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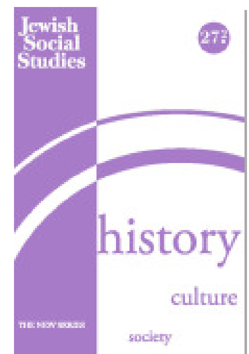

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"*Morts pour la France*": Commemoration and Community Building among Ottoman Sephardim in Interwar Paris

Robin Margaret Buller

ABSTRACT

In interwar Paris, a community of Sephardi immigrants originally from the Ottoman Empire raised a monument paying tribute to Ottoman Jews who fought for France during World War I. Its construction, which spanned over a decade, underscored the evolution of Ottoman Sephardi immigrant collective identity, goals, and anxieties in France between the close of World War I and the eve of World War II. When the memorial was first proposed in 1919, it was seen as a means of emphasizing the Ottoman Sephardi immigrant sphere as separate from that of French Jewry and other Jewish immigrant groups in the country. However, when it was finally erected in June 1935, at a time of heightened xenophobia and antisemitism within France's borders, the monument had taken on new significance. No longer a statement of Sephardi difference, it became a message of Jewish unity, patriotism, and belonging to the French Third Republic.

Key words: France, monuments, Ottoman, Sephardi, World War I

On the morning of June 16, 1935, a crowd gathered in Paris's eleventh arrondissement. Despite the summer heat, men sported three-piece suits while women donned formal jackets

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and hats. Onlookers spilled from the sidewalk onto the street in front of 84 rue de la Roquette, a lot in the heart of the working-class Ottoman Sephardi immigrant quarter that had, until recently, sat empty. That day, visible behind gendarmes and iron fencing was the new structure onlookers had come to glimpse: an austere, dark marble plaque, standing alone in the middle of the property like an immense tombstone (Figures 1 and 2 below). It was a monument for Ottoman Sephardi immigrants who died fighting for France in World War I.[1] Its epitaph, which read "*À la mémoire des engagés volontaires israélites morts pour la France, 1914–1918*" (To the memory of the oriental Jewish volunteer soldiers who died for France, 1914–1918), would remind passersby that Jewish immigrants from the then-fallen Ottoman Empire had sacrificed their lives for the victory of the French Third Republic some two decades prior.[2]

Through an examination of the monument, in this article I tease out several defining threads that characterize the history of Ottoman Sephardi Jews in interwar France. In doing so, I reveal how their experiences diverged from and overlapped with those of other Jews and immigrants in France during this period.[3] I argue that a deep identification with France as well as persisting transnational ties came together to shape how Ottoman Sephardim defined belonging in their adoptive country in ways that distinguished them from eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants.[4] The actions that inspired the monument, the plans and contributions that enabled its creation, and the competing cultures of memory that surrounded its construction speak to the cultural and legal particularities of Ottoman Sephardim in France. Their patriotism, I show in this study, was both a statement of national enthusiasm and of national anxiety as they navigated belonging in their adoptive country. What is more, while Ottoman Sephardi immigrants emphasized the centrality of "Frenchness" to their collective identity during and after World War I, the "Frenchness" they articulated had roots in the Ottoman lands. As a result, this population was not exempt from the xenophobia and antisemitism that took hold of interwar France. As threats to ethnic minorities and foreigners in France rose to new levels in the 1930s, so too did efforts by subaltern groups like Ottoman Sephardi immigrants to quell nativist tides by loudly defending their patriotism and publicly proving their past services to the Third Republic.

Ottoman Sephardi Jews began migrating to France in the late nineteenth century, arriving initially in small numbers from Mediterranean centers like Salonica and Constantinople, and ultimately forming an interwar community of upwards of 35,000 individuals, centered mostly

in Paris's eleventh arrondissement.[5] Their out-migration was part of a larger Jewish departure from the region in the years leading up to and immediately following the empire's collapse in 1923 that stemmed from a confluence of rising nationalist tides, shifting borders, heightened antisemitism, and shrinking economic opportunity.[6] Recent research, to which my article is very much indebted, has explored the richness and diversity of the Ottoman and post-Ottoman diaspora that emerged during this period.[7] However, literature on the tens of thousands of Ottoman Sephardim who resettled in France remains limited.[8] Moreover, the historiography on Jewish immigrants in Third Republic France, while emphatic about the plurality and dynamism of France's "Jewries," focuses predominantly on the comparatively larger population of eastern European Ashkenazi Jews who likewise arrived during this age of migration.[9] In this study, I insert Ottoman Sephardi immigrants into the narratives of both the post-Ottoman Sephardi diaspora as well as Jewish pluralism in interwar France.[10] I highlight how traits unique to Jewish life in the Ottoman lands persisted in immigrant communities in France in the decades after the empire's demise, and in so doing join conversations about the malleability of the boundaries surrounding France's many Jewish communities.

Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants alike were primarily working class, benefited from favorable immigration policies, and idolized France's history of Jewish legal equality. However, important cultural distinctions separate their experiences.[11] In the Ottoman Empire, Franco-Jewish educational organizations around the Mediterranean basin—most notably the Alliance Israélite Universelle—made French a dominant Sephardi language alongside Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish.[12] The Alliance embraced France's colonial *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) and believed that educating Jews in French would lead to their "moral progress" and "regeneration."[13] Thus, unlike Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, most Ottoman Sephardim arrived in Paris fluent in the language and possessing a French identity that was shaped outside of French borders by ideologues of Franco-Jewish universalism. Ottoman Sephardim leaned on that history during and after World War I, at times suggesting it elevated their claims to belonging above those of other Jewish immigrant groups. But while they embraced some elements of universalism, Ottoman Sephardi immigrants also maintained transnational ties with individuals and governments around the Mediterranean and beyond and emphasized their ethno-cultural particularity through the creation of representative communal associations. Thus, their claims to Frenchness operated in tandem with persisting markers of foreignness.

World War I reshaped the ways Jews around the globe navigated national belonging.[14] In this article, I engage with literature that shows how Jewish groups seized the war as an opportunity to prove their patriotism and to remedy any doubts about their collective national loyalty.[15] I argue that Ottoman Sephardim eagerly participated in the French war effort both out of genuine love for the Third Republic and to demonstrate their value to their adopted country—especially after the Ottoman Empire joined the Triple Alliance against France.[16] In France, the conflict's devastation raised new debates about progress, democracy, values, and national identity.[17] Scholars have shown that following the war's unprecedented scale of physical destruction, survivors struggled to define what it meant to be French and articulated new visions for the future of French national identity. The rich historiography on commemoration projects in interwar France has shown how monuments were often tools by which subaltern groups, such as disparate regional populations and ethnic or religious minorities, grappled with the question of how they would fit within the newly defined France.[18] As reflected in their monument, Ottoman Sephardim, too, carved out an interwar immigrant identity that simultaneously emphasized their foreign particularities as well as their commitment to the nation.

While the idea for the monument was conceived in the immediate aftermath of World War I, the monument was ultimately constructed in 1935, at which point France had entered a new political age characterized by the rise of far-right movements.[19] Its history is thus also tied to the history of Jewish efforts to combat the joint threats of nationalism and antisemitism in the 1930s.[20] Historians have shown how previously-at-odds Jewish groups cooperated to combat antisemitism before World War II, with unity having been the predominant strategy for many Jewish anti-fascist activists.[21] Debunking outdated assumptions that France's Jewry failed to form a cohesive front in the 1930s, scholars now assert that Jewish associations actively mobilized to promote solidarity and self-help in the capital and provinces alike.[22] Jews from different backgrounds helped Zionists facilitate emigration to Palestine, joined "federations" of Jewish societies, and formed left-wing alliances.[23] Indeed, the union of left-wing Jewish groups played a part in the 1936 electoral success of Léon Blum's Popular Front, a revolutionary leftist political alliance.[24] In the 1930s, Ottoman Sephardi immigrants likewise participated in broad Jewish demonstrations of patriotism, such as veteran parades and memorial events, and presented their immigrant identity not as a hindrance to but as evidence for their belonging to France.

Figure 1. Image of the monument’s unveiling ceremony, 1935. Source: “Photos,” Al Syete: La Maison Judéo-Espagnole à Paris, Centre Culturel Popincourt-Al Syete, https://www.alsyete.com/nos-lieux-de-vie-dans-paris/lieux-de-memoire.

Figure 2. Image of the monument's unveiling ceremony, 1935. Source: "Photos," Al Syete: La Maison Judéo-Espagnole à Paris, Centre Culturel Popincourt-Al Syete, https://www.alsyete.com/nos-lieux-de-vie-dans-paris/lieux-de-memoire.

In this article, divided into four sections, I first analyze the actions, treatment, and identity of Sephardi immigrants in World War I France. Next, I examine the emergence of a World War I memory culture among Sephardi immigrants in Paris that was spearheaded by local Ottoman Jewish leadership but that involved networks around the Mediterranean. In the third section, I present readers with examples of other Jewish memorial projects that emerged in interwar Paris. In the final section, I bring readers into the 1930s, arguing that the monument had taken on a new significance by the time it was unveiled. Indeed, in 1935, it had become as much about defending the rights of all Jews to continue to live in France as it was about memorializing Ottoman Sephardi participation in World War I.

"Doing Their Duty as Frenchmen": Ottoman Sephardi Immigrants in World War I France

During World War I, approximately 2,000 Ottoman Jewish immigrants volunteered to serve under France's flag.[25] Answering their adoptive nation's call to arms, they and other immigrant populations saw the war as an opportunity to prove their patriotism and remedy doubts about their national loyalty "as citizens as well as Jews."[26] During the conflict, Jews and Christians in France experienced a *union sacrée* (sacred union) as the relationship between the two groups, having grown strained in the previous decade following the Dreyfus Affair, became amicable out of necessity. Tensions temporarily lifted as minority and majority populations, as well as native- and foreign-born Jews, rallied together against a common enemy.[27] Non-naturalized young immigrant men who desired to join the army, whether out of social pressure, a belief that serving would increase their chances of acquiring French citizenship after the war, genuine patriotism, or a combination of such factors, thus enlisted in France's Foreign Legion. The several thousand Ottoman Sephardim who fought for France joined over 30,000 other immigrants who voluntarily enlisted to fight for France, over 6,000 of whom were Jewish.[28]

In the early days of World War I, Jewish and non-Jewish foreigners alike were eager to enlist as *engagés volontaires* (volunteer combatants) in the French Foreign Legion. Among others, Armenian, Egyptian, Polish, and Russian nationals set up stations in immigrant neighborhoods where enthusiastic young men could sign up to fight.[29] In August 1914, a group of young Ashkenazi immigrants marched through the streets of Paris, chanting in Yiddish: "Jewish Immigrants!

Brothers! . . . Do your duty!" while Russian and Romanian Jews plastered brochures along the streets of the eighteenth arrondissement, calling on all their foreign Jewish "comrades" to "pay tribute" to the nation that had taken them in.[30] Native French Jews were enthusiastic about foreign enlistment, too, and the Franco-Jewish press printed stories idealizing the image of immigrants joining the cause because they saw France as the architect of emancipation. One author wrote that foreign Jews had "a debt to pay to France, always at the forefront of civilization, who has projected the rays of her native bounty onto the world, and has granted humanity to the victims of injustice."[31]

While enlistment surely helped France and French allies, immigrant volunteers were not acting without their own political motives. Other Ottoman or Middle Eastern immigrants saw joining the French Foreign Legion as both a condemnation of the Sublime Porte's harsh treatment of Ottoman soldiers as well as "an opportunity to advance a variety of simmering plans for the geopolitical future of the Ottoman Middle East."[32] Armenians and Syrians around Europe and the Americas, for instance, actively recruited young men to enlist to fight against the Axis powers, at times even paying for their safe passage to France. For Ottoman Sephardi Jews in France, the war dovetailed with their own political interests in the metropole. But whereas the Armenian and Syrian diasporas "transformed into a space for opposition against the Ottoman state," Ottoman Sephardi enlistment was not motivated by hopes for national sovereignty in the Levant.[33] Instead, it functioned as a statement of patriotism for their newly adoptive country.

In Paris, Salonican-born Léon Alalouf alone recruited hundreds of fellow Ottoman Sephardi Jews to fight for France at a makeshift station he set up at 68 rue Sedaine in front of a popular neighborhood café.[34] Efforts like those of Alalouf contributed to an unforeseen rate of foreign enlistment in France—an objectively favorable outcome but for the fact that the French state had not drafted a plan for whether and how to incorporate volunteer soldiers born in countries with which they were at war. After the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in November of 1914, the approximately 12,000 Ottoman subjects living and working in France became enemy aliens overnight.[35] Despite President Raymond Poincaré's vague declaration on November 7 that "Ottoman subjects whose sympathies were for France, [including] Syrians, Lebanese, Armenians, and Turkish Israelites" would be treated benevolently, individuals on the ground (especially those immigrants who were not Christian) faced growing difficulties, having their residency permits revoked and receiving

evacuation orders as a result of their precarious status.[36] Fairly swiftly, Armenian, Greek Orthodox, and other Christian Ottomans were granted residency permits upon the presentation of a nationality certificate signed by their respective Christian religious authority in Paris.[37] Ottoman Jews were not afforded the same treatment until March of the following year, and even then, only after the intervention of the Alliance.[38] Ethnic Turks continued to be considered enemy aliens throughout the war, but after the establishment of the Légion d'Orient (a so-called "irregular corps") in 1916, Christian and Muslim Ottoman nationals of Armenian and Syrian ethnicity could fight for the Entente alongside French infantry.[39]

The Third Republic scrambled to categorize its large and diverse immigrant populations in a way that reflected its wartime alliances, anxieties, and xenophobic prejudices. For Ottoman Christian minorities, labels reflected geographic regions of origin such as Armenia, Syria, and Lebanon. Categorizing the territorially ambiguous Ottoman Jews proved more problematic, however, as terms like "Turkish Jew" or "Greek Israelite" neither reflected the population's national nuances nor Ottoman Sephardim's transregional ethno-cultural connectedness. Moreover, an overarching "Israelite" category risked lumping Sephardi immigrants together with the sizeable eastern European Jewish population in France, thereby obscuring their Levantine origins. Perhaps most importantly to the Ottoman Jews themselves was their legal distinction from ethnic Turks, who as enemy aliens were not permitted to fight in the French army.[40]

Ultimately, the French government created an entirely new legal category by which to identify Ottoman Sephardim, labelling the population as *israélites du Levant* (Israelites of the Levant), a phrase implying both distance from the enemy Ottoman regime as well as a level of homogeneity among all Jews of the southeastern Mediterranean.[41] As with Ottoman Christians, Ottoman Jews had to provide legal papers from a France-based religious authority to acquire certification of their newly mandated nationality. Lacking a central Ottoman Jewish religious figurehead in Paris, the community instead looked to a secular entity: the Association cultuelle orientale israélite (ACOI), an Ottoman Sephardi communal organization that had its roots in 1909 in a small Roquette café. Its founder, Nissim Rozanès, was a gem merchant who immigrated to Paris from Constantinople near the turn of the twentieth century.[42] An alumnus of the Alliance himself, Rozanès was well-connected with France's established Jewish elite, and became the community's de facto leader during World War I.[43] He and the ACOI took on the role that consulates, grand rabbis, and Orthodox

bishops occupied for other minorities, verifying identities and issuing nationality certificates for foreign subjects.[44] Rozanès also became an advocate for the community, protesting the Third Republic's treatment of Ottoman Jews as enemy aliens, and later representing the entire Ottoman Jewish diaspora at the Paris Peace Conference.[45]

The French government's discrimination against Jewish minorities during the early months of World War I inspired new levels of solidarity between native and immigrant Jews, including Ottoman Sephardim, who united to demand citizenship for foreign Jewish volunteer soldiers.[46] In August 1915, the Corps des volontaires israélites, a sub-section of the Foreign Legion, published a pledge of solidarity between French Jews and the 6,000 "Russian, Romanian, Dutch, and Oriental" Jews in the army.[47] The author Matthieu Wolff praised foreign Jewish soldiers' marriage of "Israelite" pride with the French flag, and castigated the Third Republic's unwillingness to immediately naturalize them as French citizens. "Having taken up arms because, to them, our country is the incarnation of justice, they now suffer terribly from what can only seem to them to be a terrible abuse," explained Wolff.[48]

Despite Wolff's universalist rhetoric, a distinctly Sephardi immigrant identity crystallized in wartime France. In March of 1915, during the war's first Passover, the ACOI organized a seder meal specifically for Ottoman Jewish volunteer soldiers and invited any "Ottoman Jewish volunteers spending the holidays in Paris, whether on leave or in convalescence" to join them for a celebratory dinner.[49] Underscoring, even creating, a sense of solidarity among Ottoman Sephardim fighting for France, the association stated that the meal was open to anyone wanting "to spend the two days of Passover with family."[50] Evidently, while French republican patriotism was prioritized during the war, there was also room for ethnic solidarity. According to one Ottoman Jewish immigrant, this duality was particular to the immigrant experience and caused identity conflicts that could only exist in the diaspora. "Having been too European in Smyrna," he wrote, "we became distinctly Oriental in Paris."[51]

For the Ottoman Sephardi community, a minority in France and a peripheral group within French Jewry, their individual members' service to the nation was evidence for their collective belonging to the Third Republic. At times, they articulated it as having been stronger than that of other immigrant groups. During that same Passover, Temple Popincourt's Rabbi Bembachout gave a sermon connecting the High Holiday rituals of sacrifice to those being made at the same moment by Sephardi immigrants fighting for France. Citing

the unique "love" that Ottoman Jews had for their adopted country, Bembachout prayed for the members of the community who had fallen in battle over the previous eight months, whose names included that of the son of the ACOI's vice president.[52] Another immigrant argued that "one could not be more patriotic, pardon, more francophilic" than an Ottoman Jew.[53]

Of course, not all Ottoman Jews fought for France in the same manner or for the same reasons. One immigrant father explained how each of his children had decided to serve in the military for different ideological purposes but under the same auspices of patriotism. His oldest son, having graduated from an Alliance school in Turkey, enrolled through the Amitiés françaises;[54] his middle child, an anti-imperialist who supported the establishment of a Turkish Republic, signed up to fight with the French Foreign Legion's Ottoman cohort; conversely, his youngest son, a Jewish nationalist, fought alongside the French Jewish troops. All three, in the father's words, were "doing their duty as Frenchmen."[55]

National Identity, International Solidarity: Post War Sephardi Memory Construction

In France, the war's devastation raised new debates about progress, democracy, and collective values. While the country struggled to reconstitute a unified national identity, subaltern groups that had lived through the destruction of war grappled with the question of how they would fit within new definitions of the nation and national belonging. The divergent experiences of local townspeople as well as ethnic and religious minorities were often expressed through the construction of memory projects. Across the nation, Jewish communities pushed for memorial projects that represented their particular contributions, although they were not always coordinated in doing so. The Consistory, France's chief Jewish governing body, wanted to craft a singular narrative of Jewish sacrifice, and so directed efforts to memorialize sacrifices that painted Jewish participation (and Jewish identity) with a broad brush.[56] At the same time, smaller communities in provinces like Alsace, as well as the diverse immigrant groups in Paris, raised monuments to honor their own Jewish men and to pay homage to their communal sacrifice.[57]

Within months of the conclusion of World War I, Rozanès and the ACOI proposed the construction of a monument to Ottoman Sephardim who died fighting for France. His goal was to raise 10,000

francs. To succeed, he needed support beyond the majority working-class immigrant community, and so he drew on the long history of Sephardi transnational ties by leaning on the community's international connections. In October of 1919, he began to solicit donations for the monument and launched a fundraising campaign that drew equally from the community's ties within and beyond French borders.[58] This transnational commemorative project, intended for a small community in Paris's eleventh arrondissement, became a diasporic symbol that reflected the breadth of domestic and international Sephardi networks. Emphasis on the group's Sephardi, Jewish, and French ties, as well as their Ottoman and even Spanish heritage, reinforced the layers and tensions that characterized the community's identity.

Within the borders of the Third Republic, Rozanès garnered funds from the French Jewish and non-Jewish elite, showing the access that the nascent community of Ottoman Sephardi immigrants in interwar Paris had to influential figures. Rozanès appealed to financiers and politicians, and in April 1920 he worked with the French minister of foreign affairs to create a government-sanctioned subcommittee of the ACOI that would oversee the monument's construction.[59] In the years that followed, Rozanès published lists of donors in established French Jewish periodicals. The majority of benefactors were themselves Ottoman Sephardi immigrants living in France, but there were also contributions from native French Jews, indicating a certain level of pan-Jewish solidarity, at least among the upper class. Two particularly large contributions came from members of the wealthy Alsatian Jewish Deutsch de la Meurthe family.[60]

By making it evident that he was backed by both the French bureaucracy and influential Jewish donors around the country, Rozanès created a sense of legitimacy around himself, the ACOI, and the memorialization project. Printing contributors' names and donation amounts cultivated an atmosphere of social pressure that successfully encouraged others to join the cause. Within two weeks of printing the first list of contributors in June 1922, the number of donors more than tripled from 48 to 178 individual patrons.[61] As word got out, money poured in from outside of Paris, too, with donors in Bordeaux, Dijon, Lyon, Rouen, and Marseille supporting the cause.[62]

Rozanès also published letters of endorsement from prominent international figures—including a Spanish politician, a Turkish rabbi, and a French diplomat—who advocated the importance of the project. The letters expanded the monument's broader appeal by explaining how the structure should be seen as meaningful not

only to Ottoman Sephardi immigrants in France but to all Jews worldwide. Dr. Angel Pulido, then vice president of the Spanish Consulate, expressed “it is essential that the monument that will be erected in the 11th arrondissement of Paris be the symbol of the virtues and heroism of all of the children of David and Salomon,” not only those of Ottoman Sephardim.[63] Pulido believed the monument was more than an act of commemoration, being also a symbol of protest against anti-Jewish violence worldwide and a representation of the reciprocal love between Jews and the nation of France.[64] According to Pulido, it could well have been dedicated to “the grand virtues of the chosen people” around the globe rather than solely to Ottoman Sephardim in France.[65]

Endorsements like Pulido’s served a practical purpose, and ACOI leaders hoped that his championing of the cause would strengthen support for the project. Calls for Jews beyond the Sephardi immigrant community in Paris to make financial contributions were unambiguous and moralizing. The preamble to Pulido’s letter read: “There is no doubt that the vibrant sympathies and encouragement of this noble champion of the Sephardi cause would incite any coreligionist to . . . add their name to the list of donors.”[66] Abraham Danon, an Adrianople-born Jewish scholar and educator who founded a rabbinic seminary in Constantinople before moving to Paris in 1917, expressed that he would not be “content with simply applauding the project,” and was “pressed to demonstrate his support for the notion in a more tangible way” by sending a monetary contribution of 500 francs.[67] The consul general of France in Salonica, a member of the historic dragoman Wiet family, universalized its confessional appeal when he stated that the “pious initiative” to memorialize fallen Ottoman Sephardi soldiers should not only inspire Rozanès’s “coreligionists” but “all people of France.”[68]

The letters also revealed Rozanès’s anxieties about how native French Jews and non-Jews perceived the small Ottoman Sephardi immigrant population. They characterized the group as uniquely virtuous, patriotic, and pious. Endorsements served to encourage more positive, communal, and reciprocal ties between the Sephardi immigrant minority and the majority Jewish population in France, thereby helping to ease tensions that the community was starting to have with the Consistory and its homogenizing regulations.[69] In the ACOI’s eyes, publishing endorsements from reputable individuals that emphasized the population’s collective character both as Jews and Frenchmen might raise the French Jewish elite’s image of the immigrant community. Danon, for instance, connected the Ottoman Sephardi ardor for

the French war effort to their longstanding connection to French language and culture, writing that because of such traditions, Ottoman Sephardim were "unable to resist their enthusiasm when they were called to safeguard human rights" and so "ran to their deaths to defend" the nation.[70]

At times, compliments to Rozanès and his project bordered on sycophancy. Rabbi Danon told Rozanès that he "merit[ed] all of our congratulations for having thought of marking the names of these noble champions" in such a durable and meaningful way.[71] Pulido praised the structure and aesthetic of the project. He "applaud[ed] the fine engraving . . . in its grace and elegance, which is so associated with the style of the orient," "admire[ed] the plan of the temple," and was impressed by the "heart behind the project to elevate a monument to honor the glory of the Jewish race, and the heroism of its children."[72] The endorsements even lauded the planned physical structure of the synagogue and memorial. A 1922 article described how the "modern" blueprints for the temple would be "well-received in America."[73] Surely, such remarks were not published solely to flatter Rozanès but also to quell French anxieties about the immigrant memorial project. While Rozanès was well-known among the Ottoman Sephardi immigrant community and Consistorial leadership, other Jewish populations in France were likely not familiar with him. Support from higher authorities served to confirm the trustworthiness of Rozanès as a leader and community organizer.

The fundraising campaign also underscored the extent to which Ottoman Sephardi immigrants kept feet in multiple worlds. After having settled in France and displayed their loyalty to the Third Republic during World War I, Paris's Ottoman Sephardi immigrants remained connected around the Mediterranean to their Levantine and Iberian roots. Endorsements from figures like Wiet and Pulido revealed enduring links with officials in the Balkans and Anatolia, as well as a continued connection to the ancestral Spanish home. The published lists of donors indicate that Ottoman Sephardi immigrants in Paris had broader social networks in the Iberian Peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean, too. As the campaign progressed, readers saw increasing numbers of contributors based in Madrid, Salonica, and Constantinople, as well as other former Ottoman cities including Beirut, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Kavalla.[74]

At the same time, the ACOI's memorial project as a whole underscored Ottoman Sephardi loyalty to and appreciation for the country in which they had recently settled. Pulido wrote that the monument symbolized not only the bravery the community displayed during the

war, but also the "gratitude they hold . . . for the generous people of France, who received them . . . and saved them from the outside, who gave them protection."[75] His words implied that the community had deep obligations to France, a country that he and Ottoman Sephardim portrayed as synonymous with emancipation, tolerance, and safety. Moreover, Pulido characterized the regions from which these Sephardim hailed—that is, the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia, and historically the Iberian Peninsula—as inhospitable to the population. Echoing the Franco-Jewish universalizing mantra of the Alliance, he typified France as the world's savior and the "East" as an ostensibly barbaric land in need of civilizing. This duality between exceptionalism and universalism—between seeing Ottoman Sephardim as a group with a unique relationship to France and situating them within a broader French-Jewish narrative—would continue into the 1930s.

Immigrant Particularism, Jewish Universalism: Alternate Jewish Memorial Projects in 1920s Paris

By the end of 1922, Rozanès and the ACOI had far surpassed their fiscal goal, having acquired over 130,000 francs for the monument to Ottoman Sephardi volunteer soldiers. Still, it would be over a decade before the monument would be unveiled in June 1935. In the intervening years, a number of other initiatives to commemorate immigrant and French Jewish contributions surfaced. Some, like the monument to Ottoman Sephardim, underscored Jewish pluralism and paid tribute to particular ethno-cultural subgroups within broader Jewish society. Others sought to honor all Jews who fought for France through the crafting of a singular, homogenous narrative.

Beyond Rozanès and the ACOI, other Ottoman Sephardi immigrant enclaves in and around Paris initiated their own memorial projects. Vidal Modiano, a doctor and communal leader, tried to garner support for a commemorative plaque to be constructed for Temple Buffault, the religious hub for many of the bourgeois Ottoman Sephardi residents living in the ninth arrondissement.[76] In late 1924, Ottoman Sephardi immigrants living in Paris's southeastern suburbs established their own memorial association. The Société Oël Moché was founded by Haïm Behar, a merchant, and Joseph Amar, an ex-soldier who had been awarded the Croix de Guerre and named a knight of the Legion of Honor.[77] The organization's primary goal, as laid out in their official statutes, was to "elevate a chapel to the memory of Ottoman Israelites who fell on the field of honor."[78] Ultimately,

Oël Moché placed a plaque on the façade of the stone building at 68 rue Sedaine, Léon Alalouf's enlistment site. Still visible today, it reads, "Here, on August 24, 1914, the recruitment of volunteer oriental Jewish soldiers, many hundreds of whom died for France, took place."[79] Like Rozanès and the ACOI, Oël Moché wanted their memorial project to reflect solidarity within the community as well as loyalty to France more broadly. In a letter from Behar and Amar to the Consistory's secretary general, the society's founders suggested that wartime participation was a manifestation of both their French and "Oriental" identities, and they wrote that it was an expression of their gratitude to their "own people who gave their blood and life to the country that they had adopted, and at the same time to the defense of the interests of the Oriental Israelite Colony of France."[80]

Veterans belonging to other Jewish immigrant populations who had fought for France during World War I formed their own commemorative associations. However, unlike Ottoman Sephardim in Paris, they did not erect monuments overtly dedicated to their particular ethnic or national subgroups. Rather, their exclusivity was more

Figure 3. Oël Moché's plaque at 68 rue Sedaine today. Source: "Photos," Al Syete: La Maison Judéo-Espagnole à Paris, Centre Culturel Popincourt-Al Syete, https://www.alsyete.com/nos-lieux-de-vie-dans-paris/lieux-de-memoire.

implicit. The Association des anciens combattants engagés volontaires juifs dans l’armée française en 1914–1918, formed in Paris in 1928, had both statutes and a title that suggested they would represent all foreign Jewish volunteer soldiers, regardless of their place of origin. However, the association’s documented members were all born in Poland, Romania, and Russia.[81] Similarly, an organization called Les volontaires juifs au service de la France 1914–1918 did not claim to represent Ashkenazi immigrants alone. However, its leaders were exclusively eastern European Jewish immigrants, and all pamphlets and invitations were printed in Yiddish as well as in French.[82] Their purpose, moreover, was grounded in supplying financial and spiritual support to veterans and to the families of fallen soldiers, and not in constructing a commemorative monument.

In line with their broader mission to craft a homogenous narrative of a universal Franco-Jewish experience, the Consistory orchestrated its own commemorative efforts that blurred the divisions between French, foreign, Ashkenazi, and Sephardi that played out in individuals’ daily lives.[83] Largely dominated by native French Jews of Ashkenazi origin, Consistorial leaders had long championed efforts to assimilate Jewish newcomers. As Jewish immigration to France from eastern Europe, the Levant, and North Africa increased beginning in the late nineteenth century, so did their efforts to quash more conspicuous Jewish traditions out of fears that new forms of Jewish otherness might foster antisemitism. They sought, for instance, to standardize kosher slaughter practices, seder celebrations, marriage ceremonies, as well as Talmud Torah curricula across the nation.[84]

While Rozanès and the ACOI were in the throes of their campaign to fund a monument for Ottoman Sephardi fallen soldiers, the Consistory planned a commemorative project of its own.[85] Seeking to memorialize a singular Franco-Jewish war effort and wartime experience, they crafted a gray stone monument featuring a soldier’s garb and musket laid beneath an open Torah scroll. The text was unsurprisingly inclusive, reading: “To the memory of Israelites who died for France, 1914–1918.” However, the monument’s location and unveiling underscored the divisions of class and national origin that defined France’s interwar Jewish history. The Consistory’s monument was situated at the magnificent Grande Synagogue on rue de la Victoire in the heart of Paris’s ninth arrondissement, the hub of the affluent Jewish bourgeoisie.[86] On the fifth anniversary of armistice, at nine o’clock in the morning, the doors of the synagogue opened to attendees including military generals, political dignitaries, local officials, as well as veterans. Representatives of some Jewish immigrant and minority

associations partook in the ceremony, such as the secretary general of the Federation of Foreign Volunteer Soldiers and the president of the Association of Jewish Volunteers.[87] The Ottoman Sephardi immigrant community, despite its prominent role in Jewish public discourse about wartime commemoration at the time, was noticeably absent.

Most likely, this was due to the current hostility that existed between the Ottoman Sephardi community of the eleventh arrondissement and the Consistory. Central to the disagreement was the Consistory's disapproval of the Sephardi tradition of conducting marriages at home, in the presence of a communal rabbi, rather than at an official synagogue.[88] As a result, the Consistory stopped sending the Popincourt synagogue its fiscal allowance, following which prominent members of the Ottoman Sephardi community including the board of the Association amicale des israelites saloniciens refused to pay their dues.[89]

While the war may have brought France's Jewish communities together, efforts at memorialization conversely had the potential to pull them apart. For the Ottoman Jewish immigrant community, the Consistory—the association that was supposed to represent the interests of all Jews in France—had failed to recognize the significance of their Sephardi traditions. Even if the Consistory genuinely thought of their World War I monument as universally representative of all of France's Jewish communities, the ceremonies surrounding it presented a definition of "French Israelite" that included neither Ottoman Sephardim nor working-class immigrant Jews more broadly. While Ottoman Sephardim sought inclusion in France's Jewish establishment, they also wanted their distinctiveness to be recognized and tolerated.

Facing Fascism: Jewish Unity in the 1930s

Moving into the 1930s, France saw a surge in right-wing extremism, antisemitism, and xenophobia. These intertwined phenomena had been steadily growing in the country since the late nineteenth century, when heightened immigration and the eruption of the Dreyfus Affair provoked new levels of fear and discomfort among both Christians and Jews. With the growth of fascism in neighboring Italy and the rise of Nazism across the border in Germany, right-wing nationalist sympathizers grew increasingly confident in interwar France, as well.[90] As a result, the nation's Jewish communities found themselves on the defensive.

After the Great Depression, nationalist complaints became particularly grounded in narratives of economic discontent, and as the 1930s progressed, France's right-wing increasingly blamed immigrant and Jewish minorities for their diminishing business opportunities, financial hardship, and unfavorable government social policies. [91] When conservatives encouraged citizens to support "French" enterprises over "foreign" ones, immigrant business owners responded by muting indicators of their ostensible "otherness."[92] In the tense political and economic atmosphere, violent conflicts erupted, often provoked by the Croix de feu, an indigenous French fascist paramilitary group.[93] During the so-called Veterans' Riot of February 6, 1934, for instance, nationalist, anti-democratic, and fascist militant groups took to the streets to violently protest the sitting centrist government.[94]

Condemnations of this event led to unprecedented unity on the French left and contributed to the ultimate formation of the left-wing Popular Front government, speaking to the tangible impact that conflicting wartime memory and commemorative narratives had on the French state and definitions of national belonging. In a similar vein, Jewish anti-fascist activists in the 1930s turned to unity across ethnic and class lines as a predominant strategy when it came to combatting antisemitism.[95] During this period, Jewish associations in France actively mobilized to promote unity against antisemitism in the capital and provinces alike. Paris's Yiddish press sought to combat encroaching fascism by bridging the many political divisions splintering eastern European Ashkenazi immigrants in the city and by promoting a definition of "Frenchness" that was both French and Jewish.[96] In the provinces, the Jews of Nice and Strasbourg likewise overcame inter- and intra-communal divisions to combat the refugee crisis of 1936 by creating new communal spaces for Jewish youth and activists.[97]

Within this context of defensive unity in the face of extreme nationalism, Ottoman Sephardi immigrant associations became increasingly connected to other Jewish associations, too. Ottoman Sephardi veteran organizations, namely the Association amicale des anciens combattants israélites orientaux (hereafter the Amicale des orientaux), joined Jewish cultural federations.[98] Such connections enabled them to run within the broad circle of "French Jewry" while simultaneously retaining their distinct Ottoman identity. In 1935, the Amicale des orientaux became a founding member of the Comité d'entente d'anciens combattants volontaires juifs (CACJ), a collection of various Jewish associations that represented World War I volunteer soldiers from immigrant and French colonial communities.[99]

Their manifesto indicated a desire for increased inter-Jewish cooperation on both social and charitable levels, stating that its priorities were fostering "cohesion between all of the associations," establishing "frequent contact between their members," as well as defending "the moral and material interests of Judaism."[100] The CACJ thus moved beyond solely commemorative purposes, also working toward projects to improve the well-being of Jewish communities' present and future. Like individual immigrant memorial associations, the CACJ was also founded on a platform of French patriotism and republicanism. Not unlike the Consistory, it prioritized national loyalty through a universalist approach to wartime commemoration that would preserve "connections with French veterans' associations, regardless of confessional differences." Its leaders charged themselves with "[defending] the interests of France in all ways possible, notably through propaganda within Jewish circles," explicitly hoping to transcend barriers that existed between French Jewish and non-Jewish communities.[101]

By joining federations that sought increased contact among diverse Jewish communities, Ottoman Sephardi veterans' associations ran within the broader circles of French Jewry in the 1930s while simultaneously retaining their distinct ethnic immigrant identity. In several instances, veterans and communal leaders overtly displayed their new commitment to a pan-Jewish form of French patriotism at home and abroad. In June 1936, for instance, the vice president of the Amicale des orientaux represented France's Ottoman Sephardi immigrant community at an international conference for World War I Jewish veterans in Vienna.[102] One year later, a delegation of Ottoman Sephardim who fought with the French Foreign Legion, headed by president of the Amicale des orientaux and vice president of the CACJ Robert Cohen, accompanied a group of foreign-born Jewish veterans on a pilgrimage to battle sites in northern France. There, they commemorated early battles near the Belgian border, in which many members of the French Foreign Legion—including several hundred Jewish *engagés volontaires*—died for France.[103] On June 20, 1937, the group left Paris's Gare du Nord for Aisne, the site of a 1914 battle that helped to entrench the war of attrition's front lines. They met with local officials, laid flowers at military cemeteries, and said kaddish for fallen coreligionists. One year later, in 1938, the Consistory unveiled a monument in Verdun to all 6,500 Jews ("French, Allied, and Foreign") who fought for France.[104] Evidently, by the late 1930s, Ottoman Sephardi collective memory of having fought for France during World War I had

become increasingly wrapped in a broader narrative of Jewish and immigrant patriotism. These collective displays of Jewish participation in the French war effort did not indicate an abandonment of ethnic subcommunities and identities, but were rather displays of republican loyalty for the purposes of combatting fascism, antisemitism, and xenophobia.

It was within this context of Jewish unity against fascism that Ottoman Sephardim ultimately revisited their memorial project and erected a monument to their soldiers who fell for France during World War I, which had been tabled in the mid-1920s in favor of other communal priorities like youth groups, synagogue renovations, and self-help initiatives. By the mid-1930s, the need for Ottoman Sephardim and other minorities to prove their loyalty to France was invigorated with new urgency. In the wake of explosive events like the Veterans' Riot as well as day-to-day exposure to xenophobia and anti-Jewish discrimination, the ACOI returned to its decade-old aim of constructing a monument to Ottoman Sephardi veterans. On June 16, 1935, the monument was finally unveiled at 84 rue de la Roquette, not as a quiet homage to the community's dead but as a public exclamation of their national loyalty.

The ceremonies that accompanied the unveiling likewise emphasized themes of unity within French Jewry and solidarity between France's Jewish minority and the greater nation. To the sounds of victorious military tunes, a parade passed Paris's most significant military sites, signifying a collective commitment to defend the Third Republic. By stopping at the Hôpital des invalides, the city's vast historic military hospital, as well as at the Arc de Triomphe's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, participants reminded onlookers that Ottoman Sephardim had sacrificed their lives for France. Dignitaries from the municipal and national levels of government, including the president of the Paris Municipal Council, the prefect of the Seine, and, notably, then-president of the French Republic, Albert Lebrun, attended the occasion. Their presence symbolized the Third Republic's acceptance of Ottoman Sephardi immigrants as true members of the nation, but also implied persisting anxieties about belonging and acceptance and a continued urge on the part of communal leaders to legitimize the population's place in France.

In a speech, Georges Contenot, president of Paris's Municipal Council, acknowledged the structure's political significance as well as the relationship between the monument and contemporaneous threats to Jewish liberty and equality in France and beyond.

> This pious ceremony of remembrance will have a worldwide impact. Public opinion will not be able to help but draw a connection between my remarks of French gratitude and the policies of a group of people who seek, in the name of some mythical race, to erase the deaths of 12,000 Jews in the service of France from the annals of history.[105]

With these words, Contenot made it clear that the monument was no longer just an expression of patriotism, but it had become a protest against the notion that Jews and immigrants did not belong in the French nation.

Conclusion

During World War I, the small but significant Ottoman Sephardi population living in France took up arms as foreign volunteer combatants for the French Army. Despite—or perhaps because of—the Third Republic's initial mistrust of Ottoman Jews at the outbreak of war, thousands of young men from Ottoman Sephardi immigrant families voluntarily enlisted to fight with the French Foreign Legion and the Jewish Volunteer Corps. They, along with community members who were drafted as naturalized citizens, were celebrated by the community as model representatives of the bravery and honor of Ottoman Jews and held up as indicators of the special relationship between Ottoman Sephardim, France, and republican values.

World War I helped to crystallize Ottoman Sephardi immigrant identity in France. Ottoman Sephardim in Paris celebrated and mourned their soldiers, organized community events for those fighting, and forged a new balance between their Ottoman, French, and Jewish spheres of belonging. During the years immediately following the war, they continued to balance those identities. Memorialization efforts called for an evaluation of the ways in which Ottoman Sephardi immigrants fit into France's broader Jewish community, as well as the extent to which they were a community apart. While overarching Jewish organizations like the Central Consistory attempted to forge a homogenized narrative of Jewish participation in World War I, immigrant Jews including Ottoman Sephardim resisted such efforts by publicly commemorating their own particular wartime sacrifices. Eagerness to celebrate their particular part in France's victory united them as Ottomans in a post-Ottoman world. What is more, their patriotism was both exuberant and defensive, and it illustrates how the Ottoman Sephardi community saw itself as both intimately connected

to the broader French and French Jewish worlds yet also distinct from both. The identity that Sephardi immigrants underscored both their Ottoman and Iberian heritage as well as their continued connections to influential figures—Jewish and non-Jewish—around the Mediterranean. Further, memorialization efforts emphasized the group's longstanding relationship to France, which began well before they settled within its borders, and which was grounded in the idealization of France's treatment of Jews.

Over the course of the following decade, the nationalism and xenophobia taking hold of much of Europe also threatened Jews within France's borders. As fascism and Nazism gathered steam, immigrant and native Jews in France—who in the 1920s had seen themselves as disparate and at times incompatible entities—banded together. When it came to the memorialization of World War I, veteran associations that represented previously separate Jewish minority factions attended events and commemorated the Jewish war effort as a whole. This cooperation fit within the broader trend in the 1930s of Jewish solidarity as a form of anti-fascism. It was against this backdrop that the ACOI's monument to Ottoman Sephardi veterans was ultimately erected on June 16, 1935. The circumstances behind and celebrations surrounding its unveiling underscored the themes of pan-Jewish sacrifice, solidarity between Jews and Christians, as well as collective resistance to antisemitism. Yet, such characterizations were not without contradictions—after all, the edifice remained dedicated specifically to "oriental Jews," or Ottoman Sephardim who fought for France. Moreover, Contenot's remarks at the monument's unveiling projected an optimistic vision for the future, suggesting a new era of understanding between the French state and France's Jews. However, as would be made clear by the events of the subsequent decade and the participation of French citizens and the French government in the deportation and murder of over 75,000 *français-israélites* (most of whom were foreign born), France's "gratitude" toward immigrant Jews would soon be forgotten.

Notes

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Carolina–King's College London Workshop on Transatlantic Historical Methods, who gave feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript. My research for this article was generously supported by the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Claims Conference.

1 My category of analysis, Ottoman Sephardim, is not a legal term. By 1923, the Ottoman Empire had ceased to exist, so Jews from the region had become either Greek or Turkish citizens or were, more often, designated as stateless (*apatride*) for the bulk of the interwar years. What bound the members of this immigrant community was not a legal identity but a cultural and ethnic one that was rooted in their shared Ottoman and Sephardi Jewish heritage. In contemporaneous sources, Ottoman Sephardi immigrants adopted a plurality of labels including "Ottoman," "Sephardi," "Greek," "Turkish," "oriental," and "Levantine." As has been shown in the American context, "oriental" and "Levantine" were derogatory terms for Ottoman Sephardi immigrants used to differentiate them from the "noble, well-established" Sephardim of the colonial period. In Paris, Ottoman Sephardi immigrants often used "oriental" in communal and associational files, but "Ottoman," "Turkish," and "Sephardi" are more commonly found in testimonies, memoires, and French government documents. I have chosen to avoid using the term "oriental" except in direct quotes or references to organizational names. Because it is not representative of the entire population, I also avoid "Turkish" when describing the collective. I have settled on "Ottoman Sephardim" not because it is the perfect term—nor one they would have preferred for themselves at the time—but because it is the least problematic of the bunch. On terminology in the Americas, see Devin E. Naar, "Between 'New Greece' and the 'New World': Salonikan Jewish Immigration to America," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35, no. 1 (2009): 45–89, esp. 45–46.

2 Brochure, "Inauguration du monument à la mémoire des engagés volontaires israélites orientaux morts pour la France, sous le haut-patronage de M. Lebrun, président de la république," 1935, MDLXXXVIII, box 6, dossier C, fiche 32, Centre de documentation juive contemporaine (hereafter CDJC), Paris; "Sur l'autel de la France: une émouvante cérémonie," *Le judaisme sépharadi,* Sept. 1935, p. 145. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

3 Two other notable Sephardi populations lived in France during this period: Sephardim who had been in France for generations and whose ancestors sought refuge in Bordeaux and the Papal States after the Spanish expulsion, and Sephardim from North Africa who had been brought into the borders of the Third Republic as a result of French colonial expansion (and who often came from regions that had been under Ottoman rule in centuries past). For the most part, these

disparate groups formed their own religious and cultural communities that interacted with but were separate from those of Ottoman Sephardi immigrants. On North African Jews and Muslims in interwar France, see Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge, MA, 2015). On relations between France's existing Sephardi community and Ottoman Sephardi immigrants, see Robin Buller, "Ottoman Jews in Paris: Sephardi Immigrant Community, Culture, and Identity, 1918–1939" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2021), at 16–17, 31, and 130–36.

4 The blurry nature of Jewish belonging in interwar France stands in contrast to the experience of Jewish immigrants in other destination countries during this period. In the US, for instance, German Jewish refugees "felt free to identify as American upon arrival." In the UK, on the other hand, interwar Jewish immigrants never felt comfortable claiming that they were English. Lori Gemeiner Bihler, *Cities of Refuge: German Jews in London and New York, 1935–1945* (Albany, NY, 2018), 143.

5 The population grew from just over 8,000 individuals in 1914 to approximately 35,000 in the late 1930s. During the same period, France's Jewish population was around 350,000. Of those, 200,000 were Jewish immigrants (making up a tenth of France's sizeable population of 2 million immigrants and colonial subjects living in the metropole). Ottoman Sephardim and their children thus accounted for nearly 20 percent of all immigrant Jews and 10 percent of all Jews in France at the outbreak of World War II. Lise Tiano's estimate of 35,000 is based on an average of contemporaneous interwar figures ranging from 20,000 to 50,000; Tiano, "L'immigration et l'installation des juifs grecs et des juifs turcs avant la seconde guerre mondiale" (master's thesis, Université de Paris X, 1981), 57–59. See also Sam Levy, "Les juifs orientaux de Paris," *Archives israélites*, Apr. 21, 1932; Ministère des affaires étrangères, May 5, 1932, séries Z, vol. 195; Jacques Maleh, "La colonie juive sépharade de Paris," *Archives israélites*, Aug. 22, 1935; Michel Roblin, "Les juifs de Paris: démographie, économie, culture," *Population* 8, no. 1 (1953): 183–84.

6 Testimonies of Daniel Farhi, Jean-Jacques Pincas, Nicole Polge née Arowas, Raymonde Obadia, Gemm' Obadia, and Fortunée Plawner, MDLXXXVIII, dossier B, box 3, CDJC. On push factors, see Sarah Shields, "The Greek-Turkish Population Exchange: Internationally Administered Ethnic Cleansing," *Middle East Report* 267 (2013): 2–6; Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908–1918* (Salt Lake City, UT, 2014); Michael B. Bishku, "The Interactions and Experiences of Armenians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey from the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 to the Present," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23, no. 4 (2017): 431–52; and Minna Rozen, "Money, Power, Politics, and the Great Salonika Fire of 1917," *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 22, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 74–115.

7 Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford, 2020); Devin E. Naar, "*Turkinos* beyond the Empire: Ottoman Jews in America, 1893 to 1924," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 105, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 174–205; Adriana Brodsky, *Sephardi, Jewish, Argentine: Creating Community and National Identity, 1880–1960* (Bloomington, IN, 2016).

8 Notable exceptions include Annie Benveniste, *Le Bosphore à la Roquette: La communauté judéo-espagnole à Paris (1914–1940)* (Paris, 1989); Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France* (Oxford, 2008), 112, 119, 128–29, 135, 166; Michel Garin, "Les arméniens, les grecs et les juifs originaires de Grèce et de Turquie, à Paris de 1920 à 1936," *Cahiers balkaniques* 38–39 (2011): 367–78; Celine Piser, "How to Be a French Jew: Ottoman Immigrant Authors in Early Twentieth-Century Paris," *Prooftexts* 33, no. 2 (2014): 182–221; and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Citizens of a Fictional Nation: Ottoman-born Jews in France during the First World War," *Past and Present* 226 (2015): 227–54.

9 Nancy L. Green, "Jewish Migrations to France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Community or Communities?" *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23 (1989): 135–53. On the age of migration, see Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley, 2011); and Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York, 2016).

10 Important texts include Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906–1939* (New York, 1979); Nancy L. Green, *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the "Belle Epoque"* (New York, 1986); and Jonathan Boyarin, *Polish Jews in Paris: The Ethnography of Memory* (Bloomington, IN, 1991). For newer studies, see Malinovich, *French and Jewish*; Erin Corber et al., "Beyond the Pletzl: Jewish Urban Histories in Interwar France," *Urban History* 43, no. 4 (2016): 577–80; and Nicholas Lee Underwood, "Staging a New Community: Immigrant Yiddish Culture and Diaspora Nationalism in Interwar Paris, 1919–1940" (PhD diss., University of Colorado Boulder, 2016).

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22 Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (Stanford, 1999); Corber et al., "Beyond the Pletzl"; Erin Corber, "The Kids on Oberlin Street: Place, Space, and Jewish Community in Late Interwar Strasbourg," *Urban History* 43, no. 4 (2016): 581–98. For an example of narratives of Jewish disunity, see David H. Weinberg, *A Community on Trial: The Jews of Paris in the 1930's* (Chicago, 1977).

23 On Zionism and emigration, see Hyman, *Jews of Modern France*, 142; Catherine Nicault, "L'émigration de France vers la Palestine (1880–1940)," *Archives juives* 41, no. 2 (2008): 10–33; and Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 57–67 and 101–55. On Jewish migration to Palestine from the French Empire see: Olfa Ben Achour, "L'émigration des Juifs de Tunisie en Palestine dans les années 1940. L'impact de l'idéal sioniste," *Archives juives* Vol. 50, no. 2 (December 6, 2017): 127–47.

24 Blum himself was Jewish. On Blum and the Popular Front, see Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934–1938* (New York, 1988); Pierre Birnbaum, *Anti-Semitism in France: A Political History from Léon Blum to the Present* (Oxford, 1992); James E. Genova, "The Empire Within: The Colonial Popular Front in France, 1934–1938," *Alternatives* 26, no. 2 (2001): 175–209; and Thomas Beaumont, "Extending Democracy: Railway Workers and the Popular Front in France, 1936–1938," *European History Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2014): 458–79.

25 Contemporaneous writers cite the number of Ottoman Jewish volunteer soldiers as between 1,200 and 3,000 individuals, although exact figures are impossible to determine as foreign and naturalized soldiers' religions were rarely recorded in official documents. "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman," *L'Univers israélite*, Feb. 12, 1915, p. 341–44; "Sur l'autel de la France: une émouvante cérémonie," *Le judaisme sépharadi*, Sept. 1935, p. 145. On the range of figures available, see Claire Mouradian, "Juifs et arméniens ottomans en France pendant la grande guerre: entre 'régime de faveur' et défiance," *Archives juives* 48, no. 1 (2015): 53–56.

26 Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, 2013), 169.

27 Hyman, *Jews of Modern France*, 133–35.

28 Landau, "Frères d'armes," 30. Most Jews in the French Foreign Legion (though not all) fought with the Jewish Volunteer Corps.

29 Ibid., 30.

30 "Les israélites immigrés au service de la France," *Archives israélites,* Aug. 27, 1914.

31 H. Prague, "La guerre pour le droit," *Archives israélites*, Aug. 27, 1914.

32 Stacy D. Fahrenthold, "Former Ottomans in the Ranks: Pro-Entente Military Recruitment among Syrians in the Americas, 1916–18," *Journal of Global History* 11, no. 1 (2016): 88–112, at 92.

33 Ibid., 89.

34 Landau, "Frères d'armes." According to Landau, Alalouf, a young married father, was one of the first *engagés volontaires* to die in combat in November 1914.

35 "Ottoman Jews in France," *American Israelite*, Aug. 31, 1916. Tiano's thesis supports this estimate, claiming that there were 11,000 Greeks, Turks, and Armenians (including Jews, Christians, and Muslims) in metropolitan France in 1911. Tiano, "L'immigration," 57.

36 "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman," *L'Univers israélite*, Mar. 19, 1915, p. 473–79. Britain, too, incarcerated Ottoman Jews as "enemy aliens" during the conflict. Ben-Ur, "Identity Imperative."

37 Most Armenian immigrants to France arrived after World War I and the genocide of between 1.5 and 3 million Armenians in 1915–17. Compared with Jewish immigrants to interwar France, who were faced with pre-existing antisemitic hostilities, Armenians faced fewer obstacles to national belonging. Maud Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France* (Durham, NC, 2003).

38 Letter from Nissim Rozanès to the Alliance Secretary General, Nov. 10, 1914, Fonds France, VIII D 48.3, Archives de l'Alliance israélite universelle (hereafter AAIU), Paris.

39 In total, around 10,000 Syrians (most of whom were immigrants living in North and South America) fought for the Entente, either in the French, Canadian, or American armies. Fahrenthold, "Former Ottomans in the Ranks." On the origins of the Legion d'orient and its ties to France's colonial ambitions in the Near and Middle East, see N. E. Bou-Nacklie, "Les troupes spéciales: Religious and Ethnic Recruitment, 1916–46," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 4 (1993): 645–60. The history of Polish immigrants in the Americas who fought for the Polish Army in France provides an illuminating comparison: David T. Ruskoski, "The Polish Army in France: Immigrants in America, World War I Volunteers in France, Defenders of the Recreated State in Poland" (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2006).

40 The diversity of Ottoman ethnic groups and their political leanings also complicated legal nomenclature in the US, where Syrian political organizations actively recruited from immigrant communities on behalf of the US Army. While Syrians and Armenians were not considered enemy aliens but were instead "neutral allies of the enemy" (as the US never declared war on the Ottoman Empire), they were frequently miscategorized and subsequently wrongly discharged or denied enlistment. As Fahrenthold writes, the "legal standing of Ottoman

nationals remained particularly murky" worldwide throughout the duration of the war; idem, "Former Ottomans in the Ranks," 98–99.

41 Stein argues that the category made Sephardim the subjects of an imaginary political entity and connects the new form of protection to France's colonial territorial ambitions in the Southeastern Mediterranean; idem, "Citizens of a Fictional Nation," 239.

42 Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK, 2013), 180–81; Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 2016), 170. In earlier documents, the same organization is at times called the Association Orientale Israëlite de Paris.

43 Correspondence with Nissim Rozanès, May 11, 1912, France XXXIV B 301.22, AAIU.

44 Examples of these can be found in the naturalization files of numerous Ottoman Sephardim from the period. Séries I, sous-séries IA, Police générale: naturalisations, Archives de la préfecture de police (hereafter APP), Paris.

45 "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman, racontées par lui-même (fin)" *L'Univers israélite*, Mar. 19, 1915, p. 473–76; "Chez nos coreligionnaires orientaux," *L'Univers israélite*, Apr. 9, 1920, p. 64–65; "En l'honneur de M. Rozanès," *L'Univers israélite*, Mar. 21, 1924, p. 633–34.

46 Discrimination against both Russian and Algerian Jewish volunteer soldiers continued throughout the war. Philippe-Efraïm Landau, *Les juifs de France et la grande guerre: Un patriotisme républicain, 1914–1941* (Paris, 1999).

47 Matthieu Wolff, "Le corps des volontaires israélites," *L'Univers israélite*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 529–31.

48 Ibid.

49 "Échos et nouvelles," *L'Univers israélite*, Mar. 26, 1915, p. 13–14.

50 Ibid.

51 "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman, racontées par lui-même," *L'Univers israélite*, Feb. 12, 1915, p. 341–44.

52 "Échos et nouvelles," *L'Univers israélite*, Apr. 16, 1915, p. 91–92.

53 The author wrote that "at the moment the war was declared, more than 2,500 young people, that is nearly all of our Ottoman youth, enlisted," referring to Ottoman Jewish youth; "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman," Mar. 19, 1915.

54 The Amitiés françaises was a voluntary organization instrumental in the recruitment of foreign volunteers within and outside of French borders, including many Americans, to fight for France during World War I.

55 "Les tribulations d'un israélite ottoman," Feb. 12, 1915.

56 On the origins of the Consistory, see Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton, 1999), 84–95, and Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715– 1815* (Berkeley, 2003), 194–235. On Consistorial

efforts to homogenize France's Jewish communities during the 1930s, see Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 149.

57 Corber, "Bravery in the Borderlands."
58 "Une nouvelle synagogue en perspective," *L'Univers israélite*, Oct. 17, 1919, p. 83.
59 "Chez nos coreligionnaires orientaux," *L'Univers israélite*, Apr. 9, 1920, p. 64–65.
60 "Pour le temple des israélites orientaux: première liste de souscription," *L'Univers israélite*, June 9, 1922, p. 256; "Souscription pour l'érection d'un monument à la mémoire des volontaires orientaux: troisième liste de souscriptions," *L'Univers israélite*, June 23, 1922, p. 305–6; "Souscription pour l'érection d'un monument à la mémoire des volontaires orientaux: cinquième liste de souscriptions," *L'Univers israélite*, July 21, 1922, p. 403–4. In *L'Univers israélite*, the family name Deutsch de la Meurthe is spelled Deutch de la Meurthe.
61 "Première liste de souscription"; "Troisième liste de souscriptions."
62 "Cinquième liste de souscriptions"; "Comité pour l'érection d'un monument à la mémoire des combattants israélites orientaux morts au champ d'honneur: 8ème liste de souscription," *L'Univers israélite*, Dec. 29, 1922, p. 355; "Souscription pour l'érection d'un monument à la mémoire des volontaires orientaux: quatrième liste de souscriptions," *L'Univers israélite*, July 7, 1922, p. 355.
63 "Pour le temple des israélites orientaux: Une lettre de M. Pulido," *L'Univers israélite*, June 9, 1922, p. 253–56.
64 Angel Pulido, a Catholic and renowned philosemite, published a book on the Sephardi diaspora: Angel Pulido Fernández, *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (Granada, 1993; orig. 1905). On Pulido, see Alisa Meyuhas Ginio, "The Sephardic Diaspora Revisited: Dr. Ángel Pulido Fernández (1852–1932) and His Campaign," in *Identities in an Era of Globalization and Multiculturalism: Latin America in the Jewish World*, ed. Judit Bokser Liwerant et al. (Leiden, 2008), 287–96, and Elena Romero, "La polémica sobre el judeoespañol en la prensa sefardí del imperio otomano: más materiales para su estudio," *Sefarad* 70, no. 2 (2010): 435–73.
65 "Une lettre de M. Pulido."
66 Ibid.
67 "Souscription pour l'érection d'un monument à la mémoire des volontaires orientaux: lettre de grand-rabbin Abraham Danon," *L'Univers israélite*, June 23, 1922, p. 306–7; Danon describes his donation idiomatically as an "obol," an ancient Greek coin denomination. See Danon's biographical obituary in *Abraham Danon 1857–1925: sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris, 1925), 5–8. When Danon died in Paris in 1925, Nissim Rozanès and the ACOI presided over his funeral, which was held at Temple Popincourt. On Danon's scholarly pursuits, namely his Ladino-language writing of Ottoman Jewish history, see Devin E. Naar,

“Fashioning the ‘Mother of Israel’: The Ottoman Jewish Historical Narrative and the Image of Jewish Salonica,” *Jewish History* 28, no. 3–4 (Dec. 2014): 337–72.

68 “Comité pour l’érection d’un monument à la mémoire des combattants israélites orientaux morts au champ d’honneur: lettre de M. Wiet,” *L’Univers israélite*, Dec. 29, 1922, p. 356. On the Wiet family and their involvement in Franco-Salonican diplomacy, see Mathieu Jestin, “Les identités consulaires dans la Salonique ottomane, 1781–1912,” *Monde(s)* 4, no. 2 (2013): 201; idem, “Le consulat de France à Salonique 1781–1913” (PhD diss., Université Panthéon-Sorbonne-Paris I, 2014).

69 The Consistory’s desire for immigrants to assimilate into a singular French Jewish culture was mirrored by that of the Anglo-Jewish community in 1930s Britain. Bihler writes that German Jewish refugees in London “were swiftly taught the expectations of the Anglo-Jewish community, in terms of their visibility as foreigners, and even as Jews.” By way of contrast, German Jewish refugees in New York found American Jews frustratingly conspicuous about their Jewishness. Bihler, *Cities of Refuge*, 67, 71.

70 “Lettre de grand-rabbin Abraham Danon.”

71 Ibid.

72 “Lettre de M. Pulido.”

73 “Une synagogue ‘oeuvre de guerre,’” *L’Univers israélite*, May 19, 1922, p. 180–81.

74 “Lettre de M. Wiet”; “Cinquième liste de souscriptions.”

75 “Lettre de M. Pulido.”

76 Report: union des israélites sefaradis de France, Oct. 10, 1940, séries B-A, box 2314, Cabinet du préfet: affaires générales, dossier 8, APP; “Le progrès de l’Association cultuelle orientale de Paris,” *L’Univers israélite*, Nov. 19, 1921, p. 205–6.

77 Statuts de la Société Oël Moché, Dec. 18, 1924, box 117, Archives de l’Association consistoriale israélite de Paris (hereafter ACIP), Paris.

78 Ibid.

79 Brochure, Mar. 21, 1926, box 121, ACIP.

80 Letter to the Secretary General of the Consistory, Sept. 15, 1925, box 117, ACIP.

81 “Anciens combattants engagés volontaires juifs dans l’armé française,” séries B, sous-séries B-A, Cabinet du préfet: affaires générales, box 2315, dossier 1, APP.

82 Les volontaires juifs, MD-9, file 1, CDJC.

83 Report: anciens combattants engagés volontaires juifs dans l’armée française (association), Apr. 1941, séries B-A, Cabinet du préfet: affaires générales, box 2315, dossier 1, APP.

84 “Procès-verbal de la séance du 18 mai 1923,” May 18, 1923, box B114, ACIP.

85 "Procès-verbal de la séance du 20 Février 1923," Feb. 20, 1923, box 114, ACIP.

86 Invitation, Nov. 11, 1923, box 114, ACIP; Anne Hidalgo, "Accueil," 14–18 Monument aux morts de la grande guerre ville de Paris, Mairie de Paris, accessed Aug. 1, 2018, http://memorial14-18.paris.fr/memorial.

87 "La communauté israélite de Paris à ses enfants morts pour la France: inauguration du monument et des plaques commémoratives au temple de la rue de la victoire," *L'Univers israélite*, Nov. 16, 1923, p. 221–30.

88 Memo, 1923, box 114, ACIP. Sarah Wobick-Segev details the Consistory's desire to control wedding rites in *Homes Away from Home: Leisure, Sociability, and Jewish Belonging in Berlin, Paris, and St. Petersburg 1890–1930s* (Stanford, 2018), 128–30.

89 Letter from Modiano to Dreyfuss, Mar. 14, 1923, box 114, ACIP. The secretary of the AAIS, Judas Nahmias, was born in Salonica and fought for France in World War I. Naturalization File of Judas Nahmias, séries I-A, box 149, APP.

90 Examples of heightened antisemitism in western European democracies during the interwar years can also be found in Britain. Gil Toffell writes that the Jewish press sought to subvert British neutrality to Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda and legislation, and Bihler tells of how German-Jewish refugees elected to live close together, moving out of London's East End as British fascist activity took hold there in the 1930s and 40s, and relocating to northwest London in large numbers. Toffell, "'And Israel Watcheth over Each': The Jewish Reception of Jew Suss (1934) in Inter-War Britain," *Journal of European Popular Culture* 3, no. 2 (2012): 131–41; Bihler, *Cities of Refuge*, 27.

91 Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*; Cheryl A. Koos, "Fascism, Fatherhood, and the Family in Interwar France: The Case of Antoine Rédier and the Légion," *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 3 (1999): 317–29.

92 Claire Zalc, "Trading on Origins: Signs and Windows of Foreign Shopkeepers in Interwar Paris," *History Workshop Journal* 70 (2010): 133–51, at 144.

93 In contrast to older historiography that represented France as immune to political violence during the years of the fascist Croix de feu and the Popular Front, recent scholarship shows violence did occur within French borders. Chris Millington argues that political violence characterized the late Third Republic, and Kevin Passmore shows that right-wing fascist violence "predated . . . the mobilization of the Left" in the country. Passmore, "Boy Scouting for Grown-Ups? Paramilitarism in the Croix de Feu and the Parti Social Français," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 2 (1995): 527–57; Millington, "Political Violence in Interwar France," *History Compass* 10, no. 3 (2012): 246–59. Passmore writes, "France did not see the imposition of a fascist regime, but the level of

violence nevertheless indicated that all was not well with the democratic system"; idem, "Boy Scouting," 557.

94 Chris Millington, "February 6, 1934: The Veterans' Riot," *French Historical Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 545–72.

95 The strategy of presenting a unified Jewish front as a defense against rising antisemitism during the interwar years can be found in a number of additional global contexts. In Argentina, the Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations (DAIA) defended Jews against domestic antisemitism and advocated for the removal of immigration quotas blocking refugees from Nazism. Mariusz Kałczewiak, "We Hope to Find a Way Out from Our Unpleasant Situation: Polish-Jewish Refugees and the Escape from Nazi Europe to Latin America," *American Jewish History* 103, no. 1 (2019): 25–49, at 28. In interwar Los Angeles, members of America's Jewish elite faced heightened antisemitism, and turned to communal associations for support as a result. Ellen Eisenberg, Ava Fran Kahn, and William Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge* (Seattle, 2009).

96 Nick Underwood, "Aron Beckerman's City of Light: Writing French History and Defining Immigrant Jewish Space in Interwar Paris," *Urban History* 43, no. 4 (Nov. 2016): 618–34.

97 Corber, "Kids on Oberlin Street"; Meredith L. Scott-Weaver, "Republicanism on the Borders: Jewish Activism and the Refugee Crisis in Strasbourg and Nice," *Urban History* 43, no. 04 (Nov. 2016): 599–617.

98 Large veterans' federations were also a common form of wartime commemoration in Weimar Germany, where Jews and non-Jews united to remember their losses. Even as public displays of antisemitism became increasingly common in the late 1920s, conservative non-Jewish veteran associations remained open to Jews and acknowledged Jewish participation in the war effort. Grady, *German-Jewish Soldiers.*

99 Other associations in the CACJ included l'Association des anciens combattants volontaires juifs, Les Volontaires juifs anciens combattants au service de la France, and the Amicale des engagés volontaires israélites tunisiens, suggesting solidarity between Ottoman Sephardi Jews and their North African Jewish counterparts, as well. Rapport: comité d'entente d'associatons d'anciens combattants volontaires juifs en France, Apr. 16, 1941, séries B-A, box 2315, Cabinet du préfet: affaires générales, dossier 2, APP.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 "Autriche: la délégation française à la deuxième conférence mondiale des anciens combattants juifs," *L'Univers israélite,* July 31, 1936, p. 653.

103 "Un grand pélerinage des anciens combattants juifs dans le nord," *L'Univers israélite,* July 9, 1937, p. 684.

104 "Monument to Jews Who Fell in War Unveiled near Verdun," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 20, 1938.

105 "Sur l'autel de la France: une émouvante cérémonie," *Le Judaisme sepharadi*, Sept. 1935, p. 145.

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