

## Book Reviews

Ethan B. Katz. *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 480 pp.  
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Ethan Katz's new book is a major achievement that expands our knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Muslim relations both in North Africa and the metro-pole. While earlier scholars of French Jewish history have paid attention to North African Jews, this community has largely been relegated to the margins. Thus, Katz's work, together with other recent books by Maud Mandel (*Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014]) and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (*Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014]), constitutes an important contribution.

To some extent Katz's study overlaps with Mandel's. Both challenge what they see as the prevailing view of Muslim-Jewish relations in France since 1948—that Jews and Muslims constituted two distinct ethno-religious groups whose relationship has become increasingly fraught since 1948, due especially to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Both Katz and Mandel argue that while that conflict has had an impact, other factors, too, have played a role, especially decolonization and the ensuing emigration of large numbers of Jews and Muslims to the metro-pole. Both authors suggest that relations between the two groups were never as conflictual as often depicted, and they emphasize moments of cooperation.

However, whereas Mandel begins her study in the post-World War II period, Katz goes back to the First World War, an era in Jewish-Muslim relations heretofore unstudied. He also includes a chapter on Jewish-Muslim relations both in France and North Africa during World War II, a relatively unexplored topic. Finally, Katz takes his study up to the recent events of January 2015, when Islamic terrorists in Paris killed twelve contributors to the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and another four persons at a kosher supermarket. The inclusion of these incidents reveals extraordinary dexterity on the author's part and contributes to the book's topicality. Finally, while both books draw extensively on archival material, including French government and Jewish community archives, Katz includes oral interviews with thirty-five individuals, as well as an enormous amount of memoir literature, together with films and novels. Indeed, Katz stresses that his goal is to move away from the official story conveyed by government sources in order to focus on everyday interactions between Jews and Muslims.

Katz's principal contention is that contrary to the accepted view, there was extensive interaction between Muslims and Jews prior to the colonial struggles for independence in the 1950s and 60s. He even suggests that the notion of Jews and Muslims as distinct ethno-religious communities arose only in recent decades. Ultimately, Katz argues that Jewish-Muslim interactions were shaped more by contingent, or "situational" factors, such as shared living spaces or cultural interactions, than by broader national and transnational political events. He furthermore maintains that this relationship cannot be understood in isolation from

the policies of the French state vis-à-vis these two groups; hence, this interaction should be understood as triangular and not binary.

While I am sympathetic to Katz's effort to present a more nuanced picture and to suggest that factors other than the Arab-Israeli conflict led to the fraying of relations between Muslims and Jews, the analysis is not altogether persuasive. Katz's presumption that Jewish-Muslim relations have been peaceful and cooperative since the late nineteenth century is problematic. When the region was under Muslim rule, Jews and Christians were considered dhimmis, or tolerated minorities, and after the French took over Algeria, Jews were granted French citizenship en bloc in 1870. Muslims, by contrast, were granted the possibility of French citizenship only in 1958, when France was endeavoring to integrate Algeria. Once it became clear that Algerians preferred independence over integration, France rescinded this offer and refused to grant automatic citizenship to the millions of Muslims who came to France following independence. The fact that Jews possessed French citizenship rankled both the Muslim and European populations in Algeria. Moreover, a reading of the Jewish press and Jewish archives pertaining to the nineteenth century attests that antisemitism in Algeria was the leading pre-occupation of French Jewish leaders at that time. Antisemitic riots erupted during the Dreyfus affair in 1898, during World War I, and again during the 1930s. Although Europeans perpetrated the first of these riots, Muslims took the lead in the other two uprisings. The Constantine riot of 1934 was an especially bloody affair, leaving a total of twenty-eight dead (24 Jews and 4 Muslims) and much property destroyed.

Although Jews and Muslims in North Africa may have lived side-by-side, they did not generally live together. In Tunisia and Morocco, Jews attended their own schools, run by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), and received an education steeped in French and Jewish values, and increasingly in Zionism as well. Although Jews in Algeria did not attend AIU schools, they attended French-run schools together with French *colons*, while the native Muslim population, to the extent that they received an education, attended special schools for *indigènes*.

Katz shows that once in France, North African Jewish immigrants received extensive assistance from their French coreligionists as well as from the French state. Comparable assistance was not available to Muslims, since they were not citizens, and their coreligionists in France were not well-to-do. Moreover, although these two groups frequently lived in the same immigrant neighborhoods, Jews moved out of these neighborhoods quickly, in part due to anti-Jewish disturbances, as well as upward social mobility.

As the narrator of a 1973 TV documentary on the neighborhood of Belleville commented: "Rue de Belleville still serves as a place of refuge and welcome. Jews who took refuge from North Africa, Muslim laborers—they live together without, all the same, mixing." Katz derides this statement as indicative of the narrator's "binary understanding of Jews and Muslims even in shared spaces" (276). But his own evidence suggests the contrary. For example, he cites a 1966–67 survey of North African Jews in France, which found that few of them had friends among North African Muslims (223). Katz explains this

phenomenon by emphasizing that Jews wanted to avoid being associated with the Other, but it is more likely that these two ethnic communities simply lived in different social worlds.

Further, it is not clear why Katz privileges the oral testimonies over archival history. Nor is it clear how the interviewees were selected. Few Muslims were interviewed, aside from a handful who played on a Jewish soccer team in Strasbourg. As Katz acknowledges, there are many problems in accepting oral histories at face value, since memories are frequently infused with nostalgia.

The few times Katz cites polling data, they tell a very different story than the oral testimonies. For example, he cites a survey from November 2014 that shows the majority of Muslims living in France believe that Jews have too much power in the media (61%), the economy (67%), and politics (51%), and 57 percent believe Zionism is “an international organization that seeks to influence the world and society to the benefit of Jews.” Another survey conducted among French Jews in May 2014 found that 75 percent were considering migrating to Israel, and 58 percent agreed that “Jews have no future in France,” largely because of Muslim-inspired antisemitism. After citing these striking statistics, Katz still insists that “it is unclear how central anti-Jewish hostility is for Muslims, or fear of Muslims is for Jews” (321).

It seems that in his desire to tell a story in which the forces favoring coexistence are as significant, if not more so, than the forces driving these two communities apart, Katz frequently makes statements from which he backs away almost immediately. For example, he describes the forces that were driving Jews and Muslims apart toward the end of the Algerian war. But he immediately follows up with a counterclaim that, “At the same time, in numerous cases, configurations of identity and relations remained open-ended and multifaceted” (202). Similarly, he discusses how the assassination by the National Liberation Front (FLN) of the Jewish musician, Raymond Leyris, who had performed with Muslim as well as with Jewish musicians, led Jews to feel “they would have no place in the future Algerian republic.” But he then immediately adds, “Nonetheless, the FLN and its supporters continued to court Jews,” and he suggests that Jews remained receptive to these overtures (204).

There is ultimately a deep tension here between the wealth of evidence adduced and the narrative Katz seeks to impose on this evidence. The problem is not so much that Katz skews the evidence, but that he constantly endeavors to evenly balance the forces favoring coexistence and those fostering division. However, the evidence points to a far more negative picture, one that was always conflictual and became more so over time. Even the chapter on Jewish-Muslim relations during World War II, which has generally been seen as a high point of Jewish-Muslim cooperation, since the rector of the Grand Mosque in Paris has been credited with having saved over a thousand Jews, turns out to be a more complicated and negative story. As Katz shows, while some evidence confirms this narrative, other evidence suggests the rector may have collaborated with Vichy and Nazi anti-Jewish actions.

Notwithstanding these reservations, there is much of value in this book, and it will undoubtedly stimulate significant debate. Scholars of French history, French

Jewish history, and the history of immigration will find much of value in this work. And although I was not persuaded by the author's thesis, I applaud the effort to reexamine these issues in order to reassess whether Muslim-Jewish relations both in North Africa and France may have been more fluid and complex than previously believed.

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Mollie Lewis Nowen. *Oy, My Buenos Aires: Jewish Immigrants and the Creation of Argentine National Identity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. 157 pp.  
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Latin American Jewish history is a subject of growing interest among American and Israeli scholars. The linguistic, cultural, and religious singularity of the region as well as its political history, marked by coups and military governments, seems to serve to expand the understanding of the Jewish Diaspora beyond the extensively studied American and European experiences. Of all the countries of the region, Argentina continues to draw most of the attention. This is not by chance: Argentina, and especially its capital, Buenos Aires, is home to the largest Jewish community among the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries (which includes Spain and Portugal). Along with this renewed interest in the region, we can also see the opening of new perspectives that have provided the possibility of approaching a series of overlooked topics like unaffiliated individuals, women, political activism in non-Jewish organizations, popular culture, book publishing and circulation, etc. Mollie Lewis Nowen's book is a good exponent of this perspective.

The book aims to explore the ways in which Jewish immigrants of Ashkenazic origin helped create the new *porteño* (demonym for Buenos Aires) vein of Argentine national identity, while they sought to preserve their own ethnic identity. To this end, Nowen focuses on the period of the largest Jewish immigration, during which the city of Buenos Aires became the privileged setting of the integration of immigrants into mainstream national life. Thus, through the history of Jews, the book also explores the explosive growth of a city, the ways in which it was reconfigured by migration, and, thanks to its centrality, the forms in which the city of Buenos Aires reshaped the country's identity. The volume is organized upon a series of analytical axes that help illuminate the ways in which individuals lived and articulated their multiple identities: the relations between Jews and non-Jews, gender roles, generational differences (where the distinctive uses of Yiddish and Spanish were a central issue), and class contrasts. The book draws on a systematic reading of the available literature and different types