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From the “Jerusalem of the Balkans” to the *Goldene Medina*: Jewish Immigration from Salonika to the United States*

DEVIN E. NAAR

Who are these strangers who can be seen in the ghetto of the East Side, sitting outside of coffee-houses smoking strange-looking waterpipes, sipping a dark liquid from tiny cups and playing a game of checkers and dice, a game that we are not familiar with? See the signs on these institutions. They read: “Café Constantinople,” “Café Oriental,” “Café Smyrna,” and there are other signs in Hebrew characters that you perhaps cannot read. Are they Jews? No it cannot be; they do not look like Jews; they do not speak Yiddish. Listen; what is that strange tongue they are using? It sounds like Spanish or Mexican. Are they Spaniards or Mexicans? If so, where did they get the coffee-houses, an importation from Greece and Turkey?

—Samuel M. Auerbach, “The Levantine Jew” (1916)¹

Writing in *The Immigrants in America Review*, Auerbach offered an image of “Levantine Jews” as “strangers” within the context of a predominantly Yiddish-speaking, eastern European Jewish culture on the Lower East Side of Manhattan during the first decades of the twentieth century. Auerbach, like his contemporaries writing in English or Yiddish, provided a perspective that he felt would resonate with his readership.² Subsequent accounts of American Jewry have echoed descriptions

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1. Samuel M. Auerbach, “The Levantine Jew,” *The Immigrants in America Review* 2 (Jul. 1916): 47–53, republished in *Jewish Immigration Bulletin* 7 (Aug./Sep. 1916): 10–13.

2. Auerbach came to the United States in 1907 from Istanbul. As his surname suggests, his family was probably of Ashkenazi origin. Once in the United States, he apparently distanced himself from “Levantine Jews,” and clearly wrote this piece from the perspective of an “Ashkenazi” outsider. His article elicited a series of sharp responses in the Ladino press of New York. See Maurice S. Nessim, “The Oriental Sephardim vs. ‘The Levantine Jew,’” *La Bos del Pueblo* (New York), Aug. 15, 1916, 2; and the discussion in Aviva Ben-Ur, “Where Diasporas Met: Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in the City of New York—A Study in Intra-Ethnic Relations” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1998), 84–87. For other descriptions that echo Auerbach’s, see *New York Tribune*, Sep. 22, 1912, 4; *La America* (New York), Jun. 18, 1915, 5; Celia Silbert, “Economic Conditions of the Oriental Jewess in New York,” *American Jewish Chronicle*, Oct. 6, 1916, 666–67; Nathaniel Zalowitz,

such as Auerbach's insofar as they have treated Jews from the eastern Mediterranean—described alternatively as “Levantine,” “Oriental” or “Sephardi”—as marginal figures in their narratives. Others have omitted completely from their accounts the experiences of these Jews, who stray far from the mold of “normative” American Jewry. In addition to differences in language, culture, geographic origin, and religious traditions (*minhagim*), the relatively small demographic weight of Jews from the eastern Mediterranean also has contributed to their marginalization in American Jewish historiography. Perhaps as many as sixty thousand Jews from the eastern Mediterranean arrived in the United States between 1880 and 1924, whereas over two million largely Yiddish-speaking Jews from eastern Europe arrived during the same period.³ As a result, Jews from eastern Europe often have stood symbolically for American Jewry of the early twentieth century.⁴

Recent works, such as those issued in conjunction with the 350th anniversary of Jews in America, pay scant attention to Jews from the eastern Mediterranean. They do begin their narratives of American Jewish history with the tale of the twenty-three refugees who fled from the Inquisition in Recife, Brazil, and settled in New Amsterdam in 1654.⁵ These “Old Sephardim,” however, constituted a group distinct from those Jews who arrived from the eastern Mediterranean during the early twentieth century, and whom scholars have labeled the “New Sephardim.” Some members of Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue of the “Old Sephardim” in New York, initially argued in the 1910s that

“The Thirty Thousand Turkish Jews in New York—Who They Are, What They Do, and How They Live,” *Forverts* (New York), English section, Jul. 25, 1926; Louis M. Hacker, “The Communal Life of the Sephardic Jews in New York City,” *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 3 (Dec. 1926): 32–40.

3. See Ben-Ur, “Where Diasporas Met,” 313–23.

4. Irving Howe, for example, wrote in his classic work: “Among the Jews settling in America, the East Europeans were by far the largest component and the most influential. To tell their story is, to a considerable extent, to tell the story of twentieth-century American Jews. . . . The Sephardic Jews as a group hardly figure at all.” See Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), xix. Similarly, Moses Rischin noted: “Levantine Jews maintained an existence independent of Yiddish New York,” and thus justified his mere paragraph on them, in *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 106–107. Furthermore, the standard division of American Jewry into “German” and “Eastern European” does not leave much room for discussions of Jews from the eastern Mediterranean.

5. See, for example, Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 13; and Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1. Both authors rightly note that these “Sephardim” were not the first Jews to come to colonial America, but rather the first to do so with the intention of establishing a community. Diner also includes a paragraph on the Jews from the Balkans, Turkey, and Greece (81).

the newcomers should not be categorized as “Sephardim” at all. Rather, they advocated labels such as “Levantine” or “Oriental,” both terms with derogatory connotations, so as not to muddy their own reputation as the “noble,” well-established “Sephardim,” the true heirs to the legacy of the Spanish golden age.⁶ Contributors to the Ladino and Anglo-Jewish press in America debated and polemicized over the terms “Levantine,” “Oriental,” and “Sephardi,” some distinguishing among the Jews from the eastern Mediterranean according to linguistic community—Ladino, Greek, and Arabic—and viewing only Ladino-speakers, the perceived descendants of medieval Iberian Jewry, as “Sephardim” in a strict sense.⁷ The only terms of identification not contested during the early twentieth century were those based on city or town of origin that the newcomers gave themselves and utilized internally.

A few scholars have succeeded in giving voice to the Jews from the eastern Mediterranean who lived in early twentieth-century America. They have filled important lacunae by focusing on the efforts of these

6. See David de Sola Pool, “The Immigration of Levantine Jews into the United States,” *Jewish Charities* 4 (Jun. 1914): 12–13; Alice D. Menken, “Committee on Oriental Jews,” *Sisterhood Report* 17 (1912–1913): 6–8; Menken, “Oriental Committee,” *Sisterhood Report* 18 (1913–1914): 9–11; Menken, “Oriental Work,” *Sisterhood Report* 19 (1914–1915): 5–8, all in records of Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, New York, collection I–4, box 5, folder 18; and box 6, folder 2. Scholars have suggested that initial attitudes of “Old Sephardim” toward “New” might parallel the relationship between central and eastern European Jewish immigrants in America. Eventually, scholars have argued, the dynamic between the “Old” and “New Sephardim” transformed; each group recognized the need of the other for the survival of a broader “Sephardi” community. See Joseph M. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America* (San Jose: Pele Yoretz Books, 1987), 51–64; Ben-Ur, “Where Diasporas Met,” 100–160.

7. The vernacular of the Jews from Salonika and much of the Ottoman Empire and successor states will be referred to as Ladino, following common usage. Based primarily on sixteenth-century Castilian, with a significant Hebrew-Aramaic component, Ladino had, by the turn of the twentieth century, incorporated French, Italian, Turkish, and Greek elements as well as Americanisms in the United States and continued to be written in the Hebrew alphabet. Other terms utilized to describe this language include Judeo-Spanish, Judezmo, and Spaniolit. See George K. Zucker, “Ladino, Judezmo, Spanyolit, El Kasteyano Muestro,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 19 (Summer 2001): 4–14. On American influence on Ladino, see Dena Lida, “Language of the Sephardim in Anglo-America,” *American Jewish Archives* 44 (Spring/Summer 1992): 309–29. Despite the fact that Ladino speakers in New York often had roots in places other than Spain or Portugal, the perception of them as descendants of Iberian Jewry persisted. See A[llbert]. Matarasso, “Sefaradim i Ashkenazim: Repuesta a senyor Shemuel Saadi Halevy,” *El Luzero Sefaradi* 1 (Apr. 1927): 11–13. On the Arabic-speaking community, see Joseph A. D. Sutton, *Magic Carpet: Aleppo-in-Flatbush: The Story of a Unique Ethnic Jewish Community* (New York: Thayer-Jacoby, 1979). On Greek-speaking “Romaniote” Jews, see Marcia Hadad Ikononopoulos, “The Romaniote Jewish Community of New York,” *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 23–24 (Winter 2006–2007): 141–168.

immigrants at communal organization, their interactions with the “Old Sephardim” and “Ashkenazim,” and their creation of a Ladino press in New York.⁸ Such scholars point out city-based identity but often represent it as a source of conflict and an obstacle to overcome in the formation of a broader group identity. This article seeks to push even further and reconsider the received taxonomy of “Levantine,” “Sephardi,” and “Ladino” by presenting the case of one such constituent city-based group. For Jews from Salonika—*Selaniklis*, as they called themselves—as for many Jews from the eastern Mediterranean, city-based consciousness constituted their primary vector of identity, one that transcended the experiences of emigration and immigration.⁹ To tell their story as *Selaniklis* (Salonikans) is to tell it in their own terms.

This article also joins recent work, such as that by Rebecca Kobrin on the Bialystoker “diaspora,” that diversifies what we know of immigrant American Jewry, community by community, and requires us to reconsider the geographic and conceptual lines between “Old World” and “New.”¹⁰ As those from the “Jerusalem of the Balkans,” the Salonikans provide a valuable case study of a community whose story loomed large in the cultural history and collective memory of the Sephardi world. Utilizing the Ladino press from New York and Salonika, archives of the Jewish community of Salonika and of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America, ships’ manifests and records of Ellis Island’s Special Board of Inquiries, consular reports from Salonika, memoirs, and a handful of other archival sources, this article seeks to analyze the reasons given by Salonikan Jews and their contemporaries to explain why Salonikan Jews left their natal city and came to the United States during the early twentieth century, and to explore the distinctiveness of their migration experiences. Their

8. See Marc D. Angel, *La America: The Sephardic Experience in the United States* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982); Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*; and Ben-Ur, “Where Diasporas Met.”

9. The city will be referred to throughout as Salonika, which, along with Salonica, represents the standard English-language spelling used in the secondary literature. The Jews referred to the city as Saloniko in the local Ladino press. The official name of the city today, in Greek, is Thessaloniki. The city is called Selanik in Turkish; Solun in Bulgarian; Salonique in French; Salonico in Italian; and Saloniki in Hebrew.

10. Rebecca Kobrin, “Conflicting Diasporas, Shifting Centers: Migration and Identity in a Transnational Polish Jewish Community, 1878–1952” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002); Kobrin, “Transatlantic Detachments—Bialystok Jewish Emigres and Bialystok Jewry, 1918–1929,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 107–31; Kobrin, “Rewriting the Diaspora: Images of Eastern Europe in the Bialystok Landsmanshaft Press, 1921–1945,” *Jewish Social Studies* (New Series) 12 (Spring/Summer 2006): 1–38; Kobrin, “The Shtetl by the Highway: The East European City in New York’s Landsmanshaft Press, 1921–1939,” *Prooftexts* 26 (Spring 2006): 107–37.

continued identification as Salonikans provided them with a sense of continuity during a period of rupture and dislocation. The obstacles the immigrants encountered during the immigration process and the difficulties experienced by those who remained in Salonika form part of this transnational history. Although they physically left Salonika, those *Selaniklis* who came to America sought to perpetuate a sense of Salonikan Jewishness through their café culture, caricatured above by Auerbach, and their early modes of communal organization. As they aimed to maintain this link throughout the interwar period, they transformed what Salonikan Jewishness meant in the United States and in Salonika itself.

The “Jerusalem of the Balkans”

The developing trend of Jewish emigration from Salonika during the early twentieth century ironically overturned the established image of Salonika as a Jewish safe haven. The sixteenth-century Portuguese Jewish poet, Samuel Usque, mythologized Salonika as a refuge for Jews following their expulsion from Spain in 1492 and further Iberian persecutions of the sixteenth century:

It is the mother of Israel which has grown stronger on the foundations of the religion, which yields excellent plants and fruit trees, unequalled the world over. Its fruits are delicious, because watered by rivers, Jews of other countries, persecuted and banished, have come to seek refuge there, and this town has received them with love and cordiality, as if it were our revered mother Jerusalem.¹¹

As in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Salonika served as a city of refuge for Jews during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and reinvigorated its mythic status as a Jewish safe haven and as the “Jerusalem of the Balkans.”¹² During this later period, however, the influx of Jews to Salonika did not result exclusively from persecutions, although they did play an important role. As a result of a blood libel on the Ionian island of Corfu in 1891, clashes in the town of Larissa (in what is today Greece) following the Greek-Ottoman War of 1897, and guerilla warfare during the first years of the twentieth century between Greek and Bulgarian nationalists in the Macedonian hinterland, Jewish refugees arrived in Salonika from these locales. These specific incidents accompanied a general trend of Jews’ leaving territories recently an-

11. Quoted in Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 8.

12. Rena Molho, “The Jewish Presence in Macedonia,” *Los Muestrros* 6 (Mar. 1992): 5–9.

nexed by emerging Balkan nation-states such as Greece and Bulgaria, and relocating to regions that remained under Ottoman control.¹³ The Ottoman state provided the Jews and other monotheistic non-Muslim populations—namely Christians—with the power of self-organization in exchange for certain taxes. Salonika, Istanbul (the imperial capital), and Izmir represented the largest urban Jewish communities organized according to this framework. As non-Muslims, Jews remained second-class subjects, but such an arrangement seemed preferable to the uncertain position in which Jews in the newly forming Balkan nation-states expected to find themselves.¹⁴ Furthermore, Jewish refugees fleeing from eastern Europe in the 1890s, and after pogroms in Kishenev in 1903 and Odessa in 1905, also settled in Salonika.¹⁵

Jewish migration to Salonika should also be situated within the context of larger population movements tied to increasing urbanization and industrialization in the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those living in provincial Ottoman areas and who were in search of improved economic opportunities—by no means Jews alone—increasingly settled in larger cities such as Salonika.¹⁶ In keeping with their system of organizing subject populations according to religion, the Ottoman authorities maintained a special register of Jews as part of the 1884 census that listed over one hundred families from small towns including Gallipoli (Gelibolu), Larissa (Yeni Şehir), Dardanelles

13. Yitzchak Kerem, "The Influence of Anti-Semitism on the Jewish Immigration Pattern from Greece to the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century," in *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Cesar E. Farah (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1993), 305–14; Mark Cohen, *Last Century of a Sephardic Community: The Jews of Monastir, 1839–1943* (New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 2003), 97; Sakis Gekas, "The Port Jews of Corfu and the 'Blood Libel' of 1891: A Tale of Many Centuries and of One Event," in *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*, ed. David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 171–96.

14. Aron Rodrigue, "From Millet to Minority: Turkish Jewry," in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 238–61.

15. C[harles]. Allatini to President of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Salonika, May 6, 1895, Grèce I C 39, Archive of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris (hereafter cited as AAIU). See the marriage declaration for Shlomo Tsaflik and Sosia Vodovos, both born in Odessa, June 19, 1939, folder 5, act 378, Archive of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki (hereafter cited as JMTh).

16. Kemal H. Karpat, "Jewish Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire, 1862–1914," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1994), 399–421; Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17 (May 1985): 175–209; Basil Gounaris, "Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 7 (May 1989): 133–53.

(Çanakkale), Kavalla, Serres, Drama, and Kastoria who now resided in Salonika.¹⁷ A register from 1905 similarly recorded over 350 Jewish families who had settled in Salonika from many of the same outlying towns.¹⁸ Few entries in either register indicated individuals who had come from other urban centers such as Istanbul or Izmir.

With the increased urban population, industrialization, and expanded economic opportunities, by the turn of the twentieth century Jews came to constitute close to half of the 170,000 residents of Salonika. Turks, Greeks, Dönme, Levantines, Bulgarians, Armenians, and Roma represented the remainder of the population of this cosmopolitan, Ottoman port city on the Aegean Sea.¹⁹ Historians have called the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a “golden age” for Salonika and especially its Jewish population, whose members played leading roles in the economy and constituted the largest Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ Jews in Salonika participated in a complex trans-Mediterranean commercial network and played active roles in the Ottoman economy as middlemen, exporting cereal, cotton, wool, and silk, and opening some of the first factories for bricks, flour, soap, and tobacco in the Balkan

17. Register titled, “Defter nefus resansiman primo echo del 1300: defter famiyas no. 1,” collection Gr/Sa, file 358, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (hereafter cited as CAHJP), Jerusalem. On the Ottoman census, see Kemal H. Karpat, “Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82–1893,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (Oct. 1978): 237–74; Stanford J. Shaw, “The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831–1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (Oct. 1978): 325–38.

18. “Defter nufus yabandji i bakli mekyan muvakat de shana [5]665—1321,” folder 1, JMTh. See Devin E. Naar, *With Their Own Words: Glimpses of Jewish Life in Thessaloniki Before the Holocaust* (Thessaloniki: The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, 2006), 12–14.

19. Michael Molho, *In Memoriam: Hommage aux Victimes Juives des Nazis en Grèce* (Thessaloniki: Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, 1978), 17, indicates that eighty thousand of the 173,000 residents in Salonika were Jews. For more detailed statistics, see Rena Molho, *Oi Evraioi tis Thessalonikis, 1856–1919: Mia Idiaïteri Koinotita* (Athens: Themelio, 2001), 47. Other recent works that deal with the Jewish community of Salonika during the period under discussion include: Bernard Pierron, *Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce Moderne: Histoire des relations intercommunautaires de 1821 à 1945* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1996); Bracha Rivlin, ed., *Pinkas HaKehillot—Yavan* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998); Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430–1950* (London: Harper Collins, 2004); Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808–1945*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2005); Rena Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2005); Bea Lewkowitz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika: History, Memory, Identity* (London: Valletine-Mitchell, 2006); K. E. Fleming, *Greece—A Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

20. Richard Ayoun, “Les juifs séfarades à Salonique: Un second âge d’or de 1850 à 1917,” *Neue Romania* 24 (2001): 37–62.

region. Industrialization of the city and the construction of a modern port rendered Salonika an important commercial hub for the eastern Mediterranean.²¹

A correspondent for the *Catholic World* in 1900 even referred to Salonika as a “New Jerusalem”—a variation on the theme of “Jerusalem of the Balkans”—which encapsulated the preponderance, prosperity, and diversity of the city’s Jewish population at the time.²² Jews occupied positions in a variety of social strata, with a particularly large working class. Some served as lawyers, bankers, and businessmen, while many more worked as fishermen, stevedores, porters, tobacco laborers, peddlers, and small merchants.²³ When David Ben-Gurion visited in 1911, he acknowledged the prominence of Jews in numerous segments of society, characterizing Salonika as “a Hebrew labor town, the only one in the world.” He was impressed by the fact that the port of the city closed every Saturday in observance of the Jewish Sabbath.²⁴ The community also benefited from the advent of the Ladino press and of modern education, stemming from the efforts of Jewish institutions such as the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle, which had established its first school in Salonika in 1873.²⁵

Alongside the emergence of the new golden age for the Jews of Salonika and the trend of immigration to the city, a contrasting trend of out-migration developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Scholars focusing on eastern Mediterranean Jewish immigrants to the United States argue that “political instability” and “economic hardship,” both of which correspond to an image of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century, provided the over-

21. Basil Gounaris, “Salonica,” *Review: Fernand Braudel Center* 16 (Fall 1993): 499–518; Vassilis Colonas, “The Contribution of the Jewish Community to the Modernization of Salonika at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” in Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 2:165–172.

22. Lucy Garnett, “A New Jerusalem,” *The Catholic World* 71 (Aug. 1900): 612.

23. Paul Dumont, “The Social Structure of the Jewish Community of Salonika at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *Southeastern Europe* 5 (1979): 33–72; Donald Quataert, “The Workers of Salonica, 1850–1912,” in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik Jan Zürcher (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), 59–74.

24. Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886–1948* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 78.

25. Yitzchak Kerem, “The Influence of European Modernizing Forces on the Development of the Judeo-Spanish Press in the 19th Century in Salonika,” in *Hommage à Haïm Vidal Sephiha*, ed. Winfried Busse and Marie-Christine Varol-Bornes (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996), 581–93; Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

riding “push” factors.²⁶ In enumerating five factors that spurred these Jews to emigrate during the period 1880 to 1924, one scholar adds “antisemitism” to economic hardship, unfavorable political climate, compulsory Ottoman military conscription, and natural disasters.²⁷ But the impetuses for the emigration of Jews during this long period cannot be linked exclusively to a picture of the Ottoman Empire as the “Sick Man of Europe.” Furthermore, specific variables operating in distinct locales affected the rate and extent of emigration differently: one should not presume that the reasons why Jews left Salonika could also apply, without modification, to Istanbul, Ioannina, or Aleppo.

Other scholars point to the Young Turk revolution, launched from Salonika in 1908, which overthrew sultan Abdul Hamid II and reinstated the constitution of 1876, as a turning point for Ottoman Jewry and for Jewish emigration from the empire.²⁸ In the wake of the revolution, the new administration required Jews and Christians to serve in the Ottoman military for the first time, overturning the custom of non-Muslims paying taxes in exchange for military exemption. Scholars have argued that, following the declaration of compulsory military conscription (1909), young Jewish men immediately “voted with their feet” and decided to emigrate rather than serve in the Ottoman army.²⁹ They suggest that evasion of the Ottoman army inaugurated the initial, substantial wave of Jewish emigration from the Ottoman Empire—and from Salonika—and indicate that the bulk of these émigrés went to the United States.³⁰ While this may be a valid claim to a certain extent, it cannot be substantiated by statistics culled from the ships’ manifests of Ellis Island, at least not in the case of Salonika. These statistics indicate that in 1909 and 1910,

26. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 21–22; Angel, *La America*, 10–18.

27. Ben-Ur, “Where Diasporas Met,” 22.

28. Eugene Cooperman, “The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Jewish Community of Salonica,” in *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History*, ed. David F. Altabé, Erhan Atay, and Israel J. Katz (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), 168–80.

29. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 243n129.

30. De Sola Pool, “The Levantine Jews in the United States,” 209; Michael Molho, “Radicación de los exilados de España en Turquía y emigración de los Sefardis de Oriente a America,” in *Actas del Primer Simposio de Estudios Sefardies*, ed. Iacob M. Hassán (Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1970), 65–72; Joseph Nehama, “The Jews of Salonika and the Rest of Greece under Hellenic Rule; the Death of a Great Community,” in *The Sephardi Heritage: Essays on the Historical and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*, ed. Richard D. Barnett (Grendon: Gibraltar Books, 1989), 240; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 184–85; Rodrigue, “From Millet to Minority,” 255; Yitzchak Kerem, “Jews in the Ottoman Army,” in *XIII Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 2002), 1797–1804.

the initial years in which compulsory military conscription was to have gone into effect, there was no substantial increase in the number of Jews who arrived at Ellis Island from Salonika. In fact, in relation to the total population of Salonika, Jews were proportionally underrepresented among the total number of Salonikan immigrants (see Table I).³¹

There are several ways to account for the discrepancy between claims made by scholars and available statistics. A recent study of the Ladino press in Istanbul in the wake of the decree of compulsory Ottoman military conscription argues that Jews generally disapproved of this new measure. "Disapproval," however, does not necessarily translate directly into opting for emigration.³² Furthermore, the implementation of conscription measures presumably varied from locale to locale, and Jewish responses in Salonika likely differed from those in the Ottoman capital and other regions of the empire. Other recent studies even doubt the degree to which the Young Turks successfully implemented their new conscription policy; some argue that the conscription of non-Muslims remained unimplemented for several years after its initial declaration in 1909.³³

31. Statistics were tabulated based on data from the Ellis Island Database at www.ellisland.org and the JewishGen Ellis Island One-Step Search Tool, Gold Form, at www.jewishgen.org/databases/EIDB/ellisgold.html. A first set of searches was conducted for "Hebrews" whose "last place of residence" was listed on ships' manifests as Salonika (and the various permutations of the city's name: Salonica, Saloniki, Salonique, Salonicco, Salonicca, Salonic, Thessaloniki, Thessalonique, Thessalonica, Thessalonika, Selanik, Solun). The results of these searches are indicated in column A. A separate set of searches was conducted using the same permutations of "Salonika" although without specifying an ethnic category (column D). The results of these findings were sorted and collated and those individuals who appear to have been Jewish based on their given and family names but whose "race or people" was listed as "Greek," "Turkish," "Syrian," "Arab," "Italian," "Serb," or other, were tabulated separately (column B). The total number of Jews listed in column C consists of the sum of columns A and B. The Ellis Island databases, while extremely useful, are far from flawless; transcription errors abound. Although the resulting statistics presented in Table I suggest some trends, they are far from comprehensive. They do not include Jews from Salonika who came to the United States via other countries or whose "last place of residence" was not Salonika. They also do not account for immigrants who entered the United States illegally or via other ports (Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, etc.). For a discussion of onomastics and further references on the topic, see Devin E. Naar, "Bushkando Muestros Nonos i Nonas: Family History Research on Sephardic Jewry through the Ladino Language Archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika," *Avotaynu* 23 (Spring 2007): 40-49.

32. David Ashkenazi, "Gius Yehudim be-istanbul le-tsava ha-Otomani be-shanim 1909-1910 be-re'i ha-iton 'El Tiempo,'" *Pe'amim* 105-106 (Autumn/Winter 2005-2006): 181-218.

33. Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System, 1844-1914," *International Review of Social History* 43 (1998): 437-449.

Table I. Jewish Immigrants from Salonika Recorded at Ellis Island, 1903–1924

Year	(A) Number of Jews recorded as "Hebrew"	(B) Number of Jews recorded as "Greek," "Turk," "Arab," etc.	(C) Total Jewish immigrants from Salonika (A+B)	(D) Total immigrants from Salonika (Jews and non-Jews)	(E) Percent of Salonika immigrants who were Jews (C/D)
1903	9	4	13	16	81.3
1904	6	6	12	15	80
1905	6	4	10	46	21.7
1906	3	19	22	47	46.8
1907	27	8	35	247	14.2
1908	7	4	11	12	91.7
1909	14	9	23	77	29.9
1910	20	1	21	77	27.3
1911	37	11	48	60	80
1912	77	20	97	148	65.5
1913	110	42	152	231	65.8
1914	55	48	103	148	69.6
1915	316	120	436	505	86.3
1916	319	283	602	1063	56.6
1917	32	23	55	70	78.6
1918	7	11	18	44	40.9
1919	28	28	56	93	60.2
1920	241	83	324	555	58.4
1921	48	58	106	233	45.5
1922	6	14	20	66	30.3
1923	36	20	56	144	38.9
1924	1	1	2	50	4
Totals	1405	817	2222	3947	56.3

Source: Ellis Island Database (www.ellisland.org) and JewishGen Ellis Island One-Step Search Tool, Gold Form (www.jewishgen.org/databases/EIDB/ellisgold.html), both accessed Sep. 15, 2007. See note 31 for a description of the search method.

Evasion of real or anticipated Ottoman military conscription still may have provided some impetus for Jewish emigration from Salonika—let alone other Ottoman cities—regardless of whether such a claim can be confirmed by statistics tabulated from Ellis Island passenger lists. But until such confirmation can be ascertained, the claim should be made more speculatively than the dominant position taken in the scholarly literature. It seems, however, that the perception of Jewish migration in the wake of the conscription of non-Muslims developed quickly and became naturalized in the standard narrative of Jewish emigration from the Ottoman Empire. “A sin bit the Turk [*el togar*],” Moise Soulam, a Salonikan native, asserted in a poem published in 1914 in *La America*, New York’s first Ladino weekly, “for he conscripted the non-Muslim to the military [*askyer*],/ because of this, many Jews of Turkey emigrated,/ and the greatest part of them installed themselves in America.”³⁴ It is noteworthy, however, that Soulam was not among those who immigrated to evade the Ottoman military; in fact, far from it. In another contribution to *La America*, he characterized himself as a “true Ottoman,” implying that his motivation for emigration lay elsewhere.³⁵ Referring to Ottoman Jews living in the United States, Moise Gadol, the Bulgarian-born editor of *La America*, asserted in the journal’s inaugural issue in 1910 that “most of them work in various factories here in America and their concern is to send money back to their families in Turkey and later . . . return to their country [to be] beside their beloved ones.”³⁶ Interestingly, Gadol noted an economic motive for coming to America, and indicated an intended temporary sojourn. Ottoman military conscription is not mentioned. If the immigrants had left in the first place to avoid military conscription, certainly they would not be so anxious to return.

The retrospective aspect of accounts like Soulam’s—and others like it—indicate that, while there may have been a kernel of truth to their stress on the threat of conscription under the Young Turk regime, they may also have served a second narrative function by providing Salonikan Jewish immigrants and their descendants with a rhetorical strategy for bridging the gap between them and mainstream, predominantly Yiddish-speaking Jews whom they encountered in the United States.³⁷ By emphasizing eva-

34. Moise Soulam, “Nuestro Ahi,” *La America*, Jul. 31, 1914, 3.

35. Un Selanikli [pseud.], “Un consejo a los emigrados,” *La America*, July 4, 1913.

36. *La America*, Nov. 11, 1910, 1.

37. For other accounts of Jewish immigration from Salonika that credit the Ottoman draft as a prime motivation, see Michael Castro, “Grandfathers,” in *Sephardic American Voices*, ed. Diane Matza (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England / Brandeis University Press, 1997), 155; oral history interview with Victor P. Levy by Suki Sandler, Jan. 22,

sion of military conscription, the tellers of these tales could tap into the popular mythology about eastern European Jews incoming to America in order to evade conscription into the czar's army. Such an emphasis could have provided common ground between Jews from the eastern Mediterranean and eastern Europe, who, as indicated in Auerbach's description with which this article began, often confronted seemingly irreconcilable differences in language, culture, and religious tradition.

A further irony with regard to Jewish migration from Salonika, in particular, is that many of the first Jews from the city to arrive at Ellis Island during the late nineteenth century and prior to the Young Turk revolution were Jews from eastern Europe who, seeking refuge, utilized Salonika as a transit port en route to the United States.³⁸ In other words, the first Jewish immigrants to sail to America from Salonika were not actually Salonikan Jews. A handful of Ottoman-born Jewish merchants, however, arrived in America during the same years—in 1893 for the Chicago World's Fair and in 1904 for the St. Louis World's Fair—although it remains uncertain how many, if any at all, came from Salonika or whether they remained in America on a permanent basis.³⁹ Furthermore, a war between the Ottoman Empire and Italy (1911–1912) resulted in the expulsion of all Italian subjects from the Ottoman realm; included among the Italian subjects were numerous Jews from Salonika, some of whom had served as leading members of the Jewish community.⁴⁰ Some of these Jews apparently traversed the Atlantic and settled in the United States, and may account for the increase in the number of Jewish immigrants from Salonika recorded on Ellis Island passenger lists in 1911 and 1912. These statistics underscore that Salonikan Jewish immigration to the United States did not reach its height directly following the Young Turk revolution and the introduction of compulsory military conscription during the waning years of the Ottoman Empire, but later, following the incorporation of Salonika into Greece as a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. Under the new regime, Salonikan Jews no longer saw themselves as sovereigns of the “Jerusalem of the Balkans,” but as an increasingly marginalized group in new Greek Thessaloniki.

1992, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection: American Jews of Sephardic Origin, oral histories box 125, no. 2, 2, New York Public Library.

38. Allatini to President of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, AAIU. Also see the case of the Hobermann family from Russia, consisting of a mother (age 26) and two small children who departed Salonika on the S.S. *Potsdam* and arrived at Ellis Island via Rotterdam on Apr. 1, 1905, Ellis Island database, www.ellisland.org, accessed July 18, 2005.

39. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 21.

40. Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 1:168; Orly C. Meron, “Sub Ethnicity and Elites: Jewish Italian Professionals and Entrepreneurs in Salonica (1881–1912),” *Zakhor: Rivista di Storia degli Ebrei d'Italia* 8 (2005): 177–220.

“The New Expulsion”

Writing of “el nuevo gerush” (the new expulsion), a Salonikan contributor to *El Luzero Sefaradi* (The Sephardi Beacon), a monthly Ladino literary review published in New York in 1927, provocatively recalled the dispersal of the Jews from Salonika once the city came under Greek control.⁴¹ He asserted that this “new expulsion” was “as tragic as that from Spain.” Although the Greeks had not issued any formal expulsion order against the Jews, the new government nonetheless made a concerted effort, he suggested, to rid Salonika of its Jewish population and Jewish influence, creating a massive wave of emigrants who felt as pressured as the refugees of 1492 had to leave their homes and flee to a safer place. In a poem published in *La America* in 1914, in the immediate wake of the Greek annexation of Salonika, Moise Soulam similarly referred to the notion of expulsion: “the antisemites came to power,/ the *goyim* want to expel [*desterar*] the entire *djuderia*,/ because they no longer want to see either the Turk or the Jew,/ and out of anguish the Jews [*yehudim*] call to God.”⁴² Here Soulam revealed his own motivations to emigrate—not evasion of Ottoman military conscription following the Young Turk revolution—but rather the Jews’ newfound position in the Greek nation-state. Unlike the case of Jews leaving to evade military conscription in 1909 and 1910, emigration during the initial years of Greek rule over Salonika, from 1913 to 1916, can be substantiated as a significant movement by reference to statistics gathered from Ellis Island passenger lists.

Numbering as many as eighty or ninety thousand—nearly half the city’s population—at the turn of the century, the Jewish population of Salonika decreased to about fifty thousand as a result of emigration by the time of the German occupation of the city in 1941.⁴³ According to Joseph Nehama, the director of the Alliance Israélite Universelle school

41. Shemuel Saadi Halevy, “La Ora del Sefardismo es menester crear un komite de inisiativa,” *El Luzero Sefaradi* 1 (Mar. 1927): 8–11. Halevy mentioned Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, but his discussion focused in particular on Salonika.

42. Moise Soulam, “Nuestro Ahi,” *La America*, Jul. 31, 1914, 3.

43. Statistics tabulated by the Jewish community for the German occupying forces indicate that of the 75,000 Jews living in Salonika in 1917, 35,000 had emigrated by 1941. See “Statistica sovre la population sepharadite djudia de Thessaloniki,” [c. 1941], in folder 16, JMTh. These statistics seem to underestimate the number of Jews in Salonika on the eve of World War II. Most sources place this figure between fifty and sixty thousand. Irith Dublon-Knebel, *German Foreign Office Documents on the Holocaust in Greece, 1937–1944* (Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, 2007), 47.

in Salonika, seventy thousand Jews left Salonika during this period, resettling not only in the United States, but also in France, Latin America, and Palestine, especially once the doors to America were shut in 1924.⁴⁴ While this figure appears to be exaggerated, Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue note that it illustrates the significance that the phenomenon of emigration carried in the minds of contemporary witnesses such as Nehama.⁴⁵

Jewish emigration emerged not only in response to Jews' understanding themselves as "outsiders" in their city and victims of the "new expulsion," but also in response to the communal leadership's inability to effectively deal with the various challenges the Jewish population faced following its incorporation into Greece. The Jewish population was not socioeconomically or politically homogenous, nor was its voice united. Throughout the interwar period there emerged various Jewish political parties, each vying to promote conflicting agendas—assimilationist, socialist and Zionist—directly to the Greek government and via petitions to prominent international Jewish organizations. Many ordinary Jews from Salonika elected or felt forced to leave the city in response to the unfriendly climate and as a means to opt out of the difficult political atmosphere they encountered.⁴⁶ Jewish socialists, in particular, viewed their ideological goals as impossible to achieve in the years immediately following the incorporation of Salonika into "New Greece." Many of the leaders among the *Selaniklis* in the United States had been active members of the Socialist Workers' Federation in Salonika, including the above-mentioned Moise Soulam; Maurice Nessim, the editor of *El Progreso/La Bos del Pueblo*, the socialist Ladino weekly founded in 1915 in New York; and others who saw themselves as transplanting their ideological struggle from Salonika to the United States.⁴⁷

The nationalistic agenda of the Greek state, animated by the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), aimed at the "reformation" of a "Greater Greece" and

44. Nehama, "The Jews of Salonika," 247, 279. Nehama provided the figure of forty thousand in *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique* (1940; repr. Thessalonique: Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique, 1978), 7:775.

45. Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 185.

46. Maria Vassilikou, "Post-Cosmopolitan Salonika—Jewish Politics in the Interwar Period," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 2 (2003), 99–118.

47. *El Progreso*, Nov. 5, 1915, 2; Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 74, 75, 82, 272. On Jewish socialism in Salonika, see H. Sukru Ilicak, "Jewish Socialism in Ottoman Salonika," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 2 (Sep. 2002): 115–46; Paul Dumont, "A Jewish, Socialist and Ottoman Organization: The Worker's Federation of Thessaloniki," in *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1923*, eds. M. Tuncay and E. J. Zürcher (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 49–76; Joshua Starr, "The Socialist Federation of Saloniki," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (Jan. 1945): 323–36.

the revival of the glory of ancient Athens and Byzantium through the acquisition of territory on which dwelt all the widely dispersed “Greek” people, defined in religious and linguistic terms.⁴⁸ The Balkan Wars, in which Greece participated to this end, resulted in the cession of Salonika to Greece despite competition from the other Balkan states. While the Greek government initially promised the Jews freedoms of religion, language, communal organization, and education, the new Greek rulers simultaneously sought to forge a monolithic Greek identity for all of its inhabitants in keeping with its nationalist agenda.⁴⁹ Jews of Salonika tended to resist these pressures because they desired to maintain the status quo, which they viewed as the means by which they could safeguard their Jewish identity, language, religion and economic position. Jews refused to refer to the city by its Greek name, Thessaloniki, instead continuing to call it *Saloniko* (in Ladino) until a 1937 law compelled them to change—twenty-five years after the imposition of Greek rule.⁵⁰

Greek nationalists questioned Jews’ loyalties after Salonika had changed hands, partly because the Jewish community, in order to maintain its historic position in the city, had opposed Greece’s annexation of the city in the first place. As alternatives to annexation, Jews had advocated the continued rule of Salonika and the surrounding region of Macedonia by the Ottomans, annexation by Bulgaria, or internationalization of the port to be overseen by a Jewish administration as favored by Austria.⁵¹ Salonika’s chief rabbi, Jacob Meir, who later became chief rabbi of Palestine, had bluntly affirmed the allegiance that the Jewish community had wished to maintain to the Ottoman Empire in a meeting with the Greek king in 1913:

We tried our best to support the course of Turkish domination in Macedonia, and we Jews would have been willing to sacrifice ourselves to preserve that Turkish domination, should it have been possible. I must report in all candor

48. Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47; Renée Hirschon, “Identity and the Greek State: Some Conceptual Issues,” in *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Clogg (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 158–80.

49. Rena Molho, “Popular Antisemitism and State Policy in Salonika During the City’s Annexation to Greece,” *Jewish Social Studies* 50 (Summer–Fall 1988/1993): 253–64.

50. Katerina Lagos, “The Hellenization of Sephardic Jews in Thessaloniki in the Interwar Period, 1917–1941,” in *Themes in European History: Essays from the 2nd International Conference on European History*, eds. Michael Aradas and Nicholas C. J. Pappas (Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research, 2005), 401–406.

51. N. M. Gelber, “An Attempt to Internationalize Salonika,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (Oct. 1955): 105–120.

that I would have taken up arms if that had not been an impossibility, in order to prevent the fate which befell the Turks.⁵²

While Meir conceded that he had come to terms with the “realities” of “Greek rule and domination,” he left a strong impression on Greek nationalists, who did not soon forget the ardent attempts of Jews to prevent the incorporation of Salonika into Greece. Local Zionist leader David Florentin asserted that “Salonika is neither Greek, nor Bulgarian, nor Turkish; it is Jewish,” in his unsuccessful attempt to promote an autonomous Salonika with a Jewish administration.⁵³ In this context, nationalist Greek Orthodox Christians and the Greek government came to view the Jews of Salonika as a political threat to the goals of the Greek state and even as “enemy sympathizers” who were pro-Ottoman, pro-Austrian, or pro-Bulgarian. When King George I of Greece was assassinated during his visit to Salonika in March 1913, Greek newspapers immediately accused the Jews.⁵⁴

In addition to political concerns, cultural differences further emphasized the Jews’ evident non-Greekness within the framework of the developing Greek nation-state. As a local Jewish journalist recalled in 1925, the status of the Jews of Salonika as strangers in their natal land emerged immediately in their new context: “We were ignorant of Greek customs, of Greek culture, of the Greeks’ race, of its past, its history, its language, its national ideal, its hope, its destination.”⁵⁵ The Jewish religion, the Ladino language, the French cultural orientation that resulted from education provided by the Alliance Israélite Universelle since the late nineteenth century, and economic ties to the West all positioned Jews as impediments to the nationalist Greek agenda.⁵⁶ The preference especially of middle and upper class Jews to write and speak in French rather than in Greek, even though Ladino served historically as their vernacular, proved irksome for some Greek nationalists.⁵⁷ Coming of

52. Quoted in Katherine Fleming, “Becoming Greek: The Jews of Salonica, 1912–1917,” paper presented at the International Conference on Religion, Identity, and Empire, Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University, Apr. 16–17, 2005.

53. Quoted in Gelber, “An Attempt to Internationalize Salonika,” 119; Mark Levene, “Ni grec, ni bulgare, ni turc—Salonika Jewry and the Balkan Wars, 1912–1913,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 2 (2003), 85.

54. *Jewish Chronicle* (London), Mar. 28, 1913, 14; Apr. 4, 1913, 20; Apr. 25, 1913, 11; Moise Soulam, “Dolor! Dolor!” *La America*, Jun. 6, 1913, 3.

55. Quoted in Eyal Ginio, “‘Learning the Beautiful Language of Homer’: Judeo-Spanish Speaking Jews and the Greek Language and Culture Between the Wars,” *Jewish History* 16 (2002): 241–42.

56. Esther Benbassa, “Questioning Historical Narratives—The Case of Balkan Sephardi Jewry,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 2 (2003): 15–22.

57. Molho, “Popular Antisemitism and State Policy,” 254; Rodrigue, “From Millet to Minority,” 261; Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, 56.

age at the French lycée in Salonika, and as the son of a successful businessman, Leon Sciaky spoke highly of the French culture with which he and his classmates came into contact. After reading about the French Revolution, the Rights of Man, and the works of Victor Hugo, Sciaky recalled how “a genuine feeling of patriotism sprung up in me, and the French flag in front of the school, fluttering in the breeze of sun-drenched April afternoons, moved me singularly with emotions never before experienced.” Sciaky then acquired a *tricolore* of his own, which he flew from his house whenever the French consulate raised his flag. Sciaky’s father, however, disapproved immediately of his son’s attempt to display patriotism for France. “There are troubles enough,” he asserted, “without our adding oil to the fire. . . . You can love France and yet not offend the people about you.”⁵⁸ Salamo Sciaky alluded to his own awareness that the “multiple allegiances” of the Jews of Salonika threatened the opposing nationalisms developing in the region.⁵⁹ Similarly, when the Greek army first captured Salonika during the Balkan Wars, the local Greek residents hung banners with the Greek colors—white and blue—to express their jubilation. Joseph Nehama noted that the Jews hung no flag. Rather, they preferred to maintain a discreet profile as they sensed that Greek rule posed a serious threat to their well-being.⁶⁰ Recognizing this “threat” following the incorporation of Salonika into Greece, Leon Sciaky questioned what chance his family would have at success with a “purely French education” and little knowledge of Greek.⁶¹ Despite their affinity to French culture, the Sciaky family immigrated not to Paris or Marseille, as did many fellow townsmen with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, but to the United States.

Both during and after the incorporation of Salonika into Greece, some Jews recognized that not only their cultural attributes and economic position were in danger, but also their physical safety. Such a threatening atmosphere provided a further push for emigration. Joseph Nehama reported that “among the Greek population, people are talking about a Jewish massacre.”⁶² According to some sources, the Greek population,

58. Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica* (1946; repr., Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2003), 158–159; Diane Matza, “Jewish Immigrant Autobiography: The Anomaly of a Sephardic Example,” *MELUS: Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 14 (Spring 1987): 33–41.

59. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “The Permeable Boundaries of Ottoman Jewry,” in *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49–70.

60. Quoted in Aron Rodrigue, *Jews and Muslims: Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Modern Times* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 236–38.

61. Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, 261.

62. Quoted in Rodrigue, *Jews and Muslims*, 238; *Jewish Chronicle*, Jan. 3, 1913, 16.

with the support of the army, had already instigated a series of attacks during the Balkan Wars that resulted in several murders, the rape of fifty Jewish women, the ransacking of four hundred stores and three hundred homes, and the unwarranted arrest of a handful of Jewish notables.⁶³ “As soon as the Greeks occupied Salonika,” Moise Soulam lamented in a poem in *La America* in 1913, shortly after his arrival in New York, “they already exhibited their barbarity and anti-Semitism / in massacring Jews without mercy.”⁶⁴ Such perceived “barbarity” transformed into a ritual blood libel accusation that spread like “spitfire” (*azogre*) to Salonika from the island of Corfu in 1915. Due only to chief rabbi Meir’s intervention with Greek authorities did the Jews evade a “pogrom,” as one witness, who left Salonika and fled to New York, called it.⁶⁵ David Nahum, who similarly fled to the United States, reported in *La America* that the blood libel accusation led to threats by Greeks to burn down synagogues and Jewish homes in retaliation. “All the Jews,” he predicted, “will abandon Salonika little by little.”⁶⁶ While “all” Jews did not “abandon” Salonika at that time, many did, and at a much greater rate than other populations in the city. Among all immigrants from Salonika recorded at Ellis Island in 1915, Jews were overrepresented at 86.3 percent, and Jewish immigration from Salonika reached its high point in 1915 and 1916 (see Table I). The editor of *La America* captured the escalating phenomenon in October 1915: “Our brothers from Salonika are emigrating in great numbers. . . . Every ship brings a new quantity to New York.”⁶⁷ An article in *La Bos del Pueblo* in New York even indicated that Jews who opted to leave preferred to travel on Italian rather than Greek ships precisely because, as the reporter indicated, “the antagonism of race that usually can be seen on Greek ships is not present on Italian ones.”⁶⁸

A further reason for Jewish emigration emerged during World War I and was linked to military conscription. After Salonika came under Greek control during the Balkan Wars, the Jewish population received a temporary exemption from the military reminiscent of the pre-Young Turk period of Ottoman rule. But following a revolution in Greece in 1916, in which Eliftherius Venizelos, the head of the liberal, nationalist party, assumed leadership of a government in Salonika in opposition to that of the king in Athens and advocated Greece’s support of the Triple

63. Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 1:170.

64. Soulam, “Dolor! Dolor!”

65. Isaac Azriel, “Esto solo mos mankava,” *La America*, Aug. 30, 1915, 4; *Jewish Chronicle*, Aug. 13, 1915, 9.

66. *La America*, Feb. 4, 1916, 3

67. *Ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1915, 2.

68. *La Bos del Pueblo*, Oct. 13, 1916, 2.

Entente, military conscription could no longer be postponed. Albert Levy, who became an active member of the Salonika Brotherhood of America and editor of *La Vara*, a Ladino weekly in New York, recounted how, in response to this measure, “Salonikan youth” fled in droves:

Immediately after the call to arms of the class of 1894, a strong current of emigration began among the Salonikan youth, all of whom desired to leave, all of whom prepared to leave their native city, and all of whom in the end opted for exile, directing themselves toward the land of rest and security: America.⁶⁹

“Emigration has reached great proportions among our population,” a Salonikan correspondent for *La Bos del Pueblo* of New York similarly asserted following the call to military service in 1916. “Hundreds and hundreds of young men, as well as entire families opt for exile.” The correspondent concluded by indicating that in the first twenty days of August 1916 alone, 1,800 Jewish youth left Salonika, with America as their prime destination.⁷⁰ The tendency of Jews to favor the king’s position of neutrality and the opposition of Jewish socialists, in particular, to the war may have factored into the decisions of some Jews to leave Salonika during this period as well.

A Ladino daily in Salonika, *El Liberal*, regularly published lists of Jews who evaded conscription into the Greek army—and, to help blunt the impact of draft evasion, articles encouraging Jews to express their patriotic sentiments for Greece in a more effective manner.⁷¹ It would be interesting to compare the lists of Jewish draft dodgers published in the press in Salonika with passenger lists at Ellis Island to determine the extent to which the two overlapped. Such a comparison, however, is unnecessary to recognize that, unlike emigration following the declaration of compulsory military conscription under the Young Turks in 1909, significant Jewish emigration in the wake of conscription under the Greek government in 1916 can be substantiated by statistics drawn from Ellis Island passenger lists.

In addition to compulsory military conscription during World War I, an immense fire that burnt down the center of Salonika in August 1917 compelled further emigration.⁷² Seventy thousand residents, fifty thousand

69. Albert Levy, “Una pajina de istoria: Saloniko en el 1916,” *La Epoka de New York*, Dec. 5, 1919, 3.

70. *La Bos del Pueblo*, Oct. 6, 1916, 5.

71. For example, *El Liberal* (Salonika), Oct. 4, 1915, 1; Jun. 11 and 18, 1918, 1; Aug. 19, 1918, 1.

72. John E. Kehl, American consul in Salonika, to Robert Lansing, Secretary of State, Aug. 21, 1917, RG84, vol. 64, file 848, National Archives and Record Administration at College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NARA II).

of whom were Jews, found themselves without food or shelter as a result of the fire, which destroyed numerous synagogues, schools, libraries and archives, and hundreds of businesses, mostly Jewish owned.⁷³ The Greek government faced the difficult task of aiding thousands of Salonika's residents and rebuilding the center of a city, which less than five years earlier had come under Greek control. The Greek government's plan for the reconstruction of Salonika alienated many Jews, since it attempted to diminish their visibility and remove them from the center of the city. The scheme called for the expropriation of all of the burnt land and prevented Jews from immediately rebuilding their homes and businesses in the city's center.⁷⁴ In the spirit of the Greek nationalist dream of the *Megali Idea*, the architects hired by the government redesigned the city with Byzantine architecture and the physical mark on the city left by the Jews and Muslims over the previous four centuries disappeared.⁷⁵ "The impression created on the Jews by that treatment was so profoundly demoralizing," a member of the B'nai B'rith lodge in Salonika explained to Lucien Wolf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, "that it may be said that this was the main cause for the expatriation of many wealthy Jews to Paris, Italy, and elsewhere."⁷⁶ In 1920, the French consul reported directly to Alexandre Millerand, the Prime Minister of France, that the causes of the Jewish "exodus" from Salonika at that time had less to do with the lack of housing following the fire of 1917, or even the high cost of living and commercial stagnation, than with "the antipathy that has always existed between the Israelite element and the Greek element."⁷⁷

73. *New York Times*, Sep. 4, 1917, 3; Charles Upson Clark, "The Problem of Saloniki," *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1919, 34; Rena Molho, "Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods Established in Salonika Following the 1890 and 1917 Fires," in Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 2:173–94. Papo mistakenly refers to an earthquake rather than the fire in *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 22, 122.

74. On Jews' perception of the scheme as anti-Jewish, see Richard Juda, "Condensed Report on the Moral and Material Position of the Jewish Community of Salonika," Geneva, Sep. 1, 1927, Acc. 3121/E3/158/1, Archive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, London Metropolitan Archives.

75. Alexandra Yerolympo, *Urban Transformations in the Balkans, 1820–1920: Aspects of Balkan Town Planning and the Remaking of Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1996); Vassiliki G. Mangana, "Westernization and Hellenicity: Form and Meaning in Thessaloniki, Greece, 1850–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995); Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos, "Monumental Urban Space and National Identity: The Early Twentieth Century New Plan of Thessaloniki," *Journal of Historical Geography* 31 (Jan. 2005): 61–77.

76. Juda, "Condensed Report."

77. Michel Graillet, French consul at Salonika, to Alexandre Millerand, Aug. 18, 1920, Grèce, file 69, Archive of the Quai d'Orsay (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Paris. I would like to thank Maria Vassilikou for sharing this document with me.

The spike in the number of Jews from Salonika recorded at Ellis Island in 1920 (324 in 1920 compared to fifty-six in 1919) can be attributed to the continued dissatisfaction with the plan for reconstruction, as well as to the fact that, although World War I had concluded previously, Ellis Island only resumed accepting large numbers of immigrants in 1920.⁷⁸

In addition to the expropriation and reconstruction schemes following the fire of 1917, subsequent measures put forward by the Greek government as well as popular sentiment during the interwar period reinforced the perception among many Jews that they were not welcomed in the Greek nation-state. The influx of Greek Orthodox Christian refugees from Asia Minor into Greece following the compulsory exchange of populations dictated by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) transformed the Jews of Salonika into a statistical minority in terms of numbers for the first time. They now constituted only one-fifth (rather than nearly one-half) of the city's total population. The departure of the Muslim population from Greece, in accordance with the terms of the same treaty, left the Jews as the most concentrated "non-Greek" population in all of Greece, save the Muslims of Thrace who were exempted. In 1924, with the Jews no longer the preponderant group in Salonika, the new Hellenic Republic declared a law making only one day—Sunday—the obligatory day of rest in an attempt to "nationalize" the economy and reposition commerce in the hands of "true Greeks" (meaning Greek Orthodox Christians) in Salonika. This brought to an end the custom in Salonika of resting on Saturday. In response, Jews again resorted to emigration, but restrictions on entry to the United States solidified the same year by the Johnson-Reed Act situated France, Italy, Latin America, and Palestine as the main destinations.⁷⁹ Mandates requiring that Jewish

78. For the source of the data, see Table I. For a history of Ellis Island, see Thomas M. Pitkin, *Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

79. *La America*, Oct. 17, 1924, 6; Report by Leland B. Morris, American consul in Salonika, "Greek Government Policy Towards Jewish Minority of Saloniki," Aug. 16, 1924, RG84, Salonika, Greece, vol. 113, doc. 840.1/2509, NARA II. On France, see Annie Benveniste, "Identité et Intégration: Parcours d'Immigration des Juifs des Grèce," *Pardes* 12 (Autumn 1990): 211–18; Benveniste "The Judeo-Spanish Community in Paris," in *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture*, ed. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 168–75; Ioannes Skourtes, "Metanastefse ton Evraion tes Thessalonikes ste Gallia kata ton Mesopolemo," *Thessalonike: Esistemonike epeterida tou Kentrou Historias Thessalonikes tou Demou Thessalonikes* 3 (1992): 235–47; Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 134–36. On Italy, see Samuel Varsano, "Ebrei di Salonicco Immigrati a Napoli (1917–1940): una Testimonianza," *Storia Contemporanea* 23 (Feb. 1992): 119–26. On Mexico, see Samuel Mordoh, *El Aba: de Salonica a Sefarad* (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 2003).

schools increase the instruction of the Greek language at the expense of French, Hebrew, and Ladino, and that accounting books be kept Greek, as well as proposals to expropriate portions of the centuries' old Jewish cemetery that, as a result of the fire of 1917 and expansion of the city with the influx of refugees from Asia Minor, suddenly found itself in the new city center, all combined to render the 1920s a difficult decade for the Jews of Salonika.⁸⁰ In 1931, burdened by the worldwide economic crisis that had taken hold, a fascist organization and Orthodox Greek Christian refugees from Asia Minor set fire to the Campbell quarter, a neighborhood established for Jews left homeless by the fire of 1917.⁸¹ In the aftermath of this attack, as many as ten to fifteen thousand Jews chose to leave, this time almost exclusively to Palestine, while those Salonikans established in the United States raised funds in order to aid their persecuted brethren.⁸² Jewish emigration from Salonika therefore should be understood in relation to particular political, economic and cultural developments in Salonika that challenged the self-perception of the Jews, who had previously considered themselves to be the sovereigns of the "Jerusalem of the Balkans." Under Greek rule following the Balkan Wars, such a paradigm increasingly ceased to function, with Jewish emigration representing a significant response to the new dynamics of the consolidating Greek nation-state.

The Allure of the *Goldene Medina* and Obstacles En Route

As the Ladino press in New York and other sources indicate, the United States represented one of several destinations for Jews leaving Salonika, and a preferred one while its doors remained open. Contributors to this press described the allure of America, which represented "the country of the dollar where they [the immigrants] are certain to earn and eat from the sweat of their hard work" or—as Albert Levy had called it—"the land of rest and security."⁸³ In presenting this image, writers mirrored popular conceptions among Yiddish-speaking Jews, who referred to America as the *goldene medina* (the golden land).

80. Ginio, "Learning the Beautiful Language of Homer," 245–47.

81. Maria Vassilikou, "The Anti-Semitic Riots in Thessaloniki (June 1931) and the Greek Press: A Case-Study of 'Scapegoating' Theory" (M.A. thesis, King's College, London, 1993); Aristotle A. Kallis, "The Jewish Community of Salonika Under Siege: The Antisemitic Violence of the Summer of 1931," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20 (Spring 2006): 34–56.

82. Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 265n177; *El Ermanado* 11 (1931): 28–29.

83. *La Bos del Pueblo*, Oct. 6, 1916, 5; Albert Levy, "Una pajina de istoria. Saloniko en el 1916," *La Epoka de Nu York*, Dec. 5, 1919, 3.

Already extant economic connections as well as the promise of the “American dream” served to draw immigrants from Salonika to the *goldene medina*. Before immigrating to the United States, Salamo Sciaky served in Salonika as the regional distributor for an American shoe and boot company.⁸⁴ His son, Leon, who had attended a French school in Salonika, nonetheless read about the exploits of Americans and became captivated by stories of the gold rush and cowboys and Indians in the wild west.⁸⁵ The American vice consulate reported in 1911 that American cinema was by far the most popular in Salonika and scenes of the American lifestyle drew Salonikan filmgoers. “The American heroine,” he remarked, “especially appeals to them [Salonikans] with her vivacity, her freedom and her delightful way of making love.”⁸⁶ Economic incentives were in place, and in combination with the allure of the American Dream and the popular images of the American lifestyle, the public school system, and the availability of electricity, transportation, and machinery, the United States appeared to provide a productive environment for hopeful émigrés.⁸⁷

Beyond the general appeal of the United States, a mythic image of New York emerged on the pages of the Ladino press in Salonika that resonated particularly with Salonikan Jews. “The city of New York,” asserted an editorial published in *El Liberal* of Salonika in 1915, “has become today the most important Jewish center in the world. It is the place collecting at its scene all types of Jews from every corner of the world.”⁸⁸ New York embodied the “Jerusalem” of the *goldene medina* and appeared to offer the possibilities of a Jewish safe haven that the “Jerusalem of the Balkans,” now diminishing under Greek rule, could no longer provide. Jewish immigration from Salonika to New York, especially after the Bal-

84. Peter W. Hutchinson, Clark-Hutchinson Company, to George Horton, American consul in Salonika, Oct. 10, 1910; Morse & Rodgers to Horton, Oct. 17, 1910; Horton to Morse & Rodgers, Nov. 3, 1910, RG84, Records of Salonika, Greece, vol. 26, docs. 361, 371 and 375, NARA II.

85. Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, 156.

86. John L. Binda, American Vice and Deputy Consul in Charge, Saloniki, to U.S. Department of State, Oct. 31, 1911, Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki, microfilm MMA4/b/17. I thank Paris Papamichos for pointing this document out to me.

87. Angel, *La America*, 12–13. Some from Salonika, however, were not as impressed. See, for example, Albert Daniel Saporta, *My Life in Retrospect* (New York: privately published, 1980), 156; and Georgios M. Sariyannis, “From Catalonia and Aragon to Greece: The Saporta Family’s Relations with Romaniotes and Sephardim on Hellenic Territory,” in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe from the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II*, ed. I. K. Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), 473–92.

88. *El Liberal*, Aug. 22, 1915, 2.

kan Wars, signified the transplantation from a “Jerusalem” under threat to another one on the rise. New York therefore represented the main site of settlement for Jews from Salonika, whereas satellite communities of Salonikans emerged in smaller cities including New Brunswick, New Jersey, as well as Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles.⁸⁹

The total number of Jews from Salonika who came to New York or to other American cities during the early twentieth century is unknown. While statistics culled from Ellis Island passenger lists most likely account for only a portion of the total, they are suggestive. Officials at Ellis Island often recorded Jews from Salonika, like other Jews from the eastern Mediterranean, not as “Hebrews,” but, given their unfamiliar names, languages, looks, and places of origin, as “Greeks,” “Turks,” or “Arabs,” thereby skewing the statistics (see Table I). Salamo Sciaky, for instance, was recorded at Ellis Island as “Turkish” upon his first trip to the United States in 1907, whereas in 1916, he was classified as “Greek,” in both cases not with regard to his citizenship but rather his “race or people.”⁹⁰ These same Ellis Island records provide clues about the socioeconomic status of the immigrants, who tended to be classified under the general categories of “laborer” or “workman,” in addition to “clerk” or “merchant.” School-aged sons were often listed as “scholar.”⁹¹ The census compiled in Ladino by the Jewish community of Salonika following the fire of 1917 sometimes included information about family members abroad, especially young women. Among those in America were three daughters of a clerk (*empiegado*); daughters of a butcher (*karnisero*); a grocer (*bakal*), a student (*borsier*), and others.⁹² Further research is required to arrive at a more nuanced demographic profile of the Jewish immigrants from Salonika in the United States. Our knowledge of their occupations, for example, has been clouded by popular perceptions both in the United States and in Salonika that “Oriental” or “Turkish” Jews worked largely as bootblacks on the Lower East Side. This image was presented in 1915 by *El Liberal* of Salonika in the form of a saying (*refran*) about Salonikan immigrants—“a bootblack I will become, with bread and water I will be sustained, in the game of luck I will take my

89. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 269–300.

90. Ship manifest for the S.S. *Konigin Luise*, which arrived in New York from Naples on July 18, 1907; ship manifest for the S.S. *Duca degli Abruzzi*, which arrived in New York from Naples on July 15, 1916, www.ellisland.org, accessed July 18, 2005.

91. Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 1:381–84.

92. Judeo-Spanish population register of the Jewish community of Salonika, 1917–1941, register 13, RG-207, box 1, folder 1, 236, entry 74; 281, entry 197; 290, entry 235; 380, entry 588; 390, entry 363, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Center for Jewish History, New York.

chances, so that I might be saved" (*lustradji me ago, kon pan i agua me mantenga, en la taula me echo, en tal de salir anado*).⁹³ It is obvious from even the modest statistical data available that this stereotype does not fully capture the occupational diversity of *Selaniklis* in America.⁹⁴ It does, however, point to an overall sense of the working class character of the Salonikan immigrant contingent in the early twentieth century.

Working class or otherwise, some Jews from Salonika who attempted to secure passage to the United States encountered difficulties. Especially following the fire of 1917, many Jews wanted to come to the United States from Salonika but the American consul there issued few visas as a result of the United States' involvement in World War I. The consul also prohibited the issuing of visas for some Jews and Armenians, who, following Salonika's incorporation into Greece, apparently retained their Ottoman citizenship in order to evade Greek military conscription. In the midst of World War I, with the Ottoman state aligned with the Central Powers, the consul desired to prevent entry into the United States of any individuals with "enemy sympathies."⁹⁵ This explains in part the dramatic reduction in the number of Jewish immigrants from Salonika in 1917 and 1918. Beyond this obstacle was the risk of leaving Salonika via ship during World War I, when submarine warfare terrorized the seas. Albert Saporta recalled in his memoir how his grandfather's neighbors, the wife and daughter of a Jewish banker named Matarasso, and his brother-in-law's cousin, David Recanati, all died on the Mediterranean from submarine torpedoes.⁹⁶ Even so, in the months following the fire of 1917, some Jews from Salonika did embark for the United States, presumably those who held Greek rather than Ottoman citizenship and were unperturbed by the submarine warfare. In fact, as the American Consul in Salonika noted, "practically all the emigrants from this port are Jews, who do not read or write Greek," implying that their lack of Greek literacy influenced their decision to leave.⁹⁷ According to figures from the records of Ellis Island, fifty-five of the seventy immigrants who came from Salonika in 1917 were Jews, suggesting that they, more than the other groups affected by the fire, opted for immediate expatriation.

Some Jews from Salonika encountered further difficulties once they actually reached the United States. On the pages of the Ladino press in

93. Besalel Saadi Halevy, "La emigrasion," *El Liberal*, Aug. 24 and 25, 1915, 2.

94. *New York Tribune*, Sep. 22, 1912, 4, 7.

95. George Horton, American consul in Salonika, to Alexander W. Wendell, American consul general in Athens, Nov. 20, 1917, RG84, vol. 64, sect. 855, NARA II.

96. Saporta, *My Life in Retrospect*, 109. Recanati was immigrating to Marseilles.

97. George Horton, American consul in Salonika, to Alexander W. Wendell, American consul general in Athens, Nov. 8, 1917, RG84, vol. 64, sect. 855, NARA II.

New York, an image developed of Ellis Island as a “prison” from which one was to be “liberated” as the immigrant was either offered admission to the United States or deported.⁹⁸ Disease, which severely affected many immigrants from Salonika in the fall of 1916, complicated this process. Faced with the threat of deportation in conformity with American immigration laws, some ailing arrivals cited the treacherous conditions in Salonika as justification for their need to remain on American soil.⁹⁹ One immigrant, Luna Schaki, whose husband David was suffering from tuberculosis, cried in front of Board of Special Inquiry at Ellis Island: “Please don’t send me back. I can’t get into my country. They won’t allow us to go.” The board seemed convinced of “how perilous a place Saloniki is at the present time,” and allowed the couple, whose children were already established in New York, to stay, although David died shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁰ In the case of another couple brought before the board, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society again noted the hazardous conditions in Salonika during World War I: “It is impossible, with a measure of regard for humanity, to send back these sore-stricken unfortunates to the city they left hopefully, eagerly.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, Sultana Kamhi, accompanied by her nine-month-old daughter, when faced with deportation due to the illness of her husband, a bag-maker, filed an appeal on the basis of “the peril that the alien and her child will encounter if sent back at the present time to Salonica.”¹⁰² “If we are returned to Saloniki, we shall all be killed,” she pleaded. “I have no relatives there. We lost everything there.”¹⁰³ Kamhi later tempered her comment, stating that what she actually feared was that her family would starve due to the lack of work to be had. Her exaggerated effort to prevent deportation, however, illustrates both the extent to which she imagined America

98. See, for example, Yishak Azriel, “Letra de Ellis Island,” *La America*, Jun. 11, 1915, 8; *La America*, Feb. 4, 1916, 3; Feb. 4, 1921, 1, 4; Feb. 18, 1921, 1, 4; *La Bos del Pueblo*, Jul. 28, 1916, 5.

99. Marc D. Angel, “The Sephardim of the United States: An Exploratory Study,” *American Jewish Yearbook* 74 (1973): 89.

100. Samuel A. B. Frommer to the Commissioner of Immigration, Oct. 13, 1916, T458, file 54171/458, National Archives and Record Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as NARA I). See Ellis Island database, ship manifest for the S.S. *San Guglielmo*, which left from Naples and arrived in New York on Sep. 23, 1916, and indicates that David Schaki had been discharged from the hospital after being admitted for tuberculosis.

101. Leon Sanders, President of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, to the Solicitor General of the Department of Labor, Oct. 6, 1916, T458, file 54171/455, NARA I.

102. Samuel A. B. Frommer to the Commissioner of Immigration, Sep. 27, 1916, T458, file 54171/455, NARA I.

103. Report of Board of Special Inquiry at Ellis Island, Sep. 5, 1916, T458, file 54171/455, NARA I.

as a safe haven and Salonika as a horrid place, certainly no longer the “Jerusalem of the Balkans.”¹⁰⁴

In 1917, the year after Kamhi pleaded to stay in America, and the year of the great fire in Salonika, the United States instituted a new immigration policy that established a literacy test, requiring literacy in some language. This proved troublesome for some Salonikan Jews who sought entrance to America. David Nahoum, an Italian subject who fled Salonika during the war between the Italians and Ottomans (1911–1912) and settled in the United States, returned to his native city upon the death of his daughter. When he attempted to regain entry into the United States, he encountered the literacy requirement.¹⁰⁵ Nahoum applied himself to the study of rabbinic Hebrew in order to fulfill this requirement and actually gained admittance.¹⁰⁶ But others were not as lucky. Thus, the decline in the number of admissions at Ellis Island from Salonika during this period can be attributed not only to the conditions created by World War I, but also the imposition of the literacy test, which disadvantaged hopeful Salonikan émigrés who had not benefited from modern-style education provided by the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

Some remained set on coming to the United States despite the increasing obstacles to legal immigration. By 1922, for example, the American consul received complaints from the Department of State encouraging implementation of stronger safeguards against “undesirable emigration” from Salonika to Cuba, as many of these emigrants then made their way illegally to the United States.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, twenty-year-old Rafael Moshe Fais left Salonika in 1919 and sailed to Mexico via Istanbul. In 1925, he crossed the border into Fort Laredo, Texas, under the name Roberto Farias Jr., bypassing the quotas against southern and eastern Europeans put in force by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924. Fais made his way to New Brunswick, New Jersey, to join his brother already estab-

104. Memorandum for the Acting Secretary, Sep. 29, 1916, T458, file 54171/455, NARA I.

105. Report of Board of Special Inquiry at Ellis Island, Apr. 7, 1920, T458, file 54766/555, NARA I.

106. Roger O'Donnell to the Secretary of Labor, Apr. 25, 1921, T458, file 54766/555, NARA I.

107. Leland B. Morris to J. Laurence Hills, Feb. 25, 1922; American consul in Salonika to Will L. Lowrie, editor of the *New York Herald*, European edition, Feb. 25, 1922, RG84, vol. 107, file 855, NARA II. Morris noted that most of the emigrants were Albanians coming from other parts of Macedonia and not necessarily Jews. On Sephardic Jews who immigrated to Cuba, see Margalit Bejarano, “Sephardic Jews in Cuba—From All Their Habitations,” *Judaism* 51 (Winter 2002): 96–108.

lished there.¹⁰⁸ Those Salonikan Jews educated at the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools, like Fais, were drawn to central New Jersey because businesses like the French-based Michelin Tire Company offered employment opportunities in a Francophone environment.¹⁰⁹ Relatives of Fais through marriage, the Ayash brothers, owners of the “Paris Grocery” (*Groseria Pariziana*) in New Brunswick depended on more standard measures to bring family members over. They successfully petitioned for visas for their parents to come to the United States from Salonika in 1923, just before the restrictive immigration quotas took hold. The three sisters of the Ayash brothers, however, remained in Salonika and perished at Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹¹⁰

According to fragmentary records of the Jewish community of Salonika, few Jews from the city immigrated to the United States after the implementation of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924. Ladino language records of the Jewish community of Salonika that list 425 families living in *Kuartier Numero 6*, a Jewish neighborhood established after the fire of 1917, indicate that sixteen of the families, totaling forty-six individuals, left for Palestine around 1934. In contrast, only one family of three immigrated at that time to the United States: thirty-seven-year-old David Avram Ezraty, an *ambulante* (itinerant merchant), his wife, and young daughter.¹¹¹ Furthermore, during the six-month period from August 1935 to February 1936, the Chief Rabbinate of Salonika issued 494 certificates for departure for members of the Jewish community. Only one had the destination of the United States, whereas 356 were for Palestine.¹¹² For

108. “Robert Fais—Biography,” [n. d.], Archives of Congregation Etz Ahaim, Highland Park, NJ. I am indebted to the congregation’s past president, Nathan Reiss, for allowing me to access these records.

109. Ruth Marcus Patt, *The Sephardim of New Jersey* (New Brunswick: The Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, 1992), 7.

110. Copy of petition of Sam Ayash to New York State, 1923, and letter from S. Ruben Mordohai, vice president of the Union of the Jews of Greece in Israel, to the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, Aug. 29, 1966, file 6, Archive of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, American Sephardi Federation, Center for Jewish History, New York. For an interview with Ayash’s cousin, Esterina Ayash, who disembarked at Boston in 1918, see *La Bos del Pueblo*, Feb. 8, 1918, 2. For a picture of the “Paris Grocery,” see the cover of Patricia M. Ard and Michael Aaron Rockland, *The Jews of New Jersey: A Pictorial History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

111. “Buletin de Informaciones: Kuartier Numero 6/Karagach, 5694,” file 7, 32, entry 118, JMTh. Individuals in entries 42, 80, and 88 left for Paris; entry 63 to Skopje; entry 96 to Algeria; entries 7, 25, 55, 109, 112, 123, 127, 147, 178, 224, 240, 290, 323, 336, 337, and 338 to Palestine.

112. The number of certificates issued for other destinations included: France: 42; Serbia: 30; Turkey: 8; Italy: 5; Austria: 4; Bulgaria: 2; Spain: 2; Albania: 1; and Egypt: 1. Tabulated from statistics in monthly reports of “certificates of departure” sent to the Chief

some Salonikan Jews during the interwar period, Palestine provided one of the few remaining destinations where they felt they could shed the garb of a “stranger.” The Ladino periodical *Renasensia Djudia*, the organ of the Zionist Federation of Greece, emphasized this point in 1932 by claiming that Jewish youth from Salonika understood the “Jewish flag” to be their “real” flag, while the flags of Greece or any other country could never carry such symbolic weight.¹¹³ Ironically, as Katherine Fleming argues, Jews in Palestine later identified Jews from Salonika not as “Jews,” but rather as “Greeks,” much as Jews in the United States did not initially identify Jews from Salonika as “Jews,” but rather as “Orientals.”¹¹⁴

Selaniklis between the *Goldene Medina* and “New Greece”

At first glance, the “Oriental” cafés established by Jews from the eastern Mediterranean on the Lower East Side of New York distinguished them from mainstream American Jewry, as Auerbach’s description at the beginning of this article illustrates. Several of the characteristics that rendered Jews outsiders in Greek Thessaloniki—speaking Ladino and having ties to the Ottoman Empire, in particular—also rendered them outsiders in the eyes of the majority of Yiddish-speaking American Jews. While they had perceived of themselves as the sovereigns of Ottoman Salonika, the “Jerusalem of the Balkans,” they came to constitute what Greek nationalists viewed as a concentrated and conspicuous “non-Greek” population. The prospect of becoming an actual immigrant in America—the land of rest and security—held more promise than being marginalized as a virtual “immigrant” in their natal city. Yet many who came to the United States, knowing no Yiddish and no English, experienced a certain degree of marginalization, if not rejection, by mainstream American Jewry.

The café served as the locus for communal gathering that counteracted the feeling of isolation.¹¹⁵ It provided Jewish immigrants from the eastern Mediterranean with a venue for the perpetuation of familiar, city-based identity in the foreign setting of New York (see Figure I). As indicated by Auerbach’s description, Jews from the eastern Mediterranean

Rabbi from the head of the department of civil status, Aug. 1935–Feb. 1936, Records of Jüdische Gemeinde Saloniki, RG-11.001M.51, Moscow fond 1428, reel 198, folder 116, 729–51, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as USHMM). On *aliyah* of Jews from Salonika, see Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 1: 295–310.

113. Skourtes, “Metanastefse ton Evraion tes Thessalonikes ste Gallia kata ton Mesopolemo,” 245. I thank Marcia Hadad Ikononopoulos for her assistance in translating this article.

114. K. E. Fleming, “The Stereotyped ‘Greek Jew’ from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Israeli Popular Culture,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 25 (May 2007): 17–40.

115. Angel, *La America*, 20–21.



Fig. 1. The Salonica Restaurant & Café, located on Chrystie Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, served as a central gathering spot for Salonikan Jews in New York during the early twentieth century. The proprietor (*far right*), Joseph Saltiel (1886–1950), was a founder of the Salonika Brotherhood, an executive board member of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America, and an active contributor to the Ladino press in New York. (Courtesy Robert Ligung)

congregated at cafés according to town or city of origin. An article in *El Mesajero*, a Ladino journal in Salonika, indicated that the *Selaniklis* were no different. They sought to perpetuate a feeling of connectedness to their native city:

In whatever foreign port or station a *Selanikli* arrives he first asks: ‘Where is the quarter for the *Selaniklis*?’ It is true that those who emigrated, like me, know that our fellow townsmen in foreign lands establish a café for themselves, and there they take pleasure in passing the time in a nostalgic manner apparent when speaking of our native city.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Quoted in David M. Bunis, *Voices from Jewish Salonika* (Jerusalem: The National Authority for Ladino Culture, 1999), 258.

Writing in 1930, philologist Max A. Luria similarly noted that the desire to perpetuate distinct city or town identities provided motivation for maintaining separate cafés and other associations:

Not only do the Sephardic Jews form a community apart [from the Ashkenazim], but even among themselves there exist distinct groups, organizations, and synagogues tending to preserve in a measure the dialect, customs, and individuality of the community whence they originally came. . . . A *Monastirli* would never think of venturing into a café frequented by a *Salonikli* [sic]. Localism is thus carried to an extreme.¹¹⁷

Explaining this “localism,” Albert Matarasso, a leader among the Salonikans in the United States, recalled: “It is no exaggeration to say that the Sephardic Jew of Salonica, with very few exceptions, did not know much about the one from Constantinople or from Smyrna, or vice versa,” and the same perceived lack of familiarity initially translated to the New York setting.¹¹⁸ Luria argued that the specific “dialect” of Ladino constituted a central feature of the town-based identity, thereby explaining why for each of the twenty-two town-based groups in New York, one could find a distinct “dialect” of Ladino—and a café.¹¹⁹

Selaniklis thus sought to reproduce in New York their café culture from Salonika. In Salonika, the café served as the center not only for recreational gathering but also for communal activity. The leaders of the Socialist Workers’ Federation of Salonika, an organization whose membership was largely Jewish, utilized the various cafés in Salonika as hubs for disseminating their ideology, giving lectures, holding debates, and organizing rallies and strikes.¹²⁰ *Selaniklis* in New York, many of

117. Max A. Luria, “Judeo-Spanish Dialects in New York City,” in *Todd Memorial Volumes*, ed. John D. Fitz-Gerald and Pauline Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), 2:7–16.

118. David N. Barocas, ed., *Albert Matarasso and His Ladino* (New York: The Foundation for Advancement of Sephardic Culture and Studies, 1969), 54.

119. “Finds 22 Dialects of Spanish Jews Here,” *The World*, [1931?], clipping in the archive of Henry V. Besso, box 7, folder 19, American Sephardi Federation. Hometown associations did not always organize according to rigid geographical boundaries. Solomon Emmanuel, from Jerusalem, and Albert Levy, from Salonika, presided over societies of Jews from Monastir, whereas those from Kastoria joined an organization of Jews from Ioannina before establishing their own. See Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 301–318.

120. Avraam A. Benaroya, “El Empesijio del Mouvimiento Socialista,” in *Zkbron Saloniki: Grandeza i Destruyicion de Yeruchalayim del Balkan*, ed. David A. Recanati (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro sobre la Communita de Salonique, 1971), 1:41–43. On coffeehouses in Salonika, see Gila Hadar, “Salonika: Memoirs of a City in the Context of Diversity and Change: 1914–1943,” paper presented at “Nationalism, Society and Culture in Post-Ottoman South East Europe,” conference at St. Peter’s College, May 29–30, 2004.

whom had been active members of the federation, similarly transformed The Salonica Restaurant and Café on Chrystie Street on the Lower East Side from one where “you can find all of your friends and journals from Salonika” into a site of communal organization.¹²¹ Following the blood libel accusation in 1915, and during the height of Jewish immigration from Salonika to the United States, the administrators of the Jewish Insane Asylum (*Azilo de Lokos*) of Salonika appealed for monetary aid from their “brothers” in America. Mentally unstable Jews who roamed the streets of Salonika, the *Azilo de Lokos* explained, constituted easy “prey” for those intent on retaliating for the alleged ritual murder. Funds were needed to remove these Jews from the streets not only to protect them, but also to defend the entire community and restore an “honorable” image before the Greek public.¹²² About forty *Selaniklis* in New York answered this call by converting The Salonica (also known as Café Salonique) into the base for a committee to raise funds on behalf of the *Azilo de Lokos*. In the process of setting up this committee, the *Selaniklis* also put forward the founding principles for the Salonika Brotherhood of America (*Ermandad Salonikiota de Amerika*), which would become the largest mutual aid society among the Jews from the eastern Mediterranean in the United States.¹²³

The notion of organizing according to city or town of origin was by no means particular to Jews from the eastern Mediterranean, as the *landsmanshaftn* established by Jews from eastern Europe indicate. The Yiddish Workers’ Group of the Federal Writers’ Project identified 2,468 *landsmanshaftn* in the 1930s, but did not include on its list any one of the dozens of similar associations among the Jews from the eastern Mediterranean.¹²⁴ Ironically, scholars have pointed to the congregations established in Salonika and other cities in the Ottoman Empire accord-

121. *La America*, Mar. 12, 1915, 2.

122. Azriel, “Esto solo mos mankava.”

123. Alberto Levy, “Historia de la Ermandad Sefaradit de Amerika, 1915–1921,” *El Ermanado* 1 [marked as volume 5] (1922): 1–3; Rafael Shelomo Hasson, “Ayer i oy: la historia dela Ermandad Sefaradit de Amerika, Ink., mientras los 20 anyos de su egzistensia,” *El Ermanado* 16 (1935): 2. On the earlier establishment in 1912 of the society Ets Ahaim Salonika, which changed its named to Ets Ahaim Oriental, see Angel, *La America*, 29; Pappo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 305.

124. Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Jewish Identity, 1880–1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1. The listing, “Kongregasiones i hevrot de los djudios Sefaradim en Amerika,” in the calendar (*Halila*) published by *La America* for 5679, included over forty organizations of “Sephardic Jews” in New York and over twenty in other cities in the United States. The calendar published by *La Vara* (New York) for 5691 lists over 75 such organizations and for 5701 lists 78 in New York

ing to specific place of origin by Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 as the predecessors of the *landmanshaftn*.¹²⁵ For working-class Jews from Salonika, as for most eastern European Jews in America, the services provided by hometown mutual aid societies constituted a continuation of practices in Europe, even if the structures of the societies may have differed from those in the old world.¹²⁶ In Salonika, for example, port workers gathered together in groups (*taifes*) whose members prayed together, maintained funds for sick-benefits and burial expenses, aided widows of deceased members, and even distributed a bottle of *raki* (an anise-based aperitif) to each member for his weekly consumption, all but the latter of which mutual aid societies and *landmanshaftn* in the United States did too.¹²⁷

Jewish immigrants from the eastern Mediterranean eventually recognized that they had replicated the pattern of their ancestors. Writing in the inaugural edition of *El Ermanado* (The Brother), a Ladino annual published in New York in 1922, Rafael Hasan remarked: "Until now we distinguish among ourselves by city of origin, in the same manner that the Sephardim congregated when they immigrated to Turkey after the expulsion from Spain [*gerush Sefarad*]." But as Hasan also asserted, the Jews from Spain who settled in the Ottoman Empire according to place of origin "became obliged to join together in a community when the antagonism [between the different groups] became unbearable."¹²⁸ In effect, the breaking down of boundaries between various city-based groups in twentieth century America represented the recognition that "antagonism" among them had become "unbearable." The isolation that they experienced from mainstream American Jewry served to bring together the various groups of Jews from the eastern Mediterranean. Judah L. Magnes, the president of the New York Kehillah, reinforced this notion in a letter in English to *La America*: "I regret to say that it is not possible for me to keep up with the difficulties and controversies that seem to disturb the Oriental or Sephardic Jewish community. I do sincerely hope that some way may be found of bringing about greater harmony and more united activity on behalf of the Jewish cause."¹²⁹ Precisely at that point, leaders of the Ladino press launched a campaign

and 48 in other cities in the United States. These calendars can be found in the library of Yad Ben Zvi in Jerusalem. I thank Dov Cohen for pointing these out to me.

125. See Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations*, 2.

126. *Ibid.*, 74.

127. Quataert, "The Workers of Salonika," 60–61.

128. Rafael Hasan, "Kualo es la Ermandad Sefaradit de Amerika," *El Ermanado* 1 (1922): 7–9.

129. *La America*, Jun. 9, 1916, 2.

for “Sephardi” communal unity distinct from that of the Ashkenazim. In 1922, the organization that had been founded in 1915 as the Salonika Brotherhood of America reincorporated itself as the *Sephardic* Brotherhood of America, the new name a symbol of the movement away from city-based identification and toward the formation of a broader communal identity (see Figure II).¹³⁰

City-based consciousness by no means disappeared. On the Lower East Side in 1930, for instance, Jewish garment workers and manufacturers from the eastern Mediterranean continued to divide themselves according to city of origin, with distinct shops employing those from Kastoria, Ioannina, and Salonika.¹³¹ *Selaniklis* continued to send funds back to the *Azilo de Lokos*, as well as to the *Bikur Holim* and the *Matanoth Laevionim* (Jewish soup kitchen) in Salonika throughout the interwar period, provided monetary aid following the fire of 1917, protested against the compulsory Sunday closing imposed by the Greek government in 1924, rallied their resources in response to the arson of Salonika’s Campbell neighborhood in 1931, and established the “Salonica Jewish War Relief Committee” during World War II.¹³² Some Salonikans in the United States returned to their natal city during the interwar period to live on a permanent basis, to visit family members who had stayed in Salonika, to

130. See Jonathan D. Sarna, “From Immigrants to Ethnics: Toward a New Theory of Ethnicization,” *Ethnicity* 5 (1978): 370–76.

131. Yeuda Saady, “20 anyos despues: progreso i estagnasion,” *El Ermanado* 10 (1930): 23–24.

132. See the annual *El Amigo*, published irregularly in New York from 1923 to 1942 for the benefit of the *Azilo de Lokos*, in particular: Isaac Saltiel, “Nuestro Venten Aniversario, 1915–1935,” *El Amigo* (1935): 1–3. The first issue of *El Amigo*, heretofore thought to have been forever lost, is located in file 73, JMTh. See Aviva Ben-Ur, “In Search of the American Ladino Press: A Bibliographic Survey, 1910–1948,” *Studies Bibliography and Booklore* 21 (Fall 2001): 32–33. See also *La Bos del Pueblo*, Aug. 23, 1917, 1; Aug. 31, 1917, 4; Sep. 7, 1917, 3; *La America*, Oct. 19, 1917, 1; Jul. 25, 1924, 2; Aug. 15, 1924, 5; Salomon Sciaky, “Apelo a nuestros korelijionarios de Amerika,” *La Luz* (New York), Oct. 9, 1921, 4; *La Vara*, Jul. 25, 1924, 1; *El Ermanado* 11 (1931): 28–29. On the “Salonica Jewish War Relief Committee,” see the Annual Report of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America (1943): 10–11 and (1944): 2; Albert Matarasso and Isaac Saltiel of Salonica Jewish War Relief Committee to members of the Sephardic Brotherhood, Apr. 5, 1944, Archives of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America; Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 121–127.

133. Isaac D. Florentin, “A los djudios de los Balkanes establecidos en Amerika,” *La America*, Jan. 21, 1921, 5. For visits, see correspondence from 1927 in file of Edward Besso (no. 590) in the Archive of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America. For marriage, see “deklarasion reposnavle por demanda de permiso de kazamiento” (akto 41) for Jack Mallah and Sarina Ezratty, Aug. 9, 1938, file 5, JMTh. For divorce, see letters from Jacob Farhi to Rabbi Haim Habib of Salonika, Oct. 25, 1932, and from the Sephardic Brotherhood of America to the Chief Rabbi of Salonika, Sep. 20, 1936, reel 199, folder 143, 619–620, and reel 197, folder 106, 835–36, Records of Jüdische Gemeinde Saloniki. For a comparison to



Figure 2. Founded in 1915 as the Salonika Brotherhood of America, the reorganized Sephardic Brotherhood of America (1922) was the largest mutual aid organization established in the United States by Jewish immigrants from the eastern Mediterranean. *Above*, the title page of the Brotherhood's constitution in Ladino. (Courtesy Sephardic Reference Room, Mendel Gottesman Library of Hebraica/Judaica, Yeshiva University)

wed fiancées, arrange for divorces, or care for inheritance.¹³³ Furthermore, Ladino journals established in New York, such as the satirical *El Kirbach Amerikano* (The American whip) and Zionist *La Renasensia*, paralleled publications in Salonika (*El Kirbach* and *La Renasensia Djudia*). When it came to discussions of Zionism or socialism, these journals transmitted

eastern European Jewish immigrants, who sometimes also returned home, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881–1914," *American Jewish History* 71 (Dec. 1981): 256–68.

ideas across the Atlantic in both directions; such dialogue suggests that Salonikans in America not only imported ways of thinking from their natal city, but also exported them back as well.¹³⁴

The gradual acquisition of an “American” consciousness among *Selaniklis* in the United States coincided to some extent with the acquisition of a “Greek” consciousness among *Selaniklis* who remained in Salonika. The processes of “becoming Greek” and “becoming American” had both begun in 1912–1913, the period that Salonika came under Greek control and Jewish immigration to America from Salonika began in earnest. These processes resulted from pressures to conform to the distinct mainstream cultures in which they found themselves, either the Greek nation-state or the American melting-pot, and profoundly affected the younger generation, in particular. Concrete evidence of these transformations began to appear in the interwar period, when Salonikans in the United States began using English in their communal records and publications while Salonikans in Salonika began using Greek in theirs, both in an attempt to attract the attention of younger community members. Even the Zionist *La Renasensia Djudia* began publishing its last page in Greek in 1932, while the Jewish community of Salonika hired an official “secretary of the Greek language” in 1934.¹³⁵ In New York, an organization called the Sephardic Jewish Community published an English-language monthly, *The Sephardic Bulletin*, from 1928 to 1930, and the enduring Ladino weekly, *La Vara*, began publishing its last page in English in 1934, after having published exclusively in Ladino since its inception in 1922.¹³⁶ *Selaniklis* also served the Greek and American militaries, respectively, during World War II and expressed patriotic sentiment for their new countries.¹³⁷ Despite the links maintained between Salonikans in New York and those in Salonika, the two groups embarked on divergent paths as they increasingly acculturated both voluntarily and forcibly into their new cultural milieux. Although both still understood themselves as “Salonikan,” one

134. Ben-Ur, “In Search of the American Ladino Press.” Tony Michels argues that there was a significant and sustained transatlantic dialogue between Jews in the United States and in eastern Europe, especially in the sphere of socialist politics and culture, in *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

135. Ginio, “Learning the Beautiful Language of Homer,” 247; “Processo verbal del jury del concurso por el engajamiento de oun secretario de lingua grega,” Feb. 14, 1934, JMTh, files 30–31.

136. Ben-Ur, “In Search of the American Ladino Press,” 34–35; *La Vara*, Aug. 24 and 31, 1934, 8.

137. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 182–86; Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 1:339. Jews from Salonika also participated in the Greek resistance during the German occupation. See Steven Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006).

had become Americanized whereas the other, Hellenized, and the younger generations raised during the interwar period encountered an increasingly attenuated sense of Ladino culture in both contexts.

The tales of Salonikan Jewry's incorporation into "New Greece," as well as those of *Selaniklis* who immigrated to America were both about adapting as "immigrants" in a new country. In effect, the *Selaniklis* who left "New Greece" and came to the United States did not travel from the "old world" to the "new." Rather, their voyage was from one "new world" to another, from a "Jerusalem" in the Balkans now under threat to an even newer "Jerusalem," New York, the center of the *goldene medina*, now on the rise. They recognized that their "old world," in effect, ceased with the end of Ottoman rule in their city, and they had to decide which "new world" they would prefer. The choices, at least initially, were not mutually exclusive. The links maintained between both "new worlds" throughout the interwar period constituted "their world," indeed a transnational one.¹³⁸

With the destruction of the Jewish community of Salonika during the Holocaust, the transnational world of the Salonikans as well as their Ladino culture virtually ceased to exist. The closure in 1948 of *La Vara*—the last Ladino journal to be published in Hebrew characters in the world—signified the end of Ladino print culture well beyond the confines of New York.¹³⁹ The well-known French writer, Marcel Cohen, born to Salonikan immigrants in France in the 1930s, lamented the postwar state of surviving Salonikan Jews, who dwelt in communities abroad and who had fallen from their previous status as sovereigns of the "Jerusalem of the Balkans":

[A]ll Salonicans are dethroned kings. Dethroned and ancient. You can see them in New York, Montreal, Paris, London, looking like birds whose wings

138. The case of Jews of Rhodes, who developed a widespread network of "diaspora" communities in the United States, Africa, and Europe, also suggests the perpetuation of a strong local identity and offers a fruitful comparison. See Renée Hirschon, "The Jews of Rhodes: The Decline and Extinction of an Ancient Community," in Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 2:291–307; Marc D. Angel, *The Jews of Rhodes: The History of a Sephardic Community* (New York: Sepher Hermon Press, 1978), 145–49; Yitzchak Kerem, "The Migration of Rhodian Jews to Africa and the Americas from 1900–1914: The Beginning of New Sephardic Diasporic Communities," in *Patterns of Migration, 1850–1914*, ed. Aubrey Newman and Stephen W. Massil (London: Jewish Historical Society of England), 321–34; Kerem, "The Settlement of Rhodian and other Sephardic Jews in Montgomery and Atlanta in the Twentieth Century," *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly* 85 (Dec. 1997): 373–91.

139. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Asymmetric Fates: Secular Yiddish and Ladino Culture in Comparison," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (Fall 2006): 498–506.

have been clipped. ‘*Ke haber* [how’s it going]?’ ‘Everything’s fine.’ Yet they beat against the bars of their cage. For them, the worst of all evils is forgetting.¹⁴⁰

As Cohen’s lament suggests, more Jews of Salonikan heritage now live in the United States than in Salonika itself. An understanding of the experiences of the *Selaniklis* and other immigrant communities—expressed in their own terms—as well as further consideration of the “old world” and “new world” in historical dialogue, rather than in opposition, will create more dynamic and comprehensive American Jewish narratives.

140. Marcel Cohen, *In Search of Lost Ladino: Letter to Antonio Saura*, trans. Raphael Rubenstein (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2006), 35.