

The Jews of Morocco and Israel: A Preliminary Note on Recent Trend of Study

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1. Recent Trend of Study in Moroccan Jews

The main purpose of this essay is to review Michael Laskier's recent work, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 400) from a critical point of view. The author of the book is Executive Director of the Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem, Los Angeles executive headquarters. As an energetic historian Laskier has already published four books and a plenty of articles in academic journals on this field of study. This new book is a political history of the Jews of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia chiefly from official viewpoints of Israeli Zionist bodies operating in the region.

Before discussing Michael M. Laskier's book in detail, I briefly survey recent trend of study in North African Jewry, especially in focus on Moroccan Jewry, in order to put his work in a broader context of current scholarship. I show, in the light of recent trend of study mainly in Israel, what approach he adopts towards the Jews of North Africa in particular, the Jews of Arab or Islamic countries in general, and how he describes them.

Humane and social studies on North African Jewry (history, literature, linguistics, sociology, anthropology etc.) have recently made rapid progress especially in Israel. We witness such progress notably in the revised and enlarged hard-cover edition of Attal's bibliography on the Jews of North Africa (covering Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya), in which 10,062 items including books and articles written in various languages, mainly in Hebrew, French and English and also in Spanish and Arabic, etc. are listed according to alphabetical order of authors on North Africa in general and then on each country.¹

Retrospectively surveyed, academic interest in Oriental Jews² was minimal during the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel)

1 Robert Attal, *Les Juifs d'Afrique du Nord, Bibliographie*, Edition refondue et largie, Jérusalem, Institut Ben-Zvi, 1993, pp. 672+ciii.

2 I usually distinguish the term 'Oriental Jews' or 'Orientals' (in Hebrew *Mizrahim*, *Yehudei Mizrah*, or '*Adot Mizrah*') who spoke Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Berber, or Judeo-Persian etc. in the 'Diaspora', from the term *Sephardim* (Sephardim, the Jews of Spain whose tongue was originally Ladino or Judeo-Spanish). In this essay, however, I use the term 'the Jews from Asia and Africa' (according to the Israeli official statistics) with the same connotation of 'Oriental Jews', which also include Sephardim. This means that I ignore here ethnic differences between *Tashavim* (indigenous) and *Megorashim* (deported) in Moroccan context.

period, since most of new Jewish immigrants to Palestine were consisted of Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim or Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia during that period. It should be remembered that Sephardim or Jews from the Iberian Peninsula already lived in Palestine as Ottoman subjects in the 16th century and the Jews of Maghrib, Georgia, Bukhara, Persian, and Yemen also began to immigrate after the latter half of the 19th century. Despite the very fact that the Sephardic and Oriental Jewish communities in Palestine did exist side by side with Old Yishuv (non-Zionist Jewish Orthodox communities in Palestine such as Hasidim and Pershim) long before the emergence of Zionist movement, they had been until recently ignored in Zionist historiography in New Yishuv and Israel.³

The number of Jewish immigration from Asia and Africa to Israel, however, suddenly increased in number as the aftermath of the deteriorated Arab-Israeli relations subsequent to the establishment of Israel in May 1948. The immigration of the crucial years between 1948 and 1952 is, therefore, called '*Aliya Hamonit* (mass immigration) in modern history of Israel.⁴ At that time the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency faced serious problems of new immigrants such as housing, job opportunities, education and so on. These official institutions had to manage how new immigrants should be absorbed into newly-born Israeli society. Against this backdrop, Israeli researchers were mainly motivated by the urgent governmental need to carry out intensive studies of how to absorb new immigrants (*Qlitat 'Aliya*) from Asian and African countries in general, Arab or Islamic countries in particular. These new Oriental immigrants were quite different from their dominant European and American brethren, who had already settled in Israel as either Zionists veterans (*Vatiquim*) or survivors of Holocaust, not only in life style and way of thinking, but also in language, religious traditions and customs. In Israel the Orientals were or continue to be looked down upon as backward, uncultivated, primitive and barbarous due to their 'Arabness' by their European brethren. When they immigrated to Israel, most of them were also reluctant to accept the secular ideal of socialist-Zionist revolution, after which every Jew should be reborn as a Zionist laborer in the Jewish labor state. The policy of assimilating 'traditional' Orientals into 'modernized' society under the Ashkenazi hegemony was justified under the inherited slogan of *mizug galuyot* (fusion of new immigrants or ingathering of exiles) which corresponded to American melting pot model, assuming that modernization theory could be applicable to a plural society.⁵

3 Akira Usuki, "The Sephardi Community of Jerusalem before World War I: A Note on a Dominant Community on Decline", *Orient* (Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan), Vol. 29, March 1994, pp. 93-108.

4 On the mass immigration to Israel, see Mordekhai Na'or, ed. '*Olim u-Ma'abarot 1948-1952 (New Immigrants and Transit Camps 1948-1952)*, Jerusalem, Yad Ben-Tzvi, 1986. (in Hebrew)

5 S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study based mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel*, London, 1954. A critical study of modernization theory on absorption by an Israeli sociologist of Iraqi origin, Sammy Smooha (Haifa University), *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. Also refer to a prominent 'Revisionist' or neo-Marxist view, Shlomo Swirski, *Lo Neheshalim ele Menuhashelim: Mizrahim ve-Ashkenazim be-Yisra'el, Nithah Sotziologi ve-Sihot'im Pa'ilimve-Pa'ilot (Not those who lag behind, but those who are forced to lag behind: Orientals and Ashkenazim, Sociological Analysis and Talks with Male and Female Activists; [The author's own English title] Orientals and Ashkenazim in Israel: The Ethnic Division of Labor)*, Haifa, 1981, (in Hebrew); Also see the abridged English translation of Swirski's Hebrew work by Barbara Swirski, Idem, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, London, Zed Press, 1989.

After the mass immigration period ended, new immigrants to Israel drastically decreased in number, except Jewish immigrants from Morocco. Moroccan Jews continued intermittently to immigrate to Israel from the beginning of the 1950s until 1963 with the two peaks, 1955-56 and 1961-63. The second peak of immigration is known for *Mivtza' Yakhin* (Yakhin Operation) for transporting the Moroccan Jews to Israel. Until the end of the Yakhin operation in 1963, the total amount of Moroccan Jews who immigrated to Israel reached nearly 210,347 which constituted the largest Jewish community in Israeli society according to the country of origin till the end of the 1980s.⁶

Younger generations of Israeli anthropologists trained abroad in the 1960s, emerged after these new immigrants settled mostly in new towns and Moshavim (collective agricultural settlements). These researchers lived as trained field-workers among North African Jews, above all, Moroccan Jews. They produced excellent anthropological studies on agricultural settlements, especially Moshavim, of Moroccan Jews.⁷ Meanwhile, researchers of Moroccan origin living in Israel or France began to publish studies in folklore and popular cultures of Moroccan Jews mainly in Hebrew and French from the 1980s.⁸

After the War of 1967, so-called 'ethnic revival' occurred in Israeli society. This phenomenon of the ethnic revival culminated to the social protest movement of the Orientals in the 1970s, most of whom were young Moroccans from slums in urban areas. The most prominent example was the Black Panthers, who demonstrated against ethnic discrimination in Israeli society. At the same time, Moroccan Jews in Israel also began to pride themselves on their own traditions and cultures historically shared with Arab Muslims in Morocco.⁹

6 Samu'el Segev, *Mivtza' "Yakhin": Aliyatem he-Hasha'it shel Yehudei Maroqo le-Yisra'el* ("Operation Yakhin": The Secret Immigration of Moroccans Jews to Israel), Tel-Aviv, The Ministry of Defense, 1984, p. 251, (in Hebrew). According to *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1988* (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, No. 39, p. 76), the total number of the Jews of Moroccan origin, born in Morocco and in Israel, amounted to 487,700 (approximately 13.5% of the grand total of Jewish population in Israel, not including Arab, Druze, and Bedwin citizens).

[The Number of Immigrants from Morocco to Israel (1949-63)]

1948/9	18,000	1950	4,980	1951	7,770	1952	5,031	1953	2,996	1954	8,171	1955	24,994	1956	36,301
1957	8,758	1958	1,803	1959	3,325	1960	4,108	1961	11,478	1962	35,758	1963	36,874		

7 For example, Alex Weingrod of Ben-Gurion University in Beersheva, an anthropologist educated in the University of Chicago in the 1950s, published a pioneering monograph, *Reluctant Pioneers: Village Development in Israel*, N.Y., Cornell U.P., 1966. And also Shlomo Dshen, *Immigrant Voters in Israel: Parties and Congregations in a Local Elections Campaign*, Manchester, The University of Manchester Press, 1970, and Moshe Shokeid, *The Dual Heritage: Immigrants from the Atlas Mountains in an Israeli Village*, Manchester, The University of Manchester Press, 1971; Augmented edition, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1985. Dshen and Shokeid, both of whom were trained under Max Gluckman of the University of Manchester, are presently professors of Social Anthropology in Tel-Aviv University. Concerning the Jews of Libya, Harvey E. Goldberg, *Cave Dwellers and Citrus Growers: A Jewish Community in Libya and Israel*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1972.

8 It goes without saying that French Orientalists have accumulated vast bulk of studies on Moroccan Jewry. On a brief survey of the study, see Shalom Bar-Asher, "Yehudei Maroqo be-Mehqar Zamanenu (Les Juifs du Maroc dans la recherche contemporaine)", in Issachar Ben-Ami ed., *Mehqarim be-Tarbutem shel Yehudei Tzefon-Afrika (Recherches sur la Culture des Juifs d'Afrique du Nord)*, Jérusalem, Communauté Israélite Nord-Africaine, 1991, pp. 275-289, (in Hebrew). On recent studies in saint veneration among Moroccan Jews by Jewish researchers of Moroccan origin, see Issachar Ben-Ami, *Ha'aretzet ha-Qedshim be-qerev Yehudei Maroqo (Saint Veneration among the Jews in Morocco)*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1984, (in Hebrew); idem, *Culte des Saints et Pèlerinages Judéo-Musulmans au Maroc*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 1990. And on a concise history of Jewish spiritual life in Morocco, see Haim Zafrani, *Mille Ans de Vie Juive au Maroc: Histoire et Culture, Religion et Magie*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 1985.

9 Eric Cohen, "The Black Panthers and Israeli Society", *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14, 1972, pp. 93-109, and also on the ethnic problem in Israel see Idem, "Ethnicity and Legitimation in Contemporary Israel", *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No.28, 1983, pp. 111-124; A. Weingrod, ed., *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity: After the Ingathering*, N.Y., Gordon and Breach, 1985.

Such cultural phenomenon also led in the academic field to the crystallization of the publication in 1979 of an academic journal *Pe'amim* whose purpose is the advancement of mainly cultural and historical studies in Sephardic and Oriental Jewry by Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East (*Makhon Ben-Tzvi le-Heqer Qehilot Yisra'el ba-Mizrah*) which was named after the second President of Israel and also Orientalist, Yizhak Ben-Zvi (1884-1963).¹⁰

Finally, I want to emphasize that the significant trend of study recently emerged even in the U.S. This trend is prominently represented by an excellent book whose title is 'Jews among Arabs', neither 'Jews and Arabs' nor 'Jews under Arabs', which is a rich result of colloquium held in Princeton University in 1986. The editor of the book clarified its purpose in Preface, manifesting that "we wanted to explore the experience of the Jewish communities of North Africa and Iraq in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as one example of interaction between a religioethnic group and the dominant surrounding Arab-Muslim society. To move beyond the perspective of minority-majority relationships, we hoped to examine the practical and symbolic exchanges between communities; the shared traditions and cultural forms of these communities; and their boundaries, which have served both as a system of communication and contact and means of separation and identity. In short, we wanted to explore the "Arabness of Arab Jews"—what it was and how it worked—and also to probe its transformation and its community in recent time and in new countries".¹¹

In addition to anthropological and cultural studies in Moroccan Jewry, monographs of modern history exploring new materials and documents with sophisticated academic skills seem to be increasing in number.¹² In our stores of research, of course, we have already had comprehensive surveys on North African Jewry by famed Jewish researchers of older generation such as Haim Z. Hirschberg's, André Shouraqui's and also David Corcos's.¹³ But these works except Shouraqui's updated edition do not extend to contemporary political aspects of the Jewish history of Morocco in the 20th century. In this sense, Laskier's latest book on 'a political history on North African Jewry' is informative enough for researchers and general readers to refer to in order to fill vacuum concerning the clandestine activities of Israeli Zionist groups and 'aliya from North Africa. It also makes an important

10 On the establishment of Ben-Zvi Institute, see Shim on Rubinstein, "al Yisudo u-Reshito shel Makhon Ben-Tzvi le-Heqer Qehilot Yisra'el ba-Mizrah (On the Establishment and Beginning of the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East)", *Pe'amim*, No. 23, 1985, pp. 127-149. (in Hebrew)

11 Mark R. Cohen and Abraham L. Udovitch, eds. *Jews among Arabs: Contacts and Boundaries*, Princeton, Darwin Press, 1989, pp. 7-8. On serious themes on Jews and Arabs, or Jews in dominant Muslim circumstance, see proceedings of colloquia organized by Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. *Les Relations entre Juifs et Musulmans en Afrique du Nord XIXe-XXe Siècles*, Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1980; M. Abitbol ed., *Judaïsme d'Afrique du Nord aux XIXe-XXe Siècles: Histoire, Société et Culture*, Jérusalem, Institut Ben-Zvi, 1980.

12 I mention only a few of recent publications. Michel Abitbol, *Les Juifs d'Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 1983; Sarah Leibovici, *Chronique des Juifs de Tétouan (1960-1896)*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 1984; Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication of America, 1991.

13 H.Z.(J.W.) Hirschberg, *Toldot ha-Yehudim ba-Afrika ha-Tzefonit (A History of the Jews in North Africa)*, 2 vols., Hebrew edition: Jerusalem, Bialik, 1965; English edition: Leiden, Brill, 1974. And also André Chouraqui, *Histoire des Juifs en Afrique du Nord*, Nouvelle édition, Paris, Hachette, 1987; and an more concise history is, idem, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968. David Corcos, *Studies in the History of the Jews of Morocco*, Jerusalem, Rubin Mass, 1976.

contribution to revealing a secret history of Moroccan Jews mobilized to emigrate by Zionist underground movements.¹⁴

As indicted earlier, Laskier has so far produced a lot of works on a political history of North African Jews, in English, Hebrew, and French, especially on activities in Morocco of Alliance Israélite Universelle exploring Alliance's archives in Paris. Laskier's latest work reviewed here is counted as the fourth of the books he have ever published.¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, the title of the book "North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century" is misleading as well as that of his earlier book on the Jews of Egypt. His subject might be more accurately entitled "Clandestine Israeli Zionist Activities and 'Aliya of the Jews of North Africa", as Joel Beinon criticized severely the Laskier's second book on the Jews of Egypt in a book review. In fact, those who read his book expecting that 'his work is primarily concerned with the actual Jewish community' of North Africa would be disappointed with what is really described in his book.¹⁶ Moreover, as a premise of his analysis, he seems to take for granted the desire or choice by Moroccan Jews to emigrate under the Muslim nationalistic ferments which 'inevitably' stirred up pogroms against Jews, emphasizing 'push factors' instead of explaining 'push factors' and 'pull factors' combined.

2. A Survey of Laskier's Book

I briefly survey each chapter of Laskier's book, concentrating on the process of 'aliya from Morocco. The chapters from seven to ten are omitted here, because these three chapters discuss the Jews of Tunisia and Algeria after the establishment of Israel.

In introduction, Laskier divides the 20th century of North African Jewry into two main periods: the first period 1900-1948/49 which is discussed in Part One, and the second period 1949-92 in Part Two. The characterization of both periods in the 20th century helps us to understand Laskier's approach to the North African Jewry and his main concern of this study as indicated earlier.

The first period "marked a crucial turning point in Jewish North Africa with the formation of Zionist clubs and associations across the urban milieu, organizations out of which there emerged a Zionist leadership elite". The birth of Israel was the watershed of

14 On Zionist activities in North Africa before 1945, the following Hebrew articles opened new frontiers in this field. M. Abitbol, "ha-Pe'ilot ha-Tziyonit be-Tzefon-Afrika 'ad Sof Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Sheniya (Zionist Activities in North Africa till the End of World War Two)", *Pe'amim*, No. 2, 1979, pp. 65-91, (in Hebrew); Tvi Yehuda, "ha-Pe'ilot ha-Tziyyonit be-Maroco 'erev ha-Protektorat (Zionist Activities in Morocco on the eve of the Protectorate), in Shlomo Ben-Asher and Aharon Mamen eds., *Yehudei Tzefon-Afrika ve-Eretz-Yisra'el: me-'Aliyat Rav Hayyim Ben Atar [1741-1981] ad Yemeinu, Tziyonut, Aliya ve-Hityashevot (The Jews of North Africa and Eretz-Israel: from the Immigration of Rabbi Haim Atar to the Present, Zionism, Immigration and Settlements)*, Jerusalem?, Be-Yahad, 1981?, pp. 130-142. (in Hebrew)

15 Laskier's first book is *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco 1862-1962*, Albany, State University of New York, 1983, which was originally submitted to U.C.L.A. as Ph.D. thesis; The second is *The Jews of Egypt 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict*, N.Y., New York University Press, 1992; and the third is, *Yehudei ha-Magreb be-tzel Vichy ve-Tzelav ha-Qeres (The Jews of Maghrib in the Shadow of Vichy and the Swastika)*, Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv University Press, 1992. (in Hebrew)

16 Joel Beinon, "Book Review of Laskier's *The Jews of Egypt 1920-1970*", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol., 25, No.1, Feb. 1993, p.120.

the 20th century history of North African Jews. The second period “witnessed political and socioeconomic transformations that laid the foundations for the eventual Jewish exodus from North Africa.” Of course, he mentions carefully that, during the period 1947-49, “important segments of the urban Jewish populations of Tunisia and Algeria still entertained hopes that France would not relinquish control of her colonial possessions and would neutralize Muslim nationalist ferment” (p. 4).

“The second period 1949-92 dampened hopes that large Jewish community would survive in the region”. He points out ‘push-factors’ (though he never uses this term) of Jewish emigration as follows; (1) political instability during the 1950s as the nationalist struggle for independence gained support, (2) the decline of Jews to ponder the prospects of living among the Muslims *sans France*, (3) the birth of Israel and North African Muslim solidarity with the Middle Eastern Arab states, placing the Jews in a delicate balance, (4) the emergence of independent North Africa between 1956 and 1962 (p. 4). The post-1948 period witnessed a transition on a process of communal self-liquidation, he asserts. “For those who made ‘Aliya—legally, semilegally, or illegally—the task of organizing it was entrusted to Israeli bodies such as the Mossad Le-‘Aliya Bet, *Mossad* (Israel’s secret service apparatus), and the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency. New light is shed especially on the role of the *Mossad* inside the Jewish communities of Morocco and Algeria” (pp. 4-5).

The above-mentioned approach and interest of the author, as well as archival sources he relies upon, inevitably prepare for a single-cause explanation and a one-sided description of the *Exodus* of North African Jews, namely, a Zionist’s narration of the rescue operations from Muslims’ deep-rooted persecution and oppression against the Jews to ‘utopia’, that is, Israel.

Chapter 1 (“North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: A Sociopolitical Analysis”) discusses the political status of the Jews in the new colonial setting, the politics of education with emphasis on Morocco, the penetration of Zionism, and then the conflict between local Zionists and their opponents in order to understand the sociopolitical factors of North African Jewry.

French policies of North African Jewry differed from one country to other. While the French government granted French citizenship status to Algerian Jewry by virtue of the Crémieux Decree on 24 October 1870, in Tunisia it was in 1923, under the French Protectorate, that the Morinaud Law enabled Jews to get French citizenship on an *individual* basis only. In Morocco, the situation was more complicated. The overwhelming majority remained *dhimmi* in the Sherifian rule, but issues of consular protection and foreign nationality were already raised in 1880 under the Sultan Mawlay al-Hasan. Regarding foreign nationality, the Sultan formulated the following policy: “Every Moroccan naturalized abroad who shall return to Morocco must, after a period of residence equal in time to that which was legal to obtain naturalization, choose between his complete submission to the laws of the [Sharifian] Empire and obligation to leave Morocco, . . . unless it was proved that the foreign naturalization was obtained with the consent of the Sultan”. The Sultan, however, was not about to consent because he wanted Muslims and Jews to maintain perpetual allegiance to him.

On the other hand, the French was reluctant to grant French citizenship to Jews in the new French Protectorate like Morocco, fearing that the naturalization would stir political animosity among native Muslims. Though segments of the Jews sought French citizenship, individual candidates for it were screened once they proved to be thoroughly assimilated to French culture (pp. 23-27). Laskier then turns his attention to educational problems of missionary activities by *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) among Moroccan Jews. The main purpose of the AIU was to 'civilize' Jews through teaching French and French culture in AIU's schools. So the AIU established schools and extended their educational network not only in Magrib but also in Ottoman territories of the Mediterranean basin such as Balkan, Anatolia, Egypt, and even in Iraq and Iran. It is interesting that the AIU's teachers opposed the idea of Zionism and diputed against Zionists at least until the establishment of Israel. Notwithstanding their refusal of Zionism, important segments of Zionist sympathers consisted of either rabbis or graduates of the AIU schools. So it is important for us to understand that Moroccan Zionism was not 'aliya-oriented until the outbreak of World War Two; it was still in nature, emphasizing the need to fund-raise on behalf of Eastern and Central European settlers living in Palestine (pp. 34-35).

Chapter 2 ("Under Vichy and the Nazi-German Menace: The Jews of North Africa during the 1930s and 1940s") analyzes the conditions of Jews under the occupation period of Vichy regime. Field-Marshal Philippe Pétan at Vichy retained France's overseas possessions including Morocco. On 3 October 1940, the Vichy government enacted the first anti-Jewish law. Then a special commission headed by X. Vallat was created to deal with Jewish affairs at the end of March 1941. Before discussing the Vichy regime, Laskier surveys Muslim-Jewish relations in the pre-War years in the light of 'anti-Semitism' in North Africa, especially in Algeria. In Morocco, the anti-Jewish Law was introduced by the *Zahir* (Sultan's decree), which applied to all Jews by "race". Though series of laws against Jews were enacted, the AIU was allowed to continue functioning in Morocco under Vichy. He points out that, whereas Vichy and its senior officials in North Africa were reactionaries and old-style anti-Semites, they were not as vicious as the Nazi (p. 64). The situations of the Spanish Zone and Tangier, an international zone, the latter of which accepted 12,000 Jewish refugees during 1939-40, were relatively secured. Vichy regime in Morocco ended at 3 June 1943.

Chapter 3 ("Zionism, Clandestine Emigration to Israel, and its Impact on Muslim-Jewish Relations: The Case of Morocco, 1947-March 1949") discusses Zionist underground activities. In Morocco the Charles Netter Association, which emphasized 'aliya, was transformed into an important Zionist Youth organization during the early and mid-1940s. After the latter half of 1943, emissaries of the United Kibbutz Movement (ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad), ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir and of the religious Zionist movement—affiliated with the Yishuv's Hagana, Mossad Le-'Aliya and the Jewish Agency—arrived in Morocco. Especially Mossad Le-'Aliya and the Jewish Agency which had contacted with Zionist-oriented youths, organized the illegal 'aliya in 1947-48 from Algerian coasts. The local Zionist underground assisted Jews to reach a secret transit camp in Algeria via the northeastern Moroccan frontiers area of Oudjda. Those successfully reaching Algiers and Oran were assisted by Israeli emissaries there to depart illegally for Marseilles where there existed the transit

camps cared by the Jewish Agency and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. While the French authorities in Morocco continued to ban emigration in September 1948, their counterparts in Algeria agreed to allow Jewish refugees to be transferred legally from Algiers to Marseilles. The sketchy outline of clandestine 'aliya is based on Laskier's original findings (pp. 84-91).

Laskier proceeds to detailed description of the pogroms in Oudjda and Djérada, which, he believes, accelerated 'aliya in the following years. On 7 June 1948, local Muslims killed forty-seven Jews in Oudjda and the nearby hamlet of Djérada. He suggests that these tragic killings were stirred by both a speech made by Sultan Muhammad V for supporting the Palestinian people and the agitations of extremists affiliated directly or indirectly with the leading nationalist party Istiqlal. But he also indicates that *Makhzan* officials in Oudjda were astonished and genuinely embarrassed by the conduct of the assailants, while the majority of the Arab population approves of this pogrom, according to a reliable source of Laskier's finding. His conclusion on the pogroms is following: "The evidence presented reveals that political motives, particularly Zionism, the Palestine war, and clandestine 'aliya, contributed to the tragedy. I do not believe that we can state definitively whether the events erupted spontaneously, emerged out of isolated incidents, or were planned in advance. However, (. . .) it does seem that in Oudjda, at least, diverse nationalist forces, Istiqlal *sympathizers*, either provoked the pogroms and even helped organize them, or they escalated tensions among the Muslims" (p. 101).

Laskier emphasizes that the Jews wishing to leave Morocco included numerous tailors, watchmakers, shoemaker, carpenters, and goldsmiths, since they were either unemployed or partially employed in 1948-49 and, consequently, determined to leave for Israel in order to escape the economic crisis plaguing Morocco. After the pogroms, he points out, it was no longer necessary for clandestine Zionist organizations inside Morocco to stimulate the exodus (p. 102). Turning to the French policy toward 'aliya, he explains that the French for the first time permitted *Cadima*, an 'aliya organization, to be created in Casablanca in 1956. Tens of thousands of Jews with Moroccan nationalities could, without the *Makhzan*'s approval, emigrate through *Cadima* during its operating years 1949-56. Local 'aliya committees and/or office branches of *Cadima* were established by the early 1950s in major Jewish communities (Rabat, Salé, Meknès, Marrakesh, Fez, Essaouira, and Safi). So between 1949 and 1956 emigrants were first sent from Casablanca to Marseilles, and then to Israel (pp. 112-113).

The book enters into Part Two with Chapter 4 ("Emigration to Israel in the Shadow of Morocco's Struggle for Independence, 1949-1956"). Laskier concentrates on discussing three issues, not chronologically ordered: first, the activities of *Cadima* during the first half of the 1950s; second, Youth 'Aliya, third, Zionist education and 'Aliya in relation to the AIU. Chapter 5 ("International Jewish Organizations and the 'Aliya from Morocco: The Early and Mid-1950"), also discusses the same period with special emphasis on important roles of international Jewish organizations such as the AIU (especially *Ecole Normal Hébraïque*), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

In discussing both chapters 4 and 5, I summarize the process of 'aliya from Morocco between 1949 and 56 chronologically by citing some passages in Laskier's book. The first half of the 1950s witnessed the serious stagnation of the Jewish immigration from Morocco to Israel. Even Laskier admits the fact that "a phenomenon evident among urban Moroccan Jewry in the early 1950s was *yerida*: the departure from Israel of recent emigrants (*yordim*) who wandered to other countries or returned to Morocco. According to a French Protectorate source, 2,466 Jews came back in 1949-53. Bitter and disenchanting about Israel's housing and unemployment problems, they were equally unhappy what they regarded as the Jewish state's discriminatory attitudes toward Mediterranean basin Jews" (p. 124). Facing these difficult situations after the mass immigration to Israel, Israeli government adopted in 1951 the screening policy, known as social/medical selection, of new immigrants from the following countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, India, Iran, Central and Western Europe. The Israeli government decided to choose 80% of the immigrants from the youth up to the age of 35. Potential immigrants had to agree to work within the agricultural sector during their first two years in Israel (p. 119). The exception to the rule related to Yemeni, Iraqi and Rumanian Jewry who benefited from large immigration quotas, since 'aliya from these countries was a "now or never" situation—a rescue operation (p. 121).

Laskier points out that "the attitude toward greater 'aliya from Morocco gained considerable momentum beginning in August. (. . .) Even the *yordim* were now eager to give the Jewish state a second chance" (p. 124). He explains the reason as follows: against the background of the accelerated anti-French struggle in August 1954 on the occasion of the first anniversary of Sutan Muhammad V's exile by the French to Madagascar for his pro-nationalist inclinations, terrorism (*sic.*) became widespread." And then a tragedy occurred again. On 3 August 1954, in the town of Petitjean, seven Jews were massacred. (. . .) Serious incidents took place in the *mellah* of Casablanca, resulting in the injury of many Jews. It was generally believed that a mass attack on the Jewish quarter of Casablanca would have taken place had it not been for the protection given by the French authorities. Subsequently there were attacks, harassments, and property damage in the Jewish sections of Safi, Boujad, Ouezzan, Mazagan, Ourika, and Tiznit (pp. 126-127).

The policy to absorb as many Moroccan Jews as possible into Israel's agricultural districts was also adopted in 1954. With the substantial increase in 'aliya from North Africa from 1954, Israel adopted the slogan of "From the ship to the settlement". The plan was to transfer 40 percent of the immigrant families to agricultural settlements and 60 percent to development towns (p. 130).

Chapter 6 ("The Self-Liquidation Process: Political Developments among Moroccan Jewry and the Emigration Factor") is divided into two phases of Moroccan independent period, the first of which is from March 1956 (independence) to October 1958 (Moroccan participation in Arab League), and the second, from December 1958 (the formation of the leftist Istiqlali 'Abd Allah Ibrahim government) to December 1961 (the beginning of the *Yakhin* operation).

The first part of this chapter, the most impressive from my personal view-point, devotes most of the description to the inner communal discussions of Moroccan Jews. The

categorization of main schools of thought among the modernized Jewish elite in this chapter apparently shows the author's anti-assimilationist tendency, colored throughout his narration of the book.

Laskier, first of all, denies the possibility of solidarity among Jews and Muslims, saying that politically, the situation of the Jews improved in the years 1956-58. Jews were granted Moroccan citizenship, and the fears of harassment and pogroms, prevalent in 1954-55, failed to materialize. Yet the Jews remained suspicious for the most part, and divided. Numerous Jews accused their leaders of being interested in only one thing: being members of the future independent government of Morocco. The Conseil des Communauté Israélites du Maroc (CCIM)—the umbrella organization for the diverse Jewish communities scattered throughout the country—and its secretary-general, Jazque Dahan, appealed to the Jews to demonstrate complete solidarity with Muslims' (pp. 186-7). But this appeal, he continues, made no impression on many Jews, or caused negative reactions, because they did not wish to be obliged one day to fight Israel.

Laskier, then, divides the *modernized (sic.)* elite who intended to neutralize the authority of the old leadership into three main schools of thought, putting Zionism at the center of his criterion. The first school emphasized the central importance of European culture in general and French culture in particular without any attraction to Zionism. The second school including graduates of the modern schools even in the AIU, was influenced by modern secular and religious Zionism. Most of its members contributed to the emergence of a small but dynamic Zionist movement—alongside the traditional Zionism of the Jewish masses. Ironically, he indicates, some of the notable activists within this elite group never settled in Israel. The third trend, which favored a Judeo-Muslim *entente (sic)*, emerged during the early and mid-1950s. The pro-*entente* Jewish group was by no means homogeneous. It included radicals with strong leftist tendencies as well as moderate leftists and conservatives (p. 187).

Laskier evaluates negatively the political roles of the pro-*entente* group such as *al-Wifaq* and similar groups, explaining the reasons as follows: Firstly they were elitists and may have used their political parties as a forum to advance their own political ambitions. "The vision of an entente simply did not attract the Jewish masses. Secondly, the desire of tens of thousands of Jews to emigrate after 1954, mainly to Israel, foreclosed any chance of a Judeo-Muslim entente on a large scale. The efforts of the authorities during the years of 1956-57 to afford the Jews political security and representation and a feeling of belonging to the new Morocco—including the appointment of a Jewish minister of posts and telegraph, Dr. Léon Benzaquen—were perhaps sincere. These efforts, however, were probably too limited in scope and certainly too late". Moreover, he adds that after the second half of 1958, . . . Morocco was rapidly moving into the radical Arab camp of President Nasser of Egypt. Morocco joined the Arab League (in October 1958) and began issuing virulent anti-Israel statements. These factors caused great alarm among the Jews, many of whom had already decided to leave, and convinced them that an *entente* was impossible" (p. 192).

For the Jews of Morocco, difficulties began in December 1958 with the formation of 'Abd Allah Ibrahim government, the left wing of the Istiqlal, which remained in power until

May 1960. But already in May 1958, the moderate government of Si M'Barek Bekkaï, the first government of independent Morocco, was replaced by the Istiqlal headed by Ahmad Balafrej, in which Dr. Bezaquen, the Jewish member of Bekkaï cabinet, did not participate (p. 194). Jews were particularly fearful of the Ibrahim government, because Jews were hard hit under Ibrahim's discriminating economic and social policies (pp. 198-199).

The split in the Istiqlal, the tensions between the Palace and the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP) founded by Mehdi Ben Barka, King Muhammad V's growing disenchantment with the Ibrahim government caused the serious deterioration of Moroccan domestic situation. The Jewish masses saw a figure of the last resort in Muhammad V, according to Laskier (p. 198).

In January 1961, Laskier explains, in response to two events, the intensification of official anti-Zionism prevailed. First, on 3 January Muhammad V organized the Casablanca Conference, which was attended by representatives of the United Arab Republic (including Naaser), the Algerian FLN and other African countries. The second event is the sinking of the boat *Pisces* on the night of 10-11 January. Forty-three Jews who were being smuggled out of Morocco as part of the Zionist clandestine emigration, were found dead. Both events focused public attention on the Moroccan Jewish community, with dire results. Jews suffered police abuse, arrests, and imprisonment as well as severe beatings (pp. 203-204).

However, the sudden death of Muhammad V on 26 February 1961, the emergence of Hasan II as his successor created a new situation. With the collapse of the Syrian-Egyptian Union in September 1961, the new king exploited Arab disunity and Nasser's decline in prestige, to allow the Jews who did not consider themselves at home in Morocco to leave without facing Arab disapprobation. An agreement on organizing emigration was reached in the latter half of 1961 between the Palace, Alex Gatmon (the Mossad's man in Morocco), and United HISS Service (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society). From November 1961 Israel was able to organize large scale and tolerated 'aliya via Europe (p. 212). This process, mainly between 1961 and 1964, was known as "Operation Yakhin". In chapter 7 ("The Israeli-Directed Self-Defence Underground and Operation Yakhin"), the nature of the negotiations and the magnitude of this operation are analyzed. I, however, have so far discussed only the process of 'aliya, so I do not touch with this chapter's topic either.

3. Concluding Remarks

As concluding remarks, I make brief comments on a few weak points of Laskier's analysis. First of all, it seems to be obscure and even contradictory how Laskier evaluates the King's political attitude towards the Jews and how he understands relationships between the Palace and the government as the state institution in policy-making process of the Jews especially after independence. He fails to explain explicitly how the state officially took discriminating measures against the Jews, if it did.¹⁷

17 On the "anti-Semitism" policy by the state in Iraq, see Akira Usuki, "Zionism, Communism and Emigration of the Iraqi Jews: A Brief Survey of An Ancient Community in Crisis, 1941-1951" *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, Vol. 9, March 1994, pp. 1-35.

Secondly, he does not clearly articulate inner compositions of the Jewish communities in Morocco and their social stratification. He, therefore, fails to explain explicitly why some of the Jews chose to immigrate and the others remained in Morocco, even though the latter was a minority among the Moroccan Jews. In other words, the questions he has to answer are: who loses what if he or she emigrates and who gains what after he or she immigrates?

Thirdly, it is not clear how he distinguishes between the modern Zionist aspiration of returning home and the traditional Jewish religious belief of Redemption in unique Moroccan context. Can any pious Moroccan Jew who desires to live and die in Jerusalem accompanying with his or her saint (*Tzaddiq*) be considered to be a 'traditional Zionist' or "religious Zionist"? The question posed here is: how is the relation between Moroccan Judaism and Zionism in historical and social context of Morocco?

Finally, putting his work in a broader context of scholarship in Moroccan Jewry, his historiography of 'a political history of the Moroccan Jewry' definitely lacks inner views from within native Moroccan Jews who remained in Morocco. As I pointed out earlier, its lack inevitably results from his technical and methodological strategy of utilizing official sources he explored in France, Israel and the U.S. Needless to say, I do not intend to deny his important contribution to historical study in Zionist movements and 'aliya in the Arab or Islamic countries, little less than Hayyim Cohen's pioneering work in the 1960s.¹⁸ The question, however, is: from what perspective should we write a history of Zionism in Arab and Islamic countries?¹⁹

18 Hayyim Y. Cohen, *ha-Pe'ilot ha-Tziyonit be-Iraq (The Zionist Activities in Iraq)*, Jerusalem: ha-Sifriya ha-Tziyonit/The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1969. Also see Michel Abitbol, "Le-heqer ha-Tziyyonut ve-ha-'Aliya be-qerev Yehudei ha-Mizrah: Hebtim Metodim (Research on Zionism and Aliya of Oriental Jewry: Methodological Aspects)", *Pe'amim*, No. 39, 1989, pp. 3-14.

19 Influence and historical significance of Zionism for the Jews of Arab or Islamic countries have to be seriously reconsidered against the background of the recent relaxing Arab-Israeli conflict. As suggested by the book cited in note 11, serious researchers, especially Israeli anthropologists, on the Jewish studies in North Africa had begun historically to explore Jewish life in Muslim surroundings in new context. See Shlomo Deshen, *The Mellah Society: Jewish Community Life in Sherifian Morocco*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1989; Harvey E. Goldberg, *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya: Rivals & Relatives*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990.