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Migration, Colonialism, and Belonging: Tunisians Around the First World War, 1911-1925

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MIGRATION, COLONIALISM, AND BELONGING:

TUNISIANS AROUND THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1911-1925

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the little-examined transnational experiences of ordinary North Africans around the First World War, demonstrating how the war catalyzed a wide and unexpected range of concepts of political and social belonging. With the Mediterranean once again the site of massive migration provoked by war and economic inequality, scholars and commentators have begun to revisit the First World War's legacy in the Arab world. Yet much work focuses on the emergence of Arab nationalism or on the diplomatic folly of the European victors. My research confronts scholarly assumptions about the temporal and geographic boundaries of the First World War and its social and political impacts beyond Europe. It is not an overarching history of the war from a Tunisian perspective but rather examines a wide range of war experiences among Tunisian men around the Mediterranean. It contends that the war catalyzed a wider range of concepts of political and social belonging than nationalist, colonial, and First World War histories have thus far accounted for. Integrating materials from the Arabic and French popular press, colonial archives, and unexplored personal audiovisual archives from Tunisia, France, Italy, and Switzerland, it reveals how the contingencies of war created spaces for unprecedented encounters between North Africans and their neighbors from around the Mediterranean. Through these encounters, I argue, Tunisians found themselves caught between

the new promise of affinity with the French public and the tragic boundaries of colonial practice.

Just as my research presents a challenge to the temporal and geographic boundaries of the war itself, it also offers a wider lens through which to understand how colonized men experienced the war, whether due to their varied social and religious backgrounds or to the serendipitous circumstances in which they found themselves. I treat in the same broad frame both forced conscripts and exiles and those who chose to travel out of a sense of duty, adventure, or ambition. Tunisians faced a spectrum from choice to coercion, with many having to choose from options that few would hope ever to have. While attention must be paid to the violence and oppression Tunisians faced at the hands of a colonial and military apparatus, it is clear that even those facing the most brutal aspects of war, such as conscripted soldiers and laborers, lived, acted, and made decisions within the evolving conditions of possibility through which they passed. It is in this sense that the trajectories of even the most dispossessed and disaffected can be considered alongside those who moved under very different circumstances, from the traveling Francophone artists to those back home who were exempt from conscription. To the latter point, this study also includes those who did not themselves travel or fight but for whom the war (and the war experiences of other Tunisians) provoked new ideas and public debates about their political horizons of possibility.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Albert Samama-Chikli had witnessed destruction before. In early 1909 he crossed the narrow stretch of the Mediterranean between Tunis and Sicily to document, by film and photographs, the deadly earthquake that struck Messina, Italy on December 28th, 1908. With at least 75,000 dead and nearly the entire city in ruins, Samama-Chikli treaded carefully over debris with his equipment, detailing for newspaper audiences in Tunisia, France, Italy, and beyond the terrible scenes he witnessed. Just six years later, during the height of the First World War, the inventor, artist, and self-dubbed "Prince of Chikli" (after the small island fortress he owned in the Lake of Tunis) found himself on a whirlwind tour of duty with the French Section Photographique et cinématographique de l'Armée (SPA), taking film and photographs from the Western Front to the Sahara. His visual itinerary ran the gamut of war experiences. His eye for destruction, first nurtured amid the rubble in Messina, found no shortage of material on the Western Front; his gloomy shots of trenches and ruined churches will be familiar to most who have taken an interest in the First World War. But Samama-Chikli took a particular interest in the war experiences of his Tunisian countrymen and their comrades from Algeria and Morocco. Through his works, we catch bittersweet glimpses of life at war for these colonial conscripts: soldiers tousling each other's hair while posing for the camera, others playing cards and dancing in the barracks, and the wounded being attended to by French nurses and doctors.[1]

Linked by their place on either side of the lens, Samama-Chikli shared with these soldiers an experience of mobilization across the Mediterranean and life in the trenches, yet under

[1] Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD), SPA 32 L 1708: Albert Samama-Chikli, "The military hospital for African Troops at Carrières-sous-Bois," October 25, 1916; ECPAD, 14.18 B 299: Albert Samama-Chikli, March 15, 1918.

significantly different circumstances. Most Tunisian soldiers were conscripts torn from the country's rural interior by French officials and their local intermediaries. Samama-Chikli, however, was the son of a wealthy Jewish financier father and an Italian Catholic mother and was a resident of the capital of the Tunisian Protectorate. As a result, he was exempt from conscription, yet through some combination of curiosity, artistic ambition, and perhaps a desire to prove his loyalty to the French Empire, volunteered for service. His career as a cinematographer took off after the end of hostilities, with his films *Zohra* (1922) and *Aïn el Ghazal* (1924) making him one of the first filmmakers from either the African continent or the Arab world.[2] Despite the rich literature on the First World War and on the French Empire in this period, Samama-Chikli remains as forgotten as the anonymous soldiers of his films and photographs. North Africans, separated by a sea from the most important zones of combat, have in general gone largely ignored in these histories. Their experiences seem to demand more attention, particularly as this war, more than any before it, showcased both the incredible capacity of modern states to move great numbers of people globally and the often tragic and far-reaching consequences of such efforts, from the Armenian Genocide to the Greco-Turkish population exchange.

This dissertation confronts scholarly assumptions about the temporal and geographic boundaries of the First World War and its social and political impacts beyond Europe. It is not a comprehensive history of the war from a Tunisian perspective but rather examines a wide range of war experiences among Tunisian men around the Mediterranean. I argue that the war catalyzed a wider range of concepts of political and social belonging than nationalist, colonial, and First World War histories have thus far accounted for. Arabic and French textual and visual

[2] Guillemette Mansour, *Samama Chikly, un tunisien à la rencontre du XXème siècle* (Tunis: Simpact Editions, 2000), 238.

materials from Tunisia, France, Italy, and Switzerland reveal how the contingencies of war created spaces for unprecedented encounters between North African men and their neighbors from around the Mediterranean. Through these encounters Tunisians simultaneously found themselves caught between the newfound promise of affinity with the French or Ottoman imperial cultures and a starker sense of the tragic boundaries of colonial practice.

Furthermore, just as my research presents a challenge to the temporal and geographic boundaries of the war itself, it also offers a wider lens through which to understand how colonized men experienced the war, whether due to their varied social and religious backgrounds or to the serendipitous circumstances in which they found themselves. I treat in the same broad frame both forced conscripts and exiles and those who chose to travel out of a sense of duty, adventure, or ambition, such as Albert Samama-Chikli. Tunisians faced a spectrum from choice to coercion, with many having to choose from options that few would hope ever to have. While attention must be paid to the violence and oppression Tunisians faced at the hands of a colonial and military apparatus, it is clear that even those facing the most brutal aspects of war, such as conscripted soldiers and laborers, lived, acted, and made decisions within the evolving conditions of possibility through which they passed. It is in this sense that the trajectories of even the most dispossessed and disaffected can be considered alongside those who moved under very different circumstances, from the traveling Francophone artists to those back home who were exempt from conscription. To the latter point, this study also includes those who did not themselves travel or fight but for whom the war (and the war experiences of other Tunisians) provoked new ideas and public debates about their political horizons of possibility.

Centenary Concerns

The centenary of the First World War has prompted governments and their institutions to invest heavily in commemorations, monuments, and other displays of appreciation for their "forgotten heroes'" patriotic contributions to the nation.[3] The resulting corpus is mostly biographical or descriptive, if well-meaning, and leaves unanswered many questions which go beyond simply honoring *tirailleurs*' (as North and West African colonial soldiers were known) sacrifices.[4] While such gestures may be deserved and meaningful to the descendants of these soldiers, in the case of France, such tributes do little to address the colonial legacies of coercion and discrimination bound up not only in this century-old story but also in the current realities facing the republic's North and West African communities, and indeed Europe's growing population of migrants and refugees as a whole.[5] French history, for its part, includes many dark episodes that were long forgotten or erased, from the treatment of Jews under the Vichy and occupation regimes to torture during the Algerian War of Independence.[6] But the ways in which these memories are rescued and recreated have been hotly contested and politicized.[7] In the case of the First World War, it leaves us to consider how the racist and colonial aspects of North and West Africans' treatment at war have been glossed over in favor of "forgotten hero" narratives.

While I do not directly treat questions of memory in what follows, public attention to the

[3] See, for example: Antoine Flandrin, "La mémoire des soldats coloniaux à l'honneur," *Le Monde* 5 June 2014.
[4] For example, see: Guillaume Guguen, "Hollande Honors African Role in France's WWI Fight," *France 24*, August 11, 2013, accessed October 1, 2016, http://www.france24.com/en/20131108-african-troops-soldiers-world-war-french-hollande-senegal-algeria-tunisia.
[5] For critical scholarship on the remembering of French colonial soldiers, see Eric Jennings, "Remembering 'Other' Losses: The *Temple du Souvenir Indochinois* of Nogent-sur-Marne" *History and Memory* 15:1 (Summer 2003): 5-48; Jan Jansen, "Une autre 'union sacrée'? Commémorer la Grande Guerre dans l'Algérie colonisée (1918-1939)" [Another Sacred Union? Commemorating the Great War in Colonial Algeria], *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 2:61-2 (2014), 32-60.
[6] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962)* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2001).
[7] For a critical overview of the contemporary politics of memory of the Algerian War in France, see: Claire Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile: History and Memory within the Pied-noir and Hari Communities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

centenary has also accompanied and encouraged seemingly endless international academic conferences and research initiatives, many of which have recognized the relative dearth of study on non-Western regions and participants in the war. Recent works on the Eastern Front, for example, have emphasized migration and borderlands as frameworks for understanding both violence and coexistence in a way that existing work on the Western Front has not.[8] Others have departed even further from Europe itself. This dissertation itself builds upon conversations and research generated by initiatives such as the National Endowment for the Humanities' 2014 seminar on the First World War in the Middle East and North Africa at Georgetown University and the Volkswagen Foundation's 2017 Herrenhausen Symposium in Hanover, Germany. Historians of the Middle East have in particular taken advantage of these opportunities to showcase a rich literature which does more than simply look "beyond Europe" or the Western Front. Some have highlighted the emergence of political alternatives to liberal nationalism. In Syria, for example, there is evidence that a "civic Ottomanism" endured long after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.[9] Ottoman Jews, long overlooked in this period, occupied a conflicted place in that legacy.[10] Other movements, such as populist Islam and early Arab feminism in Syria and Lebanon, challenged the paternalistic arrangements dictated by the European victors.[11] New works have, like this dissertation, begun to uncover the extent and importance of the many forms of migration which were caused by the war, from the emergence of Syrian nationalisms in the

[8] For example see Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013).
[9] Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).
[10] Devi Mays, "Recounting the Past, Shaping the Future: Ladino Literary Representations of World War I," in *World War I and the Jews: Conflict and Transformation in Europe, the Middle East, and America*, edited by Marsha Rozenblit and Jonathan Karp (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 201-221.
[11] Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 113-170; Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

Ottoman American diaspora to the pan-Islam fostered among North and West African soldiers held in German prison camps.[12] This work signals a renewed interest in an overturned social order and a hotly-contested political life in the Arab world which goes far beyond the decisions and prevarications associated with T. E. Lawrence and the legacy of Western diplomatic folly.

Despite these promising turns in the eastern Mediterranean, the war years in North Africa remain little understood. This might be explained in part by the fact that no major combat fronts, at least as are traditionally understood in historiography on the 1914-1918 period, were opened there. This is not to say that historians of the First World War have only focused on the theatres of military action – far from it. And armed conflict did, in fact, take place in North Africa around the war, particularly if we consider that beyond Europe, WWI-related conflicts merged with anti-colonial and other ongoing struggles. Just as scholars have considered the Ottomans' Balkan Wars and Turkey's postwar expulsion of occupying forces under Ataturk to be part of a broader WWI continuum, European armies and their colonial soldiers engaged in battles stretching from Tripolitania in 1911 and southern Algeria and Tunisia in 1915-16 to Morocco in the early- and mid-1920s.[13] Martin Thomas has emphasized the common elements of French imperial and anti-colonial conflicts in the interwar period, but I would argue that analysis of these conflicts deserve to be integrated more into studies of the "long First World War."[14]

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[12] Stacy Fahrenthold, "Former Ottomans in the Ranks: Pro-Entente Military Recruitment among Syrians in the Americas, 1916-1918," *Journal of Global History* 11:1 (March 2016), 88-112; Reem Bailony, "Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public: The Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt," *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies* 1:1 (Spring 2013), 8-29; Eugene Rogan, "No Stake in Victory: North African Soldiers of the Great War," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 14:2 (October 2014), 322-333; Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (University of California Press, 2001); Devi Mays, "Transplanting Cosmopolitans: The Migrations of Sephardic Jews to Mexico, 1900–1934," PhD diss., Indiana University, 2013.

[13] Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: the Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[14] Martin Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 211-76. Other notable exceptions include Habib Belaïd, "La Révolte de 1915-1916 dans le Sud Tunisien à travers les archives du protectorat," in *Révolte et société: actes* (Paris: Publications de

Standing in the way, some have argued, is the tendency of scholars to approach the Mediterranean as a frontier rather than as a borderland.[15] The former represents an "end" of geographical and civilizational Europe, whereas the latter accounts for the bustling exchange, migration, travel, integration, and conflict that speaks to a modern iteration of Braudel's Mediterranean, or perhaps to the Mediterranean as the Romans saw it: *mare internum*.[16] This dissertation stands alongside other recent works that call for a renewed focus on the *modern* Mediterranean as a unit of study. Yet as Madeleine Dobie illustrates, this approach demands a careful consideration of the cultural and polemical baggage a Mediterranean category sometimes carries. Some twentieth-century studies assumed a common cultural and climatic essence that nonetheless could serve to depict its coastal societies as northern Europe's "other," if not quite its Orient. Others were deeply implicated in an indirect (or sometimes direct) cultural, artistic, and academic effort to make the French colonial presence in North Africa more humane or palatable.[17] But even among Arab writers and thinkers, "Mediterraneanism" has been criticized as the intellectual basis for an identity that distances itself from Arab and Muslim identifiers, as in Lebanon's Phoenicianism. What is needed instead is an approach to the Mediterranean that "reflects a critical stance toward one-dimensional or exclusive models of identity, e.g., certain forms of postcolonial nationalism or linguistic or confessional identitarianism."[18]

To this end, the work of Julia Clancy-Smith has been exemplary for its rejection of binary categories often used to classify the diverse and moving peoples of what she calls the "central Mediterranean corridor" linking Tunisia foremost to Algeria, Malta, and Sicily, Liguria, and

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la Sorbonne, 1989); and Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

[15] Linda Darling, "The Mediterranean as a Borderland," *Review of Middle East Studies* 46:1 (2012), 54-63.

[16] Richard W. Clement, "The Mediterranean: What, Why, and How," *Mediterranean Studies* 20:1 (2012), 114-120.

[17] Madeleine Dobie, "For and Against the Mediterranean: Francophone Perspectives," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34:2 (2014), 389-403.

[18] Ibid., 401.

Marseille.[19] A borderland society such as Tunisia, Clancy-Smith has argued, can be understood as much by its own national or colonial boundaries as it can by the ways in which it fostered encounters among local Muslims, poor European migrants, multicultural elites, and the like.[20] Like Mary Lewis, I build on this work by bringing this understanding of Tunisian society into the twentieth century, showing how it was tested against the increasing imperial rivalries and consolidation of national identities that were so dramatically demonstrated by the outbreak of the First World War.[21] It is also in studying this later period that we have the opportunity to better highlight the voices of Muslim Tunisians through the popular press and exiles' publications.[22]

Another obstacle to understanding North Africans' experiences of the First World War is the residue of nationalist historiographies that have long attempted to locate the "roots" of anti-colonial movements in an inevitable march towards revolution and independence. The result is a telos that flattens historical narratives into binaries – the Manichaean world of colonizer and colonized – and narrow chronologies that pay little attention to moments of great uncertainty in which a variety of social and political horizons were possible.[23] The transnational sprawl of Tunisians' migration experiences pushes us to reconsider the tightly-bound nationalist narratives which continue to influence Tunisian and North African historiography on this period. Nationalist histories written in the late twentieth century characterized the war years as a period

[19] Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 11-15.
[20] For an alternate focus on the Francophone Mediterranean along similar lines, see Patricia Lorcin and Todd Shepard, eds., *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).
[21] Mary Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
[22] Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, review of *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800—1900*, by Julia Clancy-Smith, *The American Historical Review* 117:2 (2012), 476-78.
[23] This dissertation in general takes theoretical inspiration from Reinhart Koselleck's notions of "horizons of expectation" and "space of experience" in moving beyond determinist teleologies, as in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

of political "lethargy," or one marked by loyalty to France in the war effort – or at best, an ill-defined gap in an otherwise heroic and well-documented march towards Tunisian nationalism.[24] Given the Protectorate's censorship of most outlets of intellectual and political dissent, this is understandable – those looking for the origins of the national movement in the popular press or in the actions of political circles will not find many overly relevant sources from 1914 to 1918.

This is hardly a new problem, and historians have thoroughly addressed this nationalist and postcolonial phenomenon in a number of ways, as will be discussed below. It is not this study's aim to only point out yet another example of the shortcomings of nationalist historiographies; here I simply offer another explanation as to why the First World War has gone overlooked by scholars focusing more exclusively on Tunisia and the Maghrib. The challenge of this dissertation is rather to take these spatial and temporal stumbling blocks as a starting point, prompting the following questions: how did the First World War change political and social notions of belonging and difference for Tunisian men? How did experiences of war and displacement catalyze productive, intimate, and provocative encounters both among Tunisians and with Europeans, Ottoman subjects, and other Arab peoples? In addressing these questions, what follows will also pose questions to the traditionally limited temporal and geographic boundaries of WWI histories.

Various concepts of "mobility" inform the approach of my study, and I draw particular inspiration from Thomas Nail's exploration of "kinopolitics," a social theory of movement based on the contention that human groups and societies have historically functioned as continuously moving "flows," from the earliest hunter-gatherer societies to today. This upends the assumption – often a teleological and anachronistic one – that the sedentary citizen, bounded and defined by

[24] For example, see: Ali Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du Mouvement National en Tunisie, 1904-1934* (Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1982).

their status within static territories and borders, is the "default" human subject and that migrants are the exceptional or accidental runoff of populations that tend otherwise to be sedentary and stable.[25] For Nail, the migrant is the "figure of our time." States have always developed technologies and ideologies to create and enforce their "regimes of circulation." Migrants and these states (and the settled populations that compose them) are co-constitutive of one another, leaving us room to consider both the ways in which migrants of all kinds have been produced and oppressed by such regimes and the agency of migrants themselves in provoking new forms of territoriality, border control, and citizenship.[26]

Colonial histories of the past two decades or so have demonstrated that colonial subjects, like migrants, in fact always found ways to leave their own imprint on the colonial state, or to skirt it altogether. Indigenous societies and their existing structures and practices made up the waters into which underfunded, uninformed, and inconsistent colonial apparatuses had to wade. And of course, even where the colonial state made interventions, they were frequently met by resistance and less explicit responses from local subjects such as labor strikes, desertion, popular satire, and even the cooption of European technologies and discourses to their own advantage. Nail's contention that human movement should be our starting point in examining social change, rather than its stasis or restriction by state and juridical regimes, is therefore appealing to those who would study critically the history of colonialism without privileging a state-centered view and without fetishizing the hegemonic ability of those states to dictate human mobility for its own ends.

The French Protectorate, Migration, and War

[25] Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3-5.
[26] Ibid., 235-36.

Tunisia by the mid-nineteenth century found itself at the center of drastic shifts in Mediterranean power dynamics. Still a nominal part of the Ottoman Empire, it had since the early eighteenth century been ruled by hereditary monarchs, the Beys of the Husainid Dynasty. The waning Ottoman central authority over Egypt, long a reference point for Tunisian religious and cultural exchange, left the Beys free to exercise control over most state affairs both foreign and domestic but also isolated it from its most powerful ally and suzerain.[27] European imperial influence in the Mediterranean took on its most daring incarnation with the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, while the Ottomans reasserted their military presence in Tripoli in 1835. Facing these transformations, Tunisian reformers moved, much like their counterparts in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, to shore up state control over key institutions from the tax system to military conscription. Ahmad Bey (1837-1855) instituted a program of military modernization, staffing a new military school at Bardo with European officers, importing updated weaponry, and introducing wider conscription and direct taxation on the Tunisian populace. High costs, local resistance, and catastrophic losses in their expedition to support the Ottomans in the Crimean War nonetheless set Tunisia on a precarious path from the mid-nineteenth century, exposing it to the machinations of French and British diplomatic and economic interests.[28]

This threat inspired reformers from the Bey's Grand Council, a body established by the 1861 Constitution (the first in the Arab world) that included Turco-Ottoman elites such as Khayr al-Din Pasha (Tunisia's Grand Vizier, 1873-1877), to propose a controversial program of modernization. This initiative included the liberalization of the Tunisian economy, the

[27] Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12-13; André Raymond, "La réforme dans le monde Ottoman au XIXe siècle – Istanbul, Le Caire, Tunis: influences croisées," in *Réforme de l'État et réformismes au Maghreb (XIXe-XXe siècles)*, ed. Odile Moreau (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 27-35; Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 316.
[28] L. Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837-1855* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 237-312.

establishment of the prestigious Collège Sadiki which combined religious and secular education, and increased participation of the local population in state affairs.[29] Yet despite Khayr al-Din's measured success in these initiatives, a renewed spirit of cooperation between Istanbul and Tunis coincided with a period of feverish European activity in the Mediterranean following the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal. By the late 1870s, France had largely won over the European imperial community to its claims of interests in Tunisia and, using the pretext of tribal insurrections along Tunisia's northwestern border with Algeria, paved the way for a French occupation in 1881.

Made a Protectorate of France by the Bardo Treaty later that year, Tunisia never experienced quite the same level of violence, inequality, and dispossession as neighboring Algeria did. Military conquest was relatively quick, and the Bey remained nominally sovereign while a French administration was put in place to handle most aspects of governance as well as the repayment of debts owed to France, Britain, and Italy. Under French occupation, migration and overseas exchange remained an important part of intellectual, economic, and religious life in Tunisia. Colonial expansion by the turn of the twentieth century encouraged the immigration of laborers, farmers, and fishermen to the shores of Tunisia from Sicily, Malta, and other poor regions of the Mediterranean.[30] Tunisians, for their part, continued their travels to the Eastern Mediterranean, often for pilgrimages to Mecca, which sometimes ended in permanent settlement in the Ottoman Empire.[31] North African intellectuals and statesmen in general continued to look

[29] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 27-38. Khayr al-Din is also referred to as Khayr (or Khair) al-Din al-Tunisi.
[30] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 346.
[31] Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 131.

east for inspiration despite the end of formal relations with the Ottoman Porte.[32]

French settlement in Tunisia expanded, but Italian settlers and their descendants continued to outnumber their French counterparts well into the mid-twentieth century. By the 1910s, subjects of Italian descent or nationality numbered around 100,000, at least double the number of French nationals living in Tunisia. Subjects of Maltese descent, protégés of Britain after 1813, numbered about 11,000.[33] In fact, the presence of so many Italians, along with sizeable Maltese, Algerian, and Tripolitanian populations, made French domination in Tunisia a slippery proposition, both on a local and international level. Mary Lewis argues that these groups' claims for consular protection in a variety of legal cases, much like the nineteenth-century "forum shopping" described by Clancy-Smith, led by the early twentieth century to a form of colonial rule more direct, but also more tenuous and controversial, than originally envisioned.[34] These diplomatic ambiguities had significant local consequences for Tunisian subjects. Even those who did not or were not able to seek diplomatic protections or other special statuses came up against the contradictions and blank spots in the protectorate arrangement. As was the case across the various colonies and protectorates under "indirect rule," such vagueness often proved useful to European powers, allowing for the allocation of local resources to support projects that were designed for European economic and strategic benefit under the guise of benevolence to colonial subjects. However, the application of republican rhetoric and promises in colonies such as Tunisia were often turned on their heads by local actors, sometimes simply as a means to a mundane end – a more beneficial outcome in a divorce or inheritance case, for

[32] James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28-59; Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul 1860-1913: Province et metropole* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).
[33] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 107, 117.
[34] Ibid., 64; 117-18.

example – or sometimes in the name of ambitious reform, from equality before the law to, eventually, anti-colonial activism.[35]

Significant inequality between Tunisians and European settlers prompted the rise of political challenges to French colonialism during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Young Tunisians, a cadre of bourgeois reformers drawing in particular from graduates of the progressive Collège Sadiki, began calling for more Tunisian participation in government, educational and judicial reform, and a constitution. Matters came to a head in 1911 when a French plan to survey and repurpose parts of the historic Jellaz cemetery in Tunis were met with large protests supported (though not organized) by Young Tunisian leaders; police and protesters soon exchanged gunfire and dozens on each side were killed. A few months later, when an Italian-operated street car struck and killed a Tunisian child, the Young Tunisians orchestrated a boycott calling not only for reforms to the transportation system but also to the Protectorate's main representative body. A month into the boycott, French police arrested and deported a number of alleged agitators, among them several prominent Young Tunisians. These disturbances, shortly followed by the outbreak of the First World War, prompted increased efforts by the Protectorate administration to silence political dissent in Tunisia. A state of emergency imposed in 1912 proscribed most political meetings and publications until 1919, disrupting years of increasingly assertive political activism within these mostly urban circles.

War and Human Movement

The outbreak of war in 1914 ushered in disruptions to more than just elites' reform efforts. The traditionally bustling movement of people, ideas, and goods between Tunisia and the Arab

[35] Ibid., 61-97.

provinces of the Ottoman Empire was made illicit and irregular. Goods normally consumed locally or exported to other parts of North Africa were redirected towards Europe, and shipping and sea travel moved constantly under the threat of German submarine attacks.[36] Pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina were limited, as were the travels of North African intellectuals to and from Greater Syria and its important centers of *nahda*-era learning.[37] Further disruptions came in the form of economic instability. The initial departure of French settler conscripts actually ushered in a brief period of relative prosperity for Tunisian merchants, landowners, and urban functionaries, but the return of demobilized settlers coincided with a ruinous harvest and famine in 1919 and 1920, leading to a wave of strikes and demonstrations throughout the country.[38]

Tunisian conscripts and exiles were evidence of an even more dramatic upheaval to daily life. French agents and their local intermediaries targeted poor young men from from Tunisia's rural and interior lands to fulfill their conscription quotas, sending over 70,000 men first to port cities such as Tunis and Bizerte then on to European ports, depots, and eventually combat. Perhaps to avoid disrupting the local economy and upsetting influential intermediaries and notables, several groups were exempted from conscription as a matter of policy: most residents of the capital, Jewish Tunisians, those who enjoyed foreign consular protection such as Italian and Maltese settlers, contracted teachers in government schools, students of the prestigious Collège Sadiki, professors and some students of Zitouna Mosque and University, various religious functionaries, and several ranks of the Bey's royal guard.[39] The burdens of the war would fall overwhelmingly on the shoulders of young, illiterate men from rural areas and their

[36] Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes [henceforth "CADN"] 1TU/125/29: letter to the Minister of the Marine, August 2017.
[37] CADN 1TU/125/34: report from Catroux to Pontalis, 14 May 1919; Allan Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders: The Making of a Global Frontier Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 88-89.
[38] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 75.
[39] Mahmoud Abdelmoula, *L'impôt du sang : la Tunisie, le Maghreb et le panislamisme pendant la Grande Guerre* Tunis: Editions MTM, 2007), 46.

families.

While many intellectuals and others of the urban middle classes were spared military service, stringent censorship accompanied political repression of anyone suspected of questioning the Protectorate and, by consequence, the French war effort as a whole. The French administration was very anxious about North Africans' potential loyalty to the Ottoman sultan during the war, as demonstrated by the volume of ink spilled analyzing Sultan Mehmed V's call to *jihad* on 14 November 1916. Ultimately few Muslims beyond the Ottoman Empire rose up in defense of the caliph, and indeed many turned on the Sultan and his political and spiritual authority, as in Sharif Hussein's "Arab Revolt."[40] Many Tunisian intellectuals suspected of Ottoman sympathies were exiled, including Ali Bach Hamba (see Chapter Three) and Hassan Guellaty (see Chapter Five) as well as other reformers involved in the protests of 1911-12.[41] Others, including Ali's brother Mohamed Bach Hamba, may have anticipated a similar fate and left home voluntarily, settling in Ottoman lands or in neutral Switzerland.

On the face of it, experiences of wartime movement, disease and injury at the front, and the strains of separation from family and home were undeniably brutal. To add insult to injury, evidence from colonial and medical archives as well as veterans' testimony reveals that Tunisians were daily subject to the racial, colonial, and civilizational hierarchies of the French imperial order. *Tirailleurs* earned less than half of what their French counterparts did, despite likely facing disproportionate use as shock troops due to officers' presumptions about their racial proclivities to close range combat and their inability to understand complex weaponry and

[40] Eugene Rogan, "No Stake in Victory," 327-28; see also: Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016).
[41] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 70-72.

orders.[42] Tunisian soldiers were also subject to officials' efforts to segregate them from French civilians, believing that they posed a sexual and pathogenic threat to French women in particular; it was also feared that colonial subjects in general might be exposed to communist and anti-colonial politics during their stay in the metropole.[43] Such thinking impacted those who remained home, as well. Some Tunisian Jews were accused by returning Muslim and French soldiers of profiting from their exemption from conscription, leading to violent confrontations and a wave of anti-Semitism in the settler press, which only played into French legitimization of its role as "protector" (see Chapter Four).

As grim as were the circumstances of Tunisians' forced mobilization or expulsion, there is something more novel and significant to say about these unprecedented experiences than that they were often violent and exploitive, evidence of the worst strands of colonial policy and discourse. The exigencies of war also catalyzed encounters that produced new opportunities for Tunisians of all backgrounds to explore entry to and affinity with French society or, failing that, to better understand the implications and extent of colonial and racial boundaries. The war was undoubtedly a colonial one, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the Tunisians swept up by it in some way or another. It is in this sense that we might think of the "productive power" of colonial encounters to catalyze or provoke – but not determine – changes to the social and political horizons of colonized peoples.[44] For now, two examples may suffice. The first is the

[42] On the debate surrounding unequal deployment of colonial soldiers, see Christian Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their Deployment in Europe during the First World War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 26:1 (2008), 120.
[43] Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 81. See also: Thomas DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming: Tunisian Veterans of the First and Second World Wars" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006), 26; Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie Revelée: La guerre de 1914-1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981), 417-419.
[44] This dissertation draws inspiration from works that have employed the lens of "colonial encounter" such as: Ellen Amster, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Julia Clancy-Smith and

subject of Chapter Two, which explores the transformative, humanizing encounters between wounded Tunisian soldiers and their French nurses in military hospitals built specifically to house, discipline, and reform North African colonial subjects. These spaces, deeply colonial in their practices and epistemic basis, were also the products of wartime contingencies and were shaped by the individual needs and desires of their Tunisian inhabitants. A second example is the subject of the fourth chapter, which follows the construction of a "Jewish question" in Tunisia during the First World War. A combination of discriminatory colonial conscription policies and anti-Semitic settler discourse contributed to the violent episodes between demobilized Muslim soldiers and indigenous Jews who had remained at home. One result of these encounters was a vigorous debate among Tunisian Jews and their new contacts in France about their political options in the future, ranging from seeking protection by Woodrow Wilson to joining Zionists from around the world in their emigration to Palestine.

The point here is that taken alone, each of these trajectories would not reveal the extent of political horizons opened up by Tunisians' experiences of the First World War. A history focusing only on rural North African conscripts, for example, would rely too heavily upon reading "against the grain" of the colonial archives, since few written diaries and letters survive. Likewise, a study limited to the instances of "anti-Semitic violence" in wartime Tunisia might overshadow the extent to which some Jews took actions to question and redefine their place in the Tunisian and French colonial political order. The reach of this dissertation itself is limited by conspicuous silences in the various archives used, especially in state and national archives,

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Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire's Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

diplomatic and military documents, and the popular press of Tunisia and France. Bodies of sources such as these are often approached as the "official" record of events despite the anxieties, contradictions, and generalizations they tend to make.[45] In particular, they tend generally to say plenty *about* women despite being largely masculine in voice. My exploration of the trajectories of Tunisians on the move around the First World War is a largely male story, due in part to the fact that the largest groups and most archivally conspicuous individuals to cross the Mediterranean during the war were men, and mostly young men at that. There are likely many important stories yet to be unearthed of other Tunisians – including women – who moved or were displaced by the circumstances of this colonial war, in addition to others whose lives, while geographically static, were profoundly transformed as a result of wartime migration.

Nonetheless, by restricting this study to a relatively narrow period (roughly 1912-1925), a geographical subject (mobile Tunisians and the Mediterranean peoples they encountered), and demographic (young men), we are free to integrate a breadth of different actors as they experienced combat, exile, return, or other aspects of life at war. We might understand what emerges from their encounters as a series "fragmented public spheres." But beyond Habermas' Masonic lodges, provincial academies, clubs, and salons – all venues mostly suppressed by the French state of emergency – Tunisians at war also found themselves envisioning new futures in military hospitals and depots, amid armistice demonstrations, or even as exiles in Switzerland.[46] Taken together in this way, Tunisians' stories demonstrate that Tunisia was not simply a "secure hinterland for France" in this conflict.[47] Rather, it was an important site of human movement

[45] Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-30.
[46] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).
[47] Daniel Goldstein, *Liberation ou annexion: aux Chemins Croisés de l'Histoire Tunisienne (1914-1922)* (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne de l'Edition, 1978), 119.

undergoing an unprecedented reordering of its social and political life. These were parts of one story through which we can better understand the impact of those very common but sometimes poorly understood colonial encounters that exposed the limits of colonial, racial, and civilizational thinking, and that provoked new ways of thinking about self, about France, about Empire.

Colonialism and "Productive Power"

This study takes as its broader inspiration the important work of the last decade or two which has questioned the primacy of nationalism as the key focal point in social or political history of colonial societies in the early and mid-20th century. Elizabeth Thompson's research on feminist, populist, and Islamist mobilizations in Syria following the First World War demonstrated important alternatives to the cautious nationalism of "paternalistic elites."[48] Frederick Cooper, Ann Stoler, and Gary Wilder, similarly, have employed a focus on relatively brief moments of uncertainty at the end of empire in French Africa, showing how a variety of possibilities (including an altered form of affiliation with France) remained salient right up until and even for some time following national independence.[49] James McDougall employed a similar approach to Algeria, critiquing the ways in which nationalist hagiographies have obscured important figures, movements, and contingencies which stood as viable alternatives to liberal, ethno-religious nationalisms in the Maghrib.[50] Their work furthermore urges us to consider that colony and metropole were not simply two opposed poles in an inevitable, Manichaean struggle, but rather

[48] Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
[49] For example, see: Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[50] McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*.

that the end of empire could engender a diverse spectrum of expectations, grievances, and visions for the future.[51]

The promise of transnational histories is especially great, not only for bridging colony and metropole but also in highlighting "south-south" connections such as the one between Maghrib and Mashriq, a link so important to pre-modern Mediterranean history yet so often overlooked in studies of the First World War and its aftermath. Chapter Four deals most intensively with this question, as the French construction of a "Jewish question" in Tunisia played directly into the emergent international minority regime that was enshrined by the League of Nations and the postwar establishment of the mandate system in the Middle East. The language and underlying justifications for the mandate and the protectorate systems overlapped significantly. But the Maghrib-Mashriq connection goes beyond France's imperial ambitions. Three dimensional shapes may be even more helpful than lines as an explanatory device here: Simon Jackson saw Geneva, for example, as one point on a "triangle of transnational politics" of the interwar period which also included Syro-Lebanese reformers in the Mashriq and the North American *mahjar*.[52] Switzerland in general played this role from an even earlier date, as Chapter Three of this dissertation demonstrates through the case of new connections forged in Lausanne between Tunisian reformer Mohamed Bach Hamba and his Egyptian counterparts at the Congrès des Nationalités in 1916.

For the purposes of understanding the role of wartime mobility in the political and social changes Tunisia faced around the First World War, the above works are significant in that they interrogate the range of possibilities in such moments of rupture. That is, they treat carefully the

[51] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 433.
[52] Simon Jackson, "Diaspora Politics and Developmental Empire: Syro-Lebanese at the League of Nations," *The Arab Studies Journal* 21:1 (2013), 181.

various markers of identity and belonging provoked, upended, or even fostered by colonialism, with special attention paid to colonialism's limits and ambiguities and to the unintended outcomes of its grey areas. Though each of the groups and individuals examined in what follows are "Tunisian" in the sense that they were born in or lived within the geographic boundaries of France's Tunisian Protectorate, this identity marker was by no means uniformly accepted nor fully articulated in the 1910s and 1920s. While it is significant that an important group of reformers identified themselves as Tunisian by the turn of the twentieth century as an explicit challenge to French colonial rule, they do not tell the whole story of Tunisian belonging, and the futures they envisioned cannot encompass the diverse experiences and visions of other important actors on this trans-regional stage. I need only point here to the "Ottomanist" exiles in Istanbul or Berlin, the liberal nationalists in Geneva, the working-class and peasant soldiers in France, and the Jews who appealed to the international community or even to a Zionist future. Still more different was the opportunity war presented for Tunisians such as Albert Samama-Chikli to demonstrate their loyalty to France.

In this sense, then, these are "Tunisian" stories only in their origin; some never left; some never returned, and looked elsewhere, if not literally but rather discursively to make claims to various levels of political authority, as in the debates over Zionism in the Jewish press. In another sense, however, this dissertation does not discount the importance of French colonial power and discourse in these stories – they were central, in fact, in provoking and catalyzing not just the historical circumstances which led to these new conditions of possibility (war, conscription) but also the rhetoric, categories, and other discursive forces channeled by Tunisians in forging their own visions of community. In an effort to make colonial subjects legible to European institutions of control and governance (censuses, taxation, conscription), colonial

officials attempted to impose various categories of identification on local people, who of course had their own preexisting categories in place. These categories were, in theory, to replace and dominate existing systems of community and identity. But as historians have shown, these best laid plans were hampered by all manner of limitations, inconsistencies, and resistance on the ground. Colonial officials and intermediaries also often had their own ideas about the application of various policies and bodies of knowledge. Thus colonial impositions were better understood as "colonial encounters," for what they produced was as much a product of colonial power as of indigenous knowledge and practices.[53]

When Ann Stoler, writing about domestic spaces in the modern Dutch East Indies, echoed Ian Hacking's "contention that the power of categories rests in their capacity to impose the realities they ostensibly only describe," she meant that the naming of certain things – peoples, events, diseases, and the like – was a political and aspirational act.[54] That is, the terms used to describe these things really matter precisely because they reveal not reality but rather the instabilities and fluidities at the very heart of colonial encounters: material and discursive conditions of possibility, the aims and anxieties of colonial officials, and the hopes and tribulations of the colonized.

Since this study largely focuses on people and ideas in motion, my approach must account carefully for the fluidity of various categories of identification, colonial boundaries, and underlying historical contingencies. French authorities' anxieties about the racial, sexual, and

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[53] Fine examples of this approach to colonial and imperial history include: David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Antoinette Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[54] Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 8, citing Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

pathogenic threat posed by Tunisian soldiers and their assumptions about the "arrogant *mentalité*" of Jews in Tunisia, for example, created the violence, discrimination, and boundaries meant for Tunisians to operate within. Often, too, these boundaries provoked an awareness of and desire to contest the colonial order. Such were the circumstances facing the volunteer soldier Mukhtar al-'Ayari, whose turn to communism and a violent rejection of colonialism coincided with his denial of promotion and recognition while serving on the Western Front. At the same time, colonial practices were not always cynical or intentional: some French figures had a genuine (if misguided or ignorant) interest in the wellbeing of Tunisians, creating space for, among other things, relationships between Tunisian soldiers and French nurses.

The Wilsonian Moment and North African "Identities"

Conscription, political repression, and the economic uncertainties and inequalities surrounding the First World War contributed to discontent and activism across North Africa in the early 1920s. Global historians and historians of modern Europe have pointed to a "Wilsonian Moment," which ushered in a new era of internationalized dialogue reevaluating the colonizer-colonized relationship. Erez Manela's argument, for example, holds that Woodrow Wilson, in his anti-imperial liberal vision and rhetoric, provided the language anti-colonialists needed to undertake increasingly urgent efforts to secure their place in the world order, connecting a generation of reformers and dissidents with an international audience and with one another.[55]

Many in the Arab world did appeal to principles we might recognize as "Wilsonian," such as the right of nations to determine their own future and the protection of oppressed peoples. In the case of the exiled reformer Mohamed Bach Hamba and of the popular Jewish

[55] Erez Manela, *Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 219-221.

press in Tunisia, some even addressed the American president directly and regularly quoted his speeches and writings. Yet recent scholarship suggests that we not go as far as to suggest that emergent mass movements only took shape on the back of Wilson's pronouncements, nor that they depended only on the elite nationalists who traveled to Paris to make their case for independence.[56] Here, I suggest building on Manela by considering the ways in which Tunisians' evocation of Wilson's name and rhetoric acted not as a hopeful acceptance of the terms of the President or his European counterparts, but rather as a foil against which they could position their new or longstanding claims. Wilson's legalistic language, if not a source of newfound inspiration, was appealing in its apparent universality, even if it was unevenly applied. Indeed, it did not always matter whether the ostensible target of such appeals (i.e., Wilson) listened or acted upon them. Accordingly, this dissertation argues that political claims, made more urgent and daring by the harsh circumstances of war, could be amplified on an international platform in a way that called out the contradictions of the Great Powers, pointing for example to French failures to uphold their own ideals of liberty and equality. In this sense, the "failure" of these appeals was rarely just that. This perspective allows us to better account for how ordinary people became involved in political movements over the course of the war, with a particular emphasis on the role of trans-Mediterranean connections forged or reconfigured during the war.[57] Points of rupture like the First World War created plenty of space for such contingent possibilities. To this end, my dissertation takes more seriously a variety of mobile actors as political subjects.

Considering this thesis' focus on experiences of both affinity and difference with regard

[56] For example, see: Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in early twentieth-century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
[57] Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 225.

to French society, a final word is in order about "identity," a term often evoked but less often defined. Frederick Cooper noted in 2005 that the term *identity*, though not a useless concept, had become so ubiquitous in the tens of thousands of academic articles which employed it as an analytic category in the decade prior, that scholars had widely come to assume a broad stability in the notion which was not borne out by the contingencies of historical moments – *identity* as a term was seldom questioned.[58] In what follows, I will at times employ terms to describe groups or individuals who might be defined by particular identity terms such as "Tunisian Jews," "colonial soldiers," or "elite exiles," for the sake of simplicity or clarity. But with the above critiques in mind, this dissertation does not take for granted that such identities existed consistently or inevitably. Rather, it attempts to grasp the spectrum of possibilities born of the wartime moment while remaining attentive to the ways in which certain terms of identity emerged historically and historiographically, particularly where colonial residue often remains the organizing principle of the archive.[59]

In cases where colonial authorities used certain identity markers in order to define, control, or discipline a group, as in Protectorate authorities' generalizations about the "communauté juive" or "Israélites tunisiens," I explore available sources in an attempt to understand how the designated group identified themselves, if at all, and how these self-referential terms interacted with the terms of the colonial state. This approach to identity is informed by the work of Ian Hacking, whose "looping effects of human kinds" account for the fluid and ever-changing nature of identity categories. Rather than accepting some such terms as "real" and others as mere social constructions, the dialogue between "interactive kinds" (self-

[58] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 7-9.
[59] Abdelmajid Hannoum, *Violent Modernity: France in Algeria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 98-99.

aware groups or types of people, usually) and other entities which seek to define them (state institutions, majority groups, etc.) reflects the contingent nature of history itself. Space is left both for a consideration of the disciplinary power of colonialism and for the lived realities and choices of those subjected to it.[60]

Narrative Structure

Each chapter makes use of different kinds of sources and engages with different thematic historiographies; the chapters are arranged only roughly chronologically, as each examines a different group or individual as they experienced war and encountered colonialism across the time period 1911 to 1925. Each chapter, reflecting the diversity of the archival sources consulted, analyzes a different aspect of how the war's circumstances provoked new understandings of both difference and belonging among Tunisians during and following the First World War. For example, some chapters follow Tunisians through a particular space or place of encounter (such as military hospitals in France), while others follow the transformations of a particular group and its categories of identification (such as "Tunisian Jews"). The general order of chapters, moving from the ambiguously Franco-patriotic to the anti-colonial and revolutionary, was chosen in order to provide the reader with an impression of how Tunisians' war experiences cultivated new and increasingly assertive articulations of their political horizons. Note that all translations from Arabic, French, or Italian are the author's unless otherwise noted. Where possible I have followed the Arabic transliteration guide of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* except in cases where certain names are most widely known in their Francophone transliteration.

I begin in Chapter One by examining the life and career of Tunisian artist Albert

[60] Ian Hacking, "The looping effects of human kinds," *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Debate* 12 (1995), 351-394.

Samama-Chikli, the son of a Jewish financier father and Catholic Italian mother, who is often called Africa's first filmmaker. Samama-Chikli traveled everywhere from the Western Front to the Sahara during the war and its aftermath, producing a distinct vision of his world during the war while employed by the French Army's *Section cinématographique*. I explore how Samama-Chikli's extraordinary trajectory took visual form, and how this vision differed from those of other Tunisians on the move and of other French Army photographers. My project is the first Anglophone work to make extensive use of his newly archived personal collection of film, photographs, and correspondence at the Cineteca di Bologna. This chapter also draws from his photographs and films held at the Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (henceforth ECPAD), the French Army's audio-visual archive. I present an analysis of his role as an adventurous arbiter of visual culture, problematizing the assumptions sometimes made about "cosmopolitan elites" in Mediterranean or French imperial contexts and about Samama-Chikli's Jewish background. More importantly, I demonstrate how his elite trans-Mediterranean upbringing was strained, if not entirely disrupted, by the hardening of national boundaries and imperial rivalries in WWI. By beginning with Samama-Chikli, I introduce some of the tentative ways in which the war mobilized, but also tested, existing loyalties to empire and to privileged transnational circles.

Few Tunisian men had the means to choose such a creative path. The greatest number of Tunisians on the move were the rural conscripts sent to work and fight for the French Army during the war. Chapter Two examines how colonial hierarchies were brought to bear on Tunisian subjects in unprecedented ways and spaces due to the war's exigencies. Here I examine the humanizing relationships between French nurses and North African soldiers in French military hospitals. Special attention is given to the "Muslim hospitals" at Carrières-sous-Bois and

Moisselles, built specifically by the French with certain civilizational tropes, political goals, and sexual and racial fears in mind. Drawing from personal correspondence, photographs (including those of Samama-Chikli), and military and medical records, I argue that the individual needs and desires of Tunisian soldiers and of French nurses, as well as material limitations and contingencies particular to the war, created space for an unprecedented series of close encounters which transgressed colonial and gendered boundaries. These encounters offer a layer of historical precedent for the interracial relationships prevalent among the politicized North African immigrant communities in interwar France.

But where colonial encounters in metropolitan hospitals initiated only an ambiguous rethinking of racial and gendered boundaries, exile and expulsion could incite more clearly articulated political visions. Chapter Three examines how exiled Tunisian political activists engaged with reconfigured trans-Mediterranean intellectual networks, revealing the ways in which the First World War presented both ruptures and continuities with North African political concepts. In particular, it offers something of a prosopography of the Geneva-based Comité Algero-Tunisien, an anticolonial group led by Mohamed Bach Hamba which attempted to draw the attention of Woodrow Wilson and other leaders to the plight of North Africans under colonial rule. This chapter draws on Bach Hamba's journal *La Revue du Maghreb*, various Arab reformers' publications at wartime conferences in Switzerland, and the Francophone Swiss press. I compare the trajectory of the Comité's leader, Mohamed Bach-Hamba, with that of his brother Ali, who turned toward a renewed Ottoman outlook after settling in Istanbul, mobilizing longstanding ties with Anatolia and the Arab East in order to forge a future for Tunisia. Mohamed's exile in such a vibrant crossroads provided the physical and intellectual space for new political visions to be cultivated. This chapter also provides an opportunity to better

understand the assumptions, exaggerations, and stakes involved in French intelligence's pursuit of the "pan-Islamic threat" posed by exiles and their connections with the Ottoman and German Empires.

Chapter Four returns to the Tunisian "home front," where Jews faced attacks at the hands of returning Muslim and French settler soldiers resentful of Jews' exemption from conscription. Here I examine the French construction of a "Jewish Question" in Tunisia during the war and its immediate aftermath, within the emergent international context of minority regimes that would inform membership in the League of Nations and the justification for the French Mandate in the Levant. This offers the opportunity to bridge historiographies of the Maghrib and Mashriq. In turn, I investigate how Jews in Tunisia responded to intercommunal violence and the upheavals of the war, with a focus on new transnational political visions. In seeking justice, some Jews turned to international protection while others turned to Zionism as a solution. Indeed, the very term "Tunisian Jews" was itself constructed in the context of this imperial war, provoking questions about how historians can approach colonial archives which so often reproduce parameters that dictate boundaries how we understand communal identity.

The fifth and final chapter reckons with the nearly immediate political consequences of the war by comparing the tribulations of the veteran-turned-communist Mukhtar al-'Ayari and the socialist reformer Hassan Guellaty. These two rather ordinary figures' transnational encounters crossed and eventually diverged by the mid-1920s, marking the narrowing of Tunisians' political horizons which had been momentarily blown open by the war, as demonstrated by both of their publications in the popular Arabic and French press and in police surveillance files. Their trajectories, when presented on their own terms rather than within the longue durée frames of Tunisian nationalism or French colonialism, demonstrate the importance

of the war in producing, if only briefly, trans-Mediterranean cooperation and political alternatives such as communism and socialism.

2. ALBERT SAMAMA-CHIKLI'S MEDITERRANEAN WARS

It seems that the Tunisian photographer Albert Samama-Chikli (1872-1934) was omnipresent in the years surrounding the First World War: documenting the trial in Tunis which resulted in the exile of Young Tunisian activists Mohamed and Ali Bach Hamba in June 1912,[1] creating a tourism brochure in 1914 with André Duran-Angliviel, the journalist and socialist leader who later worked alongside Tunisian anti-colonial leftists such as Mukhtar al-'Ayari,[2] and behind the lens in the Muslim hospital at Carrières-sous-Bois in October 1916. Thanks to his position as one of just about a dozen photographers serving in the French Army's the Section Photographique de l'Armée (SPA) during the First World War, moreover, the Tunisian artist and inventor Samama-Chikli played witness to some of the many encounters engendered by wartime mobility in Tunisia, France, and the Mediterranean.

It takes a special sort to fashion oneself a moniker, and Samama-Chikli was not one to disappoint: he adopted the tongue-in-cheek title of "Prince of Chikli," named for the synonymous island in the Lake of Tunis purchased by his father from the Tunisian Bey Muhammad III as-Sadiq in 1866. The lighthearted honorific evoked both his upbringing in proximity to the traditional palace elite and his notoriety as a modern and eclectic iconoclast. Born to privilege and notoriety, Samama-Chikli died in relative obscurity, having squandered most of his inherited wealth. Today not known widely, he is perhaps best recognized as one of the first filmmakers in Africa and the Arab world, having made *Zohra* (1922) and *Aïn el Ghazal* (1924). His brief postwar film career has been, if anything, the focus of the little extant literature

[1] Mansour, *Samama Chikly,* 208-215.
[2] Cineteca di Bologna, Albert Samama-Chikli collection (henceforth "Cineteca CFSC") Album documenti Nero 1-2, letter from the Touring-Club de France, 22 Jan 1914; Mansour, *Samama Chikly,* 60.

in which he appears. Until the past decade, only a couple of film historians had touched upon Samama-Chikli and his work and legacy.[3] This chapter builds on those studies and contextualizes his work within the scope of his early life and transnational career.

Inspired by his wanderlust and desire for adventure, Samama-Chikli often found himself amid misery and destruction, even before the First World War: he traveled to Messina, Italy in early 1909 to document the devastation of the December 1908 earthquake,[4] and reported from the Ottoman side of the Italian invasion of Libya in 1912. For the latter, he would be accused of pro-Ottoman espionage by an Italian journalist, an allegation that fueled rumors about him well into the First World War despite a lack of evidence and his deep loyalty to his professional and familial connections with Europe.

At first glance, it is difficult to know what to make of Samama-Chikli's profoundly Mediterranean and imperial itinerary. What kinds of encounters did mobility produce for a figure so apparently unique but at the same time so evocative of what has been described as a quintessential nineteenth-century North African "cosmopolitanism"?[5] To what extent did his wartime experiences resemble the kind of jarring "rupture" that Tunisian exiles and conscripts underwent, in social, cultural, and political terms? And what do Samama-Chikli's experiences reveal about the capacity of the war to harden borders and categories of identity?

The term "cosmopolitanism" has sometimes been used as a stand-in for describing elite minorities of the Arab world, as discussed in the introduction. The term has been critiqued for its

[3] Omar Khlifi, *Histoire du cinéma en Tunisie* (Tunis: Société tunisienne de diffusion, 1970); Hélène Guillot, *Les soldats de la mémoire: la Section photographique de l'armée, 1915-1919* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 2017); Morgan Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes': les débuts du cinématographe dans la Régence (1896-1908)," *Publics et spectacle cinématographique en situation coloniale* 5 (2012), 91-129.
[4] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydee's typewritten 1973 notes: apparently because of the outbreak of cholera, he was not able to bring his film back from Messina, and almost all of his film was lost.
[5] See: Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 242-246; Abdelhamid Larguèche, "The City and the Sea: Evolving Forms of Mediterranean Cosmopolitanism in Tunis, 1700-1881," *Journal of North African Studies* 6:1 (2001), 117-128.

evocation of a nostalgic projection of a "more tolerant past," particularly when contrasted with a soured view of the present Middle East and its supposedly urban, Muslim, homogeneous masses. This has been particularly true of studies of Tunisia's historical Jewish "community," often romanticized as the embodiment of certain peaceful and diverse moments in time.[6] I therefore take Hanley's suggestion that we avoid such a teleology by exploring the particular details of Samama-Chikli's family life rather than leaving the "cosmopolitan" label as assumed, privileging "formal labels over content."[7] While it is difficult at times not to be captivated by the undeniably daring and whimsical feats of his life and work, I emphasize Samama-Chikli's wealthy upbringing and access to Tunisian royalty and French administration in order to remind the reader that his was not a trajectory available to most Tunisians around the First World War. "Cosmopolitan," in this Tunisian case, evokes for the reader a privileged social status that could provide access to trans-Mediterranean networks of commerce and art but also of military and empire.

This chapter draws from a number of largely untapped archives. Most of Albert Samama-Chikli's personal documents and photographs, collected and managed by his granddaughter Djaouida Tamzali Vaughan and her husband Paul Vaughan, have recently been moved to the Cineteca di Bologna and are, at the time of writing, still being catalogued and expanded. This collection includes photographs along with some sporadic correspondence and memorabilia, along with unpublished notes from a memoir manuscript (some of which were eventually published in 1992[8]) and biographical details compiled by Samama-Chikli's daughter and only

[6] David Bond, "Tunisia's Minority Mosaic: Constructing a National Narrative," in *Minorities and the Modern Arab World: New Perspectives*, ed. Laura Robson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 158-63. See also: Will Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," *History Compass* 6:5 (2008), 1346-1367.
[7] Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism," 1348.
[8] Haydée Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées* (Tunis: Maison tunisienne de l'Edition, 1992).

child, actress and writer Haydée Tamzali.[9] A few thousand of Samama-Chikli's wartime photographs are housed at the Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense; he was perhaps the most prolific of the dozen-member SPA, and was one of the only photographers at the Western Front to regularly place himself in his own compositions.[10]

This chapter will proceed with a chronological survey of Samama-Chikli's upbringing and pre-war career, with an emphasis on his overseas adventures and early journalistic expeditions, including a controversial foray into Tripolitania during the Italian-Ottoman War of 1911-1912. I will then closely analyze his First World War service with the Section photographique de l'armée in Europe and North Africa, connecting it to his brief postwar film career. Samama-Chikli's experiences serve as something of an ambiguous starting point for Tunisians at war. He was not an overtly political man, and there is little indication of his views on the colonial enterprise nor on the rise of Tunisian nationalism. His rare expressions of loyalty were limited to France and to the Bey of Tunisia, though his constant border-crossing fueled accusations of disloyalty amid hardening imperial rivalries in the 1910s. Nonetheless he capitalized without reservation on his Francophone upbringing and elite connections to support his creative aspirations, and he remained proud of his military service throughout his life. This will serve as a counterpoint to later chapters which highlight the diverse but more thoroughly articulated political horizons that other Tunisians (such as Mukhtar al-'Ayari) embraced largely as a response to their negative experiences at war.

This chapter's broad temporal scope offers something of an alternative to that of the

[9] Special thanks are due to Paul Vaughan, who provided instrumental guidance in the early stages of this research in Tunis. Originally housed in Tunisia, Samama-Chikli's archives were moved due to post-revolution security concerns to the Cineteca di Bologna, which was deemed appropriate given its extensive archival holdings related to the Lumière Brothers, Charlie Chaplin, and other influential figures of early film.

[10] Samama-Chikli's photographs can be found at the Médiathèque of the Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD) in Ivry-sur-Seine, France, Section Photographique de l'armée (SPA), Series L.

chapters to follow, which have focused more narrowly on the war years as a "moment." In Samama-Chikli, we see a unique and complicated individual who, as I argue, must be understood in his extended life trajectory, not just within the scope of his wartime loyalty to France or of the legacy of his postwar film career. Close attention will be paid throughout to the ambiguous and shifting position of Samama-Chikli's position relative to Francophone culture, which I contextualize with discussions of literature on colonial and Arab photography and cinema in addition to the political complications posed by the inhabitants of Tunis' diverse ethnic and religious makeup. At the same time, despite the exceptional aspects of his career and life, Samama-Chikli's transnational itinerary shared personal experiences common to that of many Tunisians around the First World War. He was compelled to voluntary military service by career ambition and loyalty to France and was profoundly affected by the encounters the war produced, not unlike the soldiers and nurses whom he photographed at Carrières-sous-Bois. Moreover, I contend that Samama-Chikli's experiences at war, while no doubt a transformative experience from a professional and emotional standpoint, demonstrate that the First World War did not always represent a dramatic historical "rupture" for all its mobile participants. His case, rather, speaks to the continuity provided by a privileged upbringing among a Tunisian urban elite long accustomed to trans-Mediterranean travel and cross-cultural networks.

Beginnings

Born in Tunis on 24 January 1872, Albert Samama was the son of Daoud Ibrahim (usually referred to as "David" in his descendants' papers) Samama (1818-1885) and Henriette Rebecca Grego (d. 1899). Grego was Catholic, likely of Italian origin. David, a Sephardic Jew of long-ago Iberian origin, was born in Tunis, but split his time between Tunis and Marseille, where he had

directed the Société Marseillaise de Credit Industriel et Commerciel, which later became the Bank of Tunisia.[11] He served as a key banker to the Bey of Tunisia and, according to his granddaughter's memoirs, boasted many impressive connections to Mediterranean royalty. He kept horses at a property in Marseille that he claimed once attracted a visit from Napoleon III, to whom he subsequently offered his best horse.[12] David received French naturalization by order of the French consul general in Tunisia in 1873 or 1874, a status which was apparently passed on to his son Albert.[13]

Albert grew up in the presence of figures involved in both Tunisia's precolonial financial struggles and in France's colonial project there. His father enjoyed a close personal relationship with Théodore Roustan, a French statesman who was directly involved in the financial negotiations surrounding Tunisia's debt as well as the 1878 Congress of Berlin, at which Britain and Germany agreed in principle to support a French incorporation of Tunisia. Roustan later served as the first Resident General of France's Tunisian Protectorate from 1881 to 1882. Tamzali also recalled David's close relationships with other diplomats such as Léon Roches (French Consul-General in Tunisia 1855-1863), Richard Wood (British Consul-General to Tunisia 1855-1879), and Licurgo Maccio (Italian Consul in Tunis 1878-1881).[14] While his personal papers reveal little direct stance toward French colonialism, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that by the time Albert came of age in the French Protectorate, colonialism – especially an indirect, less overtly violent one than in neighboring Algeria – would have been a forgone conclusion. His life would not have been changed much, at least initially, by

[11] Named elsewhere as "Le comptoir maritime du credit marseillais" (article clipping from Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 1-2 cont'd: "L'ile Chikli"); Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 3: typed memoirs from Haydée Tamzali.
[12] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali's notes.
[13] Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 3, Haydée Tamzali's notes.
[14] Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 3, Haydée Tamzali's notes.

the establishment of the Protectorate in 1881.

The Samama family life, while exceptional in its wealth and access to power transnational networks, was not anomalous of the elites of nineteenth-century Tunis. The port city's history was marked by great urban diversity drawing from its role as a privateer haven in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and from its relative openness under Husainid rule in the eighteenth century.[15] Albert's father, David, traced his ancestry back to the Sephardic Andalusian migrants who, fleeing the 15th- and 16th-century expulsions and executions by the Catholic monarchs and inquisitors of Castile and Aragon, made their way to North Africa, some of them by way of northern Italy, where they had been invited to settle by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I at the turn of the sixteenth century.[16] The family likely spoke the local dialect of Arabic in the home, but Albert, as was common for members of the Tunisian urban elite, was fluent in French and Italian.[17] Most of his writings and interactions as evident in the archives were in these three languages, though his daughter later claimed that he also spoke English, German, Spanish (or perhaps Ladino), and a little Russian, which would have been made possible to a certain extent by his many years of travel.[18]

In 1866, David bought the tiny island of Chikli from the Bey of Tunis for a nominal fee of 40 piasters. The island, situated in the shallow Lake of Tunis, housed the remains of a sixteenth century Spanish fortress, and by the turn of the nineteenth century would play host to his son Albert's many parties and film screenings, x-ray demonstrations, and yacht outings. Samama-Chikli's forging of a mock title of nobility from this tiny "principality" could be said to

[15] Largueche, "The City and the Sea," 119-121.
[16] Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 19-23.
[17] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée's notes in 1973, citing a 1961 *La Depeche Tunisienne* article.
[18] Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées*, 113-14.

have marked something of a triumph for Tunisia's now deep-rooted *grana* community, given the Spanish conquerors' historical cruelty towards Jews.[19]

Even though Samama-Chikli is today usually referred to as a "Tunisian Jew," it is not clear how he identified himself. Religion does not appear to have been an important daily presence in the life of the Samama family.[20] Mention of Judaism is nearly absent from the historical record on Samama-Chikli; whatever his family's religious convictions might have been, it seems there is little trace of them either in his archives or in his daughter's memoirs. According to Jewish law, at least, Samama-Chikli would not have been Jewish, since his mother was Catholic. I address the question of his "Jewishness" here primarily to illustrate the cultural fluidity of his upbringing. The following analysis departs from the suggestion in some contemporary and commemorative accounts that his Jewishness is central to understanding his legacy and his having been rather overlooked by historians of North Africa and Tunisia.

Samama-Chikli was educated at a series of Catholic or Catholic-influenced schools, including the elite Collège Saint-Louis, a school that was moved from the old city of Tunis to the Carthage suburbs at the direction of Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, the pioneering archbishop of Algiers with jurisdiction over much of colonial North Africa.[21] Samama-Chikli later attended the prestigious Collège Saint-Charles de Tunis, and then in Marseille, perhaps while traveling with his father on business, he attended a Jesuit school.[22] That Albert was sent to study with Lavigerie, who dominated French missionary efforts in North Africa and beyond during the

[19] *Grana* refers primarily to Jews of Andalusian descent by way of Livorno; this emerged as a term of differentiation from the older indigenous community of Jews in Tunisia, known as *Tuansa*.
[20] For example, see: Férid Boughedir, "La communauté juive dans le cinéma tunisien," *Confluences méditerranée* 10 (1994), 139-43; Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 24-25; Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 181.
[21] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti 1-2, Haydée Tamzali notes.
[22] François Pouillon, ed., *Dictionnaire des Orientalistes de Langue Francaise* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 20080, 863-64; Mansour, *Samama Chikly,* 14.

1870s and 1880s, suggests that for an elite family such as his, it was only fitting and practical to send him to the most prestigious of Catholic educational institutions.[23]

Albert Samama-Chikli's mother, Henriette, was apparently fond of celebrating holiday traditions both of Tunisia and Europe. For example, in addition to hosting events on the major Muslim holidays, on the Christian feast of the Epiphany, the family enjoyed the cutting of a cake into which a "bean" had been baked; the person who received the piece of cake with the bean inside would be "king" or "queen."[24] Albert had five siblings (three older and two younger), as well as a younger brother Samuel who died at the age of three in 1872, just before Albert was born. Digitized records from the diocese of Tunis suggest that a number of Samama-Chikli's siblings were baptized as Catholics.[25] His sister Marie appears from a certificate in his private archives to have been baptized as a Catholic in the parish of Batna, Algeria in May 1893, at the age of 21, though it is unclear why.[26] Perhaps Marie, unlike some of her siblings, was not baptized as an infant and could have been baptized as part of her own marriage arrangement, though the archives do not speak to this. In 1905 Albert married Blanche (Bianca) Ferrero, a Catholic Italian tourist from an aristocratic family of Savoia who had been visiting Tunisia with a sister who sought the healing sun.[27]

According to a rumor, circulated by the leading Italian-language newspaper in Tunis, *L'Unione* – whose feud with Samama-Chikli will be discussed below – Albert himself was said to have converted to Catholicism.[28] *La Depeche Tunisienne* shelved the rumor alongside the

[23] On Lavigerie, see: Kyle Francis, "Civilizing Settlers: Catholic Missionaries and the Colonial State in French Algeria, 1830-1914" (PhD diss., The City University of New York Graduate Center, 2015), 117-178.
[24] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, Haydée Tamzali notes.
[25] "Naissances et baptêmes catholiques en Tunisie."Web site accessed on 17 February 2018. http://www.geneanum.com/tunisie/bases/baptemes.html?page=855
[26] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, "Extrait des registres des actes de baptême."
[27] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 54.
[28] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti 1-2 cont'd; untitled clipping from *La Depeche Tunisienne*; Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 44.

volumes of the Chikli legend: "Marseille has its sardine, Tarascon has its Tarasque, Tunis has its Chikli; this very name has been grabbed by one of our young fellow citizens, who has made it a noble title… in Batna, lastly, the conversion, true or false, of the *prince of Chikli*, caused the press to groan; Chikli, thanks to this peddling of hoaxes, has headed slowly towards immortality."[29] Omar Khlifi, a Tunisian film historian, speculated in 1970 that the Masserini circus tamers, who sponsored his sister's baptism in Algeria, had extracted Samama-Chikli's conversion in exchange for whatever favors they might have proposed to him, though it is unclear why they would have demanded such a thing.[30] Corriou is skeptical about the veracity of this account, but what is clear is that the Tunisian press hawked a considerable clamor surrounding this rumor, including some amount of taunting from "anti-Semites" in the French Algerian press.[31]

Corriou notes that Samama-Chikli's burial in a Jewish cemetery in Tunis says little about his religious convictions, calling him a "convinced republican and liberal."[32] To this I add the relevant detail of his memberships in La Libre Pensée, a masonic atheist and anticlerical organization, and in the masonic fraternity Le Grand Orient de France.[33] Mansour ventures that Samama-Chikli's photograph of a monumental statue of Cardinal Lavigerie in Biskra, Algeria, draped under a cloth preceding its unveiling ceremony and surrounded by similarly dressed Algerian men, marked the pleasure Samama-Chikli took in an ironic iconoclasm.[34]

This religious fluidity, or rather a general lack of a defined religiosity, is unsurprising

[29] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti 1-2 cont'd; clipping from *La Depeche Tunisienne*, "La Cavalcade," 31 May 1893. As noted in the introductory chapter, all translations from Arabic, French, or Italian are mine unless otherwise noted.
[30] Omar Khlifi, *L'histoire du Cinéma en Tunisie*, 81-82; "Ménagerie Massérini," *La Liberté de Bône*, 24 February 1890, 2.
[31] Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes,'" 111.
[32] Corriou, "Tunisie et 'les temps modernes,'" 111-12.
[33] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, attestation dated 19 November 1918.
[34] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 46.

when we consider the pluralistic culture that permeated the Samama household. In Haydée Tamzali's memoirs, there are frequent anecdotes and memories emphasizing the extent to which the family experienced Tunisia as little changed with the coming of the French Protectorate, having built their overseas ties long before 1881. In this vein, for example, Tamzali notes that her grandfather David "never backed away from making sacrifices to hold fast the name of the French in Tunisia."[35] In the eyes of the Francophone circles to which he belonged, according to Mansour, Albert Samama-Chikli was at once distinctly Arab and as "expressive and elegant" as a Parisian.[36] Theirs was a cultural milieu rooted in Tunisia but one which straddled a decidedly transnational Mediterranean without borders – or at least without borders that hindered travel and business for a family of such stature.[37] It is this context, rather than "contemporary quarrels about the 'Tunisianness'" of Samama-Chikli, that is central to understanding his twisting itinerary and the place the First World War held in it.[38]

Wanderlust

After studying briefly at a Jesuit school in Marseille, Albert Samama-Chikli returned to Tunis to begin what would become a lifelong search for adventure, much of it entailing long-distance travel. Around age seventeen, shortly after the death of his father, he left school and set off against the warnings of his family and tutor to try a career as a sailor.[39] He embarked on the French sailing ship "L'Horizon" for a series of long journeys to Hamburg, the French Antilles, Australia, and the Cape of Good Hope over the course of the next several years.[40] Ultimately, on

[35] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti 1-2, Haydée Tamzali notes.
[36] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 56.
[37] Corriou, "Tunis et 'les temps modernes,'" 111.
[38] Corriou, "Tunis et 'les temps modernes,'" 111. Some commentators have argued that Samama-Chikli has been denied his place in the Tunisian patrimony because he was Jewish.
[39] Tamzali, *Images Retrouvés*, 110.
[40] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 15.

his second return to Tunis, his family demanded that he put an end to a career deemed below his station, his brother-in-law writing that he must "honor your name that your poor father had always sought to elevate."[41] For the time being, Samama-Chikli turned to his growing love of photography and bicycling.[42] He began selling photographs, antique weapons, jewelry, and watercolors to support his photographic craft – he did not yet see this as a commercial venture, but rather as an amateur passion.[43]

Photography in the first two decades of the twentieth century remained a gentleman's or a professional's pursuit, largely because of the costs and time required to purchase, maintain, and operate the requisite equipment. The difficulties associated with early photography in the Arab world were in fact a constant subject of travel writing by visitors to the region, and were "constantly reinscribed in the regions and its peoples within colonialist narratives of adversity overcome and heroic endeavor."[44] All the same, photography soon after its invention came into wide use by the most powerful figures of the late Ottoman world, as showcased in the early daguerrotypes of Mehmed Ali and the widely-known collections of Sultan Abdulhamid II.[45] By the early twentieth century, educated elites and middle-class professionals' pursuit of photography marked, to some historians, a negotiation of new "modern" identities.[46] Cameras made for some of the most conspicuous means of consumption, not least in that they allowed for the preservation of moments in time which could be compiled both privately in family albums

[41] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 16.
[42] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti 1-2, Haydée Tamzali notes.
[43] Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes,'"110.
[44] Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, "Introduction," in *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, eds. Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 1-2.
[45] Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 84-85; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 150-165.
[46] Nancy Mickelwright, "Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities," in *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East,* ed. Relli Shechter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 65-67.

and publicly through the emergent popular press, which itself was instrumental in creating the "imagined community" of the nation.[47] Beginning in 1921, moreover, Kodak's consumer-friendly and affordable cameras grew increasingly popular around the Arab world.[48] Educated, wealthy, and well-traveled, Albert Samama-Chikli could be viewed in such a context of emergent Arab and Ottoman consumption. Yet he was no amateur: perhaps more than the many technological feats with which he occupied himself, photography emerged as a true profession for him. He earned an income and a public presence for his photographs, and his expeditions to southern Tunisia and Algeria, Sicily, and eventually, the Western Front of the First World War, were daring and expensive undertakings.

Through the 1890s, Samama-Chikli's work with imaging technologies began to draw the public's attention. Samama-Chikli was awarded the Bey's prestigious civilian decoration *Nichan Iftikhar* in 1891, at the request of the French Resident General for his introduction of the x-ray to Tunisia and for conducting complementary x-ray scans for poor patients.[49] He developed his experience in travel photography while accompanying Algerian-born French explorer Gaston Méry to the southern Algerian desert in 1893.[50] Through the 1890s his photographs earned awards at international exhibitions and expositions in Saint Petersburg, Carthage, and Paris.[51] During one of his trips to France in 1898, he befriended the Lumière brothers and acquired a Cinematograph – an early film projector.[52] Mansour claims that Samama-Chikli was the first to

[47] See: Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 82-101.
[48] Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 91; Mona Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863-1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 52, 68.
[49] Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes,'" 93.
[50] Guillot, *Les soldats de la mémoire*, 119.
[51] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 43; Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées*, 110.
[52] Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes,'" 93; Cineteca di Bologna, 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali's notes for a 1973 radio interview, 2.

screen a projected film in Tunisia in October of that year, though Corriou has disputed this.[53] Based at a shop on the Rue d'Algérie, he built a reputation for being among the first to take film and photographs from an underwater submersible in 1903 and for taking the first photographs of Tunisia by balloon in 1909.[54]

Samama-Chikli also developed an anthropological interest in activities that showcased the medium of film. In 1910, for example, he shot a film commissioned by the Prince of Monaco documenting tuna fishing in Sidi Daoud, an important fishing port east of Tunis on Cap Bon.[55] His personal photograph collection at the Cineteca di Bologna includes many images of wild animals (including lion cubs and monkeys he raised in his garden), Bedouin traditions from the Tunisian interior, and landscapes from around the country.[56] Samama-Chikli's eclectic personal collection also includes undated images in which the photographer, wearing his army uniform, appears arm in arm with two men of unknown origin who wear only loincloths. It also includes a portrait of a bare-chested female dancer whose entire body is covered with intricate tattoos, a practice considered exceedingly subversive outside of European circus sideshows, Bedouin camps, and prisons.[57] Mansour supposes that the photographs from these journeys had always been more journalistic than aesthetic; Samama-Chikli was most interested in practical questions of daily life, particularly where that life was threatened by the very innovations he was busy pioneering back in the capital.[58]

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[53] Morgan Corriou, *Un nouveau loisir en situation coloniale: le cinema dans la Tunisie du protectorat*, PhD diss., Université de Paris 7 Paris-Diderot (2011), 36; cited by Guillot, *Les soldats de la mémoire*, 119.
[54] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée typewritten notes for a 1973 radio interview; Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 31-33; Khlifi, 87-88.
[55] Lyn Julius, "Pining for La Goulette," *Jewish Quarterly* 199 (Autumn 2005).
[56] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 37, 57-58; Cineteca CFSC 02 privato sc.4, undated photograph.
[57] Cineteca CFSC 01_ETNO sc.5; see: Margot Mifflin, *Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2013), 10-53; Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 49-65.
[58] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 64; David Henry Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919-1939: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 161.

Samama-Chikli's promise behind the lens fueled his desire to explore, and before long he had organized voyages by bicycle through Tunisia and Algeria.[59] On one hunting expedition in Guelma, Algeria, he dared to abandon his spotting post to head into the bushes, where he was kicked in the chest by a wounded animal. The local newspaper, *Le Petit Guelma*, chided him playfully as a fellow member of the Francophone elite: "We hope that this kind of unfortunate accident will not happen again and that the young Prince will be a bit more prudent next time."[60] His family was decidedly less lighthearted about his often dangerous and expensive adventures.[61]

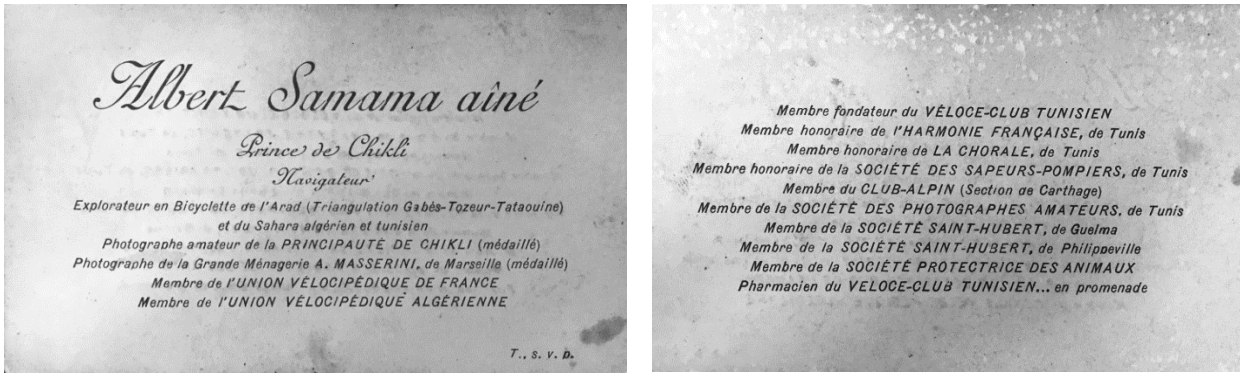

Fig. 1: Albert Samama-Chikli's undated business card

Samama-Chikli in fact appeared quite at ease making light of his many adventures and misadventures. In one of his tongue-in-cheek "business cards," he even fancied himself a successor to the "hardy explorers" Henry Morton Stanley and David Livingstone.[62] Another card (Fig. 1 above) listed a comically exhaustive list of distinctions and titles, among them "Amateur photographer of the Principality of Chikli," "Bicycle Explorer of the *Arad* [lands] of the Algerian and Tunisian Sahara," and "Honorary Member of the Société des Sapeurs-Pompiers de Tunis." The latter, a charitable group, soon came to be known as the life of Chikli's island parties, his

[59] Ibid.
[60] Cineteca Album Documenti 1-2, Undated clipping from *Le Petit Guelma*.
[61] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 19.
[62] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 1-2.

Principality's royal guard.[63] Samama-Chikli was even a fan of elaborate pranks: according to his daughter's memoirs, he even used his knowledge of chemicals and photographic lighting to stage something resembling a shadow puppet show in a successful effort to spook his unruly tenants into moving out of their home at 13 Rue Sidi Sifiane.[64] Between his surviving documents and the words of his descendants, it is clear that Albert Samama-Chikli's princely nobility was something of a whimsical farce.

Italy and Tripolitania

Samama-Chikli's adventurous spirit eventually pushed him toward grim and violent places. He traveled in early 1909 to Messina, the Sicilian city in which over 75,000 had perished in a December 1908 earthquake, as a reporter contributing to French metropolitan newspapers including the well-known weekly *L'Illustration* as well as the daily *Le Matin*. While most of the photographs from this trip were lost, a few were published; notable in particular is one in which Samama-Chikli himself stands atop the mountainous urban ruins, his heavy gear draped over his arms and shoulders as he faces the camera.[65] This composition evoked a fascination with destruction that foreshadowed the many photographs Samama-Chikli would later take of destroyed landscapes, buildings, and dead bodies at the Western Front of the First World War, including some in which the photographer himself was depicted – a relative rarity in wartime photography of the era. This fascination with destruction was not without its emotional impact, however. In an article for *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, he reported that upon first arriving in Messina,

[63] Cineteca CFSC 02 privato sc.4. Undated; Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 19; Khlifi, *Histoire du cinéma en Tunisie*, 82-83.
[64] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali notes; Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées*, 113.
[65] In Samama-Chikli's self-depictions, it is unclear whether a timed shutter release was used or whether an assistant took the photograph.

he found himself unable to take a single photograph as he walked past flattened buildings, the smell of death and the sight of dog-eaten corpses strewn about. Walking beside a four-story building left standing as an aftershock hit, Samama-Chikli described "an emotion which had never in my life seized me… and my only thought was carried to Tunis, toward my wife and my child, and I started to cry in spite of myself." Dangers abounded, as Italian soldiers shot several looters on sight; Samama-Chikli was stopped frequently and questioned about his business there. Nonetheless, urged on by a journalist's sense of duty, he took about nine dozen photographs and some 1600 meters of film.[66]

Samama-Chikli's relationship with Italy, much like that of Tunisia itself, was a long and complicated one. Italians had long been a presence in the Bey's court as advisors, doctors, and bankers, and at the turn of the century Italian settlers still vastly outnumbered French settlers in the Protectorate.[67] Italian was also widely spoken among Tunisian Jews who traced their ancestry back to the Ligurian coast and maintained familial and commercial ties there; the Samama family originated in this community, though they did not live in the rather isolated *grana* ghettos of the old city. Recall too that since Samama-Chikli himself spoke Italian, and his wife was Italian, it would not have been unusual for him to enjoy connections and travels to Italy during his journalistic and artistic career.

[66] "Sur les Ruines de Messine," *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, 18 January 1909, clipping preserved in Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 49.
[67] Mary Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 107, 117.

Fig. 2: Samama-Chikli amid the ruins at Messina, January 1909.[68]

The Italian conquest in neighboring Tripolitania shocked and alarmed nearly all social strata in Tunisia.[69] France and Italy had since the 1878 Congress of Berlin competed for a presence in North Africa, and tensions escalated with the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881. A secret convention between France and Italy in 1902 acknowledged Ottoman Tripolitania as a potential site for Italian expansion in exchange for recognition of a free French hand in Morocco and Tunisia. Nonetheless, Italian settlers in Tunisia continued to outnumber their French counterparts by more than double in the early twentieth century, their consular protection and various privileges proving a frequent challenge to French sovereignty.[70]

Tunisians, for their part, had long maintained important commercial, cultural, and religious links with Tripolitania. A number of prominent tribes straddled the Tripolitania-Tunisia

[68] Antti Alanen, "Albert Samama Chikly, Prince of the Pioneers," June 28, 2015, http://anttialanenfilmdiary.blogspot.com/2015/06/albert-samama-Chikli-prince-of-pioneers.html.
[69] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 140.
[70] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 102-117.

frontier, and Tripolitanian workers migrated to the Gafsa region in southern Tunisia where they participated in colonial railroad construction and mining projects.[71] Political and religious reformers from the Maghrib (including Salah al-Sharif and was Muhammad al-Khidr Husain, examined in Chapter Three) continued to look to Istanbul, with Tripolitania as its closest territorial presence by the turn of the twentieth century.[72] The educated and political sectors of the Tunisian public therefore watched closely and with some trepidation when the Ottoman-Italian war broke out in late September 1911. Samama-Chikli had been in Paris at the time and, according to Mansour, was encouraged by the various professional contacts he had established there to head to Tripolitania.[73] With cultural familiarity with the people of Tripolitania, a deft eye for Francophone newspaper audiences, and a command of French, Italian, and Arabic, he was well-suited for the task. He found himself onboard the French mail steamer *Carthage* bound from Marseille to Tunis when it was stopped by the Italian navy on 16 January 1912 and held in Cagliari in the midst of Italy's operations in Tripolitania. Italian authorities accused the French of shipping Turkish contraband (including an airplane) and personnel, a claim bolstered by the stopping of the vessel *Manouba* two days later as it carried 29 Turkish medical officers to Tunis.[74] The *Carthage* was allowed to proceed only after the intervention of the French consul.[75]

The Turkish medical personnel, as it turned out, were members of the Ottoman Red Crescent making their way to Tripoli. Samama-Chikli crossed paths with them the next month in Gabes, a southern coastal Tunisian city, as reported in *La Dépêche Tunisienne* on 18 February

[71] Anna Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation: Colonial Legacy, Exile and the Emergence of a New Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54-56.
[72] See especially Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*.
[73] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 199.
[74] Peter Seidel, "The Carthage and the Manouba," in *Encyclopedia of Public International Law, Vol. 2: Decisions of International Courts and Tribunals and International Arbitrations*, ed. Rufolf Bernhardt (New York: North-Holland Publishing, 1981), 43-45.
[75] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 204.

1912, one of a crowd of some 3,000 Tunisians and Frenchmen who welcomed the Ottoman humanitarian contingent waving French and Tunisian flags. While France itself remained a neutral party, many Tunisians, including members of the Young Tunisians, worked to support the Ottoman war effort.[76] Such displays of solidarity were apparently not always clandestine: Samama-Chikli had prepared fireworks for the arrival of the Ottoman contingefnt as he filmed them. The Red Crescent delegation, led by the renowned doctor Emin Bey, was thronged as it made its way to the café of the Grand Hotel, marking Tunisian public sentiment about what the newspaper proclaimed to be the organization's "noble task," carried out "despite the Italian attacks, contrary to the laws of humanity."[77] It seemed that Tunisians and French settlers alike shared their disdain for Italian meddling in North Africa. For Tunisians, the arrival of a triumphant and upstanding Ottoman delegation represented the promise of a nascent pan-Islamic solidarity. Christelow argues that the Red Crescent was fast becoming "an expression of the rising tide of Islamic resistance to European imperialism," supported by donations collected from Muslims in Algeria, Tunisia, and beyond.[78]

For the French Protectorate and Tunisia's *colons*, however, pan-Islamism had not yet emerged as the threat that it later would during the First World War. The neutral Ottoman delegation was instead welcomed as a counterpoint to what was seen by many as an Italian aggression aimed not only at the conquest of neighboring Tripolitania but also at Tunisia itself through its Italian subjects in the latter. More than this, Italy's declaration of their sovereignty over the province (now renamed "Libya") claimed its inhabitants as its own subjects, which in theory was to include the Arab Tripolitanians who had long lived in Tunisia as well as the many

[76] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 140.
[77] "Le 'Croissant Rouge,'" *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, 18 February 1912, 1.
[78] Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 84-85.

who had fled the former for the latter during the Italian invasion. This represented a serious obstacle to French sovereignty in Tunisia, and helped lead the French to later develop the concept of "co-sovereignty" with, rather than just "protection" of, the Tunisian monarch.[79] This conflict set the backdrop to the Franco-Italian negotiations that eventually saw the Red Crescent contingent aboard the *Manouba* freed from Italian containment, a victory followed closely in the European and Tunisian press.[80]

Samama-Chikli made for Tripolitania with his friend Ali, whom his daughter described in her memoirs as an old but strong man with a white beard who could usually be found selling *brik*, a popular street snack, at Tunis' central market.[81] In traveling to Tripolitania, Samama-Chikli seized the opportunity to understand certain dynamics of daily life at war. While pursuing his curiosity aboard a sponge fisher's boat off the coast of Zouara, for example, he was prevented from lighting his cigarette by the captain, who revealed himself to be part of an illicit arms smuggling ring.[82] Samama-Chikli went on to write a detailed exposé on this practice and its fascinating technical particularities.[83] It was also during this trip, according to his daughter's memoirs, that he helped geographer and geologist Léon Pervinquière to write *La Tripolitaine Interdite*, a survey of the city of Ghadames and its surroundings near the Tunisian-Tripolitanian border, though he was not credited in the edition published in 1912 in Paris.[84] The book, dedicated as a "token of gratitude" to the Resident General Gabriel Alapetite and Colonel Foucher, commander of the French military forces in southern Tunisia, would have been quite useful for French authorities when they confronted tribal revolts in the region throughout the

[79] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 102-103.
[80] "L'enquête est terminée sur les Turcs du 'Manouba,'" *Le Petit Parisien*, 1 February 1912, 1.
[81] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée's notes in 1973.
[82] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 200.
[83] Cineteca Album Documenti 1-2, clipping from *L'Italia* 20 Feb 1913.
[84] Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées*, 111.

First World War.[85]

In a context which saw Italian journalists reporting patriotic propaganda from the Italian side, Samama-Chikli's desire to report from the Ottoman side was seen by some as a partisan effort. He developed a feud with Luigi d'Alessandro, the former editor-in-chief of the Italian-language bi-weekly *L'Unione*. D'Alessandro had written an article on the arrest of Samama-Chikli upon his arrival in Turin en route to Paris. The suspect, according to the editor, was a man of average height, "of olive complexion, dressed in a full somber grey." At the station, "our police were found in large numbers," and they tailed him to his hotel. Suspected of being a "Turkish spy," Samama-Chikli had apparently identified himself as a Tunisian and a professional photographer; ironically, he had had to make the same explanation to Red Crescent volunteers he had encountered at the Tunisian border near Ben Gardane.[86] The editor coyly continued that considering the "extremely difficult judgments facing [Samama-Chikli] in his comings and goings between the frontier and the Turkish camp," his constant contact with Ottoman officers, and his presence aboard the *Carthage*, "these are testimonials that we believe we must reproduce here."[87] The editor explained, moreover, that Samama-Chikli had displayed "sickening behavior" by "twisting the words and acts of our officers for a French audience, contributing to the creation of a hateful and hostile ambiance against the Italians" in Tunis.[88]

Samama-Chikli took the opportunity to explain his side of the story to *La Tunisie Française* on 13 August 1912. As a correspondent of war in Tripoli, "in all the cities where I stopped, I noticed that I was tailed continuously by certain people. At first I just smiled, but by

[85] Léon Pervinquière, *La Tripolitaine Interdite – Ghadames* (Paris: Librarie Hachette et Cie, 1912).
[86] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 199.
[87] Cineteca documenti blu 1-2, press clipping from "Espionnage turc en Italie; les vicissitudes d'un Tunisien," *La Tunisie Française,* 14 August 1912.
[88] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 207.

the end I grew considerably irritated." Upon his arrival in Turin he was met by officers whom he asked to rid him of the surveillance, "indicating the purity of my intentions with regard to [Italy]. I explained that I traveled as much for business as for pleasure, and that as a result I couldn't be treated and considered as a spy." Ever maintaining his good humor, Samama-Chikli could not resist relating to *La Tunisie Française* that after his release, he repeatedly noticed the officer who must have been assigned to continue surveilling him during the rest of his stay in Italy, and even introduced himself to the officer. This "literally made him furious," and despite "exhausting himself in denials" he continued to follow Samama-Chikli.[89]

Another Italian-language newspaper was less interested in Samama-Chikli than in his findings on arms smuggling on the Tripolitanian coast. *L'Italia* published an interview with him on 20 February 1913, when an indigenous anti-Italian resistance movement continued despite the formal conclusion of hostilities with the Treaty of Ouchy in which the Ottomans ceded the territories that would become Italian Libya. In the interview in Rome, Samama-Chikli described in some detail the way that smugglers would drop sealed boxes of weapons and ammunition at a depth of up to 40 meters, where sponge fishers would retrieve them under cover of their daily work. When asked about the broader nature of Arab resistance to the Italian invasion, Samama-Chikli estimated that the resistance could endure for quite some time thanks to consecutive years of strong date harvests, which were among the most important commodities to the Bedouins who made up the backbone of the resistance. He also responded to questions about the rebel leader Sulayman al-Baruni, a Berber and 'Ibadi scholar who, "notorious among the tribes of Tripolitania," led the insurrection first against Italian forces from 1911 to 1913 and then again during the First World War.[90] Interestingly, Samama-Chikli noted that al-Baruni had actually

[89] Cineteca documenti blu 1-2, clipping from *La Tunisie Francaise* 13 August 1912.
[90] Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders,* 84-85.

been imprisoned by the Ottomans for killing a rival prior to the outbreak of war with Italy, but that the Italian invasion had allowed him to escape prison before organizing bands of resistance fighters.[91]

Still, d'Alessandro's accusations in *L'Unione* had a lasting impact on Samama-Chikli, with rumors and suspicions circulating even into the First World War – this will be discussed further below. His daughter, in her notes prepared for a 1973 radio interview about Samama-Chikli, claims that her father even dueled on three occasions with d'Alessandro, ultimately defeating the Italian journalist with a wound to the arm as he was "skilled with a sword."[92] Clearly there was much at stake for Samama-Chikli, and if true, the duels reveal a man deeply concerned with his reputation and with such an honor-based and increasingly outmoded rite.

While the war (and Samama-Chikli's controversy) unfolded, tensions had spilled over into Tunisia's internal affairs. In November 1911, protests against the French plan to survey the Muslim cemetery of Jellaz turned deadly, implicating not only Protectorate forces and Muslim Tunisians, but also residents of the Italian quarter, who fired potshots from their homes into the crowd of Tunisian protestors. Mass boycotts broke out the following spring after an Italian-driven streetcar struck and killed a Tunisian child, compounding for many Tunisians their exclusion from employment by the tramway company.[93] Samama-Chikli had returned home from Tripolitania in time to document the resulting expulsion of several Tunisian political leaders and the trial which saw the conviction of thirty-two men of rebellion – none of them representing political leadership of any kind, and seven of them being sentenced to death. The

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[91] "Come e operato il contrabbando di geurra sulle coste della Tripolitania," *L'Italia* 20 Feb 1913, press clipping from Cineteca Album Documenti 1-2. For more on al-Baruni, see: Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation*, 56-59.

[92] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 1-2, Haydée's notes. In Italy and the Francophone world, duels by fencing with the épée persisted sporadically into the mid-twentieth century; see: Robert Nye, "Fencing, the Duel and Republican Manhood in the Third Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25:2/3 (1990), 365-377.

[93] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 71-72.

"absurdities of French repression" were not lost on Samama-Chikli, who was present to cover the trials in June 1912: he took photographs of many of the accused, including a close-up of an eight-year-old child at the defendants' bench.[94]

Samama-Chikli Goes to War

While most historians recognize the Jellaz affair as the spark that ignited the Tunisian nationalist movement, none of this would have been clear by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. In fact, the state of emergency and heavy censorship initiated in 1912 silenced most traditional outlets of dissent. There is little indication that Samama-Chikli's Francophone patriotism had been fundamentally shaken by these events, as he attempted to enlist in the French Army as a volunteer at the start of the war. Like all Jews in Tunisia, and like many urban elites in the capital, he had not been subject to conscription; at 42 or 43 years old, he was also past the prime age for conscription.[95] With little documentation to work with, it is difficult to know why exactly he made this decision. Given his family history, with its close ties to Tunisian royalty and to French imperial figures, as well as his generally Francophone cultural orientation, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Samama-Chikli, like many men of his era, was compelled to demonstrate his patriotism and manhood. But perhaps even more compelling, given his track record, would have been the opportunity to document and experience the war. It would be one more adventure in a life spent seeking it.[96]

Samama-Chikli's daughter noted that he feared because of his age that he would be relegated to service in the territorial reserve, perhaps guarding railroad tracks.[97] Instead, he found

[94] Corriou, "Tunis et les 'temps modernes,'" 112; Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 210-211.
[95] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 119.
[96] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 220; Guillot, *Les soldats de la mémoire*, 120.
[97] Cineteca CFSC, Album Documenti Nero 1-2, Haydée's notes.

a particularly fruitful home for his talents when he secured an assignment to the Section Photographique et cinématographique de l'Armée (SPA), where he was five years older than his average comrade.[98] This unit employed about a dozen photographers and cameramen, among them Abel Gance, a pioneering filmmaker who later directed and produced some of France's most notable films of the 1920s, and Louis Feuillade, whose 1913 silent masterpiece *Fantômas* inspired a generation of thriller and fantasy films.[99] The SPA was tasked primarily with generating images that could be circulated to the domestic and international press and to foreign governments as evidence of France's military strength.[100] Members of the unit usually did not work together, however, being dispersed across the various French armies either individually or in teams of two (including a photographer and a film cameraman).[101] This meant that certain photographers, depending on the officers in their assigned zone and the variable circumstances at the front, could carve out considerable creative license in their opus; Samama-Chikli was perhaps the most exceptional in that sense.[102]

Samama-Chikli's assignment with the SPA began with a mission in Algeria and southern Tunisia, where he took photographs of strategic landscapes, conscription centers, prison camps, and military transport vessels.[103] France maintained a strong military presence in this region throughout the First World War, as the Senoussi rebellion, with its roots in the now formally concluded Italian conquest of Tripolitania, continued and even spilled into the Tunisian Protectorate. The 1915-16 revolt in southern Tunisia attracted deserters and others displaced by

[98] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 119.
[99] David-Daniel Guil, "Haydée Tamzali & Albert Samama Chikli," La Laboratoire du ciné-concert and Alif Productions. Undated.
[100] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 104, 191.
[101] Ibid., 81.
[102] Ibid., 118; Mark Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War: Photography, Posters, and Soldiers' Art in World War I France" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 162-167.
[103] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 220.

wartime disruptions, requiring the deployment of French Army units to quell a distraction which, though never threatening the existence of the French Protectorate itself, could not have come at a worse time amid manpower shortages in Europe.[104]

In 1916, Samama-Chikli was sent to the Western Front, and soon found himself an intimate participant in and observer of some of the most brutal stretches of combat at Verdun, taking nearly 2800 photographs from June 1916 to December 1919.[105] But early on in his foray into Europe, the earlier accusations of espionage for the Ottomans – now France's enemy – doggedly followed him. These accusations became official when the French Army suspended him from service at the front until he could be cleared of wrongdoing. On 14 October 1916, he wrote to the Resident General of Tunisia in order to settle the affair, relating what his own commander had told him:

> I [Commander Pierre Marcel] am happy with you [Samama-Chikli] as well as your work and I have no reproach to make to you; I ask you then to tell me frankly if in your past, you have nothing to reproach you, because for the second time, during one of your missions in Tunisia, I received a note telling me that you were suspect, and now again an officer of the 4th Army who knew you without a doubt in Tunisia told me the same thing. I want to know what to do. I want very much to believe that this is just slander. Also, that I have great confidence in you, I must know how you might be able to defend yourself if what they told me is not true. You will understand that with you facing such an accusation, I cannot just send you to the front or any army.[106]

Samama-Chikli then explained that the accusations had come from the editor of *L'Unione*, after his reporting from the "Arab side" of the war in Tripolitania. He backed up his account by referring to his published works and other relevant articles, particularly on the incident of *The Carthage*, in *L'Illustration*. It appears that even after the conclusion of that war and Samama-Chikli's return to Tunisia, the "Italian colony" in Tunis conspired to create a scandal out of

[104] On the 1915-16 revolt, see: Belaïd, "La révolte de 1915-1916," 176-184.
[105] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 162. Many of these photographs are held in Series L at ECPAD.
[106] Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 3, Letter from Albert Samama-Chikli to the Resident General, 14 October 1916.

d'Alessandro's account in *L'Unione*. Ultimately, he explained, the journal extended him an apology and a payment of 1000 francs; Samama-Chikli wrote that he kept these and other exonerating documents in a dossier that he was ready to send if needed.[107]

Samama-Chikli invited the Resident General and any other authorities to conduct an investigation which he was sure would reveal him to be an "honorable," "patriotic," "honest," and "loyal" person, noting that this would be easy to prove because in Tunis, "my family and I have been honorably known." At worst, Samama-Chikli explained, "any faults of youth or deviations of conduct that I could have committed are those shared by all fun-loving young people."[108] The photographer's stature must have been important enough to attract press attention to this story, if only briefly. Samama-Chikli's personal collection includes a clipping from *La Tunisie Francaise,* the most popular newspaper of the settler community in Tunisia, which explained that he had run into trouble with military authorities because of accusations of espionage. "Not without enormous difficulties, he managed to convince the judges of his innocence, about which, incidentally, there was no doubt." The article added, dryly: "Finally, to make him forget the painful time he had passed waiting for his case to be dismissed, they sent him back to the front of the Somme."[109]

While Samama-Chikli had been taken off the front during the investigations into these accusations, he explained to the Resident General that he also took the opportunity to return to Tunis to spend time with his wife and child.[110] During the many more months and years he spent away from home, he kept up correspondence with both, with a few letters being preserved in his

[107] Cineteca CFSC album documenti Nero 3, Letter from Albert Samama-Chikli to the Resident General, 14 October 1916.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Cineteca CFSC Documenti Blu 1-2, clipping from *La Tunisie Francaise,* 11 Oct 1916.
[110] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, Letter from Albert Samama-Chikli to the Resident General, 14 October 1916.

family's personal collection at the Cineteca di Bologna. Letters with Blanche, his wife, were warm and loving even while describing difficult wartime circumstances. In one letter from 1915, Blanche expressed delight that her husband's previous letter "was almost a love letter," comforting her greatly; "I've seen finally that you are thinking of the future, something I no longer counted on." Blanche described the great loneliness that accompanied his absence, as well as some of the material shortages which effected even such an elite household as theirs. Nonetheless, Blanche and their daughter, Haydée, continued activities that could help fill the gap, such as knitting and crocheting.[111] Haydée also wrote her father on multiple occasions. In December 1915, for example, she promised her father that she would be well-behaved until his return, telling him that she "finished her soup almost every time" and she would work hard on her studies.[112] She was also sure to provide updates on the many animals the family kept.[113] Samama-Chikli also received letters from his niece who lived in Alexandria, Egypt in March 1917. Replying to a letter he had sent from Paris, she congratulated him on his medals, expressing her pride in his display of patriotism: "We too love France and would very much wish for the war to end so that all of the soldiers can return home."[114]

The accusations against Samama-Chikli remained unsubstantiated and after a few months he returned to the Western Front. Notably, he spent several months between December 1916 and September 1917 at Mort-Homme, Côte 304, and Bezonvaux, some of the most bitterly contested combat zones around Verdun.[115] It was at these sites, his daughter explained, that the photographer was exposed to the poison gasses that caused his lungs to slowly deteriorate,

[111] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, letter from Blanche, 1915.
[112] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, letter from Haydée, 12 December 1915.
[113] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 3, letter from Haydée, 28 Feb 1918.
[114] Cineteca CFSC Album Documenti Nero 1-2, letter from Renée, 25 March 1917.
[115] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, letter from the Section Photographique de l'Armée, February 1917; Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 163.

resulting in his early death from lung cancer in 1934.[116] According to his brigade commander, Samama-Chikli demonstrated great courage in carrying his work under heavy enemy artillery and bombardment in August 1917.[117] His daughter's memoirs relate that at one of the battles at Verdun, he joined soldiers in a counter-attack wave, a heavy camera on his shoulder, as he pursued fleeing Germans. This apparently had inspired some of the more hesitant infantry to rise out of the trenches to follow him, reassured by the sight of a photographer crossing the parapet toward enemy lines. It was for this particular action that General Pétain himself, standing before the citadel of Verdun, pinned a medal on Samama-Chikli's jacket, according to his daughter.[118] He later received the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille militaire for his efforts.[119]

It is not just Mansour's hagiographic account that points to the exceptionality of Samama-Chikli's service in the Section photographique et cinématographique de l'armée (SPA). The SPA, a group of photographers operating under the Ministry of War's bureau of press information, was responsible for documenting the war and producing photographs for the purposes of propaganda, artistic history, and military history.[120] Archival evidence and historical accounts reveal that Samama-Chikli was perhaps the most prolific of the SPA, and was the only operator to serve for the entire duration of the SPA's existence.[121] ECPAD archivist and historian Hélène Guillot notes that Samama-Chikli was also the sole operator to shoot both photographs and film regularly.[122] Like other SPA operators, in keeping with the War Ministry's instructions for the Section, the majority of his wartime photographs depicted scenes of French military

[116] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée notes for 1973 radio interview.
[117] Cineteca CFSC Documenti 1-2, Letter from le Général Commandant la 178th Brigade Tale (infantry), 22 Nov 1917.
[118] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée notes for 1973 radio interview.
[119] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 122.
[120] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 51-52.
[121] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 118.
[122] Ibid., 81, 120.

strength – often the most sensitive images which were also the most likely to be censored from circulation to the press.[123] But the SPA, according to Mark Levitch, also celebrated artistic presentation, thanks in part to its leadership under Pierre Marcel Lévi (1878-1953) who before the war had been an art history professor and an archivist at the Louvre.[124] With this license, Samama-Chikli, according to Guillot's analysis, took the most photographs of daily life in military zones.[125] He was unique in that he often took photos in a "straightforward" manner, which often included brutal scenes of death and destruction, unlike most other photographers who focused on upbeat, "contrived" photos for the purpose of propaganda publication.[126] Guillot's thorough and statistical analysis corroborates this assertion; he took more images of corpses than did any of his SPA colleagues.[127]

Yet the conclusions Guillot draws from this and other aspects of Samama-Chikli's wartime record are more critical, and open up questions about the role of class and age in his outlook. First, even in Samama-Chikli's candid photographs depicting everyday scenes or

[123] Ibid., 104, 191.
[124] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 46-47. He later dropped "Lévi" from his name.
[125] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 116-17.
[126] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 162-167.
[127] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 118.

Fig. 3: "Father at the Front, 1914-1918." Cineteca di Bologna.[128]

somber scenes not normally the subject of glorifying propaganda, Guillot notes that individual soldiers are not often identified or identifiable, their faces being obscured. Rather, she argues, common soldiers and even (or especially) the gravely wounded, are featured only as "part of the environment" and as a result lack a certain intimacy which one might expect. Soldiers heads and faces are frequently photographed from the side or the rear, as the lens points, as do soldiers' weapons, toward the objective or the enemy.[129] One wonders whether this might have been due to Samama-Chikli's attraction to the front lines to the extent that he became a participant in battle, rather than just a witness. It could also speak to the photographer's desire to preserve the

[128] Cineteca CFSC.02 privato sc.1. "Père au front, 1914-1918."
[129] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 117-18.

anonymity and privacy of his subjects; he might have considered doing otherwise exploitive. Levitch suggests that even in capturing images of dead soldiers, Samama-Chikli composed such photographs in a way that "offers some dignity while still making the corpse legible" to the viewer.[130]

Second, Guillot introduces the scant archival correspondence between Samama-Chikli and his commanding officers – a single letter, and the only one of its kind preserved in the SPA collections at ECPAD, in which details about pay, provisioning, and other aspects of daily life are revealed – to argue that his elite upbringing amounted to an obstacle to his camaraderie with common infantry. On February 20, 1916, Samama-Chikli wrote to SPA commander Pierre Marcel asking for more money while still on mission in Algeria and Tunisia. He had run short on funds because, "being obliged to stay in hotels and to eat in restaurants where the civilian population is not at all friendly to soldiers we are made to pay more that the locals in certain cities."[131] Guillot asks why Samama-Chikli was staying in hotels and eating at restaurants when, in theory, he might have been provided for in cantonment with his military unit. The speculative answers given are that perhaps he was simply being opportunistic, or that given his wealthy upbringing, he did not want to give up the daily comfort that he had come to expect.[132] I would suggest that in addition to his upbringing, his age might well have been a factor – Samama-Chikli was likely some fifteen years older than most of the soldiers with which he was embedded. Guillot interprets this as indicative of a lack of intimacy resulting from Samama-Chikli's background in Tunisian high society – "read: French [voire français]." Guillot supposes that he was unable to identify with common soldiers, showing himself to be far more

[130] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War," 164.
[131] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 82.
[132] Guillot, *Soldats de la mémoire*, 82-83.

comfortable with officers and authority figures, even in his wartime correspondence and visual record.[133] The author goes as far as to suggest that his "grandiloquence and megalomania,"[134] along with his more favorable traits such as "gratitude and, of course, professionalism,"[135] helped create and preserve an oeuvre so valuable to historians today.

There is no question that Samama-Chikli stood out during his wartime service with the SPA. The breadth and quality of his extensive output has been noted already. It is certainly true, too, that given his higher rank and long experience as an adventurer, artist, and reporter, that he found ways to leave his creative stamp on an effort that might otherwise have rendered only a sanitized body of propaganda. He was even alone in his propensity for appearing in his own photographs, including those such as Fig. 3 (above) in which he sat atop ruins, and others such as Fig. 6 (below) which featured important authorities and personalities – this had changed little from his surviving photographs from Messina in 1909.[136] We may only speculate as to the intention or meaning behind this self-depiction. Some such images present the photographer alone amid ruined and largely vacant landscapes, evoking the solitude of a life spent largely in transit. Perhaps, as Levitch suggests, Samama-Chikli sought to upend the impression of the anonymous photographer given by the production of thousands of images for military purposes, restoring agency to the artist.[137] Other evidence distinguishes Samama-Chikli's unusual war experience: scattered letters in his private archives (and not preserved in the official ECPAD archives), including correspondence with SPA commander Pierre Marcel, are indeed written almost as if to a peer rather than with the stern formality normally expected of a superior officer.

[133] Ibid., 117-121.
[134] Ibid., 237.
[135] Ibid., 123.
[136] Ibid., 118.
[137] Levitch, "The Visual Culture of Modern War,"165.

Again, Samama-Chikli's age was likely a factor, as was the respect one might expect between two accomplished artists.[138]

Fig. 4: Samama-Chikli with daughter Haydée, c. 1906-7. Cineteca di Bologna.[139]

I would not go so far as Guillot to speculate that Samama-Chikli was self-obsessed or was incapable of identifying with common soldiers. Corriou, as a historian focusing on the cultural import of Samama-Chikli's film and photography, argues similarly that his compositions reflect a man at ease and with a familiar air, his compositions "stand[ing] in contrast to most of the shots of the era when most posed, in a formal manner, in bourgeois ceremonial dress. Sitting on a camel, driven by a 'native,' he waves his hand joyfully for the photographer."[140] To a certain extent, the wealth he inherited permitted him to use expensive plates and equipment for scenes that others might find frivolous, though photograph in general remained a hobby of the

[138] Cineteca album documenti Nero 3, Letter from Pierre Marcel to Albert Samama-Chikli, excerpted by Samama-Chikli in a letter to the Resident General, 14 October 1916.
[139] Cineteca CFSC.02 privato sc.4. Undated, likely c. 1906-7.
[140] Corriou, "La Tunisie 'en temps modernes,'" 113.

wealthy in this period. Yet fragments from Samama-Chikli's private collection are also enlightening in this regard: a contact sheet from late 1906 (Fig. 4 above) depicts Samama-Chikli in an affectionate moment with his newborn daughter Haydée, lifting her up while dressed down in his undershirt; another series depicts his wife Blanche in bed with Haydée in a similar manner.[141] It may be the case that in his own comfort with the lens, so too were his subjects comfortable. Some scenes filmed behind the lines near Verdun in March 1918, preserved at ECPAD (Figs. 5 and 6 below), reveal not a detached and distant outsider's view, but rather an insider's view. Two Moroccan soldiers pose before the camera, smoking cigarettes and laughing; one steals the other's cap, revealing a surprising hairdo which he then tousles playfully.


Figs. 5 and 6: Stills from a film by Samama-Chikli. ECPAD, 14.18 B 299. 15 March 1918.

If anything, the most candid work he produced, from the warm-hearted film of Moroccan soldiers joking around behind the lines to the sensitive photographs from the Muslim hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, speaks to his talents as a genuine reporter and witness, rather than to an elitism or arrogance that detached him from common soldiers. Albert Samama-Chikli forged perhaps the greatest reportage of his life at the Western Front, despite his role as a broker of images of power for the propagandizing demands of the War Ministry, and despite the

[141] Cineteca CFSC.02 privato sc.4, undated.

technical and ethical difficulties of capturing images in such highly-charged, violent, and terrifying spaces. With extensive experience crossing physical and cultural borders, he could move with relative ease through many different settings to capture human moments at war, both the mundane and the dramatic.

Postwar film career

Samama-Chikli returned home to Tunis at the conclusion of the war, and the SPA was eventually disbanded in 1921. Mansour speculates from the comparison of two of Samama-Chikli's self-portraits that life at the front had taken its toll on his appearance, revealed in the deeper lines and weary eyes that marked his facial expression.[142] The war experience did not seem to derail Samama-Chikli's ambitions, however, as his most widely-known legacy was to come in the war's aftermath.

His artistic direction took a decidedly different turn after the war than did that of Abel Gance. In the waning months of the war, the latter directed *J'accuse*, known perhaps as one of the earliest and most famous pacifist films for its depiction of the war dead rising to question whether or not the survivors had "remembered the dead by living good lives in their absence."[143] To create the battle scenes, Gance even briefly re-enlisted in the SPA after his earlier dismissal for health reasons and shot film in September 1918 at the battle of Saint-Mihiel; other scenes of the "undead" drew from some two thousand soldiers on leave. The film seems to have mixed its message of pacifism with patriotic praise for the sacrifices of soldiers, but what is clear is that the

[142] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 233.
[143] Van Kelly, "The Ambiguity of Individual Gestures: Revisions of World War I in Abel Gance's 'J'accuse,' Alain's 'Mars ou la guerre jugée,' and Bertrand Tavernier's 'La vie et rien d'autre,'" *South Central Review* 17:3 (2000), 8.

war experience had had a profound effect on the artistic output of Gance.[144]

For Samama-Chikly, the longest tenured of the SPA operators, perhaps the war's violence had finally exhausted his fascination with destruction so as to rule out the topic of war in his films. His work in the 1920s can be located in a contemporary movement that turned toward fictional narratives and provoking scenarios, and away from the pre-war films that tended to focus on depicting simple scenes of daily life.[145] His first such film, *Zohra* (1922), opened at the Omnia Pathé cinema in Tunis. It played in some ways on the increasingly popular "oriental" mythologies and fantasies based on *One Thousand and One Nights*. The film cast his daughter Haydée, then sixteen years old, in the leading role as a young French woman stranded in a Bedouin camp community. Yet this was not purely the realm of fantasy: Samama-Chikli, experienced in ethnographic travels to the Tunisian interior, set the scene in a real Bedouin community.[146] Haydée's character, taken under the wing of the villagers and their local chief, is quickly dressed up in Bedouin clothing. Henna is applied to her face to match that of the village women who have cheerfully welcomed her. She stands out even while smiling amid the groups of women: her dress is more colorful and intricately patterned, and her complexion is much lighter than theirs. She soon "desires to make herself useful to her new family" by gathering and carrying jugs of water and grinding wheat for flour with the help of other women. Still, she misses home, and she prays to be returned safely to her parents. This continues until an intrepid aviator arrives, allowing her to return home to her parents.[147]

Samama-Chikli's second narrative film, *Aïn el-Ghazel, ou la Fille de Carthage* opened in

[144] Richard Abel, *French Cinema: the First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 302.
[145] Ibid., 238. Fragments and restored versions of Samama-Chikli's films are available online as well as at the archives of the Cineteca di Bologna.
[146] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 238.
[147] Albert Samama-Chikli, *Zohra*, Les Archives du Film du Centre National de la Cinématographie (1922), film. https://vimeo.com/202395002.

1924.[148] The film once again starred Haydée and was a romance and much more a dedicated fiction than *Zohra* was. His daughter played a young woman who, refusing to marry her brutal arranged suitor, flees to the desert on the wedding night, meeting her true love, a teacher, who is then shot by the family of the groom. Much as *Zohra* had with its airplane on set, *Aïn el-Ghazel* allowed Samama-Chikli to demonstrate his elite connections: the film featured scenes shot in the personal palace of Bey Mohamed El Habib in Carthage. Only Tunisians, among them a few professional actors, were featured in the film. Haydée by then had caught the eye of Hollywood, and even had a part alongside Ramon Navarro in the 1924 film *The Arab,* which had been shot in Tunisia. American-Irish director Rex Ingram invited Haydée to pursue her career in the United States starting with a five-year contract, but she was forbidden by her father given that she was still a teenager – a refusal that Tamzali later described as her "first sorrow."[149]

Haydée Tamzali, reflecting on the films in her notes for a radio interview in 1973, wrote that her father had "distanced himself from touristic Orientalism in realizing an encyclopedia of images of Tunisian life. The scenes were absent exoticism and 'local color.' He spent long weeks amid [Bedouin] communities and scrupulously translated the rural tradition of the era."[150] This differs from Kenneth Perkins' brief evaluation which claims that Samama-Chikli's films exemplified the "'mysterious Orient' genre popularized by Paramount Pictures' 1921 hit, *The Sheik*."[151] To be sure, there are elements that, given the context of French portrayals of North Africa at the time with which Samama-Chikli was familiar, might strike the contemporary viewer as exotifying. In *Zohra,* the stranded European girl's experience with the timeless work of

[148] On *Aïn El-Ghazel*, see: Ouissal Mejri, "The Birth of North African Cinema," in *Africa's Lost Classics: New Histories of African Cinema,* eds. Lizelle Bisschoff and David Murphy (Oxford: Legenda (Moving Image 5), 2014), 24-34.
[149] Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées,* 114-15.
[150] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali's notes for 1973 radio interview.
[151] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 181.

the village (including the carrying of a water jug) evoke tropes of photographs from what Malek Alloula called the "Golden Age of colonial postcards" between 1900 and 1930.[152] The twenties and thirties also saw the growing popularity of the *Cinéma Colonial* in France, a genre to which fellow SPA veteran Abel Gance contributed, though there is no evidence that Samama-Chikli had known the film pioneer personally.[153] That a Tunisian with important educational and cultural ties to France should have been involved in producing images that might be recognized as "Orientalist" is unsurprising if we consider Ali Behdad's understanding of Orientalist photography as a "network of aesthetic, economic, and political relationships that cross national and historical boundaries."[154] On the other hand, the almost documentary style of the film clearly draws on Samama-Chikli's experience as a reporter, taking no liberties to depict the kinds of menacing, violent, or sexualized images of Saharan nomads characteristic of French colonial depictions. Ouissal Mejri notes that the choice of jewelry and tattoos adorning Haydée's character in *Aïn el-Ghazel* actually reflects a mixture of Tunisian Jewish traditions, rather than an essentialized "Arab" culture.[155]

I offer the preceding brief discussion of Samama-Chikli's films to provide an impression of his eye for recreating the kinds of cross-cultural encounters he might have envisioned for himself over the course of his career. At most, I argue, his work reveals the real curiosity of a self-consciously modern urbanite; retroactive assumptions of a position between a "colonial-authentic" binary serve only to simplify a complicated individual.

[152] For example, see: Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 62, 63, 92.
[153] See: Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France*, 58-83.
[154] Behdad, *Photography's Orientalism*, 12-13.
[155] Mejri, "The Birth of North African Cinema," 27-28.

Conclusion

Samama-Chikli struggled over the ensuing years with his health, the depletion of his family's fortune, and the departure of his wife Blanche who, according to Mansour, had struggled with his tumultuous and itinerant lifestyle. She lived out the remaining days of her life modestly as a nurse caring for children in remote villages, and during the Second World War witnessed many of the same horrors her late husband had during the First World War, tending to the wounded on both sides of the war.[156] Samama-Chikli died much earlier, in 1934, after succumbing to cancer caused by gas inhaled at Verdun and exacerbated, perhaps, by his smoking habit.[157] His gravestone epitaph reads: "Former Volunteer Soldier; Decorated by the Military; Unceasing in Curiosity; Intrepid in Courage; Audacious in Enterprise; Stubborn in the face of Challenge; Resigned in Woe; He leaves behind Friends…"[158] It is unclear who wrote the memorial, and although people do not often write their own epitaphs, the omission of Samama-Chikli's family, as well as its somber conclusion, suggests that he may have done just that, a possibility not out of the question for the eccentric figure. The words, moreover, speak to the weight of Samama-Chikli's war experience, and indeed it was one of which he was very proud: letters and newspaper clippings attesting to his distinguished service and battlefield successes make up a large portion of the contents of his private archives in Bologna.

[156] Mansour, *Samama Chikly*, 268. Tunisia became an important theatre of the Second World War, and was the site of a series of battles resulting in the surrender of some 230,000 Axis soldiers near Tunis in May 1943.
[157] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali's notes for 1973 radio interview.
[158] Cineteca CFSC 01_Etno sc 20, Haydée Tamzali's notes for 1973 radio interview; Tamzali, *Images Retrouvées*, 115.

Fig. 7: "Verdun and its surroundings after the French reconquest. Président du conseil Georges Clemenceau at Mort-Homme, during a visit to the battlefield after the offensive of 20 August 1917."[159]

Raised around foreign dignitaries, educated in both Tunisia and France, and given access to the palaces of the Beys and an island in the Bay of Tunis, Samama-Chikli fed his passion for travel and photography in a way that few other Tunisians could. Many of his foundational skills as a photographer and cinematographer were acquired in France, and the Lumière Brothers were perhaps his greatest inspiration. Yet several factors complicate any reduction of Samama-Chikli and his work to assimilated mimicry or amateur dabbling. Even in his official capacity with the SPA, Samama-Chikli's gaze through the lens took a different direction, crossing the Mediterranean to document soberly the unthinkable violence of trench warfare and total war in Europe. His photographs of common North African conscripts, to be discussed in the next chapter, approached *tirailleurs* with the interest of a documentarian but with few assumptions

[159] ECPAD SPA-60-L-2907: Samama-Chikli, 20 August 1917. Mort-Homme, France.

about any essential ways in which they might have differed from European infantry. Later, his film *Zohra* starred his daughter as a stranded French woman in a North African Bedouin community, but one depicted with little of the exoticism one might expect. *Aïn El-Ghazel* featured a nearly exclusively Tunisian cast and crew. His works, when placed in their social historical context and in the particular biographical context of Samama-Chikli himself, reveal a hybridity of experiences which are not usefully placed on an abstracted spectrum between the local or "authentic" to the Orientalist, no matter his steadfast loyalty to France and its war effort.

Given the place Samama-Chikli held in his heart for France and for his experiences there during the war, it is altogether appropriate that his wartime photographs include several in which he appears proudly alongside French dignitaries and military leaders, most often in motion and at work rather than in rigid poses. In a photograph dated August 1917, in particular, we find the photographer trudging through the trenches near Verdun beside Georges Clemenceau, who less than three months later would become France's Prime Minister (for a second time) and Minister of War (Fig. 7 above).[160] Proud of his loyal service to France, distinctly Tunisian, and at ease whether traveling to Tripolitania or Italy, Samama-Chikli was more suited than most to navigate the Mediterranean, even amid its hardening national and imperial boundaries. It was precisely this fluidity that at once allowed for his productive trans-Mediterranean adventures while simultaneously attracting accusations of espionage for the Ottoman Empire. And while Samama-Chikli's wealth and upbringing set his war experience apart from that of most others involved, he shared in the ambiguity of colonial encounters at war – including those of rural Tunisian conscripts, to whom we now turn.

[160] Although it is interesting to note that Hannah Arendt described Clemenceau as a major proponent of colonial recruitment despite his ambivalence about the colonial enterprise as a whole as well as "one of the few true friends modern Jewry has known just because he recognized and proclaimed before the world that Jews were one of the oppressed peoples of Europe." Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 118-19; 132-33.

3. HEALING WOUNDS, NURSING TRANSGRESSIONS

Gravely injured and blinded on Europe's Western Front, 'Amr, a Tunisian soldier in the French Army, found himself far from home as he lay in a hospital bed in Lyon in 1917.[1] In a certain sense, the First World War was as much "his" war as it was that of French soldiers in hospital beds across the country. Like them, he had been called upon to fight France's enemies; his homeland, a Protectorate of France since 1881 and only nominally autonomous, was said to benefit from France's tutelage and must therefore partake in its defense. In another sense, however, his war experience would have been quite different from that of a French conscript: all *tirailleurs* faced lower wages, fewer avenues to promotion, and isolation from French civilian life.[2] Several scholars have even argued that colonial soldiers were used disproportionately as "cannon fodder" on the Western Front.[3]

Yet despite the French rhetoric that informed such discriminatory policies, 'Amr's experience of convalescence opened up new possibilities that transgressed the boundaries between colonial and metropolitan life.[4] In particular, he struck up a close personal relationship with his nurse, Berthe Cantinelli. For months, Cantinelli took 'Amr out on long walks around Lyon, often with other young women who admired how he endured his injuries with dignity. She invited him to dinner at her family's home each Sunday, opening up a window onto a French society that bore little semblance either to the brutal conditions of the trenches or to life at home in North Africa where he had little exposure to white women. When 'Amr eventually succumbed

[1] The name is spelled "Amor" in the French archival documents, but here I use the *IJMES* transliteration for the Arabic name.
[2] Fogarty, *Race and War in France,* 81. Meynier, *L'Algérie Revelée,* 417-419.
[3] Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops," 120.
[4] No last name is given for 'Amr; also unspecified is the full extent of his injuries.

to his wounds in May 1917, Cantinelli organized a burial ceremony attended by a number of local women, who laid flowers on his coffin.[5] Tragically, it seems in his convalescence and even in his death, 'Amr's tentative admission into a new community contested his place in the colonial order, so much so that Protectorate officials reacted with a paternalistic anxiety when they discovered that Cantinelli had written to 'Amr's mother in Tunisia to inform her of his death. Cantinelli disclosed, among other sentiments, that "what touched us the most was when 'Amr told us that he did not want to tell you that he was blind; alas, Madame, today you know the truth."[6]

Great losses of human life on the war's Western Front meant that Tunisians would face mass conscription into the French army and labor force from 1914 to 1918. Up to 73,000 Tunisians joined 140,000 Algerians and 25,000 Moroccans in making up a North African force of some 211,000 out of the roughly half million colonial subjects sent to work and fight for France. Nearly 90 percent of Tunisian *tirailleurs* were conscripts rather than volunteers.[7] The French public, including many officials, were wary of the presence of so many Arabs on French soil: in the trenches, factories, cafés, and cabarets of the metropole, the fear was that young soldiers and laborers from the Maghrib were not only liable to spread disease and chaos, but were also easily corrupted by anticolonialism, communism, and other subversive ideas. Military and colonial authorities thus took it upon themselves to ensure that *tirailleurs* would fight and work like modern, obedient subjects while being kept at a safe distance from the dangerous temptations of French women and the kind of seditious discussions that could lead North Africans to question their place in the colonial hierarchy. It was concerns such as these that led

[5] CADN 1TU/125/23 – Lettre de Cantinelli, 29 May 1917.
[6] CADN 1TU/125/23 – Le Contrôleur Civil de Kairouan, "Au sujet d'une infermière," 20 August 1917.
[7] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 27-35; DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 23.

Protectorate officials to single out Cantinelli's letter to 'Amr's mother and the subversive relationship it had exposed.

These anxieties led to new policies and practices, informing the creation of a number of hospitals specifically for Muslim North African soldiers during World War I. The "Muslim hospitals" built to contain and rehabilitate these soldiers could have become spaces of great discontent, magnifying the daily inequalities of colonial difference.[8] Some medical and military officials at these hospitals drew harsh lines of racial difference through orientalist re-education films and surveillance measures aimed at keeping *tirailleurs* away from French women, attempting to recreate colonial conditions within these metropolitan spaces—yet this was only part of the story. Wounded Tunisians faced a more ambiguous set of circumstances in their encounters at Muslim hospitals in Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, and even at general hospitals such as the one in Lyon in which 'Amr spent his last days. Their relationships with French nurses, emotional by nature of the very work of healing and rehabilitation, tested the patriarchal demand for a stoic distance separating them. Moreover, Tunisians' self-recognition of their important role in the French war effort prompted new efforts by military and colonial officials to cultivate a "modern but oriental" subjectivity among the wounded.

But what was it like for a Tunisian to heal, to learn new methods of labor, and to be cared for within the confines of these hospitals? What led French authorities to establish such spaces in the first place? And in light of Tunisians men's largely unprecedented encounters with French women and civilian life in general, what can medical spaces tell us about how war experiences of this kind provoked new understandings of belonging or difference? Through a critical reading of

[8] French documents interchangeably used the terms "Muslim hospital," "African hospital," and "colonial hospital" to refer to Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles. The vast majority of patients were Muslim North Africans, though patients from other colonies are occasionally mentioned.

personal correspondence, photographs, and military and medical records, we can better understand the impact of these encounters within the physical, racial, and gendered confines of French military hospitals. Approached with the analytical tools of historians of colonial medicine and gender, these little-understood spaces reveal how the war marked a significant rupture not only for Tunisia but also for North Africa as a whole: soldiers' wartime experiences included a wide array of moments in which they could grasp, question, and even cast aside the harsh sense of difference imposed by French colonial practice.[9]

Scholars have often highlighted how colonial medical projects' material and personnel shortages could exacerbate the dehumanization of non-European subjects. Despite the grandiose aims of European medical and colonial officials, local concerns and conditions often proved unavoidable. The same medical discourse that Fanon critiqued for its "depersonalization" and "systematic dehumanization" of the colonized could be equally alienating and oppressive when it was applied unevenly or unsuccessfully.[10] In French West Africa, for example, heavy-handed public health measures, informed by racist presumptions and lacking in resources, resulted in the violent relocation of entire indigenous communities; meanwhile, yellow fever, malaria, and the bubonic plague persisted through the 1910s.[11] In India, frugal British spending throughout the early twentieth century meant that psychiatric asylums were critically understaffed and short of provisions, making these spaces at best only occasionally medically effective and at worst up to

[9] For example, see: Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie,* 147.
[10] For example, see Megan Vaughan, "Introduction," in *Psychiatry and Empire*, ed. Sloan Mahone and Megan Vaughan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-4; Hannah-Louise Clark, "Expressing Entitlement in Colonial Algeria: Villagers, Medical Doctors, and the State in the Early 20th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48 (2016), 445-472.
[11] Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 68-70; see also: Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), 123-132.

five times more deadly for their patients than life at home.[12]

Similarly, during the First World War, French military and medical authorities faced shortages, significant input (usually unsolicited) from their patients, and conflicting visions for how policies would take shape on the ground. Yet whereas such limitations in many cases exacerbated the inhumane treatment of colonial subjects at the hands of French authorities, wartime contingencies also produced more personal encounters than normally occurred or were permitted between French women and Tunisian men. And while the cases outlined below were likely closer to the exception than the rule, they were significant enough to provoke a sustained response from French authorities, offering a glimpse at how the war strained colonial policies toward and discourses about their Muslim subjects. In military hospitals, I argue, material limitations and nurses' and soldiers' individual motivations created space for humanizing encounters unimaginable in prewar Tunisia. Tunisian *tirailleurs* found themselves caught between a newfound sense of belonging with the French public and a starker sense of the boundaries of French colonial practice. These encounters and relationships, unfolding within the confines of these military-medical "colonies within the metropole," could in this way be understood as a precursor to the many Franco-Maghribi relationships that nurtured the anti-colonial and feminist politics of the metropole in the 1920s.[13]

This chapter begins by establishing the circumstances of Tunisian soldiers' presence on French soil during the war, with particular attention given to how French fears and racial presumptions shaped *tirailleurs'* treatment as pathogenic and sexual threats. I then proceed to show how Tunisians' ambiguous encounters with French nurses strained norms of gender and

[12] James H. Mills and Sanjeev Jain, "Mapother of the Maudsley and Psychiatry at the End of the Raj," in *Psychiatry and Empire,* eds. Sloan Mahone and Megan Vaughan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 164-165.
[13] Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 77-110.

racial segregation, offering to both a space for humanizing interactions not commonly available during peacetime. I conclude by examining how Tunisians (as well as some Algerians and Moroccans) in Muslim hospitals experienced French authorities' uneven efforts to isolate and re-educate them, problematizing the notion that military and medical officials, despite their racially informed presumptions, were successful in—or even always interested in—preventing contact between Tunisians and French civilians.

A final clarifying note is in order with regard to the scope of this chapter's subjects: in documents concerning the hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois, Lyon, and Moisselles, French officials only sometimes discerned between soldiers of different North African countries, and often grouped them together as "North African," "Maghribi," "Muslim," or even "African." These terminological choices could have been made out of convenience, ignorance, or a desire to generalize about the racial, religious, or "civilizational" traits of their colonial subjects. But French stereotypes themselves sometimes distinguished between North Africans. Moroccans, for example, were apparently assigned frontline combat more often than Tunisians, who were seen as less than keen warriors.[14] Moroccans were also presumed to be more religious than Algerians and Tunisians and were thus treated differently by some French physicians.[15] Where possible, given the focus of this dissertation on the experiences of Tunisian migrants, I have highlighted Tunisian examples. On the other hand, North African soldiers regardless of origin shared the rough contours of their wartime experience, and their relationships with one another remain an important aspect of that experience deserving of further study beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[14] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 77-79.
[15] Clark, "Civilization and Syphilization," 94, 106-107.

Saviors and Suspects

Insufficient manpower troubled France throughout the war, but its turn to its colonies to fill the army's thinning ranks generated much debate.[16] Many worried that demanding military service of *tirailleurs* without granting them French citizenship would provoke resentment.[17] In particular, Muslim North Africans were not, with few exceptions, French citizens. Moroccans and Tunisians were technically considered subjects of their nominal "protected" sovereigns. In the army, they were treated much like their Muslim Algerian counterparts who, despite living under direct French sovereignty, nonetheless remained colonial subjects because of the perceived incompatibility of their Islamic personal status with the French civil code.[18] Whereas all North Africans had once been "Muslims" or "*indigènes*" on their home soil, their experience on the front and in the factories of France won them praise as "adopted children," "heroes" fighting for the cause of their French protectors.[19] Gilbert Meynier has argued that while Algerians suffered some discrimination at the front, they found the military hierarchy generally more egalitarian than the colonial order and found temporary purpose in the paternalistic calls for solidarity in the face of a common enemy.[20]

It would seem, however, that French preoccupations with loyalty reflected continued anxieties about how North and West Africans' position in the French colonial hierarchy might be overturned during the war. These anxieties formed the basis of a complex intelligence apparatus dedicated to tracking the activities of exiled intellectuals and religious figures, some of whom

[16] C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forster, "France, Africa and the First World War," *Journal of African History* 19:1 (1978), 14.
[17] Conscription provoked number of revolts in the French Empire, including a major one in south Constantine in 1916 and 1917. Meynier, *L'Algérie Revelée,* 591-598.
[18] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 230-269.
[19] Archives Nationales de Tunisie (hereafter ANT), Série E, 440/18A: 129, G. Louchet, Pharmacien – auxiliaire V.37, Moisselles.
[20] Meynier, *L'Algérie Revelée*, 743-745.

became Ottoman and German operatives (as further discussed in the next chapter). The latter distributed pan-Islamic, pro-Ottoman leaflets to North African soldiers in the French trenches, causing much concern among French authorities about North African conscripts' loyalty. Postal censors also noted that North African *tirailleurs,* aware of French concerns over their loyalty, developed secret codes to pass along the news of defeats and losses suffered in France and Belgium.[21] But despite some qualms about the lack of religious facilities and halal foods in Europe, Tunisian soldiers were largely indifferent to pro-Ottoman or "pan-Islamic" overtures. This was perhaps due in part to their low literacy rates or to the difficulties of circulating propaganda materials under French censorship, but more to the point, French authorities vastly overestimated the extent to which these mostly rural and illiterate young men felt any sort of attachment to an Ottoman Empire about which they knew very little.[22]

While the French administration was cautious in its concern for Tunisians' loyalty during the war, it recognized that it was important that France show itself to be the protector of Muslims around the world in order to justify its international and imperial ambitions, particularly if the Ottoman Empire were to crumble. The loyal Muslim soldier, it was hoped, would prove incontrovertibly that France was well-suited to this role and that it had been recognized as such by its subjects. As Gregory Mann explains, proclamations of *tirailleurs'* loyalty became "all but obligatory" platitudes in colonial officers' memoirs, and were later recycled by generations of historians.[23]

While on leave from the front, Tunisians and other colonial soldiers were initially free to

[21] Muhammad al-Adel Dabub, "Al-ra'i al-'am al-Tunisi wa al-ḥarb al-'alamiyah al-'ula: namadhij min khilal al-silsila al-far'iya 'al-shu'un al-'askariyah,'" (Tunisian Public Opinion and the First World War: Patterns from the Branch Records of Military Affairs) (Tunis: Université de Tunis I, 1992-1993), 170-171.
[22] Ibid., 208-212.
[23] Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 66.

enjoy the trappings of metropolitan French society. They indulged in the pleasures of this lifestyle alongside European soldiers and civilians, frequenting cafés, cabarets, and brothels – spaces that could offer alcohol, sex, and subversive political discussions. Of course, Tunisians were no more likely than their French counterparts to seek out or engage in activities deemed seditious or immoral. It was simply that military and colonial officers, informed by their collective wisdom from the colonies, believed they understood the "special mentality" of their Arab subjects in a way that French civilians could not. While *tirailleurs* were dismissed as primitive and harmlessly childlike, they were also said to be dangerous and duplicitous.[24]

French medical discourse was deployed in a variety of ways to explain and neutralize these dangers during the First World War, tinged in no uncertain terms by the racial or civilizational ideologies of colonial difference and notions of indigenous peoples' "*mentalité*." Richard Keller's study of the development of colonial psychiatry shows that the cutting edge Algiers School, for example, reinforced a hierarchy of racial distinction in determining that "mentally debilitated" North African soldiers, including those who demonstrated "passivity, inertia, nonchalance," were in fact "not … inferior to the mean of their race."[25] Syphilis, moreover, was described by physician Georges Lacapère as "the Arab disease," its prevalence in Morocco attributed not to race exactly, but rather to cultural habits and civilizational differences.[26] Other French physicians produced medical narratives about North Africans as simultaneously "shameless" and "pathologically modest" about syphilis and the difficult efforts

[24] Fogarty, "Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 67.
[25] Richard C. Keller, *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 130.
[26] Hannah-Louise Clark, "Civilization and Syphilization: A Doctor and His Disease in Colonial Morocco," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87:1 (2013), 104-106. British authorities were similarly preoccupied with syphilis in the Arab world during the First World War; see Mario Ruiz, "Manly Spectacles and Imperial Soldiers in Wartime Egypt, 1914-19," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45:3 (2009), 358-60.

to treat it, both in the colonies and among *tirailleurs* in the metropole.[27] Their bodies were considered a pathogenic threat to the colonial order: improperly trained and restrained, they could upend the gender relations, biomedical safety, and public order central to French imperial rule.

Inverting the Colonial Gaze

The threat of contact between white French women and colonial soldiers appears to have provoked urgent apprehension among French authorities. Such encounters could overturn the entire colonial order, an order dependent on patriarchal hierarchies of command in both military and civilian life.[28] At stake was the "prestige" of white women who, carefully guarded across European empires as "bearers of a redefined colonial morality," in Ann Laura Stoler's words, were suddenly exposed to indigenous subjects' perceived promiscuity.[29] To those who sought to abolish prostitution for this reason, for example, such prestige was "one of the undisputed foundations of our civilizing initiative."[30] Colonial troops' circulation of thousands of letters and postcards with photographs of nude French women further threatened to invert the hierarchy which placed the subjection of "exotic" indigenous women to a male European gaze at the top of the order.[31]

Prior to the First World War, mixed-race relationships and marriages were exceedingly rare in North Africa. In Algeria, home to far more European settlers than Tunisia, less than a dozen Franco-Algerian marriages per year were reported from 1891 to 1914. Less policy than an

[27] Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in 1870-1920* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 223-230.
[28] Ibid., 83.
[29] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 57.
[30] Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 121.
[31] Fogarty, "Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing," 75-77.

accepted norm, Neil MacMaster explains, this "mutually self-reinforcing segregation of the two communities reflected complex social, cultural, and political barriers between the dominant settlers and a subject colonial people."[32] During the First World War, then, encounters between colonial troops and European women, ranging from as mundane as nurse and patient to as controversial as husband and wife, exposed Tunisians to the highly-guarded, intimate domains of white French men and women.[33] Many North African soldiers expressed amazement that France behind the lines seemed to be nearly entirely composed of women, with so many men having left for the front.[34] Others were struck that French women in the metropole appeared much more welcoming than those they had encountered in the colonies.[35] *Marraines de guerre* ("godmothers of war"), French women who wrote letters to soldiers to boost their morale, often built close personal relationships with their pen pals, inviting them to their homes, taking them out to cafés, and buying them gifts. This practice was not limited to white soldiers.[36]

Sometimes these friendships developed: the "nightmare" of mixed-race couples and their progeny was perhaps the greatest embodiment of racial and gendered anxieties.[37] In official rhetoric North Africans were largely described as seductive and manipulative, with French women dismissed as naïve or even "hysterical" in their "benevolence" towards them.[38] The Tunisian soldier Salah ben Meneddes, for example, had been engaged to a French woman named Lucienne Bernard, whom he had met during his recovery at a hospital in Bordeaux. Bernard's

[32] Neil MacMaster, "The Role of European Women and the Question of Mixed Couples in the Algerian Nationalist Movement in France, circa 1918-1962," *French Historical Studies* 34:2 (2011), 359.
[33] Ibid., 69, 83.
[34] Stovall, "Love, Labor, and Race: Colonial Men and White Women in France during the Great War," in *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race,* ed. Tyler Stovall (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), 307.
[35] Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993), 172-178.
[36] Stovall, "Love, Labor, and Race," 304-305.
[37] Fogarty, "Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing," 68-69.
[38] Ibid., 69-70.

letter requesting information about her fiancé's wellbeing in January 1919 prompted a report from Tunisian officials describing him as a criminal despite his apparently clean record.[39] In a similar case, one Maria Ayroles requested information about the family of her fiancé, a wounded Tunisian soldier named Mohammed Boukali. Officials suggested in their reply that Ayroles had little concept of what a "painful life" she was in for among the indigenous people of her fiancé's hometown, the Berber-speaking mountain village of Sened, nor of the "intolerable" laws of the Muslim religion. They recommended that she end the engagement and distance herself from Boukali.[40]

To mitigate concerns over mixing with Europeans, military authorities subjected North African soldiers to a series of initiatives aimed at limiting their contact with French society, and with French women in particular. Jean-Yves Le Naour has argued that colonial soldiers, confined to barracks and hospitals under the uniquely vigilant watch of the military and colonial apparatus, were subject to far stricter measures of isolation and control than colonial workers in the metropole.[41] Stovall has also noted that by the end of the war, French officials prioritized their efforts to limit contact between French women and colonial subjects and were often successful in doing so by imposing fines, censoring mail, and even forbidding certain interracial marriages.[42] While on leave, North African soldiers fell increasingly under heightened levels of surveillance by the Service de l'organisation des travailleurs coloniaux. They were often restricted to "Moorish cafés" in military depots and prevented from visiting French families.[43] Moreover, as early as September 1914, North Africans' standard red and blue uniforms were

[39] CADN 1TU/125/14 – Le Contrôleur Civil du Kef à Flandin, 15 January 1919.
[40] CADN 1TU/125/14 – Au sujet d'un marriage entre Française et indigène, 25 October 1915.
[41] Jean-Yves Le Naour, "La question de la violation de l'interdit racial en 1914-1918. La rencontre des coloniaux et des femmes françaises," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 61:1 (2000), 173-174.
[42] Stovall, "Love, Labor, and Race," 312-13.
[43] Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée*, 416; Le Naour, "La question de la violation de l'interdit racial," 180-181.

replaced with khaki uniforms and *chechias* (the Maghrib's ubiquitous red caps), such that they could be easily distinguished from European soldiers.[44] West and North African sex workers were even hired to fill military brothels to prevent non-white soldiers' encounters with French civilians or with each other.[45] These efforts were intended to "keep the *indigènes* in their barracks or units, sheltered from the temptations of the metropolitan cities" – a common refrain.[46] Such prophylaxis, it was hoped, would mitigate the dangers *tirailleurs* supposedly posed to French society, while sculpting obedient subjects out of them.

But how effective were such measures, and were these efforts extended effectively to medical spaces? With regard to treatment and reeducation efforts, it is true that the hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois, Lyon, and Moisselles offered potent avenues for experimentation with racial theories and policies of colonial difference. Yet in the course of daily life for recovering *tirailleurs*, wartime exigencies demanded of French officials a more ambiguous, heterodox approach towards rehabilitation. As a result, efforts at segregation were unevenly applied or often skirted completely, opening the way for encounters even more transformative than what these soldiers might have come across in France's cafés or brothels. Between the presence of female nurses, French lessons and vocational training, and opportunities to claim recognition for their important role in protecting France, Tunisians found ways to cross colonial boundaries in ways unimaginable before the outbreak of war. It is with such a rupture in mind that I now turn to the relationships between wounded Tunisian soldiers and French nurses.

Nursing Transgressions in a Mixed Hospital

[44] Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée*, 416.
[45] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race,* 116-118.
[46] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 310, "Hospitalisation des blesses Musulmans, 1916-1918."

Some officials' attempts to isolate North Africans from civilian French society were simply confounded by the circumstances of war.[47] As casualties mounted, male nurses and doctors struggled to keep up. The need for more doctors at the front drained medical facilities from both the colonies and France behind the lines, as nonprofessionals increasingly took up medical tasks.[48] Meanwhile, women joined the effort in droves, with some 100,000 French women—many of them middle-class Red Cross volunteers with little more than a couple months of training or experience—serving as nurses by the end of the war. And while French officials often pressed for more stringent training and qualification requirements for nurses, the sheer extent of wartime need, combined with women's ardent desire to contribute to national service, took precedence.[49] It would be a mistake to understate the extent to which women, despite certain officials' misgivings, were widely considered to play an invaluable role in the French war effort.[50] Still, as female nurses had not been allowed into military hospitals until 1907, nursing in France was far from the established "feminine profession" that had begun to take shape in Britain and elsewhere from the time of Florence Nightingale.[51] In their relative novelty, French women nurses drew both praise and criticism, colored by the expectation that they act as heroic, selfless, and saintly "mothers." But failing this, nurses could be accused of frivolity and sexual impropriety, their feminine presence supposedly softening the will of the nation's soldiers.[52]

French authorities were not all in agreement about limiting contact between French women and North African men, both within and beyond hospital walls. For example, Center-

[47] Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée*, 415.
[48] Clark, "Expressing Entitlement in Colonial Algeria," 456-57.
[49] Katrin Schulthiess, *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 159-161. See also: Christine E. Hallett and Alison S. Fell, "Introduction," in *First World War Nursing: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2-5.
[50] Margaret H. Darrow, "French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I," *American Historical Review* 101:1 (1996), 82-84.
[51] Schulthiess, *Bodies and Souls*, 151-153; 174-175.
[52] Ibid., 160-162.

right parliamentary deputy Albin Rozet, a friend of Young Tunisian reformer Abdelaziz Thaalbi, supported a policy of "association between the two races," arguing in June 1915 that French families should be allowed to host *tirailleurs* on leave.[53] Director of the Service de Santé de l'Armée Justin Godart, by contrast, allegedly responded to soldiers' "misinterpretations" of their nurses' care by calling in 1916 for female hospital personnel to be prevented from giving direct care to Muslim soldiers. Some medical officers listened: one Dr. Maclaud in Marseille sent away his female contingent of nurses from the Red Cross. But women on the whole remained an important part of the care given to Tunisians, Algerians, and Moroccans at many other hospitals.[54]

The experience of 'Amr, the wounded and blinded Tunisian soldier cared for by nurse Cantinelli in Lyon as first described in this chapter's introduction, gets to the heart of these charged encounters. The closeness of their relationship is suggested by the leaves of Cantinelli's personal letter to 'Amr's mother, which sit squeezed in between pages of a Protectorate official's report at the French diplomatic archives in Nantes. In the handwritten letter, Cantinelli wrote that 'Amr's "death has been truly felt in our house, where 'Amr came regularly to eat on Sunday for the past three months." 'Amr was taken by Cantinelli on walks around the city, and based on what we know about *marraines de guerre*, one could imagine that he learned some basic French and participated in a number of leisure activities and games. The kind of close contact already controversial within the confines of the hospital could prove even more profound when it moved to the civilian spaces of France. Cantinelli wrote to 'Amr's mother that "once I got to know your little 'Amr, I became interested in him; I took him out myself twice a week, and other days … other young girls and I all adored him and learned to admire his beautiful nature which suffered

[53] On Albin Rozet's friendship with Thaalbi, see Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul,* 141.
[54] Le Naour, "La question de la violation de l'interdit racial," 182-184.

nobly through his disabilities." The nurse assured 'Amr's mother that he was well taken care of, surrounded by "affection": she held his hands in hers, ensuring his good spirits right up until his death. His final words, according to Cantinelli, were: "Tell my brother never to go off to war."[55]

Tragically, it seems that in his convalescence and even in his death, 'Amr's tentative admission into the French civilian realm had so contested his place in the colonial realm that Tunisian Protectorate officials reacted to Cantinelli's letter with a paternalistic anxiety. Cantinelli's letter was perhaps only preserved because it had drawn the attention of the Civil Controller of Kairouan, a provincial official appointed by the Resident General to oversee local civilian affairs, who was dismayed by this "touching" but ultimately ill-conceived and naïve gesture. The report, notably sent directly to Tunisia's highest authority, Resident General Gabriel Alapetite, acknowledged first that Cantinelli's letter would "certainly provoke ['Amr's mother's] deep gratitude." The agent went on to note that "one can only be moved when reading it, and filled with admiration and respect for these women who follow with so much gentle devotion, even in in the face of death, the noble path to which they've been drawn."[56]

From there, however, the report turns to its ultimate purpose: to warn the head of the Tunisian Protectorate of the dangers posed by nurse Cantinelli's letter. She had bypassed the established protocol for notifying kin of fallen colonial soldiers. No doubt the Civil Controller would have been caught off-guard if 'Amr's family had come unexpectedly to claim their son's pension, Cantinelli's letter in hand. The report noted a series of indiscretions: informing 'Amr's mother that her son had been blinded, sending along his remaining possessions directly including a watch and *chechia* (the popular red cap worn across the Maghrib) she had given him, and arranging a burial with flowers and a palm laid on the coffin by "pious and maternal Catholic

[55] CADN 1TU/125/23 – Lettre de Cantinelli, 29 May 1917.
[56] CADN 1TU/125/23 – Lettre de Cantinelli, 29 May 1917.

women," as the nurse had put it. The latter, the Civil Controller noted, was bound to "produce unease and anxiety instead of the desired effect." The report goes further, however, revealing the deep apprehension evoked by the representatives of the French colonial system:

> The signatory of this letter would perhaps be sorry to hear my criticisms, however convinced I am of her sincerity and of the goodness of her intentions; but this is precisely because these women do not know the *mentalité* and the habits of the *indigènes,* whom they risk misunderstanding or being misunderstood by.[57]

What French officials held to be "misunderstandings" were, in this case, a dramatic reconfiguration of colonial understandings. While it is not clear whether Cantinelli was a career nurse or a volunteer, the Civil Controller's report seems to suggest that her misconduct was accidental and common to many of "these women" who served during the war. It is also evident from the report that nurses like Cantinelli were not always steeped in the discourses and policies of colonial and racial difference. "*Mentalité,*" for example, was a frequent refrain in French writing about the indigenous "mind," both among colonial administrators and academics. The term was often deployed to explain all manner of non-European cultural practices (as in Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's 1922 work *La mentalité primitive*).[58] It was also used to explain away indigenous resistance to European policies and practices. If the civilizing mission was meant to bring order and reason to non-European peoples, then would not a rejection of such a mission amount to irrationality or even insanity?[59]

In this case, Cantinelli's failure, willful or otherwise, to adhere to colonial and military protocols was precisely what had catalyzed her humanizing encounter with 'Amr and, by extension, his family. In writing her letter, she had presumed a certain rationality in and parity with 'Amr's mother, whom she may have seen as her counterpart. To Protectorate officials,

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013), 72-77.
[59] For example, see: Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 130-150.

however, ‘Amr’s mother was at risk of reacting harshly to news of her son’s blindness, death, and non-Muslim burial. Certainly Amr’s grim warning to his brother would not have inspired confidence in the French war effort. But more than this, the ambiguous nature of her and other European women’s relationships with wounded *tirailleurs* were best not exposed to North Africans back home. The point here is not to determine whether Cantinelli’s care for ‘Amr arose from romantic, maternal, or pious sentiment; at any rate, her true emotions or intentions are unknowable to the historian. Rather, what is significant is that Cantinelli’s expression of such compassion in a letter to ‘Amr’s mother amounted to an act of transgression.

Cantinelli’s letter, and the reaction it provoked, was not an altogether exceptional occurrence. Nurses frequently pledged their love for and admiration of these soldiers who claimed to have “saved France,” leading one officer to suggest that *tirailleurs* be reminded sternly and in the presence of nurses that they had been mobilized to defend their own homes as much as they were to defend France.[60] It was enough that these soldiers had begun to feel that a certain debt or elevated status was owed to them, to say nothing of the blow to French masculinity symbolized by the need to recruit non-European soldiers. French authorities had already faced calls from figures as influential as Blaise Diagne to extend greater political rights and even French citizenship to colonial soldiers.[61] While *tirailleurs* were paid less than their French counterparts, injured veterans of North Africa – regardless of race, religion, or political status – were eventually granted equal pensions in a 1919 law. The orphans of indigenous Algerian soldiers, moreover, later became the center of much debate over the empire’s responsibility for repaying the “blood tax.”[62]

[60] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 214-215.
[61] Ibid., 239-241.
[62] Dónal Hassett, “*Pupilles de l’Empire*: Debating the Provision for Child Victims of the Great War in the French Empire,” *French Historical Studies* 39:2 (April 2016), 321, 342.

Much has been written about the important psychological and emotional roles played by nurses in military hospitals during the First World War. They, like soldiers, felt the need to live up to certain patriotic ideals—in their case, the "ministering angel" who approached the wounded with a stoic compassion.[63] Through such care they consciously sculpted their roles to mimic those of soldiers' sisters and mothers, often acting as the wounded's only emotional link to home, or in the case of Cantinelli, literally opening their homes to soldiers.[64] Given the incredible physical and psychological burdens nurses faced in their daily work, moreover, I propose that the professional, stoic distance demanded by French authorities may not always have been possible.[65] As Paul Fussel explained in his seminar work on First World War literature, just as men's physical strength had been bested by the emergent technologies of heavy artillery and machine guns, so too had their ability to "penetrate" and "thrust" through enemy trenches.[66] In other words, the unprecedented nature of this war had wrought male impotence on a mass scale. Carol Acton explains that British nurses and wounded soldiers were brought into an interdependence through the fulfillment of their gendered roles at war, men wearing the "badges" of their wounds and women dressing those wounds dutifully, restoring men as best they could to their masculine physicality.[67]

Yet whereas such a reading of the interdependence of British nurses and soldiers points to an overstepping of gendered boundaries, the interdependence between French nurses and

[63] Carol Acton, "Negotiating Injury and Masculinity in First World War Nurses' Writing," in *First World War Nursing*, 123-24.
[64] Kirsty Harris, "All for the Boys: The Nurse-Patient Relationship of Australian Army Nurses in the First World War," in *First World War Nursing*, 74-75.
[65] See: Carol Acton and Jane Potter, *Working in a World of Hurt: Trauma and Resilience in the Narratives of Medical Personnel in Warzones* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
[66] Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-75, citing Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 293-309.
[67] Acton, "Negotiating Injury and Masculinity," 125.

Tunisian soldiers could violate both gendered *and* colonial boundaries. In such an encounter, what other dynamics did the nurse–patient relationship assume? First, it seems that the intimacy of their close quarters sometimes gave way to romance and even sex. Military authorities lamented that wounded colonial soldiers, often hospitalized for months on end, found themselves pampered by nurses while they "malingered."[68] French reports, citing incidents of "sexual favors" given to the wounded, criticized the "hysterical folly" of the nurse-*mondaine*, the "emancipated woman" who had brought her assertive sexuality out of sequestration and closer to the front.[69] Nurses presumably had their own reasons for building relationships with their patients (sexual or otherwise), be they out of compassion, patriotism, religious devotion, or romantic desire. Furthermore, non-white men and French women, disenfranchised and facing inequalities and disciplinary measures, shared the fact that they were both outsiders suddenly asked to perform duties central to the preservation of the French nation.

Despite the possibility of sex and romance, more innocent dynamics were usually at play between French nurses and Tunisian soldiers. First, although officials had begun efforts to secularize hospitals by the turn of the century, nurses of religious congregations and their ideals of pious commitment remained central to the character of nursing in France.[70] Secondly, nurses often took on the character of "nurse-as-mother" for wounded soldiers who were far from home, and referred to their patients as "boy," "my dear little one," and so on.[71] North and West Africans were in fact regularly described in such an infantilizing manner, as in the popular "*Y'a bon!*" slogan of Banania advertisements which played on the image of the smiling, harmless West

[68] Mann, *Native Sons*, 166.
[69] Fogarty, "Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing," 69-70.
[70] Schulthiess, *Bodies and Souls*, 82-84.
[71] Acton, "Negotiating Injury and Masculinity," 128.

African, or the more general characterization of colonial soldiers as "adopted sons."[72] Perhaps then a familial relationship could flourish where a sexual or romantic one could not. In other words, such a relationship could afford the sort of safe distance expected between Tunisian men and French women in such a setting while still providing a moment of exploration that pushed, but did not quite breach, the normative racial and gendered boundaries of colonial difference. This "innocent" kind of affection fell, or could appear to fall, within the scope of a nurse's duties.

Historians of emotion have rightfully warned against attempting to determine the true emotions or "gut feelings" of our historical subjects; we can only interpret the historically mediated expressions of those experiences. Analysis of emotional expression, Nicole Eustace explains, "requires critical attention to the contemporary ideas about emotion that defined the message conveyed by the expression (or omission) of emotion in any particular historical context."[73] In the case of Cantinelli's letter, close attention to the trajectory of the text itself also offers a compelling window into the historical stakes of both expression and omission. That is, the letter itself represented a certain *expression* of her sentiments, shaped of course by her personal feelings, but also by nurses' social and gendered expectations, and by the norms of writing such a letter of condolence. In turn, officials' dismay that this expression had not been "omitted" reflects wider French anxieties about women's changing roles, Muslim anti-colonialism, and the long-term political impacts of the war.

While we lack the biographical details that might allow for a more substantial exploration of the role of emotions in this encounter, the textual evidence suggests that nurses such as

[72] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 157-159.
[73] Nicole Eustace, Eugenia Lean, Julie Livingston, Jan Plamper, William M. Reddy, and Barbara H. Rosenwein, "AHR conversation: The historical study of emotions," *The American Historical Review* 117: 5 (2012), 1505.

Cantinelli and patients such as ‘Amr could find themselves in relationships marked by varying degrees of romance, maternalism, and piety. It is clear, moreover, that encounters between French nurses and wounded Tunisian soldiers could provoke an overturning of the colonial order and of the polite fictions of patriotic duty on which it insisted. Such provocations also laid bare for *tirailleurs* that they could, to a certain extent, attain aspects of a “French” life. For a seriously wounded soldier like ‘Amr, finding oneself taken into the familial domain or quite simply feeling the touch of a nurse like Cantinelli, went beyond official recognition of their sacrifices at the front line.

The “Muslim Hospitals” at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles

Would ‘Amr and Cantinelli’s encounter have been different within the confines of a “Muslim hospital,” such as those at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, rather than at the general hospital in Lyon? On the one hand, the wartime spaces that afforded such boundary crossing were for the most part short lived and tightly policed. Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, designated specifically for Muslim North Africans, offered French officials an opportunity to better isolate and re-educate their subjects along lines deemed more appropriate to colonial interests. On the other hand, it would be an exaggeration to think of France’s wartime Muslim hospitals simply as prisons, despite the disciplinary methods of surveillance and control they featured.[74] Rather, one might think of them as “colonies within the metropole,” in the sense that they too often lacked funding, supplies, personnel, and a coherent vision for their operation. Such wartime contingencies meant that Muslim hospitals allowed and even produced the spaces in which otherwise-proscribed encounters between Tunisian soldiers and French women could take shape.

[74] Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 54-56.

Specialized hospitals were not constructed only for North African Muslims. Senegalese soldiers were brought to isolated hospitals in southern French towns such as Fréjus for the winter, where it was hoped that they could recover from weather-related afflictions while being "re-Senegalized" so as not to get used to being treated as anything other than colonial subjects.[75] Similarly, the Jardin Colonial at Nogent-sur-Marne housed perhaps the largest and most diverse group of colonial soldiers at the time, its Hôpital bénévole serving over 300 wounded *tirailleurs*. Its "oriental" architecture, prayer spaces, and non-Christian cemeteries reflected its role as a flagship for French propaganda, which had been one of the grounds' primary functions since hosting a colonial exposition for the Société française de colonization in 1907. The massive Brighton Royal Pavilion, built to evoke an imperial Indian grandeur, would serve a similar role on the southern English coast during the war.[76]

French efforts to build Muslim hospitals during the First World War were unprecedented. It was not until 1935, after a controversial decade of planning, fundraising, and political negotiations, that the well-known Franco-Muslim hospital would be built in Bobigny, outside Paris.[77] The Muslim hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles were established much more haphazardly amid the turmoil of war. Neither complex was built for the occasion, both having been repurposed for their new roles in 1915. Carrières-sous-Bois, located a few miles north of Paris, had been a sanatorium prior to the war. Moisselles, found just beyond Paris' western suburbs, had been a civilian psychiatric asylum. While studies of the Jardin Colonial and the Brighton Royal Pavilion may reveal much about how colonial soldiers factored into the

[75] Gregory Mann, "Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa," *American Historical Review* 110: 2 (2005), 414-416. See also: Mann, *Native Sons*, 166-168.
[76] Samuel Hyson and Alan Lester, "'British India on Trial': Brighton Military Hospitals and the Politics of Empire in World War I," *Journal of Historical Geography* 38:1 (2012), 18-34.
[77] Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 172-176.

international politics of colonialism, the smaller and decidedly lesser-known hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, through documents preserved in Tunisian and French archives, reveal more about how North Africans encountered, contested, and constituted those politics on a daily basis.

One article in *France-Maroc*, a monthly review aimed at publicizing French national and economic interests in Morocco, marked these hospitals as part of an effort to honor North Africans' sacrifices in the name of French civilization. These "tough children of Africa" would not have to suffer their own presumed fatalism:

> It is a fact that the dispositions common to the French cannot be entirely applied to these brave *indigènes* so different in spirit, manners, language, religion, and race, and the political and military statuses which unite them with the metropole are distinct, according to whether they come from our colonies or protectorates in Africa, Asia, or Oceania. It is above all recommended to the hospital directors to ensure that the natives receive the same care and are surrounded with the same solicitude as the soldiers of the mother country [France].[78]

At least in such a promotional statement, the care provided to colonial soldiers would have to be equal to that given to French soldiers, yet the methods of such care were said to depend on the race and civilization of the patients in question. Such contradictory logic was commonplace in colonial rhetoric. The author of the report went on to highlight a few observations on daily life during his visit to Moisselles, including the varieties of food served: French dishes cooked with butter or oil rather than pig lard, and couscous served every Thursday. The Ramadan fast was facilitated for those who wished to observe it; burial rites and other religious affairs were administered by North African imams.[79] The hospital at Carrières-sous-Bois had a total of 150 beds, but it is unclear from this or other reports just how many patients or staff were present at

[78] J. Quantin, "Dans les hôpitaux musulmans," *France Maroc: Revue mensuelle, organe du Comité des Foires du Maroc*, 15 July 1918, 209-210.
[79] Ibid., 210-211.

Moisselles or Carrières-sous-Bois at any given time, or what types of injuries of illnesses were most prevalent. Given their distance from the front and their emphasis on the retraining and behavioral transformation of their patients, they likely housed soldiers with chronic or long-term medical conditions. Undated photographs reveal that doctors at Moisselles used electrotherapy, a controversial but increasingly popular practice during the war.[80] We also learn from one report that at Moisselles thirty-eight *tirailleurs* died of their wounds between June 1916 and July 1919, twenty-nine of whom were buried in plots on the grounds of the hospital; the remains of six others were repatriated after the war.[81]

Despite being designated specifically for Muslim North African soldiers, the hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles included women on staff, most of them nurses with the Red Cross. The sheer shortage of available men meant that women had to fill such roles even where they were not preferred by officials, particularly at such ad-hoc institutions as these.[82] Yet the presence of female nurses might also suggest a more practical and open-minded approach to providing care to North Africans. French officials should not be taken as a monolith on this subject, as it is likely that the value of well-supervised nurses' work outweighed the potential risks that some associated with their presence. Considering that wartime photographs were often (though not always) posed and arranged deliberately, images taken by Tunisian photographer Albert Samama-Chikli of the French Army's Section photographique et cinématographique suggest that despite officials' misgivings, some military hospitals demonstrated a relaxed atmosphere open to daily proximity between nurses and North Africans.

[80] "Nos troupes de l'Afrique du Nord: le Service de Santé s'occupe de nos soldats musulmans," *Le Monde Illustré*, 1 June 1918.
[81] "Le religieux musulman et l'armée française (1914-1920)," Michel Renard, accessed September 1, 2016, http://etudescoloniales.canalblog.com/archives/2014/08/23/30279901.html.
[82] Mann, *Native Sons*, 166.

Fig. 8: ECPAD SPA 32 L 1724D. “Military hospital for African Troops at Carrières-sous-Bois.” 25 October 1916. Samama-Chikli, Albert.

Fig. 9: ECPAD SPA 32 L 1724D. “Military hospital for African Troops at Carrières-sous-Bois.” 25 October 1916. Samama-Chikli, Albert.

Much like Cantinelli’s letter, these photographs offer few biographical details about those depicted. Nonetheless, when closely examined, they reveal some clues about the possibilities for

close daily contact between *tirailleurs* and French nurses. In Figure 8 (above), two nurses stand relaxed and smiling among a group of wounded but well-humored North Africans. The nurse on the right, in particular, appears comfortable and accessible as she leans against a balcony and looks, smiling, at a standing soldier, their backs to the Seine. In Figure 9 (above), a nurse sits on a soldier's bed watching closely as he plays checkers with another seated soldier. In these arrangements, as in many other photographs from this particular visit, nurses are frequently portrayed seated at the level of the colonial soldier while male officials are almost always standing, perhaps reflecting the different gendered roles and hierarchy expected in such a medical-military setting.[83] Segregation does not appear to be a factor; in fact, daily intermixing almost appears to be celebrated by the photographer. For all the rhetoric and policies surrounding the perceived threat of interracial intimacy, in these medical settings, gendered roles ironically set French men apart from North African men, while women, presumed to have a greater capacity to provide comfort and support, found themselves right alongside *tirailleurs*.

The scene in Figure 10 (below) is decidedly more somber, as an injured soldier is tended to by a doctor and two nurses; another official stands to the side taking notes. Quite striking in this photograph, however, is the nurse who sits on the hospital bed closely alongside the soldier, holding his hand which, exposed below a bulging swath of bandages, appears to be heavily swollen or perhaps artificial. The nurse, who wears white gloves, looks down solemnly at his hand in her lap.

[83] For example, see the following photographs in the series: ECPAD SPA 32 L 1709-1710, 1714, 1731D.

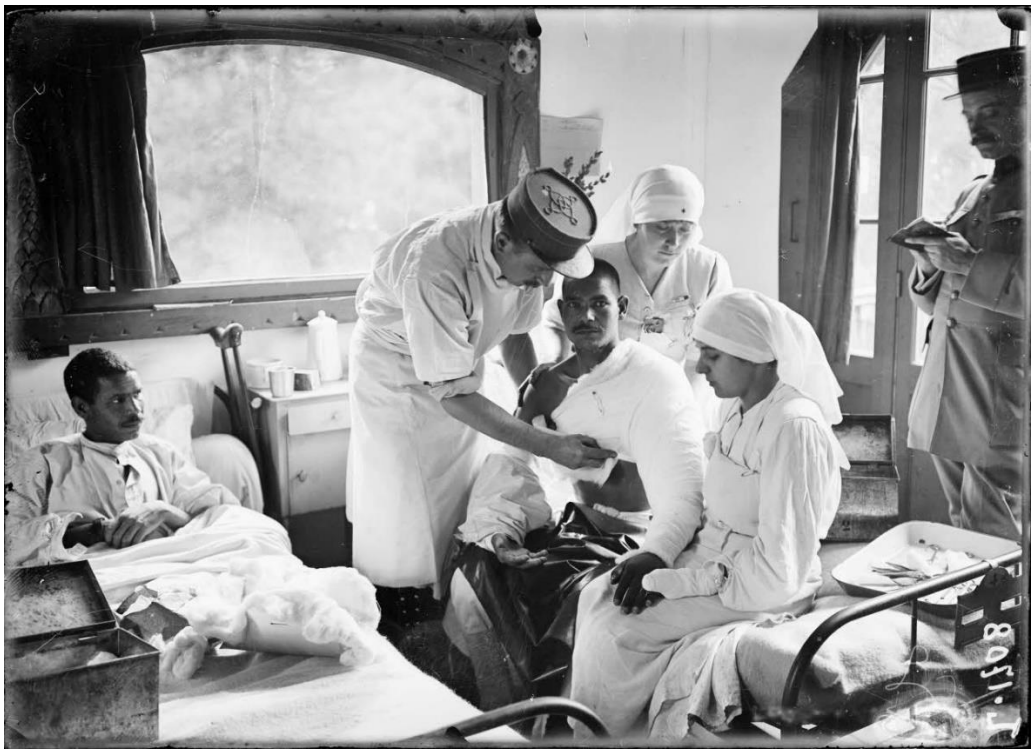

Fig. 10: ECPAD SPA 32 L 1708. "The military hospital for African Troops at Carrières-sous-Bois." 25 October 1916. Samama-Chikli, Albert.

Without speculating about the specific circumstances of the scene depicted, it is worth considering the importance of the physical touch which "can be said to open up the body at a more intimate, affective level."[84] While nurses' hands were involved in the most gruesome and taxing aspects of wartime surgery and amputation (often without anesthesia), there were many cases like the one pictured here in which nurses' hands did the enduring work of steadying and reassuring the wounded. Touch could be tender, but it could be also be violent and bruising, a tactile witness to the "frenzied grips" of a soldier in physical or emotional pain.[85] In this sense, this single image dramatically encapsulates the ambiguities of this encounter, its distances and proximities, and its understandings and humanity. One wonders about the importance of touch

[84] Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.
[85] Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, 178, citing Katherine Hodges North, "Diary: A Driver at the Front," Imperial War Museum, 92/22/I, 86.

for ‘Amr who, robbed of his sight at the front, would have held many a hand during his final months in Lyon.

Reeducation, Recreation, Difference

Fig. 11: ECPAD SPA 87 D 5172. “French classes, Moisselles, Muslim Hospital.” Seine-et-Oise. 8 May 1918. Brissy, Edouard.

The hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles played host to a number of efforts to proactively re-educate its patients, as officials were concerned with more than just North Africans’ encounters with French women. In fact, one function of the hospital at Moisselles, as described by its head doctor, was to teach North Africans to read and write French (see Fig. 11 above). While this decision might appear to contradict the widely expressed desire to limit rather than promote North Africans’ access to French civilian life, it was a tactical one: closely monitored lessons for a small number of noncommissioned colonial officers could help compensate for the utter lack of French officers who understood Arabic.[86] North Africans were

[86] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, “Cours élémentaire de Français et de leçons de Choses aux Blessés arabes de l’Hôpital VL 37 de Moisselles.” 5 June 1918.

sometimes taught by teachers from a local public school, one of whom described his half-dozen students as "applying themselves well, very attentive, and making marked progress," though there were not enough French teachers available to teach more than about three hours per week.[87] Once again, the exigencies of war sometimes demanded practical actions that permeated the stricter boundaries of colonial rhetoric.

Still, recovering North African soldiers faced the daily iterations of French notions of colonial and racial difference. Officials and physicians around the French Empire often expressed that moral uplift was central to economic development and public health projects.[88] Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles were no exception, as doctors and support staff believed their mandate to be both medical and moral. Since few North African conscripts could read, magazines and books typically enjoyed by European soldiers were nearly useless to all but a "very small elite." Doctors tried to introduce a variety of French lawn games, such as *tonneaux, boules,* and tennis, but they were met with little success, confounding French authorities who presumed that such games would be enjoyed universally: "Arabs have in effect a childish mentality, and, like children, break their toys after having a moment of fun. In any case, they are not used to this type of recreation and do not appreciate its charm." Cards, dominoes, and other indoor games were slightly more successful in officials' eyes, but were still marred by gambling and fighting. Moisselles soldiers went on supervised walks through the neighborhood during the midday "free quarter" on Thursdays and Sundays, but if they were caught drinking, they often found themselves imprisoned for this proscribed practice. Similar scenes played out among countless other groups of European soldiers behind the lines, yet embedded in such descriptions

[87] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Cours d'Adultes." 5 June 1918.
[88] For example, see: Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 48-54; Keller, *Colonial Madness,* 22-30.

of North African soldiers was the presumption of a primitive or childlike *mentalité*.[89]

Morale was a continued concern, as officials reported that North Africans still exhibited all manner of "dark ideas," "critical attitudes," and "boredom" attributed to their many injuries, to inactivity, or to "quasi-religious qualms."[90] Consul General M. Piat, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported an initiative that brought theatrical performances and film screenings to hospitals in and around Paris; Moisselle's staff hoped that this approach would address North Africans' morale problems.[91] Medical officials were particularly proud of the Army's efforts to re-educate their colonial soldiers through cinema, a cutting-edge approach increasingly used by both the Entente and the Central Powers. Such screenings at Moisselles were a major occasion for all involved; even the head doctor, "despite his many duties," would attend these three-hour sessions before dinner on Sunday.[92]

The head doctor noted proudly that not one wounded soldier had been forced to attend these screenings, but that sheer curiosity had given way to increased interest in the films, with fewer and fewer North Africans choosing to leave the building on their days of leave. Neither "by threat nor by punishment," but rather by "gentleness, by persuasion, and above all by example," the French had "imposed [their] authority and safeguarded discipline. We have often come to hear one of the wounded saying to a comrade who had made a mistake: 'don't do that, the head doctor won't be happy.'" Helpful in this regard was a Tunisian interpreter named Mustapha ben Saïdane, who had been wounded in action and was "of an elite class of North African society and of an education far superior to his coreligionists." He was described in

[89] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Influence de cinématographie sur le moral et la discipline des blessés musulmans en traitement."
[90] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, Dr. Gendron, Médecin-Auxiliaire à Moisselles. "Utilisation du cinématographie pour la rééducation des blessés"; "Influence de cinématographie…"
[91] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Influence de cinématographie..."
[92] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, G. Louchet, Pharmacien – auxiliaire V.37, Moisselles.

reports as having kindly volunteered to help explain the films to his North African comrades, often leading to prolonged discussions about topics ranging from agriculture and natural history to the appreciation of cinematography itself.[93] Pharmacist G. Louchet's report reveals that screenings were held on Thursdays and Sundays, chosen precisely because these were the soldiers' days of leave: the goal was "keeping [them] in the hospital. Have we succeeded? Certainly yes; the great number prefers the cinema to the cabaret."[94]

The educational promise of film went further: according to Moisselles' Head Doctor, the goals to be fulfilled by propaganda films included, in the following order, "the reestablishment of discipline through healthful distraction," "education and the development of intellect and artistic sense," "attachment to [France] and to their native country in particular," and "physical reeducation."[95] The films featured a variety of scenes from the war effort, many of them aimed at reinspiring and "bringing them back" to the front. Popular naval and air scenes were interspersed with pastoral views from France, "to make them know, esteem and love their country of adoption."[96]

Such cinematic scenes would complement carefully supervised tours of daily life in France: one report describes a tour of a factory, expressing the hope that the visit would provide North Africans with an alternative image of French society, outside of the trenches and brothels, which "did not represent France in sum." Rather, in the factories, *tirailleurs* would be able to "judge that the majority of France and the French were workers, and that it was only by their intelligent labor that they acquired themselves well-being and wealth," adding that "their trust in us [the French] has been strengthened, and they haven't failed to communicate this to their

[93] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Influence de cinématographie..."
[94] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, G. Louchet, Pharmacien – auxiliaire V.37, Moisselles.
[95] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Influence de cinématographie…"
[96] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, G. Louchet, Pharmacien – auxiliaire V.37, Moisselles.

comrades in the hospital and the trenches."[97] Paternalistic views of colonial subjects were never far beneath the surface: Louchet's report concludes by praising the effects of this propaganda on wounded soldiers who, "like large children," were making strides towards "correct[ing] vicious attitudes" that had resulted from their various injuries and maladies.[98] It was thus an image of a benevolent French tutor, rather than access to French life itself, that films and tours of this nature would extend to North Africans—a France untarnished by the terrors of trench warfare, compromising encounters with French women, and other potentially disturbing aspects of the wartime experience.

Film-based re-education efforts also integrated physical activities. At a plot of land near Moisselles hospital, for example, wounded North Africans learned how to cultivate crops and use agricultural equipment. These lessons would be accompanied by twice-weekly instructional films. The initiative reflected the "physiocratic" approach to artisanal and agricultural retraining favored by French authorities by the end of the war.[99] There remains a larger question, however, about the sort of "modern but oriental" subjecthood the French hoped to inculcate in convalescing North African soldiers—a question to which we now turn. If *tirailleurs* were not to be corrupting, subversive pathogens to the colonial body, what would they be?

Tunisians at Moisselles reportedly preferred films with scenes of landscapes and cultural traditions from Carthage, Tunis, and the like—"this was their native soil."[100] Hospital officers hoped the films would not just "evoke dear memories" but also remind them of the resources and advantages offered to them by their "native lands" so as to discourage the threatening prospect

[97] ANT Série E, 44/18A, 130, Report, 5 January 1919. "Au sujet du service d'assistance aux blesses musulmans, 1918-1919."
[98] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, Dr. Gendron, "Utilisation du cinématographie…"
[99] DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 59-61.
[100] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, G. Louchet, Pharmacien – auxiliaire V.37, Moisselles.

that North Africans might wish to stay in France after the war, made all the more possible by the relationships and families being built with women in the metropole. Here was where the tactical need for loyal and satisfied soldiers aligned with the strategic need for a return to the prewar colonial status quo.[101] As one report explained:

> The Orient which exalts their religious ideas or fanaticism has an attraction very particular to them. Some exaggerated or even willingly falsified stories have portrayed the Orient as a sort of dreamland, the marvelous and famous country of Scheherazade's 'One Thousand and One Nights.' An easy life, lucrative commerce, abundance and riches—this, for them, is to be the land of promise … The Arab of our North African possessions is indispensable to French prosperity in these regions, and it is our duty to try, by any means possible, to keep it that way.[102]

The report did not consider whether *tirailleurs* might simply have enjoyed the relaxation and novel distraction offered by these films, as all soldiers generally did. With great faith in the allure of such a fantastical image of the Orient, these particular films mobilized these willfully fabricated visions to counteract what authorities saw as North Africans' dissatisfaction with and corruption by industrialized European life. Similar educational films at Carrières-sous-Bois were, according to one report, the "only way suitable for these illiterates" to begin the transition from "primitive and traditional" to "real and rational methods" of thought and work.[103] In each case, racialized and civilizational hierarchies were deployed to relegate North Africans to their "proper" position in the colonial hierarchy. This wishful thinking, confidently deployed in racialized terms, held that *tirailleurs* were better suited to a pastoral lifestyle far from the metropole. If successful, the effort would fulfill the French need for a placated overseas labor force untainted by access to a French life offered by compassionate nurses and civilian families.

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[101] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 310, "Hospitalisation des blesses Musulmans, 1916-1918." MFA to RG, 11 August 1917 #915.
[102] ANT Série E, 440/18A: 129, "Influence de cinématographie..."
[103] ANT Série E, 440/18A, 130, "Au sujet du service d'assistance aux blesses musulmans, 1918-1919." 5 January 1919.

Much as Kairouan's Civil Controller had done in response to Cantinelli's letter to 'Amr's mother, these methods reflected the tendency of French officials to use terms like *mentalité* to explain away the grim realities of the European war and France's discriminatory policies towards North Africans. Officials turned instead to vague explanations of the unintended consequences of *tirailleurs*' encounter with modern technologies. Algiers-based psychiatrist Antoine Porot, for example, commented in 1918 that "profoundly ignorant and gullible" North African conscripts had been taken from their "free, peaceful, and archaic lives" and exposed instead to "a life where the most scientific and infernal inventions loomed before their eyes, which had only known the calm serenity of infinite horizons."[104] French colonial discourse was not alone in this respect; a similar trope took hold in Britain's colonial imagination of Africa: while the dreams of "paradise regained" were seen as unattainable in an industrialized England, "the open vistas of the non-European world seemed to offer limitless possibilities."[105] In the case of the films shown at Moisselles and Carrières-sous-Bois, however, French medical staff and military authorities envisioned for wounded *tirailleurs* not a wholesale return to a timeless, oriental lifestyle, but rather a selective hybrid that would balance North Africans' supposed primitiveness with a limited education that would produce obedient and productive colonial subjects.

Conclusion: Ambiguous Encounters

In French military hospitals, North African soldiers witnessed a confluence at which many of the tensions of French colonialism came to a head. The wounds of colonial violence, institutionalized hierarchies of racial difference, gendered transgressions, and shifting labor

[104] Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 131-132.
[105] John L. Comaroff, "Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 172-174.

ideals all marked the life of a convalescing Tunisian soldier during the First World War. At "Muslim hospitals" such as Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles, and even at 'Amr and Cantinelli's mixed hospital in Lyon, Tunisians built new types of relationships across the colonial and racial divide, learned new trades and languages, and came to articulate their value and contribution to (or even in spite of) the French enterprise. In the calm behind the lines, however painful their wounds, they were mostly free to test the limits of their colonial confines. That they were considered inherently different from French citizens had been made apparent enough in their discriminatory treatment at the front lines, if not earlier. Once wounded, this difference was further driven home in their medical seclusion through propaganda films, restrictions to their movement and activities on leave, and forced isolation from the "corrupting vices" of life in France. Yet this isolation was never complete. Lawn games, long walks, and Sunday dinners with French women and their families offered Tunisians and North Africans a taste of what it meant to belong to French metropolitan society. Relationships with French women, though exceptional, presented to Tunisians the possibility of an inextricable link forged through war despite – or rather, as partly a result of – the colonial inequalities that had brought them to France in the first place. For better or worse, the First World War had in this way produced a set of spaces and encounters not seen by most Tunisians prior to 1914, opening the doors to new articulations of self and of awareness of the stakes of the colonial relationship.

If the Muslim hospitals at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles really were like colonies within the metropole, they were as imperfect as any colony in terms of French authorities' ability to control and re-educate their subjects, and as experimental and contradictory in nature as other colonial spaces understood as "laboratories" for the technologies and ideologies of European

empires.[106] To be sure, colonial medical institutions and discourses often sought to reduce their colonial subjects to biological or statistical objects, or even to vectors of disease themselves. France's novel Muslim medical colonies at Carrières-sous-Bois and Moisselles were designed to address threats of miscegenation and racial corruption while experimenting with new ways to sculpt obedient subjects of a paternal French order. On the other hand, while historians of colonial medicine have underlined how material limitations often exacerbated the conditions of de-humanization, the cases explored here reveal how such contingencies could also produce spaces for humanizing encounters which crossed racial and gendered boundaries. Wartime shortages of space and personnel, as well as the individual desires of those who lived and worked in these spaces, meant that such efforts bore limited or unintended results: Tunisian subjects still mixed with French women, enjoyed the benefits of French metropolitan life, and increasingly demanded recognition or even a measure of political and social parity in exchange for their sacrifices.

Uprooted by conscription, *tirailleurs*' experience of war was decidedly different from that of exiled intellectuals and political figures like Mohamed and Ali Bach Hamba, whom we will meet in the next chapter. For as marginalized as the average colonial conscript might have been, however, transformative experiences such as that of 'Amr in Lyon may not have been altogether exceptional, effecting some of the nearly 100,000 Tunisian soldiers and workers forced or coerced across the Mediterranean. For most, this marked a novel and intense exposure to Tunisians' position in the colonial hierarchy, and to the realities both of colonial violence and the limitations of colonial power to accomplish its aims.

The direct political consequences of Tunisian soldiers' encounters with French women

[106] For example, see Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 83-120.

would be difficult to measure, but there is a conspicuous postwar context for mixed-race marriages: the apparent preponderance of marriages between French women and the North African men who relocated to France during the 1920s and 1930s. By some accounts, these mixed couples outnumbered North African couples in the metropole. This phenomenon can be explained by factors such as the disproportionately male population of North African laborers in France, the commercial and cultural expedience of partnering with French women, and perhaps the wartime losses of white French men.[107] But these relationships also had political import, as famously attested by the relationships of at least two North African nationalist leaders. In 1925 Habib Bourguiba met Mathilde Morrain (Moufida Bourguiba, after her conversion to Islam), a law student in Paris, and the two married in 1927. It was also in Paris that Messali Hadj, Algerian founder of the nationalist group *Étoile Nord-Africaine* met the labor and anti-colonial activist Émilie Busquant. Much as white French wives and partners played a salient role in the political activism of Paris' anti-imperial "black colony," so too did those of North Africans, whose colony in France was much larger and more prevalent in the industrial sectors most disposed to political engagement.[108] The occurrence of Franco-Maghribi relationships and encounters in France under the emotionally trying circumstances of the First World War, then, might well have paved the way for the kinds of mixed-race unions in which all manner of political horizons later flourished.

[107] MacMaster, "Mixed Couples in the Algerian National Movement," 359-62; see also Neil MacMaster, "Sexual and Racial Boundaries: Colonialism and Franco-Algerian Intermarriage (1880–1962)," in *Population and Social Policy in France*, ed. Máire Cross and Sheila Perry (Pinter: London, 1997), 92–108.
[108] Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 41; 77-110.

4. Exiles and the 'Spirit of Switzerland'

In 1914, Mohamed Bach Hamba (1881-1920) found himself compelled to leave his home in Tunisia for good, an exile under the suspicious eyes of the French Empire. He joined a number of North African intellectuals who either passed through or settled in Switzerland during the First World War, spending his final years until his death in December 1920 in Geneva, an emergent hub for international politics, humanitarian work, and anti-colonial movements during the First World War and its aftermath. The Swiss Confederation, unlike the French Empire, was far less interested in the surveillance of its citizens and guests than it was in maintaining its delicate and profitable role as neutral arbiter between belligerent powers. Francophone cities such as Geneva and Lausanne were thus already home to international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Bureau international de défense des indigènes by the start of the war; still less need be said of Switzerland's important role in hosting the postwar negotiations. It was in such an environment that Bach Hamba and his colleagues in the Comité Algéro-Tunisien published the anti-colonial journal *La Revue du Maghreb*, represented Tunisia and Algeria at the Congrès des Nationalités in Lausanne in 1916, and adapted Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric to critique French colonial hypocrisy in an effort to secure North Africans' independence.

French intelligence officials remarked in 1917 that Switzerland had become the "center of German-Turkish propaganda" during the war, conflating the political project of Bach Hamba with that of fellow Tunisians Salah al-Sharif and Ismail Sfaihi, whose pan-Islamic and Ottoman

loyalty informed their propaganda efforts in support of the Central Powers.[1] While some Tunisians certainly did work proactively to support the Central Powers, this alone does not suffice in capturing the evolving and multifaceted political visions of those who passed through Switzerland. Bach Hamba denied serving Germany or the Ottoman Empire, claiming that he only had the "Algero-Tunisian" people's wellbeing in mind. Whatever the case may be, these exiles, though cut off from home by stringent wartime restrictions, still made the most of their new homes and contacts with the many intellectuals and activists who passed through them.

It is important to remember that these mobile elites did not live in complete confinement or isolation. Free from some of the constraints of colonial rule, they rubbed shoulders with contacts both familiar and new from around the Mediterranean and beyond. James McDougall has written about the place of Algerian exilic tradition in the construction of a nationalist historical memory from abroad. It was a similar tradition that was mapped onto some of the Tunisian grievances for political change which I will examine below.[2] In what follows, I show how the experience and space of exile could help expand Tunisians' political horizons in such a moment of uncertainty. In particular, through an examination of the trajectory of Tunisian thinker Mohamed Bach Hamba's exile in Switzerland, and his interactions with a number of Arab and European interlocutors, I argue that exile afforded the distance, safety, and international cooperation needed to catalyze viable visions for North Africa's future. But more than this, the particular contours of exiles' trajectories demonstrate both the resilience of Tunisia's historical ties with the Ottoman center and the diversity of political options initiated by wartime mobility. I begin with an overview of the political and cultural links between Tunisia,

[1] ANT Serie E, 440/18A,194. "Au sujet de la création d'une revue des questions musulmanes en Suisse, 1917." Report from Ministre des Affaires Étrangeres to Resident General Alapetite, November 14, 1917. "Au sujet de la création d'une revue en Suisse."
[2] See, for example, McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* , 28-59.

neighboring Tripolitania, and the Ottoman center by the outbreak of the First World War, before exploring the biographical trajectories of Ali and Mohamed Bach Hamba. The remainder of the chapter reconstructs the relationships and political context of Mohamed's exile in Switzerland and its implications for the transnational development and reception of his anti-colonial platform.

Tunisians Looking East

The endurance of the Ottoman Empire's presence and influence in North Africa has been overshadowed in the historiography on the late Ottoman period by an emphasis on the Empire's Arab and Anatolian heartlands, where violence and famine had perhaps their greatest impact. While Tunisia had been a French Protectorate since 1881, and neighboring Algeria had been subject to France's expanding conquest and colonization since 1830, the Ottoman Empire was far from absent in the Maghrib by 1914. Recent works such as Mostafa Minawi's *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa* have shed light on the Empire's attempt to reassert itself beyond these lands, countering narratives about an exclusively inward-looking and defensive country hardly deserving of study as an "empire" as such.[3] Andreas Tunger-Zanetti's research has demonstrated the extent to which Tunisian reformers at the turn of the twentieth century still looked in the reverse direction – to Istanbul – for inspiration and resources.[4] Tripolitania (later Libya), which shared important links and a border with Tunisia, was an important if overlooked imperial flashpoint in the 1910s.

After nearly two centuries of nominal rule through the Karamanlı Dynasty, Ottoman Africa, stretching over modern Libya and deeper into the eastern Sahara toward the Lake Chad

[3] Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 2-4.
[4] Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul 1860-1913: Province et metropole* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

basin, was subject to Istanbul's campaign to reestablish direct rule and *tanzimat* reforms in the 1830s and 1840s. That rule was most present in the coastal Mediterranean cities of Benghazi and Tripoli; in the hinterlands and the Sahara, alliances with largely autonomous tribes marked the extent of Ottoman sovereignty. Through the second half of the nineteenth century and much of the early twentieth century, the Sanusiyya, a religio-political order organized around transnational tribal networks, dominated the Libyan interior; its relationship with Istanbul fluctuated between partnership and rivalry. With the Ottomans' loss of Balkan territories in the 1870s, followed by the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 and the British of Egypt the following year, some pinned high hopes on the region as a site for imperial ambitions.[5]

Tunisians had longstanding commercial and cultural ties with Tripolitania, the western region of Ottoman Africa with which they shared a border. Sites of religious pilgrimage such as Kairouan and date palm oasis towns such as Nafta and Tozeur made central and southern Tunisia a useful haven from which to organize political action against the neighboring colonial state after the French invasion of Algeria in 1830.[6] Even after the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881, an 'Ibadi diaspora populated by border-crossing Algerians, Tunisians, and Tripolitanians established intellectual and spiritual links from Egypt to as far afield as Zanzibar, leading to a Nahda-era "rapprochement" between 'Ibadi and Sunni Salafi reformism.[7] Certain tribes continued to cross the Tripolitania-Tunisia border long after 1881. In fact, the French building of roads, railroads, and mines attracted some 2,500 Tripolitanian workers annually around the turn of the century.[8] Through these religious and economic networks, many in Eastern Algeria,

[5] Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 26-39; 42.
[6] Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint*, 127-129.
[7] Amal N. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism: Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (1880s-1930s)* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 92-98.
[8] Anna Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation: Colonial Legacy, Exile and the Emergence of a New Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54-56.

including merchants such as ‘Abbas Bin Hamana, religio-political figures like Sulayman al-Baruni, and ‘Ibadi communities of the Mizab in the northern reaches of the Sahara, maintained ties to Ottoman Tripolitania through Southern Tunisia.[9] Another interlocutor was Muhammad al-Khidr Husain, a reformist member of the Algerian diaspora in the southern Tunisian oasis town of Nafta. Husain combined his criticism of French colonial rule in Tunisia with a call for Tunisian volunteers to fight the Italians in Tripolitania in 1911. These activities drew authorities' attention and pushed Husain to flee to Syria, where he joined Tunisian exile Salah al-Sharif (see below). During the First World War Husain was, like al-Sharif, employed by Enver Pasha to propagandize and recruit from among North African prisoners in German camps, though he fell under the suspicion of Cemal Pasha during his 1916 crackdown on Arabist reformers. After the war he settled in Cairo as an imam at al-Azhar and continued to speak out in support of North African nationalists.[10]

Beyond these regional ties, cultural and religious ties to the Ottoman center in Istanbul also endured in Tunisia well after the French occupation. In the decades preceding the Protectorate, Mamluk functionaries in Tunisia, inspired in part by *tanzimat* reforms in Istanbul, embarked on their own program of centralization and modernization. These Mamluks were originally slaves captured or bought from various Balkan and Caucasian regions of the Empire, after which they converted to Islam and were trained to serve as administrators and soldiers throughout the Empire's provinces, including Tunisia. This practice, though largely defunct by the late nineteenth century after reforms suppressed military slavery in the Empire, endured in some forms until the final days of the Ottoman presence there. Few embody the resilience of the Ottoman-Arab legacy more than Khayr al-Din Pasha, a Circassian-born official who, after being

[9] Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 84-85.
[10] Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 88-89.

sold off to an envoy of the Tunisian monarch during a visit to Istanbul, rose through the ranks of Tunisia's political and military elite to become Grand Vizier under the Bey Muhammad III as-Sadiq from 1873 to 1877. Ousted after his controversial efforts at reforming the tax, education, and military systems in Tunisia, he was invited by the Ottoman Sultan to return to Istanbul, where he briefly served as the Empire's Grand Vizier before being forced into retirement in 1879. To Julia Clancy-Smith, Khayr al-Din exemplified the "unwavering loyalty" of Mamluks to the Ottoman sultans, even as he embraced Western European political traditions and worked to dismantle the Mamluk system of which he had been a part.[11]

Other members of this heterogeneous group of Ottoman extraction had even deeper local ties and had for centuries intermarried and settled in Tunisia, mobilizing their Mamluk and imperial networks to become important landowners and power brokers.[12] By the French occupation in 1881 and well into the early twentieth century, while the mamluks' slave origin had been largely forgotten, the group adapted to colonial rule. As they had once served as intermediaries between the Ottoman center and the local Tunisian subjects, they now mediated for a French administration desperate to secure loyal and effective local know-how without the costs associated with direct rule in neighboring Algeria. M'hamed Oualdi has demonstrated how these aspiring functionaries delicately positioned themselves as particularly well suited to represent an imperial authority but with "indigenous" legitimacy. But from the French perspective, they were always suspect: as job applicants they were scrutinized for all manner of continued Ottoman associations, from their visits to Istanbul to the reputation of their

[11] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 315-41.
[12] On the heterogeneity of the "mamluks" in Ottoman Tunisia, see: M'hamed Oualdi, "Mamluks in Ottoman Tunisia: A Category Connecting State and Social Forces," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48:3 (2016), 473-490.

ancestors.[13] This was the small but upwardly mobile minor nobility from which some early twentieth century political reformers such as ‘Ali and Mohamed Bach Hamba came.

Given the feverish stream of French intelligence reports about pan-Islamic propaganda and organizing activities around the world throughout the war, and the scholarship that these documents have provoked, it is important to ask just how significant these pro-Ottoman sentiments and ties really were in North Africa by 1914. Thousands of pages in the French military, colonial, and diplomatic archives paint the picture of a widespread and determined underworld of pan-Islamic activists whose meetings, writings, and movements threatened to stir up latent fanaticism for the Ottoman sultan, the erstwhile caliph and, in theory, protector of Muslims worldwide. The Sultan’s call to *jihad* on 14 November 1914 ultimately provoked no worldwide uprising of zealous North African Muslims in defense of their caliph and their God; even in the Arab heartlands of the Ottoman Empire, the outbreak of war and subsequent mobilization was “foreboding.”[14] While certain aspects of a pan-Islamic “threat” were credible, French preoccupations point clearly at the outset to their assumptions and attitudes toward Islam and their Muslim colonial subjects. This is unsurprising given that colonial discourse generally explained away subjects’ resistance or dissent by appealing either to Muslim *indigènes*’ incapacities and “mentalities” or to the machinations and manipulations of more capable outsiders such as imperial rivals or elite locals.[15]

Nonetheless, political intrigue has attracted historians to the efforts of pro-Ottoman operatives and circles around the First World War. Some initiatives began at the Western Front.

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[13] M’hamed Oualdi, “Provincializing and Forgetting Ottoman Administrative Legacies. Sons and Grandsons of Beys’ Mamluks Facing French Administrators of Tunisia (1890s-1930s),” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34:2 (2014), 420-22.
[14] Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (Boulder: Basic Books, 2015), 61.
[15] For example, see: Keller, *Colonial Madness,* 130.

Germany established prison camps specifically for Muslim soldiers captured from French and British lines, and these spaces featured prayer rooms, halal meals, and services provided by imams (among them North Africans known to Mohamed Bach Hamba) whose sermons and publications encouraged prisoners to join the Ottoman war effort. The "Half-Moon Camp" at Wünsdorf (outside Berlin), for example, has been the focus of several recent studies.[16] Leaflets and other publications were sent worldwide to spread dissent among the Entente's colonial soldiers, and agents with the Ottoman Special Organization armed small groups of rebels in Morocco. While the impact of these propaganda efforts is hard to measure and was likely quite limited, in a global and total war, subtle efforts to support the work of a select few pro-Ottoman and pan-Islamist dissidents could be disruptive to the Entente war effort. German and Ottoman networks proved decisive in helping spark an uprising of Indian soldiers in the British army stationed in Singapore in 1915, for example.[17] Even if few significant uprisings occurred, and even if few Muslim prisoners of war were ultimately recruited into Ottoman ranks, such efforts could, given the right circumstances, tie up precious French resources and manpower.

The Brothers Bach Hamba

[16] See: Santanu Das, "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe, 1914–18: Archive, Language, and Feeling," *Twentieth Century British History* 25:3 (2014), 391-417; Martin Gussone, "Architectural Jihad: The 'Halbmondlager' Mosque of Wünsdorf as an Instrument of Propaganda," in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany,'* ed. Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016) 179-222; Heather Jones, "Imperial captivities: colonial prisoners of war in Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918," in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Odile Moreau, "Aref Taher Bey: An Ottoman Military Instructor Bridging the Maghreb and the Ottoman Mediterranean," in *Subversives and Mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean: A Subaltern History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 57-78; Jürgen Mahrenholz, "Recordings of South Asian Languages and Music in the Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin," in *When the war began we heard of several kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, eds. Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 187-206; see also: Mahon Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War: Internment and the Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[17] Heather Streets-Salter, "The Local was Global: The Singapore Mutiny of 1915," *Journal of World History* 24:3 (2013), 558-561.

Affinities with the Ottoman center were not the impetus but part of the backdrop of public demonstrations of dissatisfaction with the colonial order in Tunisia just prior to the First World War. In autumn 1911, in particular, deadly violence broke out in Tunis following the plan by the French-dominated municipal council to survey (and perhaps repurpose) part of the Muslim cemetery of Jellaz. The violence implicated not only Protectorate forces and Tunisians, but also residents of the Italian quarter, who fired shots from their homes into the crowd of Tunisian protestors. Tensions between Tunisians and Italians reached a breaking point when, early the following year, an Italian-driven streetcar struck and killed a Tunisian child. These strains were compounded by the fact that Tunisians had long been excluded from employment by the tramway company, and protests and boycotts of the tramway system ensued. The resulting French crackdown led to death sentences for at least seven Muslim Tunisians, the expulsion of several reformist leaders, and the imposition of a state of emergency, which would restrict the press and political gatherings until after the close of the First World War.[18] To an extent, these events catalyzed the trans-Mediterranean trajectories of the brothers Mohamed and Ali Bach Hamba.

Mohamed Bach Hamba had been born Mohamed Ben Ali Chérif in 1881 and came from a family of Turko-Arab background, his father having served as an assistant of the Tunisian Grand Vizier Mustapha ben Ismail.[19] An aspiring lawyer, Mohamed studied French and Arabic at the prestigious Collège Sadiki, a progressive school established by Khayr al-Din Pasha in 1875. He later served as a functionary in the Tunisian Protectorate's tribunal courts, distinguishing himself enough to be awarded the *Nichân al-Iftikhar* (Order of Glory) by the Bey of Tunis. His older brother Ali (1878-1918) was if anything even more politically prominent in

[18] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 141-42.
[19] Jallāb, al-Hādī, *'Alī Bāsh Ḥāmbah, 1876- 1918* (Tunis: Jāmi'at Manūbah, 2005), 15.

pre-war Tunisia. He cofounded the Young Tunisians, a heterogeneous group of reformers whose publications and meetings are often pointed to as the foundation for Tunisian nationalism. At this early stage, the group called for rather modest and gradual reforms but were targeted for their support of the Jellaz and tramway disturbances in 1911 and 1912, and Ali and his cofounder Béchir Sfar were expelled from Tunisia in 1912. Ali first visited his brother who had been staying in Aix at the time, and the two attempted to obtain authorization for the elder to return to Tunisia. Failing this, both brothers decided to emigrate instead to Istanbul. Ali left first while Mohamed attempted to bide his time, but the latter was refused a leave of absence by his French superior in August 1913, and in time made his way to join his brother Istanbul. Their friend Hassan Guellaty, one of the reformers to be discussed in Chapter Five, attended to Mohamed's affairs in his absence and helped sell his home in Tunis.[20]

Ali was decisive in his shift toward the Ottoman center, allegedly writing to the president of the Collège Sadiki that he had "definitively broken all relations with Tunisia," though he later expressed hope for a return to an independent Tunisia.[21] Ali went on to play a prominent role in the Ottoman war effort. He served as an operative in the Ottoman Special Organization (*Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*) with the blessing of Shakib Arslan, a Lebanese Druze notable and protégé of Cemal Pasha who after the war became one of the most widely-known pan-Arab and pan-Islamist activists.[22] The Special Organization was a notorious special forces division that worked to undermine Arab separatism and fight Western imperialism from Syria to Libya during the war and is perhaps best known for its role in the Armenian Genocide.[23] During the war, Arslan was

[20] Mohammed Abdelmoula, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien et la France* (Tunis: Beit-al-Hikma, 1991), viii-ix.
[21] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 141-45.
[22] William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 92.
[23] For example see Taner Akcam, *The Young Turk's Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 410-47.

tasked with enlisting the support of tribal and Bedouin leaders in support of the Ottomans' 1914 campaign against Egypt, and led a contingent of some 110 Druze men in support of Cemal Pasha's Hijaz campaign later that year.[24] Ali was known to be particularly active in Tripolitania, where he helped coordinate a rebellion against the Italian occupation while bolstering Ottoman legitimacy there; he later served as the First Chief of Eastern Affairs in the Ottoman Ministry of War.[25] With few sources available to shed further light on Ali's activities in the Special Organization, little has been written about his political outlook.[26] Ali's trajectory will suffice as something of a backdrop against which to compare his brother Mohamed's wartime activism. While both eventually called for an end to French colonial rule in the Maghrib, Ali's vision for the future clearly called for some form of Ottoman involvement in political change in the Maghrib.

Mohamed, on the other hand, looked to the establishment of an independent state based on liberal principles of self-determination and liberty. He was in general more ambivalent about the prospects of life abroad and about whether exile in the Ottoman Empire would serve his aims. There were personal costs: his wife refused to emigrate with him, choosing to remain in Tunis.[27] His attempt in late 1913 to settle on land near Konya, where Arabic was more widely spoken than in Istanbul, was unsatisfactory.[28] Like Khayr al-Din Pasha, his limited command of Turkish language skills proved an obstacle to life in Anatolia. He even attempted to return briefly to Tunisia in January of 1914 with his sister, but with most press outlets and meeting circles

[24] Polat Safi, "The Ottoman Special Organization – *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa:* a Historical Assessment with Particular Reference to its Operations against British Occupied Egypt (1914-1916)" (master's thesis, Bilkent University, 2006), 43-45; 54-55.
[25] Ibid., 125.
[26] Polat Safi, "Mirage in the Sands: the Ottoman Special Organization on the Sinai-Palestine Front," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 66 (2016), 40.
[27] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 141.
[28] Abdelmoula, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien et la France*, ix.

banned under the state of emergency, he found little space for the sort of work to which he aspired. In April Mohamed left Tunisia for good, passing through Istanbul before settling in Geneva, where he founded the Comité Algéro-Tunisien.[29]

Why Switzerland? Why not France, or the Ottoman Empire? Thinkers such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi had long traveled to Paris in search of insights into social and political reform. Later anti-colonial and nationalist activists such as Messali Hadj, founder of l'Étoile Nord-Africaine, flourished there in the late 1920s and 1930s. Yet during the First World War, amid heightened French suspicions and with censorship measures in effect, France and its colonies proved stifling for someone like Mohamed Bach Hamba. And why not Istanbul? Having already traveled to his brother Ali's new home there, Mohamed Bach Hamba enjoyed many connections to the Ottoman elite – his family, after all, drew from Tunisia's centuries-old Turko-Arab nobility.[30] A number of other Arab reformers, in fact, did settle in the Ottoman capital for the duration of the war, pinning their hopes on the assertive reformism of the Committee of Union and Progress.[31] However, residency in Istanbul might have limited Bach Hamba's political horizons for a truly independent North Africa, perhaps compromising his attempt to present a non-belligerent Tunisian face to the international community. Or perhaps Mohamed determined that with his brother already working in Istanbul, his presence would be most beneficial closer to Western Europe, with better access to the deliberations taking place there.[32] Lacking specific archival details about Mohamed's motivations for choosing Geneva, we may explore instead the apparent

[29] Bechir Tlili, "La grande guerre et les questions tunisiennes: le groupement du 'Revue du Maghreb' (1916-1918)," *Les cahiers de Tunisie* 26 (1978), 39; Abdelmoula, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien et la France*, ix.
[30] Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's Agitators: Militant Anti-colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52.
[31] See: Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[32] We lack specific archival details that might reveal Mohamed's particular motivations for choosing Geneva as a home, and must rely instead on contextual details and broader circumstances.

fruits of exile in this emergent international hub.

The Spirit of Switzerland

Geneva had a long history as a sanctuary for innovative or subversive exiles, from Jean Calvin and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Giuseppe Mazzini and Mikhail Bakunin.[33] In the early twentieth century, La Suisse Romande (Francophone Switzerland) attracted thinkers and dissidents from beyond Europe, making it what Harald Fischer-Tiné calls a "transnational anti-imperialist ecumene."[34] Simon Jackson's study of the global Syro-Lebanese community's relationship with the League of Nations argues that the League acted as a "political 'distillation column'" through which Syro-Lebanese could "reformulate and amplify a more dynamic type of belonging" while enjoying the wide and constant press coverage of goings-on in Geneva.[35] Here, I propose expanding Jackson's lens to all of Francophone Switzerland, and to the period immediately surrounding the First World War. Cities such as Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchâtel presented perhaps the only neutral havens in which French was spoken, state repression was limited, and access to Europe was relatively open.[36] Even before the establishment of the League of Nations, Switzerland, centrally located and linguistically diverse, had become an important arbiter of international negotiation despite its neighbors' immeasurable bloodshed over national boundaries. The Geneva-based Red Cross, for example, carefully managed the demands of both sides of the war while arranging POW camp inspections, facilitating prisoner exchanges, and delivering post and aid to prisoners. International organizations such as the World Alliance of

[33] Harald Fischer-Tiné, "The Other Side of Internationalism: Switzerland as a Hub of Militant Anti-Colonialism, c. 1910-1920," in *Colonial Swizterland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins*, ed. Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 223.
[34] Ibid., 222.
[35] Jackson, "Diaspora Politics and Developmental Empire," 180-183.
[36] Swiss neutrality in the war was paramount; anti-colonial causes were tolerated, but those preaching unapologetically in support of belligerents could lead to deportation. See Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt 1920-1924: Secret Societies, Plots and Assassinations* (Surrey, U.K.: Curzon Press, 2000), 101.

YMCAs and the Universal Postal Union also made their homes there.[37] Moreover, Switzerland was a growing destination for socialist, anti-militarist, and anarchist leaders. In 1915, for example, the Zimmerwald Conference convened prominent socialist leaders from across Europe.[38]

Some prominent Swiss nationals proved sympathetic to the fate of non-Europeans. René Claparède, for example, supported the controversial Egyptian National Congress in Brussels in 1910, was active with the Bureau international de défense des indigènes in criticizing atrocities in Leopold's Congo, and exchanged letters with W.E.B. DuBois and Blaise Diagne.[39] He played a prominent role in the 1916 Congrès des Nationalités in Lausanne, claiming in his opening statement that "the Swiss people must concern themselves with oppressed peoples, because otherwise Switzerland would be unworthy of its own name."[40] After the war, Claparède drew the attention of French agents for his connections with Tunis-based socialist Robert Louzon and with the Committee of Syrian Union in Geneva.[41] Another Bureau activist, an anarchist identified only as Sussan, was marked by French agents for having published works in Geneva condemning French colonization in Algeria and having built a network of couriers in North Africa to circulate such tracts in the aftermath of the war.[42] By 1918, one Swiss journalist was moved enough to highlight the "very curious fact of the 'nationalities': since the war began, our

[37] See: Heather Jones, "International or transnational? Humanitarian Action during the First World War," *European Review of History – Revue européenne d'histoire* 16:5 (2009), 697-713.
[38] Wayne Thorpe, "El Ferrol, Rio de Janeiro, Zimmerwald, and Beyond: Syndicalist Internationalism, 1914-1918," *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* (2006), 1015-1020.
[39] Bibliothèque de Genève: Papiers Rene Claparede, Ms. fr. 3980: "Lettres de France," A-L - f. 129-132: Congres national egyptien, 1910.
[40] *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 22.
[41] CADN 89PO/1/490 – Berne (Swiss) consulate: "Au sujet de la propagande anti Française en Afrique." 3 Apr. 1922.
[42] CADN 89PO/1/490: "A.S. d'un nommé SUSSAN ou SUSSEN," 6 Sept. 1922.

country has become, as we know, the forum for all national grievances."[43] What contemporaries called the "spirit of Geneva" after the founding of the League of Nations in 1920 may have in fact been part of a broader "spirit of Switzerland," and one which fostered thought that went beyond the horizons later offered by the League.[44]

All manner of political actors both renowned and obscure filtered through Switzerland during the war and its aftermath, and we know this thanks to the diligent work of French consular and intelligence agents. But how "neutral" was Switzerland, and how could it remain so facing a constant flow of mobile dissidents working against British and French colonial rule? Despite the increasing weight given to Switzerland's role as a humanitarian hub and an honest peace broker during the First World War, there was evidence of overwhelming sympathy for the German Empire in the German-speaking majority of Switzerland. From 1917, moreover, a new "foreigners' police" was established alongside a relative tightening of immigration policy. In some quarters both German and Francophone, Swiss intellectuals and politicians began to question their country's suitability for an influx of "uncivilized peoples."[45]

Some activists in exile dedicated themselves to peace and independence whether from the Entente or the Central Powers. Bach Hamba was said to have been in contact with Shlomo Tagger, a Palestinian Jew who had served as Grand Rabbi of Turkestan (based in Tashkent and Samarkand) before working within European pacifist circles and who, during the war, took up the cause of Palestinian independence and constitutionalism.[46] Other figures with whom Bach Hamba associated implicated him in a more intricate and controversial world straddling the

[43] "A la bibliothèque nationale," *Gazette de Lausanne*, 9 June 1918, 1.
[44] Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7. See also: Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2012), 187.
[45] Fischer-Tiné, "The Other Side of Internationalism," 222-25.
[46] CADN 89PO/1/490: "Au sujet des affaires orientales et du nommé Tagerre," 6 Oct. 1920; Alanna Cooper, *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 109-117.

German-Swiss border.[47] For example, he fostered connections with Mahmud Muhtar Pasha, an Ottoman military officer who had served as Minister of the Navy and briefly as the Empire's ambassador to Germany at the start of the war before being ousted in 1915 by a distrustful CUP leadership.[48] Muhtar Pasha settled in Switzerland in 1915 but continued working with the Young Turks in Geneva to defend Ottoman interests, a link that led French intelligence to label Bach Hamba a "violent Germanophile."[49] Neutral Switzerland in this sense provided political dissidents the additional benefit of access to German support should they desire it, and some did seize this advantage. This was a tenuous and ambiguous link, not least because it could suggest to the international community that these dissidents had a partisan stake in the war's outcome, or that Switzerland itself, by hosting these groups, could no longer serve as a viable neutral broker.

Perhaps more than any other group of reformers, it was the example of Egyptian activists that would set the stage for Bach Hamba's work in Swiss exile, as well as the accusations that he served German masters. Tunisia had long drawn intellectual inspiration from Egypt, with important visits by Muhammad 'Abduh to Zitouna University in 1885 and 1903 occupying recent memory.[50] Egyptian anti-colonial dissident Mansour Rifa'at, a critic of British rule and of the Egyptian Khedive's acquiescence to it, had worked briefly with Shyamji in Paris and was likely to have heard of the benefits of working in Switzerland.[51] Rifa'at settled in Geneva in early 1914, starting the Club des Patriotes Egyptiens and their newspaper *La Patrie Egyptienne*.

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[47] Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 42-72.
[48] Ulrich Trumpener, "The Ottoman Empire," in *The Origins of World War I,* eds. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 346; see also: Barbara Flemming and Jan Schmidt, *The Diary of Karl Süssheim (1878-1947): Orientalist Between Munich and Istanbul* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 115-35; Sükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33-70.
[49] CADN 89PO/1/490: "De notre envoyé spécial," 23 Apr. 1919.
[50] See "La question Egyptienne: discours et mémoire, présentés par la Délégation Egyptienne à la IIIme Conférence des Nationalités," (Lausanne: Librarie Centrale des Nationalités, 1917); Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 65-66;
[51] Fischer-Tiné, "The Other Side of Internationalism," 226-28.

Rifa'at and his supporters came to be explicit in their recognition of Geneva as a safe haven for revolutionary thinkers, celebrating in a speech on the city's Centennial the place which now gave "asylum and sympathy to the Rousseaus of the Orient, whose writings and teachings are sure to precipitate similar revolutions in the East in the near future." Moreover, Rifa'at linked the Egyptian nationalist cause to other nationalist struggles, such as that of Irish nationalists against British rule – a move that influenced Mohamed Bach Hamba.[52] But Rifa'at was also active with the German Nachrichstelle für den Orient (Intelligence Bureau for the East), writing and translating propaganda articles in support of the Central Powers.[53]

Other Egyptians in Switzerland who interacted with Bach Hamba explored the possibility of a return to the Ottoman fold with more trepidation. Muhammad Farid, a leader in the Egyptian nationalist Watani Party, had fled to Istanbul in 1912, having been jailed previously by British colonial authorities. Farid, like many exiles from British and French colonies, moved rather freely between Anatolia, Switzerland, Germany, and even Italy from 1912 until the conclusion of the First World War. An influential presence at the Egyptian delegation to the Congrès des Nationalités at Lausanne in 1916 (more on this below), he questioned any articles which ordered the world by races or level of "civilization." He claimed that the British, for example, had no criteria for determining just what a "half-civilized nation" was and simply defined Egypt as such in order to justify its continued rule by force. Hierarchical language of this sort, he claimed, could simply be used by the powerful against the weak in perpetuity.[54] Would an Ottoman-centered federation yield a better future? Perhaps like Mohamed Bach Hamba, Farid only appeared willing to work with the Ottomans as a means to achieve independence from European

[52] Noor-Aiman Khan, *Egyptian-Indian Nationalist Collaboration and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 67, citing *La Patrie Egyptienne,* July 15, 1914.
[53] Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest*, 50-51.
[54] "Troisième Conférence des nationalités," *Journal de Genève*, June 29, 1916, 2.

rule. His vision was not simply to replace British ministers with a Sultan in Istanbul.[55]

Farid had previously tried to work with Khedive ‘Abbas Hilmi II to achieve the evacuation of British forces from Egypt and the adoption of a constitution, but the Khedive balked when the British put new limits on his power. The Khedive, after having been deposed by the British in 1914, settled in Switzerland from 1915 to 1917 and was the subject of considerable courtship (and surveillance) by French and German agents.[56] He established an Office musulman international in Lausanne, positioned himself as a rival of Farid, and worked to win restoration to the Egyptian throne, but ultimately failed to build much legitimacy after his ouster from Egypt.[57]

Other conspicuous reformers from the India and from the Arab world also spent time in Switzerland during the war. Indian revolutionaries Shyamji Krishna Varma and Ajit Singh made their home in Switzerland a few years before the outbreak of war, finding in it the ideal balance between freedom from British repression and access to European circles of journalists and intellectuals. Salah al-Sharif and Ismail Sfaihi found similar refuge between Germany and Switzerland.[58] Al-Sharif was born in Tunisia in the 1860s to an Algerian family, and he later became a prominent teacher at the Great Mosque in Tunis. Around 1906 he emigrated through Tripolitania to Istanbul, where he began to assert his criticism of the deteriorated state of Islam in North Africa.[59] In 1908 he left for Damascus, where he was said to have clashed with the reformist Syrian scholar Rashid Rida’.[60] Later, with the Italian invasion of Tripolitania in 1911, al-Sharif accompanied Enver Pasha to Cyrenaica (eastern Libya) to support the local resistance movement there. By the outbreak of the First World War, he had clearly proven his commitment

[55] Khan, *Egyptian-Indian Nationalist Collaboration*, 65-66.
[56] Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest*, 66-67.
[57] Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25-27.
[58] Often the alternative Francophone transliteration Saleh Cherif is used.
[59] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 138-39.
[60] Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 89.

to the Ottoman cause.[61] Ismail Sfaihi, his future colleague, had been employed as a teacher and administrator at the Collège Sadiki at the turn of the century. He grew to become one of the Tunisian 'ulama most vocally opposed to the French Protectorate, and he decided in 1906 to make the pilgrimage to Mecca with his family before settling in Damascus as the inspector of the city's Umayyad Mosque. Around 1910 Sfaihi moved again, this time to Istanbul where he joined al-Sharif and formed the group "L'Association fraternelle d'aide et de soutien moral entre les Algériens et les Tunisiens."[62] During the First World War Sfaihi and al-Sharif found themselves in service to the German and Ottoman military and were directly involved in leading propaganda efforts through sermons and leaflets distributed to the captured Muslim prisoners being held at Wünsdorf. At most about a thousand of these prisoners joined the Ottoman Army's lines in the Middle East.[63] French reports from interviews with North African soldiers did occasionally confirm the suspicion that some were reluctant to fire on German lines for fear that they might kill Ottoman soldiers – fellow Muslims – in the ranks.[64]

Bach Hamba does appear to have encountered and even worked with al-Sharif and Sfaihi, though the latter were based primarily in Berlin. It was this connection that likely led French officials and agents to characterize Bach Hamba as a German puppet and perhaps, in so doing, attempt to delegitimize him in the eyes of the French Empire's Muslim subjects. Al-Sharif and Sfaihi's 1917 tract *La Tunisie et l'Algérie* attacked their "enemies, the French, English, Russians, and Italians," while noting quite favorably the German stance towards North Africa. They claimed that at any moment now, the Muslim people would gain their liberty from France and

[61] Peter Heine, "Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tûnisî, a North African nationalist in Berlin during the first world war," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 33: 1 (1982), 89-95.
[62] Arnold Green, *The Tunisian Ulama, 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 175; Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 138-39.
[63] Rogan, "No Stake in Victory, 322-333.
[64] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 189-99.

claim their love for the Ottoman caliphate.[65] Al-Sharif even hosted a tea party for a number of visiting Muslim dignitaries and Turkish and German officers at which he expressed Muslims' sympathies for Germany.[66] Tunger-Zanetti describes him as the Tunisian most engaged with the Ottoman Empire since the statesman Khayr al-Din Pasha.[67]

Bach Hamba, on the other hand, was decidedly less publicly proactive in his support for the Central Powers' war effort. One *Revue* article affirms that "we know nothing of Germany. It was only the war that revealed them to us [...] We challenge anyone to prove the existence of relations between Germans and Algerians or Tunisians."[68] Bach Hamba's nuanced and careful view of the international political situation is comparable to that of Muhammad Farid. Heine suggests that it was Farid's residence in Switzerland that placed him in a better position to evaluate the "political, economic, and military situation of the powers involved in the war" than al-Sharif, whose vehement opposition to France and rigid pan-Islamic outlook left little room for political alternatives in Tunisia other than a return to the Ottoman fold.[69]

There is no doubt that Swiss cities, with their openness to foreign activists of all stripes, helped foster the kind of thinking and collaboration central to the work and political vision of Bach Hamba. But did the safety afforded by La Suisse Romande come with the cost of being insulated from the North Africans on whose behalf Bach Hamba campaigned? On the one hand, Bach Hamba might well have been divorced from popular political developments in Tunisia, and even more so from those in Algeria. On the other hand, at a time when repression and censorship in Tunisia had effectively silenced many of the venues for intellectual exchange and political

[65] Salah al-Sharif and Ismail Sfaihi, "La Tunisie et l'Algérie" (Lausanne: Librarie Nouvelle, 1917), 23.
[66] "Nouvelles Diverses," *Gazette de Lausanne,* January 11, 1916, 2.
[67] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul,* 139.
[68] Bach Hamba, *La Revue du Maghreb* 1918: 1-2 (January-February), 22-23.
[69] Heine, "Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tûnisî," 92-93.

dissent, Bach Hamba enjoyed the space and safety to offer new possibilities for North Africa and circulate them to a receptive international audience. We need not fixate only on the social "impact" of this kind of work. To a certain extent a multilingual, federalist, and neutral Switzerland, free in many ways from the strains of war, served as a clean slate upon which exiles and traveling political figures could illustrate their visions for the future in dialogue with their analogues from all over the world. But with conspicuous connections with Ottoman and German intelligence operations, Bach Hamba's political activities continued under the careful watch of British and French consular agents.

Congrès des Nationalités, 1916

We have little evidence of Bach Hamba's intellectual output in Swiss exile until 1916. It was in late June of that year that Lausanne played host to the Congrès des Nationalités, a conference in which leaders claiming to represent twenty-three different "oppressed" nations and peoples gathered to share their grievances and to build a unified voice on the international stage. Those attending hoped to have a stake in the postwar world, however it might look. The host organization, the Union of Nationalities, counted among its backers prominent political figures such as French Minister for Public Instruction and Inventions Paul Painlevé (who later served two brief terms as Prime Minister of France), leading at least one historian to deem its stance pro-French.[70] To a certain extent, the large numbers of representatives from German- and Austrian-dominated eastern and central Europe (such as Czechs, Poles, and White Ruthenians) would suggest their hope for an Entente victory as the best promise of winning independence. Certain moments in the recorded minutes of the Congrès reveal a rather casual dismissal of anti-

[70] Alfred Erich Senn, "Garlawa: A Study in Émigré Intrigue, 1915-1917," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 45:105 (1967), 412.

colonial possibilities, as when the Union's president Paul Otlet, a Belgian peace activist and director of the Institut bibliographique of Brussels, remarked simply and briefly on behalf of an absent Syrian delegate that "because of the gentleness of the French regime, the Syrians had asked to be placed under a French protectorate."[71]

The assumption of the Congrès' pro-French stance, however, is complicated by the fact that delegations also represented a number of peoples and "nationalities" seeking greater independence from Entente powers, including Irish, Egyptians, and of course, North Africans. Bach Hamba attended as the sole representative of Tunisia and Algeria ("the Algero-Tunisian people"). Such "representatives" were often those well-connected intellectuals who happened to be available. Czechs and Serbs, for example, were represented by Swiss intellectuals as proxies.[72] Nonetheless, the assertive and vocal demonstrations of these delegations tapped into the emergent minorities regime that would later inform Woodrow Wilson's exhortations to uphold the right of all oppressed peoples to self-governance and, eventually, the legal basis of the League of Nations.

Bach Hamba's voice does not appear to have featured very prominently in the proceedings of the conference, but what has been recorded reveals a concern for self-determination and the upholding of "justice." He echoed members of Muhammad Farid's well-organized and influential Egytptian delegation who, through the conference organizers, were able to publish a booklet entitled "The Egyptian Question." The question of how to categorize certain "races" was a difficult one for the Congrès representatives. Bach Hamba was particularly

[71] *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 41.
[72] M. François, "Déclaration en faveur des Serbes," *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 187-89; M. de Meuron, "Déclaration en faveur des Tchèques," Ibid., 195-97.

impressed by Farid's request that paternalistic language about "half-civilized" peoples in the proposed Article 5 be abolished, the latter reminding the Congrès attendees that Egypt was one of the oldest civilizations in the world. The ensuing debate reflected a range of divergent opinions, including that of a certain M. Ferrières, a Swiss education reformer, who argued that some "minority races" had indeed been mistreated by whites but that something had to be done to develop and civilize them. A Lithuanian representative added that certain exceptional "civilizing" measures had to be taken toward cannibals, for example. René Claparède boldly replied that "whites sometimes behaved worse than cannibals," pointing to the atrocities committed against the Congolese and the indigenous peoples of Peru. Edmond Privat, a Swiss proponent of Esperanto, offered the concession that some races with "a civilization and a past" could be excluded from the term "indigène." Farid refused, arguing that the phrase "la Protection des Indigènes" recalled too closely "la Protection des Animaux [animals]."[73] Ultimately Article 5 was removed.

Bach Hamba's "declaration" in the official publication of the conference expressed the hope that those powers who had promised to "struggle for equal rights, for the respect of the rule of law, and for peace in the entire world" would renounce "conquest by brutal force against these populations who only ask to remain free."[74] Otherwise, as he explained during a discussion at the Congrès on 20 June 1916, autochthonous and indigenous people such as his own would continue to suffer at the hands of settlers and colonial functionaries. It was the former whose hard work and taxes were used to pay for the schools, roads, and other projects that benefitted the latter.[75]

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[73] *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 23-25.
[74] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Algériens et Tunisiens," in *Compte rendu analytique de la IIIe Conférence des Nationalités réunie à Lausanne 27-29 juin 1916* (Lausanne, Switzerland: Office de l'Union des Nationalités, 1916), 60.
[75] *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 41.

In this early stage of his life in exile, Bach Hamba did not articulate an explicit demand for independence or an end to colonial rule. Rather, Tunisians' and Algerians' demands, according to him, included an end to the regime of exception under French rule, the teaching of Arabic in public schools, equality with Europeans before the law, and a relaxing of unfair land policies in rural areas – "in a word, we reclaim the common right for all, justice and liberty."[76] Bach Hamba only asked that France simply fulfill the promises it had itself made and which the Tunisian and Algerian people deserved as human beings. This was not a significant departure from the pre-war demands of the Young Tunisians.

La Revue du Maghreb and the "Algero-Tunisian People"

Bach Hamba elaborated on his position at the Congrès des Nationalités in the earliest articles of *La Revue du Maghreb*, which he began editing in 1916. These and other writings were later compiled into the volume *Le Peuple Algéro-Tunisien et la France* and published in Geneva in 1918.[77] The *Revue* was well-circulated enough to draw the concern of French censors, particularly those issues that arrived, illicitly, on Tunisian shores.[78] Its claims, however, increasingly went beyond Tunisia and appealed to the wider international sphere in which Bach Hamba had begun to immerse himself. If it was the liberal, neutral space of Switzerland that first allowed him to articulate and disseminate critical views toward French colonialism, it may have been the most brutal aspects of the war itself that propelled him towards demands for complete independence. Béchir Tlili, one of the few historians to explore *La Revue du Maghreb* in any detail, first noted this trajectory in 1978, claiming that while the *Revue* had picked up roughly

[76] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Algériens et Tunisien," 65.
[77] Mahmoud Abdelmoula published a reprint with an introduction in 1991: Mohammed Bach-Hamba, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien et la France*, réédition préparée et présentée par Mahmoud Abdelmoula (Carthage: Beït Al-Hikma, 1991).
[78] CADN 1TU/125/28 - Commission Militaire de Contrôle Postal, Mars 1917 : "Questions politiques," 26.

where the Young Tunisians had left off in 1912, the "upheavals in global power relations" wrought by the war provoked an expansion of Tunisian demands.[79]

In mid-1916 Bach Hamba focused mainly on economic exploitation, the disappearance of the North African bourgeoisie, and the generally arbitrary nature of French colonial rule.[80] But as the war began to reveal new weaknesses in the French Empire, the French continued to demand ever more from their colonial subjects – especially the "blood tax" of military conscription, which consistently featured in the pages of the *Revue*. With waves of wounded or resting soldiers coming off the front, Bach Hamba, like many, had begun to hear stories of the inequalities suffered by the hundreds of thousands of young colonial conscripts fighting on the Western Front. He indicated that by the outbreak of war in 1914 no convention between France and Tunisia existed regarding the use of Tunisian soldiers beyond Tunisian borders. A 1904 law only provided for their mobilization in "the defense of the territory." Bach Hamba claimed that this had already been violated when, in 1912, Tunisian soldiers were deployed to assist in France's occupation of Morocco. In the same piece, he also criticized the conscription exemption extended to Tunisian Jews.[81] As for Algeria, Bach Hamba wrote that the forcible conscription policy imposed upon Muslims was made even more "odious" and "criminal" given the fact that they were already subject to the *code de l'indigénat*.[82]

In a June 1918 issue, Bach Hamba wrote, "What is atrocious in this war is that some people have been obligated to fight for a cause that is not theirs – very well, for the triumph of their oppressors! What interest do the Algéro-Tunisian people have in spilling their blood for a

[79] Tlili, "Le groupement du Revue du Maghreb," 40.
[80] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Nos revendications," *La Revue du Maghreb* 1:3 (July 1916).
[81] Mohamed Bach Hamba, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien*, 150-51.
[82] Ibid., 52-53.

power that conquered them by force, and imposed on them this regime? None, surely."[83] Similar iterations of this sentiment made their way into multiple articles and pamphlets written by Bach Hamba or signed by his Comité Algéro-Tunisien. A February 1917 article of the *Revue* notes the injustice that French widows were to receive a pension of 563 francs compared with only 413 for their Tunisian counterparts – "such is the condition of the Muslim soldier: inequality even in death." Bach Hamba goes on to detail the inequalities faced even by North African prisoners in German camps, revealing the words of French prisoner Émile Moussat who, from a German camp in Limburg, spoke out on behalf of his "Muslim comrades" who unlike European captives had few visitors and little contact with *marraines* (women who often served as "pen pals" or "Godmothers" to young soldiers).[84]

Bach Hamba and *La Revue du Maghreb* were most vocal in advocating for common Tunisians in the face of the "blood tax." In response to an article in the settler daily *La Dépêche Tunisienne* calling for French recruiters to explain to potential Tunisian conscripts that they were fighting "to save the existence and wellbeing of all humanity, including that of Islam," Bach Hamba outlined the hypocrisy of the French position exposed by their colonial rule in North Africa. Pointing out that Tunisians "are obligated to serve a cause that is not their own," he wrote, such proclamations served only to mock them:

> Our villagers and farmers, who are not naïve, smile snidely when hearing such a claim. [They reply:] 'If only you would begin by making us happy! If only you respected our rights and liberties! If only you ceased arbitrary administration! If only we were left alone on our lands instead of being expelled by force to make way for settlers, who have become our masters and dispose of Tunisia and Tunisians as they please! If only you opened schools for our children instead of spending our money for the benefit of

[83] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "La question de la participation à l'effort de guerre," *La Revue du Maghreb* 5-6 (May-June 1918), 74-75.
[84] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Choses d'Afrique: pour les soldats musulmans!" *La Revue du Maghreb* 2:1-2 (January and February 1917).

settlers!'[85]

Bach Hamba's acknowledgment of the Tunisian villager, even as he speaks on their behalf, takes a decidedly different course from other Tunisian activists and political leaders who commented on the experience of common people at war. Here, those Tunisians perhaps most negatively impacted by the First World War – residents of small rural towns in the Tunisian interior – were depicted as intelligent and sarcastic in their criticism of French colonialism. This picture stands in stark contrast to the one later painted by other Tunisian activists such as Abdelaziz Thaalbi and Mukhtar al-'Ayari, who made claims based on the wartime suffering of the Tunisian conscripts they described as "poor wretches" and corruptible "mercenaries" unable to resist their French recruiters.[86] Bach Hamba's decidedly more sympathetic take on common Tunisians was no less isolated by geographic distance than other would-be spokesmen were by class differences. Yet these thinkers each attempted to "recreate representative authority in a world torn apart" and even the "slightest influence over the perception of reality in the spheres of power" made their words and actions worthwhile, to borrow McDougall's terms.[87] In this way we afford attention to the liminal and fleeting spaces into which Tunisian voices were pushed by historical circumstance, rather than by an inevitable nationalist victory.

La Revue du Maghreb also demonstrated much about Mohamed Bach Hamba's access to the international press in Switzerland, including publications relevant to North Africans' grievances against French rule. He had more access to such materials than perhaps any intellectual living under wartime censorship in Tunisia or Algeria, and perhaps more than his

[85] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Choses d'Afrique: Propagande inopportune," *La Revue du Maghreb* 3:3-4 (March-April 1918).
[86] Chris Rominger, "Paths Not Taken: Mukhtar al-Ayari and Alternative Voices on the Post-War Home Front" in Gearóid Barry et al. (dir.), *Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries*, Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers, 2016, p. 252-254; Abdelmoula, *L'impôt du Sang*, 52, citing Abdelaziz Thaalbi, *La Tunisie Martyre: Ses Revendications* (Tunis, 1920), 145.
[87] McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, 45-46.

brother Ali did in the Ottoman Empire. With respect to his criticism of French conscription in North Africa, for example, Bach Hamba printed long excerpts from a piece written by Charles Gide, the well-known progressive professor of law at the University of Paris whom he had met at the 1916 Congrès des Nationalités.[88] Gide would later serve as Vice President of the reformist Comité d'action franco-musulman. Writing for *L'Emancipation* in 1916, Gide claimed that honors and vague recognition would not be enough to compensate for colonial soldiers' sacrifices at war:

> What we owe them are no longer mere considerations, but rights. It is unacceptable for us to continue to consider as an inferior race those who have had the honor of fighting for us and dying for our sons. I know well that *assimilation is neither possible nor even desirable* – but some rights can be equal all while being of a different nature […] *The current war must be for a result, according to the solemn declarations of all the heads of state of the Entente countries, the restitution of the rights of nationalities.*[89]

Gide explained that France had the option either to recognize that North Africans constituted a distinct nationality and therefore deserved as many rights as Poles or Czechs, or to admit that they have no other nationality than French nationality; to leave them suspended as mere "subjects" would be untenable. Gide added that one should not call North Africans "*les indigènes,* an expression which can be humiliating, but which makes no sense – are we not also '*indigènes*' in France?"[90] Bach Hamba here, as he often did, simply quoted the passage in its entirety without commentary or response. Likewise, in the closing section of his 1918 compiled publication, he quoted a proclamation from 1916's conference of the Ligue des droits de l'homme, a republican organization founded in 1898 in part to defend Alfred Dreyfus. The proclamation upheld "the right of the nations, small and large, to independence," and stated the

[88] *Compte rendu de la troisième Conférence des Nationalités* (Lausanne: Librarie Central des Nationalités, 1917), 21.
[89] Charles Gide, "Nos Soldats d'Afrique," *L'Emancipation* 7 (July 1916), cited by Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Ce qu'on écrit," *La Revue du Maghreb* 1:4 (August 1916). Italicized emphasis given by Bach Hamba.
[90] Ibid.

Ligue's demand that future peace treaties "dedicate the right of peoples to dispose of themselves and raise up all the oppressed nations, assuring to each one of them a government conforming to their manifest wishes."[91]

Distance from the French Protectorate's press censorship also allowed Bach Hamba to weigh in on relevant issues beyond Tunisia. In one article in *La Revue du Maghreb*, he critiqued the Italian journal *Carriere della Sera*'s coverage of Italy's ongoing efforts to occupy Libya, an issue with which educated urban Tunisians like Bach Hamba and Albert Samama-Chikli were deeply concerned.[92] Another article addressed the "folly" of Sharif Husayn and the Arab Revolt. Bach Hamba described the latter as nothing more than "grotesque" interference by Western Powers in the religious affairs of Muslims who, at any rate, did not recognize Sharif Husayn as Caliph. Bach Hamba applied to the Muslim world the adage that emperors who had tried to make popes had only ever failed. Going further, he even cited Lord Cromer, once "uncontestable" in his authority over Egypt, who "dissuaded his country [Britain] from intervening in the religious questions of Muslims."[93] Bach Hamba's readers were thus trusted to understand the hypocrisies and contradictions at play, and more importantly, to recognize that even within European circles, colonial oppression was being questioned. That their struggles were apparently shared by all oppressed peoples, furthermore, emphasized the global stakes of North Africans' cause.

To what extent, then, can we speak of a "Wilsonian Moment" for Bach Hamba? Bach Hamba quoted an excerpt from Wilson's January 1917 address to the U.S. Senate in the header of an April 1918 article in *La Revue du Maghreb*: "The world can be at peace only if its life is stable, and there can be no stability where the will is in rebellion, where there is not tranquility of

[91] Mohamed Bach Hamba, *Le peuple Algéro-Tunisien*, 159.
[92] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Choses d'Afrique," *La Revue du Maghreb* 1:7 (30 November 1916).
[93] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Questions Arabes : Illusion et ridicule," *La Revue du Maghreb* 1:4 (August 1916).

spirit and a sense of justice, of freedom, and of right."[94] Bach Hamba wrote of the growing acceptance of Wilson's terms, even among the French leadership and intellectuals. Rather than finding cause for optimism and faith in this mechanism for anti-colonial change, however, he accused France of using "[Wilson's] principles as a weapon against their enemies," one that they had no attention of applying to themselves. In fact, to Bach Hamba, Wilson offered no new awakening to North African peoples. Rather, he claimed that Tunisians and Algerians had protested against French rule from the beginning, and that they would continue to do so until they controlled their own fate. He concluded the piece by calling for a referendum of the nations of North Africa to determine their own future.[95] In this case, Wilsonian rhetoric and its French analogues could serve as a foil, rather than simply as a source of newfound inspiration. This legalistic language was appealing in its relative universality and consistency, even if it was unevenly applied. The historical circumstances of the war and its conclusion meant that preexisting claims, now more radical, could be given international attention.

Paris Peace Conference

In the aftermath of the war, Bach Hamba and the pro-Ottoman Salah al-Sharif collaborated in drawing up a declaration to be presented to the world powers at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 (al-Sharif had left Berlin just after the armistice and settled in Switzerland).[96] This declaration exhibited many of the grievances outlined above, from illegal conscription and land seizure to a lack of governmental representation and uneven economic development. Signatories included Bach Hamba, al-Sharif, and five other exiled North African intellectuals. Notably, the document went beyond Bach Hamba's typical use of the "Algero-Tunisian people," a vague

[94] Mohamed Bach Hamba, "Notre Droit," *La Revue du Maghreb* 3:3-4 (March-April 1916).
[95] Ibid.
[96] Heine, "Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tûnisî, 93.

pronouncement of their shared struggle. The 1919 declaration began with the claim that "Algeria and Tunisia, since the Muslim conquest, have always made up a single country with Tunis as its capital," evoking a concrete territorial basis for the claims to come with the implication that this would entail a return to historical unity.[97] The declaration as a whole reads as a chronicle of colonial oppression that had derailed past North African and Muslim prosperity, reflecting the Ottoman orientation of al-Sharif. It appealed directly to Wilson's "memorable manifesto" of January 1917 in which all nations, regardless of race or religion, would have the right to determine their own destiny. The declaration also pointed to the guarantees extended by the international community to other formerly "oppressed peoples," such as Czechs, Poles, and Latvians. Characteristic of Bach Hamba's work in *La Revue du Maghreb,* the declaration used Wilsonian rhetoric to amplify the exhortations of various French intellectuals and socialists in support of the rights of colonized peoples. The piece concluded by asserting that "The Algéro-Tunisian people claim their complete independence, which they have never renounced," as if to suggest a continuity rooting their current demands in an autonomous, pre-colonial Tunisia and Algeria.[98]

Beyond independence and the territorial unity of Algeria and Tunisia, it is unclear whether the signatories shared specific expectations for a postwar future. Through the body of Bach Hamba's work, Tunisian and Algerian independence appeared to be based on liberal proto-nationalist promises: constitutional, representative government and a territorial basis which went no further than Algeria and Tunisia (and in fact appeared to leave room for each country to either remain independent or unite together). For al-Sharif and others, a return to some sort of pan-

[97] *Les revendications du Peuple algéro-tunisien: Mémoire présenté au Congrès de la Paix par le Comité algéro-tunisien* (Geneva: Imprimerie Nationale, 1919), 3.
[98] Ibid., 8-11.

Islamic (if not always explicitly Ottoman) sovereignty was still compelling. Like the declarations in many Arab and nationalist appeals made to the Entente victors in Paris in 1919, theirs fell on deaf ears. On the one hand, one might characterize Bach Hamba's decision to partner with al-Sharif as politically naïve, given that the latter had openly sided with the now-defeated Central Powers. On the other hand, their collaboration suggests how the great promise of the postwar negotiations could unite activists whose political trajectories and visions had once differed.

Conclusion

Mohamed Bach Hamba found himself on his deathbed in Berlin in 1920.[99] He allegedly passed his dying breaths in the arms of Shakib Arslan, the Lebanese Druze notable subsequently dubbed the "prince of eloquence" for his work in the 1920s and 30s to link liberation movements across the Arab world.[100] Prior to this moment, there is little evidence that the two had worked together in the past, making this intimate scene a surprising one. But given the influx of reformers and activists into Switzerland after the defeat of the Central Powers,[101] it is less than surprising that Bach Hamba at the end of his life was positioned to pass the baton to the next generation of border-crossing Arab reformers such as Arslan. Though initially a steadfast proponent of Ottoman rule in the Arab world and no supporter of Arabist separatism, Arslan would in the wake of the war grow to support Arab nationalism through his continued opposition to European domination in the Middle East.[102] Through the 1920s, with the Mandate system in place, Arslan led the Syrian-Palestinian Congress in Geneva, and came to be considered the diasporic leader of

[99] Most put Bach Hamba's death in 1920, but Cleveland puts it at 1919: Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 92.
[100] Charles André Julien, *L'Afrique du Nord en Marche: Nationalismes Musulmans et Souveraineté Française* (Paris: Julliard, 1972), 25. See also: Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*.
[101] Heine, "Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tûnisî," 93.
[102] Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 25; Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 30-32; 41. Tamari describes Arslan as a "protégé of Cemal Pasha.

the Syrian Revolt of 1925.[103]

In Switzerland Mohamed Bach Hamba found, like Arslan and many other reformers of various anti-colonial, anti-militarist, and nationalist persuasions, a neutral space at once Francophone and international for the exploration of the political possibilities born of the war. In exile, he faced the challenge of distance from the Algéro-Tunisian constituents for whom he advocated, but nevertheless he managed to harness his connections with activists representing "oppressed peoples" from Europe, the Arab world, and the Muslim world more broadly. Despite Bach Hamba's liberal nationalist outlook, however, his trajectory and his personal connections also reveal that French accusations of his sympathy toward the Ottoman Empire were not wholly unfounded. His publications made few explicit references to the Ottoman Empire and made no direct appeal for the reinstatement of Ottoman rule in the postwar Maghrib. But by triangulating his associations with Salah al-Sharif, Shakib Arslan, and other pro-Ottoman and pan-Islamist itinerant operatives moving through Switzerland during the war, a picture emerges of an ambiguous orientation on the part of Bach Hamba. He struggled to reconcile an independent nationalist future based on Wilsonian and French republican principles with the longstanding cultural, political, and personal ties linking Tunisia with Istanbul.

[103] Bailony, "Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public," 8-29.

5. CONSTRUCTING "THE JEWISH QUESTION" IN TUNISIA

The end of the First World War, with the armistice declared on November 11th, 1918, should have brought relief to the residents of Tunis, and to the more than a hundred thousand demobilized conscripts and forced laborers now returning home. Yet the celebrations in the streets of Tunis were tainted by bloody brawls involving individuals from nearly every segment of the city's population. On the day after the armistice, two veterans led an enthusiastic crowd accompanied by several cars adorned with Zionist and French flags down the Avenue de Carthage, reportedly chanting "Long live France! Long live the Allies! Long live Palestine! Long live the Jews!" and singing Hatikvah, adopted as the anthem of the First Zionist Congress in 1897.[1] As it passed the Café du Casino, the group was met with opposing chants: "Down with the Jews!" ["A bas les juifs!"][2] The ensuing scuffle, which pitched the Jewish demonstrators (including Tunisians, Algerians, and European settlers) against a collection of European settlers and Muslim Tunisian participants, resulted in dozens of hospitalizations and at least one death.[3] The chaos spilled over into the back streets and markets of the city, causing the closing of several shopping districts for days and requiring the deployment of police and soldiers around the city; similar violent episodes continued sporadically into the following year.[4] These disturbances, the culmination of both supposedly long-held animosities and new wartime tensions, would be addressed by the press on both sides of the Mediterranean and by French police reports, with

[1] Hatikvah would later become the anthem of the state of Israel.
[2] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Mattei, Sureté Publique, 18 Nov. 1918. The same chants would accompany looting in Tunis provoked by the outbreak of the Six Day War in June of 1967; see: Michael Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: the Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (NYU Press, 1997), 306.
[3] CADN 1TU/1463: "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919.
[4] See also: André Chourqui, *Histoire des Juifs en Afrique du Nord: le retour en Orient* (Rocher, 1998), 31.

implications for intercommunal relations and postwar political discourse in Tunisia.[5]

The November 12th episode was not an isolated or unexpected outburst, nor was it limited to Tunis: similar incidents had unfolded over the course of 1917 in Cap Bon, Sousse, Kairouan, Sfax, and Gabès.[6] Over a hundred reports on intercommunal violence and tensions were compiled in a dossier entitled "War of 1914-18 - Jewish Community" in the French diplomatic archives in Nantes. In truth, the dossier, despite its name, includes little information about *anything but* what are categorized as "anti-Semitic incidents." As it often will, the label obfuscated more than it clarified. A deeper reading reveals how the French colonial "politics of protection" set the stage for the construction of a Jewish minority and a crisis of "anti-Semitism" at a time when France was positioning itself on the international stage for an important role in governing the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. Tunisia's diverse Jewish population, in turn, was not silent in the face of these violent incidents or of France's role in creating or exacerbating them. A chronicle of tensions, debates, and aspirations quickly unfolded in the popular press, as Jews in Tunisia envisioned a range of political futures, from renewed loyalty to France through volunteer military service to participation in Tunisia's burgeoning leftist and Zionist movements.

This chapter examines the French construction of a "Jewish Question" in Tunisia during the war and its immediate aftermath, within the emergent international context of minority regimes that would inform membership in the League of Nations and its justification for the French Mandate in the Levant. In turn, I investigate how Jews in Tunisia responded to intercommunal violence and the upheavals of the colonial war, with a particular focus on new

[5] Service Historique de la Défense à Vincennes (SHD) 7/N/1001: "Rapport sur les opérations de la commission militaire de contrôle postale de Tunis, pendant le mois de Novembre 1917," 21.
[6] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 360.

transnational political visions. What particular circumstances led to the naming of "anti-Semitic incidents" as such? How and why was a "Jewish Question" constructed? In what terms did Jews themselves make claims for justice? And how did transnational connections and the international community figure into these claims? Drawing from the popular press and colonial archives, this chapter demonstrates the breadth of different political visions among Jews in Tunisia at the war's end: far from a monolith, some pled for increased cooperation with France and French Jews, some sought protection in the hands of new international bodies, and others looked to various configurations of the Zionist promise of a new life in Palestine. Others still looked to a leftist vision or to a nationalist Tunisian one.

Here I also advance a call to bridge historiographical divides between North Africa and the Middle East. I argue that the similarities in the moral and legal justifications for French tutelage, as well as comparable conditions of wartime mobility, link the study of Tunisia to that of the Middle East (especially Syria and Lebanon) through questions of the emergent international order and the ascendancy of "minority questions." A focus on Jewish men in Tunisia, in particular, helps us to understand how conscription, mobilization, and demobilization exacerbated divisive colonial policies, posing new questions to Jews about their sense of belonging or of difference. These questions loomed large as they considered their political options for the postwar future.

Archival Considerations and the Minority Question

Abdelmajid Hannoum has warned against reproducing the "textual violence" of the colonial archive, particularly when writing about identity.[7] The very organization of its documents and

[7] Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 59.

materials produces narratives which are divorced from the historical context in which they were produced, grouped, and ordered by terms made legible by the practice of colonialism. Despite historians' best intentions to read "against the grain" of the colonial archive, making sense of seemingly self-evident or representational categories (whether of religious identity, political crises, or violent conflicts, for example) can be challenging. Temporality is a concern, too: Hannoum gives the example of Algeria's "Kabyle Revolt of 1871," labeled as such in the boxes of the French *Archives d'Outre-Mer* (Overseas Archives).[8] Even before reading a dossier's contents, the historian already knows the end of the story, so to speak – a "revolt" or "insurrection" ends in failure, and the restoration of a preexisting order; if it had gone differently, it might have been labeled an "uprising" or more likely a "revolution." The result is that we read these documents not as if they voiced an unsure and contingent present, but as if they foreshadowed reasons for the eventual historical outcome. We must always be aware of how the organization of archives, whether for political reasons, for ease of access, or for some other reason, can reproduce the very colonial categories which used fixed notions of "identity" or "mentality" to divide indigenous peoples and justify military intervention.[9]

Any historian working with colonial archives will be quite familiar with the problems in accepting such clean-cut categories of identity such as "the Jewish community" (*communauté juive*).[10] In the 1980s and 1990s writing about "communities" in Tunisian history, while focused on those who arrived in Tunisia from the north shore of the Mediterranean during the nineteenth century, came to include Sephardic Tunisian Jews, many of whose backgrounds (and economic

[8] Ibid., 98-105.
[9] Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 24.
[10] See, for example, CADN 1TU/123/31 – "Dossiers concernant la guerre de 1914-18; Affaires intérieures - population; Communauté juive."

and cultural ties) could be linked with Italy and Spain. According to David Bond, this coincided with the "restorative nostalgia" of Ben Ali-era efforts to co-opt his political opposition through conservational, architectural, and historiographical projects highlighting the contributions of the various Mediterranean "communities" (Italian, Jewish, and otherwise) to the Tunisian patrimony. As a result, Bond argues, histories of modern Tunisia and Tunis came to presume simplistic consistency and continuity among and between these groups along the grain of nationalist historiography.[11] In this way, it is argued, a state-supported narrative cultivated a reading of a timeless Tunisian cosmopolitanism that could account for its contemporary openness and progressiveness.[12]

Even seemingly self-evident historical events such as "anti-Semitic disturbances" (*désordres antisemites*) must be approached with a critical eye, particularly given the aforementioned context of colonial constructions of the "Jewish question" and minority protection across the Arab world, as well as the heightened stakes of the postwar international negotiations.[13] This chapter thus proceeds with the tensions of such questions, even as it occasionally relies on other generalizing terms – "Tunisian Jews" in particular – for the sake of convenience and flow. It should not be presumed that there was a single or coherent "Jewish community" in Tunisia, nor was there a consistent outcome despite the similar challenges Jews faced. Terms such as "the Jewish Question" and "anti-Semitism," however, need to be taken apart further before proceeding, emerging as they do in Tunisia with deeply imperial and global implications.

In spite of the fact that presumptions of timeless and inevitable sectarianism continue to

[11] David Bond, "Tunisia's Minority Mosaic," 157-173.
[12] See: Simon Hawkins, "National Symbols and National Identity: Currency and Constructing Cosmopolitans in Tunisia," *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 17:2-3 (2010), 228-254.
[13] CADN 1TU/123/31 – "Guerre 14-18, Désordres antisemites. Sionisme."

abound in contemporary discussions about the Arab world, Middle East historians of the past two decades have made considerable headway in revealing the role that imperial powers played in exacerbating and politicizing differences among various groups in the region.[14] The Levant has been a particular focus of historians hoping to understand the link between imperial expansion and sectarianism. Ussama Makdisi has shown, for example, that sectarianism in the Ottoman Levant was neither primordial nor inevitable, but rather was "actively produced" in the nineteenth century by European meddling as well as by Ottoman responses and *tanzimat* reform efforts, which overturned existing economic and social hierarchies between and among *millet* communities.[15] On the twentieth century, Max Weiss and others have argued that colonial French rule in Lebanon was crucial to the creation of an "institutionalized" Shi'i minority, paving the way for a fragile sectarian politics that was carried over into post-independence and contemporary Lebanon.[16]

The First World War generated a flurry of negotiations among the Entente powers about the fate of Arab lands should the Ottoman Empire fall. It was clear that postwar arrangements would not bring an end to the French and British presence in the Arab world. In fact, these powers insisted on an expanded presence in the name of tutelage, civilization, and the protection of minorities. Benjamin White explains that if the newly established League of Nations was to be

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[14] For example, see: Amal Ghazal and Larbi Sadiki, "ISIS: The 'Islamic State' between Orientalism and the Interiority of MENA's Intellectuals," *Jadaliyya*, 19 January 2016; Alireza Doostdar, "How Not To Understand ISIS," *Sightings: University of Chicago Martin Marty Center*, 2 October 2014; Bassam Haddad and Basileus Zeno, "ISIS in the News: Extensive Media Roundup," *Jadaliyya*, 26 September 2014; Karen Armstrong, "The Myth of Religious Violence," *The Guardian*, 25 September 2014.

[15] Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 51-52; see also: Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[16] Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006); see also: Max Weiss, "The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon," *History Compass* 7:1 (2009), 141-154.

the arbiter and "gauge" of states' viability and independence at the war's end, then "the legal protection accorded to 'minorities' might be seen as the needle."[17] This preoccupation dated back to the nineteenth century when independence of states depended upon their commitment and capacity to guarantee the protection of minorities.[18] This included states such as Greece and Serbia, which had seceded from the Ottoman Empire, often with the prodding or direct support of the Russian, British, and French empires. The common refrain of imperial officials was criticism of the Ottomans' alleged repression of its non-Muslim subjects.[19] After the First World War, these states, as well as new states that had acquired substantial "non-national" populations, were subject to a Minority Committee and the International Court of Justice overseen by the Entente victors. Such was a condition to these states' admission into the League of Nations.[20]

Through the mandate system, France and Britain were given the role of tutor over the peoples of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan, ostensibly guiding them towards such a day that they would be able to govern themselves as "modern," "civilized," and "stable" nations. This arrangement ignored numerous emergent nationalist and other movements, which proclaimed their willingness and ability to self-govern. Some of the findings of the American-led King-Crane Commission, which surveyed of the views of the peoples of the defeated Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces, confirmed as much.[21] Nonetheless, mandatory powers justified their

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[17] Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2011), 132-134.
[18] Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*, 163-164.
[19] For example, see Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Fatma M. Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[20] Saba Mahmood, "Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54:2 (2012), 424-25.
[21] See Andrew Patrick, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Elizabeth F. Thompson, "Rashid Rida and the 1920 Syrian-Arab Constitution: How the French Mandate undermined Islamic Liberalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, eds. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

continued presence in the Arab world as arbiters of intercommunal tensions and violence, despite their own role in creating or exacerbating conflicts. In the French and British imperial imaginations, it was minorities who had been long oppressed by the old empires that had now collapsed; the possibility that Jewish and Christian minorities of the Arab world might once again be oppressed by the Muslim majority – particularly in the emergent ethno-religious political configurations – was justification enough for their continued imperial presence. Historians have agreed that the mandate system itself exacerbated intercommunal tensions and even worked to construct or institutionalize sectarianism where it had not previously existed.[22] People living under Mandate rule, as a result, came increasingly to view the postwar arrangements as "an arbitrary game which handed out rule to some and servitude to others," as Hannah Arendt put it.[23]

The existing literature on the role of imperial powers in the construction of sectarianism and the Mandatory regime of "minority questions" restricts itself to those lands to which the mandates were officially applied. French holdings in North Africa were never included in negotiations for the mandate system. After all, the civil regions of Algeria had been integrated into France itself since 1848; Tunisia and Morocco, as Protectorates, were nominally and theoretically independent states whose sovereigns accepted French administration over their military and external affairs. As far as the League of Nations was concerned, there was no need for a "civilized tutor" where one already stood. Yet despite the fact that Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia did not fall under the purview of the League of Nations and were not granted any further measure of self-determination, the moral justification for a French presence there shared much in

[22] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism,* 126-156; Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 44-74;
[23] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 270.

common with France's bid to mandatory authority in the Levant. Sometimes that link was even made explicit: General Henri Gouraud, the French High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon, triumphantly addressed welcoming crowds in Zahla after the defeat of Prince Faysal's army in the summer of 1920:

> France has always found pleasure in this gift, to see marching by her side her adopted children like her own children. Who could believe that these Moroccans and Senegalese, after having spilled their blood for four years on the battlefield, would sacrifice themselves again yesterday, if France were not a true mother to them?[24]

This direct reference to other colonial subjects under the same colonial "mother" begs a historiographical question about the divide between scholarship on the Maghrib and the Mashriq: given the similarities in French and international justifications for the North African protectorates and Middle Eastern mandates, the literature on the construction of "minority questions" and the politics of protection in the Middle East should be expanded to include a discussion of French approaches to "indirect" colonial rule in Tunisia and Morocco (if not Algeria), as well as British rule in Egypt.[25] After all, as Weiss notes, French legal scholars explicitly acknowledged the semblance: "'The Mandatory also gives international protection to states under Mandate resembling that which is applied to countries under protectorate.' Colony, protectorate, and mandate: less and less distinguishable versions of outright foreign domination."[26] North African historiography certainly stands to benefit from this expansion, and it need not remain isolated from debates about empire and minorities in the eastern Mediterranean. The construction of a "minority question" is in fact central to understanding how a "Jewish question" emerged in a Tunisian society that had not, before the outbreak of WWI, known significant intercommunal strife or sectarianism.

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[24] Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 40, citing "La Proclamation du Grand Liban," *Le Réveil,* 5 August 1920, 1.
[25] For further discussion of the shape of "indirect rule" in Tunisia, see Mary Lewis, *Divided Rule,* 9-13.
[26] Weiss, *Under the Shadow of Sectarianism,* 131.

The "minority question" in North Africa also needs to be placed in the context of anti-Semitism as it stood and was understood in France at the turn of the century. The Dreyfus Affair, having been concluded less than a decade prior to the outbreak of the First World War, loomed large in the French political psyche. The Affair had revealed the limits of French republican idealism and *laïcité,* to say nothing of the contradictions of its promise of equality. French national identity, at the turn of the century, was more narrowly defined than the Third Republic's universalist ideals proclaimed, and public displays of anti-Semitism had been legitimized or encouraged by figures such as Édouard Drumont.[27] The Affair also spurred on the development of Zionism as a viable political movement: Theodor Herzl wrote with increasing urgency from 1895 and on about the "Jewish question" in Europe.[28] Like the phenomenon itself, the term "anti-Semitism" also entered popular usage by the turn of the century, with Émile Zola decrying in his famous 1898 broadside an "odious anti-Semitism."[29]

At the same time, Dreyfus' vindication in 1906 marked the powerful momentum of liberal republicans as a political force around groups such as the Ligue des droits de l'homme, who after leading the defense of Dreyfus proclaimed more loudly than ever the steadfast values of the republican tradition.[30] Daughton argues that the "anticlerical tirade" in France even picked up steam in colonial administrations, leading to a reevaluation of the role of missionaries in France's far-flung empire. These developments came amid increasing accusations that conservative Catholics (among others) had spawned a virulent anti-Semitism.[31] Famous anti-

[27] Ruth Harris, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2010), 64-65.
[28] Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 85-97.
[29] Nancy Fitch, "Mass Culture, Mass Parliamentary Politics, and Modern Anti-Semitism: The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France," *American Historical Review* 97:1 (Feb. 1992), 55-95.
[30] Harris, *Dreyfus*, 251-254.
[31] J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23, 86-88.

Semites such as Drumont and Henri Rochefort, for their part, railed against colonial expeditions as the costly and oppressive machinations of greedy Jews. And while republicans and Dreyfusards were increasingly critical of the more brutal aspects of colonialism, they did not question the colonial enterprise itself and instead reasserted their confidence in the righteousness of France's *mission civilisatrice* and its paternal care for the "sons" of the Empire, in Tunisia as anywhere else.[32] This was also an important discourse among reformist French Jews, who claimed to protect and uplift their less fortunate "indigenous" coreligionists, as will be explored below.

Tunisian Jews and the Ambiguities of Protection

There are many pitfalls associated with the study of Maghribi Jews, and historians of colonial North Africa have in general highlighted the ambiguity of Jews' place in both colonial societies and postcolonial nation-states. One approach has been to depict North African Jews as agents of Western colonialism, particularly after the Crémieux Decree of 1870 made French citizens out of Algerian Jews regardless of their disposition towards the colonial state, while it excluded Muslims from citizenship.[33] A Eurocentric approach goes even further, suggesting that French colonialism had liberated Tunisian Jews from "the shadow of Islam," claiming that it was both the source of the [Tunisian] Jews' security and their means of release from the degradation of Islam."[34] While such an argument is clearly problematic, other scholars warn against a "rose-

[32] Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), 469.
[33] Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries since 1492," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 342.
[34] Haim Saadoun, "Tunisia" in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* eds. Reeva S. Simon, Michael M. Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 447-48. See also Geneviève Goussaud-Falgas, *Les Français de Tunisie de 1881 à 1931* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 328-329.

tinted" view of a romanticized Ottoman or pre-colonial utopian tolerance of Jews.[35] Recent research on Jews of the Maghrib has provided a more critical and fruitful lens through which to analyze the ideologies and practices of colonialism. In the Algerian case, for example, Joshua Schreier argues that despite Jews' attainment of French citizenship in 1870, "the French applied nominally similar standards of modernity and civilization to both Jewish and Muslim subjects."[36] Some Moroccan Jews, according to Alma Heckman, embraced leftist anticolonial movements, particularly after the Vichy regime's imposition of anti-Semitic laws during the Second World War.[37] Needless to say, the reality of Jewish life in North Africa occupied a decidedly more ambiguous and shifting place than sweeping narratives of the past can accommodate. The stakes of this ambiguity would only become more pronounced with the upheavals of the First World War.

Notwithstanding the promising literature on Jews in Morocco and Algeria, historians have had relatively little to say about Jews in Tunisia in this period, and even less of their experience during the war and their shifting relationships with their neighbors. Despite citizenship laws that were different from those in Algeria and Morocco, Jews in Tunisia similarly occupied a more variegated and ambiguous position with regard to the colonial state than did Tunisian Muslims. In theory, the Protectorate system meant that Tunisia's hereditary ruler, the Bey, would remain nominally in power and would oversee domestic affairs while France would control external diplomatic and military affairs. This form of indirect rule came about in some ways as a response to the violence, high cost, and difficulty of France's conquest of neighboring

[35] Jessica Marglin, "In the Courts of the Nations: Jews, Muslims, and Legal Pluralism in 19th Century Morocco" (PhD Diss., Princeton University, 2012), 15-16.
[36] Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 7-8.
[37] Alma Heckman, "Radical Nationalists: Moroccan Jewish Communists, 1925-1975" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015).

Algeria.[38] In practice, however, the diversity and mobility of Tunisian subjects (especially in coastal cities) often undermined French attempts to walk the fine line of the Protectorate arrangement. The legal pluralism and ambiguous nationality codes inherited by the Tunisian Protectorate were never fully resolved, leading the French to employ a more direct form of rule by the turn of the twentieth century and eventually providing the impetus for resistance to French rule in the early twentieth century.[39] Through the practice known as "forum shopping," Jews, along with subjects of Maltese and Italian descent, frequently appealed to a number of different jurisdictions and consular protections in order to secure the best possible outcome for legal cases ranging from inheritance and divorce to taxation and criminal proceedings.[40] At the same time, many of Tunisia's poor urban Jews lived in homogeneous and segregated quarters in old city centers, and did not enjoy the same social and physical mobility as middle class Jews did. The *hara* of Tunis, on the northeastern edge of the medina, was often described by reformist Francophone and wealthy Tunisian Jews as an overpopulated, unhygienic, and dangerous neighborhood suffering from neglect.[41] Ambiguities thus hung over the conscription policies facing Tunisia's various Jewish communities, with serious consequences for intercommunal relations.

Jews, Muslims, and Conscription

Prior to 1914, there were few intercommunal disturbances to speak of in Tunisia. Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms such as the 1856 edict had inspired Tunisia' 1861 Constitution, which

[38] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 11.
[39] Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 64.
[40] Ibid., 98-130. This reflects a continuation of the 19th century practice described in Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*.
[41] Richard Parks, "The Jewish Quarters of Interwar Paris and Tunis: Destruction, Creation, and French Urban Design," *Jewish Social Studies* 17:1 (2010), 76-77.

established legal equality among residents of Tunisia, including Muslims, Jews, and many settlers of European origin. The Constitution had been adopted under pressure from French and British officials and was rescinded after uprisings in 1864. But intercommunal relations remained largely peaceful – rebels had directed most of their anger toward the Tunisian state for its imposition of the *majba,* personal taxes raised to cover its debt to European banks.[42] Rare outbreaks of tension or violence such as those in May 1897 were orchestrated largely by European settlers; indigenous Muslims pressured to serve the aims of European settlers often refused.[43] Moreover, at the turn of the century, incidents such as these tended to be more religious than political. During Holy Week in 1901, for example, it was Italians who received a representation of the Passion with shouts of "Death to the Jews!" Stephen Wilson, echoing Cohen-Hadria, argues that "the virulence of anti-Semitism in North Africa varied according to the degree of French or European penetration."[44] Daniel Goldstein noted that through the early twentieth century, the Protectorate administration tended to exacerbate the exclusion of Jews from public life, even "systematically" dismissing them because of their perceived economic advantages. It was this position that led Henri Tridon, an editor with *La Tunisie Française*, to speak of an antisemitism "born of the administration."[45]

With the outbreak of the First World War, conscription policy under the French Protectorate proved a divisive force. Male Muslim Tunisians had been periodically, though inconsistently, subject to conscription since the mid-19th century, before the French occupation, though residents of the capital were largely exempt because of their economic importance to the

[42] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 28-31; 45-46.
[43] Geneviève Dermenjian, "Les Juifs d'Algérie entre deux hostilités (1830-1943)" in *Les juifs d'Algérie: une histoire des ruptures*, eds. Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Geneviève Dermenjian (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015) 112-113.
[44] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 233-34.
[45] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 358-59.

country.[46] The Protectorate administration argued that it could issue a call to conscription into the French Army on behalf of the Bey. However, whereas Algerian Jews had been naturalized en masse by the 1870 Crémieux Decree, making Jewish men a pool of potential military recruits, Jewish subjects of the Tunisian Bey remained exempt from military service under the French Protectorate, though they were permitted to volunteer for service.[47] A continuation of pre-colonial practices, this arrangement was perhaps due to the fact that Jews in Tunisia had long sought protégé status from foreign consulates such as those of Italy, England, Spain, and even France. Such was the nature of the Ottoman "capitulations," even long after the Tunisian Bey had secured de-facto autonomy from Istanbul. Many Jews in Tunisia had family origins in Spain dating back to Inquisition-era expulsions, and this *grana* community, as they were locally known, had roots in and maintained connections with the Italian coastal regions between Livorno and Genoa, an important trade conduit dating back to the early modern period.[48] At the start of the war, with Italy still neutral, some Tunisian Jews, under the patronage of Italian settlers, appeared to benefit financially from the economic panic. But when Italy joined the war in August 1915, some Jews began to engage voluntarily in the war effort as soldiers and workers.[49]

French officials were at times divided about conscription policy in the Tunisian Protectorate. In October 1916, French Minister of War Pierre Roques wrote to Tunisian Resident General Gabriel Alapetite suggesting that male Tunisian Jews be made subject to military recruitment, much as their coreligionists in Algeria had been. Roques noted that Algerian Jews were in general devoted to France, and that at least four or five hundred of Tunisia's roughly

[46] DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 18-20.
[47] About 13,000-14,000 Algerian Jews were mobilized for service in the First World War, alongside some 125,000 Muslims and 92,000 Frenchmen. Philippe Landau, "Difficile citoyennité: les juifs d'Algérie à l'heure de 1914 à 1939," in *Juifs d'Algérie*, ed. Anne Hélène Hoog (Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme, 2012), 124; Philippe Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre: Un patriotism républicain* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1999), 33.
[48] See Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*.
[49] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 360.

100,000 Jews must be fit for service.[50] Alapetite, writing about three weeks later to report on Roques' inquiry, rejected the comparison to Algeria, noting that as a Protectorate, Tunisia's traditional policy of treating Jews much like a protected "foreign colony" had to be maintained. The comparison, in fact, was dire: "Nothing would be more fatal than pursuing the gradual assimilation of Tunisian institutions to Algerian institutions." To do so, Alapetite continued, would be to undermine the Bey and therefore the very juridical and ideological basis of the Protectorate, thereby forcing the French administration to rule Tunisian Muslims by force alone, as was the case in Algeria. He added: "Tunisia was not conquered like Algeria, tribe by tribe, tent by tent, by a military struggle whose fury stretched out for half a decade."[51] The Resident General set forth an explanation that Tunisian Jews were at any rate considered inept at war, and that when compared to their Muslim counterparts, they would show little more loyalty to France than they would to any other Christian nation. Rather, their community was "closed, nearly impenetrable," living tightly as a mass that only "tightens even more with the arrival of bad news from the outside." What united them, to the highest official in the French Protectorate, was "a close solidarity in economic struggle against other races."[52] Despite the differentiation of Tunisian Jews from other North African Jews, Alapetite's declarations about their nature drew from a familiar European set of stereotypes and abstractions about Jews in general.

Conscription, however, was not the only factor in growing tensions between Tunisian Muslims and Jews. What of their relationship while serving in France, and of the implications of their shared experience at war? Ethan Katz has pointed to a few examples of cooperation and

[50] CADN 1TU/125/10: Letter from Roques to Resident General Alapetite, 21 October 1916.
[51] CADN 1TU/125/10: "Incorporation des sujets tunisiens israélites." RG Alapetite à M. Briand, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 16 November 1916.
[52] Ibid; see also Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 40-41.

affinity between North African Jews and Muslims around the First World War. In particular, they sometimes fought in the same military unit such as the *Armée d'Afrique*, which was based in North Africa but notably served on the Western Front during WWI and which faced some of the first chlorine gas attacks of the war. And just as a shared loyalty to the French war effort may have been characteristic of some of these soldiers (though the evidence is limited), Katz argues that Jews' and Muslims' struggles with their ambiguous legal and racial position in the eyes of French commanders may have marked some common ground.[53] North African Jews and other foreign-born Jews, including some 30,000 Eastern European Jewish volunteers, usually served in separate units from Frenchmen, including French Jews.[54]

Muslims' experiences in the French army were probably marked just as much by a sense of profound inequality, not just compared with European soldiers, but also with Jewish North African soldiers. Non-citizen Jewish volunteers in the French army numbered just about 8,500, with about 2,500 of them recently arrived Ottoman Jews.[55] The remainder, most presumably from Tunisia and Morocco, made up a very small minority, particularly when dispersed into colonial North African units.[56] Moreover, many of them served in specialized support roles, perhaps given their access to a level of education largely unavailable to Muslim North Africans. Some North African Jews served as *officiers interprètes* – intermediaries between French

[53] Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 30-33.
[54] Erin Corber, "Bravery in the Borderlands, Martyrs on the Margins: Jewish War Heroes and World War I Narratives in France, 1914-1940," in *World War I and the Jews: Conflict and Transformation in Europe, the Middle East, and America*, eds. Marsha L. Rozenblit and Jonathan Karp (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 105; see also: Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre*, 37.
[55] Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Citizens of a Fictional Nation: Ottoman-born Jews in France during the First World War," *Past & Present* 226:1 (2015), 235, citing Captain Sylvain Halff, "The Participation of the Jews of France in the Great War," *American Jewish Year Book*, xxi (1919-20).
[56] Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 28. Keep in mind that Algerian Jews, naturalized as French in 1870, would not be counted in this number of "non-citizens," and usually served in European or *zouave* units made up mostly of other French settlers and their descendants.

officers and their Muslim subordinates.[57] While this role did entail a certain amount of care and compassion on the part of Jewish soldiers for Muslim conscripts (beyond just interpretation and translation), it also involved surveillance, censorship of postage, and other elements of colonial and racialized control that was characteristic of the French Army's treatment of *tirailleurs* as described elsewhere in this dissertation.[58] As discussed in Chapter Two, this treatment stemmed from prevailing French discourses which held Muslims to have innately zealous, violent, pathogenic, hyper-sexualized, and often irrational "mentalities."[59] The same presumptions about North African Muslims in the army were mobilized during the First World War to explain their penchant for violent attacks against Tunisian Jews, who, although not without their faults in French eyes, were a vulnerable minority whose survival was said to depend on French protection.

Details of the Armistice Incident

Given this background of juridical and imperial ambiguities, let us examine the details of the brawl on November 12th, 1918, as described by participants, victims, and witnesses whose testimonies were collected by police agents. The brawl began when a couple of apparently drunken, wounded veterans passed by Café du Casino in downtown Tunis in the early afternoon, chanting "Down with the Jews!" and "Get rid of the Jews!"[60] Minutes later, Simon Sadik, a 29 year-old Jewish soldier on convalescence leave, ran into a Mr. Jules Bonan, a man later identified by French officials as the leader of a "Zionist Committee."[61] Jules asked Simon and his

[57] Fogarty, *Race and War in France,* 100.
[58] Ibid., 142.
[59] For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops," 120.
[60] CADN 1TU/125 31: Proces-verbal de Mattei, "Plainte formulée par le sieur Sadik Simon…" 18 Nov. 1918.
[61] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Wirtensohn, "Au sujet des incidents survenus dans l'après midi du 12 Nov. 1918."

brother Victor, also wounded in the war, if they wanted to take a ride around town. Simon, in his statement to police, noted that Jules had been carrying a "Zionist flag" at the time, presumably a variant of the flag used at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897.[62] According to Victor, Jules told them, "This flag will be carried with dignity, since you are Tunisians and wounded soldiers."[63] The brothers, accepting, were soon followed by Jewish Algerian soldiers and a large number of Tunisian Jews. According to one of the participants, the group sang a "Zionist hymn" – perhaps Hatikvah – between cheers of "Vive la France! Vivent les Alliés! Vive la Palestine! Vivent les Juifs!"[64]

This last detail, however, was contested by conflicting witness reports: Mr. Raucher, an insurance broker, noted that some French patrons and Italian soldiers criticized the procession for not chanting "Vive la France," "Vive l'Italie," or "Vive les Alliés." In their disgust, they remarked that the "Zionist flag" should not be mixed with the Allied colors. Another Frenchman, Revolon, noticed that a "Jewish flag" lay draped atop the lead car of the procession, and that a French flag had been placed in a lower position. He noted the outrage of many onlookers, including members of the Consultative Conference,[65] who would have expected the French flag, "which symbolizes no religion," to occupy the top rung.[66] Revolon also disparaged the

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[62] Elon Gilad, "How Israel Got Its Flag and What It Means," *Haaretz*, May 11, 2016, accessed 15 January 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.718641. At some point in the early twentieth century, the lion and seven small stars were left out, leaving what is now recognized as the flag of the state of Israel.
[63] CADN 1TU/125 31: Proces-verbal de Mattei, "Plainte formulée par le sieur Sadik Simon…" 18 Nov. 1918.
[64] Ibid. Hatikvah was commonly used at gatherings as early as the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Such incidents as the one described here were not, it seems, limited to Tunisia: in the British Mandate in Palestine any broadcast or performance of the anthem was banned in 1919 for fear of negative reactions among the Arab community. See Laura Schor, *The Best School in Jerusalem: Annie Landau's School for Girls, 1900-1960* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2013), 93.
[65] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Wirtensohn, "Au sujet des incidents survenus dans l'après midi du 12 Nov. 1918"; see also: CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de RG Alapetite à M. de Peretti de la Rocca, 18 Nov. 1918. The Consultative Conference was the Tunisian Protectorate's main quasi-representative body, composed of appointed or elected officials from the chambers of commerce or agriculture or from liberal professions. See Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 73.
[66] CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de M. Raucher à M. Revolon, 2 Dec. 1918.

approaching crowd, describing the vast majority of them as "thugs from El Hara and Sidi-Abdallah-Guèche. In this mass, I saw not a single one of the young middle-class Jews."[67] He continued that when the group approached the Café de Paris, he said to the veteran leader, "My friend, come on in; you were wounded in the war, and if you are afraid of the crowd, you may seek shelter in the café." Revolon then blamed the "Jewish crowd" for having attacked the café, throwing chairs through the windows and starting a brawl. For their part, witnesses identifying as Jewish indicated that Revolon had as much a hand in provoking the fight as had any other participant that day.[68]

A shouting match soon escalated into a brawl, when fists, canes, chairs, saucers, and carafes started flying. It took the deployment of French police and soldiers around Tunis to disperse the roughly 300 people involved that afternoon, though many smaller groups broke off and reprisals continued to occur into the night, one resulting in the death of Victor Cohen of the *hara*, allegedly at the hands of four Muslim assailants.[69] Brawls and looting occurred sporadically throughout the remaining weeks of 1918, generating a stir among local merchant communities, French authorities, and both the Tunisian and metropolitan press.

French Anti-Semitism at Armistice

It is not clear from the archival evidence who was most immediately responsible for the violence on November 12th, 1918. What the archives do reveal, however, are the ways in which the victims, witnesses, and the police tasked with gathering their statements conceived of the wider

[67] Sidi-Abdallah-Guèche, in particular, had long been known as Tunis' main red light district.
[68] CADN 1TU/125 31: Proces-verbal de Mattei, "Plainte formulée par le sieur Sadik Simon…" 18 Nov. 1918.
[69] See numerous, including: CADN, 1TU/125 31: CADN, 1TU/1463: "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919.; CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Wirtensohn, "Au sujet des incidents survenus dans l'après midi du 12 Nov. 1918"; CADN 1TU/125 31: Extrait du rapport de permanence du 12 au 13 Nov. 1918; Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 363.

stakes and causes of this incident. The arrangement of the police investigation, with officers present and taking notes, introduced a certain filter to the responses in each report: some agents displayed open disdain for Jews, while others were quick to blame Muslim soldiers who were presumed to be innately violent. Interviewees, in turn, voiced their sides of the story, and many of their editorialized comments, colorful identifiers, and claims of broader injustices are preserved in some translated or summarized form. It is these comments that suggest the broader implications of an incident which, if isolated, might only have been a grim footnote to the exuberance of worldwide armistice celebrations.

French settler witnesses zeroed in on the aforementioned notion that Jewish subjects of Tunisia, having been exempt from military service, did not deserve to celebrate the Allied victory, much less parade their Zionist ambitions on the day after the Armistice.[70] Raucher's testimony, already noted above, concluded: "I don't believe I need to explain any further all of the details of this manifestation carried out by Tunisian Jews who haven't known, like I do, the horrors of war."[71] Similarly, at the end of his police interview, Revolon blamed the demonstration's organizers: "They should have thought to keep their religious banners in their temples on the day that the Allies celebrated the heroism of their glorious soldiers. No Catholic ever brought out the Pope's flag that day, under the pretext that there were priests among the soldiers."[72]

Such views were not just the opinions of a few isolated civilians; they permeated the colonial administration's discourse about Jews and intercommunal strife in general. For example,

[70] It seems there was no centralized or consistent Empire-wide colonial policy toward Zionism in this period; in Morocco, for example, Lyautey (Resident General, 1912-1925) was far less lenient towards Zionist activities than his successor Théordore Steeg (Resident General, 1925-1929). See: Aomar Boum, "From 'Little Jerusalems' to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism, and Rural Jewish Emigration," *Journal of North African Studies* 15:1 (2010), 64-65.
[71] CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de M. Raucher à M. Revolon, 2 Dec. 1918.
[72] CADN 1TU/125 31: Proces-verbal de Mattei, "Plainte formulée par le sieur Sadik Simon…" 18 Nov. 1918.

the Civil Controller of the province of Kairouan, writing in August 1917 about "Anti-Jewish troubles" in the cities of Sousse and Kairouan, offered an explanation of earlier episodes of violence:

> The Jewish population, in general unsympathetic, has proven in recent months to have an insufferable arrogance. They have not contributed to the war nor have they paid or given any goods in kind. On the contrary they have profited.… The daily sacrifices that the whole world has consented to have been avoided by [the Jews], but I don't know how. We lack flour and grain, but the Jews have it; even when petrol runs out, they are able to get it….[73]

Such a conviction would later be repeated in explanations of the violence on November 12th, 1918: Commandant Burat, of the Gendarmerie of Tunisia, wrote that "in Tunis, I've been alerted that a certain effervescence reigns within all the European, Jewish, and Muslim milieus. The Jews have had an arrogant attitude which, at any given moment, can reignite a conflict."[74] French police agent Calmer Marius echoed this telling of the events, describing the organizer of the Jewish procession as an "insolent provocateur."[75] It was amidst such an environment, noted the Alliance Israélite Universelle's journal *L'Univers Israelite*, that a French police officer, shortly after calm was restored, is alleged to have remarked to his friend: "I smacked around some Jews yesterday, and I'm proud of my son, still only in high school, who did the same."[76]

Some French officials, however, demonstrated a grasp of the situation less clouded by complaints about Jews' alleged provocations. It seems that the final evaluation by the French police official Mattei ultimately did not assign blame for the violence on November 12th to any particular side, noting the aggressive chants on both sides as inflammatory – though he believed that the first chairs had been thrown by the European patrons of the Café de Paris.[77] A few days

[73] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Contrôle Civil de Kairouan, "Troubles antijuifs," 29 August 1917.
[74] CADN 1TU/125 31: Transmission 620 du Chef d'Escadron Burat á RG Alapetite, 13 Nov. 1918.
[75] CADN 1TU/125 31: Proces-verbal de Mattei, "Plainte formulée par le sieur Sadik Simon…" 18 Nov. 1918.
[76] CADN, 1TU/1/V 1463: "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia*, 24 Jan. 1919.
[77] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport au sujet d'incidents qui se sont produits le 12 courant, 23 Nov. 1918.

after the incidents, moreover, Resident General Alapetite acknowledged the challenge of wartime exigencies and French demobilization policies. Despite Protectorate efforts to stagger the repatriations to soften the jarring effects that the return of so many veterans could have on the economy, social relations, and other aspects of daily life, Alapetite limited his judgment to advising that "it is also important that the Jews be prudent and not agitate with the flag of Zionism."[78]

Silences in the colonial archive often reveal much about existing epistemologies and assumptions. In this case, it is striking that French officials wrote of a growing "anti-Semitic movement" among Muslim soldiers while failing to acknowledge their own prejudices, nor those of the French settler community. More than just an ironic omission, this is in fact at the heart of understanding both the reasons for the outbreak of intercommunal violence and the categorization of these incidents as "anti-Semitic" attacks – each helped build towards a "Jewish question" in Tunisia. Such a question could explain the intercommunal violence in Tunisia without acknowledging the colonial inequities and wartime brutality that contributed to them. More importantly, the "Jewish question" could justify French suzerainty not just in Tunisia but also in the former Ottoman territories on which the French had designs in the postwar negotiations.

Constructing the "Jewish Question" from Across the Mediterranean

The construction of a "Jewish question" did not unfold in a colonial vacuum, nor was it simply a French imposition; Jews on both sides of the Mediterranean had plenty to say about the targeted incidences of violence at war's end. Even during the war, well before the armistice violence, the

[78] CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de RG Alapetite à M. de Peretti de la Rocca, 18 Nov. 1918.

perceived plight of Tunisian Jews had already attracted the attention of political and religious figures in France. One such figure was André Spire, the French intellectual who earlier in his career had contested Drumont's anti-Semitic *La Libre Parole* during the Dreyfus Affair. As the recent founder of La Ligue des Amis du Sionisme, Spire raised the question of recruiting Tunisian volunteers for an "expedition to Palestine," presumably with the goal of permanent settlement there. Spire ventured that this would help alleviate the "special situation" that Tunisian Jews were likely to face after the war by demonstrating to Muslim Tunisians that their Jewish compatriots had, in fact, participated in the war.[79] However, Resident General Alapetite would later express his doubts that Tunisia's Arab Muslims would be pleased, commenting on the events of November 12th: "It is no doubt that what resembles a conquest of Palestine by the Jews would be very disagreeable to our Arabs."[80] The Young Tunisians, for their part, had condemned Zionism as a French lure to entice Jews to join the army.[81] Perhaps Spire thought Maghribi Jews might be more open to Zionism than French Jews, who he generally believed "cannot be anything other than French."[82] At any rate, French Jews remained divided on Zionism throughout the war, dues in part to the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), the Paris-based Jewish organization aiming to modernize and "civilize" Middle Eastern Jews,[83] and the Consistoire central, France's state-sanctioned Jewish governing body, to characterize Zionism as a charitable cause in support of foreign Jews rather than as a viable impetus for French Jews' emigration.[84]

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[79] Ibid.
[80] CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de RG Alapetite à M. de Peretti de la Rocca, 18 Nov. 1918.
[81] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 362.
[82] Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre*, 61, citing *L'Univers israélite*, 26 December 1913.
[83] Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998), 49-50.
[84] Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre*, 63. On the role of the Consistoire central, see: Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 19.

In November 1917, a series of smaller attacks on Jews in Tunisia were reported by French and Tunisian Jews living in France. French censors tracked correspondence related to the matter. Joseph Boutboul, writing in a letter to a family member in Tunis, claims to have "made a lot of noise in Paris on the subject of the anti-Jewish troubles in Tunisia," soliciting support from influential figures such as Gustave Hervé, a politician who allegedly promised to write some short articles about the issue.[85] The Secretary of the AIU in Paris, writing to the AIU branch director in Tunis, noted that he had previously written to Resident General Alapetite about the Jewish "troubles of Bizerte," a northern port city and a key staging point for mobilized and demobilized soldiers.[86] A Jewish soldier serving at the Western Front in the Oran-based 2nd regiment of *zouaves* asked in a letter whether his friend in Tunisia had also "suffered from the barbarism of the *tirailleurs* and *spahis* [mostly-Muslim North African cavalry] which are equal in savagery to the Germans against whom we are currently fighting until definitive and complete victory."[87]

As the work of Richard Fogarty, Gregory Mann, and others have shown, French colonial soldiers increasingly made claims to French citizenship based on their service in the First World War, a call at times supported by Senegal-born French deputy Blaise Diagne.[88] Katz reminds us that for French Jews, too, WWI came at a "ripe time" to prove their civic participation so soon after the Dreyfus Affair, which was resolved less than a decade before the outbreak of war and

[85] SHD 7/N/1001: "Rapport sur les opérations de la commission militaire de contrôle postale de Tunis, pendant le mois de Novembre 1917," 22. Hervé had earlier in his career been a socialist and pacifist, but by the start of the First World War had become an ardent nationalist. Later, he drifted towards fascism in his romantic and nostalgic writings and in his founding of the *Parti socialiste national*, and he praised Mussolini for his rise to power in Italy. See Michael B. Loughlin, "Gustave Hervé's Transition from Socialism to National Socialism: Continuity and Ambivalence," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38:4 (2003), 515-538.
[86] SHD 7/N/1001: "Rapport sur les opérations de la commission militaire de contrôle postale de Tunis, pendant le mois de Novembre 1917," 22.
[87] SHD 7/N/1001: "Rapport sur les opérations de la commission militaire de contrôle postale de Tunis, pendant le mois de Novembre 1917," 22-23.
[88] Mann, *Native Sons*, 69-70; Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 239-40.

still loomed large in the discourse of the French public.[89] A similar phenomenon developed among the Ottoman Empire's Jewish communities during the 1912-13 Balkan War, with Ottoman Jewish journalists calling upon their audiences to honor the new universal conscription laws the same way they had volunteered during wars with Russia in 1877 and with Greece in 1897. These public displays of patriotism came amid the increasingly assertive ethno-religious imperial identity that reached its peak after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution.[90] Much in the same way Ottoman Jews had, Jews in Tunisia understood the increased scrutiny they were facing in a changing political landscape.

Fulfillment of "the ultimate sacrifice for one's country and nation" had, perhaps since the Revolution of 1789 and increasingly over the course of the nineteenth century, been one of the key duties of French citizens.[91] Notably, however, the path to French naturalization and citizenship for Jewish subjects of the Tunisian Bey had long been narrow and limited. It was not until the 1923 Morinaud Law that the naturalization of non-French residents was expanded, leading some 5,000 Tunisian Jews to seek French naturalization over the course of the ensuing decade. This measure was handled on an individual, case-by-case basis since it had mostly been aimed at the Italian residents of the Protectorate who, still far outnumbering French *colons,* the French Protectorate hoped to co-opt and remove from Italian consular jurisdiction.[92]

Some metropolitan Jews expressed their belief that Tunisian Jews' sacrifices needed to be more visible if they were to prove their loyalty and avoid discrimination at the hands of demobilized French settlers and Muslim Tunisians. It was not enough that some Tunisian Jews

[89] Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood,* 27.
[90] Julia Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134-35.
[91] Patrick Weil, *How to be French* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 43-46, 82.
[92] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 89; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood,* 16.

such as Victor Sebag and Moise Bessis, whose experiences have been explored briefly by historians, volunteered for military service.[93] As early as September 1917, the Grand Rabbi of Marseille wrote in a letter of praise to a Tunisian Jewish veteran who, remarkably, had enlisted in the army at the age of 52:

> Let it be said between you and me: it is deplorable that many of your young compatriots have not imitated your example. [Military service] could be a solution to the Jewish question in Tunisia, and a very elegant one at that …. at first glance it appears to me the young Jews of Tunisia would have an excellent occasion by which to reaffirm and demonstrate that they are worthy of the French naturalization that they lack. Like you, I hope that in the coming year, the nightmare will be gone, and that fortune shall reign once again in the world.[94]

It is notable that a metropolitan Grand Rabbi had the occasion to write to a Tunisian contact living across the Mediterranean as early as September of 1917. At first glance, it speaks to the extent to which information was shared across the Mediterranean, perhaps in this case through the French and Tunisian Jews who had crossed the sea as part of their military service.

Even more striking is the Grand Rabbi's invocation of "the Jewish question in Tunisia," and one which could be solved were Tunisian Jews to volunteer in greater numbers. This metropolitan religious leader, tied into the nationalist cultural milieu of post-Dreyfus French Jewishness, understood that he could mobilize his authority as a colonial agent of sorts, in this case in the name of a patriotic and militaristic Franco-Jewish loyalty that could be exported to the overseas empire. Metropolitan Jews' efforts to extend their vision of French civilization to North Africa in fact dated back to the liberal idealism of the July Monarchy and the first two decades of the French conquest in Algeria, when reformers such as Adolphe Crémieux and Jacques-Isaac Altaras campaigned to give the Consistoire central in Paris the authority to appoint

[93] On Victor Sebag, see: Philippe Landau, "De Tunis à l'Orient: la Grande Guerre de Victor Sebag," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 81 (2010), 191-204; on Moise Bessis, see DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 77-79.
[94] CADN 1TU/125 31: Contrôle postal – lettre du Grand Rabbin du Consistoire de Marseille à M. Smadja, 23 Sept. 1917.

rabbis and lay members of new consistories in Algeria.[95] One might also consider the gendered context of the Grand Rabbi's statement: Erin Corber has argued that during the war, the French rabbinical establishment came to embrace an image of the rabbi as a "man of action" whose heroism on the front and behind the lines would regenerate both Judaism and the French nation.[96] The Grand Rabbi of Marseille, perhaps envisioning such a role for himself, might have felt it his duty to cross the Mediterranean in pressuring his constituents into service.

By the early twentieth century, members and teachers of AIU had become particularly implicated in the French "mission civilisatrice" throughout the Muslim world, and at times took on a role as "the protector of the Jews" by monitoring and reporting on their "sufferings" from Iran to Morocco.[97] The AIU's activities were largely educational, and they established schools in which French language and culture were taught. Though relevant historiography has focused mainly on Algeria and Morocco, there are archival fragments which speak to the Maghrib-wide struggle to "enlighten" indigenous Jews. Sometimes, AIU teachers exhibited aggressive disdain for their North African constituents. For example, Gabbay Benayaoun, an Iranian-born teacher with the Alliance Israélite school in Tunis, wrote to a colleague in Bandar-Abbas about the community he was responsible for educating:

> Tunis is a very pretty city which I love passionately, but not so much its inhabitants, most of all the Jews who here are veritable scoundrels; it's a shame in this time of war that they speculate and steal the widows and orphans of the war, whether Italian, Arab, or French; they dress like gentlemen though they have empty heads, and walk ostentatiously on the avenues right past poor amputees and blind Frenchmen and Italians, which causes anger; also nobody here likes them, including myself and the other Alliance teachers. These are the least affable people, the least welcoming, the most egotistical and the most hypocritical in the world; if they flatter you a little, it's only so that they can rob and skin

[95] Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 47-53.
[96] Erin Corber, "Men of Thought, Men of Action: the Great War, Masculinity, and the Modernization of the French Rabbinate," *Jewish Culture and History* 14:1 (2013), 33-51.
[97] Michael Laskier, "Aspects of the Activities of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in the Jewish Communities of the Middle East and North Africa, 1860-1918," *Modern Judaism* 3:2 (1983), 154

you.[98]

This trans-Mediterranean relationship could therefore evoke more than just Francophone Jews' sympathetic concern for their Tunisian coreligionists. Here is a dramatic example of just how pervasive a racially-informed view toward North African Jews could be. It demonstrates the widespread purchase of a stereotype of Jews in Tunisia as disloyal war profiteers, one complicated in this case by multiple layers of intercultural relations.

News of intercommunal violence even alarmed and intrigued some Muslim Tunisians abroad, and French intelligence agents compiled their correspondence on the matter into reports categorized under the rubric of the "Jewish Question." One such report from the ministry of war from November 1917 recorded Muslim soldiers' comments, which ranged from curiosity or concern to schadenfreude. For example, Mohamed, a soldier in the 8th Regiment of *tirailleurs*, wrote to Moktar el-Djemmal that "there are rumors that the Jews have made a big story in Tunis… please let me know if it is true or not." Mohamed ben Ahmed Elferchinchi similarly wrote of rumors of "riots and brawls." Abderrham el-Halaf of Degache (in southern Tunisia) alleged in a letter home that "at first we fought with the Jews… the French then suspended our leave… The colonel said, 'There are no permissions to leave at all; you are French soldiers yet when you go to Tunisia, you fight with the Jews!'" El-Halaf then claimed that some twenty soldiers defected to the German side, prompting the colonel to reinstate leave permissions. His letter concludes, "You would do well, if you come across a Jew in Degache, to beat him on his sides, because those people, even after a hundred generations, will never become loyal to us. One part of our worries and troubles comes from the Germans, and the other from the Jews."[99]

[98] CADN 1TU/125 31: Contrôle Postal de Tunis, Avril 1918 – note sur R. Gabbay.
[99] SHD 7/N/1001: "Rapport sur les opérations de la commission militaire de contrôle postale de Tunis, pendant le mois de Novembre 1917," 21.

Word of the intercommunal strife spread beyond the empire itself, reaching Switzerland-based Tunisian exiles including Mohamed Bach Hamba and his *Comité Algero-Tunisien,* first explored in Chapter Three. The *Comité* was alarmed by what it called the "campaign of hate" unfolding against Jewish compatriots. In its journal *La Revue de Maghreb,* Bach Hamba criticized French *colons* for their incitement of violence "be it by pen or by word" against Jews, and blaming the Protectorate authorities for failing to prevent such actions.[100] Bach Hamba, while critical of French conscription of Tunisians for their own wars, understood clearly the contradictions that led Clemenceau to give up his initial interest in subjecting Tunisian Jews to conscription: while Clemenceau concluded that they could not be conscripted since they were not French citizens, Bach Hamba, exposing the hypocrisy of this arrangement, asks: "But then, are the Muslims French citizens?"[101] Beyond the French press – he cites articles in *Colon Français*, for example – Bach Hamba also pointed to the profusion of "anonymous tracts and malicious voices which, in sum, have created a heated and calumnious discourse" against Jews. As for the Muslim soldiers implicated in the attacks and looting against Jewish communities in 1917 and 1918, Bach Hamba argued only that these soldiers, "in their simplicity, are left to be influenced by these troublemakers."[102] This glib dismissal notwithstanding, Bach Hamba pointed out that the newspaper *Colon Français*' sudden appreciation for Muslim soldiers' loyalty relative to Jews was suspect: "In the past, this journal of hate has never missed an opportunity to insult and slander Muslims. Today is the Jews' turn. The method has not changed: lies, insults, and slander are the favorite weapons of these gentlemen!"[103] Bach Hamba, with a critical perspective from exile, could see clearly that contradictory colonial conscription policies, along with French

[100] Mohammed Bach Hamba, *La peuple Algero-Tunisien et la France* (Carthage: Beït Al-Hikma, 1991), 152.
[101] Bach Hamba, "Les Juifs Tunisiens et la Guerre," *La Revue du Maghreb*, June 30, 1916.
[102] Bach Hamba, *La peuple Algero-Tunisien et la France,* 153.
[103] Bach Hamba, "Excitations anti-juives," *La Revue du Maghreb*, July/August 1917.

settlers' familiar prejudices, had contributed to an unprecedented degree of intercommunal violence in Tunisia.

Le pouvoir de l'uniforme…

As voices from beyond Tunisia lent momentum to the construction or realization of a "Jewish question," Jews in Tunisia engaged in their own dialogue in order to make sense of intercommunal tensions. Testimony from Jewish witnesses and victims of the incidents in November 1918 demonstrated an acute sense of the stakes of the violence in Tunis, noting the injustice they felt that the wartime sacrifices of Jewish volunteers and their families had gone ignored. In seeking justice for episodes of intercommunal violence, some Tunisian Jews made claims primarily based on wartime loyalty to France, highlighting the fact that some had volunteered for military service despite their exemption from conscription. Most glaring in their testimonies is the importance given to participants' military status, particularly as wounded veterans. In fact, nearly all of the dozens of reports filed by victims, apparent perpetrators, witnesses, and police agents deliberately specify that each side of the incident included soldiers or veterans. Certain individuals, too, are identified as "*mutilés de guerre*" (wounded in battle), "*permissionaires*" (on leave), "*tirailleurs*," recipients of the *Croix de Guerre*, and so on.

This fixation on military status is expected of a society having just emerged from four years of war but was given added gravity by the accusations that Jews had not pulled their weight in the war effort. That the Jewish interviewees confirmed the chants "Vive la France" and "Vive les Alliés" in their accounts of the November 12th procession, despite other accounts refuting this, may speak to an awareness of the pressure to reaffirm their loyalty. They thus acknowledged the social and political capital of military service and in confronting the

suspicions of Jewish disloyalty. Isaac Bonan, before being injured in the brawl, had reminded other café patrons that some Jewish parents, in a way, had participated in the war by having lost a son at the front.[104] Darius Bonan, one of Isaac's brothers, describes having stepped in to help his wounded brother as they were pursued by a crowd who chanted, "Kick out [*enlevez*] the Jews! Death to the Jews!" A third Bonan brother, Henry, came across the same crowd; pleading with them not to carry on with such chants, he reminded them "that among the Jews there were a great number who fulfilled their duty to France, and I won't allow you to insult me, because I am both Jewish and French."[105] He was subsequently attacked, but was quickly rescued by a passing soldier from the 4th regiment of Zouaves. Henry Bonan's testimony, like those of the other witnesses, does not end with the narrative details. He adds:

> I will point out to you, Mr. Commissioner, that I am French, enrolled in the [army] class of 1920, but deferred on 2 Oct 1918 for general weakness of constitution, and that my brother has been at the front for nearly 2 years, and that my father is mobilized with the 15th Territorial Battalion in Tunis. I don't understand how in Tunis, where many Jews did their duty for the French homeland, these men, as Jewish as they are French, would be attacked in the middle of the street in view of happy passers-by who could hardly care about my French status, having not hesitated to attack me in great numbers (I recall about 50 people), even though my family's blood had been spilled for France.[106]

Here, Henry Bonan appealed to multiple layers of belonging, from his own individual status as a French national and to his family's military service, to the Jewish community's collective loyalty to France. The tone of the statement seems to suggest that these were not isolated incidents, but in fact part of a larger societal ill which had struck Tunisia. The French Protectorate had failed to protect those who were loyal to it, leaving them vulnerable to prejudicial attacks.

Another violent incident between Jews and *tirailleurs* broke out in July 1920, less than

[104] CADN 1TU/125 31: Rapport de Wirtensohn, "Au sujet des incidents survenus dans l'après midi du 12 Nov. 1918."
[105] CADN 1TU/125 31: Lettre de Henry Bonan à M. le Commissaire du 5e arr. à Tunis, 14 Nov. 1918.
[106] Ibid.

two years after the events at Café du Casino. An article in the Jewish periodical *L'Evolution Tunisienne* assured the good conduct of Jews in the cafes and restaurants of Tunis, criticizing the *colon* daily *La Depeche Tunisienne* which, "as usual," had accused Jews alone of stirring up trouble. The article also criticized the Muslim *tirailleurs*, some of them non-commissioned officers, for failing to maintain order in the city. While this incident was not reported on as widely as the November 1918 conflict, it seems that those hurt included French and Italian settlers as well as a couple of Jews of unknown origin.[107] For some Jews, that violence of this kind could occur well after the conclusion of the war was a reminder that intercommunal tensions had not disappeared with the end of the war.

Jews in Tunisia were also concerned with the challenges faced by demobilized soldiers in finding work upon their reintegration into Tunisian society. This was one area, moreover, in which common ground between Jewish and Muslim grievances against the French colonial administration could emerge.[108] One Jewish periodical, *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie*, made the fate of all veterans a central concern, its editor-in-chief J. C. Ganouna writing in its first issue:

> Admittedly, we live in a time when the recent agitations of the great bloody tremor we have just suffered have not yet been calmed. Those who have suffered morally and physically for six years may find it hard to understand that when they return home, they still live under the yoke of speculators. Speculators and profiteers, they are everywhere, among the French, the Jews, as well as the Arabs, great and small…[109]

The journal described itself as "reformist" and "intelligently socialist," waging war as it did not only against speculators but also against "abuse, favoritism, and wastefulness" and "the demagoguery of revolutionary socialism and the Third International."[110]

A few weeks after its launch, *Le Sémaphore* ran a front page article detailing the

[107] "Les troubles de La Goulette – Les Responsables," *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, 24 July 1920.
[108] DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 57.
[109] J. C. Ganouna, "Notre programme," *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie*, 7 October 1920.
[110] Ibid.

misfortune of a Tunisian veteran of Maltese descent who had come to its editors: having served over four years on the Western and Macedonian Fronts, he had to pay 400 francs for his own passage back to Tunis. Once home in May 1920, he found work with the Bureau of Maritime Transportation, only to have the position revoked that October; though vacant posts in the Bureau remained, his requests for a new position there fell on deaf ears. The author of the article and the journal's political editor, Jean Siger, doubted whether such a precedent "would encourage those who wanted to serve France" in the future, writing that the Maltese soldier had been "cheated by the representatives of France" despite their "formal promise" that he "would be treated like a native of France" and certainly "treated better than a foreigner."[111] The next day, *Le Sémaphore* ran another article praising veterans' contributions and calling for Tunisians to support orphans and widows.[112] The accusation that France had misled or even "cheated" its loyal and vulnerable subjects was familiar not only to urban Jews, but also to Muslim veterans such as Mukhtar al-'Ayari, who experienced discrimination both during his service on the Western Front and in the war's aftermath. Both communities claimed to have fulfilled the patriotic duties asked of them, only to have their sacrifices go unrewarded and unrecognized beyond ceremonial niceties.

At least from the perspective of these Francophone Jewish periodicals, then, Tunisian Jews appeared uniquely to face not only neglect from the French administration but also demonization by French settlers and the Muslim Tunisian majority. Set in the context of the French colonial politics of protection, however, the characterization of intercommunal tensions as part of an endemic "anti-Semitism" was part of the construction of a "Jewish minority" in Tunisia. It is not that "Tunisian Jews" did not exist at all as distinct group (whether religiously,

[111] Jean Siger, "Servons la France," *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie*, 5 November 1920.
[112] For example, see: "Pro Patria," *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie*, 6 November 1920.

culturally, or legally) prior to the First World War or to the French occupation of Tunisia. It is that the growing tensions and incidences of violence cannot be separated from, and were explicitly made legible to, France's colonial and international aims. A self-fulfilling logic was at play: first, wartime manpower needs led France to commit further to a divisive conscription policy which, alongside its racial and imperial hierarchies, exacerbated the disillusionment of Muslim conscripts and their targeting of Jews. But when intercommunal tensions emerged, racial and colonial discourses could be mobilized to blame these groups and their "timeless" ways. Much in the same way that such tensions were exploited in the Eastern Mediterranean, France's broader postwar ambitions could be justified by Tunisia's need for the tutelage of an enlightened and stabilizing power.

Jews, Wilson, and the International Community

While French and colonial discourses were influential in developing a "Jewish question" and demonstrated to some Jewish Tunisians the need to reaffirm their loyalty and sacrifices to the empire, Protectorate archives reveal that this moment of tension and uncertainty had incited discourse surrounding new political futures for Tunisian Jews. The emergence of these alternatives reflected the increasingly international orientation of reform movements around the world towards the end of the war.

One such possibility involved an appeal to Woodrow Wilson and American rhetoric of liberty. For example, three days after the armistice brawl outside the Café du Casino, a group of Jewish merchants from the old city, having shuttered their shops out of fears of further attacks, decided to keep them shut until they had received a response to a telegram to President Woodrow

Wilson asking for his protection.[113] On the same day, a remarkable censored letter from one H. Fellous to an unknown recipient revealed that in the afternoon after the brawl on November 12th, a group of Jews led by the Grand Rabbi of Tunis demonstrated briefly near the Resident General's office before marching to the American embassy, where they chanted, "Long live Wilson, long live America, cradle of liberty [*berceau de la liberté*]!" Fellous' letter, written in French, is nonetheless signed "Cordially yours" in English. Fellous also prayed that his letter would not be censored, but correctly feared that it would be, because "only truth hurts," and that the censor would see "too much truth" in his letter which "will be wiped away by his black brush."[114]

The shockwaves of attacks against Jews were generally evident in the Jewish press, where articles circulated between the metropole and the Protectorate. Metropolitan Jewish periodicals such as *Archives Israélites* and *L'Univers Israélite* fought a constant battle against anti-Semitism in France and its colonies throughout the war through weekly exhortations of the heroic deeds of Jewish soldiers.[115] In Tunisian newspapers, weeks and even months after the armistice attacks in Tunis, articles repeatedly surfaced criticizing the French Protectorate's failure to protect Jews in Tunisia and condemning the European press for stoking the flames of anti-Semitism.[116] In the bi-weekly *Tunisia,* a Tunis-based journal aimed at a broad audience of Jews in North Africa, a front page article on January 24th, 1919 reprinted several articles and letters dealing with "The Incidents of Tunis." One of them, reprinted from the AIU's *L'Univers Israélite,* claimed that the French authorities were suppressing articles about the incidents, while

[113] CADN 1TU/125 31: Note no. 1243, 15 Nov. 1918.
[114] CADN 1TU/125 31: Contrôle postal – lettre de H. Fellous, 15 Nov. 1918; 1TU/125 31: Note au sujet des évènements d'hier, no. 1237, 13 Nov. 1918.
[115] Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 28-29.
[116] See, for example, CADN 1TU/1/V 1463 - "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919.

another article accused conservative settler journals in Tunisia such as *Le Colon Français* of inciting their readers against Jews by depicting them as shirkers of military duty. The article accused Resident General Alapetite of ignoring these incidents for fear that they would spoil his last few days in Tunis before taking up his appointment as French ambassador to Spain; his delusion, they claimed, was that "Tunisia was a paradise for all the races of the world."[117] Another article in *Tunisia* (also printed under the title *L'Égalité*) reported on a municipal planning meeting for a public armistice celebration in Mateur. The meeting devolved into discord when three angry French committee members, whose "biased feelings are known," angrily demanded that Jews be excluded from participating, presumably because they believed that Jews, exempt from military service, did not deserve to celebrate.[118] The author of the article remarked with a mixture of cynicism and optimism:

> And they say we've entered into a Wilsonian era…. France, who is the center of civilized humanity, cannot tolerate such injustices in a country that it protects. The governments have affirmed that the Jews fought for law and justice. We mustn't forget that several thousand Jews went to spill their blood for the Allied cause…. We stand in a critical moment in history. The arc in the sky of peace is drawn to the horizon. Here is the day of alliance and reconciliation. We must be united in this unique work.[119]

Reference was made once again to wartime sacrifices, but more than anything, the passage looked to the future: peace had been promised, but it hinged upon Jews' ability to hold French civilization to its own ideals and to attract the attention of the international community. Ultimately, the resulting vote did not exclude Jews from the festivities in Mateur. Still, of the twenty-one committee members, the nine who had been "rotten with anti-Semitism… suffered a forced bath."[120]

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[117] CADN 1TU/1/V 1463 - "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919.
[118] "A bas les Juifs! Vive la Discorde!" *L'égalité* 18 May 1919.
[119] "A bas les Juifs! Vive la Discorde!" *L'égalité* 18 May 1919. See also: CADN 1TU/1/V 1463 - "Les Incidents de Tunis." *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919.
[120] "A bas les Juifs! Vive la Discorde!" *L'égalité* 18 May 1919.

Tunisia's invocations of Woodrow Wilson suggest that the "Wilsonian moment," as some have dubbed it, indeed reached Tunisia. This was far from the only such instance, with other journals such as *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie* providing regular updates about Wilson's health, speeches, and political rivals.[121] To a certain extent, the name Wilson, along with terms such as "liberty" and "equality," were now in wide circulation and given a new weight in Tunisia by 1919; so too, apparently, was the term "anti-Semitism." Jewish leaders in Tunisia clearly understood that these terms could mobilize their own community and draw the attention of French or even American authorities. This is not to suggest that ideas such as the protection of minorities, political equality, or national liberation were new, foreign imports. The claim of "protection" from various layers of authority, including foreign powers, was a longstanding practice among Tunisians, according to Julia Clancy-Smith.[122] Mohamed Bach-Hamba's Comité Algéro-Tunisien, as we have seen, wrote in vain to Wilson and the leaders at the Paris Peace Conference, using Wilsonian language to highlight France's failures to live up to its own republican ideals. Jews in Tunisia, like the reformers exiled in Switzerland (or indeed Egyptian and Syrian reformers), may have used this sort of discourse as a means to amplify their grievances, hoping to win greater attention from French authorities by stoking additional scrutiny from the international community.

Discussions about the armistice incidents persisted long after late 1918, and some took on wider implications than simply the prevention of future violence. An August 1920 article of the Francophone Jewish newspaper *L'Evolution Tunsienne* lamented that those incidents had not, despite their hopes, "dried up" the "Judeophobic wickedness" of the perpetrators. The author, E. Suzgertoret, went further: "May I remind you that the son of a nation that since 1789 was made

[121] See, for example: "Une victoire du Bons Sens," *Le Sémaphore de Tunisie*, 9 October 1920.
[122] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 199-246.

the champion of liberty should respond to the call of a people who aspire to see Wilsonian principles applied, and whose keen desire is to live within a Palestinian state in good understanding with all its neighbors."[123] "Wilsonian principles" were carried beyond the desire to force the French Empire to protect its Jewish constituents. Here, they extended to the American president's support for concepts of self-determination, particularly after the Balfour Declaration had in theory supported the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Suzgertoret's article was published just days before the war's participants finalized the Treaty of Sèvres, which stipulated the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and paved the way for the creation of the British mandate in Palestine, signaling a new possibility for some Jews in Tunisia.

The Appeal of Zionism in Tunisia

It is in this context – that of the emergent international stage upon which all manner of grievances and claims could be played out, with varying degrees of success – that the Zionist procession in Tunis' ad-hoc armistice celebrations can be revisited. What is the significance of the fact that this parade, headed by wounded Jewish Tunisian veterans, carried a Zionist flag at its head while the anthem of this nascent movement was sung out loud? What led Jews in Tunisia to join such a group, and what was really at stake in their dreams for a homeland in Palestine?

The war's upheavals helped provoke various articulations of an international Jewish community, and that included those who supported the Zionist movement. Through the 1910s, Zionist organizations, including Agoudat Tsion (Zionist Union), were founded in seven different

[123] E. Suzgertoret, "Pour le droit et la justice," *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, 7 August 1920, 1.

Tunisian cities.[124] In August 1918, the Commissariat Général des Affaires de Guerre Franco-Américaines noted that both peaceful and "agitated" Zionist groups were active in Tunisia, and that they were in contact with larger Zionist organizations in France, suggesting that the Francophone colonial connection was an important conduit for the popularization of Zionist ideas.[125] Some Jews looked even further afield in imagining a transnational community: popular Jewish periodicals such as *Tunisia* featured news updates on the Jewish Congress in New York, as well as pieces reprinted from the international press which boldly supported Zionism. One such article even celebrated the unsubstantiated "fact" that Charlie Chaplin – the "King of Film" – was Jewish.[126] While these trends hardly yet represented a coherent popular movement, it is against this backdrop that we need to consider the processions of November 12th which chanted "Vive la Palestine," as well as the ambitions articulated in their aftermath.[127] The war appeared to do much to encourage a new configuration of the trans-Mediterranean connections long a part of life for Jews in Tunisia. It is not at all surprising that the Zionist procession held in Tunis the day after the armistice was led by, and featured prominently, wounded Jewish soldiers.

Tunisians' interest in Zionism picked up steam in 1920, after the easing of wartime press restrictions and the wider opening across the political spectrum among Tunisians. What form this "movement" would take was still very much up in the air, however. Some were skeptical: in May, Edmond Fonessy wrote in *L'Evolution Tunisienne* that the British mandate recently established in Palestine was only a "half victory" since it imposed an "international character" on what was supposed to be a national home. He lamented further that "they tell us that oppressed

[124] Haim Saadoun, "L'influence du sionisme sur les relations judéo-musulmanes en Tunisie," in *Juifs et Musulmans en Tunisie: fraternité et déchirements*, ed. Sonia Fellous (Paris: Somogy, 2003), 223.
[125] CADN 1TU/125 31: Note du Présidence du Conseil, Commissariat Général des Affaires de Guerre Franco-Américaines, 27 Aug. 1918.
[126] CADN 1TU/1/V 1463: "Le roi du film est Israélite," *Tunisia* no. 2, Jan. 1919. Chaplin himself did not identify as Jewish (despite what the Nazis claimed), but was quick to defend Jews against anti-Semitism.
[127] Laskier, *North African Jewry*, 36-37.

Jews can simply leave for Palestine," when clearly many remained unable to do so while suffering in their home countries. Jews deserved rights wherever they might live and not just half-baked promises from the international community.[128]

The ideological and occasionally messianic appeal of a "return" was given a new immediacy not only with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Zionism, but also with the deterioration of intercommunal relations in Tunisia and of faith in the ability of the French Protectorate to protect.[129] As a result, others were more optimistic about a future in the land of Israel. Jewish leftists and their supporters, for example, called for a socialist brand of Zionism, engaging with a vigorous debate within the Zionist movement from its earliest days.[130] Lucien Monray, drawing inspiration from the influential French-born settler Joachim Durel's blending of socialism with patriotism, argued that the same sentiment could apply to Zionism. In a June 1920 article in *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, Monray praised the work of a new Tunisian branch of Workers of Zion, a Jewish working-class socialist confederation based in Bern, Switzerland. The main group, having agreed to adhere to the Third International at a conference in Geneva in August 1919, stood as proof to Monray that Zionists could be "socialist and 'Bolshevik' at the same time." He continued:

> By Zionism, I do not mean the establishment of all Jews in ancient Judea, the creation of another nationalism thirsty for territorial conquest, but, simply, the creation of a national home for those whose right to citizenship in their birth homes has been contested, where they live as pariahs, in miserable ghettos.[131]

It is unclear whether Monray was referring specifically to Tunisia's Jewish quarters as

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[128] Edmond Fonessy, "Sionisme et pogroms," *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, 9 May 1920.
[129] In the case of rural Moroccan Jews, Aomar Boum argues that Zionist ideology and propaganda did more to encourage their eventual emigration to Palestine than did economic and social pressures; Boum, "From 'Little Jerusalems' to the Promised Land," 65-66.
[130] On the debates over the place of socialism in Zionist thought, see: Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[131] Lucien Monray, "Socialisme et Sionisme," *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, 26 June 1920.

"miserable ghettos," but this was one popular way to evoke Jews' widespread exclusion from participation in nationalist movements or, in this case, colonial civic life – like the dystopian *hara* where Albert Memmi was born, and which he would later describe in *La statue de sel*, for example.[132] To Monray, the Zionist solution for "the eternally wandering Jew" lay with "love for one's family, homeland, and humanity," along with compassion for the pain of those who suffered persecution from Poland to Ukraine.[133] It was taken for granted that Jews had not been (and might never be) sufficiently incorporated into Tunisian life, whether under a French Protectorate or in an independent state.

After summarizing the historic and Biblical glories of the Jewish people, Monray described an encounter with a Jewish friend the day that the San Remo Conference "approved the creation of a Jewish national home." His rhetorical friend explained:

> Though I love Tunisia, the country where I was born and grew up, beside parents who cared for me and friends who were fond of me; though I am irresistibly attracted to Paris and its hundred thousand lights; and though I feel no desire to walk along the banks of the Jordan River, I am completely happy to know that the idea of a national home has been approved by the San Remo Conference….
>
> I remember from my childhood, when at the 'kouttab' the rabbi spoke to us of the Messiah and of our future return to the Promised Land, I would tell myself, if only I could live to see the happy day when we would return to the land of our forefathers… I also remember Passover evenings when we would hold the Seder, singing *Next Year in Jerusalem*, knowing well how long it could be until we would return to Palestine.[134]

Departing with a firm handshake, Monray's friend said, "Long live progress! Long live Jewish Palestine!" While few made concrete plans for emigration to Palestine, and others watched warily as the war's victors wrangled over the fate of former Ottoman lands, many could not help but be optimistic that a "return" to the Promised Land appeared to be transforming from a

[132] Deborah Barnard, "Being Ghetto: The Hara as Heterotopia in Judeo-Tunisian Literature," *The Coastal Review* 1:1 (2007), 4-5.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

timeless legend into a concrete possibility. But this still depended on cooperation between French authorities and Tunisians and solidarity among socialists. A few weeks later, in July, Monray linked the Zionist cause to that of Tunisian leftists, writing that the Young Tunisians, including socialist Hassan Guellaty, were right to seek "the same rights as the French." He called on "liberal, discerning" Frenchmen to grant Tunisians their rights despite the fact that some "fanatics" might be threatening Tunisia's cohesion and peace.[135]

Conclusions

Various iterations of Zionism, especially those of the leftist, anti-militarist sort, did continue to be debated into the mid-20s and beyond.[136] In the brief period of uncertainty during the war and in its immediate aftermath, some Tunisians earnestly pursued a range of visions and possibilities, including Zionism and appeals to Woodrow Wilson. We know in retrospect that few Jews in Tunisia would emigrate to Palestine before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 or Tunisian independence in 1956; only after the Six Day War in 1967 did a majority of Jews leave Tunisia.[137] We also know, of course, that their pleas to Wilson and the international community fell for the most part on deaf ears, much like those of other anti-colonial reformers from around the Arab world.[138] The French Protectorate, for its part, moved to co-opt those Jews who fell under Italian protection by paving the way to naturalizing some 5,000 as French nationals with the 1923 Morinaud Law. In part this might be viewed as a measure aimed not only at reducing the long-irksome Italian meddling in Tunisia but also at shoring up support and patronage among

[135] Lucien Monray, "Les Jeunes Tunisiens," *L'Evolution Tunisienne*, 4 July 1920.
[136] For example, see *La Revue Israélite*, a Tunis-based periodical directed by Victor Nataf celebrating "social action and the Defense of the Jewish Worker," which launched in late 1924.
[137] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 144-45.
[138] See, for example: Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 137-158.

Jews in the midst of facing an increasingly assertive anti-colonial movement by the mid-1920s, which counted Jews among its ranks.[139] Several prominent Jewish lawyers supported the Dustur from its earliest days, including Jacques Scemama, who later helped defend Thaalbi against French repression, and Elie Zirah, who participated in the former's delegation to Paris.[140]

Set in the international context of the First World War and French aims in the Ottoman Arab provinces at war's end, the conflicts and debates outlined above reveal "anti-Semitism" and "the Jewish question" not to be self-evident realities nor eventualities. Rather, these were categories constructed in part by a French colonial administration hoping to make legible a minority community which, if vulnerable to an indigenous Muslim Arab population, could provide justification for France's continued tutelage as a "protector." This chapter argues that one cannot, in fact, understand the politics of protection and the insistence on a "Jewish minority" in Tunisia during the war without an understanding of the international stakes of France's postwar aims and the treaties and the League of Nations' mandates to which it was a party. The oft-overlooked link between North African and Middle Eastern historiographies, in this case, proves not only fruitful but necessary for situating the stakes of colonial rhetoric surrounding Tunisia's Jewish "minority."

I do not suggest here that anti-Jewish sentiments did not exist in Tunisia prior to the First World War. More to the point is that concerned parties from around the Mediterranean, including French and Francophile Jews, emerged from their own context – one in which Dreyfus' struggles to assert a proudly French Jewishness, one which celebrated military duty, a universal and anti-clerical republicanism, and a *mission civilisatrice* around the empire were in vibrant circulation.

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[139] See also, for example: Élie Cohen-Hadria, *Du protectorat français à l'indépendance tunisienne : souvenirs d'un témoin socialiste* (Nice: Cahiers de la Méditerranée, 1976), 325; Claude Hagège and Bernard Zarca, "Les Juifs et la France en Tunisie: Les bénéfices d'une relation triangulaire," *Le Mouvement Social* 4:197 (2001), 9-28.
[140] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 363.

Attacks on Jews did occur at the hands of demobilized French and Muslim soldiers, in the columns of the French settler press, and in the police and administrative documents of Protectorate authorities. Fluid wartime circumstances, combined with an unequal conscription policy and Jews' sometimes ambiguous legal status in the Protectorate, incited a new and diverse discourse among Jews in Tunisia about possibilities for the future. Some Jews, of course, remained steadfastly rooted to Tunisia, their place of birth, demanding international protection or doubling down on their exhortations of loyalty to France. Others merged messianic traditions with the newfound potential of a realized homeland in Palestine. But even Tunisian Zionists disagreed about the orientation of such a movement in its early incarnations, and about the ideal role Wilson, the French government, or other international parties. What was shared was a decidedly transnational conversation and imagination among Jews in Tunisia which extended to France, the United States, and the eastern Mediterranean.

Whatever degree of intercommunal equilibrium may have long existed in Tunisia was thrown into disarray by French conscription policies, increasingly impassioned discourses distinguishing between Muslims and Jews, and the economic and social costs of the war. Yet Jews looked beyond incidents of violence and injustice, revealing a variety of ways in which the war and the mobility it demanded produced new horizons of expectation. They envisioned increased ties with European Jewry, new international avenues to recognition and protection, rhetorical support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, or actual participation in Zionist movements. These diverse visions point to the productive power of violence, colonial discourse, and claims-making in this "moment."

In a certain sense, this has been an exercise in reorganizing the colonial archives: what appears on the surface to be a story of violence and tensions between Arab Muslims and Jews

actually reveals not only a story of divisive colonial policies but also a story of new possibilities, communities, and solidarities. One might then ask how this incident might have been interpreted differently, or even ignored, had it not been organized under a dossier labeled "War of 1914-18 – Jewish Community" or referred to as part of an "anti-Semitic movement." By placing these incidents in the broader context of North African migration and the First World War, one avoids disembodying Jews in Tunisia from their own historical contexts.

6. THE POSTWAR TRANSNATIONAL LEFT

Despite the global political consequences of the First World War and the direct involvement of some 70,000 Tunisians in combat in Europe, to say nothing of the countless others impacted by the economic tolls of war, histories of Tunisia have had relatively little to say about the local political effects of the war itself. Some historians of the Tunisian national movement have characterized this moment as politically "lethargic," which might be indicative of a tendency common to nationalist history writing more broadly: a focus on the "contributions" of various groups and individuals to a singular "national movement" presumed to have been inevitable, at the expense of research on figures such as migrants, exiles, and minorities.[1] Stuart Schaar explains that during the long reign of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, for example, "no serious scholarship could be published" on the histories of political groups or figures that had rivaled Bourguiba's Neo-Dustur movement, among them original Dustur co-founder Abdelaziz Thaalbi and communist and labor activist Mukhtar al-'Ayari.[2]

Recent transnational approaches to the war across the Arab world, however, have pushed scholars to consider the sheer uncertainty and possibility characteristic of the war's immediate aftermath.[3] Far from a foregone conclusion, Tunisia's liberal nationalism was still in its formative stages in the early 1920s, competing in a political field which also included strands of

[1] On political "lethargy" during WWI, for example, see: Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie*, 147. On the teleological assumptions of nationalist historiography in Algeria, see: McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, 15.
[2] Stuart Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari, a Radical Tunisian in the 1920s and His Place in Labor History," eds. Odile Moreau and Stuart Schaar, *Subversives and Mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean: A Subaltern History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 196-97.
[3] For example, see: Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

socialism, communism, Zionism, and a resilient Ottomanism. Some of these strands were themselves woven back and forth across the Mediterranean through networks of intellectuals in Europe, Egypt, and Turkey. Years before Habib Bourguiba's Neo-Dustur nationalist party had surpassed its rivals – Bourguiba would go on to serve as independent Tunisia's first president from 1957 to 1987 – several visions for the future were in play. In particular, during the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, Tunisian leftists cultivated ties across the political spectrum and reached out to French allies for support. In the early 1920s vigorous debates unfolded about the prospects of trans-Mediterranean cooperation, the role of the international community in ensuring self-determination, and the radicalism of political demands.

This chapter reconstructs this postwar "moment" as seen through the trajectories of two political activists, their allies, and their opponents. A comparison of the "radical" veteran-turned-communist Mukhtar al-'Ayari and the "moderate" socialist Hassan Guellaty will demonstrate the ways in which the Tunisian political field was constructed and contested in the wake of the First World War.[4] These two figures' transnational trajectories crossed and eventually diverged by the mid-1920s, marking the narrowing of Tunisians' political horizons that had been blown open by the war. Their postwar careers, when presented on their own terms rather than within the longue durée frames of Tunisian nationalism or French colonialism, provide an opportunity to problematize categories such as "radical" or "moderate" – relative terms which cannot sufficiently explain the uncertainty and contingency of this moment.

Such a comparison draws inspiration from several recent works on the complex relationship between France and its African colonies at the end of empire in the mid-twentieth century. In particular, in an effort to circumvent the anti-colonial Manichaeism that has

[4] On al-'Ayari, see: Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 195-205. On Guellaty, see: Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 77; Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie*, 244.

understandably characterized many nationalist histories, scholars such as Frederick Cooper and Gary Wilder have focused on African intellectual and political movements which envisioned a wide range of futures, including those which held a place for a continued (albeit altered) relationship with France. Cooper, examining the efforts of Mamadou Dia and Léopold Senghor to negotiate various forms of postcolonial federation between West Africa and France, warns against using anachronistic concepts like "nation-building" and "identity," lest we project onto people of the past our hindsight of the events we know would follow (in the case of West Africa, the independence of sovereign nation-states).[5] Wilder refuses to reduce Aimé Césaire, for example, to a "political moderate," calling his program of decolonization and departmentalization in Martinique an "antifoundational, nondogmatic, and experimental approach to truth and politics that refuses ready-made a priori certainties about the best means to desirable ends" – those certainties surrounding the inevitability of sovereign nation-states.[6]

Here I attend to similar concerns not at the end of empire, but at the end of war. I take up a brief period of political uncertainty during which socialist and communist currents had not yet been stifled by French repression or co-opted by the Tunisian nationalist mainstream. The chapter focuses on two political figures whose circumstances and legacies were decidedly more ordinary than those of Bourguiba, Césaire, or Senghor.[7] And as neither al-'Ayari nor Guellaty had quite the clout or opportunity to participate directly in metropolitan politics (as did Césaire and Senghor), an examination of their trajectories opens a window into the ambiguous conditions

[5] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 433; see also: Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 18.
[6] Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 21.
[7] An expanded study might also include the more well-known Mohamed Ali El Hammi, a founder of the influential *Confédération générale des travailleurs tunisiens*. Yet he falls slightly outside of the temporal scope of this "moment," only having returned to Tunisia in 1924 after an extended educational stay in Germany. He was exiled along with Mukhtar al-'Ayari to Italy the following year. See: Boubaker Letaief Azaiez, *Tels syndicalistes, tels syndicats, ou les péripéties du mouvement syndical tunisien* (Vol. 1) (Tunis: Société Tunisienne d'Edition et d'Art Graphique, 1980), 13-17.

of possibility that Tunisian activists faced in the wake of the First World War. Al-'Ayari, as a veteran, presents a particularly unique voice in this moment. Veterans, when viewed as migrants, push historians to go beyond the analytical binary of either top-down state-centered narratives or bottom-up resistance chronicles. Much like the liminal figures explored in the preceding chapters, veterans complicate colonial categories and paint a nuanced picture of political subjectivity and identity formation. Geographically, of course, they were extraordinarily mobile; they were also interlopers within the colonial and military hierarchies, somewhere between subject and citizen. Their deeper integration into these hierarchies gave them a basis upon which to make certain claims for benefits or privileges, yet by nature of their profession and their marginal position in the colonial hierarchy, they also stood to lose more than most by being refused these claims, as they often were.[8]

As was the case in many colonial settings, Tunisia's early socialist and communist circles were markedly diverse. In earlier chapters, I demonstrated how the war reconfigured existing cross-Mediterranean networks and Maghrib-Mashriq links, invigorating the exchange of political ideas which could reach a broader swath of the Tunisian population than ever before. For those who avoided military service, travel to emergent political hubs like Geneva and Lausanne introduced them to anti-colonial activists from around the Arab world, expanding not only their audience but also the scope of their claims. For those compelled to work and fight in France, the opportunity to mix with other colonial subjects and French civilians could introduce a newfound cultural affinity with France, if not a starker sense of its racial boundaries. Thus, even while traditional outlets for political dissent in Tunisia were silenced by Protectorate censorship, transnational experiences such as these burgeoned, with varied political and social effects.

[8] For example, see: Mann, *Native Sons,* 108-45.

Immediately following the war Muslim and Jewish Tunisians worked alongside French and Italian settlers as well as metropolitan French leaders to establish vibrant political meeting circles and publications which presented early alternatives to a liberal Muslim Tunisian nationalism. In such a moment of uncertainty, communism and socialism presented visions for Tunisia's future which to many were just as compelling or even more so than liberal nationalism or pan-Islamic Ottomanism. But how and why did these alternatives emerge before subsequently collapsing? I argue that early Tunisian communists' and socialists' evolving positions, even in the midst of mounting anti-colonial sentiment, reflected the extent of trans-Mediterranean cooperation in the early 1920s. Beyond deconstructing a nationalist teleology or resuscitating its "forgotten heroes," I propose that alongside the ascendance of an international sphere characterized by the League of Nations and its Mandatory powers, another possibility emerged: a transnational leftist sphere marked by its own range of contradictions, uncertainties, and questions of inclusivity. An understanding of this sphere enriches debates about the nature of communism in France amid its postwar split with the Third International and the nature of communism in North Africa and the Middle East.

Mobile Beginnings: Guellaty and al-'Ayari

Hassan Guellaty was, from an early age, well-connected and well-traveled. He was born in Boghair (near Algiers), Algeria in 1880, and within a year moved with his father, a shari'ah court interpreter, who had been transferred to Tunis.[9] In this sense Guellaty was from one of many

[9] Éric Gobe, *Les avocats en Tunisie de la colonization à la revolution (1883-2011)* (Paris: Karthala Éditions, 2013), 95.

upper bourgeois Algerian families who settled in Tunisia throughout the nineteenth century.[10] It has been argued that these shared origins help explain the similarity between Algerian and Tunisian activists' grievances prior to the First World War despite their decidedly different legal and political position in the French colonial apparatus.[11] In 1903, Guellaty began practicing law in Tunis after studying in Toulouse and quickly made the most of his connections with the Algero-Tunisian elites through his marriage to Fatma Sfar, daughter of the reformer and judicial administrator Béchir Sfar.[12] Guellaty enjoyed French nationality thanks to his being born in Algeria and made the most of his education and family connections to the Protectorate administration.[13] He served for a time as the president of the Khalduniyya Society, an institution founded by his father-in-law (among others) that fostered Arabic-language learning on European and global affairs.

Guellaty entered politics as a contributor to *Le Tunisien,* the first French-language newspaper published independently by Tunisians. The journal, run by prominent intellectual Ali Bach Hamba from 1907 to 1911, was the primary organ of the Young Tunisians who, though reluctant to question the existence of the Protectorate itself, called for educational reforms and legal equality. Despite his generally Francophone education and political orientation, Guellaty like many Tunisian political figures at the turn of the century still looked to Istanbul, traveling there in September 1908 to evaluate the implications of the Young Turk Revolution and its new constitution.[14] It was his partnership with Ali Bach Hamba, in addition to Guellaty's involvement

[10] McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, 36. This included political dissidents in self-imposed exile from Algeria such as Si Muhammad al-Madani, the father of Algerian nationalist and historian Ahmad Tawfiq al-Madani.
[11] Béchir Tlili, *Nationalismes, Socialisme et Syndicalisme dans le Maghreb des années (1919-1934)* (Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1984), 116.
[12] Noureddine Sraieb, "Note sur les dirigeants politiques et syndicalistes tunisiens de 1920 à 1934," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 9:1 (1971), 107-108.
[13] Gobe, *Les avocats en Tunisie*, 96.
[14] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul,* 140-41.

in the 1912 tramway strike aimed at securing equal treatment of Tunisian and European workers, that resulted in his expulsion to Algeria later that year. In 1913 Guellaty visited Ali in Istanbul where he is said to have purchased the greater part of the library of Ali's brother Mohamed Bach Hamba.[15] He was able to return to Tunisia shortly before the outbreak of war, unlike Ali and Mohamed Bach Hamba, who could not.[16] Guellaty continued to enjoy the support of number of prominent contacts in Tunisia, Algeria, and France, including progressive thinkers such as the military doctor Georges Saint-Paul, who in 1912 praised Guellaty and his kin as "a beautiful Muslim family of scholars and soldiers" while urging his French readers to support the Young Tunisians.[17]

Details from Mukhtar al-'Ayari's early life are scant. Born in 1887 or 1889, he attended a Franco-Arabic school in Tunis and held a series of small jobs, hoping to one day become a police officer. He enrolled voluntarily in the army a couple years prior to the start of the First World War, perhaps hoping that it might facilitate or accelerate his acceptance into the ranks of the Protectorate government.[18] He was overshadowed by such towering nationalist figures as Abdelaziz Thaalbi and Habib Bourguiba. Al-'Ayari has been something of a "pariah" to nationalist historians, thanks to his communist associations and rather short-lived political career.[19] The little we know of al-'Ayari's wartime experience comes from his writings and recorded comments after the war. Historians have argued that North African soldiers such as al-'Ayari were deployed disproportionately as "cannon fodder," justified by French conceptions of

[15] Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 140.
[16] Perkins notes that Guellaty returned to Tunisia after the war, but more recent evidence seems to put Guellaty in Tunisia during the war. Kenneth Perkins, *Historical Dictionary of Tunisia*, 2nd ed. (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), 72; Gobe, *Les avocats en Tunisie*, 96; CADN 1TU/125/29: Note de Sureté Publique, 10 February 1917; Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul*, 141.
[17] G. Espé de Metz, "Vers l'Empire…" *La Presse colonial*, 13 August 1912, 51, 121.
[18] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 199.
[19] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari, a Radical Tunisian in the 1920s, and his place in labour history," *Maghreb Review* 36:1 (2011), 5. This is an earlier version of the chapter cited in the note above.

their "warlike mentality" and "savage ardor," even while they earned less than half the salary of French soldiers of equal rank, faced segregation from French civilians, and were rarely considered for promotion.[20] Recall, moreover, that French authorities held that behind the lines, North and West Africans, biologically and culturally unable to resist the corrupting influences of metropolitan society, threatened the gendered and racial hierarchies underpinning the French civilizing mission.

With these realities in mind, that al-'Ayari would describe his war experience in overwhelmingly negative terms following the war comes as little surprise. He claimed at a 1922 communist meeting surveilled by police that despite heroic and distinguished service in battle that had earned him a Croix de Guerre and despite his ability to speak both French and Arabic, he was never promoted because to do so would violate the colonial order by placing him on par with French non-commissioned officers.[21] Indigenous noncommissioned officers were in fact seldom if ever promoted to command units at the company level or higher, and multiple North African lieutenants were never allowed in the same company. All communications between them had to go through a French superior, undermining the potential for concerted resistance or claims-making during a war in which mutiny was a real concern.[22] Moreover, the few Tunisians who were placed in positions of authority usually came from an elite background, reflecting the French policy of "association."[23] It was presumed that these elites, used to commanding their "social inferiors" and unlikely to grow dissatisfied with their position, would not make claims

[20] Christian Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their Deployment in Europe during the First World War," *Immigrants & Minorities,* 26:1/2, 2008, p. 120; Joe Lunn, "'Les Races Guerrières': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34:4 (1999), 531-35.
[21] CADN, 1TU/2 MI 239: Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 January 1922. See also: Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 199.
[22] Meynier, *L'Algérie Revelée,* 417.
[23] For example, see: Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1960); Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*.

against the very colonial hierarchy that sustained their elevated position.[24]

In the French Army, then, al-'Ayari had run up against two dynamics of colonial difference: a lack of French nationality and a modest social upbringing which together had conspired to create obstacles to advancement. In attempting to understand how these disappointments with French hierarchies impacted his political engagement after the war, we must account for his expectations. It would not be unreasonable to presume that, prior to the war, al-'Ayari was quite aware that he was not "French," whether in the legal sense or otherwise. Although it is not laid out explicitly, however, we can deduct from his postwar commentary that his wartime experiences had indeed come as a shock: an aspiring Protectorate police officer prior to the war, he had far less sense of what exactly his exclusion from both the French and elite Tunisian spheres would mean for his lived reality. Perhaps it is in this regard that we can speak more authoritatively about al-'Ayari's political shift: disappointments and shattered expectations at war catalyzed unexpected visions for the future.

Contentious Homecomings

Demobilization presented social and economic challenges for Tunisians. Returning veterans were involved in violent and occasionally deadly altercations, some targeting Tunisian Jews and other groups said to have profited from their exemption from conscription, as discussed in the previous chapter.[25] It is unclear whether these tensions were behind police allegations in spring of 1921 that al-'Ayari, while working as a tram operator, slapped a Jewish passenger simply for

[24] Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 116-117.
[25] Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 40-41; Philippe Landau, "Les Juifs de Tunisie," *Archives Juives* 32 (1999), 47-48.

asking the price of a ticket, leading to his dismissal by the tramway company.[26] Demobilization also created hardships for the many veterans who had come from rural areas and had little formal education. Correspondence with remote villages was unreliable, and documentation requirements for widows and orphans to claim their pensions could be onerous. Similarly, Mann writes that for West Africans, just becoming a veteran could be a "full-time occupation" due to the gap between metropolitan bureaucratic requirements and administrative realities. Veterans often had to travel days to fill out a form, only to have to return months later to complete paperwork before receiving a pension.[27]

Yet despite the horrors the war visited on so many, it did catalyze a number of new opportunities for Tunisians to think not only beyond colonial borders but also across class and religion, a phenomenon familiar to the different groups thus far examined in this dissertation.[28] Early forms of Tunisian communism and socialism, in particular, highlight the extent to which the war's upheavals opened up new concepts of political community which might stretch beyond traditional categories of identity (nationalist, loyalist, and so on).

We can say with some certainty that al-'Ayari's experience in the trenches of France and Belgium were jarring. Moreover, having witnessed the very real boundaries imposed by colonialism, al-'Ayari arrived home in Tunis prepared to take a path quite different from the one he had once envisioned as a policeman or soldier. He soon began working as a tramway operator, and became Secretary General of the tramway's union during the difficulties of Tunisia's

[26] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 200; "In the French court," *Tunis Socialiste,* 2 January 1921, 2.
[27] Gregory Mann, *Native Sons*, 100-102.
[28] For example, see: Tamari, *Year of the Locust,* 7-8; James McDougall, "Dream of Exile, Promise of Home: Language, Education, and Arabism in Algeria," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2011), 251-270.

postwar economic crash.[29] North African soldiers such as himself had learned from French workers' labor activism in the depots and ports of France during the war.[30] By 1921 al-'Ayari also began attending meetings of Tunisia's new Communist Party, lending his oration skills and working-class appeal to a political vision he believed might align with his tramway union work.[31] Schaar writes that while al-'Ayari's grasp of French was not as strong as that of his better-known communist colleague M'Hammed Ali, his "working class style of delivery added authenticity to his persona and made him more valuable" to the movement.[32]

For Guellaty, on the other hand, home might have had multiple meanings over the course of his life prior to the First World War. He had traveled with his family from Algeria, studied law in France, and drew from a long tradition of Mediterranean elites crossing seas and land borders, not unlike the reformers Salah al-Sharif and Muhammad al-Khidr Husain.[33] There is little evidence of his wartime activities, and while his brief exile may have provided the space for a more assertive approach to reform, he faced none of the extremes of combat, discrimination at the front or in French hospitals, or the sudden discovery of colonial boundaries to citizenship or promotion. Rather, Guellaty returned to Tunisia to find that many of his Young Tunisian colleagues had quickly resumed their political activities, particularly with the lifting of the state of emergency in 1919.[34] He joined with former allies Abdelaziz Thaalbi, Ahmad al-Safi, and Khairallah ben Mustafa to found Le Parti Tunisien whose aim was to establish a constitution and secure legal equality for Tunisians. Thaalbi and Ahmad Sakka's publication of the influential and

[29] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 75-76. Poor harvests, the ousting of Tunisians from jobs and markets by returning French veterans, and Protectorate attempts to boost the colonization of arable land provoked great discontent in 1919 and 1920.
[30] Tyler Stovall, "Colour-blind France? Colonial Workers During the First World War," *Race & Class,* 35:2 (1993), 47.
[31] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 199.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 3-8.
[34] Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie,* 254.

controversial tract *La Tunisie Martyre* in late 1919, however, alienated Guellaty. He held its wholehearted indictment of the French Protectorate administration to be a mistake, as it left little room for accommodation and negotiation with France.[35]

Tunisia and the Transnational Left

Despite these disagreements, the immediate aftermath of the First World War was in many ways a moment of optimism when it came to the promise of overseas political cooperation. Guellaty's outlook was no exception: while active in the early incarnation of the Dustur's nationalist vision, he also remained connected to socialist reformers, both French and Tunisian. Even during the war, despite its restrictions on the press and political associations, Guellaty continued to cultivate ties with foreign-born intellectuals. Many of Tunisia's early socialists and communists were in fact settlers of French or Italian descent or came from among the middle-class Jewish communities of Tunisia's coastal cities.[36]

Guellaty's longtime colleague André Duran-Angliviel, a representative in Tunisia's Consultative Congress, was a settler from southeastern France.[37] Guellaty also forged a relationship with Benjamin Frederick Dawson, an American cousin of Pierpont Morgan who had earned a *Croix de Guerre* for his volunteer service as a driver in the French Army early in the war. Dawson, after being wounded in action, was monitored by Protectorate authorities during a visit to Tunisia while on convalescence leave in early 1917. A lawyer, he took great interest in Tunisian intellectuals' political activities, attending the clandestine meetings of the "Cercle

[35] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 76-77.
[36] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 203.
[37] Incidentally, as noted in Chapter One, Angliviel collaborated with Albert Samama-Chikli on a guide pamphlet promoting tourism in Tunisia just before the outbreak of war in 1914. Both Angliviel and Samama-Chikli, in fact, were members of masonic lodges, the former with the left-leaning La Volonté and the latter with Le Grand Orient de France. Claude Nataf, "Les Juifs et la franc-maçonnerie en terre coloniale: le cas de la Tunisie," *Archives Juives* 43:2 (2010), 94.

Tunisien" and visiting Guellaty at his study several times during his stay.[38] It appears that this was the same Dawson who would go on to write as an activist and journalist, notably publishing *The French in Syria* anonymously for the Brooklyn-based Independence Party of Syria following a 1926 visit to Syria amid its anti-colonial rebellion.[39]

The rise to power of the Bolsheviks in 1917 provoked controversy and would reveal the extent of uncertainty among competing visions of reform in Tunisia from both sides of the Mediterranean. For the first time, a communist vision had been embraced by a major world power, and French leftists moved to come to terms with the implications of such events for their own aspirations as well as those of their counterparts in France's overseas colonies. Guellaty and Angliviel served as Tunisian delegates to the 1920 Congress of Tours, held with the aim of determining whether French socialists of the Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (SFIO) would adhere to the Third International. While the majority voted to join the Third International and form the Section française de l'Internationale communiste (later becoming the Parti communiste français), Guellaty and Angliviel voted against it.[40] This path stands in notable contrast to the example of the young Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), who supported the Third International while criticizing France's colonial enterprise. The end of the First World War offered no foregone conclusions as far as the exact shape of reform or revolution was concerned, even within leftist circles.

The Third International's eighth article stipulated that member parties would work

[38] CADN, 1TU/125/29: Note de Sureté Publique, 10 February 1917; CADN, 1TU/125/29: Note de Sureté Publique, 5 February 1917. The Cercle was a small group of intellectual elites who had met regularly in Tunis since the turn of the century to discuss political affairs in private.
[39] B. F. Dawson, *The French in Syria* (Brooklyn, Independence Party of Syria, 1927). On Syrian nationalism in the Americas, see: Stacy Fahrenthold, "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in al-Nadi al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920-32," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46:2 (2014), 259-283.
[40] Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie*, 188-189.

actively to end imperial oppression and liberate colonized peoples. In this sense, then, Tunisian revolutionaries could in theory count on the support of the international communist movement.[41] At first glance, al-'Ayari, much like Guellaty, was exemplary of this optimistic trans-Mediterranean political collaboration. The Italian settlers Enrico and Mario Costa worked closely with al-'Ayari and were frequently on hand at communist meetings, the latter being condemned in 1922 for publishing a pamphlet attacking colonial rule in Tunisia.[42] Tunisia had in fact long served as a haven for Italian reformers – Giuseppe Garibaldi notably stayed in Tunisia in 1834 and 1849. Al-'Ayari worked closely with French allies as well, one of his being the French-born settler Robert Louzon, a vocal Dreyfusard and union activist who after the war became president of Tunisia's branch of the Communist Party. Louzon was a vociferous critic of colonialism and he frequently drew the attention of Protectorate police.[43] Louzon's presses supported a variety of different publications, ranging from reformist socialists to revolutionary anti-colonial communists; he seemed to have a particular concern for Tunisian veterans. For example, he was tried alongside the veteran and communist poet Abderrahman Kefi for preaching "attacks against the rights and powers of the French Republic in Tunisia" in early 1922.[44] Louzon had helped al-'Ayari publish his journal *Habib al-Umma*, "lover of the nation," which ran at least two dozen issues in late 1921.[45] Schaar speculates that al-'Ayari might not have been the primary author and editor of the journal given his lack of an advanced education, and that his name on the

[41] Ibid.
[42] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Note de Clapier, 21 November 1921; Juliette Bessis, *La Méditerranée fasciste: l'Italie mussolinienne et la Tunisie* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1981), 67-68.
[43] CADN 1TU/2MI239/1700(2): Note du Commissaire Spécial Clapier, 3 October 1921.
[44] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 392-93.
[45] While the term *umma* typically refers to the entirety of the world's Muslim community, it was not unusual in the early 20th century Arab world for the word to be deployed to mean something closer to "nation" or "national community," or even to refer to a specific religious group within the nation, Muslim or otherwise. See Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 57-58; Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 21-23.

masthead was more valuable to the Communist Party. That much is unclear, but historian Habib Kazdaghli credits al-'Ayari with having written at least six major articles for the journal.[46] Although its lifespan was cut short by order of the Resident General, it had a lasting impact: as Tunisia's first popular Arabic-language communist journal, *Habib al-Umma* paved the way for a number of journals such as *Al-Umma* and *Le Moudhek*.[47]

In the first issue of *Habib al-Umma*, al-'Ayari positioned the journal as an alternative to the nationalist mainstream, quipping, "Without entering into any of the infighting that one can find amongst the different groups of the Tunisian nationalist movement, *Habib al-Umma* supports the efforts of all those who demand the expansion of the rights, freedom, justice, and education of the Tunisian people."[48] From the outset, al-'Ayari envisioned himself, through the words of his journal, to be transcending the limitations of nationalist politics. Later issues of *Habib al-Umma* grew more outspoken in their rhetoric, its grievances maturing from vague manifestos into targeted attacks on the French Protectorate and its policies. A 29 October 1921 issue began with an article entitled "A Social Grievance" in which al-'Ayari attacked the Protectorate's lack of concern for the orphans and widows of Muslim soldiers killed in Europe. He wrote:

> The issue of widows and children of the Muslim soldiers who quickly answered France's call to war has slowly been fading from our attention. The soldiers were thrown into the fiery oven by Lyautey, falling prey to the emotions stirred up at the Academy in Paris.[49] They committed themselves to a covenant with the French, who promised to recognize and protect the rights and interests of these soldiers, both in life and after death… but the soldiers died, and the French broke their promise!
>
> Let there be no question about the unfortunate situation that afflicts the survivors of those

[46] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," in *Subversives and Mavericks*, 197, citing Habib Kazdaghli, *Tatawwur al-harakat al-shuya-'ya* (1919-1943) (Tunis: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de La Manouba, 1992), 77.
[47] Mustapha Kraïem, *Le Parti communiste tunisien pendant la période coloniale* (Tunis: Université de Tunis I, 1997), 76-77.
[48] Mukhtar Al-Ayari, "Ilā al-Shaʾb al-Tūnisī" [To the Tunisian People], *Habib al-Umma*, 23 October 1921, 1.
[49] Likely a reference to the École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr.

> heroes who gave their lives, and everything they have, only to see their widows and children facing starvation…[50]

A personal and emotional call from al-'Ayari to remember the heroic sacrifices of veterans such as himself are juxtaposed with the harsh reality familiar to nearly any postwar generation: the survivors, as much as the war dead, were soon forgotten by a society longing to leave its darkest days behind. In this case, "Muslim soldiers" had held up their end of this "covenant" only to see France break its promises. Given the bureaucratic obstacles to veterans and surviving family members seeking their pensions, as well as the new taxes which primarily benefited returning French veterans, one can understand al-'Ayari's critical impulse.[51] His approach, moreover, resembled those of Mohamed Bach Hamba and of some Tunisian Jews in that it used French promises as something of a mirror turned toward a contradictory liberal discourse. Far from naïve, such an appeal was to demonstrate to a Tunisian audience that to wait for French promises to come to fruition was itself a lost cause.

Al-'Ayari also directed reproach at the Protectorate's alleged favoritism toward French settlers, criticizing for example the French-run Municipal Council's allocation of 240,000 Francs to support European acting and theatre initiatives in Tunis. In *La Tunisie Martyre*, Thaalbi had attacked a similar decision, claiming that in 1919, despite the economic devastation of the war, the Municipal Council managed to find 150,000 Francs to support four months of French theatrical works at the Municipal Theatre in Tunis, compared with the paltry 5,000 Francs granted to a Tunisian theatrical society in 1913.[52] Al-'Ayari asked:

> What does the spread of theatre matter to the orphan and the widow, when they have

[50] Mukhtar Al-Ayari, "Muẓlima Ijtamāʿaī" [A Social Grievance], *Habib al-Umma*, 29 October 1921, 1. Al-Ayari refers to Marshal Hubert Lyautey, Resident-General of Morocco from 1912 to 1925, who served as France's Minister of War for part of 1917.
[51] For a detailed look at the debates surrounding postwar provisioning for orphans in neighboring Algeria, see: Hassett, "Pupilles de l'Empire," 315-345.
[52] Abdelaziz Thaalbi, *La Tunisie Martyre: Ses Revendications*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1985), 157.

> starving bellies? …Does it please a man to leave behind such weak offspring, children who cannot find even a piece of bread or a spoonful of olive oil, while the fortunes of entertainers and dancers rises in leaps and bounds, thanks to the government and its supporters? Is this not, my people, a clear and blatant injustice, whose shame will be inked in history?[53]

An illustration accompanying the above article depicts a large mound of skulls watched closely by circling vultures with the caption, "War and its Horrors." The sketch appears to have been a reproduction of Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin's 1871 painting *The Apotheosis of War: Dedicated to All Conquerors Past, Present, and Future* (Fig. 12 below).[54] The choice is salient, given the original subject of Vereshchagin's work, which depicts the brutal aftermath of the Russian colonial conquest of the Muslim region of Turkestan in 1867-68. Images and variants such as these were circulated widely across the emergent international leftist press as a condemnation of militarism.

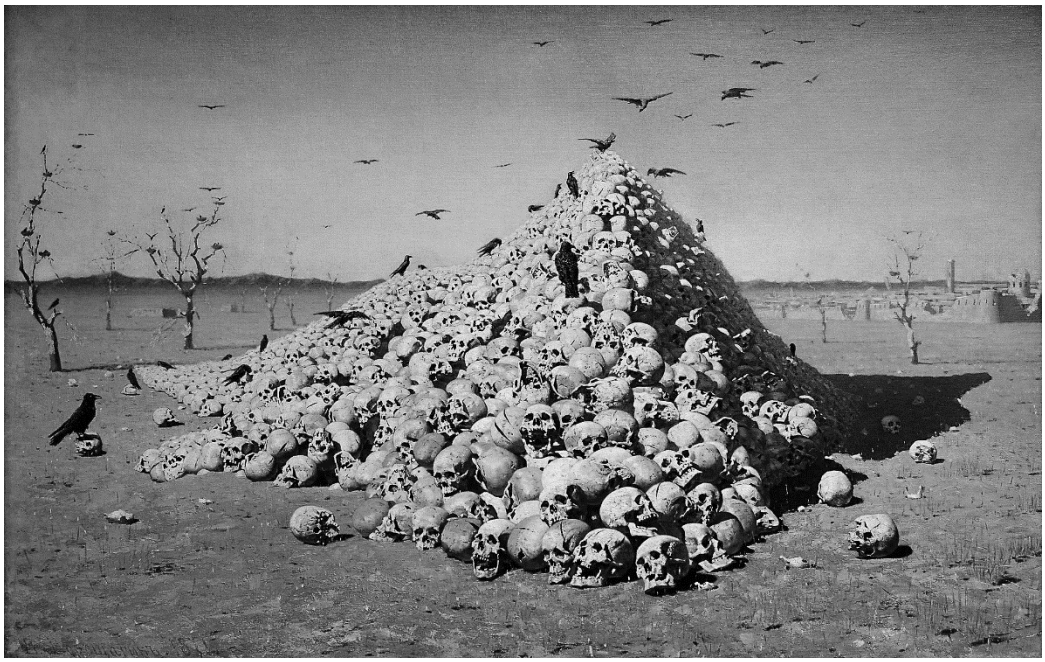

Fig. 12: Vasily Vereshchagin, *The Apotheosis of War*, 1871

[53] Al-Ayari, "A Social Grievance," 1.
[54] Vasily Vereshchagin, *The Apotheosis of War*, 1871, oil on canvas, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, accessed 1 Mar. 2015, http://www.tretyakovgallery.ru/en/collection/_show/image/_id/183.

Al-'Ayari's 1921 foray into the print media was short-lived, punctuated by censorship and brief stints in prison. He continued his activities in support of the Communist Party by inviting potential allies from France to hold lectures and meetings in Tunis. In March 1922, he organized a visit from French parliamentary deputy Paul Vaillant-Couturier, a communist and war veteran who had recently campaigned to spread the cause of anti-militarism. Al-'Ayari and Jean-Paul Finidori, the Tunisian communist party's Corsica-born treasurer, helped arrange an earnestly prepared reception and four speaking events for the deputy during his stay, each of which apparently drew hundreds of attendees. Vaillant-Couturier highlighted, among other topics, the "scourge" of global capitalism and its wars, as well as his activities with the Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants, an anti-militarist organization founded in 1917 seeking to defend the rights and interests of veterans. He also reportedly spoke on the freedom of the press in a large courtyard to an audience of nearly a thousand attendees, including many Tunisians who listened through an Arabic translator.[55]

The results of the communist deputy's visit were mixed. Police surveillance reports wrote dismissively about the impact of his speeches. Though al-'Ayari worked hard to spread the word in Tunisian coffee houses, police agents noted the scant presence of indigenous attendees at the conferences – though the police may have been eager to dismiss such political efforts from the outset.[56] Vaillant-Couturier's public talks were, moreover, marred by sharp opposition, not least from the settler press. Some attendees boldly questioned what he, as a deputy, would do to ensure that the Protectorate best served French settlers' interests.[57] Others asked about the ongoing famine in Russia, which the deputy blamed on drought rather than on Soviet policy. He

[55] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 393.
[56] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport de Boireau, "Conférences Vaillant-Couturier," 29 March 1922.
[57] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport du Contrôleur Civil de Bizerte à Résident Général Lucien Saint, 30 March 1922.

replied that "in the Tunisian south, this year's harvest has been irreversibly ruined – are the communists to blame for this too? Of course not."[58] European affairs seemed to dominate his lectures, with praise heaped on the Bolsheviks for their perseverance despite widespread condemnation (including that of his own government). An audience member, an employee of the Popular Bank of Bizerte and one of the many White Russian refugees who landed in Tunisia following the communist revolution, challenged this view, claiming that his personal experience had better informed him of the suffering that Soviet rule caused.[59] In their final analysis, Protectorate authorities found little danger in Vaillant-Couturier's conferences, noting that his written publications, rather than his speeches, posed the greatest threat.[60] If the deputy was as disappointed as police reports suggest, one can imagine that al-'Ayari too had been frustrated as he and a small cadre of supporters saw the deputy to his port of departure on 1 April 1922.[61] Wrapped up in debates surrounding the Bolsheviks' shocking rise to power, there is little evidence to suggest that Vaillant-Couturier ever questioned France's colonial hold over Tunisia during his weeklong visit.

A few months later, in June, al-'Ayari helped arrange a five-day visit from another communist parliamentary deputy, the lawyer and journalist André Berthon. Berthon hoped to call upon the Resident General Lucien Saint, with whom he apparently had a friendly personal relationship, to ease the "persecutions" against Tunisian communists which he claimed were far harsher than those in Algeria. In the weeks prior to Berthon's visit, the communist party of Tunisia had been suspended by Protectorate authorities, and its leaders, including al-'Ayari and

[58] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport de Farfal, "Conférence de député Vaillant-Couturier," 1 April 1922.
[59] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport de Boireau, "Conférences Vaillant-Couturier," 29 March 1922.
[60] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport du Contrôleur Civil de Bizerte à Résident Général Lucien Saint, 30 March 1922.
[61] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport de Farfal, "Départ pour la France du député Vaillant-Couturier," 1 April 1922.

Finidori, had been temporarily placed under arrest for threatening the security of the state.[62] Meeting with Protectorate officials, Berthon claimed to have come not as an "agitator" but rather to ensure the consistent application of the law. He distinguished the "spirit" of his visit from that of Vaillant-Couturier, to whom officials had likened him. Berthon's request to use a public building for a conference entitled "l'Action Ouvrière" was also refused.[63] Berthon ultimately claimed to have reconstituted the Communist Party in Tunisia by the end of his visit, while the Resident General proclaimed his satisfaction with the suppression of communist activities. Whatever the case may be, al-'Ayari's ability to work effectively not only with settlers but with political figures from across the Mediterranean for a shared cause points to a moment of great potential for visions for the future that transcended geographic and colonial boundaries.[64]

Global Struggles, Local Debates

Despite these moments of trans-Mediterranean cooperation, French socialists and communists remained bitterly divided on the issue of French colonialism through the early twenties, with significant consequences for Tunisian anti-colonial activists. Even though a majority of French socialists had voted to join the Third International at Tours in December 1920, no vote was held on Lenin's required 21 Conditions, including the eighth condition that called on its members to speak and act against their own nations' oppression of colonized peoples. A 1922 convention at Sidi-bel-Abbès, Algeria, for example, voted against the Third International's stance on colonialism, arguing that the metropolitan workers' revolution would have to come first, and that

[62] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 394.
[63] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport sur André Berthon, 6 June 1922.
[64] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Note de Sureté Publique, 8 June 1922;

communist propagandizing to indigenous Algerians was "useless and dangerous."[65] In some French leftists' paternalistic imagination, Arabs, without continued French tutelage, might otherwise succumb to an oppressive Islamic oligarchy.[66] Al-'Ayari's close ally Louzon called such a position "a repugnant hypocrisy."[67] Nevertheless through much of the 1920s and 1930s, French communists, in their evolutionary and sometimes racialized views, saw anti-colonial liberation movements as an impediment rather than an asset to the working-class struggle.[68]

While this schism among the French Empire's leftists would be an important factor in the trajectories of both Hassan Guellaty and Mukhtar al-'Ayari, local Tunisian political developments were just as critical, and in some ways anticipated this broader divergence. As al-'Ayari and the Tunisian communists organized the visits of Vaillant-Couturier and Berthon in early 1922, Guellaty had grown weary of Thaalbi's influence over the Dustur and its attempts to woo the Bey to support the creation of a constitution and parliament. Guellaty, having been a co-founder of the Dustur's predecessor, now parted ways with Thaalbi to found the Parti Réformiste. At first glance, it can be said that Guellaty and the Parti Réformiste struggled to gain much traction whether among the Tunisian public or in the eyes of the Protectorate authorities. One wonders as well how the Algerian-born Guellaty's status as a French national, rather rare among Muslim Tunisians, might have influenced his views towards the Protectorate and its critics. The editors of the French newspaper *Le Figaro,* for their part, questioned why Guellaty even cared to support Tunisians' emancipation in the first place.[69] Kenneth Perkins attributes

[65] Éloïse Dreure, "Communisme et réalités coloniales, le communisme en Algérie, 1920-1925," *Revue Transversales du Centre Georges Chevrier,* 9, 2016 [http://tristan.u-bourgogne.fr/CGC/prodscientifique/Transversales.html]; René Gallissot, "Sur les débuts du communisme en Algérie et en Tunisie: socialisme colonial et rupture révolutionnaire," in *Mélanges d'Histoire Sociale Offerts à Jean Maitron* (Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1976), 101.
[66] Kraiem, *Le Parti communiste tunisien,* 115.
[67] Gallissot, "Sur les débuts du communisme en Algérie et en Tunisie," 101-102.
[68] Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien,* 119.
[69] "Les problèmes tunisiennes: les faux prophètes," *Le Figaro* 15 December 1921, 4.

Guellaty's struggles not only to his political ideas, but also to his upbringing and attitudes. The historian describes Guellaty as a "highly Westernized" member of the elite who "clung to the prewar notions of association and collaboration," harboring "arrogant confidence in his superiority to the likes of Thaalbi."[70] According to this explanation, the Parti Réformiste was dismissed for its "sycophancy" and lack of popular support.[71]

This focus on the personal, however, overlooks the appeal of Guellaty's ideas and reputation as well as the continued openness of the Tunisian political field in the early 1920s. Guellaty was not simply a holdout from another era, bound for failure in the new postwar world. Recall that less than two years prior, Guellaty had allied with Thaalbi and a number of other activists to form Le Parti Tunisien. The leftist press in Tunisia reveals that Guellaty was not completely marginalized. An October 1921 article in the communist journal *Le Moudhek* sheds some light on the schism between Guellaty and the communists:

> What has motivated Guellaty to change so much that he has become our adversary? Is it because he believes the heads of the Communist Party have committed some mistakes? If such is his motive, he should have warned the Tunisian people as soon as it appeared to him thus, so that we might have replaced those responsible. As for our grievances, they remain sacred and unflinching.
>
> We are equally heartbroken to see how the Arab press treats this man, whose intentions are perhaps pure and who may have acted on a misunderstanding with the party heads. Is there someone among us who can restore the peace between the two adversaries and cut short this conflict? The situation is serious. We must not divide ourselves into parts and fractions of parts, as this would be to play our enemy's game; they would seize this opportunity to harm us.[72]

Nowhere are the accusations of elitist arrogance or of clinging to a foregone era of pandering to French authority. Rather, *Le Moudhek*'s communist editors call for unity in the face of a common opponent, looking inwardly to try and understand the scope of this misunderstanding or

[70] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 81.
[71] Ibid.
[72] CADN 1TU/2MI239/1700(2): "'Moudhek' du 12 Octobre 1921."

even of the party's own missteps. To simply describe a figure like Guellaty as a "Westernized elite," or worse, a "sycophantic" collaborationist, submits that the ends can explain the means – in other words, that Guellaty's eventual marginalization from the Tunisian national movement was simply a matter of time given his character and upbringing. Such logic would hold that if his "contribution" to the Tunisian nation cannot be traced back in a straight line, then he must have been a thorn in that nation's side. This would be to overlook the importance of this brief window of possibility in which a Tunisian communist journal could defend and reach out to an Algerian-born French national who argued for continued accommodation with France.

Al-'Ayari and his communist colleagues, while diverging from Guellaty and his new Parti Réformiste, found it just as hard to maintain a united front with the Dustur and the emergent mainstream of Tunisian anti-colonial politics. French communists who had declared pacifism "a pillar of [their] colonial program" might well have been alarmed by al-'Ayari's espousal of violence as a means to achieve revolutionary ends.[73] At party meetings tracked closely by police agents, he delivered speeches attacking the Protectorate authorities, particularly for their raids on the homes and offices of fellow party members. He called for mass protests, a refusal to pay taxes, and the destruction of public property like streetlamps.[74] In April 1922, police offered a 1,000 franc reward for al-'Ayari's arrest, to which he replied that he would, on the day that Tunisians rose up to seize their independence, seek out the director of police and break his neck.[75] This was not the first time al-'Ayari alluded to violence as a means to achieve his revolutionary goals – at a Communist Party meeting in Tunis earlier that year, he told an

[73] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," *Maghreb Review,* 10, citing CADN-Tun. ıer vers. 1701-3, folio 395-401, "Programme Colonial," August 23, 1924.
[74] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," *Maghreb Review,* 8.
[75] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1697: Rapport de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, "Parti Communiste Section Indigène," 8 April 1922. See also: Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," *Maghreb Review,* 8-9.

allegory in which two rival kings had sent their servants to battle in their names:

> Stopping the arm of his adversary, the servant asked the other servant why he wanted to kill him. His adversary responded that he harbored no animosity towards him, but that he had been sent by *his* master to kill his enemies. The servant then asked his adversary if he was hungry, and if he wanted to share the provisions which he was carrying…. The adversary accepted and, over the course of the meal, they both agreed to return and kill their respective masters, who had not hesitated to make them kill each other while they remained in their palaces.[76]

Al-'Ayari suggested that his story could "serve as a lesson and show that with agreement and unity, we can live happily. Let us save the unfortunate man whose land has been taken from him, and oppose those who want to leave us in ignorance by wiping away our thoughts and ideas."[77] The allegory's call, drawing perhaps from the veteran's bitter experience on the Western Front, is anything but subtle: unity amongst oppressed people, whether Tunisian or otherwise, must be forged to bring about the end – even if a violent one – to capitalist colonial regimes. Few Francophone leftists would have supported this position in the early 1920s, as many had built their movements on the popularity of anti-militarist and pacifist sentiments coming out of the First World War. Fewer still called for the dismantling of France's overseas empire.

Wise Men and Poor Wretches

Despite his unrelenting view toward colonialism, class occupied an ambiguous position in al-'Ayari's postwar vision. He had an upbringing decidedly more middle class than that of the wealthy Guellaty, and he often aimed to set himself apart from more "elite" political intellectuals. One such elite, Abdelaziz Thaalbi, had written in *La Tunisie Martyre* (1920) that conscripts were easily misled and corrupted by their "slave drivers" (French and Tunisian recruiters), setting off "without fear of betraying their morals, poisoned as they were by

[76] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1700: Note 35 de Clapier, 14 January 1922.
[77] Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien,* 68.

conquests void of ideals or morality."[78] To one of Tunisia's most prominent nationalist intellectuals, then, veterans were not exactly reduced to either collaborators or heroes – they were empty vessels to be filled, in this case, by the false promises of the French Empire. Actual veterans' voices were in general conspicuously absent from the few public discussions about veterans, due in part to the fact that residents of the capital, where most reformist debates were centered in this period, were exempt from military service.[79] This silence makes al-'Ayari's writings and speeches, preserved in police reports and his journal *Habib al-Umma*, so unique. He expressed a profound sense of betrayal not just at the hands of the French, but also by his more moderate reformist countrymen. Al-'Ayari wrote about the disparity between Tunisian subjects and French settlers:

> Perhaps some wise men thought this disparity would disappear with gradual improvements in education, and from the lessons learned from the Great War about fraternity and equality. Supporters of the war effort claimed that we needed to part with the grudges and hatred which had served as the rallying cries for various nationalist or other beliefs. They believed France, in particular, had learned from this war that differences of nationality and belief did not prevent us from joining together as one in order to counter the threat of the attacker.[80]

Here, al-'Ayari mocks the unfulfilled French ideals of fraternity and equality, but he also ridicules those Tunisian reformers who held on to hopes of gradually securing their rights in recognition of Tunisia's wartime loyalty. To al-'Ayari, such an approach had by 1921 proven hopeless. But if *tirailleurs'* sacrifices had been for naught, how might he otherwise conceive of their experience?

Al-'Ayari distinguished himself from other Tunisian veterans, taking pity on the mostly illiterate rural conscripts in much the same way as Thaalbi had. On at least one occasion, in a

[78] Abdelmoula, *L'impôt du Sang,* 52, citing Thaalbi, *La Tunisie Martyre*, 145.
[79] Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion*, 356.
[80] Al-Ayari, "Masʾalat al-Murtabāt" [The Issue of Salaries], 1.

January 1922 meeting documented by French police agents, he revealed his views on rural conscripts:

> Tunisois [residents of the Tunisian capital] were exempt from military service because they were educated in the study of social matters, and knew how to distinguish between what is useful and what is not, whereas the *fellahin*, completely ignorant and having no knowledge of real life, submitted easily to the demands of the rulers.
>
> [Local recruiters] roamed their sectors, dragging behind them the poor wretches, leashed like beasts who they then penned into the caravansaries with little concern for the retinue of poor parents who trailed behind them. These Bedouins, under threat of imprisonment and other tortures, were scared and gave in blindly.[81]

The animalistic imagery used to depict the very conscripts who fought alongside al-'Ayari in the trenches of the Western Front is striking. Perhaps drawing upon his own experience with the French military hierarchy, he pointed to the ignorance of most conscripts:

> The authorities knew well who to decorate with medals: that is to say, a Bedouin who, for the most part, does not even understand why he is in the barracks. These Bedouins were always scared, and showed more consideration for a Frenchman than for his coreligionist non-commissioned officers. All this was a result of his ignorance.[82]

Even if al-'Ayari did not literally carry out "directives from Moscow or Paris," as Protectorate authorities once claimed, it is clear that he had come to share some of the same convictions French communists held with regard to North Africans' stage of revolutionary advancement.[83] Al-'Ayari was resolute in his proposed solution: "*Tunisois* should inculcate in the minds of their ignorant coreligionists the benefits of communism, which would give them equality and their rights."[84]

With a stance not far from that of the French communists at Sidi-bel-Abbès in 1922, al-'Ayari made comments about conscripted soldiers that reveal a similar position. He believed it to

[81] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1700 : Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 January 1922.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 114.
[84] CADN 1TU/2MI236/1700 : Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 January 1922.

be the duty of the Communist Party to educate his simple countrymen, sharing in some ways his French counterparts' view that the poor rural Tunisians (al-'Ayari uses *fellahin* and Bedouin interchangeably) were not yet developed enough to achieve or benefit from a workers' revolution. Given what we know about the position of most Francophone communists towards anti-colonialism in this period, the language available to al-'Ayari rather unsurprisingly contributed to such conclusions. Thoroughly convinced of the transformative power of knowledge, al-'Ayari paints a picture not unlike Thaalbi's portrayal of the rural conscripts. To both urban activists, these poor masses lacked the tools needed to resist complicity in their own exploitation.

At the same time, al-'Ayari's position cannot be reduced to mimicry of a paternalistic French communist ideal. Rather, his self-assertion as an authoritative bearer of knowledge echoes a longstanding notion of political representation in the Arab world in this period, one claimed even by figures eventually marginalized by the nationalist mainstream such as exiles, 'ulama, and the like. James McDougall notes that such figures claimed such a role "in the belief that they, as bearers of an established socio-cultural authority, were *naturally* fitted to be the spokesmen for their community."[85] Al-'Ayari had a great deal to say about his frustrations at being refused promotion despite his literacy and urban upbringing. He directly addressed these two facts about himself in his writings and recorded comments, setting himself apart from the vast majority of the North Africans with whom he had served in Europe – and did so explicitly by contrasting himself with those he categorized as "ignorant" (illiterate) and "Bedouins" (rural) coreligionists. Al-'Ayari now spoke for those with whom he served but, crucially, never had the opportunity to lead.

[85] McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, 45-46. McDougall describes the bid of exiles such as the religious scholar Salih al-Sharif to influence Tunisian politics from abroad.

Foreclosing Possibilities

Following the divergences and schisms within Tunisia's leftist groups, both al-'Ayari's and Guellaty's political aspirations would be checked by the mid-1920s. Guellaty and his Parti Réformiste never built the kind of popular support they had hoped for when he split with the Dustur in 1921. Aside from interjecting its voice into a number of debates between French authorities, the Dustur, and the Communist Party in 1924 and 1925, it remained largely ineffectual. Al-'Ayari and the communists, on the other hand, faced an abrupt set of obstacles to their rising popularity. In 1924, Tunisian dockworkers in Tunis, Bizerte, and Sfax went on strike seeking wage parity with their European counterparts of the same union, the Confédération générale des travailleurs (CGT). European workers' refusal to support this measure led Tunisian workers, with the support of the Dustur and communist leaders such as al-'Ayari, to found a nationalist offshoot, the Confédération générale des travailleurs tunisiens (CGTT).[86] The new union, emboldened by this show of support, organized strikes across the country which were met with a harsh crackdown by Protectorate authorities. The unexpected assertiveness of these working-class actions, combined with the force of French repression of them, led to a further splintering of Tunisian political alliances. The first to balk were the socialists and Guellaty's Parti Réformiste, but even the Dustur, before long, began to distance itself from the CGTT and its communist base.[87] Now exposed and with few significant allies, just as *Le Moudhek*'s editors had feared in 1921, al-'Ayari and his communist colleagues Mohamed Ali El Hammi and J. P.

[86] Eqbal Ahmad and Stuart Schaar, "M'Hamed Ali: Tunisian Labor Organizer," in Edmund Burke III and David Yaghoubian, eds., *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 169. For a more detailed treatment of the founding of the CGTT, see: Boubaker Letaief Azaiez, *Tels syndicalistes, tels syndicats, ou, Les péripéties du mouvement syndical tunisien* (Tunis: Imprimerie Tunis-Carthage, 1980), 13-74.
[87] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 84-88.

Finidori were arrested and exiled. The Tunisian Communist Party did not recover from this blow for decades. Al-'Ayari appears to have ended up in Cairo or Alexandria, taking jobs as a tour guide, merchant, and cook, since his foreign nationality may have prevented him from working with the Egyptian public tramway system. He later died in Paris, never having returned to Tunisia.[88]

The preceding illustration of the convergence and subsequent divergence of two individuals' political careers in the early 1920s has been a demonstration of the range of political possibilities catalyzed by the First World War. A focus on early iterations of communism and socialism in Tunisia serves to highlight the degree to which migration and overseas cooperation were important components of reform efforts, even as Tunisians increasingly attempted to define themselves in terms free of French dominance after the war. This evolving and sometimes precarious position reflected the extent to which Tunisia's trans-Mediterranean connections, despite the restrictions imposed by the state of emergency and the conditions of war, continued to be viable conduits for the movement of people and ideas. Such ambiguity, as I have argued, is not particularly well served by categories such as "moderate" or "radical," terms deployed by French authorities and contemporary scholars alike in an attempt to make legible those individuals, ideas, and currents that could not be easily understood through narrow frames of nation or empire. Instead, by placing Guellaty and al-'Ayari into the same frame, and by focusing on the fleeting points at which they converged and eventually diverged, we reveal the very contingent circumstances that defined Tunisians' political horizons – including competing

[88] Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 195. Schaar puts al-'Ayari in Cairo after his expulsion from Tunisia, but a descendant of al-'Ayari, in his amateur history blog, puts al-'Ayari in Alexandria. Mohamed Chichini, "Ma'ānah Mukhtar al-'Ayari fī manfāh bal-Askandrīyah bayn as-syāḥah wal-trāmwāy wat-tijārah [The suffering of Mukhtar al-'Ayari in his exile in Alexandria between tourism, tramways, and commerce]," February 23, 2012, http://ayari-mokh.blogspot.com/2012/02/blog-post_3733.html.

forms of transnational communism and socialism – in the aftermath of the First World War.[89]

[89] Also significant is the fact that a "transnational" socialism (and, to lesser extent, communism) would return to play a key role in Tunisia's mass politics of the 1950s and 60s, particularly in the early years of Bourguiba's rule. See: Burleigh Hendrickson, "March 1968: Practicing Transnational Activism from Tunis to Paris," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012), 755-774.

7. CONCLUSION

After generations of sparse recognition of the colonial war dead in France, a number of government-sanctioned commemorations have begun to honor their memory. President Jacques Chirac, for example, dedicated a memorial for Muslim soldiers at Verdun in 2006, and President Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled a temporary plaque dedicated to Muslim soldiers at the Great Mosque in Paris in 2012.[1] In 2014, the centenary offered an even greater opportunity for historical reflection, and the moment seems to have taken on the burdens not only of the war but of a bevy of other contemporary conflicts and debates. In 2015 Europe faced what appeared to be the peak of a "migrant crisis," largely labeled as such by commentators regardless of whether they would welcome or reject the millions of migrants fleeing war and economic instability in the Middle East and Africa.[2] Now as a century ago, migrants bring with them a reminder of France's troubled past in the Arab world and in sub-Saharan Africa, of its contradictory promises, and of the stubborn legacy of violent conflict.

Commemorations for Muslim soldiers serving in France during the First World War have been marked by official rhetoric hopeful that remembrance of those who "sacrificed" and "died for France" would help reconcile and integrate the second- and third-generation French North and West Africans. President François Hollande, dedicating a permanent plaque to the Muslim soldiers of both World Wars at the Grand Mosque in Paris in 2014, proclaimed that it was the "fraternity of arms, born of the conflicts of the twentieth century, [that] has deeply rooted Islam

[1] Elizabeth Rechniewski, "Remembering the Black Diggers: From the 'Great Silence' to 'Conspicuous Commemoration'?" in *War Memories: Commemoration, Recollections, and Writings on War*, eds. Stéphanie A.H. Bélanger and Renée Dickason (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 400-401.
[2] Seth M. Holmes and Heidi Castañeda, "Representing the 'European Refugee Crisis' in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death," *American Ethnologist* 43:1 (2016), 12-24.

in the republic, in the defense of its sovereignty and freedom."[3] Few would outright reject the increased public and scholarly attention to a topic of such importance. Still, one must be wary of the shortcomings of "soft reconciliations" of this sort, as they have a way of glossing over the darker historical realities of colonial subjects' experiences both in wartime France and throughout the colonial period. Instead of critically examining the inequalities that *tirailleurs* faced relative to their European counterparts – to say nothing of the violence of the colonial condition as a whole – such commemorations engage in what has been called "récupération."[4] A selective and sanitized remembering of the events would have it that these soldiers only ever wanted to demonstrate their French patriotism and loyalty – "forgotten heroes," to use the parlance of many publications, websites, and exhibits created by academics, archivists, museum curators, and interested members of the public.[5] While survival in all its forms may be said to be heroic in the context of the First World War, service to France was, for the vast majority of North Africans, coerced and involuntary. More than that, the war initiated a wide and unpredictable range of social and political outcomes for Tunisians. I have argued that their experiences did not dictate a particular position on a "loyalty-resistance" spectrum.

There are similar processes by which historical experiences of human mobility can be flattened out by the attendant political and contemporary stakes. While statistical snapshots of

[3] Barthélemy Gruot, "Une plaque en hommage aux soldats musulmans morts pour la France inaugurée à la Grande Mosquée de Paris," Ministère des Armées, November 11, 2010, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/actualites/articles/une-plaque-en-hommage-aux-soldats-musulmans-morts-pour-la-france-inauguree-a-la-grande-mosquee-de-paris.
[4] Rechniewski, "Remembering the Black Diggers," 400-401.
[5] For example see Gilles Manceron, "Les soldats coloniaux de 14-18, éternels oubliés?" *Mediapart,* November 10, 2014, https://blogs.mediapart.fr/gilles-manceron/blog/101114/les-soldats-coloniaux-de-14-18-eternels-oublies; David Baché, "Triompher de l'oubli, la dernière guerre des Tirailleurs," *RFI,* June 10, 2014, http://www.rfi.fr/tirailleurs/20140602-premiere-guerre-mondiale-tirailleurs-senegalais-archives-histoire-afrique; Vivek Chaudhary, "The forgotten Muslim heroes who fought for Britain in the trenches," *The Guardian,* November 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/12/forgotten-muslim-heroes-fought-for-britain-first-world-war.

trans-Mediterranean migrations are important for building public awareness and international policy, they sometimes boil migrants themselves down to an accounting of the dispossessed. Nail deconstructs the historically popular water-related metaphors by which migrants and migrations are typically understood, such as "waves," "flows," "floods," revealing the extent to which these "failed citizens" have been perceived as an unstable mass.[6] Colonial subjects, mobilized by conflicts such as the First World War, likewise readily fit the rubric of post-Enlightenment writings on "crowds." The theories of Le Bon and Freud, regardless of their academic or historical reception, have proven remarkably resilient in characterizations of crowds as inherently violent, animalistic, and unpredictable – a threat to a society otherwise based on the primacy of the rational, settled individual.[7] These images hardly reflect the range of Tunisian experiences highlighted in this thesis. Far from just pitiful masses plucked or flooding from the countryside, wartime experiences took many different forms, and created the conditions of possibility for a variety of social outcomes and political horizons.

North Africans who served in the French Army during the First World War faced social transformations shaped as much by their social position as by the contingent circumstances at war. For the Tunisian and Algerian conscripts exposed to the worst aspects of imperial violence and colonial discrimination at the Western Front, convalescence in French military hospitals could well have embodied the worst excesses of racial segregation, medical experimentation, and disciplinary violence. Instead, wartime shortages and a diversity of French approaches to medical care and reeducation combined with North Africans' own actions to produce humanizing encounters and relationships, thereby setting the stage for further transgressions. Alternatively,

[6] Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant*, 127, 139.
[7] For example, see Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Fischer, 1897); Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1921).

for the elite photographer Albert Samama-Chikli, crossing the Mediterranean had been a family tradition. Engagement in the war instead offered the journalistic and artistic opportunity of a lifetime, propelling him into a pioneering postwar film career. Nonetheless, he too paid a price at war, later succumbing to lung cancer caused by exposure to poison gasses at the Western Front.

For Tunisians who had long been politically engaged, the outbreak of war provoked painful choices or even forced expulsion. Mohamed Bach Hamba and his brother Ali, both involved in the reformist Young Tunisian movement in the early part of the century, shifted during the war years toward more assertive stances against French colonialism. But whereas Ali settled in the Ottoman Empire and led special operations in support of their propaganda efforts in the Arab world, Mohamed, in neutral Switzerland, forged a more ambiguous path. He called for outright independence for North Africa based on liberal nationalist claims rather than on pan-Islamist reincorporation into the Sultan's realm, reflecting the influence of not only of pro-Ottoman interlopers but also of numerous self-determination movements from around Europe and Asia.

For some Tunisians, the war experience was revelatory of deep political and social problems for which only new transnational political configurations could provide answers. Mukhtar al-'Ayari, before the war a willing volunteer and aspiring police officer, returned from the French Army with an overturned view of the world order. Inspired by his experiences with racial and class-based discrimination in Europe and by the Bolsheviks' rise to power in Russia, international communism presented a revolutionary reordering of society. While eventually marginalized amid a French crackdown on labor mobilization, al-'Ayari's uncompromising views, though not without their contradictions, appealed briefly to a segment of the Tunisian political community who looked beyond colonial and national boundaries. And one did not have

to cross the Mediterranean oneself to face the upheavals that the war had provoked. Jews in Tunisia, exempt from military conscription, found themselves the target of returning French and Muslim Tunisian veterans' violent wrath. Intercommunal tensions were fueled, rather than quelled, by the French construction of a "Jewish question" premised on the existence of primordial violence among backward peoples. It was this question that could justify France's continued tutelage in line with the League of Nations' emergent order. In this context, Jews in Tunisia were spurred to seek new avenues for self-preservation, whether through appeals to Woodrow Wilson or calls to support the Zionist movement.

In these ways and others, war experiences forged diverse social or political outcomes. They did not determine any particular outcome any more than did one's ethnic or religious "identity" or upbringing. Given this perspective, we see that these outcomes were more diverse and contingent than has been reflected in colonial narratives, nationalist histories, or broader First World War studies. And even where Tunisians found themselves caught between, for example, the new promise of affinity with French or Ottoman imperial cultures and a sharper sense of the boundaries of colonial rule, these were not two poles at the ends of a spectrum. Rather they were important realities that produced the conditions of possibility for Tunisians' transformations into the 1920s.

Transnational studies of this kind present certain challenges, among them the potential for any single piece of research to expand to an unwieldy geographic scope. It is my hope that by highlighting cases originating in the relatively narrow geographical confines of the small country of Tunisia, I have imposed feasible boundaries around this project, allowing for a deeper and closer analysis of individual and quotidian experiences. All the same, there are countless other experiences of war for which further research is needed, particularly for those who did not

themselves cross the Mediterranean but were nonetheless directly and profoundly impacted by movement: Tunisian women, tribes who crossed Tunisia's Saharan borders with Libya and Algeria, and children and orphans, for example. Nonetheless the transformations presented here tell not a history of the First World War in Tunisia nor of "the Tunisian war experience" but rather explore a diverse range of experiences evocative of both the unique circumstances facing Tunisians and the consequences of mobility that effected peoples throughout the Mediterranean during the war. In this way, this research contributes to a growing body of global histories that confronts the geographic and temporal boundaries typically associated with the study of the First World War and its aftermath.

I began this project not with a desire to create an overarching evaluation of Tunisian mobility during the First World War but rather with a single individual's story – that of Mukhtar al-'Ayari. Labeled a cantankerous and violent man in his thick file of Protectorate police records, he proved too tempting not to explore further during my first visit to the Tunisian National Archives in the spring of 2013. His dramatic transformation from a volunteer soldier to a communist revolutionary might have been the subject of any number of interesting studies: of Tunisia's early nationalist or labor movements, of communism in the French Empire or Arab world, or of colonial veterans of the First World War, for example. Instead, my ensuing archival discoveries took me from Tunisia and France to Switzerland and Italy, slowly revealing a series of seemingly disparate Tunisian stories linked by the common experience of trans-Mediterranean mobility. As serendipity would have it, it was one of the very last figures I came across, the photographer Albert Samama-Chikli, whose story was surprisingly and subtly woven through nearly all of the other trajectories in my research. His run-ins with Italian police in 1911 and 1912 evoked the longstanding links between Tunisia, Italy, and Tripolitania; his love of tourism

led to his partnership with the leftist French reformer André Duran-Angliviel, with whom al-‘Ayari later worked; his photographs depicted daily life at war for Frenchmen and North Africans alike. Samama-Chikli was not an overtly political figure, and his pursuits reveal a man concerned more with adventure and travel than with empire or religion. His wealthy upbringing and voluntary military service offered a stark counterpoint to the trajectories of the poor, young Tunisian conscripts who found themselves at the Western Front. It was telling, however, that their paths crossed not in Tunisia but in the small “Muslim hospitals” in the suburbs of Paris in October 1916. Stories as much Tunisian as they were Mediterranean or French colonial, they were linked by war and mobility – and for this historian, the unpredictable interpretive forces of the archive.

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