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'To Be French?': The Construction of Jewish Communities and Identities in Colonial Algeria,
1830-1923

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ABSTRACT

Since the age of antiquity, Algeria was home to a robust Jewish community, rich in its diversity and solidarity among the other Jewish communities in North Africa. Yet, the 1870 Crémieux Decree forced Algeria's Jewish community into a new legal, social, and political model in order to adhere to the decree's larger purpose of elevating the position of French Jews. As a result, Algerian Jews' way of life was forever altered. The French government intervened on nearly every facet of their life. One can consider the impacts upon Algeria's Jewish community through their family relations, education, and citizenship, considering the French government's laws dictated each of these spheres of life to coalesce with their political agenda in rendering Algerian Jews as French citizens. Although Algerians Jews in general welcomed French citizenship, they sacrificed their culture and Mzabi community, also known as the Mozabite Jewish community, at the expense of such legal recognition, which eroded the authenticity and the presence of Algeria's Jewish community over time to the extent that Algeria is no longer home to such a flourishing Jewish community.

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Introduction

Why Become French?: A Pact Between French and Algerian Jews

In 1870, the French government naturalized Algeria's Jewish community as French citizens.¹ Within a month of the French empire's end, the French government finally adopted Adolphe Crémieux's proposal: the Crémieux Decree.² Adolphe Crémieux's namesake law extended French citizenship upon "les israélites indigènes des départements de l'Algérie [the indigenous Jews of the departments of Algeria]."³ Yet, members of the French government were split in their opinions of the decree. Some— like Jules Favre, French statesman and lawyer— found the *en bloc* naturalization of Algeria's Jewish community rather hasty.⁴ On the contrary, other French government officials claimed that the decree was long overdue.⁵ Hence, the political context (and the agenda of its politicians) was imperative to the context of the Crémieux Decree and its assimilation of Algerian Jews (and their communal autonomy).

Originally proposed in 1848,⁶ the idea of naturalization *en bloc* for Algeria's Jewish community was controversial. Seeing that they had just safeguarded the rights of French Jews less than a half-century earlier, the French government had difficulty imagining the inclusion of another Jewish community in the metropole.⁷ Yet, in 1870, the instability of the French

¹ For a discussion of the Crémieux Decree and its consequences see chapter 1.

² Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs : de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 72.

³ Adolphe Crémieux et al., "Décret qui déclare citoyens français les Israélites indigènes de l'Algérie," *Bulletin des Lois de la République française* 8, no. 136 (12 September 1870): 109, Gallica.

⁴ Winock, *La France et les juifs*, 73.

⁵ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 147.

⁶ Winock, *La France et les juifs*, 68.

⁷ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 147.

government coupled with the Jewish question in Algeria (and in the metropole) created the opportune moment for Crémieux, the then newly-elected Minister of Justice, to enact his proposal of the *en bloc* naturalization of Algeria's Jewish community.⁸ Thus, the Crémieux decree's establishment was not divorced from the political context, rather it was defined by it.

In the years leading up to the Crémieux Decree, French government officials— particularly French Jews— travelled to Algeria and reported their findings to the French government, urging French intervention in 'civilizing' Algeria's Jewish community. Through France's *mission civilisatrice*, these French officials and French Jews realized that they could 'better' Algerian Jews' poor conditions while also earning the French government's interest in Jewish life in the metropole. Joseph Cohen, French lawyer and journalist, argued for the naturalization of Algerian Jews into French citizens, bolstering the same written requests by Baron Jean-Jacques Baude, French administrator and politician:

Initier à l'civilisation, à la science;...des tribus nombreuses de nos coreligionnaires mènent encore la vie nomade et guerrière à la fois de nos anciens patriarches ; à droite ayant jusque dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique et dans tout l'Orient des relations importantes ; et ainsi, en la rendant française, exercer une puissante influence sur plusieurs millions d'israélites, n'est-ce pas là une mission que tout homme de cœur doit être heureux de pouvoir tenter, dût-il être brisé par la grandeur même de la tâche [To initiate to civilization, to science ;...the numerous tribes of our co-religionists still lead the nomadic and warlike life to the time of our ancient patriarchs; to the right having as far as in the interior of Africa and in all of the East important relations; and so, in rendering them French, exercising a strong influence on many millions of Jews, it isn't there a mission that all men at heart must be happy to might try, must he be stopped by the very scale of the task] ?⁹

Cohen and Baron Baude petitioned for French intervention in the welfare of Algerian Jews. One can see that Cohen alludes to France's *mission civilisatrice*, emphasizing the 'need' for

⁸ Winock, *La France et les juifs*, 68.

⁹ *Archives Israelites de France* VI (1845), 261-2; Baron Baude, *l'Algérie* (184), 288-9.

Westernization among their co-religionists in Algeria. In this, Cohen marries France's colonial agenda in Algeria with the Jewish question in the metropole, creating a political pact between Algerian and French Jews to gain rights in the new French Republic.

With this context in mind, Adolphe Crémieux was one of such politicians and French Jews in the metropole. His objective in elevating the legal, social, and political positions of Jews around the world was not exclusive to the Crémieux decree. Another pertinent element in Crémieux's campaign for Jews' rights, the *Alliance Universelle Israélite* (AIU), established in 1860 by French Jews in the metropole, to "promote the emancipation and regeneration of their less fortunate co-religionists elsewhere."¹⁰ Crémieux served as President of the AIU later in his career.¹¹ In these influential positions, Crémieux believed that the solving of France's 'Jewish Question' would promote the French Republican agenda of secularization further.¹² Through the lens of French Republicanism, Adolphe Crémieux developed the Crémieux Decree to aid in the assimilation and secularization of Algeria's Jewish community—in order to, ultimately, render them French citizens.

In examining its exigence in the metropole and in Algeria, the Crémieux Decree was more than unilateral naturalization for Algeria's Jewish community. There were immense implications inflicted upon Algerian Jews as a whole. From 1830 until 1923 (the arguable end of World War I with the establishment of the Lausanne Treaty),¹³ the French government

¹⁰ Joan Gardner Roland, "The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy in North Africa, 1860-1918" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969), 1.

¹¹ Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 32.

¹² Lisa Moses Leff, "Jews, Liberals and the Civilizing Mission in Nineteenth-Century France," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 102.

¹³ For a discussion of the Lausanne Treaty's significance in the conclusion of WWI see Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, *The Last Treaty: Lausanne and the End of the First World War in the Middle East* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

deconstructed and dismantled the communal autonomy and the cultural identity of Algerian Jews in rendering them French citizens. To this extent, Algeria does not have a robust Jewish community as it previously did, once amounting to around 130,000.¹⁴ What happened to Algeria's Jewish community before, during, and in the time after the establishment of the Crémieux Decree? How did France disassemble Algeria's Jewish community in order to assimilate them into French citizens? These are questions that have heralded the inquiry of Algeria's Jewish community in relation to the colonization of the territory of Algeria and its peoples.

Through analyzing Parisian, Algerian, and Jewish-based newspapers, archival records, and the French government's ordinances, I illustrate the ways in which France disassembled the identity and the community of Algerian Jews. Through the transformation of Algerian Jews' legal code from Jewish personal status law to French law, Chapter 1 examines the implications of France's assimilation attempts upon Algerian Jews and their family unit. Chapter 2 explores the role of education in the assimilation process of Algeria's Jewish community, ushered by the replacement of Algerian rabbis and educational model with French rabbis and curricula. As well, the role of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in preserving the religious quality and autonomy of Algerian Jews' education and community will be explored here. Lastly, chapter 3 culminates in the participation of Algerian Jews in World War I, providing justification for Algerian Jews' acceptance as French citizens due to their fight in the French war effort. In studying the family relations, the education, and the citizenship of Algerian Jews, the French

¹⁴ Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 348.

government deconstructs legally, socially, and politically Algeria's Jewish community in order to render them *les citoyens français* [French citizens].

Chapter 1

Family Relations: A Mode of Colonization

“Nous voulons tous être Français pour le commerce, parce que les consuls nous protègent et que les étrangers ne nous font plus d’avanies ; mais, en ce qui touche le mariage et la répudiation, nous voulons rester israélite [We all want to be French for business, because the consuls protect us and the foreigners do not slight us anymore ; but, in that affects marriage and repudiation, we want to stay Jewish].”¹⁵ – L’Univers Israélite, September 15, 1875

In the 1830s, the French government initiated the colonization of the Algerian family unit. In fulfilling their *mission civilisatrice*, the French government recognized the value of colonizing Algeria through the family unit of Algerian Jews.¹⁶ Upon travelling to Algeria, French citizens from the metropole noted the destitute conditions of Algerian Jews. In 1840, a “médecin israélite de l’armée [Jewish Army doctor]” stationed in Algeria wrote to the editors of the Archives Israélites [Jewish Archives], a yearly review of Jewish records, describing Algeria’s Jewish community to a curious audience in the metropole: “C’est une race exécration, fourbe, avide. Ils joignent toute la bassesse de l’esclavage, aux vices les plus dépravés [This is a detestable, deceitful, greedy race. They combine all the lowness of slavery to the corrupted vices].”¹⁷ After such a scathing portrayal of his co-religionists, the doctor characterized the political situation of Algerian Jews:

J’ai interrogé plusieurs d’entre eux, et des gens notables, pour savoir si sous le gouvernement français ils étaient plus heureux que sous le régime des Turcs....Monsieur, me répondirent-ils, dans ce temps-là, tout le commerce était à nous; c’est nous qui exploitions les marchés de toute nature ; toute le monde gagnait sa vie, tandis qu’aujourd’hui, il y a beaucoup de misère parmi nous ; sous les Turcs nous n’étions pas très-bien traités, mais nous faisons de bonnes affaires. [I interrogated many among them, and of notable people, for knowing if under the French government they were more

¹⁵ “Cour d’Assises d’Oran,” *L’Univers Israélite*, September 15, 1875, Gallica.

¹⁶ Civilizing mission: for a discussion of the French civilizing mission in Algeria, see Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 175.

¹⁷ “Correspondance,” *Archives Israélites de France* I (31 May 1840): 269-70.

happy than under the Turkish regime...Mister, they responded, in that time, all the business was ours; it is we who would exploit the markets of all nature.; everyone earned his living, whereas today, there is a lot of misery among us; under the Turks we were not treated very well, but we would do good business].”¹⁸

In this account, the doctor demonstrated to the metropole that Algerian Jews have the *potential* for civilization, seeing that, according to the doctor, Algerian Jews were not yet ‘civilized.’ Yet, they could become civilized under the auspices of the French government and their *mission civilisatrice*.

In justifying their civilization of Algerian Jews, the French government discriminated Algerian Jews from Algerian Muslims. Through the domestic sphere, the French government discerned differences in the treatment of women in the two communities. In the Algerian Jewish community, the French government indicated that women were “open” and “civilizable.”¹⁹ By contrast, in the Algerian Muslim community, the French government viewed Algerian Muslim women as closed off from society.²⁰ In the infamous “Altaras report,” Jacques-Isaac Altaras, leader of the Jewish consistory and the chamber of commerce in Marseille, and Joseph Cohen, French attorney and journalist, convinced the French government of the need for civilization among Algerian Jews in highlighting such differences among the two Algerian communities, most notably Jews’ capacity for civilization.²¹

Most importantly, the Altaras report reaffirmed the French government’s *mission civilisatrice*, shifting their approach from colonization to assimilation. In their report, Altaras and Cohen evaluated Algerian Jews on the rubric of France’s Jewish community, detailing that

¹⁸ “Correspondance,” 270.

¹⁹ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 148.

²⁰ Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Les Juifs d’Algérie et la France* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1981), 84-5.

²¹ Simon Rabinovitch, “The Quality of Being French versus the Quality of Being Jewish: Defining the Israelite in French Courts in Algeria and the Metropole,” *Law and History Review* 36, no. 4 (November 2018): 824.

Algerian Jews were “living in the same feudal, corporate, and thereby unequal legal situation as French Jews prior to emancipation in 1791.”²² Through unifying Jewish personal law and French law, Cohen and Altaras proposed the same model to assimilate Algerian Jews as the French government used to assimilate French Jews in the metropole.²³ Thus, due to Altaras and Cohen’s analysis, the French government began to consider Algerian Jews as French citizens due to their relationship to their co-religionists in the metropole.

Jewish Personal Status Law vs. French Law: Secularized Assimilation

Beginning in 1832, the French government regulated the religious authority of Algerian Jews.²⁴ In particular, the French government focused on the “communal autonomy” of Algeria’s Jewish community.²⁵ The subsequent laws in the 1830s and in the 1840s demonstrate that the French government aimed to deconstruct the legal structure of Algeria’s Jewish community in order to further their colonial agenda.²⁶ Insofar, in the 1842 law, the French government declared that Algerian Jews are “exclusivement justiciables des tribunaux français [exclusively answerable to the French tribunes],” limiting the power of Jewish personal status law in the Algerian Jewish community.²⁷ To this extent, the French government reduced the authority of rabbis in the local Algerian Jewish community to “l’état civil, aux mariages et répudiations entre israélites

²² Rabinovitch, “The Quality of Being French,” 825.

²³ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 176.

²⁴ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 154.

²⁵ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 154.

²⁶ Andrea L. Smith, “Citizenship in the Colony: Naturalization Law and Legal Assimilation in 19th Century Algeria,” *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 19, no. 1 (1996): 36.

²⁷ Robert Estoublon and Adolphe Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté. Recueil chronologique des lois, ordonnances, décrets arrêtés, circulaires, etc. actuellement en vigueur* (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1896), 25.

[personal status, to marriages and repudiations among Jews].”²⁸ Thus, the 1842 law gave legal jurisdiction to the French government over the Algerian Jewish community as a whole.

After gaining entrance into the private sphere of Algerian Jews’ life, the French government magnified their control upon the family unit of the Algerian Jewish community. In the 1845 law entitled “Portant organisation du culte israélite en Algérie [Bearing organization to the Jewish religion in Algeria],” the French government (re)defined the anatomy of the Algerian Jewish community.²⁹ Namely, the 1845 law established the Consistory to:

Réglera l’organisation, le nombre et la circonscription des synagogues particulières ainsi que le nombre et le mode de nomination des rabbins et des ministres officiants nécessaires à l’exercice du culte [to regulate the organization, the number and the district of particular synagogues just as the number and the method of nomination of rabbis and of the ministers doing the necessary honors to the exercise of worship].³⁰

The Consistory worked as an extension of the French government’s control on a local level in Algeria. Considering the local religious officials and entities required their approval, the Consistory possessed an immense command of power in the private sphere of Algerian Jews’ life. Rabbis had to consult the Consistory on decisions pertaining to religious practices as instructed by the 1845 law. Thus, the French government weakened the power of rabbis in substituting the authority of the Jewish personal status law for the authority of the French law.

With this in mind, the French government began to dismantle Algerian Jews’ way of life. Unprecedentedly, the 1845 law allowed the French government to manage the quotidian life of Algerian Jews. The French government also replaced Algerian rabbis with French rabbis in 1845 “seconder de leur mieux les efforts des premières familles juives [to better help their efforts of

²⁸ Estoublon and Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté*, 27.

²⁹ Estoublon and Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté*, 82.

³⁰ Estoublon and Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté*, 82.

the first Jewish family],”³¹ illustrating a turning point in the French government’s colonization of Algerian Jews. Up until this point, the French government’s colonial policy did not attempt to render Algerian Jews into French citizens. In 1845, the seeds of the Algerian Jews’ French naturalization are planted— considering in 1848, the French government began to explore the notion of comprehensive naturalization for Algerian Jews.

In the 1850s and in the 1860s, the French government debated on the notion of extending French naturalization to Algerian Jews as a whole. Members of the French government rejected the idea of comprehensively naturalizing Algeria’s Jewish community. During this time, Algerian Jews and Muslims alike did have the opportunity to apply for French citizenship, given that they had to surrender observance of their respective religious laws.³² Yet, Algerian Jews and Muslims rarely invoked this law. The French government only naturalized 142 Algerian Jews from a total of 33,000 in the Algerian Jewish community.³³ In this account, Algerian Jews were not interested in giving up their adherence to Jewish personal status law in order to become French citizens.

In the 1865 law, the French government emphasized the fact that Algerian Jews had to relinquish their Jewish personal status to receive French naturalization:

L’indigène israélite est Français; néanmoins il continue à être régi par son statut personnel...Il peut, sur sa demande, être admis à jouir des droits de citoyen français ; dans ce cas, il est régi par la loi française [The indigenous Jew is French; however he continues to be governed by his personal status...he can, on his application, be admitted to enjoy the rights of French citizen; in this case, he is governed by French law].³⁴

³¹ Jacques Cohen, *Les Israélites de l’Algérie et le Décret Crémieux* (Paris: Rousseau, 1900), 76.

³² Estoublon and Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté*, 25.

³³ Claude Martin, “Les Israélites algériens de 1830 à 1902” (PhD diss., University of Paris, 1936), 123.

³⁴ Estoublon and Lefébure, *Code de l’Algérie annoté*, 309.

In this law, the French government explicitly asserts that Algerian Jews *could* be French, but only at the expense of surrendering their Jewish personal status— and by extension, their culture. This is a significant element to the 1865 naturalization law because Algerian Jews’ naturalization is based on the condition of giving up the laws and the practices particular to their culture. Without renouncing such adherences to Jewish personal status, Algerian Jews would not be considered *French*.

Dictated by Napoleon’s *code civil*, French law clashed with the Jewish personal status law that governed Algerian Jews’ way of life. Primarily, the *code civil* was the rule book of French citizenship in the metropole. For example, in article 6 of “de la publication, des effets et de l’application des lois en général [of the effects and of the application of laws in general],” the *code civil* states “On ne peut déroger par des conventions particulières, aux lois qui intéressent l’ordre public et les bonnes mœurs [one cannot depart from the particular conventions with the laws which affect the public order and the good morals],”³⁵ revealing the standard for French citizens to assimilate to the common values and practices of their *concitoyens*, or fellow citizens. The *code civil* further outlines the ‘appropriate’ process to follow for such practices. In divorce, the *code civil* instructs that “La femme ne peut contracter un nouveau mariage qu’après dix mois révolus depuis la dissolution du mariage précédent [The wife cannot contract a new marriage after over ten months since the dissolution of the preceding marriage],”³⁶ demonstrating the exercise of monogamous relationships and marriage practices in the metropole. The French government wanted to ensure that divorce, in the rare cases it was exercised, it was employed in particular cases and not for polygamy or other ‘immoral’ reasons. In particular, in the case of

³⁵ *Code Civil des Français* (Paris: L’imprimerie de la République, 1804), 2.

³⁶ *Code Civil des Français*, 56.

divorce, article 229 of “du divorce [of divorce],” the code civil declares that “Le mari pourra demander le divorce pour cause d’adultère de sa femme [The husband could demand the divorce for reason of adultery of his wife],” as well in article 230 that “La femme pourra demander le divorce pour cause d’adultère de son mari, lorsqu’il aura tenu sa concubine dans la maison commune [the wife could request the divorce for reason of adultery of her husband, when he had taken a live-in partner in the common house].”³⁷ To this extent, the code civil disseminated a how-to-guide on how to be French. In coalescing with his larger political agenda, Napoleon aimed to dictate the morals of the metropole in order to unify the French empire, which would increase his power and control overall.³⁸

In typifying the qualifications of French naturalization, the French government used the model of assimilation based on Napoleon’s assimilation of French Jews in the metropole. In 1807, Napoleon I organized an assembly to reconcile the differences between Jewish personal status law and French law, Napoleon’s *code civil*.³⁹ Infamously known as Napoleon’s *Grand Sanhedrin*, the assembly (re)examined the French government’s recognition of Jews in the metropole as French citizens, considering members of the French government proposed to revoke such rights declared to French Jews in the 1791 naturalization law.⁴⁰ Similar to the dissents in naturalizing Algerian Jews, members of the French government opposed the naturalization of French Jews due to the conflicts between French law and Jewish personal status law. In particular, the subjects of polygamy and divorce plagued the discussions surrounding the

³⁷ *Code Civil des Français*, 56.

³⁸ Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 219.

³⁹ Joshua Schreier, “Napoléon’s Long Shadow: Morality, Civilization, and Jews in France and Algeria, 1808-1870,” *French Historical Studies* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 78.

⁴⁰ Schreier, “Napoléon’s Long Shadow,” 79.

recognition of French Jews in the metropole, like Algerian Jews, in becoming French citizens.⁴¹ The French government found an issue with such practices, not only because they deemed them ‘immoral’ in their opinion, but they were illegal in France’s *code civil* enacted by Napoleon. Thus, it was crucial for French Jews to surrender such practices and their observance of Jewish personal status law, otherwise they would be breaking French law.

In order to rectify the conflicts between Jewish personal status law and French law, Napoleon proposed to “harmonize” the two legal codes.⁴² Yet, like in the case of Algeria, the unification was more so a vanquishing of Jewish personal status law by French law. The French government “secularized” the French Jewish community, considering there were cases of divorce and polygamy in practice prior to the Grand Sanhedrin.⁴³ Polygamy, divorce, and other practices, deemed ‘immoral’ by the French government, were not embedded in the fabric of the French Jewish community in the way that it was characteristic of the Algerian Jewish community. The French government mistakenly took such surrendering of the Jewish personal status law and its practices in the French Jewish community as a successful mode of assimilation for *all* Jewish communities.⁴⁴ Members of the French government, though, did not realize that French Jews “never practiced polygamy, rarely had access to legal divorce, and were traditionally unable to prevent apostasy or marriage outside the faith” in the metropole.⁴⁵ On the contrary, Algerian Jews had access to such legal structures, which afforded them the opportunity to invoke such rights declared to them in the Jewish personal status law.⁴⁶ Thus, it was not a conflict in culture

⁴¹ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 157.

⁴² Rabinovitch, “The Quality of Being French,” 825.

⁴³ Lisa Moses Leff, “Jews, Liberals and the Civilizing Mission in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 105.

⁴⁴ CAOM, fol. 3U/2, “arrêté du cour impérial,” 27 January 1857.

⁴⁵ Schreier, “Napoléon’s Long Shadow,” 82.

⁴⁶ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 155.

that inhibited the Algerian Jews from becoming French citizens, it was a conflict in legal systems.

During this time, Algerian rabbis were the sole authority in the local Jewish community, serving as the administrators of the Jewish personal status law. In particular, Algerian rabbis' duties included rendering legal decisions, offering private council, officiating marriages, and settling divorces.⁴⁷ Considering the religious and private spheres were intertwined in the Algerian Jewish community, rabbis were integral to the fabric of Algerian Jews' way of life. Rabbis represented the Jewish personal status law, and matrix between the 'civil' administrative laws of Algeria and the religious personal status laws of Judaism. Thus, when the French government imposed the consistories to regulate the authority of rabbis, their function changed. They were not longer the sole authority in Algerian Jewish community— France and its colonial government was the leading command of power. For instance, the consistory outlined the position of rabbis to function as “(1) to teach religion and patriotism, and inculcate obedience to the French law; (2) to recite prayers for the royal family; (3) to perform burials and marriages; (4) and to inspect the schools to be established for both sexes.”⁴⁸ As instructed by the French government, the rabbis, the physical manifestation of the Jewish personal status law, were to serve France and the French government in reorientating their practices to honor French laws. This was an overt conflict with the traditional role of rabbis whose role centered on promoting Jewish solidarity and laws in their religious practices. Yet, the French government altered the command of the Jewish religion in

⁴⁷ Valérie Assan, “Des rabbins français en Algérie coloniale : De la mission civilisatrice à la lutte contre l'antisémitisme,” *Histoire, Monde et Cultures Religieuses* 42, no. 2 (2017): 14.

⁴⁸ Morton Rosenstock, “The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria,” *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1956): 50.

order to dovetail with their colonization of and, subsequent, assimilation of Algerian Jews for French naturalization.

Adolphe Crémieux and the Consequences of the 1870 Crémieux Decree

Adolphe Crémieux, a French Jewish politician and lawyer, became the champion for Jewish rights. Crémieux heralded the campaign to secularize Jews. Seeing that Crémieux possessed a great deal of influence in French politics, the French government saw Crémieux as the beacon of secularization for French Jews.⁴⁹ Crémieux himself symbolized the harmonization of French Jews and the metropole that Napoleon sought to create in the Grand Sanhedrin. In particular, Crémieux emphasized the integration of French Jews into the metropole. He ushered the adoption of the French Republican agenda into his mission of equality for the international Jewish community.⁵⁰ Insofar, the *Archives Israélites* exalted Crémieux as a hero of the international Jewish community:

Au temps héroïque de Crémieux, des pages glorieuses alors qu'elle revendiquait avec tant d'énergie la mission de défendre les Juifs opprimés et qu'elle comptait des victoires comme celle de la reconnaissance par l'Europe des droits de citoyens des israélites roumains [to the heroic time of Crémieux, the glorious pages while it claimed with as much energy the mission of defending the oppressed Jews and that it counted the victories as the one about the recognition by Europe of the rights of citizen of Romanian Jews].⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lisa Leff, "Trusting Adolphe Crémieux: Jews and Republicans in Nineteenth-Century France," in *On the Word of a Jew*, eds. Mitchell Hart and Nina Caputo (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019), 103.

⁵⁰ Leff, "Trusting Adolphe Crémieux," 102.

⁵¹ Hippolyte Prague, "L'Alliance Israélite et ses émules," *Archives Israélites de France* LXVIII (3 January 1907): 1-2.

Crémieux's entrance into the dialogue of the Algerian Jews' autonomy in the mid-to-late nineteenth century shifted the conversation from application-based naturalization to *en bloc*⁵² naturalization.

Due to the political exigence in Algeria, the timing of the French government's adoption of Crémieux decree was imperative. Originally, Urtis, a lawyer, proposed an iteration of the Crémieux decree in 1848 to secure French naturalization for Algerian Jews.⁵³ Yet, the French government did not proceed further with the proposal then.⁵⁴ Only in 1870, the French government seriously considered (and, ultimately, enacted) Crémieux's proposal due to the situation of Algeria within France and its colonial possessions came to breaking point. Members of the French government were conflicting in their solutions concerning the Algerian Jewish community.⁵⁵ Do they extend French naturalization? After all, it was the logical result of the French government's assimilation process of Algerian Jews.

In reality, the Crémieux Decree further distanced Algerian Jews into a legal liminality where their position remained undefined—consistently not French enough for the French government and not Algerian enough for the indigenous Algerian communities. The Crémieux Decree segregated Algerian Jews into two distinct communities: French and Indigenous. North Algerian Jews were *French*, and Southern Algerian Jews were Indigenous, considering they were subject to two different legal codes.

⁵² Complete (naturalization of the community); for a discussion of *en bloc* naturalization vs. application-based naturalization see Avner Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria and the Politics of Citizenship* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 52-3.

⁵³ Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs : de 1780 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 68.

⁵⁴ Winock, *La France et les juifs*, 68.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of French government officials' respective positions on the naturalization of Algerian Jews see Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 147.

Although the Crémieux Decree appeared inclusive, it created an exclusive reality. The Crémieux Decree stated:

Les israélites indigènes des départements de l'Algérie sont déclarés citoyens français: en conséquence, leur statut réel et leur statut personnel seront, à compter de la promulgation du présent décret, réglés par la loi française, tous droits acquis jusqu'à ce jour restant inviolables. Toute disposition législative, tout sénatus-consulte, décret, règlement ou ordonnance contraires, sont abolis [The indigenous Jews of Algeria's departments are declared French citizens: consequently, their real status and their personal status are, take into account the enactment of the present decree, governed by French law, all rights acquired until this day remaining inviolable. All legislative provision, all sénatus-consulte, decree, regulation or contrary order, are abolished].⁵⁶

The southern territories of Algeria were not included in the departments of Algeria during the adoption of the Crémieux Decree.⁵⁷ Consequently, Southern Algeria Jews were not incorporated into such citizenship en masse vis-à-vis the Crémieux Decree.

One of the ways in which the Crémieux Decree impacted the construction of Algerian Jews' family life was through the legal implications of marriage between a Northern and Southern Algerian Jew. Considering Northern and Southern Algerian Jews were— for all intents and purposes— two separate people groups in Colonial Algeria, marriage between them was rather complicated. Northern Algerian Jews were subject to French law, whereas Southern Algerian Jews were subject to indigenous, or Muslim, law.⁵⁸ Thus, the mere legality of marriage was contested. Was the marriage subject to French law because one of the parties was *French*? Or was the marriage subject to Muslim law because one of the parties was *indigenous*? Many times, these answers were not clear because of such questions of citizenships.

⁵⁶ Adolphe Crémieux et al., "Décret qui déclare citoyens français les Israélites indigènes de l'Algérie," *Bulletin des Lois de la République française* 8, no. 136 (12 September 1870): 109, Gallica.

⁵⁷ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 43.

⁵⁸ Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 50.

In addition, these uncertainties surrounding marriage law in Algeria became even more uncertain due to their marriage location. In this circumstance, a Northern (French) Algerian Jew and a Southern (Indigenous) Algerian Jew married on French soil at a synagogue, which was officiated and legitimized by Jewish law.⁵⁹ The religious ordinances and laws of Judaism also oversaw such marriage. Hence, was the marriage subject to Jewish law?

In questioning the legal jurisdiction and authority of marriage, the identity and the community surrounding Jewish families was challenged in colonial Algeria during this time. Southern Algerian Jews were not a part of the Northern Algerian Jewish community. Thus, a marriage between a Northern Algerian Jew and a Southern Algerian Jew was an integration of two different communities, laws, and, most importantly, citizenships.

With this in mind, the French government did not condone the passing of Southern Algerian Jews as Northern Algerian Jews due to the fact that such Southern Algerian Jews would be benefiting the privileges and identity of a French citizen:

Even as the military administration feared that Mzabi Jews might seek to pass as northern Jews (and hence as French), they were also anxious that “immigrant” Jews might seek to assimilate themselves into the Mzabi Jewish population, as had so many Moroccan and Tunisian Jews in Algeria’s north⁶⁰

In particular, the integration of a Southern Algerian Jew into Algeria’s Northern Jewish communities would signify that they could vote.⁶¹ For the Southern Algerian Jews, the right to vote “was symbolism rather than pragmatism.”⁶² For the French government, the right to vote represented the political imagination of the Southern Algerian Jews’ (and other communities in

⁵⁹ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 50.

⁶⁰ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 50.

⁶¹ GGA [Cambon] to unnamed general, 6 June 1896, 1H, 85, Correspondance politique des Affaires indigènes, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, France.

⁶² Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 50.

the French colonial Union) who lacked citizenship and rights— which was not entertained by France due to their own political imagination surrounding their colonial and imperial agendas.

In marrying a Northern Algerian Jew, a Southern Algerian was subject to such legal, social, and political discrimination from the French government. Despite marrying a Northern Algerian Jew, a Southern Algerian Jew did not marry into the benefits of a French citizenship. In other words, they remained under the category of *indigenous* and, therefore, subjected to Muslim law. The reverse was true for Northern Algerian Jews.

In particular, Northern Algerian Jewish women who married Southern Algerian Jewish men retained their French citizenship. They did not ‘lose’ their designation as *French*. They maintained their own identity and citizenship, which they could “pass [their] citizenship [to their] children.”⁶³ This was an important moment for Algerian (and Jewish) women in general because it signified the (little) autonomy that women possessed during this time, and the hope for more rights in the future.

In addition, the 1927 law represented the legal authority of women over their children.⁶⁴ For example, a Northern Algerian Jewish woman who married a Southern Algerian Jewish man would have the legal right to bestow French citizenship upon her children.⁶⁵ Thus, her children would not inherit the citizenship of their father— as would customarily be the case— instead they would inherit the status of their mother as a *Northern Algerian Jew*.

Despite the recognition of such situations reflected in the law, there were immense legal, social, and political complications with the identity of Northern and Southern Algerian Jewish

⁶³ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 49-50.

⁶⁴ Patrick Weil, *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 202-4.

⁶⁵ Letter by GGA [Carde] to Chef de l’Annexe Ghardaïa, 3 March 1930, 52, 9 and 10, Archives de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), Paris, France.

families. Although there were laws in place, the legal status of Northern and Southern Algerian Jews' marriages was still contested. The citizenship, in particular, of the children of such marriages was ambiguous:

Such was the case of the children of Meriem bent Maklouf and Brahim ben Isaac Sellam, who had married in Laghouat in 1890. Because she had been born in Laghouat, Meriem was legally French. Brahim, who was born in Ghardaïa, was an indigene, legally beholden to Mosaic Personal Law. When Brahim appealed to the General Government for clarification about his children's legal status in 1930, the office determined the pair's offspring were French citizens.⁶⁶

The children of Northern and Southern Algerian Jews were in a peculiar position because they were not necessarily Southern Algerian Jews, seeing that one of their parents was a Northern Algerian Jew. Yet, they are not unequivocally Northern Algerian Jews due to their patrilineality-inherited status of a Southern Algerian Jew.⁶⁷ Hence, even with the laws of inheritance, the pathway to identify such children's citizenship and status was not straight forward by any means— and still required legal and government intervention in distinguishing the identities of such families.

With this in mind, the construction of families for Jews in colonial Algeria was complicated by the social, legal, and political segregation of the Crémieux Decree. Family life for Algerian Jews during this time was constructed (legally, socially, and politically) by the French government. Considering they governed the identities of a *French* and an *indigenous* citizen, they also governed the lives that people with such identities experienced— and the limitations associated with such identities.

⁶⁶ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 49.

⁶⁷ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 50.

In spite of their conflicting identities and citizenships, the Northern and Southern Algerian Jews who married each other encountered legal, social, and political challenges. Namely, Northern Algerian Jews were represented and recognized legally, socially, and politically. Contrastingly, Southern Algerian Jews were not donated such personhood and humanity by the French government. The Southern Algerian Jews were not granted the right to citizenship, vote, education, representation, and several other pertinent human rights. These discrepancies between the treatment of Northern and Southern Algerian Jews in colonial Algeria impacted the relationships between such groups. As a result of the French government's colonial policy, the Crémieux Decree created a binary of conflicting identities within Algerian Jewish's community, which disturbed the legal construction of families in colonial Algeria.

Chapter 2

Education: An Assimilation to Secularization

“Ancien élève de l’école rabbinique de Metz, je voudrais aussi partager ses nobles travaux; l’aider à élever l’édifice sacré de la civilisation sur les bases antiques et inébranlables de la morale et de la religion israélites, à dissiper les ténèbres de l’ignorance et des préjugés par le flambeau d’une construction solide et progressivement; à inspirer à mes coreligionnaires barbaresques l’amour du travail qui s’est éteint sous l’influence malfaisante de la mollesse et de l’oisiveté orientales, auxquelles les avaient condamnés une longue et brutale tyrannie ; à éveiller dans leurs cœurs les vrais sentiments d’honneur et dignité, étouffés par une oppression millénaire ; enfin à leur apprendre à apprécier les bienfaits de la liberté dont ils jouissent, et à animer, à chérir la France à laquelle ils doivent ce don céleste [Former student of the Rabbinical school de Metz, I would like also to share his noble work ; to help him raise the sacred structure of civilization on the ancient bases and unwavering morals and Jewish religion, to disperse obscurity of the ignorance and of the prejudices by the torch of the solid and little by little construction; to inspire to my barbaric co-religionists the love of work which goes out under the damaging influence of the Eastern languidity and idleness, at which having condemned them a long and brutal tyranny; to awakening in their the true sentiments of honor and dignity, suffocated by a thousand-year-old oppression; then to their learning to appreciate the benefit of the liberty where I have enjoyed, and to animate, to cherish French to whom they owe a celestial donation.”⁶⁸ -Lazare Cahen, Chief Rabbi from Constantine, February 27, 1847

In 1833, the French government established a Consistory to govern Algeria’s Jewish community.⁶⁹ At first, the French government’s motivation concerned the organization of the Algerian Jewish religion. Seeing the assimilation process of French Jews, the French government replicated a similar system in Algeria in order to unify Algerian Jews with their co-religionists in the metropole.⁷⁰ Based on the Altaras report, the French government and “des israélites français pourront faire évoluer positivement ceux d’Algérie. La régénération prendra la forme d’une occidentalisation [the French Jews could make positive progress those of Algeria. The.

⁶⁸ ANOM, F80 1631, lettre de Lazare Cahen au ministre de la Guerre, 25 février 1847.

⁶⁹ Morton Rosenstock, “The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria,” *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1956): 50.

⁷⁰ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 148.

Regeneration will take the form of westernization].”⁷¹ The French government and the French Jews sought to reform the Jewish religion in Algeria due to its influence from Algeria’s Muslim and indigenous communities, such as polygamy, divorce, and other practices that were not commonplace in the metropole.⁷² Yet, as the French government discovered, the differences in the French and Algerian Jewish communities was not contingent on their culture. It was the legal structures in France and Algeria that characterized the distinctions between the French and Algerian Jewish communities. To this extent, the French government recognized in order to reform Algerian Jews’ religion, they would have to reform Algerian Jews themselves.

In reforming the Jewish religion, the French government recognized that the Algerian Jews’ education system was not modernized. Members of the French government characterized the Algerian Jews’ education as primitive to their own educational system in the metropole.⁷³ Rabbis were responsible for the education of Algerian Jews. Claude-Antoine Rozet, a French military officer, observed that Algerian rabbis taught their students— Algerian Jewish boys—⁷⁴ a variety of subjects throughout the various educational levels:

Dans celles du premier, sont reçus les enfan[t]s de quatre à huit ans; ils n’apprennent qu’à lire, en commençant par épeler dans des livres. Au second degré, on enseigne l’Ancien-Testament et l’Histoire des différents peuples; enfin, dans les écoles du troisième degré, les jeunes gens au dessus de huit ans apprennent à écrire et à calculer avec des caractères hébraïques [In the ones of the first, admit the children of four to eight years old; they learn only to read, in starting by spelling the books. As of the second degree, one teaches the Old Testament and the history of different peoples; Finally, in the schools of the third

⁷¹ Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Geneviève Dermenjian, *Les Juifs d’Algérie: Une histoire de ruptures* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015), 65.

⁷² Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 154.

⁷³ Rosenstock, “The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria,” 41.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the education of Algerian Jewish girls see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 88-94.

degree, the young people above eight years old learn to write and to calculate with Hebrew numerals].⁷⁵

The French government emphasized the fact that the Algerian Jews' education was facilitated by rabbis in a religious environment, learning about their religious practices. Whereas in the metropole, French Jews enjoyed a *secular* education concerned with preparing students for the work force.⁷⁶ On the contrary, the purpose of Algerian Jews' education was cultivating their religious practices and worship.⁷⁷ Thus, Algerian Jews' religion-centered education was the justification for the French government's reform of their curricula.

Furthermore, the *mission civilisatrice* shaped the French government's approach to reforming Algerian Jews' education. The French government thought that they were 'helping' Algerian Jews in bettering their educational system. Yet, the French government was 'civilizing' Algerian Jews' curricula to their own standards.⁷⁸ The French government based their remodel of Algerian Jews' education on the rubric of French Jews' education in the metropole where they were exposed to "la Bible, le Talmud, la théologie, la langue hébraïque, l'histoire des Hébreux jusqu'à nos jours, l'histoire universelle dans ses rapports avec l'histoire des Hébreux, l'histoire de la philosophie, la littérature [the Bible, the Talmud, theology, the Hebrew language, the history of the Israelites until today, the universal history in his reports with the history of the Israelites, the history of philosophy, literature]."⁷⁹ In reality, Algerian Jews' curricula was not

⁷⁵ Claude-Antoine Rozet, *Voyage dans la régence d'Alger, ou Description du pays occupé par l'armée française en Afrique : contenant des observations sur la géographie physique, la géographie, la météorologie...: suivies de détails sur le commerce l'agriculture, les sciences et les arts, les mœurs* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1833), 252-3.

⁷⁶ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

⁷⁷ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 91-2.

⁷⁸ Lisa Leff, "Jews, Liberals and the Civilizing Mission in Nineteenth-Century France," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 111.

⁷⁹ Jules Bauer, *L'École rabbinique de France (1830-1930)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1930), 118.

much different from that of their co-religionists in the metropole. Rozet details that the curricula of Algerian Jewish boys— particularly of the wealthier classes— included “parlaient français, espagnol, italien, anglais et ture [speaking French, Spanish, Italian, English and Turkish].⁸⁰ Thus, Algerian Jews were not entirely subjected to a “backward” education as the French government depicted.⁸¹

In reality, the upper-class Algerian Jews were quite educated individuals. Algerian Jewish boys received a European education through studying abroad in Italy, for example.⁸² They learned a great deal of languages and customs of other people groups outside of Algeria and North Africa in general. Most importantly, despite the assumptions of the French government, these students were afforded a practical education. They were taught business skills from their education:

“ce qui provient plutôt des relations commerciales qu’ils ont eues avec cette nation que d’y avoir été envoyés pour s’instruire. Il y a, dans presque toutes les villes, plusieurs Juifs qui ont voyagé dans toutes les parties du monde et qui en ont très bien profité ; ils parlent plusieurs langues, se rappellent les contrées qu’ils ont parcourues, et connaissent parfaitement les mœurs des habitant[s] [what comes later from business relations that they had with this nation that were sent there for educating them. There is, in nearly all the cities, more Jews who travelled in all the parts of the world and who of them have benefitted very good].⁸³

Hence, the wealthier students of Algeria’s Jewish community developed a strong business acumen from their education abroad. They were immersed into another country, learning the language and the culture. In return, these students cultivated a relationship to the country and its

⁸⁰ Rozet, *Voyage dans la régence d’Alger*, 253.

⁸¹ Rosenstock, “The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria,” 41.

⁸² Rozet, *Voyage dans la régence d’Alger*, 253.

⁸³ Rozet, *Voyage dans la régence d’Alger*, 253.

community beyond their education for business purposes. The French government does not appear to commend the practical education efforts of Algeria's Jewish community.

On the contrary, the French government dismantled Algerian Jews' educational system. In 1831, the French government extended "au même titre que les prêtres et les pasteurs [to the same title that the priests and the pastors]."⁸⁴ This is a significant step to secularizing Algerian rabbis and Algerian Jews' education. In this, the French government symbolically typifies the Algerian rabbis as the same as other religious figures in the metropole, which weakens their power and role in the Algerian Jewish community.

Seeing that Algerian rabbis were the center of the Algerian Jewish community, the French government recognized that they had to dismantle the autonomy of Algerian rabbis in order to deconstruct the education system of Algeria's Jewish community. In doing so, the French government replaced Algerian rabbis with French rabbis from the metropole.⁸⁵ This measure helped to effectuate their reform of the Algerian education system. French rabbis were more acquiescent of the French government's regulations than Algerian rabbis, considering they wanted to maintain their previously established educational structure.⁸⁶ French rabbis, though, were interested to partake in the French government's *mission civilisatrice* in the Algerian schools. To this extent, French rabbis became a commonplace facet in Algerian Jewish society, educating their co-religionists in Algerian Jews' schools.⁸⁷ As they were replaced by their co-religionists from the metropole, Algerian rabbis' presence and influence in Algerian Jewish society dwindled.

⁸⁴ Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs : de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 68.

⁸⁵ Rosenstock, "The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria," 52.

⁸⁶ Rosenstock, "The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria," 52.

⁸⁷ Allouche-Benayoun and Dermenjian, *Les Juifs d'Algérie*, 64.

For Algerian Jews, the French government forced these reforms upon their education system, affecting the community itself. The French government did not consult the Algerian Jewish community regarding their substitution of their rabbis. Instead, the French government obliged the Algerian Jewish community to accept such rabbis and reforms due to the French government's authority established through the Consistory: "Imposés par les autorités françaises puis par le Consistoire central pendant toute la période concordataire (et même au-delà) [Imposed by the French authorities then by the central Consistory during all the approved period (and even beyond)]."⁸⁸ Due to their commanding authority over the Algerian Jewish community, the French government did not receive any overt opposition to their efforts. As a result, the Algerian rabbis did not resist their replacement by the French rabbis whom they viewed honorably.⁸⁹ Hence, the French government forced their idea of 'civilizing' onto the Algerian Jewish educational structure and community at large.

For the French government, the first step was improving the state of the Algerian Jews' schools. The rabbis were themselves in a destitute living condition, seeing that they had to "sell their holy books to live."⁹⁰ The state of the schools was not divorced from that of the rabbis. In particular, the French government concentrated on fostering an academic environment of formality.⁹¹ They emphasized the advancement of the schools' "hygienic conditions" and "discipline."⁹² In this, the French government seems especially focused on cultivating 'civilized' students among the Algerian Jews.

⁸⁸ Allouche-Benayoun and Dermenjian, *Les Juifs d'Algérie*, 70.

⁸⁹ Michel Weil, "Rapport présenté à M. Lepêcheux, Inspecteur de l'Instruction Publique, sur la réorganisation des écoles Israélite indigènes," Archives Israélite VI (1845): 609-19.

⁹⁰ Rosenstock, "The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria," 48.

⁹¹ Weil, "Rapport présenté à M. Lepêcheux," 609-19.

⁹² Rosenstock, "The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria," 52.

Yet, the issue of the schools' conditions did not lie in the 'uncivilized' nature of the rabbis (or their students), but in the lack of funding for the schools. For example, the schools were operated by the government— more specifically, the Consistory— who received funding from the Algerian Jewish community.⁹³ The Algerian rabbis— the once operators of the schools— were paid by the government. In comparison to their co-religionists in the metropole, Algerian rabbis' compensation paled:

4 000 francs par an pour le grand rabbin d'Alger et 3 000 francs pour les rabbins provinciaux en 1847 ; 5 000 francs à partir de 1867 pour les trois grands rabbins— et les salaires, variant de 20 à 70 francs par mois environ, des rabbins algériens payés par leur communauté [4,000 francs by year for the Chief Rabbi of Algiers and 3 000 francs for the provincial rabbis in 1847; 5,000 francs starting from 1867 pour the three Chief Rabbis— and the salaries, varying from 20 to 70 francs by around a month, Algerian rabbis paid by their community].⁹⁴

The Algerian rabbis were not afforded the proper resources to be able to manage a school, particularly in comparison with their co-religionists in the metropole. The French rabbis evaluated the Algerian Jewish schools on the model of their educational system. Nonetheless, how can the French government and French Jews from the metropole judge Algerian Jews' education system when they have less resources at their disposal?

In assessing the Algerian Jews' educational model, the French government and French Jews chastised the 'uncivilized,' 'indigenous' quality of the Algerian schools and its students. Insofar, the French government considered the "Indigency" of Algeria's Jewish community as "the greatest obstacle to progress, and the Consistory of Algiers took immediate action to improve charity distribution."⁹⁵ Consequently, the French government found it imperative to

⁹³ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 90-2.

⁹⁴ Allouche-Benayoun and Dermenjian, *Les Juifs d'Algérie*, 71.

⁹⁵ Rosenstock, "The Establishment of the Consistorial System in Algeria," 53.

assimilate Algerian Jewish students into Frenchmen in order to successfully effectuate their *mission civilisatrice* through the education system.⁹⁶ Insofar, the French government viewed Algerian rabbis as contrary to their *mission civilisatrice*: “l’admiration français tolère la présence de rabbins « indigènes » au sein des consistories lorsqu’il est impossible de faire autrement, et à titre exceptionnel [the French administration tolerated the presence of “indigenous” rabbis within the consistories when it is impossible of doing differently, and to the title extraordinary].”⁹⁷ This is because the French government wanted to dismantle the “indigenous” structure of the schools for Algerian Jews’ schools, replaced by their own educational model. Yet, these early Consistory-operated schools for Algerian Jews would not be the final mode of Algerian Jews’ assimilation into the metropole. The French Jews from the metropole would intervene to upgrade the educational system of their co-religionists.

The Origins of the Alliance Israélite Universelle Schools in Algeria

In 1900, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, or the AIU, extended its services to the Algerian Jewish community.⁹⁸ Previously, the AIU deemed that the Algeria’s Jewish community did not need their services, seeing that the French government oversaw Algerian Jews’ education. Due to the 1870 Crémieux Decree’s bestowal of French naturalization, the AIU considered Algerian Jews as safeguarded by the auspices of the French government.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Joan Gardner Roland, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy in North Africa, 1860-1918” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969), 23.

⁹⁷ Allouche-Benayoun and Dermenjian, *Les Juifs d’Algérie*, 71.

⁹⁸ Jérôme Bocquet, *L’enseignement français en Méditerranée: Les missionnaires et l’Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 107.

⁹⁹ Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in The Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 23.

For Algeria's Jewish community, the AIU adopted a different approach. Considering Algerian Jews were *legally* French citizens, the AIU did not need to advocate for them legally like they did for other Jewish communities around the world. Instead, the AIU concentrated their efforts on the social reforms of Algeria's Jewish community, particularly upgrading their religious education.¹⁰⁰

In the previous education system, the French government secularized the Algerian Jews' education. They imported French rabbis from the metropole who taught secular subjects to their students in order to coalesce with the French *mission civilisatrice* and notion of *laïcité*¹⁰¹ in the metropole. Consequently, the French government removed the religious emphasis that was characteristic of Algerian Jews' education prior to the French government's intervention.¹⁰² Thus, Algerian Jewish students lacked a religious education focused on Jewish principles and practices.

In addition, la crise *anti-juive* influenced the AIU to turn their attention to Algeria and its educational system. At the turn of the century, Algerian Jews faced discrimination from the local indigenous communities in Algeria, particularly the Algerian Muslim community.¹⁰³ In particular, the indigenous Algerian communities promulgated stereotypical images of Algerian Jews, such as "portrayals of Jews as moneylenders sapping the strength of the hardworking artisans, laborers, and small business-owning néos."¹⁰⁴ These depictions of Algerian Jews were

¹⁰⁰ Bocquet, *L'enseignement français en Méditerranée*, 107.

¹⁰¹ There is not a direct translation for the French idea of *laïcité*, a close comparison in English is secularism; for a discussion on *laïcité* see Emile Chabal, "The Republic and its Discontents," in *France* (Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press, 2020), 114-41.

¹⁰² Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

¹⁰³ Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 21.

¹⁰⁴ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 69.

inaccurate, considering Algerian Jews occupied a variety of occupations— beyond the business sector:

Chaisiers, 3 ; coiffeur, 1 : cordonniers, 3 ; ébénistes, 3 ; encadreur, 1 ; horloger, 1 ; imprimeurs, 4 ; maréchaux-ferrants, 2 ; marbrier, 1 ; mécanicien-forgeron, 1 ; Menuisier, 1 ; peintres, 2 ; photographe, 1 ; relieur, 1 ; serrurier-forgeron, 1 ; Tailleurs, 2 ; Typographes, 2 ; Tourneur, 1 [Chair vendor, 3; hairdresser, 1; shoemaker, 3; cabinetmaker, 3; frame-maker, 1; clockmaker, 1; printer, 4; blacksmith, 2; marble worker, 1; blacksmith mechanic, 1; carpenter, 1; painters, 2; photographer, 1; bookbinder, 1; locksmith-blacksmith, 1; tailor, 2; typographer, 2; silk winder, 1].¹⁰⁵

Hence, the AIU recognized that Algerian Jews needed an education that supported them religiously and socially in combatting the discrimination in Algeria at large.

The AIU organized their educational system in Algeria in order to strengthen the Algeria's Jewish community at large. The leadership of the AIU and the French Jewish community fought against discrimination through a covert pact called the *Comité de défense* [Defense Committee].¹⁰⁶ The committee was instrumental in systemically combatting discrimination in the metropole:

ses moyens d'action étaient l'action électorale, l'action par la presse, l'action par l'écrit, en encouragement et en subventionnant les brochures luttant contre l'adversaire, et l'action judiciaire en conseillant et éventuellement en aidant financièrement les personnes engagées contre des antisémites dans un procès [his ways of action were the electoral action, the action by the press, the action through writing, in encouraging and in subsidizing the brochures fighting against the adversary, and the judiciary action in advising and eventually in helping financially the persons engaged against the anti-Semites in a trial].¹⁰⁷

Their efforts translated from France's Jewish community to Algeria's Jewish community where they effectuated similar changes.¹⁰⁸ Insofar, the AIU's schools in Algeria focused particularly on

¹⁰⁵ Moïse Netter, "BESOGNE UTILE ET NÉCESSAIRE," *L'Israélite algérien*, April 1, 1900, 2, Gallica.

¹⁰⁶ Simon Epstein, "Les Institutions Israélites françaises de 1929 à 1939 : solidarité juive et lutte contre l'antisémitisme" (PhD diss., Panthéon-Sorbonne University, 1990), 238-40.

¹⁰⁷ Bocquet, *L'enseignement français en Méditerranée*, 109.

¹⁰⁸ Archives AIU, IC2; fonds Moscou, C01.1, C01.2, C01.3, C01.7, et C01.8.

“prepar[ing] young Jews for self-defense in an antisemitic environment.”¹⁰⁹ Seeing the political and social defense mechanisms that they employed, the AIU taught such methods to their students to exercise themselves.

In this mission, the AIU aimed to equip Algerian Jewish students with the education and the resources to prevent discrimination in their local community. The AIU was concerned with the given atmosphere of discrimination in both the metropole and in Algeria. As a result, they wanted to ensure the wellbeing and the livelihood of Jews in Algeria during the present and future discriminatory attacks:

L’Algérie apparat alors comme le dernier des pays où les juifs pourraient aspirer à une évolution régulière. Dépouillés en fait de presque toutes leurs prérogatives de citoyens, diffamé, humiliés avec un cynisme et une opiniâtreté jamais constatés ailleurs, exclus de la société, le cas échéant traqués, assommés comme des bêtes, mollement défendus, parfois persécutés par une magistrature sans caractère, ils se virent ramenés à la nécessité de s’inquiéter de leur droit au travail et de leur droit à l’existence [Algeria appears then as the last of the countries where Jews could aspire to a steady evolution. Robbed in fact of nearly all their rights of citizens, defamed, humiliated with a cynicism and a tenacity never observed elsewhere, excluded from the society, the expiry case tracked, stunned as foolish, weakly defended, sometimes persecuted by a magistrature without character, they live reduced to the necessity of worry of their right to work and their right to existence].¹¹⁰

The AIU supplied their students with jobs to supplement the loss of work due to discrimination.¹¹¹ The AIU also prepared their students through biblical lessons of strong characters that they could exemplify in their lives, particularly in instances of discrimination.¹¹²

Albert Confino, AIU administrator, affirmed the importance of religion in supporting Algerian Jews’ rights and autonomy:

¹⁰⁹ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 113.

¹¹⁰ Moïse Nahon, “Rapport Annuel, 1900-1901 de M. Nahon, directeur de l’École de l’Alliance à Alger,” Algiers, September 1901, AIU Moscou.

¹¹¹ Bocquet, *L’enseignement français en Méditerranée*, 110.

¹¹² Bocquet, *L’enseignement français en Méditerranée*, 110.

Faire connaître aux enfants les figures de nos héros et de nos hommes illustres, de nos grands savants et de nos grands poètes, rien de plus propre pour enflammer leur cœur, exciter leur enthousiasme, leur donner conscience de leurs devoirs en tant qu'israélites et développer en eux l'esprit de sacrifice, de charité et de solidarité [To introduce to the children the figures of our heroes and of our men celebrated, of our great scholars and of our great poets, nothing cleaner to light their heart, to incite their enthusiasm, their giving awareness of their duty in as Jews and to develop in them the spirit of sacrifice, of charity and of solidarity].¹¹³

The AIU was pivotal in providing an education for Algerian Jewish students beyond that of cultural assimilation like the Consistory, but of cultural protection and preservation. The AIU tailored their educational system to the needs of Algeria's Jewish community in order to best promote the life and wellbeing of Jewish peoples and ideas in Algeria. Although the AIU schools have been more recognizable in the history of other Jewish communities, they certainly played a role in advocating for the rights of Algerian Jews and their communal autonomy. Hence, the French government (and their colonial agenda) dismantled the social construction of Algerian Jewish identity through their educational system and religious autonomy.

¹¹³ Albert Confino, "Œuvre scolaire de l'Alliance Israélite," *Paix et droit*, June 1, 1933, 21-3.

Chapter 3

Citizenship: A Battle of Acceptance

During the early twentieth century, World War I was the catalyst for France's colonies to reimagine their position (and belonging) within the French colonial Union. The Great War furnished colonial soldiers, despite their diverse backgrounds, to unify under France to defend her and the French Republic's (*la république française*) honor. In this, soldiers from across the colonial Union— or “*French-Outremer*,” which is what France referred to their colonial Union—¹¹⁴ served with troops from the metropole in the French war effort. Thus, in this war, colonial soldiers had an opportunity to consider their role in the colonial Union and in the French Republic. For Algerians, this was especially true.

With the emergence of growing animosity among the Jewish community and the Muslim community,¹¹⁵ Northern Algerian Jews wanted to prove their ‘Frenchness’ and their belonging to the larger French community in Algeria and in the metropole. The Muslim and the Indigenous Algerian communities claimed ‘Jewish exclusivity’ as the reason to why Algerian Jews should not be included in the larger Algerian and French communities.¹¹⁶ Yet, through organizations such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (the AIU), Algerian Jews displayed their ability to assimilate and adopt the French language, culture, and customs.

With the backing of the AIU, Algerian Jews garnered support for their political and legal rights in Algeria, but also in the metropole. Some of the most prominent figures in the political,

¹¹⁴ Joan Gardner Roland, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy in North Africa, 1860-1918” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969), 15.

¹¹⁵ Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 65.

¹¹⁶ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 113.

social, and legal spheres of French society— such as Adolphe Crémieux, French politician, lawyer, founder and president of the AIU — led the AIU.¹¹⁷ Through the AIU, Algeria’s Jewish community had influential members from the metropole at their disposal in order to safeguard the rights of Algerian Jews both in Algeria and in the metropole. Thus, Crémieux and his colleagues bolstered the status of Algerian Jews in the metropole and in Algeria through their advocacy of Jewish liberties.

With this in mind, the support of Crémieux and his colleagues was twofold. While promoting rights for Algerian Jews, Crémieux and his peers advocated for the rights of France’s Jewish community in the metropole.¹¹⁸ In this way, the political ambition of such group married two people groups (and their political ‘baggage’) together. Although the Algerian Jewish community saw themselves as Frenchmen,¹¹⁹ the French Jewish community did not consider the Algerian Jewish community as one of their own. The Jewish community in the metropole were hesitant to the idea of integrating the Algerian Jewish community in French society. In particular, French Jews did not want the question of their rights in the metropole to be entwined with the French government’s “Jewish Eastern Question” concerning Algerian Jews, which characterized Eastern Jewish communities as ‘uncivilized.’¹²⁰ The French government had recently reaffirmed the rights and the ‘civilized’ status of French Jews in the metropole.¹²¹ Thus, the French Jewish community did not want to jeopardize their fragile social, legal, and political status.

¹¹⁷ Roland, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy,” 15.

¹¹⁸ The other signers of the Crémieux Decree: Léon Gambetta, Alexandre Glais-Bizoin, and Léon Fourichon.

¹¹⁹ Roland, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy,” 23.

¹²⁰ Aron Rodrigue, *Jews and Muslims: Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Modern Times* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003), 9-10.

¹²¹ For a discussion of French Jews’ assimilation in the metropole see Joshua Schreier, “Napoléon’s Long Shadow: Morality, Civilization, and Jews in France and Algeria, 1808-1870,” *French Historical Studies* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 78-9.

Through the AIU and the Crémieux Decree, Crémieux and his colleagues did not consider the reactions from the French Jewish community in combining their campaign for French Jews' rights with that of the acceptance of Algerian Jews in Algeria and in the metropole. Crémieux and his colleagues did not account for the potential ramifications in the metropole with an additional Jewish community, people group, and political struggles all together. With this lack of foresight, Crémieux and his colleagues' political efforts in securing a firm foothold for Algerian Jews' position in French society did not fulfill their political objectives. Only with the outbreak of World War I did the Algerian Jewish community find their place in French society—as (accepted) citizens of the metropole.

The African Tirailleur

A pertinent outside military power for France's war effort, the African Tirailleur troops, or the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, were a long-time fixture within the French military prior to and during World War I. In colonizing the colonial Union, France depended upon support from the African Tirailleur troops. In particular, the African Tirailleur were a "Muslim-only infantry regiments with French officers and an interface of Muslim NCOs."¹²² The African Tirailleur proved especially useful for France's military campaigns during its colonization of Morocco.¹²³

With this in mind, France invoked the use of the African Tirailleur in World War I similar to their employment of the African Tirailleur in colonizing their colonial Union. The inclusion of the African Tirailleur was imperative to the French war effort because they were

¹²² Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria*, 102.

¹²³ Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991), 25.

able to rely upon this group of soldiers. Considering the African Tirailleur's predating the war, France had "170,000 black Africans served in the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* during the war" soldiers from the African Tirailleur troops at their disposal in support of their war effort.¹²⁴ In consequence, the African Tirailleur was "seen by [French] generals as a crucial factor in the French victory."¹²⁵ Thus, the inclusion of the African Tirailleur set a precedent in the blend of French troops with troops from the colonial Union to fight France's military campaigns outside of Africa.¹²⁶

The Colonial Union in World War I: *To Fight or Not to Fight?*

At the onset of World War I in 1914, France was not interested in accepting members of the colonial Union into their army troops. Only French *citizens* were permitted to fight for France and represent its values of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* in the Great War— not French (colonial) *subjects*. The French government intended to bar eligible draftees from its colonial Union in joining the French war effort due to the consequences of including colonial troops. In fighting for France, soldiers from the colonial Union had a stake in the French political sphere. France owed them a debt of recognition for their service in the war, which included legal and political representation in the metropole— namely, citizenship in the metropole. Thus, France was not keen on the idea of rethinking their colonial Union and its belonging within the French Republic due to reasons of imperialism and colonialism.

¹²⁴ Marc Michel, *L'Appel à l'Afrique: Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F., 1914-1949* (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 1982), 30.

¹²⁵ Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria*, 102.

¹²⁶ Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria*, 102.

Like the republics that have preceded the *république française*, they employed citizen armies in their military endeavors— and France did not veer from such model. French citizens comprised the military campaign on behalf of the French Republic. This meant that citizens of the metropole participated in the war effort, as well as *citizens* of Algeria. Considering Algeria's unique status as an extension of the French state, some inhabitants of Algeria fought in the war as permitted by their legal (and political) status. This included *français d'origines*¹²⁷: *les colons*¹²⁸ and *les pieds-noirs*¹²⁹.¹³⁰ The category, however, also encompassed *les néo-français*,¹³¹ who are comprised of Algeria's Jewish community. Consequently, the beneficiaries of the Crémieux Decree's French naturalization—Northern Algerian Jews— were incorporated into such group of *les néo-français*.

With this in mind, *les néo(-français)* are permitted to participate in the war effort. In view of the Crémieux Decree, Algeria's political position as a part of the metropole allows inhabitants of Algeria to be newly granted citizenship. Despite not originating from the metropole, *les néo(-français)* are citizens of France, not Algeria.

In its liminal space, the French government authorized *les néo-français* to fight for France in the war regardless of Algeria's colonial status. Although *les néo-français* may include indigenous Algerians, not all indigenous Algerians are *les néo-français*, and therefore, permitted to fight in the war. *Les néo(-français)* are only the beneficiaries of the Crémieux Decree, which were Northern Algerian Jews. Southern Algerian Jews, Muslim Algerians, and other indigenous

¹²⁷ French citizens originally from France.

¹²⁸ French citizens who have moved to Algeria from the metropole.

¹²⁹ French citizens who were born in Algeria to *les colons* or *les Français d'origines*.

¹³⁰ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 50.

¹³¹ Newly naturalized French citizens in Algeria.

communities in Algeria were not embraced in the Crémieux Decree's benefits of French citizenship. Thus, they were not citizens of France, nor were they citizens of Algeria.

As a consequence, Southern Algerian Jews, Muslim Algerians, and other indigenous communities in Algeria were not permitted to fight in the French military campaign.¹³² They were not viewed as *French* in political citizenship status nor in social class status. Subsequently, France did not want such groups to join their military campaigns along with French citizens from the metropole, which would convey the impression that indigenous Algerians were 'equal to French citizens' and 'worthy of French citizenship.'¹³³ Thus, only Northern Algerian Jews had the opportunity to defend France and its rights in the war.

For Southern Algerian Jews, they did not have the privilege to demonstrate their capacity for supporting the French cause in the war by way of serving in the military. Southern Algerian Jews were denied the opportunity to showcase their 'deserving' of French citizenship in promoting (and defending) the French Republic's values. Whereas Northern Algerian Jews provided the opportunity to 'prove' to the French government their belonging and their 'worthiness' as French citizens of the Republic.¹³⁴ Through its conscription service, the French government bolstered the binary, set by the Crémieux Decree, within Algeria's Jewish community: those we can serve and those who cannot.

For the most part, the majority of Algeria's Jewish community wanted to serve in the war effort. In this, Algerian Jews were in favor of demonstrating their 'Frenchness' to the French government in order to gain more rights and liberties in the metropole. In particular, the war

¹³² Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 81.

¹³³ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 112.

¹³⁴ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 117.

effort “allowed Jews to distinguish themselves as soldiers and patriots, offering their lives as a sacrifice to the glorious future of la mère patrie.”¹³⁵ Hence, Northern Algerian Jews were able to participate in the French military campaign along with French citizens from the metropole, cultivating pride for the Republic and its people in the process.

On the contrary, Southern Algerian Jews were not able to have such experience in fighting for France and its people. They did not have the opportunity to forge alliances with France and its citizens from the metropole in fighting for the Republic. Southern Algerian Jews were not able to partake in the shared experience of defending France’s honor and liberties in the Great War. Whereas, Northern Algerian Jews did have such experience that they could relate to French citizens in the metropole, enhancing their relationship and the metropole’s regard of their social and political position.

At the beginning of the war effort, France relied upon their own troops in the metropole to fulfill their military campaign. Yet, as the war progressed, they quickly realized that their own troops would not be sufficient for the endeavor of a world war.¹³⁶ Subsequently, France recruited soldiers from their colonial Union. France underestimated the weight of the war effort with only the army regiment from the metropole. Consequently, they “were forced to learn a basic axiom of military force: that it required more soldiers to occupy conquered territory than it had to win it initially.”¹³⁷ Thus, France realized that the inclusion of the colonial Union benefitted their war effort.

¹³⁵ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 111.

¹³⁶ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 25.

¹³⁷ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 25.

In particular, France noted the larger political symbolism of including the colonial Union troops into their military campaign. Such an act could unite the entirety of France's colonial Union beyond the 'mission civilisatrice.' Notably, the colonial Union could occupy a new role within France and act in a different manner on the government behalf. Thinkers from the metropole enjoyed "the discourse and the concept of Greater France (*la plus grande France*)...was an attempt to transcend the binary of metropole versus colonies and to accommodate difference in a way that marked a significant departure from the republican quest for cultural-religious uniformity."¹³⁸ Thus, the unification of France's troops with the colonial Union's troops signifies an act greater than stronger military might for the country but an act toward greater rights and representation of the colonial Union in French politics.

On the other hand, the inclusion of the colonial Union's troops in the French military campaign unites France's political and colonial agendas in an unprecedented manner. For the first time, outside of the initial installment of the Crémieux Decree in 1870 to Algeria's Jewish community, France did not have to face the consequence of naturalization of their colonial Union en masse for the benefit of politics in the metropole. If France recruited troops from its colonial Union, they would be met with (whether from the colonial Union itself or supporters of the cause in the metropole) protests for the citizenship and the rights of the members of their colonial Union.¹³⁹ The French government did not want to extend such liberties to its colonial Union. Other colonial empires at the time, such as Britain, struggled with such complexities in enlisting colonial troops and granting them rights, yet "France rewarded its colonial subjects not with

¹³⁸ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2005), 25-35.

¹³⁹ Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria*, 99.

rights but with its ‘tenderness.’”¹⁴⁰ Thus, in lieu of newly bestowed rights, France’s colonial Union earned the attention and the respect of France for their actions on their behalf in the war.

The Recruitment Crisis

As a result, France extended the French conscription process upon the colonial Union. The French government embraced its colonial subjects from countries (and status) who were barred from participating in the war effort. In World War I, over 500,000 soldiers from France’s colonial Union fought on behalf of France.¹⁴¹ They were enrolled in the French military campaign through the French conscription system, *l’impôt du sang*¹⁴², which required conscription for all eligible men in the metropole and in the colonial Union.¹⁴³

Yet, the conscription process did not automatically generate numerous soldiers at the disposal of the French government. France experienced a conscription crisis in recruiting soldiers in the French colonial Union because members of the colonial Union were not interested in participating in the war. At the time, members of the colonial Union did not want to partake in military pursuits. They had careers as farmers, merchants, and a variety of domains.¹⁴⁴ Thus, members of the colonial Union did not aspire to embrace the military as a career, considering they already had multiple.

In recruiting the colonial Union’s troops, France had to rely upon a troop of volunteer soldiers to complement their existing troops. This system differed from the French conscription process in the metropole. In this, colonial soldiers enlisted on a volunteer basis, rather than the

¹⁴⁰ Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria*, 93.

¹⁴¹ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

¹⁴² The blood tax.

¹⁴³ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 25.

¹⁴⁴ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 29.

French government requiring one to enlist in the military like in the metropole.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the nature of the conscription system in the colonial Union complicated the French government's recruitment of colonial soldiers.

With this in mind, the French government did not realize that the recruitment of colonial soldiers would be a difficult task. The individual colonies in the colonial Union did not largely have an established reserve of troops to employ in the war. Consequently, the colonies had to rely upon career military soldiers to comprise their troops.¹⁴⁶ Seeing that the recruitment process was voluntary, there was resistance to enlisting in the French war effort for various reasons.

In addition to this discrepancy between the two systems, the guidelines contrasted between the requirements of a soldier in the colonial Union troops and the French troops. Yet, such guidelines were outlined by the French government, rather than the colonial Union itself. The French government "demanded that military service for Algerian Muslims have the same duration as that of French citizens and that conscripts be recruited from a minimum age of twenty rather than eighteen."¹⁴⁷ Thus, from the onset, there were different expectations of the colonial Union troops from that of the French troops.

In Algeria, in particular, the eligible male population was unwilling to enlist in the French military campaign due to the lack of rights that French would grant them in return. They wanted rights in exchange for their sacrifice in honor of France—a country in which many Algerians were *subjects*, not citizens of. As a result, the recruitment process for the colonial Union's troops in Algeria amounted to 5 percent of the total troops in the French war effort.¹⁴⁸ Hence, France's

¹⁴⁵ Anthony Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (London and Washington: Brassey's Defence, 1988), 6-8.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), 285.

¹⁴⁷ Avner Ofrath, *Colonial Algeria and the Politics of Citizenship* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 100.

¹⁴⁸ AN, 509AP/5 – dossier 2: Note sur le service militaire des algériens.

reluctance to bestow rights upon soldiers of the colonial Union for their service resulted in an equally reluctant population of enlistees for the French military campaign.

The Evasion of Military Duty

As a result, the eligible male population of draftees in the colonial Union sought to intentionally avoid the French military recruitment process. In Algeria, the eligible draftee population within the Northern Algeria Jewish community maneuvered such avoidances of their military duties. In particular, they bestowed their military service upon Southern Algerian Jews who were willing to accept their call to service for the French troops in the war: “There is evidence, it is true, of certain, presumably wealth, Mzabi Jews other, presumably poorer, Jews to take their place in the conscription lottery.”¹⁴⁹ Hence, the Northern Algerian Jews, who did not wish to participate in the French war effort, had the privilege of buying themselves out of the military service process. Although Southern Algerian Jews acquiesced to such demands, they did not have the means to evade such service.

For evading one’s call to duty, the eligible draftee would face consequences from the French government. In response to the avoidances of military duty during World War I, the French government enacted a law that would punish its violators. Thus, the violators of the law, “they and their families, their villages or their chiefs, could all be held to be in violation of the Conscription Law of 1919, which imposed prison sentences for obstructing the conscription process.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 79.

¹⁵⁰ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 73.

Although the law addressed the act of evading one's military duty, its punishment was not implemented for its violators by the government. The French government did not address the violators of the law.¹⁵¹ The cause of such leniency, or overlooking, of avoiding one's duty is due to the fact that those who evaded their military service provided an alternate in their place. For example, the historical record reflects such disparate numbers from the colonial Union's troops. In this, there were "high rates of volunteers in regions which had a reputation for disliking the draft— places like Abengourou and Assinie, for example, in eastern Côte d'Ivoire— may also have been districts where substitution of outsiders, perhaps from the north of the colony and from Upper Volta, may have been a factor."¹⁵² Hence, France's desperation for troops from their colonial Union allowed them to turn a blind eye to the hidden machinations of the colonial Union's eligible draftees.

In addition, the French government was not conscious of the variety and particularities of the colonial Union. One of the ways in which France's seeming 'acceptance' to the colonial Union's evasion of French military service succeeded was due to France's lack of awareness of the colonial Union's diversity (of people and of cultures). In this, the French government confused the different cultures and peoples of the colonial Union with each other. Namely, they would misidentify draftees with the wrong country or people group to which they belonged.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 73.

¹⁵² Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 75.

¹⁵³ Lieutenant Governor of Niger, Report on Recruitment for 1934, Niamey, 8 March 1934, ANS, 4D82 81.

The Conscription Process of the Colonial Union and Its Consequences

Once the French government began recruiting soldiers from the colonial Union, colonial soldiers faced challenges in integrating into the French troops at large. Next came the process of assimilating the colonial Union troops into the milieu of the French military with the French troops from the metropole. Besides both troops sharing the French nation, they had little in common. The colonial Union's troops were "exposed to the French language, culture, traditions, and France's republican ideals."¹⁵⁴ They were not privy to such notions. Algeria's relation with the metropole was one of unique status that was not afforded to the other countries and peoples of the French colonial Union. Hence, members of the colonial Union could not relate to the French troops because the colonial Union carried their own set of languages, customs, and values apart from those of the metropole.

In these differing cultures, the French troops did not fully embrace the colonial Union troops as a part of their own military regiment—they were othered. The colonial Union faced discrimination in the military effort, impeding upon their sense of community within the French military troops. In particular, the French troops constructed "racial hierarchies controlled relationships and interactions within the military."¹⁵⁵ In view of such treatment, the French troops "maintained the colonial soldiers at the lowest ranks."¹⁵⁶ Consequently, the colonial Union was not regarded for their military ability or achievements like the French troops, they were regarded by their social and legal status by the French government.

¹⁵⁴ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

¹⁵⁵ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

¹⁵⁶ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

There were certainly advantages and disadvantages to the colonial Union's participation in the war effort on behalf of France. Yet, their political status complicated their conscription status and experience in the French military campaign.

Primarily, the colonial Union troops "occupied a complex place within French society: they were, for the most part, not citizens, but colonial subjects, but were engaged in the colonial process of assimilation by participating in the military."¹⁵⁷ The colonial Union troops fought for the same rights and liberties as the French troops. Yet, they were not provided the same privileges as the French troops. The colonial Union was excluded from the benefits of the campaigns that they were advancing in the war effort. Although they were, at times, forced to participate in the war on behalf of their colonial country, not on behalf of their home country.

With this precarious situation in mind, the colonial Union saw themselves as French. They fought with Frenchmen. They fought for French freedom. Thus, why could they not be recognized fully (in the eyes of the legal and the social order) as Frenchmen? The colonial Union asked themselves this question as they imagined themselves apart of France beyond their position as members of the French colonial Union, but citizens of France itself. In *Le Journal Juif* [*The Jewish Journal*], a Parisian-based newspaper chronicling news in the Jewish community in the metropole, the French Jewish community highlights the perspective of Algerian Jews who are grandfathered into French citizenship through the 1870 Crémieux Decree:

Ils proclament qu'ils sont Français de droit, non seulement parcequ'un décret pris avis conforme des autorités locales octroya jadis cette qualité à leurs grands-pères mais aussi parce que leurs aînés ont généreusement répandu leur sang pour la France, comme en témoignent leurs livres d'or, remplis de noms de leurs morts et d'innombrables citations [They proclaim that they are French from law, not only because a decree taken local assent formerly given this quality to their grandfathers but also because their elders had

¹⁵⁷ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

generously spread their blood for France, as in showing their pounds of gold, filling names of their deaths and of countless summons].¹⁵⁸

This article is from 1935, thus it is a reflection with the privilege of hindsight and of retrospect of the French military effort and Algeria's Jewish community's participation in it. Nonetheless, the descendants of the early French citizens of Algeria's Jewish community from the Crémieux Decree who fought for France in World War I believed that their ancestors earned their French citizenship not only because France extended such citizenship, but because they paid the ultimate sacrifice of offering their lives to France to protect the Republic, its people, and its values. Thus, the Crémieux Decree was central to Algeria's Jews claim to military involvement in the French campaign, but also to displaying further to their fellow citizens in France that they were in fact French citizens.

Algeria's Jewish community in World War I

The participation of Algerian Jews in World War I was not excluded from the complicated experience of serving France, a nation of which one may not belong to, despite the country's legal and political distinction from the others in the colonial Union. In World War I, Algerians accounted for nearly 172,000 soldiers in the French war effort.¹⁵⁹ The historical accounts have "virtually no mention of Jews in World War I,"¹⁶⁰ yet the presence (and the legacy) of the war effort was pertinent to Jewish identity during and after the war.

¹⁵⁸ "La jeunesse juive d'Alger, écrit à M. Régner," *Le Journal Juif*, March 28, 1935, Gallica.

¹⁵⁹ Richard S. Fogarty, "Between Subjects and Citizens: Algerians, Islam, and French National Identity during the Great War," in *Race and Nation: Ethic Systems in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Spickard (New York: Routledge, 2004), 178.

¹⁶⁰ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

The Great War offered Algeria's Jewish community a pathway to France's recognition of their status—both legally and socially. *L'Univers Israélite* [*The Jewish World*], a Parisian-based journal on Jewish life in the metropole and internationally, details the Jewish community's motivations in the French military campaign in World War I:

L'ordre du jour voté par l'Assemblée constitutive déclare que les volontaires juifs ont été guides dans leur action par un profond sentiment de reconnaissance envers la France républicaine, libérale et hospitalière, et par le désir de prouver que l'esprit de sacrifice anime toujours les juifs pour toutes les causes de droit, et de justice [The order of the day voted by the constituent Assembly declared that the voluntary Jews were guided by their action by a profound sentiment of recognition towards the France republican, liberal and hospitable, and by the desire to prove that the spirit of sacrifice always animated the Jews by all the causes of law, and of justice].¹⁶¹

In this, the war offered the opportunity for Jews to redeem themselves in the eyes of the French people and the Republic in that they deserved to be *French*. The war allowed Jewish communities to showcase their commitment to France and its values.

In France, the French government regarded Jews as 'outsiders' from France, its people, and Republic. In that, the Jewish community did not share France's republican values or the collective history of France.¹⁶² Thus, why *should* they be French, if they have their own values and history? There was a belief that the Jewish community had their own culture and identity, which was separate from that of France and its people. In particular, *L'Univers Israélite* [*The Jewish World*] explores this notion of the shared Jewish experience in invoking the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain:

Les Juifs n'ont pas été persécutés par les Turcs, depuis qu'expulsés d'Espagne par Ferdinand et Isabelle, ils se sont réfugiés en Turquie et y ont formé de puissantes communautés ; mais dans beaucoup de régions ou de villes de domination turque, par exemple à Smyrne, ils sont ou ont été longtemps des protégés français [The Jews were not persecuted by the Turks, since expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, they

¹⁶¹ "Échos et Nouvelles," *L'Univers Israélite*, February 4, 1916, Gallica.

¹⁶² Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs : de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 7.

are refugees in Turkey and there formed from strong communities; but in a lot of regions or in towns of Turkish domination, for example in Smyrna, they are or were for a long time French protected].¹⁶³

In this, the Jewish community in the metropole reflects upon their collective history with the Jewish community from other nations, and their relationship to such community—just because they are from another country, does not mean that they do not carry a similar experience, culture, values, and other markers of identity that resonate with the Jewish community in the metropole. Notably, the Jewish community considers France’s relationship with such communities as well. Although there is evidence that France intervened to help the Jewish community of Turkey, it did not guarantee a relationship between the two Jewish communities. This is the same approach to the relationship between the Jewish community in the metropole and in Algeria. The war solidified the argument that Algerian Jews belonged in the metropole due to their connection to French Jews.¹⁶⁴ Algerian Jews earned a justification for their acceptance in the metropole: the war. Algerian Jews can claim that they fought for France, its people, and, most importantly, its Republican values.¹⁶⁵ Thus, the war effort bolstered the position of Algerian Jews and their claim to the metropole.

The war effort not only strengthen the status of Algerian Jews in the metropole, but also at home. In Algeria, the war palliated the discriminatory treatment of Algeria’s Jewish community from Muslim and indigenous Algerians. In a way, the French war effort (along with their French education) transformed Algerian Jews into bona fide Frenchmen. The AIU extended the tools and the resources “to combat antisemitic attacks on Jews” to Algeria’s Jewish

¹⁶³ André Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France,” *L’Univers Israélite*, February 4, 1916, Gallica.

¹⁶⁴ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

community.¹⁶⁶ In addition, the war equipped Algerian Jews to prepare for themselves and the larger Jewish community, as indicated in *Le Journal Juif* [*The Jewish Journal*]:

Ils lui rappellent que les jeunes gens Juifs d'Algérie sont Français de fait, attendu qu'ils sont nés en terre française, que le français est leur langue maternelle et qu'ils sont nourris de culture française comme en témoignent les palmarès des écoles et des Facultés d'Algérie et de la Métropole [They reminded him that the young Jewish people from Algeria are French in fact, given that they were born on French land, that French is their maternal language and that they sustained French culture as in showing the record of schools and of Colleges of Algeria and of the Metropole].¹⁶⁷

In this quote, the French Jewish community rejects any doubts regarding the legal status of Algeria's Jewish community as being deemed 'French citizens.' It is telling that the French Jewish community goes out of their way to clear up any uncertainty regarding this matter. For *Le Journal Juif*, their audience is presumably Jews in the metropole: in Paris and perhaps other prominent cities in the international Jewish communities. That is to say that this is a Jewish-based newspaper for a Jewish-based audience. Thus, this means that the journal felt compelled to dispel any notions of hesitation to recognize Algerian Jews as full *French* citizens—just like them. One can deduce from this that there were issues of acceptance in the metropole of Algerian Jews and their relationship to the French Jewish community there.

In consequence, Algerian Jews imagined themselves as citizens and members of France's Jewish community. The war allowed Algerian Jews to imagine themselves as Frenchmen,¹⁶⁸ considering they were immersed in French culture with Frenchmen from the metropole.¹⁶⁹ In doing so, Algeria's Jewish community grew closer to the metropole and its own Jewish

¹⁶⁶ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 118.

¹⁶⁷ "La jeunesse juive d'Alger, écrit à M. Régner."

¹⁶⁸ Roland, "The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Policy," 23.

¹⁶⁹ Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 117.

community, imagining themselves as belonging to the larger French Jewish community in Algeria and in the metropole.

Migrations During and After World War I: Reactions from the Metropole

Following the war, Algerian Jews immigrated to the metropole for a variety of reasons. The war provided the perfect impetus for Algerian Jews to migrate to the metropole to join France and the French Jewish community. During and after the wartime, Algerian Jews migrated to the metropole due to education, employment, and numerous other factors. Yet, following the war, France recruited Algerians in replenishing their workforce. In the early 1920s, France employed upwards of 70,000 Algerians in their labor force.¹⁷⁰

On the other hand, Algerians (and eligible soldiers in the colonial Union) migrated to the metropole not for the French benefit, but for their own benefit. In recruiting troops for the French military campaign during World War I, eligible soldiers were highly encouraged to enlist to support the French war effort. Yet, some eligible draftees did not wish to do so. Consequently, they emigrated to evade military service.¹⁷¹ In particular, such eligible draftees emigrated to the Gold Coast to pursue a career in agriculture.¹⁷²

With this new surge of Algerian migrants in the metropole, the French Jewish community did not welcome the addition of members to their community with open and receptive arms. In fact, they did not wish to welcome the Algerian Jewish community. In *L'Univers Israélite* [The

¹⁷⁰ James McDougall, *History and Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34.

¹⁷¹ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 71.

¹⁷² Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 73.

Jewish World] provides insight into the thought-process of the Jewish community in the metropole to considering their relationship to other Jewish communities: “on a confondu la question juive et la question des étrangers. Les juifs étrangers sont des étrangers, mais sont aussi des juifs [one has confused the Jewish question and the question of foreigners. The Jewish foreigners are foreigners, but also Jews].”¹⁷³ One can note the ambiguity in this quote that there is not a clear model for their response to accepting another Jewish community into their own. This quote, however, does share that the French Jewish community did render other (not from the metropole) Jewish communities as in fact *Others*. They were not equivalent to the Jewish community in the metropole. In addition, the quote divulges the personal perspective of the French Jewish community into the political machinations and maneuvering of France into combining the French Jewish community with other Jewish communities because they were ‘the same.’ In response, the French Jewish communities elucidates the ‘Jewish question with that of the ‘immigration question,’ which are not the same at all. The French Jewish community demonstrates to the state of France that they do not belong to the international Jewish community. They are French citizens, belonging to France.

With this in mind, the acceptance of the Algerian Jewish community into the metropole confounds the French Jewish community because they are still in the process of earning their right to belong in the metropole too. *L’Univers Israélite* [The Jewish World] conveys the situation of the French Jewish community in fighting (literally and metaphorically) for their rights in the metropole:

En signalant la citation à l’ordre de l’armée du sous-lieutenant d’artillerie Pierre Dreyfus, fils du commandant Alfred Dreyfus, nous avons manifesté notre étonnement de ce qu’elle avait été supprimée par la censure dans le journal *La Victoire*. Le Bonnet Rouge a relevé

¹⁷³ Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France.”

vertement le fait pour demander une enquête et une sanction : « Est-ce que, pour ce censeur, demande notre confrère, Pierre Dreyfus, fils de martyr, n'avait pas le droit d'être un héros ? Ce qui est hors de doute, c'est que la guerre n'a encore rien appris à ce Monsieur. La haine reste immuable [In signaling the summons to the army order of the sublieutenant of the artillery Pierre Dreyfus, son of the commandant Alfred Dreyfus, we have demonstrated our astonishment of what was removed by the censor in the journal *La Victoire* [the Victory]. The Red Hat was revealed vehemently the fact for demanding an inquiry and a sanction: "is, for this censure, demanding our brother, Pierre Dreyfus, son of martyr, did not have the right of being a hero? This was without doubt, this is the war was still nothing learned to this Mr. The hate remains unchanging]."¹⁷⁴

After fighting for France in the war, Pierre Dreyfus— son of Alfred Dreyfus, the victim of one of the most infamous demonstrations of antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries— also faced a display of antisemitism in having his acts from the war honored by France. This display goes so far to censor Pierre Dreyfus in a newspaper, *La Victoire* [*The Victory*], which was the successor of the anti-militaristic journal revue of the early twentieth century, *La Guerre Sociale* [*The Social War*].¹⁷⁵ Seeing that the war did not solidify the acceptance of even French Jews, the French Jewish community was more resistive to welcoming political 'others,' such as Algerian Jews, who could not advance and elevate their social status in the metropole.

In this, the *L'Univers Israelite* [The Jewish World], the Parisian-based Jewish community newspaper for international Jewish community, was certainly interested in the notion of accepting other Jewish communities. For instance, in an article titled "Les juifs étrangers en France [The Foreign Jews in France]," the Jewish community in the metropole consider the situation of Jews in Greece following the aftermath of the Balkan War (from 1912-1913):

D'autre part, jusqu'en 1913, les juifs de Salonique (il y avait avant la guerre des Balkans plus de 75000 juifs à Salonique, et 15000 Grecs seulement) ont été des juifs ottomans; ils ont gardé avec les juifs de Turquie des liens de parenté et d'amitié. Or, Salonique est, en Orient, un des plus importants centres d'influence française. Serait-il politique, en ce

¹⁷⁴ "Échos et Nouvelles," *L'Univers Israélite*, June 2, 1916, Gallica.

¹⁷⁵ "Échos et Nouvelles."

moment, de nous aliéner les juifs de Salonique et tous les Sephardis du bassin méditerranéen en molestant quelques juifs ottomans restés à Paris [Furthermore, until in 1913, the Jews of Salonika (there are before the Balkan war more than 75,000 Jews in Salonika, and only 15,000 Greeks) were Ottoman Jews ; they kept the links of relationship and of friendship with the Jews of Turkey. Or, Salonika is, in Orient, one of the more important centers of French influence. Is it political, in this moment, we alienate the Jews of Salonika and all the Sephardics from the Mediterranean basin in assaulting some Ottoman Jews staying in Paris] ?¹⁷⁶

This quote is compelling because the French Jewish community is considering their relationship to and their responsibility in the “political” situation(s) of Jews around the world.¹⁷⁷ Firstly, they highlight the relationship that exists among other Jewish communities that they are in the same country, namely the Greek Jews and the Turkish Jews: “ils ont gardé avec les juifs de Turquie des liens de parenté et d’amitié [they [the Jews of Greece] kept the links of relationship and of friendship with the Jews of Turkey].”¹⁷⁸ This piece of the quote signifies that the French Jewish community does not reject the idea of accepting other Jewish communities altogether. Yet, in this circumstance, like previously mentioned, the French Jewish community was conflicted in their response. This article is from 1916 in the prime of World War I and the Ottoman Empire was not an ally of France. In this, the French Jewish community notes their questioning their own treatment of the Ottoman Jews in the metropole: “en molestant quelques juifs ottomans restés à Paris [in assaulting some Ottoman Jews staying in Paris]?”¹⁷⁹ In response to the events in the war, the French Jewish community considers if they can divorce the conflicts of war and the tensions of their nations from the alliance of the international Jewish community and their shared

¹⁷⁶ Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France.”

¹⁷⁷ Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France.”

¹⁷⁸ Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France.”

¹⁷⁹ Spire, “Les juifs étrangers en France.”

sense of community. The answer lies in the French Jewish community themselves. Were they a part of the French nation, or the notion of the larger Jewish nation at play during this time?

In defining their own identity and sense of community, the French Jewish community embraces the communities and the political situations that benefit their cause the most. For instance, *L'Univers Israelite* [The Jewish World] stresses the circumstances of the Greek Jewish community and the Russian Jewish community, and even calls upon the international Jewish community for assistance in these circumstances:

Par suite de la guerre, un million et demi de juifs russes—hommes, femmes et enfants—ont perdu leurs foyers en un instant et ont été plongés dans les souffrances et les privations les plus terribles, encore accrues par les rigueurs de l'hiver...Il y a 350,000 réfugiés à nourrir chaque jour et il est nécessaire de réunir 120,000 livres par mois...près d'un demi-million de juifs russes combattent dans l'armée russe et contribuent à défendre notre cause aussi bien que la leur, j'estime que nous sommes tenus à tous les points de vue de répondre à cet appel de Russie avec l'empressement le plus vif et la plus grande générosité [As a result of the war, a million and half Russian Jews— men, women and children— have lost their shelters in an instant and were plunged in suffering and deprivation the most terrible, still increased by the rigor of winter...there are 350,000 refugees to feed each day and it is necessary to join 120,000 pounds by month...close to a half million of Russian Jews fighting in the Russian army and contributing to defending our cause despite it also being theirs, I estimate that we hold to all perspectives to respond to this call of Russia with eagerness the most quick and the most grand generosity].¹⁸⁰

This quote illustrates that, when the situation suits them, the French Jewish community could and would aid Jewish communities of other countries. In the first half of the war, Russia was allied with France. In helping the Jewish community of Russia, France helped the cause of the Jewish community in the metropole. The language of the quote conveys the urgency and the necessity of France's intervention in this circumstance, considering— as the article notes— the Russian Jewish has “contribuent à défendre notre cause aussi bien que la leur [contributing to defending

¹⁸⁰ “L'organisation des secours,” *L'Univers Israélite*, June 2, 1916, Gallica.

our cause despite it also being theirs]”¹⁸¹ Thus, the response of France to the call of the French Jewish community’s request for the Russian Jewish community would be a representation of France responding to the political situations of the international Jewish community. In France seeing the effort of the Jewish community around the world in the allied war effort, they would be able to understand the sacrifice of the Jewish community, which is not exclusive to any country, but to the values of freedom and of rights for their community.

With this in mind, the French Jewish is certainly receptive of the idea of helping the Russian Jewish community and the Greek Jewish community, but what about the Algerian Jewish Community? Why did the French Jewish community deem that they are not ‘worthy’ of their help and, ultimately, their acceptance into the metropole? At the time, there was a prevailing idea that the Jewish communities in the Levant were not loyal to France, but to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸² This is another call to the larger dialogue of the history of the Jewish community. Who shares the collective history, and who does not? The Algerian Jewish community does not share the collective ‘Western’ history as the Jewish community of the French Jews in the metropole. The Algerian Jewish community shared their own history that is separate and distinct from the French Jewish community.

Je devine que ce sont des Algériens, ou des Tunisiens, ou des Arméniens ou peut-être même, (car je trouve la coupure dans l’Œuvre), quelques juifs orientaux qu’on a laissés à Paris, horrible dictu, tout de même que les autres ottomans non musulmans, et peut-être aussi, quelques camelots authentiquement Montmartrois ou Bellevillois, Français pur sang, qui se sont affublés en « mercantis levantins » pour écouler leur camelote soi-disant exotique, intriguer les badauds et...les journalistes. [I guess this was from the Algerians, or the Tunisians, or the Armenians or maybe even, (because I found the bill in the work), some Eastern Jews that one left in Paris, horrible [dictate], all the same that the other non-Muslim ottomans, and maybe also, some peddlers authentically Montmartre [mountain of the martyr] or Bellevilloise, pure French blood, which were decked in “[marketing]

¹⁸¹ “L’organisation des secours.”

¹⁸² Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 112.

Levantine” for selling their stuff saying themselves exotic, intriguing the onlookers and...the journalists].¹⁸³

This quote is rather telling of the French Jewish community’s view of the Levant region in general, which is deeply rooted in stereotypes of such communities that they carry unto the Jewish communities of the Levant. In this quote, the French Jewish community marks the Algerian Jewish community— and their neighboring communities in Tunisia and other regions in the Levant— other and different from the French Jewish community. Thus, the French Jewish community counters the point of accepting the Algerian Jewish community in the metropole with their country of origin, which is *different* from France.

In this point of inquiry, the country of origin is significant to France in their accepting a particular Jewish community into the metropole. Western countries carry for more for the French Jewish community in their evaluation of extending their help and recognition of another Jewish community outside of the metropole. Yet, Eastern Jewish communities are less likely to receive aid from the French Jewish community because they are *different*. The French Jewish is already deemed *other* in the eyes of the French Republic. Hence, the French Jewish community’s accepting of a community that is *different* would not better their position in the metropole. It would solidify their status as outside of the French nation— belonging to their own nation with their own shared culture and history.

In a way, World War I forced these conversations upon the Jewish community of France to consider their belonging to the metropole and to the international Jewish community. Their accepting of other Jewish communities had implications upon their own regard in French society and in the French Republic. Yet, they still fought for the French nation and the French people.

¹⁸³ “Échos et Nouvelles,” *L’Univers Israélite*, February 4, 1916, Gallica.

The country that they were excluded from before, during, and after the war. Thus, did the war injure the bond between the international Jewish community and the French Jewish community? Throughout the archives, the bond was only strengthen in their devotion to the cause of Jewish rights in the metropole and elsewhere: “Et c’est parce que le type inaltérable d’Esther et de ses sœurs en Israël s’est perpétué à travers les siècles, que notre peuple, toujours persécuté, est aujourd’hui plus vivant que jamais et mieux disposé à soutenir de nouvelles luttes, en attendant dans l’avenir une ère de paix et de concorde universelle [And it is due to the steadfast type of Esther and of her sister in Israel it is perpetuated through the centuries, that our people, always persecuted, is today more lively than never and better disposed to maintain new struggles, in waiting in the future an era of peace and of universal agreement].”¹⁸⁴ This quote signifies that the Algerian Jewish community felt a sense of community within the international Jewish community. The injustice inflicted upon the international Jewish community was injustice inflicted upon their own community and their campaign for rights in Algeria. Therefore, the French government complicated the political identity of Algerian Jews with regard to their belonging within the French Republic and the metropole at large during and after World War I.

¹⁸⁴ La redaction, “Pourim,” *L’Israélite algérien*, March 15, 1900, Gallica.

Conclusion

To Be French?: The Lasting Effects of Conflicting Identities

In compounding France's colonial policy, World War I illuminated France's hypocrisy in forcibly conscripting colonial subjects to participate in *their* war effort without the extension of citizenship. The French government maintained their pre-war sentiments of surrendering one's personal status for French citizenship but refused to grant *en bloc* naturalization to all Algerians—Muslim and Indigenous Algerians alike—for their participation in the French war effort.¹⁸⁵ Yet, Algerian Jews' involvement in the war strengthen their case for social acceptance as French citizens in the metropole.¹⁸⁶ This dichotomy between Algerian Jews' rights and Algerian Muslims' (lack of) rights was a stark reminder of the French government's hypocritical treatment of Algeria's people groups. Like Algerian Jews, Algerian Muslims served the French war effort too. Why would one people group be accepted for their service over the other?

Another hypocrisy in France's colonial policy, the French government re-established the Crémieux Decree in 1944 without consideration of naturalizing Algeria's other indigenous communities.¹⁸⁷ During the Vichy Regime, the French government annulled the Crémieux Decree because it did not coalesce with their antisemitic agenda.¹⁸⁸ Returning them to their pre-Crémieux Decree status, Algerian Jews had lost the identity that had defined them for seventy years. At the time, Algerian Jews had been French citizens for seventy years. As a result, the

¹⁸⁵ Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 312.

¹⁸⁶ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 118: "Previously considered unworthy of their citizenship by antisemites, Algerian Jews proved themselves enthusiastic patriots by joining the war effort."

¹⁸⁷ Ofrath Avner, *Colonial Algeria and the Politics of Citizenship* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 145.

¹⁸⁸ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 97-8.

French government did not hesitate to re-establish the Crémieux Decree after the fall of the Vichy government in 1944 due to the indelible relationship between Algerian Jews and France.¹⁸⁹ Yet, why did the French government not consider extending French citizenship upon the other indigenous communities of Algeria? This seems like the opportune moment as Algerian Jews and Algerian Muslims were both relegated to the same (pre-Crémieux Decree) status of no rights.

With this political context in mind, Algeria's Muslim community desired legal, social, and political autonomy from France and their colonial occupation. In other words, Algerian Muslims wanted an independent Algeria, free from the colonization of France.¹⁹⁰ Yet, it would take until 1954 with the Vietnamese triumph over French troops at Dien Bien Phu, heralding the period of French colonies to seek independence. In 1954, Algerian nationalists commenced the eight-year war for an independent Algeria against France.¹⁹¹

Due to their conflicting identities stemming from the 1870 Crémieux Decree, Algerian Jews' relationship to the war, as French citizens, was more complex than that of Algerian Muslims, French subjects, who predominated the movement. Despite their wishes to remain neutral, Algerian Jews were put in the middle of the strife between their homeland, Algeria, and their nation (to which they belonged as citizens), France.¹⁹² Both sides, France and the Algerian nationalists, wanted the support of Algerian Jews to strengthen their campaign.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 296.

¹⁹⁰ Archives de Sciences Po, Fonds Julien, Ju 20: Service Français d'Information: Le Statut d'Algérie, 6 August 1947, 24.

¹⁹¹ Avner, *Colonial Algeria and the Politics*, 151.

¹⁹² Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 335.

¹⁹³ "An Appeal by the FLN for the Support of Algerian Jewry," November 25, 1959, reproduced in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 540-1; Jacques Lazarus, "Réalités Algériens," *Information Juive*, no. 116 (February 1960): 1, YIVO.

Nearly a century after the establishment of the Crémieux Decree, Algerian Jews still grappled with their identities and their alliance to Algeria and France. In a pivotal way, the Algerian War symbolized the moment of reckoning for Algerian Jews to *finally* affirm their allegiance—and, ultimately, their identity. Were they Algerian? Or, were they French? The Algerian War made them choose a side. When forced to choose between France and the Algerian Nationalists, Algerian Jews affirmed their allegiance to France.¹⁹⁴ Despite the antisemitic and racist treatment promulgated by the French government (before, during, and after the Algerian War), Algerian Jews in general chose their French identity over their homeland. By the end of the war, Algerian Nationalists realized that Algerian Jews could not be included in the independent nation of Algeria because they represented France through their French citizenship.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, regardless of Algerian Jews' allegiance, neither side considered them full members of their communities. As historian Sophie Roberts has contended, Algerian Jews “were not Algerian enough for the Algerians or French enough for the French.”¹⁹⁶ Although both sides in the war recruited Jewish support through proposing ideas of unity between them and Algerian Jews, these efforts stemmed from political necessity, rather than social acceptance in their respective communities.¹⁹⁷ Both sides believed that Algerian Jews were outside of their respective communities.

¹⁹⁴ Lazarus, “Réalités algériennes,” 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ethan B. Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 203.

¹⁹⁶ Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 333.

¹⁹⁷ For a discussion of the recruitment tactics from both the French and the FLN sides in the Algerian war see Sarah B. Sussman, “Changing Lands, Changing Identities: The Migration of Algerian Jewry to France, 1954-1967” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2002), 115-32.

Following Algerian liberation in 1962, Algerian Jews largely migrated to France. Due to their siding with France, Algerian Jews were excluded from the front de libération nationale [National Liberation Front] (FLN)'s and from Algeria's Muslim and indigenous communities, and by extension, the state-building project of an independent Algeria.¹⁹⁸ Taking into account their sacrifice of their homeland in choosing to side with France, Algerian Jews were, in a way, wholly exiled from Algeria.¹⁹⁹ Instead, they repatriated— by French citizenship, not origin— to France, making official their identity and their citizenship to the metropole.

In migrating to France, Algerian Jews embraced their Frenchness and shed their Algerian identity. Nevertheless, the French people and the French society at large did not reciprocate these sentiments of acceptance that were reflected in France's colonial policy. French society still considered Algerian Jews as 'others.' Inhibiting the French from fully accepting Algerian Jews as French citizens, Algerian Jews' Algerian identity remained as a reminder of their colonial past.²⁰⁰ As well, their Algerian identity remained as a persistent reminder throughout their lives of the culture, the identity, and, ultimately, the homeland that they sacrificed in becoming French citizens.

¹⁹⁸ Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 203.

¹⁹⁹ Sussman, "Changing Lands," 141.

²⁰⁰ Stein, *Saharan Jews*, 146: "In practical as well as symbolic terms, the legacy of colonial and military rule was continuing to influence the legal experience of Algerian Jewry, even in the postcolonial era."

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ANOM F80 1631 – Culte israélite 1832/1858

Gouvernement général de l'Algérie Correspondance politique des Affaires indigènes

ANOM GGA 1H 85 – Correspondance confidentielle 1882-1898

Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine

Fonds Messimy

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Série D – Affaires Militaires

Sous-série 4D – Personnel militaire

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