

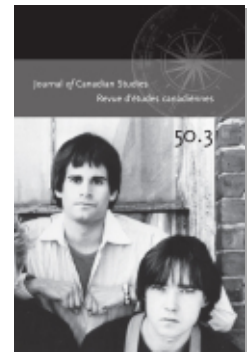


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Scholarship on Moroccan Jews in Canada: Multidisciplinary, Multilingual, and Diasporic

YOLANDE COHEN and STEPHANIE TARA SCHWARTZ

A historiography on Moroccan Jews in Canada (1960–2015) offers an exemplary case study of conducting comprehensive research on religious and ethnic minorities within a Canadian national framework. To find literature on this community, one must take a multinational, multidisciplinary, and multilingual approach. This mirrors the diasporic reality of Moroccan Jews, themselves dispersed from Morocco to Israel, France, Canada, and beyond. Scholarship on Moroccan Jews in Canada must cross the linguistic divides of Quebec and Ontario, as the majority francophone, but also Spanish- and Judeo-Arabic-speaking, population settled predominantly in Montreal followed by Toronto. In an attempt to examine Moroccan Jews as part of Canadian and Quebec history, the authors examined over 130 articles for this study—mostly regarding Moroccan Jews in Montreal, but these also included some key works in Canadian Jewish studies and Quebec studies. In what follows, we analyze the chronology of these works in relation to broader trends in Canadian Jewish studies and Quebec studies. The trends in the growth of studies on Moroccan Jews in Canada have been divided into roughly four overlapping periods: immigration and integration (1960s to 1970s); recognition and rapprochement (1980s); multiculturalism, interculturalism, and the production of ethnicity (1990s); and memory, identity, and religion (2000s to present).

Sephardic, historiography, Moroccan, Jews, Canada

En ce qui concerne l'étude exhaustive des minorités religieuses et ethniques en contexte pan-canadien, l'historiographie des juifs marocains au Canada (1960–2015) permet une remarquable étude de cas. Pour trouver de la documentation sur cette communauté, en effet, il faut adopter une approche multinationale, multidisciplinaire et multilingue, ce qui reflète tout à fait la réalité diasporique des juifs marocains, dispersés depuis le Maroc en Israël, en France, au Canada et ailleurs. Notre savoir sur les juifs marocains au Canada doit passer outre aux divisions linguistiques du Québec et de l'Ontario, puisque la majorité de cette population, qui est francophone, mais aussi hispanophone et judéoarabophone, s'est installée en grande partie à Montréal, puis à Toronto. Dans le but d'étudier les juifs marocains dans le contexte de l'histoire canadienne et québécoise, les auteures ont passé en revue plus de 130 articles ; la plupart concernent les juifs marocains établis à Montréal, alors que d'autres constituent des ouvrages clés du domaine des études juives canadiennes et des études québécoises. Les auteures analysent ici la chronologie

de ces ouvrages par rapport à des courants plus généraux de ces domaines d'études. Les différents courants des études sur les juifs marocains au Canada se divisent, grosso modo, en quatre périodes qui se chevauchent : immigration et intégration (années 1960 et 1970) ; reconnaissance et rapprochement (années 1980) ; multiculturalisme, interculturalisme et production de l'ethnicité (années 1990) ; mémoire, identité et religion (des années 2000 jusqu'à aujourd'hui).

séfarade, historiographie, Marocains, juifs, Canada

Context

The study of Moroccan Jews in Canada is part of a broader and burgeoning field of Sephardic, Mizrahi, and Arab Jewish studies. Within two decades of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, nearly the entire population of Jews (around 800,000) left their homes in North Africa, the Middle East, Iran, and Turkey and migrated to Israel, France, the United States, and Canada. In Jewish studies, the diverse histories of these Jews have generally been overshadowed by those of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jews. At the same time, Jewish histories in general are marginal to national histories such as that of Morocco, though this has begun to change with works such as those by [Kenbib \(1994\)](#), [Abitbol \(2009\)](#), [Miller \(2013\)](#), and [Kably \(2011, 2013\)](#). With the vast migration of Moroccan Jews to Quebec after 1957, Canada became home to these migrants, as well as a crucial site for the study of Moroccan and Sephardic Jews.

The category of *Jew* is a notoriously difficult object of study due to its simultaneous and conflicting definitions as constituting a religious, ethnic, racial, national, and/or cultural group. According to [Michael Brown \(2007\)](#), in the period of *binationalism* from 1759 to 1960s, “like French and Anglo-Canadians, Jews in Canada organized themselves as an ethnic group, a nationality, unlike American Jews, who organized as a religious group” (3). This helps explain why the Federation of Zionist Societies, founded by Clarence de Sola, a Sephardic Jew in 1899, took hold as one of Canada’s first national Jewish organizations, until the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) formed in 1919; however, [Richard Menkis \(2011\)](#) demonstrated how the CJC preferred to define the Jewish community as a religious, rather than an ethnic, group during the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B Commission), which took place between 1963 and 1965. By dismissing the terms *race* and *ethnicity* as irrelevant to the inquiry and shifting the focus to culture, the CJC resisted the B&B Commission’s designation of Jews under the category of “other ethnic groups” in contrast to Canada’s “two founding races” ([Haque 2012](#), 63–4).

Despite the fact that groups such as the left-wing secular Yiddishist Workmen's Circle wanted Jewish ethnic and national culture to be recognized (Menkis 2011, 289), Saul Hayes, the director of the CJC, ultimately preferred to follow the example of the United States and advocated for Canadian Jews as a religious group rather than an ethnic group on par with Ukrainians and others. This tension has also been evident for social scientists in determining whether to count Jewish census data according to religion or ethnicity (Canada's long-form census included both possibilities before 2011), leading to the development of the *Jewish Standard Definition*, which includes Jewish ethnicity when *no religion* is indicated (Schnoor 2011).

In Canada and Quebec, the language/ethnicity/nation nexus has further complicated the category of Jews. The immigration of over 8,000 francophone Jews to Montreal from the 1960s to the 1980s during Quebec's modernization, secularization, and nationalization movements created a unique situation in the world (Miles 2012). Montreal's majority Jewish anglophone community, the largest in Canada at that time, was ultimately challenged to rethink its own self-definition and how it ran its institutions; Moroccan Jews were led to redefine themselves as *Sephardim*; and many non-Jewish Canadians and Quebecers were encouraged to rethink their stereotypes of Jews (once misunderstood as *Juifs Catholiques*). According to Miles (2012), this wave of immigration revealed the extent to which the religious ideal of Jewish unity clashed with the social fact of Sephardic and Ashkenazi ethnolinguistic subgroups that were perpetuated under Canadian multiculturalism and Quebec's commitment to being a francophone nation.

Quebec Jews historically have often been described as a *third solitude*, having a distinct ethnicity that developed between the competing nationalisms of English and French Canada. Education and public services in the province were divided along religious/linguistic lines and contributed to this triangulated development. In 1914, Yiddish was the third most spoken language in Quebec after French and English; by the 1960s, the community was largely anglophone. Jews had been designated *Protestant* under the province's confessional education system, and they attended English-language schools. As a result, in the 1970s, the majority of Montreal's 115,000 Jews, mostly of Ashkenazi background, were anglophone (Hayes 1977). The Quiet Revolution, which culminated with the election of the Parti Québécois (1976) and the adoption of the Charter of the French Language (1977), rattled the stability of Montreal Jews as anglophones in Quebec. This, combined with the declining numbers and the aging of the Jewish population, contributed to anxiety by Montreal Jewish leaders for their future in Quebec.

The CJC and Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS) (supported by the American Joint Distribution Committee) reached out to new immigration pools, including the

Moroccan Jewish community, as early as the 1950s. Spurred by the aftermath of the Shoah, they sought to *rescue* Jews from the Arab lands before it was too late, and at the same time to replenish the ranks of the Montreal Jewish community, which was growing older and producing fewer children. Though Moroccan Jewish migration to Canada began in 1957, it peaked in the years following Israel's 1967 war (the Six-Day War) and the violent repercussions it had on Jews in Morocco.

On a communal level, Moroccan Jews, arriving in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, seized upon the opportunities afforded by a majority francophone population and the movement toward Francization to establish their own Jewish French-language schools (École Maïmonide), organizations (i.e., Communauté sépharade du Québec [CSQ], Centre Communautaire Juif, Département francophone du Y, Hillel français), and a distinct identity apart from the Ashkenazim. We have focused on francophone Moroccans in Quebec, but there are also Spanish-speaking Moroccan Jewish communities in Montreal and Toronto who are even further marginalized in the literature.

Moroccan Jews organized themselves under the rubric of the Association Sefarade Francophone (ASF), creating a unique Sephardic identity that gathered together a loose network of non-Ashkenazim, including Iraqis, Egyptians, and others. Despite these efforts to forge independent Sephardic institutions, Moroccan Jews remained under the towering power of Ashkenazi organizations (Lasry and Tapia 1989; Tulchinsky 2008, 453–6). The clash between Ashkenazim and Sephardim proved to be one the most enduring misunderstandings that still hovers over the Jewish community of Montreal. The conflict between these groups in Canada should be viewed in relation to the global situation of displaced Moroccan Jews vying to forge diaspora networks around Sephardic or Mizrahi identities. It is from this background that we can begin to explore the historiography of Moroccan Jews in Canada as an essentially diasporic one.

Immigration and Integration (1960s–70s)

The first academic papers on Moroccan Jews were written in the late 1960s, mostly in English by faculty and students at McGill University's School of Social Work, connected to the JIAS. These papers focus on understanding family life (Amber and Lipper 1968), economic adjustment of North African immigrants (Modolfsky 1969), immigration (Berman, Nahmiash, and Osmer 1970), and integration (Batshaw and Low 1971). The question of immigrant adjustment stands out in these studies, the goal being to determine how to best integrate these Jewish immigrants with different languages, religious practices, and backgrounds into Canada and the established Jewish community. Together with the question of language and demography (Légaré

1965), there was also a concern with the identification of these new immigrants to their Jewishness, Moroccanness, or Frenchness.

Meanwhile, as early as 1975, Moroccan Jews themselves began to publish academic papers and dissertations about their community, with the clear intention of establishing their distinct (francophone) identity. Jean-Claude Lasry, a long-time activist and president of the ASF from 1972 to 1974, published articles on Moroccan Jewish immigration and mental health in *Social Psychiatry* (1977) and *International Review of Applied Psychology* (1980). In 1976, Esther Benaïm completed a PhD thesis on the integration of Moroccan Jews in Canada under the supervision of Moroccan Jewish scholar Doris Bensimon Donath in Paris. Benaïm argued that the French language permitted the Sephardim in Quebec to distinguish themselves from the Ashkenazim, who dominated and controlled community spaces in Montreal (Cohen and Guerry 2011, 295). She wrote about the Moroccan Jews of Quebec as part of the Jewish diaspora (Benaïm 1977) and on the paradox of being a Jew and becoming Sephardic in Quebec (Benaïm 1979). In 1979, Fernand G. Filion also completed a PhD thesis on the Sephardic Jewish community of Quebec and its institutionalization. While previous studies had specified *North African* or *Moroccan* communities, Filion used the term *Communauté Sépharade*, reflecting the change in community self-representation with the formation of the CSQ in 1976.

This early writing on Moroccan Jews in Montreal was focused on the integration of Moroccan Jewish immigrants into Quebec and into a Jewish diaspora on a psychological or ethno-historical level (Bordes-Benayoun and Schnapper 2006). These articles were explicitly transnational—they were connected to both Moroccan and Jewish diasporas and less concerned with a Canadian national framework. While this can likely be explained by the relatively recent immigration of Moroccan Jews to Canada, these works took place in a particular context. The 1970s was a potent time politically for Moroccan Jews in Israel, which had repercussions for how they were being studied in Montreal and Paris. Mizrahim (*Eastern* or *Oriental*, Jews from North Africa and the Middle East) were fighting against the second-class treatment they had been receiving since their migration to Israel. Concern for the treatment of Moroccan Jews under the Ashkenazi regime became a global concern. Ongoing conflict in the Middle East between Israel, Palestinians, and surrounding Arab states led some to become very involved in peace initiatives.

Benaïm, for example, was active in both the CSQ in Montreal and the international group *Identité et Dialogue*, headed by André Azoulay, which aimed to promote Sephardic Jewish history and to build intercultural dialogue, especially between Arabs and Jews. It reaffirmed the Arab identity of Moroccan Jews, as well as their proximity with Israel, pitching them as emissaries of peace in the Arab–Israeli conflict. This

was also the aim of the conference organized by the group in Paris in December 1978 and its published proceedings, *Juifs du Maroc, Identité et dialogue* (1980). With representatives from Canada, France, Morocco, and Israel, the conference saw the liminal group of Moroccan Jews in Israel, dominated by Ashkenazi authorities and sharing elements of language and culture with Palestinians, as potential mediators for establishing an alternative path to peace in the Middle East. The conference helped create a network of academic and community activists who started to work on the project of strengthening the Moroccans' position in international Jewish organizations (with the creation of the Fédération Sépharade Mondiale), as well as upgrading the status of the Moroccan Jewish population in Israel.

In the context of the political upheavals in both Canada and Israel during this time period, there is evidence that Moroccan Jews were looking to international solidarity movements rather than to the Canadian national framework. Books and articles on Canadian Jews more generally tended to focus on biographies of individuals, such as the opera singer Pauline Donalda (Brotman 1975) or efforts like that of David Rome's (1974, 1975) archival compilations to systematically document the key issues of Canadian Jewish history. The seed of a comprehensive Canadian Jewish studies field was just beginning to be planted, while writings on Moroccan Jews were already transnational and diasporic due to the nature of the community's numerous displacements and its relatively recent immigration. In the political context of the 1980s, studies on Moroccan Jews would remain peripheral to the effort to write Canadian Jewish history, but bridges had begun to be built across the lines of the language divide.

Recognition and Rapprochement: 1980s

The 1980s saw the release of the first academic monographs on Jews and Canada. First was Abella and Troper's (1982) groundbreaking *None Is Too Many*, which revealed Canada's anti-Semitic immigration policy toward Jews during the 1930s and 1940s. Michael Brown's (1987) *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759–1914* was the first book to analyze Quebec's Jewish community as a *third solitude*; this was followed shortly by Michael Greenstein's (1989) *Third Solitude: Tradition and Discontinuity in Jewish-Canadian Literature*. Brown ponders why Jews in Quebec identified so strongly with English Canada rather than with French Quebec. The answer to this question, he argues, lies within the defining period of 1759–1914, when the Jewish community of Montreal established itself and its allegiances, which would influence communal relations into the tense political climate of the 1980s. Their own version of nationalism—Zionism, rather than Canadian or

Quebec nationalism—united Canadian Jews during this early period through the Federation of Zionist Societies in Canada. According to [Brown \(1987\)](#), the high rate of intermarriage between North African Jews and French Canadians in the 1960s signalled a potential change: that French Canada had become more welcoming to Jews in general (260).

In contrast to anglophone studies of Canadian Jews that stressed Jewish distinctiveness from other national communities within the framework of multiculturalism, francophone Quebec scholars were more concerned with *rapprochement*, an attempt to build bridges between Jews and French Québécois under Quebec's new national project. For example, [Anctil and Caldwell \(1984\)](#) published the edited collection *Juifs et réalités juives au Québec* under the rubric of Montreal's Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture. The authors' aim was to make the history and sociology of Quebec's ethnocultural minorities more accessible to the Québécois "de vieille souche" (7). They did this by emphasizing the *Québécois* identity of Quebec Jews (in contrast to studies of the Jewish community, which had been predominantly from a *Canadian* perspective) and by making links between Jewish and francophone Québécois experiences of oppression and communal strategies in the diaspora (8). [Langlais and Rome's \(1986\)](#) book *Juifs et Québécois français*⁴ is another attempt at ameliorating relations between Jews and French Canadians during this period of encounters with the other while integrating Jewish experiences within a Quebec national narrative. This book, too, focuses on the Ashkenazi Jewish community with only a brief section on the "Arrival of French-Speaking Jews" (220), who the authors believe can help bridge the gap between anglophone Jews and French Québécois. These outreach and collaborative endeavours occurred during the decade of a mass exodus of anglophone Jews out of Montreal and Quebec. It is surprising, however, that both works fail to incorporate more fully the voices of Moroccan Jewish scholars, who were becoming increasingly active in telling their own histories.

Between the competing discourses of anglophone Jews trying to articulate a Canadian Jewish history and French Québécois hoping to fold Jews into a Quebec national narrative, Moroccan Jewish scholars were mainly concerned by this displaced population's fate, stressing the continuity of their diasporic relations to Morocco and Israel. Mikhaël Elbaz, anthropologist at Université Laval, conducted an important study on the plight of Moroccan Jews in Israel. Through his work on generational changes in the Moroccan Jewish population in Montreal, Quebec, and Israel, [Elbaz \(1986, 1989, 1993\)](#) observed a sharp change within the younger group, documenting the religious turn that took place in the 1980s. For Elbaz, the second generation's quest for a stable identity had led many in the younger generation of Moroccan Jews toward a more orthodox Judaism, fuelled by Ashkenazi rabbis and against the

secularism of their parents. For this group, religious revival and the adoption of Ashkenazi orthodoxy was the way to integrate into Israeli and Canadian societies. For the older group, for which Jean-Claude Lasry seems to be the spokesperson, secularism and Sephardism were the essential pillars of identity. Striving to assess their difference, whether in the languages they spoke, their cultural habits, or religious traditions, Lasry's works focused on the difference of the Moroccan Jewish community from both Canadian and Quebec nations. The inclusion of Lasry's (1981) article "A Francophone Diaspora in Quebec" in the English-language anthology *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, edited by Morton Weinfeld, William Shaffir, and Irwin Cotler, was a first attempt to bridge anglophone and francophone Jewish scholarship under the rubric of Canadian Jewish studies. The article nevertheless stressed the language divide, as well as the differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews.

Concerned with the questions raised by the massive displacement of their community, Berdugo-Cohen, Cohen, and Lévy (1987) and André Elbaz (1988) documented Moroccan Jews' experiences of migration from sociological and historical frameworks. They were the first to look at autobiography and oral history as methods for exploring the perceptions of three generations of Moroccan Jewish immigrants, producing a trove of oral archives that documented their memories of migration and exile. Influenced by the growing interest in oral history as a way to give a voice to invisible or marginalized minorities (Draper and Karlinsky 1986), the book *Juifs Marocains à Montréal* (Berdugo-Cohen, Cohen, and Lévy 1987) presents the different themes that structured the migrants' experiences and memories of migration. Their life stories stressed the first generation's nostalgia for, as well as their silence about, the causes of their migrations (Cohen 2011). Also outlined are the hectic paths those migrants took before arriving in Canada, their transitions through different locations, and their unending circulations. Oral testimonies—valuable first-hand accounts of Moroccan Jewish life and migration—offered ample individual reflections on these migrations (Cohen and Messika 2012; Cohen, Messika, and Cohen-Fournier 2015). Sharing those memories allowed the participants to feel an agency in their lives, as it gave a voice to those otherwise silenced. Focusing on the migrant's perceptions of their own lives, the study shows their ambivalences and various attachments, their nostalgic memories, and their losses.

On another side of the spectrum, Lasry and Tapia (1989), in their edited volume *Les Juifs du Maghreb: Diasporas contemporaines*, contextualized Maghrebi Jewish experiences in terms of diaspora. The sociological bent of the book prioritizes quantitative and descriptive analysis but lacks a complex theory of ethnicity or diaspora to back up the studies, even as it insists upon such a framework for contemplating the experiences of Moroccan Jews. These works by Moroccan Jewish authors demonstrated a

unique approach to scholarship on Canadian Jews and a means of announcing their inclusion in scholarship on Jews in Canada and Quebec. At the same time, Ashkenazi Jewish scholars, such as the performer and ethnomusicologist Judith Cohen, began to take a more active interest in the study of Moroccan Jewish culture. Cohen (1982, 1989a, 1989b) published several articles on Judeo-Spanish traditional song, beginning to link Moroccan Jews' culture and music in Montreal and Toronto, as well as hispanophones and francophones.

Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, and the Production of Ethnicity: 1990s

Shifting into the 1990s, Canadian Jewish studies highlighted the key themes of anti-Semitism (Davies 1992) and multiculturalism (Adelman and Simpson 1996) for articulating a national Jewish consciousness. We see the first large-scale Canadian Jewish histories in Gerald Tulchinsky's (1992, 1998) *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* and *Branching Out: The Transformations of the Canadian Jewish Community*. In his preface to *Taking Root*, Tulchinsky argues that the Canadian Jewish community developed differently from American Jewry in the context of a range of unique conditions, from the duality of its national personality (a conflict between French and English) to distinct immigration, economic, and urban-growth patterns. The community that evolved was

more traditional, more superficially unified, and more culturally homogeneous than that of our U.S. cousins. While American Jewry yearned for integration into the mainstream of the great republic, Canadians strove to express their Jewishness in a country that had no coherent self-definition—except perhaps the solitudes of duality, isolation, northernness, and borrowed glory. (xxv)

Tulchinsky's two-book project (1992, 1998; the two volumes were updated and combined into one book in 2008) was the first, and remains the only, comprehensive history of Canada's Jews, stretching from St. John's to Victoria, beginning with the settlement of Jews in Quebec in the 1760s and continuing to the time of writing. His work was emblematic of a general nation-building project by Canadians, which was at its peak in the 1990s, to define themselves against the cultural domination of their national neighbour to the South. As Koffman (2013) writes, this was the beginning of Canadian Jewish studies (CJS) as a "bona fide" field (402). In 1993, the Canadian Jewish Historical Society (established in the 1970s) became the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (ACJS), and the organization's journal changed its name to *Canadian Jewish Studies*. Under its new mandate, ACJS broadened its scope from

a focus on history to include also sociology, literary studies, and political science. By 1999, [Brown, Menkis, Schlesinger, and Schoenfeld \(1999–2000\)](#) had recorded over 1,600 books and articles on Canadian Jews from the fields of history, political science, economics, anthropology, sociology, women's studies, literature, and others. While CJS was defining itself in contrast to studies in the United States, however, Jewish pluralism in itself came somewhat as an afterthought. The specificity of the still rather recent migration of North African Jews was perceived as relatively irrelevant to the production of a national ethnic group, which was the aim of [Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld's \(1993\)](#) edited volume *The Jews in Canada*. The inclusion of [Lasry's \(1993\)](#) article "Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Montréal" in the seventh and final section of the book, entitled "Minorities," along with articles about Russian Jews in Toronto, Jewish survival in small communities in Canada, Jewish poverty and Aliyah, and return migration, bore witness to this. Like [Lasry's 1981](#) contribution to the *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* anthology, this offered another example of the editors' will to integrate Moroccan Jews into a comprehensive CJS perspective. Lasry's insistence on the radical difference between Ashkenazim and Sephardim fed into the multiculturalist discourse, yet the framing of his article within the overall work declared that Jewish diversity was a minor issue compared to those such as anti-Semitism. Multiculturalism was useful for anglophone Jews trying to construct a unified ethnic voice vis-à-vis English and French Canada but not for promoting multicultural Jewish identities as such ([Byers and Schwartz 2013](#)).

For Moroccan Jewish scholars, multiculturalism offered an opportunity. [Lévy and Cohen's \(1992\)](#) *Itinéraires sépharades: L'odyssée des Juifs sépharades de l'Inquisition à nos jours* aimed at recapturing Moroccan Jewish history within its multiseular Sephardic roots. Lévy and Cohen also oversaw the production of a multimedia CD-ROM, *Juifs marocains: Traditions et modernité* ([Berdugo and Cohen 2000](#)), which featured sections on Moroccan Jewish music, religious traditions and cantillation, culture, and culinary tastes, and a biographical dictionary containing more than 2,000 names. Written and published in French, these works signalled the wills of their authors to reassess the existence of a world and culture that was waning under their eyes; at the same time, they established links with the communities in the diaspora, especially in Montreal. This attempt at building a common Sephardi identity was done within the multicultural lens.

During this period, scholarship on Moroccan Jews increasingly demonstrated the richness of Moroccan Jewish diversity and cultural production as distinct from that of Ashkenazi Jews. [Suzanne Myers Sawa \(1991\)](#) published an article in *Canadian Folk Music Journal* on the difficulties faced by the Jewish Marrakesh-born, Canadian-trained, Middle Eastern dancer Dahlia Obadia. [Lucette Heller-Goldenberg \(1997\)](#) wrote about

Quebec as a site where Moroccan Jewish culture, threatened by the near-dissolution of Moroccan Jewish life in Morocco, was preserved through its literary works. With the end of mass Moroccan Jewish migration after 1980, issues of integration and institutional development were discussed in works by [Taieb-Carlen \(1996\)](#) and [Cohen and Lévy \(1998\)](#). In the 1990s, multiculturalism was used as a tool by Moroccan Jews to escape the religious minority status (and its related anti-Semitism) and to enter the broader Canadian and Quebec citizenry through its openness to ethnic minorities in this time period. They succeeded in creating their own subethnic group within the Jewish community with its distinct Sephardic identity. These publications, mainly produced by Moroccan Jewish scholars attuned to the need to grasp their own history, attest also to the co-construction of a subfield within Jewish studies, as well as North African and Middle Eastern studies. Paradoxically, both Canadian multiculturalism and Quebec interculturalism helped prompt this ethnic turn.

Memory, Identity, and Religion: 2000s

The trend toward the recognition of the plurality of ethnic voices became even more apparent in the following decade. With the growth of works on identity and memory in social sciences and the humanities, Jewish subjects also gained traction in a number of different ways, including the reassessment of religion as the basis for community belonging. Since 2000, there has been an explosion in scholarship on Canadian and Quebec Jews in general, doubling from the production in the 1980s and 1990s. [Koffman \(2013\)](#) counted over 700 articles on Canadian Jewish subjects produced between 1999 and 2013, with history as the primary disciplinary approach (at 25%). He observed further that most of these articles were published in Jewish studies journals, with very few in Canadian studies journals, and were *multidisciplinary* rather than *interdisciplinary*. There was a move toward greater Jewish diversity in works such as [Menkis and Ravvin's \(2004\)](#) *The Canadian Jewish Studies Reader*. Unlike in previous anthologies organized chronologically, Janice Rosen's essay "Moroccan Jewish Saint Veneration: From the Maghreb to Montreal" appeared among the first chapters in the volume, which were organized thematically. This reflected a growing trend of the diversification of CJS, with [Shaffir's \(2001, 2002\)](#) writing on Hassidim, [Bialystok's \(2000\)](#) work on the impact of the Holocaust on the Canadian Jewish community, and articles by [Wolfman \(2002\)](#) and [Schnoor \(2006\)](#) and a PhD dissertation by [Lash \(2007\)](#) concerning gay and lesbian Canadian Jewish identities.

Indeed, the cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences in the United States offered a new avenue for integrating Jewish cultures and experiences in national and transnational settings ([Biale 2002](#)). It encouraged the exploration of

a large array of languages and diverse cultures and experiences of Sephardic Jews. Their lives under colonial rule, whether French, British, Spanish, Portuguese, or Italian, made theirs a unique place to explore post-colonial settings and changes (Valensi 2002). A deeper understanding of the larger culture of Jews in Muslim lands can still emerge from these studies since their cultural boundaries are more pervasive than the national ones.

The cultural turn also occurred internationally with the development of multidisciplinary Sephardic studies. The question of how the Jews lived/survived/strived in Muslim lands offered a new means of analyzing their cultures, practices, and choices of where to migrate. Their language, habits, foodways, and religious practices were scrutinized in relationship to their traditional and new environments (Cohen, Messika, and Cohen-Fournier 2015). Informed by a wealth of works on Moroccan Jews produced by historians in Israel (Abitbol 2009), France (Abécassis et al. 2012), and the United States (Schroeter 2002, 2008), a new consideration grew around the importance of establishing a clear historical documentation of these people's fate after the Second World War. The role of transnational Jewish organizations (such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), as well as the role of the Israeli Immigration offices (such as the Jewish Agency), was central to that historical claim (Cohen and Messika 2012). Maud Mandel's (2014) study shows that international Jewish organizations created a category of "Juifs d'Afrique du Nord" (28), bringing attention and specific public policies to the difficulties they encountered in settling in France, as one example.

There is also a move toward diversity in Sephardic publications. In literary studies, for example, Heller-Goldenberg (2004) and Redouane (2004) explore, respectively, Moroccan and Sephardic literature. We can also observe a rise of literary scholars taking interest in the works of Iraqi Jewish writer Naim Kattan and Egyptian Jewish writer Victor Teboul (Sadock 2006; Dahab 2009); as well, Jean-Luc Bédard (2005, 2007) and Kelly Amanda Train (2008), both in the field of sociology, have contributed PhD theses and scholarly publications on Sephardim.

It is worth highlighting here the conference and subsequent publication *Identités sépharades et modernité*, edited by Jean-Claude Lasry, Joseph Lévy, and Yolande Cohen (2007). The conference's organizers attempted to stress the importance of listening to other voices in the Jewish community that were expressing themselves in the academy and, more broadly, in intellectual circles.

Jean-Luc Bédard's (2007, 178) article in the previously mentioned volume followed Mikhaël Elbaz (1993) in arguing that re-diasporisation—a superimposition of a second exile (from Morocco) on the classic diasporic relationship with Israel—is a major factor in the collective memory of Moroccan Jews living in Montreal. The community had to

negotiate their relationship between *here* and *there*, their homeland (Morocco), or nostalgia for, and the impossibility or undesirability of return. Other important factors for the community included the ambiguity of their relationship to French culture, which served to link them to modernity in Morocco; their identification with new localities in North America, where, for example, the ethnonym *Sephardic* was adopted; and the process of *rejudaisation*. For some Moroccan Jewish youth, religiosity accompanied the reconstruction of the memory of origins in Morocco. Families and individuals began to distance themselves from each other and from the institutionalized community, with the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec (CSUQ) linking itself more strongly to religion. The creation of schools (such as L'Académie Yéchiva Yavné) on the model of Ashkenazi orthodoxy had been at the centre of a heated debate within CSUQ itself. On one side, the first generation of community leaders considered themselves to be secular Jews, eager to defend their view of their community as built on an ethnocultural basis; on the other, a second generation of community leaders now strove to defend a rejudaisation of the community.

Claude Tapia's (2007) article in the *Identités sépharades et modernité* volume situated Sephardism specifically within the realm of *francité*. This article stood in contrast to works of other scholars such as Ella Shohat (2002), who called for Mizrahi studies that question the Mizrahi subaltern position in Israel and unravel both the abuses faced by those populations in Israel, as well as the mythologies that enabled it. These publications reflected the extent to which the study of Moroccan Jews in Canada continues to require a multinational approach, reflecting the influence of international concerns for a diasporic population.

The Sephardic Jewish community of Quebec has itself continued to change over time, shifting its focal point further from Morocco and closer to France and Israel, as is evident from analyses of its community newspaper, *La Voix Sépharade* (LVS) (Manac'h 2006). The paper, at first, devoted little attention to Canadian and Québécois topics. A few decades later, the CSUQ leadership left its secularist ambition to embrace all expressions of religion, as well as an overtly Zionist stance during the difficult times Israel was going through. Not that these positions were non-existent before, but they were covered by a concern to establish a specific space for the community. The power struggle of the first group of young and not-so-young male community leaders with their Ashkenazi counterparts that had been occurring since the 1960s receded behind the need to gather all forces around Israel in the 1980s. Another younger generation of Moroccan Jewish community leaders came to see this objective, together with a religious stance, as central to their activity; at least, this is how we can understand it through the changing directions of LVS articles (Manac'h 2006).

Conclusion

Since 2010, publications about and by Moroccan Jews in Canada have continued to increase. From David Bensoussan's (2010) edited collections on Sephardic writers to Yolande Cohen's (2010, 2011, 2015) work on migration and memory; Mechtild Gilzmer's (2010) articles on Sephardic literature in Quebec; Kelly Amanda Train's (2013) work on North African Jewish experiences in Toronto; Jessica Roda's (2015) article on Montreal's Festival Sefarad; and Martin Messika's (2015) thesis on the politics of integration, compared in Canada and France, the growth of a rich literature has been demonstrated in recent years. These authors continue to further trends begun in the 1990s and 2000s toward the diversification of literature on Moroccan Jews. From the focus on integration and immigration in the 1960s and 1970s, the study of Moroccan Jews in Canada has shifted to a study of Moroccan Jews as individuals and comprising multiple communities in their own right and in relation to communities beyond national frameworks. The example of Moroccan Jewish studies in Canada demonstrates the particularities of studying multilingual, religious, and ethnic minorities beyond the master national narratives of Canada and Quebec. Moroccan Jews, because of their ongoing diasporic connections with Morocco, France, Israel, and the United States, and because of their internal diversity of language—French, Spanish, Judeo-Arabic—resist a single disciplinary lens, as do their religion and cultures. As such, this scholarship provides an example to Canadian studies: that they should further strive to reach across francophone and anglophone scholarship and partake in studies on Canadians from beyond a Canadian studies framework.

In anglophone publications, Canada–US comparisons have often been made in efforts to write about Jewish experience in Canada as a whole. It is striking that Sephardic studies, in contrast, has been taken up in journals dedicated to francophone studies rather than Jewish studies specifically. France is a more frequent frame of reference for Sephardic studies, and was long before the rise of Sephardic studies in the US. Works on Sephardim thus reached different audiences than articles in anglophone Canadian Jewish studies. We might consider these as being more diasporic in reach—not limited to a single national framework, but instead jumping between multiple homelands, reflecting the experiences of Moroccan Jews. In France, too, Sephardic studies had trouble finding its place. This could be attributed to the ways in which Franco-Judaism defined itself first as French and then as Jewish. Unlike in France, however, where Franco-Judaism has defined the field of Jewish studies for the last century, we cannot find in Canada the same urge to establish what it is to be a Canadian Jew.

Scholarship on Moroccan Jews in Canada reveals an ambivalent relationship between a national and diasporic framework for making sense of Jewish experiences in Canada and Quebec. On one hand, the nationalist framework makes the case for paying attention to the unique experiences of Jews in Canada as opposed to other national or geographic contexts and encourages its scholarly production. On the other hand, the nationalist framework will never satisfy the complexities of Jewishness between the two competing national contexts in Canada—and the diasporic networks maintained by groups such as the Moroccans with France, Israel, and the United States. At best, the national framework is a starting point for an ongoing conversation about Jewish history as part of a transnational network, but it should not be its ending point. This extends to Jewish studies as whole, as the expansion of Sephardic and Mizrahi studies continues to challenge the field.

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- 1 The English translation of this book—*Jews and French Quebecers: Two Hundred Years of Shared History*—was published by Wilfred Laurier University Press in 1991.

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