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**From Constantinople to Cairo:
A Zionist Newspaper Across National Boundaries**

An Undergraduate Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of the Department of History
Skidmore College

By
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Introduction

For many living in the Ottoman Empire, 1909 was a year of patriotic enthusiasm and hope: The Young Turks had reestablished the Ottoman constitution and deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II. It was also a period of rearrangement, as the communities of the empire struggled to find a place within the new regime. It was in this context that the newspaper *L'Aurore* (the Dawn) was born, its name expressing the sentiments of those who indeed viewed that moment as the dawn of a new era. *L'Aurore* was owned and edited by Lucien Sciuto, a Jewish Salonican journalist who had moved to Constantinople a decade earlier. Written in French, it was to be a weekly newspaper that dealt exclusively with “Jewish” issues. Both the paper and its editor were Zionist, a position that would quickly draw controversy.

Yet, the paper’s notion of Zionism was a complex, ever changing idea. The European vision of an independent Jewish state in Palestine was not consistently shared by Ottoman Zionists, who often viewed Zionism as a project of cultural regeneration of the Jewish community, firmly within the boundaries and under the leadership of the Ottoman Empire.¹ This was a line *L'Aurore* walked frequently, sometimes referencing immigration to Palestine as an abstract goal, but always stressing loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.

In 1919, Lucien Sciuto sold *L'Aurore* to the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire and the French ambassador, and departed Allied-occupied Constantinople for Mandate Palestine.² In 1921, after only a short period of working as an insurance agent and a journalist in Jerusalem, he

¹ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 79.

² I chose to call the city Constantinople rather than Istanbul, since it was known by that name in western languages while Sciuto was living there (under the Ottoman Empire) and would only officially become Istanbul in the 1920s.

moved to Cairo. There he resurrected *L'Aurore* in 1924, and stayed in Egypt until he died in Alexandria in 1947.³

Yet, Cairo in the mid-1920s was not the same setting in which *L'Aurore* had been created over a decade earlier. The Ottoman Empire had dissolved into separate mandates, and Constantinople was a part of the recently established Turkish Republic.⁴ Egypt had declared independence as well. The English government had issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, promising support for the establishment of “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.⁵ Since the beginning of the twentieth century, thousands of Jews had immigrated from across the former Ottoman Empire to Cairo, Alexandria, and other parts of Egypt.⁶ It was in these surroundings that Sciuto revived *L'Aurore*.

Although the newspaper was published under the same name throughout its entire duration, the substantial time and space that divided the paper published in Cairo from the one published in Constantinople allows us to think of them as intertwined, but distinct. Thus, this thesis focuses its analysis on these two eras of *L'Aurore*. Specifically, I will use Sciuto’s journalistic career and his connections to other journalists and prominent Jewish leadership to show the enduring nature of transnational relationships across two cities. This thesis will also focus on the following aspects of *L'Aurore* itself: the paper’s audience—who they might have been and where they might have lived, the cities and countries that found their way into the newspaper—either as article subjects or in the advertisements, and the paper’s understanding of Zionism. These points will show how *L'Aurore* was read transnationally from its conception, but

³ D. Gershon Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” in *The Encyclopedia of Jews of the Islamic World*, ed. Norman Stillman, Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman, et al. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2010), 275.

⁴ For more on the mandate system in the Middle East, see: Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

⁵ “Balfour Declaration,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, last modified October 26, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Balfour-Declaration>.

⁶ Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt: 1914-1952* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1989), 10.

its content became more globally oriented after the move to Cairo, as well as more focused on Palestine as a news source. Finally, this thesis will attempt to show how Sciuto's and *L'Aurore*'s relationship with local authorities, and local Jewish and non-Jewish communities and individuals, changed as time passed and their surroundings shifted.

Middle Eastern Jewry in Historical Scholarship

In 2014, *the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*, the leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of Middle Eastern studies in North America, published a roundtable, titled "Jewish Identities in the Middle East, 1876–1956." The roundtable consists of articles from some of the leading historians of Jewish communities in the modern Middle East.⁷ Featuring articles from Orit Bashkin, Sarah Stein, Michelle Campos, Jonathan Gribetz, Rami Ginat, Aomar Boum, and Lior Sternfeld, this roundtable can serve as a way to take stock of the field in the last decade. Although each article has a different regional focus, all of the articles included concentrate on the treatment of Middle Eastern Jews both in the history and historiography of the twentieth century. For the most part, the articles focus on a specific identity, be it Mizrahi, Arab Jewish, Jewish revolutionary, or Jewish noncitizen, that has either been overlooked or only recently taken up in the historiographical conversation.

The decision to organize and publish the roundtable in *IJMES* is significant. It demonstrates a diverse body of literature that is in dialogue with and seeks to make contributions to both Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies. This approach has emphasized integrating the history of Jews living in the Middle East into Middle Eastern history, by showing how Jews participated in shaping national identities, and how they were fully invested in the culture and politics of the cities, regions, nations, and/or empires in which they lived.

⁷ "Jewish Identities in the Middle East, 1876–1956," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 3 (August 2014): 170.

This scholarship is diverse in terms of regional focus, time period, and sources. An important early contribution to the literature of Jewish communities in the Middle East is historian Stanford Shaw's *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*.⁸ As the title suggests, the book is an ambitious project. Spanning five hundred years, it attempts to write a comprehensive history of Jews in the Ottoman Empire starting in 1492, when all Jews were expelled from Spain, up to the Turkish Republic of the mid-twentieth century.

Another approach to studying Jewish communities of the Middle East highlights the overlapping identities among Jews of the empire. Historian Aron Rodrigue has made great contributions to the literature in his book, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925*. His work is a significant departure from Shaw's understanding of Ottoman Jews.⁹ While Shaw's book is a sweeping survey of Jews in the empire, Rodrigue is ultimately concerned with the institution of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). Through this institution, he makes a number of foundational points that other scholars have drawn on.

Rodrigue shaped the field of Ottoman Jewish history through his own work and also through his mentorship of other scholars. He served as the graduate advisor to three of the other historians figuring into this review: Sarah Stein, Julia Phillips Cohen, and Devin Naar. As a result, these historians share a common training in Jewish studies. Their respective works, although diverse, collectively focus on the development of a rapidly growing francophone middle class within the Jewish community of the empire, which was struggling to position itself positively vis-à-vis a newly modern empire.

⁸ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁹ Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

Stein's work engages with ideas related to Rodrigue's work, although her methodology and conclusions are often different. Stein's book, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*, focuses entirely on Jewish newspapers in two major empires: The Yiddish publication *Der Fraynd* in the Russian Empire, and the Ladino publication *El Tiempo* in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰ Her inclusion of two geographically and politically separate communities of Jews points to a transnational study of Jews, and results in a comparison of these two communities across two empires. Stein shows through the press that Ottoman Jews tended to orient themselves towards the culture of the European Jewish bourgeoisie, rather than modeling themselves off the surrounding elite culture.

Julia Phillips Cohen makes notable contributions to this and other bodies of literature in her book, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era*. Phillips Cohen, another student of Rodrigue's, shifts the focus to imperial citizenship in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ Phillips Cohen offers an alternative to the eternal and natural brotherhood between Jews and Turks that Shaw presents. Looking at Salonica, Izmir, and Istanbul, she shows that patriotism was an evolving project, and one that Jewish communal leaders, "assimilationists," and Zionists alike participated in and competed against each other to be the most successful at.

A key theme in the scholarship on modern Middle Eastern Jewry is the relatively new concept of a community that continued to evolve and participate in shaping its own identity even after cataclysmic events—such as the fall of the Ottoman Empire or the Second World War. Scholars such as Mark Mazower, in his book *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and*

¹⁰ Stein, *Making Jews Modern*.

¹¹ Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Jews 1430-1950, have tended to read these events back into the past, implying an inevitability and an erasure of Jewish autonomy.¹² In the past decades, a new body of scholarship challenges this approach. Notable contributors to this literature are Devin Naar and Dario Miccoli.

Naar, also a product of Rodrigue's mentorship, focuses on the Jewish community of Salonica. His book, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*, challenges the narrative of decline—in population, in economic and cultural development—that has followed Jews in post-Ottoman Salonica, through the lens of the local press and the official archives of the Jewish Community of Salonica.¹³ Cognizant of the effects of the Greek state on the Salonican Jewish community, Naar nonetheless effectively shows how identities, whether Jewish, Salonican, Greek, or Ottoman, had the potential to overlap, endure, and evolve even after great upheavals and geo-political shifts. In this way Naar's work strides into new territory. Half in the Ottoman Empire, half out, his work bridges empire and nation-state.

In many ways Miccoli's article on Cairo, *A Fragile Cradle: Writing Jewishness, Nationhood, and Modernity in Cairo, 1920–1940*, mirrors the work of Rodrigue, Stein, and Phillips Cohen, in terms of his focus on French Jewish publications, the multilayered and multilingual Jewish identity, the formation of a Jewish bourgeoisie, and how Jews helped shape ideas of modernity and nationalism.¹⁴ However, the location Miccoli studies, Cairo, and his engagement with transnational movement of people and ideas, distance his work from the body of literature on Ottoman Jewry. His methodological differences may also stem from the fact that he was not a student of Rodrigue.

¹² Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).

¹³ Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

¹⁴ Dario Miccoli, "A Fragile Cradle: Writing Jewishness, Nationhood, and Modernity in Cairo, 1920–1940," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2016) 1-30.

Miccoli's article adds to a growing body of literature, including Naar's work, that seeks to read history from the perspective of specific Jewish actors and to provide a counterpoint to the teleological lens that nationalist historiographies have used to present the inevitability of the Second World War, the creation of Israel, or the Arab-Palestinian conflict. Like Naar, Miccoli does not see the Jewish community of the Middle East as doomed, but rather as active in producing a unique variety of both Jewish and Egyptian identity and culture.

Two other scholars have contributed to discussions about Jewish communities in the Middle East: Joel Beinin and Orit Bashkin. Both Beinin and Bashkin rewrite the history of Egyptian and Iraqi Jews respectively to situate them firmly in their historical moments, rather than use them as props to explain future events. As Beinin shows in his book, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, Jews participated in the creation of national identity in Egypt.¹⁵ Bashkin makes a similar argument for Iraqi Jews in her book, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*.¹⁶ Published in 1998, Beinin's work is one of the earliest contributions to this scholarly trend. He upends Zionist readings of history entirely, by presenting Egypt as the homeland from which there was a diaspora, in opposition to the idea that Israel was the homeland that reunited members of the diaspora.

This thesis contributes to this literature by bridging the scholarship from Rodrigue to Beinin. It accomplishes this by tracing the changes and similarities of a paper (*L'Aurore*) that died in Constantinople and was reborn in Cairo under one editor, Lucien Sciuto. Sciuto embodied many of the points raised above: he was a part of the francophone Jewish middle class,

¹⁵ Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

he participated in shaping Jewish identity through his publications, he exemplified a multilayered identity, and he expressed these attributes in the press in both Constantinople and later in Cairo.

Scholars have used *L'Aurore* to buttress their arguments about Jewish Ottoman or Jewish Egyptian history. For instance, Aron Rodrigue has used the paper to exemplify schisms between AIU-graduates created by Zionism in Constantinople.¹⁷ Dario Miccoli has used Sciuto's writing more broadly to provide an example of what he describes as a "post Ottoman (Jewish) world in which moving from Istanbul to Cairo did not have the same implications as it does today."¹⁸ Yet he only engages with Sciuto's publications in Cairo. Thus, the two eras of the paper have never been brought together analytically. This thesis will fill this gap in the literature.

This project brings together two cities and two stretches of time, under one paper, one editor, and one language. To end *L'Aurore*'s story in Constantinople, or to start it in Cairo, severs the transnational ties that crisscrossed the Mediterranean. These were ties that Lucien Sciuto and the paper built up over a lifetime, and never remained neatly compartmentalized within the cities they inhabited. Thus, the thesis attempts to integrate the life of the editor into its analysis. Viewed through the lens of both Sciuto and *L'Aurore*, this thesis synthesizes the movement of ideas, politics, and objects, with the movement of people and relationships.

Sciuto in Context

When Lucien Sciuto was born in Salonica in 1868, the Ottoman Empire was already a diminished power, one that Sciuto himself would outlive. Yet, the mood of the nineteenth century was not one of resignation, but rather one of renewed energy as the empire made great strides towards the vision of modernity that Ottoman reforms and Europeans insisted was the key

¹⁷ Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 127. Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 125.

¹⁸ Miccoli, "A Fragile Cradle," 16.

to its survival. This modernity ostensibly meant a codification of religious freedom and individual rights. These changes first came in the form of two edicts, the Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane in 1839 and the Hatt-ı Hümayun of 1856.¹⁹ The edicts declared the “life, honor, and property” of Ottoman citizens under the protection of the empire.²⁰ They also attempted to level distinctions between the various ethnoreligious groups of the empire to create a cohesive Ottoman identity that transcended ethnoreligious identity. Where the empire had previously granted non-Muslim communities both communal autonomy and a subordinate status, these edicts attempted, with mixed results, to subsume them into the mass of Ottoman subjects.²¹

As the tide of nineteenth century reforms continued to shape a new Ottoman identity, Ottoman subjects transformed into Ottoman citizens. The Ottomanist ideal was an empire in which all communities were equal and all citizens participated equally in the success of the empire. For example, military conscription would in theory no longer apply to Muslims alone, but to all citizens. The tax burden would be shared equally as well.²² These changes obligated Ottoman Jews, as well as other citizens of the empire, to learn how to display the patriotism and modernity that was expected of them.

It was not only the Ottoman Empire that attempted to mold Ottoman Jews into modern citizens; European Jews also had a vested interest in what they saw as their down-trodden coreligionists in the East.²³ The Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) was the instrument with which European Jews were able to disseminate their values among Ottoman Jews. AIU schools

¹⁹ Heather Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 115. For the original edicts, see James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159-164.

²⁰ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 79-80.

²¹ For more on nineteenth century reforms, see Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 115-118.

²² Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 115.

²³ For more on the process of constructing imperial citizenship in the Ottoman Jewish community, see Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

across the empire served as spaces in which French Jews (and later Ottoman AIU alumni) instructed Ottoman Jews on how to integrate into the local society while simultaneously turning away from the “backwardness” of the East.²⁴ It was a paradox that resulted in many Ottoman Jews identifying more with elite French Jewry than with other Ottoman citizens.

Ottomanism and the AIU were two of many attempts to define a communal identity in the empire. Meanwhile, near the end of the nineteenth century in Europe, the Austrian Jewish journalist Theodore Herzl began spreading the idea of forming a Jewish state as a solution for European Jews looking to escape anti-Semitism.²⁵ His vision of community was defined along ethnoreligious lines, and offered another political identity among the many Jews had to choose from. Herzl’s Zionism would shortly reach Ottoman citizens, where local Jews would adapt and localize his ideas to suit their own surroundings.

By the time Sciuto moved to Constantinople in 1899, the city and the empire were approaching a revolution. In 1908, after thirty years of Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s iron-fisted rule, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) rebelled against his leadership. The CUP was comprised of young, educated Ottoman officers who wanted more control over the fate of the empire.²⁶ They demanded that the sultan restore the parliament he had suspended at the beginning of his rule.²⁷ Many Ottoman citizens, including Ottoman Jews, greeted the revolution and its message of freedom and equality joyfully across the empire.²⁸ Nowhere was this excitement more visible than in the empire’s multilingual press. As the CUP stripped away the

²⁴ For more on the role of the AIU in shaping Sephardic Jewish identity, see Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

²⁵ Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 248.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) 26-27.

editorial censorship laws the Hamidian regime had imposed on the press, an outpouring of new publications in a variety of languages celebrated the promise of a better future for the empire and its citizens.²⁹

Despite this undeniable boom in the press, an active print culture existed before 1908. Abdul Hamid II went to great lengths to control content, by banning certain words, confiscating issues that referenced either his personal life or the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire, and editing any mention of foreign affairs.³⁰ Nonetheless, Sciuto himself is evidence that there was a diverse press, published in multiple languages, during the Hamidian era.³¹ Although Sciuto only founded his own paper in 1909, he worked as a writer or editor on at least two papers in Salonica and Constantinople before that year—*Le Journal de Salonique* and *Le Moniteur Oriental*. His ability to start publishing *L'Aurore* came in part as a result of the new surge of enthusiasm and freedom provided by the leadership of the CUP, but also as a result of Sciuto's professional experience and networks in the press that he began cultivating long before the revolution.

Zionist ideas had begun to circulate before the revolution as well, although they had been regarded with suspicion by the Hamidian government.³² The new political atmosphere, inaugurated by the 1908 revolution, allowed an even broader array of ideas to come to the fore. The performance of patriotism, however, was equally as important after the revolution as it had been under Abdul Hamid. The Zionist Organization in Constantinople, as well as local Ottoman Zionists, shifted the presentation of Zionism to make it compatible with Ottoman patriotism.³³

²⁹ Palmira Brummet, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 3.

³⁰ Brummet, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911*, 4.

³¹ For more on the Ottoman press pre-1908, see Elizabeth Frierson, "Gender, Consumption, and Patriotism: The Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale Eickelman (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2006), 99-125.

³² Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 204.

³³ *Ibid.*, 205-208.

The press became a primary vehicle for disseminating this new vision of Zionism in the empire, which was rooted in Jewish cultural regeneration without a territorial component. Although Zionists had more freedom to express their beliefs after the revolution, they still represented a minority among the Jewish community, many of whom expressed indifference to or distain for the project.³⁴

Although many Ottoman citizens had responded enthusiastically to the revolution, the CUP's period of influence was shadowed by war from start to finish. The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 resulted in the empire's massive loss of territory and population, including Sciuto's native city of Salonica.³⁵ In 1914, the First World War broke out, further weakening the crippled empire, and resulting in the CUP-sanctioned murder of hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Armenians.³⁶ It was also in 1914 that Britain severed Egypt's legal relationship with the Ottoman Empire.³⁷ Egypt had been a British protectorate since the late-nineteenth century, following Egypt's inability to repay European loans. However, it was only formally declared a protectorate in 1914, in response to the Ottoman Empire and Britain joining the war on opposite sides. In 1918 the war ended, and that same year Sciuto moved to mandate Palestine, which was also newly under British occupation.

When Sciuto settled in Cairo six years later, he inhabited a vastly different world than the one he was born into. British colonial rule in Egypt had just ended, although British influence in Egypt had not, giving way to a constitutional monarchy. The Wafd party emerged in 1918 as an Egyptian national movement and a political party, holding the support of the majority of

³⁴ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 207.

³⁵ Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 286.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 286-287.

Egyptians.³⁸ The recent opening of the Suez Canal and the economic growth it produced enabled thousands of Jews, among many others, to immigrate to Egypt from across the empire.³⁹ As in Constantinople, the intervention of Europeans created a large community of educated, often wealthy, Jews;⁴⁰ in Egypt, it was the System of Capitulations that protected non-Muslim foreign merchants, and led to the formation of a Jewish community largely comprised of immigrants who did not speak Arabic.⁴¹ It is hard to say what exactly brought Sciuto to Egypt at the tail end of this influx of immigrants, but he was not alone.

Several Zionist organizations cropped up in Egypt in the early twentieth-century, including the Zionist Federation of Egypt, the Pro-Palestina Committee, and the Zionist Organization of Alexandria.⁴² A number of Zionist newspapers also appeared, including *Israël* and *La Revue Sioniste*.⁴³ Like in Constantinople, Zionist leaders in Egypt often stressed their attachment to Egypt and even participated in the Egyptian national movement.⁴⁴ Yet, when Sciuto arrived in 1924, the Zionist fervor had mostly dissipated, and by 1927 the Zionist Organization of Cairo only counted eighty members when in 1923 it boasted three hundred.⁴⁵ Although Zionism had garnered the support of a few members of the prominent and wealthy Jewish Egyptian Mosseri family, the majority of Jews in Egypt did not adopt it.⁴⁶

The world that Sciuto navigated was in constant flux, as he witnessed the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Egyptian nationalism, the flourishing of the press in both Cairo and

³⁸ Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt: 1914-1952* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1989), 120.

³⁹ Dario Miccoli, "A Fragile Cradle: Writing Jewishness, Nationhood, and Modernity in Cairo, 1920–1940," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2016): 3.

⁴⁰ For more on the francophone Jews in Egypt, see: Miccoli, "A Fragile Cradle," 1-30.

⁴¹ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 184-185

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

Constantinople, and the waxing and waning of the popularity of Zionism, which itself was not a constant set of goals or beliefs. However, the measure of success Sciuto attained in both cities attests to a level of continuity persisting after the fall of the empire.

Lucien Sciuto: transnational network and career

In many ways, Sciuto exemplified the image of a “cosmopolitan” Jew, as he created a space for himself first in Salonica, then Constantinople, then Jerusalem, and finally Cairo. For many historians of the Middle East, “cosmopolitan” has come to mean an idyllic coexistence of different ethnic groups, often wielded to romanticize past eras.⁴⁷ Instead, I employ the term “cosmopolitanism” to mean a person who has inhabited several different cities, and holds several different identities as a result. Sciuto was one such person: each time he relocated, he maintained connections with the people he left behind, connections that he drew on for the remainder of his career.

Sciuto grew up in Salonica, and in 1895, began writing for *Le Journal de Salonique*, a bi-weekly “political, commercial, and literary” paper, published in French. After becoming its editor in chief, he left for Constantinople in 1899. Although Sciuto quickly began writing for *Le Moniteur Oriental*, a daily news publication in English and French, he had not forgotten his colleagues at *Le Journal de Salonique*. In 1904, the paper announced his return—not to Salonica—but as a contributor writing a column of news from Pera, as well as a humor section.⁴⁸ A year before that, he had written a letter to the paper, mourning the death of Saadi Levy, the paper’s founder.⁴⁹ Although most of *Le Journal de Salonique*’s mentions of Sciuto were

⁴⁷ For more on representations of cosmopolitanism in memoirs and historiography, see Nancy Reynolds, “Entangled communities: interethnic relationships among urban salesclerks and domestic workers in Egypt, 1927-61,” *European Review of History* 19, no. 1 (February 2012): 113-139. and Will Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies,” *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (September 2008): 1346-1367.

⁴⁸ “Echos de La Ville,” *Journal de Salonique*, September 1, 1904, 1.

⁴⁹ “Lettre de Constantinople,” *Journal de Salonique*, January 26, 1903, 2.

positive, one letter he sent in, denying being the writer behind a certain pseudonym, “Lady Skrett,” received a cutting reply from Saadi Levy himself. Levy wrote, “Sciuto only wrote his letter for the sneaky pleasure of saying that he detests copying la Bruyère and implies that Lady Skrett was a plagiarist...Mr. Sciuto does not copy disgusting classics.”⁵⁰ However, in his letter, Sciuto asserted that he was “an assiduous reader” of *Le Journal de Salonique*.⁵¹

The connections maintained between Salonica and Constantinople is not so surprising, as these cities were linked under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire. What is interesting to note though, is that these connections held up after the breakdown of the empire. These were connections between Sciuto and other prominent Jews, but primarily other Ottoman Jewish journalists, something unsurprising given that the venue for displaying these relationships was a newspaper. Without the unifying structure of the empire to support a specific notion of the Jewish community, and with the rise of new state identities, Sciuto’s relationships transcended national boundaries. The example of Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum shows that these boundaries were more porous than solid, and that Sciuto’s connections to other former Ottoman Jews remained relevant even after the empire dissolved.

Sciuto was far from unique in his trajectory that led him to Egypt. In the early twentieth century, thousands of Jews from across the Ottoman Empire settled in Egypt and started new lives there.⁵² As a result, the Jewish communities of Cairo and Alexandria especially were dynamic and shifting. Both Sciuto and Nahum were participants in the building of an Egyptian Jewry comprised largely of recent immigrants.⁵³

⁵⁰ “A Propos de Lady Skrett,” *Journal de Salonique*, September 20, 1907, 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 10.

⁵³ Of course, there was a non-trivial population of Jews prior to the influx of the 1930s.

The transnational migration that took place in this era begs the question: was it possible for Jews moving en masse to recreate the communities of the places they left, or encounter old friends and neighbors? For Sciuto, he likely encountered former acquaintances, but he also encountered old rivals. Although the final issue of *L'Aurore* oddly makes no mention of it, before his departure to Palestine, Sciuto sold *L'Aurore* to Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum and the French ambassador.⁵⁴ The precise reasons for this course of action are hazy—Sciuto and Nahum were deeply divided on most political issues, especially where Zionism was concerned.⁵⁵

Although both Nahum and Sciuto had been educated by the AIU, Sciuto became a critic, while Nahum remained deeply loyal to the institution.⁵⁶ Nahum had also ensured that anti-Zionist literature circulated among the Ottoman government,⁵⁷ and publically withdrew from an Ottoman Jewish gymnastics association, “Maccabi,” an act that Sciuto railed about in *L'Aurore*.⁵⁸ According to a letter sent in by the Chief Rabbi, “the attitude taken by the Society [was] contrary to [his] opinions and detrimental to the interests of Judaism as well.”⁵⁹ Although the letter did not mention Zionism, it became clear in subsequent issues of the paper that this was the crux of the conflict. A close ally of the Chief Rabbi, a fierce anti-Zionist, and Sciuto’s arch-nemesis, David Fresco, the editor of the Ladino *El Tiempo*, forced the rift wider. When Maccabi brought Fresco to court in a defamation suit, Sciuto criticized the Chief Rabbi for his unfairness and the favor he showed towards Fresco, and expressed his hatred for Fresco explicitly.⁶⁰ It was

⁵⁴ Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” 275.

⁵⁵ Nahum’s eventual fall from power in the empire was largely due to poor relations with Zionists, although Sciuto had left Constantinople by that point. Esther Benbassa, ed. *Haim Nahum: A Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Politics, 1892-1923*, trans. Miriam Kochan (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ Benbassa, *Haim Nahum*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁸ “Le Grand-Rabbin et la « Maccabi », Demission du Grand-Rabbin de la Société Maccabi,” *L'Aurore*, November 8, 1910, 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ “Le Procès Maccabi-Fresco,” *L'Aurore*, November 8, 1910, 1-2.

also revealed that the defamatory article consisted of an accusation that Maccabi was “dangerous to the country,” because, “it aided, in an indirect way, the Zionists, in lending them support, in going on quests for them and serving as a shield for them.”⁶¹ Sciuto called Fresco “an intimate friend of the Grand Rabbi,”⁶² and described him in the following way:

Mr. Fresco, with deliberate statements, dumped on his coreligionists the torrent of his habitual slander. He had the base and perverse satisfaction of renewing, without a shudder of shame, all the depravities of which his is accustomed to, all the villainous rage, all the ignominious lies that he already vomited in his writings of an informer without shame.⁶³

For all of Sciuto’s expressions of amity and unity between Jews, the issue with Fresco, and indirectly the Chief Rabbi, had become profoundly personal. However, it appears that despite Sciuto’s personal feelings, economic necessity following the First World War forced Sciuto to deliver the paper into the hands of his rival.⁶⁴

It must have been disconcerting for Sciuto to hear news, only a couple years after arriving in Egypt, that his old political adversary Haim Nahum would be joining him there, again in the capacity of Chief Rabbi. After the contentious life of *L’Aurore* in Constantinople, in part due to its clashes with the authorities—including the Chief Rabbi—to find some residual bitterness would be unsurprising. Yet there was no public sign of such a response. Rather, Sciuto published an article entitled “Who is Haim Nahum Effendi? Should the leader of the community be a religious leader?” in response to news that Haim Nahum would soon be taking the post of Chief Rabbi of Egypt.⁶⁵ In this article, Sciuto wrote that “progressive” Jews worship Nahum as an idol,

⁶¹ “Le Procès Maccabi-Fresco,” *L’Aurore*, November 8, 1910, 2.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” 275.

⁶⁵ “Qui est Haïm Nahoum Effendi ? Faut-il que le Chef d’une Communauté soit un Religieux ?” *L’Aurore*, July 4, 1924, 1-2.

while orthodox Jews consider him a monstrosity, but Sciuto challenged this dichotomous framing, arguing that he was neither.

Sciuto called him a product of the “assimilationist” AIU, a man “made in France.”⁶⁶ Here we must remember that Sciuto too, was a product of the AIU, although he perhaps believed he had been less affected by its western-centric, assimilationist agenda.⁶⁷ In this context, western-centric refers to the fact that the AIU was committed to instilling French values, language, and culture in Middle Eastern Jews. Assimilationism is more complicated, since Sciuto’s hostility towards the concept grew over time. Yet, in this article, it meant AIU efforts to help eastern Jews integrate into their surrounding society through education in languages and professions.

Despite his critiques, Sciuto concluded by saying that the perfect Chief Rabbi, who could please everyone in the Jewish community (or in Egypt), did not exist. He also suggested that the leader of the Jewish community could be a secular figure instead. However, since he concluded the article by saying casually that it was “only a suggestion, nothing more,” it does not seem that he was truly protesting the appointment of Haim Nahum to the position, or seriously considering a specific individual as an alternative.⁶⁸ Once Nahum assumed the title of Chief Rabbi, mentions of him in *L’Aurore* remained brief but amicable. For example, King Fuad received Nahum, and either Sciuto or another writer wrote that, “His Majesty deigned to attest to the special kindness of our spiritual leader.”⁶⁹ Thus, the writer accepted Nahum as a spiritual leader, and praised him through the King’s words.

⁶⁶ English in the original.

⁶⁷ The fact that his paper was published exclusively in French suggests otherwise.

⁶⁸ “Qui est Haïm Nahoum Effendi ? Faut-il que le Chef d’une Communauté soit un Religieux ?” *L’Aurore*, July 4, 1924, 1-2.

⁶⁹ “Audience Royale,” *L’Aurore*, September 4, 1930, 1.

Sciuto's treatment of the Chief Rabbi in the article "Who is Haim Nahum Effendi?" illustrates a number of significant points connected to the endurance of an Ottoman Jewish network, post-Ottoman Empire. First, that Sciuto was still a skeptic of the AIU, and did not consider himself to be "made in France" like the Chief Rabbi, a term he employs in a way that seems almost derogatory. Yet, these two products of the AIU continued to communicate in French. Second, Sciuto may have been cynical about the AIU and the position of Chief Rabbi in general, but he did not retain a similar bitterness towards the person of Haim Nahum, or at least was not keen to convey it to the readers of *L'Aurore*. He was, however, eager to impart his acquaintance with a person who had been of relevance to the empire, and was now of relevance to Egypt. Third, that Sciuto considered himself a moderate. While some people viewed his ideals as inflammatory, radical, even dangerous, Sciuto was keen to present himself as taking a middle path. This positioning is one we see persistently throughout his paper, as he established himself as a Zionist while espousing Ottomanist ideals, or loyalty to the Egyptian state, depending on his location.

Haim Nahum and Lucien Sciuto weaved in and out of each other's lives as they underwent parallel journeys through the AIU, to Constantinople, and to Cairo. Although much had changed since Sciuto left Constantinople, his knowledge of Haim Nahum did not lose its relevance. The AIU-educated community of the empire was still bound together by language and interests. This is a theme we see throughout Sciuto's life: as frequently as he changed location, he maintained connections that crisscrossed across the empire, or across the space of the former empire.

L'Aurore: Timeline and Layout

From Lucien Sciuto we turn to *L'Aurore*, the newspaper that dominated his career in two cities. This project's temporal span begins with *L'Aurore*'s first issue, in 1909, and ends when Sciuto retired as editor-in-chief in 1931. While this paper does reference Sciuto's journalistic career prior to 1909, it is only to support arguments that can be made primarily using *L'Aurore*. As for the end date, an analysis of *L'Aurore* after Sciuto's departure would force another comparison between the paper under two editors, which would no doubt be interesting, but would be another project entirely. Ending the thesis's scope with the end of Sciuto's journalistic career is especially appropriate, since this thesis will analyze Sciuto's journey and the paper's transformation as conjoined topics that reflect and build off each other.

L'Aurore was a weekly paper for its entire duration, and each issue was comprised of four pages. The first three pages would feature articles written by Sciuto and other writers, and the final page was generally devoted to advertisements. The front page would often begin with a fiery editorial written by Sciuto, or a particularly sensational piece of news, while the centerfold would be devoted to news from various cities. Often, a correspondent located in these cities would write these articles. These correspondents were the most frequently recurring writers for the paper (aside from Sciuto himself), although many articles went unsigned.

L'Aurore was published in French from beginning to end. Occasionally a few words or lines of Hebrew appeared in the text, but the vast majority of the writing was French. The only exception was the title. Starting in late June of 1915, *L'Aurore* began to include a transliterated title in Arabic letters, with a line of text in Ottoman Turkish underneath it. The text included the same telephone number that was listed below in French. In November of that same year, the transliterated letters were enlarged to become comparable to the French title in size. The letters were then large enough to include stylized diacritical marks.

This new inclusion is noteworthy because it does not appear to have been a common feature of French papers in the Ottoman Empire at the time. Even papers that advertised themselves as Ottoman, such as *La Patrie* or *La Turquie*, did not include a translated or transliterated title, much less Ottoman Turkish text. *La Patrie* described itself as an “Ottoman newspaper published in French,” at the top of each front page. *L’Aurore*, on the other hand, had “organ of the interests of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire,” emblazoned on each issue. In Cairo, Sciuto changed it to, “newspaper for Jewish information.” Sciuto may have felt heightened pressure during the war, as someone writing what he described as a Jewish paper, especially a Zionist one, to display his Ottoman affiliation with Ottoman text. This characteristic is one we will see throughout the paper, as Sciuto was forced to defend his political positions by showing them to be compatible with Ottomanism. It seems unlikely that the editors of less controversial “Ottoman” papers would have had to defend their patriotism in quite the same way.

This change in format lasted for the duration of the paper’s life in Constantinople. When it appeared again in Cairo, it was stripped back to the French title alone. Perhaps the pressure to profess loyalty to a common identity other than French or Jewish had diminished for Sciuto. Perhaps it was because his political identity as an inhabitant in a multiethnic, multiconfessional empire had disappeared. Perhaps his connection to a collective Egyptian identity felt less strong than his connection to the Ottoman Empire, where he had lived almost his whole life.



Figure 1: 1915



Figures 3-6: The images above represent a typical issue of *L'Aurore*: four pages, three for articles, one for ads. This particular issue is from 1924, after the transliterated title had been removed.

A final point to note on the layout of *L'Aurore* is the dating systems. The top of each issue lists three versions of the same date according to the following systems: The Jewish calendar, the Rumi calendar (the standardized solar calendar used by the Ottoman administration up until 1917⁷⁰), and the Gregorian calendar. This combination speaks to the triple affiliation of *L'Aurore* during its sojourn in Constantinople, as a French-language, Jewish-run, Ottoman paper. Most Ottoman papers would not use the Jewish calendar, and many French-language papers would not use the Rumi calendar or the Jewish calendar. And indeed, when *L'Aurore* moved to

⁷⁰ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 48.

Cairo, it dropped the Rumi dating system, just as it dropped the Ottoman Turkish text. Only the Gregorian and Jewish calendars remained.

Readership of L'Aurore

Scholars have used *L'Aurore* to analyze the Jewish community of Constantinople, and the Jewish community of Cairo. The paper's reach, however, was broader than this scholarship implies. It has not been possible for me to find figures on subscriptions to *L'Aurore*, but the newspaper itself gives several clues as to who that audience might have been, and I believe a little speculation on this subject is worthwhile. Evidence from *L'Aurore* and other contemporary papers indicate, through testimonials from former writers and readers, advertisements, and article content, that the readership may have stretched further—geographically, religiously, ethnically—than just the Jewish communities of these cities, or even the Ottoman Empire.

In the context of the paper's migration from Constantinople to Cairo, numerous questions about readership arise. Were Jews in Cairo reading the paper when it was published in Constantinople, or vice versa? Did non-Jews read the paper in either iteration? According to the Historical Jewish Press, in whose electronic archives *L'Aurore* is currently housed, Sciuto revived *L'Aurore* in Cairo as a result of “pressure from his devoted readers.”⁷¹ Who were these devoted readers? Is it possible that they were Egyptian Jews who had read the paper as it was being published in Constantinople? Is it also possible that Jews in Constantinople were encouraging Sciuto to publish from Cairo, intending to (re)subscribe regardless of the distance? Perhaps these readers were scattered across the former Ottoman Empire, although it is likely that concentrations existed in Constantinople and Cairo. Of course, the wave of Jewish immigrants

⁷¹ “L'Aurore,” Historical Jewish Press, National Library of Israel, <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/jpress/english/pages/laurore.aspx>.

that arrived in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s meant that some of Sciuto's readership may have traveled from Constantinople to Cairo with him.⁷²

Any one of these conclusions leads to interesting insights, as each one supposes there were readers that bridged national divides. Each one points to maintained connections across the Mediterranean, and a ghost of the social and geographic framework of the Ottoman Empire that was not destroyed with the empire itself.

Supporting this idea of wide geographic readership, in 1912 an issue of *L'Echo Sioniste*, a Zionist newspaper published in Paris, included an advertisement for none other than Sciuto's *L'Aurore*.⁷³ The ad included two prices, one for subscribers within Constantinople and the "provinces," presumably of the Ottoman Empire, and another for those inhabiting "foreign" countries (similar subscription information was provided at the top of every issue of *L'Aurore*). Since the paper was already published in French, it is certainly possible that *L'Aurore* found subscribers among the Jewish residents of France, especially given the active role of French Jews in Ottoman Jewish life, through the institution of the AIU.⁷⁴

The question of the ethnoreligious identities of the readers is another challenge, although not unrelated. At the surface level, Lucien Sciuto clearly and unequivocally stated in the opening issue of the Cairo edition that it was "before anything, a Jewish work," and "created for them alone."⁷⁵ Yet, it seems as though the paper may have reached more than just Jews, at least when it was published from Constantinople. A letter to the editor published in the Cairo paper, from a former writer of the Constantinople paper, Abraham Elmaleh, stated that Sciuto had a profound effect on a diverse array of people. As a result of the paper, Elmaleh wrote, "even foreigners,

⁷² Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt: 1914-1952* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989), 10.

⁷³ "L'Aurore," *L'Écho sioniste*, July 10, 1912, 2.

⁷⁴ Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*.

⁷⁵ Lucien Sciuto, "En Guise de Programme," *L'Aurore*, February 19, 1924, 1.

even the Young Turks started to consider our qualified people with trust and respect.”⁷⁶ Who constitutes “our qualified people” remains unclear. Did Elmaleh mean Zionists or Jews, or the Jews of a specific region? Was this ambiguity intentional? I can, however, hazard a guess that if he held the same beliefs as Sciuto, he meant the Jewish community as a whole. Sciuto’s feelings about non-Zionists were not always consistent, but in one hopeful article, he wrote that “whatever the troubled events that appear occasionally obscuring the light, it ends up reappearing as resplendent as the wait in obscurity was prolonged,” and that “union and amity will again be the prerogative of our community.”⁷⁷ Sciuto also repeatedly stressed the need to “lift the prestige and the recognition of the Jew and to make of each of us a solid and indivisible ring in the great chain of Judaism.”⁷⁸ He emphasized that his paper was for “Jews,” not only for Zionists.⁷⁹ It seems unlikely that he, or his adherents, would have seen the Zionist mission as only beneficial to the standing of Zionists.

According to Elmaleh, Sciuto’s “influence is not limited to Turkey, but extends to North Africa, Mesopotamia, Persia. Everywhere where we had the fortune of reading you, Zionism took root. Your influence in all these countries is enormous; your name and that of Zionism are but one name.”⁸⁰ In the last sentence, Elmaleh established Sciuto as the definitive voice of Zionism in the Middle East, despite the existence of other Zionist papers during the same period, such as the Egyptian *La Revue Sioniste* directed by Leon Castro, or the tri-lingual *Israël* (published for a time in French, Arabic and Hebrew), founded by Dr. Albert Mosseri.⁸¹ Elmaleh

⁷⁶ The Editorial Board, “‘L’odieux passé’ du directeur de L’Aurore,” *L’Aurore*, September 19, 1924, 1.

⁷⁷ “La Fête de la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore*, January 3, 1911, 1-2.

⁷⁸ “Pourquoi nous autres, Juifs, nous faisons la gymnastique,” *L’Aurore*, May 20, 1910, 4.

⁷⁹ Lucien Sciuto, “En Guise de Programme,” *L’Aurore*, February 19, 1924, 1.

⁸⁰ The Editorial Board, “‘L’odieux passé’ du directeur de L’Aurore,” *L’Aurore*, September 19, 1924, 1.

⁸¹ “Israël,” Historical Jewish Press, National Library of Israel, http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/Israel_egypt.aspx.

himself would later found his own paper, *Mizrah Ou'maarav*, published in Hebrew in Jerusalem.⁸²

In terms of the accuracy of his statements, it is possible that Elmaleh was being hyperbolic; certainly the letter was intended to be flattering. Even taking this into account however, does not negate his expressed belief that the paper was widely read inside and outside the Ottoman Empire. The possibility that *L'Aurore* was read by non-Jews within the Ottoman Empire, as well as Jews in Iran, Iraq, and North Africa challenges the idea that this was a paper read *only* among local Jews—and thus may have done more than just shape the Jewish communities, but shaped relationships between different ethnoreligious communities, and between geographically separated communities of Jews.⁸³ *L'Aurore* was not confined to national or imperial borders, and nowhere is this more evident than the simple fact that Sciuto was able to, with apparent success, move the paper and find an audience almost immediately—one that may have been active readers the whole time.

Additionally, Elmaleh's implication that the paper was read by the Young Turks, the dominant party of the post-revolution Ottoman Empire, gives new weight to what might be read as a solely Jewish paper based on Sciuto's own framing of it. The fact that the paper was written in French gives credibility to this possibility, since unlike Hebrew or Ladino, this was a language accessible to any French-educated portion of the population. In a letter to the president of the AIU in 1919, Chief Rabbi Nahum wrote that *L'Aurore* was being used by his enemies to blacken

⁸² "Quelque Lettres de Félicitations," *L'Aurore*, January 2, 1930, 2.

Elmaleh would also employ Sciuto as a writer during his brief time in Jerusalem, where Sciuto also worked as an insurance agent for a German company. Lewenthal, "Sciuto, Lucien," 275.

⁸³ Rodrigue does not speculate at length about the readership of *L'Aurore*, but he references it as one of "two leading Zionist newspapers in the city," meaning Constantinople. Gudrun Krämer and Dario Miccoli both note *L'Aurore*'s reflection of Egyptian society, but don't project its influence elsewhere. Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 131. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 10. Miccoli, "A Fragile Cradle," 16.

his name—not only among “all world Jewry,” but among the English as well.⁸⁴ Evidently, it was not only supporters and collaborators of the paper who estimated its significant reach far beyond Ottoman Jews. What’s more, this visibility was not unique to *L’Aurore*: Nahum made sure anti-Zionist literature circulated around the Ottoman government.⁸⁵ It seems as though “Jewish” newspapers and writings were perhaps not specific to a Jewish readership at all. The Zionist nature of *L’Aurore* may also have heightened its interest among government officials looking to keep tabs on the Jewish community.

Significantly, Sciuto’s writings were not limited to *L’Aurore*. He “collaborated on nearly every French-language newspaper in Constantinople, including the *Levant Herald*, *La Turquie*, *Le Stamboul*, and *Le Jeune Turc*.”⁸⁶ In addition, he “edited the French-language supplement to the illustrated satirical journal *Kalam*... and was the chief editor of *Hilal*, the literary supplement of the major Turkish-language daily *Le Tanin*.”⁸⁷ While these achievements do not speak directly to the influence of *L’Aurore*, it is clear that Sciuto personally had a wide readership, extending to non-Jewish communities reading in a variety of languages. This supports the new wave of scholarship aiming to show how Jews and other non-Muslim groups were actively engaged in their surroundings, and built relationships outside of the bounds of their ethnoreligious communities.⁸⁸ As a journalist, Sciuto interacted not only with other Jews, but with other journalists of different ethnoreligious and linguistic identities.⁸⁹ In other words, Sciuto’s

⁸⁴ Benbassa, *Haim Nahum*, 175.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 50

⁸⁶ *The Levant Herald* was published in English as well as French, broadening Sciuto’s audience still further. Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” 275.

⁸⁷ Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” 275.

⁸⁸ For more on Jewish participation in a multi-ethnic community, see Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*.

⁸⁹ For more on intercommunal mixing through work see: Nancy Reynolds, “Entangled Communities: Interethnic Relationships among Urban Salesclerks and Domestic Workers in Egypt, 1927-1961,” *The European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire*, vol. 19, no. 1, 113-139.

professional identity, not just his Jewishness, was a powerful factor in determining who he associated with. His linguistic ability placed him within a francophone network that, though shared by many Jews who were graduates of the AIU, was not exclusive to that community.

Articles in the paper also point to a wider readership. In both the Constantinople and Cairo papers, there are articles on Jewish holidays. Specifically, in the Constantinople paper, an article was published on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in September of 1909.⁹⁰ This would not be worth much note, except the tone of the article is didactic—it explains the purpose and customs of both holidays as if the reader was not intimately familiar with them:

Roch-Achana is the welcome to the year that is beginning, with its hopes and its illusions, its visions and its future joys, its escapes towards the dreamed horizons, its promises of happiness... Yom-Kippour is of a more severe character. It's a day of prayer and mortification, of repentance and fasting. It's a moving goodbye to the year that has passed, charged with mistakes and regrets, carrying in the folds of its days the imprint of our bad actions... For those who believe, there is yet a large and sublime comfort to the latter celebration.⁹¹

A possible explanation is that the article was intended to educate non-Jewish readers, with the assumption that they were regular readers. This theory is supported both by the educational tone of the article, and the inclusion of the statement “for those who believe,” which indicates the article may be speaking to those who do not believe (in Jewish religious customs) and therefore do not know. Not believing could in turn mean more than one thing. It could mean non-Jewish, or it could mean non-observant Jews. Alternately, it is possible that the author of the article had a specific modern understanding of the holidays that he believed ought to be imparted to other Jews. Or, it is possible that Sciuto wanted to highlight common aspects of Jewish culture, as he often stressed the importance of communal unity. Since this unity was a pillar of Sciuto's Zionist message, the article could even be read as implicitly Zionist.

⁹⁰ “Deux Fêtes : Roch-Achana, Yom-Kippour,” *L'Aurore*, September 19, 1909, 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

An article on Purim can be found in the Cairo paper, in 1924, yet a note at the bottom reveals that the article had been taken from an issue of *L'Aurore* published ten years prior, in Constantinople.⁹² The fact that Sciuto was recycling old articles from Constantinople suggests that he did not see much of a change in his audience from city to city, either in actual individual subscribers, or in their interests. An article on Yom Kippur published in 1924, however, was not a recycled article, and it did indeed seem more oriented towards a Jewish audience. In the article, Sciuto proclaims that a “good Jew” can be religious or not, and that he has no interest in pushing Jews towards religiosity, even as he waxes nostalgic about Yom Kippur's past and the specific feeling of the holiday that “penetrates the folds of his conscience.”⁹³

The combination of these factors at least strongly implies that the *L'Aurore* was more widely read than it seems at first glance, and perhaps even more widely read than Sciuto had ever intended it to be. Although subscription data might yield more solid information, it would not provide a complete picture either, since there were multiple ways of dispersing the information in a newspaper other than reading it. Historian Ami Ayalon has convincingly shown through his study of reading in Palestine how newspapers and other written material not only would have been shared in the home with family, but also read aloud in coffee shops, in the streets, and perhaps in the workplace.⁹⁴ He also points out that reading aloud in public places was especially common in non-urban spaces, where rates of literacy were lower than in cities.⁹⁵ These ideas are relevant to this project as well. Based on Ayalon's research, it seems safe to posit that “readership” extended beyond subscribers, and even beyond “readers,” to include listeners. A

⁹² Lucien Sciuto, “Pourim,” *L'Aurore*, March 21, 1924, 1.

⁹³ Lucien Sciuto, “Yom-Kippour,” *L'Aurore*, October 10, 1924, 1.

⁹⁴ Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 143.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

single issue of *L'Aurore* may have circulated homes, coffee shops, clubs, and other spaces where news, opinions, and stories were welcome.

Advertisements in L'Aurore

From these musings on the readership of *L'Aurore*, we can shift into a more concrete look at where the information in the paper was coming from. First, the advertisements are informative on the origins of the paper's sponsorship, and a look at which cities and countries were featured in the headlines shows a shifting perspective on Zionism.

The advertisements varied a great deal in their origin between Constantinople and Cairo. The majority of the ads were featured on the back page of *L'Aurore*, but over time some crept into the centerfold of the paper. In Constantinople, the paper carried ads for companies based almost exclusively in the same city. The companies would often include their headquarters somewhere in the ad, and they generally lay in Stamboul, Pera, or Galata—all neighborhoods of Constantinople. For example, an ad for an upholsterer and decorator featured prominently at the top of the November 1909 issue, proclaimed that its placement was “courtesy of the Alliance” (Figure 7).⁹⁶ Located in Pera, the owner claimed to have furnished several salons in Pera already, without mentioning other neighborhoods, much less other cities. The business's range then, seems geographically restricted, and appears to have been deeply embedded in local institutions. This example is a good representation of a typical ad in the Constantinople paper. Although a few companies advertised goods from abroad, the paper's engagement with global business was limited.

⁹⁶ *L'Aurore*, November 28, 1909, 4.



Figure 7: An ad featured in *L'Aurore* in Constantinople (*L'Aurore*, November 28, 1909).

This geographic consistency in sponsors changed drastically after relocating to Cairo. On the back page of a single issue of *L'Aurore* published in Cairo, there were advertisements for American Quaker Oats, Palestinian wine, Swiss watchmakers, and a Greek restaurant.⁹⁷ Presumably, each of these businesses would have been accessible to someone living in Cairo or Alexandria, indicating that there was a more active engagement in the global economy than there had been only several years prior in Constantinople. Colonial ties between Egypt and Britain likely also played a substantial role in introducing commercial relationships with Europe, even after Egyptian independence. As Palestine was a British mandate, this may have increased the flow of products between Egypt and Palestine, such as the Palestinian wine being advertised in *L'Aurore*.



⁹⁷ *L'Aurore*, January 2, 1925, 4.



Figures 8-11: Advertisements from *L'Aurore* in Cairo (*L'Aurore*, January 2, 1925).

A particularly fascinating advertisement featured in 1925 informs the reader about the “Hotel de France” in Alexandria where “Jewish travelers going to Palestine or returning” could stay (Figure 11).⁹⁸ The ad reveals that Alexandria is a stopping point to and from Palestine, rather than a destination. The fact that the ad mentions Jews both coming and going to Palestine also implies a high rate of exchange between Egypt and Palestine, wherein Palestine is not necessarily a final destination either. Sciuto’s own travels are exemplary of this, as he moved to and from Palestine without settling there permanently. Even for Zionists, Palestine was not always the end of the road.

Palestine and Zionism in L'Aurore

This discussion of where the paper content was coming from bleeds directly into a discussion on the evolution of Zionism. In the Constantinople paper, there were articles bearing news from a wide variety of locales. At least eighteen different countries or cities were featured in the major headlines of the first year of *L'Aurore*’s publication, ranging from Paris to Odessa to

⁹⁸ “Hotel de France,” *L'Aurore*, January 2, 1925, 4.

Smyrna. However, *L'Aurore*'s headlines rarely mentioned European cities or countries; and it was more characteristic to have articles focused on cities within the empire. For example, a headline might read, "The Chief Rabbi of Adrinople and the Turkish Language,"⁹⁹ or "The Jews of Yemen."¹⁰⁰ The cities most commonly reported on (aside from Constantinople), were Salonica and Smyrna, and the most common mandate appearing in the paper was Palestine. England was not once featured in a headline for the year of 1909.

This is another visible change in the *L'Aurore*'s two iterations. The Cairo publication often included articles from across the globe, from Japan to Transylvania to the United States. In the first year of the Cairo paper, 1924, there were two headlines about England, and five on the United States. Most significantly for the purpose of assessing the changing role of Zionism, the number of major headlines including Palestine multiplied by almost nine times. Where Palestine was mentioned only seven times in the headlines of the first year of the Constantinople paper, there were sixty-two Palestine-related headlines in 1924. Part of the reason this number is so high is because a regular column of Palestinian news, entitled "Éphémérides Palestiniennes," was published in almost every issue that year.

The historical context of the paper's residence in Cairo can help explain the intensified interest in Palestine. The paper had always been Zionist, but Zionism had not always meant immigration to Palestine. While in Constantinople, the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was a more abstract concept, at least until 1917, the year the Balfour Declaration was issued. Writers like Sciuto stressed loyalty to the Ottoman homeland and internal regeneration of the Jewish community. The territorial aspect of Zionism took a backseat, or was obfuscated by other more pressing issues.

⁹⁹ "The Chief Rabbi of Adrinople and the Turkish Language," *L'Aurore*, February 18, 1910, 2.

¹⁰⁰ "The Jews of Yemen," *L'Aurore*, March 25, 1910, 2.

In Cairo, perhaps more as a result of time and politics than of geography, *L'Aurore* was more directly oriented towards Palestine, as seen in the intense preoccupation *L'Aurore*'s writers had with Palestinian news. By this time, Britain had issued the Balfour Declaration, and a Jewish homeland in Palestine may have seemed more realistic than it ever had previously. Not only that, but Sciuto himself had lived in Jerusalem for a few years, meaning his personal experiences may have shifted his interests.

It is also worth noting that Sciuto's geopolitical relationship to Palestine had changed dramatically: both Palestine and Constantinople were under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire, but the Ottoman government had not particularly entertained ideas of mass Jewish migration to Palestine. In the 1920s and 1930s, both Egypt and Palestine were under British occupation, and indeed the British had made promises in regards to Jewish immigration to Palestine. As Zionist ideas were seriously courted on the global political stage, it became more subject than ever to layered social and political authority. Someone like Sciuto would have had to navigate British promises and the Egyptian government, alongside Zionism and anti-Zionism within the Jewish community. All of these factors had some measure of authority and influence over the issue of Zionism, and they multiplied when the Ottoman Empire dissolved.

L'Aurore's local ties: Constantinople

The ways in which Sciuto reconciled Zionism with the various forms of local authority he encountered, as well as the ways he sought local support, differed greatly from city to city, showing a change in his ideology and its practical implications. In Constantinople, Sciuto was keen to locate support among non-Jews and Ottoman authorities. His greatest enemies were other Jews, especially journalists like David Fresco, who did not endorse Zionism. In Cairo, Sciuto appeared to identify only with other Jews. He did not judge anti-Zionism to be the same threat it

once had been, and now his deepest concern was Jewish assimilation to local culture. His enemies in Cairo then, sometimes came in the form of “assimilationist” Jews, but were ultimately his own surroundings.

The first article of the first issue of *L'Aurore*, published in June of 1909, was titled “Our Agenda.” In the opening paragraph, the writer (presumably Sciuto) quoted the first issue of Theodore Herzl’s paper, *Die Welt*. The quote ran, “This paper is a JEWISH paper; we accept this epithet which, for others is an insult, and which we would like to turn into a title of glory.”¹⁰¹ This, the article stated, was the entirety of the *L'Aurore*’s agenda. But what did it mean, exactly, to be a “Jewish paper?” As I have shown through my examination of the paper’s readership, it is entirely possible, and even probable, that non-Jews were reading the paper. Sciuto, the editor, was Jewish, but did this make it a Jewish paper? Many of the articles could be said to pertain to “Jewish interests,” but others would have been relevant to any Ottoman citizen. The language of publication, French, was accessible to educated non-Jews.¹⁰² So, perhaps what made it a Jewish paper was that Sciuto saw it as such, and presented it as such. A question then arises: did Sciuto view the paper, and the Jewish community of Constantinople, as exceptional to or isolated from the rest of society? The same could be asked of Cairo. While it might not be possible to pin down how integrated into the rest of society Sciuto *felt*, it is possible to analyze the way he, and other contributors to *L'Aurore*, expressed their aspirations in relation to the empire, the city, its authorities, various ethnic and religious groups, and local associations.

¹⁰¹ Lucien Sciuto, “Notre Programme,” *L'Aurore*, June 25, 1909, 1.

¹⁰² For more on French language in the late-Ottoman Empire, see Şükrü Hanioglu, “The Ottoman Empire at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” In *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2008) 29-30, 33. and Selçuk Akşin Somel. “Ottoman Islamic Education in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century.” *Islamic Studies* Vol. 36, no. 2/3, 1997, 439–464. JSTOR.

As historian Julia Phillips Cohen establishes, a narrative exists that enshrines Jewish/Turkish friendship as an unwaveringly positive phenomenon. This narrative, propagated both by contemporary writers and later historians, presents Ottoman Jewish interests as coinciding completely with the interests of the state.¹⁰³ Phillips Cohen argues that this is a myth, and Jewish loyalty was highly performative, as various Jewish groups competed to be seen as the most loyal.¹⁰⁴ The writers of *L'Aurore*, it appears, were participants in this effort, and theirs was an especially difficult task given the controversy of their Zionist ideology, which was not shared by all Ottoman citizens, or by all Ottoman Jews. Throughout the newspaper, *L'Aurore's* contributors defined Zionism by stressing Jewish/Muslim brotherhood, deferring to the opinions of Ottoman officials, and entertaining the idea of Turkish as a language to teach Jewish children. These were attempts to merge Herzl's emphasis on an independent Jewish community with the ambient enthusiasm for Ottomanism espoused by other Ottoman citizens, including non-Zionist Jews.

The same article that included Herzl's statement already complicates the understanding of *L'Aurore* as a paper solely for the benefit of Jews. Near the end of the article the writer stated that the paper hoped to "contribute, to the extent of our capabilities, to the arrival of an era of complete fraternity between Israelites and non-Israelites. May the latter be inclined to help us."¹⁰⁵ It would be rather difficult for the paper to engender positive relations between Jews and non-Jews if non-Jews were not even reading the paper. While this excerpt speaks to a desire for intercommunal fraternity, it is not particularly specific to Constantinople, or even the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁰³ For an example of this kind of history, see Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*.

¹⁰⁴ Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*.

¹⁰⁵ Lucien Sciuto, "Notre Programme," *L'Aurore*, June 25, 1909, 1.

It becomes clear in the course of time, however, that Sciuto saw the manifestations of the paper's efforts towards brotherhood in the frequent, and usually positive, interactions between Jews and non-Jews in Constantinople that he and others documented in the paper. In other words, his lofty aspirations found their root in local events. For example, in telling of a party thrown by Maccabi, a writer gave special care to describing the speech given by Muhieddine Bey, the governor of Pera. The Ottoman official was said to have spoken "of the patriotic feelings of the Jews in terms that honored [them] all, and he proclaimed the sincere trust that the government put in [them]."¹⁰⁶ His speech reportedly ended with the words "Long live fraternity, equality, the homeland, the Jews, all the Ottomans and cursed are those who would want to divide them," neatly summarizing everything *L'Aurore* stood for.

Since Maccabi was not only a Jewish organization, but one with Zionist affiliations, Muhieddine's speech was especially meaningful. For Sciuto, no conflict was necessary between Ottomanism and Zionism, between the homeland and the empire, between Zionist Jews and non-Jews. Muhieddine's status as a government official, and possibly as a non-Jew, heightened his importance for *L'Aurore*'s purposes, as he exemplified the brotherhood and intercommunal respect *L'Aurore* hoped to cultivate. A prominent member of the Maccabi organization, Mr. Ziffer, also gave a speech, but the writer of the article only promised to "reproduce [it] elsewhere," before returning to Muhieddine Bey's "perfect tact and...exquisite sensitivity."¹⁰⁷ No praise was too high for a member of the Ottoman government who recognized Jewish contributions to the empire, and had no qualms about giving such a speech at a Zionist venue. Although Muhieddine only spoke broadly of Ottoman Jews, not specifically Zionist Jews, for

¹⁰⁶ "La Fête de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore*, January 3, 1911, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Sciuto this was surely an expression of Zionism, since it conformed to his own definition of Zionism as fostering a Jewish renaissance and homeland within the empire.

Another instance of similar treatment of an Ottoman official was in an article describing Dr. Riza Tewfik Bey, deputy of Adrinople, giving a speech at the Talmud Torah in Smyrna. The writer, who signed the article only as “Ralph,” noted that Riza Tewfik “expresses himself so well in Judeo-Spanish that one barely believes he is a non-Jew.”¹⁰⁸ His speech contained both encouragement and a warning. “One of the best ways to socially as well as morally elevate the mass of these poor Israelites that wander across the world, is to fix them somewhere,” said Riza Tewfik, “I would like this to be Turkey.”¹⁰⁹ Again, Zionism was constructed in relation to the Ottoman Empire, and Tewfik was reported to have said unequivocally, “I am a Zionist.”¹¹⁰ He tempered his endorsement, however, with the statement that “if the Israelites engage in sentimental and poetic Zionism, I fear very much that this will be fatal to the Israelite cause, by giving birth in Turkey, to an unfortunate Jewish question.”¹¹¹ While these words may have seemed ominous, Ralph wrote that they were met with “a thunder of applause.”¹¹² It seems as though he wished to convey that Jewish Zionists were on the same page as Ottoman officials, and that they understood the stakes of their ideology. Thus, the relationship between Zionists and the empire was displayed as completely symbiotic, and Zionism as well-understood by those who made the effort.

A final example on this point comes from a voice belonging to a different part of society, the Ottoman press. An article published in January of 1911, again defended Zionism. Yet, this

¹⁰⁸ Ralph, “Le Dr. Riza Tewfik Bey et Le Sionisme,” *L'Aurore*, July 16, 1909, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

article was titled, “The Opinion of a Muslim,” and was a reproduction of an article published in *Le Jeune Turc* by Ahmed Agaieff Bey, it’s editor.¹¹³ The original article was titled, “The Jewish Question.”¹¹⁴ The title change is interesting in itself, and reveals a preoccupation with ethnoreligious identity. For Agaieff, the subject was a Jewish question, but for *L’Aurore*, it was a Muslim question of how to view Jews. Like Riza Tewfik, Agaieff believed that if Zionism is “the aspiration of the Jewish people to concentrate themselves in Palestine and establish a separate Jewish kingdom, it’s the Jewish people...who must first recognize that this is simply a crazy and stupid thought.”¹¹⁵ If, however, Zionism “consists only of the aspiration towards a peaceful and honorable existence, with the right to cultivate the maternal language, the national culture of the Jewish people,” there was nothing objectionable about that.¹¹⁶ Agaieff saw Zionism as developing Jewish culture, but also “becoming Ottoman,” and “studying the Turkish language.”¹¹⁷ For him, being Zionist was tightly tied to a local Ottoman identity. As a Zionist paper, *L’Aurore* was bound to the Ottoman Empire with the same ties.

The response published in *L’Aurore* alongside Agaieff’s article speaks volumes. “It is comforting,” the article reads, “to a supreme degree to hear a non-Jew, a Muslim, speak the language of reason.”¹¹⁸ Present here is a clear anxiety, revealed further when the article states that “so many Jews are fighting against Zionism, both foreign Jews and Ottoman Jews, some in the *Tiempo*, others in Turkish newspapers.”¹¹⁹ Evidently, and exemplified by Ahmed Agaieff’s original article in *Le Jeune Turc*, this was a debate taking place across all strata of society.

L’Aurore was deeply embroiled in this debate, constantly pushing an Ottomanist agenda of

¹¹³ “L’Opinion d’un Musulman,” *L’Aurore*, January 24, 1911, 1.

¹¹⁴ The original title is noted in the reproduced article.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

intercommunal brotherhood and equality. *L'Aurore* rejoiced when it was echoed back, especially from an Ottoman official, or any Muslim. These three examples of Muhieddine Bey, Riza Tewfik Bey, and Ahmed Agaieff Bey, show *L'Aurore* seeking endorsement from local non-Jewish figures. The desire to create and display cross-communal understanding and brotherhood is not only visible in articles featuring representatives of the Ottoman Empire, but also other Ottoman, non-Jewish, journalists.

L'Aurore promoted Ottomanism in conjunction with Zionism in several ways, although some topics, like language, remained under debate. *L'Aurore* raised the idea that Ottoman Jews should study the Turkish language alongside Hebrew a number of times, and always with mixed feelings. In 1909, a writer for *L'Aurore*, M. A. Hermoni, confronted Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum about “the rumor that spread in the Jewish spaces that [he was] inclined to replace what still remains of Hebrew with Turkish.”¹²⁰ The Chief Rabbi replied that he had never attempted to “wage war on Hebrew,” even producing “multiple letters exchanged with the provincial communities and which were all drafted in Hebrew” to prove it.¹²¹ This interview implies that there was an active debate among the Jewish population, and perhaps in the empire more generally, about national languages. David Fresco, the editor of *El Tiempo* who often wrote from the opposite side of the political spectrum as Lucien Sciuto, advocated for Jews to drop all languages except Turkish, although this was an unpopular position.¹²²

Another writer, M. I. Cohen, interviewed Emroullah Bey, the minister of public instruction in the Ottoman Empire, in 1910. Cohen expressed doubt that Turkish would be an effective unifying language for Ottoman Jews, saying, “since Jews live dispersed in lands in

¹²⁰ M. A. Hermoni, “La Question des Ecoles et de L’hébreu : notre interview du Grand-Rabbin,” *L'Aurore*, July 16, 1909, 1.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, 78-79.

which the population is Arab here, Slav there, Greek elsewhere, etc. the adoption of Turkish as the national language would result in collective incoherence, dismemberment; they would become strangers to each other and this would be a truly great danger to them.”¹²³ The minister assured Cohen that the Jews were free to choose any language they pleased, “on the condition that they also learn the official language, Turkish.”¹²⁴ Again, Hebrew was pushed by a correspondent of *L’Aurore*, who claimed the instruction of which had “already yielded very satisfying results.”¹²⁵

These two articles indicate that there was no real enthusiasm from the writers behind *L’Aurore* to spread Turkish among the Jewish population, although there does not seem to have been any objection either, so long as they could also teach Hebrew. Hermoni even recorded that the Chief Rabbi said that the “majority of the Jewish population [were] keen to develop the Turkish language.”¹²⁶ Regardless of whether or not writers like Cohen or Hermoni personally advocated for the instruction of Turkish, there was a great deal of interest, as well as uncertainty, in the subject of language visible in *L’Aurore*. That the merits of Turkish were repeatedly raised and considered indicates a willingness on the part of certain Zionist Jews to entertain the possibility if it would further prove their status as a “model minority.”¹²⁷ Again, there was an active conversation between Ottomanism and Zionism that grounded *L’Aurore* and its contributors in the empire by allowing its official language space in the press and in their lives.

Thus far, we have viewed *L’Aurore*’s engagement with its local surroundings through the lens of language, and relations with Muslims and Ottoman officials. Yet, to truly understand the

¹²³ M. I. Cohen, “Notre Langue Nationale : Interview de S. E. Emroullah Bey, Ministre de L’Instruction Publique,” *L’Aurore*, March 11, 1910, 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ For more on what it meant to strive for the label of “model minority,” see Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*.

extent to which *L'Aurore* was embedded in local life, its interactions with Jewish groups is crucial, especially those centered in Constantinople. The Jewry of Constantinople was entrenched in the landscape of the city, and the Ottoman Empire. Although Sciuto was born in the Ottoman Empire, he was not a native of the city. Thus, his paper's engagement with local Jews indicates a local involvement similar to (yet distinct from) that shown by its treatment of local Muslims.

One institution repeatedly mentioned in *L'Aurore* was L'École Séror-Ahaïm. According to the paper, the primary language of instruction there was Hebrew, and Turkish and French were also taught. One article published in September of 1909 congratulated several students from Séror-Ahaïm "who were admitted to big Muslim schools."¹²⁸ The writer appeared to celebrate the convergence of Jewish and Muslim education. Later that month, the paper published an open letter to Chief Rabbi Nahum, calling for the establishment of a Hebrew school. The letter had been originally published in *The Federation Review* in New York, written by its editor Nissim Behar. The letter lamented that "in Baghdad, in Damascus, in Yemen, and in Egypt, our brothers speak Arabic. In Jerusalem, in Safed, etc...they express themselves in Yiddish here, in Judeo-Spanish there."¹²⁹ The solution to this linguistic confusion, Behar wrote, was a school for Hebrew in Constantinople. By writing, "the Chief Rabbi would be very favorable to this project," *L'Aurore* appeared to endorse it too. The continued development of Jewish culture in Constantinople was seen as a work in progress, one that the journalists behind *L'Aurore* were evidently interested in.

L'Aurore also linked itself to the politics of local Jewish clubs. Sciuto himself had taken David Fresco's attack on Maccabi and Haim Nahum's withdrawal from his honorary

¹²⁸ "L'École Séror-Ahaïm," *L'Aurore*, Semptember 5, 1909, 2.

¹²⁹ "Une École Normal Hébraïque à Constantinople," *L'Aurore*, September 26, 1909, 2.

membership of the same club extremely personally.¹³⁰ Both before and after this climax of building resentment, *L'Aurore* closely followed the club's progress. At one party thrown by Maccabi in Pera, a contributor to *L'Aurore*, Abraham Elmaleh, gave a speech in Hebrew.¹³¹ During the period the paper was published in Constantinople, there were dozens of articles published on Maccabi. One article gave a review of a march that had been composed for Maccabi, calling it "a composition of a gripping inspiration and of a most interesting style."¹³² Another gave details on the election of its new committee.¹³³ Yet another expressed disappointment that the "the central committee of Paris of the Alliance Israélite Universelle categorically refused the request which was sent to it regarding making available...the space of the boys school of this neighborhood for the gymnastic exercises and the courtyard of the school of girls for a celebration by the society."¹³⁴ In the context of international news, these updates on Maccabi seem insignificant. Yet, they were important to *L'Aurore*, and likely to Sciuto. They demonstrate the extent to which *L'Aurore* was embedded in the daily lives of people and groups in Constantinople. The minute day-to-day happenings of the city, and its Jewish and Zionist communities, were worthwhile and relevant information for a paper whose Zionism was rooted firmly in the empire, of which Constantinople was the political center.

Each of these examples, from Muhieddine Bey to Maccabi, illustrates that *L'Aurore* was working to create relationships between Jews and Muslims that were based on Ottoman brotherhood, and was deeply involved with local Jewish institutions and organizations. As such, it seems safe to say that Constantinople, and the larger empire, were central pieces of *L'Aurore's*

¹³⁰ "Le Grand-Rabbin et la 'Maccabi', Demission du Grand-Rabbin de la Société Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (Novembre 8, 1910), p. 1., "Le Procès Maccabi-Fresco," *L'Aurore*, November 8, 1910, 1-2.

¹³¹ "La Fête de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore*, January 3, 1911, 1.

¹³² "La Marche Maccabi," *L'Aurore*, January 7, 1910, 3.

¹³³ "La Societé Maccabi," *L'Aurore*, June 17, 1910, 2.

¹³⁴ "L' Alliance et les Maccabi," *L'Aurore*, April 22, 1910, 1.

identity as a newspaper. A final observation on this point is that Sciuto, who was always the driving force behind *L'Aurore*, was a participant in Ottoman politics himself, outside the bounds of *L'Aurore*. For a period of time after settling in Constantinople, he was the chief editor of *Hilal*, the literary supplement of the Turkish-language *Le Tanin*. Given that *Le Tanin*, “functioned as the organ of the Committee for Union and Progress,” Sciuto was operating at the most influential levels of the Ottoman Press.¹³⁵ When Sciuto published his *Poèmes Patriotiques*, *Le Tanin* “devoted a long editorial to the book, praising it and expressing regret that Turkish poets did not produce similar works.”¹³⁶ Here we can return to Phillips Cohen and her point about Ottoman Jews wishing to present themselves as a “model minority.” Sciuto appears to have been greatly concerned with expressing his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire through his publications, and was often very successful.

Cairo

The first article of the first issue of *L'Aurore* published in Cairo in 1924 again laid out the paper's agenda. This time, although the emphasis on the paper's Jewishness remained present, the message was far less inclusive. Rather than speaking of brotherhood, Sciuto wrote that “anyone who makes a Jewish paper, when he could create one of general interest—certainly more lucrative—must necessarily be guided by a very specific feeling, and this feeling is none other than the love of his people.”¹³⁷ Based on this, it does not appear that Sciuto envisioned non-Jews reading this paper. Sciuto continued to say *L'Aurore* was “a paper created for them [the Jews] alone. For *them alone*, yes...I've seen many Jews subscribed to anti-Semitic newspapers, and I've never seen a single anti-Semite who subscribed to a Jewish newspaper.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Lewenthal, “Sciuto, Lucien,” 275.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Lucien Sciuto, “En Guise de Programme,” *L'Aurore*, February 19, 1924, 1.

¹³⁸ Emphasis in original.

In the first issue published in Constantinople, Sciuto was clear about the paper's Jewish identity, but he also envisioned it as one that would cross ethnic boundaries, even stimulate trust and brotherhood between diverse Ottoman citizens. In this new Cairene paper, gone were the overtures of intercommunal friendship linked by a common homeland.

As for Zionism, Sciuto asserted that its "adversaries have settled down," and that "we're no longer fighting, we're debating."¹³⁹ Even as Sciuto saw a rapprochement with non-Zionist Jews, he distanced himself from the rest of society. The new paper no longer bore signs of non-Jewish affiliation like Ottoman Turkish text and multiple dating systems. The obvious cause of this change is the fall of the empire. Yet, it is interesting that no Egyptian-specific additions were made, like Arabic text. The disappearance of Ottomanism may be helpful in understanding this, since it had unified Ottoman citizens of diverse ethnoreligious backgrounds under one identity. Without a binding ideology like Ottomanism, *L'Aurore* broke ties with other affiliations.

Additionally, if Sciuto truly felt as though Zionism was no longer under attack, then he was no longer obligated to ingratiate himself, *L'Aurore*, and Zionism, to the general public and to the government. A letter sent in by a Y. Freyman reminisced about the origins of *L'Aurore*, calling its first surroundings in Constantinople "hostile and dangerous."¹⁴⁰ The implication was that the inclement situation had largely disappeared, and Zionism could be expressed in relative safety.¹⁴¹ It is then certainly possible that the disposal of external connections was in part as a result of a perceived lack of need for non-Jewish or official support.

One of the few articles published in 1924 that did connect Jews to their milieu was one that reproduced an overture made by Abdullah I of Jordan to the Jews. "Why," he reportedly

¹³⁹ Sciuto, "En Guise de Programme."

¹⁴⁰ Y. Freyman, "Lettre a L'Aurore," *L'Aurore*, August 8, 1924, 3.

¹⁴¹ This was the same mentality that was expressed when Sciuto started *L'Aurore*, after the 1908 revolution.

asked, referencing the Balfour Declaration, “did the Jews not come directly to us who are their brothers, they say. Why do they hide behind the English who will betray them like they betrayed us?”¹⁴² There was no comment from *L’Aurore* on these questions. Although an appeal to brotherhood was again invoked, it did not come from *L’Aurore*, and the issue was less about uniting Muslims and Jews under one identity, and more a question of political alliance against British imperialism. For *L’Aurore*, at least, lines of identity seemed to have hardened, as the article was titled, “Arabs and Jews,” implying that Jews were not Arab and Arabs could not be Jewish.¹⁴³

In Constantinople, there was an ongoing debate in the press about the language(s) Ottoman Jews ought to be able to speak proficiently. Among the top three were Hebrew, Turkish, and French, although how those ranked was not uniformly agreed upon in the Jewish community. In Cairo, no such debate existed, at least for the writers of *L’Aurore*. And yet, in the 1930s, the Association de la Jeunesse Juive Egyptienne—a group of Jews seeking to promote both Jewish heritage and Egyptian patriotism—was calling for the integration of Jews into Egyptian society, in part by learning Arabic.¹⁴⁴ Had it been two decades earlier, and suggesting a merging of Ottoman and Jewish identity, it is not hard to envision Sciuto championing such an association. And yet, rather than weighing the benefits of Arabic versus Hebrew, Hebrew was privileged as the Jewish language in *L’Aurore*, and Arabic was rarely if ever mentioned.¹⁴⁵ One article titled “The Language Said to be Dead: There are 24 Hebraic newspapers in Palestine,” noted sarcastically that “the ‘dead language’ [Hebrew] is so dead that after the funeral celebrated

¹⁴² “Arabes et Juifs,” *L’Aurore*, May 16, 1924, 1.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 170-171.

¹⁴⁵ Somewhat ironically, Hebrew text only ever appeared on the periphery of *L’Aurore*.

by assimilationists, it has not ceased to give unequivocal signs of life.”¹⁴⁶ It is possible that with Zionist hopes now pinned on immigration to Palestine, learning Egyptian Arabic was not a priority. It seems clear that Sciuto and the other writers did not see Egypt as a homeland in the same way that the writers in Constantinople, including Sciuto, had seen the Ottoman Empire as a homeland.

This attitude was probably somewhat unique to Sciuto, Zionists, and even other elite francophone Jews in the 1920s and 1930s. It is important to remember that Sciuto was not a native of Egypt, and may not have spoken a word of Arabic himself. Other Jews, especially of the lower-classes, who were well-established in Egypt, did speak Arabic already.¹⁴⁷ However, neither Arabic nor Hebrew were spoken by the majority of Egyptian Jews in the early twentieth century, and French and Italian retained supremacy, especially among recent immigrants and the upper classes.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, most Egyptian Jews were not Zionist during this period.¹⁴⁹ As a Zionist immigrant to the country, Sciuto did not necessarily represent the opinions of the Egyptian community as a whole.

For Sciuto, the emphasis on Hebrew in Cairo was a way to combat “assimilation” and the “assimilationists” who advocated for it. In Constantinople, Sciuto had often used language, even the word “assimilation,” that was shared by assimilationist Jews. At this time, assimilation, although always a contested idea, had meant accepting and aiding Ottoman efforts to create a diverse, but homogenously Ottoman, body of citizens. Although Sciuto probably never would have called himself an “assimilationist” many of his views intersected with assimilationism, especially as it was promoted by the AIU. “The Jew,” one writer stated in *L’Aurore* in 1909,

¹⁴⁶ “La Langue dite Morte : Il y a en Palestine 24 journaux hébraïques,” *L’Aurore*, March 2, 1924, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 168.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Beinun, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, 21.

“who possesses to a high degree the capability of assimilation, or rather of adaptation, is everywhere a good citizen.”¹⁵⁰ For Sciuto, this form of assimilation did not mean discarding Jewish customs and language, but participating in the empire as interested citizens through, for instance, military service.¹⁵¹ These were aims that Sciuto saw as consistent with Zionism as well. In Cairo, however, assimilation became an enemy of Sciuto’s Zionism, destined to strip away Jewish identity without benefit. Its trajectory, *L’Aurore* argued, would be, “first assimilation to another people, then indifference to Judaism, finally hostility to everything Jewish.”¹⁵²

The lauding of the Hebrew language was not the only way Sciuto and other contributors to *L’Aurore* fought “assimilationists.” An article Sciuto wrote four years later, in 1928, expressed the belief that “what is indeed missing from the education of the Jewish masses in the Orient is precisely the Jewish character.”¹⁵³ He also argued that “proponents of assimilation could not adopt a better system of education than that which erases us from the history of the world...and which forgets our glorious pasts, the greatness of our people, upright in the middle of ruins of empires.”¹⁵⁴ If it could be argued that Sciuto harbored assimilationist sentiments while in Constantinople, or espoused them in order to soften the politics of Zionism, the same could not be argued in Cairo. Where previously *L’Aurore* had celebrated the idea of Jewish students attending a “big Muslim school,” now the writers called for less integration.

The desire for separation did not apply only to Muslims, but to Christian schools too. Ben David, a reader of *L’Aurore*, sent in a letter decrying “Congregationalist schools” which “put pressure on the Jewish mind, to catechize them, to at least distance them from the beliefs of their

¹⁵⁰ Nessim Mazliah, “Le Service Militaire des Non-Musulmans,” *L’Aurore*, June 25, 1909, 3.

¹⁵¹ Lucien Sciuto, “Le Service Militaire et les Israélites,” *L’Aurore*, August 8, 1924, 3.

¹⁵² Dr. J. Buchmil, “L’Avenir de la Race Juive,” *L’Aurore*, December 4, 1925, 1.

¹⁵³ “Education Juive pour les Enfants Juifs,” *L’Aurore*, August 2, 1928, 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

families.”¹⁵⁵ Ben David’s solution, like Sciuto’s, was the creation and betterment of Jewish schools, so that Jewish children would not be indoctrinated “against their family, their religion, and their ideal homeland: Zion.”¹⁵⁶ The primary emotion running through the letter is fear: an anxiety that Jewish children would not recognize their own identity, and the community would crack and disintegrate over time.

It appears as though throughout the course of *L’Aurore*’s life, Sciuto and like-minded individuals created more rigid identities for themselves and others. This may have been, at least in part, in reaction to the exclusive nationalisms, like Egyptian, that arose around them.¹⁵⁷ Even so, it was not uncommon to find Egyptian Jews participating in the Egyptian national movement and the Wafd Party, or doing so while simultaneously supporting Jewish nationalism.¹⁵⁸ The fact that Sciuto was not Egyptian may have had something to do with the path *L’Aurore* took away from Egyptian nationalism. It may have been easier to reconcile Zionism with Ottomanism, since the empire had been Sciuto’s home. For him to call the empire a “homeland” was no stretch, he had been born there. For Sciuto to call Egypt a homeland may have made little sense to him, since his connection to Egypt was very limited, and only consisted of his current residence.

Nonetheless, integration or assimilation should not be conflated with loyalty. Just as Sciuto performed his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire through *L’Aurore*, he did the same in Egypt. After King Fuad helped reopen a Jewish school in Alexandria, Sciuto devoted an entire article to thanking him, and acted as “the interpreter for the whole Jewish population of Alexandria, to respectfully transmit to his Majesty the homage of a gratitude that can only reaffirm the feelings of faithfulness and loyalism of the Jews of Egypt towards the country where everything that

¹⁵⁵ Ben David, “Il Nous Faut des Écoles « Juives »,” *L’Aurore*, December 5, 1924, 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 168.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

claims to be from the Good and the Equal is certain of finding help and protection.”¹⁵⁹ While Sciuto may have rejected assimilation in his new environment, he was not above a little flattery, especially if it had practical results. He still viewed positive relationships with ruling powers as productive, even if he had no interest in Egyptianizing.

Another example of Sciuto’s positioning vis-à-vis Egypt comes in the form of a book of poems he published in 1938, called *Le Peuple du Messie*. In the dedication, Sciuto drew the reader’s attention to the fact that he “placed at the head of the work, a poem that he had the honor of dedicating to his Majesty, King Farouk I.”¹⁶⁰ A few lines later, he “proclaim[ed] his feelings of admiration for this country where a stranger—an honest and loyal stranger—can live and think, free and honored, under the protection of the generous hospitality of Islam.”¹⁶¹ Even as he praised Egypt and the king, he established himself as a “stranger” to the country. The use of the word “hospitality” further develops the concept of Sciuto as a guest, not a resident, and certainly not a native.

Finally, it is worth noting that while Sciuto lived in Cairo, *L’Aurore* was receiving financial support from abroad. From 1924 to 1931, the United Palestine Appeal headquarters in London supported the newspaper with 10 Pounds sterling per month.¹⁶² It is hard to say whether the economic hold the organization had over *L’Aurore* translated into ideological influence, but their relationship does help paint a picture of a newspaper that, while concerned with Egyptian and Middle Eastern Judaism, had ties to foreign organizations. This is a quality also observable through the myriad of foreign businesses that published ads in *L’Aurore*’s pages.

¹⁵⁹ Lucien Sciuto, “La Haute Sagesse de S. M. le Roi donne gain de cause au parti du droit,” *L’Aurore*, August 6, 1926, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Lucien Sciuto, *Le peuple du Messie : poème, et autres poèmes* (Alexandria: Editions d’Orient, 1938), 7.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶² “L’Aurore,” Historical Jewish Press, National Library of Israel, <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/jpress/english/pages/laurore.aspx>.

As in all histories, there is no way to know how one person felt about their surroundings, only what they expressed. So while we cannot know the extent to which Sciuto felt “Ottoman” or “Egyptian,” we can see through his writings how he chose to express his identity in relation to those surroundings. In Constantinople, the paper was heavily influenced by a mixture of Ottomanism and the hope for a Jewish renaissance. In Cairo, the latter took precedence and was coupled with anti-assimilationism. Loyalty remained a consistent feature of Sciuto’s writings, although towards whom that loyalty was directed changed with his location and the political climate.

Conclusion

The final sections of this thesis indicate that *L’Aurore* reflected a transformation in the identity of its editor. As Sciuto moved to Cairo after the First World War, and as the political, social, and cultural climate shifted around him, he became more focused on reaching Jews alone, as his Zionist views became fixed on Palestine. He no longer saw himself as part of a larger multiethnic, multiconfessional community, as he had in the Ottoman Empire. If he did envision himself within that framework in Egypt, it was as a visitor, and a stranger.

These conclusions represent both the benefits and challenges of analyzing a single newspaper alongside its editor. This thesis shows how complex and layered newspapers can be as sources. In the case of *L’Aurore*, understanding the man behind the paper is imperative to understanding the information that was published in its pages. The paper not only expressed news, but opinions, stories, history, and even jokes. Each article was not only a representation of the time, but of the person writing it, who imbued each word with his own shifting worldview, political outlook, and style. In this way, this thesis has been able to make judgments about the way Sciuto’s opinions, politics, and relationships evolved, by reading the paper alongside

Sciuto's personal evolution during the first three decades of the twentieth century, as he experienced the shift from empire to nation-state and traversed the Eastern Mediterranean.

Clearly, *L'Aurore* represents a much more colorful and wider world than just four black and white pages. Yet, the approach of using one source alone has major challenges as well. What this thesis cannot do is make a judgment about whether Sciuto was representative of larger movements, or whether he was unique. At this stage, it cannot definitively state the extent to which his opinions, or the changes they underwent, were echoed by other journalists, or other Zionists. For that, this project would have to be expanded to include other newspapers published in French in Cairo and Constantinople, and in other languages. There were dozens of French-language newspapers published in Egypt in the 1920s, several of which were Jewish-run. Beyond French, there were papers in Cairo published in Arabic, and papers in Constantinople published in Ladino.

Future research should include archival sources outside the press as well, and outside the limited materials I could access online. The AIU archives in Paris could shed light on the relationship between Cairo and Constantinople during the early twentieth century, especially as it was maintained by AIU graduates. The Central Zionist Archives in Israel may hold information on Sciuto, *L'Aurore*, the time he spent in Jerusalem, and other Zionist people and publications who were active at that time. The Ottoman State Archives in Istanbul, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, could provide details about how the Ottoman government viewed *L'Aurore*, and Zionism more generally. Until then, however, the individual, his ideas expressed on paper, and the relationships he cultivated, will have to suffice.

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