

# Revisiting Jewish Ottomanism: An Intertextual Approach

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## Abstract

With the imperial turn in Jewish historiography, recent studies argue that Ottoman Imperial Jews voluntarily incorporated into the Ottoman centralization reforms and performed an Ottoman civic identity in the 19th century. However, these studies perhaps one-sided as they merely engaged Jewish sources. As such, it remains a monologue from the periphery to the center. This study aims to reveal to how the Ottoman center received and understood these voices from the Jewish periphery. Since archival encounters between Jewish languages and Ottoman Turkish are a rare instance, the methodology proposed here is to compare two official translations of Jewish documents, one from Judeo-Spanish to Ottoman Turkish and the other from Hebrew to Ottoman Turkish on framing Ottoman citizenship identities. The documents are an Ottomanist article of a Habsburg Vienna-based diasporic Ottoman Jewish newspaper in the time of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 and a petition submitted by a Jew of Aleppo to the government in 1890. The comparisons reveal that whereas Jewish texts presume an egalitarian Judeo-Turkish togetherness, the Ottoman translations extort this presumption with a new unequal power hierarchy.

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