

INTRODUCTION



Anisa's kitchen is extremely clean; she runs a tight ship. Today I am sitting there as she gives her son, Zeroual El Khiyat, thirty years old, a lesson in both cooking and Arabic, specifically vernacular North African Arabic (Darija). They're making *kemia* (appetizers), to accompany the main meal. The windows of their small apartment in Paris' nineteenth arrondissement (district) catch the May sun that spills across the floor. "Pass me the *comino* (cumin)," she says. "Chop the *basla* (onion)," she tells him in a mix of old Spanish (Ladino) and Darija.¹ Anisa's husband is working late in his textile and dress shop in the eighteenth arrondissement. Zeroual is in his happy place, pleased to show me what life is like with his mother when they're relaxed and they have time.

Anisa, or "Madame" as Zeroual's father addresses her, is wearing a bandana and a purple gandoura, more Maghreb than stereotypically Parisian. The heat makes her dress and apron stick to her; she's perspiring but happy to have two young men in her kitchen, making food for the whole family during the festive period around the traditional *hiloula* (pilgrimage) holidays, whose observance is a cherished thread in the fabric of Maghrebi Jewish communal life.

Zeroual, or Zer' with a French "r", recently married a girl from another Jewish family from Constantine (eastern Algeria). At the wedding, they played *Maaluf*, the eastern Algerian *Nouba*, a centuries-old Andalusi musical repertoire. His wife's father was something of a virtuoso on the *darbuka* (drum). Zeroual was one of the last generations to attend the local lycée where, as he put it, Jews and Arabs still went to school together. They shared a lot, particularly recipes and sayings from home, expressions they recognized and could use as code, protected from the understanding of predominantly French-origin teachers.

Anisa listens to Abdesalam Chekara on a CD that her husband, Godefroy, bought from the local market where his shop is located, on rue de la

Goutte-d'Or. He's been there for thirty years and is close to retirement. He works and speaks to his wife predominantly in Darija, but he also has good Arabic-accented Hebrew which he speaks with family in Israel and on the southeast coast of the United States. Godefroy is from Guercif, not far from Debdou, which according to the former intellectual and museum curator Simon Levy has a very specific language that incorporates much of the local Tamazight (2009). Debdou was something of a Jewish fortress; over 50 percent of the population was Jewish. Anisa is from Oujda in the far east of Morocco, right next to the Algerian border, as is the owner of the Moroccan bakery next door to Godefroy's shop, from which Anisa buys bread on Thursdays, ensuring that the kids get a taste of home or at least what home used to taste like.

The Abdesalam Chekara CD offers songs of urban nostalgia. Anisa hums along to *Bint Blédi* (Daughter of the Homeland), perhaps his most famous number, as she continues making the *mezze kemia* plates in intricate, ornate bowls in *zellige* (an Arabic term for a type of geometric pattern). By this time, our conversation has drifted to football, work, families, love life, and other topics easily broached on a nice spring evening when everybody's happy and relaxed, our appetites growing with the smell of cumin, caraway, and coriander.

On Sunday morning after Shabbat, James Mlihi is giving the boys a lesson in principles of the *Talmud*. They're discussing ethics. James is not an ordained rabbi—he does not necessarily have *semikhah* (ordination)—but he's highly cognizant of, and well studied in, Jewish traditions from western Algeria. He also has a PhD in telecommunications and satellite engineering, of which he's extremely proud. As the son of merchants from western Algeria, he knows a great deal of the history, but refuses outright any connection to the place. Yet in the teachings and incantations that emerge from his synagogue, the sounds are deeply Sephardic, and the Hebrew is guttural and Semitic. The *ayin*, the *het*, and the *gimmel* are all pronounced in Middle Eastern fashion, “as they should be,” he says.

Outside of the time in his eighteenth-arrondissement synagogue, James runs a successful entrepreneurial business in information communications and technology (ICT) in Paris' fourth arrondissement. M-Switch's tailor-made, ultra-hi-tech office was built to keep the feel of an *entrepôt* (warehouse), the stockroom atmosphere found in textile shops in the Sentier district, as James' company is located in a space that once housed one of these textile traders. M-Switch is founded on intercommunal work, particularly North African countries and employers. James is not only comfortable but even appears lighter and more jovial in Darija, or at least when drawing heavily on its lexicon.

Beyond time invested in synagogue life, western Algerian liturgical tradition, reading, and understanding technological innovation and Algerian

history, James loves to play North African drums, the *darbuka* of Zeroual's father-in-law. He performs at marriages and bar mitzvahs and appears at his most content when existing outside of discursive fear, enraptured in music and sounds from Algeria, a country he barely knew.

Zeroual's sister comes home, or rather back to her mother's apartment. She's stressed and unhappy about packing for her move from the nineteenth arrondissement to a district outside central Paris, where she's managed to pay the deposit on an apartment. She's upset to find her father still at work and calls him to say she needs somebody to help her make boxes because her partner Saul isn't helping much. "He's too much of a slacker, too much of a Tunisian," she says. She too has "married out" to a Tunisian Jew.

She tells her father over the phone that she wants "an Arab" (*Je veux un Arabe*). Her mother and brother give her looks. "Yes, Papa, I want an Arab. Abba, Daddy, I want an Arab. I need an Arab. They work the best; they work the hardest. I want an Arab to make my boxes and help me move."

In the thick of the conversation, I'm not sure she understands precisely what she's articulated, nor how it is being received. The looks, though, somehow hush her, perhaps allowing her to engage the fact that she's speaking in a way that might not be acceptable in front of guests or that might not be acceptable to her brother or mother.

These scenes underscore the complexities of intergenerational Jewish life and urban Parisian existence, and the challenges of holding together the tensions innate in Jewish Maghrebi and French lives in the peripheries of Paris. They reveal ways of existing in the urban capital while maintaining being Maghrebi, Jewish, entrepreneurial, a slacker, caring, angry, family-centered, inveterately single, traditionalist, and liberal, or combinations thereof. Unfortunately, the voices of Zeroual, James, and their family and friends are rarely heard in the French public sphere. Rather, they are spoken for, sometimes instrumentalized for political gain, during which the delicate balances they navigate, their ambivalences, contradictions, and lived tensions, are collapsed under the weight of ideology. These situated experiences are flattened into symbolic roles within larger national and international narratives, leaving little room for the subtle negotiations and everyday ethics that actually shape their lives.

EXODUS OF FRENCH JEWS FROM ALGERIA (EFJA)

This process of homogenization and monochromatic rendering, of sanitizing and smoothing over the complexity of lived lives described above, and the process of schematic imposition, is readily apparent in modern mainstream Jewish French politics, which, in turn, has informed my own

The Jewish Maghreb

North African Experiences in Greater Paris since 1981

Samuel Sami Everett

<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/EverettJewish>

Not for Resale

ethnography of the Jewish Maghreb. Linked to my own background and family, this work has been ongoing over the last fifteen years. In particular, I spent time in Paris in 2010–12, in 2015–17, and again in 2019–21 conducting participant observation, learning languages, and interviewing. The start of my first period of fieldwork coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence in 2012, which was gained through great bloodshed in a war between Algerians, led by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (the National Liberation Front, or FLN) and the French army. By the sixtieth anniversary, in 2022, my own research was part of an exhibition at the *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration* (The History of Immigration Museum) in Paris, called *Juifs et Musulmans de la France coloniale à nos jours* (Jews and Muslims from Colonial France to Today). Following ethnographic convention, all names are pseudonymized except for those of public intellectuals and publicly established organizations.

In the run-up to the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence, I attended a conference about Jewish life in colonial French Algeria on June 18, 2012, held at the Constantine Tournelles synagogue in central Paris. The keynote talks were given by the executives of the conference's organizing body *Exode des français juifs d'Algérie* (the Exodus of French Jews from Algeria, EFJA), all of whom were born in Algeria. French Algeria is shorthand for the period during which the territory known today as Algeria was colonized by the French state and later settled by French and European people. This lasted from 1831 to 1962, far longer than the Moroccan and Tunisian protectorates, during which time Algeria was not a colony but an exceptional case that was legally incorporated into France, which completely blurred the line between colony and metropole.²

One of the talks at the EFJA conference titled *La présence juive en Algérie: Histoire et perspectives* (The Jewish Presence in Algeria: History and Perspectives) was given by Shmuel Trigano, a university sociologist and public intellectual working to build bridges between Jewish populations in France and Israel. Trigano explained that those born into Jewish families in French Algeria who moved during the War of Independence have since been portrayed by the state of Israel as modern because they were French. Meanwhile in France, they are often seen as uncultured Algerian immigrants, similar to the other Arab-like immigrant Jews, mainly from Tunisia and Morocco. In contrast to the French concept of "Arab Jews," and the Israeli view of "French Jews," Trigano insisted on his own ontology of their Iberian (Spanish) or "Sephardic origins,"³ which he implied were ultimately European. This desire to seek out Euro-Jewish connectivity for North African Jewish populations in France retrojects contemporary European political anxieties into a deeper historical relationship with the Maghreb. Such an outlook hollows out part of what it is to be Algerian and Jewish in

France, making all Algerian Jews European *séfarades*, or *séf* in the vernacular. Yet, the meaning of *séf* in France is skewed toward the Maghreb because of the mass migration of North African Jewish populations. Approximately two-thirds of France's post-Second World War Jewish population arrived from the Maghreb between the 1950s and the 1970s, most, though by no means all, to Paris and *Île-de-France*, or Greater Paris.⁴

While Trigano's drive to facilitate Maghrebi Jewish integration in France is perfectly understandable, it nevertheless ignores the ongoing experience and feeling of close attachments to particular cities, towns, and regions in the Maghreb that resonate for Jews in France.⁵ Another speaker at the conference, Rabbi Zini, a French Israeli of western Algerian Jewish descent, held a less Euro-centered perspective. He lauded the legacy of western Algerian Jewish liturgy and learning and criticized the French colonial project for having made it fragile. Yet he also said *Kaddish*—recited traditionally for a deceased child, sibling, spouse, or parent—for Algeria to reinforce a deep-seated mourning for what he understands as its Jewish expulsion.

As I understand them, the views of Trigano, expressed through personal and ideological reflections at this event, represent a prominent but deeply polarizing vision of what it is to be Jewish and Maghrebi as it is broadcast and published in France today. Trigano represented a particular institutional face of the contemporary French North African Jewish relationship to the Maghreb, one increasingly articulated through the prism of conflict. His outlook was shaped not only by the assertive emergence of Mizrahi voices in the late 1970s, including those advocating for recognition of Maghrebi Jewish heritage and political influence (such as the rise of Mizrahi power in Israel and France under figures like Mitterrand and Begin), but also by the hardening of attitudes toward Palestinians in the following decades. Since the 1980s, successive Israeli administrations have overseen a growing disregard for Palestinian rights and lives, contributing to the entrenchment and naturalization of Judeo-Muslim⁶ antagonisms both in Israel and across diasporic contexts like France. Trigano's political trajectory maps onto this perspective: it foregrounds a steady political shift, not uncommon among many learned North African-born Jewish public figures, especially since the 1980s (Segré 2009; Zia-Ebrahimi 2021), moving from positions of leftist internationalism to an embrace of French and Jewish ethnic nationalisms.

In the 2022 presidential and legislative elections, Trigano supported Éric Zemmour, as did many French Jewish Israelis of North African descent who voted from abroad. Zemmour, who argues for the use of the term “Judeo-Berbère,”⁷ was defended by Trigano from accusations that his position was in line with racist French nationalism.⁸ To Trigano, Zini, and Zemmour, one could add the voice of George Bensoussan, whose rhetoric of *territoires perdus* (lost territories) is the stereotype of a primordial and obdurate

Maghrebi Muslim anti-Jewish hatred that was ostensibly deeply embedded in the urban peripheries of France (Brenner 2002).

THE JEWISH MAGHREB

This book aims to complicate the increasingly hegemonic binaries that undergird the EFJA's perspective. Fundamentally, I want to argue that the Maghreb is neither relegated to the colonial past nor reduced to a set of frozen postcolonial memories. The Maghreb continues to play a deep role in how people think about their worlds, lives, and interactions. The revisionist reformulations of EFJA do a great disservice to the complexity of the deep Maghrebi Jewish past by reducing it to a singular (lachrymose, to cite Salo Baron 1963, or triumphant) narrative. Such a revisionist ideology is embraced by members of my own family, and part of this book's genesis is my attempt to grapple with their emergent positions, both intimately and on a broader anthropological and cultural-historical scale. In order to understand and portray this fraught situation, I pay ethnographic attention to contemporary French North African Jewish experiences, their embodied memories, their cultural production, and the historical conditions of their lives within an overlapping Jewish Maghreb and Maghrebi France.

Though I was born in Britain, my maternal heritage is western Algerian Jewish. I spent parts of my childhood on the Côte d'Azur, listening to my grandparents and their friends, often gathered together on the beach. As I grew older, I began to realize that my grandparents and their entourage, all of whom had gravitated toward Paris after the Second World War and particularly during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62), held discriminatory views about *les maghrébins* (Muslims from North Africa), even though in addition to speaking French, they spoke Darija and/or Spanish, listened to Arab-Andalusi music, and ate Maghrebi food. When older still, I confronted them with what I thought to be the truth, that I believed Algerian Jews were *dans le fond des indigènes aussi* (ultimately just Algerian natives like any other). *C'est pas la même chose* (it's not the same thing), I was told over and over again, meaning, I think, that they believed Jews and Arabs are fundamentally different.

Retrospectively, this was when I began to articulate questions about the *kshfa* (shame) carried by our Maghreb-born forebearers somehow simultaneously Pied-noir (which literally means “black feet” and is used to refer to non-Muslim Algerians—more on this later) and Arab, Jewish, and citizens of the French state. In the context of such a highly fraught transfer of memories and identities across generations (time) and places (space), I have attempted to examine the similarities and differences in the historical and

social experiences of being Maghrebi Muslim and Jewish in Greater Paris. I investigate the cultural and political tensions through which my predecessors were classified as *indigènes* in French Algeria and marginalized by colonial state rule, and then subsequently confused in the metropole as to who or what they were, which led to a number of identity *amalgames* (conflations).⁹

Such conflations include widely held perceptions that Algerian Jewish populations were either themselves *Pieds-noirs* or indistinguishable from the broader *arabo-musulman* (Muslim Arab) community. I contend that lesser heard stories of indigenous proximity and solidarity among Maghrebi Jews and their descendants in France can shine a light on the contemporary injustices against North African Muslims—equally known as “Arabs,” with both *maghrébin* and *arabe* serving as essentializing monikers—and reaffirm the importance of Maghrebi culture within Jewish families and friendship groups as a part of contemporary Europe. The book will address these tensions, ambivalences, and struggles, including the conceptual limitations of existing frameworks used to analyze Maghrebi Jewish cultural transmission.

As the title indicates, this book deals with the Maghreb, but it is predominantly focused on Algeria as both a part of the Maghreb and distinct from it, particularly in its proximity to France. Because of the deeply encumbered France–Algeria (post)colonial relationship, Algerian Jewish histories and experiences are lived and performed differently from how Moroccan and Tunisian Jewish populations express their relationships to North Africa. Many scholars, public intellectuals, and Algerian Jews themselves have related their history as one of progress and social mobility (often focusing on the middle class) stemming essentially from the 1870 Crémieux Decree that “made French” (*fait français*, to use Benjamin Stora’s dictum, 2011) Jewish populations living in the most populous northern territories of Algeria with more or less Jewish amenability.¹⁰ The Crémieux Decree is often seen as a foundational moment in the process of Algerian Jewish assimilation into Frenchness, as part of their civilizing process (see Chouraqui 1985). But this book sheds light on how the trajectories and experiences of poorer Algerian Jewish populations are connected to a wider transnational Maghrebi urban network, including its implantation on the Parisian periphery and even in marginalized Israeli development towns.¹¹ Where Sternfeld and Anzi (2019) have noted the instrumentalization of Arab Jewish history for political ends, as visible in Bensoussan’s writings, this book by contrast includes a wide diversity of Maghrebi Jewish identifications, paying close attention to their experiences of ambivalence, and ambivalences of experience, that do not neatly separate them by class position or national background.

All the same, in the US and Israel, from where general Jewish historiographies are largely written, Jews from Algeria are generally construed

by the Hebrew term *Sfardim* (Iberian), sometimes opposed to *Mizrahim* (Eastern) Jews, sometimes invisibilized altogether. Yet unlike those Jewish populations who migrated to Israel directly from the Maghreb (notably from Tunisia and Morocco) in the 1940s and later, most Algerian Jewish populations were “repatriated” to France despite often knowing the metropole mainly from school textbooks in which Algeria’s three official regions were presented as an integral part of French geography. While individual religious practices and beliefs did vary, many of those Jewish Algerian populations who dwelt in the large and mixed northern coastal towns of Algeria had increasingly become less observant over the course of the colonial period.

After a decade of so-called integration into France, during the 1960s Algerian Jewish populations began to distance themselves from the demographic and cultural Christian core of French Pied-noir repatriates and, with the 1967 Six-Day War, modified their long-standing commitments to French secular republicanism with a stronger and more affectively charged forging of connections to Israel. Since then, continued Algerian Jewish mobility both within France and beyond it to Europe, North America, and Israel has shaped the course of French-Maghrebi Jewish life. Perhaps an eighth of the Algerian Jewish community today lives in Israel, primarily in Ashdod, Netanya, Jerusalem, and many settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.¹² In contrast to the polemics of Bensoussan, Trigano, and others, this book shows the ongoing salience of the Maghreb within Algerian Jewish postcolonial trajectories.

MAGHREBINICITÉ

Due to these complex histories of mobility, there is an intergenerational crisis of Maghrebi Jewish representation for those who have either little knowledge of or have never known the Maghreb from within. Intergenerational efforts run parallel to a broader French and European societal need to account for plural Maghrebi histories, trajectories, and experiences of arrival and belonging in France. This need combines recognizing the shame of Nazi collaborationism *and* the dark shadow of colonialism that manifest in an increasingly brutal Jewish–Muslim divide, the key fault line of which, at least in France, is North Africa.

Significant tensions underpin this crisis—the transmission and non-transmission of intergenerational and intrafamilial memory, accentuated by contested (and often manipulative) historicization. Within the conceptual models used to historicize what constitutes the Jewish Maghreb (Trigano 2003a; Tapia 2010), there is a failure to capture the unstable dynamics of

temporality, mobility, affective ambivalence, and coexistence that characterize the experiences of Maghrebi Jewish populations. Through my ethnographic work, I discovered a social reality that existing frameworks fail to capture, flattening complex dynamics. The prevailing concepts are not merely insufficient, they actively distort what I observed, often forcing nuanced phenomena into ideologically motivated frameworks that miss their essential character. This recognition led me to develop *maghrebinicité* as a necessary heuristic, not for theoretical novelty's sake but because my ethnographic work revealed a genuine gap in our vocabulary for addressing these significant issues and erasures.

Maghrebinicité counterpoises the geographical and colonial term Maghreb to the French *cit *, imbued with meanings both vernacular and classical. Maghreb is the colonial name used in France to label the now-independent yet formerly French colonies of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (Hannoum 2021). Etymologically, the word Maghreb is bound to the Arabic and assimilated into the Tamazight transnational term *-gharb*, denoting “the west”, though many scholars of Amazigh culture reject “Maghreb” and insist on the label “Tamazgha.” In the vernacular, *cit * refers to the high-rise social housing in the neighborhoods on the ghetto-like periphery of large French towns and cities. In Paris, these urban neighborhoods have influenced the development of Maghrebi Jewish experiential identification in France and are both peripheral and central to the capital, as in the cases of le Sentier, Belleville, or Barb s. The cultural representations of the urban landscape nested in the word *cit * reflect different psycho-topographies impacting upon ways of thinking about race, space, and class. The postwar histories of many *cit s* have been indelibly marked by the arrival of working-class North African Jewish families to peripheral places that remain relatively ungentrified like Sarcelles, le Port, Cr tail, and Pantin. Today, however, central Parisian districts such as the seventeenth arrondissement—where one in four inhabitants is Jewish (Mongaillard 2019)—testify to North African Jewish social mobility. More classically, to think with Richard Sennett (2018), *cit * is derived from *civitas*, the Latin term for a body of citizens united by law and responsibility, or citizenship in the early city-state, and so connotes “inhabiting the city.”

The figures of the Maghreb and the *cit * also outline a physical, experiential, and discursive shift from the precolonial Maghreb—a bounded but not bordered region—to the retrenched imperial space of the colonial French Maghreb, to the postcolonial nation-states in France and North Africa, to the emigration of *maghr bins* first as colonized bodies and later as postcolonial laborers to France. The latter were banished from the Parisian center, where rights are encoded and enacted, to the carceral-like margins (*mise au ban*) in the peripheral place of the *banlieue* (housing projects) where many

of the *cités* lie (Sciara 2011). In this sense, *maghrebinicité* offers us ways of understanding shifts in political imaginaries.

As a dynamic term, *maghrebinicité* is an index, not a stable denotative concept. It serves as a means of making sense of the multiple processes of North African Jewish movement and self-understanding across non-distinct eras of the “before” in Algeria, and the “after” in France. Responding to the intergenerational crisis of representation, *maghrebinicité* foregrounds the rich seam of historical Maghrebi indigenous knowledge, poesis, and ways of being. It attempts to reactivate a Judeo-Islamic epistemology that has been erased in Europe by a hegemonic discourse of Judeo-Christian civilization (see Topolski 2020; Becker and Everett 2023; Bessis 2025). *Maghrebinicité* encourages us to consider movement within and beyond diaspora and combats the epistemological violence of methodological nationalism. Not country-specific, *maghrebinicité* draws generative power from a pre-national trans-Maghrebi political imaginary.

Maghrebinicité centers the emotional charge the Maghreb holds for generations of Algerian Jews, and elucidates feelings of belonging beyond the sentiments of shame originally harbored by some in the initial decades of their French exile. It highlights Maghrebi subjectivities that are awkward, bringing into view disjointed complexities across the political spectrum. Finally, *maghrebinicité* self-reflexively recognizes the influence of ethnographic research itself on the intergenerational transmission of the Maghreb.

Similarly, *maghrebinicité* calls into question standard terms used to discuss and understand Jewish forms of identification with the Maghreb. Key among these are migration, assimilation, and integration, all of which presuppose a particular direction of movement and a set of desires for belonging. The resulting names—*immigré*, *assimilé*, *intégré*—even more deeply alienate those referenced as others and presume what they want: *l’immigré* is either a burden or pitiable; *l’assimilé* has forgotten from where they come, blinded by the Occident; *l’intégré* achieves a new state of cultural and social competence. These terms emerge from and tend to reinforce both a Protestant ideology of individualism and a secular nation-state model, ideological biases that *maghrebinicité* avoids.

Historical migration to and from western Algeria in the early nineteenth century is a good example of the interlocking histories taken into account by the *maghrebinicité* heuristic—a trans-Maghrebi territory severed cartographically, administratively, and politically after the French conquest.¹³ In the early nineteenth century, there was a mass migration of “native” inhabitants from Tlemcen and Oran in western Algeria to Tetouan in northern Morocco when crops failed and the region suffered from a plague epidemic (Khamlichi 1992). Prior to the arrival of the French in the Maghreb, people circulated and traded between regions with more ease. Historian Joshua

Schreier has explored the precolonial trans-Maghrebi networks of power that Jewish merchants negotiated outside of the contemporary ethno-national frame that the colonial categories of indigenous Jews or Muslims later helped to shape (2017, 4).¹⁴

Maghrebinité also seeks to account for the significance of affect, especially the bonds of spatial and temporal belonging alongside socially negative emotions of embarrassment and shame, known as *hshouma* or *kshfa* in vernacular Maghrebi Arabic or Darija. *Maghrebinité* is awkward because it defies normative categories of ethno-national belonging and expected trajectories of social integration; rather, it seeks to represent narratives of affective Jewish attachments to the Maghreb, and, in particular, Algeria, that are historically painful and, in the familial realm, often difficult to discuss and full of complexity.

ETHNOGRAPHY

Maghrebinité describes the space between generations, what sociologists call the intergeneration. It is often at this intergenerational juncture that narratives, understandings, and imaginations mutate and diverge. In *doing* ethnography through engagements with various interested and situated interlocutors, I paid particular attention to the intergenerational junctures evidenced in people's imaginaries, that is, their person-centered cultural ethos or shared cognitive schemas.¹⁵ It became clear that these often included a form of "migration in reverse," or "return," entailing travel to Algeria and Morocco or their linguistic acquisition of various degrees of Arabic, Hebrew, and Judeo-Arabic (Arabic with Hebrew liturgical elements). While nostalgia may afflict North African Jewish memory, younger generations' reimagination, reinterpretation, and reclaiming take more complex liminal forms of engagement.¹⁶ For example, while conversation in Yaël Benabou's family would shut down entirely when it came to North Africa, for Zeroual it was in the kitchen with his mother that *décomplexé* (uninhibited) memories were decoupled from the prevalent narratives over forced migration, abrupt change, and the rejection of Arab cultural proximity.

My relatives' reluctance to discuss Judeo-Maghrebi connections revealed the memory gaps that drove my research. While their experiences and those of others showed proximity, they simultaneously held racialized views about *arabe* immigration, *banlieue* housing projects, and Islam. I've tried to take all their stories seriously, however painful or contradictory. Only through *doing*—following Alfred Gell's emphasis on agency over symbolic interpretation (1998)—have I begun to understand the ambiguities of a Jewish Maghreb, from which the term *maghrebinité* emerged. Rather

than accepting North Africa's erasure as inevitable to Algerian Jewishness, I've committed to "going backwards" while moving forward. As an ethnographic study of these emotionally charged sentiments, I adopt a dialogic, open-ended perspective without preconceived positions.

In this book, I use a relational approach to Jewish North African belonging in Paris without reducing it to an identification with postcolonial North African nation-states. During our interview in the Sentier, James, introduced earlier, whose story is central to the ethnographic heart of this book, was very clear about his attachment to western Algerian Jewish practices, but this, he told me, should not be confused with an emotional relationship to contemporary Algeria. Yet, James and those whom he has assembled to work around him at M-Switch regard the trans-Maghreb as having tangible existence and resonance. In contrast to Maghreb-born Jews who arrived in France such as Godefroy, also appearing above, the specificity of national symbolism holds less importance for their descendants, who frequently intermarry, like his son Zeroual.¹⁷ Diasporic identification is less related to a specific nation-state "homeland" such as Algeria or Morocco and more closely tied to an imagined region—*le Maghreb, Nord Af'* (an abbreviation of North Africa), and even *Séfarade*—or, alternately, a more specific locality such as *Algérois* (from Algiers), connected to particular religious observance, melodies, and even vocal timbre. At the same time, other descendants of North African Jews distance themselves from the Maghreb through the contemporary appropriation of the term Sephardi or *Séf*, anachronistically invoking modern understandings of Europeanness, as implied in Trigano's talk.

In spite of my deep and longitudinal ethnographic research and personal experience, I hesitate to claim authority. When I am put on the spot as the expert and asked what I think, I struggle to speak for others. When I explain my research to certain North African Jewish interlocutors, I occasionally feel like a *fouille merde*, somebody who is looking for problems and issues (literally dredging up shit), and that these memories belong to the past and should remain there. A grandmother from Ghardaïa in southern Algeria told me *mais c'est du passé ça maintenant* (that's all in the past now) even as we sat down to talk about her memories of life there and coming to France. A young man of Moroccan descent in Sarcelles, sporting a head covering upon which was printed a *Breslov* (a form of Eastern European Hasidic Judaism) incantation popular among Sephardi youth (*Na Nach Nachma Nachman Mei'uman*), explained that *les anciens* (the old generation) and the practices that had been established within the town's *grande syna'* (main synagogue) no longer held sway.

Four key overlapping themes resonate across North African Jewish intergenerational identification, all of which are shot through with

trans-Maghrebi and ambivalent affective dynamics. While *maghrebinité* is the book's heuristic frame, the main title, *The Jewish Maghreb: North African Experiences in Greater Paris since 1981*, indicates greater urban Paris as a central locale to which we must turn before returning to these themes: motion, diaspora, solidarity, and return.

URBAN PARIS

Paris is important as a site of general population settlement from Algeria, particularly between the 1950s and the 1970s. The 1951 European Steel and Coal pact, which tied together French and German socioeconomic interests to prevent future war, confirmed Paris as an attractive metropole for Muslim migrants. This was the case too for post-independence North African Jewish populations, particularly as Algerian Jewish populations had been made French. Bensimon and Della Pergola calculate the Algerian Jewish population to have stood at 71 percent of some 232,779 North African Jews in Greater Paris by 1980 (1984, 36–37). Zytnicki and Green estimate that 40 percent of the overall Algerian Jewish population resided in the Greater Paris area by the early 1980s (2010). Paris therefore contains many examples of Maghrebi Judeo-Muslim solidarity, magnifying debates and complexities of national identification and racial politics (see Figure 0.1).

In 2001, I graduated from university in London and took a job there in a telecommunications company run by an Orthodox Jewish group of friends. Patterning my grandparents' movement, I then joined the company's Paris office to help the company become more prominent in the French market. The company's Paris office was in the Sentier—Paris' historical neighborhood for the confection and commercialization of fabric and fashion—where my grandparents had bought and sold textiles (*schmates*, in Yiddish) alongside many other Maghrebi Jews in the 1950s.¹⁸ It was an important part of my life in terms of both self- and political development: it felt like I was following in the footsteps of my elders but also that the world had come full circle in terms of French fascism. In my first weeks, I spent long days working in the Sentier learning about the French ICT market, while each evening I demonstrated, with thousands of other predominantly young Parisians blocking traffic on the *periph'* (the ring road around central Paris), against the far-right Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose party had, for the first time in French history, made it to the second round of the presidential elections. In those first months, I stayed with friends of my grandparents, and then, thanks to connections in the workplace, I rented an apartment with a Greater Parisian friend of Algerian Kabyle descent who was finishing his degree.



Figure 0.1. Map of North Africa and Greater Paris.

The apartment that we rented was near Barbès, known for its Maghrebi and West African commerce, including many textiles and traditional clothing shops. This neighborhood—where I became friendly with some of the elderly Maghrebi Jewish shopkeepers—and the Sentier make up the urban backdrop to the central ethnographic chapters of this book on intergenerational change, Judeo-Muslim commerce, and coexistence in France. In the evening, the two Sams, as people referred to my roommate and me, often went out in Barbès to listen to music, dance, and meet new people. As it turned out, most of the friends I made within the ICT industry and outside of it, around Barbès, were of Maghrebi descent, either Jewish or Muslim.

T'es un frère ou un cousin? (Are you a brother or a cousin?, meaning Jew or Arab), I was asked by Jewish and Muslim friends alike, which, I think, was

a way of asking if my loyalties were to the *magen david* (the star of David) or to pan-Arab colors (from Palestine to Morocco). I had to further negotiate such linguistic subtleties and their inferences when I became close to a woman from Sarcelles. Her family, unlike my own, were, as she put it, *des traditionalistes*.¹⁹ They introduced me to the part of the *Haggadah*—the story of *Pessah* or *la Pâque juive*, as Passover is referred to in France—sung for generations (and still, in some households) in Darija. They had a proximity to North African language and culture to which I felt both immense connection and estrangement.

MOTION

About a decade later, I revisited, as a budding anthropologist, those places in Paris, as well as the people with whom I had kept in touch. First as a PhD candidate and then as a postdoc, I re-engaged with many of the personal, cultural, and political aspects that had been my life there: Maghrebi popular culture in music, fiction, and film; the people I knew in the textile and telecom industries in Barbès and Le Sentier; and Jewish journeys of return to particular North African cities but also to Jerusalem to make *aliyah* (meaning “ascent,” literally “going up” in Hebrew, i.e., emigrating to Israel). This time I reflected on others’ stories and my own, together. My desire was to do justice to the voices less heard—those of the artist, the shopkeeper, the technician, and the pilgrim. But the voices of intellectuals are also important to this book because they represent narratives of a plural relationship to Algeria and North Africa as it is traversed by philosophical and geopolitical trends and expressed in the public sphere. So, I gathered my courage and visited the writer and literary icon H el ene Cixous, who, as it turned out, was very generous with her time and reflections. As if she saw through my socially engaged but somewhat anti-clerical upbringing and its effect on my life and research, she told me to be wary of Judeo-centrism in my research and asked me if I had ever lived in the North African places that I was researching. A couple of years later I went back to see her and interviewed her at length, after having spent extended periods at universities and in archives, talking to people, and learning languages in private academies and public institutes in Algiers, Casablanca, Fez, Jerusalem, Oran, Tangiers, Tel Aviv, and Tlemcen. An example of this was an invitation to Casablanca from Amran, my colleague and friend in the French office of the company where I was working. Amran, who was born during the 1980s, did not really enjoy life in Paris. In Casablanca, I discovered his life in Ain Diab, near the chic private beaches where well-heeled Jewish and Muslim populations interacted (see [Levy 2015](#), 128–40). Amran considered himself an

Arab-Jew (*Juif-arabe*) since Arabic was his mother tongue, and he showed me the poetry he'd written in this vein. In it was a reference to the indigenously warrior-princess Al Kahina, a sacred figure in Maghrebi folklore, to whom I will return in [Chapter 1](#). Amran also encouraged me in my study of Arabic and Hebrew, shifting away from my university studies in European politics and languages. Later, I interviewed the historian Benjamin Stora, known as *Monsieur Algérie* for his encyclopedic knowledge of the country, who was born to a Jewish family from Constantine, and I eventually met and spoke with Shmuel Trigano after the [2012](#) conference. I will revisit these authors whose work influenced this book's epistemology in the penultimate chapter.

Sensitive to the shifting national and geopolitical climate in which Jewish Maghrebiness is expressed in France and the sometimes-deadly attacks on descendants of North African Jews including the very public murder of Ilan Halimi in 2006,²⁰ I have had to build up the academic and emotional mettle to feel less vulnerable in challenging French Jewish representations of the Maghreb, such as those propounded by the EFJA. These representations, as in [Trigano's 2012](#) talk, impose a national heritage prism—that of being a French or “European Sephardi”—onto North African Jewish subjectivity. In response to this, one of this book's central propositions is that it is impossible to define a standard, fixed Maghrebi Jewish reality.

Subjectivities are necessarily contradictory, complex, and therefore messy as our perceptions and the world around us change. While this is broadly acknowledged, I recognize the disconnect between discourses of the Maghribi march toward French Jewish *modernité* and various valences of so-called Jewish betrayal toward North African *indigénéité*. These histories that I put forward in this book may sometimes correspond to what Jonathan Glasser has characterized as a variety of lachrymose narratives (forthcoming, 6). However, I present how these discourses shape Maghrebi Jewish lives in France, particularly in colliding intergenerational relations, with their self-representation influenced by French state discourse about the exemplary integration of Sephardic Jews over the last decades ([Deldyck 2000](#)). Yet, as in the book's epigraph, Amar and Milza point to how successive waves of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in France are also part of the genealogy of antisemitism and therefore deeply connected to Jewish, and particularly North African Jewish, experience—which because it is also Maghrebi and at least contingently indigenously is likewise necessarily racialized (1990). So, to listen carefully to the silences around indigeneity—reacting against the colonial classification and evaluation on a scale of primitiveness to superiority—among different generations of North African Jews in Paris is, in some sense, to come to grips with a wider racialized story of Franco-Maghrebi historical stigma that is both Muslim and Jewish.

To decenter the discourse of the EFJA and similar narratives, the disjointed voices blended with my own in this book broaden the discussion of French-Maghrebi diasporic histories. By and large, except for the three authors Cixous, Stora, and Trigano, I primarily focus on non-elite persons who have no particular purchase in the public sphere, meaning they are largely erased from diasporic histories of Maghrebi Jewish populations in France. “What is interesting about your research is that it focuses on *le petit peuple* (ordinary people),” a friend of Tunisian descent told me when we met for lunch and I spoke about my observations in the textile and dress shops in Barbès that constitute the core of [Chapter 4](#).

DIASPORA

At another conference I attended in 2012, this time dedicated to the memory of Jewish life in Algeria by the memory group Morial, a young representative of the UEJF (the French Union of Jewish Students) explained to me between sessions why he thought the term diaspora was *galvaudé* (hackneyed) with regard to the makeup of the contemporary French Jewish community.²¹ To him, characterizing the community as a “diaspora” presented a false dichotomy of Jewish life in France (and multiple centers of migration) and in Israel, the barriers of which, he believed, had been broken down over time via cross-national living by French-Maghrebi Jews and Jews of Maghrebi descent. Diaspora has become ubiquitous in scholarly discourse explaining pathways of migration and change in cultural and community identification, and has spread far beyond academia to areas of policymaking, specifically for regions of net emigration, like in North Africa.²² In part thanks to circulation of ideas, I have continued to reflect on the notion of diaspora, in dialogue with [Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin \(1993\)](#) and [Paul Silverstein \(2004\)](#). Instead of creating a rift in the Parisian context, a diasporic imaginary ([Axel 2002](#)) might gesture to a shareable Jewish–Muslim affective historical identification, albeit often lived separately and differently, which informs my own deployment of *maghrebinicité*.

One route to overcoming disconnected historiographies is by interrogating and tracking Maghrebi Jewish memory and experience diasporically across generations. This is particularly urgent given the overall lack of organizational structures that keep North African Jewish language and culture from cohering, at least institutionally, in Paris. Jonathan [Boyarin’s \(1991\)](#) interest in diaspora dates to his engagement with *Yiddishkeit* (Yiddish life and culture) and work in the 1980s on the *Landsmanschaft*, institutions (or fraternities) of Polish Jewish political culture in Paris, such as the still-operating Medem Center. Although in this first work he never stated it explicitly, his ethnographic histories, taken mainly from meetings

of Polish Jewish organizations, were about salvaging the vestiges of Yiddish language and culture that were soon to be lost, at least in France. When I relate Boyarin's experiences in Paris to my own, notwithstanding the obvious differences in historical context, proximity, and linguistic focus, it is the lack of structures, networks, and institutions to have emerged after Jewish emigration to France from North Africa that is striking. This is why the cultural and intellectual events and the various associations that were created around the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence in 2012 are so important: they allow us to catch a fleeting glimpse into an aspect of North African Jewish communal organization that connects historically to older North African forms but that are also transformed in the Parisian context.

While I recognize many of the institutions and even some of the (then) Yiddish organizations that Boyarin references from the 1980s, these do not give a sufficiently broad basis from which to sketch out reconstruction of a Maghrebi Jewish world in Paris. Today, these organizations are simply Jewish, as opposed to specifically Polish Jewish. Yet, as they are now invested in by North African Jews or French-born Jews of North African descent, their original Yiddish focus has been slow to shift to Judeo-Arabic or Maghrebi political or artistic culture. A similar network as that which Boyarin describes has never really been available for Parisian Jews from North Africa, and therefore was not available for me to analyze cartographically. For these reasons, my ethnographic focus of this book has been commercial and commensal sites.

SOLIDARITY

Maghrebi Jewish specificity is necessarily entangled with collective or intercommunal Maghrebi histories in France. This study took me from the ambiance of Maghrebi cafés in the eleventh arrondissement to the textile trade and those dress shops on the rue de la Goutte-d'Or in the Barbès neighborhood that had their heyday in the 1980s. These include the shop run by Godefroy, who, in between serving customers, told me about his life in Casablanca and France. This constitutes a core ethnographic anchor for the book. In addition to meeting his family, I observed Godefroy's everyday experience of being Maghrebi and even sometimes passing as Muslim. It was a shop where I witnessed a fight, where I discovered Godefroy crying after having been robbed, and where I found him beaming after selling thousands of euros worth of dresses, and which I even dreamed of owning and continuing when he eventually left. I observed him being coquettish with young French Muslim Maghrebi women half his age, watching TV,

cutting up labels, dressing mannequins, and chatting to Madame Anisa, his wife, over the telephone.

In my attempts to capture the atmosphere of Godefroy's shop as I recorded and experienced it, as he recounted it, and as his children saw it, I realized that the dress and textile industry was a central node of North African Jewish social and commercial involvement in the Parisian *cit  *. I also attend to the many networks behind the textiles and dresses that are sold in his shop, and Godefroy's interactions with other Jewish shopkeepers and the majority-Muslim clientele along the street. His stories tell not only of his own life, but also of intergenerational continuity and change; they chronicle a commercial network in and through which, not least along the rue de la Goutte-d'Or, Maghrebi language and culture have endured to a greater extent than in French Jewish institutional life.

In the heyday of Godefroy's shop, its commercial networks were underpinned by Maghrebi Jewish and Muslim, Turkish, and Chinese migrant labor, among others (see Green 1997). Beginning in the middle of the 1980s, these networks were often supplanted, sometimes within the same physical spaces, by the hi-tech industry and, notably, by ICT businesses, at the intergenerational nexus between those born in the Maghreb and those born in France, which intersect with my own familial entanglements. This made it apparent that another site for understanding Jewish Maghrebi subjectivities, as they relate to a pan-North African existence and memory in Paris, was the newer hi-tech story of Maghrebi Jewish diasporic relations to North Africa. This switch—from textiles to telecom—illustrates the unfolding of an intergenerational shift in Maghrebi economic life. It also reflects the evolution from a garment trade anchored experientially in the precolonial history of the trans-Maghreb, to a memory-inflected relationship to a North African past for generations born in France, the most recent of whom are the purveyors of the current technology.

I also build on my experience working in ICT at M-Switch from 2006 to 2010 to explore the interconnections between intergenerational Maghrebi Jewish experiences. The tension and mutual impact between experience and imagination is a theme that runs throughout the book, understood through what Marianne Hirsch has called postmemory (2012), referring to memories that are inherited or transmitted rather than directly lived. These are shaped by embodied affects transmitted from previous generations, often silently (*ibid.*), as French-born Jews of Maghrebi descent born after the 1980s actively reimage inherited Maghrebi Jewish memories through curatorial means, creating new forms of cultural transmission that go beyond mere preservation and become active sites of identification. Tracking Hirsch's approach, I cannot describe and narrate my encounters,

relations, and the stories of the people here without myself becoming involved in the process of imagination across generations: at once engaged but also distanced; at once North African (and French) but also British; at once Jewish but not “in,” i.e., not part of a synagogue community; at once a former participant to the trade but now a researcher.

With regards to the intergenerational shift from experience to reconstruction and reimagination, the most professorial of several “secret Algerian Jews”—people whom I met during my research who are uncomfortable “coming out” as Jewish and from Algeria—said to me at a workshop in Rabat: “It’s one thing piecing together the memories of Jews who grew up in North Africa; it’s quite another deconstructing the intellectualized affinities toward the *maghreb juif* (Jewish Maghreb) [notice the inversion of the words in English and French] of their children.” James was one such, extremely erudite voice; the contradictory feelings that he had doing business in the Maghreb, and toward certain Muslim Maghrebi members of staff whom he himself had hired, led me to tears after the interview as I sat on a sidewalk a few hundred meters from the M-Switch building, trying to write my field notes. I was one mere street away from where my grandpa had worked long evenings on his accounts in his Sentier office—well into the 1970s—alongside Zitoun, his close friend from Tunis. I felt that James’ unbearably stigmatizing suspicion regarding my interest in North Africa (he told me that he didn’t understand why my overwhelming focus was not on Israel and Arab antipathy toward the Jewish state, since that was the problem) was a fatal indicator of Maghrebi Jewish–Muslim relations having moved further toward fear and paranoia. This has been increasingly borne out since October 7, 2023.

RETURN

At either end of this book’s historical-ethnographic explorations of commercial networks are cultural, intellectual, and historical investigations. I provide an alternative terminological history of the labels that have shaped and been shaped by the Maghrebi Jewish experience and then focus on the importance of the 1980s as a time of intergenerational renewal (see [Mandel 2014](#)) and reappropriation of North African culture in France. I also investigate contemporary and popular cultural production in literature, graphic novels, song, and cinema by French-born persons of North African Jewish descent, including discussing their reception and transmission. These anthropological artifacts intertwine a dynamic cultural history of Maghrebi Jewish–Muslim interactions through a series of stories mediated by different cultural forms—a folk tale, a play, a piece of music, a distinctive

sound, films and their commentaries—and the affective relationships these images and texts generate. Many voices punctuate their histories: Amran’s poem about Al Kahina, in which he speaks about the (im)possibilities of being an Arab; the artist Joann Sfar and the multiple meanings behind his graphic novel series *The Rabbi’s Cat*; Mamie Jeanne Corcos, who spoke to me at length about cuisine and music in her kitchen; and Malik and Sarah, whose respective Maghrebi weddings I attended. I concentrate on these relationships to North Africa through the media of art, music, and poetry (including the retelling of myth), which provide important cultural context for the intergenerational imagination of Jewish Maghrebiness in Greater Paris today. My discussions with writer Valérie Zenatti and filmmaker Cléo Cohen about their work on North Africa and their relationship with Israel—where Zenatti moved as a child (and where she learned Hebrew and came to translate it into French)—and Tunisia and Algeria—to which both Cohen and Zenatti have each returned in their own ways—provide a further artistic perspective to that historical endeavor.

Zenatti’s familial trajectory, migrating from Constantine to Nice and then Tel Aviv, is not extraordinary among Jewish families of Maghrebi descent in France today. Alongside their “return” to Israel is the process of *teshuva*—a spiritual return to Judaism but notably to forms of Ashkenazic Hasidism that can accompany or precede making *aliyah*—which has been well documented by Loupo (2006) and Laurence (2010) and which I have sought to situate in Greater Paris (Everett 2022). Loupo and Laurence sociologically investigate the decline of North African Jewish traditionalism and the uptake of more globalized Jewish doctrines often originating in central and eastern Europe, but neither have probed the question of transference from North Africa to Israel as a *bléd* (“homeland” in Darija) and its relationship to the alterity of Maghrebi experience in Paris. I do this by triangulating a variety of pilgrimage experiences—both sacred and profane—and those of Return including that of Shmuel to the Haredi community of Meir Sharim in Jerusalem, and Sarah Benzakar on her *hiloula*.²³

CHAPTER MAP

Chapter 1 investigates the notion of indigeneity—so central in postcolonial debates about Maghrebi Jewish identification and belonging—as it relates to Algeria (what Algerian author Hédia Bensahli (2023) termed *l’Algérie Juive*, or Jewish Algeria) as a way of giving an overview of the multiple Jewish histories of Algeria and their entanglement with France, the Maghreb, and ultimately Israel. Channeling these histories, **Chapter 2** documents the perpetual motion of Jewish trajectories within North Africa

alongside its continued identification in France, marking out within these continued shifts an increasingly ethnicized pattern of belonging among both Jewish populations and other North African migrants. [Chapter 2](#) also highlights the salience of the 1980s for the emergence of these trends and introduces us to the key site of Sarcelles, through which I further develop the heuristic of *maghrebinité*. The possibly hackneyed characterization of a Maghrebi Jewish “diaspora” is also tackled in [Chapter 3](#), alongside ethnographic observations on what we could term anti-diasporic intergenerational deviation away from the Maghreb and toward Israel, and the conflation of Maghrebi Judeo-Muslim issues in France with the fraught conflict in Israel–Palestine.

[Chapter 4](#), on minority solidarity, shows that the Israel–Palestine conflict is not the only way of framing North African Judeo-Muslim relations. This is the first of three predominantly ethnographic chapters, foregrounding sites of Judeo-Muslim commerce, coexistence, and interaction in France. Moving from textiles to telecoms, [Chapter 5](#) focuses on intergenerational changes in attitudes and ways of identifying, whether through rebellion against the family and the state, or through social mobility within France. It also spotlights the importance of the imaginary as a powerful person-centered anthropological and psychological prism for recreating shared Maghrebi space in urban Paris. Continuing the use of a generational lens, [Chapter 6](#) investigates the transmission of the Maghreb, whether as a historical (Stora), communal (Trigano), or poetic (Cixous) phenomenon. It then addresses civic education and cultural production, before exploring issues of transmission in the realm of popular culture, including how particular musical forms become a means for intergenerational expression and reinterpretation of Maghrebi Jewish belonging. Shifting away from immaterial culture, [Chapter 7](#) centers on the physical and mental return to Algeria, moving across different generational and more-or-less traditionalist perspectives as a way to understand continuity and change in patterns of identification. So, too, the afterword returns us to *maghrebinité* in the very near, clear and tangible, past, dialogically tracking the output and reception of an association dedicated to the promotion of Jewish North African cultures in France. The book’s ending therefore considers the sphere of cultural production, and the ways in which its contents can bring together fractured communal and generational perspectives, constructively questioning the discursive strategies of heritage preservation that so often characterize attempts to understand and heal Maghrebi pasts.

Despite the Maghrebi Jewish connection to North Africa being increasingly undermined by global Jewish politics, the affective importance of the Maghreb endures for many Jewish lives in Greater Paris.²⁴ But *The Jewish Maghreb* also shows that postcolonial Jewish migrant experiences

and the emotional knowledge they carry to the French capital have modified the Maghrebi Jewish relationship to North Africa at the intergeneration. These experiences are filtered by spatial politics, particularly regarding housing and commerce in key sites within the city-state or *cit *, which have had as significant an effect on the lives of Maghrebi Jews and their descendants as the broader forms of ethno-religious identification called forth in contemporary geopolitics. The shared urban social tissue that had interlinked North African descendants, both Jewish and Muslim, through zones of proximity, sociability, and sometimes minority solidarity through the 1970s has been progressively replaced by a growing representation of sectarian hostility since the 1980s.²⁵ Such a divisive discourse has been a powerful force disconnecting Jews from the Maghreb. Though today such a division has attenuated both physical and figurative sites of encounter, increasingly less visible in the everyday, it has not entirely separated Maghrebi Jewish experiences from those of Maghrebi Muslims. Therefore, there is an existential importance to my emphasis on intercommunal Maghrebi identification as a political project and an imaginary, as well as a conceptual tool to challenge hegemonic logics and divisive frameworks.

NOTES

1. Darija and its Judeo-Arabic written form (North African Arabic written in Hebrew script with liturgical Hebrew elements) as well as Ladino (an old form of Castilian Spanish with Hebrew elements) are the languages of Jewish populations from eastern Morocco and western Algeria.
2. Metropole means France throughout the book. I differentiate between the “metropole” (i.e., the territory that constitutes France today) and the “ex-colony” (i.e., the territory formerly known as French-Algeria). See Becker and Everett (2023). The Latinate “metropolis,” meaning chief or capital city in contemporary English, is mainly used to reference Paris here; “metropolitan” refers to the metropolis.
3. It should be noted that *s farades* is a term not used in North Africa before decolonization (Bord s-Benayoun 2012) and that this vernacular adjective has only recently made its way into French lexicon as a marker of Jewish identity.
4. Although the correct transliteration of the Arabic term is *Maghrib*, I have used the French spelling of *Maghreb* to (a) avoid confusion with the nation-state Morocco, and (b) emphasize the influence of the French language for Maghrebi Jews. For more on patterns of North African Jewish migration to metropolitan France, see the work of Colette Zytnicki (2005, 2012).
5. The specifically French language-resonating “indigeneity” (from the French *indig n it *) is more in tune with the particularities of this French colonial construction than the noun “indigenoussness.”
6. I use Judeo-Muslim throughout the book rather than Jewish–Muslim or Muslim–Jewish as it’s closer to the French/Maghrebi expression *Jud o-musulman* and less

- fixed than Jewish–Muslim, yet it also gets at the complexity of Maghrebi Jewishness that has a deep traditionalist Judaic substratum of thinking, feeling, and doing.
7. Rather than Berber or *Berbère*, which is the word Zemmour used, I will follow contemporary Anglophone academic trends and use the term Amazigh favored by the Amazigh cultural and political movement (see [El Guabli 2025](#)).
 8. 54 percent of French Israelis voting in Israel voted for Zemmour, and while only 22 percent of the eligible French voting population of Israel voted, his candidacy was a clear favorite among those who did ([Imbert 2022](#)). It also indicates that Zemmour’s strident rhetoric can mobilize voters. It should be noted, however, that this is not representative of French Jewish voters abroad overall who voted predominantly for Macron.
 9. The complexities of these multiple terminologies, *européen*, *Pied-noir*, *indigène*, etc., are discussed in some depth in [Chapter 1](#), but it is worth noting here that it was particularly the 2005 uprisings that responded to yet another racialized bout of police violence against young Arab and Black men that served to recenter the colonial legacy of *indigène* and its postcolonial vestiges in France ([Tetrault and Silverstein 2005](#)).
 10. Benjamin Stora is the most well-known historian of Algeria in France and now a public figure on matters of culture and history. He holds advisory roles in the state and is the former director of the French National Museum for Immigration.
 11. See the INA clip by journalist Louis Roland Neil depicting Algerian Jewish families in early Ashdod (1966).
 12. Please note that this is an imprecise calculation based on Maghrebi Jewish numbers to France by the 1970s, Algerian migration being approximately half of these, projected forwards to those who emigrated to Israel.
 13. Such mobility includes the routes taken by cross-religious scholarly networks ([Gottreich and Schroeter 2011](#)).
 14. This thesis has been taken up more recently by Julie Kalman in “The Kings of Algiers” concerning specifically the assertiveness of the Bacri family (2023, 21).
 15. See Claudia Strauss on centering the person and their experience in the potentially reifiable notion of “imaginary” (2006).
 16. Originally coined by Turner in 1969 and relating to the anthropological “interstructural situation” (46) in “initiation rites,” the concept as well as the name *liminal*, meaning “threshold” in Latin, denotes an intermediary state. In more recent “post-colonial” literature, the term has been used in reference to the impossible ambiguity of being Western but of Middle Eastern heritage, in line with the historical perspective of [Albert Memmi \(1957\)](#) who described the Tunisian Jewish situation or “state” at the time of the African independences. I take the word to mean “on the threshold,” both metaphorically and ideationally “wedged” between contradictory cultural forces.
 17. Indeed, intermarriage between descendants of North African Jews is on the rise, but also between descendants of North African Jews and Ashkenazim ([Charbit 2015](#)).
 18. On the sociohistorical connections between *le textile* in le Sentier and *schmates* in New York City, see [Nancy Green \(1997\)](#).
 19. *Le traditionalisme* represents the most common form of North African Jewish observance in contemporary France among generations born in the Maghreb, characterized by respecting traditions and authority, such as the family, but not by

- orthopraxy, or so-called correct practice, such as prohibitions against driving to a Friday night Shabbat dinner (see [Everett 2022](#); [Sorek 2025](#)).
20. Ilan Halimi was tortured and killed by a French West African Muslim gang who assumed that because he was Jewish, his abduction would lead to a healthy ransom.
 21. The Espace Culturel et Universitaire Juif d'Europe (ECUJE), a well-established Jewish cultural center in Paris, under the stewardship of Gad Ibgui has given much more airtime to Judeo-Arab culture since 2018. During lockdown in 2020, Ibgui, alongside Sefwoman, curated a series of public talks on significant North African Jewish intellectuals and culture makers.
 22. For more than a decade, migration to Europe from North Africa has not been unidirectional, at least for North Africans, many of whom circulate between the two continents ([Truong et al. 2014](#)).
 23. Return is a polyvalent term in the context of *maghrebinicité* relating to different directions of movement south and east, but also philosophical and embodied forms of return to the Maghreb. I come back in some detail to the notion of Return in [Chapter 7](#).
 24. One growing area of research in Jewish Studies is around the “Arab-Jew,” which has strong implications for people from or descendants of Maghrebi Jewry. At a grassroots and community level, this has translated itself into a cultural movement of sorts, particularly among Moroccans in Israel in the context of the so-called Abraham Accords, sometimes built around an exoticization of an absent historical Arab-Jewish subject, and/or the ignoring of contemporary social phenomena within Morocco.
 25. See the periodical series *Combat pour la Diaspora*, Syros. See also Beur FM (second-generation French North African radio station) and Radio J for cooperation and joint programming at that time.