israel in partnership with Tel Aviv University. As noted above, *La Voix Séfarad* and *La Voix Sépharade* were available online through BanQ, and *Présence* was made available to me by the Sephardi community of Montreal. Other local newspapers, such as issues of *Ofakim shelanu* and *Ofakim*, produced by the municipality of Ofakim in the 1970s and 1980s, were available through the personal archives of Yehiel Bentov. Other issues of non-digitized Jewish newspapers from Canada were found in the CJA and JPL, in particular the French-language *Bulletin du Cercle Juif*, whose editorial and management board included a large number of Moroccan Jewish immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s.

Several types of sources were left unused in this dissertation. Most notably, I have foregone the use of historical photographs which add dimension to such projects. Though valuable, the constraints of writing on such a broad topic left their use unfeasible. Finally, I have made use of a very limited number of oral histories which I collected myself in Israel, Morocco, and Montreal. Methodologically, these were approached without significant framing. My interviews lacked significant leading questions, and rather attempted to follow where my interviewees indicated. Though few interviews ultimately appear in this dissertation, many of my interviewees provided me with crucial signposts for what to explore in the archives. Thus my methodology in analyzing the interviews has consisted of utilizing them in tandem with archives.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation explores the question of who and what counts as Moroccan in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first century Moroccan Jewish diaspora. It hypothesizes that migration and intradiasporic connections have played a major part in determining the answer. Each of its six chapters contributes a different piece of a large mosaic and which hopefully can serve as the basis for further study. Chapter 1, *From Morocco to the Negev*, bridges Morocco and Israel by describing the situation of Moroccan Jews on the eve of the establishment of Israel in 1948 and Moroccan independence in 1956, including Jewish internal migration in Morocco in the colonial period, and following them to the country which received most of Morocco's Jews. The chapter specifically focuses on Jewish migration to the Negev, and describes Israel's absorption policy, the transit camps, and the establishment of the development towns in the country's periphery. Chapter 1 begins with descriptions of movement and the perception of it within Morocco before turning to Moroccan Jews' arrival in the Negev in a deliberate attempt to bridge two contexts which are rarely imagined as a continuity.

While Chapter 1 is primarily a practical, nuts-and-bolts description of Moroccan migration to the Negev, Chapter 2, *Centering the Periphery: Morocco in Ofakim*, continues by describing Moroccan Jews' experiences in the Negev, primarily Ofakim. Building on the foundation of Chapter 1, this chapter demonstrates how Jews' pre-migration experiences and skills from Morocco were successfully translated into their Israeli identities. It also analyzes Moroccanness in the context of contested intergenerational narratives of Moroccan migration to the development towns. Moroccanness in this chapter is determined to constitute a particular relationship to peripherality, which Moroccans have utilized to retell the specific history of migration to the Negev and recenter themselves in the narrative as Israel's true pioneers.

Chapter 3, *The Moroccan Home Front*, returns to Morocco and describes an important episode in postwar and postcolonial Moroccan history in the teachers' union of the Moroccan AIU. In this chapter I demonstrate how Moroccan Jews continued to fight for a life in Morocco as the country quickly changed and began to feel less hospitable. Significantly, I demonstrate how the AIU can be understood as a local Moroccan organization, rather than a foreign one, which operated primarily in service to, and through the actions of, the Moroccan Jews who made up most of its teachers, its students, and its alumni. I argue that AIU teachers expressed and took part in Moroccanness in this context by seeking to become state-builders in colonial and independent Morocco, and by urging the state to recognize the AIU's history as a Moroccan institution.

While Chapter 3 focuses on the teachers who possessed only Moroccan nationality, Chapter 4, *To France and Back*, turns to the Moroccan AIU's French nationals, many of whom were also born in Morocco. Through the lens of France's postcolonial repatriation laws, this chapter tells the story of Ruth Jouhet, a Jew of Moroccan descent born in Ottoman Palestine, and through her story demonstrates how the AIU amplified pre-existing Moroccan Jewish networks and could even act as a mediator of return migration to Morocco. This chapter also shows how it became possible for some Jews not born in Morocco to frame themselves as belonging there. By sketching the periphery of Moroccanness, however, it demonstrates the limitations of a Moroccan Jewish identity for foreign-born Moroccans like Jouhet. Both Chapters 3 and 4 also serve to contribute to the growing literature about Jewish life in postcolonial Morocco, and thus to modern Jewish, MENA, and Moroccan historiographies.

Chapter 5, *Becoming Who We Were: Moroccan Jewish Ethnicization in Montreal*, crosses the Atlantic and describes the migration to and communal activism of Moroccan Jews in Canada, and Montreal in particular. Following the end of the last chapter, which notes some limitations in the applicability of Moroccanness, this Chapter notes its successful instrumentalization in Montreal. Chapter 5 focuses on Moroccan Jews' experiences in Ashkenazi social service institutions in Montreal, and their subsequent ethnicization as francophone Sephardim through Montreal's Jewish press. This chapter also illustrated how Moroccanness came to inform post-migratory identities not explicitly termed "Moroccan," as well as how

Moroccanness engaged within numerous transnational contexts such as the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and similar ethnic revivals in France and Israel.

Finally, Chapter 6, *Mobilizing a Moroccan Jewish Diaspora*, explores the different manifestations of Moroccan Jewish attachments to Morocco, from return migration from Israel to Morocco, to subsequent generations' initiatives to preserve and spread Moroccan Jewish history and culture in the diaspora as represented by the Israeli organization Kulna. Focusing on PASI, a program developed by James Dahan and other Moroccan Jews between Montreal and Israel's periphery, this chapter also describes "diaspora Moroccanism" and shows how Moroccanness functions diasporically even in initiatives not organized or termed as "Moroccan".

From Morocco to the Negev

Center to Periphery, Periphery to Center

The two decades from 1948–1967 which brought the largest part of Morocco's Jews to Israel were preceded by decades of intense internal migration and cultural reconfiguration in Morocco. As noted in the introduction, many Jews had since the nineteenth century begun orienting themselves towards France and the West through the influence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). From the interwar period and particularly following World War II, Zionism became an increasingly attractive prospect for young Jews who saw no future for themselves in Morocco. Others were pushed to leave as tensions and anti-Jewish violence surrounding the establishment of Israel in 1948, anticolonial violence in the run-up to Moroccan independence in 1956, and anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda in independent Morocco led to a widespread feeling of insecurity amongst the country's Jews. Within two decades, most had left.

Conceptually, both Israel and Morocco constitute today centers of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora. Israel is a major center of Moroccan Jewish life, while Morocco today serves as both an imagined and real homeland for Jews connected to their Moroccan pasts. Scholarship on Moroccan Jews has transitioned from a schema which saw Israel as the center of all Jewish life, to one which acknowledges that diasporas can have multiple centers. Correspondingly, diasporas can include multiple peripheries, and Moroccan Jewish migration to Israel could be represented several ways. Before waves of Jewish emigrants left Morocco for other shores, thousands left their homes for other parts of the same country, a jump which conceptually could have been as large. For urban Moroccan Jews in the early twentieth century, rural Moroccans were moving from the country's periphery to the center, represented in the francized elite's minds by cosmopolitan Casablanca. Later, the same characterization by urban elites would describe rural Moroccans on their way to Israel as a center.

On the other hand, for Moroccans who arrived in the Negev, they found that they had been settled in a new periphery rather than a center. Most Jews on their way to Israel imagined they would live in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or one of the country's other developed cities. Instead, they became part of new Negev development towns and agricultural settlements, emblematic of what today Israelis regard as *periferiah*, for elite Israelis a separate, adjacent reality. With regards to Moroccanness, these Jews experienced a double peripheralization—from central Israel, but also from Morocco, their country of birth and the center of their new diaspora community.

The purpose of this chapter is to bridge the conceptual gap between the process by which waves of migration brought the majority of Morocco's Jews from their country of birth and their arrival in Israel. Specifically, it connects this migration from Morocco with the "From Ship to Village Plan" which brought Moroccans to new towns and villages established in the

Negev in the 1950s. Here I draw on existing literature to set the stage for Chapter 2, where the pre-migration context and the process of migration are crucial for understanding how Moroccanness manifested amongst Moroccan Jews in the Negev. As we will see, much of the way this unfolded was a result of Jews' experiences in Israel's periphery.

The following section will describe Moroccan Jewish internal migration in the decades before Moroccan independence before turning to major incidents of anti-Jewish policies and violence which destabilized the community's feelings of security. The chapter will then move to France and Israel's coordination of Jewish emigration in Morocco, as well as the Israeli domestic context which defined the new country's policies. Finally, I end by describing the "From Ship to Village Plan" which was responsible for settling the majority of Israel's Moroccan immigrants in the plan's active years in new towns and villages in the country's periphery.

Internal Migration and Perceptions of Moroccan Jewish Urbanization

Decades after having left Morocco, in an interview conducted in the 1980s by Marie Berdugo Cohen in Montreal, Mireille Toledano, born in Rabat in 1924, recounted how much she disliked Casablanca. Like many Jews, Toledano's family had effected internal migrations; her father was born in Casablanca and her mother was from Rabat. After getting married in 1939, Mireille chose to live in Meknes where her husband's family was from. There they lived out the war years, and though they loved the warmth of the community in Meknes and felt that they were embedded in good social networks there, her husband's failing clothing business compelled them to try their luck in Rabat. They lived in Rabat for two years, but ran into similar financial problems and then moved to Casablanca. In her interview, Toledano characterized the move this way: "[we] were forced to leave for Casablanca", where business went well. Casablanca, she said, was too busy, unlike Meknes, where people concentrated on "family life".¹ When the interviewer asked Toledano to elaborate on this point, however, her answer revealed that perceptions of class had much to do with this feeling:

"Casablanca is everyone for themselves and God for all, the more money you have, the better you are regarded, that was the standard of Casablanca [...]. Whereas in Meknes it's more families, this one is a Berdugo, this one is a Toledano, [...] it was something very important, if it was [a good] family it was everything, even if they are poor. Whereas in Casablanca the worst of the Shleuhs, if he has money, he is better than us."²

1 Toledano, Mireille. Interviewed by Marie Berdugo Cohen. Montreal, 30 May 1988. Fonds CJC001-S-A, CJA.

2 Ibid.

Toledano's response demonstrated a feeling of difference which separated Moroccan Jews on two fronts. Firstly, there were the worlds of Casablanca and Meknes; Toledano identified a marked shift between her aristocratic experience of Meknes, where family names were powerful cultural currency, even preferable to money, and Casablanca, where anyone with money could be respected, even "the worst of the *Shleuhs*". The word *Shleuh*, however, invoked the urban-rural divide within Moroccan Jewry which denoted a perception of class and cultural difference. Toledano's assertion revealed her dissatisfaction that in a place as crazy as Casablanca, *Shleuhs*, southern, rural Jews, could be better considered than cultured, urban Jews from illustrious families like herself. This likely had much to do with the fact that Toledano was unhappy in Casablanca and felt like she did not belong there. There it seemed as though class categories which Toledano knew well were turned on their heads.

The nineteenth century saw relocation become a recurrent facet of Jewish life in Morocco. Jean-Louis Miège's assessment of Moroccan demographics asserted that the urbanization of the country's coastal cities had led to a fifty percent increase in the urban population between 1830 and 1867. Emily Gottreich has criticized Miège's model on the grounds that he ignored the "dramatic" population growth in Marrakesh which occurred in the same period as the growth of coastal Moroccan urban centers.³ Gottreich contends that European travelers routinely misjudged Marrakesh's Jewish population due to an insensitivity to the city's "floating population".⁴ A significant number of Jews from Marrakesh were merchants who traveled to the countryside for long periods, while others visited the city as a necessary pitstop during pilgrimages. Rather than "emptying out," and despite the attraction of coastal cities, Gottreich writes that Marrakesh saw an "overall increase in [its] Jewish population".⁵ Urban areas in Morocco, and not the coast exclusively, then, saw significant population growth throughout this period.

With regards to the interior more generally, according to numbers drawn from Charles de Foucauld's 1888 report based on his travels in 1883-1884, Harvey Goldberg stipulated that rural Moroccan Jewry represented about fifty percent of the total Jewish population. These numbers accounted for most major cities, though they notably excluded Tangier and Essaouira. Just twenty years later, based on estimations made by the personnel of the AIU, the proportion had considerably shifted so that rural Jewry consisted of about twenty-five percent of the total population.⁶

Following the imposition of the Spanish Protectorate in the north and the French Protectorate across the rest of Morocco's coast and in the south in 1912, Marrakesh's *mellah*,

3 Emily Benichou Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 53-55.

4 Gottreich, 59.

5 Gottreich, 70.

6 Harvey E. Goldberg, "The Mellahs of Southern Morocco: Report of a Survey," *The Maghreb Review* 8, no. 3-4 (1983): 61.

where many southern rural Jews had begun migrating in the nineteenth century, saw its Jewish population moving to the European *ville nouvelle*, “then for Morocco’s coastal cities, particularly Casablanca, and eventually for foreign lands.” It was only in the 1940s, however, that the *mellah* of Marrakesh saw a net decrease in its total Jewish population, since rural migration no longer replenished the number of Jews who were moving north and outward. Notably, the early protectorate years had not significantly impacted the interior’s rural communities, since the French would not succeed in “pacifying” the interior until the 1930s, “and, even then, there was little interest or effort to integrate the Jews of the countryside into the new administrative and judicial bureaucracy.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, the AIU had not opened schools in parts of the *bled*, the rural Moroccan interior, until “the late 1930s and 1940s”, and the colonial government made an effort to leave traditional markets untouched by French influence.⁷⁹ Some arrangements, of course, do not fit the outward pattern. Around 1950, Pierre Flamand’s report still counts many new arrivals from the rural countryside, as well as several families from Portugal, Israel/Palestine, and sixty Jewish families from Algeria with French citizenship. The city of Safi also counted two Jewish refugees from Europe, still there in 1950.¹⁰

World War II also accounts for part of this shift and the subsequent migration, though Aomar Boum has observed that the war initially had little effect on the rural communities of the interior since “they were accustomed to economic hardship and to making do with few resources.”¹¹ By 1942, Boum stipulates that contractions caused by the war, “coinciding with drought,” reached these communities and stimulated a migratory swell towards urban centers, and then the coast. In particular, Casablanca would eventually overtake other cities as the primary destination, and the Jews who moved towards Marrakesh would often make their way there.¹² Between 1956 and 1968, due to independence and changing conditions, most Europeans would also evacuate the south and head to Casablanca.¹³ Robert Montagne speculated that roughly one million Muslims and 100,000 Jews moved to Casablanca during the interwar period, though parts of this migration were temporary, as well. Montagne tallied the city’s total population between 1937–1940 at 120,000 Europeans, 365,000 Muslims, and 60,000 Jews.¹⁴ By this time, many of the southern rural *mellahs* which had partly fueled this migration ceased to exist.¹⁵

7 Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco’s Red City*, 2007, 132–34.

8 Daniel J. Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, “Emancipation and Its Discontents: Jews at the Formative Period of Colonial Rule in Morocco,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 1 (2006): 195.

9 Boum and Hatimi, “Blessing of the Bled: Rural Moroccan Jewry During World War II,” 119.

10 Pierre Flamand, *Diaspora En Terre d’Islam: Les Communautés Israélites Du Sud-Marocain* (Casablanca: Presses des Imprimeries Réunies, 1959), 215–17.

11 Boum and Hatimi, “Blessing of the Bled: Rural Moroccan Jewry During World War II,” 114–16.

12 Goldberg, “The Mellahs of Southern Morocco: Report of a Survey,” 3.

13 Flamand, *Diaspora En Terre d’Islam: Les Communautés Israélites Du Sud-Marocain*, 113.

14 Heckman, *The Sultan’s Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, 108.

15 Boum and Hatimi, “Blessing of the Bled: Rural Moroccan Jewry During World War II,” 131.

Interwar and postwar urban migrations were not perceived as neutral processes, especially by Europeanized Moroccan Jewish elites. Newspapers operated by foreign Jews and “*évolués*,” European-oriented local-born Jews and often AIU graduates, took an active interest in the status of their rural counterparts. These *évolués*, a term which they used to refer to themselves, could represent the rural-to-urban movement of poor, “uncivilized” Jews, as disastrous, and even as a catalyst for the loss of Moroccan Jewish history and culture. A major source for this elite perspective in the 1930s is *L’Avenir Illustré*, a newspaper which had been founded in 1926 by Jonathan Thursz, a Polish Jew educated in Belgium. Published in Casablanca, *L’Avenir Illustré* was simultaneously pro-Zionist and supportive of French colonization in North Africa.¹⁶

L’Avenir Illustré explicitly connected the arrival of the French in Morocco with the Jews’ progressive emancipation. Joseph Ohayon, regarding European influences on Marrakesh and its Jews, wrote in the March 1931 issue of *L’Avenir Illustré*: “when the colonel Mangin [...] made his solemn entry into Marrakech, the Jews who joined the parades of liberating troops cried with joy, understanding that a new era was beginning for them.”¹⁷ Since then, Ohayon continued, the Jews of Marrakesh were permitted “to mix with the Muslim population which had [...] ignored them” and had thus begun to leave the *mellah* for its surrounding neighborhoods. Ohayon explicitly linked the movement of some of Marrakesh’s Jews from the *mellah* to new neighborhoods with the start of those Jews’ “evolution” and moral improvement. By leaving the *mellah*, these Jews were “escaping promiscuity.”¹⁸

Marrakesh in particular received a lot of attention as a major Jewish population center in the context of southern rural-to-urban migration. On 30 May 1937, Theodore Steeg, appointed by the Popular Front government of France’s first Jewish head of state, Léon Blum, and Charles Noguès, then Resident General of Morocco, visited Marrakesh to assess its economic and social situation. While there they visited the city’s *mellah*, where “26,000 souls languished in a state of legendary pauperism.” An article on 31 May in *L’Avenir Illustré* urged the Resident General to demolish the *mellah* altogether due to its deplorable conditions and the looming risk of an epidemic.¹⁹ Such calls were also responses to Blum’s election in France and his aspiration for the metropole to live up to its colonial rhetoric and improve conditions for indigenous subjects in the colonies.²⁰

The relationship between Casablanca and the south of Morocco was often portrayed through opposing categories in *L’Avenir Illustré*. In 1934 the newspaper lamented the “chronic”

16 Pierre. Cohen, *La Presse Juive Édité Au Maroc 1870-1963* (Rabat: Editions & Impressions Bouregreg Communication, 2007), 183.

17 Joseph Ohayon, “Dans Marrakech La Juive,” *L’Avenir Illustré*, March 26, 1931, 3.

18 Ibid.

19 “La Détresse Des Juifs de Marrakech,” *L’Avenir Illustré*, May 31, 1937, 9.

20 Ethan B. Katz, “Crémieux’s Children: Joseph Reinach, Léon Blum, and René Cassin as Jews of French Empire,” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Maud S. Mandel, Lisa Moses Leff, and Ethan B. Katz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 144–48.

presence of beggars in Casablanca and declared that it had identified a “tourism of begging”. The article traced this movement of Jews from Sous, the Tafilalt Oasis, or Boudenib, through Marrakesh, and finally, “after having sojourned in the Southern capital” and countless other steps along the way, had arrived in “generous Casablanca which is the promised land for these beggars.”²¹ Notably, the writer sympathized with the “Jewish beggars” who had made their way to Casablanca but hoped that the official community there would improve on the piecemeal charity offered to the poor Jews and coordinate an “organization which would permit us to remove from our cities the degrading spectacle of our brothers in rags.”²²

The language employed by this article denotes a certain skepticism about the plight of the poor Jews and whether they belonged in Casablanca, a city associated for the writer and many *évolué* Jews with a modern and liberated existence. The author seemed aware that the term “tourism” might be controversial and defended it: “The expression undoubtedly surprises you. Still, it expresses well the singular migration of these miserable people.”²³ The author seems to have distinguished between those well-to-do Casablangans who were living in the future, and those poorer intercity migrants who were pulling the city back to the past. The use of the word “tourist” framed the newly arrived rural Jews as transient, highlighting that they should not be considered fixtures of the city. Elite Casablangan Jews belonged in Casablanca, whereas poor, rural beggars were only visiting. This perspective conveniently ignored the fact that most Jews, as well as Christians and Muslims for that matter, were newcomers to Casablanca.

Another harsh assessment of this “tourism” was made in the *Union Marocaine*, founded in 1932 by the Tunisian community leader and a director of one of Casablanca’s AIU schools, Elie Nataf. Nataf’s journal was anti-Zionist and more assertively supportive of Jewish assimilation into French culture.²⁴ At first articulating the risk of diseases that these poor Jews brought with them, Nataf urged the public to acknowledge that beggars were not necessarily the “veritable unfortunates” they seemed to be. Being a beggar, he claimed, was often a “veritable profession”, an “industry” from which those who practiced it drew a luxurious living. “Did we not read, just a few days ago, of a [story] [...] about the death, in I don’t know what large city in France, of a patented and unrepentant beggar, at his house was discovered a fortune of 300,000 francs in [cash]? And this is far from being the only case of its kind.”²⁵

Nataf’s distaste for “Jewish pauperism” contrasted his appraisal of Casablanca as “our magnificent, ultra-modern city”, which he wanted to persist on its route to modernity, and which the Jewish poor hindered. His solution was “a limit to the incessant influx of all indigents from the *bled*, from villages, and from the mountains, which the big city attracts,

21 “Chronique Locale et Régionale,” *L’Avenir Illustré*, September 30, 1934, 13.

22 Ibid.

23 “Chronique Locale et Régionale,” 13.

24 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 203-4.

25 Elie Nataf, “Le Paupérisme Juif à Casablanca,” *L’Union Marocaine*, March 26, 1936, 4.

and which furnish most of the paupers of Casablanca.”²⁶ Only a year later, the official Jewish community of Casablanca deplored the “continued afflux of all the miserable people of the Moroccan *bled* which no restrictive measure prevent from coming to our city.”²⁷ A general sentiment amongst *évolué* Jews, even those temporarily resident in Morocco like Nataf, indicated a growing perception of class difference between well-to-do urban and poor rural Jews.

By 1937, however, due to the Jewish refugee crisis in Europe, the sentiment had somewhat changed. In April that year in *L’Avenir Illustré*, Joseph Ohayon wrote an article which criticized the “narrow regionalism” which divided Moroccan Jews of different local origins and discriminated against their poorer elements. Casablančan Jews, he affirmed, came from all over Morocco “to people this beautiful city”. In fact, Jews born in Casablanca were so few in number, he added, that it was impossible to reasonably mock them—who exactly would be mocking who? With regards to those poor Jews of the *bled*, he criticized those who blamed Morocco’s economic problems on a reluctance to push them out of the city. Whether poor in Casablanca or in the *bled*, these Jews were starving, wrote Ohayon. Demonstrating the influence of the refugee crisis in Europe, Ohayon attacked this “regionalism” as “hitlerism”, and sarcastically parroted the people he was addressing with the phrase “Vive le racisme, monsieur!”²⁸ Harsh opinions about poor Moroccan Jews during the interwar period thus became intertwined with a rising sense of insecurity for the well-being of Jews in Europe.

L’Avenir Illustré and the *Union Marocaine* were closed in 1940 due to anti-Jewish censorship imposed by the Vichy government, in power from July 1940 until November 1942.²⁹ An important replacement for *L’Avenir Illustré* after the war was NOAR, the Hebrew word for “youth,” another Zionist publication which ran from 1945 to 1952.³⁰ NOAR also collected stories about Moroccan Jews moving across the country, though in the context of eventually leaving for Mandate Palestine, and later Israel. For example, one article published in 1952 followed five Moroccan youths who immigrated to France through the youth *aliya* movement, *Aliyat hano’ar*. The youths were housed at the Jewish Agency’s Cambous compound in Viols-en-Laval, France, where they learned Hebrew, Israeli geography, and were prepared for life in Israel.³¹ One interesting case was “Hanna S.,” who moved from “Ksar Es Souk”, today Errachidia in the region of Morocco’s Tafilalet Oasis. Hanna had moved to Cambous, where she seemed “so ignorant” that her *madrikhot*, her instructors, did not know what to do with her. She wore “three or four robes superimposed” and spoke no other language than “[something] half-arabic, half-shleuh.” The article recounted

26 Ibid.

27 “Appel de La Communauté Israélite de Casablanca,” *L’Union Marocaine*, March 31, 1937, 1.

28 Joseph Ohayon, “Régionalisme Étroit,” *L’Avenir Illustré*, April 30, 1937, 4.

29 Cohen, *La Presse Juive Éditée Au Maroc 1870-1963*, 194.

30 Cohen, 137.

31 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 140.

that Hanna had suffered ridicule from her peers from “large cities” which inhibited her from taking part in activities with others.³²

According to the article, one of Hanna’s instructors met her six months later, and claimed that she did not recognize her, as she had been completely transformed. Hanna “played the role of Queen Esther in the Pourim celebration put on by [Cambous], and she had to perform a long text in Hebrew, which she recited naturally and with unbelievable majesty.” The article added that “Hanna hoped to become a nurse” and that she “would soon be a citizen.”³³ The perspective of this article was both continuous with and departed from the conclusions we have seen from *L’Avenir Illustré* and *L’Union Marocaine*. The article from NOAR restated the difference between urban, “modern” Moroccan Jews and the rural Jews who did not speak French (or Hebrew) and dressed in traditional clothing. It was clearly meant, however, to encourage young Moroccans to enlist in the youth aliya movement and to assuage widespread fears of parents who sent their children on their way to Israel.

NOAR aimed to encourage an interest in these rural, southern communities, though its representation of these always framed their inhabitants as pre-modern, simple, and spiritual Jews.³⁴ *L’Avenir Illustré* would advocate for Moroccan Jews’ “rejuvenation” via French universalism and a Jewish rejuvenation through Zionism—though not through emigration; NOAR explicitly entrusted responsibility for this process of modernization in the youth aliya movement and the influence of Zionism. *L’Union Marocaine* had previously not favored rural-to-urban migration towards Casablanca, while NOAR encouraged it—for the purpose of emigration to Israel. Importantly, the other four young individuals mentioned in the article had all arrived from urban areas—Fez, Mogador, and two had already lived in Casablanca—and were admired for having “found their place” in the youth aliya movement. Only Hanna, a Jew from Morocco’s *bled*, who did not speak French, had been so transformed that she could “not be recognized”. Perceptions of emigration thus mirrored previous perceptions of internal migration and continued to be intertwined with urban Jews’ prejudices towards rural Jews.³⁵

Decades after Morocco’s demographic makeup has already significantly changed due to these internal migrations, emigration became a persistent specter in Jewish life. Nearly as soon as World War II ended, Jews began leaving. Some 276,000 Jews would immigrate to Israel in the second half of the twentieth century, and yet Moroccan Jews were never expelled, as they were in Egypt. Indeed, between 1956–1961 the independent Moroccan state largely did not issue passports to its Jewish citizens to prevent them from immigrating to Israel. Instead, the feeling of being trapped led thousands to sign up to leave as soon as it was possible, as in the

32 “Cinq Gosses Parmi d’Autres,” NOAR, May 12, 1952, 1.

33 “Cinq Gosses Parmi d’Autres,” 4.

34 See e.g. “Les Communautés Juives Au Sud de Marrakech,” NOAR, November 1, 1949, 2; “Les Communautés Juives Au Sud de Marrakech,” NOAR, November 15, 1949, 2; “Les Communautés Juives Au Sud de Marrakech,” NOAR, December 31, 1949, 8.

35 Ibid.

case of Iraq, while notable instances of violence against Jews led many to question whether a Jewish future was possible in Morocco.³⁶ The next section interrogates some aspects of the years surrounding Moroccan independence in 1956 which led Jews to believe that their futures lay elsewhere than their country of birth.

Decolonization, violence, and uncertainty in postwar Morocco

Multiple factors made it so that Jewish life in Morocco at mid-century became uncertain, and this uncertainty, more than anything else, drove Jews at some point in the second half of the twentieth century to leave when the right conditions aligned. One major break was Jews' experiences during World War II under France's Vichy government. Moroccan Jews across the world even tend to romanticize life in Morocco, particularly with regards to the King, who, it is common to express, protected Morocco's Jews during the Holocaust.³⁷ As noted above, Europeanized Jewish elites had routinely advocated for French rule in North Africa. For many, however, World War II and the Vichy government's collaboration and anti-Jewish policies led to a decided disillusionment with France's "stewardship" of Morocco. The abrogation of the Crémieux Decree in Algeria which stripped Jews of French citizenship, the enactment of Jewish quotas in certain professions, curfews, the forced return of many Jews living in the new European parts of cities to the cramped and unhygienic mellahs, and other anti-Jewish policies in Morocco and across North Africa, and finally the slow French reaction to, even the suspicion of French incitement of anti-Jewish violence, led Jews to question the security of their futures under French rule.³⁸

The fear of violence was another major factor. Though violence against Jews was not widespread, some did take place and marked the memory of Moroccan Jews, for example Yehiel Bentov (née Bitton), a longtime mayor of Ofakim born in Casablanca in 1930. In his autobiography, *Forty Years in the Desert*, Bentov recalls that in the wake of the US occupation of North Africa as part of Operation Torch, French officials, offended by Jews' celebration of the US' success, incited "antisemitic" Muslims to raid the mellah of Casablanca. He adds that

36 Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s*, 203–6.

37 Schroeter, "Vichy in Morocco: The Residency, Mohammed V, and His Indigenous Jewish Subjects," 215–31.

38 Daniel J. Schroeter, "Between Metropole and French North Africa: Vichy's Anti-Semitic Legislation and Colonialism's Racial Hierarchies," in *The Holocaust and North Africa*, ed. Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 40; Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 84–85; Bin-Nun, "La Négociation de l'évacuation En Masse Des Juifs Du Maroc," 305–8.

only the efforts of these Jews' Muslim neighbors prevented a "pogrom."³⁹ Bentov believed that it was French incitement which convinced Muslims to attack the *mellah* and adds that Muslim neighbors were the ones who protected Jews from those who had been manipulated by the French. In reality, scholars have demonstrated that the French authorities in North Africa had often directed local tensions to be taken out on Jews, or worse, had been the perpetrators of anti-Jewish massacres.⁴⁰ Bentov's assertion likely also represents the disillusionment with the French for a young generation of Moroccan Jews who grew up during the war, many of whom felt French in some way, even if they were not French citizens. This narrative of Moroccan interfaith brotherhood, however, did not prevent him from leaving for Israel, and his negative memories of the French may help explain his activities in the Zionist youth movement in Casablanca. For Bentov, who left before Moroccan independence, only his immigration to Israel could address the flaws, maintained by the French, which he felt were inherent to the Jews' situation in Morocco.

Following the end of World War II, tensions in Mandate Palestine spread across the MENA, leading the Sultan to give a widely publicized speech to his Jewish subjects in May 1948 amidst increased Jewish emigration. In it he invoked the history of coexistence in the country and ominously urged Jews not to "support the Zionist aggression or demonstrate their solidarity for the cause; for in doing so, they would risk their rights and their Moroccan nationality."⁴¹ In response to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, riots broke out in the eastern Moroccan cities of Oujda and Jerada, "leaving forty-four Jews dead, including women and children, and more than one hundred wounded."⁴² Oujda had emerged as a major transit point for Jews leaving for Israel, and tensions there reached a fever pitch over rumors that a Jew had a bomb, and that a Jew had killed a Muslim. While the first rumor was untrue, the second referred to Albert Bensoussan, a Jewish convert to Islam, who killed a Jew over rumors the latter was supposedly spreading over Albert facilitating emigration to Israel. In nearby Jerada, agitators spread rumors that Jews in Oujda were setting fires to mosques.⁴³ The discourses adopted by some, but not all, Moroccan nationalist parties with regards to the establishment of Israel and the riots that followed this event contributed to the uncertainty many Jews felt. Regarding the riots in Oujda and Jerada,

39 Yehiel Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (Forty Years in the Desert) (Kibuts Daliyah: Ma'arekhet, 2000), 30–31; Orit Bashkin notes a similar tendency amongst Iraqi Jews to temper their stories of the Farhud with a "good neighbor" narrative, in which some Muslims helped their Jewish neighbors, while others were "bad neighbors" and took part in the violence. See Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford University Press, 2012), 122–25.

40 For French officials' slow response to anti-Jewish violence in North Africa, see Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); for French soldiers' perpetuation of a massacre of Jews in Constantine, see Joshua Cole, *Lethal Provocation: The Constantine Murders and the Politics of French Algeria* (Cornell University Press, 2019).

41 Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, 119–20.

42 Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 10.

43 Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, 120–22.

the Istiqlal party, the primary Moroccan nationalist party, for example, mirrored the King's "appeal for peace and calm", but "also criticized Moroccan Jews for having undermined the possibility for peace by supporting Israel and Zionism, especially through fund-raising and emigration."⁴⁴ Zionist activity in Morocco was growing, though most Moroccan Jews were still not politically involved. Nonetheless, many naturally felt an affinity for the self-defined Jewish state which corresponded to the traditional Jewish attachment to "Eretz Israel".⁴⁵ For most others, the frequent attacks on Zionism and Israel in Morocco's press as well as the criticism levelled towards Moroccan Jews who attended international Zionist gatherings, seemed a bad omen for Jewish life in the country.⁴⁶

Between Sultan Mohammed V's exile in 1953 and his return on the eve of independence in 1955, Jews also found themselves in the midst of significant anticolonial violence, which in those years reached a fever pitch: "Violent attacks became a daily occurrence. [...] Secret cells proliferated throughout 1954 and 1955, attacks on settlers multiplied, farms and factories were set on fire, and strikes paralyzed vital sectors of the economy."⁴⁷ A paramilitary Moroccan nationalist army was formed along the lines of the Algerian Front de Libération National, and the French responded with bloody ruthlessness. Jews found themselves in the middle of the anticolonial struggle in 1954, when seven Jews were massacred in Sidi Kassem (then called Petitjean) by protestors for keeping their stores open during a strike organized by the Istiqlal, and over 1,000 Jews were injured in riots which took place in the Casablanca mellah in 1955.⁴⁸

During the years of the Sultan's exile, the Istiqlal had become the major catalyst for independence, "with its sprawling network, its armed militants, its local cells in every city and town throughout the countryside". Following independence, the monarchy, which had been successfully mobilized by the independence movement as a symbol to unify Moroccans, set out dismantling the Istiqlal's "state within the state", leading to decades of political instability.⁴⁹ No sooner had the Sultan returned than the Istiqlal found its plans for political

44 Baïda, "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948-1956," 2011, 326.

45 Yaron Tsur has eloquently assessed the way Zionism successfully bridged traditional Moroccan Jewish responses to religious Jewish symbolism with political Zionism and the state of Israel. See Yaron Tsur, "The Religious Factor in the Encounter between Zionism and the Rural Atlas Jews," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover, London: University Press of New England, 1998), 312-29.

46 Take for example the case of five Moroccan Jews who attended the 1961 World Jewish Congress in Geneva—and in fact criticized the misinformation at a session on North African Jewry—who were themselves criticized by other Moroccan Jews for furthering the Zionist organization's use of local Jews as a pretense to intervene in Moroccan affairs. See Ralph Benarosh Maoudy et al., "Lettre Ouverte à MM. Sabbah et Azoulay," *La Voix Des Communautés*, October 1, 1961.

47 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 152.

48 Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 155; Michael M. Laskier, "The Instability of Moroccan Jewry and the Moroccan Press in the First Decade after Independence," *Jewish History* 1, no. 1 (1986): 39.

49 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 153.

reform sidelined, while “mysterious political assassinations [...] heightened the general sense of fear.”⁵⁰ Brahim El Guabli has argued that the post-independence moment held a strong promise for Jewish inclusion in the state, especially for intellectuals like Carlos de Nesry who articulated a liberal democratic vision for the country.⁵¹ Under the aegis of Al-Wifaq, “the Accord,” a group founded by the Istiqlal shortly before independence, prominent Moroccan Jews like the historian and short-lived Moroccan AIU delegate Haïm Zafrani called on their coreligionists to work with Muslims to build the nation. They also “urged Moroccan Muslims not to conflate Moroccan Jews with Zionists and Israelis, which, especially in public discourse, was widespread.”⁵² For Moroccan Jewish communists like Edmond Amran El Maleh, Abraham Serfaty, and Simon Lévy, a more radical vision for an inclusive and equitable Morocco was put forward.⁵³ The early years of independence indeed gave reason for Jews to be optimistic, with the press and the Sultan expressing explicit promises of equality for Jewish citizens, and several Jews appointed to important offices in the independent government.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, these visions were shuttered by the government’s infighting and the shift towards authoritarianism.

Furthermore, in the years following Moroccan independence, accounts of young Jewish girls being kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam sowed fear amongst Jewish parents.⁵⁵ On top of these events, the Moroccan government’s policy of prohibiting the issue of passports to Jewish citizens between 1956–1961 reinforced the impression that Jews should leave when and if they could. A “show trial” of Jews from Tangier and Tetouan prevented from illegally emigrating to Israel disturbed Jewish onlookers,⁵⁶ and in January 1961 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser gave a speech in Casablanca “that incited Muslims against Jews.”⁵⁷ Following Nasser’s visit, “several [Jewish youths] were arrested and beaten by the Moroccan police, and a strike was called against the Jewish wholesalers of Casablanca.”⁵⁸ Finally, the ban on issuing Jews passports was lifted following the shocking deaths of 44 Jews on the sunk clandestine emigration ship, the *Pisces* (also called the *Egoz*). Similar to the case of Jews in Iraq, many Moroccan Jews worried that if they did not leave when they had the chance, they might not be able to as the situation in Morocco deteriorated.⁵⁹ On the other hand, many poor

⁵⁰ Miller, 155.

⁵¹ Brahim El Guabli, “Morocco Reimagined: When Moroccan Jews Could Theorize the Moroccan State,” *Journal of Religious Minorities under Muslim Rule* 1, no. 1 (June 19, 2023): 44–48.

⁵² Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 133.

⁵³ See Heckman, *The Sultan’s Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*.

⁵⁴ Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 134.

⁵⁵ Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, “Muslim Descendants of Jews in Morocco: Identity and Practice,” *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews*, July 12, 2015, 48–50.

⁵⁶ Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 164.

⁵⁷ Gottreich, 155–56.

⁵⁸ Gottreich, 155–56.

⁵⁹ Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s*, 203–6.

Jews—indeed, most Moroccan Jews were poor—hoped that emigration to Israel represented a chance at upward mobility and might improve their economic status.⁶⁰

Overall, general uncertainty bolstered the encouragement of Israel's *shliḥim* (emissaries sent to organize Moroccan Jewish immigration to Israel), and the self-reinforcing effect of migration itself served to motivate the largest part of Morocco's Jewish community which left to make its way, in one way or another, to Israel.⁶¹ Vichy rule in Morocco had led a growing number of Moroccan Jews, particularly youths disillusioned with the possibilities of the protectorate and excited by those of Zionism, to actively engage in Zionist and pro-emigration activity. Local clubs such as the Charles Netter Association and local scout organizations adopted a pro-emigration orientation in the 1940s, especially under the tutelage of emissaries from *hashomer hatsa'ir* and the United Kibbutz Movement who arrived in North Africa in 1943.⁶² Before long, emigration became increasingly streamlined and acquired France's tacit approval, providing an outlet for Jews who had become uncertain if life in Morocco was worth the risk.

French and Israeli Policies Towards Moroccan Jewish Migration to Israel

While during World War II overt Zionist activity in Morocco was shut down by the French authorities, in 1948 France's policy in Morocco became that of "opposing 'aliya, though tolerating, if not overlooking, other aspects of Zionism".⁶³ In Algeria, France turned a blind eye towards immigration to Israel, so that those who managed to make their way to the Algiers camp, and from there to Marseille, France, could successfully arrive in Mandate Palestine and, later, Israel. Laskier writes that "Between May 1947 and April 1948 only 1,500 persons from all of North Africa made 'aliya. Yet between April and December 1948, as many as 9,000 Jews, the majority of whom were Moroccans, reached France on their way to Israel."⁶⁴

These early instances of immigration to Israel were made possible by the *Mossad le'aliya bet*, which was founded in 1938 and which turned its attention to the Middle East and North Africa in

60 Michael M. Laskier, "Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel: Government Policies and the Position of International Jewish Organizations, 1949–56," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (1989): 324.

61 In his article criticizing state-centered narratives of migration, Aviad Moreno explains: "By imparting cumulative experiences that shape individuals' decisions over the course of the migratory experience, they gradually transform migration into an acceptable, and predictable, form of behavior with cultural value; in other words, they create a migration culture." Moreno, "Beyond the Nation-State: A Network Analysis of Jewish Emigration From Northern Morocco to Israel," 15.

62 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 85; Yehiel Bentov, born in 1930, recalls his engagement at the age of 12 in numerous Zionist activities through scouts movements led by the Hagana in Morocco. Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (Forty Years in the Desert), 35.

63 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 86.

64 Laskier, 91.

1942 following the revelation of the extent of the Holocaust in Europe.⁶⁵ In 1947, the *Mossad le'aliya* bet collaborated with the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) and the Jewish Agency to secure from Marseille's municipal authorities the right for clandestine Jewish immigrants to be housed in the *Grand Arénas* transit camp near that city.⁶⁶ In June 1949 the French authorities signed an official agreement, the "Gershoni-Juin agreement," with the Jewish Agency permitting the emigration of 600 Moroccan Jews per month.⁶⁷ French authorities had been concerned that permitting emigration to Israel would escalate tensions, already high, between Jews and Muslims. Realizing that emigration would not stop, France sought to supervise it instead. France committed itself to issuing visas and permitted the opening of a special emigration bureau in Casablanca if illegal, disorganized *aliya* would end.⁶⁸ On the other hand, French officials ventured that the presence of French-speaking Jews in the Middle East might conceivably benefit their interests in the region.⁶⁹



Map 6: Proposed 1947 Partition Plan Borders (Resolution 181).

65 For an in-depth account of the organization of the Jewish transit camps in France, Morocco, and Algeria, see Haim (Hai) Bitton, *מפגש וקונפליקט, 1956-1947: מרוקו וצרפת, בין שליחי העלייה והעולים ממרוקו בתהליך ההכשרה לקליטה בישראל* ('A Community at Twilight': The Transit Camps in Algeria, Morocco and France, 1956-1947: Encounter and Conflict Between the Aliyah Emissaries and Moroccan Immigrants in the Process of Preparation for Absorption in Israel). PhD Dissertation. (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2022), 124.

66 Bitton, 131.

67 Picard, 1951-1956. *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה* (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951-1956), 66.

68 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 106.

69 Laskier, "Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel: Government Policies and the Position of International Jewish Organizations, 1949–56," 329–30.

The Gershoni-Juin agreement authorized the Jewish Agency to set its preferred conditions for the immigrants it would take. Though a significant number of Jews left Morocco for Israel in this period of emigration, Moroccan Jews were not the preferred immigrants of the Jewish Agency and Israeli government, so much so that the Agency enacted a policy of *Seleḵsiya* (selection), rejecting the candidacies of the elderly, the sick, and the uneducated in favor of young, able-bodied, and educated Jews, particularly men.⁷⁰ In practice, the selection policy proved both more flexible when it needed to be, but not flexible enough to satisfy Israel's needs or the demand for emigration in Morocco.

A subset of the *Seleḵsiya*, the "rural" selection, began in 1949 as a collaboration between the Jewish Agency and the AJDC, with the former needing people to populate agricultural settlements and the army, and the latter worried that rural Moroccan Jews were in danger, especially as it appeared that local Muslims were entering traditional Jewish professions.⁷¹ Despite a willingness amongst Jews to emigrate, and the Jewish Agency's desire to bend its criteria, David Ben-Gurion personally disallowed such immigration.⁷² The organized emigration of young Moroccan Jews through *Aliyat hano'ar* ran into similar obstacles in these early years. Though young Moroccan Jews like Yehiel Bentov, later mayor of Ofakim, independently made their way to Israel starting in 1948, between 1951 and 1953 the Jewish Agency tried to increase the number of young Moroccans leaving for Israel. By the end of 1953, however, the operation was shut down by the Jewish Agency due to the youths' families being ineligible for emigration. Despite the large number of interested youths, most proved unwilling to leave their families, especially those dependent on them for income. Only 1,500 youths from across North Africa arrived in Israel through this plan.⁷³

In the end, the *Seleḵsiya*, active between the beginning of 1952 and mid-1954, prevented the widespread immigration of the kind of immigrant that the policy was meant to bring. With mounting fear for the fate of North African Jews as decolonization ramped up, by 1953 Itzhak Raphael, the head of the Jewish Agency's *aliya* department, announced that with the *Seleḵsiya* in place, there could be no immigration from North Africa, and suggested a switch to "family *aliya*," in particular to populate *Moshavim* (agricultural settlements).⁷⁴ Other officials, like Haim Shiba, head of the Ministry of Health, feared a "wild and sick" *aliya* from North Africa. In opposing Raphael's proposed reforms, Shiba saw himself "not only as a doctor, but as the 'guardian of Israel's gates'."⁷⁵ On the other hand, in 1951 immigrants from Eastern Europe, Yemen, Iraq, North Africa, and elsewhere were already languishing in *ma'abarot*, or transit

70 Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 132–37.

71 Picard, 1951–1956, *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה* (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951–1956), 125.

72 Picard, 129–30.

73 Picard, 132–42.

74 Picard, 139; 152.

75 Picard, 154–55.

camps, in Israel, making unlimited immigration unfeasible. In the end, only a portion of the Moroccan Jews who in the early 1950s were ready to immigrate to Israel were permitted to go. In 1953, two thirds of all North African Jews who signed up to immigrate were disqualified according to the *Seleksiya*, and only 3,600 immigrated despite the Agency's set maximum of 25,000. Young Jews who returned from Israel to Morocco in these years cited that the principal reason they had come back was because they had not been permitted to arrange for their families to follow them.⁷⁶

By 1954, as Moroccans at home struggled for independence in the absence of the exiled Sultan Mohammed V, and Moroccan nationalists abroad enlisted the US and the UN to campaign for the country's independence, international Jewish organizations and the Jewish Agency increasingly feared for the safety of Morocco's Jews.⁷⁷ This, coupled with the failure of the *Seleksiya* policy, led to the adoption of unconditional "family *aliya*" by the Jewish Agency. As it seemed more and more likely that Morocco would become independent, elements in Morocco which had previously opposed emigration began to support it, tacitly or actively. Jacques Dahan, for example, General Secretary of Morocco's Jewish Communities within the French colonial framework, had a decidedly pro-French orientation. By 1955, however, Dahan encouraged the emigration of Jews in the Atlas Mountains, and signaled that in areas where Europeans had left, Jews had better leave, too.⁷⁸ Under the more successful "family *aliya*" scheme, between 1954-1955 the Israeli *shaliah* Yehuda Grinker registered 13,533 Jews in the Atlas Mountains for emigration to Israel. Throughout these years, whole rural villages of Moroccan Jews, dating back hundreds of years, if not longer, disappeared overnight.⁷⁹

In the years between the establishment of Israel in 1948 and Moroccan independence in 1956, around 100,000 Jews emigrated to Israel.⁸⁰ Despite the Israeli government's bid to limit "undesirable" immigration from North Africa between 1952 and mid-1954, the two years leading up to Morocco's independence saw the gates thrown open, and around 50,000 Jews emigrated, half the total number of the period between 1948-1956. Following his return to Morocco after his forced exile in Madagascar by French authorities, and following the country's achievement

⁷⁶ Picard, 169–70.

⁷⁷ Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 150–51; for the Moroccan nationalist mobilization of transnational networks in the campaign for independence, see Jonathan Wrytzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); and David Stenner, *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); for more on international Jewish organizations' policies regarding Moroccan emigration, see Laskier, "Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel: Government Policies and the Position of International Jewish Organizations, 1949–56."

⁷⁸ Picard, 1951–1956, *אפריקה, צפון אפריקה, מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה, 1951–1956*, 184.

⁷⁹ Many of these communities dated their origins to refugees fleeing after the destruction of the First or Second Temple. See Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*, 95.

⁸⁰ Laskier, "Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel: Government Policies and the Position of International Jewish Organizations, 1949–56," 332.

of independence, Sultan Mohammed V banned organized Jewish emigration. A policy was soon instituted by the independent state to deny the issue of passports to Moroccan Jews to prevent them from fighting in the Israeli army.⁸¹ In contrast, the emigration of Moroccan Muslims steadily rose from the last years of colonial rule, primarily to France where Moroccans replaced Algerian laborers with the outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence in 1954. Similarly to Jews, however, it was particularly following the accession of King Hasan II to the throne in 1961 that Muslim emigration skyrocketed, particularly as laborers to European countries with which the King signed recruitment agreements: West Germany and France in 1963, Belgium in 1964, and the Netherlands in 1969.⁸²

But the story of increased migration leading up to Moroccan independence, and the shift in the Jewish Agency's and the Israeli government's policies, must be understood from the perspective of Israeli domestic policy, as well. Indeed, it is the Moroccan Jews who immigrated between August 1954 and October 1956, as a part of the "From Ship to Village" plan, that would end up, almost in their entirety, in the new development towns and Moshavim of Israel's periphery.

Emptying the transit camps, filling the Negev

From 1948 until the end of 1951, nearly 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, more than doubling the pre-state Jewish population of 650,000 to about 1,322,000 in May 1951.⁸³ As the 1948 war dragged into 1949, the government was slow in executing a comprehensive settlement policy for the new immigrants, and by 1951 the country faced an economic crisis which "manifested in inflation and the near-exhaustion of the country's foreign currency reserves".⁸⁴ While many plans were theorized, by 1950 the dwindling number of expelled Palestinians' dwellings and the desire to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees of the Nakba, house the new immigrants,

81 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 214; Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 164.

82 Mohamed Berriane, Hein De Haas, and Katharina Natter, "Introduction: Revisiting Moroccan Migrations," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 4 (August 8, 2015): 505-6.

83 The height of immigration were the years between 1948-1951, with 101,819 immigrants in 1948, 239,076 in 1949, 169,405 in 1950, and 173,901 in 1951. Numbers dwindled after the institution of the *Seleḥsiya*, with only 23,357 immigrants in 1952, 10,347 in 1953, and 18,370 in 1954. See Moshe Lisk, *כשלונו של כור ההיתוך* (The Great Aliya of the 1950s: The Failure of the Melting Pot) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1999), 4-5; other numbers are quoted for the period from 1948-1951, for example 720,000. See Hila Shalem Baharad, "המסע, המסע" (The journey and burden of the children of the immigrant transit camps)," *Israel* 29 (2021): 190.

84 Aharon (Arahle) Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot) (Israel: Aharon Cohen, 2016), 12; Avi Picard, "Building the Country or Rescuing the People: Ben-Gurion's Attitude towards Mass Jewish Immigration to Israel in the Mid-1950s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 3 (2018): 387.

and disperse them across the freshly conquered territory led to the birth of the *ma'abara* (plural *ma'abarot*), the planned Israeli transit camp.⁸⁵

The existence of transit camps in Israel preceded the formalization of the *ma'abarot*, and by the end of 1949 there were already 90,000 immigrants in transit camps across the country.⁸⁶ Transit camps had already figured in Ben-Gurion's "million plan" between 1942–1945, according to which Jewish immigrants from Europe and MENA countries would live temporarily in the camps before moving on to settle the Negev.⁸⁷ The first *ma'abara* was established and the term coined in May 1950. In 1951, there were 127 *ma'abarot* and 230,000 people residing in them, with some seventy-five percent coming from Muslim majority countries that year and eighty-three percent the next year.⁸⁸ By the end of 1952 there were 194 *ma'abarot* with over 250,000 people.⁸⁹ Shlomo Swirski writes that "fifty-eight percent of the Jews who came from Arab lands prior to 1951 were sent to *ma'abarot*, compared with 18 percent of those who came from Europe".⁹⁰ In 1951, there were 250,000 people living in temporary housing in Israel, meaning that the vast majority of immigrants without a permanent residence by this time were living in *ma'abarot*.⁹¹ Those who had the means to leave or family living elsewhere in Israel, including Moroccans, were able to escape the *ma'abarot* more quickly, while those that remained often had no connections and were dependent on the state.⁹² By 1963 the *ma'abarot* had largely been liquidated, with only 12,750 residents remaining.⁹³ In practice, liquidation often meant their conversion into "housing projects on the margins of the big cities" where they had been established, their

85 For the Nakba and the 1948 war, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); for Palestinians who remained or who returned after fleeing, see Adel Manna, *Nakba and Survival: The Story of Palestinians Who Remained in Haifa and the Galilee, 1948–1956* (University of California Press, 2022).

86 Baharad, "המסע והמשא של ילדי מעברות העולים" (The journey and burden of the children of the immigrant transit camps), 190.

87 According to the plan, Jews from Europe would wait up to three months in the transit camps while Jews from Muslim majority countries would wait up to two years. Hila Shalem Baharad, "זהות עדתית והתמיינות" (Ethnic identity and group differentiation in immigrant camps and transit camps), in *קבוצתיות במחנות העולים ובמעברות* (בהקדמה לירון צור) (Sde Boqer: Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2021), 92–93.

88 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 23; Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 228.

89 Baharad, "המסע והמשא של ילדי מעברות העולים" (The journey and burden of the children of the immigrant transit camps), 191.

90 Shlomo Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States* (London: Garland Science, 1999), 114.

91 Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 226.

92 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 25.

93 Cohen, 28; Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, 114.

conversion into development towns, or the immigrants' transfer to development towns or Moshavim established elsewhere.⁹⁴

The living conditions in the *ma'abarot* were deplorable, and these became another aspect of MENA Jewish, and particularly Iraqi and Yemenite, collective memory in Israel.⁹⁵ Those that were placed near existing settlements were often ignored by the municipalities, until a statutory order in 1951 compelled the nearby regional or local councils to provide services for them.⁹⁶ Long lines for food rations, crowded "huts" and tents, poor sanitary conditions, a lack of reliable running water and electricity, among other things, drove the necessity to empty the camps by any means.⁹⁷ Immigrants, especially those from Muslim majority countries, and particularly Yemenites, also faced anti-religious discrimination in *ma'abarot*, with requests for religious education potentially leading to repercussions in the allocations of "food, clothing, and jobs."⁹⁸ By 1952, the unemployment rate in the camps was between forty and fifty percent, when the global Israeli rate was between six and ten percent.⁹⁹ By design, the *ma'abarot* tended to be established either near an existing settlement or in a place where a settlement would someday be established, and indeed a significant number of *ma'abarot*, including several in the Negev, would become development towns.¹⁰⁰ Ofakim was not one of these, but the placement of *ma'abarot* was conceived by state planners, Levy Eshkol in particular, as a first step in the dispersal of the population across the country. As noted earlier, and though the development towns were considered a solution to the problem of the *ma'abarot*, the planned division of the population into "new cities" had already begun in 1949.

By 1950 it was decided that the *ma'abarot* would serve to both disperse the Jewish population and form the foundations of new cities in the north and south of the country. At the end of 1951, when the *ma'abarot* held most of the new immigrants in temporary housing, the government

94 Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, 114.

95 The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or Yehuda which documents the lives of Jews in Iraq and their immigration to Israel, for example, devotes almost the entire second floor of the museum to the traumatic experiences of Iraqi Jews in the *ma'abarot*. See Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 21–66.

96 Cohen, *נתיבות, אופקים, שדרות*: *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 24.

97 Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 225.

98 Yemenites had been particularly targeted by a practice of taking Yemenite immigrant children from their families and sending them to youth camps. Religious discrimination in the *ma'abarot* became the subject of a governmental commission of inquiry, the Frumkin Commission, which led to the resignation of senior officials, though the youth camps continued to operate. See Zvi Zameret, *The Melting Pot in Israel: The Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Education of Immigrant Children During the Early Years of the State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 76, 99–100.

99 Cohen, *נתיבות, אופקים, שדרות*: *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 27.

100 For example the development towns Beit She'an, Rosh Ha'ayn, Yeruham, Kiryat Malahi, Beit Shemesh, Sderot, and Netivot, among others, were established on top of *ma'abarot*. Cohen, 24.

greenlit the “Sharon Plan,” named after its head, architect Arie Sharon.¹⁰¹ According to the Sharon Plan, the development towns were meant to be “rural-urban centers,” localities which would provide services and serve as commercial centers for Kibbutzim and Moshavim across the country. While in practice this goal for the development towns did not come to fruition, the Sharon Plan fundamentally shaped the reality of Israel’s space in the years that followed, and with it the lives of the Jews, many of them Moroccan, who immigrated to these new “rural-urban centers.”¹⁰²

The Sharon Plan and the liquidation of the *ma'abarot* also saw the creation of numerous new moshavim across the country, many in its peripheral regions and on the sites where Palestinian villages had stood. Between 1948-1963, a total of 214 moshavim were founded, with 167 being populated entirely by Jews from Muslim majority countries.¹⁰³ The legacy of this period of settlement is the contemporary ethnic division between MENA Jews in Moshavim and Ashkenazim in Kibbutzim. Kibbutzim, “though they were fewer in number and smaller in population than the moshavim, [...] received a larger portion of the appropriated Palestinian lands and of the new state investments.”¹⁰⁴ This fact would also impact the history of the development towns. Aharon Cohen, for example, argues that the proximity of development towns to either Moshavim or Kibbutzim in certain cases contributed to their contemporary economic situation. According to Cohen, those settled in development towns such as Sderot which were near Kibbutzim, whose residents were relatively affluent, experienced less economic success since the Kibbutzim did not need their services. Paradoxically, those settled near Moshavim such as Netivot and Ofakim, largely populated by less affluent MENA Jews, experienced a higher degree of economic success because the Moshavim needed their services.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Netivot in particular is considered a major success story among the former development towns and their residents.

Between 1952 and 1954, during which the *Seleḥsiya* was active, less than 16,000 Jews arrived in Israel from Morocco.¹⁰⁶ Moroccan and other North African Jews would soon come to dominate the immigrant groups in new settlements, but Moroccans made up only a relatively small share of the *ma'abarot's* residents. In 1953, the *ma'abarot's* populations were surveyed, and it was found that 22.3 percent were from Europe, 54.6 percent were from Asia, and only 17.6 percent were from

101 Cohen, 11–12.

102 Cohen, 13.

¹⁰³ Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, 114; see also Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

104 Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, 138.

105 "אהרון ברנע משוחח עם ד"ר אהרון (אהרל'ה) כהן." מחוץ (Aharon Barna speaks with Dr. Aharon (Arahle) Cohen) כהן. February 2017. <http://www.aharonbarnea.com/2017/02/01/א-ה-ר-ב-ר-נ-ע-מ-ש-ו-ח-ח-ע-ם-ד-ר-א-ה-ר-ו-ן-כ-ה-ן/>. ערוץ הכנסת. 19

106 Laskier, "Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel: Government Policies and the Position of International Jewish Organizations, 1949–56," 332.

Africa.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, 80,000 of the 100,000 Iraqi Jews who immigrated to Israel by the end of 1952 were living in *ma'abarot*.¹⁰⁸ Though Moroccans who lived in the *ma'abarot* would experience the difficulties noted above, it was decidedly immigration to and life in the development towns and Moshavim which would come to define the experience of most Moroccans who immigrated in the 1950s.

“From Ship to Village” and planning the development towns

In the closing years of the French protectorate in Morocco, between 1954–1956, Israel sought to populate the country's north and south with new immigrants. The *ma'abarot*, intended to temporarily house new immigrants as well as to disperse the population, had been a stopgap measure. With a new plan in hand, the *Seleksiya* was ended, and a new wave of North African Jewish immigration was organized. In practice, Algerian and Tunisian Jews proved overall less interested in immigrating to Israel than Moroccans, and Jews already settled in the country were largely unwilling to live in the periphery.¹⁰⁹ With the mandate to populate the country from north to south, the mounting worries regarding the safety of Jews in North Africa, and the higher level of interest in immigration to Israel in Morocco than in Algeria and Tunisia, by the force of things the “From Ship to Village Plan” was overwhelmingly a Moroccan operation. During the active period of the plan between 15 August 1954 and October 1956, 90,000 Jews immigrated and were settled in new towns or Moshavim. 70,000 were from Morocco, 15,000 were from Tunisia, and 5,000 were from Poland.¹¹⁰

Despite the abandonment of the *Seleksiya*, “From Ship to Village” was not a wave of unlimited immigration. Rather the plan staked out new sites for Jewish settlement, signed Jews up in their countries of origin, assigned them a destination in the *Grand Arénas* transit camp in Marseille, or on the ship which brought them to Israel, and then brought the

107 Baharad, “זהות עדתית והתמיינות קבוצתית במחנות העולים ובמעברות,” 93.

108 Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, 114; Orit Bashkin also demonstrates that Iraqis made up by the far the single largest group of Jews in transit camps in 1953, with 79,157, compared to all Maghrebi Jews, who made up only 12,745, out of a total of more than 210,000 residents in all camps. See Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 34.

109 Algerian Jews, French citizens since 1870 and having attended even earlier schools controlled by the French state, were by the mid-twentieth century primarily oriented towards France on the eve of Algerian independence in 1962. Tunisian Jews emigrated more slowly in general, and following Tunisian independence emigration to Israel was rarely restricted, leaving many Jews feeling safer in their ability to leave than in Morocco. Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 114–42; Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 287–305.

110 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 41.

immigrants by truck or bus to the sites in accordance with the government's ability to absorb them. Giora Yoseftal, head of the Jewish Agency's absorption department, warned that if the pace of *aliya* was not set by the government, they would lose the opportunity to settle the new immigrants where they were needed.¹¹¹ Shlomo Shragai, who replaced Itzhak Raphael as the head of the Jewish Agency's *aliya* department, agreed with Yoseftal. He argued that the intense *Yerida* (emigration from Israel) of the *ma'abarot* years would only be repeated if new immigrants continued to be placed in camps, stating in a meeting that "the letters that will come from these people to their countries of origin will be letters of reproach and we will close the *aliya*."¹¹²

Accordingly, the government restricted the pace of immigration and began to fill what became known as the "development zones" with new *moshavim* or development towns. Prior to 1955, any location which the government planned to invest in was referred to as a "development area," but that year a new map was drawn up which divided the country into four zones: Zone A, considered top priority, consisted generally of the Negev, the Galilee, the Jerusalem corridor, and the Lakish region. Zone B was made up of the areas surrounding "Ashkelon, Kiryat Malakhi, Ashdod and Yavne, the Hula region, the area surrounding Beit She'an, and centers with concentrations of *Olim* like Afula and Yokneam."¹¹³ Zone C consisted of coastal cities and older cities like Ramle, Lod, and Akko, and Zone D was Tel Aviv, Haifa, and their suburbs. Zones A and B were identified as "development zones," and the new and existing settlements in those areas came to be known as "development towns."

The "From Ship to Village Plan" utilized the map of "development zones" and its proposed settlement locations to direct new immigrants to the places the government wanted to populate. For example, Be'er Sheva was not a new city, but due to its location within Zone A and its low level of industrialization, it was considered a development town and received many immigrants, particularly Moroccans and Tunisians, during the plan's operative years. In Morocco, the Jewish Agency continued to sign Jews up for emigration, with most of those who left coming from Casablanca, though preference was also given to Jews from southern and rural Morocco.¹¹⁴ Most were also sent to "development zones," with only isolated individuals, largely from Casablanca, sent to Kibbutzim. In November 1955, for example, of 6,486 Moroccan Jews who migrated to Israel, 3,298 were from Casablanca. Of those Jews, twenty-four went to Kibbutzim, 3,074 to development towns, and 201 to *Moshavim*. Of all the Moroccan immigrants, only eight others went to Kibbutzim, and 4,679 were put in development towns. Interestingly, Jews from Casablanca and other northern urban centers were more likely than

111 Picard, 1951-1956: *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה*, 1951-1956), 241. (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951-1956), 241.

112 Picard, 242.

113 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 35.

114 Picard, 1951-1956: *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה*, 1951-1956), 246. (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951-1956), 246.

Jews from southern and rural Morocco to be sent to development towns, while the latter were more likely to be sent to Moshavim. In that same month, for example, though only 243 Jews came from Marrakesh and its surroundings, 238 were sent to Moshavim and only nine to development towns. Similarly, of the 445 Jews who arrived from the surroundings of Amizmiz and Agadir, 436 were sent to Moshavim, while all of the 276 Jews who arrived from Meknes were sent to development towns.¹¹⁵

This settlement pattern, based on Jews' place of origin in Morocco, made sense to the Jewish Agency's planning department. The development towns were meant to provide urban services to the nearby rural settlements, and so settling them with urban Moroccan Jews seemed like a good idea. Similarly, relocating rural Moroccans to rural Moshavim was intended to ensure a smoother transition. However, upon arrival, many immigrants lacked capital and relied heavily on state assistance, limiting their ability to contribute to local rural settlements. The Jewish Agency considered that rural Moroccans would most easily adapt to life in agricultural settlements in Israel, but this represented a flawed understanding of the ways Jews in Morocco lived. Moroccan Jews had rarely engaged in agriculture, and despite the AIU's agricultural schools founded in Marrakesh and Meknes, by the 1950s only a handful had turned to such work.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, urban Moroccan Jews were placed in development towns where they could not practice the urban professions they knew, since no resources or client-base were available to develop those industries. Thus the Jewish Agency's plan to map Jewish settlement patterns from Morocco onto the new Israeli peripheral landscape proved a colossal failure. In contrast, Polish Jews arriving during the same period were predominantly resettled in the country's central regions. This proved to be a deliberate political decision, as multiple government officials attested. Giora Yoseftal, for example, noted in a meeting in 1957 that "for Eastern Europeans we have no space, but for North Africans we have a lot", indicating that the country's periphery was more suited for the latter. In another meeting, Yoseftal stated clearly that "we will take from the Olim from North Africa and give to the Olim from Eastern Europe."¹¹⁷

Regarding this discrimination, Absorption Minister Yehuda Berginsky admitted in 1957 that "[Mizrahim] are not discriminated against [...] but we haven't yet sent Poles and Hungarians to shacks... I know honestly that we needed to send Poles and Hungarians to shacks as well, but I know that from political considerations it is forbidden to do this". Consequently, the government worried that Polish and Hungarian Jews would leave Israel if they were sent to the periphery. North African Jews, on the other hand, were considered "raw material from which things could be built", as a 1958 Jewish Agency report stated.¹¹⁸ It is important to note that the ethnic division in the early years of the development towns was not entirely between

115 Jewish Agency, Aliya Department – Morocco (Hebrew). S6-7262, CZA.

116 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 290–92.

117 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 49–50.

118 Cohen, 49–50.

Jews from the MENA region and Eastern Europe. Romanian Jews proved to be an exception to the government's policy of sending Eastern Europeans to the center and MENA Jews to the periphery, and more Romanians were sent to the periphery in the early years of the development towns than any other European group. By 1960, forty-three percent of all European Jews in development towns were immigrants from Romania.¹¹⁹ According to Aharon Cohen, government officials felt that Romanians were "inferior" compared to other Europeans, but also that they might lose control of the periphery if they did not send some Europeans there, as well.¹²⁰ This same fear, as we will see later, led Mapai (Ben-Gurion's dominant labor party) to install Ashkenazim as development town mayors in their early years. Like the objective to have them be "rural-urban" centers, such top-down plans for the development towns were short-lived and would rarely work out as intended.

Of the immigrants who arrived through the "From Ship to Village Plan," forty-two percent were sent to the south of Israel and the Negev, forty-two percent were sent to the Galilee, eight percent were sent to Jerusalem, and eight percent to cities and settlements on the coast. Initially the government opted to establish more peripheral Moshavim than development towns, with only fifteen percent of all immigrants being placed in development towns in 1954, and thirty-three percent in 1955. In 1956, almost all immigrants were sent to development towns.¹²¹ Jews settled in the development towns were almost entirely new immigrants, with only 2.8 percent having immigrated before 1947, whereas the figure was 27.7 percent in Tel Aviv and 39.2 percent in Haifa.¹²² Moroccans, and to a lesser extent Tunisians, made up the vast majority of all immigrants sent to the new towns and Moshavim. Through the plan, the government established forty-five Moshavim and expanded fifty, and established seven new development towns, while ten were expanded or converted from *ma'abarot*. The expanded or converted settlements were Kiryat Shmona, Beit She'an, Hatzor, Safed, Ashkelon, Akko, Be'er Sheva, Beit Shemesh, Yeruham, Eilat, and Gadera. The new settlements were Shlomi, Dimona, Sderot, Kiryat Gat, Netivot, Mevaseret Yerushalayim (today part of Mevaseret Zion), and Ofakim.¹²³

Conclusion

This chapter has focused mainly on a practical description of how Jewish life in Morocco became destabilized in the years following the end of World War II and those surrounding Moroccan independence, and how migration to Israel was organized by Israel and the Jewish Agency with the eventual help of France. A significant factor was the eruption of violence

¹¹⁹ Cohen, 61.

¹²⁰ Cohen, 51.

¹²¹ Cohen, 41.

¹²² Cohen, 61.

¹²³ Cohen, 41.

against Jews and more general anticolonial violence which unsettled Jews' feeling of security in the country. Additionally, despite a moment of optimism following independence, Morocco's political instability as different parties vied with the monarchy for control of the country led to increased authoritarianism. It is important to note, however, that before Jews began to emigrate, many had already undergone some form of migration within Morocco, a fact which undermined Jews' ability to rely on social networks in increasingly uncertain times.

With the establishment of Israel in 1948, Jewish emigration began in earnest, and tens of thousands of Moroccans made their way there before Israel began to institute major limits on immigration, in part with "rural" *Seleḵsiya* in 1949, and with increased severity in 1952. Some Moroccans, like other MENA Jews, languished in Israel's *ma'abarot*, though far fewer than Iraqi Jews, and despite these experiences Moroccans would prove continuously interested in immigrating to Israel. The *Seleḵsiya* and its harsh rule of privileging young, able-bodied Jews and separating them from their families, however, left immigration at a standstill.

Mounting anticolonial violence in Morocco coincided with Israel's desire to free itself from the paralyzing reality of the *ma'abarot* and to consolidate the country's control over its borders. In 1954, officials ended the *Seleḵsiya* and, with the help of the French authorities, set the pace for the plan which would define Israel's geographic and demographic landscape until today. The "From Ship to Village Plan" saw the establishment of hundreds of localities earmarked for Jewish settlement, both to avoid the problems of the *ma'abarot* and to prevent Palestinian refugees from returning. In both cases the plan was a success.

Moroccans and other Jews who were settled in Israel's new peripheral Moshavim and development towns found themselves in a different reality than that of the *ma'abarot*. Though the *ma'abarot* would constitute a defining aspect of collective MENA Jewish memory in Israel, by sheer numbers it was not a defining aspect of Moroccan immigration to Israel. More than the *ma'abarot*, it was their settlement in urban slums and new peripheral development towns which came to define Moroccans' immigration experience to Israel in the years of the "From Ship to Village Plan". The question of how Moroccan Jews in Israel's periphery experienced life in their new surroundings and translated their Moroccan past to their Israeli present is the subject of the next chapter.

Centering the Periphery: Morocco in Ofakim

Beyond nostalgia: Moroccanness in the development towns

In the July 1983 editorial of Ofakim's local newspaper, *Ofakim Shelanu* (Our Ofakim), edited, printed, and distributed for free by Ofakim's local council (the municipality), the editor and a member of the local council, Mordechai Abutbul,¹ addressed his recent trip to Morocco. Instead of describing in detail where he had gone and what he had seen, Abutbul's editorial had a clear message: forget the past and move forward. He wrote:

“Dear reader, not long ago I returned from a visit to Morocco, my country of birth. It was a trip with many experiences and impressions from my father's house. I made my way there with an anxious heart and the expectation of what my eyes would see when I arrived. I saw, I chatted with people, and I visited the city of my birth, and I visited my sister. Some of these impressions appear in this issue, which have one goal in mind, to try to explain to those who came from Morocco that things are not as they once were, and that our past is dead. It no longer exists, and never will again. I know well that often we cling to the old homeland and the landscapes we used to live in, the unique present which was our heritage. Over 21 days in Morocco, all across, I came to know that none of these remained and would never be again. Please allow me to suggest to all those from Morocco, my friends and comrades, do not sink into nostalgia or longing. There is no point in that. We have to embrace the place where we live now, to appreciate the fact that we live in the State of Israel, in a sovereign state apart from which the people of Israel have nothing. It is upon us to nurture our lives here, in Ofakim, and to understand that this is the place where we all received a new deal. Personally and publicly, I hope that these impressions which I shared in this letter will speak to your heart. That was my intention.”²

Abutbul's editorial, published in 1983, evidences the major developments which had transpired since the establishment of Ofakim in 1955. Morocco had achieved independence in 1956, and many of its Jews across the country had departed. Additionally, Abutbul's visit in 1983 took place during Morocco's “years of lead”, a period characterized by authoritarianism

1 Not to be confused with a similar name, “Abitbol,” which in the Hebrew is rendered differently: אביטבול as opposed to אבוטבול.

2 Local Council Ofakim. Mordechai Abutbul, “Editorial,” *Ofakim Shelanu*, July 1983, 2.

and state violence.³ Ofakim, located approximately seventeen kilometers northwest of Be'er Sheva, had grown since 1955 from a desert hamlet of some 600 residents to a bustling town of nearly 13,000, the largest part of whom were Moroccan.⁴ Moroccans, along with other Israelis, had lived in their new home for several decades, and many had fought in the 1967 Six-Day war and the 1973 Kippur war. Furthermore, 1977 had seen Israel's political "revolution", with the right-wing Likud party significantly outperforming the left-wing coalition "Hama'arakh" and putting an end to thirty years of left-wing dominance in Israeli politics. This had major ramifications for Moroccan political leaders in Israel's development towns, most of whom had since their immigration associated themselves with the Israeli political left.

Abutbul's attempt to redirect nostalgia for Morocco towards Ofakim and Israel indicates the two entwined aspects of Moroccan Jews' experience in the Negev: the irrefutable harshness of these Jews' lives in Israel's periphery, as represented by David Deri in his documentary *The Ancestral Sin*,⁵ and the development of strong local identities which bridged Moroccaness and Israeliness. As Abutbul's editorial demonstrates, nostalgia for Morocco in Ofakim was real and significant, and for him it seemed to clash with the necessity to develop Ofakim. In reality, accurate and unforgiving accounts of Moroccan Jews' lives in development towns in the decades following their establishment not only coexisted with, but in fact became a core element of the prevalent narrative of these Jews as pioneers in the Negev and Israel's periphery. To understand this narrative, I provide an in-depth look at Ofakim, its establishment, its institutions, its residents, and their relationship to its neighbors and the rest of Israel.

To locate Moroccaness in Ofakim, this chapter seeks to answer the question "what is Moroccan about the history of Israel's periphery?" Its challenge is to identify the fine seams connecting the threads of Moroccan Jews' lives in Morocco and in the Negev. This chapter offers several answers to this question. The most obvious answer lies in demographics. As demonstrated above, in the years in which Israel's peripheral development towns and moshavim were established, the "From Ship to Village" years, the vast majority of immigrants were Moroccans. From this standpoint, migration to development towns and moshavim is fundamental to the Moroccan experience migrating to and living in Israel in those years, while it is not exclusively a Moroccan experience. In this way this chapter argues that Moroccaness has come to form a specific and prominent undercurrent within the broader Mizrahi sphere, informed by Moroccan migration experiences to the Negev. It thus also demonstrates how Mizrahi identities have developed in Israel's periphery, though its focus is on Moroccaness as a Mizrahi subset. For example, if not all immigrants to Israel's periphery were Moroccans,

3 While Susan Gilson Miller dates the "years of lead" approximately 1975-1990, Brahim El Guabli includes the entire period from 1956-1990. Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 170; El Guabli, "Morocco Reimagined: When Moroccan Jews Could Theorize the Moroccan State," 43.

4 See table below.

5 סאלח, *פה זה ארץ ישראל* (*The Ancestral Sin*) (Israel, 2017).



Map 7: Israel and major cities (1949 borders). Credits: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS.

almost all Moroccans who immigrated in those years were sent to the periphery. This makes it part of a larger story of Moroccan Jewish migration in the twentieth century, too.

The second answer is that Moroccanness was expressed through political and community engagement to combat peripheralization. Moroccans in Ofakim were distinctly aware that their origins in Morocco were stigmatized in Israel. This phenomenon as it manifested through their treatment at the hands of state officials and their representation in the media gave rise to a feeling of “insiders” against “outsiders”. Local leaders, almost always Moroccan Jews, pushed back against what was perceived as outside meddling when they preferred to manage their own affairs. Such was the case with Ofakim’s first elections, when Mapai, the labor party, attempted to control the town from outside. On the other hand, Moroccans like Yehiel Bentov, a longtime mayor of Ofakim and a central figure in this chapter, enlisted the resources of the broader Israeli society, both in terms of money and manpower, to improve conditions for the town’s residents. In these cases, agitators pushed back against their identification along ethnic lines and did not refer to themselves as Moroccans, though most were. It was by the force of things that when local leaders in Ofakim defended their “insider” control on politics, they did so as a group of Moroccans.

The third and final answer is that Moroccanness became part of narratives which strongly associated them and other Mizrahim with the history of immigration to Israel’s periphery. These have primarily been a way of acquiring resources or taking control of stigmatized narratives about them. Such was the case with the commemoration of the sinking of the *Pisces* (*Egoz*), which gave Moroccans an opportunity to request funds by demonstrating that the event had a special significance to Jews in Israel’s periphery since most had originated in Morocco. Another example was the development of a popular narrative of Moroccans and other Mizrahim as Israel’s true pioneers. Mizrahim, this narrative tells, were those who went to Israel’s harshest regions, like the Negev, rather than settling comfortably in Tel Aviv. In addition to destigmatizing their relegation to the country’s periphery, this narrative reserves a prestigious place for Moroccans in Israeli society.

This chapter thus indicates how Moroccans have wielded agency within broader Zionist and Mizrahi narratives which have subsumed them. Zionist narratives imagined them being “rescued” from Morocco and brought to Israel, where they would shed their exilic culture in favor of a modern, Israeli one. Similarly, the wider Mizrahi perspective can assimilate Moroccans to the experiences of all MENA Jews in Israel without consideration for their specific histories. Both can also depict them as helpless victims, obscuring the agency they exercised. In this chapter I argue that Moroccanness in the context of the development towns has meant the self-conscious adaptation of broader narratives as a means to highlight Moroccan agency. Specifically, Moroccanness in the development towns serves to center Israel’s periphery in Zionist narratives. By recentralizing Zionism on Israel’s periphery, Moroccans in the development towns have sought to bring to the fore their contributions to the country, attract needed resources, and thus restructure Israel’s hierarchies.

As Abutbul indicated in his article, Ofakim is not exclusively populated by Moroccan immigrants; from its establishment it was made up of Jews with diverse origins. Most of the documents which detail the history of the development towns do not explicitly refer to their residents as Moroccans, and today residents identify themselves primarily as Israelis, rather than Moroccans. But as Abutbul also suggested when he encouraged Moroccans to leave their pasts behind and focus on where they were now, Moroccan Jews have contributed their Moroccanness to the broader Israeli culture of which they are a part. It is in this way that this chapter argues that, by making their Moroccanness part of the town's history and distinctive character, Ofakim's Moroccan residents brought Ofakim into the sphere of Moroccan history, whether through their economic pursuits, their communal activism, their political engagement, or the narratives they constructed. While Ofakim was not entirely populated by Moroccans, it was its Moroccan immigrants that contributed to developing its Moroccanness.

This chapter begins with a description of Ofakim's establishment in 1955 and opposing examples of how the town's earliest years have been narrativized by Moroccans. The following sections describe how Moroccans in Ofakim organized around politics, education, and industry, both as Moroccans and as Israelis. In many cases we will see how their Moroccan pasts informed their strategies for overcoming difficulties in the periphery, and how they came to center Israel's periphery as a means of rewriting narratives that obscured their agency. Accordingly, the final section of the chapter demonstrates how Moroccans and other MENA Jews in Ofakim have pushed back against and adapted a dominant Eurocentric narrative of Zionist and Israeli immigration history to frame themselves as the country's true pioneers.

New Horizons: The Negev and Moroccan collective memory

Ofakim lies along what, during the British mandate period, had been called *kvish hara'av* (the road of hunger). The route, now known as Road 241, running from Gilat junction to Magen junction, was originally constructed by local Bedouins who endured severe hunger during the British mandate era.⁶ The nearest Bedouin village to Ofakim, Fetais, had been located next to Fort Fetais, an Ottoman fort which had been installed in 1894. The residents were likely expelled and the village destroyed by the Israeli army in 1948, though the fort still remains on the outskirts of Ofakim.⁷ In 1954 the site where Ofakim would be established was used to store tractors, and seven barracks were built to house the workers who operated them. On 19 April 1955, some of the first residents of Ofakim arrived and were housed in those barracks.⁸

6 "The 'Road of Hunger' Has Been Renovated," *Al Hamishmar*, July 2, 1959, 4.

7 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 355.

8 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (*The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot*), 179.

Ofakim, which means “horizons,” a name meant to “signify the wide horizons visible from there,” was founded on 19 April 1955 by twenty-one Jewish families and was part of the Merhavim regional council.⁹ Of the first families, seventeen were from Morocco, and the rest were from Tunisia and Egypt.¹⁰ It was one of seven new development towns, almost all in the Negev, which were established as part of the “From Ship to Village” plan between 15 August 1954 and October 1956.¹¹

The first immigrants who arrived had come directly from Haifa, where they had landed and been loaded onto a truck. Upon arriving, the immigrants looked at where they had been brought and refused to disembark. Only after being convinced to disembark by Ya'acov Shimshon, the head of the Merhavim regional council, did the immigrants leave the truck. Shimshon recalled the difficulty in convincing the new immigrants: “[they] arrived late in the night, tired, broken, and when they saw the desolate place, they refused to get off the truck. I stood and spent hours convincing them until finally they got off the truck and entered with their movers into the living barracks.”¹² Some were housed in the seven barracks which had been built for the tractor workers, and the rest were placed among eighty other barracks and shacks which had been built in anticipation of their arrival. The barracks and shacks were colloquially called by the new residents “*ma'abarot*” though Ofakim was not officially a transit camp. The structures which housed the new immigrants were called by them “*asbeston*,” after the material, later found to be cancerous, which insulated the structures. When the first immigrants arrived, Ofakim had no running water and no electricity. To fetch water, the new residents walked one kilometer to Piduyim, a nearby moshav to the north.

Immigration to Israel's periphery in these years is in large part a Moroccan story. Immigrants, mostly from North Africa and Morocco in particular, continued to arrive as part of the “From Ship to Village” plan, and 85,000 arrived from Morocco and Tunisia between 1954–1956, constituting eighty percent of all immigrants to Israel.¹³ By December 1955 there were eighty families, mostly from Morocco, but also Egypt, India, Iran, Romania, and Tunisia, approximately 631 residents. During the years of the plan the population grew quickly to nearly three thousand in 1957, and even after the plan, to 4,627 in 1961 and 8,350 in 1965.¹⁴ Ofakim's population stagnated in the 1970s and 1980s but has grown quickly since the 1990s as the town has progressively become a more attractive place to live. In 1960, fifty-three percent of

9 Cohen, 179.

10 Aharon Cohen states that twenty-one families arrived on 19 April 1955. See *Ibid.*

11 The other Negev towns are Dimona, Sderot, Kiryat Gat, and Netivot. For the others, Mevaseret Yerushalayim is near Jerusalem and Shlomi is in the north. Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, נתיבות, אופקים* (*The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot*), 41.

12 Cohen, 179–80.

13 Picard, “The Reluctant Soldiers of Israel's Settlement Project: The Ship to Village Plan in the Mid-1950s,” 33–34.

14 *Ibid.*; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, “Israel Population by Municipality 1948–1995,” 1995.

Ofakim's heads of families were Moroccan, and in 1966 the figure was thirty-eight percent.¹⁵ As the population grew, so did the share of Moroccans. Many Jews who immigrated during Operation Yakhin between 1961-1964 were also settled in Israel's periphery, so that in 1977 sixty percent of Ofakim's population was Moroccan-born, and in 1986 38.1 percent of all North African immigrants lived in development towns.¹⁶

Year	Population
1955	~631
1957	~3,000
1961	4,627
1965	8,350
1972	9,325
1974	10,600
1975	10,700
1980	12,100
1983	12,646
1985	13,400
1995	20,571
2008	24,000
2022	32,258

Figure 2.1: Population of Ofakim 1955-2022.¹⁷

Though the populations of Ofakim and other development towns steadily grew due to the arrival of new immigrants until the 1970s, from their establishment the towns were plagued by residents leaving. Though universal numbers in the 1950s are difficult to ascertain, in the 1960s forty percent of all immigrants to the development towns left them.¹⁸ For Ofakim alone, from 1959-1964, nearly twenty percent of all immigrants would leave the town, 2,398 people out of 10,648 who had initially moved there.¹⁹ The problem remained in 1985, as well, with all but

15 Shani Bar-On, 1981-1955, *עובדים באופקים: אורגים קהילה* (Weaving a Community: Workers in Ofakim, 1955-1981) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2013), 15.

16 Avi Picard, "The Reluctant Soldiers of Israel's Settlement Project: The Ship to Village Plan in the Mid-1950s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 2013): 38; Local Council Ofakim. Pamphlet - Ofakim ir ganim banegev. 1977. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1976-1984, Ofakim Municipal Archives (hereafter OFKM).

17 These numbers are drawn from various sources: Cohen, *שדרות, נתיבות, אופקים* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 179-80; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Shnaton 1975," 1975, "Shnaton 1986," 1986, "Israel Population by Municipality 1948-1995," 1995, "Census 2008 - Ofakim," 2008, "Population in Localities with 2,000 Residents or More - Preliminary Estimates for the End of July 2022," 2022.

18 Cohen, 51.

19 Bar-On, 1981-1955, *עובדים באופקים: אורגים קהילה* (Weaving a Community: Workers in Ofakim, 1955-1981), 12.

one development town, and particularly those in the Negev, experiencing negative population growth that year.²⁰

Neither as far east as Dimona, nor as far south as Mitzpe Ramon, in the 1980s Ofakim began to attract residents from elsewhere in Israel, particularly ultra-orthodox Ashkenazim from Bnei-Brak and Jerusalem, as well as people who work in Be'er Sheva. Ofakim has in some ways become a suburb of Be'er Sheva, Bnei-Brak, and Jerusalem with many residents traveling by bus, or by train from its new station opened in 2015, often daily.²¹ Since the 1990s, Ofakim has also counted many residents from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia amongst its numbers, decidedly changing the ethnic landscape of the city.²² Once an isolated patch of desert with little but apartment blocks for miles, Ofakim would later boast sprawling parks and villas with personal gardens. As early as the 1970s it was advertised by the municipal council as a "Garden City of the Negev", and indeed it inspired other development town mayors to visit and try to copy its verdant successes.²³ Once a hometown name that residents hid when they left it for other parts of the country, today Ofakim has cultivated a proud and positive local identity, different from the rest of Israel, and even from other hubs of Moroccan Jewish life, yet rooted in the experiences and efforts of the Jews, most of them Moroccans, who formed its foundational core.

At the root of this strong local identity are conflicting visions within Moroccan collective memory in Israel which arise around the issue of asserting agency in the history of MENA Jews in Israel's peripheral development towns. As Aomar Boum notes, collective memory across generations and periods becomes "useful". Boum writes that how Jews are remembered by Muslims in Morocco "represents the continuous historical process of Jewish representation in Moroccan society, which changes across time and space". Correspondingly, in Ofakim and similar towns, the way migration is remembered evokes diverse and changing understandings of these Jews' tribulations and accomplishments in the Negev and Israel more broadly.²⁴ Take for example Yossi Marciano, an important local leader in Ofakim who arrived in 1955 along

20 Ministry of Labor and Welfare, Center for the Direction of Development Cities and Settlement. *Conference of Mayors of Development Cities*. July 3-5, 1985. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1968-1975, OFKM.

21 In 2020 the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics counted 10,439 Haredim (ultra-orthodox Jews, though not necessarily Ashkenazim), making up 32.1% of Ofakim's population of 32,555 in that year. This number must be understood as a combination of Haredi Jews who moved to Ofakim from other cities as well as a local trend of second and third generation residents of Ofakim becoming increasingly religious. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Haredim in Jewish Localities, End of 2020," 2020. See also אלישע אפרת, *עיירות הפיתוח בישראל, עבר או עתיד?* (The development towns in Israel, past or future?) (Tel-Aviv: Ahi'asaf, 1987).

22 In 1993 for example 3,547 people settled in Ofakim, with 2,015 from the former Soviet Union, 940 from Ethiopia, 536 from elsewhere in the world, and 56 born elsewhere in Israel. Ofakim Local Council, Department of Urban Absorption. *The activity plan for absorption and social and cultural integration*. 1993. OFKM—PVT—PCP—DVK—008, OFKM.

23 Interview with Yehiel Bentov. 28 August 2017. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 09, OFKM.

24 Boum, *Memoires of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*, 7.

with his family and his brother, Yehuda Marciano, who became the town's first elected mayor that year. Yossi remembers that his family was given the choice to settle in Afula, which was "already organized" or Ofakim, where there was "no water and no electricity" but that they chose Ofakim. Yossi declares that the first stages were difficult, but also adds that they were grateful that they had not been placed in a *ma'abara*, and that Ofakim had no tents, but real barracks and soon apartment blocks. In an interview with Ofakim's municipal archives in 2017, Yossi also deliberately pushed back against David Deri's *The Ancestral Sin*:

And what does not happen, and I want to contradict completely the movies that described us as if we were led like sheep to the slaughter, no, there were also families, many families, who came with an awareness beforehand that they are coming to the Land of Israel, and they don't want to be in a big city, they go *livnot ulehivanot* (to build and be built). [...] In 1955 they decided that they are coming to Israel, they were suggested Ofakim, my brother was suggested all kinds of places and he decided to come to a place that didn't exist, and I remember, that he took together his family [...] and they explained to us that we are going to tents, everything will be hard, there is no water, no electricity, and explained it to us, it will be in the Negev.²⁵

Yossi's invocation of "to build and be built," which refers to the Zionist movement's ethos that working in the land of Israel would create a "new Jew," indicates his desire to write Moroccan Jews into the Zionist story of building Israel which typically does not include Mizrahim. As Ella Shohat has perceptively written, "[as] an integral part of the topography, language, culture, and history of the 'East,' Eastern Jews [...] threatened the Euro-Israeli self-image that has envisioned itself as a prolongation of 'Europe,' in the 'East' but not of it."²⁶ Yossi's and other Moroccans' efforts to revise this narrative challenge it by rejecting the notion that Moroccans and other Mizrahim were not crucial parts of Zionist history. By critiquing the understanding of Zionism as an exclusively European history, they seek to emphasize the role that Mizrahim, and consequently Moroccans, have played in that history. Significantly, these revisionary efforts, based on a particular understanding of Moroccan migration to Israel's periphery, informed the evolution of Moroccanness in the context of the development towns.

For Yossi, his family history in Spain and Morocco informed his Zionism in Ofakim. Yossi's father had been a politically active republican socialist in Spanish Melilla, where all of Yossi's siblings had been born. During the Spanish civil war, republican activists, and in particular Jews, were hunted by Francisco Franco's regime.²⁷ Yossi's father was nearly caught when his

25 Interview with Yosef (Yossi) Marciano. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 050 1, OFKM.

26 Ella Shohat, "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews," *Social Text*, 75 21, no. 2 (2003): 62.

27 Pablo La Porte, "Colonial Dreams and Nightmares: British and French Perceptions of Republican Policies in Spanish Morocco (1931–1936)," *The International History Review* 41, no. 4 (July 4, 2019): 837.

house was raided by the Francoist Spanish police. Luckily, he was tipped off and fled to Fez, where he had family. Soon after his wife and six children followed him to Fez, where Yossi was later born. While they were Spanish, it is interesting to note that the Marciano family's political engagement was not removed from the Moroccan context, indicating a fluidity across the Spanish/Moroccan border on North African soil. Three of Yossi's older brothers immigrated to Israel through *aliyat hano'ar*, and Yossi himself immigrated with the rest in 1955 directly to Ofakim. There, Yossi and his older brother Yehuda would become socialist activists themselves. Yossi became the local secretary²⁸ of Mapam (the United Workers Party) and Yehuda became a local leader of Mapai and Ofakim's first local council head (mayor), as well as a member of the local council and worker's council for numerous years.²⁹

While Yossi's socialist activism helps to align him to the Zionist ethos of "to build and to be built," his narrative fights to claim space amidst black-and-white depictions of Ofakim's earliest years. In his interview with Ofakim's municipal archive, Yossi deliberately contradicts the lachrymose narrative which, according to him, robs his family and other Moroccans in Ofakim of agency. Additionally, Yossi understands his socialist activism as a legacy of his father's political activities in Melilla and Morocco, and which continued with his local activism in Ofakim. Again, despite his father's political legacy in what was technically Spain, activism by Jews in Melilla could become Moroccan activism in Israel. When describing his political work in the 1950s in Ofakim, Yossi stated: "Now like I told you about my life, I am from a family that was very socialist. I couldn't have gone with a rightist party."³⁰

Yossi's story represents one example of the first generation of Moroccan Israelis, those who had immigrated from Morocco. The following generation, however, sometimes understand this history differently. Take for example David Deri, a Jew of Moroccan descent born in Yeruham, who, in his film *The Ancestral Sin*, brings MENA Jewish immigrants and their children face-to-face with archival documents which reveal the state's policies relegating these Jews to life in the periphery and to factory labor. Crucial to Deri's framing is the mistreatment of MENA Jews according to the state as a matter of policy and as MENA Jews–Mizrahim. In the documentary, a scene occurs in which Deri introduces Shmuel Niv, an Ashkenazi Jew who established a factory trade school in Yeruham, to a current worker in that bottle factory over forty years later. The woman, Daniela Lugassy Harmon, who is also a community activist in her hometown, Dimona, tells Niv:

²⁸ The secretary of a party is its local head.

²⁹ Kalman, "מנהיגים עולים: מפא"י והנהגת עיירות הפיתוח בנגב בשני העשורים הראשונים למדינה" (Mapai and the Leadership in the Development Towns of the Negev in the first two decades of the State of Israel), PhD Dissertation, 209.

³⁰ Ibid.

“I want to tell you that we, the second generation, and my children, the third generation, are paying for the same injustice done to our parents. There are no promotions here, if you were [chosen] [...] to work on the assembly line of the bottles, you are stuck there for twenty years. [...] I receive today a salary of 5,000 Shekels, what dream can I achieve? [...] You created here a generation of workers and a second generation of workers.”³¹

In the scene, Niv protests, saying that “part of the arguments of the second generation”, like Lugassy Harmon, “that ‘we were directed to be water collectors (*sho’avei mayim*) is not true. It depends on you.” Lugassy Harmon immediately rejects this idea, and responds:

“When we are talking about such a large population, of Dimona, Kiryat Gat, Netivot, Ofakim, Yeruham, this is already somebody else’s fault. This is already a government policy. Today we, my generation, is a generation that does not remain silent. And we are going to stand up for our rights. Because I grew up on this pain, and pain is something you cannot get rid of.”³²

Moments like this, which confront former officials like Shmuel Niv and Israeli-born Jews in the periphery like Lugassy Harmon, reveal the open wound of this history, as well as a generational difference in the way it is understood. Muted in the background of this scene, but emphasized by Deri in the film, being himself of Moroccan descent, is the fact that it was MENA Jews who were by and large placed in peripheral development towns and who worked in the factories opened there. On the other hand, first-generation immigrants like Yossi Marciano chafe at their representation as “sheep to the slaughter.” In both cases, origin is a crucial part of the narrative. For Marciano, his political engagement and his Zionist story of settling the Negev are tied to his family’s political engagement in Morocco. Additionally, in rejecting Deri’s framing, Marciano rejected their representation as lacking agency, not their identification as part of Moroccan migration to the Negev. For Deri, his family’s origin in Morocco is an inseparable part of the story of peripherality in Israel.

Orit Bashkin’s description of Iraqi identities in Israel can help us to better understand the numerous ways in which Moroccanness can be expressed in the identities of Moroccan Israelis. In her book *Impossible Exodus*, Bashkin counts three identities resulting from the ways in which Jews of Iraqi origin could relate to their experiences in Israel from the state’s establishment: Iraqi, Arab-Jewish, and Mizrahi.³³ Perceptively, Bashkin writes that Iraqi Jews’ identitary articulations helped them fight for their rights in different ways, as Arab-Jews to narrowly collaborate with Palestinians, as Iraqi in their longing to return to Iraq, and as

31 סאלח, פה זה ארץ ישראל (*The Ancestral Sin*).

32 סאלח, פה זה ארץ ישראל (*The Ancestral Sin*).

33 Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*, 182–83.

Mizrahi to better articulate their demands “as Jewish citizens in a Jewish state.”³⁴ Similarly, no one single route monolithically represented Moroccan responses to life in Israel, and in this case there is overlap. As Bashkin writes, the “identities were not monolithic but were intertwined with one another.”³⁵ For Yossi, being socialist and politically active are part of his family’s Spanish and Moroccan past and constituted his way of challenging the state. For Deri, born in Israel, Moroccans’ disadvantageous situation in 2017 is connected to and a subset of the experiences of other Mizrahim. While their framing differs, common to them is the notion that Moroccanness, in this case meaning their experiences as Moroccan Jews, informs each narrative.

The diverse ways Moroccan collective memory has developed around the immigration of Moroccan Jews to Israel’s periphery consistently revolve around these Jews’ real experiences in the Negev. The agency of Moroccans thus resides in the ways they overcame obstacles, and the ways they developed a Moroccanness which posits a counternarrative. To understand how Moroccanness was expressed contemporaneously, this chapter’s remaining sections each address different aspect of how Moroccans navigated the structures which determined their experiences in Ofakim and several other towns: early education in the town, its first elections, its labor history, and the narratives devised by its communal leaders. In all cases, as we will see, Moroccan immigrants’ lives in Morocco informed how they tackled the challenges of life in Israel’s periphery and determined what Moroccanness in the context of the development towns looked like. In many cases, it meant retelling the Zionist narrative in a way that highlighted the contributions of Moroccans and other MENA Jews.

The history of education in the town in its first decade illustrates how Ofakim like other development towns, developed a sense of being “insiders” at the mercy of “outsiders” in control of resources. The section describing Ofakim’s first election demonstrates how, early on, Moroccan local leaders developed a sense of local solidarity amongst “insiders” as against “outsider” political influence. Similarly, the section on labor describes the awareness of an ethnic struggle amongst Moroccans in Ofakim through labor protests, but also points to intra-Jewish connections which coexisted with and nuanced this awareness. The final section of this chapter describes how Moroccans and other Mizrahim have devised, since the 1980s, a narrative which frames them as Israel’s true pioneers to center Israel’s periphery in Zionist narratives. I argue in this section that Moroccanness constitutes a crucial undercurrent of this Mizrahi counternarrative and positions the experiences of Moroccan Jews in Israel within the stream of Moroccan history.

34 Bashkin, 219.

35 Bashkin, 219.

Insiders and Outsiders: Education in Ofakim 1955-1977

The challenges faced by Jews in Ofakim defined their sense of difference vis-à-vis Jews from outside the town. In some instances, the desire of locals to draw on their Moroccan pasts was met with difficulties, creating a growing sense that “Moroccanness” and “peripherality” were intertwined. In other cases, locals recognized the problem as one of “insiders” versus “outsiders,” in which the residents of the place were too dependent on decisions and resources drawn from outside Ofakim.

One of the earliest ways this manifested was the lack of qualified personnel to work in schools. An initial shortage of teachers at the town’s establishment turned into a constant cycle of hiring new teachers who would last a year or two, or less, and then leave to work elsewhere in the country. This was a problem shared by other development towns in Israel’s periphery and was related to the poor resources and support afforded to teachers, as well as their remote locations. For example, Ofakim’s first school, Eshelim, opened in 1955, was initially managed by Azriel Oshrov, who was soon replaced by Givona Segev. Segev requested from the Ministry of Education that the dispersed apartments used as classrooms be relocated to units that were closer together, but her request was denied since there were no other units available. Segev also petitioned for the school to be named after Rabbi Amram ben Diwan, an eighteenth-century rabbi from Ouezzane whose grave is a Moroccan Jewish pilgrimage destination. This request was also denied. In September of 1957, a new school director was appointed, Shalom Katev, who gave the school the name Eshelim.³⁶

Ofakim’s educational problems were also particularly acute due to its unusually high population of young children, in its early decades the highest of any Jewish settlement in Israel. In 1960, 52.1 percent of the town’s population was below the age of fourteen, and in 1967 the figure was 35.3 percent.³⁷ By 1971 the young population was closer to average at 35 percent out of 11,000 residents under the age of eighteen. In that year, 1,875 children attended elementary school, 280 were in state kindergartens and 360 in religious kindergartens, and 115 were in daycares. After primary education, 795 were attending secondary education, and eighty were in the professional or trade center. In 1971, two-hundred primary students were learning outside of Ofakim, and fifty were attending higher learning institutes across the country.³⁸

Another major issue in Ofakim’s early education landscape was a conflict between the state track and the state-religious track. Both tracks were funded by the government, but the non-religious track was often referred to simply as the “state” track. Early on, the state-religious track proved more popular than the state track and a second religious school opened in 1963

36 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 181–82.

37 Cohen, 220.

38 Ofakim Local Council. Report to the Ministry of the Interior. 17 November 1971. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1968-1975, OFKM.

called *Ḳehilat Ya'akov*, after Rabbi Ya'acov Abuhatzeira, a nineteenth century Moroccan rabbi who, like the famed Baba Sali (Rabbi Israel Abuhatzeira) was born in the Tafilalt region in the deep Moroccan interior.³⁹

Another reason for the religious track's popularity was that for a long time the state track did not offer regular secondary education, and instead directed students to professional training or the agricultural school, which were not always attractive to residents. Alice Tedgui, for example, had studied at the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) school in Fez. Tedgui had immigrated with her family to Ofakim in 1963 but had left to Haifa for a year before returning, when she was enrolled in the Hagiv'a state track agricultural school. Tedgui recounts:

"When I arrived after a year, I went to Hagiv'a school to learn, unfortunately, at 9:00 they told us there is farming class. I went to my mom crying, I said, what is this, in Morocco in school we would learn, we were clean, here I have to wear farming clothes and work in the dirt. Mom didn't understand, she told me to stay home and not to go learn. But I was a kind that likes to study, so I learned everything myself later, and succeeded in everything. [...] I went home, and instead of the school checking 'why is this kid not coming to school,' or the department of education or that someone would ask—nothing! My mom said, sit, don't go to a school where there is only farming, you're not going to learn in such a school, no way, so I sat [at home]."⁴⁰

The shock of the gap in educational quality in the state track schools for those who attended the AIU in Morocco could thus be disheartening. For Alice and her mother, attending an agricultural school and becoming a farmer was out of the question.

Instead, Tedgui opted to work as a seamstress, a trade she had already mastered at a young age in Fez. She recalls that her mother had been famous in Fez for her sewing and "the whole town came to her." Tedgui followed after her mother, and at the age of eight would sew dresses and sell them. "The money I made, I would give to poor people on the street." Tedgui's childhood in Morocco heavily influenced her life in Ofakim, and she became somewhat of a local celebrity for her volunteer work in the town. For example, she related that "in Morocco I loved sports. I would play sports with boys", and consequently she organized sports for the elderly in Ofakim at the *Isha* (woman) community center. For many years, Tedgui also offered her services as a seamstress for free to those who could not pay, and "a bride who is getting married I dress her up here in my house. I do it without charging, of course."⁴¹ In the end, the skills they brought with them from Morocco were not always left behind by immigrants.

39 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 204.

40 Interview with Alice Tedgui. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 027, OFKM.

41 Ibid.

Foregoing secondary education worked out for the better for Tedgui, though many others struggled to make it work for them.

Another major problem was the constant changeover of teachers and managers sent from outside the town. Working as a teacher in Ofakim was undoubtedly more challenging than in central Israel. Few locals possessed the required qualifications, though many performed functions ad-hoc, and the schools in development towns were consistently under resourced. When veteran Ashkenazim did come to teach in Ofakim, they often espoused missionizing motivations and commented on the differences between the town and the rest of Israel. Based on a labor Zionist perspective which imagined themselves as “new Jews” and Ofakim’s residents as backwards, diasporic Jews, some explicitly understood their role as civilizing them, or offering them a way into modernity.

This dynamic continued into the 1960s and 1970s. In 1967, for example, Edna Shifman, who had come to teach Hebrew from outside of Ofakim, complained about being unable to encourage women to learn the language, and that she received responses such as “[there] are children at home, there is laundry and a lot of work, there is no time to learn” and “I am already old, I don’t have a head for learning.” Edna remarked that she herself had grown through an exposure to other cultures but added that in Ofakim, “though this is my country I felt foreign.”⁴² Edna’s perspective consciously identified new Moroccan immigrants as outsiders to what she considered Israeli society, and the targets of her modernization efforts. Indeed, this same perspective would be consciously revised by community leaders like Yehiel Bentov who saw Moroccans as drivers rather than subjects of Zionism.

For example, from the outside, Ofakim was seen as a lost cause in Israel, a perception that local leaders made monumental efforts to thwart. On 4 April 1975, for example, Andre de Vries, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was quoted in an article called “Professor urges: don’t protect the inefficient” about his opposition to the expansion of tenure. The article read: “[De Vries] said that if university professors were no good, ‘let them go and teach school in Ofakim.’”⁴³ Bentov, who regularly read Israeli newspapers for mentions of Ofakim, constantly wrote letters to the editor when the town’s reputation was damaged. This time, too, Bentov wrote a scathing letter to the *Jerusalem Post* and de Vries. He referenced de Vries’ comments, writing “in other words, what is not good enough for de Vries’ college is still good enough for Ofakim and other places like it.” Bentov appealed to the Zionist ethos to which he subscribed and stated that de Vries’ viewpoint negated the state’s goals of spreading the population and improving life in the development towns. The crux of his response was dedicated to the distinctive experiences and efforts of Ofakim’s residents:

42 Edna Shifman, “Language Management,” *Ofakim - Newspaper of the Local Council of Ofakim*, September 1967, 39. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

43 Ernie Meyer, “Professor Urges: Don’t Protect the Inefficient,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 4, 1975.

“I think that actually a disadvantaged child, the child of the same parents who, in making aliya to Israel did not win the chance for employment, free Ulpan, housing in absorption centers, cars without taxes and all the other advantages today offered to olim (I do not narrow my eyes to the olim of the seventies, but it is worth remembering that in the fifties and sixties, when many of the residents of Ofakim made aliya, and their absorption was executed under completely different conditions) who for years lived in tents, barracks, and with asbestos when they, with difficulty, succeeded to feed their families in the shadow of the lack of work which filled Israel, the same children who deserve the best teachers, the most fantastic doctors, and the most moral social workers.”⁴⁴

Bentov’s reply to de Vries helps to clarify both Ofakim’s negative reputation in central Israel, as well as the way that reputation was understood locally. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, disparaging narratives, as much as they could alienate residents from the place where they lived, could also be utilized to effectively frame them as pioneers whose migratory experiences lent them more cultural capital than other immigrants.

In the 1970s, the problem of temporary teachers from outside the town was still pervasive. In an article in April of 1977, a local seventeen-year-old boy, Yehiel Mamane, was quoted as saying that “the teachers come from other settlements every day, ‘and are just looking forward to the fifteenth of the month’, which is the day they receive their monthly paychecks.”⁴⁵ The same article also quoted Michael Azoulay, a twenty-seven-year-old engineer who had grown up in Ofakim and recently returned from his studies in Haifa. Azoulay argued that the problem was not just Ofakim’s, but that of every city, including Tel Aviv and Be’er Sheva, and that it was also an issue of responsibility rather than solely of money: “teachers have to be local. Aid should be within the reach of the student [...]. It’s a mistake to think that with a monetary incentive alone we can recruit good educational staff. The teacher must, on top of the incentive, be vigorous.”⁴⁶ Azoulay was also seemingly criticizing the widespread programs of recruiting teachers from outside of the town and pushing for local representation.

The overwhelming feeling that Ofakim was at the mercy of “outsiders” who didn’t understand life in the town and whose lack of commitment actively harmed it reinforced the boundaries of a local identity in the making. “Insiders” were those who lived in the town and were invested in improving it. For some such insiders, like Alice Tedgui, overcoming this disparity meant relying on experiences and skills from the Moroccan past to inform the Israeli present, and to a significant extent the boundaries could be traced along the lines

44 Letter from Yehiel Bentov and Ofakim’s Local Council to the Editors of the Jerusalem Post and Andre de Vries. 29 April 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1968-1975, OFKM

45 Roni Eshel, “אופקים חדשים, תדמית ישנה, *Old Image, New Horizons*,” *Ma’ariv*, April 20, 1977, 34.

46 Eshel, 34.

which divided privileged Ashkenazim and disadvantaged Moroccans and other Mizrahim. As we saw, despite the fact that not all residents of Ofakim were Mizrahim, this has become a major element in Mizrahi and Moroccan collective memory in Israel's periphery. Another area in which this insider/outsider dynamic became salient was in politics. There, Moroccans organized politically to address these issues, as in the case of Ofakim's first elections.

Becoming Locals: Ofakim's first elections 1955-1960

Though a complete survey of Ofakim's political history exceeds the scope of this dissertation, the story of Ofakim's first elections can help us to determine what political culture amongst Moroccans in Israel's periphery looked like following their immigration, as well as how a sense of Moroccanness developed in a local leadership positioned against outsiders. The latest research on development town leadership conducted by Oren Kalman demonstrates how crucial local leadership was from the development towns' beginnings. Kalman shows that, despite Mapai's early and unsuccessful attempts to impose leadership from above, ultimately the central party found that it could not bypass local leaders.⁴⁷ In my own analysis, it is clear that politics in Ofakim's early years also helped form sub-group Moroccan identities, and even when they were at odds with each other, Moroccans in Ofakim organized to keep political power in their hands rather than handing it over to outsiders.

For its first six months, Ofakim remained under the responsibility of the Merhavim regional council, but on 11 December 1955 elections for a local committee were held among the eighty families residing there and Yehuda Marciano was elected as the town's first mayor.⁴⁸ Though still technically under the jurisdiction of the regional council, the committee received a budget and would have to see that there was enough water, maintain the electricity lines once they were installed, and organize the collection of trash and guard shifts for the town. Significantly, political power was concentrated locally amongst the new immigrants themselves, primarily Moroccans, very early on in Ofakim's history.

The early political atmosphere of the town was characterized by factionalism amongst the new residents. In October 1957, when the town's streets were lit, the local committee held a "festival of light" to celebrate the occasion. The event was marred, however, by a fight that broke out between supporters of Yehuda Marciano, the head of the committee, and supporters of Moshe Bittan, another significant figure in Ofakim's local politics. Moshe Bittan was born

47 See Kalman, 1948-1965 *הפיתוח עירוני והנהגת עיריית מפק"י* (Immigrant Leaders: Mapai and the Leadership of the Development Towns 1948-1965).

48 The position of mayor, directly translated as *rosh ha'ir*, or "head of the city," is not the official title of mayors in Israel. Rather, mayors are heads of the local committee or council that govern the town or municipality, which is *rosh hava'ad hamekomi* or *rosh hamo'atsa hamekomit*. I have opted to alternately use the term head of the local council/committee as well as mayor when appropriate and to simplify long-winded descriptions.

in Ouezzane in 1926 and immigrated to Ofakim in 1956, where he became the owner of the first coop store. On top of Arabic and French, Bittan could already speak Hebrew competently before he arrived. Both Yehuda Marciano and Bittan were members of Mapai, and when the local Mapai branch opened in 1957, Bittan became its first secretary.⁴⁹

According to several sources, the conflict at the 1957 “festival of light” was caused by Bittan’s supporters, who refused to let Marciano’s take the stage, and also refused to congratulate him on the achievement.⁵⁰ The fight was stopped by the police. Interestingly, in his memoir, Yehiel Bentov describes the conflict as resulting from the different Moroccan hometowns of the factions. Marciano was from Fez, and Bittan and his supporters were from Ouezzane, and according to Bentov, this lay at the root of the discord. Again, it is interesting that even though Marciano was born in Melilla, it was his accolades from Fez which differentiated him from Bittan. Though such a statement is difficult to bear out with proof, Bentov’s interpretation is striking, and we must consider the notion that their hometowns in Morocco encouraged the factionalism. Bentov was a central political figure in Ofakim for several decades and knew both Bittan and Marciano intimately, and thus his explanation cannot be easily dismissed.⁵¹ Evidently, heterogenous kinship ties formed the basis of sub-group Moroccan identities. When it came to outsiders, however, locals proved they could put on a united front.

Already since the 1930s a strong association with immigrants’ hometowns was apparent amongst Jews from Muslim majority countries, and many Moroccan Jews later founded influential hometown associations in Israel. Yehiel Bentov and several other Ofakim community leaders were longtime members of *Brit Yots’ei Maroko*, the Alliance of Moroccan Immigrants, the largest association of Moroccan immigrants in Israel. In addition to country-of-origin associations, immigrants from North African countries also organized informally and formally, often as a means to coordinate their political representation throughout the country. This is demonstrated by a letter sent by Bentov in 1969 to the *Hitaḥdut Olei Tšfon Afriqa*, the Association of North African Immigrants, regarding an event celebrating the election of North African immigrants to high-level positions in municipalities across the country.⁵² Moroccanness thus became a recognizable stream within North African political organization in Israel’s early years.

Interestingly, such Moroccan ethnic associations even came to highlight the differences within Moroccan Jewry in Israel. In 1966, *Brit Yots’ei Maroko* organized a public *Mimouna*

49 Kalman, “מנהיגים עולים: מפא”י והנהגת עיירות הפיתוח בנגב בשני העשורים הראשונים למדינה” (Mapai and the Leadership in the Development Towns of the Negev in the first two decades of the State of Israel), PhD Dissertation, 229.

50 Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (Forty Years in the Desert), 116; Mapai Branch Ofakim, Meeting of the Secretaries of the Mapai Branch in Ofakim. 25 May 1960. 2-902-1960-90, Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archive.

51 Bentov, 116.

52 Ofakim Local Council. Letter from Yehiel Bentov to *Hitaḥdut Olei Tšfon Afriqa*. 28 December 1969. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1968-1975, OFKM.

celebration. Following the 1971 Black Panther protests, the celebration grew exponentially year-by-year. This led another organization, *Mifgash Benei Tanjir*, the Reunion of Tangier Natives, to specify in 1979 that Mimouna had little to do with northern Moroccan Jewish traditions.⁵³ Factionalism amongst Moroccan Jews from different hometowns was therefore not unique to Ofakim. It is notable, however, that Moroccans in Ofakim put aside their diverse hometown origins when it came to maintaining control over local politics, as demonstrated by the town's first elections as a local council.

In April 1958, notables proposed a list for an independent local council with Yehuda Marciano as the first local council head, or mayor. Crucially, however, elections in Israeli municipalities were not direct until 1978, meaning that mayors were determined by the head of the local party or coalition with a majority. In the 1958 elections following Ofakim's political reform, Mapai's central branch in Tel Aviv decided to send Dov Friedkin to compete as head of the local Mapai branch and thus exert direct control on the town. To determine who would be head of the local Mapai branch, the branch held its own elections, and Dov Friedkin was elected by a majority.⁵⁴

Yehuda Marciano and Moshe Bittan both claimed that the branch's elections were rigged, other North African members of the branch called Friedkin's appointment "ethnic discrimination," and were quoted in *Ma'ariv* as saying they were "able to manage the place by themselves" and that "we don't want a commissar ruling over us."⁵⁵ Hoping to oust Friedkin, Marciano and Bittan organized a protest against Mapai's leadership on the *kvish hara'av* consisting of fifty people, but were unsuccessful. Friedkin, however, proved to be incredibly unpopular in Ofakim, and his candidacy did not last long. Remembering Friedkin's arrival, Yehiel Bentov recalls: "Dov Friedkin wanted to be a king, 'I came from the Palmah.' [...] every meeting he would say 'I am a man from the Palmah.' What does it matter?"⁵⁶ New elections in 1959 saw Mapai's majority lost, and so a coalition with Mapam had to be signed to stay in power.

Moshe Bittan, then a member of Mapai, decided to undermine the party and form a new coalition with Mafdal and Herut, with him as mayor. The local Mapai branch expelled Bittan and the municipality became plagued by dismissals until the central Mapai branch decided that all new elections were needed to decide, once and for all, whether Friedkin or Bittan should lead the branch. In the new elections, seventeen out of twenty-one members of the local Mapai

53 Moreno, "The Ingathering of the Jewish (Moroccan) Diaspora: Zionism and Global Hometown Awareness among Spanish-Moroccan Jews in Israel," 145–46.

54 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 195; Kalman, "מפא"י והנהגת עירות" (Mapai and the Leadership in the Development Towns of the Negev in the first two decades of the state of Israel), 231.

55 Mapai Branch Ofakim, Meeting of the Secretaries of the Mapai Branch in Ofakim. 25 May 1960. 2-902-1960-90, Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archive. Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות* (The History of the Establishment of the Development Towns in the Negev: Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot), 195.

56 Interview with Yehiel Bentov. 28 August 2017. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 09, OFKM.

branch voted for Bittan, and the central branch accepted his candidacy. Friedkin, however, did not accept the results. In response, he essentially copied Bittan's tactic and formed a coalition with a few members of Mapai, Herut, and Mafdal, and claimed to be mayor.⁵⁷

The resulting mess pushed the central branch of Mapai to send Shmuel Meron to Ofakim as a representative with the authority to force Friedkin to accept the results of the elections. The minutes of that emergency meeting, held on 25 May 1960 with members of the Mapai branch, including Yehuda Marciano, Moshe Bittan, Yehiel Bentov, as well as Friedkin and Meron, are fascinating. The meeting began with Meron softly and indirectly attempting to convince Friedkin to give up. In response, Friedkin said that Meron likely did not understand what was going on, argued that he was acting in the best interest of the town, "and all the residents know it," and demanded that a meeting of the branch be held the next day to discuss the lack of confidence he claimed the branch had in Bittan. To this, Bentov responded diplomatically that what Friedkin had done in trying to form his coalition against Mapai "had no precedent in Ofakim" and that it was best to "close the issue in good spirits". Next, Bittan stated that Friedkin had not permitted the branch's members to vote when he initially arrived in Ofakim, and thus that he had not been democratically elected. Bittan went on: "in the last three months [as Mapai elect and mayor] I had to suffer comrade Friedkin's ploys, who went from agency to agency to delay the budgets for the development of Ofakim". Marciano also castigated Friedkin for not accepting the election results and forming a coalition against Mapai and said that he should receive the "greatest punishment."⁵⁸

By the end of the meeting, Meron had lost his patience with Friedkin. In a scathing final statement, Meron told Friedkin that there was no excuse for "hiding behind ploys" when it was known that "the secretary was elected according to law". He went on and said that even if Friedkin was successful in gaining support in a meeting of the local branch, "the current mayor can do the same [...] and where will that leave us?" Meron continued:

You messed with things and got messed up, and I am sorry that you forced me to say this in this forum [...] I want you to know that you have no support at the central party branch, you came to educate and you should have helped the local council head and fulfilled your mission, there is no going back on Ofakim's historical problems, because we need to deal with the problems of today [...] because Ofakim will not be built like this. [...] I hear that you do not live here, and that you only show up during meetings,

57 Kalman, "מנהיגים עולים: מפא"י והנהגת עיירות הפיתוח בנגב בשני העשורים הראשונים למדינה," (Mapai and the Leadership in the Development Towns of the Negev in the first two decades of the state of Israel), PhD Dissertation 234–35.

58 Mapai Branch Ofakim, Meeting of the Secretaries of the Mapai Branch in Ofakim. 25 May 1960. 2-902-1960-90, Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archive.

and based on your face you are not a resident of this place like the others sitting here, let them manage things [...].⁵⁹

Following the meeting, Friedkin was called away from Ofakim, but refused to leave. The central Mapai branch launched an investigation, and it was determined that due to Friedkin's insubordination as well as the history of conflict between Marciano and Bittan, the municipality could not be salvaged. In December 1960 the elected council was dissolved and replaced by a *va'ada k'rua*, an "appointed council" from outside the town tasked with stabilizing it.⁶⁰

Even though Bittan and Marciano were political rivals, the two preferred to unite against appointees like Friedkin than be governed by an outsider, even from the same party. As Oren Kalman argues, Mapai's strategy shifted quickly from appointing from outside to backing local candidates, because they could receive more support that way.⁶¹ The central branch even supported Bittan's claim against Friedkin's and denounced the latter's attempt to form a coalition outside the party, essentially ignoring the fact that Bittan had done the same. In the end, local support became more valuable as Friedkin became unmanageable.

It's also significant that Bittan's knowledge of Hebrew from Morocco helped him to excel in politics as soon as he arrived in Ofakim. Marciano's socialist family's heavy engagement in politics in Morocco helped prepare him for the same in Israel. Additionally, Bentov's interpretation of the nature of their feud demonstrates that hometown affiliations in Morocco continued to be important in Ofakim. However, a stronger local identity was on the rise, and Moroccanness was a major contributor. Bittan himself was quoted as saying in 1977, still a member of the municipality, though not the mayor: "the settlement made up of the beautiful things which we have in Ofakim, its source is on the ship that brought us to Israel. [...] We made aliya as Jews—and we left the deck as Moroccans."⁶² In moments such as the conflict with Friedkin, as demonstrated by Bittan's words, Moroccanness became associated with difference and peripherality. Bittan's critical tone referred to Moroccans' devaluation by the state, but he also invoked the group identity which was developing under the new conditions.

Moroccans were becoming identified as such by the broader Israeli society and by Moroccans themselves. This much was clear when Meron, during the emergency meeting, stated suggestively that just by looking at Friedkin's face, he could tell that he was not a resident of Ofakim like Bittan, Marciano, Bentov, or the others were. This emergent sense of "insiders" versus "outsiders" did not, however, mean that Moroccans were unwilling to

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kalman, "מנהיגים עולים: מפא"י והנהגת עיירות הפיתוח בנגב בשני העשורים הראשונים למדינה" (Mapai and the Leadership in the Development Towns of the Negev in the first two decades of the state of Israel), PhD Dissertation, 235.

⁶¹ Kalman, 294.

⁶² Eshel, "תדמית ישנה, אופקים חדשים" (Old Image, New Horizons), 34.

engage with the rest of Israeli society, despite the uneven power dynamic established along ethnic lines. In the following section, which incorporates labor and social history, we will see that through interactions with Jews of other backgrounds, their Moroccan origins came to the fore. Additionally, community leaders were aware of power dynamics which disadvantaged them as Moroccans and used them to the best of their ability to improve Ofakim's situation, both by protesting and by enlisting resources.

Building and/or being built: Labor and social history in Ofakim

Ofakim has gone through several periods of intense change in its labor environment which have strongly informed its residents' experience of peripherality, as well as their stigmatization as Moroccans or Mizrahim. From the arrival of the first immigrants in 1955 and until 1959, most of Ofakim's residents worked in farming or building in the town or other surrounding settlements. After the end of Ofakim's first year, 284 workers were employed, ninety in building or guarding settlements, sixty for Keren Kayemet⁶³ (in most cases digging holes and planting trees), fifty worked paving roads, and the rest in non-physical labor. Notably, these numbers did not include those working in farming in nearby moshavim.⁶⁴ In 1959, out of 555 workers, 181 worked on farms, 140 for Keren Kayemet planting trees, ninety-eight in building and paving, and sixty in diamond polishing.⁶⁵

In 1956, Ofakim's first factory opened, OFEK. OFEK, a diamond polishing plant, was owned by Naftali Hyman and Ya'acov Vishkin, two Ashkenazi diamond workers from Tel Aviv. Ofakim's second factory, OF-AR, was a textile factory opened in 1961 by Jewish investors in Argentina, with offices in Tel Aviv.⁶⁶ OF-AR was one of Ofakim's longest lasting employers and would serve as the site for remarkable collective action until its definitive closure in 1986. For example, in 1979 OF-AR was behind one million shekels in payments, and announced there would be layoffs, and soon after that the factory would close down. With OF-AR's stormy history, workers assumed that the government would, as it had many times before, swoop in and save the factory. By January 1981, however, the government showed no indication that it would, and a "closure strike" was organized amongst the factory's Jewish workers.

On 12 January, workers, their families, and other organizers like Yossi Marciano walked to the Kvish hara'av and blocked the road in protest of the factory's closing. Two days later, buses

63 Keren Kayemet Leyisrael (Keren Kayemet), in English the Jewish National Fund, was founded in 1901 to purchase land in Palestine for the development of a Jewish national home. Following the establishment of the state, land owned by Keren Kayemet was worked by new immigrants to plant trees with the purpose of employing the new immigrants and creating forests which prevented the return of Palestinian refugees.

64 Cohen, *תולדות הקמתן של עיירות הפיתוח בנגב המערבי: שדרות, אופקים, נתיבות*, 188–89.

65 Bar-On, 1981–1955, *עובדים באופקים: אורגים קהילה* (Weaving a Community: Workers in Ofakim, 1955–1981), 24.

66 "Textile Factory OF-AR Inaugurated with a Celebration in Ofakim," *Ma'ariv*, April 25, 1961, 7.

filled with workers, their families, and other Ofakim residents made their way to Jerusalem where they had been assigned a spot far from the Knesset to protest, and where they were met briefly by Yeruham Meshel, a Knesset Member part of the labor party coalition. According to Shani Bar-On, the protesters were encouraged by a politician who was a former Israeli black panther, likely Saadia Marciano, to head to the prime minister's office and protest there.⁶⁷ The protestors indeed went and were met there by police officers on horseback. Four protestors were arrested and five were injured before all returned to Ofakim at the end of the day.

As a result of the protest, the government kept the factory open, closing only its weaving section. 140, rather than all 250 workers, were laid off with compensation. In all the government invested 20 million shekels to keep the factory open. Notably, the protests stirred Mizrahi politicians in particular to push for bailing out the factory, a feat which was repeated when OFEK was closed and saved in 1986 following another "closure strike".⁶⁸ These moments of Mizrahi solidarity were linked with broader labor protests which erupted in the 1980s due to factory closures, part of worldwide capital labor relocations to Asia.⁶⁹ In Israel, this was precipitated by large-scale privatization which affected MENA Jews in the periphery disproportionately.⁷⁰ The 1980s also saw mounting Mizrahi political aspirations, with the Tami and Shas parties, and finally the intifada, which created a sense of widespread crisis.⁷¹ In 1996, another bus protest to Jerusalem was organized by Yossi Marciano in response to the closure of the OMAN textile factory, but the factory ultimately closed. In his interview, Marciano said of the major protests he had helped organize, "I said, in silence nothing will happen. [...] this is part of the history of Ofakim, in my opinion."⁷²

This history of labour protest resulted from the poor economic conditions in the development towns, and the struggles and frustration they inspired. From the town's first decade, regular wages in Ofakim were exceptionally low. In an interview from 1967, Tamar Soussan, a mother of four, related how she balanced her budget. Remarkably, she only allowed the interviewer into her house once the latter had insisted that they were not from the tax office. Tamar's husband, Shimon Soussan, worked at the OF-AR factory, and made 350 Israeli Lira a month: "How! My husband works a whole month. But the paycheck disappears in one minute." Tamar's list of expenses can help give us an idea of how a typical family in Ofakim lived:

67 Bar-On, 1981-1955 באופקים, עובדים קהילה: אורגים קהילה (Weaving a Community: Workers in Ofakim, 1955-1981), 132-37, 150.

68 Bar-On, 132-37, 150.

69 Nir Cohen and Meirav Aharon-Gutman, "Labor Agencies and the Temporality of Struggles: A Comparative Study in the Israeli Periphery," *Geoforum* 74 (August 2016): 100.

70 See Yair Barak, "Since the Mid-1980s: A Value Shift in Work in Israel - from Labor to Employment," *Journal of Israeli History* 40, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 61-90.

71 Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 233-39.

72 Interview with Yosef (Yossi) Marciano. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 050 1, OFKM.

“Some things you need to pay or else you have trouble, like rent (which doubled a few months ago), electricity and water, there is 70 per month. Gas for cooking and the dud shemesh (solar water heater), another 100. [...] there are 4 kids, I need to cook quickly so as not to finish the oil. It’s the same for showering [...]. 170, there went half the money. On food – I need 130. I am lucky the children are still small and don’t eat much. Meat and fish I already buy less than I used to. Clothes only 40 a month. I buy according to turn, once for my husband, once for me, and once for the kids. It’s hard to buy for everyone together. Only for the holidays I buy a little more and then we have debts. So what is left? Nothing! We don’t leave the city, we go to the movies once a week. We don’t buy newspapers, books, or records. But believe me, today the problem is not how to live on a small income. The problem would be if there were layoffs – otherwise it’s a disaster, you understand.”⁷³

Another significant problem became unemployment amongst young men recently discharged from the army. In 1967, Ofakim’s local newspaper described an “epidemic” of young men who finished their army service and could not find work amidst a national recession. The young men, most of them Moroccans, “speak like old men”, according to the article, and would spend their days in the town center, smoking and talking. In the article, one interviewed youth, Haim Elkabetz, nineteen years old, said he had found work on a Kibbutz, but had since been fired and could not find another job. Albert Zohar, twenty years old, related that he had trained as a locksmith for many years, but couldn’t find a job in his field. Zohar wanted a job so he could marry his girlfriend, but as things stood, he had no money to start a family. David Gabbay, seventeen, had worked for thirteen months in the Afuda textile factory, but was laid off, and now could not find work in that profession, and had no desire to learn another one. The article reported that many young men offered their opinions about the situation. One claimed that “the recession only affected Sephardim”. Another bitterly stated: “we should steal from them [the Histadrut]!!! Why do they only worry about places which have crime or violence, is that what they are waiting for?! So tell them that also here if there is no immediate change and they won’t give us work—we don’t want free money—so here, too, is likely to be [violent]...”⁷⁴

This problem persisted for decades. In 1971, Yehiel Bentov reported that thirty to forty percent of youths were not returning to Ofakim after their army service because they could not find work there.⁷⁵ Bentov stated that a new generation of youths educated at Sapir College and Ben-Gurion University as technicians, engineers, and academics could not be “absorbed in the Negev” and was leaving for central Israel. He urged the Minister to pass a law raising the

73 “How to Balance a Budget,” *Ofakim - Newspaper of the Local Council of Ofakim*, March 1967, 3.

74 “The Youth Recession,” *Ofakim - Newspaper of the Local Council of Ofakim*, March 1967, 8–9.

75 “In Ofakim the Empty Apartments Have Been Filled,” *Davar*, August 6, 1971.

minimum wage for factory workers and to draw skilled factories to the Negev.⁷⁶ The problem had existed at least since 1969 when, following a law which permitted Israeli companies to recruit workers from the occupied Palestinian territories, it was the local factories' inability to find local Jewish workers which compelled them to hire Palestinian workers from Gaza.⁷⁷

The problem of disaffected youths became the locus for significant community action. For example, in the 1970s, the municipality opened a Matnas (a Hebrew acronym for a center for culture, youth, and sport) and converted six disused shelters into discotheques and youth clubs which offered activities such as martial arts classes and art projects and hosted youths from all over the Negev for Shabbat dinners.⁷⁸ In interviews, Yossi Marciano and Shaul Tangi, key youth organizers, recall that they had to come up with ways to occupy the youth, and that the clubs were a creative solution. Marciano stresses that in the 1970s youths from other Negev development towns like Sderot and Netivot would come to Ofakim for its nightlife and activities—a reversal of the image that Ofakim typically has in that period.⁷⁹ Crucially, for Ofakim's working adult population, many of whom were employed with low wages and on the cusp of insolvency, activities to occupy and benefit youths were a service which they desperately needed. This can best be demonstrated through the case of Gar'in Oded.

The major push for community life and youth activities in the 1970s was not entirely internal to Ofakim. As stated above, Yehiel Bentov was particularly well connected in the Kibbutz movement, and as mayor he utilized those connections to help lift the burden off local parents. One of those connections was Gar'in Oded,⁸⁰ an umbrella for multiple programs which organized activities and services for development town residents provided by youths from Kibbutzim across Israel. The program began in the early 1970s in Ofakim, though by 1975 it had spread to ten development towns and consisted of some ten programs. It was brought to Ofakim through Yehiel Bentov's collaboration with Avraham Dvori, known as "Mantcher," from Kibbutz Be'eri. By the 1980s its presence in development towns was largely overtaken by a similar program, *hano'ar ha'oved vahalomed*, and today Gar'in Oded no longer exists.

In its heyday in 1975, Gar'in Oded had become a prominent feature in the lives of Ofakim's youths and parents. The volunteers and counselors ranged in age from their early to late teens. Some came to Ofakim several days a week, while other lived full-time in the town in a renovated shelter which served as a neighborhood club for local youths to spend time at, particularly on Shabbat, during the day on Saturday. According to Moshe, who lived next door, local youths had become strongly attached to the counselors who lived at the club. In a letter to the counselors, Moshe recounted that one Shabbat when they were not present, he heard

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Bar-On, 1981-1955: *עובדים באופקים*, *אורגים קהילה*: (Weaving a Community: Workers in Ofakim, 1955-1981), 120-22.

⁷⁸ Interview with Yosef (Yossi) Marciano. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 050 1, OFKM.

⁷⁹ Ibid.; Interview with Shaul Tangi. 22 August 2022.

⁸⁰ This program should not be confused with one of the same name which was a movement for organizing Aliya and the establishment of moshavim, as the two are distinct.

the club's door recurrently being knocked by a slew of youths: Meir, a young man who was on leave from his army service and wanted to see the friends he had made there, a group of girls, and another group of boys who came "in the stormy rain and wind" and, when knocking didn't help, starting calling out the counselors' names: "Orna...Hagit...Osnat...Allo hey!" Moshe related that seeing how much the local youths missed the familiar presence of the counselors was a particular "Oneg Shabbat" and concluded: "Well done and know that your contribution here is real, even if it deviates from what you intended to contribute."⁸¹

Serving as a hang-out spot for local teens was not the program's original plan, despite its evident significance for them. One of Gar'in Oded's main programs was to help elementary school children with their studies when their parents could not or simply did not have the time. Volunteers for this program were often Ashkenazim in their early teens and came loaded with presuppositions about Mizrahi families in development towns. Interactions within the framework of the program, however, were nuanced, and could be extremely positive. The case of Batya, for example, demonstrates how Moroccanness could be disseminated as an influence from the development towns onto the rest of Israeli society.

In Gar'in Oded's newsletter, Batya, a fifteen or sixteen-year-old girl from Kibbutz Be'eri,⁸² gave a profoundly earnest account of the two years she had spent with a Moroccan family in Ofakim. Batya recalled that when she was assigned to Shoshana, a young girl with eight siblings, she was terrified of being left with all the children, and that she had heard stories about the family: "the father is a drunk, the mother is crazy..." Despite a rocky start helping Shoshana, whom she found could barely read, a few months later she had made progress, and was delighted that Shoshana picked flowers for her or made her drawings before their meetings twice a week. Batya even corresponded with Shoshana's teachers to better help her.⁸³

Batya's involvement went far beyond just helping Shoshana with homework. Shoshana's siblings all became fond of Batya, who taught them songs and spent time with them. Perhaps most touching is Batya's account of what she learned, and her enduring attachment to Shoshana's mother:

"I have to note the intimate and warm custom of welcoming guests which I have not felt or seen in any other place. The mother is very lovable, the kids are all charming, I sit a lot with the mother, she tells me about her problems: the welfare office, it's hard for me with the kids, my husband is sick, many money problems, I need to do a bar-mitzvah for my son but I don't have money and he doesn't know how to read well, problems, there

81 Gar'in Oded. "A letter written to Gar'in Oded by one of the neighbors" (Hebrew). *Gar'in Oded Ofakim Newsletter*. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

82 Kibbutz Be'eri was founded in 1946 as a socialist, secular Kibbutz and was one of the most established in the region.

83 Gar'in Oded. "This is what Batya writes" (Hebrew). *Gar'in Oded Ofakim Newsletter*. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

is no lack... but 'tomorrow I am going to the wedding of someone in the neighborhood, tell me which dress to wear and which shoes,' etc. But not only did they learn from me, I learned what ethnic Moroccan 'couscous' is, what you have to do on Shavuot, when a guest comes you have to call out to them 'amen, amen...', songs, curses. Every time I came to the house the kids ran to me, hugged and kissed me and it became mutual. The mother stated: 'you're like my daughter, I love you, as if I had another daughter.'"⁸⁴

Other aspects of the programs were equally meaningful. Batya hosted Shoshana at her house in Kibbutz Be'eri, and seasonal camps were regularly organized to give children a chance to see other parts of the country. Counselors worked with the municipality and even organized a trip to the beach exclusively for women in Ofakim. Bathsheba Lasry recounts that on the bus ride an old woman, "you can say 'the most ethnic one,' sang in all the languages, to our delight."⁸⁵ Such an activity was an opportunity for women to leave the confines of the town, not an easy feat for married or working women. Vice-versa, Gar'in Oded was also an entry for more privileged Israelis into life in the periphery. Batya related that, despite all that she had heard about families and the youth in development towns, she had been wrong, and she encouraged others "'to go outside' and meet the second side of our country."⁸⁶

For Batya, her engagement with Ofakim's residents, and particularly Moroccans, was a positive experience of what Moroccanness constituted, as opposed to the stereotypes commonly held by outsiders. Inevitably, not all volunteers were as nuanced about their relationship to Ofakim and Moroccans, and many espoused missionizing doctrines which infantilized and instrumentalized the town's residents. One counselor, Ziva, from Kibbutz Neot Mordechai, stated that the purpose of the program was to "help people help themselves." As an example, she wrote that it was helpful to "[plant] customs" in the family, such as getting children used to getting up and helping each other get ready for school in the morning, a task which had to be instilled in them "due to the blind mother being lazy." Other comments revealed the demeaning assumptions some volunteers held, such as when Ziva spoke about the neighborhood club:

"The initiative for activities stems from the inability of the population to raise ideas themselves. And this stems, it seems, from insufficient acclimation to the usual way of life in Israel. For example, the children of the neighborhood hang around all day in the streets with inactivity, if not on a rampage and causing damage. The parents

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Gar'in Oded. "A day with a group of women from the 'merkaz klita' neighborhood" (Hebrew). Gar'in Oded Ofakim Newsletter. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

⁸⁶ Gar'in Oded. "This is what Batya writes" (Hebrew). Gar'in Oded Ofakim Newsletter. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

did not imagine opening a neighborhood club themselves, perhaps because in their country of origin taking care of children was a constant occupation or simply because a neighborhood club was never established there as a solution to loitering or inactivity. The parents can also not imagine that games, books, drawings, are fruitful work, so kids suffer from lack of knowledge on how to busy themselves in a positive way and are thirsty for all activities that are organized for them.”⁸⁷

Others, such as Yoav, from Kibbutz Be’eri, stated that he was proud to aggressively criticize “every thing and every individual in the family” to which he was assigned. He wrote:

“Most of my work is with the kids, but also the mother, in order to have her function as a mother and not just a ‘helper’ in the household. Of course you need patience and love. What is clear is that members of the family receive you quickly as one of them and give you all the trust of familiarity, and then they are like clay in the hands of the artist - though it is difficult to generate drastic changes in a short meeting when you are talking about living people.”⁸⁸

Yoav’s account was also replete with descriptions of affection similar to those of Batya. The juxtaposition of the family’s earnest affection for him and his understanding of himself as molding them “like clay in the hands of the artist” are particularly disturbing.

In the end, Gar’in Oded was a set of interactions mediated by the complex dynamics of ethnicity, socio-economic status, and individual character. The programs were undoubtedly helpful to parents and the young children which they served, who urgently needed the practical help. For local children, teens, and adults, the emotional companionship could prove just as important; vice-versa, the impact of such nuanced relationships on young Ashkenazi Kibbutznikim like Batya should not be underestimated or considered disingenuous. On the other hand, such interactions were rife with uneven power dynamics in which even youths like Ziva and Yoav felt they had a sort of power over adults in Ofakim. Such disquieting perspectives characterized many Israelis’ views of Moroccans in the periphery and reinforced the notion that they constituted another Israel, a *second Israel*.⁸⁹

87 Gar’in Oded. “Help for independence” (Hebrew). Gar’in Oded Ofakim Newsletter. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

88 Gar’in Oded. “Strengthening families” (Hebrew). Gar’in Oded Ofakim Newsletter. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

89 The term second Israel is still salient in Israeli political discourse today and denotes Mizrahim and residents of Israel’s periphery. Most notably it has been adopted rather polemically by journalist Avishay Ben Haim. See Avishay Ben Haim, *הבשורה השנייה: הדיכוי המר, הדיכוי המר* (Second Israel: The Sweet Vision, the Bitter Oppression) (Rishon le-Tsion: Yediot Aharonot, 2022).

The power dynamics between the “two Israels” were not lost on Ofakim locals, and in fact were instrumentalized to help meet residents’ needs. In 1975, for example, Yehiel Bentov urged Kibbutzim to enlist more people to “leave after noon, after work to the [development towns],” and promised that the municipality would pay “a lira for a lira” in transportation costs if only they would find the manpower. As he implored greater involvement, Bentov also pushed back against the negative perceptions of the development towns: “I want to say I was shocked to hear an expression from 10 years ago which was forgotten, *second Israel*. It was forgotten, and I do not want you to renew this saying.” The expression must have been prevalent, because Bentov repeated it as he contradicted stereotypes about Ofakim while stressing the contribution of Gar’in Oded to eliminating those stereotypes:

“And why is this so important? [...] if there were not volunteers, the same children would be in the street, and these would be marginalized youths. The youths who do not meet the Kibbutz members would stay at home, would not meet strangers [...], and the kids would grow up in this environment and then we would really start to say *second Israel*, they would start to be criminals. Today this is not felt anymore. Ofakim only has 15 open police cases. [...] we will work to arrive at *one Israel*, one and united, which will be a good and beautiful Israel that each and every one of us want to see, whether it’s a person from a kibbutz, moshav, city, or development city.”⁹⁰

Bentov’s address walked the line between what Ofakim needed and its negative view in the rest of Israel. As a former Kibbutznik himself, Bentov believed that enlisting this help could help support the town’s residents. As he stated in that meeting, Gar’in Oded had come into being to do this work because “there was no other body to do it.”⁹¹ At the same time, and despite the evident imbalances between the Kibbutzim and the development towns, Bentov denied that such work was charity, as some of its volunteers saw it. Bentov pitched the program as a necessary redistribution of resources to equalize Israel’s lingering disparities and to create connections between the country’s center and periphery.

As we have seen, the particular histories of migration, education, labor, and politics in development towns in general had created strong identities and cultural markers which served to associate Moroccanness with peripherality. This was a true for young men in Ofakim who could not find work, as for young Ashkenazim who perceived Ofakim’s residents as a separate part of the country. Such a view was suggested by the outsiders like the Mapai politicians, teachers like Edna Shifman who said she felt “foreign” in Ofakim, and Kibbutznik volunteers

90 Gar’in Oded. “Things that the mayor of Ofakim said in a central meeting of the united Kibbutz movement dealing with its activities in the development towns” (Hebrew). Gar’in Oded Ofakim Newsletter. 11 November 1975. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

91 Ibid.

like Ziva who commented in 1975, twenty years after the town's founding, that its residents had not yet adjusted to Israeli life. At the same time, the borders of Moroccanness were mutable, both with regards to other Mizrahim, who could share Moroccans' experiences in the periphery, and even to Ashkenazim like Batya, who could ingratiate themselves with Moroccan families. If Moroccanness has come to denote peripheralization in the development towns, then local leaders have taken it upon themselves to rewrite the standard Zionist story and frame Moroccans and Mizrahim as pioneers in Israel's periphery.

Forty Years in the Desert: Pioneer narratives of Moroccan Jews in the Negev

In August of 2022 I visited Itzik Krispel in his home in Ofakim. Krispel, among many other things, is the manager of Ofakim's municipal archive and a prominent community activist. Krispel describes his work as one of consciously "fixing" the narrative about himself and the place he comes from. A narrative, he told me "[...] brings justifications, it shapes consciousness, it puts hierarchy without us being aware, it is more deceptive than anything, so I decided [...] to focus on the issue of the narrative." Krispel's self-conscious efforts to take control of the narrative which misrepresents himself and Ofakim stem from his alienation in the many years he lived outside of the city. He told me he spent years running away from Ofakim, pretending he was from Be'er Sheva, but that he couldn't escape himself. "You can get out of Ofakim, but Ofakim can't get out of you," he said.⁹²

Krispel's parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were born in Taroudant, a city in southern Morocco, east of Agadir. His father had been a merchant who sold imported goods from France and Italy, and his mother had taken care of four children before the family immigrated in 1962 to Ofakim, where Krispel was born in 1966. They had requested to be placed in Haifa, where Krispel's mother had family: "they told her no problem, here's the truck to Haifa. All day they slept, and they woke up in the night in Ofakim on Sharett street."⁹³ He attended the Technion in Be'er Sheva, and then in Haifa, as far as he could go to get away from Ofakim. He continued his studies through a government program that paid for students from the periphery as long as they committed to returning to the periphery to teach, but when his studies were completed, he went to a peripheral town near Jerusalem. He still did not want to return to Ofakim.

In 1991 he took a job as an instructor at a boarding school for children from the periphery where he worked for nine years. Summarizing the experience of peripheralization which has been evidenced in the previous sections of this chapter, Krispel describes his time teaching at the boarding school like this:

⁹² Interview with Itzhak Krispel. 22 August 2022.

⁹³ Ibid.

"I enter, I ask a kid 'where are you from,' he says Sderot. I ask the next in line, he says Beit Shemesh. Ofakim, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Malakhi, Natsrat Illit. And then I ask them why they came here, they answer me the same way I answered when I left Ofakim. [...] This drove me crazy. And in the years I was with those kids, I went through with them what I had gone through myself. The distance from the parents, the alienation, the depression, the family problems, the language problems, the accent problems, problems with the gap between you and your parents, problems of desire to go back to the neighborhood, and how they tell the story about you in the newspapers, what society expects from you, what you are really giving back, how it looks from the other side. In short, this was my second childhood. There I decided I was going back to Ofakim to make sure that there wouldn't be other kids like this."⁹⁴

In 2001 Krispel returned to Ofakim and started a community association, *Ahuzat hanegev*, which until today organizes activities, lectures, and other events to foster community involvement in Ofakim and other Negev settlements. In 2009 he finished an MA and a program in Negev community leadership at Ben-Gurion University, and in 2013 he started collecting materials to develop Ofakim's archive. Krispel also created the city's first internet page when Ofakim was governed by its third *va'ada k'rua*, an appointed council, between 2007 and 2014.⁹⁵ In the vacuum of local leadership and the lack of an official archive, Krispel became an unofficial authority on the city and was contacted by newspapers, television stations, radio hosts, and even donors from within Israel and abroad to answer questions about the city. Today, the substantial collection of personal and official letters, photos, interviews, and all kinds of other documents that are available online as a part of Ofakim's municipal archive—including those used in this dissertation—are largely there because of Krispel's volunteerism. In addition to the municipality's webpage, Krispel also runs a facebook page for the archive which receives significant community engagement. As things stand, the municipality funds the archive ad-hoc and the state does not contribute, though Krispel is convinced he will persuade it to, soon.

Municipal archives for development towns began as the unofficial collections organized by dedicated local archivists, such as Itzik Krispel in Ofakim. A wider initiative of community archives in Israel's periphery, and particularly in the Negev, was born out of the collaboration of these archivists with Dr. Adi Portughies, head of the Ben-Gurion Archives housed at the Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism in Sde-Boqer. Dr. Portughies has since built relationships with archivists and scanned or housed materials from Ofakim, Yeruham,

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Haniel Elmekies, "קורעת את הדמוקרטיה? על המקום של וועדה קרואה בחברה דמוקרטית" (Appointed Committee - Tearing Democracy? The Place of Appointed Committees in a Democratic Society)." MA Thesis. (Be'er Sheva, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2015), 186.

Kiryat Shmona, Mizpe Ramon, and Hura. What is clear through these initiatives and the statements of dedicated individuals like Itzik Krispel, is that the residents of places like Ofakim understand themselves and their cities to have a history and culture which differentiate them from other localities in Israel.

In his 2013 book, *Memories of Absence*, Aomar Boum discussed the role of the museum of Akka, in southern Morocco, which included a prominent section about the Jews of the region. He suggests that museums often seek to “clean up” inconvenient historical realities, such as local factors which contributed to Jews leaving Morocco. The museum of Akka, however, according to its founder Ibrahim Nouhi, is “education by confronting”, and challenges Moroccan Muslims to engage with the rich history of Muslim-Jewish relationships in Akka and to make more nuanced judgements about Jews in the present, versus what they hear in the media.⁹⁶ Similarly, Itzik Krispel positions the role of Ofakim’s archive, and the other local archives in Israel’s former development towns, as one of actively pushing back against hegemonic narratives which devalue the histories and experiences of Jews in the periphery. By presenting both sides of the narrative, the difficulties Jews experienced as well as their achievements, the local archives encourage a more nuanced understanding of migration to and life in the Negev. By presenting a cohesive counternarrative, locals like Krispel have thus sought to center the periphery, so to speak, by differentiating the experiences of Moroccans in the Negev to the rest of Israel and framing them as pioneers.

A prominent example of such boundary-work can be seen from the earliest years of the development towns, such as in the commemoration of the sinking of the *Pisces*. The *Pisces* (also called *Egoz*), which sank on 10 January 1961, had been carrying Moroccan Jews immigrating to Israel. The event is traumatic in the collective memory of Moroccan Jews. In November 1966, municipal officials from several Negev development towns convened to organize a commemoration for the forty-four Moroccan Jews who had drowned on the *Pisces*. The Jewish Agency had begun organizing an official commemoration in 1962, but the interjections of Moroccan Jews from development towns are remarkable.⁹⁷ At their meeting on 28 December 1966, fifteen local leaders gathered in Sderot, where seven of the attendees were from. Two others were from Ofakim, including Yehiel Bentov, one was from Yeruham, one from Dimona, one from Netivot, and another three from Beit She’an. Four other invitees who could not attend were from Beit She’an, Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, and Kiryat Malakhi. All were from development towns, all but Beit She’an were in the Negev, and all were Moroccans.⁹⁸

The commemoration for the Jews who had died on the *Pisces* was one of many activities which the group planned. The group called themselves *haḥug leyots’ei maroḳo*, the Association

96 Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*, 120–29.

97 Jewish Agency for Israel. Letter from Shlomo Shragai to A. Harel. 4 January 1962. S6-10096, CZA.

98 Association of Immigrants from Morocco. *Protocols from a Meeting in Sderot (Hebrew)*. 28 December 1966. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946–1967, OFKM.

of Moroccan Immigrants. According to the minutes of a previous meeting, the Association was a response to the creation of equivalent organizations by Jews from Algeria and Tunisia.⁹⁹ At the meeting in December, the group outlined its plans for monthly lectures in each city—January in Dimona, February in Ofakim, etc. Additionally, the association noted that it would be made up exclusively of Jews from Morocco, and that it aimed to form a central national organization with other North African Jews and promote the “integration of North African electees in regional leadership.”¹⁰⁰

The local commemoration of the sinking of the *Pisces*, however, was an initiative of Moroccan leaders from development towns, particularly in the Negev. Such activities were self-consciously understood as resulting from their shared Moroccanness and origin in North Africa. In Dimona, for example, a monument was erected on 18 January 1967 which had partially been paid for by the Jewish Agency. In his request for the money to build the monument, the mayor of Dimona, Gabi Sebag, wrote that “Dimona as a center of North African Jewish settlement recognizes the importance of the immortalization” of these Jews.¹⁰¹ Sebag requested 10,000 Israeli Lira to build the monument, though Shlomo Shragai, head of the Jewish Agency’s Aliya department, approved 6,000 “and no more.”¹⁰² In December, Shragai sent an angry letter to Sebag in which he complained that none of the newspaper publications about the monument mentioned Jewish Agency officials or their donation.¹⁰³

Strikingly, the sinking of the *Pisces* was invoked for other, more practical concerns as well. On 13 December 1964, a local committee in Yeruham sent a letter to Shragai requesting five-hundred Israeli Lira for the construction of a “Torah library which will be named after the brothers who sent their souls on the altar of the homeland.” In this case the committee was made up of local Moroccan Jews who wanted a library added to the local religious track school synagogue “as a tool for teachers, worshippers, and the whole town.”¹⁰⁴ The funds were approved in February 1965. In another example, it was suggested by the United Jewish Appeal in Israel and the Jewish Agency that a forest of 10,000 trees be planted in the memory of the Jews who had drowned on the *Pisces*. Asher Hassin, a Moroccan Jew born in Casablanca and then an

99 Association of Immigrants from Morocco. *Protocols from a Meeting in Be'er Sheva* (Hebrew). 28 November 1966. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

100 Association of Immigrants from Morocco. *Protocols from a Meeting in Sderot* (Hebrew). 28 December 1966. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1946-1967, OFKM.

101 Local Council Dimona. *Letter from Gabi Sebag to Shlomo Shragai*. 30 August 1966. S6-10096, CZA.

102 Jewish Agency for Israel. *Memo from Shlomo Shragai to Barukh Duvdevon* (Hebrew). 9 September 1966. S6-10096, CZA.

103 Jewish Agency for Israel. *Letter from Shlomo Shragai to Public Local Council Dimona*. 27 December 1966. S6-10096, CZA.

104 State Religious School of Yeruham. *Letter from Religious School Committee to Shlomo Shragai*. 13 December 1964. S6-10096, CZA.

elected Knesset Member in Mapai in 1959, suggested that the forest be planted in the Jerusalem corridor near Beit Shemesh, a development town with a high population of Moroccan Jews.¹⁰⁵

It is clear that by the 1960s the development towns had already developed an understanding from within and a perception from outside as having a distinct relationship to North Africa and Morocco. As we saw in the previous sections, Ofakim had also garnered a reputation throughout Israel as crime-ridden and poor. It was disparaged by privileged people like Andre de Vries, who suggested the country's worst teachers belonged there, and was the subject of insulting stereotypes, such as related by Batya of Gar'in Oded. Locals had their own understandings of the influence of their countries of origin. Yehiel Bentov, for example, wrote a lecture to give at a conference called "the contribution of residents to the character of development towns."

In the lecture, Bentov began by noting the early problems of the towns: industry, housing, education, etc. It was with regards to housing, he said, that residents first stamped the town with their countries of origin. The chronic lack in the 1960s of larger houses for growing families meant that many residents took it upon themselves to expand the houses they'd been given. Bentov wrote "today we can see the residents' contribution in the city's design [...] and the creation of a style that includes both the foundations of their country of origin and the new Israeli present." Inside the houses, he wrote, it was common to see residents hanging carpets in the styles of their countries of origin, "Persian, North African, Indian, Russian..." and at communal events like Bar-Mitzvot or weddings, one could find Moroccan "burekas (pastel), pashtida (maḥmer), and arak (maḥia)", along with Tunisian, Persian, Egyptian, and Russian food and drink. This, for Bentov, was something exceptional about the development towns: "all of this intermarriage creates a unique character which gives the development city a cultural form which realizes the Zionist goal of the ingathering of exiles in a renewing state and creates a typical Israeli cultural form in the development cities."¹⁰⁶ It is worth adding that *arak*, a liquor derived from anise, and *maḥia*, a liquor derived from dates, are not the same, and the same is true for the other foodstuffs. It seems Bentov considered that *arak*, *burekas*, and *pashtida* were the names the reader would be familiar with, indicating that the lecture, and the counternarrative it expressed, was for a non-Moroccan audience.

Bentov's argument that it was in the development towns that a true ingathering of exiles had taken place in Israel was not a fringe one and is espoused today by development town leaders, community activists, and ordinary residents in different ways. Itzik Krispel, for example, promoted the exact same perspective, some five decades later in my interview with him in 2022. When I asked him to tell me, in his words, what the story of Ofakim was, he said:

105 United Jewish Appeal in Israel. Letter from A. Harel to Asher Hassin. 12 June 1964. S6-10096, CZA.

106 Local Council Ofakim. *The contribution of residents to the character of development towns* (Hebrew). 1970s. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1985-1987, OFKM.

“What is interesting is that [...] Ofakim is just a part of it. Which is to say the story is much larger, it’s about communities which come from all over the world, which dispersed 2,000 years ago, and got together again here, in Ofakim. [...] Of course, it was done through a small city, in the land of Israel, in the arid Negev, in an ingathering of exiles, which is in my opinion the meaning of the true Zionism. True Zionism is not to make a copy of Berlin and be Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv is a beautiful and very nice city, and I like it a lot, but I don’t know if that’s exactly an accurate Zionism. Maybe Ashkenazi Zionism, yes, but Zionism in my opinion is more than that. It’s actually to live with an ingathering of exiles, it’s to see how Haredi Jews live, it’s to disperse the country, in the end of it, it’s not to be in good weather next to the sea, and I have nothing against anyone who wants to live next to the sea [...]. I am only saying, I see here much greater pioneering, I see here really the use of the Zionist vision, of making the wilderness bloom, in doing hard work like farming, in transporting across long distances.”¹⁰⁷

Thus for Krispel, like Bentov, Ofakim represents the true expression of the Zionist vision, as opposed to Tel Aviv, or other central cities. It is contrasted to an “Ashkenazi Zionism” which, for them, means to transplant cosmopolitan Europe in Israel. Rebranding Ofakim as a genuine ingathering of exiles is a way in which community activists like Krispel and Bentov have sought to challenge more exclusionary notions of Zionism with one that includes Moroccans and other Mizrahim.

Another such rebranding initiative was undertaken earlier by Bentov in the 1970s. Following Ofakim’s second *va’ada k’rua* between 1961–1963, Moshe Mayevsky, an outsider of the Mafdal party, was elected mayor. Though Mayevsky proved popular, especially amongst more religious residents, by the end of his tenure in 1969 the municipality was rocked by “an empty account, a list of foreclosure orders from banks, full trash cans, sewage rising above the grills, a danger of disconnecting water and electricity for lighting the roads, etc.” 160 municipal workers who had not been paid in two months went on strike until a new government was elected led by Yehiel Bentov as head of the Ma’arakh, a national coalition party between Mapai and Mapam.¹⁰⁸ The city had accumulated so much bad debt that it could no longer receive credit from banks or building companies. Yossi Marciano was interviewed in 1975 at the age of thirty-two and as a part of the coalition from Mapam in charge of the department of youth, culture, and sport. Described then as a “local patriot,” he related that to regain the confidence of banks and companies, “[we] built everything from scratch. We had to build the new image of the city.”¹⁰⁹ Ofakim’s new image, and its corresponding slogan, was ‘*ir ganim banegev*,’ and

107 Interview with Itzhak Krispel. 22 August 2022.

108 Amos Hadad, “The Danger of the Collapse of Services Is on the Horizon. Salaries Have Not Been Paid to Employees for Months,” *Ha’aretz*, December 5, 1969.

109 Yosef Gilat, “20 Year Anniversary of Ofakim’s Mapam Branch,” *Mapam Municipal Papers*, September 1975, 4–5.

it explicitly drew on the Zionist tenet of “making the wilderness bloom” to present Ofakim in a better light.¹¹⁰

Ir ganim banegev, “garden city of the Negev,” became an umbrella for numerous projects which the new government launched during Yehiel Bentov’s longest candidacy as mayor of Ofakim between 1969–1978 (he was mayor again between 1983–1989). The vision of Ofakim as a modern garden city differed notably from outside visions of development towns and their residents, such as the Ashkenazi Israeli singer Israel Itzhaki expressed in his popular 1957 song, *Simona Medimona*. The song, purportedly about a young Mizrahi woman from Dimona that Itzhaki had met, described Simona as “black and ugly” and compared the town to the biblical “Sodom.” To combat such views and improve the lives of residents, the municipality enlisted large funds from the Jewish Agency and built parks and trees across the city. Additionally, the municipality subsidized the cost of water to encourage residents to tend their own gardens, which many did.¹¹¹ By virtue of these changes, by the late 1970s, Ofakim looked strikingly different than other Negev development towns.

Bentov’s part in transforming Ofakim into “*ir ganim banegev*” was not incidental and followed his personal expertise in community formation in the Negev, as well as his personal understanding of his own life and narrative, from Morocco to Israel. In 2000, Bentov self-published his memoir, *arba’im shana bamidbar*, or *Forty Years in the Desert*. Bentov’s memoir also covers a significant part of his life, from 1954 to 1964, when he worked as an agent of the Jewish Agency’s settlement department in charge of establishing, settling, and serving as a central contact briefly for settlements in the Arava, and mostly for moshavim in the western and northern Negev. This significant period of his life overlapped with his involvement in Ofakim’s local politics, such as during the contentious 1958 and 1959 elections. It also endowed him with the experience and knowledge which helped him succeed as Ofakim’s mayor, and which inspired him to turn the town into “*ir ganim banegev*.” Bentov had lived with his wife in Mivtahim, a moshav near the Egyptian border, until 1956, when they were married and moved to Ofakim. In 1955, Meir Ben Yair, a Moroccan Jew who had been Bentov’s Zionist scout leader in Casablanca, and who was then the Hasbara coordinator for the Negev, asked him to “to meet and talk with” new immigrants to moshavim in the Negev. His first such meeting was in January 1955 in moshav Shoval and, crucially, Bentov recounts that most of the conversation between him and the immigrants took place in Moroccan Arabic. The new immigrants told him about their problems, “income problems, lack of work, isolation, distance, lack of transportation and a doctor, etc.”¹¹² Bentov promised to report these to Ben Yair and did.

Bentov had already managed the establishment of settlements in the Arava in 1954, but in 1955 he began to oversee the transfer to the ground of new immigrants, the establishment

110 Interview with Yosef (Yossi) Marciano. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 050 1, OFKM.

111 Local Council Ofakim. Pamphlet - *Ofakim ir ganim banegev*. 1977. Yehiel Bentov Private Archive 1976–1984, OFKM.

112 Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (*Forty Years in the Desert*), 93–94.

of settlements, and the development and maintenance of moshavim in the Eshkol region and in the northern Negev.¹¹³ In another example in the Eshkol region, Bentov writes that he was called to mediate a conflict between families from Morocco and from Kurdistan in Moshav Mivtahim. As Bentov tells it, he and the immigrants came to the conclusion that one of the groups would have to move to another settlement, and the Jews from Kurdistan were moved to Moshav Eshbol. Mivtahim, he writes in his memoir, remained a moshav populated by Moroccan Jews.¹¹⁴ In the Eshkol region, Bentov says, “I established all the settlements in the area.”¹¹⁵ Bentov continued this work until 1964, when he officially entered politics in Ofakim, but continued to coordinate between the settlements he had established and the Negev authorities until 1967.¹¹⁶

Bentov’s work establishing moshavim in the Negev, many of which were populated by Moroccan Jews, informed his work as mayor of Ofakim and the “*ir ganim banegev*” initiative. In his 2017 interview, Yossi Marciano explicitly linked Bentov’s work as coordinator of Negev settlement and their rebranding initiative.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Bentov’s personal experience of immigrating from Morocco to Israel as a part of the youth *aliya* movement, his early life in a Kibbutz and his run-in with Ben-Gurion, and his decades of establishing settlements of Moroccan Jews in the Negev and as mayor of Ofakim all serve as testimony for the narrative he championed of Moroccan Jews as pioneers of the Negev. Additionally, Bentov’s career further nuances the narrative of Moroccan Jews as inert victims of Jewish settlement in the Negev, or as Yossi Marciano said, necessary Zionist casualties who were “led like sheep to the slaughter”. Bentov himself played a key part in mediating the process between the Jewish Agency’s *aliya* and settlement departments from above, and Moroccan and other Jewish immigrants from below. Bentov’s career thus offers a strong example of agency exercised in the history of Moroccan Jewish migration to the Negev, informing the counternarrative Bentov champions.

The recognition of the development towns’ specific link to Morocco and North Africa existed, and still exists, on all levels—from the towns’ individual residents and families, to local notables and community activists, and to government agents and elected officials. People like Bentov and Meir Ben Yair formed Moroccan nodes within Israeli networks which enabled the establishment of settlements in the Negev and mediated Moroccan Jews’ immigration processes and lives. This is in addition to the Moroccan Jews like Yossi and Yehuda Marciano, Amram Bittan, and Alice Tedgui who, in physically inhabiting, working, and building the town, made Moroccanness a key aspect of Ofakim’s history, and brought Ofakim into the purview of Moroccan history. The same is true of other Negev towns, as in Yeruham and Dimona, where their clear relationship to Morocco was recognized locally and by the

113 The region was then called the Mivtahim region.

114 Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (Forty Years in the Desert), 108.

115 Interview with Yehiel Bentov. 28 August 2017. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 09, OFKM.

116 Bentov, *ארבעים שנה במדבר* (Forty Years in the Desert), 121.

117 Interview with Yosef (Yossi) Marciano. OFKM PVT ORL ORLG 050 1, OFKM.

government. Even Moroccan Jews like Knesset Member of the Mapai party, Asher Hassin, who did not live in a development town, recognized their particular relationship to Morocco when he recommended that the forest in commemoration of the sunk Pisces be planted near Beit Shemesh. Such efforts served to center the development towns in Zionist narratives which had left them on the periphery. This same dynamic continues to be understood and revised by many local Moroccan Jews as part and parcel of a pioneer narrative in the Negev and Israel's periphery which informs the community activism of individuals like Ofakim's resident archivist, Itzik Krispel. In brief, if one way Moroccanness has manifested in Israel is by denoting a particular relationship to peripherality, than Moroccan Jews have successfully worked to center that peripherality in Zionist narratives and Israeli immigration history.

Conclusion

In the 2021 film, *Beyā'arot Ha'elu* (*In These Woods*), Naomi Omasi, a Yemenite immigrant to Pduyvim, next to Ofakim, and who worked for years planting trees for Keren Kayemet, stated: "Who made the wilderness bloom? Only *edot hamizrah*."¹¹⁸ The film, directed by Ronen Zaretsky and Yael Kipper, dramatizes and brings to life the testimonies of Jews, many of them Moroccan, who lived and still live in former development towns or moshavim and worked for Keren Kayemet planting trees. Reuven Abergel, a founder of the Israeli Black Panthers, acted in the film as an elderly man who spoke only Moroccan Arabic and was obliged to do the hard labor. Significantly, though the testimonies were given by Jews from Yemen, Iraq, and Tunisia as well, the film focused on a group of immigrants from Morocco.

On 3 January 2022, Ofakim's Matnas held a screening of *Beyā'arot Ha'elu*. The audience was filled with residents of the city, both old and young, and eight individuals, sitting next to their children and grandchildren, who had been interviewed for the film and who still lived in Ofakim or other moshavim and development towns. Three such participants in the audience were Naomi Omasi, and also Ya'acov Hayat, a Moroccan Jew who had worked for Keren Kayemet, and his daughter. After the film, Nadav Michali, a director himself who manages Ofakim's movie theatre, and a Jew of Moroccan descent born in Ofakim, facilitated as the film's directors answered questions and took comments from the audience. The discussion that erupted between the directors and the audience, as well as between the audience members themselves, demonstrates how lively the issue of the history of Israel's peripheral settlements continues to be amongst their residents. Several interesting exchanges took place during the discussion. One man praised the recognition of MENA Jews as pioneers, stating:

118 "Edot hamizrah" translates to "Eastern Communities" and refers to Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries. *ביערות האלו* (*In These Woods*), 2021.

“Thank you [...] you show the invisible people that no one saw, and no one even wrote about them! Every time I see in ceremonies where they light the torches, [...] I don’t see the people who really built the country, who really deserve to light the torch, and this is the first time in this movie that we see them, [people like these] Yemenites, and Ya’acov Hayat, and my father, and the people who really, with their own hands, built this country.”

Many in the audience clapped and agreed. Another man, younger than the first, spoke up, taking issue with the Mizrahi lens that pervaded the discussion. When Nadav Michali pointed out that there was historical proof that Mizrahim had been directed to the periphery instead of Polish Jews, the man vehemently disputed that narrative:

“They deserve recognition, but this discussion is going to a poor place... [...] The Mizrahi place. [...] It sounds to me like you are taking the respect that these people deserve... Everything you said is true and factual, but the film wants to give credit to people who did very hard work that I didn’t know about. And it’s so nice for me that I have two here from my moshav (Piduyim) and I look at them now full of respect, I didn’t know they did that, they are like me, the same origin (Yemen). [But] it doesn’t matter to me that Ashkenazim sent them, don’t take that from them.”

For this young man, noting the origin of these Jews diminished their contributions. Many in the audience found this contentious, but that young man insisted for long minutes that “Ashkenazim” or “Mizrahim,” it didn’t matter.

Another interjection was made by a young woman who was researching moshavim across the country and claimed to have interviewed some two-hundred people. The young woman responded to a comment one of the directors, Ronen, had made: “For nothing, people gave their identity and their time, and this needs to be known, no more and no less!” The researcher, disturbed by the remark, countered: “[...] you said, ‘they worked for nothing.’ It wasn’t for nothing. It was so that we would have a home and so we would have a country. These are the soldiers that were sent to the front.” The woman also criticized the lack of historical background in the film, suggesting the directors should have mentioned the role of planting forests in the state’s goal of dispersing the population and keeping Palestinian refugees from returning to their villages.

Finally, another young woman, the daughter of Ya’acov Hayat, who appeared in the film, admitted that this discussion did not interest her:

“At the end of all this philosophical and smart discussion, I, as [...] *ben porat yosef*,¹¹⁹ the representative of six children of Yaa’cov Hayat, [...] want to say to you thank you from us. [...] All our lives we absorbed Keren Kayemet, we lived Keren Kayemet, we grew up Kerent Kayemet, we did research after we got older, but we didn’t know so much, and you told us another side of our parents that we didn’t know, and I simply, in the name of all of us, say a great thank you.”

The vibrant discussion surrounding the narrative of MENA Jewish settlement in Israel’s periphery and their framing as pioneers reveals the manifold ways Moroccans have manifested their Moroccaness in Israel’s periphery. For many, Moroccaness, being Moroccan in Israel’s periphery, is inseparable from the history of discrimination and the harsh living and labor conditions suffered by new immigrants and their children.

Contemporaneously, strong local identities were formed based on a sense of being insiders, as opposed to outsiders who were either not committed to the place and sought to control it from outside, such as Dov Friedkin, or some of the missionizing volunteers of *Gar’in Oded*. Education and labor conditions in the town tended to confirm this feeling, with transitory teachers who recurrently arrived and left the town, and factories established from outside, never owned by locals, some of whom lived in fear of layoffs, while in other periods many languished in unemployment. As residents said themselves, it appeared as though Mizrahim paid a higher economic and social price as Israel industrialized. The feeling thus arose that an archetypal aspect of the Moroccan and Mizrahi experiences in Israel was marginalization, as captured by David Deri in his film *The Ancestral Sin*.

Not all interactions were regulated by this imposing sense of difference, however, and some Kibbutznikim like Batya from *Gar’in Oded* and some Ofakim residents like Shoshana, her family, and the town’s other underserved youths could benefit from these intercultural social exchanges. Indeed, Yehiel Bentov, who organized the program, genuinely believed that Moroccans and Moroccaness had something to offer the rest of Israel, as much as he thought that Moroccans in Israel needed broader support to overcome the major difficulties they faced. This belief led Bentov to try and control the narrative of Moroccan migration to the Negev, a process which he himself had to a large extent overseen. Bentov’s life embodied his own Zionist ideology in seeking to populate the Negev with primarily MENA Jews. It is clear that adapting a Eurocentric Zionist narrative to include Moroccans has everything to do with attracting state resources, such as with the commemoration of the sinking of the *Pisces*. Beyond this, however, Bentov’s own experience as a Zionist Moroccan Jew in the Negev informs his frank understanding of Israeli history. For him, Moroccans are an indisputable part of this history. The same is true for Itzik Krispel, whose archival work seeks to cement Ofakim’s place as an

119 *Ben porat yosef* is an expression used to ward off the evil eye, particularly when speaking about children, analogous to saying *bli ayn hara*, or repeating the word *ḥamsa* multiple times.

example of Zionism. In this way they argue that Ofakim is not peripheral to the Zionist story, but rather central.

This chapter has demonstrated many ways in which, for Moroccan Jews and their descendants, Moroccanness is a prominent aspect of their Israeli identities. This can be seen through the numerous examples given above, among them: the petition to rename Ofakim's first school after a Moroccan Jewish saintly rabbi; the real skills and experience which helped Moroccans survive in Israel's harsh periphery, such as Alice Tedgui's work as a seamstress in Morocco and her volunteer work in Ofakim, Yossi and Yehuda Marciano's family's political and socialist histories in Spain and Morocco; the continued legacy of Moroccan habits, traditions, and styles, such as cooking, and décor; and finally, the development of Moroccanness through the self-conscious centering of Israel's periphery to Zionism through the adoption of a narrative of Moroccans and other MENA Jews as pioneers. In these ways Moroccans in Israel's periphery did not avoid becoming Israelis by forming secluded Moroccan enclaves, but utilized Moroccanness to construct Israeli identities which suited them and their circumstances.

Significantly, these reformulations were all products of Moroccan Jews redefining themselves in the context of diaspora. As Moshe Bittan expressed, the source which made up what Ofakim had become was "on the ship that brought us to Israel. We made *aliya* as Jews—and we left the deck as Moroccans." Bittan was right in the sense he intended, that a Moroccan identity crystallized around their perceptions and efforts to build lives in Israel. On the other hand, some Jews in Morocco did, in fact, seek to become part of the Moroccan nation and even to serve as state-builders in the independent country. For this, let us return to Morocco.

The Moroccan Home Front

Who is the (Moroccan) AIU?

In 1957, the Moroccan Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) teachers' union—the *syndicat des instituteurs et des institutrices de l'alliance israélite universelle au maroc* (SIAI)—held its December congress and voted on a motion encouraging the Moroccan state to nationalize its members according to the conditions they had secured through their collective agreements with the AIU, and thus transform them into Moroccan civil servants.¹ During the early years of Moroccan independence, the SIAI even enlisted the AIU to advocate for this “integration” into the Moroccan civil service, culminating in the nationalization of one-third of its personnel in October 1960. In November 1964, just a few years later, the SIAI voted a diametrically opposed motion that rejected “any plan” for further nationalization and pleaded with the AIU to sign a new collective agreement regulating the working conditions of the personnel instead.²

The SIAI's radical shift in strategy vis-à-vis its employer and the Moroccan government in such a short period can be understood in the context of independent Morocco. Firstly, things were changing quickly. By 1957, over a third of Morocco's Jews had left the country, shrinking the AIU's potential student body, its very *raison d'être*. Those who had remained also faced new restrictions on their movement out of the government's fear that they would leave to Israel. At the same time, the independent Moroccan government suffered major instability as the monarchy, led by King Mohammed V, wrestled for dominance with political parties and contestants to his rule.³ When the dust of the power struggles had settled in 1959, the independent Moroccan government tackled the gargantuan task of shaping the Moroccan nation through policies of mass education and Arabization, including the nationalization of one third of the AIU's schools and staff in 1960.⁴ It was the AIU's teachers who had put themselves forward to be nationalized and converted from AIU employees into Moroccan civil servants. It was equally the AIU to which these Jews turned when they lost confidence in the Moroccan government's ability to provide for their livelihoods. Indeed, as the place of Jews in independent Morocco became increasingly unclear, the teachers of the AIU, like many Jews, turned to that organization to anchor their lives in Morocco. Though this chapter focuses on the late colonial and postcolonial periods, this was part of a longer process throughout the

1 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès*. 26-27 December 1957. AIU-MA-795.2, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (hereafter CAHJP).

2 SIAI. *Congrès extraordinaire*. 15 November 1964. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

3 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 153–57.

4 Spencer D. Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 250–59.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which Moroccan Jews increasingly worked through, and operated, the AIU and made it a Moroccan organization.

This chapter argues that by enabling its teachers to serve as state-builders, the AIU served as a venue for the crystallization of Moroccanness in the colonial and postcolonial periods. By examining correspondence between the Paris AIU and the unions, internal AIU documents and statistics, as well as the unions' own minutes and bulletins, this chapter studies how the Moroccan AIU's staff negotiated in the wake of independence, seeking to become, and be recognized as, Moroccan state-builders. It demonstrates how Jews fought for the right to belong in newly independent Morocco, often putting themselves at harsh odds with the Paris AIU. This chapter seeks to reframe AIU operations in Morocco, not as a French outpost, but as a local Moroccan institution by virtue of the staff and students which patronized and constituted it. Additionally, this chapter asks to what extent the AIU's foreign-born staff can be considered conceivably Moroccan, too.

Between 1862 and 1956, the AIU in Morocco transformed from a small educational institution staffed by foreign-born teachers into a large network of 83 schools and over 33,000 students, administrated mostly by local Moroccan Jews.⁵ Histories of the AIU in Morocco tend to end after Moroccan independence in 1956, or the nationalization of one third of its staff in 1960.⁶ As such, this chapter builds on a growing body of literature which reveals the complexities of Jewish life in postcolonial Morocco.⁷ To do so, I focus on the Moroccan AIU teacher's union as a case study to demonstrate how these Jews compelled the AIU to act as an organization that we can count as Moroccan, both under the French protectorate and subsequently in independent Morocco.

Prior to Moroccan independence in 1956, the AIU teachers' union initially advocated with the AIU and the protectorate government for their integration into the Cherifian civil service.⁸ In pre-independence Morocco, there were two civil service bodies: the Cherifian, or protectorate, staff and the metropolitan, or French Public, staff. The former, the majority of the country's civil servants, was comprised of French and Moroccan nationals, while the latter were exclusively French nationals in a state of "secondment," or dispatched, from metropolitan France to protectorate schools, usually for French settlers. I use the term "Cherifian" because,

5 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 40.

6 Laskier's authoritative volume ends shortly after nationalization and a more recent volume by Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol does not make it far past independence. See Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*; Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*.

7 See e.g. Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*; Christopher Silver, *Recording History: Jews, Muslims, and Music across Twentieth-Century North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022); André Levy, *Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslims, and an Israeli Anthropologist* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*.

8 AIU. Confidential: Meeting resumé of Moroccan AIU union audience with René Cassin. 29 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, Alliance Israélite Universelle Archives (hereafter AIU).

firstly, that was the term used by the union and the protectorate, and secondly because it was the Cherifian civil service, and not the French Republic's civil service that the union constantly aimed to be integrated into. This distinction is important because, when the Cherifian staff became the Moroccan state's civil service following Morocco's independence, it was this same staff that the union sought to be integrated into.

After independence, France and Morocco signed the 1957 "Convention Culturelle" which restructured Morocco's educational system. The Convention Culturelle aimed to prevent the mass departure of teachers from Morocco by permitting France to continue operating schools in the country after independence. Significantly, it made no provisions for the status of the AIU, whose administrators and teachers feared what independence would mean for them. The years surrounding independence thus saw the SIAI, the Moroccan AIU, and the Central Committee in Paris exploring all options to best preserve employees' livelihoods, Jewish education, and the continuity of the *oeuvre*.

In the last years before independence, tension erupted amongst the SIAI and the teachers as fears regarding what the future held for the AIU's foreign nationals undermined a previously unified front advocating for the entire staff's integration into the Moroccan civil service. As the nationalist atmosphere stigmatized foreigners, Moroccan teachers like Isaac Levy and Haïm Zafrani came to believe that Moroccan nationals could better advocate for themselves apart from teachers with foreign nationality. For their part, teachers with French nationality, both foreign and local-born Jews, feared losing their jobs if they were ineligible for employment in the Cherifian staff. This tension eventually led to a schism and the creation of separate unions for the AIU's Moroccan and French nationals.

Through the AIU's and the new French union's advocacy, many Moroccans and foreign-born Jews with French citizenship bargained for integration into the French civil service, prompting additional tension and difficult decisions about whether to remain in Morocco or depart for France. For those with Moroccan citizenship, the Paris AIU found it increasingly challenging to improve working conditions following independence. As the personnel's situation continuously worsened, the Casablanca-based union organized strikes and even asked the Moroccan government to intervene and mediate on its behalf. When the Moroccan government dragged its feet on its own promise to integrate the AIU's staff into the Moroccan civil service, the SIAI employed the AIU as an intermediary to lobby the government, too.

AIU Teachers as Moroccan State-Builders

This chapter argues that, from the pre-colonial period its teachers and students could make the AIU a Moroccan organization, and in both the colonial and to a certain extent into the postcolonial period, the nature of the AIU and France's protectorate allowed the AIU's teachers to serve as Moroccan state-builders. By this I mean that its teachers served Morocco's Jewish youth for nearly a century before independence, and they quite literally built the infrastructure which would later be part of the Moroccan state's school system. This was as true for local-born Jewish teachers as much as foreign ones.

As noted in the introduction, the first teachers of the Moroccan AIU had come from France, and then overwhelmingly from the former Ottoman provinces of Greece and Turkey. These teachers were often native speakers of Ladino, and so it is no coincidence that they became the largest contingent in northern Morocco, where the AIU opened its first schools and where the local Jewish population spoke Haketia, another Judeo-Spanish dialect. According to Aron Rodrigue, between 1869–1925, “[twenty-two] of the thirty-one male teachers and all nine women teachers from Morocco came from this region whose Jewish communities also spoke Judeo-Spanish.”⁹ Especially in the context of Spanish imperial influence in northern Morocco from the late nineteenth century, formalized with colonization in 1912, Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews were well-aware of notions of their origins in Spain, popularized at the time by the Spanish government and local leaders.¹⁰ The immigration of Ladino-speaking Jews to northern Morocco thus constitutes an intra-Jewish diasporic encounter as much as a quasi-colonial one. A sense of belonging to a Moroccan Jewish community was elusive amongst Jews in the early twentieth century and existed primarily amongst westernized intellectuals such as AIU alumni; most of these foreign-born teachers lived most of their lives in Morocco precisely when such a sense was becoming concretized.¹¹

Additionally, the efforts of locals like Elias Harrus and Haïm Zafrani were indispensable to the school network’s growth, as well as its accommodation by Moroccan Jews. Elias Harrus, born in 1919 in the Middle Atlas city of Beni Mellal, taught in the Moroccan school network from the age of 20, oversaw the opening of numerous schools in rural Morocco in the 1950s, and served as delegate of the Moroccan AIU/Ittihad-Maroc from 1960 until his death in 2006.¹² From its earliest days in the nineteenth century, the AIU in Morocco had been compelled to adjust its goals according to the expediencies of local communities, making it inextricable from the Moroccan context. Similarly in the twentieth century, Harrus was essential to the school network’s expansion following World War II, and had a knowledge of customs and language which were vital to aligning the AIU’s objectives with local communities’ needs.¹³ Harrus was one of the many local-born Jews who made up the majority of the AIU’s staff who lived most of their lives in Morocco. For his part, Haïm Zafrani, was born in Essaouira in 1922, and served as co-delegate of the Ittihad-Maroc with Harrus before immigrating to France, where he became a distinguished historian of Moroccan Jewry. Along with his wife, Célia, Zafrani had since 1956 sought to prepare the AIU for an Arabized future by encouraging Standard Arabic education in the schools. Zafrani was also a member of Al-Wifaq and was committed to Jewish life in independent Morocco. From the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, the interplay between local and foreign Jews made the AIU a Moroccan organization.

9 Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925*, *The Modern Jewish Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 73–74.

10 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 35–40.

11 Marglin, “Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913,” 588.

12 Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 399–400.

13 Aomar Boum, “Schooling in the Bled: Jewish Education and the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Southern Rural Morocco, 1830–1962,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 3, no. 1 (2010): 12.

Though students, parents, and other community members are all valid examples to bear out this argument, this chapter focuses on the AIU's teachers. By the mid-twentieth century, several major groups had emerged amongst the teachers of the AIU. There were the foreign teachers, born abroad, who had attended the AIU at home and then the École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO) in France, before at the young age of twenty or so coming to teach in Morocco, where many spent most of their lives. Despite the fact that they often and loudly pledged themselves to their adoptive *patrie*, France, they formed a crucial piece of what made the AIU a Moroccan success. By the 1930s the foreign-born staff lived largely in Casablanca and coastal cities rather than the interior. There were also Moroccan-born Jews who attended the AIU, the ENIO, and then returned to Morocco to teach there, where they, like their foreign-born counterparts, became part of Morocco's growing westernized Jewish elite. The third group of teachers, the majority of the staff, were Moroccan-born Jews who held only Moroccan nationality and had not studied at the ENIO.

A significant section of the staff eventually became French nationals, though nationality only tells part of the story. Very few had been born in France, and most of the ENIO graduates acquired French nationality later in life through one of several laws which allowed foreign nationals with French diplomas to become naturalized. Interestingly, in 1955 out of 141 teachers with French nationality, twenty-seven had been born French, thirteen had acquired it through marriage, and 101 had been naturalized according to these laws. Of these 101, thirty-five had been naturalized between 1928-1939, while sixty-six had been naturalized between 1945-1955; evidently the naturalizations had been halted during World War II.¹⁴

The AIU's network in Morocco had long relied on locally trained teachers, called *moniteurs*, or teaching assistants, to manage the high number of classes amidst a lack of ENIO graduates.¹⁵ Following the 1936 election of Léon Blum's Popular Front in France, the metropole invested heavily in education in Morocco in a bid to fulfill the hollow promise of the "civilizing mission." This expansion continued following the US occupation of North Africa in 1942, and the AIU benefitted profoundly, further extending its network into Morocco's deep interior.¹⁶ The speed of the expansion, however, outpaced the arrival of new ENIO graduates, and by 1949 most of the teaching staff had been completely recruited and trained in the AIU's schools in Morocco. Out of a total 512 teaching staff in that year, 192 had attended the ENIO, 320 teachers had only studied in Morocco, and an additional eighty-five employees were nurses, cooks, and domestic workers.¹⁷ By 1950 most staff only held Moroccan citizenship, and in 1957 the personnel was comprised of 611 Moroccan and 195 French nationals.

14 AIU. État Récapitulatif du personnel. 25 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

15 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 138.

16 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956*, 237-43.

17 Some of the non-teaching staff was not Jewish. Alliance Israélite Inspection. État du personnel. 10 November 1949. AM Maroc E 015 A, AIU.

Year	Total	French	Moroccan	Foreign
1945	345 ¹⁸			
1948	393 ¹⁹			
1949-1950	597 ²⁰			
1951-1952	675 ²¹			
1955	461 ²²	141	278	42
1956	718 ²³			
1957	806 ²⁴	195	611	
1958	791 ²⁵	192	599	
1959	849 ²⁶			
1960	622 ²⁷	111	509	2
1961	650 ²⁸			
1962	601 ²⁹	92	506	3
1963	496 ³⁰	89	407	
1964	428 ³¹	79	349	
1972	230 ³²			
1982	79 ³³			
1983	73 ³⁴			

Figure 3.1: Numbers of AIU Personnel working in Morocco.³⁵

- 18 SIAL. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 3 January 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.
- 19 Alliance Israélite Inspection. État du personnel. 9 November 1948. AM Maroc 015 A, AIU.
- 20 Alliance Israélite Inspection. État du personnel. 10 November 1949. AM Maroc E 015 A, AIU.
- 21 AIU. État des agents. 12 September 1952. AM Maroc E 015 A, AIU.
- 22 AIU. État Récapitulatif du personnel. 25 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.
- 23 Ittihad-Maroc. Tableau comparatif des diverses catégories du personnel. September 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.
- 24 AIU. État du personnel. 23 June 1957. AIU-MA-1066, CAHJP.
- 25 AIU. État numérique du personnel. 10 November 1958. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.
- 26 Ittihad-Maroc. Tableau comparatif des diverses catégories du personnel. September 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.
- 27 AIU. État numérique du personnel. 10 November 1960. AIU-MA-1079, CAHJP.
- 28 Ittihad-Maroc. Tableau comparatif des diverses catégories du personnel. September 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.
- 29 AIU. État du personnel. 10 November 1962. AM Maroc E 098 F, AIU.
- 30 AIU. État du personnel. 10 November 1963. AM Maroc E 098 F, AIU.
- 31 AIU. État du personnel. 10 November 1964. AM Maroc E 098 F, AIU.
- 32 Ittihad-Maroc. Tableau numérique des personnels enseignants. 10 November 1972. AM Maroc E 082 C, AIU.
- 33 Ittihad-Maroc. Liste du personnel en fonction. 1 October 1982. AM Maroc E 105 T, AIU.
- 34 Ittihad Maroc. Note succincte sur Ittihad-Maroc 25 March 1983. AM Maroc E 096 G, AIU.
- 35 Due to the nature of the sources, no one document held all employee statistics over numerous decades. This table must consequently be read with a degree of caution, as the lists these numbers were drawn from were often composed for different reasons and at different times of the year. I have endeavored to privilege, when possible, numbers which include all AIU/Ittihad-Maroc staff, and not only teaching personnel. Furthermore, I have opted to exclude, where possible, staff employed in AIU satellite schools, such as the ORT, Em Habanim, and Otzar Hatorah. It should be noted that the absence of employees with foreign nationality is misleading. These numbers were rarely indicated on lists, especially after 1956, though such personnel were continuously employed in the schools, even after independence, when most had been naturalized as French citizens.

The AIU in Morocco persisted by virtue of this heterogeneous group of teachers who operated it from the coast to the interior. Part of this chapter's contribution is the argument that these teachers can all, in some sense, be considered Moroccan. Though most were born in Morocco, those who were not became deeply involved in local Jewish communities and were no less consequential in shaping colonial and postcolonial Moroccan Jewish society. The AIU's teachers, wherever they were born, were the most prominent agents of change for Jews in Morocco. They instilled Jewish youth with new notions of Jewish solidarity, the West, and modernity, and they modeled new habits such as dress and hobbies.³⁶ The teachers also formed a political body which undermined and replaced traditional community dynamics, from opposing child marriages and the alliance which saw initially unreceptive rabbis become part of the school system, to becoming critical intermediaries between many local Jews and the Moroccan government.³⁷ Though we should not exaggerate the AIU's role in determining individual Jewish characters, in many ways Moroccan Jewish society on the eve of independence in 1956, as well as the notion of Moroccanness that Jews brought with them abroad, had substantially been influenced by the activities of the AIU's teachers.

Another important perspective to keep in mind when treating the AIU's teachers and independence is their role in Moroccan state-building, and how local and foreign-born teachers fit, or didn't, into the new Moroccan nation-state. In her book *Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Hilary Kalisman explores how teachers from former Ottoman provinces in Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan served as transnational agents of both colonial state consolidation and simultaneous subversive, anticolonial change. Kalisman follows these teachers from the interwar period when France and Britain established mandate governments carved out of former Ottoman provinces, ostensibly to prepare these countries for modern nationhood, into the 1930s and past Jordanian, Israeli, and Iraqi independence. Kalisman also demonstrates how teachers transitioned from valued intellectual elites with strong political access to colonial governments, to petty civil servants in independent nation-states whose role was devalued by policies of mass education. She writes:

"The growth of nationally bounded infrastructures, even those as integral to the construction of the nation-state as public education, was dependent on actors whose bodies and writings transcended these borders. [...] As states became larger, more powerful, and more independent, they became better at and more interested in aligning national ideologies with national borders, and in expanding national education systems in order to do so. [...] Educators lost their privileged access to the

36 Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939*, 183-84; Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 116-18.

37 Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939*, 205-16; Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 80-81.

upper echelons of governance. The easy slippage between regional and national affiliations would collapse into the hardened borders and alliances of nation-states.”³⁸

In many ways the trajectory of AIU teachers in Morocco—perhaps AIU teachers in general—mirrored and was even a pre-cursor to that of the educators which Kalisman describes. If Kalisman’s teachers were often foreign-born and expressed pan-Arab ideologies while propping up colonial structures, AIU teachers tacitly favored France’s colonial influence while instilling a transnational ideology of Jewish solidarity which forged new connections between local Jews and Jews abroad.³⁹

Similarly, too, AIU teachers’ roles in local communities went beyond education to “promoting hygiene, fitness, order, and development”, and they held privileged political access which gradually eroded with independence.⁴⁰ Though they sought, through the SIAI, to be integrated into the new Moroccan nation-state as civil servants, previously flexible national boundaries hardened so that a once heterogeneously fluid but united teaching corps became cracked along lines of citizenship. Just like their counterparts east of the Mediterranean who “found themselves poorly suited to the mandates’ new categories of nationality and citizenship”, AIU teachers with French or foreign citizenships on the eve of Moroccan independence feared the repercussions of nationalist educational policies.⁴¹ Such fears were amplified by overtly nationalist teachers like Isaac Levy and Haïm Zafrani, whom French nationals feared would not represent them in the union, while many teachers with Moroccan nationality hoped they would better serve their interests by adopting an explicitly nationalist platform.

This chapter focuses on the SIAI to show how Moroccan AIU teachers, wherever they were born, were equally invested in securing their futures both in colonial and independent Morocco. I allege that all AIU teachers participated in Moroccan state-building, fighting to remain in the Moroccan Jewish society of which they were a part and had helped shape. Even most foreign-born Jewish teachers had lived and worked most of their lives there, and there is every indication that few wished to leave until the circumstances surrounding independence compelled them to make difficult decisions. As noted above, the AIU’s teachers expressly requested their own nationalization into the Moroccan civil service, and independent Morocco nationalized one third of them and one third of the schools which they had established for the purpose of mass Moroccan education. Thus in addition to serving as a post-1948 history of one of Morocco’s most influential Jewish groups, this chapter also demonstrates how the AIU

38 Hilary Falb Kalisman, *Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Princeton University Press, 2022), 3–4.

39 On AIU teachers’ ambivalence towards French colonization in Morocco, see Marglin, “Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913,” 596–602.

40 Kalisman, *Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 79.

41 Kalisman, 47.

enabled Jews, both local and foreign-born, to serve as state-builders, agents who had developed an educational sector absorbed by the Moroccan nation-state. Ultimately this chapter does not make an argument about a diasporic Moroccan identity, which typically emerged after emigration. Rather, I focus here on how Moroccanness meant an opportunity to engage in building Moroccan national institutions, and the limitations Jews faced in trying to exercise those opportunities.

I begin with the origins of the SIAI during World War II before moving onto the collective agreements achieved through bargaining with the AIU and the French protectorate. I also draw insight from the case of the Tunisian AIU to demonstrate how Moroccan teachers engaged in Moroccan state-building processes and provide a new perspective on Arabization in Morocco. I go on to describe the schism between foreign and Moroccan nationals on the eve of Moroccan independence. I reveal how nationalist teachers like Isaac Levy and Haïm Zafrani hoped to prepare the AIU and its teachers for integration into the Moroccan state, and in doing so clashed with the schools' foreign nationals. I finish with the union's response to their nationalization in 1960 before concluding. Past independence, this chapter will focus on the AIU's Moroccan nationals, while the next chapter will address its French nationals.

Unionizing in the Shadow of War: The Moroccan AIU Teachers' Union

On 29 December 1943, Vitalis Eskenazi,⁴² the first general secretary of the SIAI, invited the esteemed French diplomat René Cassin, then Minister of National Education and Justice of Charles de Gaulle's "Free France," to visit to the AIU schools in Casablanca.⁴³ That year, Cassin had been appointed president of the AIU at de Gaulle's recommendation, and he wasted no time convening a provisional central committee, first in London in April, and then in Algiers in June.⁴⁴ Cassin played a major role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and would later serve as President of the European Court of Human Rights. Prior to these achievements, on 31 December 1943, Cassin met with nearly a third of the teachers of the AIU's Moroccan schools who related the hardships they had suffered since the war had begun. To remedy their issues, the SIAI requested parity with the Cherifian civil service.

The main issues the personnel reported to Cassin were their effectively subsistence wages and the forced resignation, by order of the Vichy-collaborationist protectorate government, of

42 As noted in the introduction, Vitalis Eskenazi was born in Greece in 1906 and began teaching in Morocco in 1926 after attending the ENIO. He worked in Morocco until his retirement in 1962. Vitalis Eskenazi. Fonds Harrus, 1309/1, AIU.

43 SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 29 December 1943. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

44 Jay Winter, "René Cassin and the Alliance Israelite Universelle," *Modern Judaism* 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 3.

numerous teachers since 1940.⁴⁵ Indeed, following the regular transfer of funds to Morocco in 1940, the Paris AIU was severely restricted by the Vichy government. It was first formally cut off from its schools east of the Mediterranean, and then was notified of its forced dissolution in March 1942. In a moving letter in April 1943, William Oualid and Maurice Leven, former members of the AIU's central committee, informed Ruben Tajouri, the AIU's Moroccan delegate, of the situation, and entrusted the Moroccan schools to him. Tajouri had been born in Libya in 1895, taught in the AIU's Moroccan schools since 1914, and became the Moroccan delegate in 1940, during the Vichy period, and continued until his passing in 1960.⁴⁶ Tajouri was a pillar in the Moroccan history of the AIU. In his response to Oualid and Leven, Tajouri pledged the continuity of the AIU's mission and the schools in Morocco. By November 1943 most of the remaining central committee members had gone into hiding. The Moroccan AIU was on its own.⁴⁷

Personnel wages had already been relatively low in 1939 due to inflation and the AIU's limited means, but in 1940, according to the SIAI, the situation was markedly worsened. Though the Vichy government maintained the subventions promised by the 1928 convention recognizing the AIU's role in Jewish education in Morocco, they were frozen at the level of the 1939 subvention, forcing Tajouri to significantly reduce wages in the French and Spanish zones.⁴⁸ During these difficult years, Morocco's cities were squeezed by rationing, forcing many to resort to the black market. As Susan Gilson Miller writes:

"People caught selling goods on the black market were denounced by name in the local press. When shopkeepers were arrested and cited, guilty Jews were singled out by the prefix 'Israelite.' [...] While no more guilty of black marketeering than anyone else, Jews fit neatly into the stereotype of dishonesty and lack of civic responsibility. Whether one was a native Moroccan Jew or a Jewish refugee did not matter—it was believed that violating the rules came more naturally to the Jew."⁴⁹

Jews were subject to quotas in specific professions, including law and medicine, and many were forced to leave the European neighborhoods of cities for the crowded mellahs.⁵⁰ The AIU

45 In a letter to the Director of Public Instruction (DIP) of the French protectorate of Morocco in 1945, Vitalis Eskenazi noted that it was primarily teachers with foreign nationality—e.g. those with neither French nor Moroccan nationality—who had been forced to resign, though they were re-hired by 1945. SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to DIP. 4 July 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU. See also Susan Gilson Miller, *Years of Glory: Nelly Benatar and the Pursuit of Justice in Wartime North Africa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2021), 76–86; 113–17.

46 Ruben Tadjouri. Fiches du Personnel, 100-1-66/08, AIU.

47 Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 313–18.

48 SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to M. Guéry. 3 January 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

49 Miller, *Years of Glory*, 85.

50 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 180.

did its best to keep its schools open and its employees paid, and Tajouri was able to secure a special subvention in 1942 from the *Union générale des israélites de France*, the antisemitic body governing Jews and Jewish organizations in Vichy France, but salaries remained low.⁵¹

Europeans had been generally permitted to unionize in the protectorates since 1936,⁵² and French civil servants had been unionized since at least 1919.⁵³ The Moroccan AIU, comprised of Moroccan and other non-European nationals, could not legally unionize,⁵⁴ and so the personnel instead formed an *amicale*, an informal labor union.⁵⁵ Only at the end of 1943 did the AIU personnel in Morocco officially unionize, in response to the resumption of activities by the Moroccan branch of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the reconstitution of the AIU's Central Committee.⁵⁶ In 1945, the SIAI was an incorporated member of the CGT. Following Operation Torch and the American invasion of North Africa on 8 November 1942, which saw the "rapid takeover of Morocco and Algeria" as launch points to free Europe from Nazi rule, René Cassin secured for the schools a special subvention of 4.6 million francs from the protectorate, but conditions were still challenging.⁵⁷

Following the SIAI's formation, Tajouri advised the school's directors to hold firm against it. By June 1944, however, Cassin was forced to recognize the union, intervening in July on behalf of the Moroccan personnel with the protectorate government, the French Ministry of Public Instruction in Morocco (DIP), and the central committee in Algiers.⁵⁸ Cassin's intervention and the resulting subventions from France and the protectorate government raised the wages of the AIU's personnel, though ultimately fell short of parity.⁵⁹ It was the union's first successful action. In the following years, local chapters across Morocco elected delegates and sent them to Casablanca once a year for the union Congress, where the union leadership was elected, and the union's claims were revised. Notably, only teachers recognized as tenured could initially

51 Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 321.

52 Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, 26.

53 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 158.

54 In colonial Morocco Jews were *indigènes*, indigenous subjects of the monarchy with highly restricted communal autonomy who could no longer use their own rabbinic courts, but were compelled to use the French-created Makhzan courts. French settlers, on the other hand, could naturally be subject to French law. Daniel Schroeter has argued that this made Jews more "Moroccan" in that they were directly "integrated in the reformed colonial Makhzan on a national level." See Schroeter, "How Jews Became 'Moroccan,'" 235-36.

55 SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 29 December 1943. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

56 Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging*, 91; a separate union was also organized amongst the Tunisian AIU teachers in 1943. See Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 330.

57 Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 330; Schroeter, "Between Metropole and French North Africa: Vichy's Anti-Semitic Legislation and Colonialism's Racial Hierarchies," 19.

58 Kaspi, Assan, and Abitbol, *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à Nos Jours*, 330.

59 SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 10 December 1944. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

vote, and it was only in 1956, in anticipation of Moroccan independence, that every category of personnel was permitted to do so.⁶⁰

In unionizing, the Moroccan AIU's teachers were following the example of the Cherifian civil service and signaling their parallel role to those teachers, but for Jewish education. In negotiations, they explicitly argued that their education and their activities made them in practice what they were not in name: state employees and state-builders. The next section will examine how the SIAI compared themselves to Cherifian teachers and framed their role in Morocco.

Cherifian Parallels and Proto-nationalization

In 1945 the SIAI began to request its integration into the Cherifian civil service. To understand the consequences of this demand, we must contextualize what integration would mean for the teachers of the AIU. In requesting that they become Cherifian civil servants, the SIAI were inspired by the AIU teachers in the Tunisian protectorate who had in 1945 been integrated into the French civil service. This did not mean that the AIU's schools in Tunisia had become French public schools—quite the contrary. Rather the Tunisian protectorate had assumed the costs of the AIU's salaries, then made equivalent to those of the protectorate's own civil service, while the schools and all other costs continued to be the AIU's responsibility. The Tunisian DIP reserved the right to inspect the schools, but their independence and their Jewish character was maintained.⁶¹ Thus when the SIAI requested that the Tunisian solution be applied to them, as well, they were not advocating for the end of the AIU in Morocco; rather, in aspiring to the stability of government positions, they were seeking its permanency.

The main obstacle preventing the integration of Morocco's AIU teachers into the Cherifian civil service was that relatively few were eligible for tenure. In September 1945, 180 out of 345 AIU teachers in Morocco had the appropriate diplomas to be tenured according to French regulations.⁶² As noted above, on the eve of World War II and following the end of the war, France had decided to invest heavily in education for its indigenous colonial subjects. The protectorate's Cherifian staff, made up of French nationals and Moroccan Muslims, had recently been promised parity with the metropolitan staff, and the government had announced the intention to open two-hundred public school classes across Morocco over the next ten years.⁶³ The protectorate's investment extended to the AIU, which was able to open new schools in the far interior of the country, but this investment ultimately fell short of parity, despite the SIAI's recurrent demands for it. Ultimately Eskenazi and the SIAI were arguing that the

60 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès annuel*. 26-27 December 1955. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

61 Habib Kazdaghi, "Les Écoles de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Au Lendemain de l'indépendance de La Tunisie (1955-1972)," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 51, no. 3 (2016): 295-96.

62 SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 11 September 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

63 Ibid.

teachers of the AIU were fulfilling an equivalent role to the Cherifian staff by educating Moroccan youths. In a letter to René Cassin, Eskenazi bolstered his argument by noting that it was due to the “personnel’s attitude during the painful Vichy period”, that the schools even remained open.⁶⁴

The AIU responded that they didn’t have the funds to give teachers parity, so the SIAI turned to the protectorate, hopeful because of the recent Tunisian case. In a meeting with the general secretary of the protectorate on 15 May 1946, Vitalis Eskenazi was accompanied by Eliézer Sikirdji,⁶⁵ Felix Azoulay,⁶⁶ and Jean Fardel, the general secretary of the CGT’s General Teachers’ Federation in Morocco.⁶⁷ Eskenazi summarized the AIU’s Moroccan achievements, lauding its fifty-eight schools and fifteen thousand students. The union leader compared their work to that of the protectorate, which “in its highly democratic spirit, tends to the masses of this country, which we, educators of thousands of young Moroccans, believe entitles us to [...] parity”.⁶⁸ If, they noted, the protectorate’s subvention to the AIU could not be raised to cover the higher salaries, then the “Tunisian” solution should be adopted.

This strategy which approximated the AIU’s teachers with Cherifian civil servants explicitly framed them as (colonial) state-builders engaged in the development of Morocco and its youth. Significantly, this argument was not without its flaws, and in arguing for their equal treatment with Cherifian employees, the SIAI denigrated the Moroccan Muslims working in that staff. In one letter to René Cassin, Vitalis Eskenazi pointed out that the protectorate had committed itself to establishing parity between “indigènes” and French nationals in the Cherifian staff. This meant, he argued, that Muslims would earn more than the AIU’s personnel despite the fact that their own Moroccan staff, “natives of this country[,] hold French diplomas, bestowed by the academies of Paris, Bordeaux, Aix and Oran”. Their diplomas could “in no way be compared” to those of their Muslim counterparts teaching in indigène schools who, despite their “devotion,” possessed “a relatively low intellectual and pedagogical capacity.”⁶⁹

The SIAI’s leadership, particularly its foreign-born members, in these years employed racially charged perspectives to argue for their deservedness of civil servant status in the French protectorate and aimed to distance even the Moroccan Jewish teachers of the AIU from Moroccan Muslims, rather than approximate non-Moroccan AIU teachers to “indigènes”. And yet, by invoking that many of their own teachers were “natives of this country”, the SIAI were

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Eliézer Sikirdji was born in Ottoman Manisa (Magnésie) in 1906 and who had worked in Morocco since 1926. Fonds Harrus, 3102, AIU.

⁶⁶ Felix Azoulay was born in Larache, Morocco in 1894 and working as an AIU school director across Morocco since 1915. Fonds Harrus, 0308, AIU.

⁶⁷ SIAI. *Compte-rendu de l’audience accordée par monsieur le secrétaire général du protectorat à la délégation du bureau syndical*. 23 Mai 1946. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

⁶⁸ SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to secretary general of the protectorate. 15 Mai 1946. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

⁶⁹ SIAI. Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin. 25 April 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

advocating for the elimination of a colonial difference between Moroccans and foreigners. The AIU had argued that parity was impossible, pointing to the fact that even in the Cherifian staff Moroccans were paid less than French nationals.⁷⁰ It was in response to this assertion that the SIAI invoked the protectorate's promise of parity between "indigènes" and French nationals in the Cherifian staff, and argued that they were entitled to it, too. Within the Moroccan AIU, just as within the protectorate, teachers could agitate for change which was both colonial and challenged colonial hierarchies. Additionally, the AIU's foreign teachers explicitly sought to be part of this vanguard shaping Morocco and its Jewish population.

This argument regarding the role of the AIU's teachers in Morocco provides an interesting perspective on how the AIU and its teachers engaged in Moroccaness through state-building. The expansion of Muslim education by the protectorate was widely understood as preparing a vanguard of Muslims to serve as Cherifian civil servants, a longtime concession demanded by local elites who desired French education in Morocco.⁷¹ As Spencer Segalla writes, "[however] flawed the DIP system may have been, its institutions and its teachers were to be the foundation upon which independent Morocco would build the schools of the future."⁷² This was a foundation, which the AIU's teachers had contributed to shaping, and the SIAI's demand for parity with Cherifian civil servants indicated their identification with the broader project of developing the country in and beyond a narrow colonial sense. Quite concretely, requesting parity with the Cherifian staff offered AIU teachers a platform to argue that, as teachers, they were engaged in Moroccan state-building, even within the limits of the protectorate.

Additionally, by pointing out their parallel roles to Cherifian teachers, AIU educators born in Morocco were aligned with their Muslim counterparts who sought upward mobility and to advance education in their country. These activities shaped an elite more aware of their belonging to a Moroccan national community, at least a Jewish one. On the other hand, foreign-born teachers were engaged in the same efforts, and thus participated in building this shared sense of Moroccaness, of belonging to the Jewish society which they were shaping. It is here important to reiterate that the SIAI did not advocate for the disappearance of the AIU as a Jewish educational network, nor that the schools should accept Muslims students. If AIU teachers were building Moroccan institutions, they were building ones for Jews. It was later, when independence cut harder lines between Moroccan and foreign nationals, that this state-building project, inclusive of foreign Jews, and yet exclusive of Muslims, fell apart. Before then, numerous other arenas illuminated how the SIAI participated in state-building efforts which could include locals and foreigners, such as the achievement of collective agreements with the AIU.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956*, 238-46.

⁷² Segalla, 247.

Parity, Privilege, and the Personnel Statutes

The period from 1943 until Moroccan independence, similar to the last years of the British mandates and the early years of independence in Iraq, Jordan, and Israel, saw the bureaucracy of education increasingly centralized within state borders. As Kalisman writes, “[teaching] became a standardized profession within national borders. As national governments consolidated their control over state education, teachers’ relationship to state- and nation-building projects changed.”⁷³ As the French protectorate, and later the Moroccan state, turned their efforts to expanding access to education, AIU teachers became tied to Morocco in ways which they had not been before. Indeed, if AIU teachers had long been mobile missionaries who could easily be relocated from Morocco to Iraq, the collective agreements which the SIAI signed with the AIU created a new incentive for teachers to remain in Morocco. As we will see, the SIAI also sought to, though limitedly, erase colonial labor differences, such as with salaries, between Moroccan, foreign, and French nationals. For all, as they nearly achieved parity with Cherifian civil servants, it became harder to distinguish the AIU’s teachers from the Moroccan proto-state builders employed by the protectorate.

Prior to 1949, the Moroccan AIU’s personnel had no collective agreement with their employer besides the results of negotiations and policies which, before World War II, had universally covered ENIO graduates teaching in AIU schools across the world.⁷⁴ Two important examples were the salary and retirement regimes which had been fixed by AIU ordinances in 1907 and 1909; notably, these had no provisions for the AIU’s auxiliary staff and teaching assistants, only for tenured staff and ENIO graduates.⁷⁵ The AIU’s ordinances were amended many times over the years, but it was only following World War II that the Moroccan personnel successfully negotiated legally binding collective agreements exclusively applicable in Morocco. Indeed, the fact that the collective agreements nearly covered the entirety of the teaching staff in Morocco further consolidated them as an educational corps distinctly attached to that country.

On 20 March 1945, the protectorate government issued a Dahir permitting limited categories of organizations to negotiate a *statut du personnel*, a collective agreement regulating their working conditions, which needed to be approved and signed by the personnel, the employer, and the general secretary of the protectorate. The categories of organizations listed in the Dahir were businesses approved by the Cherifian State or a municipality, businesses managing a public service, state agencies, and finally businesses with a recognized privileged

73 Kalisman, *Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 185.

74 Collective agreements in general were sparse before 1926, and were only protected by law for civil servants in 1928. A. Ayache, “Contribution à l’étude Du Mouvement Syndical Au Maroc: La Création de l’Union Des Syndicats Confédérés Du Maroc (C.G.T.) (1929-1930),” *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 66 (1969): 51–64.

75 AIU. *Circulaire: Caisse de Retraites*. 1 November 1909. AIU-MA-685b, CAHJP; AIU. *Règlement sur les traitements du personnel*. 20 January 1907. AIU-MA-685b, CAHJP.

status, either by the Cherifian state or an international accord.⁷⁶ Crucially, the Moroccan AIU fell under the last category, as it was not a public institution; specifically, it was the 1928 convention between the protectorate and the Moroccan AIU which empowered it to negotiate a personnel statute. The SIAI's change in fortunes was thus embedded in national changes in labor regulations.

For the SIAI, this Dahir was a turning point, and it would play a major role in all of the benefits and the struggles experienced by the personnel in the years following Moroccan independence. Since the union's formation, their main claim was parity with Cherifian staff, and in negotiating a personnel statute, they strove for the same, consistently comparing themselves to civil servants, both in negotiations with the AIU and the protectorate government. As noted above, the SIAI often emphasized their parallel role to protectorate officials and pointed towards similar examples. Indeed, the protectorate's position on these issues was vital; in the background of the SIAI's negotiations with the protectorate were the AIU's own negotiations with it. All increases in salary and working conditions promised to the personnel not only had to be approved by the protectorate, but they could entail an increase in the yearly subvention accorded to the AIU, who had limited independent means to implement such increases. The American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) eventually also played a major role in shoring up these deficits, but the regular subvention by the protectorate government underscored all of the AIU's responsibilities in Morocco.⁷⁷

Already by September 1945, Eugene Weill, general secretary of the AIU Central Committee, wrote to the union that "the Central Committee agrees on the necessity of a new statute" but that it had to satisfy the needs of the ENIO graduates as well as "the Moroccan teacher".⁷⁸ These difficulties would eventually lead to the elaboration of multiple personnel statutes, each for a different category of staff. The first was the statute for the "*Cadre Général*" (general framework or staff), comprising mostly ENIO graduates. Like all the statutes, the *Cadre Général* statute was modeled off the protectorate government's signed agreement with the Cherifian civil service, though there remained numerous important distinctions.

For example, the AIU's *Cadre Général* were not civil servants; indeed, though the statute granted them equal salaries with civil servants, the protectorate had only increased its subvention enough to make this possible for French nationals. Instead, the AIU committed itself to contributing the difference of the two salaries so that Moroccan nationals were paid as much as civil servants, as well.⁷⁹ Another obstacle in the negotiations was the paid trip to France which the protectorate government granted to its French civil servants every two

76 "DAHIR DU 20 MARS 1935 (5 Rebla II 1864) Relatif Au Statut Du Personnel de Diverses Entreprises," *Bulletin Officiel de l'Empire Chérifien, Protectorat de La République Française Au Maroc*, April 27, 1945, 2-3.

77 AIU. Letter from Jules Braunschwig to Eugene Weill. 10 February 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

78 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to SIAI. 25 September 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

79 In Tangier and the Spanish zone, where the French protectorate did not subsidize the AIU, salaries were ten percent lower. AIU. *Statut du Personnel du Maroc*. May 1947. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

years. Like the question of salaries, the AIU was ready to reimburse exclusively the voyages for their French personnel, as was the case for the protectorate's civil service, meaning that Moroccans and foreign nationals would not be included. In response to the SIAI's lobbying, the AIU, without any legal obligation to do so, was again compelled to pay for the remaining voyages itself so that all tenured staff, regardless of nationality, could benefit.⁸⁰

By May 1947, most elements of the statute for the *Cadre Général* had been finalized, but it took until July 1949 for the final draft to be ratified by all three necessary parties. The statute was effective as of 1 January 1948, meaning that all advantages, extra indemnities,⁸¹ and salary increases were retroactively applied.⁸² The document that was the result of intense negotiations between the SIAI, the Paris AIU, and the protectorate since 1945, and in part since 1943, did not grant the personnel complete parity with the Cherifian civil service. It did, however, drastically change the situation of the AIU's tenured personnel in Morocco, and it repeatedly used DIP policies as benchmarks if it did not cite or outright copy them. Critically, the statute stipulated that it was conditional on the French protectorate's 1928 convention with the AIU and its continued subventions.

The statute defined the requirements for entering the *Cadre Général*: that teachers be aged eighteen to thirty; that they possess "the required physical aptitudes," that they be Jews (*israélites*) of either French, Moroccan, or Tunisian nationality, or be the descendant of a teacher working in a Moroccan AIU school; that they be an ENIO graduate exercising a ten-year engagement or that they possess the *Brevet Supérieur*. The statute also specified that the same requirements employed by the protectorate would be used to tenure staff. Additionally, the statute recognized, for teachers who had taught outside of Morocco, the entirety of their years of service as though they'd been performed in Morocco.⁸³

The statute of the *Cadre Général* was one of three personnel statutes that the AIU ratified with its Moroccan personnel. A second statute, the statute of the *Cadre Particulier* (particular framework or staff), which covered substitute and auxiliary staff, similarly modelled off the protectorate's own statute with its comparable civil servants, was negotiated in June 1952 and implemented retroactively as of 1 January 1951.⁸⁴ This statute also permitted most teaching assistants to enter into the *Cadre Particulier*, achieving a dramatic increase in salary and conditions for the section of staff with the highest proportion of Moroccan-born Jews,

80 AIU. Notes prises lors de l'audience accordée par M. président Cassin au bureau syndical des instituteurs de l'A.I.U. au maroc. 5 September 1952. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

81 Indemnities were allowances paid out to teachers for specific situations, for example indemnities for teachers working in the rural interior (*indemnité de bled*), indemnities for teachers with a spouse and children (*indemnité de famille*), or indemnities for teachers living in municipalities with exorbitant rent prices (*indemnité de logement*).

82 SIAI. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to SIAI. 18 December 1953. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

83 AIU. Statut du Personnel du Maroc. May 1947. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

84 SIAI. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to SIAI. 18 December 1953. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

particularly those in the Moroccan interior. Indeed, some had been frozen at starting-level salaries for ten or even fifteen years.⁸⁵ Notably, these teaching assistants who became part of the *Cadre Particulier* would not have been promoted in the Cherifian staff, meaning the SIAI's negotiations had compelled the AIU to accord them a substantial privilege.

Next, a Hebrew teachers' statute (*statut des instituteurs de l'enseignement hébraïque*), for graduates of the École Normale Hébraïque, was adopted in January 1953 and implemented retroactively as of 1 January 1952.⁸⁶ A fourth statute, for the relatively few teaching assistants not absorbed into the *Cadre Particulier*, had theoretically been accepted by November 1955, but concerns surrounding Moroccan independence delayed it until it became impossible to implement.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, these advances, all negotiated by the SIAI, covered a much higher proportion of Moroccan-born Jews than the *Cadre Général* statute and represented a significant measure of security gained for these individuals and their families. Significantly, these statutes, like the *Cadre Général* statute, were contingent on the 1928 convention.

The case of the collective agreements demonstrates that in the period leading up to independence, the AIU's teaching staff, regardless of nationality, were given, indeed negotiated for, unprecedented opportunities to approximate the status of Cherifian state-builders. In 1955, Moroccan nationals made up 139 of the total 278 teachers in the ENIO-educated *Cadre Général*, and many of the 109 French nationals were themselves Moroccan-born.⁸⁸ Even the foreign-born staff had participated in these negotiations, and continued to argue to the AIU and the protectorate that they should be converted into the Cherifian civil servants. Though they did not become civil servants in this moment, in actuality the AIU's teachers had succeeded in cementing their role in Moroccan Jewish education, recognized by the protectorate since 1924, within the Moroccan national context.

Significantly, the collective agreements supported the notion and reinforced the reality of a Jewish teaching staff which was proper to Morocco as a country with a specific legal context and borders. Indeed, as the union would argue a few years later, it was due to the presence of collective agreements which only applied in Morocco that teachers were reluctant to leave as Morocco's political situation destabilized.⁸⁹ Prior to the collective agreements, ENIO graduates were administratively as attached to the AIU's transnational school network as they were to Morocco. The collective agreements are a testament to the fact that in the years following 1943 the AIU's staff in Morocco was becoming increasingly grounded in that country.

In addition to this, many of the SIAI's achievements diverged from the protectorate's plan and should be viewed as anticolonial, in a limited respect. The promotion of many teachers

85 SIAI. Bulletin. 7 January 1949. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

86 Ibid.

87 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to Moroccan AIU Personnel. 4 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

88 Ibid.

89 AIU. *Compte-rendu de l'audience accordée par M. le président Cassin aux représentants du personnel de l'A.I.U. au Maroc*. 29 November 1955. 18 June 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

only educated in Morocco to the salaries and conditions of the Cherifian civil service, where according to French regulations they would not have been employed, meant that the SIAI and the AIU had created an opportunity for Moroccan Jews to act as state-builders against broader colonial policy. This phenomenon resembled less the typical picture of the AIU in which a foreign missionary serves to westernize locals, and rather served as a notable development in a longer process begun by the AIU which set up Moroccan-born Jews across the country to teach other Moroccan-born Jews. Jessica Marglin has pointed out that too often scholars emphasize foreign intervention rather than focusing on how Moroccan Jews negotiated their own relationship to modernity.⁹⁰ Though the AIU certainly colored this cultural transmission, through the SIAI and its collective agreements, Moroccan Jews were increasingly empowered as arbiters of how to fulfill the AIU's mission of embracing modernity within the Moroccan context.

In the years leading up to independence, and in many respects after independence, as well, a process of Moroccan national crystallization was taking place, and the personnel statutes provided a critical incentive for AIU personnel to remain in Morocco. This process was interrupted when Moroccan independence and later the nationalization of one-third of the AIU's Moroccan network disrupted the security the statutes provided. The collective agreements would continue to be key reference points in the SIAI's negotiations with the Paris AIU. This continued to be true even when the AIU could no longer sustain its previous commitments and as the personnel felt increasingly anxious about their future security in Morocco. And yet, as we will see in this next section, fallback plans for what should happen if the country became inhospitable for Jews were formulated in parallel with those to cement the personnel's hard-won advantages in independent Morocco. Indeed, as Morocco decolonized and negotiated its future relationship to France, the AIU and its personnel worked feverishly to make sure they were not caught in a bad situation.

Preparing for independence: A new perspective on Arabization

On 29 November 1955, AIU officials including René Cassin and Eugene Weill confidentially met in Paris with the SIAI.⁹¹ Three union representatives made the trip from Morocco: Eliezer Sikirdji, mentioned above, Elie Obadia, born in Fez in 1918 and teaching in Morocco since 1936,⁹² and Sabetay Sabetay, born in Janina in Greece in 1907 and teaching in Morocco since 1927.⁹³ The purpose of the meeting was for the personnel and the administration to have a frank discussion regarding Morocco's looming independence and the future of the AIU in Morocco. The meeting

⁹⁰ Marglin, "Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913," 577.

⁹¹ Part of this section will also appear in a forthcoming edited volume titled *Jewish Ideas of France*.

⁹² Benjamin Gomel. Fonds Harrus, 1853, AIU.

⁹³ Sabetay Sabetay. Fonds Harrus, 2079, AIU.

followed months of bad relations between the union and the administration and was almost certainly prompted by the recent return of Sultan Mohammed V to Morocco from his forced exile to Madagascar since 1953.

The SIAI began the meeting by expressing that, due to the “rapid unfolding of events [...] it is no longer only the distant future which worries the teachers of the A.I.U. in Morocco because they foresee the threat of a forced unemployment in the much closer future.”⁹⁴ Indeed, troubled by the clause in their personnel statutes which subjected their advantages to the maintenance of the 1928 convention, the SIAI had since 1952 urged the Paris AIU to find a way to permanently secure their pensions. The Moroccan AIU’s personnel feared that, should the AIU go bankrupt, or should Morocco become independent, this clause meant they would have limited recourse to restitution.

With increasing boldness, the personnel had begun to request its “*fonctionnarisation*”, meaning their nationalization or conversion into Cherifian civil servants, as in the Tunisian case, paid by the protectorate, but working in AIU schools.⁹⁵ It was this request which incurred the scorn of the AIU administration, who beyond feeling that it demonstrated ingratitude, noted that it would be harmful to the personnel “who, in its overwhelming majority, is not French and does not hold the required diplomas” to be considered civil servants.⁹⁶ The issue had led the SIAI in May of 1955 to threaten to strike unless a solution was worked out.⁹⁷ The personnel eventually backed down following a discouraging meeting with the DIP, by whom “they had been so badly received [...] that they are completely prepared not to strike.”⁹⁸

The tumultuous events of the early 1950s—the Casablanca riots of December 1952 in response to the assassination of Farhat Hached, a labor organizer and leader of Tunisia’s nationalist movement, after which unions were temporarily prohibited from organizing, the Sultan’s exile in 1953, a slew of attacks on settlers and some on Jews throughout 1954 and 1955, France’s brutal repression of Moroccan resistance, and finally the return of Mohammed V on 16 November 1955—left the personnel shaken and concerned about an increasingly uncertain future.⁹⁹ In their confidential meeting with the Paris AIU, the SIAI also cited fears that the “generalization of the teaching of [Standard] Arabic would brutally hinder their careers” since “more than fifty percent” of the personnel could not speak that language. Additionally, with an eye on the nearly 100,000 Jews who had already departed, they expected a massive emigration to Israel

94 AIU. *Compte-rendu de l’audience accordée par M. le président Cassin aux représentants du personnel de l’A.I.U. au Maroc*. 29 November 1955. 18 June 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

95 SIAI. *Letter from SIAI to Ruben Tajouri*. 1 February 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

96 Such accusations of ingratitude were recurrent in negotiations with the AIU. See Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 209; AIU. *Demandes du Personnel de l’AIU au Maroc*. 23 August 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

97 SIAI. *Conseil syndical du 28 Mai 1955*. 29 May 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

98 AIU. *Letter from Eugene Weill to Jules Braunschvig*. 18 June 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

99 Laskier, “The Instability of Moroccan Jewry and the Moroccan Press in the First Decade after Independence,” 39; Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 149–53.

to reduce the potential student body in places the AIU still had no schools, since education in urban areas was “more or less completely accomplished.”¹⁰⁰

Having summed up their concerns, the SIAI expressed that:

“the personnel was anxious to know if the Alliance has thought of fallback positions for teachers who would find themselves suddenly in excess. They would prefer a plan for keeping the entirety of the personnel where they were *[[sur place]]* but in the case where it becomes necessary they would like to be transferred elsewhere, primarily in France.”¹⁰¹

In response, Cassin assured the representatives that the AIU was prepared “to fight if necessary for the maintenance of the Alliance and its personnel in Morocco” and that he had personally spoken with Sultan Mohammed V “who has assured him that he could count on his sympathy for the Alliance.” He noted that mass emigration to Israel seemed doubtful, and that “the high birth rate of Jews in Morocco” would likely replenish the emigrants’ numbers. Regarding the “Arabization” of schools, Cassin rationalized that new AIU teachers would simply have to be trained for the new system, but that a transitory period would certainly allow them to adapt. In any case, he added, “the role of French” would long remain important in Morocco, guaranteeing security for veterans. Eugene Weill, for his part, judged that “partial solutions” could be found for a certain number of personnel, as had occurred numerous times “when the role of the AIU was reduced in a country to develop in another”, potentially in Tunisia, Iran, or Lebanon.¹⁰²

Eliezer Sikirdji replied that despite the reasons why they “did not wish to establish themselves outside of Morocco (family reasons, the existence of a statute exclusive to Morocco, higher guaranteed pensions, etc...) [...] [in] times of crisis all [...] solutions must be considered.” For this reason, he added, the personnel thought they would be in a better position come independence if they could be integrated into the Cherifian civil service “even before the Franco-Moroccan conventions come into effect.” He specified, however, that French and Moroccan nationals should be integrated into the civil service. The Alliance would have the responsibility of finding positions for the thirty or so foreign agents who, being neither Moroccan nor French nationals, were not permitted to work in the Cherifian staff.¹⁰³

Little was resolved by the meeting; the SIAI requested that the Paris AIU send a reassuring message to the personnel, and Cassin declared that “the personnel and the Alliance must

100 Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 126; AIU. *Compte-rendu de l'audience accordée par M. le président Cassin aux représentants du personnel de l'A.I.U. au Maroc*. 29 November 1955. 18 June 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

survive.”¹⁰⁴ The meeting is emblematic of the Paris AIU’s and its Moroccan personnel’s motivations and strategies surrounding Moroccan independence. The Paris AIU, for one, had no intention of closing its Moroccan network, and in fact was working resolutely to secure its perpetuity. The personnel, for its part, was exploring numerous possibilities, a fact which reflected its heterogeneity. It is notable, however, that their primary goal was to secure their place in Morocco through their integration into the Cherifian staff. The SIAI’s reference to the “franco-Moroccan conventions” indicates that they were aware that the Cherifian civil service would be succeeded by the Moroccan civil service, that being integrated into that staff before independence would offer them a grandfathered security which independent Morocco would have to respect. They also stressed that being transferred abroad was, at least for now, only a fallback, or an option for foreign nationals if they could not be employed according to the regulations of independent Morocco. Adding to this the reasons the SIAI cited for wanting to remain in Morocco—their families, their personnel statute, and their pensions—emigration, though they wanted to be prepared for it, was not deemed attractive or an inevitability. In October 1955, the SIAI even signed a four-year accord with the AIU to satisfy some of their longtime claims.¹⁰⁵

On 2 March 1956, Morocco formally gained independence from France and Spain. Throughout the following year, the public schools of the former protectorate were rocked with uncertainty as to whether they would even open the following school year.¹⁰⁶ A landmark agreement, signed between Morocco and France on 30 May 1957, settled these fears for French civil servants: the *Convention Culturelle entre la France et le Maroc*—the Cultural Convention between France and Morocco. In brief, the convention permitted the agents of both states to manage educational institutions on each other’s territories. The convention also ceded the remaining French schools to the *Mission Universelle et Culturelle Française* (MUCF), which would thus oversee France’s schools in Morocco. French nationals would thus be “reintegrated” into the French civil service and could be employed in either MUCF or Moroccan schools, but be remunerated as though they were employed in metropolitan France. The convention dispatched them for a minimum one-year contract in Morocco, offering them the opportunity to extend it or be repatriated to France, where they were guaranteed another position.¹⁰⁷ The civil servants’ salaries, indemnities, and pensions were, naturally, paid and guaranteed by the French state.

Crucially, the convention made no mention of the AIU, and exclusively dealt with France’s own civil service in Morocco. Behind the scenes, however, as the French and Moroccan governments negotiated what education in independent Morocco should look like, the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ SIAI. *Union Congress Announcement* 1955. December 1955. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

¹⁰⁶ “Paraphe à Rabat de La Convention Culturelle Maroc-Française,” *Le Petit Marocain*, May 31, 1957.

¹⁰⁷ AIU. *Convention culturelle entre la France et le Maroc*. 30 May 1957. AIU-MA-1066, CAHJP.

Moroccan AIU's French nationals met with the AIU and French officials to be included somehow in the process being worked out for France's civil service on Moroccan soil. Why did the AIU's French nationals abandon their long-standing goal of being integrated into the Cherifian civil service and pivot towards the French civil service? While on the one hand the SIAI elite had routinely compared themselves to civil servants to extract the best possible benefits, the strongest answer relates to fears that the new Moroccan state would only employ Moroccan nationals in the Cherifian staff. As the AIU's Moroccan majority turned unequivocally towards their integration into independent Morocco's civil service to secure their futures, fear of what this would mean for French and foreign nationals led to a schism in the SIAI.

The conflict within the personnel simmered for months before finally erupting. On 28 November, the day before the confidential Paris meeting, a manifesto was circulated amongst the personnel on behalf of a "unionized group of teachers in Casablanca".¹⁰⁸ Notably, the manifesto had not been issued by the SIAI's elected leadership, but by nine teachers, six of whom were Moroccan-born Jews, and two of whom were members of the current SIAI leadership—Elie Obadia and Daniel Hadjez-Menda. Of these two, Obadia was Moroccan-born and would be present in Paris the next day. Among the names was also Haïm Zafrani, one of the pioneers of Arabic-teaching in the Moroccan AIU, later a general secretary of the SIAI, then a short-lived co-delegate of the Ittihad-Maroc with Elias Harrus, and finally a distinguished historian of Moroccan Jewry.¹⁰⁹ The introduction to the manifesto read:

"The Christmas congress will take place at the end of December. But great events are happening presently in our country. Morocco is moving towards its national independence and sovereignty.

A new era is beginning.

It is clear that these events will have a major impact on our situation and on our future. An independent Morocco will take control of the national education of Moroccan youth.

In this situation, it seems to us necessary to specify the attitude of the personnel and of our union to safeguard the interests of all our institutions. We insist on the fact that the personnel must maintain its unity and its cohesion.

It would be disastrous if certain agents, letting themselves be overcome by panic, as was recently attempted, to act alone, as a [separate] category.

108 Manifesto. *Au personnel de l'A.I.U. au Maroc*. 28 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

109 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès de 1954*. 27–28 December 1954. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

The interests of the entire personnel are at stake. We are persuaded that by keeping abreast of events, by adapting our teaching to the new circumstances, we will be able to safeguard and maintain the legitimate interests of the entire personnel.

For this, we think it indispensable to keep in mind certain imperatives which we ask you to subscribe to and to adopt at the next congress of our union."¹¹⁰

Numerous aspects of the manifesto evoked the tension amongst the personnel: the nod to Moroccan nationalism, absent from all previous union communication; the call for the personnel to remain unified, and the specific example given of a group of teachers "overcome by panic" who had seemingly taken unidentified steps outside the union framework; and the fact that it was only two members of the union leadership and not the union itself which had issued the manifesto. Additionally, that the manifesto was mostly signed by Moroccan-born Jews reinforces the likelihood that the "group" which they wrote about were French nationals seeking to be integrated into the French civil service.

The group cited five points which they hoped would be adopted by the next SIAI congress. The first was the union's integration into the *Union Marocaine du Travail* (UMT–Moroccan Worker's Union), which was the only union which Moroccan workers could join following independence. The second stipulated that it was in the interest of the personnel, and necessary for their affiliation to the UMT, to elect a union leadership directed by a majority of Moroccan nationals. The third was that the new union leadership would demand the immediate nationalization of the entire personnel by the Moroccan state, as well as the recognition of their previously acquired advantages. The fourth point urged the congress to request that classical Arabic, "the official language of our country", be taught in schools. Classical here referred to Modern Standard Arabic, which was "classical" in relation to Moroccan Arabic. They stressed that the entire personnel needed to accept this point, indicating that it was not universally supported. The final point, corollary to the fourth, stated that "the personnel itself needs to adapt to the new conditions and must learn [Standard] Arabic." They added that they would ask the AIU for the resources, either by organizing courses or by encouraging teachers to participate in internships.¹¹¹

The issue of Arabization deserves attention. Following independence, the Moroccan government endeavored to Arabize all public instruction, from primary to higher education, most of which had previously been offered in French. Confronted by numerous obstacles—a lack of teachers, both Jews and Muslims, familiar with Modern Standard Arabic, the inadequacy of existing textbooks for the Moroccan context, and the tenfold increase in Muslim enrollment in 1957—the first years of Arabization saw limited success. Over the following decades, Arabization

¹¹⁰ Manifesto. *Au personnel de l'A.I.U. au Maroc*. 28 November 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

was abandoned and taken up intermittently, to the chagrin of teachers and students, and was only fully achieved in the 1990s. Spencer Segalla contends that: “[ultimately], the argument for arabization was based not on financial or pedagogical concerns but on the ideal of the monocultural nation-state and the belief that the Arabic language was an essential element of Moroccan nationhood, and therefore that French-language instruction constituted a betrayal of the Moroccan self.”¹¹² This placed Moroccan AIU teachers in a problematic category, alongside many, perhaps most, Muslims who spoke a Berber dialect at home, not Arabic.¹¹³

The Moroccan foray with Arabization paralleled experiments with language in independent Algeria and Tunisia, as well. Notably, independent Algeria pursued a strong policy of Arabization out of the same drive to reclaim an authentic Algerian identity, and Algeria invested far more in importing foreign teachers since, just like Morocco, very few Algerians were proficient in Standard Arabic. Over a thousand teachers, largely from Egypt, were hired to teach in Algeria, where one-fourth of the population spoke a Berber dialect natively, while the rest spoke Algerian Arabic or French.¹¹⁴ Diverging more from the Moroccan case, in Tunisia nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba had advocated for Arabization before independence, but quickly pivoted to favoring French-Arabic bilingualism in the public sector. Favoring bilingualism from the beginning benefited Tunisian modern education greatly, and many of the problems associated with Arabization in Morocco and Algeria were muted in Tunisia.¹¹⁵

Historians have inadequately discussed the consequences of “Arabization” policies in independent Morocco for Jews and the AIU, despite some citing it as a significant motivation for emigration.¹¹⁶ The manifesto proves that some support was present among teachers, for example Haïm Zafrani, one of the signatories, responsible, along with his wife, Célia, for much of the Arabization achieved by the AIU leading up to and following Moroccan independence.¹¹⁷ Moreover, five of the manifesto’s signatories, four of whom were Moroccan-born, were elected at the SIAI congress on 26 and 27 December 1955 in Casablanca.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the three foreign-born teachers who signed are evidence that it was not only the AIU’s Moroccan-born teachers who were ready to adapt the AIU for Morocco’s independent future.

112 Segalla, *Moroccan Soul*, 250–9.

113 Kaoutar Ghilani has argued that the prevailing notion in Morocco today, particularly after the Arab Spring, is that Arabization was a mistake, or had failed. See e.g. “‘The Legitimate’ after the Uprisings: Justice, Equity, and Language Politics in Morocco,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (October 20, 2022): 848–49.

114 Farida Abu-Haidar, “Arabisation in Algeria,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 3, no. 3 (October 2000): 154–55.

115 Craig A. Sirles, “Politics and Arabization: The Evolution of Postindependence North Africa,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 121–22.

116 E.g. Bin-Nun, Yigal, “The Contribution of World Jewish Organizations to the Establishment of Rights for Jews in Morocco (1956–1961),” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 267.

117 Laskier, *Alliance*, 322.

118 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès*. 26–27 December 1955. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

More evidence, however, emphasizes that most personnel did not ardently support Arabization, but rather considered that publicly backing it would increase their chances of becoming Cherifian civil servants by appealing to nationalist lawmakers. Since its inception, the SIAI had only once before, in 1946, advocated teaching Arabic, in a move likely intended to align itself with the protectorate's investment in Arabic-language education following World War II. Given the nature of education in colonial Morocco in general and the AIU in particular, this lack of sustained support is unsurprising. Furthermore, the SIAI advocated for Arabization only until December 1957, after which it was never again mentioned on the union's platform.¹¹⁹ Second, as at the confidential November 1955 meeting with René Cassin, behind closed doors the SIAI voiced the personnel's concerns about Arabization, not their support.¹²⁰ Even if many teachers could speak Moroccan Arabic, few could teach Standard Arabic, or teach in that language.

Another aspect of this issue was the diversity within the personnel. The SIAI had long been governed by a foreign-born, Francophile elite, which, as noted above, sometimes espoused racist language regarding Muslim teachers to demonstrate their suitability for employment in the protectorate.¹²¹ Such claims attempted to approximate AIU teachers to Europeans rather than to Muslims, though foreign-born teachers could undoubtedly hold such views regarding Moroccan Jews, as well. Indeed, in the union's earliest years, Moroccan-born teachers were elected far less frequently to the leadership due to the union's policy which initially restricted voting to the *Cadre Général*, then mostly made up of an elite of ENIO-educated teachers, many of whom were foreigners. Consequently, amid the revolutionary atmosphere in 1955, some Moroccan Jewish teachers genuinely echoed broader nationalist frustration with foreign hegemony, which conceivably included both the AIU and the foreign-born teachers, and even foresaw an improvement of their position within the Moroccan AIU's hierarchy vis-à-vis foreign-born teachers. This did not, however, necessarily mean an avid support for Arabization, which, practically, was disadvantageous for most teachers. Furthermore, both foreign and Moroccan teachers signed the manifesto, highlighting their shared goal of Cherifian integration.

The manifesto simultaneously represented a serious determination, not only to secure their livelihoods, but to adapt the AIU to the reality of Moroccan independence. It is notable, again, that two of the signatories were currently elected by the personnel, and four others—Elie Gabbay, Sam Zrihen, Salomon Mayost Abitbol and Haïm Zafrani—would be elected by the next union congress, where motions to pursue their conversion into civil servants and integrate Arabic teaching would be voted unanimously.¹²² Just a few years later, the union's plans would be completely reversed.

119 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès*. 26-27 December 1957. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

120 AIU. *Réunion sur la situation au Maroc*. 24 November 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.

121 AIU. *Letter from Vitalis Eskenazi to René Cassin*. 13 February 1945. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

122 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès annuel*. 26-27 December 1955. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

Fears and Fractures: The Union Schism, Ittihad-Maroc, and Nationalization

Following the manifesto's circulation, tensions rose, and on 21 December Léon Arari sent a panicked letter to René Cassin, urging him to send the letter "to calm the worries of the personnel and reassure them about their future" which he had promised at the Paris meeting of 29 November.¹²³ While the AIU's French nationals also wished to be integrated into the Cherifian civil service, fears that the new staff would only comprise Moroccan nationals led them to worry that they would find themselves unemployed.¹²⁴ Integration into the Cherifian staff, then, posed unexpected risks for the AIU's French nationals.

In a separate letter on 21 December, Moroccan AIU delegate Ruben Tajouri informed Cassin that Arari "keeps asking me for this letter", and that to calm the union he had been forced to invoke the irregularity of the postal service. Referencing the manifesto, Tajouri noted two groups amongst the personnel, the "overheated Moroccan elements [...] [whose] ardor makes sense in the current agitation animating our Jewish circles on all fronts", to whom he attributed the calls for nationalization by the Moroccan state, or as he wrote, "the absorption of our Oeuvre." The other group, according to Tajouri, was a moderate block led by individuals like Arari and Eliezer Sikirdji, who he said could serve as mediators in the "coming confrontation". With Cassin's letter in hand, Tajouri said that these individuals could calm the personnel and discourage support for nationalization, which for Tajouri signified the end of the *oeuvre* in Morocco.¹²⁵ In a surprising twist, on 24 December, Cassin sent the promised letter, offering official support for the personnel's Cherifian nationalization.¹²⁶

The SIAI held its yearly congress on 26 and 27 December 1955 in Casablanca. The congress summary noted that, in addition to regular delegates, numerous individual members had arrived to take part in the extraordinarily important session. A new union leadership was elected, including five of the manifesto's signatories, four of whom were Moroccan nationals, listed above. Two others were French nationals, Sabetay Sabetay and Nessim Levy.¹²⁷ Notably, the French nationals had only been elected as advisors, and not to positions with specific responsibilities, likely due in part to UMT stipulations requiring Moroccan nationals to head the union. The congress voted motions opening union membership to all categories of personnel, urging the AIU to provide resources to teach Arabic, praising the AIU's support for nationalization, calling for the return to Morocco of exiled "syndicalists and democrats", and proclaiming their desire to do everything they could to "raise Moroccan Jewish youth in

123 SIAI. Letter from Léon Arari to René Cassin. 21 December 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

124 Groupement des instituteurs et institutrices français de l'AIU. *Rappel de notre problème*. 1 March 1956. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

125 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to René Cassin. 21 December 1955. AM Maroc EP 010, AIU.

126 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès annuel*. 26-27 December 1955. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

127 Nessim Levy was born in Edirne (Adrianople) in 1906 and had taught in five Moroccan Morocco since 1924. Nessim Levy. *Fiches du Personnel*, 100-1-55/31, AIU.

a spirit of fraternity” and to “develop relationships of fraternity and comprehension between Muslim and Jewish youth.”¹²⁸ The official document which resulted from the congress gave little additional indication of strain or tension.

Nevertheless, a few weeks after the congress, on 16 January 1956, Sabetay Sabetay circulated a letter announcing his resignation from the SIAI, citing his incapability of fulfilling his role. Sabetay wrote that the personnel knew “under what difficult conditions the last congress was held”, and the gargantuan efforts of the delegates to put together a plan satisfying “all categories” of staff. He lamented, however, that the union was paralyzed, citing “mistrust based on unfounded accusations.”¹²⁹ Following the letter, the remaining SIAI leadership had circulated a bulletin, citing his election as an advisor as a cause for Sabetay’s resignation. In response, Sabetay sent another letter on 26 January, condemning the union’s accusation and revealing that the true reason was an article published by Isaac Levy in *Al Alam*, the Istiqlal’s official newspaper. The article had seemingly denounced him by name, and Sabetay accused the union leadership of supporting it in a meeting on 14 January.¹³⁰ Unfortunately, I was unable to find additional information about the contents of the article which Levy wrote, and the union documents give no further indication of how the issue was addressed.

Isaac Levy was a Moroccan Jewish teacher and labor organizer born in Safi in 1924. Levy attended the AIU in Casablanca where he received his *Brevet Élémentaire*, and then went to teach in the Safi school, where he taught French and Arabic since 1942. He briefly taught in Salé in 1951, and then in Casablanca until 1968. He also briefly served as a regional inspector for the Moroccan Ministry of Education in 1957, and would later acquire several degrees, including a law degree in 1968.¹³¹ Levy had been an elected union delegate in 1953 and 1954 and would be again numerous times after 1956. He was said to have been “exiled” from Safi for having fomented strikes amongst local fishermen, but I could find no corroborating stories about this.¹³² According to Charles Bensimon, a school director and at one time SIAI general secretary, Levy had “since 1943 proven himself an enemy of the Alliance, critiquing it in the Arabic and union press, accusing it often of colonialist and Zionist actions.”¹³³ Born in Mazagan in 1917 and having taught in five different Moroccan schools since 1917, Bensimon heavily disliked Levy, but his notes are not likely exaggerated.¹³⁴ Many other documents agree that Levy was a firebrand nationalist, and he would become a thorn in the side of the administration, organizing numerous strikes over the next decade. During Bensimon’s tenure as SIAI general secretary, Levy had so aggressively criticized his “collaboration” with Tajouri that Bensimon

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Letter from Sabetay Sabetay to SIAI. 16 January 1956. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

¹³⁰ Letter from Sabetay Sabetay to SIAI. 26 January 1956. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

¹³¹ Isaac Levy. Fonds Harrus, 1580, AIU.

¹³² AIU. Letter from Charles Bensimon to Eugene Weill. 1962. AM Maroc EP 12C, AIU.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Charles Bensimon. Fonds Harrus, 0618, AIU.

had seemingly threatened to silence him by revealing to the UMT and the personnel that Levy had previously requested French nationality, in a bid to smear his nationalist credentials.¹³⁵

In his writing about Levy to the Paris AIU, Bensimon wrote that the man was a “communist,” though this is probably untrue, and was most likely meant to discredit him. Still, Levy’s own attack on Sabetay in *Al Alam* demonstrates the tensions which were erupting between some foreign and local-born teachers. In threatening to reveal that Levy had sought French nationality, even Bensimon admitted that being a foreign national, regardless of where one had been born, had quickly become stigmatized. Influenced by the general nationalist atmosphere and the uncertainty about the lot of foreign nationals in independent Morocco, AIU teachers found it increasingly challenging to find a way forward which benefitted all, setting the stage for the union schism.

By 1 March 1956, the SIAI’s final refusal to incorporate a defined French section to advocate for French and foreign nationals, who “see their futures threatened”, led Sabetay and several other French nationals, both foreign and Moroccan-born, to organize a small group. Indeed, the SIAI had been informed by the DIP in a recent meeting that not all the personnel could be integrated into the Cherifian staff. The French nationals had begun to organize separately, with the conviction that “it is in Paris, during the Franco-Moroccan negotiations, that our problem will be studied and resolved.” The SIAI consequently sent a letter demanding they cease their “anti-union activity”.¹³⁶

On 19 March, Nessim Levy, the only French national remaining in the union leadership, announced his own resignation in a deeply troubled letter comparing the conflict to the one between “the Franco-Moroccan populations of this country”.¹³⁷ Following his departure, the SIAI held an extraordinary congress on 25 March, several weeks after Morocco formally became independent. In announcing the congress, Haïm Zafrani, general secretary, wrote that though they understood the anxieties of “our French and foreign comrades”, they believed that “right or wrong, the situation of the Moroccan staff could most easily find a solution which met their interests” alone. A separate group exclusively representing French nationals was soon formalized, marking the end of the era during which the entire Moroccan AIU personnel formed a single union.¹³⁸

As Nessim Levy wrote, the conflict between nationalist teachers like Haïm Zafrani and Isaac Levy, on the one hand, and teachers with foreign nationality, on the other hand, mirrored the state of the country as it struggled for independence. In the nationalist atmosphere, all things foreign became stigmatized and “locals” sought to rid themselves of “foreign” dominance. In one sense, this applied to the SIAI, as well. In pushing a vision of Moroccan

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Groupement des instituteurs et institutrices français de l’AIU. *Rappel de notre problème*. 1 March 1956. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

¹³⁷ Letter from Nessim Levy to AIU personnel. 19 March 1956. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

¹³⁸ SIAI. *Congrès extraordinaire*. 10 March 1956. AIU-MA-795.5, CAHJP.

nationalism which obscured the nuances within the AIU, teachers like Isaac Levy alienated those with foreign nationality. While it meaningfully addressed the dominance of foreign nationals in the country, it also overlooked that, in the AIU, many of these foreign nationals were Moroccan-born Jews, as well, and that many had spent their lives teaching Moroccan youths and building Moroccan institutions. Similar to Spencer Segalla's argument regarding Arabization, some AIU teachers adopted a vision of Moroccan nationalism which essentialized the personnel according to their nationality—either you were Moroccan, or not. As the government adopted a similar line, maintaining responsibility for foreign nationals became an obstacle to Cherifian integration. At the moment of independence, Moroccaness shifted from empowering all Jewish teachers to build Moroccan state institutions, to encouraging a sectarian rather than an inclusive nationalism.

Following the schism in the SIAI and the formation of a new union representing the Moroccan AIU's French nationals, most of these personnel, through their own efforts and the support of the AIU, succeeded in securing their own "reintegration" into France's civil service. Like their counterparts employed in MUCF schools in Morocco and AIU schools in Tunisia, they became employed directly by the French state and dispatched to the AIU schools, where they continued to work until they either resigned, retired with a French pension, or were "repatriated" and transferred to a position in France, a move which some regretted. Many of these were Moroccan Jews, and their stories are crucial to understanding the AIU post-independence; they will be treated in more detail in Chapter 4. The following section will continue to focus on the SIAI and the majority of Moroccan nationals which it represented.

Planning for Nationalization

In the early years of Moroccan independence, the SIAI and the personnel endeavored to prepare the AIU for the future of Moroccan education, a future which likely included nationalization. Ruben Tajouri had, before independence, launched an Arabic training program for teachers trained at the École Normale Hébraïque, and beginning in 1956 Haïm and Célia Zafrani prepared Arabic manuals as well as weekend and evening courses to train veteran AIU teachers.¹³⁹ Together, Tajouri and the Zafranis introduced Arabic into the AIU curriculum year-by-year, so that by 1959 four elementary school years taught Arabic six hours per week.¹⁴⁰ These developments were supported by the SIAI, who in 1957 in their first congress following the schism, applauded the AIU and the personnel for its stunning efforts, and urged the AIU to further fund leave, grants, internships, and other measures to facilitate the process.¹⁴¹

139 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 321-23.

140 Laskier, 321-23.

141 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès annuel*. 26-27 December 1957. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

The SIAI stated in bulletins that its primary concern in 1957 was acquiring the personnel's nationalization into the Cherifian staff, but only with respect to "acquired situations, seniority in class, retirement, etc." At the 1957 congress, the question had been debated, with the assembly eventually acknowledging that "his majesty and [...] the Minister of National Education possessed [...] [the] authority to define the schools' structures." The assembly voted a motion encouraging the Moroccan state to integrate them and another for the "Moroccanization" of school directors, meaning the replacement of foreign and French nationals by Moroccans. The assembly also continued to adopt Moroccan nationalist language, thanking the AIU for contributing to their "evolution" into "Moroccan citizens conscious of their rights and the duties towards the homeland (*patrie*)."¹⁴² This tone seemed to acknowledge that the Paris organization's role in managing its Moroccan network would soon end, but also points to one of this chapter's main arguments—that the AIU had shaped the way in which Jews understood their relationship to Morocco as a national entity, and that it had given them the opportunity to serve as state-builders within it.

The AIU continued to support the staff's nationalization, and on 14 April 1958 the SIAI met with Moroccan education cabinet Minister Nasser al-Fasi, who confirmed that "the principle of [their] [integration] was certain", but that due to budget constraints it could not be achieved until January 1959. Two days later, the government was dissolved, frustrating the SIAI's efforts to extract an official document expressing the government's intention to nationalize them. In the meantime, the SIAI worked tirelessly documenting the status of the personnel and preparing proposals for the conditions under which they would integrate into the Cherifian staff.¹⁴³

The Paris AIU did not in principle oppose nationalization, but in the background negotiated desperately with the Moroccan government to ensure the future of Jewish education in Morocco. The AIU hoped for a situation in which the Moroccan government would acquire the personnel, dispatch them to the AIU's schools and accord a yearly subvention, similar to how the protectorate had operated, and indeed how the schools continued to operate. Jules Braunschvig wrote in September 1957 that "the risk is not [...] that [the government] compels us to pay more, but that we see our schools transferred altogether to the government, the first step of a complete fusion and the disappearance of Jewish schools... and one day a *numerus clausus* if not *de jure*, at least *de facto*".¹⁴⁴ The personnel's budgetary assumption by the state would in fact be a relief to the AIU, whose operational deficit was growing each year.¹⁴⁵

The Moroccan Ministry of National Education, succeeding the protectorate DIP, had inherited the responsibility of conferring the AIU yearly subventions according to the

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ SIAI. *Rapport d'activité du bureau syndical*. 15 May 1958. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

¹⁴⁴ AIU. Letter from Jules Braunschvig to Marcel Franco. 2 September 1957. AM Maroc E 114 G, AIU.

¹⁴⁵ In 1958 the AIU ran a deficit of sixty million francs, and in 1959 it was 350 million. AIU. *État des écoles de l'alliance israélite universelle au maroc au 1 octobre 1958*. 9 October 1958. AM Maroc E 112 G; AIU. Memo. 12 July 1960. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

1928 convention, but had frozen it at the 1957 level of 617 million francs.¹⁴⁶ In May 1959, the government informed the AIU of their definitive refusal to increase the subvention, and only the AJDC kept the school network solvent.¹⁴⁷ In return, the AJDC's requested that the AIU cut costs,¹⁴⁸ but under pressure from the SIAI not to introduce restrictions, the AIU managed to maintain conditions according to the personnel statutes until 1960.¹⁴⁹ A special subvention of forty-five million francs was allotted by France in late 1959,¹⁵⁰ but expecting a deficit of half a million francs in 1960, the AIU was at the end of its rope.¹⁵¹ Proving true the AIU's worst fears, and despite hope that it would be maintained, effective 1 October 1960 the 1928 convention was abrogated, fundamentally changing the position of the AIU in Morocco.¹⁵²

Failed hopes for a Moroccan Jewish civil service

The nationalization of its Moroccan schools has largely been misunderstood in the historiography of the AIU, and especially here I contend that my research presents an important contribution to the field. Neither Laskier's nor Kaspi's authoritative volumes focus on nationalized personnel, nor indeed on any schools much after 1960. The break before and after nationalization has never been questioned, though multiple sources demonstrate an important, if temporary, continuity after 1960. Indeed, if one-third of the Moroccan AIU's personnel had suddenly become civil servants, the major claim of these teachers would have been satisfied. Instead, the Moroccan government first doubled down, and then backtracked on its intention to integrate all AIU schools into the Moroccan public system. It was between the independent Moroccan government's intransigence and the AIU's substantially deteriorated financial situation that the SIAI¹⁵³ became more militant than ever before. I argue that by nationalizing some AIU schools, not respecting the collective agreements signed by the teachers, and finally reneging on its promises to integrate AIU teachers into the civil service, the Moroccan government precluded Jews from continuing to serve as Moroccan state-builders in the new educational system. This was despite the fact that Jewish teachers overwhelmingly

146 AIU. *État des écoles de l'alliance israélite universelle au maroc au 1 octobre 1958*. 9 October 1958. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

147 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Charles H. Jordan. 5 March 1959. AM Maroc E 114 G, AIU.

148 AIU. Letter from Jules Braunschvig to Ruben Tajouri. 11 March 1959. AM Maroc E 112 G; AIU. Letter from Jules Braunschvig to Marcel Franco. 11 March 1959. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

149 AIU. *Réunion sur la situation au maroc*. 24 November 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.

150 AIU. Letter from Jules Braunschvig to Roger Seydoux. 30 November 1959. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

151 AIU. Memo. 12 July 1960. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

152 The convention was officially abrogated by Dahir on 3 March 1961, but the effective date was 1 October 1960.

153 Following 1 October 1960, the SIAI became known as the *Syndicat National des Instituteurs et Institutrices des Écoles Israélites du Maroc*. For simplicity, and to stress the continuity of the represented personnel, I continue to use the abbreviation SIAI.

fought to secure their livelihoods by being legally recognized in name what they had already been in practice.

On the eve of nationalization, the AIU had seventy-seven schools, 823 teachers, and 28,684 students. On 1 October 1960, the government nationalized 19 schools, 233 teachers and 9,653 students, leaving the AIU with 64 schools, 590 teachers and 20,741 students.¹⁵⁴ For the personnel, a new category of teacher was created: AIU teachers teaching in nationalized schools, referred to as “integrated” teachers and schools. Crucially, these teachers were not considered civil servants, and, as we will see, integrated teachers’ status lacked the security which the SIAI had hoped would result from nationalization.

What, then, did nationalization mean? Theoretically, nationalized schools were state schools and nationalized teachers state employees, severed from the AIU. In practice, the changes were ambivalent. Predictably, nationalized schools enrolled Muslim students and employed Muslim teachers who were civil servants. Former AIU teachers, however, were still paid through a government subvention to the AIU. This was because the government declined to provide integrated Jewish teachers with SOMs, state identification numbers necessary to enroll in public pension and health insurance schemes. Indeed, in the years following nationalization, integrated teachers who reached pension age requested it from the government and “were told to go to the Alliance to settle their pension”.¹⁵⁵ They also continued to be covered by the Moroccan AIU’s health insurance cooperative rather than the government’s. Most importantly, integrated teachers were still represented by the SIAI, and continued to bring their concerns to the AIU, alongside the Moroccan government.

Following the nationalization, the SIAI held its congress on 19 March 1961. As usual, the union listed its many claims and declared that “the general situation of all AIU teachers is deteriorating.” For example, the AIU lapsed on promoting personnel according to the statutes, no longer instituted salary increases parallel to the government, and refused to negotiate a statute for nurses employed in the schools.¹⁵⁶ For non-integrated personnel, it urged the AIU for parity with government staff on numerous counts. For integrated personnel, the union voted a motion praising the government’s decision to integrate this staff into the Moroccan civil service, though warned that none of their previously acquired rights should be abandoned.¹⁵⁷

Despite their motion of praise, the personnel were unsettled by the unilateral nationalization without negotiations or guarantees for their salaries, pensions, and other conditions. Consequently, non-integrated personnel did not immediately reiterate their desire for nationalization. In response, they urged the AIU not to send their personnel dossiers to the government before a new statute had been negotiated, extracting a promise that the personnel

154 AIU. *Écoles de l’A.I.U. au maroc*. 30 December 1960. AM Maroc E 112 G, AIU.

155 AIU. *Réunion sur la situation au maroc*. 24 November 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.

156 SIAI. *Compte-rendu des travaux*. 21 January 1962. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP; Ittihad-Maroc. Report from Charles Ben-simon for Eugene Weill. 15 January 1962. AM Maroc EP 12C, AIU.

157 SIAI. *Congrès* 1961. 19 March 1961. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

statutes were still in effect, though by doing so tacitly admitting that since the 1928 convention had been abrogated, they effectively had no personnel statutes, and thus no legal protection.¹⁵⁸

The SIAI's fears were realized when, following Ruben Tajouri's death in 1960 and that of Sultan Mohammed V in February 1961, the Moroccan AIU was dissolved by the government, becoming on 27 November 1961 the *Ittihad-Maroc*.¹⁵⁹ On the one hand, the AIU was dissolved because "nationalists, communists, and labor unionists with left-wing inclinations pressured the Palace" to do so, believing that the AIU was a foreign body with too much influence in the country.¹⁶⁰ *Ittihad-Maroc* was presided over by Simon Abergel, and Tajouri's position as delegate was inherited by Elias Harrus and Haïm Zafrani. Under Harrus and Zafrani's direction, the *Ittihad-Maroc*, though it was in essence the same organization, earned the immediate hostility of the personnel as the AIU finally attempted to relinquish the guarantees of the legally abrogated collective agreements.

The AIU had been for years under pressure from the AJDC to reduce expenditures but had found itself with ever-rising costs as schools closed, the subvention remained the same, and the costs of paying the teachers remained disproportionately high compared to the number of remaining schools. In particular, the idea that the AIU would cancel their pensions led the SIAI to frame the *Ittihad-Maroc* as a "stooge" which could not negotiate with the personnel. The AIU's financial woes mirrored those of the country in general, and Morocco's economy "showed a steady and steep decline from 1956 onward, marked by low productivity, rising unemployment, weak savings and investment, and an unfavorable balance of payments."¹⁶¹ Massive inflation and "overall unemployment [...] at 45 percent but [...] as high as 60 percent in rural areas", coupled with government instability, incited the personnel's extreme reaction to the *Ittihad-Maroc*'s sudden appearance.¹⁶²

Fears and tensions finally boiled over at the SIAI general assembly on 21 January 1962. For the first time, the union elected as general secretary an overt nationalist, Isaac Levy, mentioned above. According to a report by Charles Bensimon, the assembly was "stormy and marked by very violent attacks against the Central Committee of the Alliance and the delegation in Morocco." The assembly, and particularly teachers from the interior, accused the AIU of having discarded the statutes and deserting the personnel in the hands of a "stooge"—the *Ittihad-Maroc*.¹⁶³ What is interesting is that the election of Levy and an overtly nationalist leadership did not translate into a desire to disconnect the personnel from the AIU. Though they maintained their desire to be integrated into the Moroccan civil service, the precarity

158 SIAI. *Compte-rend d'audiences*. 5 May 1961. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

159 *Ittihad-Maroc*. Letter from Simon Abergel to moroccan minister of national education. 27 November 1961. AM Maroc E 109 L, AIU.

160 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 331.

161 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 173.

162 Miller, 173.

163 AIU. *La vie de nos écoles*. 19 January 1962. AM Maroc EP 12C, AIU.

of the personnel, resulting from a lack of practical guarantees that the Moroccan state would maintain their working conditions in the context of the country's extreme political and economic instability, compelled them to further attach themselves to the AIU. This must be understood within the context of the AIU's role in Morocco since the pre-colonial period. If the AIU had spent a century largely replacing traditional channels of recourse for Jews in the country, it remained in the years following independence as Jews' premier political outlet. Even when they espoused overt Moroccan nationalism, and in contrast to Moroccan Muslim nationalists, many Jews did not understand the AIU to be a foreign intruder, but rather an integral part of Moroccan Jewish society. Even if some did, like Isaac Levy may have, they could not forego the AIU. Thus it was the Ittihad-Maroc, and not the AIU, which the SIAI called a "stooge."

Ironically, the Ittihad-Maroc represented practically the same administration, the same schools and employees, and the same funding—a subvention accorded by the government, albeit a smaller one, and significant funds from the AJDC through the Paris AIU. In many ways the "dissolution" of the AIU and the creation of the Ittihad-Maroc was a nominal move meant to appease the King's political adversaries. But another crucial aspect of this history is that the AIU did take this opportunity to attempt to sever part of its relationship with its Moroccan branch as a means of reducing its costs, which were too high. Though it did not want to completely absolve itself of its role in Jewish education in Morocco, the AIU welcomed a distanced role which would see more responsibility placed on the Moroccan government for funding the schools and, more importantly, managing the personnel. What is fascinating is that it was Moroccan Jews themselves who succeeded in keeping the AIU fully implicated in Morocco. In seeking to redirect Moroccan Jews to the Moroccan government, the AIU tried, and failed, to undermine its own historical role in mediating Moroccan Jewish political activities.

In response to the Ittihad-Maroc's abandonment of the personnel statutes, the union threatened to strike on 27 February and refused to engage with the Ittihad-Maroc, recognizing only the Alliance as its employer.¹⁶⁴ Multiple times in February, the SIAI met with co-delegates Harrus and Zafrani, and each time the union announced that the delegates had been intransigent, and that only the AIU could solve their problems.¹⁶⁵ On the other end, Charles Bensimon reported that Isaac Levy was holding back negotiations with an "all-or-nothing" attitude, and that he often cut meetings short.¹⁶⁶ Evidently the AIU was hoping for the least expensive deal to hold them over until the personnel's inevitable assumption by the government, while the personnel worried that any recognition of the Ittihad-Maroc would mean a *de facto* relinquishment of the statutes signed between them and the AIU.

¹⁶⁴ SIAI. *Compte-rendu des travaux*. 21 January 1962. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ittihad-Maroc. *Report from Charles Bensimon for Eugene Weill*. 15 January 1962. AM Maroc EP 12C, AIU.

To resolve the issue, the SIAI solicited arbitration on behalf of the Moroccan government. On 14 February 1962, Isaac Levy, David Levy,¹⁶⁷ Elie Gabbay, and Roger Banon¹⁶⁸ of the SIAI, accompanied by Mr. Amalou from the Moroccan union for public school teachers,¹⁶⁹ met Harrus, Zafrani, and Abergel from the Ittihad-Maroc and three representatives of the Moroccan Ministry of National Education. According to Isaac Levy, the SIAI refused to recognize the Ittihad-Maroc, who stated that continuity with the AIU was not possible, and that they needed time to see which claims they could satisfy. The government representatives acknowledged that the Ittihad-Maroc had to undertake all the AIU's responsibilities.¹⁷⁰ After another heated meeting that ended in shouting on 26 February, the SIAI effected a general strike on 27 February, as promised. On 1 March, a second government arbitration took place, at the end of which two points were agreed: that the personnel's working conditions would not be diminished, and that a new collective agreement would be signed as soon as possible. At the meeting, the SIAI also invoked, to the government representatives, the worrying situation of the integrated teachers, still unresolved.¹⁷¹

The SIAI and the AIU had continued to lobby the government to specify the uncertain positions of the integrated personnel. Only after profuse petitioning did the government finally promulgate, on 19 July 1962, the "Dahir of integration", declaring the eventual nationalization of all Moroccan nationals of the AIU. Crucially, the Dahir was vague regarding the conditions of the integration; it did not pledge to respect their current remuneration, promising instead an indemnity for personnel whose situation diminished, and announced that a special commission would be convened to determine specific conditions. It also stated that the government would enroll employees in the appropriate pension fund.¹⁷²

Over the next two years, the SIAI incessantly lobbied the government for details. Meanwhile, the AIU introduced moderate improvements for non-integrated personnel, while integrated personnel suffered from a salary freeze since 1961.¹⁷³ The Ittihad-Maroc continued to petition the government to secure the eventually nationalized personnel's secondment to its schools. At an extraordinary SIAI congress in November 1964, everything came to a head. Salomon Bensmien,¹⁷⁴ representative of the integrated personnel, resumed their precarious

167 David Levy was born in Ouezzanne, Morocco in 1936, and had been teaching since 1959. David Levy. Fonds Harrus, 1560, AIU.

168 Roger Banon was born in Casablanca in 1930 and served as a teacher in the AIU/Ittihad-Maroc schools from 1952 until 1974. Roger Banon. Fonds Harrus, 0333, AIU.

169 *Fédération Nationale de l'Enseignement* (National Federation of Education).

170 SIAI. Bulletin. 20 February 1962. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

171 SIAI. Bulletin. March 1962. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

172 "Dahir Du 16 Safar 1382 (19 Juillet 1962) Portant Intégration Du Personnel de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Dans Les Cadres Du Ministère de l'éducation Nationale," *Bulletin Officiel de l'Empire Chérifien*, July 27, 1962.

173 SIAI. Bulletin. 10 October 1962. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

174 Born in Essaouira in 1913, Salomon Bensmien worked in five AIU schools between 1933 and 1966. Salomon Bensmien. Fonds Harrus, 0646, AIU.

situation, and announced that the government had informed them that it was no longer possible to apply the integration Dahir. The delegate from Meknes proposed to refuse further nationalization if it meant losing the statutes, and the delegate from Fez pronounced a complete loss of confidence in the Ministry.¹⁷⁵ A new leadership was elected in which Isaac Levy was replaced by Bensmien as general secretary, and the union voted a motion citing the “dramatic situation of our comrades, said to be ‘integrated’, and opposing ‘any plan for nationalization’.”¹⁷⁶ Disillusioned by the government’s handling of their integration, the SIAI abandoned, after twenty years, their claim for integration in the Cherifian civil service.

On 24 November 1964, following the extraordinary congress, the new SIAI leadership met in Paris with AIU officials, including Jules Braunschvig, Eugene Weill, Raymond Leven, and others. Elias Harrus, sole delegate of the Ittihad-Maroc, was also present. According to the minutes of that meeting, Salomon Bensmien announced to those present that the Moroccan personnel unanimously wished to depart from Morocco. Meyer Sisso and David Alfassy, two union delegates, cited the personnel’s numerous worries and they urged the AIU to maintain the personnel statutes and no longer request their nationalization from the government.¹⁷⁷

In a frustrated response, Jules Braunschvig noted that since 1956 the union “had only one idea: to be nationalized and no longer depend on the AIU.” The vice-president also noted a contradiction in the personnel’s request: did they want the AIU to help them emigrate, or to satisfy their claims in Morocco? After much back and forth during which the SIAI equally urged the AIU to provide opportunities for emigration as well as security in Morocco, David Alfassy lamented that it was terrible that the Moroccan personnel, rather than the French personnel, was consistently sacrificed. To this Braunschvig retorted that “if you want to live in Morocco, sacrifices must be made.”¹⁷⁸

The case of Ittihad-Maroc and nationalization is a significant example of how Jews attempted, but ultimately failed, to become partners in building the independent Moroccan nation-state. At the core of the issue was the role of the AIU in Moroccan Jewish society and the advancement of a policy of mass education in Morocco in general. The Moroccan government sought to democratize education, but also to disseminate a useful nationalist, curriculum to help shape a “monocultural nation-state” based on an Arab identity to which French was an intruder and essentially foreign.¹⁷⁹ Naturally, this perspective included the AIU, whose former exclusive responsibility for Jewish education was incompatible with this notion of a homogenous Moroccan national identity. But in a broader sense, by failing to acknowledge the role that the AIU had played over a century in shaping Moroccan Jewish society, the government undermined one of the key pillars of Jewish life in the country.

175 SIAI. *Compte-rendu du congrès tenu à casa*. 15 November 1964. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

176 SIAI. *Congrès extraordinaire*. 15 November 1964. AIU-MA-324, CAHJP.

177 AIU. *Réunion sur la situation au maroc*. 24 November 1964. AM Maroc E 103 H, AIU.

178 Ibid.

179 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956*, 257–58.

The importance of this pillar was evident for students, teachers, parents, and alumni before the colonial period. It can further be seen in the colonial and postcolonial periods through the teachers who, in using the AIU to secure their livelihoods in Morocco, either by becoming civil servants or by pleading for the AIU to remain their employer, made the AIU a Moroccan organization. The AIU had become the most important locus for Jewish political action in Morocco, and the irony was that, despite the AIU's origins in France and the benefits it derived from French colonialism, even a nationalist Moroccan Jewish teacher was compelled to employ the AIU as a mediator to try and become a Moroccan civil servant. If the AIU had empowered Jews, even foreign ones, to act as colonial Moroccan state-builders during the protectorate period, it continued to fulfill this role in trying to convert its staff into postcolonial Moroccan state-builders, too. In a sense, the Moroccan government tacitly recognized this when representatives of the Ministry of National Education ruled that the AIU could not abdicate its responsibilities in Morocco, when it referred retiring nationalized teachers to the AIU, as nationalized teachers aired their complaints to the AIU, and as the AIU continued to administer nationalized teachers' salaries through a government subvention.

In abandoning the project of integration and failing to make Jewish teachers civil servants, the government closed the door on a significant opportunity for Jewish involvement in independent Morocco. The *Ittihad-Maroc* became a failed experiment, not because it was too foreign, but because the government did not recognize its local history. The AIU's teachers had long expressed their willingness to integrate into the civil service, and nationalization did not inherently change this. More generally, the *Ittihad-Maroc* "failed" because the Moroccan government's priorities constituted roadblocks for Jews. Privileging Standard Arabic and adopting an essentialist notion of who and what was authentically Moroccan alienated many Jews, even the majority who spoke Moroccan Arabic. Additionally, by not integrating Jews into the civil service, it explicitly precluded them from the influential roles in shaping Moroccan society which they had previously enjoyed.

To some extent, this was part of a MENA-wide phenomenon by which teaching, a venerable and respected occupation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became in the later twentieth century devalued as formerly colonized countries instituted costly policies of mass education.¹⁸⁰ The same process took place in Jordan, Iraq, and Israel, where formerly transnational and generally foreign teaching corps became incompatible with the goals of nationalist education.¹⁸¹ The government's priority in the years since independence was its investment in increasing access to education across the country. The working conditions of an elite group of teachers associated with a quasi-colonial organization, especially Jews amid significant Jewish emigration, was secondary. Additionally, its own financial restrictions prompted the government to judge that maintaining an expensive Jewish teaching staff,

180 Kalisman, *Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 223.

181 Kalisman, 187–93.

even one made up of native Moroccans, was a cost which could be offloaded onto the AIU and its donors.

In concluding his postcolonial assessment of the AIU in Tunisia, Habib Kazdaghli writes that “we must rightly consider the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle as one of the constituent elements of Tunisia’s educational heritage.”¹⁸² The case of the SIAI demonstrates that a similar understanding can pertain to the Moroccan context. The AIU and its teachers had served to build Moroccan state institutions which educated indigenous Moroccan subjects, first and overwhelmingly Jews, and later Muslims, too. Nationalization did not serve as the ultimate break it has been described as; though it was unilaterally announced by the government, it was a clear opportunity for the AIU, Jews, and the government, and all understood it as such. The plan for Moroccan AIU teachers to become Moroccan civil servants failed, but the fact that it was attempted and almost succeeded is a testament to these Jews’ efforts to remain, and the roles they and the AIU played in shaping postcolonial Morocco.

Epilogue and conclusion: The AIU and building Morocco

The promulgated Dahir of integration was never applied by the Moroccan government, though it was never abrogated, either. In March 1965, Elias Harrus reported that he expected nearly one hundred teachers to resign by the end of the year, and that a list of seventy-one teachers who intended to resign had already been sent to him.¹⁸³ In March, the AIU announced cut backs on a never-before seen scale, relinquishing pensions and offering compensation, but essentially, according to Braunschvig, “[making] it known that a new era is beginning, without a right to pension or job security.”¹⁸⁴

In response, the SIAI organized a strike on 15 June and the proposed cuts were not made. As the Jewish population of the country departed en masse, the school network continued to shrink, and as it did the SIAI continued to negotiate for its remaining teachers. Five more strikes were executed in 1966, leading Jewish parents to send letters to the AIU expressing deep concern.¹⁸⁵ The SIAI successfully negotiated improvements in 1970 after several more strikes, and in 1976 they acquired a yearly cost of living increase,¹⁸⁶ representing such a major demand that the Ittihad-Maroc was compelled to formalize a commitment by the *Conseil des Communautés*, the state-recognized Moroccan Jewish community organization, to contribute to its schools.¹⁸⁷ In 1975 Elias Harrus formed the “Ittihad-Maroc Committee,” consisting of local,

182 Kazdaghli, “Les Écoles de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle Au Lendemain de l’indépendance de La Tunisie (1955-1972),” 306.

183 Ittihad-Maroc. *Dégagement des cadres*. 19 March 1965. AM Maroc E 104 R, AIU.

184 AIU. *Séance confidentielle*. 18 June 1965. AM Maroc E 104 W, AIU.

185 SIAI. Letter from SIAI to Elias Harrus. 28 March 1966. AM Maroc E 105 L, AIU.

186 AIU. Letter from Elias Harrus to Eugene Weill. 25 May 1977. AM Maroc E o85 F, AIU.

187 AIU. Telephone call between Elias Harrus and Eugene Weill. 23 April 1975. AM Maroc E o85 F, AIU.

affluent Moroccan Jews tasked with drumming up donations specifically to fulfill the SIAI's demands.¹⁸⁸ Community funding again became a major component of the AIU in Morocco, as it was in the nineteenth century.

In this chapter I have provided a new way to understand the AIU and its teachers in Moroccan history. My major claim regarding the pre-colonial and colonial periods is that the AIU and its teaching staff can be considered Moroccan, and their activities as Moroccan state-building. In particular, I assert that the AIU had by the mid-twentieth century become a central institution within Moroccan Jewish society and that in seeking to secure their lives following the tumultuous years of World War II and independence, foreign and local Jews organized into a Moroccan union and made the AIU a Moroccan organization. Vice-versa, it was the AIU which empowered Jews to become integral parts of Moroccan colonial and then postcolonial society. This was demonstrated by the fact that it was the protectorate's recognition of the AIU's exclusive role in Moroccan Jewish education with the 1928 convention which permitted Jews to organize and negotiate collective agreements. Subsequently, it was those collective agreements which created a legally defined Moroccan staff whose working conditions were only secured within Morocco's borders.

In the years leading up to independence, AIU teachers, like most Jews, were anxious about what their futures in Morocco held. Even as a third of the country's Jewish population left, however, the teachers negotiated for their continued security in the country where most had lived all of their lives, and where most had been born. Prior to the schism, Moroccaness could thus mean an inclusive vision of the AIU's teachers as Moroccan state-builders. In tandem, the AIU itself fought for the perpetuity of its schools in the country. The hardening of national lines, however, and fears over what independent Morocco would make of its foreign nationals led to a union schism, and a divergent history where most French nationals could leave to France, while most Moroccan nationals continued, at least for a few more years, to be invested in becoming Moroccan civil servants. As they fought against foreign influence in the country, nationalists like Isaac Levy could also adopt an essentialist vision of Moroccaness—in the heat of independence, only those with Moroccan nationality were considered authentically Moroccan. Accordingly, teachers with foreign nationality, including both Moroccan-born Jews and foreign-born Jews who had lived and worked in Morocco since the age of twenty, became obstacles to securing integration into the Cherifian civil service.

It was not, however, that in seeking to become Cherifian or Moroccan civil servants that AIU teachers became state-builders. In advocating for their integration into the government or their nationalization by independent Morocco, Jewish teachers, foreign and local-born, were advocating for more than increased working conditions. Jewish teachers were also appealing to the protectorate and independent Morocco to recognize their historical role in teaching a large part of Morocco's Jewish youths and their role in shaping Moroccan Jewish society since 1862. If

188 Ittihad-Maroc. Letter from Elias Harrus to René Cassin. 29 April 1975. AM Maroc E 096 G, AIU.

many Jews who finally emigrated never completed the entire AIU cycle, the enrolment of 33,000 students in 83 schools in 1956, when a third of the country's Jews had already departed, meant that most had had some experience with the AIU. Even beyond schooling, AIU teachers served as political intermediaries for local Jews and constituted an essential part of how Jewish society worked in the colonial period, a role which eroded significantly in the postcolonial period as teachers no longer held privileged political access. In desiring to be recognized as state-builders, AIU teachers who had lived most or all their lives in Morocco were also requesting that this history be recognized. When the SIAI stated to the AIU, as noted above, that the teachers were grateful to the AIU for its role in making them "Moroccan citizens conscious of their rights and the duties towards the homeland", this statement constituted a genuine interpretation of the AIU's influence on Moroccan Jewry as the teachers understood it, framed by the nationalist atmosphere.

Following independence, the Moroccan government was presented with the same opportunity as the protectorate, which was to recognize the AIU's role in educating Jewish youths by making its teachers Moroccan civil servants. As we have seen, it was not independence in and of itself which caused this project to fail and deprived Jews of the opportunity to serve as recognized partners in building independent Morocco. Rather the notion that the AIU was a foreign body which could not be assimilated into the Moroccan nation-state prevented a more seamless plan for nationalization, an eventuality which the AIU and its teachers made huge strides in preparing for. Expecting that they would need to adapt to independent Morocco, the AIU and its teachers, despite the latter's fears about the consequences of Arabization, earnestly worked to ready the schools for the Moroccan future. It was the Moroccan government which decided to unilaterally nationalize the schools and dissolve the AIU without negotiating, under pressure from politicians who saw the organization as inherently foreign.

In many ways this reflected Morocco's difficult reckoning with its own complicated relationship to French colonialism. Spencer Segalla has pointed out that this same notion of a Moroccan national identity exclusive of French influences led France and Morocco to direct former colonial French teachers to the private MUCF schools, "[ensuring] that French funds—and two thousand French teachers—that might have been used for mixed public education would instead be used to run a separate, private French system."¹⁸⁹ In a similar way, associated with the AIU, Jewish teachers were eventually considered too foreign to take part in Moroccan national education, and the Moroccan government lost out on hundreds of teachers which were relegated to Jewish education in the remaining non-nationalized schools. Perhaps more importantly, Morocco forfeited an opportunity for meaningful Jewish inclusion within the public realm.

Even the emergence of the *Ittihad-Maroc* did not mean the end of the AIU in Morocco. Though, practically, little changed with the AIU's dissolution in Morocco, Jewish teachers

189 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956*, 252.

panicked, understanding that only the AIU, by virtue of its long tenure and strong influence in the country, would be able to negotiate with the government to secure their working conditions as Moroccan civil servants. Unfortunately, given the opportunity to bring on Jews who were willing to serve as partners in building independent Morocco, the government reneged on the promises of nationalization. Even teachers who were nationalized were never recognized as Moroccan civil servants. Living in perpetual uncertainty, the Moroccan AIU's teachers finally decided to abandon their goal of Cherifian integration and turned back to the AIU for as long as the non-nationalized schools existed. Even as the number of schools diminished, from sixty-seven in 1962,¹⁹⁰ twenty-six in 1971,¹⁹¹ and twelve in 1976,¹⁹² and the student body emigrated, the case of the SIAI is a testament to a moment when Jews could and did fight to be partners in building independent Morocco. Following the union schism, however, a divergent history began for the schools' French nationals, which is the subject of the next chapter.

190 Ittihad-Maroc. *État des écoles de l'Ittihad-Maroc*. 22 October 1962. AM Maroc E 114 E, AIU.

191 Ittihad-Maroc. *État des écoles de l'Ittihad-Maroc*. 29 March 1971. AM Maroc E 114 E, AIU.

192 Ittihad-Maroc. *État des écoles de l'Ittihad-Maroc*. 20 October 1976. AM Maroc E 114 E, AIU.

To France and Back

A Dream Come True?

In 1962, Ruth Jouhet,¹ née Ruth Carmela Lydia Barzilay, a longtime teacher at the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) girls' school in Tangier, left her job to become a civil servant in a public school in France. On 23 November 1962, shortly after her arrival in France, Jouhet sent two desperate letters to AIU president René Cassin and vice-president Eugene Weill, begging them to offer her a job back in Tangier.² Jouhet's letters caused consternation on the part of the AIU's leaders, inflated by the network's deep financial troubles, but also by the fact that this exact scenario involving Jouhet had occurred two years before.

Jouhet was born in Haifa, in Ottoman Palestine, to a family which originated in northern Morocco, though I was unable to determine precisely when this part of the family had left Morocco. Jouhet had attended the École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO) teacher training school in Versailles from 1928-1930, and had worked her entire career, nearly thirty years, in the schools of the Moroccan AIU. Following Moroccan independence in 1956, Jouhet had taken advantage of a program negotiated by the Moroccan AIU's teachers' union for French nationals permitting them to be "repatriated" to France, where they were guaranteed public teaching positions and state pensions. This program mirrored France's repatriation of its own former colonial staff and citizens following the decolonization of its African empire. Presented a seemingly enviable option precisely as the anxieties of the Ittihad-Maroc's teachers reached a fever pitch in Morocco, why did Jouhet plead with the AIU to take her back there?

This chapter offers a new perspective on Moroccan Jewish migration to France in the second half of the twentieth century through the AIU, and specifically on how Jews fit and did not fit into French empire and postcolonial policies to manage the empire's dissolution. I contend that throughout the twentieth century a complex relationship to France was forged amongst many Jews like Ruth Jouhet through the AIU, but that the AIU, acting as a familial network, more successfully tied Jews to itself and each other than France. Building on Chapter 3, which demonstrated how teaching as an inherently transnational profession became hardened along national lines with decolonization, I argue that as France and Morocco navigated the status of thousands of French citizens in its former colonies, Jews could fall between the cracks of decolonial policies and were sometimes forced to choose a definitive attachment to France or Morocco. Indeed, as France devised policies for its nationals abroad, it routinely failed to take

1 I have opted to refer to Ruth by her married name, Jouhet, since this was the name she used and signed her letters with for the last two decades of her life that I could follow her through archival documents.

2 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

Jews into account, forcing them to negotiate for their adoptive *Patrie* to make arrangements for them.

At the core of this chapter is the life of Ruth Jouhet. The small part of her life that I was able to reconstruct has taken shape from letters found in the AIU's archives. These leave much of her biography incomplete; we know little of her childhood, of her family, of how she experienced life in Ottoman Palestine, Morocco, and France, of her experiences in the ENIO. We also know nothing about her life after her final emigration from Morocco. Such details would have undoubtedly enriched this narrative and helped us to understand her relationship to Moroccaness. Neither born in Morocco nor a Moroccan citizen, Jouhet was not accounted for in the *syndicat des instituteurs et des institutrices de l'alliance israélite universelle au maroc's* (SIAI) postcolonial negotiations with the independent Moroccan state described in Chapter 3.

As we will see, Jouhet likely did not consider herself to be "Moroccan."³ Neither did Jouhet seem to consider France as her "dream come true", having twice begged the AIU to return her from there to Morocco. By focusing on Ruth Jouhet, a Jew of Moroccan descent born abroad and who lived and worked nearly her entire life in Morocco, I offer insight into what it meant, already in the early and mid-twentieth century, to be a Moroccan Jew born outside of Morocco. I choose in this chapter to consider Jouhet a Moroccan Jew due to her family's origins, the time she spent in Morocco, her familial and professional networks there, but also the strong feeling of belonging she clearly expressed for some parts of the country. Ultimately, I determine that, though Jouhet developed a real sense of belonging in Morocco, this sense did not translate into a Moroccan Jewish identity. I thus demonstrate to what extent Moroccaness was accessible to Jouhet as a Jew of Moroccan descent born in diaspora in the early twentieth century, prior to the mass emigration of Moroccan Jewry, but also the limitations of Moroccaness for Jews like Jouhet.

Jouhet's story also allows us to deliberate on the extent to which another group of AIU teachers could express belonging in Morocco—the foreign-born, ENIO-trained teachers, often from former Ottoman provinces, who lived and worked most of their lives in Morocco. Specifically, I suggest that these Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews found in northern Morocco, where most local Jews spoke a Judeo-Spanish dialect, a familiar cultural atmosphere which could inspire a feeling of belonging. Additionally, I theorize that in the atmosphere of Spain's and France's colonial influence in Morocco, these teachers became "foreign locals," similar to Jacqueline Kahanoff's "Levantine generation" in British colonial Egypt. To demonstrate this point, I devote a section to the ENIO and its place in migration to France. These same teachers

3 A strong hometown affiliation was already present amongst Jews from Morocco in the early twentieth century, particularly in the diaspora of Jews from northern Morocco. Such hometown affiliations eventually blended with popular national affiliations with the Moroccan state that developed in the second half of the twentieth century, and continue to form important parts of Jewish expressions of Moroccan nationalism into the twenty-first century. Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 64, 105.

would almost all be “repatriated” to France in the years following Moroccan independence. I argue that framing these teachers and the colonial society they helped shape as a Moroccan “Levantine generation” helps nuance these Jews’ ideological attachment to France, despite their legal and physical repatriation.

Through Jouhet’s story, I will use the notion of repatriation to help us to better understand the AIU’s mediation of Moroccan Jewish migration across the Mediterranean, particularly to France, as well as the dynamics of migration at work in the period during which France’s African empire disintegrated. Jouhet’s self-identification in her final years working for the AIU as a Moroccan “expatriate,” and her recognition of the AIU and its officials as her surrogate parents, strongly informed her attachment to Morocco and France, as well. Correspondingly, we will see that throughout the twentieth century, notions of “repatriation” were at work in congruent and opposing ways, from the “return” of North African Jews with French citizenship to France, to the “return” of Jews to Israel, and the “return” of Jews of Moroccan descent born abroad to Morocco, like Jouhet. Building on the previous chapter, Jouhet’s story also reveals how a group of French citizens, most of them Moroccan-born Jews, negotiated their own inclusion in the massive French repatriation of the late 1950s and the 1960s. Though Jouhet’s own trajectory is rather exceptional, her movements pushed the boundaries of Morocco’s, France’s, and the AIU’s decolonial negotiations. In doing so, Jouhet unintentionally drew attention to the gaps in policies which disregarded Jews. By following her atypical trajectory, we can thus draw conclusions about more typical trends of Moroccan Jewish migration.

Additionally, Jouhet’s gendered experience, in particular the way the AIU’s administrators who were men seemed to treat her due to her gender, provides an additional lens of analysis in this chapter. Frances Malino has demonstrated that Jewish women became more radically feminist and empowered through the AIU than the latter’s anticipated, far more than their counterparts in the metropole.⁴ Yet it is clear that AIU administrators, who were primarily men, could be quite patronizing towards women teachers, as well as to the young girls they taught.⁵ If the AIU saw itself as a family, the women who taught in its schools were daughters and could be infantilized or dismissed accordingly. The AIU would sometimes characterize Jouhet as “fickle” and “indecisive” in clear bouts of chauvinism. In other cases, Jouhet would reverse the strategy and represent herself as a “helpless woman” or emphasize her maternal responsibility in attempts to bend her employers’ gender biases to her benefit. This is not to say that Jouhet was never uncertain; in the charged interwar and postcolonial periods, Jouhet was forced to make quick decisions regarding her future. She sometimes regretted those decisions, but it was the AIU which seemed to blame those errors on her gender.

The following sections provide crucial contexts for understanding Jouhet’s trajectory, and that of Jews like her. I begin with what I know about Jouhet’s biography and her many

4 Malino, “Oriental, Feminist, Orientalist: The New Jewish Woman,” 107.

5 Malino, 110.

migrations before Moroccan independence, and then turn to educationally motivated migration across the Mediterranean through the ENIO. Through these sections I speculate on how Jouhet and her ENIO-trained colleagues, local and foreign, may have felt attached to Morocco. Next, I describe the massive waves of repatriation from France's former colonies and the metropolitan policies launched to regulate them; this section reveals the postcolonial negotiations on the part of the union of the Moroccan AIU's French nationals which so affected Jouhet's story. Finally, I explore how the AIU functioned as a familial network, and how the notion of "repatriation" can help us to understand how the attachment of Jews like Jouhet to Morocco and France transformed with Moroccan independence before concluding.

"This Morocco I learned to love": The Transnational Career of Ruth Carmela Lydia Barzilay Jouhet

Ruth Jouhet was born Ruth Carmela Lydia Barzilay on 9 or 12 October 1914 in Haifa in Ottoman Palestine.⁶ Jews from North Africa, specifically Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, had begun migrating to Palestine in the 1830s and set up small communities in Galilee, on the coast in Acre, Jaffa, Haifa, and Gaza, as well as in Safed and Tiberias. In these towns, North Africans quickly became the majority of Jews, and in Jerusalem, by 1914 there were some 2,500 North African Jews. Over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, North Africans joined growing communities of Jews from "Bulgaria, the Balkans, Yemen, Persia, India, Morocco, Georgia, and Bukhara", in addition to thousands more from Eastern Europe.⁷ In 1914, there were 85,000 Jews out of a total population of 800,000 in Ottoman Palestine.⁸

Jouhet was related to Isaac Nahon, who was born in Tangier in 1869 and taught for many years in the AIU schools of Haifa, Damascus, and Tanta in Egypt.⁹ Nahon was the director for over thirty years of the school in Haifa, where he had family, including Jouhet.¹⁰ In this way, Jouhet was part of a longer history of Moroccan Jews who had since the eighteenth century formed an important diaspora between Morocco, other Mediterranean countries, and Latin America, among other places.¹¹ Jouhet thus serves as an appropriate case study for Moroccan

6 The AIU archives list Ruth's date of birth as 9 October, while her French military record lists her date of birth as 12 October. For simplicity, I use the surname Jouhet rather than switching between Jouhet and Barzilay, and because this was the name which she herself used for the last two decades of her life into which I gained some insight. Ruth Jouhet. Fonds Harrus, 1493, AIU.

7 Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass, "Eretz Israel/Palestine, 1800-1948," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 337-39.

8 Kark and Glass, 336.

9 Isaac Nahon. Fiches du Personnel, 0365, AIU.

10 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Ruben Tajouri. 17 July 1953. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

11 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 52.

Jewish mobility, particularly through the AIU, and even an example of an intergenerational return to Morocco.

Jouhet's slew of movements did not begin with Moroccan independence. In fact Jouhet had undergone many transnational migrations in her life before 1956, and, as we will see, these had little to do with "Arab nationalism" or Zionism as the supposed poles of push-and-pull for Moroccan Jewish migration. Like many northern Moroccan Jews and ENIO-trained AIU teachers, Jouhet was multilingual. Jouhet learned English in London, spoke Spanish well and French fluently, and remarked in letters that Hebrew was her native language.¹² On the other hand, Jouhet's movements exceed the standard case of migration through French repatriation. Indeed, a significant facet of her migrations was her ostensible indecisiveness, and her unusual aptitude for securing mobility through the AIU, striking even for a diaspora spread across the globe.

As with many Moroccan Jews, Jouhet's migratory history began with the AIU. Jouhet attended the AIU in Haifa, then the ENIO in Versailles, acquiring her *Brevet Élémentaire*, a middle school degree, in 1930 at the age of 16, and taking her first teaching job in Essaouira's AIU school in 1932.¹³ Already by July 1934, a pattern which would come to be reproduced several times began. In a letter to Sylvain Lévi, then AIU president, Ruth shortly requested that she be reassigned to a school in Mandate Palestine where she had two younger brothers in Haifa. From this letter we learn that Jouhet was "*orpheline de père*", which is to say her father was deceased. In another letter we also learn that her father had been "assassinated", though she provides no additional details, and I found no references to such an event in the contemporary Jewish press in Mandate Palestine. She stated that the two brothers were her responsibility, and that it would be easier for her to take care of them from Palestine.¹⁴ Here Jouhet emphasized that she had to fulfill her maternal responsibility by taking care of her young brothers. Jouhet was twenty years old at the time of the letter.

Jouhet would request that the AIU move her numerous times, and this was the only time she would ask them to move her to Mandate Palestine. The proposed return to Palestine never took place; it is possible that Isaac Nahon in Haifa promised to take care of her brothers, and Nahon did pay for her trip back to Morocco. Jouhet was moved to Tetouan, where she was instead reassigned in September 1934, and where she would work until 1939.¹⁵ Her time in northern Morocco had a major effect on Jouhet, and it is clear that she felt little attachment to French Morocco. Later when she asked to be reassigned again, she even indicated that she would rather go abroad than go to French Morocco.¹⁶ Spanish Morocco, rather than the French protectorate, seemingly attracted Jouhet greatly.

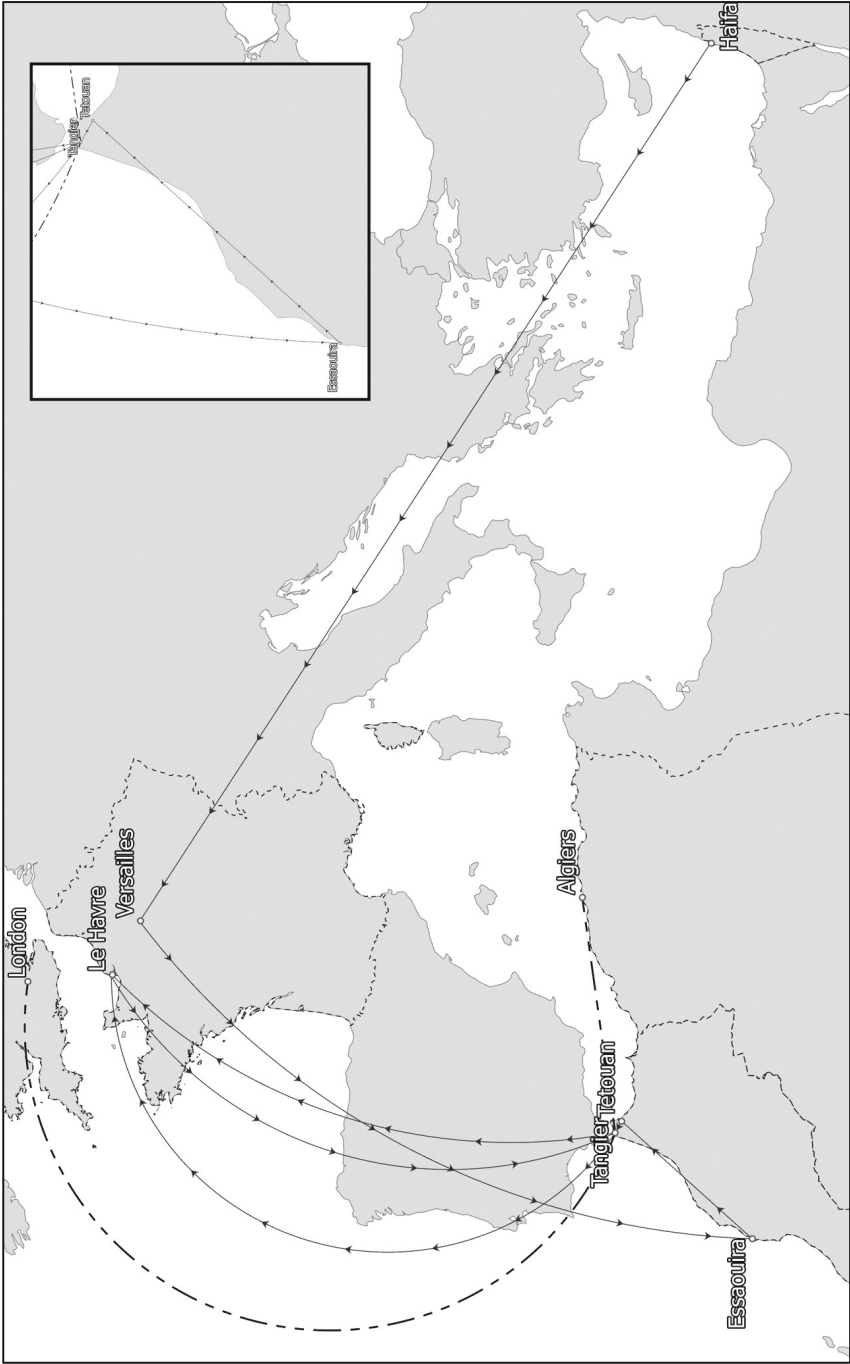
12 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Eugene Weill. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

13 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Eugene Weill. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

14 AIU. Letter from Ruth Barzilay to Sylvain Lévi. 18 July 1934. MAROC XXXIII E 577, AIU.

15 AIU. Letter from Ruth Barzilay to Sylvain Lévi. 22 September 1934. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU; Ruth Jouhet. Fonds Harrus, 1493, AIU.

16 AIU. Letter from Ruth Barzilay to Georges Leven. 10 August 1938. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU.



Map 8: Ruth Jouhet's international movements (undated). Dashed lines represent non-resident migrations.

One reason for this preference, as noted above, is that her family originated in northern Morocco, and I consider it likely that she shared familial ties with Stella Tajouri (née Estrella Pinto) and by association her husband, Ruben Tajouri, the AIU's Moroccan delegate. After numerous years of association, and after Stella and Ruben Tajouri's passing, Jouhet would speak of Tajouri as her "father" and noted that she had often been in his confidence.¹⁷ This unusually close relationship, framed as parenthood, makes more sense if we consider that Jouhet, arriving in Morocco as a 16 year old girl who had recently lost her father, connected most strongly with Stella Tajouri, and her husband Ruben, who became her parental figures. Thus it seems likely that Jouhet possessed social networks in northern Morocco which she did not elsewhere.

In the end, her move to Tetouan proved taxing, particularly after the Spanish civil war broke out in July 1936. Northern Morocco, with the exception of the international city of Tangier, had been a Spanish protectorate since 1912, and the civil war spilled over the straits of Gibraltar. Spanish Republican refugees streamed into northern Morocco, particularly Tangier, in a bid to escape Franco-controlled territory, and these were soon joined by Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-controlled Europe in 1939.¹⁸

"After 4 years in Tetouan, two of which in wartime, and a life of constant worry", Jouhet, then twenty-four, asked once again to be reassigned in a subsequent letter in August 1938.¹⁹ Jouhet stated that she was depressed and that her "health required a less oppressive atmosphere". She appealed to the AIU to reassign her to Tunisia, or "certainly Egypt, but not in French Morocco, with the single exception of Tangier."²⁰ She may even have possessed contacts in Cairo through her AIU colleagues in Tetouan. Clearly Jouhet held no particular attachment to the French-dominated zone of Morocco, and preferred to stay in the north, but considered that Tetouan was too dangerous due to the civil war. As Daniel Schroeter writes:

"During the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish Nationalists had taken immediate control of the Spanish Protectorate, and the Jews, accused of supporting the Spanish Republic, were terrorized by Falangists, who led a campaign against the Jews by boycotting businesses, expropriating property, and committing acts of violence. The fascists also enlisted Muslim Moroccan soldiers in their cause, offering inducements of autonomy and encouraging Moroccan nationalists as well."²¹

Jouhet's hesitation reared its head when she was offered a position in Sfax, and she declined, specifying her preference for Tunis in a letter to the AIU on 20 August 1939, less than two weeks before the German invasion of Poland.²² On 2 September 1939, the day following the invasion, Jouhet reversed her decision, and the director of the Tetouan AIU school wrote the president

17 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Eugene Weill. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

18 Miller, *Years of Glory*, 34.

19 AIU. Letter from Ruth Barzilay to Georges Leven. 10 August 1938. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU.

20 Ibid.

21 Schroeter, "Vichy in Morocco: The Residency, Mohammed V, and His Indigenous Jewish Subjects," 240–41.

22 AIU. Letter from Ruth Barzilay to Georges Leven. 20 August 1939. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU.

a telegram stating that though she had decided on going to Sfax, “in the current situation [...] she begs you to retain her in Tetouan.”²³ A day later, on 3 September, Jouhet sent another telegram accepting the position in Sfax.²⁴

Jouhet never reached Tunisia. Between the outbreak of the war and the German occupation of northern France, her reassignment never took place. The war years are blurry as far as Ruth is concerned. What is known is that she succeeded in securing a job at the AIU’s Tangier girls’ school in 1939, and following this, at some point during the war, she married a French national named Léo Jouhet in Algiers.²⁵ In 1942 Ruth moved to London to serve on a team of “psychotechnical operators” in the Free French Forces until 1945, and there she met René Cassin.²⁶ Her husband died in the war, and afterwards she returned to her job in Tangier. Tangier seemed to be a good option for Jouhet, equally embedded as it was in Spanish and Judeo-Spanish cultural and social networks which she knew how to navigate.

As noted above, Jouhet seemed to have a nervous personality, and potentially suffered from anxiety or trauma brought on by the years of war, or the “assassination” of her father and her orphanhood. Her difficulties become even more prominent in her trajectory after the war. By 1953 Jouhet had tried and failed to pass the exam for the *certificat d’aptitudes pédagogiques*, the CAP, at least eight times, a fact which restricted her potential for promotions and raises.²⁷ Frustrated by her inability to pass the CAP and advance, by the summer of 1953 Jouhet entertained the idea of quitting and moving to Paris.²⁸ She finally acquired the CAP in 1955, seemingly with the help of the Moroccan AIU delegate, Ruben Tajouri, who lobbied the Ministry of Public Instruction to pass her.²⁹ While this provided her with an appreciable increase, her late acquisition, and the lack of the *Brevet Supérieur*, meant Jouhet could not earn nearly as much as some of her colleagues, and her French nationality offered her little advantage. Additionally, while I have not systematically verified the AIU’s salary structure according to gender, there is a chance that being a woman also contributed to this disparity.³⁰

Though we can make no certain judgements regarding anxiety or trauma, Jouhet’s recurrent movements seemed generally inspired by political upheavals around the Mediterranean. It is

23 AIU. Telegram from Lévy to Georges Leven. 2 September 1939. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU.

24 AIU. Telegram from Ruth Barzilay to Georges Leven. 3 September 1939. MAROC LXXVII E 1.02, AIU.

25 Ruth Jouhet. Fonds Harrus, 1493, AIU.

26 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to Eugene Weill. 18 September 1953; Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin and Ruben Tajouri. 24 May 1950. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

27 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to Eugene Weill. 18 September 1953; Letter from Ruben Tajouri to René Cassin. 7 October 1953. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

28 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin and Ruben Tajouri. 5 June 1953. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

29 Ruth Jouhet. Fonds Harrus, 1493; AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to Ruth Jouhet. 3 November 1953. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

30 In 1957 Jouhet, with twenty-four years of service, was paid the same as Maurice Kantorovitz with only six years, while Charles Bitton’s with twenty-six years was paid almost double. All three were French nationals in the *Cadre Général*. AIU. *État du personnel*. 23 June 1957. AIU-MA-1066, CAHJP.

unclear how those AIU officials involved perceived her requests for reassignment in the 1930s and 1940s, but in the years following Moroccan independence, officials would point towards her history of migration as evidence that she was a fickle woman. It is not even entirely clear that, up until this point, Jouhet's requests were completely out of the ordinary. Teachers had since the nineteenth century asked for reassignment to different countries several times in their lives, as demonstrated by Frances Malino.³¹ However, because she was a woman, Jouhet's previous migratory decisions came to serve as pretense to treat her future requests as excessive.

Jouhet's career also reveals numerous interesting aspects of how France and the AIU, as ideas and networks, did and did not function for some Moroccan Jews. Though she had attended the ENIO and taught in the AIU, Jouhet seemed to have little attachment to the goal of spreading French language and culture, hence her refusal to return to the French protectorate. The high chance that Stella Tajouri in Casablanca was her family also did not lead her to request being moved there, meaning that she preferred to stay in the Spanish-dominated zone. Indeed, rather than being a missionary for the AIU, Jouhet's career denotes a person who could make use of the AIU as a professional and familial network, as many did.³² Tetouan had clearly appealed to her more than Essaouira, and when the war caused her to leave, she did so to Tangier in 1939. She likely believed that Tangier's international status (shuttered in 1940 and resumed in 1945 upon her return) would protect her from the violence of the Spanish civil war. Additionally, her family connection in Ruben and Stella Tajouri yielded advantages for her, such as helping her pass the CAP.

Indeed, most striking in this period of her career is the lack of attachment to France. Though she later referred to France as her "patrie," like many Jews schooled in the AIU, this attachment was more theoretical and legal than substantial. While much is not known about Jouhet's life, her letters did not express a zealous attachment to France. Her decisions were more likely based on economic factors, such as her low salary due to her late CAP acquisition, and the presence of strong family and cultural networks. This may be because France's influence in the Spanish protectorate was limited and not as competitive as the more natural attachment to Spanish culture amongst local and many foreign-born Jews. If some Jews garnered a strong French or Francized identity through the AIU, this was not always the case, even for those who, like Jouhet, possessed or acquired French citizenship. Rather, a more complex array of identitary options were available to Jews in pre-colonial and colonial Morocco. And yet, similarly to their counterparts with Moroccan nationality, as decolonization neared, the ability to maintain multiple attachments dwindled, and Jews like Jouhet were compelled to make a drastic decision based on hardened national categories like "Moroccan" and "French." When Jews like Jouhet were "repatriated" to France, this was true more in a legal sense than a personal one, as we will see.

31 See Frances Malino, "Prophets in Their Own Land?: Mothers and Daughters of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," *Nashim* 3, no. Spring/Summer (2000): 56–73.

32 See Isabelle S. Headrick, "A Family in Iran: Women Teachers, Minority Integration, and Family Networks in the Jewish Schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Iran, 1900–1950," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 10, no. 4 (October 2, 2019): 307–22.

In late 1955, the AIU's teachers' union for French nationals successfully negotiated their own reintegration into France's metropolitan civil service. Many of the reintegrated teachers took advantage of their new status to facilitate their migration to France, where, thanks to the AIU and the union, they were guaranteed a public teaching position and a French government pension which recognized their entire careers in Morocco. The process of reintegration, however, especially when it meant physical relocation, could be fraught with complications and obstacles. As noted above, following Algeria's final push towards independence, Jewish migrants from Morocco joined waves of Algerian and Tunisian Jews—as well as Europeans and Muslims with French nationality—who were “repatriated” to metropolitan France in the years following 1962. Additionally, the French government, though it invested immense efforts in easing the “reintegration” of its nationals, sometimes abdicated these duties regarding its Jewish citizens. Jews with French nationality were sometimes expected to fall under the social aid jurisdiction of Jewish organizations, who in turn mostly aided Jews without French nationality, urging the government to fulfill its universalist obligations.³³

Teachers could thus be dissatisfied with numerous aspects of the reintegration process. For example, upon requesting their reintegration, teachers were required to provide their top three choices from France's geographical administrative departments, such as Seine-Maritime or Rhône.³⁴ Teachers were not guaranteed their departments of choice, and whichever department they were assigned determined where in France they would be allotted a teaching position. Despite this framework which allowed Moroccan Jews to seamlessly migrate to France, some came to regret the decision. Significantly, however, as for France's own colonial staff, the reintegration program was meant only in part to facilitate repatriation, while it also incentivized French nationals to remain in the former colonies which were desperately in need of teachers and administrators. But Moroccan Jewish migration to France had not begun with decolonization. The following section describes Moroccan Jewish migration to France through a broader lens. By then focusing on the premier venue for hosting Moroccan Jews in France, the ENIO, I describe how foreign-born and Moroccan-born Jews may have developed a sense of belonging in Morocco.

The ENIO and Morocco's “Levantine Generation”

In the second half of the twentieth century, approximately 240,000 North African Jews migrated to France, with more than 125,000 from Algeria, some 50,000 to 60,000 from Tunisia, and 35,000 to 50,000 from Morocco.³⁵ The migration of Jews from North Africa has drastically changed the character of postwar French Jewry, from 235,000 Jews in 1950, largely originating from Alsace-

33 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 129–30.

34 AIU (copy). Letter from Philippe Rebeyrol to the Ambassadors and Ministers of France. 14 December 1961. AIU-MA-1078, CAHJP.

35 See Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*; Taïeb, “Immigrés d'Afrique Du Nord: Combien? Quand? Pourquoi?”

Lorraine and Eastern Europe, to more than 500,000 in 1970, more than half of which had roots in North Africa.³⁶ This number peaked in the 1970s, and has since decreased to 448,000 in 2020, owing to migration to Israel, and to a lesser extent, Canada, amongst other countries.³⁷

Numerous factors propelled a significant number of Moroccan Jews towards France. Many left for education, many because they felt an affinity with France due to their experiences in the AIU and colonial Morocco, and others because Morocco's upheavals and Israel's instability made France the most sensible option. A substantial number of North African Jews would see France, regardless of where they chose to go, due to the hugely important transit camp in Marseille. Amongst all hubs of migration, France is the second most popular, and more Moroccan Jews still reside in France than anywhere else outside of Israel.

A popular understanding of this migration is that "poor" Moroccans went to Israel, and middle- or upper-class Jews went to France or Montreal. Martin Messika does note that the American Hebrew Immigrant Aid Service and the Canadian Jewish Immigrant Aid Service which so facilitated Jewish immigration from North Africa tended to bring poor Tunisian Jews to France, and middle-class Moroccans to Canada.³⁸ Inevitably, many Jews considered France an option, regardless of economic background, and a knowledge of French certainly eased this decision. It is significant, however, that the same immigration organizations tended to view non-westernized North Africans, considered to be "the vast majority" according to Messika, as "potential immigration material for Israel."³⁹

Jews in France today live across the country, though Paris houses more than half, with Marseille as another major center, along with Strasbourg, Lyons, Nice, and Toulouse, among others.⁴⁰ Marseille in particular has been a historical point of contact for Moroccan and other North African Jews since the twelfth century, and particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for Jewish merchants authorized to trade by the Moroccan sultan.⁴¹ It is no accident that Marseille and Algiers, cities that connected North Africa to the early modern Mediterranean, would later become key sites for North African Jewish migration after 1948. Still, numbers of Moroccan Jews in France remained low until the founding of the AIU in the nineteenth century and the arrival of young Moroccans to study in Paris or Versailles. French colonization further encouraged migration as the AIU expanded under French influence and required more teachers, while even non-AIU educated Moroccan Jewish elites forged business ties in France.

36 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 3.

37 Dashefsky and Sheskin, *American Jewish Year Book 2020*, 120:293; Sergio DellaPergolla, "Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends, Contexts and Outlooks," in *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, ed. Julius Hans Schoeps, Olaf Glöckner, and Anja Kreienbrink, *Jewish Identities in a Changing World 17* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 8.

38 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 43–44.

39 Messika, 46–47.

40 Colette Zytynicki, "Du Rapatrié Au Séfaraïte: L'intégration Des Juifs d'Afrique Du Nord Dans La Société Française: Essai de Bilan," *Archives Juives* 38, no. 2 (2005): 151.

41 Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844–1886, 1988*, 22–23.

A consistently strong aspect of Moroccan Jewish migration to France has been education. For over 150 years, Moroccan Jews like Ruth Jouhet have made their way to France in search of an education, whether for upward mobility or, later, to receive a religious education.⁴² The AIU had, since the earliest years of its establishment on Moroccan soil, recruited numerous students to the ENIO to become its agents both in Morocco and across the Middle East and North Africa. Following the establishment of the AIU's first school in Tetouan in 1862, Moroccan Jewish youths began to arrive in France as students of the ENIO and the future teachers in the AIU's schools across the Mediterranean. As we know, by 1956 Moroccan-born ENIO-trained teachers would outnumber all other ENIO-trained groups put together. By 1951, Morocco supplied the vast majority of ENIO students, and after independence Moroccan Jews continued to attend the school in great numbers.⁴³

It is also notable that the majority of ENIO graduates from Morocco in the AIU's early years came, as did Ruth Jouhet's family, from the country's north, where Jews usually spoke Haketia, a Moroccan dialect of Judeo-Spanish, and in the twentieth century modern Spanish. Just like their Ladino-speaking counterparts from present-day Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria, knowledge of a Spanish dialect made acquiring French much easier, and naturally provided a much easier transition to France itself.⁴⁴ Indeed, it is likely that Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews from these countries found northern Morocco particularly hospitable and even culturally familiar. Through their modernizing experiences in the ENIO, these Jews came to constitute a remarkably international corps of teachers.

Students who attended the ENIO for free were required to sign a commitment to reimburse the ENIO a set amount per year of study, should the student either not finish their schooling or leave the AIU's service before the full term specified in the agreement. Students either signed five- or ten-year agreements depending on the number of years they attended the school.⁴⁵ In practice, the AIU often subsidized students' travel costs, and though some teachers did reimburse the ENIO for breaking these agreements, by 1963 the ENIO's school commission admitted that "[in] the current state of things, [...] the obligation for reimbursement is more theoretical than practical," due to the unrealistic expectation that students or their parents could, or would, actually pay back such a large sum.⁴⁶ Table 4.1, below, demonstrates the number of five-, ten-, and three-year engagements signed by students admitted to the ENIO with scholarships from Morocco, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, and Syria between 1946 and 1965, though even more attended by paying. Table 4.2, also below, draws numbers from lists sent to the ENIO by the AIU/Ittihad-Maroc confirming the number of scholarship attendees arriving per year, from 1949 until 1975.

⁴² See Loupo, *Metamorphose*.

⁴³ Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, 292.

⁴⁴ Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 73-74.

⁴⁵ *École Normale Israélite Orientale. Engagement de Remboursement*. 9 July 1964. AM France E 017 A, AIU.

⁴⁶ *École Normale Israélite Orientale. Séance du Commission des Écoles*. 1 October 1963. AM France E 017 B, AIU.

School Year	Morocco	Iran	Israel	Lebanon	Tunisia	Athens	Algeria	Syria	Unspecified							
5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year	3-year	5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year						
1946-1947	19	1														
1947-1948	6	1	3													
1948-1949	8	2								2						
1949-1950	8	4														
1950-1951	6	21		2	1											
1951-1952	7	15			2	1										
1952-1953	5	10	1	2	1	1	1									
1953-1954	7	14		2	1	1			1							
1954-1955	3	13	3	1	3											
1955-1956	2	9	1	2	2				1							
1956-1957	9															
1957-1958	8			1			1									
1958-1959	4	11		1												
1959-1960	8	10		3												
1960-1961	9	2	3	3												
1961-1962	10	4	3	1												
1962-1963	1	7	3	3												
1963-1964	1				4											
1964-1965		2			5											
Totals by type	51	193	8	23	0	4	21	1	9	0	10	0	1	0	1	3
Gross Totals	244	31	4	31	31	10	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	3	3

Figure 4.1 - Global number of 5-, 10-, or 3-year engagements signed by ENIO attendees and parents, 1946-1965.⁴⁷

47 École Normale Israélite Orientale. Global Student Engagements. 1946-1965. AM France E 016 A, AIU.

Year	Combined	Boys	Girls
1949	17	8	9
1951	27	13	14
1952	21	9	12
1953	17	6	11
1954	20*	12	8
1955	11	5	6
1956	8	6	2
1957	8*	6	2
1958	13	7	6
1959	12	3	9
1960	9	5	4
1961	10	4	6
1962	10	4	6
1963	12	9	3
1964	10	6	4
1965	7	3	4
1966	6	3	3
1968	4	2	2
1969	4	2	2
1970	11	5	6
1971	11	9	2
1973	10	4	6
1974	13	9	4
1975	9	7	2
Totals	280	147	133

Figure 4.2 – Number of ENIO scholarship students from Morocco 1949–1975.^{48*} 1 student each for years 1954 and 1957 originated in Tunisia

We should consider education in France in general, and the ENIO in particular, as significant steppingstones on the trajectory from Morocco to France in several ways. It was often these Moroccans' first real encounter with French life and culture outside its representation by the AIU or the French protectorate; combined with these young men and women's inculcation of French-European ideas at the ENIO, these teachers became key mediators of ideas about France for other Moroccan Jews, as well as the very agents who would promote additional youths to venture outside of Morocco, as had been done for them. The ENIO's substantial influence on this point is demonstrated in Martin Messika's analysis of the Paris Toit Familial, a boarding house set up after World War II for Jews from France and abroad, particularly North

48 École Normale Israélite Orientale. Student Engagements from Morocco. 1949–1975. AM France E 017 C, AIU.

Africa, who sought higher education in Paris. Between 1954 and 1975, Moroccan Jews, despite their statistically lower proportion in North African migration to France, made up 38 percent of the youths in the *Toit Familial*.⁴⁹ Critically, a disproportionate number of these Moroccan youths had previously attended the ENIO.⁵⁰

Education and upward mobility have therefore long been key aspects of Moroccan Jews' attachment to France, though the dynamic changed over time. If earlier on graduates might have been sent abroad with the expectation that they return to support their families, later on fewer families planned on their children's return. In some cases, sending their children to the ENIO also prompted parents to finally move themselves, and in 1975 *Ittihad-Maroc* delegate Elias Harrus noted the recurrent trouble in securing parents' signatures on their children's engagements due to parents having "left the day after their children's departure for the ENIO."⁵¹ Education continues to play a major role in Moroccan Jewish migration to France; indeed, amongst Morocco's remaining Jews, education in France is usually what precipitates departure, and today it is often considered a rite of passage, youths' first taste of independence, even for those who choose to return to Morocco afterwards.

Over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Moroccan Jews had become attached to France in multifaceted ways often mediated by the AIU, and this was equally true of Jews who had not originated in Morocco. Some had even acquired French citizenship. In 1943, according to the French protectorate's census, only 12,000 Jews in Morocco possessed French nationality, though we must consider that a significant number of these may have been Algerian Jews who lived in Morocco.⁵² As noted in Chapter 3, France passed numerous laws permitting foreigners with French diplomas to become naturalized, and by 1956 this included one fourth of the Moroccan AIU's teachers, almost two-hundred, nearly all of whom had not been born in France, but rather in Morocco and former Ottoman provinces. AIU teachers, particularly those trained at the ENIO, did express an attachment to their adoptive *Patrie*, or homeland, though as Jessica Marglin has written about Tangier's AIU Alumni association: "[their] skepticism about the benefits of European rule demonstrates the danger of confusing AIU graduates' admiration of French culture with political loyalty to France."⁵³ While Marglin writes about the turn of the twentieth century, I contend that these AIU teachers' turn to France in the years surrounding decolonization was similarly conditional and, like their counterparts with Moroccan nationality described in Chapter 3, represented a strategy as previously fluid avenues of attachment were increasingly cut off.

49 Martin Messika, "L'accueil Des Juifs Marocains En France," in *Terre d'exil, Terre d'asile*, Bibliothèque Des Fondations (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 2010), 178–79.

50 Messika, 182–84.

51 *École Normale Israélite Orientale. Engagements de Remboursement*. 16 June 1975. AM France E 017 C, AIU.

52 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 67.

53 Jessica M. Marglin, "Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 602.

If, as historians have argued, we must rethink the way that the AIU attached ENIO graduates to France, we must also reimagine the way it attached them to Morocco. In particular, we must consider what northern Morocco, where Jouhet and many other foreign-born ENIO graduates lived, was like socially and culturally for Jews. If most Jews in northern Morocco had previously spoken Haketia, by the 1930s and 1940s most had switched to modern Spanish, in part due to the fact that the AIU schools there taught Spanish before the establishment of the protectorates.⁵⁴ Spanish influence in Tetouan and Tangier became particularly strong due to the large number of Spanish settlers there, and northern Moroccan Jews over the early twentieth century quickly adopted modern Spanish as their *lingua franca*, Spanish food, dress, and cultural habits along with an intensified awareness of their origins in Spain, which the colonial power actively encouraged.⁵⁵ The vast majority of AIU teachers who arrived in northern Morocco were from former Ottoman provinces where Jews had largely spoken Judeo-Spanish. Thus the northern Morocco to which Jouhet migrated was a veritable “*reencuentro*”, or re-encounter, of Spanish-speaking Jews in an environment with a dominant Spanish influence. More work on how this atmosphere was experienced by Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews from former Ottoman provinces is needed to understand how this social dynamic unfolded. Jouhet was certainly not the only northern Moroccan Jew born abroad to move back, and the 1930s Great Depression, for example, brought many Jews who had immigrated to Latin America back, presumably some with children born abroad.⁵⁶

I consider here that the AIU served to bring to Morocco a group of foreign Jews who, not unlike the Jewish community of modern Egypt, became “local foreigners.”⁵⁷ This “generation of Levantines” described by the Egyptian Jewish writer and philosopher Jacqueline Kahanoff,

“[...] imbibed the influence of many waves of immigration from southern Europe, especially Italy and Greece, and from the Mashrek and Iraq, together with British rule and French culture in a Moslem country torn between traditionalism and modernity, [...]. Modernity was therefore [...] the attempt of many societies, including some outside the western world, to find lifestyles and means of adaptation whereby people of different cultures could form themselves and make their own way between the conservatism of the past and present-day modernity.”⁵⁸

54 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 21.

55 Moreno, 24–27.

56 Moreno, 61.

57 Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, 1998, 4–5.

58 David Ohana, “Jacqueline Kahanoff: Between Levantinism and Mediterraneanism,” in *New Horizons*, by Mihran Dabag et al., ed. Mihran Dabag et al. (Brill Schöningh, 2016), 366.

Strikingly similar to this “Levantine generation,” the mixed groups of Jews brought to Morocco, and particularly northern Morocco, through the AIU took part in experiments of Jewish modernity for which colonial cities like Tetouan, Tangier, and Casablanca became the perfect homes. Numerous historians have noted how Jews, especially in Tangier, experimented with modernity in the colonial period.⁵⁹ Impacted by diverse cultural influences, as well as the pan-Jewish solidarity of the AIU, a strong, modern Jewish identity amongst AIU teachers and other Jews developed there. Additionally, for teachers who had lived in Morocco since the age of twenty, it was natural that they became attached to the Moroccan society they had seen develop and even shaped. We must therefore consider that a liminal form of Moroccaness was accessible to Jews born outside of Morocco in this period. The ENIO thus constitutes a notable aspect of Moroccan Jewish history beyond the educational migration it mediated.

This history began in the nineteenth century and included Jews well beyond Morocco—even Jews of Moroccan descent born abroad, like Ruth Jouhet. Jouhet herself would study at the ENIO in Versailles, and the AIU’s network would bring her back to the cities in Morocco where her family had originated. The liminal Moroccaness accessible to ENIO graduates like Jouhet, however, became unworkable in the postcolonial period, when categories of identification became increasingly associated with nationality. The question of what happened to those like Jouhet who acquired French citizenship, and how they figured—and did not figure—into France’s procedures devised to repatriate hundreds of thousands of settlers and colonial employees, is the subject of the next sections.

Between citizens and subjects: North African Jews and repatriation

The 1950s saw France’s African empire crumbling, from Morocco and Tunisia in 1956, French West Africa in 1960, and Algeria in 1962. The same period saw the “repatriation” of tens of thousands of colonial administrators, and hundreds of thousands of French settlers to metropolitan France, along with the migration of some 200,000 North African Jews.⁶⁰ North African Muslims, long present in the metropole as laborers, also began to arrive in large numbers, particularly *harkis*, Algerian Muslims who had served in the “self-defense and auxiliary forces” and the French army, and by 1968 about 138,000 Algerian Muslims with French citizenship resided in France.⁶¹ As the French state scrambled to adjust to the independence of

59 Marglin, “Modernizing Moroccan Jews: The AIU Alumni Association in Tangier, 1893–1913”; Susan Gilson Miller, “Making Tangier Modern: Ethnicity and Urban Development, 1880–1930,” in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 128–49; Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 18–27.

60 Taïeb, “Immigrés d’Afrique Du Nord: Combien? Quand? Pourquoi?,” 150–51.

61 Ethan B. Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 217.

Morocco and Tunisia, as well as settle its internal upheavals and the downfall of the Fourth Republic precipitated by the Algerian war of independence, the AIU and its Moroccan-based teachers struggled to make sure they were not left out of the metropolitan proceedings.

While the arrival of Algerian Jews in France has often been placed in the context of France's immense mobilization to "repatriate" its former colonial administrators and its nationals on foreign soil, Moroccan Jews have generally not benefitted from the same perspective. The historiography has tended to note that the majority of Moroccan Jewish migrants to France held Moroccan citizenship, as opposed to Algerian Jews who held French citizenship, and draw subsequent conclusions about the "successes" of the migrants in integrating into metropolitan France.⁶² In fact, such narratives have revolved around the success of the French state's repatriation benefits, including loans, subsidies, and travel compensation, made available to French "repatriates."⁶³

The legal status "repatriate," first legally defined in December 1961, became key to postwar French state policies already in the 1950s as France began to expect the independence of Morocco and Tunisia, and as it planned to double down on its violent hold on French Algeria.⁶⁴ And yet an important aspect of this story is how French policy had to be devised ad-hoc in the face of unexpected circumstances. Even with the Evian Accords which confirmed Algerian independence under negotiations prior to March of 1962, "violence escalated as both the French government and the [Algerian Front de Libération Nationale] lost the monopoly on violence in their respective spheres", as Arthur Asseraf writes.⁶⁵ Subsequently, France realized that a much larger exodus of its citizens would reach its shores, and in much shorter order than expected. While approximately 500,000 migrants from across the Mediterranean reached France between 1956 and 1961, some 750,000 French citizens arrived from Algeria in the summer of 1962 despite the French government's plan for most to remain in North Africa.⁶⁶ By 1978, approximately 1.5 million French citizens had been "repatriated" to metropolitan France from its former colonies.⁶⁷

62 Taïeb notes that a significant number of Tunisian Jewish migrants, certainly more than Moroccans, were civil servants and could take up positions in metropolitan France. See Taïeb, "Immigrés d'Afrique Du Nord: Combien? Quand? Pourquoi?," 151; see also Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*, 220.

63 Bensimon-Donath, *L'intégration Des Juifs Nord-Africains En France*, 2.

64 Sung-Eun Choi, *Decolonization and the French of Algeria: Bringing the Settler Colony Home* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2; on «repatriation» as it emerged in postwar France, see also Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca (N.Y.): Cornell university press, 2006); Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, *Devenir métropolitain: politique d'intégration et parcours de rapatriés d'Algérie en métropole; (1954-2005)* (Paris: Éd. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2010).

65 Arthur Asseraf, "A New Israel: Colonial Comparisons and the Algerian Partition That Never Happened," *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 116–17.

66 Abderahmen Moumen, "De l'Algérie à la France. Les conditions de départ et d'accueil des rapatriés, pieds-noirs et harkis en 1962," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* N° 99, no. 3 (2010): 1; Choi, *Decolonization and the French of Algeria*, 2.

67 Choi, *Decolonization and the French of Algeria*, 1.

The literature about how Jews with French citizenship from Morocco fit into this story is still quite sparse. Messika's recent book has made two major contributions on this front. On the one hand, using social workers' files on North African Jewish immigrants who received financial and psychological support from the *Comité de Bienfaisance Israélite de Paris*, later the *Comité d'Action Sociale Israélite de Paris*, Messika has skillfully demonstrated that the transition for Jews supposedly of French culture, if not of French citizenship, was not always smooth and in fact could be quite difficult.⁶⁸ On the other hand, he determines that Jewish organizations like the abovementioned *Comités* were crucial in accommodating North African Jews, and in some cases even served as extensions of the French state in the wider effort to accommodate Jewish immigrants. For example, Messika notes that Jewish organizations tended to focus their services on Jews without French citizenship and urged the state to fulfill its expressed universalist responsibilities to its citizens. This was especially true when it became clear that some Jews with French citizenship had been refused the state's repatriation services, due to the extension of colonial boundaries between "French" and "Jew" which followed North African Jews to their supposed *Patrie*.⁶⁹

If Messika's work has demonstrated how French Jewish organizations assisted non-citizens and buttressed the French state's responsibilities towards its Jewish citizens, then this chapter expands upon this research by incorporating the story of French citizens, predominantly Moroccan Jews, who successfully negotiated their inclusion in the substantial French repatriation initiatives of the late 1950s and 1960s. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, by 1 March 1956 a separate union had been created to represent the interests of the Moroccan AIU's teachers with French nationality. Despite efforts to reunite the unions by expanding the SIAI to include a French section, relations broke down, and by late 1956 the new group had named itself the *Groupement Professionnel des Instituteurs Français de l'AIU au Maroc* (hereafter *Groupement*). In a bulletin, the *Groupement* observed that the AIU was ready to dissociate the questions of its future in Morocco and that of "metropolitan integration", and that the union of French teachers and the French Ministry of Public Instruction were "favorable to our cause."⁷⁰ It was also noted that a new law or amendment would be necessary to settle their situation, and significantly, as for teachers with Moroccan nationality, the 1957 Cultural Convention made no specific provision for the AIU.

At the heart of this story is the strange fact that the vast majority of North African Jewish repatriates had not been born in France and had not worked in the French colonial civil service. Most Algerian Jews had been French citizens since 1870 and numerous developments since the French invasion in 1830 had caused rifts between them and Algerian Muslims. Still, their

68 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 185.

69 Messika, 129–30.

70 *Groupement*. Bulletin. 22 November 1956. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

sudden departure nearly overnight, was a shock to many.⁷¹ In Morocco, partly due to the fact that French colonial administrators would come to regret granting Algerian Jews French citizenship, colonial policy had long been geared towards maintaining legal and practical separations between Jews, Muslims, and French settlers.⁷²

For Jewish teachers with French citizenship in Morocco, then, the question of how they could be written into decolonial political negotiations can not only help us to understand an aspect of Moroccan Jewish history which has attracted little attention, but also how the circumstances of North African decolonization compelled the French state to account for contingencies which it had not expected. This in itself allows us to break down hard categories within the larger narratives of French “repatriation” and citizenship, and illuminate how these developments were seen from the margins. For this, we must determine exactly how the Groupement, along with the AIU, negotiated for teachers like Ruth Jouhet with French citizenship, who were neither French civil servants nor born in France, to be included in the emerging French policies of repatriation not intended to accommodate them.

Some 30,000 French public servants worked in Morocco on the eve of independence, and provisions had to be made to avoid their flight from the new state, while offering security for those who would eventually leave.⁷³ The state of secondment accorded to colonial employees had originally been defined by France’s pension law from 30 December 1913 which permitted civil servants to be dispatched to France’s colonies while retaining the right to promotion and pension.⁷⁴ Secondment refers to the state of being dispatched from one entity to another, such as from metropolitan France to a Moroccan school. On 5 August 1929, another law had been passed which allowed French nationals serving in France’s colonies and holding the diplomas required for public service in France to be incorporated into the metropolitan staff, and thus “treated to the same conditions [...] as if they were serving in France.”⁷⁵ This law allowed French nationals in colonies to be placed in a state of secondment regardless of whether they had been physically dispatched from metropolitan France. The law was extended on 4 April 1937, and on 7 August 1955 the law was revived to settle the situation of France’s metropolitan staff serving in its newly independent colonies.⁷⁶

71 See Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria*; Joshua Schreier, “A Jewish Riot against Muslims: The Polemics of History in Late Colonial Algeria,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58, no. 3 (July 2016): 746–73; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*, 85–97.

72 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912–1956*, 54–55.

73 M Rousseau, “La Loi Du 4 Août 1956 et l’intégration Dans Les Cadres Métropolitains Des Fonctionnaires et Agents Statutaires Français, Des Administrations et Services Publics Marocains,” *La Revue Administrative*, no. 70 (August 1959): 374.

74 “Loi Sur Les Pensions,” *Journal Officiel de La République Française*, December 31, 1913.

75 “Loi Prorogeant Les Effets de La Loi Du 5 Août 1929 Sur l’incorporation Dans Les Cadres Métropolitains Des Professeurs Français à l’étranger,” *Journal Officiel de La République Française*, April 7, 1937.

76 Ibid.

This law, however, only referred to staff serving within France's metropolitan staff. Civil servants employed in colonial administrations, such as Morocco's Cherifian staff, were not included. Indeed, it seems that, like the Moroccan AIU's French nationals, France's colonial staff had become anxious about their futures. Following pressure by Morocco's colonial unions on this point, a new law was passed on 4 August 1956 permitting, under certain conditions, for French nationals to be "reintegrated" into France's metropolitan civil service, and thus allowing "agents who could not continue serving in Morocco to finish a regular career in France."⁷⁷ Notably, the law placed locally employed teachers in a state of secondment by the French state with a theoretical end date; it did not, however, compel them to leave Morocco, and in fact was designed to facilitate the opposite.

On 13 November 1956, mandated by the new Groupement, Sabetay Sabetay and Léon Arari made the trip to Paris to pursue their own "steps regarding integration", meaning these teachers' conversion into French civil servants.⁷⁸ Essentially, they aimed to take advantage of the new application of the 1937 law to have themselves placed in a state of secondment, like the Cherifian staff, dispatched by metropolitan France to the AIU, similar to the Tunisian solution described in Chapter 3. Sabetay proved a key actor in the negotiations, making additional trips in February 1957,⁷⁹ and an extended one from April until June 1957.⁸⁰ Finally, on 11 October 1958, just days after the inauguration of the Fifth Republic under Charles de Gaulle, an amendment to the 1937 law was promulgated, allowing "*professeurs français*", meaning teachers of French nationality, who had taught in Morocco prior to their naturalization to benefit from the law.⁸¹ This amendment meant that suddenly most of the Moroccan AIU's French nationals, both Moroccan and foreign-born, were eligible for reintegration into the French civil service.

By April 1962 all eligible French teachers who requested their reintegration had received it.⁸² Reintegrated teachers were placed in a state of secondment on behalf of the French government and administratively dispatched to the same AIU schools where most had worked for decades. These teachers were effectively reintegrated from the date they had begun teaching in Morocco, meaning they were considered to have conducted their entire careers as French civil servants, a significant gain regarding pensions. Additionally, a provisional date for the end of their secondment, meaning their physical relocation and assumption of an equivalent position in France, or retirement, was attributed to each teacher.

77 "Loi Du 4 Août 1956 Relative Aux Conditions de Reclassement Des Fonctionnaires et Agents Français Des Administrations et Services Publics Du Maroc et de Tunisie," *Journal Officiel de La République Française*, August 6, 1956; Rousseau, "La Loi Du 4 Août 1956 et l'intégration Dans Les Cadres Métropolitains Des Fonctionnaires et Agents Statutaires Français, Des Administrations et Services Publics Marocains," 379.

78 Groupement. Bulletin. 22 November 1956. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

79 Groupement. Bulletin. 6 February 1957. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

80 Groupement. Bulletin. 20 June 1957. AIU-MA-795.2, CAHJP.

81 "Ordonnance N° 53-942 Du 11 Octobre 1958 Relative à l'incorporation Dans Les Cadres Métropolitains Des Professeurs Français Ayant Enseigné Au Maroc," *Journal Officiel de La République Française*, October 12, 1958.

82 Groupement. Bulletin. 28 April 1962. AM Maroc EP 12C, AIU.

Significantly, teachers with French citizenship did continue to work in Morocco after reintegration and nationalization. However, similar to Messika's disclosure of the French state's uneven treatment of its Jewish French citizens, reintegrating AIU teachers in Morocco did not necessarily put Jews on equal footing with France's former Cherifian or its metropolitan staff. For example, reintegrated teachers who continued to teach in Ittihad-Maroc schools or who worked in schools nationalized by the Moroccan government did not automatically gain the benefit of new laws passed in favor of France's civil service dispatched to Morocco, such as salary or pension increases. Léon Benaroya, Groupement president since Sabetay Sabetay's retirement, often complained about this both to the Ittihad-Maroc delegation and French officials in Morocco.⁸³ Strikingly, these circumstances even led the Groupement to threaten the Ittihad-Maroc in December 1958 to sign contracts directly with the Moroccan government if it did not either help them to gain the benefits of these laws, or pay the differences itself. To this, Eugene Weill retorted of the Groupement that "they would sign a pact with the devil for a few extra [Francs]."⁸⁴

The source of these difficulties proved to be the fact that the French government did not consider the Ittihad-Maroc, even as a "Moroccanized" organization following its reconstitution, to be a part of the "Moroccan administration", which is to say the Moroccan public system.⁸⁵ Naturally, French employees in MUCF schools also benefited from such laws as direct representatives of France in Morocco's French schools. Ironically, even given the AIU's supposed Moroccan nationalization, and despite the French government's reintegration of the AIU's French nationals, the AIU/Ittihad-Maroc was neither considered French nor Moroccan enough to be included in the provisions of the 1957 accord which would have permitted the easy implementation of new laws for Jewish employees with French nationality. These mirrored some Jews' difficulties accessing France's repatriation services once they arrived there.

Thus both in Morocco and in France, Jews with French citizenship could find themselves falling between the cracks of systems which had difficulties accounting for them. Possessing French nationality during the colonial period had not provided the AIU teachers with a significant advantage, and they were not paid more than their counterparts with Moroccan nationality. The colonial system in Morocco had been built on maintaining differences between European nationals and indigenous subjects, as well as between Jews, Muslims, and Europeans. The French protectorate had long assumed the extended presence of both French, foreign, and Moroccan nationals, and while there were real and obvious disadvantages for indigenous subjects, Jews of different nationalities could navigate Morocco seamlessly when

83 See e.g. Groupement. Letter from Léon Benaroya to René La Combe. 1 February 1964. AM Maroc E 103 L, AIU.

84 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Jules Braunschvig. 11 December 1958. AM Maroc E 115 J, AIU.

85 Groupement. Audience accordée par S.E. Monsieur l'ambassadeur de France au Maroc. 24 January 1961. AIU-MA-1087, CAHJP.

sponsored by the AIU. It was on the eve of decolonization and in its wake that this fluidity became impracticable.

Fearing that they would be unemployed as foreign and French nationals, the Groupement was compelled to decide on taking their chances with the independent Moroccan government or the French government and chose the latter. But when it came time to “reintegrate”, colonial differences were not eradicated by an attachment to the French state. The phenomenon of placing French nationals in secondment to be dispatched to the colonies was not new, and even non-Jewish French nationals in the Cherifian staff benefitted from French laws on improved working conditions. This discrepancy hinged on the fact that the AIU’s schools were never recognized as part of the public system, and its teachers as Cherifian staff. This constitutes another aspect of Jews’ colonial experience in Morocco, if a minority one. So long had it considered Jews legally separate, the French state had to be convinced by the Groupement to make some adjustment for their reintegration, which for those who remained in Morocco was never equal to their non-Jewish counterparts teaching in Cherifian or MUCF schools. Just as Messika writes about Jews with French nationality who immigrated to France, in Morocco, too, it would take additional negotiations and explanations for Jews to be recognized as citizens of the republic.

Perhaps most strikingly, the AIU, the largest Jewish institution at the intersection of the local and the colonial, had no choice but to consider paying the premiums on what the French government accorded its French nationals teaching in Ittihad-Maroc schools. In the same letter in which Eugene Weill denounced the Groupement’s threats, he proposed a plan for what benefits the AIU could reasonably accord the French teachers.⁸⁶ Just as for the Moroccan personnel, and especially before the nationalization of one third of the schools, the AIU walked a fine line between keeping its costs low and keeping its teachers on board, knowing that if teachers left en masse, as the student body was slowly doing, this would signal the end of the AIU in Morocco. And with the Moroccan teachers encouraging the government to nationalize them in the same period, the loss of its French nationals could conceivably precipitate a swift end to the school network’s hundred-year history.

The Groupement’s negotiation of French nationals’ metropolitan reintegration is part of the history of the upheaval of Morocco’s educational system in the wake of decolonization. Morocco’s complicated negotiations with its commitment to “Arabize” its educational system reflected its desire to homogenize and modernize its population through education, and the place of French teachers and French nationals in that scheme was vulnerable, but never extinguished. It was not without reason that French nationals split from their Moroccan colleagues in the AIU out of fear that they would find themselves unemployed. And yet at the same time the Groupement’s actions were part and parcel of the massive reconfiguration Morocco underwent, whether for Muslim teachers or Jewish ones. With this final bit of context in mind, let us now return to the story of Ruth Jouhet.

86 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Jules Braunschvig. 11 December 1958. AM Maroc E 115 J, AIU.

Expatriated Moroccaness and the AIU as a Familial Network

Following Morocco's independence in 1956, Jouhet was integrated into France's metropolitan staff in December 1958 and continued to work in the Tangier school.⁸⁷ Due still to her late acquisition of the CAP which placed her in a lower paid category, her reintegration had not yielded the results she'd hoped. Material comfort, due to the low pension for which she was eligible, was clearly an issue, and her reintegration seems to have been motivated by the hopes of a higher salary and retiring with a French pension in Morocco. Discouraged, in 1959 Jouhet lamented to Tajouri in a fit of "physical and moral suffering" and asked to meet because "only you know how to talk to me." She added that she hoped to be promoted "in Morocco" to a better paid category and asked if it wouldn't be possible due to her being a war widow and a veteran ("veuve de guerre et ancien combattant").⁸⁸ Jouhet here seemed to encourage an image of herself as helpless, potentially in a gendered manner, in a bid to improve her financial situation. Such entreaties may have been informed by other instances when Tajouri assisted her, such as when he intervened to help her pass the CAP. We must also consider that her framing was sincere. Jouhet seemed to have a close personal relationship with Tajouri, and the two wrote to each other fondly. Showing vulnerability to him was likely quite natural.

Even as a French civil servant, Jouhet's failure to acquire the CAP many years before placed her in a lower category, and there was little she could do to change that. In March 1960, citing "family reasons", Jouhet requested an end to her secondment, even though it was slated for 1961; it was a decision she came to regret dearly.⁸⁹ Through her reintegration, Jouhet was assigned to the Seine-Maritime department and was allocated a teaching position in Caucriauville, a small town bordering Le Havre, nearly two-hundred kilometres from Paris. Jouhet was meant to begin her new position on 16 September, but never did. According to Tajouri, Jouhet had made a "brief visit to Havre" and had quickly realized that "life in France presented many more inconveniences than advantages for her health and that the familial atmosphere she was looking for was not guaranteed."⁹⁰ Likely the "familial atmosphere" meant the lack of a strong Jewish community presence in Le Havre. Jouhet had seemingly regretted her decision almost immediately, and before 16 September Jouhet had already left Le Havre to her father-in-law's house in Paris and requested the reversal of her "reintegration".⁹¹

Tajouri offered Jouhet a job in Casablanca, but the teacher pleaded for her job in Tangier. By early November 1960, Jouhet had requested that her "reintegration" be cancelled and, still a French civil servant, was placed again in a state of secondment at the AIU's Tangier girls'

87 AIU. *Liste du Personnel Intégré en 1957*. 3 December 1958. AIU-MA-1104, CAHJP.

88 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Ruben Tajouri. 19 September 1959. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

89 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 23 March 1960. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

90 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to René Cassin. 26 October 1960. AIU-MA-1079, CAHJP.

91 AIU. Letter from Ruben Tajouri to Ruth Jouhet. 14 September 1960. AIU-MA-1079, CAHJP.

school.⁹² Jouhet's situation was what it had been prior to her reintegration, including her low salary compared to other teachers with her seniority. Having found France inhospitable, but still hoping to improve her financial situation, Jouhet sought a position at a Moroccan MUCF school—the successors to France's colonial school network for French settlers following the 1957 Franco-Moroccan Convention. Without giving notice, and less than a year after returning to Morocco, Jouhet resigned from the AIU and was hired to teach a childhood education program at the Tangier MUCF, thanks to a kindergarten program she had attended in the United States in 1950, paid for by the American Joint Distribution Committee.⁹³

By November 1961, Jouhet again regretted her decision—according to AIU vice-president Eugene Weill because teaching the young class “does not suit her”—and pleaded to have her job back at the AIU's Tangier school.⁹⁴ By then, Tajouri was on his deathbed and had been succeeded by Haïm Zafrani and Elias Harrus, and the Moroccan AIU by the Ittihad-Maroc. The AIU's administration lost patience with Jouhet; Weill wrote that “our personnel must understand that one cannot give and take back a resignation without [...] consequences.”⁹⁵ Again, however, the AIU rehired her, this time intervening with the MUCF to secure for her another order of secondment to their Tangier school. It is possible that Tajouri pleaded Jouhet's case one last time before passing, as the AIU offered her a less sympathetic ear after his death. In their letter to the MUCF, Zafrani and Harrus noted that the head of that organization had also lost patience with Jouhet.⁹⁶

The final turn in her career came a year later when Jouhet again left Morocco to reintegrate to France, and again pleaded with the AIU to take her back. In response to this last appeal, the AIU specified that the decision was no longer theirs. Weill noted that “[seeing] as she is integrated into the metropolitan staff and that for any job she would have in Morocco she would need to be paid by the [MUCF] [...] her case no longer depends on us, and even if she obtained a job at our schools in Morocco, her case would be submitted to the MUCF.”⁹⁷ By this, Weill meant that unless the MUCF or the French government dispatched her of their own volition to the AIU, the latter would have to pay her salary itself. As noted in Chapter 3, by 1963 the Moroccan AIU was in a harsh financial state, with schools closing, the disappearance of much of its funding, and local personnel fighting to maintain job conditions which the AIU could no longer afford. In a letter to her in March 1963, Weill wrote frankly that they could not offer her a job “since you left the Ittihad schools of your own initiative.”⁹⁸ According to a note by the AIU's accounting department, Jouhet retired shortly after this last letter.⁹⁹ It is unclear whether she remained in Paris, returned to Morocco, or went elsewhere.

92 Ibid.; AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Ruth Jouhet. 2 November 1960. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

93 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 24 May 1950. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

94 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Elias Harrus and Haïm Zafrani. 13 November 1961. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

95 Ibid.

96 AIU. Letter from Elias Harrus and Haïm Zafrani to MUCF. 28 November 1961. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

97 AIU. Note by Eugene Weill. 5 December 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

98 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Ruth Jouhet. 19 March 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

99 AIU. Accounting note for Ruth Jouhet. 25 April 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

Jouhet's last letters recurrently framed herself as helpless and destitute to try and convince the men with the power to return her to Morocco to do so. She wrote that "I have not one penny [...]. I am a poor woman, without will, help me survive, please."¹⁰⁰ She wrote that she was "an orphan, robbed of all affection from childhood" and that Tajouri had been "like my father".¹⁰¹ Of Le Havre, where she had been assigned, she wrote "the terrible solitude and cold of the region are harmful to me."¹⁰² In the end, they were not moved by her appeals. One official characterized her "successive and contradictory demands" as a "veritable harassment".¹⁰³ Indeed, that same official suggested that it was perhaps the ease with which Jouhet could reintegrate, back and forth, which encouraged her "variations", and that if they were to give her a job again, then the "cycle" would begin anew.¹⁰⁴

Jouhet's own self-characterization as a "poor woman" was in a sense accepted by the AIU, but instead of "rescuing" her once again, this image of her became a pretense to deny her "repatriation" to Morocco. Realistically, Jouhet's postcolonial movements through the AIU were atypical, and the AIU had even rehired her after an abrupt resignation. Similarly to her movements in the 1930s and 1940s, however, Jouhet had been prompted by major political upheavals. The AIU's portrayal of her as veritably hysterical, prone to "cycles" and "harassing" officials, reduced a veteran teacher's pleas in difficult times to shrill cries. The AIU, like its teachers, was navigating major uncertainties and decolonization. Even if it meant describing herself negatively according to gender, Jouhet utilized the tools she had to secure her livelihood, as all AIU teachers were doing. For its part, the decision to employ harmfully gendered stereotypes in response reflected the poor judgement of some of the AIU's officials.

In her last letters to the AIU, Jouhet also described her attachment to France and Morocco, and these letters help us to understand how Jouhet understood her own place as a Jew of Moroccan descent, born abroad, and living in Morocco and France amidst decolonization. In one letter, she described her previous return to Morocco from France after her initial plea: "Two years ago, I committed my first error, that of coming to the Metropole; I had then M. Tadjouri who immediately put an end to my pain. I returned to Tangier where I was welcomed with joy [...], I was home [chez moi] and felt so good."¹⁰⁵ In her second letter, she specifically invoked the concept of homeland (*patrie*) for France, as opposed to Morocco. She wrote: "I have committed the greatest error of my life, of having left the place where I lived for twenty-five years, this Morocco I learned to love more than my own homeland [*patrie*] [...]."¹⁰⁶ Finally, in her third and

100 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Eugene Weill. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

101 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

102 Ibid.

103 AIU. Letter from C. Lévy to René Cassin. 14 March 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

104 Ibid.

105 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to Eugene Weill. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

106 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 23 November 1962. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

final letter, she again invoked the concept of homeland by stating that she had “expatriated herself” –from Morocco. She wrote:

“To the President,

I ask you to please consider once more the situation of a lost being, to which you have extended your hand many times, and saved many times from [...] catastrophes, circumstances which, still the same and of a personal nature, had pushed me to commit, involuntarily, grave errors, today’s of having left ‘my fold’ [*mon bercail*] where I lived for thirty years as part of the Alliance [...]. But why did I expatriate myself, this time? That is a question which, regrettably, I do not know how to answer. It was the height of folly, to leave then my paradise! Today I am very unhappy and a lost being in this strange world, with its rude climate and whose society, very withdrawn, is far from resembling our own. [...] I beg of you, Mr. President, to please accept my services in the schools of the AIU in Morocco, as of the next school year 1963 for a period of three years, when I think I will retire in Morocco itself.”¹⁰⁷

Her final letter allows us to extrapolate another characteristic of Jouhet’s –and the AIU’s– place within the Moroccan Jewish diaspora. Though she was not born in Morocco, Jouhet had lived most of her adult life there, under the wing of the AIU; she wrote that she was an “adoptive” child of the AIU, this was not only a turn of phrase, referencing her orphanhood. Jouhet had quite literally lived most of life under the AIU’s patronage; she had attended the AIU in Haifa, the ENIO in Versailles, and it was the AIU which had brought her to Morocco, and which had framed her experiences and social networks, as evidenced by her letters. Three times Jouhet had attempted to find employment elsewhere, and each time she attempted to return to Morocco, and to the AIU, which, for its part, had gone far beyond what one might expect from an employer, securing for her twice a return to its schools when it had no obligation to do so.

Frances Malino’s work on Jewish girls and women in the AIU, particularly those born in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), provides crucial understanding for Jouhet’s significance for a kind of Moroccan Jewish belonging mediated by the AIU. Malino writes:

“As Alliance teachers, as women born in North Africa and educated in Europe, their identities were fragmented. They were simultaneously insiders and outsiders, a foreign presence entitled to European protection and spokespersons for the memories as well as the aspirations of their fellow Jews. Predictably, they did not always negotiate smoothly between the traditions of their community, the lure of westernization and the realities of colonization.”¹⁰⁸

107 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 11 March 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

108 Malino, “Prophets in Their Own Land?: Mothers and Daughters of the Alliance Israélite Universelle,” 69–70.

Already born “abroad,” a product of the AIU’s mediation of MENA Jewish migration, Jouhet’s hybridized identity left her without a strong attachment to Morocco, France, or Palestine.¹⁰⁹ As noted above, she likely developed such an attachment to parts of Morocco, particularly the Spanish north, partially because of her origins there, and pivoted to France when it was strategic. It was instead her relationship to the AIU, and her networks mediated by the AIU, which simulated a connection to “home.” Hence her reference to the thirty years lived in Morocco “as part of the Alliance”, which, as she wrote, “so warmly hosted me since the age of 19”. She even explicitly wrote that she was an “adoptive” daughter of the AIU.¹¹⁰ Most importantly, it was the AIU which facilitated her migration, or her “repatriation” to each of her supposed homelands.

Jouhet’s alternating references to “homeland” (*patrie*) and “home” (*chez moi*) are illuminating and must be analyzed to determine the nature of her attachment to Morocco, and thus what Moroccaness could have meant to her. Jouhet herself was born in Ottoman Palestine, though at least through 1963 she did not migrate to Israel. Amongst Moroccan Jews abroad in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Moroccan nationalism was anachronistic, and few Jews espoused any kind of political Moroccan nationalism while living in Morocco.¹¹¹ And yet by the 1960s, in her letter to Cassin, the teacher noted that she had learned to love Morocco more than her own “homeland”—*patrie*, in the original French. In her letter, she seemingly referred to France as her *patrie* by virtue of her French nationality, likely acquired through marriage. Morocco, however, was referred to as her “home”, and even her “fold”—*bercaïl*, in the original and elaborate French of her final letter, and which in both languages tends to reference belonging to a religious community.

This appeal is more intriguing given that Jouhet was born in Ottoman Palestine and had a certain claim thereby on Eretz Israel as home. Yet Jouhet seemingly did not want to move to Israel, for a number of possible reasons, first and foremost that Morocco was the place which she was best able to navigate, both linguistically and given her tenure there. Paris was a secondary, though less desirable option, as she indicated, but it was preferable to staying in Le Havre, and Morocco remained her first choice. Still, her appeals fell short of an ideological Moroccan nationalism akin to that espoused by Jewish communists. Jouhet had pleaded for her job back several times and even appealed to the Moroccan government for a job, though only in her last letter did Jouhet indirectly refer to Morocco as her *patrie* by stating that she had “expatriated” herself. Jouhet lacked a bureaucratic kind of attachment to Morocco, in that she did not hold Moroccan nationality, however neither did she refer to any family she might have still had

109 Frances Malino has noted that Jewish girls in the ENIO arrived without a strong feeling of attachment to France. See Malino, “Adieu à Ma Maison: Sephardi Adolescent Identities, 1932–36.”

110 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 11 March 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

111 On the competition of Moroccan nationalism with Zionism as it appealed for Moroccan Jewish attachments to traditional Jewish symbols, see Aomar Boum, “From ‘Little Jerusalem’ to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism, and Rural Jewish Emigration,” *Journal of North African Studies* 15, no. 1 (2010): 51–69.

in Morocco, nor an attachment to Morocco which exceeded the AIU or the country's Jewish institutions. While Jouhet stressed her strong attachment to Jewish life in Morocco without any political Moroccan nationalism, her time in Morocco, representing over half of her life, defined her experience of being Jewish. This falls in line with Daniel Schroeter's research, who notes a limited civic identification with Morocco amongst Jews in the postwar era, as an example, praising Sultan Mohammed V's role in protecting Jews during the Vichy period rather than in symbolizing a movement for national liberation.¹¹²

Thus we must note that forms of attachment to Morocco beyond nationalism were available to Jews, even those born abroad. If Jouhet had no ideological stake in Morocco's independence, she did indicate a personal stake in the life she had built there. In her last letters to the AIU in which she appealed to be returned to Morocco, Jouhet wrote that she wished to be reunited with her friends and colleagues, whom she called her "family." She added to this that she hoped "[to] see again, too, our religious sites, the rest of 'Shabbat', and the joys of our holidays which I miss so and which I will never find again in this country!", meaning France.¹¹³ She referred to Morocco as her "paradise", and repeatedly described France as cold and foreign to her. These indications served unequivocally to frame Jouhet as belonging in Morocco, from where she had been "expatriated," as she put it. There she had her only "family," her social networks, and very possibly actual family connections. There, as opposed to France, Jouhet expressed an enthusiasm for Jewish community and religious life; notably such community life would be muted in Le Havre, where few Jews lived. Back in Morocco, Jouhet would be at home, in her "fold," rather than in France, which felt "foreign" to her.

These formulations were undoubtedly a strategic move on Jouhet's part to convince the AIU to offer her a job in Morocco. But it is significant that only in this moment did she limitedly begin to refer to herself as belonging in Morocco, if not as "Moroccan." As for her colleagues with Moroccan nationality, the necessity to declare loyalties to France or Morocco in the years surrounding decolonization, usually determined according to citizenship and the laws which regulated it, compelled Jouhet to declare for France, and made it difficult for her to return to Morocco. Amazingly, however, those same hardened legal lines served to crystallize a recognizable category of belonging for Jouhet. If she could only have been brought to France as a civil servant because she had been "French," she reasoned that she could be brought back to Morocco by arguing that she was, in some way, "Moroccan." In this way Jouhet twisted the existing legal framework of repatriation to make sense of her own "fragmented" identity, as Malino writes.

From this perspective, Jouhet's case can tell us something new about North African Jewish migration in the twentieth century by expanding the limits of what can be considered "repatriation" in this period. Firstly, France was one of many countries to initiate "repatriation"

112 Schroeter, "How Jews Became 'Moroccan,'" 238.

113 AIU. Letter from Ruth Jouhet to René Cassin. 11 March 1963. AM Maroc E 045 L, AIU.

policies in the twentieth century, alongside Greece, Turkey, Armenia, and Israel, and each had their respective processes of categorization which defined the boundaries of the “repatriate”.¹¹⁴ Correspondingly, exclusionary categorization could lead, in the case of France as shown by Messika, to a lapse in policy, or in the case of Turkey and Greece’s 1923 population exchange, to forced exile.¹¹⁵ Correspondingly, in 1950, Israel legislated its own “Law of Return”, expressly framing Jewish migration to the new state as a repatriation effort.¹¹⁶ Just a few years before, numerous Jewish refugees in Mandate Palestine had applied for repatriation to their countries of origin in Europe, and several years later, others continued to apply for repatriation back to Israel. In 1953, Romania opened a repatriation program for Romanian Jews in Israel, to which 3,500 applied.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, the vast majority of Algerian Jews were “repatriated” to France, declining to be “repatriated” to Israel, while both were countries which most had never lived in or seen. The twentieth century thus saw a proliferation of sometimes competing “repatriation” efforts by newly formed nation-states vying to frame and bend waves of migration in their interest. It is amongst such competing frameworks, and the gaps between them, that Jouhet’s own story of repatriation comes to the fore.

Jouhet had twice been “repatriated” to France, and she had once been administratively returned to Morocco in a reversal of her French repatriation. Later, she had appealed to both the AIU and the Moroccan government to, through administrative process, return her to Morocco. The Groupement had successfully arranged the administrative “repatriation” of the Moroccan AIU’s French nationals, but the reverse was trickier; the AIU was not a state institution and it had diminishing resources to take on new staff, especially French nationals, most of whom had since the late 1950s been assumed financially by France due to that very repatriation scheme. Though this story clearly shows that “repatriation” exceeds the exclusive field of nation-state actions, nation-states were far more capable than the AIU of implementing sweeping programs of repatriation, should it have wanted to.

No parallel Moroccan repatriation scheme was available, even though this was essentially what Jouhet was requesting. Indeed, if such a Moroccan repatriation program had existed, it is almost certain that Jouhet would have framed herself as Moroccan to take advantage of it. But though her family was from Morocco, where she had lived and worked most of her life, and though she had spent few years in France, where she knew few people and was relegated to a

114 Aviad Moreno and Tamir Karkason, “A Transnational Millet in the Jewish State: A Judeo-Spanish Diaspora between Israel and Turkey, 1948–1958,” *Nations and Nationalism* 29, no. 3 (July 2023): 1094.

115 On the difficulties in rendering these displacements as “exile”, see Huw Halstead, *Greeks without Greece: Homelands, Belonging, and Memory amongst the Expatriated Greeks of Turkey* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 7–8.

116 On the undefined boundaries of the Jewish repatriate in Israeli law, see Nicole Maor, “‘Who Is a Convert?’ – The Law of Return and the Legality of Reform and Conservative Conversions in Israel,” *Israel Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 2022): 24–40.

117 Ori Yehudai, *Leaving Zion: Jewish Emigration from Palestine and Israel after World War II*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 158.

small, isolated town, no political arrangement facilitated her stable and sustainable return to Morocco. The same scheme which facilitated the “return” of hundreds of thousands of French citizens to France administratively expatriated Jouhet from her home, keeping her from returning to Morocco. Jouhet, like many Jews at mid-century, had decided to leave in a bid to improve her situation, or to escape the possible consequences of staying, but deciding to leave meant there was no guarantee she could return, at least not under the same circumstances. Jouhet’s luck was that she could have once been returned to Morocco through a program meant to facilitate departure. Either France or Morocco may have been her *patrie*, but Morocco was her home. And yet, if France considered Jews born in Algeria with French citizenship repatriates of the same order as settlers born in France, the imaginative leap is short to see Jouhet’s migration from France to Morocco, facilitated by the same program, as a repatriation, too. This paradox is at the core of Moroccan Jewish migration to France, and perhaps in general.

Just as paradoxically, it was the AIU, which sent many Moroccan Jews abroad, whether for education or employment as its devoted acolytes, which had repatriated Jouhet and led her back to Morocco. If the AIU’s success is often stated as attaching Jews to France, should we consider Jouhet a failure of its project? Rather, the AIU was more successful in connecting Jews to itself and each other than it was at creating good “Frenchmen” and women. In part this was because the AIU functioned as a node in or a facilitator of the strong Moroccan networks which had predated it and grown through it. It would have been impossible for Adolphe Crémieux and the AIU’s other founders to have predicted what the organization would become one-hundred years later, but we must acknowledge that it fulfilled a role far beyond what they had envisioned. Given their likely family ties, and additionally the AIU’s role in her “repatriation” to Morocco, we can best understand this by returning to the late Ruben Tajouri’s words, supposedly spoken often to Jouhet: “do not suffer [...] because we are here, you will always come home”. If Jouhet had been an expatriated Moroccan Jew, born outside her homeland or her fold, then it had indeed been the AIU which had brought her home.

Conclusion: An (a)typical case

Ruth Jouhet’s story is overall atypical of Moroccan Jewish migration. If Jouhet’s movements within Morocco were not unusual for AIU teachers, her repeated requests for reassignment across the Mediterranean were exceptional. While other teachers also made such requests successfully, we must concede that Jouhet seemed to have, through Isaac Nahon, the Tajouris, and even René Cassin, an exceptional “pull” within the AIU. In particular, while Jews did often return to Morocco from France, Jouhet’s use of a program meant to repatriate French citizens to France to return to Morocco is extraordinary, and I could find no similar case. Simply having French citizenship made Jouhet atypical of most Moroccan Jews, but we must add to this the fact that, despite her inclusion in the same framework, she was born outside of Morocco. In most studies of Moroccan Jewish migration to France, Jouhet is not considered a Moroccan

Jew; Jouhet may only have limitedly considered herself Moroccan at all, and we lack crucial information which could have made her self-identification clearer. The decision in this chapter to consider Jouhet a Moroccan Jew is perhaps its most controversial, though it has been, I hope, sufficiently justified.

Still, Jouhet, like countless before and after her, was a Jew of Moroccan origin mobilized by the AIU to seek education in France and employment across the Mediterranean, and like others, family networks had facilitated her movement. In another sense, she was one of hundreds of teachers born outside of Morocco who spoke Spanish or a Judeo-Spanish dialect and who found in Morocco, particularly the north, a familiar atmosphere and culture. Following World War II and decolonization in North Africa, Jouhet was also swept up in regional upheavals and urgent waves of migration. Like most Jews across North Africa, Jouhet was seeking whatever security she could find in a confusing and constantly shifting political landscape which included competing repatriation programs and domestic state-building, such as Morocco's Arabization program. As for them, movement held no guarantee for upward mobility.

What we can determine is that it was possible for Jouhet to express belonging to Morocco precisely in the years following Moroccan independence. But before this period, it had not been necessary. ENIO-trained AIU teachers in Morocco, and elsewhere, were a diaspora of their own. In cities like Tangier, just as Jacqueline Kahanoff describes the westernized and diverse Jewish community of Cairo or Alexandria, "belonging" did not imply a homogenous national identity—quite the opposite.¹¹⁸ Significantly, Jouhet's experience resulted partly from the fact that she had not been born in Morocco and felt most attached to the AIU as her "family." Other ENIO-trained teachers who themselves had been born in Morocco, such as the well-known historian Haïm Zafrani, could and did assert a Moroccan national identity. Even if it had brought her back to Morocco, the AIU was also part of the modern networks which had alienated her from this form of belonging which she only incompletely expressed. It was also particularly in the AIU that young women like Jouhet could become so empowered. Across the Mediterranean, men could more easily engage in local society, but for Jewish women the AIU offered them unparalleled access and mobility. Thus perhaps women like Jouhet were even more attached to the internationalism fostered by the AIU's teacher and alumni community, and by extension, more distanced from developing notions of Moroccaness.

Still, this portrait would change if we knew more about her life after her final rejection by the AIU. *In absentia*, living in France, did she one day consider herself Moroccan? Did she consider herself French, but was identified as Moroccan by French Jews, as Naomi Davidson observed was the case for Algerian Jewish repatriates?¹¹⁹ Did she retire in Morocco, and forever think of herself there as a foreigner? Though the answer, as far as Jouhet is concerned, is

118 Headrick, "A Family in Iran," 321.

119 Davidson, "'Brothers from South of the Mediterranean': Decolonizing the Jewish 'Family' during the Algerian War," 77.

unfortunately unknown, Moroccan Jews the world over were faced with similar decisions on how to identify themselves in the context of diaspora. The next chapter will focus on this process for those Jews who left for farther Atlantic shores, to Montreal, where, rather than Moroccan, they became “Sephardi.”

Becoming Who We Were: Moroccan Jewish Ethnicization in Montreal

Canadian Jewry's Moroccan origins

In honor of the 2014 *Quinzaine Sépharade* (today *Festival Sefarad*), a festival established in 1972 by Montreal's Sephardi community to celebrate Sephardi culture and history, a Moroccan newspaper based in Montreal, *Atlas Mtl* (*Atlas Montreal*), published an article by Hakam Hmiddouch which made an intriguing claim about the origins of Canada's Jewish community. The article read:

"Whether they are in France, Ukraine, Israel or Saudi Arabia, [Moroccans] are adamant about their Moroccaness, which is and will always be their deep identity. It was through our Sephardi compatriots that Morocco first made itself known in this country where we find ourselves today. Did you know that the Jews of the Maghreb even preceded the Ashkenazi Jews in Canada? Their contribution to the construction of this great country is invaluable, which is a source of pride for all Moroccans here. And it is in Morocco that their ancestors found refuge in peace centuries ago and where they flourished in peace and assimilated into the Moroccan people by benefiting from all the social advantages allowing them to access high offices and participate in the development of the country."¹

The article, which celebrated Moroccan Jews' contributions to both Canadian and Moroccan history, alleged that in fact Moroccan Jews had been the first to arrive in Canada, long before waves of Ashkenazi Jews intensified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ostensibly referring to Sephardim who, as British subjects, were the first Jews to settle in what is today Canada following the British conquest of France's colonies there, the article made no distinction between the merchant Aaron Hart, one of these early Jewish settlers who was likely born in Bavaria and was raised in London, to "the Jews of the Maghreb", primarily Moroccan Jews who today overwhelmingly form the largest part of Montreal's Sephardi community.² How was it that classically-considered Sephardim, the descendants of the fifteenth century

1 Hakam Hmiddouch, "Quinzaine Sépharade 2014: Deux Mille Ans de Brassage Culturel; Un Témoignage...", *Atlas Mtl*, December 18, 2014, <https://www.atlasmedias.com/2014/12/quinzaine-sepharade-2014-deux-mille-ans-de-brassage-culturel-temoignage/>.

2 Michael Hoberman, "More Disgrace than Honor: The Diminishment of Paternal Authority in the Letters of Aaron Hart," *American Jewish History* 98, no. 4 (2014): 212.

Spanish and Portuguese expellees, and Moroccan Jews became so intertwined in the author's understanding of Canadian Jewish history?

Moroccan Jews began immigrating to Canada in 1956, and today at approximately 30,000 they form the largest Moroccan Jewish community outside of Israel and France.³ A fair amount has been written about ethnicization amongst Moroccan Jewish communities around the world, from their labelling as “Mizrahim” in Israel, “Turcos” in Argentina, their Hispanicization in northern Morocco, Spain, and Latin America, and even the adoption of a Sephardi identity in France.⁴ Across numerous diaspora hubs, the 1960s and 1970s saw a wave of ethnic reassertions championed by North African Jewish associations “paralleled by a re-awakening and legitimisation of ethnic culture and demands for full equality in Israel in which Jews from Morocco were particularly visible.”⁵ According to Efrat Rosen-Lapidot and Harvey Goldberg, predominantly Moroccan and Tunisian Jews became “more salient” in France, meaning that while Algerian Jewish ethnicity was muted, Moroccans and Tunisians were less so. In Montreal, as in Israel, it was principally Moroccans who took center stage in this ethnic activism, but with a catch—in Montreal, Moroccans reinvented themselves, not only as Sephardim, but as fundamentally francophone. The Montreal case has three major loci for this ethnicization: Moroccans' experiences in Montreal's Jewish social service institutions, the Quiet Revolution, and the global Sephardi movement sparked by the growing awareness of Israel's ethnic problem. This chapter will primarily address the first two, while the third has been addressed elsewhere.⁶

Relatively few studies have delved into this ethnicization process from the Canadian community's beginnings in 1956 and highlighted the role of Jewish social services in shaping

3 Aomar Boum, “Circuits Diasporiques: Les Communautés Juives Marocaines En Amérique Latine et En Amérique Du Nord,” in *Marocains de l'Extérieur - 2017* (Rabat: Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger, 2018), 254.

4 For the United States, see Aviva Ben-Ur, *Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 81, 93; for Israel, see Avi Picard, “Like a Phoenix: The Renaissance of Sephardic/Mizrahi Identity in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 15; for France, see Judith Roumani, “Le Juif Espagnol: The Idea of Sepharad among Colonial and Postcolonial Francophone Jewish Writers,” in *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*, ed. Yael Halevi-Wise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 213–34; for Latin America, particularly Venezuela, see Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 101.

5 Efrat Rosen-Lapidot and Harvey E. Goldberg, “The Triple Loci of Jewish-Maghribi Ethnicity: Voluntary Associations in Israel and in France,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 2013): 116.

6 While this chapter focuses more on the local contexts of Montreal and Quebec for Moroccan ethnicization, see this article regarding the influence of the Israeli context and transnational Moroccan networks on Moroccan ethnicization in Montreal. See Shukrun and Moreno, “Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism.”

Montreal's francophone Sephardi identity.⁷ Additionally, several aspects of the Quebec context significantly distinguish it from any other hub of Moroccan Jewish migration, making it an important point of comparison. Firstly, at the moment in which Moroccan Jews began arriving to Quebec, the province had begun undergoing a set of social, political, and economic upheavals which came to be known as the "Quiet Revolution," largely seen by Quebecois nationalists as a push for the province to "modernize" as well as to provide better opportunities for the Catholic francophone majority, who were economically and educationally disadvantaged vis-à-vis the Protestant anglophone minority.⁸ Secondly, the Jewish community of Montreal, nearly 100,000 strong of primarily eastern European origin, largely spoke English or Yiddish and was unprepared to deal with the arrival of a mostly francophone Moroccan population. The Ashkenazi community, many of whom had attended English Protestant schools, had built a social service framework which mirrored that experience, and francophone Moroccans could not benefit from it in the same way. Some Moroccans may even have spoken English, as a number learned the language while working for the United States military during its occupation of North Africa, though the majority did not and encountered significant issues.

Though Ashkenazi leaders mobilized gargantuan efforts to support the newcomers, they found that the social service infrastructure of the Jewish community was insufficient to properly accommodate francophone Jews. This fact sometimes reflected negatively on the immigrants themselves, who became stereotyped as ethnically incompatible and backwards. Indeed, as Moroccans in Montreal looked abroad, particularly to Israel, and found that the notion of such an "ethnic problem" based in Moroccans' supposed cultural inferiority existed across the diaspora, Sephardi community activists sought to base themselves in a self-sufficient ethnic identity which would position them as modern and well-suited for their new North American home. And as with the article which opened this chapter, the ethnicization achieved by Sephardi community activists in Montreal could also reimagine Moroccans as the first Jews of Canada. Accordingly, when this chapter refers to "Sephardi community activism," it refers to North African, almost entirely Moroccan, Jewish activists, including businessmen, students, teachers, administrators, and other primarily middle-class francophone Moroccans, who constructed and championed an ethnic identity that reimagined them as francophone Sephardim as a means to combat their specific issues based in the local context of Quebec and Montreal. This does not mean that a Moroccan identity was and is not salient, but rather that strategically labelling themselves "Sephardi" could be more advantageous.

7 Take for example this important article but which only limitedly addresses the issue of Jewish social services in informing an ethnic francophone Sephardi identity. Christine Chevalier-Caron and Yolande Cohen, "La Langue Française Chez Les Sépharades Du Québec: Une Stratégie de Préservation Culturelle et d'intégration Sociale (1960-1980)," *Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 31, no. 1 (2019): 96.

8 Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35-36.

This chapter focuses on and describes the process of Moroccan Jewish ethnicization as francophone Sephardim in Montreal. It offers a novel perspective on why Moroccans came to identify as inherently francophone Sephardim in Montreal, and how this related to their relationship to the mostly Ashkenazi and anglophone Jewish community, and to the broader political context of the Quiet Revolution. Moroccanness in this setting is thus treated as a separate category which, amongst other sources, informed “Sephardiness.” Similarly to Chapter 2, not all North African Jews who migrated to Canada were Moroccans, though the majority were (see section 5.2). As we will see further on, the community’s own publication recurrently used Morocco rather than Algeria or Tunisia as a reference point for its audience, and so though activists spoke alternately to “Sephardim,” “North Africans,” and “Moroccans,” both the speakers and the audience were mostly made up of Moroccans. I will thus refer alternately to Moroccans and North Africans.

Sephardi community activists were not exclusively Moroccan, but they were primarily Moroccan Jewish men and women and used Morocco as a prominent frame of reference for developing a francophone Sephardi identity. This explains why, for example, Naïm Kattan,⁹ the famous Iraqi Jewish writer, was often identified by the Sephardi community as Sephardi, but rarely referred to himself as such.¹⁰ The nomenclature will necessarily vary accordingly. Additionally, this chapter primarily addresses Moroccan Jews who migrated to Montreal, rather than Toronto, where another community took root and did not adopt a francophone Sephardi ethnic identity. Furthermore, this chapter includes a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the Alliance Israélite Universelle’s (AIU) influence on Moroccan Jews in the diaspora.

This chapter will begin with an account of North African immigration to Canada. Next, it will describe the schools and social service infrastructure frequented by Jews in Montreal and the problems faced by Moroccans within those institutions. Finally, it will demonstrate how, influenced by these experiences and by the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, Moroccans reimagined themselves as Sephardim in Montreal’s francophone Jewish press, and how Moroccanness came to occupy the core of this new francophone Sephardi identity.

9 Naim Kattan was born in Baghdad in 1928 and emigrated to Montreal in 1954 where he founded the Bulletin with CJC. He authored numerous novels and countless articles as a contributor to newspapers such as *Le Devoir*. Kattan worked closely with CJC and was probably the most prominent French-speaking Jew in Montreal at the height of his career. He remains a major figure in the history of Jewish Canada.

10 See Kattan, “Le Séfaradisme.”

Jewish Montreal and the Quiet Revolution

Adolphe Teboul, often called the first Moroccan Jew in Canada, arrived in Montreal from Morocco in 1956 to a community just shy of 100,000 Jews.¹¹ The majority of Montreal's Jews were immigrants who had arrived from Russia, Poland, and Romania, but a small number of French-speaking Jews had also arrived from Belgium, France, and Iraq.¹² Teboul, like many before and after him, arrived with the help of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), which lobbied the government to except him from Canada's immigration regulations, helped prepare his documentation, met him at the airport, and provided him with support as he settled in his new home. JIAS, a major player in the history of Moroccan immigration to Canada, would financially support thousands of new Jewish immigrants and help them navigate their new home.¹³ In the following years, hundreds, and then thousands, of Jews from North Africa would immigrate to Canada, mostly to Montreal, but also to Toronto. In Montreal, they would settle in more or less the same neighborhoods,¹⁴ and were under the jurisdiction of the same schools and social services as Ashkenazi Jews.¹⁵ That being said, their experience greatly diverged from that of their English- and Yiddish-speaking neighbors.

Ashkenazi community leaders were active in discourses on human rights and identity, contributing to the cementing of their rights as Canadian citizens. Significantly, however, the source of Jews' rights as a religious group had its origins in the guarantee of Catholic religious freedom in 1832.¹⁶ France's influence in what became Canada's province of Quebec began in the sixteenth century, and French hegemony in the region ended with the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, after which France ceded its Canadian colony to Great Britain. The earliest Jewish immigrants to Quebec were Western Sephardi Jews who were usually British Subjects, like

11 Though in 1891 Montreal had counted only some 3,000 Jews, by 1954 Montreal was home to 92,000. Pierre Anctil, *Trajectoires Juives Au Québec* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), 75-76; "Jewish Population," *American Jewish Yearbook* 56 (1955): 298.

12 Joseph Kage. Interviewed by CBC Radio. Montreal, 26 May 1969. Transcript in: File 9, Series QA, Box 1, Fonds 10037, CJA.

13 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 154-55.

14 Moroccans settled particularly in the area from Outremont to the Snowdown/Côte-des-Neiges area, but today many also live in Côte-St-Luc and beyond. Fewer settled around the Plateau, the earlier site for Ashkenazi Jewish life before the twentieth century westward move.

15 Despite the internal diversity of Canada's Jewish community whose origins lay across Europe, for the purpose of this chapter I have chosen to refer, as is common today, to these different groups of Jews collectively as "Ashkenazim".

16 David Fraser, "Honorary Protestants": *The Jewish School Question in Montreal, 1867-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 44.

Aaron Hart, mentioned above, though German Ashkenazi Jews soon outnumbered them.¹⁷ The major waves of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration in the first half of the twentieth century completely remade the face of Montreal's Jewish community, but the notion that the roots of Canada's Jewish history lay with a nucleus of Sephardim would inspire the ways Moroccan Jews redefined themselves in that context.¹⁸

The British North America Act of 1867 had formally given the provincial governments jurisdiction over schools, a fact which led to the recognition of two educational authorities in Quebec: English-Protestant and French-Catholic.¹⁹ Against the grain, Jews fought to insert themselves into the dominant anglophone narrative of Canada as a "Christian society and an outpost of British values in North America."²⁰ At the same time, Anglophone Protestant supremacy was often challenged, and Protestant-Catholic conflicts were at the center of the negotiations for Canadian Confederation in 1867. Within this internal fight for recognition and hegemony, Jews in Quebec became identified with the Protestant minority, a fact which would have manifold consequences for francophone Moroccan and other North African Jews who immigrated to Canada.²¹

A fundamental consequence of this historical shift was in the infrastructure of Quebec's Jewish community services. From the end of the nineteenth century and over the first half of the twentieth, Jews in Montreal would establish some twenty agencies to provide social services to the community. These services primarily developed to improve the community's insufficient infrastructure vis-à-vis the massive influx of Holocaust survivors to Canada in the late 1940s.²² These services, under the umbrella of the Allied Jewish Community Services (AJCS), comprised "a hospital, a library, a nursing home, a legal advice office, immigration support, interest-free loans, daycares, community centers, elderly clubs, and other services."²³ By the 1950s the services offered by these institutions were offered almost exclusively in English, and partially in Yiddish. In many ways, North African Jews benefitted from the remarkable groundwork laid by Ashkenazim before their arrival; in other ways, the legacy of Canada's colonial negotiations would create obstacles for these Jews which highlighted the country's

17 Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 16; for a newer account of the first Jew in Canada, see also Heather Hermant, "Esther Brandeau/Jacques La Fargue: An Eighteenth-Century Multicrosser in the Canadian Cultural Archive," in *The Sephardic Atlantic*, ed. Sina Rauschenbach and Jonathan Schorsch (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 299–331.

18 Shukrun and Moreno, "Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism," 673.

19 Fraser, "Honorary Protestants": *The Jewish School Question in Montreal, 1867–1997*, 11–12.

20 Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 8.

21 Harold M. Waller, "Power in the Jewish Community," in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), 153.

22 Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947–1955* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 54.

23 Shukrun and Moreno, "Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism," 667.

inherent dichotomies. Most notably, francophone Catholics, or French Canadians (*Canadiens Français*), the descendants of French settlers in Canada, experienced tremendous disadvantages in Montreal along financial and educational lines, despite being the majority of the city's and the province's population.²⁴ This was a fact which Quebecois activists would work and ultimately succeed to change in the second half of the twentieth century.

These inequalities would lead, after the death of conservative Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis in 1959, to the election of Jean Lesage as premier in 1960. Quebec's confessional split had led to the creation of parallel networks of social services of which the Jewish network was but one. For Lesage's Liberals, elected on a platform of "catching up," the social and legal infrastructure of Quebec, largely perceived as disadvantaging the province's francophone Catholic majority, drastically needed revamping, centralization, and "modernization." This process of governmental centralization, legal and structural overhaul, and ideological reconfiguration beginning in the 1960s became known as the "Quiet Revolution." For Jewish leaders who had become associated with Canada's protestant anglophone minority, this period was one of both resistance and major adjustment. As the Quebec government chartered numerous edifying commissions to inform the rapid overhaul of the province, the Jewish community, represented by Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC),²⁵ fought to be a part of the conversation and to direct policy by submitting recommendations on the questions of the French language, schooling, and the future of social services.²⁶

Especially in the agitative atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s, Quebecois activists were driven by the notion that Quebec, and by extension the Quebecois nation or French Canadians, were colonized and suffering under the imperial influence of the United States and Great Britain.²⁷ Quebecois nationalism in this period was often explicitly framed as a decolonial movement, a fact which would intersect meaningfully with Moroccan Jews as they reckoned with their own postcolonial identities.²⁸ Throughout the Quiet Revolution, Jews retained their distinctive status as a "founding" religion of Canada and extracted significant concessions

24 François-Olivier Chené, *Laïcité et nation québécoise: de la révolution tranquille à aujourd'hui* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2024), 35; Stéphane Paquin and X. Hubert Rioux, *La révolution tranquille 60 ans après: rétrospective et avenir* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2022), 71.

25 Canadian Jewish Congress was an organization founded in 1919 to represent Jewish interests to the Canadian government in lobbying for labour rights and support for a national home for Jews in Palestine. CJC worked closely with the agencies of AJCS and the Combined Jewish Appeal. Though it did not directly provide services, it played a major role in representing and directing Jewish organizations. For lobbying, see Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 184–87; Waller, "Power in the Jewish Community," 153–57.

26 Simon-Pierre Lacasse, "Les Juifs de La Révolution Tranquille: Regards d'une Minorité Religieuse Sur Le Québec de 1945 à 1976" (University of Ottawa, 2020), 195, 242–50, 267–73.

27 Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 34.

28 Mills, 4.

from the provincial government.²⁹ However, by the end of the 1970s, the landscape of social services and public life in Quebec had drastically changed. As this chapter argues, Montreal's distinctive social service makeup was crucial to the Canadian context to which North African Jews soon arrived, and notions, as much as the reality, of privileged anglophones and deprived francophones in Quebec fueled the ethnicization of Moroccans as francophone Sephardim. The following section will describe how North African Jews arrived in Canada before moving on to their experiences there.

Montreal as a hub of Moroccan Jewish migration

In 1956, Jews began to arrive to Canada from North Africa, even though Canada's immigration policy barred nationals of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, like most non-European countries, from immigrating there. It was only in 1962 that the Canadian government promulgated a new Immigration Act, the points system, which "eliminated racial discrimination as a major feature of Canada's immigration policy".³⁰ By then, despite the regulations, several hundred North African Jews had already arrived in Montreal and Toronto, due to a special program organized by JIAS in tandem with the Canadian government, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Service (HIAS), comparable French Jewish communal organizations, as well as British and French embassies in North Africa and Europe.

The major work describing this special episode in Canadian immigration history is Martin Messika's *Politiques de l'Accueil*, based on his dissertation. *Politiques de l'Accueil* compares the processes, policies, and experiences of immigration of Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian Jews to France and Canada, primarily Paris and Montreal. In Messika's assessment, discriminatory rules according to origin continued after 1962, and only truly ended in 1967 with the application of new immigration practices.³¹ Canada was only one of many migration options explored by Jewish organizations around the globe following the Holocaust, though it would become a preferred option in general, and in particular with regards to Moroccan Jews as the Canadian government created an unusual opening in its otherwise strict policy. In the 1950s its immigration policy had been made intentionally inaccessible for undesirable groups, such as Italians and Jews, but by the 1960s Canada was touted by Jewish organizations as a viable destination for Jewish immigration.³² By the 1980s, however, many Moroccan Jews who had

29 For example, in 1974 Jews were able to operate a dedicated social service center in Montreal alongside the centralized French and English ones. No other ethnic or religious group received this concession. Andrew Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal: Language Differences and Metropolitan Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 194.

30 Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540–2015* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016), 187.

31 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 54.

32 Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 103.

first immigrated to Israel found their way to Canada. In June 1982, for example, out of thirty-five cases of families, representing 129 individuals, receiving aid from JIAS, seventeen cases, almost half, represented Jews born in Morocco. Significantly, most had lived in Israel for at least a decade before moving to Canada, and some had resided in Israel for almost twenty years, meaning that Canada had not been a quick “hop” from Morocco by way of Israel.³³

In 1956, however, it was JIAS who opened Canada to North African Jewish immigration. According to Messika, there were three phases in this immigration process. The first, beginning in 1956 and ending in 1959, was characterized by the strong roles played by JIAS and Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), particularly Joseph Kage and Saul Hayes, who successfully argued that North African Jews constituted, on the one hand, appropriate potential immigrants to Canada due to their “westernization” under French influence, but also that they constituted “refugees of a sort.”³⁴ This characterization of North African Jews as westernized refugees successfully opened the door for a limited number of immigrants when North Africans were not legally permitted to settle in Canada. Notably, North African Muslims were intentionally barred from this discretionary program.³⁵ In this period, JIAS and HIAS recruited, processed, and even performed medical examinations to insure they did not carry diseases on behalf of the Canadian government on potential Jewish immigrants in Morocco, where Canada had no embassy. JIAS thus served as a crucial extension of Canadian immigration policy, especially as it used discretion to define “refugees” internally, rather than according to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, according to which Jews were not admitted.

From the beginning, JIAS played a prominent intermediary role, and even helped to determine where Moroccan Jews arrived in Canada. Notably, the organization made an active effort to send smaller families who spoke both Spanish and French to Toronto, while larger families who spoke French but not Spanish were generally sent to Montreal.³⁶ By 1959, the Canadian government had become uneasy with the arrangement and the extent to which a private organization could influence immigration. Wishing to reassert control over the process, it no longer permitted JIAS to select candidates, but allowed them to sponsor immigrants when they did not meet the qualifications set by the government.³⁷ This meant that JIAS’ guarantee could be offered in lieu of an offer of employment or family sponsorship by a legal Canadian resident. The third phase began in 1967, when the new points system abolished geographic origin as a criteria for immigration to Canada, as well as JIAS’ ability to sponsor

33 JIAS. *List of Cases from Israel Active with the Resettlement Service of JIAS Montreal*, June 1982, File 20, Series QF, Box 16, Fonds 10037, CJA.

34 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 46–47, 58.

35 Messika, 59.

36 Joseph Kage. *A Brief Account of the Admission of Jewish Immigrants from North Africa*. File 1, Series QA, Box 1, Fonds 10037, CJA.

37 Messika, *Politiques de l'Accueil*, 68.

immigrants who did not meet the criteria.³⁸ By 1973, the province of Quebec's own immigration ministry had set up an office in Rabat, hoping to attract French nationals and francophone Jews with Moroccan citizenship which it believed would soon leave due to the country's "Moroccanization", or Arabization policies.³⁹ In fact, Quebec established offices in several former French colonies, such as Haiti, hoping to attract francophone immigrants as part of its push for the Francization of Quebec's overly anglophone public space.

Numbers for Moroccan Jewish immigration to Canada have been difficult to come by. A number between 10,000 or 12,000 is often touted for North African Jews in general, and Messika notes that 10,000 is a good number between the years 1956-1980.⁴⁰ Early internal censuses conducted by the Canadian Jewish community tended not to separate Jews by virtue of being Ashkenazi, Sephardi, North African, Middle Eastern, etc., and so even the official statistics of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s offer little information beyond a growing number of francophone and Arabic-speaking Jews.⁴¹ For example, in 1981 Montreal's official Jewish community counted 104,790 people. Regarding Jews' mother tongue, the same census counted 12,690 Jews who spoke French as a first language, 2,345 who spoke Hebrew, and 13,175 who spoke one of any other language such as Arabic, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, etc. The rest spoke English and Yiddish. The exact linguistic makeup of the Jewish community is uncertain, and many of these Jews may have spoken two, three, or more languages.

According to the census, 9,300 Jews had been born in "North Africa [and the] rest of the Middle East", and 2,515 in Israel. For North Africa and the Middle East, it is clear that Moroccans were the single largest group, though their exact share is uncertain. Furthermore, exactly how many of the 60,450 Canadian-born Jews were of Moroccan descent, though the number may have been relatively small, is impossible to ascertain.⁴² Most recently, Montreal's 2011 Jewish community census counted 8,530 Jews born in Morocco,⁴³ while in 2017 Aomar Boum estimated that some 30,000 Jews of Moroccan descent reside in Canada, including those born in Morocco and their descendants.⁴⁴ See below a more detailed table which counts the number of North African Jews who immigrated to Montreal and Toronto between 1957-1977, drawn from a JIAS memo (see Figure 5.1).

38 Messika, 69-71.

39 Messika, 72-73.

40 Messika, 39.

41 Burgard, "Les Sépharades Dans Les Études Démographiques," 39-47.

42 AJCS. Census Data. 1981. File 00154, Series 2.3, Bay 1, Fonds 1001, Jewish Public Library Archives (hereafter JPL).

43 Rémy Tremblay and France Drolet, "Les Marocains Du Canada: Un Phénomène Montréalais," in *Marocains de l'Extérieur - 2017* (Rabat: Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger, 2018), 535.

44 Boum, "Circuits Diasporiques: Les Communautés Juives Marocaines En Amérique Latine et En Amérique Du Nord," 254.

Year	Montreal		Toronto		Totals	
	Families	Individuals	Families	Individuals	Families	Individuals
1957						546
1958	65	213	20	53	85	266
1959	42	128	20	44	62	172
1960	15	38	9	30	24	68
1961	33	96	39	120	72	216
1962	27	73	32	80	59	153
1963	63	196	63	137	126	333
1964	223	795	113	438	336	1233
1965	177	594	72	204	249	798
1966	93	229	16	53	109	282
1967	227	609	50	148	277	757
1968	359	1083	113	357	472	1440
1969	123	286	54	138	177	424
1970	70	172	32	79	102	251
1971	50	112	22	49	72	161
1972	101	243	33	73	134	316
1973	146	377	34	99	180	476
1974	256	732	36	114	292	846
1975	161	399	19	58	180	457
1976	103	244	16	48	119	292
1977	56	128	7	15	63	143
Total	2390	6747	800	2337	3190	9084

Figure 5.1: Number of North African Jewish immigrants to Montreal and Toronto, 1957-1977.⁴⁵

45 JIAS. Memo. 15 July 1977. File 1, Series QCB, Box 5, Fonds 10037, CJA.

Year	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia
1957	28	380	65
1958	20	228	59
1959	4	118	28
1960	1	56	1
1961		155	4
1962		89	14
1963	2	243	10
1964		949	38
1965	2	733	3
Total	57	2,951	222

Figure 5.2: Number of North African Jewish immigrants to Canada, 1957–1965.⁴⁶

Significantly, these numbers likely only applied to Jews who immigrated with JIAS aid or sponsorship, and thus the real numbers are certainly higher. A 1966 report gives more specific numbers regarding immigrants respectively from Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria to Canada, but naturally only counts until 1965 (see Figure 5.2). Notably, these numbers help establish the dominant Moroccan majority amongst North African Jewish immigrants to Canada; simply put, most North African Jewish immigrants to Canada have been Moroccan. This is not to say that these immigrants did not share a “North African” identity. To the contrary, Jews from North Africa first organized, and differentiated themselves from Ashkenazim, as North Africans in Montreal. North Africa served as a strong overarching identity, which could even include Egyptian Jews, until the growing community pivoted to its Sephardi strategy.

Significantly, the numbers cited above do not represent those with French citizenship, whom JIAS was less likely to aid. In 1972, Elias Malka published an article in the Sephardi community’s own newspaper, *Présence*, recounting the community’s recent immigration history, but notably only referred to “Jews of Moroccan origin”. Though he stressed that he possessed no precise statistical data, Malka, then outgoing president of the Sephardi community, was in a good position to make a projection. Malka estimated that in 1972 there were more than 12,000 Moroccan Jews in Canada already, 11,000 in Montreal and 1,000 in Toronto, though he did not specify if this included Jews born in Canada. Alongside the numbers above, this estimation could suggest a strong current of Moroccan Jews who moved to Montreal after having moved to Toronto. Finally, Malka estimated that some 2,000 Jews had arrived in Canada between 1956–1965, some 8,000 between 1966–1969, and another 1,000 between 1969–

⁴⁶ These numbers should be taken with caution, as I have found no other sources which confirm them. That being said, they were certain enough for Joseph Kage to send in a memo, and even such tentative numbers for North African Jewish immigration to Canada are sorely needed and offer an idea of how this immigration manifested. JIAS, Memo, 15 July 1977. File 1, Series QCB, Box 5, Fonds 10037, CJA.

1971.⁴⁷ These numbers vary significantly from the ones supplied by JIAS in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, however this may indicate the increasing number of Jews who arrived without JIAS support. In 1986, for example, James Dahan, a central figure of the Sephardi community, estimated that there were between 23–24,000 Sephardim in Montreal, including those who had come from Israel. He deduced that 21,000 were “of Moroccan origin”, while the rest were “Egyptians, Iraqis, Algerians, Tunisians, Lebanese, and Turks.”⁴⁸

As noted above, following 1967 JIAS could no longer offer its guarantee in lieu of a job offer or family sponsorship, though it continued to lobby the government to reopen the special program as late as 1981, arguing, as before, that “the situation of the Jewish inhabitants in Morocco is precarious.”⁴⁹ The exceptional nature of the immigration program permitting North African Jews to enter Canada was lost neither on the immigrants themselves, nor on JIAS officials. Importantly, the program was understood and articulated explicitly within the context of Morocco as a dangerous country for Jews. For example, seemingly reacting to the closure of the program by the Canadian government, forty-four North African Jews in Montreal signed a petition asking the government to reopen it. The petition’s appeal read: “We appreciate the opportunity given to us and all of us will do our utmost to become good citizens of Canada and share in the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizens.” It continued: “[as] you well know, the situation in the countries of North Africa, is not only not improving, but is actually becoming worse.”⁵⁰ The petition was delivered through JIAS, and likely it was JIAS who had formulated the language of the letter. This is clear due to the familiar language of impending catastrophe, the fact that the petition was in English, and the inclusion of the phrase “duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizens”, a phrase which JIAS officials hoped would convince the government.⁵¹

In fact, this program represented one of many initiatives aimed at opening Canada for North African Jewish immigration, and JIAS, HIAS, and other global Jewish organizations looked for every opportunity to facilitate Jewish movement. A distinctive intervention in 1964, for example, was the attempt by JIAS to import North African Jews as French teachers for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal. Significantly, due to a 1903 law which conformed Jews to Protestants for the purposes of public education, the majority of young Jews in Montreal attended anglophone Protestant schools.⁵² In some Protestant schools Jews

47 Elias Malka, “Pour Un Assouplissement Des Modalités d’Immigration Au Canada, Des Juifs Originaires Du Maroc,” *Présence*, September–October 1972, 5.

48 Daniel Chonchol, “Des Relations Entre Juifs Sépharades et Ashkénazes,” *La Voix Séfarad*, September–October 1986, 50.

49 JIAS. Letter from Joseph Kage to Mr. W. K. Bell. 21 July 1981. File 4, Series QF, Box 20, Fonds 10037, CJA.

50 JIAS. Immigration Petition. Undated (1963–1964?), File 12, Series QF, Box 16, Fonds 10037, CJA.

51 A JIAS pamphlet likely put together in 1960 already used the familiar motto, “From Immigrant to Citizen”. JIAS. Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada. 1960?, File: Canadian Immigration Policy, Series 2, Bay 2, Fonds 1074, JPL.

52 Anne Read, “The Precarious History of Jewish Education in Quebec,” *Religion and Education* 45, no. 1 (2018): 26.

even formed a majority of the students. In 1965, for example, at Northmount high school, out of 1,479 students, 1,351 were Jewish, while at Bedford elementary 598 out of 849 were Jewish.⁵³ Both were schools within the Protestant School Board. Thus, when JIAS attempted to import North African Jews as French teachers, it was primarily for Jewish students. JIAS even circulated the demand for teachers through the AIU in Morocco, hoping to recruit Jewish emigrants for this purpose.⁵⁴ The same flurry of letters dedicated to this question referred to the Talmud Tora schools in Montreal which would soon begin to teach in French in addition to English, in accordance with expected Quiet Revolution-era policies regarding public education, as well as to the “large [recruitment] advertisement [in Europe] made by Mr. the Superintendent of the personnel of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal” which urgently needed French teachers.⁵⁵ Quebec’s shifting linguistic landscape thus intersected significantly with extensive networks of Moroccan Jewish migration.

The program may have been moderately successful, and in February 1966 the AIU listed twenty-three former teachers of its Moroccan schools which had immigrated to Canada; these Jews were overwhelmingly Moroccan-born.⁵⁶ According to a letter by Joseph Kage, as well as the AIU’s circulation, the initiative was launched in response to a more general advertisement taken out by the Protestant School Board in various European newspapers requesting trained French teachers.⁵⁷ Thus, JIAS and the AIU attempted to take advantage of the more general call for European immigrants for the purposes of Jewish immigration and education, and the AIU continued to play an important role in Moroccan Jewish life following these Jews’ emigration.

Regardless of its success or failure, the attempt to bring North African Jews as French teachers for the Protestant School Board represents a microcosm of the Jewish experience within 1960s Quebec history and linguistic politics. JIAS’ initiative placed North African Jews within the evolving political landscape of Quebec where some of them were already providing a desperately needed function which the Protestant School Board was generally at a loss to fulfill—teaching the French language. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, teaching was a prospect which had long occupied Moroccan Jews through the AIU. In Montreal, language, more than religion, was a marker which could invite discriminatory attitudes, and which defined social classes. In practice, linguistic categories were also inextricably bound up with ethnic categories. Furthermore, language tangibly affected the opportunities available to North African Jews, regardless of the strong Jewish community structure present in Montreal. The way this mismatch of linguistic and religious categories affected the experience of Moroccan Jews in Quebec is the subject of the following section.

53 AJCS. Montreal pupils attending Montreal schools. 30 April 1965. Container 32, AJCS/FJCS Unprocessed, JPL.

54 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Elias Harrus. 14 December 1965. AM Maroc E 104 L, AIU.

55 Ibid.

56 AIU. Liste des instituteurs de l’Ittihad Maroc installés au Canada. 27 February 1966. AM Maroc E 104 L, AIU.

57 JIAS. Letter from Joseph Kage to Mr. F. C. Grosman. 22 January 1963. File 3, Series QE, Box 20, Fonds 10037, CJA.

“Difficulties with Western concepts”: Moroccan experiences in Jewish social services

French-speaking Jews from North Africa, the vast majority from Morocco, had begun arriving to Canada in 1956 in small numbers. Completely distanced from Yiddish and mostly unable to speak English, these Jews had faced a communal and migratory trajectory dissimilar to that of Ashkenazi immigrants to Canada. Specifically, many Ashkenazi Jews had undergone anglicization in Protestant schools, while Moroccans would seek to preserve their connection to the French language. As noted above, JIAS had tended to target middle-class francophone Moroccan Jews for immigration to Montreal. A minority, usually the parents of these younger immigrants, spoke only Arabic.

The language employed by Jews in Quebec had real, tangible consequences. As noted above, the vast array of social services provided by the Jewish community were organized, communicated, and offered in English. To understand the significance of this, we must keep in mind the distinctive confessional structure of Quebec, where “well into the twentieth century, Quebec’s social services were provided almost exclusively by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and by various ethnic-based organizations.”⁵⁸ Though some, like community centers, could cross confessional boundaries, most social service organizations tended to serve particular populations. For Jews in Montreal, the relevant ethnic-religious organization was the collection of agencies belonging to the established Jewish community, under the umbrella of AJCS: the Baron de Hirsch Institute, Neighbourhood House, the Hebrew Free Loan Association, the Jewish Vocational Service, the Golden Age Program, the Jewish General Hospital and Nursing Home, the Jewish Public Library, etc. Montreal’s Jewish communal reality was defined in large part by these social services.

Martin Messika has observed that, though the historiography of Moroccan Jewish immigration to Canada has focused on its success, few have shown the difficulties these Jews faced.⁵⁹ Significantly, Jewish community institutions largely operated in English, a good deal in Yiddish, and limitedly in French, while most Moroccan Jews in Montreal spoke French, and a few Arabic. Additionally, French-language Catholic institutions including hospitals were generally inaccessible to Jews and groups other than Catholic French Canadians,⁶⁰ a fact which cemented the prominence of ethnic social services in communal experience.⁶¹ As we will see, Moroccan Jews’ subsequent redefinition as Sephardim was strongly influenced by their experiences in Montreal’s Jewish social service network. This and the following section

58 Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal: Language Differences and Metropolitan Politics*, 50.

59 Messika, *Politiques de l’Accueil*, 185.

60 St-Mary’s Hospital in Montreal, for example, was founded to serve Irish Catholics who also found it difficult to access French Catholic organizations. See Alan Hustak, *At the Heart of St. Mary’s: A History of Montreal’s St. Mary’s Hospital Center* (Montréal, Québec: Véhicule Press, 2014).

61 Anctil, *Trajectoires Juives Au Québec*, 181.

will utilize internal reports compiled by Montreal's Jewish community to reveal some of the difficulties Moroccans faced in the early years of immigration to Montreal, and it will focus on three organizations: the Golden Age Association, the Jewish Vocational Service, and Neighbourhood House.

It is important to note that these reports were informed by the dominant social and anthropological constructions of the 1960s and were thus replete with orientalist and negative racial stereotypes. On the one hand, Ashkenazi Jewish leaders were earnest in their desire to properly support and accommodate North African Jewish immigrants, especially in helping them "adapt" and "integrate". In fact, the first report detailing the difficulties experienced by Moroccan Jews was published in 1966 and was a result of concerns raised by Moroccan Jewish women themselves.⁶² Conversely, leaders striving to comprehend and assist Moroccans often arrived at conclusions focused on perceived cultural differences from "Western" norms. This notion of cultural difference would come to inform, not only Ashkenazi officials' policies regarding Moroccans, but Moroccan Jews' own strategies to push back against specific stereotypes, such as being backwards, patriarchal, and incapable of adapting to "Western" ways of doing things, by redefining themselves as francophone Sephardim.

Take for example the Golden Age Association (GAA), a social service organization founded in 1950 which planned activities for Jewish senior citizens in Montreal and worked to foster a feeling of belonging amongst them.⁶³ In their 1966 report studying the extent to which French-speaking Jews were utilizing Jewish community services, the Women's Federation of AJCS had gleaned that "70 people representing about 60 families" took part in "an all French-speaking group of senior citizens," or the French club. Out of this number, sixty were "North African" and ten were "French-speaking Europeans".⁶⁴ Interestingly, most of these Jews reportedly spoke at least two languages, though only two spoke English, and one spoke only Arabic. Presumably, some of the bilingual seniors spoke both French and Arabic.⁶⁵ By the time of the report's publication, some 3,000 North African Jews, most of whom were Moroccans, resided in Montreal (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

The 1966 Women's Federation report compiled responses to a survey circulated amongst Montreal's Jewish social service institutions regarding the difficulties faced by French-speaking Jews in using their services. In the report, the GAA responded that it was "sufficiently

62 Women's Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women's Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL.

63 Joe King, *Six Decades: The First Sixty Years of Federated Jewish Services in Montreal* (Montreal: Allied Jewish Community Services, 1977), 13.

64 Women's Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women's Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL.

65 None would have spoken Hebrew at this juncture, as any Jews arriving from Israel were younger and not involved in an association for elderly Jews.

staffed with French-speaking personnel” to manage the influx of French-speaking Jews, but it also indicated that:

“Moroccan older adults have objected to the practices and treatment they have encountered as recipients of our Jewish agency services. Many of the receptionists, intake workers, doctors, social workers, and psychologists do not speak French and are unaccustomed to relating to the Moroccan Jew.”⁶⁶

Though the voices of elderly Moroccan Jews are muted here, the GAA’s statement suggests that some friction characterized the interactions between Moroccan Jews and anglophone Ashkenazi social service operators. To explain this friction, the GAA tended to point towards a cultural mismatch and a lack of effort on the part of Moroccan Jews:

“[...] Jewish Moroccans in this French-speaking group are slow in making a good adjustment either in the agency or the community. It was pointed out that the Moroccans are a small proportion of the total senior citizen population in the agency. The customs, habits, and manners are seen as different and alien from the predominantly Western and East European ties of the majority served by the agency. [...] the Jewish Moroccan appears to be dependent on being given services with minimal motivation to obtain them for himself. [...] The Jewish Moroccan senior citizen also has difficulties with western concepts, such as making appointments, coming on time for appointments, or accepting age limits as requirements for group membership. [...] The Jewish Moroccan senior citizen has difficulty in moving out of his own environment, leaving his home and familiar surroundings. For this reason he has not been able to make full use of the new Golden Age Association Building and facilities.”⁶⁷

Through the subdued language used by the GAA, we can garner the frustration of both Moroccans and the agency itself, a frustration which is mirrored in the responses of other agencies. The statement also reveals the isolation experienced by some elderly Moroccan Jews by describing the archetypal “Moroccan senior [citizen]” who is faced with the ordeal of “moving out of his environment”. Furthermore, the reference to “alien” “customs, habits, and manners”, and a difficulty with “western concepts” seemed to cement that Moroccan Jews were unable to “integrate” or properly benefit from Jewish community services due to a cultural incompatibility. This notion would repeatedly rear its head, and Moroccan Jews would challenge it head-on as they redefined themselves in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 18-19.

In 1966, North African Jews still comprised a significant minority of the members of the GAA. One community institution in which North African Jews became disproportionately represented was the Jewish Vocational Service (JVS). According to the agency, the JVS was founded in 1945 in response to the high unemployment of the 1930s, as well as discrimination against Jews, an “overconcentration of Jewish youth” in clerical work, and, according to the organization, a “general lack of any kind of realistic planning for the future on the part of our Jewish young people.”⁶⁸ This description illustrates well the expansive role which community services aimed to play in Montreal Jewish life. The JVS began with career counselling services and a job placement program for both immigrants and local-born Jews who were “physically and emotionally handicapped” called the “Sheltered Workshop” program, and soon provided counselling services to other Jewish institutions such as the Jewish General Hospital.⁶⁹ By 1964, and perhaps earlier, North Africans formed “the most significant emigré group” using the JVS’ services.⁷⁰

According to the Women’s Federation’s 1966 report, the JVS, like the GAA, received most of their North African referees through JIAS. The JVS indicated that they were “probably the second agency that [Moroccans] come in contact with in Montreal.”⁷¹ The JVS, in turn, referred Moroccans to other agencies like the Herzl Health Centre, the Jewish General Hospital, the Baron de Hirsch Institute, and the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Hebrew Association. Predictably, they noted that almost all of these Jews spoke only French. As of 1964 they employed two French-speaking professionals but were uncertain if this would meet the requirements of future immigration. Finally, roughly 200 Moroccan Jews were placed in jobs in 1964.⁷²

As “the second agency” these Jews encountered in Montreal, the JVS could be a gateway to the Jewish community, or an unexpected dead-end. Though the JVS’ intention was to “[guide] the individual to take his place in society as a responsible citizen”, its program could have unintended consequences for Moroccan Jews.⁷³ Firstly, as specified by their initial purpose, the JVS was meant to direct employment for Jews, young and old, within the Jewish community, not outside of it. As a Jewish community service, the JVS worked with the Jewish-owned businesses in its community network. For francophone Moroccans this meant placement within mostly anglophone Jewish businesses, where they were at a linguistic and social disadvantage. In

68 Alfred Feintuch, *Jewish Vocational Service 1945-1985: A Proud Record of 40 Years of Service* (Montreal: Allied Jewish Community Services, 1985), 1.

69 Ibid., 4-6.

70 Feintuch, *Jewish Vocational Service 1945-1985: A Proud Record of 40 Years of Service*, 6-8.

71 Women’s Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women’s Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL.

72 Ibid.

73 Isadore Glustein, *The Function of the Jewish Vocational Services* (Montreal: McGill University Special Education, 1974), 1.

practice, jobs obtained by middle-class Moroccan immigrants through the JVS were often blue-collar, and thus constituted a career setback.

This pattern continued into the late 1970s, as evidenced by Jacques Bensimon's 1977 documentary, *20 Ans Après*, in which Bensimon, himself a Sephardi activist, interviewed a Moroccan Jew, his father, in the JVS' sheltered workshop program. The interviewee, aged fifty-nine, revealed that he had been a mechanic in Morocco, from where he had arrived twelve years earlier. He had eight children, two of which were married. The man worked five days a week and received forty dollars every two weeks making automotive parts for Anglophone Jewish businesses, a salary below the "minimum fixed by the government".⁷⁴ Apparent even in the short interview was the father's visible bitterness, and his father's struggles within Montreal's Jewish social service structures would influence Jacques Bensimon's conception of a class struggle between an Ashkenazi hegemony and a Sephardi lower class.⁷⁵ Though not all Moroccan Jews faced these same issues, as immigrants facilitated by JIAS, the JVS could be central to their experience and frame intra-Jewish relations in Montreal as "Ashkenazim" vs "Moroccans", a theme readily adopted by Sephardi community activists.

Similarly to the GAA, the JVS found Moroccan Jews a challenging group to serve within the scope of Montreal's Jewish community institutions. The JVS, however, revealed that Moroccan Jews' expectations of leading a middle-class life and benefitting from their French fluency tangibly clashed with the low-income employment and anglophone reality of the social services offered by Montreal's Jewish community. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on language, and in particular Moroccans' use of French, highlighted again that the friction which erupted at the points where Moroccans received social services from Ashkenazim was coming to be perceived as a cultural or ethnic conflict. For their part, Moroccan community activists would come to understand and articulate this disparity in terms of their special needs as francophone Sephardim. To develop this perspective, the following section will turn to efforts by Moroccan and other North African Jews to shape their own new community, and in particular how such community activism was achieved through another Jewish organization which became disproportionately representative of North African Jews, Neighbourhood House.

Neighbourhood House and Moroccan Jewish community activism

If North African Jews were a numerically modest group in the first years since their immigration to Canada had begun in 1956, a decade later North Africans, and particularly Moroccans, had become a sizeable minority of several thousand in Montreal's total Jewish community. Notably, the earliest distinctive community organization amongst North African Jews was as North Africans, rather than Sephardim. This community organization began with

74 Jacques Bensimon, *20 Ans Après* (Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 1977).

75 Schwartz, "Occupation and *20 Ans Après*: Representing Jewish Activism in Montreal, 1968-1977," 74.

social gatherings arranged with JIAS' help by newly arrived Moroccan Jews such as Baruk Aziza, Rachele and Ralph Lallouz, Vicky and Pinhas Ibghy, and Jeanette and Emile Perez, among others.⁷⁶ In 1959, Aziza presided over the first formal group of North African Jews, the Association Juive Nord-Africaine, which became in 1961 the Groupement Juif Nord-Africain de Montréal (the North African Jewish Grouping, GJNA).⁷⁷ In tandem with JIAS and CJC, the GJNA organized cultural and religious events for North African Jews, but early on the association became a conduit for community activists to communicate their difficulties to the leadership of the broader Jewish community. Significantly, the GJNA explicitly represented Jews from across Northern Africa, rather than the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria). In 1962, for example, a GJNA memorandum explicitly stated that the group's elections committee consisted of a chairman, Salomon Serruya, from Morocco, while three co-chairmen were "M. Lumbroso (Tunisia)", "M. Altarac (Algeria)", and "Cesar Sol (Egypt)".⁷⁸

The first substantial complaint, indicative of the North African community's growing numbers and issues, was delivered to CJC as a memorandum in 1963. Already in this letter we can see the ethnicization of North African Jews as francophone Sephardim taking shape in the context of the Quiet Revolution. Compiled by the GJNA, the letter counted three urgent problems: "education," "synagogue," and "integration," in this order. For "education," the GJNA noted that their immigration to Canada had been effected under the assumption of "the strong Canadian Judaism", a crucial aspect in their desire to immigrate somewhere where they could assure that their children received a Jewish education, and which for them had become a "sad deception."⁷⁹ The letter continued that the community, which now numbered some 3,000, could largely not afford to send their children to private Jewish schools, and that the English Protestant schools were simply not appropriate, as parents wished to "avoid assimilation and its grave consequences". The letter added, however, that North African Jews had immigrated to Canada "because of their French culture" and were now compelled to enroll their children in English schools, due to Jews being coded as Protestants in Montreal. Clearly seeking to persuade CJC to act, the letter assumed a political tone and added that, should North African Jews anglicize, "the entire Quebec Jewish community will be deprived of a group which could be an important bridge of harmony between themselves and the Quebec nationalist movement."⁸⁰

76 Jean-Claude Lasry, "Les Juifs Sépharades de Montréal: L'Association Sépharade Francophone et le début de l'École Maimonide," *La Voix Sépharade*, September 2015, <https://lvsmagazine.com/2015/09/les-juifs-sepharades-de-montreal-lassociation-sepharade-francophone-et-le-debut-de-lecole-maimonide/>; Women's Federation of the CJA. Minutes of Special Canvass Meeting for the Moroccan Group, 27 July 1964. File: Special Canvass (New Canadians), Container 32, AJCS/FJCS Unprocessed, JPL.

77 GJNA. Memo from Pinhas Ibghy to GJNA Executive. 20 February 1964. File 12, Series QF, Box 16, Fonds 10037, CJA.

78 GNJA. Memorandum. 12 May 1962. File 12, Series QF, Box 16, Fonds 10037, CJA.

79 GJNA. Letter from GNJA to CJC. 1 December 1963. File 12, Series QF J, Box 16, Fonds 10037, CJA.

80 Though there is no evidence of a direct link, this phrasing could have been inspired by Jacqueline Kahanoff's writings about Levantism as a bridge between the Orient and Occident. See David Tal, "Jacqueline Kahanoff and the Demise of the Levantine," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 238.

Regarding a “synagogue”, the group lamented “the lack of a North African Sephardi Synagogue” which “deprives us of our traditional practices”. They added that it was “well known that North African Jewish life was for the most part in keeping with the traditional character of our ancestors”, and that therefore this need was fundamental. Finally, concerning “integration”, they noted that “the Ashkenazi Jewish Community has not taken much cognizance of the small Sephardi one.” They urged the community to acknowledge their distinctive problems, so that North African Jews could “take our place in Canadian Society, both as Jews and French-speaking Canadians.”⁸¹

In this early memorandum, we can see the intertwining of Quebec’s charged political atmosphere with the Jewish community’s language conflicts, the issue of cultural preservation along an Ashkenazi/Sephardi (North African) split, and North Africans’ particular difficulties of being embraced by the same institutions as the broader Jewish community, compounded by the problems outlined in the previous sections. Still, the use of “Sephardi” to describe the community remained linked to the Sephardi religious rite and had not yet come to denote an ethnic identity which encompassed all these issues. Indeed, the conspicuous lack of any reference to other North African diaspora communities, particularly in Israel, characterized an earlier era in Quebec’s Sephardi community activism.

In 1965, a new association replaced the GJNA, the *Fédération Sépharade de Langue Française*, soon renamed the *Association Sépharade Francophone* (ASF) in 1966.⁸² This moment also marked a concerted effort by these community activists to make the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Shearith Israel), Montreal’s historically Sephardi synagogue founded in 1768, their religious home. Prior to the immigration of North Africans, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue had largely been frequented by Ashkenazi Jews. In 1966, however, the ASF negotiated a statute by which North Africans could become non-voting members of the synagogue’s board, and the group began to hold events there, such as their general assembly in 1967.⁸³ The synagogue became particularly popular amongst Moroccan Jews after it hired Moroccan Jewish star Samy Elmaghribi (Salomon Amzallag) as its Hazan (cantor), a role he fulfilled from 1968 to 1984.⁸⁴

The efforts of North African Jewish community activists to organize around the Sephardi rite progressively became intertwined with these Jews’ francophone character. In 1972, in a

81 Ibid.

82 For more on this, see Yolande Cohen, *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d’Exils Nord-Africains* (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017).

83 Lasry, “Les Juifs Sépharades de Montréal: L’Association Sépharade Francophone et le Début de l’École Maimonide.”

84 Yolande Cohen and Linda Guerry, “Mariages et Parcours Migratoires: Juifs Nés Au Maroc et Mariés à La Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue de Montréal (1969–1981),” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 40, no. 3 (September 27, 2011): 298; see also Christopher Silver, “The Sounds of Nationalism: Music, Moroccanism, and the Making of Samy Elmaghribi,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (February 6, 2020): 23–47; Jessica Roda and Stephanie Tara Schwartz, “Home beyond Borders and the Sound of Al-Andalus: Jewishness in Arabic; the Odyssey of Samy Elmaghribi,” *Religions* 11, no. 11 (November 16, 2020): 609.

pamphlet intended to help francophone Jews navigate Montreal's Jewish community services, eight synagogues were listed, including "Anché Castillia"—the people of Castille, a clear reference to Sephardi-Spanish roots—the Outremont Sephardi Union, the Sephardi French-language Congregation, the Chomedy Sephardi group, and even a branch of Em Habanim, the ultra-orthodox missionary movement so popular amongst Jews in Morocco.⁸⁵ The list also included a contact for a Sephardi Hevra Kadisha (Jewish burial organization). The pamphlet was put together by the ASF, and so it is not surprising that the pamphlet assumed that "francophone" in the context of Montreal's Jewish community meant Sephardi.

The ways in which North African community activism were expressed through the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue and the GJNA have been previously documented. One institution which has received little or no attention despite its important role is Neighbourhood House. Likely founded sometime in the 1940s, Neighbourhood House began as a separate organization and became a branch of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA) after 1966, which was analogous to the YMCA for non-Jews.⁸⁶ Neighbourhood House provided day camp and summer camp programs, a wide range of youth activities, language classes, as well as a nursery program for working parents. In 1962 the Clark Street location had about 1,100 members and forty children in the day nursery.⁸⁷ The Women's Federation report in 1966 found that a sizeable Moroccan population was being served by the YM-YWHA's Snowdown Branch and that somewhere between seventy-five and ninety-five percent of these members spoke only French.⁸⁸ By 1969, Neighbourhood House stated that sixty percent of the Darlington location's 1,200 members were "French-speaking Jews" or "North Africans".⁸⁹

Neighbourhood House's disproportionate representation of North African Jews eventually became a platform for Moroccan community activism. In 1969, the ASF published the first issue of *Présence*, the first organ of Montreal's official Sephardi community, made up mostly of Moroccan Jews. In that first issue, the ASF announced that AJCS and the YM-YWHA would be opening French departments.⁹⁰ The departments, it reported, would be headed by James Dahan, a leader of Morocco's Jewish scout movement, whose goal would be to "supervise youths,

85 AJCS. *Répertoire des Agences de la Communauté Juive et des Groupements Francophones*. 1972. File 00297, Series 2.3, Bay 1, Container 026, Fonds 1001, JPL.

86 Women's Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women's Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL.

87 Neighbourhood House. *Some Facts on Neighbourhood House Programs*, 21 May 1962. File 6, Series C, Container 33, FJCS Fonds, JPL.

88 Women's Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women's Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL.

89 YM-YWHA. *Neighbourhood House Branch*. 1969?. File 00777, Series MB1, Box 22, Fonds 1001, Jewish Public Library of Montreal.

90 *Présence* was in practice both the newspaper of the Sephardi community and the bulletin of the new French departments under North African management.

train leaders, [...] give life to these agencies [...], and instill a community interest in our youth.”⁹¹ Under Dahan, the French department began to organize very successful scout and leadership programs for young Moroccan Jews. Notably, the French department of the YM-YWHA referred to Neighbourhood House and the opening of a French section of the Snowdown Y branch which had informally already existed. The French departments were a space for Moroccan Jews to develop their own services with AJCS funding. Neighbourhood House thus served as an early outlet for Moroccan Jewish community activism.

In 1977, the *Communauté Sépharade du Québec*, formerly the ASF, would become a constituent agency of AJCS.⁹² An examination of the events leading up to this “merger” reveals that Neighbourhood House played a key role. In 1969, along with the new French departments, CJC created the *Comité sur le Fait Français* (the Committee on the French Fact), broadly intended to improve the relationship between English-speaking Jews and French Canadians, and its mandate would eventually include attempts at improving the level of French within the Ashkenazi community itself.⁹³ Parallel to these developments, in 1971, a sub-commission of another committee was organized to treat the question of a community center for Sephardim.⁹⁴ The negotiations of this committee would eventually lead to the merger of the *Communauté Sépharade du Québec* with AJCS. The North Africans staffing these committees were the North African executives of Neighbourhood House and the ASF, and the same Ashkenazi officials staffed both, as well.

This reveals that a significant part of the Moroccan community’s institutional development was achieved through Neighbourhood House. Former directors of Neighbourhood House, like Michel Chocron, could become presidents of the ASF, which became the *Communauté Sépharade du Québec* through the merger. Additionally, extraordinarily close ties existed between the committee working to prepare the anglophone Jewish community for an ever more Francizing Quebec and the one working towards Sephardi community development. The same Ashkenazi Jews developing “*rapprochement*” programs with French Canadians were negotiating the improvement of French-language services with Sephardi community activists. In fact, the 1977 merger was welcomed by the *Comité sur le Fait Français* as an opportunity for a “closer working relationship with the sépharade community in general terms, and more

91 “Tout Vient à Point,” *Présence*, September 1969, 2.

92 AJCS. Executive Committee. Report of Comité Conjoint AJCS-CSQ. 24 August 1977. File 00472, Container 42, Fonds 1001, Jewish Public Library of Montreal.

93 AJCS. Comité sur le Fait Français Projet Action Rapprochement. 28 December 1979. File 4, Series ZB P15/29, Container: Amber, Phyllis, Fonds CJC0001, CJA.

94 AJCS. Comité sur le Fait Français Projet Action Rapprochement. 15 March 1977. File 4, Series ZB P15/29, Container: Amber, Phyllis, Fonds CJC0001, CJA.

specifically in the activities of our committee.”⁹⁵ Greater Sephardi self-representation was here connected to widening avenues of communication with French Canadians.

As a condition for the Communauté Sépharade du Québec-AJCS merger in 1977, Neighbourhood House would be renamed the Centre Communautaire Juif (the Jewish Community Center), a community center responsible for the needs of French-speaking Sephardi Jews.⁹⁶ The Centre Communautaire Juif exists today under the same name. In the same year, before the Centre Communautaire Juif’s inauguration, Jean-Claude Lasry, then president of the Communauté Sépharade du Québec and a central figure of the merger, argued that their struggle for the Centre Communautaire Juif represented his community’s learned experience that French “departments” could not respond to their needs. According to Lasry, interviewed in Jacques Bensimon’s *20 Ans Après*, AJCS’ strategy of developing parallel francophone structures within the Jewish community, was simply a way “de noyer le poisson”—to avoid the issue.⁹⁷

Simply receiving services in French was not considered enough by Sephardi community activists like Lasry who believed that AJCS would not be able to understand them, and for whom the goal was for Moroccans to become masters of their own destinies, which they could do by reinventing themselves as Sephardim. This was evident by 1971, when the *Bulletin du Cercle Juif*, the French-language organ of the CJC, stated that the objective of The French Department of the YM-YWHA–Neighbourhood House, and later the Centre Communautaire Juif—was the “preservation of Sephardi culture”.⁹⁸ The goal of the “preservation of Sephardi culture” already went far beyond the adaptation of anglophone Jewish services for Moroccans. To understand why this became the goal of Neighbourhood House as it was perceived by Moroccan community activists, the next section will explore how the ASF sought to ethnicize North African Jews as francophone Sephardim in Montreal’s Jewish press by strategically positioning themselves as francophones within the context of the Quiet Revolution.

Speaking for ourselves: Sephardi ethnicization in the francophone Jewish press

Upon their arrival to Montreal, the first moniker adopted by North African leaders was as a group of North Africans within the broader Jewish community. By the mid-1960s, however, community activists pivoted towards “Sephardi” as a self-contained ethnic identity which

95 AJCS. Memorandum from Rosetta Elkin and Jack Gottheil to Fait Français Committee. 18 August 1977. File 4, Series ZB P15/29, Container: Amber, Phyllis, Fonds CJC0001, CJA.

96 AJCS. Report of Comité Conjoint AJCS-CSQ. 24 August 1977. File 00472, Container 042, Fonds 1001, Jewish Public Library of Montreal.

97 Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, 45–46; Bensimon, *20 Ans Après*.

98 “Le Département Francophone Du Y.M.-Y.W.H.A. & N.H.S. de Montreal Branche Snowdon,” *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, January 1971.

included origins in North Africa and, before that, Spain, their essential attachment to the French language, and their commitment to a “modern” identity along what they believed was expected in Canada and Quiet Revolution Quebec as a democratic setting.

The ASF adopted many avenues to effect their ethnicization as francophone Sephardim: founding in 1969 École Maïmonide, the first French-language Jewish school in North America, by initiating the Festival Sefarad (formerly the Quinzaine Sépharade), a Sephardi Festival launched in 1972 to “preserve Sephardi culture and to assure its diffusion [...] amongst the Montreal public”,⁹⁹ and numerous academic and artistic publications by community activists.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most important avenue, however, was in Montreal’s Jewish press. To demonstrate how this ethnicization was effected, and how it related to the particular context of Montreal and Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s, this section will establish how community activists shifted towards Sephardism, as they called it, in the mid-1960s in the press.

As indicated in the name change from the GJNA to the ASF, nearly a decade after their first immigration, community activists pivoted away from “North African” and towards “Sephardi” as a moniker in a deliberate strategy to address their distinctive issues as francophone North African Jews amongst a majority anglophone Ashkenazi community in Montreal. In addition to this, the Sephardi identity under construction by these community activists, as indicated by the GJNA’s 1963 letter, was also becoming heavily influenced by the broader political context of the Quiet Revolution. In this context, North African—and particularly Moroccan—community activists became vocal in Montreal’s Jewish press and worked to construct the Sephardi identity which tied together all these categories.¹⁰¹ Two important such publications were the *Bulletin du Cercle Juif* and *Présence*.

The first known Jewish publication written in French in Quebec was the *Bulletin du Cercle Juif*, operated by the Cercle Juif de Langue Française (the French Language Jewish Circle), a group of francophone Jews employed by CJC. The *Bulletin* was founded in 1954 by CJC with the purpose of improving CJC’s relationship with French Canadians and was edited by Naïm Kattan, the prominent Iraqi Jewish writer, for thirteen years. Thus the periodical often commented on political issues in Quebec and stated CJC’s official positions. For example, numerous articles

99 “Le Festival,” Festival Sefarad de Montréal, <https://festivalsefarad.ca/presentation/>.

100 Lasry and Tapia, *Les Juifs Du Maghreb: Diasporas Contemporaines*; Lasry, “Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Montreal”; Jean-Claude Lasry, Joseph Lévy, and Yolande Cohen, *Identités Sépharades et Modernité* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2007); Tapia, *Les Juifs sépharades en France, 1965-1985: études psychosociologiques et historiques* (Sephardi Jews in France, 1965-1985); Bensimon, *20 Ans Après*; David Bensoussan and Asher Sarah Arditti, *La Mémoire Vivante – Récits de l’Âge Sépharade* (Les Édition Du Lys, 2000).

101 In many ways, Moroccan Jews’ reinvention as Sephardim in the 1960s and 1970s paralleled the strategies employed by Ladino-speaking Jews from the Ottoman empire who reinvented themselves as Sephardi in the early twentieth century. See Naar, “Sephardim Since Birth: Reconfiguring Jewish Identity in America.”

were published regarding Jews and the question of publicly funded education, a major concern in the Jewish community and for the Quebec government.¹⁰²

In practice, the *Bulletin* was a free periodical sent to French-speaking Jews and a French-Canadian elite, and Moroccan Jews also sometimes read the periodical, as demonstrated by a letter sent to the Cercle Juif in January 1973 by Jacob Bendayan.¹⁰³ In the letter Bendayan thanked the editor, writing that since his family's arrival five years before they had regularly received the publication, and that they all appreciated "the noble and admirable task that you are assigned in defense of the collective interests of the francophone Jewish community of Greater Montreal." The letter was signed Jacob Bendayan, "born in Morocco (Tangier)."¹⁰⁴ Following Naïm Kattan's departure from the Cercle Juif in 1967, Moroccan community activists became heavily involved in the *Bulletin*.¹⁰⁵ From the mid-1960s many Moroccan Jews had joined the board of the Cercle Juif, and in 1968 Ralph Lallouz, formerly of the GJNA, took over as president. Significantly, all were or had been representatives of the ASF, and from the mid-1960s the *Bulletin* would report increasingly on the ASF's activities. Other francophone non-Moroccans like Kattan may have paved the way for this change, but the *Bulletin* reported sparsely about "Sephardim" before Moroccan community activists strategically deployed the category.

From 1965 on, the *Bulletin* was filled with news regarding the ASF and the role of francophone Jews in Quebec. Interestingly, the news was rarely framed as being solely about Moroccan Jews, but nearly always about francophone Sephardim-Sépharades. Moroccan voices were using the press to demarcate a public identity particularly with reference to the specific issues which these Jews encountered in the context of the Quiet Revolution. For example, in March 1966, an editorial appeared which encouraged francophone Jews to participate in the French "renaissance" of Quebec. It stipulated that francophone Jews had a duty to explain this cultural renewal to their English-speaking coreligionists.¹⁰⁶ This editorial, almost certainly written by a member of the ASF, reflected a new emphasis on the "duty" of francophone Jews to lead the broader Jewish community amidst Quebec's political upheavals.

In February 1967, the *Bulletin* reprinted an article previously published in *JIAS News* written by Salomon Benbaruk, another Sephardi community activist born in Casablanca in 1920 and an ASF organizer. Benbaruk served in numerous committees and positions for the ASF, such as the first president of the Sephardi Hevra Kadisha (burial society) in 1969. Benbaruk also published

102 Jean-Philippe Croteau, "L'intégration Scolaire Des Juifs Francophones et Le Bulletin Du Cercle Juif(1954-1968)," *Bulletin d'histoire Politique* 10, no. 3 (2002): 156-57.

103 Lewis Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press, 1880s-1980s* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1989), 259.

104 Cercle Juif. Letter from Jacob Bendayan to Cercle Juif de Langue Française. 23 January 1973. File 11, Series DB-05, Box 8, Fonds CJC0001, CJA.

105 Croteau, "L'intégration Scolaire Des Juifs Francophones et Le Bulletin Du Cercle Juif(1954-1968)," 156; Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press, 1880s-1980s*, 260.

106 "Editorial," *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, March 1966.

prolifically; not least important was his book published in 1990, *Trois-quarts de siècle pêle-mêle: Maroc-Canada, 1920-1950-1990*, which explicitly connected the community in Montreal to Morocco. Benbaruk's 1967 article explained that the ASF's purpose was to bring North African Jews into the fold of the existing Jewish community. The article noted the diversity of the Jewish community along linguistic lines, indicating that those from eastern Europe spoke Yiddish or English, while the majority of those from the countries "of old French influence, such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, consist of francophones." Benbaruk wrote that North African Jews, "particularly the Moroccans," had "perfectly understood" that they should be "a perennial branch of the beautiful community tree" all while maintaining "their French language, which is so dear to them, [and] their traditions." Thus, he concluded, the ASF had chosen to call itself an "Association" rather than a "Community, Union, or Federation", so as not to detach itself from the broader Jewish community. He stressed, however, that the ASF represented the fact that "we are and will remain francophones, we are and will remain Sephardim".¹⁰⁷

The February article, originally published in JIAS news, was moderated in its tone and conclusion. Another article by Benbaruk which appeared in the *Bulletin* in April 1968 took a more animated stance. Titled "Do we need a French-language Jewish school?", the article summarized the proceedings of a conference organized by the ASF and AJCS to bring together leaders of the Ashkenazi and the North African communities, in this instance to address the question of Jewish schools. Benbaruk recapitulated statements made by Harold Lande, vice-president of CJC, and Mario Dumesnil, the legal consultant for Quebec's regional school boards, in which (according to Benbaruk) Lande recommended a bilingual school track to accommodate anglophone and francophone Jews, and Dumesnil recommended that schools be secularized and opened up to all confessions.

Benbaruk communicated his own contribution to the meeting, somewhat conveniently describing it as the best of the three options and noting its wide appeal amongst the audience. Writing about himself, the article read that "Benbaruk [...] drew the correct conclusion emanating from the real situation of Quebec, and the experience which the Jews of Morocco lived in the educational system dispensed by the Alliance Israélite Universelle." He argued that neither Lande's nor Dumesnil's suggestions appropriately responded to "the current context [...] of Quebec", and that indeed education in the province required a "UNIFIED school system whose primary language is that of the majority of the country, which is to say French, and with English second". Benbaruk justified his argument by openly acknowledging the French future of Quebec, which he called a country. He wrote:

"...The Québécois or the inhabitant of Quebec has to express themselves, study, speak and begin in the first place with French and then be necessarily bilingual. Religious

107 "Association Sépharade Francophone," *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, February 1967.

education, if there should be any, would have to be divided according to religion of each group and assumed by the clergy of each religion. Starting from this point, there is a certain advantage in establishing a school for Jewish students, which would be a Jewish school, with English as a second language, and for religious education, it would then be Hebraic, Jewish, and traditional, and optional for those who wish. This system exists in Belgium, Sweden, in Morocco, in Israel, due to the multiplicity of languages in these countries.¹⁰⁸

This stance was undoubtedly a bold statement and went far beyond CJC's position. In accordance with Lande's statement noted above by Benbaruk, in response to the 1968-1973 Gendron Commission, CJC had submitted its own proposal arguing that the best course of action for schooling in Quebec was a two-track, bilingual school system.¹⁰⁹ The Commission had been spurred by the St-Leonard crisis which saw primarily Italian immigrants refuse to send their children to French schools.¹¹⁰

The article demonstrated how, though they sometimes adopted the stance of the broader community, in the late 1960s ASF community activists were becoming bolder in breaking with CJC and increasingly identifying themselves as a separate group with different needs. As evidenced by Benbaruk's argument for a French-language Jewish school along the lines of the AIU, Moroccan Jews were directly drawing on their own educational experiences in Morocco. At the same time, conscious of the positive developments for francophones in Quebec associated with the Quiet Revolution, francophone Moroccans like Benbaruk were able to disagree with CJC and opt for a French-first track rather than bilingual. This strategy, in line with Quebec nationalist aspirations, framed Moroccans as well suited for Quebec's future. This was so advantageous that some, like Benbaruk, Jacques Bensimon, and others, did not shy away from calling Quebec a country.

Significantly, Benbaruk's alternate plans were not made in a vacuum. Haim Hazan, another community activist involved with the ASF, began publishing articles in the *Bulletin* as well, especially concerning the ongoing negotiations between the Catholic School Board of Montreal and the ASF for opening a French-language Jewish school.¹¹¹ These negotiations would eventually lead to the establishment of École Maïmonide, the first French-language Jewish school in North America. École Maïmonide was established in 1969 by ASF community

108 Salomon Benbaruk, "Avons-Nous Besoin d'une École Juive de Langue Française?" *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, April 1968.

109 CJC. *Proposal for Submission by C.J.C. to the Gendron Commission*. File 10, Series QA, Box 1, Fonds 10037, Alex Dworkin CJA.

110 Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 72.

111 Haim Hazan, "Dispositions Prises Par La Commission Des Ecoles Catholiques Relatives Aux Eleves de Confession Juive," *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, October 1969.

activists as a public school within Quebec's Catholic School Board,¹¹² located in a wing of a Catholic school.¹¹³ Naturally, the school offered religious Jewish education drawn from the AIU's curriculum rather than Catholic education. The school existed within the province's public system, meaning that it offered primary education for free, and in 1972 it was declared a "public interest" school by Quebec's Ministry of Education.¹¹⁴

Perhaps most importantly was how the ASF's activism intertwined here again with Quebecois nationalism. At École Maïmonide's inauguration, then minister of Education François Cloutier stated in muted understanding to a crowd of mostly francophone Moroccan Jews: "You are one of us, and I count on you to remain one of us."¹¹⁵ By this he imparted on Moroccans the condition for the special status given to École Maïmonide: Quebecois nationalists, especially in the wake of the recent St-Leonard crisis, were interested in promoting French amongst immigrant groups and hoped that Moroccans could be such a model group. By happenstance, this coincided with the desire of Moroccan immigrants to maintain French amongst their children.

The issue of a francophone Jewish school in Montreal had since 1956 taken on a deep urgency as the younger generation of Moroccan Jewish immigrants progressively anglicized in the Protestant schools frequented by Montreal's Jewish youths. Moroccan Jewish parents had for over a decade noted with distress the difficulties their children faced in anglophone schools, and the first issue of *Présence*, the ASF's own journal launched in 1969 along with École Maïmonide, lauded how the school would reverse their anglicization.¹¹⁶ The school's administrators stated three educational goals upon its founding: "The first, Judaism in the Sephardi tradition, the second, the education of the French language, and the third, the acquisition of a basic understanding of English."¹¹⁷ The school, which still exists today and has two campuses in Montreal, was perhaps the ASF's most enduring success in constructing and reproducing its new Sephardi identity, as well as the most enduring legacy of its activism in the context of the Quiet Revolution.

The *Bulletin's* article written by ASF enthusiasts continued to invest in Quebec's francophone future. In 1971, another article advertised the francophone department of the YM-

112 École Maïmonide was one of a very small number of schools which benefited from this policy, and it was perhaps one of only two; the other was L'école Socrates which began to offer a mostly French curriculum in 1971 and entered the Catholic School Board in 1978. The policy was largely championed by François Cloutier, then Minister of Education.

113 Christine Chevalier-Caron, "De l'Alliance Israélite Universelle à l'école Maïmonide," in *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d'Exils Nord-Africains*, ed. Yolande Cohen (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017), 99–100.

114 "École Juive de Langue Française: École Maïmonide," *Présence*, September–October 1972, 2.

115 "L'importance de la Langue," *Présence*, December 1973, 14.

116 Shukrun and Moreno, "Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism," 668.

117 Chevalier-Caron, "L'héritage Des Activités de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Dans Les Relations Entre Accueillants. Es et Accueillis. Es à Montréal et En France Des Années 1950 Aux Années 1980 : Le Cas Des Migrations d'origine Marocaine," 125.

YWHA and Neighbourhood House, stating that their objectives were: firstly, “the preservation of traditional Sephardi culture based on Hebrew and French”; and secondly, “the survival of Sephardism in harmony with the ambiance of a Francophone North America [which is to say] the preservation of intercommunity relations and the historic future of Sephardism in Quebec.”¹¹⁸ The article demonstrated further efforts of the North African community activists of the ASF to position themselves strategically vis-à-vis French Canadians, but also to invest the word “Sephardi” with strong ethnic markers, including the French language.

The early 1970s only saw the ASF’s share of the *Bulletin* increase, though it remained an organ of CJC. As the ASF increasingly failed to keep in line with CJC’s positions, this fact could lead to private disagreements spilling into the public sphere. Such disagreements stemmed from the ASF’s association with Quebecois nationalism, which CJC tended to exaggerate, and disassociation from or disparagement of the broader Jewish community. For example, in June of 1968 the *Bulletin* printed a response by CJC to an article which had been published in the Quebec newspaper *La Presse* by André Luchaire, a French-Canadian journalist and specialist of history for the newspaper.¹¹⁹ Luchaire had conducted an interview with Elias Malka, then president of the ASF, and published it in an article titled “Canadian Jewish Congress accepts the principle of French Jewish schools.” In the article, Luchaire wrote that this new position put an end to “a long tradition of indifference [by CJC] to the French Fact.”¹²⁰ Echoing information received from Malka, Luchaire wrote that, though most Montreal Jews were “Ashkenazi”, the French Jewish community was “almost totally of Sephardi rite.” “In fact,” Luchaire added, “when one says Sephardi in Montreal, they mean Francophone.” In the interview, Malka lamented about the situation of North African Jews having to send their children to Protestant schools, “where they are anglicized.” The article blamed CJC, which, for its part, Luchaire wrote, had in fact constituted an “oligarchy” which had for years been subject to criticism.¹²¹ The article further lauded the efforts of the ASF in advocating and organizing francophone activities and opportunities for North African Jews.

CJC published an indignant response in its June 1968 issue of the *Bulletin*. They rebuked Luchaire for accusing them of a long-standing indifference to the French Fact and listed several arguments, largely noting the achievements of the *Cercle Juif*, which refuted his statement. The rest of the points targeted every claim made about Sephardim.¹²² More than half of the article was concerned with the apparent misconceptions which Luchaire had acquired from Malka. The article condemned the ethnic claim made about Sephardi identity. Luchaire, it

118 “Le Département Francophone Du Y.M.-Y.W.H.A. & N.H.S. de Montreal Branche Snowdon.”

119 Rosario Bilodeau, “Chronique de l’Institut,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 22, no. 4 (1969): 684.

120 André Luchaire, “Le Congrès Juif Canadien Accepte Le Principe Des Écoles Juives Françaises,” *La Presse*, May 25, 1968, 21.

121 *Ibid.*

122 “Réponse du Congrès Juif Canadien à Monsieur André Luchaire de Journal *La Presse*,” *Bulletin Du Cercle Juif*, June 1968.

read, had been gravely mistaken in equating “francophone” with “Sephardi”, and even the fact that these Jews represented the majority of francophones was incorrect. While Sephardim were often francophones, Ashkenazim, they countered, were not necessarily unilingual. In fact, they corrected, “Sephardi Jews numbered 10,000 at the most”, while “Ashkenazi” Jews, notably those of the new generation, exactly 38,234 individuals, are perfectly bilingual and thus Francophones, too [...].¹²³ Furthermore:

“Ashkenazi” Jews actually have as much interest and right, if not more, than Sephardi Jews to a good and egalitarian French education. André said erroneously, tendentiously, and with much exaggeration, that Sephardi Jews would be the authentic emanation of the French-speaking Jewish community that considers itself responsible for the survival of French culture brought here by the immigrants from North Africa.”¹²⁴

CJC concluded by stating that it was the representative of “ALL” Jews. It advised an unnamed organization to avoid creating a myth of “discrimination against Sephardi Jews, or a disinterest in them by the CJC, or their monopoly of the French Jewish population, when they are only a minority [...]” The Jewish community, they amended, was more united than ever.¹²⁵

Though the article was written as a response to Luchaire, it was evident that the intended readers were Elias Malka and the ASF. The ASF had felt emboldened to spread its ethnic narrative regarding North Africans’ status in Montreal and felt that, as francophones with a certain authentic connection to “French culture” through their experiences in colonial North Africa and in the AIU, the reforms and Francization heralded by the Quiet Revolution were a propitious moment to claim to be the representative voice of most francophone Jews in the province. Importantly, this strategy worked, as evidenced by the establishment of École Maïmonide not long after these articles’ publications. The AIU again here proves to be a major influence on Moroccan Jewish trajectories post-emigration, and insofar as Moroccans in Montreal depended on their experiences in the AIU to operate École Maïmonide, we must consider the AIU as a key factor in the development of Sephardi identity in Montreal, and Moroccanness more broadly.

In speaking with Luchaire, the ASF had crossed confessional lines and forced CJC to be on the defensive within its own community. The idea that “Sephardim” should be the voice of Jews to the Quebec government or society, the voice of French-Jewish Quebec, endangered the precarious position of the anglophone Jewish community as anglophones and as Jews. From the ASF’s point of view, strengthening their ties with French Canadians by speaking to journalists like Luchaire and appealing to the government was a means to improve their

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

position and address their issues by reinventing themselves as Sephardim vis-à-vis non-Jewish francophones. Significantly, this seemed to be working; in its response, CJC felt the need to exceptionally frame its response in terms of “Ashkenazim” and “Sephardim”, something the organization was not in the habit of doing, preferring to be the voice of “[ALL]” Jews. Rather, it picked up on the francophone Sephardi identity that the ASF had utilized in its communication with Luchaire and adopted the paradigm to frame its own complaint. Suddenly, when the intra-Jewish tensions based on Quebec’s distinctive linguistic landscape arose, the CJC was “Ashkenazi,” and the North Africans, at least those represented by the ASF, were “Sephardim.”

The *Bulletin*, which remained the official French publication of CJC, was only ever a partial outlet for the ASF, who launched their own organ in 1969, *Présence*. Likely funded by the budgets of AJCS’s new French departments (Neighbourhood House and the Snowdown Branch of the YM-YWHA), *Présence*, unlike the *Bulletin*, was unequivocally the voice of the new self-styled Sephardi community of North African Jews in Montreal. It hailed the achievements of the ASF and other North African Jews, it advertised businesses owned by North Africans, and monitored what it saw as a diaspora of North African Jews around the world. Similarly to previous publications, its articles recurrently made stronger references to Morocco than any other North African country. *Présence* is still in publication today under the name *La Voix Sépharade*.

Présence was a space in which the community activists of the ASF could negotiate their identities as Sephardim. In the first issue which opened in September of 1969 with the establishment of École Maïmonide, Elias Malka sketched the perceived responsibilities of the ASF and *Présence*. Basing these responsibilities in the particular issues faced by francophone Jews in Montreal, Malka encouraged all who were capable to volunteer in “improving the social services which already exist and work to adapt them to the specific needs of this new community.”¹²⁶ Deliberately seeking to shape the boundaries of their “new community”, Malka wrote that the anglophone community now found itself with a second community “for which they were not ready” and that the readers needed to help “prepare a tomorrow when we can be proud of our origins and our belonging to a rightfully considered ethnic group.”¹²⁷

An important facet of the ASF’s identity construction through *Présence* was a reimagination of this ethnic group’s origins. One such example was a series of articles in the journal in 1973 which redrew the boundaries of “Sephardim”, published by Charles Abraham. Little is known about Charles Abraham besides that he was not a Moroccan Jew, but had been born Christian in Texas and had converted to Judaism after discovering his Sephardi heritage.¹²⁸ Abraham had subsequently become close to activists within Montreal’s growing Sephardi community and would publish several articles in *Présence* which reimagined Sephardi history to include

126 Elias Malka, “Editorial,” *Présence*, September 1969, 1.

127 Ibid.

128 For more on Charles Abraham, see Shukrun and Moreno, “Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism,” 673.

Moroccan Jews and tie them to the Quebec context.¹²⁹ Abraham was not himself responsible for generating the new francophone Sephardi identity, and he was just one of many more contributors to *Présence*, publishing only a small number of articles between 1973–1977. Still, his articles were published in conjunction with Moroccan community activists and can help us to understand how this identity was developed within the context of Quebec.

Working together with ASF community activist Nessim Chény, who translated the articles from English to French and likely co-wrote them, as well, Abraham aimed to expand “Sephardim” as a category to include North African Jews who long predated the expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492. Referring to the Vandal conquest of North Africa in the fifth century, Abraham’s article series claimed that at that time “Sephardim were still present” in North Africa. In another article in the same series which appeared in *Présence*, Abraham wrote that Sephardim were essentially French Canadians, which included “Acadians and Quebecois, and two religious minorities, Huguenots and Sephardim.”¹³⁰ In this way a wing of the ASF argued that Moroccans, who had only recently arrived in Canada, were actually a founding group of Canada who had predated the arrival of Ashkenazim—hence the quote which opened this chapter.

Charles Abraham’s claims, published in *Présence*, serve to clarify another aspect of this ethnic revival. Moroccan Jews’ reimagination as Sephardim served a practical purpose in that it identified them with this group of Jews whose presence in North America predated Ashkenazi immigration. In addition to this, however, Moroccans were drawing on Jewish history to find an appropriate model for post-migration ethnicization, and the Sephardi model of dispersal and diasporic identity construction worked seamlessly. As Jonathan Ray has written:

“As the Sephardic Diaspora took shape, the notion of a shared cultural identity offered a means to bind together the Sephardic communities of the Mediterranean and, eventually, the Converso communities of northern Europe. During this process, pre-Expulsion Iberia began to function as an idealized homeland, a marker of communal identity and the centerpiece of their cultural patrimony.”¹³¹

For some Moroccans, as Aviad Moreno has shown, this process of association with Iberia as an idealized homeland had begun already in Morocco, and many francophone Moroccans, embedded in urban Moroccan networks and those of the country’s AIU schools, were certainly aware of this. Much as it was achieved amongst Hispanic Moroccan Jews in Venezuela,

129 Ibid.

130 Shukrun and Moreno, “Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism,” 673–74.

131 Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*, 155.

Moroccan Jews in Montreal balanced medieval Spain, Morocco, and Israel as mythic and real homelands to construct an identity to serve them in Montreal and as a global diaspora.¹³²

In *Présence*, “Ashkenazi” became a recurring category juxtaposed with “Sephardi.” In the first issue’s article announcing the French departments of AJCS, the development was justified with specific reference to “the nature of the problems encountered by francophone immigrants, notably North Africans.”¹³³ The Jewish institutions of Canada, it read, were meant to support Ashkenazim who, from either “central or eastern Europe”, did not speak “any of the official languages of Canada.” According to the article, this changed with the arrival of Sephardim, when, for the first time in Canadian Jewish immigration history, there were immigrants who “spoke one of the official languages of Canada.” Immediately after this, the article described Sephardi Jews’ problems as reflecting

“conceptual and philosophical differences concerning the role of social services. These conceptions—anglo-saxon and ‘latine’—affected by the different Ashkenazi and Sephardi ritual considerations—did not allow for sympathy between assistant and assisted, administrator and administrated... inaccurate assessments, miscomprehension, indifference, malcontent, panic [...]”¹³⁴

Articles like this contributed to a version of Canadian history in which the arrival of francophone—and thus North African—Jews heralded a new era for Canadian Jewry, since the largest section, Ashkenazim spoke neither English nor French upon immigration, and thus had been less suited for Canadian integration. Francophone North Africans, who spoke an “official language of Canada”, it suggested, were thus better suited for life in Canada. Interestingly, the same article deliberately framed Sephardim in terms of class as being disadvantaged compared to Ashkenazim—“assisted” rather than “assistant” and “administrated” rather than “administrator”. This statement cleverly twisted history in favor of the article’s argument: Ashkenazim had not spoken English when they immigrated, and so they had been less suited for Canada; and yet now, Ashkenazim spoke English, while Sephardim spoke French, reflecting Quebec’s linguistic hierarchy by which anglophones dominated francophones. Making a clear distinction between the utility of both languages, another article in the same issue justifying the establishment of École Maïmonide stated that: “French is no longer a fashion statement in Quebec. To make for ourselves a future, it has become VITAL.”¹³⁵

132 Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 76.

133 “Tout Vient à Point,” *Présence*, September 1969, 2.

134 Ibid.

135 “Notre École,” *Présence*, September 1969, 1.

The ASF also used *Présence* to push back against negative stereotypes about North African Jews, and in these counterarguments also juxtaposed Ashkenazim and Sephardim.¹³⁶ For example, Ashkenazi Jews' assessment of a typical North African Jewish family arrangement, according to which men unequivocally dominated women, made repeated appearance in official and unofficial studies of their problems and tended to accuse North Africans of being backwards and paternalistic. The status of women in families became a sore spot for North African Jews who were commonly suspected of being less progressive and more oppressive towards women.¹³⁷ North African Jewish community activists attempted to counter these stereotypes by re-introducing themselves as Sephardim. For example, in the first issue of *Présence*, Lison Chocron wrote an article which stated that men had finally realized that "their liberty does not end where ours begins".¹³⁸ In the manifesto style of the article, she urged women not to return to their traditional roles, but rather to serve "our noble Sephardi cause" which was the same as serving "our community and the feminine cause."¹³⁹ In 1973 Jean-Claude Lasry published a short piece in which he argued that, unlike Ashkenazi women, who always took their husbands' names, Sephardi women kept their own last name, proving that they were more progressive.¹⁴⁰ Again, Sephardim and Ashkenazim became opposed categories within the context of stereotypes often applied to North African Jews.

One aspect of this was certainly the approximation of Europeanness which came with self-identifying as Sephardim, and the cultural capital that afforded. Perhaps just as importantly, however, being "Sephardi" positioned Moroccans as the original Jews of Canada, meaning that any claim of their need to adapt to Canada was anachronous. In *Présence*, however, community activists could equally point out to each other how Moroccans should adapt to Canada. On 15 February 1972, for example, the Women's Division of the ASF congregated at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue and discussed their responsibilities and goals. The proceedings were summarized in *Présence* and the resulting article deliberately theorized the necessity of acting as women:

136 Some of these stereotypes, such as backwards and paternalistic, mirrored those applied to Moroccans in Israel as noted in Chapter 2. Some, however, such as Moroccans being violent, were specific to the Israeli context. See e.g. Shay Hazkani, "Our Cruel Polish Brothers: Moroccan Jews between Casablanca and Wadi Salib, 1956–59," *Jewish Social Studies* 28, no. 2 (March 2023): 55.

137 Women's Federation of AJCS. *French-Speaking Jewish Immigrants and Their Use of Jewish Social Agencies and Women's Service Organizations*. March 1966. File 02882, Container 153, Fonds 1001, JPL; Phyllis Amber and Irene Lipper, *Towards an Understanding of Moroccan Jewish Family Life: Including the Perceptions of Moroccan Immigrants to Montreal* (Montreal: McGill University School of Social Work, 1968), 126; Marvin Julian Godfrey, "Achievement & Adjustment of Jewish Moroccan Students" (McGill University, 1970), 103.

138 Lison Chocron, "Présence Féminine," *Présence*, 1969, 6.

139 Ibid.

140 Jean-Claude Lasry, "Note Sur l'avant-Gardisme Sépharade de La Femme," *Présence*, January 1973, 2.

“In MOROCCO, we [women] did not belong to any group, perhaps musical youth groups, and we were very happy amongst our families, our friends, and our work. [...] In NORTH AFRICA, the political and social structures and even the philosophy of life were essentially different to what they are here. But we are now in Canada and we must match ourselves to the tune of NORTH AMERICAN LIFE.”¹⁴¹

Describing a “cultural shock”, the article added that in Canada, “a democratic country”, they suddenly had “the right to make themselves heard”. It is also notable that in the entire article only Morocco was singled out, indicating that the organizers were mostly Moroccans, and that they expected their audience was mostly Moroccan, too.

Action was necessary, but the article stressed that they could not simply imitate the route taken by Ashkenazim in Canada. The solution was in communal action which identified them as a separate ethnic group:

“I do not believe that the isolated individual or family can overcome this situation. In the best case, to adapt, the individual **with** melt into the masses and will disappear, absorbed by the majority. But he will never survive as JEWISH, as SEPHARDI, and as FRANCOPHONE. This is why we must unite, to be conscious of our possibilities and the means of action that this country puts at our disposal. [...] As JEWS, it is evident that the goals of [AJCS] are ours and their action is our ACTION. But as SEPHARDIM and FRANCOPHONES, we have particular needs and problems that others cannot think about. And we shouldn’t hold it against them.”¹⁴²

Strikingly, the article raised the recurrent specter of assimilation as a consequence of failing to act as an ethnically distinct community, but did so with regards to the broader, non-Jewish Canadian population as much as to their Ashkenazi coreligionists. A muted but important part of this concern was that a startling number of young Moroccan Jewish men were marrying non-Jewish women, primarily French Canadians.¹⁴³ Additionally, in an interesting retort to the Ashkenazi community’s partial successes in accommodating them, the article responded that “we shouldn’t hold it against them”, which was to say that, try as they might, the existing community and its services were incapable of sufficiently adapting to them; it was up to Sephardim themselves to act. In a stellar example of how this situation had played out and could be fixed, the article continued by pointing towards the Jewish General Hospital:

141 “La Division Féminine,” *Présence*, September-October 1972, 4.

142 Ibid.

143 Jean-Claude Lasry and Evelyn Bloomfield-Schachter, “Jewish Inter-marriage in Montreal, 1962-1972,” *Jewish Social Studies* 37, no. 3 (1975): 271-72; Schwartz, “Occupation and 20 Ans Après: Representing Jewish Activism in Montreal, 1968-1977,” 70.

“Everyone knows the Jewish General Hospital and everyone has had, more or less, the opportunity to benefit, if one can say that (*si j’ose dire*), from its services. But how handicapped and uncomfortable we feel when we cannot obtain information in French, speak to the doctor, understand their questions! And what can we say about the elderly that only speak Arabic and feel doubly lost and isolated. Would it not be more pleasant to have a few hostesses who could speak either French or Arabic and would help us like the English hostesses help the English population? Frankly, we would feel **at home**. There, I think, is the true goal of our association. To make it so we feel more and more **AT HOME** in Montreal. To participate in the **LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY**, in **THE LIFE OF THE COUNTRY**, all in saving a respectable part of our folklore.”

This statement is remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, it reiterates some of the same issues outlined above in the GAA’s and the JVS’ responses to the 1966 AJCS report, and notes that it was mostly the more elderly population which needed help in Arabic, while younger Moroccans spoke French. In this case, both French and Arabic were important languages to the community, so that even if a limited number of individuals at the hospital could speak French, none could speak Arabic. It is crucial, however, that despite the minute recurrences to it in this chapter, Arabic did not become part of the publicly constructed Sephardi identity. Arabic roots and reality were acknowledged to a certain extent, and continued to be important cultural markers at weddings, bar mitzvahs, and at festivals, but the future was francophone. But the article went further, and implied that Moroccans would prefer to be served by Jews like them, that this would help them feel more at home. Finally, it is striking that the article referred to the Ashkenazi clientele of the Jewish General Hospital as “the English population”. Lines like these were charged in 1970s Quebec, where notions of an Anglo-American imperialism dominating an oppressed, even colonized francophone majority were routine. Rather than shy away from such associations, however, the ASF found itself well at home in this discourse.

The article brings together the major themes of this chapter. North African Jews, most of whom were francophones, and most of whom were Moroccans, had arrived in Montreal hoping to join a strong Jewish community and use their French language to their advantage. Instead, they found that most Montreal Jews spoke English or Yiddish, were associated with anglophone Protestants, went to anglophone Protestant schools, and operated a Jewish social service network almost exclusively in English. These social, educational, and administrative issues took on additional meanings in the context of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, in which anglophones dominated francophones, as well as in the context of structured intra-Jewish relations in which North African Jews were stereotyped as backwards and culturally incapable of properly adapting to Canadian life. In the charged identitary atmosphere of the Quiet Revolution in which French was lauded as the future of the province, Sephardi community activists utilized Canada’s Sephardi history and institutions, their attachment to the French language, and the notion of North African Jews’ collective origins in Spain to reinvent

themselves as a recognized group of Jews separate from “Ashkenazim”. As the articles above demonstrate, as “Sephardim” they could push back against notions of their backwardness and posit that they were well-suited for Canada as a democratic country and Quebec as a haven for francophones. Furthermore, they could place their interests—French-language Jewish education and social services, cultural specificity, and the desire to feel at home—alongside the perceived goals of Quebecois nationalism, a strategy which yielded real results, as in the case of École Maïmonide’s special dispensation to open as a francophone Jewish school within the publicly funded Catholic school system.

Conclusion: A Moroccan light unto French civilization in North America

In late 1972, *Présence* published an article titled “En Avant Sépharades Montréalais!” (“Go Forth Montreal Sephardim!”). The article, written by Charles Abraham, sought to define the boundaries of the new Sephardi ethnic identity taking root amongst Moroccan Jews in Montreal, as well as to positively compare it to other such Moroccan diaspora communities, particularly in Israel. While the article viewed the prospects afforded by Israel for world Jewry positively, it was in North America, particularly in Quebec, Canada’s francophone province, that the author predicted a true “renaissance” for Sephardim:

“The same as it was more than fifteen centuries ago, the people of Israel are today dispersed between two great and powerful centers of Jewish creativity: one on the economic and military level, the other, on the spiritual and cultural level. The Babylonia of today is North America; Zion remains Zion. [...] What tasks do we, Sephardim, face in our new life here in Quebec? The pages of our history in Spain and elsewhere in corners of the Sephardi Diaspora of the old world have already been written and indelibly printed. These chapters are closed. Our Andalusia, our Spain, is but a memory. We are from now on Sephardi North Americans and Jews of Hebrew and French culture and expression, citizens of Quebec and Canada.”¹⁴⁴

The author went on to note the “historic” moment to which Moroccan Jews had arrived in Quebec, and the role which they could play in it:

“Therefore it falls to us to be the ‘light unto the nations’ for French civilization in North America, as we were in every civilization where we have lived throughout time. [...] It is here in Quebec and in Canada [...] that our Sephardi Jewish civilization can best be perpetuated. Here, we arrive at a historic moment when most of the existing North American Sephardi communities, almost without exception, are at a loss to

144 Charles B. G. B. Abraham, “En Avant Sépharades Montréalais,” *Présence*, September-October 1972, 3.

find spiritual and cultural leaders. Their youth have already assimilated too much to Anglo-Saxon life to be able to provide the creative force necessary for the continuation of their religious and cultural traditions. We, on the other hand, thanks to the unique cosmopolitan ambiance which is Quebec, and thanks to our Sephardi, Andalusian, and Castilian roots from Morocco, are particularly well-suited for this task. We aim here in Montreal for nothing less than a veritable global Jewish renaissance.”¹⁴⁵

Much can be drawn from this article regarding Moroccan Jewish migration to and ethnic community activism in Montreal. Significantly, it was written by the same Charles Abraham who was not himself Moroccan, but whose views seemed informed by Moroccan Sephardi community activists like Nessim Chény, who translated it into French. Firstly, this article, strategically associated Moroccan Jewish migration to Canada with Sephardi history and movement. Referring to the special Quebec context which facilitated this new ethnic association, the article chose to spotlight the mostly francophone Moroccan Jews who had migrated to Montreal, while entirely omitting the small number of hispanophone Moroccans who had settled in Toronto. An association with “Sefarad”, the Hebrew word referring to Spain and the diaspora descended from Spain’s 1492 Jewish expellees, might have prompted a stronger association to Spanish, rather than French. Yet the author highlighted the role that Sephardim could play, as a “light unto the nations”, for “French civilization” in North America.

Notably, the article did not reference the Alliance schools or French colonialism in Morocco, instead suggesting that an unbroken line connected Spanish “Andalusia” and “Castile” to Morocco, and thus to Montreal. We cannot ourselves, however, fail to mention that this language strongly resembled that of the AIU’s goal of “rejuvenating” dormant Jewish communities. Charles Abraham had not attended the AIU, but many Sephardi activists had, and the rhetoric of this article is another indication of the AIU’s legacy outside of Morocco and France.

The article furthermore contrasted the previously settled Sephardim of North America, mostly “assimilated” into “Anglo-Saxon life”, to these newer Sephardim who were still directly attached to their traditions and religion. Amazingly, it was these francophone Sephardim, rather than Spanish-speakers or even Arabic-speakers, who were best suited for the task of rejuvenating Jewish and Sephardi culture in Quebec. The slight gibe towards Jews who had “assimilated” as anglophones was a reference to the author’s own background as a convert and an anglophone. As elsewhere in this period, Montreal Sephardi activists often used a particularly broad definition of “Sephardi” which could include essentially any Jews not considered “Ashkenazi”, from a convert like Abraham and the classic Judeo-Spanish speaking diaspora of Spanish and Portuguese expellees, to North Africans, and to Iraqi, Yemenite, and Syrian Jews. Sephardi, in this new ethnic formation, was expanded to encompass a huge mass

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

of MENA Jewry as well as “assimilated” North American Sephardim like Abraham himself. In this way, too, the earliest Jewish immigrants to what became Canada, such as Aaron Hart, could become “Jews of the Maghreb”, indistinguishable from Moroccan Jews who migrated to Canada due to their common lineage in Spain and Morocco.

The major push for francophone Sephardi ethnicization which began in the 1960s has had a lasting impact on Montreal’s Moroccan Jewish community. At its 2020 general assembly, held online due to COVID-19, the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, formerly the ASF, announced its strategic plan for the future of Quebec’s Sephardi community. In its plan, it noted that the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec was “unique in the Jewish world” due to the combination of five main aspects of the community: that it was “francophone,” “representative,” “democratic,” “Sephardi,” and that it “intervened in all spheres of Sephardi life and aimed to reach all generations.”¹⁴⁶ Three of these in particular, “francophone,” “Sephardi,” and “democratic,” seem to confirm the strong legacy of the self-conscious ethnicization which this chapter has sought to evidence. One wonders as well how much the emphasis on “democratic” was a legacy of the AIU’s influence on Moroccan Jewry, especially as it mirrors the complicated French-Jewish attachment to the Fifth Republic, but the close ties between Moroccan communities in France and Canada requires further assessment.¹⁴⁷

Today, the community has an impressive list of achievements which exceed the boundaries of the Moroccan community, including École Maïmonide, operating on two campuses, *La Voix Sépharade*, published three times per year, the Bar-Mitzvah Mission, discussed in Chapter 6, a slew of francophone Jewish youth activities, and the biennial Festival *Sefarad*, amongst many others. And yet Morocco continues to play a prominent role in the community’s operations. Notably, the community had between 2015 and 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, organized leadership programs for young Sephardi Jews in Montreal which ended in 2016 with a “return to the roots” trip which brought them to Jewish sites in Spain, Portugal, and Morocco.¹⁴⁸

In its 2020 general assembly, the community also noted as one of its “strengths” its strong “relations with countries of origin”, a statement which, then and today, could refer to few other countries than Morocco. Though the same general assembly noted the community’s participation in the 2006 global conference for Egyptian Jews held in Israel, no other single country besides Israel and Spain was mentioned by name in the program, and Morocco was listed seven times. These included an instance when the community had hosted a delegation of Jews from Morocco in 1978, the community’s attendance at the “World gathering of Moroccan Jews” in Montreal in 1985, as well as at an international conference organized by Morocco’s state Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad in 2018 in Marrakech.¹⁴⁹ The “World

¹⁴⁶ Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, *Plan Stratégique 2021–2026* (Montreal, 2020).

¹⁴⁷ See Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*, 318–19.

¹⁴⁸ Elias Levy, “Dialogue Intergénérationnel à La CSUQ,” *The Canadian Jewish News*, 16 August 2016, <https://thecjn.ca/en-francais/le-voyage-retour-aux-sources-de-la-csuq/>.

¹⁴⁹ Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, *Plan Stratégique 2021–2026* (Montreal, 2020).

Gathering” is particularly notable, since it was organized on behalf of the monarchy along with the official community in Morocco. Instituted in Montreal, the gathering was meant to preserve Moroccan traditions, but more specifically to mobilize the Moroccan Jewish diaspora politically with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, *La Voix Sépharade*, continuously published since its emergence as *Présence* in 1969, has for decades advertised flights to Morocco for *hilulot*, the anniversary of Moroccan saints often celebrated through pilgrimages, and its articles reference no country more than Morocco, other than Israel.¹⁵¹ While the Sephardi ethnic identity includes, in theory, any Jew who is not Ashkenazi, in Quebec the core of the identity is undeniably Moroccan.

The boundary work effected in Montreal’s francophone Jewish press, particularly the *Bulletin* and *Présence*, was framed as the “preservation” of Sephardi culture. Community activists perceived Moroccan anglicization as assimilation, whether it be within Ashkenazi Jewry or the non-Jewish Canadian population. And yet, as much as the ASF sought to ground itself in a historically accurate Sephardi category, the resulting ethnic identity was no less a post-migration invention, inextricable from the social and political contexts of Quebec. So, too, was it a direct response to Moroccans’ experiences within Montreal’s Jewish community institutions. These experiences were persistently used to justify the need for an ethnically distinct activism. They also drew on their experiences in Morocco, which they used to inform their identity in Quebec—as francophone—and contrast it to their country of origin—as democratic. It was this new and self-contained Sephardi, conscious of their roots in Spain and Morocco, but who was committed to the most “modern” elements of their recent experience, French language and culture from the AIU and democracy from Canada, that was well-suited for the Quebec of the Quiet Revolution. As evidenced by the words of Elias Malka and Lison Chocron, community activists were often deliberate about how much of this identity was a contemporary construction. On the other hand, Sephardi activists like Charles Abraham just as often framed it as a cohesive category which they had brought with them from Morocco, and before that, Spain. This strategic and often mythic interplay between old and new characterized Moroccan Jewish ethnicization across the diaspora.

It is additionally interesting that figures like Charles Abraham could be included in a primarily Moroccan revival. As I noted in the introduction, there are significant and real parallels between the process of identity-construction undergone by the descendants of classically considered Sephardi expellees and the development of Moroccanness in the Moroccan Jewish diaspora. While of course the two are different, it is clear that Moroccans in Montreal were explicitly modeling their own ethnic revival on that successful Sephardi prototype. The inclusion of Charles Abraham, whose Christian-born experience seemed to mirror that of conversos who returned to Judaism through migration to the Ottoman Empire,

150 Berdugo-Cohen, Cohen, and Lévy, *Juifs Marocains à Montréal: Témoignages d’une Immigration Moderne*, 21–22.

151 See e.g., “Advertisement: Hiloula Au Maroc,” *La Voix Sépharade*, November–December 1985, 15.

Amsterdam, and even North America, seemed to lend an important legitimacy to the ethnic revival taking place in Quebec.

Moroccan Jews in Quebec and Ontario were admitted to Canada through a special program which bypassed the country's strict, racially motivated laws, facilitated by international philanthropic organizations like JIAS and HIAS. It was propitious that Moroccan Jews arrived in Quebec just as progressive nationalist governments began to address long-standing inequalities between the province's francophone majority and anglophone minority. In this way, Moroccans themselves form an integral part of the Quiet Revolution's Jewish history. Vice-versa, the Quiet Revolution is an important and largely untold chapter in the history of the emergence of a Moroccan Jewish diaspora as we know it today. Moroccan Jews who migrated to and remained in Toronto largely did not take part in the francophone Sephardi ethnic activism. This activism depended more on the context of the Quiet Revolution and Montreal's strong Jewish institutions. Notably, the community's official iterations over the years have remained strongly based in Quebec rather than in Canada as a whole, from the *Communauté Sépharade du Québec* in 1977 to its evolution into the *Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec* in 2001.

The Montreal case is just one example of post-migration Moroccan ethnicization. The post-migration influence of the AIU on Moroccan communities is also not exceptional in Canada. Still, within the Moroccan Jewish diaspora, Montreal is unique. Though Moroccan Jews met with ethnically dissimilar Jews in many post-migration host countries, only in Montreal did Moroccanness inform their reinvention as Sephardim as an essentially francophone ethnicity. This has distinguished the Montreal Moroccan community from others, as much as it remains deeply connected to the broader diaspora. This final question of the relationships between different branches of a highly mobile diaspora will be addressed in the next and final chapter. Bringing this dissertation full circle, the final chapter demonstrates how Moroccans in Montreal and the Negev in Israel have interacted with each other and Morocco as members of a Moroccan Jewish diaspora.

Mobilizing a Moroccan Jewish Diaspora

“I dreamt of Morocco every night”: Revisiting notions of return

In May 2023, I visited Kobi Ifrah, an Israeli Jew of Moroccan descent, in Marrakesh, where he lives with his wife and daughter, to interview him about the activities of his organization, Kulna Morocco. Ifrah is the founder and CEO of Kulna (“all of us” in Arabic), an Israeli organization based in Yeruham and Jerusalem which offers classes on Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Jewish history and culture, with a special focus on Morocco. In 2022, Kulna also began recruiting Israeli Jewish youths as volunteers to live in Marrakesh for three months at a time to work on preserving the city’s Jewish history by restoring tombstones, renovating the city’s central synagogue, and many other activities. Born in Dimona in 1982 to parents born in Marrakesh, Ifrah moved there permanently from Israel in 2015 and is one of the very few Moroccan Jews born abroad who have ever returned to live permanently in Morocco. When asked about his life before coming to Morocco and his choice to do so, Ifrah began with his childhood experiences:

“I dreamt of Morocco every night. [...] As a small child I always dreamt of Morocco. [...] As a kid Arabic was always spoken in the house, and Arabic was spoken in the neighborhood, everyone wearing Djellabas, it was still a Moroccan culture, Mimouna, weddings, events... All around you a Moroccan atmosphere, everything in Arabic. So somehow it always sounded to me like Morocco was the country of dreams, the country where all these things came from.”¹

Ifrah’s experience growing up in Dimona, a Negev development town with a major population of Moroccan Jews, like Ofakim, was central to his experience, and inspired him to investigate his roots. Ifrah visited Morocco for the first time at the age of eighteen. Arriving alone, he said the trip was special, that he felt he had “arrived home.”² After returning to Israel, serving in the army, and studying in the Middle East studies program at Ben-Gurion University, Ifrah took some ten trips to Morocco before deciding he would live in Morocco for an extended period of time in 2015. His goal, he said, had been “researching this whole thing which is called ‘Jewish community’, to experience life in Morocco [rather than] as a tourist.”³

1 Interview with Kobi Ifrah. 5 May 2023.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

In the same year, Ifrah applied for Moroccan citizenship and within a month, he received it. He has lived in Marrakesh ever since.

Kobi Ifrah's story is exceptional. Few Jews of Moroccan descent have chosen to return to live in Morocco, and Ifrah himself acknowledges that his situation is atypical. And yet, if Ifrah is individually exceptional, his return to Morocco is conventionalized in the broader context of the Moroccan diaspora. This is to say that Ifrah's story demonstrates how Jewish diaspora Moroccanism connects different hubs of Moroccan Jewish migration. This chapter posits a longer history of Jewish returns to Morocco and traces one aspect of the evolution of Jews' relationship to Morocco in diaspora. Specifically, I demonstrate how the first generation of Moroccan Jewish emigrants sometimes chose to return to Morocco, while subsequent generations have largely developed other ways of exercising an attachment to Morocco in the diaspora. Indeed, though many Jews of Moroccan descent have been able to apply for Moroccan citizenship and have received Moroccan passports, such as the famous Israeli singer of Moroccan descent Neta Elkayam, very few have chosen to live there permanently. And yet, if that is the case today, from 1948 to the late 1950s, and to some extent in the 1960s, a certain number of Moroccan-born Jews did choose to return to Morocco. Most of these had immigrated to Israel and, due to the difficulties they encountered there, chose to return to their country of birth. And while most of these returnees would eventually choose another immigration destination, such as France, Canada, and the U.S., far more would remain in Israel. Some movement of Jews between Israel and Morocco even occurred precisely during those years when it was heavily restricted by Morocco's official policy of denying most Jews passports and disallowing Jews who had immigrated to Israel from returning.

Though it constitutes a limited form of movement in the broad history of Moroccan Jewish migration, return migration reveals how some Moroccan Jews were able to facilitate further migration, while others could not. Jews born in Morocco who emigrated were also the first to operate as a postcolonial global diaspora, informing their counterparts back home of the issues they faced in Israel, and finding new solutions for defining and preserving Moroccaness or casting it aside. Additionally, the question of return migration demonstrates how the Moroccan diaspora is generationally layered—if Moroccan-born Jews sometimes chose to return to live in Morocco, subsequent generations born abroad necessarily found other ways to connect with their Moroccan past.

For example, tens of thousands choose to visit Morocco every year as part of a major tourism industry which drives and shapes contemporary conceptions of Moroccan Jewish identity. While such casual or familial returns to Morocco have never been wholly prohibited and have generally always been possible for Moroccan Jews, most often those with non-Israeli passports, the 1990s and the early 2000s saw the development of a niche industry seeking to attract Jews in tandem with Morocco's more general push for tourism. This aspect of Moroccan Jewish return has received increasing attention in recent years, particularly since the advent of the Abraham Accords which saw Israel achieve diplomatic relations with some Muslim-majority

countries.⁴ In 2019, 39,900 Israelis had visited Morocco, and following the signing of the Israeli-Moroccan normalization agreement in December 2020, the number skyrocketed to 70,000 in 2022. Part of this increase was due to the addition of Israel to Morocco's digital visa application program, evidenced by the fact that in 2022 Israelis made up fifty-five percent of all digital visas accorded to foreign nationals.⁵ Other estimates have put the number of total Jewish tourists in 2019 to 140,000.⁶

Parallel to these other frameworks which facilitate Jewish movement through Morocco are programs which have sought to connect movement and action to a notion of, as Kobi Ifrah put it, "Jewish community." Kulna is one such program which self-consciously seeks to preserve Marrakesh's Jewish history and traditions. Ifrah largely sustains himself and Kulna through Morocco's tourism industry, but also strongly differentiates himself from the many other tour guides which operate tours for Jews in Morocco. According to him, "there are many tour guides in Morocco, but unfortunately many keep spreading the idea that Morocco is just mouflettot⁷ and clapping hands. And our purpose is to change the message."⁸ Though he is not opposed to the tourism industry in and of itself, and in fact encourages Jews to come visit Morocco, for Ifrah too many people come away with a stereotypical and inauthentic notion of what Morocco has to offer. Indeed, most important for Ifrah is the transnational aspect of this communal activism. According to him, Kulna's main goal is its message for Israeli society and what it can learn from Morocco.

Diaspora Moroccanism, however, began with the generation who had emigrated. Another program, PASI (Project d'Action Social en Israël, Social Action Project in Israel), was developed

4 See e.g. Aomar Boum, "Rural Moroccan Jews and the Colonial Postcard: A Review Essay," *Hespéris-Tamuda* LV, no. 2 (2020): 461–88; Aomar Boum, "Branding Convivencia: Jewish Museums and the Reinvention of a Moroccan Andalus in Essaouira," in *Exhibiting Minority Narratives: Cultural Representation in Museums in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2020, 205–23; Maite Ojeda-Mata and Joachim Schlör, *Jewish Cultural Heritage, Space and Mobility in Spain, Portugal and North Africa*, *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. 22 (Taylor & Francis, 2021); Hanane Sekkat, "Jewish Tourism in Morocco," *European Judaism* 52, no. 2 (September 1, 2019): 156–64; Maria Cardeira Da Silva, "Moroccan Jewish First-Places: Contraction, Fabrication, Dissipation," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 2 (February 7, 2018): 167–80; Oren Kosansky, "Tourism, Charity, and Profit: The Movement of Money in Moroccan Jewish Pilgrimage," *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (2002): 359–400; André Levy and Antonella Capelle-Pogăcean, "Pélerins-Voyageurs En Patrie Diasporique : Les Retours Des Juifs Au Maroc," *Critique Internationale*, no. 47 (2010): 61–76.

5 "70 000 Israéliens Ont Visité Le Maroc En 2022, 2 500 Marocains Sont Venus En Israël," *The Times of Israel*, August 17, 2023, <https://fr.timesofisrael.com/70-000-israeliens-ont-visite-le-maroc-en-2022-2-500-marocains-sont-venus-en-israel/>.

6 Houssine Soussi, "Jewish Heritage Tourism in Morocco: Memories and Visions," in *Value of Heritage for Tourism: Proceedings of the 6th UNESCO UNITWIN Conference 2019*, ed. Dominique Vanneste and Wesley Gruijthuijsen (Leuven: University of Leuven, 2019), 268.

7 A Moroccan crepe eaten during Mimouna, the Moroccan festival in which Jews invite Muslims to their homes during the last night of Passover.

8 Interview with Kobi Ifrah. 5 May 2023.

by James Dahan (nicknamed Cabri), a Moroccan-born Jew and scout leader who immigrated to Montreal in 1969 and there managed the youth services and leadership development initiatives of the Sephardi community. Dahan was a major figure in the Moroccan scout movement and later in Montreal's Sephardi community until his untimely death on a visit to Israel in 2008. PASI, Dahan's own brainchild, was a program which brought young Jews, primarily Montreal-born Sephardim, most often of Moroccan descent, to conduct activities for disadvantaged Jews in Negev development towns since 1984. Compared to Kulna, PASI lacked any strong self-aware identification as a Moroccan enterprise; even Kulna volunteers are not all Israelis of Moroccan descent, but include Israelis of Tunisian origin and even Ashkenazi Israelis. Unlike Kulna, PASI had no particular relationship to Morocco and operated between Montreal and Israel alone. PASI was also never framed as a program which mobilized Moroccans to help Moroccans, or Sephardim for Sephardim; in practice, however, it often worked that way. Indeed, Dahan's self-conscious disinterest in his Moroccan past did not mean that Moroccanism was irrelevant to his activities—quite the opposite. Rather, even though PASI was not framed through Moroccanism, it was built on Moroccan networks and solidarity which in practice reinforced connections across the Moroccan diaspora and even encouraged further Moroccan migration to Israel.

This chapter argues that programs like Kulna and PASI are forms of Jewish diaspora Moroccanism which are characterized by the perpetuation, self-replication, and creation of transnational networks which connect hubs of Moroccan Jewish migration through the exchange of resources and culture, and through movement. Building on the previous chapters regarding Ofakim and the Negev, the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) and Moroccan decolonization, and Montreal, I connect these sites of Moroccan Jewish activity and suggest that diaspora Moroccanism is one way in which the different nodes of this diaspora interact. A related part of this story of new forms of diasporic Moroccan expressions is the end of widespread Jewish life in Morocco. Opportunities for and the appeal of Moroccan Jewish return migration to Morocco diminished over the twentieth century. This chapter thus argues that the emergence of new hubs which today constitute what we call the Moroccan Jewish diaspora has facilitated additional intradiasporic forms of movement which exceed those we often think about, such as state-to-state migration, multistep migration, or even return migration. This chapter begins with a description of the restrictions placed on Jewish movement by Moroccan and Israeli authorities from the 1950s until the 1960s, including a discussion and a limited quantification of Moroccan Jewish return migration from Israel. The chapter will then continue with a description of the PASI program and finally draw conclusions about the significance of diasporic Moroccanism for how we treat the mobilization of Moroccan Jewish identity and networks.

Moroccan and Israeli limits on Jewish movement: Passports and Yerida

While most of this dissertation has focused on the high mobility of Moroccan Jews over the second half of the twentieth century, this section will describe two elements of this story which contradict the overall pattern. On the one hand, though Moroccan Jews left Morocco en masse in the years surrounding the country's independence, in the nearly five years between September 1956 and early 1961, Jews were overwhelmingly not issued passports by the Moroccan state. On the other hand, though the vast majority of Moroccan Jews would immigrate to Israel, a certain number would choose to return to Morocco because of the difficulties they encountered there, while others who may have wanted to return found that they could not.

Immigration from Morocco to Israel had begun to gain speed in mid-1948 and had become increasingly organized following the French residency's agreement with the Jewish Agency signed in June 1949.⁹ The institution of the *Seleksiya* policy between 1952 and 1954 by the Jewish Agency, primarily responsible for the small number of Moroccan immigrants in those years, gave way to the *From Ship to Village* plan which sent many Moroccans to Israel's periphery.¹⁰ This last plan, active between August 1954 and October 1956, was ended precisely at the moment when the Moroccan government began to institute harsh limits on the issuance of passports to Jews and their ability to cross Morocco's borders. Not only were Jews overwhelmingly prohibited from leaving the country, but those who had already emigrated or travelled abroad, in particular to Israel, found their ability to return to Morocco curtailed.

In the years preceding Moroccan independence in 1956, some Jews did indeed return from Israel to Morocco. Though the numbers were always small, it is worth noting that especially in the years in which immigration to Israel was characterized by transit camps and, to a lesser extent, a relegation to the country's periphery, some Jews who wished to return to Morocco could do so. Emigration from Israel since the country's establishment acquired a particular term: *Yerida*.¹¹ Just as Jews who immigrated to Israel had made *Aliya*, had literally "ascended" to Israel, and were referred to as *olim*, departure from Israel was called *Yerida*, literally translated to "descent", and emigrants were referred to as *yordim*, those who had descended. As argued by Oren Meyers, the term necessarily carried with it a negative moral value, with emigrants treated by the government as "losers, if not outright deserters."¹² **Amongst Moroccans, it is**

9 Picard, 1951-1956, *עולים במשורה: מדיניות ישראל כלפי עלייתם של יהודי צפון אפריקה* (Cut to Measure: Israel's Policies Regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951-1956), 66.

10 Picard, 132-42.

11 Though *Yerida* generally applies to emigration from the State of Israel, the word is used in the Torah to denote departure from the Land of Israel, and some modern emigrants make this connection. See e.g. Tamir Arviv, "Reframing Jewish Mobilities: De-Nationalized/Non-Territorialized, Racialized, and Hybrid Identities among Israeli Immigrants in Canada," *Mobilities* 14, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 183.

12 Oren Meyers, "A Home Away from Home? Israel Shelanu and the Self-Perceptions of Israeli Migrants," *Israel Studies* 6, no. 3 (2001): 74.

doubtful that the same pejorative view was dominant. Total numbers for this sort of return movement from Israel are difficult to ascertain, especially as the Jewish Agency rarely kept specific numbers which only tracked Moroccan Jewish *yerida*, and often Moroccans were grouped together with Tunisians and Algerians, or all Jews from Africa. Additionally, numbers for North African emigration varied depending on the report. Still, some numbers do exist and are worth noting here.

Some of the first numbers published on the subject were offered by Laskier, who noted 1949–1953 as significant years for return migration from Israel and suggested that in those years perhaps twelve percent of Jews, or 2,466, who immigrated to Israel returned.¹³ A February 1968 Jewish Agency report summing up emigration from Israel found that, between 1948–1967, 183,677 Jews had emigrated. Out of these, 3.6 percent, or 6,612 people, had emigrated to either Morocco, Tunisia, or Algeria.¹⁴ At the same time, a relatively higher percentage of the total emigrants, 8.8 percent, or 16,163 people, were Jews who had originated in those countries.¹⁵ This means that a significantly higher proportion of Moroccan Jewish emigrants from Israel left to countries other than Morocco. Some, of course, indicated to Israeli authorities upon their departure that they intended to go to another country, and all necessarily needed to transit via another country even if they planned to return to North Africa. This third country was almost always France, as specified by an earlier report produced in late 1953. Between 1948–1952, this report counted 38,263 emigrants, from which 7.9 percent, or 2,918 people, had indicated to Israeli authorities that they were going to North Africa, while 13.9 percent, or 5,168 people, had written France. The report added, however, that “a number of immigrants who indicated France as their ‘country of immigration’ in practice leave to the countries of ‘North Africa’, so that the number of departures to Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria are higher than the number which appears”.¹⁶

It is often unclear exactly how many of these Jews were Moroccans, though some reports did separate North Africans by country. One report which tracked Jewish emigration from the port of Haifa between January and August 1953 found that out of 3,928 emigrants, 606 left to North Africa, and that out of these 428 went to Morocco, 126 to Tunisia, and 52 to Algeria. An additional 323 left to France.¹⁷ Another report, produced in early 1956, gave an interesting indication. It showed that between 1953 and the end of 1955, 1,263 emigrants had left to North Africa, and 592 to France. It added, however, that 90 percent of Jews from Asia and Africa were returning to their country of origin.¹⁸ The same report also raised an important point: it only

13 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 124–26.

14 Jewish Agency. *Emigration according to destination country 1948–1967* (Hebrew). February 1968. S6–10200, CZA.

15 Jewish Agency. *Emigration according to country of origin 1948–1967* (Hebrew). February 1968. S6–10200, CZA.

16 Jewish Agency. *Survey on Jewish immigration from Israel since the establishment of the state* (Hebrew). 14 September 1953. S42–212, CZA.

17 Jewish Agency. *Emigration by way of Haifa port* (Hebrew). 11 August 1953. S42–212, CZA.

18 Jewish Agency. *Yordim (declared) according to country to which they returned* (Hebrew). 1956. S42–212, CZA.

counted Jews who had declared their emigration. Those who indicated that they were leaving to travel abroad with the intention of returning and simply never did were not counted.

Combining numbers from different reports presents obvious difficulties, namely that data was drawn from different sources. Sources to which officials had access naturally evolved over time and the numbers in different reports could be quite different. Take for example one report, which counted less than 3,000 Jewish emigrants from Israel in 1955, while a later report estimated 6,000 Jews in the same year. Despite these discrepancies, it is still helpful to note how many Jews may have returned to North Africa in various years up until 1967. The 1968 report offers 6,612 as the number of Jews emigrating to North Africa between 1948–1967. Between 1948–1952, at least 2,918 Jews had indicated North Africa as their emigration destination, and between 1953–1956, perhaps another 1,263 had done so. Using these numbers, we can estimate that between 1956–1967, perhaps another 2,431 Jews had returned to North Africa. Again, these numbers do not include Jews who did not indicate North Africa as their destination, but we can suppose that the decade following 1956 saw less return emigration to Morocco than did the years between 1948–1956. 1953 seems to have been the height of Moroccan return migration, and another report estimated that as many 1,090 Jews had left to Morocco in 1953. The same report noted that the precise numbers were likely artificially low.¹⁹

Some of these years correspond to those in which the Jewish Agency enacted its *Seleksiya* policy which severely limited Moroccan Jewish immigration to Israel. In these years, too, return migration consisted in large part of young Jews who, due to the strict immigration policy, could not be reunited with their families in Israel.²⁰ And though overall the number of Moroccan emigrants was dwarfed by the number who remained in Israel, emigration was a serious concern for the new Israeli State, and in some months more Moroccans left than nearly any other country-of-origin group. For example, in July 1952, thirty Moroccans requested to leave Israel, and twenty-nine requested to leave specifically to Morocco.²¹ In November 1953 the numbers were sixty-three and sixty-six (including Tangier, which was listed separately), and in December 1953 the numbers were thirty-two and thirty-eight. In 1954 return migration dwindled, from thirty-seven Moroccans requesting to leave and the same number indicating Morocco in January 1954, to sixteen and twelve in February, to only seven emigrants and only one indicating Morocco as the destination between September and December 1954.²²

According to Susan Gilson Miller, the decrease in these numbers from the end of 1953 may reflect Sultan Mohammed V's exile from Morocco in August 1953 and the violent anticolonial attacks which followed through to independence.²³ Another likely cause is

19 Jewish Agency. *Emigration Numbers* (Hebrew). Undated. S105-270, CZA.

20 Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 157.

21 Jewish Agency. *Report on those leaving the country in the month of July 1952* (Hebrew). 30 September 1952. S42-212, CZA.

22 Jewish Agency. *Account of candidates for emigration* (Hebrew). 1954. S42-212, CZA.

23 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 151–53.

the Jewish Agency's turn to the "From Ship to Village" plan which saw Moroccans directly brought to Israel's periphery, from where departure was far more difficult due to the low socio-economic conditions and the lack of transportation options in regions like the Negev. Additionally, as whole communities immigrated to Israel together, return migration simply became unimaginable, especially to rural Moroccans. Tightly knit rural communities often immigrated together, and so returning to Morocco begged the question to which communities Jews would be returning to—an urban center where they had few social networks, or their hometown where no Jews or barely any remained?

Some desire for return emigration would continue after 1953, but additional obstacles became apparent in 1956 as the independent Moroccan government applied measures to limit this type of Jewish movement as well as immigration to Israel. The Moroccan government's institution of limits on Moroccan Jewish emigration and return began with its order for the Jewish Agency's Casablanca Kadima office to be closed in June 1956, effectively shuttering many Jews' ability to get in contact with the main authority in charge of organizing Moroccan Jewish immigration to Israel.²⁴ At the time of the office's closing, some 70,000 applications by Moroccan Jews for emigration were pending, 50,000 of which had already been processed by the Jewish Agency.²⁵ The next development was the issuance, on 27 September 1956, by the Moroccan Minister of the Interior, Driss Mhammedi, of a confidential circular which expressed the government's refusal to permit Jews to immigrate to Israel, or to permit Jews who had done so to return to Morocco.²⁶ Significantly, the circular was issued in response to a request made by Moroccan Jews in Israel to be permitted to return to Morocco. The circular read:

"Jews who have immigrated to Palestine requested from the French consulate in Jerusalem permission to return to Morocco. The French embassy in Rabat transferred this request to us and wanted to know whether this can be accomplished. On the other hand many Jews have turned to [local] governors, to receive passports with the intention of leaving Morocco to immigrate to Israel. It is clear, however, that the government is not prepared to give Moroccan Jews permission to leave Morocco and to take their fortunes with them which they accumulated in their homeland just as it is not in the interest of Morocco to take back people who left [Morocco] to seek their fortune and after spending it request to come back there. I hereby inform you that it is decided to absolutely forbid the Jewish immigrants from returning to Morocco just as it is forbidden for Jewish citizens to leave their homeland and immigrate to Israel."²⁷

24 Jewish Agency. *Confidential Memorandum on the Question of Freedom of Emigration for Moroccan Jews* (Hebrew). September 1957. S6-7254, CZA.

25 Ibid.

26 Jewish Agency. *Copy of Moroccan confidential circular 424 from Minister of the Interior to District Governor of Chaouia* (Hebrew). 27 September 1956. S6-7267, CZA.

27 Ibid.

Several noteworthy aspects emerge from this document. Firstly, in the months following Moroccan independence in March 1956, a certain number of Jews attempted to return to Morocco from Israel. Unable to directly contact the Moroccan authorities, since Morocco had no diplomatic relations with Israel and no embassy there, these Jews settled for the French embassy, the natural outlet for such a request for Jews who had lived their entire lives under French colonial rule. Respecting those preexisting administrative and colonial channels, the French government had then forwarded the requests to Rabat to verify whether this was possible. Secondly, Jews in Morocco were increasingly requesting passports from their local governors, a fact which the state perceived with worry, as it feared the departure of these Jews' capital from the young state, as argued by Michael Laskier.²⁸ In addition to this, the government did not want poor Jews who had spent all their money abroad to return. The government's response was twofold: not only were Jews forbidden from leaving to Israel, they were also forbidden from returning from Israel, or returning if they had visited there.

When the ban became apparent to the Jewish Agency and local Jews, community leaders and international Jewish advocates, particularly from the World Jewish Congress, inquired about the situation with the Moroccan government. The government's public stance was simply denial: there was no ban on Jewish emigration. Despite this, the evidence began to pile up. The head of Marrakesh's Jewish community soon received a letter from the local governor instructing him not to issue medical certificates required to apply for passports. In June 1957, a letter to the Minister of the Interior signed by many Moroccan Jewish community leaders went unanswered. Another letter to Léon Benzaquen, one of the only Jews in the Moroccan cabinet, asking him to raise the issue had no results.²⁹ At this point nearly 200,000 Jews remained in Morocco, and for most Israel was the only option for immigration. Additionally, though we know that Moroccan Minister Driss Basri used selective passport allocation to encourage emigration amongst perceived dissident Muslims in the 1980s, it would be interesting to know how many Muslims were applying for passports in the earlier period, though I have found little information regarding this.³⁰

In 1957, King Mohammed V made a highly publicized visit to the US, during which the issue of Jewish rights of movement had been raised. Following the King's return, a memo was issued on 18 November which expressed the government's intention not to discriminate between Jews and Muslims regarding passport applications since "every resident is entitled to freedom of movement".³¹ On 12 December the memo was circulated throughout Moroccan police departments, and the World Jewish Congress, whose agents had been secretly meeting with

28 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 182.

29 Jewish Agency. Confidential: Issuance of Passports to Moroccan Jews (Hebrew). 9 January 1959. S6-7254, CZA.

30 Ruba Salih, "Moroccan Migrant Women: Transnationalism, Nation-States and Gender," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 2001): 661; Hein De Haas, "Morocco's Migration Experience: A Transitional Perspective," *International Migration* 45, no. 4 (October 2007): 54.

31 Ibid.

Moroccan government officials, had hopes that the ban would be reversed. The government did not, however, retract the earlier circular, and so in practice nothing changed.

The result of this policy was that, firstly, the Jewish Agency, along with the discrete help of French, British, and Spanish authorities, began arranging clandestine immigration.³² Already in October 1956, the *Misgeret*, the Mossad's operation which organized this immigration, began to produce counterfeit Moroccan passports in France and Israel, and "washed" used passports to be reused for new immigrants.³³ Secondly, it became increasingly difficult for Moroccan Jews who had left Morocco, even for temporary travel such as visiting family or conducting business, to return. Already in 1952, Jews who wanted to leave Israel could apply for Israeli passports, but only if they could prove the ability to sustain themselves in their country of emigration, and if the tax authorities had confirmed that they held no outstanding debts; even then Israeli passports were still sometimes not issued to Jews who had been in Israel for less than five years.³⁴

Jews returning to Morocco, of course, could not make use of such passports, and several other realities made it so their ability to leave Israel was further hindered. In practice, many Moroccan Jews, though not all, had their passports confiscated from them upon arriving in Israel. The Jewish Agency used these passports to fuel further clandestine immigration until the Moroccan government relaxed the restrictive measures in 1961. Secondly, already in 1948 the standard practice had been to issue collective passports rather than individual passports, meaning that a single passport would be issued for a family, or one for each parent, rather than for an individual.³⁵ In this case, if a whole family did possess their collective passport, if not all could arrange or afford to leave, or if the head of the family was not inclined to emigrate, then the point was moot.³⁶

Finally, the progressive dissolution of most *ma'abarot* (transit camps) in Israel coincided with the "From Ship to Village" plan that saw immigrants sent directly to new development towns. This plan was largely responsible for the decrease in general emigration, a fact announced by Shlomo Shragai, head of the Jewish Agency's *Aliya* department.³⁷ This was then particularly true for Moroccans, who made up the majority of immigrants to Israel's periphery in the years of the plan. As noted in Chapter 1, the development towns, from their establishment, faced chronic desertion, and those who left were often those with the means to do so, or who had family

32 According to Laskier, Spain helped Jews emigration as a "modest way of getting even with Morocco" where they had been forced to abandon the Spanish colonial zone. For Britain, Laskier writes that helping Jews reach Israel was a way to bolster Israel against Nasser in Egypt, Britain's "chief opponent in the Arab world." France, for its part, had preexisting agreements with the Jewish Agency. See Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 226.

33 Laskier, 225.

34 Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 144–48.

35 It is unclearly whether a single collective passport was issued to families or whether both parents held one each.

36 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 239.

37 Jewish Agency. *Renewed Aliya, its problems and opportunities* (Hebrew). 1956. S6-10028, CZA.

which could accommodate them elsewhere in Israel. Grim conditions in the development towns made movement difficult, and by the time Morocco instituted its ban on Jewish return migration from Israel in September 1956, those who may have wanted to leave Israel could not return to Morocco.

As demonstrated by the Moroccan AIU's correspondence with the École Normale Israélite Orientale in Paris, the issue did not only affect Jews seeking to immigrate to Israel, though the suspicion regarding Jews who had visited Israel could play a role, regardless. In June 1957, Emmanuel Levinas informed Ruben Tajouri, Moroccan delegate of the AIU in Casablanca, that the passports of several Moroccan students were expiring in July and August, and some would soon need to travel, either back to Morocco for vacation, or to Israel for a summer internship.³⁸ Here, too, as was demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, the AIU served to mediate Moroccan Jewish movement. Eugene Weill, vice-president of the AIU, asked Tajouri whether he could intervene with the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs.³⁹ The Moroccan consulate in Paris had informed Levinas that a police investigation had to be conducted in Morocco regarding the students who wanted to renew their passports, but that the request for this investigation was refused. The consulate also demanded that the students' passports be remitted to them the moment they expired.⁴⁰

In this moment, the Moroccan government viewed passports held by Jews abroad as a potential threat, as it was aware that counterfeit passports were being used by Jews to enter and leave Morocco. For students who needed to visit Israel for the summer, the Jewish Agency "takes care of all the formalities", meaning the students could enter and leave Israel without passports, or without having their passports stamped. But to return to France, the students needed valid Moroccan passports.⁴¹ Thus students found themselves unable or unwilling to leave France out of fear that they would not be able to return, whether from Morocco or Israel. In one case, a student, Robert Amar, required a Belgian visa to go study there, and had submitted his passport to the Moroccan consulate. The consulate, however, refused to tell him when he would receive it back.⁴² In another case, Annette Aflalo had a return visa in her passport stating she had visited Israel, and wished to return to Morocco, but feared that her passport would be confiscated if she tried.⁴³ By mid-July, Levinas had recovered the passports which had been submitted to the consulate for renewal because the students had to return to Morocco for the summer vacation. Levinas noted with some annoyance that "their files had not even been registered" and that the state of the applications was the same as when they'd

38 AIU. Note from Emmanuel Levinas to Ruben Tajouri. 12 June 1957. AM Maroc E 019 H, AIU.

39 AIU. Letter from Eugene Weill to Ruben Tajouri. 17 June 1957. AM Maroc E 019 H, AIU.

40 AIU. Letter from Emmanuel Levinas to René Cassin. 18 June 1957. AM Maroc E 019 H, AIU.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

given the passports over. The students, Levinas wrote, would have to apply for the renewals in Morocco.⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that the period of the *Seleksiya*, during which it was difficult for Moroccan Jews to immigrate to Israel, was also the period which saw the most return migration to Morocco, largely because young Jews could not bring their families with them. Paradoxically, after 1956, when Jews settled in peripheral development towns might have wanted to return, many were prohibited from doing so by the Moroccan government's policy against permitting Jewish returnees from Israel. Perhaps more importantly, it was not only decided emigrants who were affected by these policies. Jews who were engaging in forms of movement which had recently been relatively seamless, such as for their studies, to visit family, or business, were suddenly forced to make more critical decisions. As the next section demonstrates, if strong mobility precluded the question of emigration for many, the politicization and harsh policies limiting Moroccan Jewish migration turned the decision to migrate into a more permanent one than it had previously been.

One door opens, another closes: the resumption of *Aliya* and the end of Moroccan *Yerida*

In June 1957, the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, and other European and North American philanthropic Jewish associations held numerous consultations with Moroccan state officials in attempts to persuade them to reopen the borders. According to Alexander Levvey Easterman, Political Director of the World Jewish Congress, Moroccan officials both denied that it was withholding passports from Jews, while justifying its actions by noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the King's November memo, only referred to "individuals and not to organized emigration, especially as encouraged by Cadima."⁴⁵ In October 1957, Easterman met with Mehdi Ben Barka, a Moroccan nationalist, socialist, and the head of the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP) party in Morocco.⁴⁶ Much of the interview hinged on Ben Barka and Easterman's conceptions of Zionism; Ben Barka stated that Jews who wanted to go to Israel for pilgrimages were perfectly acceptable in his eyes, "just as we go to Mecca." But he stressed that Jews could not be systemically transferred or allowed to help "organize an artificial state".⁴⁷

44 AIU. Letter from Emmanuel Levinas to René Cassin. 15 July 1957. AM Maroc E 019 H, AIU.

45 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 183.

46 For more on Ben Barka, see Nate George, "Travelling Theorist: Mehdi Ben Barka and Morocco from Anti-Colonial Nationalism to the Tricontinental," in *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s*, ed. Laure Guirguis (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 127–47; Jan Koura, "A Prominent Spy: Mehdi Ben Barka, Czechoslovak Intelligence, and Eastern Bloc Espionage in the Third World during the Cold War," *Intelligence and National Security* 36, no. 3 (April 16, 2021): 318–39.

47 Jewish Agency. Memorandum: Moroccan Jews (Hebrew). 26 November 1957. S6-7266, CZA.

According to Easterman, whose French, he admitted, may not have been “equal to the situation”, Ben Barka seemed to refer to Jews as “Jews” and Muslims as “Moroccans”, something which Easterman made a point of reporting on. Still, Ben Barka lauded the good relations between Jews and Muslims, offering as an example the “Unity Road” project which Ben Barka had organized which saw some 11,000 youths, including some Jews, selected by his party to build a road from the Moroccan south to communities in the Rif mountains, a hotbed of dissent for the Moroccan state. The program also included “political” instruction for the youths who were intended to become nationalist ambassadors in their local communities.⁴⁸ Ben Barka thus concluded that there “is no Jewish problem in Morocco. There are pressures from the Arab-League, asking us why it is that we have Jews in our government and why we have Jewish judges [...]. No single Moslem country has done as much for the Jews as we have.”⁴⁹ Apparently getting emotional, Ben Barka also exclaimed that Jewish emigration was a deep wound for the country: “It is like cutting our veins and bleeding us to death to let them go.”⁵⁰

Ben Barka reiterated the government’s line, that organized emigration was not protected by the UN declaration of human rights, and that thus there was no discrimination against Jews. In fact, Morocco was doing more for its Jews than any other Muslim country, and indeed this comparison was not difficult to make, with the examples of Iraq and Egypt ready at hand. Additionally, Ben Barka’s socialist national vision for a Morocco which included Jews as part of the national polity is striking; Ben Barka’s dramatic reaction evidenced a genuine desire to maintain a certain vision of Moroccan unity, a vision threatened by mass Jewish emigration. This vision would become especially elusive as Morocco transitioned towards authoritarianism, particularly with the ascension of King Hassan II.⁵¹ Ben Barka would find himself exiled in Paris not long after, in 1963. Ben Barka had previously contacted the Mossad in an attempt to organize a coup. Instead, the Mossad assisted the monarchy in locating Ben Barka and luring him to Paris.⁵² Moroccan agents kidnapped him on 29 October 1965, “only to never reappear again”, widely believed to have been assassinated.⁵³

Internal Moroccan considerations saw Jewish migration become a highly politicized issue, and ministers who may have been more disposed to accept emigration were soon compelled by pro-Arab League factions in the government to let the issue slide, lest they give their political adversaries ammunition with which to attack them. This much can be seen in the so-called “gentleman’s agreement” reached between the World Jewish Congress, Aderrahim Bouabid, another UNFP politician, and Mohamed Laghzaoui, head of the National Police and part of

48 Charles F. Ghallager, “The Evolving Moroccan Political Scene: Ben Barka and the National Union,” *American Universities Field Staff Report Service* 5, no. 5 (September 30, 1959): 6.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 El Guabli, “Morocco Reimagined: When Moroccan Jews Could Theorize the Moroccan State,” 52.

52 “A Look at Israel’s Decades-Long Covert Intelligence Ties with Morocco,” *The Times of Israel*, December 11, 2020.

53 El Guabli, “Morocco Reimagined: When Moroccan Jews Could Theorize the Moroccan State,” 56.

the Istiqlal. According to the agreement, reached in June 1958, limited Jewish emigration of five to six hundred per month would briefly and discretely be permitted.⁵⁴ Laghzaoui had previously staunchly opposed Jewish emigration, apparently expressing that the liquidation of the Casablanca Kadima camp, where several thousand Jews had been stranded, would only be achieved “over his dead body” and requesting that the Jews who left sign a declaration renouncing their Moroccan citizenship, which was never applied.⁵⁵

On 23 June 1958, Laghzaoui eased the restrictions, though this did not mean that the floodgates had opened. In January 1959, the Jewish Agency noted that Jews continued to encounter numerous difficulties when applying for passports. To apply, Jews needed an ID card, a certificate from their employer which permitted them to take a holiday abroad, or a certificate of accommodation from a foreign institution such as a school where students would be staying. In practice, this was not always enough. In Fez, where some applications had previously been accepted, applications by Jews were simply refused, while in Meknes, Jews were told that they would not receive passports and that they had been placed on the Moroccan blacklist as Jews who had attempted to leave to Israel. In the Tafilalt region, Jews were informed that orders from Rabat prohibited the issuance of passports to them, and in Rabat Jews were told that no passport application forms were available. In Tangier a Jewish man leaving Morocco was removed from a plane for “investigation”. Some Jews, however, were able to leave, particularly men who had businesses or families they were leaving behind, people considered to have a “high standing” in Morocco, since it was presumed that people with strong social networks in Morocco would be less likely to leave definitively.⁵⁶ Additionally, a certain number of Jews who received visas to immigrate to Canada and France were able to do so, while Jews with foreign passports encountered far fewer difficulties.

The “gentleman’s agreement” came to an abrupt end following the government’s arrest of twenty-six Jews in Nador in March 1959,⁵⁷ accused of carrying false passports.⁵⁸ In a meeting in April 1959, Easterman reported that Bouabid lamented that “no government could tolerate” the use of fake passports, and though Easterman tried to persuade him and Laghzaoui to resume the previous agreement, Easterman felt that the government was under too much pressure by a faction led by Allal al-Fassi, a founder and leader of the Istiqlal party.⁵⁹ Conditions would not improve until the sinking of the *Pisces* in January 1961 and the subsequent negotiations with King Mohammed V and, following his untimely death shortly after, King Hassan II. As crown prince, Hassan had already been predisposed to permit Jewish emigration and held secret talks with Easterman in 1960; according to Brahim El Guabli, the prince viewed Jews as

54 Jewish Agency. Letter from Alexander Easterman to Nahum Goldman. 20 April 1959. S6-7272, CZA.

55 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 184–85.

56 Jewish Agency. Confidential: Issuance of Passports to Moroccan Jews (Hebrew). 9 January 1959. S6-7254, CZA.

57 “Morocco,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 61 (1960): 326.

58 Jewish Agency. Letter from Alexander Easterman to Nahum Goldman. 20 April 1959. S6-7272, CZA.

59 Ibid.

obstacles to the creation of a more homogenous, authoritarian state, and thus favored their departure.⁶⁰ In February 1961, King Mohammed V received a delegation of Jewish community leaders and subsequently announced the relaxation of restrictions on Jewish emigration as well as return migration.⁶¹ Soon after, in October, King Hassan II would assent to the mass organized departure of most of Morocco's remaining Jews; in exchange, his government was paid half a million dollars for the first 50,000 Jews to depart, and an additional 250 dollars for each subsequent emigrant to Israel.⁶² In addition, the Moroccan government provided trucks which transported Jews from their communities to the country's ports, and it seems that, through Operation Yakhin, passports were even delivered in many cases to the Jewish Agency rather than to individual Jews.⁶³

Soon, issuing passports to Moroccan Jews was no longer restricted, and the Jewish Agency sent emissaries across the country to help local Jews complete their passport applications. The greatest number of Jews left in 1962 and 1963, 38,821 and 37,078 respectively. On the question of collective and individual passports, the Jewish Agency and the Moroccan state went back and forth; in 1961, in which relatively few Jews emigrated as the borders were still closed, eighty-one percent left on collective passports, while in 1962, 7,823 out of 38,821 Jews left on collective passports, while the rest, over seventy-five percent, left on individual passports. Overall, between 1961-1964, the active years of Operation Yakhin, half of all Jews left on collective passports and half on individual passports. The general trend was the same for the years 1961-1971, with half leaving on collective, but with more Jews increasingly leaving on individual passports after 1967.⁶⁴ The French protectorate had issued collective passports before 1956, and this trend followed the more general, global one, according to which collective passports were previously more common, and then declined as passport and border controls increased in the 1960s.⁶⁵

By 1964, in which 15,843 Jews emigrated to Israel, many Jews found that leaving was less of an urgent necessity as receiving passports became normalized. Already in August 1963, Moshe Yuval from the Jewish Agency reported to Shlomo Shragai that the "situation of Moroccan Jewry has completely changed regarding Aliya. During the last month I came to understand that we had reached the end of the mass Aliya."⁶⁶ Yuval noted that more and more "latecomer" Jews were choosing to delay their Aliya for several reasons: first, the process had been streamlined, and what had previously taken "weeks or months" to arrange was now much quicker, and people

60 El Guabli, "Morocco Reimagined: When Moroccan Jews Could Theorize the Moroccan State," 53-54.

61 Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*, 207.

62 Gottreich, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Postcolonial Times*, 165.

63 Jewish Agency, Letter from Moshe Yuval to Shlomo Shragai. 6 August 1963. S6-10157, CZA.

64 Jewish Agency, Manuscript on Moroccan Jews (Hebrew). 1971. S6-10167, CZA.

65 See e.g. John C. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 120-57.

66 Jewish Agency, Letter from Moshe Yuval to Shlomo Shragai. 6 August 1963. S6-10157, CZA.

were reticent to leave without preparing. Second, the number of these “latecomers” in 1962 had been nearly zero, and the Jewish Agency had not known what to do with the passports which would finally not be used for planned flights or boat trips. To solve the issue, the Jewish Agency had begun to hold onto passports rather than immediately attaching them to preplanned trajectories. In practice, this meant that Jews could leave whenever they wanted. According to Yuval, “this information spread very quickly in Morocco and people are acting as though they have individual passports in their pockets”, when in fact the Jewish Agency was in possession of the passports.⁶⁷ Third, Yuval noted that business-owners felt less urgency and were less likely to liquidate their businesses on short notice, and fourth, following numerous cases of Jews leaving to Israel to escape their debts in Morocco, debtors in Morocco were “on guard” and “more than once an emigrant or another was caught by a debtor truly at the last moment and was prevented from emigrating until the debt was settled.”⁶⁸ In one case, 450 Jews from a town in the far south had collectively applied to emigrate, and the Jewish Agency had been in possession of their passports in July 1963. The community had originally planned to emigrate in September, but were now asking “to delay until after Sukkot.”⁶⁹

Even as the delivery of passports to Jews in Morocco became normalized, emigration to Israel continued to be an open secret. The emigration of young Moroccan Jews resumed as family reunification ceased to be a pressing issue, though Moshe Yuval warned that only small groups of students could leave at a time lest it “be felt that it is [an organized] youth immigration.”⁷⁰ The Jewish Agency was careful not to create the appearance of organized emigration and thus upset the agreement with the Moroccan authorities. Moroccan Jews now had substantially fewer obstacles in leaving Morocco. On the other side of the Mediterranean, some Moroccans continued to leave Israel, though many were less inclined to return to Morocco rather than going, for example, to France or Canada. In fact, in the early 1960s the Jewish Agency became aware that an increasing number of North African Jews wanted urgently to leave the country, but noted that many of these were Algerians.⁷¹ The Jewish Agency reported that, though only 116 Algerian Jews had left Israel in all of 1961, 1,200 had already left by June 1962.⁷² The failure of a significant number of Algerians to immigrate to Israel even inspired a public “trial” held symbolically against Algerian Jewry in Jerusalem in January 1963.⁷³ At the trial, prominent Algerian Zionist leaders like André Narboni and André Chouraqui took

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Jewish Agency, Letter from Moshe Yuval to Yehuda Dominitz. 27 August 1963. S6-10157, CZA.

⁷⁰ Jewish Agency, Letter from Moshe Yuval to Yehuda Dominitz. 10 September 1963. S6-10157, CZA.

⁷¹ Jewish Agency, Letter from A. Siegel to Shlomo Shragai. 3 December 1961. S6-10157, CZA.

⁷² Jewish Agency, Letter from Aharon Zisling to Moshe Sharett. 10 June 1962. S6-10157, CZA.

⁷³ Public “show trials” were since the 1950s an established way in Israel of publicly accusing people, particularly youths, of failing in commitment to Zionism. Paula Kabalo, “Pioneering Discourse and the Shaping of an Israeli Citizen in the 1950s,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 2 (2009): 100.

opposing sides in “prosecuting” and “defending” Algerian Jewry, which had overwhelmingly immigrated to France.

The Jewish Agency became increasingly disturbed by the high number of Algerian emigrants, so much so that its focus on them overshadows the situation of Moroccans in archival documents. Indeed, in 1962 the Jewish Agency secretly read 8,106 letters sent by North African Jews in Israel and wrote a report based on the letters. Despite the fact that eighty-three percent of the letters had been written by Moroccans, ten percent by Tunisians, and only seven percent by Algerians, the vast majority of the report concerned the negative opinions of Algerian Jews.⁷⁴ The report itself partially addressed this disparity by noting that writers had decided to concentrate on the negative comments in the letters, even though most of the letters were overwhelmingly positive about Israel in their content. According to the report, most referred to the positive advantages of Israel versus their countries of birth, including “democracy, freedom, free religious life, good housing conditions, education for children, social welfare” and others.⁷⁵ Admittedly, conditions in the development towns were markedly improved by 1962, but we must wonder if the report’s writers had not omitted some such negative citations by Moroccans due to their greater interest in the waves of departing Algerians.⁷⁶

Some of the cited letters did, however, offer such perspectives. One Moroccan in Netanya wrote “if you are thinking of coming, don’t expect one tenth of the life you lived in Fez.” Another, in Kfar Yavneh, wrote that “We live in a wooden shack in the woods [...] without cafés... Listen to me and stay in Morocco, because it really is America. We will sell everything and return to France. Here there are no Arabs, but the Jews of Israel are worse than the Arabs. They don’t even know if there is a God...” Several other letters also noted the negatively perceived irreligiosity of Israeli Jews. A large number of letters sent from Dimona are particularly negative on the parts of Algerians; one notes that a large number of Jews from Constantine were waiting to be sent to France, while another, likely written by a Moroccan, though possibly a Tunisian, expressed that all those leaving were “obviously, Algerians, because the others have nowhere to return to.”⁷⁷

This letter raised a rather important point, which was that Algerians had a much more easily accessible destination than did others, now. Significantly, Algerians were aware that

74 Significantly, the report did not remark on the languages in which the letters were written, but we can assume that most of those cited were in French, and some others in Hebrew. For Moroccans, this could have indicated a middle-class background for those sending the letters, but in some cases, it simply meant that students had attended the AIU.

75 Jewish Agency, *Confidential* (Hebrew). 1962. S6-10034, CZA.

76 For some difficulties experienced by Algerians in Israel, see Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, “Autopsie d’une Agence d’émigration : Étude Des Pratiques Administratives Du Département de La Alya de l’Agence Juive Pour Israël, 1948-1960,” *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 36, no. 1 (October 1, 2020): 22.

77 Ibid.

upon immigrating to France, where it seemed many had already been and had family, they would be offered the repatriation package offered to all French citizens arriving from France's former North African colonies, described in Chapter 4.⁷⁸ A few letters expressly mentioned this advantage, with one noting "if someone had described to us this situation, we would have stayed in France, we would have received the compensation like everyone."⁷⁹ Even many more Tunisian Jews had received French citizenship than Moroccans in total numbers.⁸⁰ This option was not available to most Moroccan Jews, a fact which came to light when North Africans requested their passports back from the Jewish Agency.

While by the 1960s it seems as though the Jewish Agency had largely ceased confiscating passports from newly arrived immigrants, many Jews who had arrived in the late 1940s and the 1950s needed to request their passports if they wanted them. Already in 1958, some Moroccans in Israel had requested their passports back from the Jewish Agency and signed declarations that they had received them. In some cases, the Jewish Agency had difficulty finding the passports, such as the case of the Elbaz family, who requested their Moroccan passports back, leading Israeli officials to send letters until they were found in Marseille.⁸¹ The issue of scattered passports became such a problem that in January 1963, Benjamin Rotem sent a letter stating that all passports should be centralized in the Haifa office.⁸²

Jews with French citizenship, however, seemed to have more clout in this matter. For example, in March 1959 the French consul in Jerusalem sent a letter to the president of the Jewish Agency stating that he had received a request by Simy Meiffredy, née Simy Azoulay in Casablanca, to intervene on her behalf since her French passport and that of her son, Philippe, had been taken from them in Marseilles and not returned. The two lived in Beit Shemesh and wished to have their passports back, presumably to travel.⁸³ Thus Jews with French citizenship in Israel had an extra facilitator that could work in their favor, which Jews with only Moroccan citizenship could not employ. It also suggests that perhaps not all passports were confiscated to be used for the purposes of clandestine immigration. Either the confiscation of Simy Meiffredy's French passport evidences an operation on the part of the Jewish Agency to "wash" and reuse French passports in addition to Moroccan ones, or the confiscation of her passport

78 Ethan B. Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 218–20; see also Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, *Devenir métropolitain: politique d'intégration et parcours de rapatriés d'Algérie en métropole; (1954–2005)* (Paris: Éd. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2010).

79 Ibid.

80 Paul Sebag counted 6,648 Tunisian Jews who acquired French citizenship between 1921–1936. Cited in Terrence Peterson, "The 'Jewish Question' and the 'Italian Peril': Vichy, Italy, and the Jews of Tunisia, 1940–2," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 2 (2015): 236.

81 Jewish Agency, Letter from Yehuda Dominitz to Miriam Cohen. 5 August 1958. S6-7257, CZA.

82 Jewish Agency, Letter from Benjamin Rotem. 23 January 1963. S6-10035, CZA.

83 Jewish Agency, Letter from André Favereau to S.H. Shazar. 6 March 1959. S6-10157, CZA.

was meant to discourage her emigration from Israel. Unfortunately, a clearer answer cannot be given, but the matter deserves further investigation.

On 2 September 1970, a letter was sent from the Jewish Agency's Haifa office to the Jerusalem office about the thousands of North African passports still being held there. The letter read:

"We are moving to our new building soon and the problem has been raised of thousands of North African passports, which we have, some of which are incredibly old, which were in use in the 1940s and 1950s in their countries of origin. Lately the requests for the passports to be returned by their owners have nearly stopped and despite this they are taking up a significant amount of space in our archive."⁸⁴

While the precise number of passports held in 1970 is unknown, most were used in the 1940s and 1950s, indicating that in the 1960s passports were rarely confiscated. In any case, from the early 1960s and especially following the Six-Day War in 1967, return migration to Morocco from Israel largely subsided. In the end, passports were a strong symbol, not only of mobility, but also of immobility for Moroccan Jews in the 1950s.

Despite the fact that return migration from Israel to Morocco was a noticeable phenomenon, numbers never reached levels that saw Morocco's Jewish community replenish or perceive positive growth. Most Jews would eventually choose another destination and be occupied with making sense of life in their new homes, in Montreal, in Ofakim, in Caracas, in Marseille, or elsewhere. Return migration to Morocco continued under other auspices like *hilot*, and Jews continued to visit their families in Morocco, and vice-versa, for as long as Jewish families remained there. Only decades later did this aspect of movement take on a new dimension, which included heritage tourism, particularly for a new generation of Jews born outside of Morocco.

This trend, despite new dimensions such as tourism and other programs, has largely remained the same, and few Moroccan Jews and their descendants have returned to live in Morocco. By the twenty-first century, only a few particularly enthusiastic individuals, such as Kobi Ifrah and his wife, Kimmy, made the leap of returning to live in Morocco. Others, like James Dahan, would also launch themselves into the herculean task of Jewish community-building with PASI, and would focus on hubs outside of Morocco. Both Ifrah and Dahan saw the same hub outside of Morocco as central to their transnational communal activism: Israel.

Tying together Montreal, Morocco, and the Negev: PASI and transnational communal activism

In 1975, James Dahan, a central leading figure of Montreal's Sephardi community and youth programs, many of which he had created or spearheaded, sat with the troupe of young Sephardi scouts he had created called "the District" and explained to them the importance of youth

84 Jewish Agency, Letter from Y. to Y. Sapir. 2 September 1970. S6-10329, CZA.

mobilization. The moment was captured in Jacques Bensimon's 1977 documentary, *20 Ans Après*, and serves as strong indicator of how his life in Morocco, the first thirty or so years of his life, informed his community activism in Montreal.

In the documentary, the viewer can see a large and noisy group of children lined up on a stage; the troupe leaders then shout "*sheh!*" and the children respond "*ket!*", forming the Hebrew word "*sheket*", or "quiet". In another scene, Dahan impresses upon the young troupe leaders that the goal of the youth programs is to "inspire people regarding Judaism, [...] motivate the members for something practical" and for the youth trained through these movements to pass what they learn on to new generations. One of the troupe leaders, a young woman, asks "do you think that the District is really succeeding in inculcating Jewish values, rather than solely the values of Moroccan culture?" Dahan responds firmly:

"Moroccan folklore in and of itself does not interest me at all. I don't take a personal stance that I like or don't like Arabic music, or couscous, that's not important for me. We have youth that lives in Quebec that we need to educate to live in Quebec. And the rest, for me, is folklore that should only appear in folkloric events. And it should end there."⁸⁵

Dahan was known in Montreal's community as a visionary and a forward-looking leader, and his disinterest in Moroccan "folklore", or cultural elements, as he called it, was more exceptional. As a crucial figure in Montreal's Sephardi communal activism, however, Dahan's activities were necessarily described as Sephardi and the community he served, including the many youth leaders he trained, were almost all of Moroccan descent, a fact evidenced by the question about "Moroccan culture" posed to him by the young troupe leader.

In a 1988 interview as part of the "Sephardic Oral History Project" conducted by Marie Berdugo-Cohen, Yolande Cohen, and Joseph Lévy, Dahan reinforced his disinterest in the Moroccan past:

"Well, I can say that my experiences in Morocco, through everything that wasn't related to the scouts, left me with a very bitter taste. I don't want to get into the subject. The only thing I want to do is make a 'statement'. I no longer want to go and see all of the [scout] camps where we lived practically most of our youth, me and a number of friends who live here in Montreal. They ask me often. It would be interesting to have a tour of all the camps we made in Morocco. But besides this desire, I do not think of returning to Morocco at all. I have a bitter taste of what I was able to see and hear [there]."⁸⁶

For Dahan, unlike others, Sephardi community activism in Montreal was not about preserving a vision of Moroccan history or culture, nor about maintaining a living connection

85 *20 Ans Après* (20 years later), 1977).

86 Dahan, James. Interviewed by Marie Berdugo-Cohen. Montreal, 5 July 1988. Fonds CJC001-S-A, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

to Morocco. Rather, for Dahan, it was about tackling the problems faced by a Montreal's francophone Jewish youth, most of whom were Moroccans, preparing them for life in Quebec as Jews. How, then, did PASI, a trip which primarily connected Moroccans in Montreal with Moroccans in the Negev, come about?

By the time PASI was born in the early 1980s, James Dahan had organized numerous international youth trips; in Morocco he had organized youth trips to France, and prior to PASI Dahan had already brought several groups of youths on trips to Israel, though not to the Negev.⁸⁷ In 1982-1983, Dahan led a leadership training program called "formation des cadres" for young adults between twenty-three and thirty-five years old.⁸⁸ The program had existed previously, and would continue intermittently through to the late 1990s. Like many such youth programs in Montreal's Sephardi community throughout his tenure, the "formation des cadres" lost steam when Dahan was too busy with other engagements, and after his passing in 2008. In late 1983, however, after the program had ended, the involved young adults met with Dahan and expressed the desire to put what they had learned into action. The group brainstormed several ideas, including a trip to the Amazon or California, but Dahan insisted that "the project, I wanted it to be in Israel."⁸⁹

For Dahan, however, not any trip to Israel would do. He specified that he wanted to do a trip "under difficult conditions" and wanted to differentiate it from other organized trips to Israel which existed. In his interview with Marie Berdugo-Cohen, Dahan compared his idea to the usual trips taken by American or French Jews to Israel: "We know that Americans [...] are generally counselors in day camps. We know that the French, they paint [walls in Tel Aviv]. We had to depart from that and find something innovative, revolutionary."⁹⁰ The group then settled on setting up a three-day carnival in an Israeli development town. The plan eventually grew into a ten-day marathon of activities, and the chosen development town was Ofakim.

The link to Ofakim had begun years before when Yehiel Bentov, longtime mayor of Ofakim, had visited Montreal in 1973 as "a representative of the state for the establishment of the Sephardi Federation in that country."⁹¹ His mission as a state emissary of a development town primarily made up of Moroccans, also identified as Sephardim according to Montreal community activists, set the stage for PASI's relationship to Ofakim. By the 1970s, the idea of a broad Sephardi identity which included Jews from the Maghreb had taken root amongst

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "P.A.S.I.: Une Bonne Initiative," *La Voix Sépharade*, November-December 1983, 32.

⁸⁹ Dahan, James. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Ten Days of Fun," *Kol Bi*, August 24, 1984.

such communities in France, the United States, Latin America, and Montreal.⁹² As seen in Chapter 5, such Sephardi ethnicization had been in the works in Montreal since the 1960s, in part because of North Africans' difficulties navigating Montreal's Jewish community institutions, but also due to the high currency of anticolonial thought throughout Quebec's Quiet Revolution.⁹³ In the 1970s, these factors coalesced with the global visibility of the issues Moroccan and other MENA Jews faced in Israel and the influence of Sephardi Federations amongst local communities following the 1971 Israeli Black Panther protests.

Bentov would tour the Sephardi federations in the US and Canada in 1975 on a trip meant to bring Ofakim to the awareness of North American Jewish communities and find a wealthy twin city to contribute to its development. Amongst other things, Bentov had attended the summer 1975 Sephardi congresses held in New York and Montreal, where he "brought before the congress attendees [...] Zionism in practice, in the way it is realized in Ofakim."⁹⁴ On his initial trip to Montreal in 1973, Bentov had met David Avayou, there to help establish the Canadian Sephardi Federation and later the general director of Sephardi communities at the Jewish Agency.⁹⁵ According to Bentov, who hosted all of PASI's activities in Ofakim as mayor in the 1980s, when Dahan and the other Montreal-based youth leaders were seeking a place in Israel to execute their program, they turned to Avayou, who in turn remembered his connection with Bentov years before. Through that connection, Ofakim was chosen as the first town where PASI would operate.

Crucial to the coordination of this project were also the special emissaries (*shliḥim*) sent from the Jewish Agency to Montreal's Sephardi community since 1975. These emissaries were often Jews of Moroccan descent born in Israel, such as Avi Bensimohn, Avi Chlouch, and David Abisoror. Some, like Chlouch, came from Israel's periphery. The emissaries were also deeply involved in the community's activities; for example, Bensimohn worked for three years with the District, James Dahan's Montreal scout movement.⁹⁶ Avayou became PASI's point man in Israel, and when Dahan visited Ofakim to pitch the program at an extraordinary session of

92 For the United States, see Aviva Ben-Ur, *Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 81, 93; for Israel, see Avi Picard, "Like a Phoenix: The Renaissance of Sephardic/Mizrahi Identity in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s," *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 15; for France, see Judith Roumani, "Le Juif Espagnol: The Idea of Sepharad among Colonial and Postcolonial Francophone Jewish Writers," in *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*, ed. Yael Halevi-Wise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 213–34; for Latin America, particularly Venezuela, see Moreno, *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community*, 101.

93 See Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*.

94 Miriam Oren, "Ofakim-City? Yehiel Bentov on a publicity trip abroad: Ofakim's name mentioned in American and Canadian cities for 21 days," *Ha'merhav*, July 4, 1975, 1.

95 Esther Benaim-Ouaknine and Fred Anzarouth, "Assemblée Générale Annuelle de La Communauté Sépharade Du Québec," *La Voix Séfarad*, January 1984, 3.

96 "Avi s'en Va...", *Présence*, July 1978, 9; "Connaissez-Vous Vraiment P.A.S.I.?", *The Beacon*, May 1984, 1; Shukrun and Moreno, "Rethinking Moroccan Transnationalism," 679.

the municipality's local council, Abisror, then the Israeli emissary to the Sephardi community, came with him. From the connection to Bentov in 1973, to Moroccan *shliḥim*, Moroccan diasporic networks had set the stage for PASI already ten years before its inception.

In its first year PASI received only limited financial support, and so the Montreal team effected numerous events to raise the necessary funds. The team of young adults organized a bazaar, a cake sale, a garage sale, and a dozen other fundraisers; altogether, the first PASI trip had a budget of some 20,000 dollars to put on ten days of activities in Ofakim.⁹⁷ In subsequent years, the budget would be enhanced by greater contributions from the Canadian Sephardi Federation, the Communauté Sépharade du Québec, and particularly the Jewish Agency as a result of Montreal's pairing with Yeruham and then Be'er Sheva as a part of Menachem Begin's "Project Renewal". Project Renewal was an arrangement by which impoverished Israeli communities were twinned with wealthier communities abroad which invested in developing services and infrastructure in their twinned cities. Even as PASI expanded to other cities, however, Ofakim remained the logistical hub of the program until it ceased to operate.⁹⁸

On 15 August 1984, a group of thirty Montreal youths and young adults, led by James Dahan, arrived in Ofakim. According to Dahan, the PASI group was first met with some suspicion: "the first year we had many problems because people [in Ofakim] thought we were a political entity. People had a lot of reticence, and after one or two days it was true love."⁹⁹ This reticence indicated that locals were suspicious of the intentions of outsiders if they had political aims in Ofakim, and perhaps even a distrust of the state. The activities, intended to bring some joy and raise the morale to the disadvantaged Negev inhabitants, were exceptional for Ofakim in those days. They included the kinds of activities that, despite its considerable efforts to provide activities for its high proportion of youths and children, the municipality of Ofakim alone did not have the budget and resources to execute. On the first night, for example, PASI arranged a children's concert with performances by Tzipi Shavit, Doudou Zar, and Monzi Aviv; Shavit is known today as the "first lady of Israeli entertainment" and Zar is well-known as a children's musician from the popular 1982–2004 children's show *parpar nehmad*.¹⁰⁰

Some popular events took place in Ofakim, like an Olympic games event for the children, while several others took residents by bus outside of the town, such as an activities day at the beach, and most notably, Bar Mitzvot at the Western Wall. This activity, which brought a group of children by bus from Ofakim, and later other development towns, to Jerusalem to perform their Bar Mitzvot together at the Western Wall, became the highlight of the PASI trips. Perhaps no other PASI activity has had more of a lasting influence than this one, and indeed it is the only part of PASI which still exists today under the name "Projet Bar Mitzvot" (Bar

97 "P.A.S.I.: Une Bonne Initiative," 32; Dahan, James. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

98 Interview with Arie Levy. 4 November 2022.

99 Dahan, James. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

100 "Connaissez-Vous Vraiment P.A.S.I.?", 1.

Mitzvot Project). Still a recurrent campaign by the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec, the Project continues to fund Bar Mitzvot at the Western Wall for boys from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Israel, usually former development towns. Often referred to in campaigns as the community's "crown", *Projet Bar Mitzvot* is a direct legacy of PASI.

PASI's first trip from 15-25 August 1984 was a resounding success, if measured by residents' enthusiasm for the program and its continuation, despite Dahan feeling as though they did not receive enough awareness in Canada or in Israel. This soon changed, as they returned in 1985, this time for twelve days to organize activities in three Negev towns, Ofakim, Netivot, and Sderot, and with a budget of 40,000 Canadian dollars, twice that of the first year. In 1987 they returned with a budget of 80,000 dollars and organized activities in Ofakim, Netivot, Sderot, Yeruham, and Neighborhood Daled in Be'er Sheva. By that time, PASI had become a "military operation", with some 100 buses which brought together many residents of the five towns and the organizers to multiple locations over twelve days.¹⁰¹ By the third iteration, Dahan compared it to the Jazz festival in Montreal: everyone knew what it was, and when PASI arrived in town they put up flags and booths, and people came to be together when otherwise, in the hot summer months in the desert without much to do, they would have been boxed in at home.

PASI was not framed as a Sephardi or a Moroccan enterprise, though it was still sometimes perceived that way and it constituted an undeniable element of the program's dynamic. In one of the early PASI trips, an Israeli news broadcast captured the program's Olympic games in Ofakim and interviewed a young man who said:

"the project gave us [...] an awareness of... basically the fact that in Canada they already know Ofakim, a development town like this that no one ever talked about, and we already had a good feeling. So we live with this [fact]! [...] Mitzpe Ramon, also Netivot, also Sderot, these development towns that aren't on the map, that aren't in the headlines [...]."¹⁰²

The youth noted the good feeling of having a community in Canada know and think about a "forgotten" place like Ofakim or the other development towns.

And yet strikingly, despite Dahan's overt disinterest in his Moroccan past, Moroccanness was a fundamental part of how the program had come about and how it was perceived. Moroccan networks, from Montreal to the Negev, had facilitated it, and a desire by Moroccans to help other Moroccans had inspired it. In other moments, the Moroccan connection was more explicitly noted. The journalist describing the activities on the same news broadcast credited the "Sephardi Federation in Canada", but also added that the goal of the program was to "strengthen and develop ties between the Moroccan community in Montreal and the local

101 Dahan, James. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

102 Sports day together with the Canadian Sephardi Federation. Clips from Israeli Television #9, OFKM.

population.”¹⁰³ Following the second PASI trip in 1985, *La Voix Sépharade* stated: “First of all we commend the judicious choice [...] of these three development towns, majority Sephardi, for building relationships of friendship and solidarity with Israel.”¹⁰⁴

PASI ran intermittently in two waves, from 1984-1990, and the late 1990s until the early 2000s. After James Dahan retired and then passed in 2008, the program stopped, though its influence, both in Montreal and Israel, are significant. As noted above, the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec still organizes “Projet Bar-Mitzvot”, based on PASI. In the former development towns, PASI is still a fond memory amongst residents, and in Ofakim I was told a story of someone, now an adult, who to this day is nicknamed “pasi” because “every summer that PASI would come to Ofakim he would go crazy about them and all year he would wear the hat that they distributed.”¹⁰⁵ PASI may have even inspired Moroccan volunteers in Montreal to immigrate to Israel, such as Arie Levy, born in Morocco in 1979 and who moved to Montreal in 1981, and left for Israel in 2003 after having been intensely involved with James Dahan in the Sephardi community and leading one of the PASI trips he attended. According to Levy, he and at least four other Jews of Moroccan descent who had taken part in PASI ended up moving to Be’er Sheva before moving elsewhere in the Negev. For Levy personally, PASI influenced him staying in the Negev from a practical aspect: he knew it well after the many trips he’d taken. Ideologically, he added, he wanted to be a part of the Zionist project of settling the Negev.¹⁰⁶

But Levy also explained that what was remarkable about PASI was the aspect of connecting Moroccans in different places, since it had been his first encounter with the story of the Negev and the history of Jewish immigration there:

“I think it was the first attempt, from my perspective, to understand the connection between Montreal Moroccans to *darom* (south)¹⁰⁷ Moroccans. Even though they were not always Moroccans, it was in the 90s, there were already Russians [in the Negev], but you felt how much every person we interacted with was... the guy from the buses company who did the trucks, Benzaquen, right? And the mayor is like this, and this mayor here [...], to me [...] the first time where you see even the story about immigration to Israel, came about from PASI. I wasn’t even aware of it before.”¹⁰⁸

For Levy and other PASI volunteers, Moroccan Jews from Montreal, the program could be their first encounter with a muted branch of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora in Israel. The fact

103 Ibid.

104 Chantal Benhamron, “PASI: Un Petit Pas En Israël... Un Grand Pas Pour Notre Communauté,” *La Voix Sépharade*, September-October 1985, 13.

105 Conversation with Ofakim resident, Meytal, 2020.

106 Interview with Arie Levy. 4 November 2022.

107 Southern Israeli, particularly referring to the Negev.

108 Ibid.

that the bus driver, the Negev towns' mayors, the residents who took part in the activities, were in large part Moroccans could trigger an awareness of the different migratory trajectories for Moroccan Jews. For Levy, it even inspired a variant of Zionism which mirrored what Yehiel Bentov and Itzik Krispel advocated—real Zionism happened in the Negev, not in Tel Aviv. In a concrete, tangible way, PASI was the link which brought together, as Levy said, Montreal Moroccans and *darom* Moroccans.

Conclusion: From return migration to diaspora Moroccanism

In 2023, the municipality of Ofakim planned to send a group of local students to Morocco for eight days, guided by Kobi Ifrah of Kulna. The trip, tentatively named “Echoes of the Baqashot”, would see the students immersed in the history of Sephardi religious life from Andalusian and Christian Spain to Jewish North Africa, to Kabbalah in Safed, and the arrival of emissaries from Eretz Israel to Morocco. The trip was planned between Sukkot and Purim, when Sephardi Jews often sing Baqashot, or “Supplications”, a series of *piyyutim* performed in Sephardi and especially Moroccan synagogues from the early hours of winter Shabbat mornings before the regular Shabbat morning prayers.

In a call for funding describing the purpose of the trip, an official at Ofakim's municipality wrote:

“Over 2,000 years of history, Moroccan Jewry created a rich and diverse culture which in our opinion was not sufficiently expressed in the ingathering of exiles in the State of Israel. [...] Today there are frequent roots trips to Morocco following the opening of its borders over the past decade. It allows us an extraordinary opportunity to experience the rich past of this Jewry, as well as its contribution to Jewish culture and tradition to Israeli society, despite its belated recognition. [...] [The Baqashot are a] custom that exists to this day in the synagogues of Moroccan Jews throughout Israel and has become widespread among the younger generation, born in Israel, who are connected to the tradition and renew it in the spirit of the times. In Ofakim in particular, we establish unique activities in schools and in the community for singing the Baqashot in accordance with ancestral tradition.”¹⁰⁹

The trip was framed explicitly as an expression of Moroccan Jews' attachment to a tradition which, though it had not originated in Morocco or Israel, is practiced in Moroccan synagogues across Israel and which, for the writer, is a significant local manifestation “in Ofakim in particular”. Additionally, the writer noted the value of Moroccan Jewish traditions for Israeli

109 Call for Funding for Student Trip to Morocco. May 2023. Personal Archive.

society, where they had not been sufficiently recognized, despite Ofakim's and other Israeli Moroccan communities' faithful perpetuation of the practice.

The trip would have begun with a preparatory series of lectures on "Mizrahi history and the contribution of Moroccan Jewry to Israeli society" as well as tours of historical Sephardi neighborhoods in Jerusalem. In Morocco, it would have seen young Jews from Ofakim visit important Muslim sites, like the Hassan II mosque in Casablanca and the mausoleum of Moroccan kings in Rabat, engage in volunteer work restoring tombstones in Ouezzane, and participate in discussions about their identities and the Muslim-Jewish past through meetings with El Mehdi Boudra, head of Mimouna, an organization which works with Muslim students to preserve Morocco's Jewish history, and with Kamal Hachkar, the famous Moroccan director of films exploring Morocco's Muslim-Jewish past and present such as *Tinghir-Jerusalem*, *Echoes from the Mellah* and *In your eyes I see my country*.¹¹⁰ In Morocco, students would have taken ownership over a part of the trip by researching a specific site and sharing their findings with the group. Following the October 7th massacres by Hamas in southern Israel, in which Ofakim suffered the loss of some fifty residents, the trip was put on hold indefinitely.¹¹¹ In May 2023, however, a similar roots trip to Morocco guided by Kulna, though not related to the practice of the Baqashot, was undertaken by youths from Yeruham.

Such roots trips which connect Morocco to Israel's periphery and which are facilitated by Kulna's base in the Negev are largely undertaken by Israeli-born Jews of Moroccan descent. Indeed, the same was true of PASI, which primarily mobilized Montreal-born Moroccans to put on activities for their Israeli-born counterparts in the Negev. As demonstrated above, return migration to Morocco in Israel's early years was relatively significant, but this phenomenon largely ceased as Jews born in Morocco increasingly chose one or another immigration destination. Return migration to Morocco was also primarily a dynamic which attracted Jews born in Morocco, while subsequent generations of Jews have found other, necessarily diasporic ways of expressing and deepening their Moroccan identities. Moroccan and Israeli policies, the former forbidding Jews from returning and the latter seeking to curtail Jewish departure from the new state, restricted such return migration, but by the force of circumstances and patterns which led Morocco's Jewish community to deplete over the twentieth century, most soon found that there was less and less a Jewish community to return to.

When I met him in Marrakesh in May 2023, I asked Kobi Ifrah, CEO of Kulna, whether he thought many Jews would come back to live in Morocco, as he had. Ifrah replied flat-out that he didn't think so: "For Israelis it will be very hard to live here. Because it's a very bureaucratic, slow country, and Israelis have no time, they rush, they're stressed, they have to come with a desire

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "אופקים עברה טראומה. 52 נרצחו ואין מי שדואג לתושבים" (Ofakim underwent trauma. 52 were murdered and no one cares for the residents), *The Marker*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.themarker.com/podcasts/2023-10-23/ty-article-podcast/0000018b-5c61-d473-a5fb-7ce96f1b0000>.

to get used to the life here.”¹¹² Ifrah does not see himself on the vanguard of a Jewish return to Morocco, though he does see himself as part of a renaissance bent on preserving authentic Moroccan Jewish culture and history, to which he contributes with Kulna’s activities. Kulna’s main purpose, according to Ifrah, however, is not the preservation of Moroccan culture, but delivering a message to Israeli society:

“First of all, that [Morocco] is a big space of identities which succeed in sharing one space, one country. [...] no one is worried that one will subsume the other, but rather everyone has respect, everyone recognizes the respect of the other, everyone gives the other respect, he understands that the total of the parts makes up this thing which is called Morocco. That’s one. Two, [there’s] a great Jewish history which has not found expression. People suddenly come here and realize how much hasn’t found expression and why it hasn’t found expression. And three, it’s Morocco as a Jewish-Muslim space, let’s say, in the last 100 years, which has in it a kind of romanticism, [...] that more or less, is what Morocco has to offer Israeli society today.”¹¹³

Ifrah’s Moroccan message for Israeli society is the result of his passion for the shared Moroccan past of which he is a part. Perhaps more striking, however, is that the purpose of an organization founded by one of the few Jews who returned to Morocco in the twenty-first century is not to encourage more Jews to return to Morocco, but to share what Morocco has to offer to Jews elsewhere. Even Ifrah’s deeply embedded work within Morocco must be seen, then, as a form of diaspora Moroccanism, a communal activism which at its core recognizes the dispersal of Moroccan Jewry across a vast diaspora, and which seeks to impart his vision of Moroccan Judaism to a wider Jewish world. Significantly, though Kulna’s work primarily interests Jews of Moroccan descent, it is not conceived as only being intended for Jews of Moroccan descent, and is rather pitched to the wider Jewish diaspora, primarily in Israel.

Kulna and the trips it planned or executed from the Negev help us to understand how diaspora Moroccanism worked, even unintentionally, through James Dahan’s transnational communal activism and PASI, too. PASI was not explicitly intended as a program to express Moroccan or even Sephardi solidarity. Despite this, it was understood as such by many of those who took part in it, like Arie Levy, and it was built on Moroccan-Sephardi Jewish networks which connected Yehiel Bentov and other Israeli Moroccans to Montreal through the transnational Sephardi Federations which specifically sought to improve the condition of Moroccan and other MENA Jews in Israel’s periphery. Part of this was also the role played by Moroccan emissaries from Israel, such as Avi Chlouch and David Abisror. For James Dahan, the door to Morocco had closed, and one had to look at the future; and yet the future manifested by

¹¹² Interview with Kobi Ifrah. 5 May 2023.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Dahan in PASI, one of his most successful and long-lasting projects, put Moroccan networks to use and brought the history of Moroccan migration and the reality of the Moroccan diaspora to the awareness of a new generation. As Kobi Ifrah said to me in my interview with him, “Moroccans need [...] to be stronger in their identity, not to run from it, [or] to say it was and it’s gone [...]. It’s part of your DNA. And the moment you ignore it, it comes back to you with a force.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Morocco as a language

In my interview with him in Marrakech, Kobi Ifrah frequently referred to the notion of “Morocco as a language.” In conveying to me the unique message that Morocco offers Israeli society beyond the stereotypical “moufletot and clapping hands,” Ifrah said that what was important to him was “Morocco as a language. [...] Morocco as Morocco, and society, and Judaism, and what it has to tell.”¹ While it might not be what he intended, Ifrah’s expression perfectly encapsulates this dissertation’s central thesis: that Morocco serves as a language which connects a global diaspora.

The events described in this dissertation’s chapters are united by the fact that Morocco has a story to tell about them. Moroccanness as a category, as I argued in the introduction, exceeds the historicity of these case studies. Many of the Jews I speak about do not or did not consider themselves “Moroccan,” and some, like most of the foreign-born teachers of the Moroccan AIU, were not even of Moroccan descent. Moroccanness has nevertheless provided a language which allows us to recognize what unites these case studies: the fact that in the twentieth century the dispersal of Moroccan Jewry across the world, the political, social, and cultural particularities of their immigration whenever and wherever they migrated, and the collective memories, experiences and networks that were forged through these migrations, have generated vibrant, highly mobile, and globally dispersed communities which are together identifiable as a Moroccan Jewish diaspora.

For Jews in Ofakim, Moroccanness became a means of surviving the harsh environments of the development towns. It gave Moroccans like Yehiel Bentov, Alice Tedgui, and Itzik Krispel the language to highlight their contributions to the country against narratives which undervalued them, as well as to enlist resources to improve their lives. Moroccanness was the language which imbued their immigration with narrative agency. For Jews still in Morocco, Moroccanness worked to reshape narratives, as well, by allowing AIU teachers to depict themselves as state-builders in the Moroccan national project. Even the achievements of the AIU and its teachers before 1956 find expression in Moroccanness, and for foreign-born Jews, the AIU fostered such a strong attachment to the country that they fought to remain. For Ruth Jouhet, Moroccanness ultimately provided her with the language to understand her attachment to Morocco as belonging. For Jews in Montreal, Morocco constituted the core of a new communal identity, and for Moroccans like Arie Levy, mobilized by Moroccan Jewish networks in PASI, Moroccanness was the language which made sense of their encounters with their diasporic counterparts in the Negev.

1 Interview with Kobi Ifrah. 5 May 2023.

More broadly, Moroccanness has provided me with the language for understanding the threads which connect these cases. In particular, the idea that their Moroccan origins provide a lens for understanding their global diaspora offers historians a plausible framework for writing a history of Moroccan Jews that transcends Morocco's borders and the mid-twentieth century. Considered this way, Moroccan Jews are, as Bob Oré Abitbol perceptively wrote in the poem which opened this dissertation, from their country and from all countries in which they have lived. It is only that their experiences in each new context, from Miami to Paris, from Montreal to Caracas, and from the Hague to Ofakim, supplements the already rich vocabulary which Morocco has to offer.

Areas for Future Research

While this dissertation has contributed to the scholarship on its areas of focus, it has also indicated numerous opportunities for further research. For example, the subject of missionary movements led by rabbis from eastern Europe which influenced Moroccan Jewish religious and social life since 1912 is a sore gap in the historiography.² Additionally, though I have drawn heavily on the work of other scholars to make arguments about how life in northern Morocco and the Spanish protectorate influenced the emergence of Moroccanness and the Moroccan Jewish diaspora, still too few studies pay attention to the region which came under Spanish, rather than French, colonialism, and the Jews who emigrated from the north.³

Furthermore, though this dissertation has contributed to the elaboration of a post-1956 history of the AIU in Morocco, much work remains on this topic. For example, the experiences of Jewish students in nationalized schools after 1960 is scarcely known, in addition to Jews in the AIU/Ittihad-Maroc's schools which remained open past the 1960s. For this, the use of teacher and student memoirs could conceivably be quite useful, though they have fallen outside the purview of this study.⁴ Similarly, the relationship of the AIU/Ittihad-Maroc with Moroccan diaspora communities is worth investigating, as evidenced by AIU alumni's continued relationship with the organization from across the world in the late nineteenth century, the use of AIU material in the Montreal Sephardi school École Maïmonide in 1969, and the Moroccan AIU's role in recommending its teachers for employment in the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal in the 1950s. Still with regards to the AIU, the experiences of Judeo-Spanish-speaking teachers from Greece, Turkey, and other former Ottoman provinces in northern Morocco, where local Jews spoke Haketia and Spanish, is a valuable topic to be

2 For the most comprehensive contribution yet, see Loupo, *Metamorphose*.

3 Aviad Moreno's book is the notable exception. See *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2024).

4 Nadia Malinovich's upcoming volume will be an important addition in this regard: "A Transnational History of the Students and Teachers of the Alliance Israelite Universelle after 1945" (unpublished manuscript, 4 December 2023).

expanded on. The way in which foreign-born teachers could identify with Moroccanness through their Judeo-Spanish connections in northern Morocco are an important footnote in this dissertation. Moreover, I have attempted to temper a black-and-white understanding of the AIU and its agents in Morocco which relies too much on the binary of colonizer/colonized. Still, a dedicated research project using Spanish language sources would enrich our understanding of this important moment in history, similar to what historians have done with regards to Jews in Egypt.⁵

Just as with the Jews of Egypt, a comparative lens is a fruitful avenue for further research. This dissertation has illuminated numerous aspects of Moroccan Jewish migration which could help contextualize the migrations of other religious minorities. In virtually the same period which saw Moroccan Jews massively emigrate, many other groups took advantage of new opportunities for mobility or sought better conditions from countries in uncertain political situations. For example, Moroccan Jewish migrations to Venezuela “coincided with and were followed by migrations of religious minorities from Western Syria, including Melkites, Greek Orthodox, and Druze, and small numbers of Alawite and Sunni Muslims.”⁶ As noted in Chapter 5, the experiences of migrants between Greece, Turkey, and Armenia also parallels those of Middle Eastern and North African Jews in the twentieth century. Many opportunities available to Jews were utilized by other religious minorities, while some, like immigration to Israel, remained squarely for Jews.

From the early twentieth century, Ruth Jouhet’s migrations could be compared to other migrants from Palestine or other former Ottoman provinces. In particular, her migrations mirror those of the many transnational teachers from the eastern Mediterranean who taught in schools in the British Mandates in Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. Viewing Jouhet’s migrations and her career as parallel to these other transnational agents who became embroiled in colonial and then postcolonial education could nuance historical assumptions about exclusive Jewish-Arab experiences and memories. Such comparative analyses could also further integrate Moroccan Jewish historiography into the broader field of diaspora and migration studies and yield significant results.

It remains an important task for historians to access underutilized archives, in the case of this research the municipal archives of Israel’s former development towns, the unorganized archive of the Sephardi community in Quebec, as well as the smaller archives of communities in Latin America, France, and the United States. Particularly with regards to France, a more robust account of post-1948 Moroccan Jewish history in that country is still waiting to be written. Similarly, the use of material culture, photographs, cooking, or *piyyut* as archives could add new dimensions to the historiography, specifically pertaining to how Moroccanness

5 See for example Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s-1950s*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History 18 (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

6 Moreno, “Expanding the Dimensions of Moroccan (Jewish) Migration,” 2.

is transmitted. Finally, as this dissertation has hopefully done, historians must frame post-emigration Moroccan Jewish history as inherently transnational. Similarly to Iraqi Jews, few are the Moroccans who do not have family members, friends, or other connections in some other corner of the diaspora, and when they meet other Moroccan Jews, Moroccanness provides them a language to connect over their shared heritage. Whether we write about Moroccans in Canada, France, Israel, or Morocco, today we as historians cannot properly understand what it means to be Moroccan in a vacuum.

Moroccan History after October 7th

During the last months of completing this dissertation, Hamas militants from Gaza, as well as militants from several other groups, launched an attack on southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, perpetrating sexual violence, and taking over two-hundred hostages, including elderly people and children. While it was the Kibbutzim which border Gaza, such as Kibbutz Be'eri, which saw the highest number of casualties and hostages, a number of former development towns in the Negev were also attacked, including Sderot and Ofakim, and Ashkelon was bombarded by rockets. Ofakim was the farthest city from Gaza which the militants reached.

In the Negev, numerous stories about October 7th have reinforced the way in which Morocco serves as a language for making sense of their lives in the Negev. For example, many sites of violence on October 7th, including sites in Ofakim, have become pilgrimage destinations for Jews in Israel and outside it. One such site is the house of Rachel Edery, better known as simply *Raḥel me'ofakim*—Rachel from Ofakim. On October 7th, Rachel, a Jew of Persian descent, and her husband, David, were taken hostage by five militants in their home in Ofakim for nearly twenty hours, until they were rescued by police officers, among them their son, Eviatar. Rachel and David's ordeal has become widely publicized, due to the successful rescue, and to the story of how Rachel "hosted" the five men, using rudimentary Arabic she knew to endear them to her by offering them tea, cookies, and even putting one's arm in a cast. On 26 February 2024, David Edery passed away, his family admitting that he was never the same after that day.⁷

Rachel's story has taken on numerous new meanings as it has spread since October 7th, and she herself has come to be seen as a kind of saint. One example is found in the Olympics-themed Haggadah produced by the French media platform Jewbuzz in 2024, in which the page dedicated to *tsafoun* depicts Rachel, illuminated by a divine beam of light from her kitchen window, offering a plate of cookies, and with the caption: "In Aramaic, the word *Afikoman* signifies 'take out the dessert,' a dessert which fills us with *emouna* (belief) for the rest of the year, just like the dessert that Rachel from Ofakim took out on the 7th of October to save her

7 Rotem Sharon, "צעור גדול: דוד אדרי, בעלה של רחל מאופקים - נפטר בגיל 68" (Great Sadness: David Adri, Husband of Rachel Maofakim - Died at the Age of 68), Be'er Sheva Net, February 26, 2024, <https://www.b7net.co.il/חדשות/צעור-גדול-דוד-אדרי-בעלה-של-רחל-מאופקים-נפטר-בגיל-68-578207>.

life.”⁸ This growing idea of Rachel as a Moroccan *tsadiqa*, a righteous and saintly woman, has been encouraged by many of the articles which have described her ordeal, which have added a Moroccan slant by spreading the idea that she served “Moroccan cookies and tea” to her captors. Indeed, recipes for “Rachel from Ofakim’s Moroccan cookies” have since proliferated on the internet,¹⁰ despite the fact that Rachel herself has said that she served her captors date cookies and chocolate chip cookies in addition to “Moroccan machine cookies,” common in houses across the country.¹¹ Additionally, the “warm” way Rachel treated her captors has been strongly associated with her upbringing in Ofakim and her Mizrahi background, as seen in her representation by the popular comedy show, *Erets Nehederet*, in which she is played by Yaniv Bitton, an Israeli actor who often plays Moroccan and other Mizrahi Jews by accentuating ethnic speech and body language.

Another, even more mythical story which has proliferated is that an interrogated Hamas militant admitted that they chose not to attack Netivot because a “scary old man” who looked like the Baba Sali told them not to enter. Netivot is another city in the western Negev which houses the tomb of the saintly Moroccan Rabbi Israel Abuhatzaira, known as the Baba Sali, which attracts thousands of pilgrims each year, particularly Moroccans for his *hulula*, the anniversary of his death. Many other versions of each story have appeared, and these are only one recent example amongst numerous others of the pervasiveness of tropes about Moroccanness. Nonetheless, it is significant that these stories’ Moroccanness has found strong expressions across the world, and that their Moroccanness has been strongly associated with the Negev development towns. For even the terrible events of October 7th, Moroccanness has provided some small, insufficient words.

Speaking Moroccan

I have sought to widen our understanding of Moroccan Jewish history and migration by elaborating how Moroccan Jews in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries established new communities across the world and functioned as a global diaspora. I have also nuanced the notion that Jewish life in Morocco ended in 1948 or 1956 by exploring how Jews fought to be part of independent Morocco and demonstrating how elite Moroccan and foreign-born Jews had worked to shape Moroccan Jewish society for over a century. Jews in Morocco at mid-century

8 Haggada Jewbuzz - Édition Jeux Olympiques (Paris: Jewbuzz, 2024), 70–71.

9 See e.g. “Rachel from Ofakim’s cookies: Moroccan cookies.” Foody. Accessed August 6, 2024. <https://foody.co.il/foody—recipe—רעוגיות-של-רחל-מאופקים-עוגיות-מרקאיו/>

10 See e.g. Julia Frankel, “Woman Becomes Israeli Folk Hero for Plying Hamas Militants with Snacks until Rescue Mission Arrives,” *Associated Press*, October 18, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-militants-hero-75f145487afbc74fe28451fe49f79a50>.

11 “Rachel Edri from Ofakim Reveals Her Counterterrorist Cookie Recipe,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/food-recipes/article-779442>.

did face legal restrictions, aggressive nationalist provocation, and some violence. These, the recurrent economic and political crises of the late 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1970s, along with the organization of Jewish emigration on the part of Moroccan, Israeli, French, and Canadian authorities, eventually deprived the country of its only recognized indigenous religious minority. Amidst political instrumentalization and fears of a sharp decline in Jewish life as had occurred in Iraq and Egypt, Jews also made their own decisions about whether and when to leave. It is notable, regardless, that throughout all these destabilizing predicaments, Moroccan Jews continued to fight to live in their country of origin. Ultimately this dissertation does not, and has not endeavored to, change our understanding of why Jews left Morocco; instead, it has decentralized that question from the field of Moroccan Jewish history by demonstrating that this history has carried on into the present.

Like the classical Sephardi diaspora which inspired many of them, Moroccan Jews by and large adopted Moroccan identities abroad, not in Morocco. Using the grammar provided to them by their memories and experiences in Morocco, bolstered by words imbibed in their new homes in Montreal, Ofakim, or elsewhere, as well as the vocabulary of diaspora which filtered across the transnational networks they established, Moroccans crafted a language to understand their own state of dispersion. A major part of this new diasporic identity was the notion that Moroccans were peripheralized in global Jewish structures and communities. Indeed, it seemed that everywhere they looked, Moroccans were facing problems of “integration,” often associated with a Jewish host community which stereotyped them as incapable, uneducated, or culturally backwards. This, however, is only part of the story. Moroccan immigrants around the world organized to tackle the obstacles they faced as a diaspora community, and explicitly understood themselves as being responsible for their counterparts elsewhere. While it was not always framed as “Moroccan,” this solidarity was based, as Naïm Kattan wrote, in a contentious relationship to “the Other” which emerged in numerous post-migration centers of Moroccan Jewish life.¹²

In conclusion, Morocco as a language, like all languages, has sprouted dialects and regional variations. The dispersion of Moroccan Jews in the twentieth century has led to identifications more diverse than the number of extant communities. In many cases, at least some part of these identities can be understood as the result of these Jews’ origins in Morocco, or their relationship to other communities of Moroccan Jews across the world. While I have aspired in this dissertation to not essentialize how some have chosen to identify themselves by excessively reducing them to their origins in Morocco, I hope that it has produced some of the necessary language, sought by many, to understand how Morocco relates to them, and they to Morocco.

12 Kattan, “Le Séfaradisme.”

Appendix

Je Vous Avoue

Par Bob Oré Abitbol

Je vous avoue
Je suis un peu perplexé
C'est que mon identité
Est un peu complexe.
Jugez vous-même si vous pouvez
Et essayez de m'aider
Je vais tout vous raconter.
Au Maroc où je suis né
On m'a dit t'y'es Marocain :
Pas de problèmes j'ai dit très bien
Tu seras fidèle à ton roi
Ton pays tu honoreras :
J'ai dit ça m'va
Les français sont arrivés
On m'a dit faut tout changer
Protectori Protectorat
Li z'arabes j'y connais pas

Tes ancêtres sont les Gaulois
J'ai dit ouakha
Mais attention n'oublie pas
Où que tu ailles, où que tu sois
Juif tu es, Juif tu mourras
J'ai dit hourra
En France où je suis passé
On m'a dit si tu veux être respecté
Renonce, renonce vite à ton identité
Ou tu seras un immigré
J'ai dit parfait
Arrivé au Canada
On m'a dit t'es Canadien
Et aussitôt par la grâce de Dieu
C'est devenu le «pays de mes aïeux»
Attention ! mes amis m'ont dit : Attention !
Fais pas de bêtises, t'as plus le choix

Au Québec t'es Québécois
Je me suis dit: Et pourquoi pas?
Avec tout ça, n'oubliez pas
On me répète où que je sois
Israël est tout pour toi
C'est pourquoi ce soir
En tant que
Juifo-Marocano ex-Français en transito
Québécois Montréalais en exilo
Israélien et par mes enfants un peu
Mexicano
De ce goût des confitures
Je vous souhaite une bonne lecture
Puisqu'à moi tout seul, j'ai compris
Je suis de mon pays
Et de tous les pays
Amen

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AM Maroc E 103 L

AM Maroc E 104 L

AM Maroc E 104 R

AM Maroc E 104 W

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Summary

This thesis traces the development of a global Moroccan Jewish diaspora from the second half of the twentieth century through an exploration of Jewish Moroccaness. It argues that Moroccaness was forged through multi-directional migration, and the collective history, memory, connections, and culture that this migration engendered. Each chapter provides a case study based in a different center or locus of Moroccan Jewish life and argues that the notion of these Jews' origins in Morocco, their memories and experiences as Moroccans, and their networks with other Moroccans, informed the development of the communities, their identities, or their collective actions. The thesis also constitutes a compendium for sites of Moroccan Jewish life in the twentieth century with focuses on under researched centers. The thesis is constructed thematically rather than chronologically.

Chapter 1 provides a background for Moroccan Jewish emigration in general, and to Israel's periphery in particular, beginning with nineteenth and early twentieth century rural-to-urban internal migration. I discuss the role of decolonial violence, decolonization, and uncertainty in spurring Jews to leave Morocco, as well as the roles of the French and Israeli policies which facilitated Jewish emigration. I demonstrate how Israel's policy for facilitating Moroccan Jewish immigration evolved over time and coincided with the Israeli government's desire to dissolve the many immigrant transit camps (*ma'abarot*) and settle the country's borders. I show that the last years of colonial rule in Morocco corresponded with Israel's "From Ship to Village" plan, which saw the establishment of numerous new "development towns" in Israel's north and the Negev desert.

Chapter 2 explores Moroccan Jewish settlement, life, and memory in Israel's peripheral development towns, particularly those in the Negev. I focus on Ofakim as a case study and demonstrate how one aspect of Moroccaness in Israel is a particular relationship to "peripherality". I show how Moroccaness in Negev development towns, as a subset of Mizrahi identity, has posited a Zionist counternarrative which frames Moroccans and other Mizrahim as Israel's "true pioneers" for having built up the country's periphery, as opposed to Ashkenazim settled more comfortably in Tel Aviv. I trace the development of this counternarrative through Ofakim's early educational and political history, its relationship to surrounding localities, and its deliberate formulation amongst community leaders.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in Morocco can be considered a Moroccan institution, and how its teachers struggled in colonial and postcolonial Morocco to become and be recognized as Moroccan state-builders. Focusing on the AIU's teachers' union in Morocco, I show how local-born and foreign-born Jews achieved unparalleled job security in the final years of the French protectorate through collective action, and how they even sought to be nationalized by the independent Moroccan government. Ultimately, fear that Jews with foreign nationality (both local- and foreign-born) would not be employed

in the independent civil service led to a schism in the union along lines of nationality. Those with Moroccan nationality continued to agitate for their integration into the civil service until the government's handling of the affair compelled them to reinforce the AIU's historic role as their employer. This chapter also provides new perspectives on Arabization in Morocco and the nationalization of one-third of the AIU's schools in 1960.

Chapter 4 follows the Moroccan AIU's teachers with foreign nationality and recounts how they negotiated their integration into the French civil service and their repatriation to France. This chapter focuses on the life of Ruth Jouhet, a Jew of Moroccan descent born in Ottoman Palestine, who attended the École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO) and taught in Morocco for thirty years. By exploring the experiences of foreign-born teachers like Jouhet who attended the ENIO and who were overwhelmingly Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews from former Ottoman provinces, I suggest that colonial Morocco, and particularly northern Morocco under the Spanish protectorate, offered these Jews a culturally and linguistically accessible Moroccaness. Through the concept of "repatriation," this chapter notes that Jouhet ultimately did not consider herself to be Moroccan, but that she felt, after her long tenure there, that Morocco was where she belonged.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Moroccan Jewish community activists who ethnicized as francophone Sephardim in Montreal in the context of Quebec's Quiet Revolution. The primarily Ashkenazi Canadian Jewish community lobbied the Canadian government to permit North African Jews, mostly Moroccans, to migrate to Toronto and Montreal and facilitated their immigration and settlement through the community's robust social service network. I demonstrate how intra-Jewish tensions arose at points where mostly francophone Moroccans encountered anglophone Jewish social services and the anglophone Protestant school system attended by Jews. To combat their issues, Moroccans in Montreal reimagined themselves as Sephardim through the francophone Jewish press, using the political, social, and cultural programs of new progressive Quebec governments to successfully promote their francophone identity.

Chapter 6 unites many of the previous chapters' themes. Elaborating on what I call "diaspora Moroccanism," I use the PASI program, a solidarity program organized by Moroccan Jews in Montreal to support their counterparts in Israeli development towns in the 1980s and 1990s, and Kulna, an ongoing program organized by Israeli Moroccans, to show some ways how Moroccan Jews have mobilized as a diaspora. This chapter also provides a history of the limited return migration from Israel to Morocco, as well as a detailed analysis of the Moroccan government's policy of prohibiting the issue of passports to Jews from 1956-1961. I argue that if return migration was an option exercised by some Jews born in Morocco, generations of Moroccan Jews born abroad have found other, necessarily diasporic ways of expressing and deepening their Moroccan identities.

In conclusion, Moroccan Jewish history did not end in 1948 with the establishment of Israel, nor in 1956 with Moroccan independence. Instead, like the classic Sephardi diaspora,

the dispersion of Moroccan Jews served as the beginning of a new chapter in Moroccan Jewish history. I argue that the idea that their origins in Morocco can be considered a way of understanding a set of diasporic phenomena which connect Moroccan Jews around the world offers historians a plausible framework for writing a history of Moroccan Jews which exceeds these dates and Morocco's territorial boundaries. Finally, I note areas of future research and suggest that Moroccanness itself has come to serve as a language which unites a global diaspora.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Routes naar Roots: De Opkomst van een Marokkaans-Joodse Diaspora in de Twintigste Eeuw

Deze scriptie traceert de ontwikkeling van een mondiale Marokkaans-Joodse diaspora vanaf de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw door een verkenning van Joodse Marokkaansheid. Ze stelt dat de Marokkaansheid is gevormd door multidirectionele migratie, en door de collectieve geschiedenis, herinnering, verbindingen en cultuur die deze migratie teweegbracht. Elk hoofdstuk biedt een casestudy die is gebaseerd op een ander centrum van Marokkaans-Joods leven en betoogt dat de notie van de oorsprong van deze Joden in Marokko, hun herinneringen en ervaringen als Marokkanen, en hun netwerken met andere Marokkanen, de ontwikkeling van de gemeenschappen, hun identiteiten of hun collectieve acties heeft beïnvloed. De scriptie fungeert ook als een compendium van locaties van Marokkaans-Joods leven in de twintigste eeuw, met nadruk op onderbelichte centra. De scriptie is thematisch in plaats van chronologisch opgebouwd.

Hoofdstuk 1 biedt een achtergrond van de Marokkaans-Joodse emigratie in het algemeen, en naar de Israëlsche periferie in het bijzonder, te beginnen met de interne migratie van het platteland naar de stad in de negentiende en vroege twintigste eeuw. Ik bespreek de rol van dekoloniaal geweld, de dekolonisatie en de onzekerheid die Joden ertoe bracht Marokko te verlaten, evenals de rol van de Franse en Israëlsche beleidsmaatregelen die Joodse emigratie mogelijk maakten. Ik laat zien hoe het Israëlsche beleid om de immigratie van Marokkaanse Joden te faciliteren in de loop van de tijd evolueerde en samenviel met de wens van de regering om de vele immigrantenkampen (ma'abarot) op te heffen en de grenzen van het land te vestigen. Ik toon aan dat de laatste jaren van het koloniale bewind in Marokko overeenkwamen met het Israëlsche “Van Schip naar Dorp”-plan, dat de oprichting van talrijke nieuwe “ontwikkelingssteden” in het noorden van Israël en de Negev-woestijn inhield.

Hoofdstuk 2 onderzoekt de vestiging, het leven en de herinnering van Marokkaanse Joden in de perifere ontwikkelingssteden van Israël, met name die in de Negev. Ik richt me op Ofakim als casestudy en laat zien hoe een aspect van Marokkaansheid in Israël wordt gekenmerkt door een specifieke relatie met “periferie”. Ik toon aan hoe Marokkaansheid in ontwikkelingssteden in de Negev, als een subset van Mizrachi-identiteit, een zionistisch tegenverhaal biedt dat Marokkanen en andere Mizrachim neerzet als de “ware pioniers” van Israël vanwege hun bijdrage aan de opbouw van de periferie, in tegenstelling tot de Asjkenazische Joden die comfortabeler gevestigd zijn in Tel Aviv. Ik traceer de ontwikkeling van dit tegenverhaal in de vroege onderwijs- en politieke geschiedenis van Ofakim, de relatie met omliggende plaatsen en de bewuste formulering hiervan door lokale leiders.

Hoofdstuk 3 laat zien hoe de Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in Marokko kan worden beschouwd als een Marokkaanse instelling, en hoe AIU leraren in zowel het koloniale als

postkoloniale Marokko streden om erkend te worden als staatsopbouwers van Marokko. Door te focussen op de lerarenvakbond van de AIU in Marokko, laat ik zien hoe Joden, die zowel die in Marokko als het buitenland werden geboren, ongekende baan zekerheid bereikten in de laatste jaren van het Franse protectoraat door middel van collectieve actie, en hoe zij zelfs trachtten genationaliseerd te worden door de onafhankelijke Marokkaanse regering. Uiteindelijk leidde de angst dat Joden met een buitenlandse nationaliteit (zowel in Marokko als in het buitenland geboren) geen werk zouden vinden in de onafhankelijke ambtenarij tot een splitsing binnen de vakbond langs nationaliteitslijnen. Degenen met de Marokkaanse nationaliteit bleven pleiten voor hun integratie in het ambtenarenapparaat totdat de manier waarop de overheid de zaak afhandelde hen ertoe bracht de historische rol van de AIU als hun werkgever te benadrukken. Dit hoofdstuk biedt ook nieuwe perspectieven op de Arabisering in Marokko en de nationalisering van een derde van de AIU-scholen in 1960.

Hoofdstuk 4 volgt de Marokkaanse AIU-leraren met een buitenlandse nationaliteit en beschrijft hoe zij met hun integratie in de Franse ambtenarij en hun repatriëring naar Frankrijk omgingen. Dit hoofdstuk richt zich op het leven van Ruth Jouhet, een Joodse vrouw van Marokkaanse afkomst, geboren in Ottomaans Palestina, die de École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO) volgde en dertig jaar in Marokko les gaf. Door de ervaringen van buitenlands geboren leraren zoals Jouhet te onderzoeken, die op de ENIO zaten en overwegend Judeo-Spaanse Joden uit voormalige Ottomaanse provincies waren, suggereer ik dat het koloniale Marokko, en met name het noorden van Marokko onder het Spaanse protectoraat, deze Joden een cultureel en taalkundig toegankelijke Marokkaansheid bood. Via het concept van “repatriëring” laat dit hoofdstuk zien dat Jouhet zichzelf uiteindelijk niet als Marokkaans beschouwde, maar dat zij na haar lange verblijf in Marokko wel voelde dat Marokko de plek was waar ze thuis hoorde.

Hoofdstuk 5 richt zich op de Marokkaans-Joodse gemeenschapsactivisten die zich in Montreal etnisch profileerden als Franstalige Sefardiërs in de context van de Stille Revolutie in Quebec. De overwegend Asjkenazische Joodse gemeenschap in Canada lobbyde bij de Canadese regering om de migratie van Joden uit Noord-Afrika, voornamelijk Marokkanen, naar Toronto en Montreal toe te laten, en faciliteerde hun immigratie en vestiging via een sterk sociaal dienstennetwerk. Ik laat zien hoe spanningen binnen de Joodse gemeenschap ontstonden op momenten dat de voornamelijk Franstalige Marokkanen in aanraking kwamen met Engelstalige Joodse sociale diensten en het Engelstalige protestantse schoolsysteem dat door Joden werd gevolgd. Om hun problemen aan te pakken, herdefinieerden Marokkanen in Montreal zichzelf als Sefardiërs via de Franstalige Joodse pers, waarbij ze succesvol gebruik maakten van de politieke, sociale en culturele programma's van de nieuwe progressieve regeringen van Quebec om hun Franstalige identiteit te promoten.

Hoofdstuk 6 verenigt veel van de thema's uit eerdere hoofdstukken. Aan de hand van wat ik “diaspora Marokkaansheid” noem, gebruik ik het PASI-programma, een solidariteitsprogramma dat in de jaren 1980 en 1990 werd opgezet door Marokkaanse Joden

in Montreal om hun tegenhangers in Israëlische ontwikkelingssteden te ondersteunen, en Kulna, een voortdurend programma georganiseerd door Israëlische Marokkanen, om te laten zien hoe Marokkaanse Joden zich als diaspora hebben gemobiliseerd. Dit hoofdstuk biedt ook een geschiedenis van de beperkte terugkeer van migranten van Israël naar Marokko, evenals een gedetailleerde analyse van het Marokkaanse regeringsbeleid om Joden tussen 1956 en 1961 geen paspoorten uit te reiken. Ik betoog dat, hoewel terugkeer naar Marokko voor sommige in Marokko geboren Joden een optie was, generaties van in het buitenland geboren Marokkaanse Joden andere, noodzakelijkerwijs diasporische manieren hebben gevonden om hun Marokkaansheid uit te drukken en te versterken.

Tot slot is de Marokkaans-Joodse geschiedenis niet geëindigd in 1948 met de oprichting van Israël, noch in 1956 met de Marokkaanse onafhankelijkheid. In plaats daarvan betekende de verspreiding van Marokkaanse Joden, zoals bij de klassieke Sefardische diaspora, het begin van een nieuw hoofdstuk in de Marokkaans-Joodse geschiedenis. Ik betoog dat het idee van hun oorsprong in Marokko kan worden beschouwd als een manier om een reeks diasporische fenomenen te begrijpen die Marokkaanse Joden over de hele wereld met elkaar verbinden, en dat dit historici een plausibel kader biedt voor het schrijven van een geschiedenis van Marokkaanse Joden die verder gaat dan deze data en de geografische grenzen van Marokko. Ten slotte wijs ik op gebieden voor toekomstig onderzoek en suggereer ik dat Marokkaansheid zelf is uitgegroeid tot een taal die een mondiale diaspora verenigt.