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## Sephardic Scholarly Worlds: Toward a Novel Geography of Modern Jewish History

JULIA PHILLIPS COHEN AND  
SARAH ABREVAYA STEIN

A REAPPRAISAL OF MODERN SEPHARDIC SCHOLARSHIP may fruitfully begin with Cecil Roth, equally keen as a barometer of rich historical topics as he was adept at sensationalizing them. Writing in 1956, in a tribute to Abraham Galante on the occasion of his eighty-fourth birthday, Roth reflected that the prolific scholar of Ottoman Jewry was a “Single-handed Jewish Historical Society.” The quip, intended to praise Galante’s scholarly production on the Sephardic communities of the eastern Mediterranean as unequalled, conjured an image of its author as a man alone in the world, without peers or institutional support. It was an image Galante himself was inclined to sustain—so much so that he published the letter in a collection of documents pertaining to Ottoman Jewish history just two years later.<sup>1</sup>

As Roth penned his letter at the mid-twentieth century, the creation of an Ottoman Jewish Historical Society remained an imagined but still unrealized project. In part because such an institution did not exist, and in part because its would-be members—Levantine-born Jewish scholars such as Galante—did not produce programmatic essays announcing

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1. Cecil Roth to Joseph Habib Gerez, December 18, 1956, in Abraham Galante, *Septième recueil de documents concernant les juifs de Turquie et divers sujets juifs* (Istanbul, 1958), 40–41.

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themselves as an intellectual or institutional collective, we have been left with little sense of the long-term history of Sephardic studies.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, while various monographs have been dedicated to modern Sephardic rabbinical writers in recent years, the many generations of scholars born in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Levant who pioneered the study of eastern Sephardic Jewish culture have not received equal attention.<sup>3</sup> Our understanding of the birth and genealogy of Sephardic studies thus remains fragmented, with no single source transcending our fractured vision of the oeuvre of modern Sephardic scholars despite important contributions on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

It is the aim of this essay to suggest that the larger story of modern

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2. We employ the term "Sephardic" here to refer to the Judeo-Spanish or Ladino-speaking world of the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans and Levant. For important contributions on the intellectual and scholarly production of Arabic-speaking Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mashriq and Maghrib, see the work of Ammiel Alcalay, Robert Attal, Yitzhak Avishur, Orit Bashkin, Hayyim Cohen, Joseph Chetrit, Harvey Goldberg, Yaron Harel, Lital Levy, Shmuel Moreh, Philip Sadgrove, Daniel Schroeter, Reuven Snir, Sasson Somekh, Norman Stillman, Yosef Tobi, Yaron Tsur, Lucette Valensi, and Zvi Zohar.

3. On modern Sephardic rabbinic authors: Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Rabbinic Scholarship: The Development of Halakhah in Turkey, Greece and the Balkans, 1750–1900," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 9 (1997): 9–18; Matthias Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture* (Bloomington, Ind., 2005); Norman Stillman, *Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity* (Luxembourg, 1995); Zvi Zohar, *Masoret u-temurah* (Jerusalem, 1993).

4. For eastern Sephardic participation in the Haskalah and *Wissenschafts des Judentums*: Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th–20th Centuries* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000), 106–9; Aron Rodrigue, "Jewish Enlightenment and Nationalism in the Ottoman Balkans: Barukh Mitrani in Edirne in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. M. Greene (Princeton, N.J., 2005), 73–88; Dina Danon, "Abraham Danon: La vie d'un maskil ottoman, 1857–1925," in *Itinéraires sépharades*, ed. E. Benbassa (Paris, 2010). On Sephardic intellectuals and scholars through the mid-twentieth century, see Yitzhak Kerem, "The Development and Current State of Research on Ottoman Jewry," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001): 79–85; Ammiel Alcalay, "Intellectual Life," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. R. S. Simon, M. M. Laskier, S. Reguer (New York, 2003); Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Tübingen, 2008), 10–11; Meropi Anastassiadou, *Salonique, 1850–1912: Une ville ottoman à l'âge des Réformes* (Leiden, 1997), 20. See also the work of Olga Borovaya, which continues to fill in the picture of the cultural production of late Ottoman Sephardim, including *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theater in the Late Ottoman Empire (1845–1908)* (Bloomington, Ind., forthcoming).

Sephardic scholarly production merits our attention. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, an unorganized collection of scholars, mostly autodidacts who labored as a hobby rather than profession, began promoting and pursuing the study of Sephardic communities as they read the works of the German and East European Haskalah, translated Hebrew as well as Western literatures, and contributed to the flowering of the Ladino press.<sup>5</sup> These individuals participated in a world of Judeo-Spanish letters that stretched from Jerusalem to Vienna, Livorno to Cairo, Adrianople to Ruschuk, and Sofia to Sarajevo but whose center of gravity lay somewhere between the Ottoman port cities of Salonica, Izmir, and Istanbul—cities with both the largest and longest-running Ladino printing presses of the empire and the three largest Judeo-Spanish communities of the period. At midcentury, the vast majority of these individuals were still subjects of a reforming Ottoman state. Living in the midst of imperial reorganization, a growing push toward secularization within their own communities, and increasingly frequent contact with individuals and ideas from abroad, they responded to their changing place in the world by expressing attachments to local, foreign, and transregional milieux, a sense of belonging to a global Jewish community and to the Ottoman state. During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, a number of Sephardic intellectuals followed the many thousands of their coreligionists and hundreds of thousands of Muslims who fled the Balkans for areas remaining within the shrinking borders of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Others continued their lives and work under new political regimes.

In the decades following these tectonic shifts, numerous Sephardim across the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean began producing a wide-ranging body of serious scholarship on the history and traditions of their own communities, compelled as much by their commitment to engage in scientific studies as by their sense that the world of Judeo-Spanish culture they knew so intimately was poised to disappear. The

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5. An earlier precedent exists in the work of David Attias, a Sarajevo-born Sephardic intellectual who resided in Livorno during the late eighteenth century and published in 1778 a treatise, *La Guerta de oro*, “arguably the very first book in Ladino echoing some of the themes of the European Haskalah.” Aron Rodrigue, “The Ottoman Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of Ladino Literary Culture,” in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. D. Biale (New York, 2002), 876.

6. Menahem Farhi, Haim Bejerano, Abraham Rosanes, his son Solomon Rosanes, and Gabriel Arié were among the Sephardic intellectuals who relocated to Istanbul during the war, which displaced tens of thousands of Jews from the Balkans. Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1850–1914* (Madison, Wisc., 1985), 75, estimates that by the war’s end, some 1.5 million Muslim refugees had made their way into Ottoman domains.

experience of a series of wars and disasters, including the Balkan Wars, the First World War, a major fire in Salonica in 1917, and, most dramatically, the near destruction of various Balkan Jewish communities during the Second World War only sharpened the impulse of Sephardic scholars to document the life of a lost world. Survivors of this last war—some returning to their erstwhile homes, others settling in the newly-created state of Israel, Europe, Latin America, or the United States—rushed to produce a number of commemorative volumes documenting the vanished communities they knew so well.

This essay presents in synthetic fashion the contributions of four generations of intellectuals and scholars born in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans and Levant whose work helped to establish the field we now know as Sephardic studies. Most but not all of these individuals were of Sephardic origin: those who were not lived and worked in the Judeo-Spanish cultural sphere of the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup> As we consider the writings and personal biographies of these authors, we argue that scholars today have underestimated the full import and extent of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Sephardic intellectual developments. To counteract this impression and to begin to fill the lacunae of past research, we will draw upon a wide range of examples that illustrate the wealth and breadth of the forgotten worlds of Sephardic scholars.

#### SCHOLARLY GENEALOGIES

Without negating the relevance of early modern precedents or overdrawn the boundaries between them, one can speak of four overlapping generations of Jewish scholars born into the late and post-Ottoman Balkans and Levant who developed an interest in Sephardic history and culture. The pioneering generation of Jewish intellectuals to emerge from the eastern Judeo-Spanish cultural sphere, born around the early to mid-nineteenth century (ca. 1820–50), moved in enlightened circles—both locally and internationally. Some of these figures began to engage directly in the study of Judeo-Spanish culture, whereas others set the stage for later developments by promoting secular scholarship among their coreligionists and by mentoring pupils who would later take up the study of Sephardic communities more directly. In this coterie were Judah Neh-

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7. This list includes three figures we will return to: Baruch Mitrani and Joseph Halévy, both believed to be of Ashkenazi origin, and A. S. Yahuda, of Baghdadi background. A comparable figure is Adolf Zemlinsky, a convert to Judaism who helped edit the Ladino periodical *El Koreo de Viena* and wrote a history of the Sephardim of Vienna, *Geschichte der türkisch-israelitischen Gemeinde zu Wien* (1888), translated into Ladino by Michael Papo.

ama (1826–99), Joseph Halévy (1827–1917), Abraham ben Israel Rosanes (1838–79), Menahem Farhi (ca.1836–1916), Moshe ben Rafael Attias (“Zeki Effendi”) (1845–1916), Baruch Mitrani (1847–1919), Nissim Behar (1848–1931), and Haim ben Moses Bejerano (1850–1931).<sup>8</sup>

Though they often promoted the reform of Ottoman Jewish communities along Western lines, most of these individuals were observant Jews heavily steeped in traditional rabbinic learning. Nehama, Farhi, and Bejerano were formally trained as rabbis, but all were equally committed to secular studies.<sup>9</sup> Bejerano learned over a dozen languages, including Latin, Arabic, and Sanskrit.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Halévy, who began his career teaching Hebrew in Adrianople (now Edirne, Turkey), was equally dedicated to studying and systematizing Hebrew and to enriching it.<sup>11</sup> As a young man in Ruschuk (now Ruse, Bulgaria) in the early 1850s, Abraham Rosanes attended a local Bulgarian school in order to learn Greek; in the next decade, he founded a “general” Jewish school in the city, employing his friends Menahem Farhi and Haim Bejerano to teach Hebrew according to modern methods.<sup>12</sup> Judah Nehama, also known as the “Turkish Mendelssohn,”<sup>13</sup> sponsored various initiatives to introduce secular methods of instruction into Salonica’s Jewish schools in the 1850s, published a Ladino work of history titled *Istoria universal* and, in 1864, founded the city’s first Ladino periodical, *El Lunar*; in addition, he maintained a correspondence with European Jewish intellectuals such as Samuel David Luzzatto, Solomon Judah Rapoport, and Leopold Zunz, publishing a volume of their exchanges in 1893.<sup>14</sup> It was partly through the appearance of his letters in print, which included “contributions to the history of the Jews in Salonica,” and their development of printing presses in that city that Nehama has come to be understood as an infor-

8. On Farhi: Abraham Galante, *Histoire des juifs de Turquie* (Istanbul, 1985/86), 2:110, 175; 9:215; Anri Niyego, *Haydarpaşa’da Geçen 100 Yılımız* (Istanbul, 1999), 36–37; Keren, *Kebilat Yehude Rusts’uk*.

9. “Ravi Yehuda Nehama,” *El Avenir*, February 1, 1899, 1.

10. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman and the Turkish Republic* (New York, 1991), 244.

11. Hans Polotsky, “Joseph Halévy,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Detroit, 2007), 8:271.

12. Keren, *Kebilat Yehude Rusts’uk*; Keren, “The Jews of Rusçuk: Growth of a Community in the Capital of the Danube District,” in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808–1945*, ed. M. Rozen (Ramat Aviv, 2002), 2:81.

13. Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 76.

14. Judah Nehama, *Mikbteve dodim mi-yayin: Mikbtavim asher beḥlafti ben obavai ve-dodai* (Salonica, 1893).

mal historian of his own community.<sup>15</sup> A Ladino obituary published upon his death in 1899 reveals that Nehama had once planned to establish himself as a serious scholar of Sephardic history: a massive fire that struck Salonica in 1890 burned his entire library, including a manuscript he had prepared on the history of the Jews of his native city.<sup>16</sup> Around the same period, Moshe Attias published what he hoped would be the authoritative history of the Jews of Bosnia in the pages of Sarajevo's short-lived Ladino periodical, *La Alborada*. Using the pen name "el amante de la luz," Attias introduced himself as an enlightener who sought to approach the history of the local Sephardic communities he knew best with the tools of modern scholarship.<sup>17</sup>

These early scholars of Sephardic culture were both immersed in and prolific contributors to the world of Hebrew letters. Convinced that Jewish learning should be taught in innovative ways, Rosanes announced his support for the teaching of Hebrew syntax in the "general" Jewish school he directed; he also dabbled in an informal ethnography of Ottoman Jewish communities after a trip to Palestine in 1867. Rosanes's Ladino travel notes were subsequently translated into Hebrew by his friend Menahem Farhi, who published them serially in *Ha-Magid*. A dedicated Hebraist, Farhi contributed hundreds of articles to the Hebrew-language press from the mid-to the late nineteenth century, authored a Ladino-language Hebrew grammar book, wrote innovative Hebrew and Aramaic poetry interlaced with biblical and talmudic passages, and launched an initiative to sell Hebrew newspapers at a discount in Istanbul after he moved to the Ottoman capital in 1878.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Halévy, who spent the early years of his career in Adrianople, similarly published poems and other entries in the Hebrew periodicals *Ha-Magid*, *Ha-Levanon*, and *Yerushalayim*. Writing to *Ha-Magid* in 1861, he proposed the establishment of a society for

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15. "Judah Nehama," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 208.

16. "Ravi Yehuda Nehama."

17. On Attias/Zeki Effendi (also known as Moshe Rafajlovic): Stephen Schwartz, "Balkan Dreams, Modern Realities; Sarajevo, Center of Sephardism," *Forward*, August 15, 2003; Muhamed Nezirović, "Historija Bosanskih Jevreja Moše (Rafaela) Atijasa – Zeki Efendije," *Prilozi* 29 (2000): 245–60.

18. For Farhi's Hebrew renderings of Rosanes's travel notes: *Ha-Magid*, xi, no. 38-xii, no. 34; A. M. Habermann, *Sinai* 33 (1953): 312–19, 373–82; 34 (1953/54): 241–64. On Farhi's contributions to the Hebrew-language press: Nissim Behar to Paris, August 31, 1877, Istanbul, Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle—Turquie IC 6.2a; "Rabi Menahem Farhi," *El Tiempo*, October 15, 1916, 6. Explaining that he had written to nearly a dozen Hebrew journals to make the necessary arrangements, Farhi announced plans to spread Hebrew among Ottoman Jews in "Avizo importante," *El Nacional*, February 11, 1878, 4.



the development of Hebrew called *Marpe lashon*. His pupil Baruch Mitrani also contributed to the Hebrew press (including *Ha-Magid* and *Havatselet*), published a Hebrew grammar with Ladino explanations, books on teaching in Hebrew, and two short-lived newspapers (*Karmi* [1881–82] and *Karmi Sheli* [1890–91]).<sup>19</sup> Famously, Nissim Behar introduced a Hebrew immersion teaching method to his Ottoman Jewish pupils; in 1882, he opened an Alliance school in Jerusalem that would employ the young Eliezer Ben Yehuda as a teacher.<sup>20</sup> Behar, Mitrani, and Halévy championed the Hebrew in Hebrew learning style that Ben Yehuda later pursued.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Bejerano, who spent the early years of his career in Eski-Zagra, Ruschuk, Vienna, Shumla, and Bucharest, is known to have contributed to *Ha-Magid*, *Havatselet*, *Ha-Me'asef*, and *Ha-Mitspeh*, as well as to journals in various other languages.<sup>22</sup>

While their interests and output differed, each of these individuals expressed a shared commitment to the pursuit of secular studies and scholarship. Much like their contemporaries associated with the *Haskalah* in Eastern Europe and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement in Central Europe, they began their explorations of Ottoman Jewry as thinkers without institutional affiliation, and also as contributors to the popular Ladino press, a genre then still in its infancy. Many, as we will see, also fathered or mentored significant scholars of Sephardic culture.<sup>23</sup>

The subsequent generation engaged more directly with the study of Sephardic cultures, languages, and histories. Those that fall into this group were born in the mid- to late nineteenth century (ca. 1850 to 1870), just before—or concurrently with the early development of—the geographic fracturing of the Ottoman Empire, the intense westernization of Ottoman Sephardim through schooling, press, and commodity culture, the politicization of European Jewry, and the expansion of crucial new technologies and literary genres (such as the popular press and the letter presses that produced them) that would have such a profound effect on the history of letters. Some of the most significant figures of this milieu

19. Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 106.

20. "Nissim Behar," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 3:263.

21. Shlomo Haramati, *Sheloshab she-kadmu le-Ben Yehuda* (Jerusalem, 1978).

22. "Bekhor Hayyim Ben Moses Bejerano," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 3:273; Ángel Pulido, *Los israelitas españoles y el idioma castellano* (Madrid, 1904), 109.

23. Included in this category are the father/son pairs Abraham ben Israel/Solomon Rosanes and Judah/Joseph Nehama. Haim Bejerano, Menahem Farhi, and Nissim Behar all served as Solomon Rosanes's teachers at various points, while both Abraham Danon and Baruch Mitrani studied under Joseph Halévy in Adrianople.

were David Fresco (ca. 1853–1932), Abraham Danon (1857–1925), Isaac Elia Navon (1859–1952), Solomon Rosanes (1862–1938), Moise Franco (1864–1907), and Mercado Covo (1870–1940).<sup>24</sup>

Like their predecessors, many of these figures viewed themselves as maskilim, joined local Jewish “enlightened” societies, and allied themselves intellectually with the Haskalah. David Fresco recalled a youth spent among maskilim in his Istanbul neighborhood, scouring the shelves of his neighbors’ libraries for books by a “legion of writers from Germany, Austria, Poland, and Russia.”<sup>25</sup> After becoming a professional journalist, Fresco translated numerous influential works of the Haskalah into Ladino, including Moses Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem* and Abraham Mapu’s *Love of Zion*. Fresco’s contemporary Navon, an important poet, composer, and journalist, contributed to Nahum Sokolow’s Warsaw-based *Ha-Tsefirah* and maintained extensive communications with Eliezer ben Yehuda about their shared investment in the revival of the Hebrew language. He also played an instrumental role in organizing a Maftirim choir in Adrianople and in the 1921 publication of the group’s songbook, *Shire Yisra’el be-’erets ha-kedem*, with a foreword by Hayim Nahman Bialik.<sup>26</sup> Danon, trained as a rabbi in Hebrew and Aramaic, was an autodidact who taught himself French, German, Greek, Latin, Turkish, Persian,

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24. Other significant writers of this generation include Aron de Yosef Hazan (1848–1931), founder and long-time editor of Izmir’s Ladino periodical *La Buena Esperanza*, Alexander Benghiat (1863–1924), a Ladino poet, translator, journalist, and founding editor of *El Meseeret*, and Sam Lévy (1870–1959), best known for his role as editor-in-chief of Salonica’s *La Epoka* and *Le Journal de Salonique*. On Hazan: Julia Phillips Cohen, “Fashioning Imperial Citizens: Sephardi Jews and the Ottoman State, 1856–1912” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2008), chaps. 1 and 2; idem., “Aron de Yosef Hazan,” in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. N. Stillman. On Benghiat: Borovaya, “The Serialized Novel as Rewriting: The Case of Ladino Belles Lettres,” *Jewish Social Studies* 10.1 (2003): 29–68; idem., “The Role of Translation in Shaping the Ladino Novel at the Time of Westernization in the Ottoman Empire (A Case Study: *Havan-pasha* and *Pavlo y Vürzbintia*),” *Jewish History* 16.3 (2002): 263–82. On Lévy: Sam Lévy, *Salonique à la fin du XIXe siècle: Mémoires* (Istanbul, 2000); Borovaya, “Shmuel Saadi Halévy/Sam Lévy Between Ladino and French: Reconstructing a Writer’s Social Identity in a Polyglossic Situation,” in *Modern Jewish Literatures*, ed. S. Jelen, M. Kramer, and L. S. Lerner (Philadelphia, forthcoming).

25. “Numero especial ala okazion del sinken aniversario de zhurnalismo de Se. David Fresko, direktor del zhurnal ‘El Tiempo,’ 5635–5685,” *El Tiempo*, August 1925, 5.

26. Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 76, refer to him as Elie Isaac Navon (1857–1952). Bathja Bayer, “Isaac Eliyahu Navon,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 15:39.

Arabic, and Ethiopic.<sup>27</sup> In 1879, he helped found Adrianople's *Ḥevrat Shohare Tushbiyah* (Society of the Friends of Practical Wisdom), also called *Dorsho Haskalah* (Seekers of Enlightenment), an organization devoted to the study of the Ladino press, Hebrew literature, and to the moral and intellectual advancement of its adherents.<sup>28</sup> Societies such as these served as sites of debate and intellectual exchange: through them the individuals referenced here, along with their interlocutors, widened their exposure to the writings of Western, Central, East European and Levantine thinkers.

Members of the second generation of Sephardic scholars were not the only Sephardic intellectuals of their time, but they were distinguished from their peers by the quantity of their scholarly output and by the fact that each included among their subjects of inquiry the history and culture of Ladino-speaking communities. A few examples illustrate this point: Danon produced French-language research on Ladino philology, compilations and French-language translations of Ladino ballads, studies of Salonican and Adrianople Jewry and Sephardic religious practices; he also founded, in 1888, an Adrianople-based review devoted to the history of Levantine Jewry, *Yosef-Da'at/El Progreso*. Appearing in both Hebrew and Ladino, the journal was designed to initiate the publication of documents and scholarship pertaining to the history of Ottoman Jewry. Among other entries, Danon contributed seventeen serialized chapters titled "La istoria israelita en Turkia," a project cut short when the paper was closed within a year by a censorious regime.<sup>29</sup> By 1890, David Fresco stepped into the void created by the dissolution of Danon's journal by opening the pages of his newspaper, *El Tiempo*, to the publication of new material on the history of Ottoman Jewry.<sup>30</sup> Fresco's programmatic appeal for the establishment of a society devoted to the study of Ottoman Jewish culture was warmly received by contributors to *El Tiempo*, who

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27. Aron Rodrigue, "The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Attempt to Reform Jewish Religious and Rabbinical Instruction in Turkey," in *L'Alliance dans les communautés du bassin méditerranéen à la fin du 19e siècle et son influence sur la situation sociale et culturelle*, ed. S. Schwarzfuchs (Jerusalem, 1987), lxiii.

28. Albert Navon, *Abraham Danon, 1857–1925* (Paris, 1925), 10–11.

29. Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman* (1897; repr., New York, 1973), 282.

30. "La istoria de los judios de Turkia – una propozision," *El Tiempo*, April 28, 1890, 3–4. Danon's and Fresco's interest in establishing historical societies might be compared to that of Jacob Moses Toledano of Tiberias, who initiated an international correspondence with Jewish scholars about the idea of founding a society aimed at collecting archival material on the history of "Oriental Jewry." See Itzhak Goldshlag, "Jacob Moses Toledano," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 20:21–22.

testified that their own history had yet to be written.<sup>31</sup> The young Solomon Rosanes (son of the above-mentioned Abraham Rosanes) was the first to respond: he suggested that the new institution be named after the eighteenth-century Sephardic rabbinic scholar Haim Yosef David Azulai (HiD"A), since it was "well known that . . . Azulai was the greatest historian of the Orient."<sup>32</sup> (Just two years later, in 1892, the young Jewish historian Simon Dubnow offered similar proposals to his Ashkenazi coreligionists in Eastern Europe, calling on them to collect manuscripts and other materials from their synagogues and communal institutions in order to begin documenting their history).<sup>33</sup> Although the "Azulai Historical Society" Rosanes envisioned never materialized, he continued to study the history of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, wrote a genealogy of his family (published in French in 1885), and, in 1914, released a Ladino work on the Jewish community of Ruschuk, his hometown.<sup>34</sup> His best-known work on the history of eastern Sephardim appeared partially in 1907–14 and, in an impressive six volumes, as *Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkiyah ve-artot ba-Kedem*, between the years 1930 and 1945.

Mercado Covo began his scholarly forays in a similar fashion, publishing Jewish histories of Serres, his native town, in the local and French Jewish press and subsequently in French and Hebrew monographs.<sup>35</sup> Writing in the Ladino press of Salonica in 1892, he also called for the creation of a "Literary and Scientific Society" among his compatriots, pointing to the work of Jewish scholars in France and Germany, including Théodore Reinach, Salomon Munk, Heinrich Graetz, Leopold Zunz, Albert Cohn, Léon Halévy, Joseph Salvador, and Isaak Markus Jost as sources of inspiration.<sup>36</sup> Another historian from this group, the Istanbul-

31. "Istoria de los judios de Turkia," *El Tiempo*, May 12, 1890, 3.

32. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1890, 5. Haim Yosef David Azulai, born in Jerusalem in 1724, was a prominent Sephardic rabbi and author of the eighteenth century. Among Azulai's important works are his *Sbem ha-gedolim* (Livorno, 1774), an encyclopedic account of the oeuvres of various rabbinical authors, and his *Sefer ma'agal tov ha-shalem*, ed. A. Freidman (Jerusalem, 1934), a travelogue of his journeys throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Levant. On Azulai's life, see Meir Benayahu, *Rabbi Hayim Yosef David Azulai* (Jerusalem, 1959).

33. Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle, Wash., 1999), 91–92.

34. "Solomon Abraham Rosanes," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 17:422.

35. See Mercado Covo, "Notice sur la communaute israélite de Serres," *Univers Israélite* (1897): 281–82; *idem*, *Études salonicienes . . . imprimeries juives à Salonique au XVIIe siècle* (Salonica, 1928). His work on the subject was later published in Tel Aviv (in 1952) and France (in 1962).

36. Covo suggested that the society publish post-biblical history books for use in Ottoman Jewish schools, "Korespondensia de Sheron: Una reforma menester-oz," *La Epoka*, May 31, 1892, 2–3.

born Franco, undertook scholarship while serving as an Alliance Israélite Universelle school director. In the 1890s, Franco penned a lively French-language study of Ottoman Jewry “from its origins to the present day” that has had a lasting effect on scholarship in the field.<sup>37</sup>

What distinguished the first two generations of Sephardic scholars who helped shape Sephardic studies from those who followed? Members of the first generations published their historical accounts primarily, or at least initially, in article-form in the Ladino popular press, as well as in periodicals in various other languages, including the French-language publications *Revue des études juives*, *Revue orientale*, and the *Revue hispanique*.<sup>38</sup> Franco and Danon also contributed numerous entries to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on the worlds and works of Ottoman Sephardim: this despite the fact that the *Encyclopedia* did not explicitly include the Ottoman lands in its list of “communities of any importance” that warranted coverage. By contrast, the third generation of Sephardic scholars, born in the last decades of the nineteenth century (~1870–1900), were more methodical than their predecessors, had more ties to the academy, and, while they continued to publish their research in the Ladino popular press and other periodicals, also published greater numbers of books, booklets, and edited volumes. While many members of the earlier generations viewed themselves as maskilim, few of the third generation embraced this label, by then as dated a term in the Ottoman context as elsewhere; the first and second generations tended to be impressionistic in their research, members of the third generation (notably Abraham Galante, Joseph Nehama, Abraham Shalom Yahuda, and Michael Molho) exercised a methodological rigor unmet by most of their predecessors. Like their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe and the Middle East, the third-generation intellectuals were also more mobile than those who worked in an earlier period—they conducted research at far-flung libraries and archives, presented papers at international conferences, and in some cases assumed academic positions far from home.

At least eight of the scholars we identify as third generation authored

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37. Franco subsequently published historical studies in the Ladino press, a work on the mystical practices of the Jews “of the Orient,” and a study of the Jews of Safed.

38. E.g., M. Franco, “Les Juifs de l’Empire ottoman au dix-neuvième siècle,” *Revue des études juives* 16 (1883): 111–30; Abraham Danon, “Recueil de romances judéo-espagnoles chantées en Turquie,” *Revue des études juives* 32 (1896): 102–23, 263–75, and 33 (1896): 122–39, 255–68; idem, “Essai sur les vocables turcs dans le judéo-espagnole,” *Revue orientale* 4 (1903): 215–29, 5(1904): 11–128; Abraham Galante, “Quatorze romances judéo-espagnols,” *Revue hispanique* 10 (1903): 594–606.

historical works, including Abraham Galante (1873–1961), Moritz Levy (1879–1942), Joseph Nehama (1880–1971), Saul Mezan (1893–1943), Abraham Elmaleh (1885–1967), Isaac Raphael Molho (1894–1976), Isaac Samuel Emmanuel (1899–1972), and Moshe David Gaon (1899–1958).<sup>39</sup> Thanks to two insightful biographies of Abraham Galante, far more is known about this scholar than most Sephardic intellectuals of the era.<sup>40</sup> A historian, educator, professor, journalist, linguist, and activist, Galante was an avid devotee of the archive: of his astonishing sixty books and roughly one hundred articles, most are weighted with translations and transliterations of rare documents from Hebrew, Ladino, Ottoman (and later modern) Turkish, French, and German. Much of Galante's most influential work has been compiled into his nine-volume *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*; his many articles, both popular and scholarly, defended Jews' adoption of the Turkish language. Galante's undying defense of the advantages of Jews' Turkification marked him as a distinctly political scholar who, more than anyone, popularized a narrative of Jewish belonging to the Turkish body politic that would leave an indelible mark on the Kemalist Republic.

The Macedonian-born Gaon, a graduate of the University of Vienna, was one of the few among his cohort to leave southeastern Europe for Palestine. There he published a bibliographical survey on the Ladino press, and a two-volume Hebrew-language biographical dictionary of notable Sephardim who lived in Palestine, contributed to the prestigious (if short-lived) journal of the Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology, *'Edot* (1944–48), and participated in the Council of the Sephardic Community.<sup>41</sup> Gaon's scholarship was complemented by the work of

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39. Another Sephardic historian and folklorist of the interwar period worthy of mention here is Abraham Moshe Tadjer, whose *Notas istorikas sobre los djudyos de Bulgaria y la komunita de Sofia* appeared in Sofia in 1932. See Tamir, *Bulgaria and Her Jews*, 68.

40. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*. Abraham Elmaleh's biography has appeared in French and Hebrew, as *Les grandes figures du judaïsme: Le professeur Abraham Galante, sa vie et ses œuvres* (Istanbul, 1946) and *Ha-Professor Avraham Galanti: Hayav u-fo'olo ha-sifrut, ha-histori ve'ba-mada'i* (Jerusalem, 1954).

41. Edited by the Hungarian-born folklorist Dr. Raphael Patai, *'Edot* focused primarily on Mizrahi Jewish culture. For Gaon's contributions, see, for example, "The Fight of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews against the 'Indulco,'" *'Edot* 1/2 (January 1946): 104–7. Thanks are due to Yehuda Sharim for this source. Other Sephardic scholars who moved from southeastern Europe to Palestine were Isaac Elia Navon, Isaac Molho, and members of the Amarillo family, who brought with them from their native Salonica invaluable archival documentation (on Sabbateanism, among other topics) now held by the Ben Zvi Institute. On this collection, see Abraham Amarillo, "Sabbatean Documents from the Shaul Amarillo Archives" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 5 (1961): 252–53; on the Amarillos: *Zikbron Saloniki*:

Elmaleh, a Hebrew journalist and author born into the Sephardic community of Jerusalem who co-founded a Sephardic Jewish nationalist newspaper by the name of *Ha-Herut* (Freedom) in 1909. A decade later, in 1919, Elmaleh established a scholarly journal, *Mizrah u-ma'arav* (East and West), dedicated to the study of Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewries;<sup>42</sup> Elmaleh also published a number of popular surveys of the history of the Levant and “Oriental” Jewries, as well as a study on the life of Shabbetai Zvi and a two-volume history on the Jews of Salonica.<sup>43</sup> Like Gaon, the Sarajevo-born Moritz Levy studied in Vienna, where he completed a doctoral dissertation on the Sephardic Jews of Bosnia, later turning the work into a book published in Sarajevo in 1911.<sup>44</sup> During this period he was also active in a Sephardic society known as “Esperanza,” or the “Sociedad academica de judios espanioles,” whose various members strove to create “an awareness of their Sephardic heritage by studying its language and history.”<sup>45</sup> In addition to his academic training, Levy was an ordained rabbi and, in 1917, became chief Sephardic rabbi of Sarajevo, a position he held throughout much of the interwar period, while also directing the Jewish Theological Seminary in that city after its establishment in 1928.<sup>46</sup> Isaac Molho of Salonica, for his part, penned various historical works, including a study of the sixteenth-century Salonican rabbi Moses Almosnino, another on modern Salonica, and a biography of his contemporary, the Sephardic Zionist Marco Baruch of Istanbul.<sup>47</sup> Working during the same period, Joseph Nehama (son of the above-mentioned Judah Nehama) published a study of Salonica, *La Ville Convoitée*, in Paris in 1914; beginning in the same period, he also commenced his seven-volume *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, which—along with the scholarship of Rosanes, Gaon, Franco, Galante, and Emmanuel—remains a foundational text in the field of Sephardic studies.<sup>48</sup>

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*gedulatab ve-ḥurbanah shel Yerushalayim de-Balkan*, volume 2, ed. D. A. Recanati (Tel Aviv, 1971–85), 154, 456.

42. Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass, “Eretz Israel/Palestine, 1800–1948,” in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa*, 343.

43. Abraham Elmaleh, “Ha-sifrut ve-ha-‘itonut ha-espanyoliot,” *Ha-Shiloah* 26.1 (1912): 67–73, 252–60. Elmaleh’s studies of Salonican Jewry and of Shabbetai Zvi were published in 1925 and 1927, respectively.

44. Moritz Levy, *Die Sephardim in Bosnien* (Sarajevo, 1911).

45. Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia* (Philadelphia, 1979), 151.

46. Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 84.

47. Yitzchak Kerem, “Isaac Raphael Molho,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 14:426. On Baruch, see Paula Daccarett, “1890s Zionism Reconsidered: Joseph Marco Baruch,” *Jewish History* 19 (2005): 315–45.

48. Selected letters by Nehama can be found in the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle; Paul Dumont, “La correspondance de Joseph Nehama avec

The remaining historians include the first to cast a critical eye on the extra-Ottoman Sephardic diaspora. Between the 1920s and 1960s, Isaac Emmanuel authored key works on the Salonican Jewish past, including a study of Jews' historic involvement in the textile industry in that city, three Hebrew-language volumes on Salonica's Jewish cemetery, and French, Hebrew, and English-language studies of the Jews of the Dutch Antilles, Coro, Venezuela, and Amsterdam. Much of his later work Emmanuel penned jointly with his wife, Suzanne Amzalak Emmanuel, one of the first female scholars in the field. The two-volume work they coauthored on the Dutch Antilles was based on a wide array of archival materials, ranging from tax registers to letters, and periodicals to synagogue records and memoirs, many of which they translated in full in their English-language publication.<sup>49</sup>

Also unique in focus was Saul Mezan, a poet and journalist with a degree in medicine; among his first book-length publications (dating to the 1920s) are works on hygiene and sciatica, but he also ventured into the world of Judeo-Spanish studies. Contacting the renowned Spanish philologist and historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal in 1920, Mezan noted his plans to create a "Committee for Hispano-Jewish Folklore" within the Organization for Hebrew Language and Culture in Bulgaria.<sup>50</sup> Mezan's lasting contribution to the field of Sephardic studies came in the form of a 1925 French-language study of the history of Bulgarian Jewry. Additional works, written in German, Bulgarian, and French, explored the Sephardic intellectual tradition and the history of Sephardic Zionism.<sup>51</sup>

Four of the third-generation scholars were philologists: in addition to Joseph Nehama and Abraham Elmaleh, these individuals included Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951), and Kalmi Baruch (1896–1945). Given the intense multilingualism of the Sephardic Jews of their genera-

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l'Alliance Israélite Universelle," in *Les Juifs en Grèce: Questions d'histoire dans la longue durée* (Athens, 1995), 131–46.

49. Isaac Emmanuel, *Histoire de l'industrie des tissus des Israélites de Salonique* (Paris, 1935); idem, *Gedole Saloniki le-dorotam* (Tel Aviv, 1936); idem, *Matsevot Saloniki: be-tseruf toledot hayehem shel gedole kebilah*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1963–68); Isaac Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curaçao: Curaçao Jewry, 1656–1957* (New York, 1957); idem, *A History of the Jews in the Netherlands Antilles*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1970).

50. Samuel G. Armistead, *El Romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid, 1978), vol. 1, n.p.

51. Saul Mezan, *Les Juifs espagnols en Bulgarie* (Sofia, 1925); *De Gabirol à Abrahanel: Juifs espagnols, promoteurs de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1936); Aleko Konstantionov *v zaštitā na Iosif-Marko Barukh* (Sofia, 1925).



tion, this list toward philology is not surprising: it also signals the extent to which language mastery served as a path of social ascension for turn-of-the-century Ottoman Jews of all classes. A Baghdadi Jew born in Jerusalem, Yahuda was a celebrated Semiticist who moved comfortably between studies of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic and authored over ten books and scores of academic articles, including a study of Ladino, a language he learned while growing up in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> After completing his studies in Semitics at the universities of Heidelberg and Strasbourg, he became a lecturer at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (in 1904), assumed—at the remarkably early year of 1915—a chair of rabbinic language and literature at the Universidad Central de Madrid, served as lecturer at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the Royal Asiatic Society of London, and joined the faculty of New York's New School for Social Research, the last academic position he would hold.<sup>53</sup> Throughout his career, Yahuda immersed himself in the world of Sephardic studies and would later join in America—as he had in Spain and elsewhere in Europe—groups committed to documenting the history of Judeo-Spanish communities.

The second linguist, Nehama, labored for some forty years on a French-Ladino dictionary that—despite its focus on the Salonican dialect he knew best—arguably remains the best-known and most-used Ladino dictionary in any language. (Scholars of Jewish linguistics might compare Nehama's work to that of Uriel Weinreich, whose still definitive English-Yiddish dictionary was published a decade before Nehama's.) Baruch, a native of Sarajevo, submitted a doctoral dissertation to the University of Vienna on the Ladino spoken by Bosnian Jews. The fruits of this research appeared in published form throughout the 1930s, mostly in Serbo-Croatian.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, the prolific Elmaleh pub-

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52. A. S. Yahuda, "Contribución al estudio del judeo-español," *Revista de filología española* 2 (1915): 339–70. Later, Galante referred to Yahuda as "un savant sépharadi." Abraham Galante, "Le Dr. Abraham Schalom Yahuda," *Hamenora* 14.1–3 (1936): 3.

53. "Abraham Yahuda, Expert on Bible," *New York Times*, August 14, 1951; interview, *Jewish Chronicle*, May 9, 1919; "Abraham Shalom Yahuda," *Who Was Who, 1951–1960*; "Abraham Shalom Yahuda," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*; Santiago García-Jalón de la Lama, *Don Abraham Yahuda y la Universidad Central de Madrid, 1915–1925* (Salamanca, 2006). Yahuda's papers are held by the Jewish National University Library: [http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton/yahuda\\_eng.html](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton/yahuda_eng.html).

54. Kalmi Baruch, "Der Lautstand des Judenspanischen in Bosnien" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1923); idem, "El judeo-español de Bosnia," *Revista de la Filología Española* 17 (1930): 113–54; idem, "Španske romanse bosanskih Jevreja," *Godišnjak* (Sarajevo-Belgrade, 1933): 272–88.

lished three different Hebrew-French dictionaries, nine French-Hebrew editions, one dictionary of Hebrew-Arabic, another of Arabic-Hebrew, and a five-volume Hebrew-French dictionary.

Michael Molho (1890–1964) and Laura Papo Bohoreta (1891–1942) were also influential scholars of this generation, producing sophisticated ethnographic scholarship, among other works.<sup>55</sup> Molho, a Salonican by birth, wrote extensively on the customs of the Jews of his city, publishing broadly on this topic over the course of some forty years; in 1950, this work was gathered together in a single volume and published in Spanish by Madrid's Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (the same imprint would release Nehama's dictionary) as *Usos y costumbres de los sefardíes de Salónica*. (This remarkable collection has recently appeared in an excellent English-language translation.)<sup>56</sup> Other subjects that captured the attention of this wide-ranging and ambitious autodidact were the Sephardic rabbinic tradition, Salonica's unparalleled Jewish cemetery, which he catalogued even as the Nazis were preparing to destroy it, the history of the Jews of Kastoria, the Sephardic literary legacy, and a book memorializing the Greek Jewish victims of Nazism.<sup>57</sup> Like Molho, Laura Papo sought to preserve the folk traditions of the Sephardic Jews of her native city; as early as 1917, she began recording Ladino ballads in Sarajevo, where she was born and lived much of her adult life. Papo came to master seven languages, taught French literature, and became a poet, novelist, songwriter, essayist, and dramatist, publishing in the Jewish press of her day, as well as a book on the place of Sephardic women in Bosnian society.<sup>58</sup> She was also a Sephardist: she proposed that Ladino

55. The work of Enrique (Haim) Saporta y Beja (1898–1984) in collecting the proverbs of Salonican Jewry also warrants mention: *Refranero sefardí: Compendio de refranes, dichos y locuciones típicas de los sefardíes de Salónica y otros sitios de Oriente* (Madrid, 1957); idem, *Refranes de los judíos sefardíes* (Barcelona, 1978).

56. Michael Molho, *Traditions and Customs of the Sephardic Jews of Salonica*, ed. R. Bedford, trans. A. A. Zara (1944/50; repr. New York, 2006).

57. Molho's other works include *Kontribusion a la istoria de Saloniko* (Salonica, 1932); *Histoire des israélites de Castoria* (Salonica, 1938); "Cinq élégies en judéo-espagnol," *Bulletin hispanique* 42 (1940): 231–35; *Literatura sefardita de Oriente* (Madrid, 1960); *In Memoriam: Hommage aux victimes juives des Nazis en Grèce* (Thessaloniki, 1973), revised and expanded by Joseph Nehama; *Matsevot bet ha-'almin shel yehude Saloniki* (Tel Aviv, 1974).

58. Papo's languages included Bosnian Serbo-Croatian, Ladino, French, German, Turkish, Greek, and English: Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 132. Also see Eliezer Papo, "Hayehah u-mif'alah ha-sifrutit shel Laura Papo Bohoreta, hamahazait ha-sefaradit-yehudit ha-rishonah," *El Prezente* 1 and *Mikan* 8 (2007): 61–89. Her life and works are currently the subject of an ongoing dissertation by

be promoted and standardized in order to facilitate communication among the Jews of the Balkans and Turkey.<sup>59</sup>

Speculatively, we may speak of a small, fourth generation of Jewish intellectuals engaged in the study of Sephardic history and culture born in Ottoman lands in the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century (ca. 1895–1910) but who emigrated as young children and came of age in the United States. This generation includes Mair José Benardete (1895–1983), who, after migrating from the Dardenelles to New York in 1910, pursued a college education at the University of Cincinnati, received a Ph.D. from Columbia University and came to serve as professor of Spanish at Brooklyn and Hunter colleges in New York City.<sup>60</sup> As early as 1913, the young Benardete helped conduct a sociological survey of the Sephardi immigrant community of Cincinnati.<sup>61</sup> He went on to collect ballads from Sephardic Jewish residents of New York's boroughs in the early 1920s, submitting his findings in a 1923 master's thesis.<sup>62</sup> Within a decade, Benardete developed a Sephardic studies program under the umbrella of Columbia University's Hispanic Institute, a development made all the more impressive when compared to Salo Baron's historic and oft-cited appointment as the country's first Jewish historian

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Ramajana Hidic Demirovic of the University of Indiana, whom the authors wish to thank for her assistance.

59. Eliezer Papo, "Serbo-Croatian Influences on Bosnian Spoken Judeo-Spanish," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1.2 (2007).

60. Marc D. Angel, *La America: The Sephardic Experience in the United States* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), 38, suggests that Benardete was the first (Levantine) Sephardic public school teacher in the United States.

61. In this capacity, he aided Dr. Maurice B. Hexter as an interviewer and translator. Joseph M. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 279, describes this as the "first such sociological survey of an inland Sephardi community."

62. Benardete's Sephardic ballad-collecting campaign was the first undertaken in the United States: Mair José Benardete, "Los romances judeo-españoles en Nueva York" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1923); Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, *Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York: Collected by Mair José Benardete* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981), 7, 11. Engaged in parallel work was the linguist Max Luria, whose 1927 collection of Yugoslavian Sephardic ballads is held by Yeshiva University. Max A. Luria, *A Study of the Monastir Dialect of Judeo-Spanish* (New York, 1930); idem, "Judeo-Spanish Dialects in New York City," in *Todd Memorial Volumes: Philological Studies* 2, ed. J. D. Fitz-Gerald and P. Taylor (New York, 1930), 7–16; Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, "Rare Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Monastir (Yugoslavia) Collected by Max A. Luria," *American Sephardi* 7/8 (1975): 51–61.

at Columbia University during the same period. During his years as the program's director at the Institute, Benardete sponsored lectures on Sephardic civilization, generated articles for the Institute's *Revista hispánica moderna*, published a bilingual Ladino/Spanish commemorative volume on the medieval Spanish-Jewish poet Judah Halevi, and staged plays in Ladino that were the talk of Sephardic New York.<sup>63</sup>

The fourth generation also includes the literary historian and bibliographer Henry Victor Besso (1905–93), a native of Salonica and a New Yorker for much of his life, who wrote one of the first master's theses in Sephardic studies for an American university: a 1935 study for Columbia University titled "Dramatic Literature of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam, Holland, in the 17th and 18th Centuries." Thereafter, Besso worked as a librarian for the Library of Congress' Hispanic Division, continuing to conduct independent research on Sephardic linguistics, history, theater, and culture and lecturing widely on these topics in Europe and the United States. He is remembered best for his 1963 work, *Ladino Books in the Library of Congress: A Bibliography*. Besso's work in the extra-academic spheres is also noteworthy: he helped found the American Society of Sephardic Studies at Yeshiva University in 1963, and, with Benardete, played a central role in the creation (also in the 1960s) of the autonomous Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, which still functions today.<sup>64</sup>

Also part of the fourth generation are the siblings Emma Adatto Schlesinger (b. 1910) and Albert Adatto (1911–96), both of whom were born in Istanbul and immigrated to Seattle with their parents as young children. Adatto Schlesinger earned a B.A. in Spanish at the University of Washington and, in the same year as Besso, completed a master's thesis in Sephardic studies, "A Study of the Linguistic Characteristics of the Seattle Sefardí Folklore."<sup>65</sup> Inspired by her example, Adatto's brother

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63. Amiga Serena [pseudonym], "Penseros de Nieta," in *Sephardic House Newsletter* 10.3 (1996). Benardete's dissertation was first published in English by the Hispanic Institute in 1952 and has since been republished as *Hispanismo de los sefardíes levantinos* (Madrid, 1963) and *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews*, ed. M. Angel (New York, 1982).

64. A special issue of the *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture*, Tract 11, is dedicated to Besso: David Barocas, *A Study on the Meaning of Ladino, Judezmo, and the Spanish Jewish Dialect* (1976). Besso's papers are held by the American Sephardi Federation.

65. On Adatto: Armistead and Silverman, *Judeo-Spanish Ballads of New York*, 7–8. In the ensuing decade, other Sephardic women scholars submitted theses on American Sephardic folklore and language: Susan Bassan Warner, "Judeo-Spanish Folk Poetry" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1947); Denah Levy Lida, "El sefardí esmirniano de Nueva York" (Ph.D. diss., Universidad Nacional

Albert pursued a similar academic track, completing, four years after his sister, a master's thesis (also submitted to the University of Washington) titled "Sephardim and the Seattle Sephardic Community." Neither of the Adatto siblings pursued scholarly careers or independent research upon completing their graduate work; however, later in their lives, both returned to their erstwhile passions, carrying on independent research on Ladino language, songs, folklore and Sephardic history.<sup>66</sup>

#### CHARACTERIZING MODERN SEPHARDIC SCHOLARSHIP

Considered as a whole, what general trends emerge from the above analysis of the pioneering generations of scholars of Sephardic studies born in the Judeo-Spanish heartland of southeastern Europe and the Levant? Can the histories of these individuals lead us to begin to flesh out the contours of a modern Sephardic intellectual history? In the interest of working toward a synoptic (but by no means complete) outline of modern Sephardic scholarship, we propose the following characteristics.

First, as we have seen, the majority of intellectuals discussed here were not formally trained in an academic setting and often lacked institutional support. Few were able to pursue an advanced degree or teach at a university, although opportunities to do so increased for members of later generations. Nonetheless, even those without university training or institutions produced innovative studies based on their direct engagement with little-used archival sources. After his first library burned down in a fire in 1890, Judah Nehama built up another important collection before his death in 1899, creating an impressive set of works utilized later by his son Joseph.<sup>67</sup> Solomon Rosanes drew upon both rare manuscripts gath-

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Autónoma de México, 1952). Lida (1923–2007), born in Harlem to Ottoman Jewish immigrant parents, became a professor of Spanish and comparative literature at Brandeis University, where her papers are now held. See also the dissertation on Macedonian Ladino dialects by Jamila Kolonomos, a Sephardic woman of Monastir (now Bitola, Macedonia) who survived the Second World War as a partisan: "Les parlers judéo-espagnols de Bitola/Monastir et de Skopje/Uskub" (Ph.D. diss., Sorbonne University, 1962).

66. The siblings' correspondence, along with other personal and scholarly papers, is held by the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections. Emma Adatto published some of her work in academic journals such as *Folklore* and *Hispania*, as well as an autobiographical piece, "La Tía Estambolía" in *Sephardic-American Voices: Two Hundred Years of a Literary Legacy*, ed. D. Matza (Hanover, N.H., 1997).

67. Abraham Elmaleh, "Un serviteur fidèle de l'Alliance et des letters," *Maḥberet* (April 1965), republished in "Joseph Néhama, éducateur, écrivain, historien et homme d'action." [http://www.aiu.org/bibli/ils\\_ont\\_fait/Joseph\\_%20Nehama.pdf](http://www.aiu.org/bibli/ils_ont_fait/Joseph_%20Nehama.pdf).

ered by his father, Abraham ben Israel Rosanes, and the extensive library of Chief Rabbi Shabbethai Behar Abraham, who donated his collection to Ruschuk's Jewish community; in addition, Rosanes regularly devoted time during business trips to utilizing libraries and archives peppered across the Sephardic heartland.<sup>68</sup> Well before he assumed a formal position at the University of Istanbul during the period of the early Turkish Republic, Galante took copious notes while conducting research in a number of libraries. At the time of his death, his own library included some 2,000 volumes.<sup>69</sup> Michael Molho, too, possessed a large library of 500 rare manuscripts and books; he also drew on the extensive collection of his father, Rabbi Solomon Molho, who, like Michael's brother, grandfather, and great-grandfather, was a distinguished rabbinic commentator as well as a *dayan* (judge).<sup>70</sup> Something similar can be said of Isaac Emmanuel, whose father, Rabbi Samuel Emmanuel, created an extensive library later pillaged by the Nazis. In Spain, meanwhile, between 1915 and 1922, Yahuda mined the rich collections of Hebrew manuscripts and books pertaining to Iberian Jewry, many of which had been collecting dust in libraries and monasteries across the country. Still others urged the further excavation of forgotten archival sources. As he wrote of forging a society of Oriental Jewish historians in 1890, Solomon Rosanes had called upon his coreligionists to make use of all resources available to them, including the *responsa* of their own rabbis, manuscripts, and printed books. He also suggested that oral traditions be culled and recorded in order to further this project, a feat Franco, Danon, Galante, Michael Molho, Papo, and others attempted in the years that followed. On American soil, Besso, Benardete, and the siblings Adatto all undertook original research and data collection. Thus, even without the society devoted exclusively to Judeo-Spanish studies they so often dreamt of, these early scholars of Sephardic studies inventively pioneered a field.

Second, a large number of the individuals discussed here served as editors of Ladino periodicals and regularly published within the pages of

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68. "Solomon Abraham Rosanes" and "Rustchuk," *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

69. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 34, 66.

70. Similarly, Abraham Tadjer's historical survey of Bulgarian Jewry in the interwar period was created with the aid of his father's library. Gaëlle Collin and Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Un trésor oublié: Le fonds judéo-espagnol de la bibliothèque municipale Ivan Vazov de Plovdiv (Bulgarie)," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos* 55 (2006): 86. On collections lost in the Second World War, see Michael Molho, *Sefarim 'ivrim 'atikim ve-sifre Ladino, she'erit ha-pelitah mi-sifriyati she-nishbedab be-Saloniki bi-sbenat 1941 bi-yede ha-germanim, Y[imah] Sh[eman]* (Buenos Aires, 1957).

the popular press. The list of such instances is too long to rehearse in full, but we may note that Judah Nehama initiated *El Lunar*'s publication in Salonica in the mid-1860s, while Danon created *Yosef Ha-Da'at/El Progreso* in Adrianople in 1888; that David Fresco worked tirelessly editing six different Ladino periodicals in Istanbul for nearly the same number of decades;<sup>71</sup> that Abraham Galante contributed to and founded a number of journals, including the Ladino and Judeo-Arabic, Cairo-based journals *El Mitoraim* and *La Vara*; and that Molho was a regular contributor to Salonica's Ladino daily *El Pueblo*. Newspaper imprints also released free-standing publications that brought together serialized contributions and essays of several of the intellectuals referenced here.

Third, many of the scholars we introduce here were either rabbis themselves or hailed from rabbinic families. Contrary to what one might expect, their prestige as religious leaders often increased as their scholarly profiles expanded. After pursuing his academic interests independently while directing a Jewish school in Bucharest for many years, Bejerano became chief rabbi in Adrianople and later of the Turkish Republic; Emmanuel received master's and doctoral degrees in history from the University of Lausanne and an ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau before going on to minister to Sephardic communities in Curaçao, Panama, Rio de Janeiro, and Cincinnati while continuing his research;<sup>72</sup> Molho, who descended from a long line of distinguished rabbis and scholars, continued to pursue his studies as he taught at the Salonican rabbinical seminary *Bet Yosef*, served as chief rabbi of Salonica after the Second World War and, toward the end of his life, as rabbi of the Sephardic community of Buenos Aires;<sup>73</sup> Danon ran a modern rabbinic seminary in Istanbul for a number of years before competing with his son-in-law Haim Nahum to serve as chief rabbi of the Empire (a position Nahum was awarded);<sup>74</sup> Moritz Levy earned his doctoral degree from Vienna before returning to Sarajevo to serve as chief Sephardic rabbi and director of the Jewish Seminary there; and, extraordinarily enough, Galante, though never rabbinically trained, was offered the posi-

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71. These were *El Nacional*, *El Telegrafo*, *El Tiempo*, *El Sol*, *El Instruktor*, and *El Amigo de la Familia*.

72. Malcom H. Stern, "Portuguese Sephardim in the Americas," in *Sephardim in the Americas*, ed. M. A. Cohen and A. Peck (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1993), 148–49.

73. While residing in Buenos Aires, Molho also began publishing in Argentinian reviews: Michael Molho, "Tres romances de tema bíblico y dos canciones de cuna," *Comentario* 4.15 (1957): 64–70.

74. Esther Benbassa, *Haim Nahum: A Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Politics, 1892–1925*, trans. M. Kochan (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1995).

tion of chief rabbi of the Sephardim of the United States by members of the Federation of the Oriental Jews of America in the midst of the First World War.<sup>75</sup> This intimacy between worlds religious and secular might appear surprising; we are more accustomed to reading maskilic accounts of rebellion against *beders*, fathers, religious authority, or piety more generally, exaggerated as such tropes may be. Yet, in the Sephardic intellectual world, the dyads of religious : secular and intellectual : pious were not always operative, either as an ideal or a norm. In the absence of diverging religious currents such as could be found in the contemporary Ashkenazi world, the resistance of some Sephardic rabbis to secular and “enlightened” scholarship did not prevent other rabbis from taking up its cause. Thus, for example, one can find in the Ladino press of Istanbul advertisements posted as early as the 1870s by stores that sold “books of the Haskalah” alongside the Talmud, tefillin, tsitsit, and other religious paraphernalia.<sup>76</sup>

Other scholars have explained this dynamic by pointing to the flexibility of the Sephardic religious establishment to a rapidly changing modern world, often focusing on the accommodation and incorporation of secular forms into religious frameworks.<sup>77</sup> Here, the picture that emerges is a slightly different one: a number of the Sephardic scholars charted above were observant Jews who pursued secular subjects as a calling rather than a compromise. Still, engagement in secular studies did not necessarily entail the adoption of a secularist worldview. For Michael Molho, indeed, preserving Sephardic culture through ethnographic work offered a bulwark against unbridled secularism and “free-thinking,” both of which he railed against in his writing.<sup>78</sup> In this Molho was rather more a traditionalist than many, but his impulse was not entirely isolated. Many Sephardic religious leaders did not consider secular intellectual ambition the source of rebellion or a shirking of their duty: on the contrary, their scholarly explorations quite often appeared to consolidate their communal authority.

Fourth, in addition to retaining their status as religious leaders, an impressive number of the scholars discussed here were deeply rooted in the wider European scholarly world. Most extraordinary in this regard

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75. “Oriental Jews Gather at Annual Meeting: the Federation Elects Officers,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1914, 7; “Invite Chief Rabbi: Oriental Jews Want Dr. Abraham Galante of Constantinople,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1915, 7.

76. “Avizo importante,” *El Nacional*, November 28, 1877, 4.

77. E.g., Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*; Stillman, *Sephardic Religious Responses*; Zvi Zohar, *Masoret U-temurah*.

78. Bedford, “Preface,” xii.



was Yahuda, interlocutor and friend of such luminaries as Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and Chaim Weizmann.<sup>79</sup> In this, as in so much else, Yahuda was unusual. However, other Sephardic intellectuals were not without intellectual ambition or, indeed, community, of other forms. In Berlin, Saul Mezan collaborated with Max Leopold Wagner, the influential Romance philologist, as the two planned to cowrite a study of the language and folklore of Bulgarian Sephardim.<sup>80</sup> Even when they did not travel far, a substantial number of the scholars mentioned here had contact with colleagues from abroad. Nehama corresponded extensively with scholars from Italy, Prussia, and Galicia, for example, while Bejerano maintained a correspondence with various influential European thinkers of his day, including Jules Simon and Ernst Renan.<sup>81</sup> Solomon Rosanes studied Yiddish in order to stay apprised of work being done by Ashkenazi scholars in Eastern Europe, while Eastern European Jewish scholars also referenced his scholarship in their work.<sup>82</sup> Others met fellow intellectuals who visited Ottoman lands; David Fresco thus encountered Cyrus Adler in Istanbul during the latter's visit to the Ottoman capital in the early 1890s. Thereafter, Adler remarked how impressed he had been at having maintained a fluent Hebrew conversation with Fresco for some hours. Although Fresco had never left the city of his birth, Adler explained, he found the Sephardic journalist to be "a more cultured man than any Jewish newspaper man . . . [he had] met anywhere so far," adding that "with the possible exception of Dr. Sabato Morais," Adler's own mentor, Fresco spoke "far better Hebrew than . . . [Adler] ever heard."<sup>83</sup> These examples suggest that Sephardic thinkers working in

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79. For Yahuda's 1933 correspondence with Einstein, held by the Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: <http://www.alberteinstein.info/>. Yahuda and Freud were neighbors in London in 1938, when Yahuda beseeched Freud not to publish his controversial *Moses and Monotheism*: Mark Edmundson, "Defender of the Faith?," *New York Times*, September 9, 2007. Throughout his life, Yahuda also had many encounters with Chaim Weizmann, with whom he disagreed strongly over the so-called Arab Question. He made his opposition to Weizmann's policies clear in a 1952 work titled *Dr. Weizmann's Errors on Trial*.

80. Vladimir Paounovski, "Saul Mezan: Sa vie et son oeuvre, IIe partie," *Études balkaniques* 2 (2009): 66.

81. Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman and the Turkish Republic*, 244.

82. Salvator Israel, "Solomon Avraam Rozanes—Originator of the Historiography of the Bulgarian Jews," *Annual* 19 (1984): 343, 349. Rosanes's other languages included Ladino, Hebrew, French, Italian, Turkish, Arabic, German, Bulgarian, Russian, and Rumanian.

83. Cyrus Adler, *Selected Letters*, ed. I. Robinson (Philadelphia, 1985), 31. On this encounter: Cohen, "Fashioning Imperial Citizens," chapter 2.

Ottoman lands beginning as early as the mid-nineteenth century successfully stayed abreast of current scholarship by reading Hebrew, German, Yiddish, and French-language materials distributed across the empire and by conversing with one another and with colleagues abroad.<sup>84</sup>

Still other scholars viewed themselves as part of a community of philologists engaged in the study of languages. Moise Franco collaborated with the Ottoman Muslim colonel Rushdi Bey in the compilation of three French readers which the pair officially introduced into the Ottoman school system: Galante issued publications opposing the romanization of the Turkish language in the period just before Atatürk's script reform of 1928 and later, of a treatise against a similar plan for Hebrew.<sup>85</sup> He also coauthored a series of Turkish-language philological works with the German scholar G. Bergstrasser, then employed by the University of Istanbul. Benardete conducted research and shaped crucial academic institutions with linguists in New York City, while Baruch—though never holding a permanent academic position—worked closely with the most prominent linguists of interwar Yugoslavia.

Many of the Sephardic intellectuals described here—particularly those of the second and third generations—also developed relationships with the Spanish academy and/or devoted themselves to highlighting the intimate relationship between Sephardic and Iberian culture and history. As early as the 1880s, Bejerano was publishing scholarship in Madrid's liberal *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza*.<sup>86</sup> Solomon Rosanes maintained a correspondence with scholars in Madrid, exchanging documents and references for his work on the history of Sephardic Jewry, while, in 1911, Moshe Attias accompanied the Spanish folklorist Manuel Manrique de Lara around the Balkans as the two collected Judeo-Spanish ballads from Sephardic informants across Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo.<sup>87</sup> Three years later, Galante became a corresponding member of Portugal's Academy of Sciences,<sup>88</sup> while Yahuda assumed his chair at the University

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84. For six years Galante taught at the Ottoman Imperial Lycée and censored foreign printed matter for the government. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 17.

85. "Moses Franco," *Jewish Encyclopedia*; Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 50; Abraham Galante, *Arabî Harfleri Terakkimize Mâni Değildir* (Istanbul, 1927); idem, *L'adoption des caractères Latins dans la langue hébraïque signifie sa dislocation* (Istanbul, 1949).

86. Haim Bidjerano, "Los judíos españoles de Oriente," *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* 140 (1883): 114–16.

87. Israel, "Solomon Avraam Rozanes," 353; Armistead, *El Romancero*; Schwartz, "Balkan Dreams."

88. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 43.

of Madrid in 1915. After the First World War, others (including Saul Mezan, and Mercado Covo) continued to publish their studies of Sephardic life in influential Spanish journals, such as *La Gaceta Literaria*.<sup>89</sup> Kalmi Baruch was awarded a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship by Madrid's Center for Historic Studies in 1928; and Molho's two most influential works, along with Nehama's Ladino dictionary, were published by Madrid's Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas roughly three decades later.<sup>90</sup> Scholars of the fourth generation working in the United States took this impulse in a new direction; all received their training in programs in Spanish/Hispanic studies. Like his predecessors, Besso delivered frequent lectures in Spain and also maintained a correspondence with influential Spanish thinkers such as Miguel de Unamuno.<sup>91</sup>

Other individuals joined Orientalist milieux, publishing their studies on Sephardic Jewish culture and history in periodicals such as *Revue orientale* and *Édot*. Bejerano, it will be recalled, ventured well beyond the "Oriental" languages of the Middle East, with the study of Sanskrit. Danon, for his part, attended multiple conferences on Oriental studies, occasionally publishing his work on the Sephardic Jews of the "East" in the resulting volumes.<sup>92</sup> In 1897 he even represented Oriental Jews at the annual Congress of Orientalists held in Paris. One cannot help but wonder how it must have felt for Danon to be both a scholar of Oriental Jewry and an object of scrutiny (and quite possibly an ethnographic sub-

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89. Saul Mezan, "Estudios sobre el judaismo bulgaro," *La Gaceta Literaria* 4.76 (1930): 7; M. José Covo, "Tipos judíos de Salónica," *La Gaceta Literaria* 4.73 (1930): 9.

90. "Sephardim in Spain," *Jewish Chronicle*, April 28, 1916, 10. Others participated in highlighting the intimacy between Sephardic and Spanish culture, moved, in part, by the campaign of the Spanish senator Ángel Pulido, whose tour of Ottoman lands led him to promote a Spanish-Sephardic rapprochement, most notably in his 1905 book, *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí*. In an earlier work, Pulido described a pivotal encounter with a "Spanish" (that is, Ladino) speaking Jew during a journey to southeastern Europe: this was none other than Bejerano, whom Pulido described as a "well-known polyglot, cultivator of eighteen European and Asian languages" and "director of a Jewish school in Bucharest." Pulido, *Los israelitas españoles*, 73–74; Angel, *Voices in Exile* (Hoboken, N.J., 1991), 171.

91. For further discussion of this trend in the American context: Aviva Ben-Ur, *Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* (New York, 2009), 150–87.

92. Abraham Danon, "Une secte judéo-musulmane en Turquie," *Actes du XIème Congrès international des Orientalistes* (Paris, 1897): 57–84; "Les superstitions des juifs ottomans," *Actes du XIIIème Congrès international des Orientalistes* (1899), 259–70.

ject) for his fellow Orientalists: at present, we lack the sources to do more than draw attention to the tensions these issues may have engendered.

Fifth, links to the larger Ottoman and—later—Turkish and Balkan worlds were decisive in the intellectual development of Sephardic scholars of different generations. Abraham Rosanes hosted the famous reforming governor (and later the proverbial “father of the Ottoman constitution”) Midhat Pasha in his home in Ruschuk. The pair must have had much to discuss: both founded “modern” schools in the city during the same year.<sup>93</sup> Abraham Rosanes also arranged Turkish tutoring for his son, Solomon, from a local Ottoman teacher by the name of Iskender Bey.<sup>94</sup> Moshe Attias attended Ottoman schools in his native Sarajevo and Istanbul; gaining an in-depth knowledge of Islamic culture in the course of his studies, he became an enthusiast of the thirteenth-century Persian poet and Islamic mystic Muslih-uddin Sa’di.<sup>95</sup> In addition to collaborating with an Ottoman Muslim colleague to produce French textbooks, Franco also contributed to Istanbul-based French periodicals that circulated widely among Ottoman intellectuals.<sup>96</sup> Galante, for his part, attended both the *rüçdiye* (Ottoman middle school) and *ıdadiye* (Ottoman high school) of his native Bodrum; he later took a position as a French teacher at the Ottoman *Dar-ül İrfan* school of Izmir and wrote frequently for the Turkish-language press (including the dailies *Hizmet* and *Akıyam* as well as *Meşveret*, *İzmir*, and *Hilâl-i Abmer Mecmuası*, the journal of the Red Crescent Society). During his time in Cairo, Galante befriended many radical Ottoman intellectuals affiliated with the Young Turk movement, helping smuggle their writings to publishers beyond the reach of Ottoman censors. A later friendship forged in Istanbul with Salih Safvet Bey, a staff officer in the Imperial Navy and a member of the Ottoman Historical Society (*Tarib-i Osmanî Encümeni*), helped him stay informed of new historical findings made in the Ottoman archives and aided his discovery of hitherto unknown documents concerning Ottoman Jewry.<sup>97</sup>

This type of intellectual collaboration was not limited to Jews and Muslims. In 1892, Abraham Danon visited a Greek *Sylogos* in Adrianople to deliver a lecture on the historic relationship between Jews and Greeks in antiquity; around the same time, local Christians came to hear him

93. Zvi Keren, “The Jews of Rusçuk,” 81–82.

94. Israel, “Solomon Avraam Rozanes,” 349.

95. Schwartz, “Balkan Dreams.”

96. The French-language publications included *Stamboul* (1886–97) and *Le Moniteur Oriental* (1897–1903).

97. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 18.

speak before a Jewish society in the same city.<sup>98</sup> In Izmir, Aron de Yosef Hazan, the editor of *La Esperansa*, that city's longest-lived Ladino periodical, encouraged his Jewish readers to support a local Hellenic library when it opened in 1877 with 12,000 books—urging them to donate works to the institution and to dedicate a few hours a week to reading there.<sup>99</sup> Galante also contributed articles to *Harmonia*, a Greek paper of Izmir, while residing in that city.<sup>100</sup> During Bejerano's time in Bucharest as the director of a Sephardic school, he taught Hebrew to local Christian theological students at no cost due to the interest they had shown in the subject; later, while serving as chief rabbi in Istanbul, he commissioned a well-known Armenian composer of the city, Kirkor Çulhayan Effendi, to put a large repertoire of Jewish religious poetry—including some of his own composition—to music in the classical Ottoman style.<sup>101</sup> He is also said to have become an active member of the Committee of Union and Progress that reinstated the Ottoman constitution in 1908.<sup>102</sup> Such ties suggest that Ottoman Jewish intellectuals did not dwell in isolation, aloof from regional conversations. Though not all of the thinkers we explore wrote in Turkish or other regional languages, their French (and other European) language publications were also read by non-Jewish Ottoman intellectuals engaged in related work.

Sixth and finally, it is important, if poignant, to note that most of the scholars we describe here cannot be deemed “successes” in the classical sense. Their work was little circulated, and even as journalists and editors of popular newspapers they often struggled to find an audience.<sup>103</sup> Even

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98. “Korespondensia” *El Tiempo*, February 1, 1892, 5; “El Rabino Abraham Danon,” *El Tiempo*, February 15, 1892, 2–3; “Jews and Greeks at Adrianople,” *Jewish Chronicle*, April 29, 1892, 13. Such an encounter was not uncommon in late Ottoman society: Johann Strauss, “‘*Küttip ve Resail-i Mevkute*’ Printing and Publishing in a Multi-Ethnic Society,” in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. E. Özdalga (New York, 2005), 225–53, describes the Greek *Sylogos* of Istanbul where “all sorts of European periodicals were on display and where conferences were given by cultivated members of all communities.”

99. “El muzeo y la biblioteka elenika,” *La Esperansa*, January 27, 1876, 1; Cohen, “Fashioning Imperial Citizens,” 52–53.

100. Kalderon, *Abraham Galante*, 26.

101. “Miscellaneous,” *Jewish Chronicle*, January 26, 1900, 21; Maureen Jackson, “Crossing Musical Worlds: Jews Making Ottoman and Turkish Classical Music,” *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 31.1–2 (2007/2009).

102. Yaacov Geller, Haïm Hirschberg, Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, and Isaiah Friedman, “Ottoman Empire,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

103. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington, Ind., 2003), chap. 2.

those who relied on institutional support rarely did so for a sustained period; more often they worked in changing venues, multiple countries, and myriad languages including Ladino, Turkish, Arabic, Bulgarian, Rumanian, German, Serbo-Croatian, French, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew, and English. Incidents of formal mentorship were limited, though scholarly publications and autobiographical writing suggest that as early as the midcentury these thinkers were aware of one another and one another's work.

Nor did politics serve as a force of coherence. Many of the scholars mentioned above aligned themselves with the Ottoman state while it existed, and other governments after the empire's collapse. Some were Sephardists (such as Laura Papo and Moritz Levy). Others became Jewish nationalists or Zionists during different periods (for example, Behar, Mitrani, Rosanes, Gaon, Elmaleh, Emmanuel, Moritz Levy, and Michael as well as Isaac Molho); others opposed Zionism vehemently at different points (David Fresco and Joseph Nehama). Still others identified with various national institutions simultaneously. (Bejerano, for example, served for many years as the official interpreter of Semitic languages for the Rumanian government and crown, had close ties to the country's Queen Elizabeth, worked as a corresponding member of the Spanish and French academies, and eventually became chief rabbi in the Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, of the fledgling Turkish Republic.)<sup>104</sup>

And yet, for all this, the first generations of scholars of Sephardic studies have been perceived to be *more* alienated—from one another and from the larger Jewish, European, Balkan, Ottoman, and Turkish intellectual milieux—than they actually were.<sup>105</sup> Today, the official site of a Jewish communal center of Sarajevo, named “Bohoreta” in honor of Laura Papo Bohoreta, states that during the period of her cultural activity, she was “the only Sephardic intellectual . . . in Sarajevo.”<sup>106</sup> In fact, she was hardly alone; Kalmi Baruch, among others, moved in the same scholarly worlds of her city in the interwar years, becoming Papo's colleague and collabo-

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104. “Bejerano,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

105. In this, they were not unlike the modern Hebrew and Yiddish authors who wrote copiously of their own alienation, an alienation both real and imagined: Alan Mintz, *Banished from Their Father's Table: Loss of Faith in Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington, Ind., 1989); Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone: The Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford, Calif., 2006).

106. “Who Was Bohoreta?”: <http://www.benevolencija.eu.org/content/view/33/35/>.

rator.<sup>107</sup> If outside observers have dwelled on this theme of alienation, so have members of the circles in question. Danon's entry in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, for example, penned by Franco, describes that Danon was the sole Sephardic intellectual to write in Hebrew in his day. Yet Franco, had he been pressed to do so, could surely have listed others, such as Farhi, Bejerano, Mitrani, Navon, Judah Nehama, and Solomon Rosanes, all of whom published in the Hebrew press or issued Hebrew works in the final decades of the nineteenth century. This perceived (but mistaken) idiosyncrasy is evocative of other cases. Recall the anecdote with which we began, wherein Cecil Roth reminisced about the isolation of Abraham Galante. Interestingly enough, Roth himself was aware that Galante did not, in fact, toil in solitude. At roughly the same time Roth opined that Galante belonged to an intellectual circle of one, he delivered a tribute to Michael Molho, lauding his contribution to the study of Sephardic culture, while also engaging in correspondence with Isaac Emmanuel and Henry Victor Besso. It is also unlikely that Roth, relentless reader that he was, could have been unaware of David Fresco, long-time Istanbul correspondent for London's *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>108</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that in Roth's tribute to Galante, he spoke of the extent to which he himself drew on Galante's writings ("sometimes to a very considerable extent") in his own scholarship. Galante, for his part, was in contact with many of the scholars mentioned here, including Bejerano and Rosanes, with whom he exchanged documents and ideas. Indeed, Galante even wrote about these scholars, as well as about Menahem Farhi, Moise Franco, Abraham Yahuda, and others, in his own historical contributions.<sup>109</sup> In this, Galante was not unusual: many of the intellectuals mentioned here, as we have begun to see, had intellectual ties with one another. Franco authored the entry on Abraham Danon for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. The introduction to Menahem Farhi's Hebrew grammar boasts the Hebrew blessing of David Fresco and also acknowledges both Abraham Rosanes and Bejerano.<sup>110</sup> Isaac Molho wrote the introduction to

107. Other Sephardic intellectuals of the period similarly studied local Balkan dialects of Judeo-Spanish: Samuel Romano, "Dictionnaire judéo-espagnol parlé—français—allemand, avec une introduction sur la phonétique et sur la formation des mots dans le judéo-espagnol" (Ph.D. diss., University of Zagreb, 1933).

108. "Obituary, Mr. David Fresco," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 1, 1933, 10.

109. References to Farhi, Rosanes, Franco, and others appear in Galante's multivolume history. See also Galante, "Le Dr. Abraham Schalom Yahuda."

110. Aviva Ben-Ur, *A Ladino Legacy: The Judeo-Spanish Collection of Louis N. Levy* (Alexander, N.C., 2001), 255–57.

the final volume of Solomon Rosanes's magnum opus on Ottoman Jewry; Kalmi Baruch contributed to a commemorative work published on the seventieth anniversary of Rosanes's birth. Isaac Navon was the Istanbul correspondent for Galante's Cairo-based bi-monthly *La Vara*; Elmaleh was the same paper's Jerusalem correspondent; he later published French- and Hebrew-language biographies of Galante, who in turn issued a tribute to Elmaleh on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Solomon Rosanes was the student of Farhi, Bejerano, Nissim Behar, and his own father in Ruschuk and Istanbul and also studied alongside Gabriel Arié, who became an important representative of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and later contacted his childhood friend as a consultant for a local history he planned of the Alliance.<sup>111</sup> Danon and Mitrani studied under the famous Orientalist and Hebraist Joseph Halévy in Adrianople. Remarkably, Marcus Ehrenpreis (the Galician-born chief rabbi of Sofia from 1900 to 1914) even sketched a plan to establish a Jewish University in Sofia, including Danon, Navon, and other Sephardic scholars on the list of lecturers he hoped to employ.<sup>112</sup> Mercado Covo, a transitional figure straddling the second and third generations delineated here, engaged in an extended debate over the place of Salonica in Jewish history in the pages of *La Epoka* during the last year of that city's Ottoman existence;<sup>113</sup> Isaac Emmanuel and Michael Molho competed to document the tombstones of the Jewish cemetery of Salonica in the 1930s;<sup>114</sup> and finally, Mercado Covo, Isaac Emmanuel, Isaac Molho, Michael Molho, and Joseph Nehama (among many others) contributed to the influential Memorbuch *Zikbron Saloniki*, dedicated to recording the lost world of Salonican Jewry after the Holocaust.<sup>115</sup>

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111. Israel, "Solomon Avraam Rozanes," 349; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *A Sephardi Life in Southeastern Europe*, 25, 209–11.

112. Marcus Ehrenpreis (1869–1951), an Ashkenazi Jew born in Galicia, taught himself Ladino and made many connections with local Sephardim during his tenure as chief rabbi. His musings about founding a Jewish college in Sofia included reflections on a possible curriculum and faculty: Marcus Ehrenpreis's personal archive, Box B2.1, Jewish Community of Stockholm's Archive, Riksarkivet, Arnänge. Thanks are due to Fabian Sborovsky for this fascinating reference.

113. In 1911, over a dozen exchanges under the title "Tribuna puvlika" were published in *La Epoka* between Mercado Covo and an author using the pseudonym "Satre."

114. The feverish documentation of Salonica's Jewish cemetery is currently the subject of doctoral dissertation research being conducted by Devin Naar of Stanford University.

115. Other examples of collaboration include Hebrew articles coauthored by Isaac Molho and Abraham Amarillo: "A Collection of Communal Regulations in



Members of the third and fourth generation of Sephardic intellectuals working on American soil seem also to have been in active dialogue with one another and with Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals of other stripes. When Nissim Behar and Benardete both found themselves in New York, they walked the streets of the Lower East Side and Harlem together, going door to door in an attempt to convince their Sephardic coreligionists to attend night school and pursue an English education.<sup>116</sup> In the following decade, Yahuda, Besso, and Benardete cooperated in the programs of the Sephardic studies section of Columbia's Hispanic Institute, earning the interest of Salo Baron, who referred students to them.<sup>117</sup> Copies of Benardete's and the Adattos' theses are filed in Henry Besso's personal papers, while the tireless Besso carried on correspondence with Abraham Elmaleh, Abraham Galante, Michael Molho, Abraham Gaon, Saul Mezan, Isaac Emmanuel, and Joseph Nehama, among many others. Archival collections of YIVO's Jacob Shatzky register a correspondence with Benardete, who also established connections with important Spanish and Latin American literati, including Juan Larrea and Gabriela Mistral.<sup>118</sup> This array of examples illustrates quite clearly the extent to which these different scholars of Sephardic history, culture, language, and folkways belonged to varied and overlapping intellectual worlds.

REMEMBERING A FORGOTTEN MILIEU / INTEGRATING  
JEWISH INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

If four generations of Sephardic scholars, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, initiated serious scholarship about Sephardic history and culture, if they were aware of one another, of the work of Jewish and non-Jewish interlocutors and colleagues, and of literary and social scientific innovations unfolding in Europe and the Levant, why do we persist in believing that there was, historically, no unified field of Sephardic studies, no Ottoman Jewish intellectual history, or, indeed, that those

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Ladino from Salonica," *Sefunot* 2 (1958), and "Autobiographical Letters of Abraham Cardozo," *Sefunot* 3-4 (1960).

116. Angel, *La America*, 25.

117. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, 208; Ben-Ur, *Sephardic Jews in America*, 284. Among the Sephardic students Besso listed was Paula Ovadia, a Spanish instructor at Brooklyn College who later married Benardete.

118. On Benardete's correspondence with Larrea, a Spanish writer of the famous "Generation of '27": Jacobo Israel Garzón, "Mair José Benardete y Juan Larrea, Cartas," *Ralces* 24 (1995): 37. Benardete's connections with the Chilean poet Mistral are evidenced in her papers: Columbus Memorial Library of the Organization of American States: <http://www.oas.org/columbus/docs/Gabriela%20Mistral%20Series%201V.pdf>

scholars who existed operated in desperate isolation? The answer to this question is at once historical and historiographic. In the first years of the twentieth century, it was possible for Marcus Ehrenpreis, chief rabbi of the Jews of Bulgaria, to envision a Jewish University in Sofia populated by Sephardic scholars from across the Balkans.<sup>119</sup> But a decade after Ehrenpreis announced his intention, the Ottoman Empire was definitively broken up, and Jewish intellectuals in its erstwhile territories found themselves increasingly fissured by political boundaries and—equally as important—by linguistic, pedagogic, and cultural pressures generated by the empire’s successor states. The burgeoning of nationalism in the region would have a lasting effect on Sephardic scholars’ research and the way in which it was received: in the wake of the Balkan Wars, the larger categories of “Ottoman,” “Oriental,” and “Levantine” Jewry ceased to be as compelling as they had once been. This development not only guaranteed that Galante would be remembered or would view himself as a Turkish scholar, or Laura Papo a Bosnian one: it also meant that many scholars invested in the Sephardic cultural sphere of the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean came to emphasize the study of Jews in particular cities, regions, or nations over more synoptic approaches. The resulting studies could be clear-eyed, but they overlooked a more synthetic—but increasingly outdated—vision of Levantine Jewish culture featured in the work of an earlier generation of scholars.

With this context in mind, we can understand in a new light Cecil Roth’s quip about Abraham Galante’s lonely membership in a Jewish Historical Society concerned with the study of Ottoman Sephardim. In the context of a post-Ottoman world, Galante had indeed become one of the only scholars of Sephardic culture operating in Turkey—many of his erstwhile colleagues had died, while others had become Greek, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, American, and Israeli.<sup>120</sup> Put simply: the dramatic geopolitical shifts rocking the Balkans and Turkey changed the texture of scholarly communities and of scholarship itself, influencing not only what was to be written thereafter but also which topics and collegial relationships were possible to remember, and which were better left forgotten. Per-

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119. Among the other names that appeared on Ehrenpreis’s list of possible teachers were Eliezer Kohen, Joseph Tagger, and a certain Dr. Caleb (quite possibly Yehoshua Caleb, who undertook a Bulgarian translation of Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat* and has been called the “intellect” of Bulgarian Zionism). Tamir, *Bulgaria and Her Jews*, 140.

120. At the time Roth wrote his letter, many of the other Sephardic scholars who had labored in Istanbul (Danon, Farhi, Franco, Fresco, Bejerano) had died, leaving Galante more lonely in his pursuit of Turkish Jewish studies than before.

haps, then, it is important to close by emphasizing not the history of isolation toward which Roth had gestured but, instead, the existence of a climate in which Ehrenpreis could reasonably articulate the intellectual ambition he did. Sephardic intellectuals born in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Levant expressed not only their own commitment to Sephardic studies but, additionally, the sense that the academic study of Sephardic culture, history, language, and folkways was a viable intellectual and academic project. In doing so, they pointed to the existence of a scholarly community in need of an institutional structure to sustain and further their scholarship, and also to the momentum individuals of a prior generation had created toward this end.

Moreover, in each generation, whether with or without institutional support, these scholars found intellectual companionship as well as a place for their scholarship; without the equivalent of a *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, a YIVO Institute, or even their own “Society of Ottoman Jewish Studies,” they nonetheless managed to forge a field using a wealth of sources, many of which are no longer available to us today. The scholars in question were historians, linguists, ethnographers, composers, translators, journalists, dramatists, and poets; maskilim, Hebraists, Ottomanists, Orientalists, Gallicizers, Hispanists, Sephardists, Balkan nationalists, Zionists, anti-Zionists; Ottomans, Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Yugoslavians, Palestinians/Israelis, and Americans. While these categories divided them, they nonetheless had in common their self-ascribed identity as intellectuals as well as the shared scholarly worlds they jointly and independently forged. A prosopographical approach to their lives exposes both the breadth of modern Sephardic intellectual history and the many vectors that connected Sephardic intellectuals to collaborators and interlocutors who were neither Sephardic, Jewish, nor Ottoman.

Notwithstanding their wide-ranging research and contacts, many of the figures introduced here have been condemned to marginality, if not invisibility, within larger narratives of Jewish history due to a self-reinforcing logic: Sephardic maskilim and scholars exist on the margins of modern Jewish intellectual history or Jewish social scientific circles because they operated within spheres that have come to be considered peripheral to the development of modern Jewish thought. This tautology raises theoretical questions for students of Sephardic studies, and Jewish intellectual history more generally: is it fruitful or self-defeating to evaluate the quality and significance of Sephardic intellectual production using the standards of other Jewish intellectual milieux? Might not a comparison undertaken in this manner allow the canon to remain rigid, with new Jewish historical subjects forming concentric circles around an immov-

able core? At the most general level, must sightings of hitherto neglected constellations of Jewish intellectual activity be consigned to the edges of the Jewish scholarly solar system? Or might their existence transform our sense of the gravitational pull that has been understood to order this universe?

It has been our aim to explore Sephardic intellectual history in a fashion that neither situates Sephardic scholars on the margins of modern Jewish thought nor measures them exclusively with yardsticks inherited from other contexts or historiographic traditions. We call for an approach that is integrative as well as comparative. For while it is true that the Sephardic thinkers and authors charted above can be seen as the founders of the field we now know as Sephardic studies, their intellectual influences and contacts were far more expansive than this categorization allows. Their connections reached across regions and often spanned the globe. A sense of intellectual solidarity led the earliest scholars of modern Sephardic studies to collaborate in myriad languages, with non-Jews as well as Jews, both locally and internationally.

Equally important, these scholars were not only influenced by modern Jewish (and other) intellectual trends: they were also in dialogue with them, and often had a marked influence upon the intellectual production of others. This pattern emerged already in the milieu of nineteenth-century maskilim. Thus, it was not only the case that Judah Nehama published his correspondence with the eminent Jewish scholar Samuel David Luzzatto: Luzzatto, too, saw fit to publish his correspondence with Nehama.<sup>121</sup> Joseph Halévy's proposed Hebrew language society later took shape as the *Va'ad ha-lashon ha-Ivrit* and, following that, the Academy of Hebrew Language. A similar pattern can be discerned with the next generation working toward a Hebraist revival, when Ben Yehuda learned about new approaches to methods of Hebrew instruction from individuals like Nissim Behar. In the world of historical scholarship, Solomon Rosanes penned critiques of Graetz's writings on Joseph Caro and fleshed out Dubnow's discussions of medieval Bulgarian rulers and their relevance to Jewish history.<sup>122</sup> Franco authored an impressive 136 entries for the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, including many coauthored by Richard Gottheil, Isidore Singer, Gotthard Deutsch, Meyer Kayserling, Kaufmann Kohler, Solomon Schechter, and others; Danon's contributions were the

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121. Samuel David Luzzatto, *Igrot Shadal* (Cracow, 1891), 1110–11; 1122–23; 1126–27; 1153–54; “Books and Bookmen,” *Jewish Chronicle*, November 18, 1892, 11.

122. Tamir, *Bulgaria and Her Jews*, 255.

result of collaborations with some of the same individuals. Kalmi Baruch of Sarajevo, who died in Bergen-Belsen in 1945, was honored for his scholarly contributions by his native city in 1970, when a street was named after him: one can still walk along the *ulica Kalmija Baruba* in Sarajevo today.<sup>123</sup> Isaac Molho, originally of Salonica, now has a square named after him in Jerusalem, marked by a plaque that honors him as “an author and historian” as well as one of the founders of the neighborhood of Rehavia in that city.

Surveying the work of some of the early- to mid-twentieth-century luminaries of modern Jewish history, one also finds that reference is made to the scholarship of a number of the figures featured in this essay: Cecil Roth benefited from Galante’s discoveries of materials concerning the life of Doña Gracia and Joseph Nassi in the Ottoman archives, which had been facilitated in turn by Galante’s personal and intellectual connections with Ottoman scholarly worlds.<sup>124</sup> (In fact, Galante opened up a new set of sources to Western readers by translating a variety of Hebrew and Ottoman documents into French.) Salo Baron, in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, included nearly ninety references to the works of Rosanes, Galante, Danon, Emmanuel, Nehama, Michael Molho, Elmaleh, and Mezan; Simon Dubnow similarly made reference to Rosanes’s *Divre yeme Yisra’el be-Togarmah*, as well as to Moise Franco’s *Essai sur l’histoire des Israélites de l’Empire Ottoman*, Mezan’s *Les juifs espagnols en Bulgarie*, and Danon’s work on Ottoman Sabbateans.<sup>125</sup> Finally, Gershom Scholem, in his foundational *Sabbatei Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, cited Danon’s scholarship dozens of times, made mention of the works of Galante, Nehama, and Molho, and described Rosanes as one of the “pioneers in Sabbatean research” alongside David Kahana and Heinrich Graetz.<sup>126</sup>

These scholars, all European-born intellectuals who appear to have seen Eastern Sephardic scholarly worlds as inseparable from their own,

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123. Stephen Schwartz, *Sarajevo Rose: A Balkan Jewish Notebook* (London, 2005), 35.

124. See Cecil Roth, *House of Nasi: The Duke of Navos* (Philadelphia, 1948) and idem, *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia* (Abingdon, UK, 1969), 191, where he also cites the work of Solomon Rosanes, Moise Franco, and Isaac Emmanuel.

125. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 18 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews: From Cromwell’s Commonwealth to the Napoleonic Era*, vol. 4 (South Brunswick, N.J., 1971), 438.

126. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, N.J., 1976).

took for granted what we have allowed ourselves to forget: that modern Sephardic intellectual history existed, not in the form of a few isolated or marginalized thinkers, but in dynamic engagement with a wider—indeed, nearly global—landscape of Jewish and non-Jewish thought. To rehabilitate Sephardic intellectual history is to envision a novel geography of modern Jewish history without a single center, awash in crosscurrents.