

MIMOUNA IN THE MELLAH:
MOROCCAN AND FRENCH GOVERNMENT POLICIES
AND THEIR IMPACTS ON JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS
IN MOROCCO

by

NAMRATHA SOMAYAJULA

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Issues that arise between Muslims and Jews around the world are often, today, linked automatically to the political divide between Arabs and Jews in Israel and Palestine. In 20th and 21st century Morocco, tensions between Muslims and Jews have surely escalated along climbing intensity in Israel-Palestine; however, attempting to directly correlate Jewish-Muslim relations in Morocco to dynamics in Israel-Palestine would undermine the far-reaching role that various historical factors in Morocco have had in impacting relations between the two groups. This thesis examines some of the most influential governmental policies in Morocco, looking primarily at pre-Protectorate policies under the Muslim sultans and at French policies during the Protectorate era. Looking at how these policies have historically influenced, and often reduced, the degree of accommodation between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Morocco, this paper then explores the effectiveness of various movements in present-day Morocco that seek to counter the harmful legacies of these policies.

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Introduction

A *carrefour* in the geographic, cultural, and economic senses, Morocco stands in a unique position in the international context, linking Africa, the Middle East, and Europe in several ways. The country is unique due to the historical presence of a large Jewish population in the region that over the years became a Muslim-majority Islamic kingdom. This kingdom's location along the Mediterranean coast made it, during the age of colonialism, a strategic economic locus for European powers, particularly for France. However, the French presence and policies there before and during the Protectorate era¹ significantly disrupted intergroup dynamics, both intentionally and inadvertently, leaving a mark that remained long after the French government presence departed.

Before – and though to a lesser degree, while – these external influences manifested in Morocco, members of Morocco's Muslim and Jewish communities coexisted for centuries, albeit with minor hurdles. However, significant internal and external forces, such as the French Protectorate throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, allowed for widespread feelings of distrust to develop between Jewish and Muslim communities in Morocco. These feelings were exacerbated by political dynamics around the world during the 20th century, and eventually led to the rapid departure of Jews from Morocco. This emigration has caused a profound lack of awareness among young Moroccan Muslims regarding the historical importance of the Moroccan Jewish

¹ The Protectorate-era in Morocco refers to the period of time when Morocco was an official French “protectorate”, similar to an overseas colony. The French protectorate in Morocco officially began in 1912 and ended in 1956, but the soft power of the French government had begun influencing Moroccan economic and political dynamics by the end of the 18th century.

community and its impact on present-day Moroccan society. Today, Moroccan religious identities have become more politically charged than they have ever been before, as these historical factors have culminated and resulted in the formation of national identities. With so few remaining in the country, “Jews” often becomes synonymous with “Israelis,” and as a result, relations between Moroccans supporting Palestine and their Jewish compatriots are thought to be characteristically tense.

Despite the pockets of political chaos and rough relations between Muslims and Jews in Morocco over the centuries, and the sporadic periods of instability between the communities today, there are still a number of Moroccans—Muslims and Jews—who hope for peaceful relations to once again become more widespread. However, during a time when efforts to encourage mutual understanding bring with them the risk of political categorization, stigmatization and silence, those who lead such efforts must be deliberate in their tactics to facilitate understanding between the two communities.

In this thesis, I attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How did Moroccan and French policies that targeted its Morocco’s Jewish population impact general relations between the Muslim and Jewish communities there over the years?
2. How did such policies play into the rapid emigration of Jews from Morocco, as seen in the latter half of the 20th century?
3. How do leaders of civil society movements in present-day Morocco seek to counter the harmful consequences emigration had on Moroccan society?

In this thesis, I argue that the history of inter-group relations in Morocco, specifically between the Muslim and Jewish communities, has been shaped directly by

sultan-era and colonial policies; the legacy of these policies has created divisions in Moroccan society that have persisted under the surface, and that are now deep enough to allow dynamics associated with the conflict in Israel and Palestine to penetrate. However, despite such divisions, Moroccan society holds in its collective memory the contributions of Moroccan Jews to Moroccan culture and history, and some Moroccans today have begun the effort to correct the recent history that has erased Jews from the Moroccan landscape.

To begin answering my research questions, I collected material related to my research question through academic literature, written and oral primary sources, and interviews with individuals involved in efforts to either preserve Jewish culture in Morocco, or to consciously engage Muslims and Jews in dialogue and collaboration. My written sources come primarily from academic journals, news sources, and published government documents; together, they draw a fuller – but still limited – picture of the impact government policies had on Muslim-Jewish relations in Morocco. While I was living in Morocco in the fall of 2015, and collecting primary source material related to this project, Ms. Vanessa Paloma Elbaz generously allowed me access to an array of oral primary sources to use in my research. Ms. Paloma Elbaz is the director of KHOYA: *les archives sonores du Maroc juif* in Casablanca, and the recordings that I used are part of the oral history archive of Jewish life in Morocco that she is developing.

The interviews I conducted independently mainly took place between November and December 2015 in Casablanca, Rabat, and the Al Haouz province of Morocco. The

interviews in Al Haouz province took place in Marrakech and Tameslouht in particular. All interviews took place in either French or English.

The written literature and primary documents used in this thesis provided essential context, background, and factual information regarding the various complicated aspects of Muslim-Jewish relations in Morocco. Complementing the written sources, the oral recordings available through *KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif* and the interviews with Moroccans leading present-day civil society efforts brought to light individual experiences and nuances that in written accounts are often engulfed and overshadowed by broad trends. By synthesizing historical and contemporary sources, I drew connections between the history of Jews under the sultans and the French government in Morocco, the impact the policies of these governments had on evolving relations between Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Muslims, and the objectives behind modern movements to preserve Jewish culture and re-establish understanding between Muslims and Jews.

I chose a qualitative method in collecting primary material for my research question, as most of the information I gathered would be based on individuals' experiences and goals, which I could not hope to uncover through a series of strictly structured or data-based questions. Additionally, the flexible qualitative method I followed allowed the conversations I had with informants to take multiple directions, which allowed me to better define terms and concepts. When I began answering the third question I pose in this project, I had hoped to examine methods of peace-building between Jews and Muslims in Morocco, despite the fact that I was yet unable to fully define what the term entailed in this context, where tensions were present but had not

erupted into any sort of widespread violent conflict. Through speaking with my interviewees, I was able to learn about the creative ways in which peace-building is directly and indirectly approached and perceived. Allowing informants to speak freely about their experiences, without being confined by a series of specific questions, also enabled me to learn about some of their perceptions of evolving Jewish identity in Moroccan society.

In order to document the information shared during each interview, I handwrote notes, and sometimes asked participants if they would be willing to let me record the interview. I wanted participants to feel comfortable sharing the relevant information with me, and therefore, depending on the subject the interview focused on, I chose not to record some of the interviews. The situation differed for each participant and depended on the content of the interview, and the interviewee's preference. In addition, the institution in Morocco that I began this project under provided consent forms for participants.² Mainly using the French versions of these forms, I obtained the consent of my interviewees before including their thoughts in my paper.

While each interviewee had a unique perspective on an angle of my research question, I divided the interviews I conducted into three main categories for the purposes of this study. Although several of the interviews could have been placed in multiple categories, I chose the groupings based on each interviewee's area of greatest expertise and the subject she or he expanded upon the most. The interview categories are:

² See Appendix A for a copy of the consent form.

1. Personal and academic accounts of the history of Jewish-Muslim relations in Morocco, Jewish culture in Morocco, and the conditions that led up to the rapid departure of Moroccan Jews from the country.
2. The methods by which relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco can be ameliorated in the future.
3. The activities and intent of organizations that facilitate dialogue, cooperation and intercultural understanding between Muslims and Jews in Morocco.

As stated, the majority of these interviews took place over a four-week period. Due to this limited amount of time, I confined my interviews to certain cities with historically large Jewish populations, despite the fact that there are efforts facilitating dialogue in other parts of the country. I also spoke mainly to leaders of the organizations I describe in my paper, and did not speak to many participants in the movements themselves. For instance, I did not speak to parents of students enrolled in intercultural schools, nor did I speak to the communities who would directly benefit from the agricultural projects I will later discuss. This limitation was both due to the time I had to establish connections and conduct interviews, and also due to the fact that I was unsure of how willing community members would be to engage in overt dialogue about the subject I am researching. While it is important to include these voices, I also think it is necessary to do so when there is more time available to explain the objectives of the research and build trust between the researcher and participants, particularly as I am pursuing a topic that is sensitive to many people.

I approached this project with a deep interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the effects it might have on Moroccan society, peace-building efforts within

communities in conflict, and cooperation across socially and politically constructed boundaries. For these reasons, I began this project with the intent to focus on what I thought were the peripheral effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Morocco. Over the course of the project, however, it became clear that tensions between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Morocco have much deeper roots, and for the most part, have been unrelated, until recently, to events in Israel and Palestine. Relations between the groups in Morocco, have rather been carefully constructed by the Moroccan government and by the colonial French government through policy, and the added strain caused by events in the Middle East only serves to exacerbate tensions that were put into motion by these internal Moroccan policies.

In its broadest sense, this thesis is an example of the impacts policy has in shaping the relationship between minorities and a majority population. In understanding how minorities fit into a society in which they are “othered,” it is important to first understand how government policy allows for and may encourage the “othering” of certain groups. The Moroccan case clearly exemplifies how society’s views can often mirror governmental actions.

The movements and organizations that are described toward the end of this thesis are examples of slow-moving, but successful, efforts to counter historical narratives that “othered” the Jewish minority in Morocco. While Morocco’s history and the evolution of intergroup relations there are unique, aspects of such movements as these can be integrated and adjusted in other societies that seek to negotiate and equalize the rights of minorities in relation to a dominant majority.

In the context of Moroccan society, the themes this thesis explores have more specific significance. Throughout the twentieth century, and particularly after the Second World War, Morocco saw its once significant population of Jews emigrate in large numbers—mainly to Israel, France, and North America—at an much more rapid rate than before, due to various factors. As a result of this emigration, children growing up in Morocco today are not aware of the fact that a significant number of Jews in Israel and around the world still consider themselves Moroccan by heritage, culture, and perhaps birth. Furthermore, and maybe more importantly, many Moroccan Muslim youth are not aware of the fact that there are still Moroccan Jewish communities in Morocco, simply because many of the youth have never met a Jew, due to their diminishing numbers in Morocco. As a result, unlike their grandparents, most Moroccan Muslim children today have not had the chance to grow up in a society in which they can see Jews and Muslims living side-by-side as they did before.³ With this young generation, the word “Jew” is sometimes automatically dissociated from Moroccan identity. Rather, it has become synonymous with the word “Israeli,” and in turn, “Israel” is associated with conflict.

This reality demonstrates the significant consequences Jewish emigration from Morocco has on Morocco as a whole – it has drastically changed the historical narrative of culture and identity in what was once a pluralistic and religiously diverse society. In order to counter these consequences and to bring about a renewed acceptance of Jews as true members of Moroccan society, it is essential to bring about an awareness, particularly among Moroccan youth, of the history of Judaism in Morocco, the

³Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

preservation of Jewish culture in Morocco and the ability of Jews in Morocco to be just as Moroccan as their Muslim neighbors. Such awareness could not only impact the Jews who remain in Morocco, but could also allow Moroccan Muslim youth to better understand the complicated evolution of their own history and identity, which until recently was closely intertwined with Moroccan Jewish narratives.

The Construction of Conflict and Cooperation

Several secondary sources speak to the historical relations between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, and draw a detailed timeline of the events that led to emigration and present-day relations. There is relatively little research that focuses specifically on the ongoing dialogue and cooperation among Moroccan Muslims and Jews, amidst the tensions that have penetrated the social fabric in the last century. The secondary literature discussed here, however, addresses a variety of sub-themes concerning Moroccan Jewish experiences and contextualizes them within broader societal dynamics.

André Levy's piece, titled *Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach* speaks to the "isolationist tendencies" of Moroccan Jews as a minority group, highlighting the increasing emergence of cultural enclaves as the Jewish population overall declines. He acknowledges that, while his "data indicate isolation and identification with France and Israel as primary responses to this foreseen dissolution, this tiny and diminishing community cannot be self-sufficient."⁴ Focusing on this fact, he presents an issue relevant to most minority groups: while Moroccan Jews seek to preserve their identity through isolated cultural enclaves, it is necessary, in Moroccan society, for the Jewish minority and the Muslim majority to interact. His analysis particularizes the "dance of any minority anywhere," including the Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Moroccan groups who sought to "protect the integrity of [their] group towards the next generation." He addresses the question: how does one accept the surrounding culture, and embrace

⁴ André Levy, "Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach," (Israel: Ben Gurion University: 1999).

it...and at the same time not meld with it?⁵ He says that the basic solution he has seen is for “Jews to contain their relations in well-defined spaces and within clear social frames over which they aspire to hold some control.”⁶ While Levy speaks mainly about physical spaces, these frames can indicate intangible spaces as well, such as the poetry and music through which Judeo-Moroccan women passed their cultural values on to the younger generation in the private sphere.⁷

While conducting his fieldwork, Levy observes the interactions between Jews and Muslims on a beach in Casablanca. He observes the ways in which each group interacts with the other over card games, establishing unspoken rules that in turn seem to break down barriers, allowing each group to establish control to an extent, and diminish stereotypes. In these card games, Jews and Muslims form mixed couples when playing against another couple—Levy cites an interview with one of the players, who says that this is done on purpose, to avoid accusations along “ethnic” or religious lines. While this “mingling of couples,” as he calls it, seems like a way to break down barriers between Jews and Muslims in Morocco, it comes primarily from a wish to avoid preventable conflict and in this case “is an indication of deep social division outside the game.”⁸ His paper provides important historical context, and also provides a unique example of an effort that seeks to maintain friendly relations by deliberately constructing societal roles. The way in which these card games are structured—and the fact that they are so well-established on that particular beach—suggests that the players

⁵ Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

⁶ Levy, “Playing for Control of Distance,” 1999.

⁷ Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 2 December 2015.

⁸ Levy, “Playing for Control of Distance,” 1999.

share a desire to carry on with normal activities in cooperation with the “other,” without barriers across cultural and political lines.

Mapping Dialogue Between Jewish and Muslim Communities in Europe by Ruth Friedman identifies and explains the activities of institutions in five European countries that organize intercultural activities between Muslim and Jewish communities in each country. Friedman notes that such activities— such as the creation of a Jewish-Moroccan Muslim football tournament in an Amsterdam neighborhood— are relatively simple, as they are small-scale and require no national or international fundraising; however, due to the simplicity and small scale, such projects also remain largely unknown outside of their immediate target population. “The reality,” Friedman explains, “is that for some years dialogue has been going on quietly at the local level but ideas and practices are rarely shared.”⁹ Activists in Morocco share this notion as well. Despite the efforts of numerous small organizations that attempt to build bridges on individual levels, and the fact that there are many people and organizations putting their energy into intercultural efforts, “nothing will be done...if we don’t have the synergy between these initiatives.”¹⁰

Acknowledging the importance of the identities of “Arab Jews” in post-Zionist discourse and current politics, Emily Gottreich (2008) argues that the simplified concept of the “Arab Jew” implies a “particular politics of knowledge vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” and that, along with two other main factors, works to flatten and keep ambiguous the identity of the Arab Jew. She notes that in some circles, “the

⁹ Ruth Friedman, “Mapping Dialogue Between Jewish and Muslim Communities in Europe,” (USA: Berghahn Books: 2008).

¹⁰ Interview with El-Mehdi Boudra, Rabat. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 1 December 2015.

concept of the Arab Jew almost always implies a specific politics...more broadly, the idea of the Arab Jew emerged as a corrective to the...division created by Zionism on the one hand and Arab nationalism on the other, which together conspired to make the term 'Arab Jew' seem an oxymoron, or even, to some, a provocation." Through an analysis of the perceived mutual exclusivity of the two terms—Arab and Jew—that come together to describe this group of people, Gottreich exposes the historical dynamics that shaped experiences of North African Jews. In turn, she effectively starts to counter the assumptions that are made about this group based on the terminology that describes them, and thus effectively starts to steer readers away from generalizations.

Though the specific issue of language is only briefly touched upon in this paper, Rajuan and Bekerman (2011) offer, through a discussion of language, unique perspectives on cultural identity, national identity, and coexistence. The goal of the bilingual Palestinian-Jewish schools studied by Rajuan and Bekerman (2011) is "to raise youth who both acknowledge and respect one another...[and] at the same time retain loyalty to their own ethnic/cultural heritages and identities."¹¹ This goal and the structure of the schools simply exemplify the capacity for both mutual understanding and cultural retention among communities between which broader political tensions may exist. Clearly, there are several differences between the structures of the schools that Rajuan and Bekerman studied and the Jewish schools in Morocco that are attended by both Jewish and Muslim students. However, the authors, who studied the bilingual schools in Israel, managed to portray "the significance of bilingualism and its inter-

¹¹ Maureen Rajuan & Zvi Bekerman, "Teachers' 'inside' reports on language instruction in the Palestinian-Jewish Schools in Israel," (*Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 2011), 465.

connectedness to almost every aspect of school life” through an analysis of teachers’ final reports for an in-service.¹²

As Rajuan and Bekerman explain, very few teachers who participated in the in-service chose to focus explicitly on bilingualism within their reports. Instead, the authors found through analyzing the reports that the theme of national identity versus coexistence was the most prevalent. If the term “nation” is perceived in terms of cultural groups rather than state entities, then this theme is relevant to bilingual education in Morocco as well. The use of the majority group’s language—Hebrew in Israel and Arabic in Morocco—in theory indirectly influences the power dynamic between members of each language group. Particularly in the Jewish schools started by l’Alliance Israélite Universelle, however, this dynamic is altered with the presence of a third language, French, in which the bulk of conversations—especially those between Jewish and Muslim students—take place.¹³

In the Arab nationalist movement, which will be discussed later within the Moroccan context, common use of the Arabic language was one of the main criteria used in establishing a cohesive Arab identity and in that case served as a tool for alienation rather than cultural understanding. These days, youth in Morocco are also usually the most lacking in cultural awareness as social diversity rapidly declines. Many Moroccan Muslim children have not had the same chance as their parents and grandparents to grow up in a Moroccan society in which Jews and Muslims interacted

¹² Rajuan and Bekerman, “Teachers’ ‘inside’ reports,” 465.

¹³ Interview with Shimon Cohen, École Maïmonide, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 25 November 2015.

naturally on a daily basis.¹⁴ Because “deep acquaintance with the culture and traditions of the other is reflected through language,” the points put forth in this article enable readers to look at both language use and cultural understanding through a unique lens.

Written by Dina Elmahi, *Interfaith Muslim/Jewish Seminar: How Can We Foster a Grass-Root Cooperation Between Muslim and Jewish Youth in the EU?* is a report on the “Together for Sweden” conference that took place in “cooperation with European Union Jewish students” in Marrakech, Morocco in 2012. Elmahi summarizes the structure and explains the objectives of the conference, which briefly were “to connect Muslim and Jewish interfaith activists, establish a sustainable network of Muslim and Jewish youth, exchange methodologies by which interfaith work may be conducted, and inform each other about ongoing projects and campaigns.”¹⁵ Later on in her paper, Elmahi draws conclusions based on her observations of the successes and shortcomings of the conference. In her beginning synopsis, she also notes that the “European Union of Jewish Students selected Morocco as the location for the seminar due to its long standing history of multi-religious coexistence between the Abrahamic faiths.”¹⁶ The conference involved Jewish students from the European Union and Canada as well as Moroccan Muslim students.

After noting her observations, Elmahi uses her analysis of the conference’s outcomes to plan a structure for a conference that could take place in the future in

¹⁴ Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

¹⁵ Dina Elmahi, *Interfaith Muslim/Jewish Seminar: How Can We Foster a Grass-Root Cooperation Between Muslim and Jewish Youth in the EU?* (Sweden: 2012), 1-5.

¹⁶ Dina Elmahi, *Interfaith Muslim/Jewish Seminar*, 1-5.

Sweden. When relevant, she considered her and participants' experiences in the Marrakech conference within the context of such a conference in Sweden.

Dhimma Law and the Emergence of the Mellah

Jewish communities have existed in North Africa at least since the destruction of the Second Temple.¹⁷ Evidence also indicates some Jews may have come to Morocco long before 70 C.E. – inscriptions on the columns of a Jewish cemetery in Essaouira display the emblem of the Punic goddess, indicating “that Jews have lived in Morocco since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, when they escaped Babylonian captivity on Phoenician merchant ships.”¹⁸

Centuries later, under Islamic rule, Jews were given *dhimmi* or “protected” status. The Islamic principle of *dhimma*, or security and tolerance for non-Muslims, originated through various written deals between the Prophet Muhammad and other People of the Book in Muslim lands. The foundation for such agreements was laid by the Pact of ‘Umar, signed between the 7th and 9th centuries C.E., and established between Christians and Muslims of what is now Syria. The Pact outlines restrictions imposed upon “the Christians of such-and-such city...in return for which [they were] to be given a guarantee of security.”¹⁹ The same principle—restrictions in return for rights—was actively extended to Jews in Muslim lands during the same approximate time period, and is enshrined in documents such as the Constitution of the Medina.²⁰

¹⁷ Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89-106.

¹⁸ Regina Keil-Sagawe, *A Moroccan Jew with Arabo-Berber Roots*, (Germany: Qantara de, 2011), 1.

¹⁹ Norman Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America), 158.

²⁰ The document establishing the *dhimmi* status of Yemenite Jews is noted, in the Arabic text included in *Kirjath Sepher*, vol. 9 and translated by S.D. Goitein, to have been written (in *anno Higirae*, or Islamic Hijri years) in AH 17. However, this year in the corresponding Julian calendar is toward the late 630s, after the Prophet

According to another document scripted by the Prophet's relative Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Jews of Yemen were the first to earn official *dhimmi* status after displaying, steadfastly, support for the Prophet Muhammad in his battle against the local "heathens" who had tried to fight against him. Throughout the battle, the "Children of Israel fought in his vanguard...and the Prophet had extended his protection to them."²¹ Though he asked them to keep their Sabbath, the Prophet later learned that the Jews of Yemen had fought for him relentlessly through Shabbat, and he is said to have told them: "O men of the Children of Israel, by Allah, I shall reward you for this...I shall grant you my protection, my covenant, my oath, and my witness for as long as I live and as long as my community shall live after me, until they see my face on the Day of Resurrection."²²

As opposed to the Pact of 'Umar, which emphasizes restrictions, Ali ibn Abi Talib's document emphasizes the protection extended to the Jews by the Prophet Muhammad. In the text, the Prophet Muhammad promised that the "Children of Israel" would:

be safe under Allah's security – praised be He – and under the security of the Muslims and Believers....For I have taken them as my clients and extended protection to them...I have extended security to them in every village, in every market, and in all the land of the Muslims and the Believers. No wrong, no harm, and no crime should befall them. There shall be no legal claims against them, no usurpation of what is theirs, no tithing of their property, no special levies on their properties, nor on the fruits they bear, namely in their grain fields, their vineyards, and their palmeries. Allah shall not bless anyone who oppresses the Children of Israel even the weight of an atom. I shall testify against him on the Day of Resurrection.²³

Muhammad's death. Stillman, in his discussion, notes that Geniza versions of this text that indicate a date near AH 9 are more fitting (AH 10 corresponds to 631-632 A.D.).

²¹ Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 256.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

Across dynasties, ruling bodies operating under Islamic rule and with an Islamic understanding of law adopted this foundational principle of tolerance toward Jews, applying it as seen fit in their respective societies. Although the experiences of Jewish communities in Morocco during each period varied depending on the sultan and on regional politics, as *dhimmis* they were legally protected and allowed to retain their cultural and religious practices in return for loyalty to the sultan, certain restrictions, and the payment of a *jizya* tax.²⁴ Since *dhimmi* status rendered them unequal to Muslim subjects of the Islamic dynasties, many Jews and other non-Muslims despised the *dhimma* laws and were inadvertently harmed due to their status as *dhimmis*. Paradoxically, the protection they received under this set of laws would later become essential for the survival of Jews in Morocco and other French protectorates during the later periods, particularly when anti-Jewish decrees were issued under the Vichy government.²⁵

Justified by the government's obligation to protect its Jewish subjects, the local government in mid-15th century Fez established Morocco's first *mellah*. The *mellah* was particular to North Africa, and the term indicates the walled-off quarter seen in "some major cities and smaller towns, where, invoking religious precepts, in a dominant Muslim context, the local Jewish minority was forced to reside."²⁶ The structure of the *mellah* is in several ways strikingly similar to that of the European *ghetto*. The Jews

²⁴ Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89.

²⁵ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, "Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community," 97.

²⁶ Julio Calvo-Serrano, Fabián García-Carillo, Juan Manuel Santiago-Zaragoza, "Mellah: The Jews' Quarter at the Medinas of Morocco. New Interpretation of the Minority's Space in the Islamic City," *Procedia Engineering* 161 (2016), 1323.

who lived within each were restricted in movement and activity, were treated as lesser citizens, and both *mellahs* and *ghettos* were built to fulfill a “policy of Jewish confinement.”²⁷ However, these similarities between ghettos and *mellahs* should neither be overstated nor used to meld the European Jewish experience with that of their North African coreligionists, as the reasons why *mellahs* were created in various Moroccan cities differed based on the era and political climate. In North Africa, even though Jews were confined for political reasons, reasons to establish the *mellah* “notably...lacked the predominant discriminatory motives, religious and social in nature, that motivated European rulers to restrict Jews to ghettos.”²⁸

Even at its advent, the *mellah* served several different purposes and there was no singular reason that led to its construction in different parts of Morocco. Preexisting relations between Moroccan Jews and their local government, and between Jews and other religious populations in the society, dictated when and whether a *mellah* would be established in a given city.²⁹ It is true that there are “basic continuities cutting across Moroccan Jewish society” regarding the origins of *mellahs* across Morocco.³⁰ For instance, many argue that the *mellah* was first founded under the assumption that “keeping the Jews within close proximity to the Kasbah made it easier for the sultan to protect them from aggressors while allowing the *makhzan* (royal administration) easy

²⁷ Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 12.

²⁸ Shlomo Deshen, *The Mellah Society*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 20.

²⁹ Mainly, as *mellahs* were first constructed in cities, this refers to relations between Moroccan Jews and Muslims, and between Moroccan Jews and Christians.

³⁰ Emily Gottreich, “On the Origins of the Mellah of Marrakesh,” (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 299.

access to their taxes and services.”³¹ Others describe the *mellah* as a “manifestation of inclusion and exclusion” in an Islamic city, and attribute to its establishment “differences in daily religious practices” and religious needs between Muslim and Jewish communities. And still others, uncomfortable with attributing one specific reason to the *mellah*’s advent and growing importance throughout the Middle Ages, note the changing function of the *mellah* overtime. In analyzing this evolving character, such scholars highlight that “when the attitude towards the Jews shifted, the role of the *mellah* changed from being a safeguard for the Jews to a means of isolating them and controlling them.”³² The history varies so widely between regions, however, that there is no specific set of years or reasons to point to for either the *mellah*’s advent or the changes in its function. Before we can fully understand the *mellah*’s role in shaping Moroccan urban society, “we have yet fully to contend with the historical reality that each of Morocco’s *mellahs*...was created at a specific moment in time and place and at least partly in response to local and regional circumstance.”³³

The first *mellah* was established in Fez by the Marinid dynasty in 1438, and was built immediately following an attack on Jewish residents of this northern city.³⁴ This attack likely acted as a catalyst that justified the dynasty’s decision to remove Jews from the center of town. While other cities had different reasons for establishing Jewish quarters at a particular time, the pattern of *mellahization*, and the structure that first emerged in Fez were imitated over the next few centuries in other Moroccan cities with

³¹ Gottreich, “Origins,” 299.

³² Dana Lovrek, “Public Health in the Mellah of Marrakesh from 1879-1912,” (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, 2012), 1.

³³ Gottreich, “Origins,” 288.

³⁴ Daniel Schroeter, *The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155.

significant Jewish populations. In the southern city of Marrakech, for example, a combination of factors, rather than one singular catalyzing event, led to the creation of the *mellah* between 1557 and 1563. Here, attacks on the Jewish population in Marrakech were more of a result of the *mellah*'s construction rather than its cause. There are two main reasons, among the many, that historian Emily Gottreich points to as impetuses for the *mellah*'s establishment in Marrakech. The first is the population influx to Marrakech – and Morocco as a whole – from the Iberian Peninsula and other parts of Europe during the Sa'adi period.³⁵ Though Marrakech was not as severely affected by this population influx as other cities were, the impacts of population pressure were still manifested in strained relations between the two main groups of *dhimmi*s – Christians and Jews – in Marrakech. As a result of the consequential “high visibility of non-Muslim immigrants” in Marrakech, and the disruption they seemed to be creating, “clear hierarchies of space” were created in the city.³⁶

Secondly, the Sa'adi rulers of Marrakech, in competition with the northern capital of Fez, found that the *mellah* was a “crucial element of *Fāsī* urban life [that] was lacking in Marrakesh” as it provided to the rulers a spatial way to demonstrate their control of inter-group relations.³⁷ As a result, in order to legitimize their own rule of Marrakech, the Sa'adis built the Marrakech *mellah*. The experiences of the communities after the *mellah*'s construction, in Marrakech and other *mellah* cities across Morocco,

³⁵ For more information on the population influx to Morocco during this time period, and the impact it had on intra-dhimmi relations, see Emily Gottreich's article, *On the Origins of the Mellah of Marrakesh*. The Sa'adis ruled Morocco from the mid-16th century to the mid-17th century, and during this time period, city structure underwent significant and enduring changes.

³⁶ Gottreich, “Origins,” 298.

³⁷ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 27.

however, also expose the impacts – intentional and unintentional – the institution had on inter-group dynamics over the next few centuries.

Economic Interdependence in the *Mellah* Society

Despite the varying reasons for their construction, after they were built, *mellahs* across Morocco served similar functions. The *mellah* became an important institution in Moroccan urban settings over the years, as it influenced patterns that affected the economic and social functioning of the Moroccan city and shaped the interactions of Moroccans across its walls. Though it was meant to seclude, the *mellah* was not only a space “fully invested with meaning as Jewish space,” but also “fully integrated into its urban setting” in the Moroccan city.³⁸ In most cities that underwent *mellahization* in Morocco, the walls of the *mellah* were porous and allowed for economic and cultural exchanges to continue freely between Muslim and Jewish residents of the city.³⁹ Though the direct evidence is relatively sparse, researchers have found, across most Moroccan cities, that Jewish and Muslim communities formed relationships of economic interdependence across the *mellah*’s borders. A case study of the coastal city of Salé indicates that:

The Jews and Muslims of Salé maintained close economic relations, and during the expansion of commerce the Jews often acted as creditors for their Muslim compatriots. Moreover they sometimes formed partnerships in commerce or property, especially in the commercial quarters which developed in the New *Mellah* and *Sīdī Turkī* during the early years of the protectorate. Although detailed evidence is lacking, Jews and Muslims in Salé had apparently maintained ties of economic interdependence

³⁸ Susan Gilson Miller, Attilio Petruccioli, and Mauro Bertagnin, “Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912),” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60 No. 3 (2001), 310.

³⁹ Daniel Schroeter, *The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155.

for centuries, and these developed still further with the penetration of European trade (italics added).⁴⁰

Modern scholars who study economic interdependence between separate states in the context of international relations generally fall into one of two schools of thought. The first of these concludes that economic interdependence between states serves as an incentive for good relations—economic, political, and social—because if such relations were to deteriorate, each state would face the consequences of significant economic losses.⁴¹ Those who adhere to the view of this liberal school point to “the European Union as a prime example of the power of economic interdependence to hold together in peace countries with a long and bitter history of wars and conflicts between themselves.”⁴²

The second school contradicts this notion, stating that, while economic interdependence might have short-term benefits for each economy, in the long-term, it serves to undermine peace and security between states. Interdependence, they say, is unstable, because economic relationships rarely function under a balanced power dynamic. Rather, economic interdependence can, and often does, slowly evolve into a hierarchical relationship of economic dependency. This realist argument takes the disagreements that arise with increased interaction between humans into account, noting that “as trade and prosperity increases over time, so...does the range of economic issues over which disputes can emerge, sometimes leading to violent conflict.”⁴³ In an arena

⁴⁰ Kenneth Brown, *People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City, 1830-1930*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 159.

⁴¹ Derek Braddon, “The Role of Economic Interdependence in the Origins and Resolution of Conflict,” *Revue d’économie politique* 122 No. 2 (2012), 301.

⁴² Braddon, “Economic Interdependence,” 301.

⁴³ Braddon, “Economic Interdependence,” 301.

where interaction is inevitable, however, purposefully establishing a system of mutual benefit to all those involved may prove to be effective in the long term.

Semi-autonomous nations within states, like all economic sub-units, ultimately operate within the same state system and are each subject to the state's economic policies and trends – therefore, not all of the theories associated with interstate conflict and economic interdependency can apply. However, particularly when these sub-units are operating within distinct spaces in the same state, and, due to their operation within overlapping spaces where interaction is inevitable and often necessary, some aspects of economic interdependency theory can be used to analyze intrastate dynamics.

After *mellahs* were established, the Jews and Muslims of Morocco operated within their separate but overlapping spheres, and the specialization of labor was divided along lines of religious identity. In Morocco's *mellah* society, "Jews were primarily petty tradesman and artisans, serving special needs of the Muslim population. A general form of economic symbiosis developed over the centuries, in which Jews exchanged goods and services for the agricultural staples and craft skills of the Muslims."⁴⁴ The formation of these relations was natural, but did not go unnoticed and was critiqued by certain political groups, who were concerned that such ties would obstruct the Jewish community's semi-autonomous status. On the political level, therefore, Jewish institutions whose leaders were of this opinion made extra efforts to expand and make more distinct the institutions' spheres of influence within the *mellah*

⁴⁴ Alex Weingrod, "Reciprocal Change: A Case Study of a Moroccan Immigrant Village in Israel," *The Middle East Journal* 14 No. 3 (1960).

and in spaces where Jewish economic influence pervaded.⁴⁵ Despite their efforts, however, personal relationships between Jewish and Muslim tradesmen and clients continued over the centuries, and in the absence of widespread political tension, the formation of these relationships undermined the Moroccan government's and the sectarian institutions' political efforts to completely separate the communities into their respective spaces.

Jerry Harris's analysis of such "two-dimensional interdependence" of state economies sheds light on the changing conditions later in Moroccan history that may have led to the strengthening of national identities among Muslims and Jews in Morocco, and eventually, increasing separation between the two groups.⁴⁶ He discusses the impact of economic interdependence on the development of the goals, means and overall success of internal separatist groups, stating that, in analyzing the causes of separatist movements, one must "acknowledge the role played by economic factors [as] directly or indirectly, economic factors impose constraints on, and provide opportunities for, separatist movements. The principles he focuses on can be used to inform an understanding of how economic interdependence impacts minority-majority group relations, as various factors that influence economic dynamics served to further separate Jews in Morocco from their Muslim compatriots.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Stephen Sharot, *Comparative Perspectives on Judaism and Jewish Identities*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011): 29.

⁴⁶ Jerry Harris, *The Nation in the Global Era: Conflict and Transformation*, (Boston: Brill, 2009), 321.

⁴⁷ These changing dynamics became most apparent, and indeed were in large part caused by, the era of French influence. For more information on how French influence affected the economic relationship between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, see pp. 52 to 55 of this thesis.

In pre-protectorate Morocco's particular case, however, because of the natural overlap between Jewish and Muslim spheres of economic influence within the overall Moroccan state, causality in relation to intrastate tension is difficult to discern.⁴⁸ That is, the strength of the link between pre-protectorate Muslim-Jewish economic interdependency and the political tensions that emerged and escalated intermittently between the two groups remains unclear, though each had some effect on the other.⁴⁹

The relatively uneventful interaction between Jewish and Muslim economies in Morocco for several centuries, the foundation of which was laid by the *mellah* years, serves as an example of both the liberal and realist schools of thought associated with economic interdependency theory, in a local context. On the one hand, certain Jewish institutions saw the porosity of the *mellah*'s walls as a threat to their already limited control of Jewish space in Morocco. On the other hand, the dependence of each community on the other established a sense of mutual reliability and need, and because of the specialization of labor along lines of identity, both communities would be significantly affected in the unlikely case that total separation could be maintained.

⁴⁸ More informed analysis of the economic dynamics within Morocco would be needed in order to better understand the relationship between economic interdependency and intrastate tensions in this context.

⁴⁹ The term "pre-protectorate" is referring to the eras in Moroccan history preceding the French political presence. In the context of this chapter, the term refers to the time period between the establishment of the *mellah* as an influential institution and the arrival of the French in 1912. This distinction is important because the French protectorate increased Moroccan interaction with France and other European states – which, at the time, were becoming more cognizant of complications with the second-class status of Jews – adding an extra element of interstate economic and political relations. The French economic establishment in Morocco soon served to privilege the Moroccan Jewish minority over the Muslim majority, and therefore created additional political tensions on both sides, associated with economic opportunity and political inequality, that were not so significant or as openly addressed before the French dimension came into being.

Because the Muslim population was dominant, however, the reliability between the two groups was mutual but not equal. The lack of balance, and the duality of the situation brings to light the variety of factors that fed the changing dynamics between Muslims and Jews in Morocco throughout the country's history.

The economic bonds described above are a key example of the patterns resulting from *mellahization* – after the institution's advent, these patterns continued and became well established over the next few centuries. While the division of economic responsibilities along lines of religious identity became an integral aspect of Moroccan society for centuries, these specific economic responsibilities also pushed each community to depend on the other to maintain a well-rounded state economy and for each city to fully function. The bonds built across physical barriers in this way were the foundation of a bridge between the two communities. This bridge was in ways was strengthened over the years, despite the government's efforts to physically separate Moroccan Jews from the rest of Moroccan society.

When Muslims and Jews entered the other's spaces in *mellah*-era Morocco, the activities were indeed mainly economic. As Jews did in the *medina*⁵⁰, “Muslims came to the Jewish quarter not only to buy, but also to sell their own goods and services.”⁵¹ The economic interdependence was, therefore, not only on a market-to-market level but also on an individual level, as many traditional economic activities depended on individual craftsmanship and service. The cross-cultural interactions, though in large part focused on business, were frequent and fairly organic, and therefore accepted as a natural part of the Moroccan way of life, particularly in urban areas.

⁵⁰ The *medina* is the pre-colonial Muslim quarter of a Moroccan city.

⁵¹ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 74.

This is all not to say, however, that good relations between Muslims and Jews in Morocco were consistent, or that the physical separation of the communities through the establishment of the *mellah* was not detrimental in any way. Even in the economic arena, Jews faced harassment, as economic activities were frequently not confined to cities. Studies of economic activity reveal that, in the nineteenth century, “over one-half of male Jews earned their living by traveling for extended periods in tribal areas away from the cities.”⁵² Thus, many urban Jews, identifiable and distinguished from Muslim travelers by their clothing, spent the majority of their time traveling in the hinterlands amongst non-Jews with whom they had not yet formed any sort of personal or economic tie. To ensure greater safety for their travels, Moroccan Jews learned how to preemptively form ties with patrons that extended further than payments for goods and services.

Frequently [the ties] included handicraft and business services that continued for a lifetime; sometimes these even passed from one generation to the next. In this manner, patron-client relations were bolstered by family tradition, feelings of loyalty and trust. Occasionally, there was also a sacral element to these ties, such as when they were forged by , an oath and animal sacrifice at the doorstep of the Muslim patron. The principle guiding the *‘ar* was that an important personage brought shame upon himself if he refused a request made by a person of lower status making a sacrifice on his doorstep.⁵³

Through interactions like these, Jewish culture in both urban and rural areas, remained an integral and accepted part of Morocco’s diverse character. Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman (2010) note that many non-urban Moroccan Jewish communities of this time lived in close proximity to and had generally good relations with the indigenous Amazigh, or Berber, populations—speaking “Judaeo-Berber” and maintained

⁵² Deshen, *The Mellah Society*, 20.

⁵³ Deshen, *The Mellah Society*, 21.

a shared culture. For such groups, “certain prayers, such as the benedictions of the Torah, were said in *Tamazight*⁵⁴...and there are even fragments of a Haggadah in *Tamazight*, transcribed in Hebrew characters.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, “prior to French penetration, Jews were largely protected by local Berber leaders...This form of protection became hereditary. The children of the protectors inherited the role of protecting the Jews’ children.”⁵⁶ This way of ensuring greater security was similar to that established by ‘*ar* oaths between traveling Jewish merchants outside of their city and their Muslim patrons in the hinterlands they frequented. Though the extensiveness of such practices as these differed based on the degree of tolerance in the political climate, these relationships are a few of many examples of the coexistence across cultures and religions that continued to characterize Moroccan society through periods of political chaos.

Protection of Jews through government policy – which simultaneously served to differentiate Jews from the rest of the population, characterize them as outsiders, and make them depend on protection – was limited in *mellah*-era Morocco and extended solely to the *mellah* space. As demonstrated through the pacts formed between Jews and Muslims or Amazigh tribes-people, safety in other spaces was in large part dependent on personal relationships. In theory, Jews were offered legal protections in all of Morocco due to their status as *dhimmis*; however, the laws were enforced to varying

⁵⁴ Tamazight is one of the three main indigenous Amazigh, or Berber, languages spoken in Morocco and is predominant in the Central Atlas mountainous region.

⁵⁵ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community,” 96.

⁵⁶ Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco 1862-1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

degrees, and the creation of the *mellah* as a way of protecting the Jews created the illusion that the *dhimma* contract was being upheld. In reality, the provisions of the *dhimma* contract that dictated restrictions in Jews' behavior—restrictions to which they *dhimmi*s had agreed in return for protection—served to clearly separate Jews from the rest of Moroccan society and indeed made them more vulnerable by emphasizing their status as second-class citizens. Outside of the *mellah* space, they were frequently treated as such by their Muslim compatriots, and the degree to which they were discriminated against in day-to-day interactions outside of the *mellah* tended to correlate inversely to how strongly *dhimmi* laws were enforced by particular sultans.⁵⁷ *Dhimma* law, in a sense, served to legitimize the notion that Jews were not truly citizens of Morocco and were therefore only worthy of being protected in certain spaces.

Despite the constraints that *dhimma* laws placed on the Jews' relationship with Moroccan Muslim society and the ruling parties, they were one of few minority groups that was offered this privileged—albeit, severely limited—protection. Because of their unique status, the manner in which Jews were treated by their government and by Muslims in Moroccan society during a particular political era served as a microcosm of Morocco's relative political stability as a whole.⁵⁸ The Jews were “part and parcel” of the process of Morocco's political and socioeconomic development. Their treatment relative to Moroccan Muslims, therefore, sheds light on a specific governing body's true legitimacy and tolerance for minorities who in an unstable situation might be seen as a threat to the dominant group's power. Moulay Ismaïl, the second ruler of the Moroccan Alaouite dynasty, is remembered for the climate of relative safety and security he

⁵⁷ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 93.

⁵⁸ Levy, “City and Society,” 250.

created and maintained during his rule of Morocco. This climate was tolerant enough that, generally, “ ‘even a woman or *dhimmi* could travel from Oujda to Wadi Nul unmolested’ (Stillman 1974:17).”⁵⁹

Under less tolerant rulers, the restrictions of *dhimma* law were more strictly enforced, and as a result, Jews were more easily identified based on their behavior in accordance with these laws. Under strictly enforced *dhimma* law, Jews were prohibited from riding “horses (for these are noble beasts), to wear shoes in the vicinity of mosques, to wear colorful clothes, to carry arms, to build synagogues, and so on.”⁶⁰ Other reports indicate that, during certain time periods, Jews were required to remove their shoes upon leaving the *mellah*, and to walk barefoot throughout the *medina*. It was the application of such laws as these that varied widely on the local level, particularly up until the 19th century. Even though the laws were originally enacted to prevent administrative mistakes, the rules soon became forms of humiliation, and regulations regarding Jews’ behavior and clothing made them visibly vulnerable targets outside of the *mellah*.

As seen in most societies that must negotiate the rights of minorities in relation to a majority population, bias and the enforcement of discriminatory provisions by the Moroccan government implicitly permitted Moroccan society at-large to treat Jews with disrespect and sometimes to harm them. Jews were subject to the whims of the sultan and local leaders, and their status in Morocco significantly declined in the late 1800s, when the pasha Umalik began giving special attention to Jews’ clothing and

⁵⁹ Levy, “City and Society,” 251.

⁶⁰ Levy, *Notes on the Jewish-Muslim Relationships: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community*, 368.

appearance.⁶¹ Before Umalik, Jews had been allowed to wear shoes in most parts of the *medina*, except for areas in front of mosques, but Umalik added further restrictions to this freedom as well. When a Jewish man under Umalik's rule walked with his shoes on through the *medina*—in a part where shoes had until that point been allowed— “a soldier who noticed him threw a rock at his head and opened a large wound that gushed blood... We have become the bêtes noires of the Arabs, who hit us each time they see us in the medina.”⁶² These fluctuations in the treatment of the Jews in Moroccan cities continued to vary, and the dynamics were further complicated by the increasing involvement of European powers in Moroccan affairs by the end of the 18th century.

Jews in Protectorate-Era Morocco

French interests in Morocco began long before the Protectorate was officially established. With the beginnings of French involvement in Moroccan affairs came many changes in the position of Moroccan Jews relative to Moroccan society as a whole. A significant example that points to this changing status is the increasing prevalence of Moroccan Jews in government positions – many served as agents, translators, and local representatives of European powers.⁶³ Because of the foreign language skills that many Moroccan Jews had, and due to their social and economic transnational ties, many Moroccan Jews seeking higher civil status earned these

⁶¹ Proving the volatility of the Jews' situation, treatment toward the Jews had bettered significantly by the early 1902 and laws against them were even more strict in 1910 than they were in 1880. For more information about the different extremes of treatment toward Jews in Muslim space during particular time periods, see Gottreich, “The Mellah of Marrakesh,” chapter four.

⁶² Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 95.

⁶³ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 7.

government positions and served as liaisons between the French government and the Muslims in Morocco with whom they shared local knowledge and culture.⁶⁴ As a result of their dominance in these positions, combined with their historically transnational status, Jews often inadvertently became informants for the French government. Consequentially, they were eventually seen by some of their fellow Moroccans as conspirators who helped enable the French to establish control over the country.

These government positions that Jews held brought with them an elevated status that was of political and economic benefit and social detriment. The French-Moroccan commercial treaty, signed in 1767, exacerbated divisions along lines of both religious identity and economic class by providing special privileges for Moroccans – both Muslims and Jews – under European employ. This treaty granted special political and tax exemption rights to government officials, who were deemed *protégés* of the European powers, but not of the sultan.⁶⁵ The resulting friction between members of different socio-economic classes culminated in a series of attacks against Jews and Muslims of the upper classes toward the end of the 19th century, and, “on the eve of the Protectorate,” in the early 20th century, “these attacks began to specifically target the *mellahs* and the Jewish businesses.”⁶⁶ While the upper-class Jews were held in disdain by the majority of the lower-class Muslim population at the time, it is important to note that “in terms of their economic conditions, the bulk of Moroccan Jews experienced

⁶⁴ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 39.

⁶⁵ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 95.

⁶⁶ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 95.

very nearly the same squalor and grinding poverty as the Muslim masses.”⁶⁷ The separation of upper-class Moroccan Jews from the rest of Moroccan society created an interesting paradox: a small proportion of *protégés*, who were predominantly upper-class Moroccan Jews, were in close contact with the governing colonial body to whom the majority Muslim population were subject while the vast number of Jews in Morocco lived in subordination to this majority Muslim population.⁶⁸ Regardless, Jews as a group were seen as accomplices of the colonial government. This perception grew as France officially began its rule of Morocco and brought with it more promises for Moroccan Jews than it did for the Moroccan population as a whole.

France had become increasingly involved in Moroccan affairs over the course of the 19th century in multiple spheres. Not only did the French come with a colonial fervor, but also brought with them to Morocco the echoes of European ideas advocating for the rights of religious minorities.⁶⁹ After the European Revolutions and particularly after the age of the Enlightenment, changes had begun to occur in French society regarding the position of French Jews; Jews and Christians started to negotiate the status of Jews in European society, and eventually, the Jews’ position alongside their Christian countrymen was elevated.⁷⁰ During the first half of the nineteenth century, when France’s power began rapidly extending south toward Morocco, Jews in Western Europe were encouraged by the relatively more equal status many of them had gained in

⁶⁷ Leland Bowie, “An Aspect of Muslim-Jewish Relations in Late Nineteenth-Century Morocco: A European Diplomatic View,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, No. 1 (Cambridge University Press: 1976), 18.

⁶⁸ Bowie, “An Aspect of Muslim-Jewish Relations,” 19.

⁶⁹ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 93.

⁷⁰ This elevation of status was before the 1930s, the Third Reich, and the Vichy government.

European society and were determined to help Jews in other regions of the world achieve the same.⁷¹ From 1830 onward, Jews in Morocco and other North African countries were increasingly exposed to revolutionary ideas that were being exchanged among European citizens.

Discussions about societal inequalities were much more complicated in the Moroccan context due to the “triangular” and hierarchical “relationship between colonized Jews, the colonizing power, and French Jewish citizens.”⁷² Due to the unequal and inconsistent treatment the majority of Jews received as *dhimmi*, Moroccan Jews hoped that the Moroccan government would adopt such ideas as well, and that the ideas would be supported by Moroccan Muslim society at large.⁷³ Instead, the encroachment of European ideas into Moroccan affairs, coupled with the socioeconomic divisions within the Jewish community and between Jews and Muslims, served to create increasing mutual fear and tension between Jewish and Muslim citizens of Morocco. As discussed above, the socioeconomic position of educated urban Jews in relation to the majority of their Muslim neighbors began to change and as the European powers started to encroach upon the sultan’s rule, *dhimmi* status started becoming less apparent, even for Jews who were not serving in government positions. De jure *dhimma* law effectively continued, however, until the official beginning of the French Protectorate in 1912.

⁷¹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 31.

⁷² Daniel Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco* (USA: Indiana, 2006), 174.

⁷³ Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle and Moroccan Jews

As Moroccan Jews struggled to bring the ideals of “*liberté, égalité, et fraternité*” to their fellow Moroccans, European Jews even outside of France began to advocate strongly for the rights of their Moroccan co-religionists; Sir Moses Montefiore, who came to Morocco from Britain in the 1860s, condemned the humiliation and harm to which Moroccan Jews were subject, and convinced the Sultan Muhammad IV to legally ensure that “*Israélites*”⁷⁴ under his empire would be treated with “utmost benevolence.”⁷⁵ His visit is often seen as the point after which Morocco was faced with consistent “foreign diplomatic pressure intertwined with European Jewish concerns” that from then on dictated Muslim-Jewish relations in Morocco.⁷⁶ While they received the support of their advocates from Europe, Moroccan Jews were faced with the uncomfortable position of being singled out by foreign powers, and in that manner, were further alienated from their Muslim compatriots.

Due to the efforts of French Jews particularly, the Alliance Israélite Universelle became one of the main instruments by which Western European Jews sought to ameliorate the situation of their Moroccan – and other non-Western – brothers and sisters.⁷⁷ The Alliance was founded in France in 1860, and, by bringing enlightened Western education to Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, its primary

⁷⁴ Israel was not yet established as a state at the time of Sir Montefiore’s visit; however, the French term *Israélite* can refer to anyone of the Jewish faith, rather than just Israelis.

⁷⁵ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 89.

⁷⁶ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 1-2.

⁷⁷ The Alliance Israélite Universelle will be hereinafter referred to as the “Alliance” or the “AIU.”

goal was to help Jews in these regions rise out of their status as unequal citizens.⁷⁸ More specifically, the AIU was created to help Jews who were facing unjust circumstances, harm, or forced conversion in predominantly Christian or Muslim countries in these three regions. Morocco was, in fact, the AIU's special project, and it left a legacy there that remains significant to this day. In its activities within and outside of Morocco, the AIU had three main goals. First, it sought to work "toward the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews" through French secular education.⁷⁹ Cognizant of the opposition it might face from North African Jews attached to their traditions, however, the AIU from the beginning tried to find a balance between the integration of progressive Western ideas and traditional North African Jewish education in its model of curriculum.⁸⁰ While furthering what its leaders called the moral progress of Jews in these countries, the AIU also intended to lend "effective support to all those who suffer because of their membership in the Jewish faith." Lastly, the Alliance

⁷⁸ Peter Drucker, "Disengaging from the Muslim Spirit": *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and Moroccan Jews*, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, No. 1, March 2015, 4.

⁷⁹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 33.

⁸⁰ Though the Alliance sought to find this balance, scholars note that the AIU for the most part failed to fully integrate truly traditional, rural Moroccan Jews into their system. Furthermore, the economic changes that came with France's establishment of the protectorate caused Jews and Muslims—particularly those in rural areas—engaged in crafts or small enterprises that were rendered obsolete by the modernized colonial economy to lose their livelihood. As will be discussed later, it is in appealing to these traditional or marginalized Jews in the hinterlands of Morocco that the Alliance failed, and that the Zionists succeeded. For more information on these divides between rural and urban Jews in Morocco under the French protectorate, see pp. --- to --- of this thesis. For a more detailed analysis, see Aomar Boum, *From 'Little Jerusalems' to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism and Rural Jewish Emigration*.

worked to make European leaders and the enlightened European public aware of the injustices Jews continued to face around the world.⁸¹

With these goals laying its foundation, the first AIU school was opened in Tetouan in 1862, and the Alliance was supported over the following decades by the French consulate in Essaouira.⁸² In part because it had, during the time of the AIU's establishment, the largest Jewish population of any country in the region, Morocco was fertile ground for the development of the AIU's interests. After a number of years, the AIU operated in tandem a total of eighty-three schools in Morocco – more than the number of schools it operated in all other countries combined.⁸³ French was the language of instruction in these schools, as the AIU leaders saw French language instruction in Morocco as a gateway to modern French culture for Moroccan Jews.

The Alliance attempted to emancipate Moroccan Jews by eliminating the practices that Western society saw as backward. It strove to modernize them through “Western education and political reform.”⁸⁴ This modernization goal was in line with the broader Protectorate government's goal for Moroccan society and economy as a whole.

⁸¹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 34.

⁸² Although schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle still exist in Morocco, they are now Moroccan institutions.

⁸³ Gottreich, *Mellah of Marrakesh*, 9.

⁸⁴ Daniel Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco* (USA: Indiana, 2006), 170.

The Modernizing Economy and Changing Roles of Moroccan Jews

Before the French entered Morocco, Moroccan Jews were limited in the scope of economic activities they could pursue, due to the specialization of labor that occurred along religious lines as *mellah* society developed. The semi-permeable *mellah* over the five centuries preceding French presence in Morocco somewhat isolated the Jewish community from the Muslim *medina*; however, the *mellah* also brought with it a degree of autonomy within the Jewish communities, autonomy that vanished as the French government consolidated its power and controlled, in a different way than the sultan, the Jews' economic activities.

In 1918, after the first six years of the Protectorate, the sultan of Morocco issued a *dahir*⁸⁵ to promote reorganization of economic roles within the Moroccan Jewish communities, the purpose of which was to promote “modernization” among reorganized groups.⁸⁶ This goal of modernization characterized much of France's engagement with the Jews of Morocco—and Moroccan society as a whole—during the Protectorate years, particularly in the period directly preceding World War II. Morocco's location at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and the Middle East allowed the French to treat it as a center of international trade, and as European capitalism began taking over the once-traditional Moroccan economy, many of its once-thriving economic centers began to rapidly decline.⁸⁷

Though Moroccan Jews were thought of as eager to modernize and acculturate to the French economic way of life because of the political advantages Europeanization

⁸⁵ A *dahir* is an official decree issued by the Moroccan king.

⁸⁶ Schroeter and Chetrit, “Jews in Colonial Morocco,” 170.

⁸⁷ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 98.

would offer them, it was in cities where Jews were most active that changes took place most slowly. Marrakech, southern Morocco's largest economic center toward the end of the nineteenth century, was one of the last major cities to adopt a more European structure. The *mellah* of Marrakech was porous enough that the Jews' economic activities – which were mainly in crafting and manual labor – were essential to the viability of the Marrakech economy and tightly intertwined with the activities of Muslims in the *medina*. As a result, this city could more easily resist the invasiveness of European economic behavior. Over the years, however, as French influence became increasingly prevalent, tradesmen in Marrakech found themselves establishing economic ties to Europe while still maintaining local ones.⁸⁸ The French maintained adequate control over their economic routes in Morocco, but as the importance of local economy declined, so did the sultan's control over the few local routes that remained in use. As a result, the merchants that continued trading along these routes and developing their local economy while simultaneously integrating into the European globalized economy were traveling part of the time on routes that had fallen to disuse and that were no longer regulated. Due to the lack of regulation, they were susceptible to exploitation, robbery and murder “en route... Jewish merchants were particularly vulnerable at the eleven or so *nazālas* (toll stations) that dotted the route between Marrakesh and Essaouira.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 120.

⁸⁹ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 120.

Rural-Urban Differences Between Jews Under Protectorate Morocco

Undoubtedly, friction grew with European influence and French colonial power in Morocco between Muslims, Jews, and the colonial body, particularly as a result of new economic policies and changing socioeconomic status. The effect of French policies and institutions was most immediately seen in strategically located urban areas, where these institutions concentrated their activities. In the rural south in particular, “the reforms implemented in the early part of the French protectorate had little impact,” due to the distance of the rural south from the French colonial center and the lack of institutions established there that acted as extensions of French rule.⁹⁰ Even previously significant urban centers in the south of Morocco were at first neglected in the colonial modernization movement, and cities like Essaouira faced rapid emigration of their elite, including Jewish tradesmen and merchants, who moved to new, modernized port cities such as Casablanca, Rabat, Agadir, and Safi.⁹¹

The AIU was one of the most effective arms of the French colonial effort that sought particularly to modernize the Jewish population of Morocco. Like the French colonial government as a whole, the Alliance faced difficulty establishing its presence in the south of Morocco, in cities like Marrakech as well as in southern rural areas such as Akka and Goulmim.⁹² This difficulty was due to a variety of factors – geographical, cultural, and institutional.

⁹⁰ Schroeter and Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco*, 195.

⁹¹ “Essaouira,” Al Akhawayn University, Accessed Online.

⁹² Aomar Boum, “Schooling in the Bled: Jewish Education and the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Southern Rural Morocco, 1830-1962,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 3, No. 1 (2010).

Marrakech, an interior city, was exposed to the Europeans later on than coastal cities were, and even when foreigners began to enter Marrakech toward the end of the 19th century, they “were taken aback by the cold welcome they received from the denizens of the *mellah*, who treated even foreign Jews with suspicion.”⁹³ To add to the suspicion, in the Moroccan rural south, Jews and Muslims, while separated into the *mellah* and *medina*, lived in much closer proximity to one another, and the *mellah* was more integrated into the walled villages. This “spatial proximity between Muslim and Jewish households reinforced social and cultural warmth despite the religious differences,” and still allowed people in the Jewish minority to retain their own practices in their own space.⁹⁴ In these hinterlands, there were few significant pre-existing divides that a foreign presence could mitigate or exacerbate.

The southern resistance to welcoming Europeans can be interpreted as a resistance to modernization, rather than to the Europeans themselves. In the Moroccan south, “the orthodoxy of the Jews is as strict and conservative as that of the Mohammedans... This uncompromising religious attitude makes the Moroccan Jews as suspicious of Christians as they are of the Jews of other countries”⁹⁵ who, in the Western sense, had undergone a modern transformation before they arrived in Morocco to bring the same to Moroccan Jews.⁹⁶

Throughout the 1930s, disenfranchised rural Jews from the south were losing access to a secure livelihood as their traditional local economy slowly became obsolete.

⁹³ Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, 10.

⁹⁴ Boum, “Schooling in the Bled,” 2010.

⁹⁵ Eugène Aubin, *Morocco of To-Day*, (London: Ballantyne, Hanson, & Co., 1903), 209.

⁹⁶ This refers to the societal transformations in Europe that took place during the Enlightenment.

At the same time, they were not seeing the benefits of a modernized European economy manifest in their lifestyle. By the time the Alliance was able to effectively make its way into southern Morocco, in the late 1930s, these Jews had already begun leaving Morocco to find opportunity elsewhere, primarily in Palestine. The AIU continued to concentrate and develop its efforts in the rural south, however, focusing on those who had chosen to stay. The importance of appealing to tradition is seen clearly through accounts describing the success of certain teachers in the south. These teachers were trained at specific AIU training schools that taught them to maintain a balance between modern secular education and the traditional education that until the AIU's establishment in the south had been the responsibility of local rabbis. Rabbis were hired by the AIU schools to teach Hebrew language, and "in order not to alienate the local community, the Alliance curriculum included biblical history."⁹⁷ Despite the difficulties of trying to establish legitimacy within a disillusioned and rapidly emigrating population, the AIU persevered in developing its efforts in this way in the south until the early 1960s.

⁹⁷ Boum, "Schooling in the Bled," 14.

Arab Nationalism, Zionism, and the Emigration of Moroccan Jews

After the beginning of the twentieth century, and coinciding with the arrival of the French, the question of Moroccan identity had started to permeate the society. Identity politics in Morocco were constructed in large part by French policies. While not all of the most impactful policies were implemented to divide Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews, the separation of Arabs from other Moroccans as facilitated by French policy as well as external factors all played a role in separating Jewish religious identity and Moroccan national identity from each other.

Modern nationalism in Morocco can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, when Moroccans began resisting European penetration, and failed at warding off the impending French Protectorate, which was established in 1912.⁹⁸ The fight continued in phases until independence in 1956, and particularly during the last thirty years of the Protectorate, the tension between the French and the majority of the Moroccan public allowed for the increasing separation of ethnic and religious groups in Morocco.

Halstead (1967) notes that France's governing system in Morocco impacted, positively, reforms in government structure that were put in place after independence, and that were demanded by nationalists while the French Protectorate was still in place.⁹⁹ He also speaks, however, of the many more detrimental effects the colonial government had on Morocco's social, political, and economic norms. Regardless of a

⁹⁸ John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism: 1912-1944*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1967), 4.

⁹⁹ Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 46.

few positive impacts, the French presence created internal strife between ethnic and religious groups in Morocco and caused deep disillusionment among Moroccans.

The modern nationalist movement simmered throughout the 1920s, taking shape over those years through secret societies based in urban centers such as Rabat, Fès, and Salé. The nationalist consciousness was further strengthened by the beginning of the next decade and reached an unprecedented level of cohesiveness. The sudden radicalization of the nationalist movement was in part catalyzed by Moroccans' strong reactions against a specific law, the 1930 "Berber *dahir*." This *dahir* was a piece of legislation that the sultan issued under the rule of the French Protectorate to grant legal legitimacy to Amazigh (Berber) law, and, under a certain article that was later rescinded, to hold Amazigh people accountable under French penal code for certain crimes.¹⁰⁰ Because this decree served to separate Arabs and Berbers from one another based on ethnic background, it was met with loud opposition from the Moroccan majority. This opposition formed the basis for an "organic national unity against efforts to differentiate between previously undifferentiated ethnolinguistic groups."¹⁰¹ Further, the *dahir* and the differentiation between these groups created suspicion among Moroccan Muslims that the colonial French were attempting to "convert Berbers to Christians, replace Arabic with French, and otherwise foment schisms in the population" as part of their overall "divide and rule" policy.¹⁰² The natural integration of Arabs and Berbers had been, up until then, a traditional and unique characteristic of

¹⁰⁰ Harriett Mitchell, "The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco," *Phylon* 16, No. 4 (1955), 428.

¹⁰¹ Katherine E. Hoffman, "Berber Law by French Means: Customary Courts in the Moroccan Hinterlands, 1930-1956," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, No. 4 (2010), 855.

¹⁰² Hoffman, "Berber Law by French Means," 855.

the country that had persisted despite the Moorish government's efforts centuries earlier to completely transform Morocco into an Arab Islamic society. The passage of this decree tarnished this admirable trait of Moroccan society and was consequentially met with immediate resistance.

By the early 1930s, following the Berber *dahir*, the somewhat fragmented societies that had begun developing in the previous decade had evolved into more organized programs such as the clandestine groups *Zawiya* and *Taifa*, and the publicly known *Kutlat al-Amal al-Watani*.¹⁰³ Loosely translated, the *Kutlat* eventually became known as the Moroccan Action Committee (*Comité d'Action Marocaine*). In 1934, this Committee put forth a comprehensive "Plan of Reforms" that called for a return to indirect rule, admission of Moroccans to government positions, and establishment of representative councils."¹⁰⁴ The Committee was led by Allal al-Fassi, and, particularly in its beginnings, attracted young Moroccan Muslim urban elite, who, like the urban masses, rejected and were left out of the Europeanized culture that the French tried to recreate in Morocco. As a result, because the French bestowed opportunities on those who cooperated in subservience, and that too, only within certain socioeconomic, religious, or ethnic groups, these urban youth were not reaping the benefits they felt their socioeconomic status would entitle them to under autonomous national conditions.¹⁰⁵ As the movement grew and developed, it later melded with another group to form the right-wing, nationalist Istiqlal Party. At the start of the Second World War,

¹⁰³ Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 192.

¹⁰⁴ "Morocco," *Library of Congress*, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Mitchell, "The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco," 428.

the Istiqlal Party changed its rhetoric, and, instead of asking for reform, issued demands for complete Moroccan independence.

The close association of Moroccan national identity with Arab Muslim ethnoreligious identity from the 1930s onward was due in large part to the political and economic separation between Muslims and Jews, and between Arab and Amazigh populations, that was facilitated by French policies during the Protectorate. Added to the internal factors that led to the singular approach of Morocco's nationalist rhetoric, however, were various external factors that dictated how the Arab Muslim nationalist movement in Morocco would develop.

One of these external forces was the involvement of foreign powers in the quest for autonomy in colonized North African and Middle Eastern countries. Pre-Protectorate Morocco was proud of its integrated and diverse culture. As it stands geographically on the edge of the Arab world it's economic and political history even before the French Protectorate era allowed to serve as a bridge between the Arab world, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this unique position, Morocco was still considered to be an important part of the Arab world. The contrast between historical Arab culture and colonial European culture was stark on the Moroccan stage as the French attempted to assimilate certain groups of Moroccans into a Europeanized way of life that had not previously existed in their country.

French assimilationist policy was directly attacked when foreign Arab powers addressed the issue of the Protectorate. These diplomatic attacks were relatively infrequent; however, the opposition by outside powers to Western influence entering Morocco implies "that there [was] a great fear of Morocco being swept into the Western

sphere of civilization; that the memory of Arabic past greatness [was] seeking to reconstitute the old Eastern empire based on racial solidarity and that Morocco must be included as a part of the Arab Homeland.”¹⁰⁶

Toward the end of the French Protectorate, a movement sweeping across the greater Middle East began to penetrate Morocco as well. The ideas of Arab unity and, later, Pan-Arabism,¹⁰⁷ took hold. While it was gaining popularity, the Pan-Arabism movement made “the Arabic language the basic criterion of Arab unity...[and] with the spread of modern education among the Muslims, the Muslim Arabs began to emphasize Islam as a unifying force among the Arab-speaking peoples.”¹⁰⁸ Alluding to the Moroccan masses’ fears that the colonial influence would replace Arabic with French and convert Muslims to Christianity, Arab nationalism grew in its popularity. A combination of Pan-Arabism rhetoric, stronger diplomatic ties between Morocco and other Arab countries, and, periodically, the escalation of the tensions between Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine began to generate in many Moroccan Muslims a new sense of identification with the greater Arab world.

Back in the earlier part of the century, as modern nationalism had just begun to develop in Morocco, Zionist ideas also entered the Jewish communities of Morocco, coming first through European lines of communication. Zionism became even more

¹⁰⁶ Mitchell, “The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco,” 431.

¹⁰⁷ Pan-Arabism is the ideology that promotes the unification of all countries in the greater Arab world – North Africa and most of the Middle East. Though the idea of Arab unity emerged in the 1940s and gained popularity after Israel’s founding as a state, Pan-Arabism truly gained traction as an ideology under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who governed Egypt (which under his governance was part of a short-lived political union with Syria known as the United Arab Republic).

¹⁰⁸ Elie A. Salem, Arab Nationalism: A Reappraisal, *International Journal* 17, No. 3 (1962), 290.

appealing to Moroccan Jews as Moroccan nationalism became increasingly associated with the Arab world and Islam, and as Moroccan Jews consequently became increasingly alienated from their Muslim countrymen.

The Zionists' primary goal, in Morocco and elsewhere, was to find a solution to the issues Jews faced as second-class citizens in most of the countries they inhabited. The French colonial government and its limbs, like the AIU, had a similar goal with an opposite strategy. The French sought to solve the issue by integrating Moroccan Jews into a transplanted French culture, Europeanizing them and training them to adopt a way of life with which they and their Muslim compatriots were unfamiliar. The Zionists, on the other hand, accused the AIU of "sacrificing Jewish goals in favor of national interests."¹⁰⁹ Their route to solving the issues that the Jewish diaspora faced was to physically uproot "the Jews from the diaspora and [to place] them in a homeland of their own."¹¹⁰ Particularly after 1939, the contradictions between the goals of Zionists and the AIU created tension between the two groups who sought to influence Moroccan Jews in different ways.

The AIU's assimilation project was an obstacle to the Zionists' goal, which was to make *aliyah*¹¹¹ a viable and appealing option for Moroccan Jews.¹¹² Likewise, the Zionist pursuits stood as direct obstacles to the AIU cause, as AIU delegate Yomtov

¹⁰⁹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 195.

¹¹⁰ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 195.

¹¹¹ *Aliyah* is the Hebrew word that directly translates as "the act of ascending." The term refers to the act of "going up" to the Land of Israel and denotes the migration of Jews from the diaspora back to *Eretz Yisrael*.

¹¹² The AIU did not share the Zionists' goals of making *aliyah* an option for Moroccan Jews. Rather, the AIU policies on their own would make *aliyah* a more difficult option, and it was this obstruction to the Zionists' goals that caused tension between the AIU and Zionists in Morocco.

Sémach would vehemently argue. At first, however, most AIU representatives were unconcerned about the Zionists' presence in Morocco. Even Sémach underestimated at first, "the attachment of the early political Zionists to their cause."¹¹³ Due to the slow growth of the Zionists' following in North Africa through the 1910s, Sémach and other AIU delegates doubted that it would be successful. By 1917, the year the Balfour Declaration¹¹⁴ was passed, however, some AIU leaders in Morocco began to recognize the potential that Zionist ideas might gain in the near future as the movement gained traction. In particular, Henri Gaillard saw Zionism and pan-Arabism as the two most immediate dangers that would seriously threaten French reign over Morocco.¹¹⁵ He advised the AIU to prevent the rise of these two nationalisms in Morocco, and to guide Moroccan Jews "in the path of French civilization."¹¹⁶ Ironically, it was the AIU's relatively rigid structure and the shortcomings of its actions that would act as catalysts in the eventual rise of both movements. The Zionist activities continued to grow at a modest rate for a while, and did not wield great influence before 1939. Even at that time, though opposition was quiet, the AIU was not the only group that was against the Zionists' presence – the French government and Moroccan citizens themselves were largely unimpressed by the rhetoric. Despite their lukewarm reception, however, the Zionist cells and their limited activities before 1939 in Morocco laid the groundwork for the expansion of their activities during and after the Second World War.

¹¹³ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 201.

¹¹⁴ The Balfour Declaration (1917) was a part of a letter addressed to Baron Rothschild, a prominent Jewish citizen of Britain, and written by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour. The letter conveyed the official support of the British government for a Jewish homeland to be established in Palestine, and served as the British government's public recognition of and support for the Zionist movement.

¹¹⁵ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 202.

¹¹⁶ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 202.

By the 1930s, as Moroccan nationalism became stronger and increasingly associated with greater Arab unity, the AIU simultaneously began to pay closer attention to the Zionist movement. During those years, the interactions between the AIU and Zionists in Morocco became considerably more strained. The Secretary General of the AIU in Paris, Jacques Bigart, explained the AIU's opposition to the Zionists' agenda in 1934, asking on behalf of the AIU:

are we, who for many years have fought to attract people to the emancipation of the Jews, able to support a movement which stands against our efforts? The process of emancipation, in our opinion, is the absolute adaptation of the Jew to his *patrie nouvelle*. Zionism with its dishonest characteristics condemns this adaptation.¹¹⁷

As time went on, the AIU and the Zionists observed which tactics of the other group were most effective in convincing the Moroccan Jewish masses of the importance of their cause, and each sometimes borrowed and adapted the other's tactics to meet their own ends. Particularly in the beginning of the 20th century, rather than providing educational and vocational training for Jews that would fit within the context of their socioeconomic position in Morocco, the AIU attempted to "Parisienize" the Jews, and only extended its efforts to certain urban areas in Morocco, many of a relatively high socioeconomic status. By helping the urban and wealthy Jews of Morocco to "assimilate" into the colonial French urban culture, and neglecting to engage Jews of less prestigious trades and of less urban lifestyles, the AIU both divided urban Jews from their own Moroccan culture and from other Jews of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

¹¹⁷ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 208.

Furthermore, the Europeanized urban Jews in Morocco, trained by the French in white-collar trades, also only felt the economic benefits of their special training intermittently after the French Protectorate became established. The percentage of the Moroccan Jewish population employed in white-collar positions fluctuated depending on economic and political conditions both inside and outside of Morocco. By 1930, Moroccan Muslim nationalists had become semi-successful in demanding greater Muslim representation in administrative agencies, and while their numbers were still relatively low in administrative positions, Moroccan Muslims were given greater consideration for these roles than they had been before. Several other factors that emerged around this time – such as the 1930 economic crisis and the larger presence of French expats in administrative roles – began to diminish the Jews’ role in colonial administration as well.¹¹⁸ As a result, having been trained and actively recruited for these positions for decades under the auspices of the French government and the AIU,¹¹⁹ urban Jews had been culturally separated from and had faced the

¹¹⁸ In 1951, for instance, the census indicates that, while Muslim participation in administrative roles increased after the 1930s, Jews were still better represented overall in white-collar positions than Muslims for some decades. In the two administrative job categories that Laskier analyzes, 8.25% of Jews and 3.90% of Muslims, out of the total urban population employed that year in each category, held white-collar positions. In 1960 the numbers increased again – though he acknowledges that the exact cause of this increase has not yet been analyzed, Laskier hypothesizes that it could be due to two separate factors: 1) the Moroccan government may have begun employing more Jews post-independence to give them incentive to stay in Morocco and not leave for France or Israel. This factor may have been independent of or in combination with 2) the need for trained personnel familiar with the European system to take over positions that were left vacant when the French left, but that were necessary in the administration of a country in transition. For more information and a more detailed analysis of the changing roles of Jews in the Protectorate urban elite workforce, see Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco: 1862-1962*, Chapter VII.

¹¹⁹ While the AIU was the primary body of the French colonial power that trained Jews in these elite trades, the French government schools in the French zone of Morocco and

disillusionment of their Moroccan Muslim neighbors, because, in this particular case, they were the part of a minority community that had benefited from an unequal colonial situation. Partly because, overtime, elite Jews that had been trained for the white-collar positions were recruited in smaller numbers, training in other sectors became necessary to sustain the employment of urban upper-class Jews and their contributions to the Moroccan economy. While many urban Jews of lower socio-economic status in the *mellahs* had been at first neglected by the AIU's pursuits, they had continued their engagement in certain traditional trades. When the AIU decided to expand the scope of its activities, it specifically targeted the urban and rural areas it had previously ignored in order to garner more support from a larger variety of Moroccan Jewish communities. Though this expansion came too late to have the impact it might otherwise have had on Morocco's sociocultural dynamics, the scope of the Alliance's activities in Morocco eventually exceeded, by far, the institution's activities in any other country where it was present.¹²⁰

If the Alliance had from the beginning provided more opportunities for vocational or agricultural training, more Moroccan Jews from the hinterlands would have been included in the French educational endeavors in Morocco and would likely have felt less alienated and faced less difficulty finding employment as the economy modernized.¹²¹ On a small scale, the AIU had since the beginning of the Protectorate in

in Tangier played a role in training Moroccan Jews to be journalists, teachers, pharmacists, lawyers, and physicians. See Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco: 1862-1962*, Chapter VII, for more information about the evolution of French employment training in urban Moroccan Jewish communities.

¹²⁰ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 354.

¹²¹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 255.

1912 supported vocational training and education. However, this training took the place in the form of small workshops in large cities. Urban Jews were, again, the main beneficiaries of these workshops, and the presence of these useful workshops in cities but not in the interior resulted in the migration of Moroccan Jews from rural to urban areas, a phenomenon that created visible economic competition between urban Muslims and Jews. From that point on, though the development of AIU vocational training developed very gradually, some AIU representatives began to acknowledge the need to expand opportunities within the AIU to combat unemployment if nothing else.¹²²

Though vocational training developed Nahum Sokolow, a Hebrew-language journalist and Zionist leader of the 20th century suggested that:

Instead of attempting to transplant a Parisian *boulevardier* or a Parisian student in the Mediterranean-basin communities, agricultural (and perhaps vocational) training, modeled on the Mikveh Israel example¹²³, would create a Jewish type of peasant who would be similar in many ways to a French small landholder. Instead of striving toward assimilation to French culture, the AIU, through agricultural training, would help create the type of Jewish peasant who would resemble the French peasants of Bretagne, Normandy, and the isle of Oubon; they would become economically independent, producing their own fruit, milk, butter, cheese, and flour to make bread.¹²⁴

This course of action would have assimilated rural Jews into a Europeanized lifestyle that would have also given them a socioeconomic standing and important vocational position similar to what many of them held in Morocco. The AIU acknowledged the need to diversify their activities and attract Moroccan Jews from a wider range of backgrounds. For several years, however, the AIU's Central Committee

¹²² Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 255.

¹²³ Mikveh Israel ("Hope of Israel") was founded in 1870, and is located in central Israel, near the city Tel Aviv. This agricultural boarding school was the first of its kind and was founded by Charles Netter, emissary to the AIU.

¹²⁴ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 196.

feared that expanding too much into the agricultural sector, alongside proponents of Zionism, would only render the Zionist cause more effective as it would train Moroccan Jews in skills many of them would need to find jobs upon making *aliyah*. The AIU consequently neglected to establish more agricultural schools during the 1920s. Instead, the institution continued primarily to pursue ways of expanding elite education to Jews in the cities, and gradually developed programs in vocational training for lower-level trades.¹²⁵ As the AIU's activities in Moroccan cities developed and slowly spread into smaller towns, villages, and eventually, the hinterlands, most rural Jews were still left without the support of the colonialists, their Muslim countrymen, or the Jews of the urban upper classes.

Therefore, France's presence in Morocco paradoxically served to alienate Jews from the rest of Moroccan society in multiple ways—not only did it try to target Jews specifically through the rule of law, but, through institutions such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, it also Europeanized a select number of urban Jewish families and youth in Morocco, while the rest remained in crowded *mellahs*. Essentially, French imperialism acted as a catalyst in the formation of gradual divisions between Jews and Muslims in Morocco.¹²⁶ The distance between Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Muslims grew after World War II, specifically between 1944 and 1956. In 1947, UN Resolution 181 was passed and in 1948, the State of Israel was formed. As a result, “from that point on, Moroccan nationalists would openly look askance at their Jewish compatriots,

¹²⁵ Though the AIU's vocational programs grew gradually at first, they expanded greatly after the Second World War. The AIU's activities had been halted during World War II by the French Vichy regime, but the work they had laid down in Morocco before 1939

¹²⁶ Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

viewing them as Zionists first and Moroccans second.”¹²⁷ Additionally, during the Moroccan movement towards independence, Moroccan Jews—as well as Moroccan Muslims who worked under French rule—were targeted for their affiliations with the French and their European ways of life.

The feeling that Morocco was not their own country, in which they could be fully equal, increased for many Jews during and after World War II.¹²⁸ Sultan Muhammad V approved the passing of certain anti-Jewish laws under the Vichy government in France, which would deny Jews of much of their rights in France and in overseas French colonial entities like Morocco. However, Muhammad V was the same Sultan who vehemently protected his Jewish subjects from the Nazis, refusing to make them wear the yellow stars prepared for them by the Vichy government.¹²⁹ In this sense, the Sultan protected Jews from the harassment and potential harm that would inevitably have been inflicted on them by their fellow countrymen if they had been visually distinguished as “others,” during the 20th century just as they had been in the *mellahs*.

The emigration of Jews from their homeland of Morocco accelerated between 1948 and 1956, and Moroccan Jews made *aliyah* to Israel and migrated to France and North America. Particularly in the rural south of Morocco, the Zionists had proven to be effective in communicating their cause, particularly The French tolerated this pattern of rapid emigration until Morocco’s independence in 1956, when the new Moroccan government restricted it.¹³⁰ In the beginning, therefore, the emigration was a clandestine

¹²⁷ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 98.

¹²⁸ Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

¹²⁹ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 97.

¹³⁰ Laskier, “Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel, 1949-56,” 323.

activity and facilitated by the Israeli entity Mossad le'aliyah, which found the largest Middle Eastern Jewish populations in Moroccan and Yemen.¹³¹ The clandestine emigrations were carried out from Morocco to Oujda, where Moroccan Jews would take boats from Algeria to Palestine. In 1948, pogroms were organized against Jews in the border towns of Morocco and Algeria, but by the end of the year, the French government decided to work with “Jewish organizations...and find a suitable formula for legal or semi-legal emigration under French supervision.”¹³² However, clandestine immigration returned in the years immediately following Morocco’s independence, until 1961 when, due to the tragic drowning of 42 Moroccan Jews leaving Morocco secretly, the Moroccan government removed the obstacles previously in place to prevent Jewish emigration to Israel.

Thus, emigration continued through the 1950s and ‘60’s, periodically increasing when political events in Israel and Palestine—such as the 1967 war—created apparent tensions between Muslim and Jewish members of Moroccan society. Asher Farhi, born in 1961 in Tangier, described his experiences with some Muslim children in his French elementary school after 1967. Every so often, he would be hit in the courtyard by Muslim Moroccan children in his school, who, though not fully aware of the politics behind the 1967 war, were nonetheless aware of the underlying tensions that periodically materialized between Muslims and Jews in Morocco.¹³³ The Six-Day war was the turning point when he and other Moroccan Jews in his generation began to

¹³¹ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

¹³² Laskier, “Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel,” 326.

¹³³ KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, interview with Asher Farhi. Conducted by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 2 March 2008. Accessed 17 November 2015. Name of interviewee changed for confidentiality.

notice a marked change in the way they were received as Jews in their country. When the Moroccan radio began to speak about how Israel had been “destroyed” after the Six-Day war, Farhi’s family left Morocco and stayed in the Canary Islands with his uncle for two weeks, returning to Morocco... “after the hatred had subsided.”¹³⁴ Eventually, his family moved to Toronto, and, in visits to Morocco, Farhi notes that, despite the fact that his family felt threatened in the years directly preceding their departure, Morocco still remains one of the only places in the Arab world where the older generation is welcoming of visiting Jews. His children do not have ties to Morocco yet, he said, but, particularly because Tangier’s history can enable Moroccan Jews to connect to their ancestry, he hopes to bring his children to Tangier once they are old enough to fully appreciate their family’s history in the city.¹³⁵

Like Farhi’s family, Moroccan Jews emigrated from Morocco in thousands throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. By 2009, only a few thousand Jews remained. Today, the pre-World War II Moroccan Jewish population of 215,000-300,000 has dwindled to approximately 5,000, the majority living in Casablanca.¹³⁶

As Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman (2010) analyze the experiences of Jewish communities in Morocco, they remark that the immigration of Moroccan Jews to Israel has served to strengthen ties between Morocco and Israel. There were several reasons for this relationship and “King Hassan...eagerly played a visible role in

¹³⁴ KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif interview with Asher Farhi. Conducted by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 2 March 2008. Accessed 17 November 2015. Name of interviewee changed for confidentiality.

¹³⁵ KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif interview with Asher Farhi. Conducted by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 2 March 2008. Accessed 17 November 2015. Name of interviewee changed for confidentiality.

¹³⁶ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

facilitating the Arab-Israeli peace process, from the mid-1970s until his death in 1999.”¹³⁷ The role he played is reflected in civil society activism for peace in the present-day. Furthermore, his diligence in recognizing the Jewish history of Morocco has been carried on by his son, His Majesty King Muhammad VI. The 2011 Constitution issued under his reign explicitly acknowledges the plurality of Moroccan national identity, “built on the convergence of its Arab-Islamic, Amazigh, and Saharan-Hassani components...nurtured and enriched by African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean constituents.”¹³⁸

Despite the fact that, specifically over the last half-century, relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco have been characterized less by cooperation and understanding than they are by tension and stress, it is necessary to remember that the capacity to coexist is still very real. Coexistence between Moroccan Muslims and Jews is not solely a reality from the past. In fact, regardless of their departure from Morocco, many of the Jews who left are part of one of the very few diasporas that wants to keep its heritage alive, and retain its ties with its home country.¹³⁹ Even in Morocco, cooperation between the Jewish and Muslim communities continues to exist, and relations are not solely characterized by the penetration of historical tensions. Cooperation exists and does not need to be re-created from the beginning. However, it

¹³⁷ Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzmann, “Myth, History, and Realpolitik,” 100.

¹³⁸ Morocco: 2011 Constitution, Accessed Online.

¹³⁹ KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif with Mr. André Azoulay. Conducted by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 26 May 2009. Accessed 17 November 2015.

should be made more visible. Currently, the connections that once were are still there but are “just much more reduced...because there are fewer Jews.”¹⁴⁰

21st Century Civil Society: Re-Writing the Cultural Narrative

Agriculture as a Tool for Peace

Since their arrival in the region incorporating present-day Morocco, Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Muslims alike have been engaged alongside one another in the agricultural sector. More significantly, the land and all that it has to offer has been shared between Muslims, Jews, and other cultural groups in Morocco for over 2,000 years. However, the presence of Moroccan Jews in agricultural trades dwindled over the centuries. The AIU had provided agricultural and other vocational training to Moroccan Jews. Moroccan Jews were given training in agricultural work so that they would be able to “cultivate the land like their Muslim counterparts.”¹⁴¹ The first AIU agricultural training center was founded in 1936, in Marrakech. The objective was to encourage youth to consider agriculture a viable option for their future, and physically strong youth were recruited from the local primary school.¹⁴² Through a colonial ideology that sought, through the benefits of agricultural training, to ally the Moroccan Jews with the European settlers, these schools trained a significant number of Moroccan Jews and, due to the increasing presence of Europeans, enabled them to find work in the rural and urban spheres.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

¹⁴¹ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 263.

¹⁴² Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 264.

¹⁴³ Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 264.

Based in Marrakech and founded in the year 2000, the High Atlas Foundation is a Moroccan-U.S. non-governmental organization that works with rural communities in Morocco to provide them with resources needed to carry out sustainable agricultural practices. It is within this framework of sustainable human development that the High Atlas Foundation recently pioneered a project known as “Maison de Vie,” or “House of Life,” in which partnerships were formed between the Jewish communities of the Al Haouz province and local Muslim farmers.¹⁴⁴ Beginning in 2012, the High Atlas Foundation established plant nurseries on land lent for free to the Foundation by the Jewish community of Marrakesh-Essaouira. This land lies “adjacent to the tomb of Rabbi Raphael HaCohen, one of over 600 Jewish burial sites dotted across the country, in rural as well as urban areas.”¹⁴⁵

Once developed, the organic fruit trees and medicinal plants in this nursery will benefit Moroccan Muslim farmers in the province and surrounding areas. The essence of the project denotes “life” in multiple ways. The name of the project was chosen specifically because “House of Life” is one of many traditional terms used to refer to Jewish cemeteries, and the term was fittingly employed by Governor Bathaoui of the Al Haouz province during a ceremony in 2015.¹⁴⁶

Secondly, the trees themselves give economic life to the Muslim farmers who will benefit from the project in the coming years. Physically, the trees give life to the areas surrounding Jewish sacred sites as well as a sense that the land is being respected and used. The significance of this land use was noted upon the death of Moroccan

¹⁴⁴ Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, (Morocco: High Atlas Foundation, 2015), 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

writer and professor Edmond Amram El Maleh. A self-defined Moroccan Jew—that is, not a Jewish Moroccan— El Maleh celebrated, in his own life and through his writings and actions, the symbiotic pluralism of Arabs, Jews, and Amazighi people in Morocco.¹⁴⁷ Throughout his life, he was an activist who embraced his identity as a Moroccan Jew, noted the importance of Jewish culture in the historical and contemporary Moroccan cultural narratives, and advocated for the Palestinian cause by denouncing Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories. Before his death, he had requested to be buried in Essaouira’s old Jewish cemetery ‘among “all these graves which, exposed to the rank growth, the wind, and the ravages of the ocean, silently enclose the Hebrew inscriptions and mysterious symbols.”’¹⁴⁸ His burial was the first time in 40 years that the land in the cemetery had been used.¹⁴⁹

The use of the land surrounding the sacred sites in the Al Haouz province benefits the Jewish community of the province as it lends a very real sense that the land being respected and kept up, rather than receiving a threat of destruction or exclusive acquisition by the ‘other.’¹⁵⁰ In this way, and in multiple other interpretations, the House of Life project allows the plant nurseries to serve as stages for cooperation, not

¹⁴⁷ “Hommage à Edmond Amran El Maleh” (Morocco: Institut Français à Tanger, 2011), 1.

¹⁴⁸ Regina Keil-Sagawe, “A Moroccan Jew with Arabo-Berber Roots,” (Germany: Qantara de, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Moulay Youssef, Tameslouht, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 28 November 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

conflict, between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, rather than “trying to say where the boundary should lie between Arab and Jewish land.”¹⁵¹

Cooperation on the basis of land use in Morocco, such as that occurring under the House of Life project, has important and symbolic implications. Kati Roumani describes House of Life as an “innovative agricultural initiative whose implications are broad and resonate acutely with current world events.” It is situated perfectly in Morocco, a cultural and political crossroads between multiple worlds, in which both Jews and Muslims have deep roots and where tensions have seeped every so often through the threads of an intricately woven social fabric. If adapted appropriately, “the model...created [by House of Life] could be replicated throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.”¹⁵² Already, the successful initiative the High Atlas Foundation has started expanding, and is projected to soon become a national initiative, expanding to communities such as Fez, Tangier, Casablanca, and areas around Marrakech like Ouarzazate, Azilal, and Essaouira.¹⁵³ The goal in Marrakech’s surrounding provinces is to plant one million organic fruit seeds at Jewish sacred sites.¹⁵⁴

At the beginning of the new decade, even before Morocco’s adoption of the 2011 Constitution that officially acknowledged the country’s cultural plurality, the Moroccan government started leading efforts to preserve Jewish heritage in the region.

¹⁵¹ Shaul Ephraim Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁵² Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, 1.

¹⁵³ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

¹⁵⁴ Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, 1.

In part, this came from the Moroccan government's commitment to fulfilling its role as a leading entity in countering extremism, and its tendency in recent years to globally define itself as such.¹⁵⁵ To do so within its own country, the Moroccan government employed land use as a tool in cultural preservation, launching "preservation efforts" in 2010 and restoring, in the past five years, "at least 167 Jewish burial sites," and building perimeter walls around some of them.¹⁵⁶

The House of Life efforts are an innovative and positive example of efforts to facilitate and make visible the willingness of Moroccan Muslims and Jews to cooperate in mutually beneficial initiatives. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as in the context of intercultural cooperation through agriculture in Morocco, "the symbolic power of these measures must be seen within the cultural framework of the participants, in terms of both the significance of the trees, and the meaning of land and the practices relating to it."¹⁵⁷

Peace-Building Through Cultural Preservation and Awareness

One of the most significant leaders in the preservation of Moroccan Jewish heritage, the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca, founded by Simon Levy and now curated by Zhouh Reihil, symbolizes an intersection between historical and contemporary Jewish culture in Morocco. Exhibits in two rooms display artifacts from ancient synagogues around Morocco, showcase the products of traditional Moroccan Jewish trades, and illustrate aspects of Moroccan Jewish culture through materials such

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

¹⁵⁶ "Morocco Touts Efforts to Preserve Jewish Cemeteries," (JTA, The Forward, February 6, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Cohen, *The Politics of Planting*, 5.

as jewelry and clothing. In a separate room, pictures of synagogues around Morocco line the walls, accompanied by plaques describing each synagogue's location and restoration date. Additionally, one room is allocated to temporary exhibits that, along with the others, seek to valorize and authenticate the rich history in Morocco of Judaism and Jewish culture. Now the museum is frequently the site of visits from tour groups and Moroccan schools that seek to expose their students to Morocco's diverse cultural makeup.

In addition to increasing Moroccans' awareness of Moroccan Jewish culture, and offering "an alternative view of Jews, it also offers an alternative view of Muslims" by ending a "pejorative image of Muslims...who are not tolerant," and thereby bringing to light the capacity—and reality—of cooperation between the Moroccan Jewish and Muslim communities.¹⁵⁸

Working toward a similar goal in a different way, *KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif* in Casablanca, led by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, is a collection of oral histories recording the experiences of members of the Jewish community—and members of the Muslim community who lived alongside it. To avoid a flat portrayal of this profound history, the archive stores information collected from individuals over the years, the culmination of which brings to light connections and overlaps between the various stories. In this way, through tying together seemingly unconnected threads, Ms. Paloma Elbaz seeks to start putting together pieces of a three-dimensional puzzle through a sound archive that will eventually be available to everybody. The sound archive is a specific part of a larger research project, in which Ms. Paloma Elbaz has

¹⁵⁸ Danielle Kubes, "Moroccan Students Visit Arab World's Only Jewish Museum," 11 February 2011. Accessed Online.

explored, over the past decade, the ways oral and written though work together to preserve traditions. She said to me, “the process of being a performer, and being a researcher, and of interviewing people” emphasizes that “you don’t tell the story with one little part of people’s experiences, but actually with all the different aspects of people’s experiences. That is how we can understand the complexity and the layered-ness” of the full picture, and examine a history through different lenses.¹⁵⁹

As do many others involved in these efforts, she notes that, although there has not been a “break” in history in regard to cooperation between Moroccan Muslims and Jews, there is such a break developing in the younger generation.¹⁶⁰ Through KHOYA, hidden voices can become accessible to young Moroccans who have never exchanged words with a Jew in their lives, living in places where the Jewish population that remains is minuscule, and that continues to grow smaller each year.¹⁶¹ The oral nature of the histories can preserve unique memories that are otherwise hard to come by. While “language exists in the world of boundaries and separation, sound exists in the world of emanation. So to marry languages and sound, we are marrying these two dimensions of ourselves—the world of identity, which is separation, and an aspect of

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Historically, though there have been fluctuations in the degree of tension between Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews, there has not in the recent past been a period of utter chaos or discontent between the two communities – cooperation has always existed between the two communities, particularly on the local level, and that cooperation has not broken down entirely. While it has not broken down, it has the potential to be repaired so that the cooperation and friendly relations can withstand periods of political and economic instability, at which time weak bonds of cooperation often dissolve.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

humanity and...shared experiences.”¹⁶² This notion—of shared experiences and values across boundaries—is vital to communicate to today’s youth, who are growing up in a society that many believe is for the most part culturally homogenous.

Communicating the reality of Morocco’s cultural plurality is one of main goals of Association Mimouna, now a non-governmental organization that was started as a student organization by El-Mehdi Boudra. As a Moroccan Muslim student at Al-Akhawayne University in Ifrane—the same town where King Hassan II met with Shimon Peres in 1986—Mr. El-Mehdi noticed a gap in the discourse between his generation at the university and his grandmother’s generation back home, in discussing Muslim relations with Jews in Morocco. While his grandmother’s stories were characterized by anecdotes of friendly interactions and personal friendships, his generation’s stories were more abstract, theoretical, and rife with stereotypes. Mainly for this reason, he founded the Mimouna Club, which started as a student organization in Ifrane, but that has since spread to other universities in Rabat, Fez and Marrakech. Together, these different branches comprise the umbrella Association.¹⁶³ The Association promotes Moroccan heritage through awareness of Jewish culture and history in the region. The members—Muslim university students—address the obstacles that have prevented full understanding of Morocco’s cultural diversity throughout recent history.

The rhetoric behind the organization’s objective is to promote “Moroccan” heritage through increasing understanding of Moroccan Jewish history, specifically because Jewish culture, like Muslim culture, has historically been an integral part of

¹⁶² Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

¹⁶³ Association Mimouna, last modified 2014. Accessed Online.

Moroccans' social experiences. Association Mimouna reflects this reality through its name. "Mimouna" is a traditional Moroccan Jewish festival at the end of Passover during which Moroccan Muslims would traditionally take leavened foods to their Jewish neighbors' houses to mark the end of Passover each year. Mr. El-Mehdi's grandmother, like most Moroccan Muslims living in her area, participated each year in Mimouna festivities. True to his family and national heritage, Mr. El-Mehdi is "proud to be a Muslim by religion, Arab and Amazigh by ethnicity, and also Jewish by culture."¹⁶⁴ In saying so, Mr. El-Mehdi is acknowledging, specifically, the inseparability of Jewish culture from Moroccan culture overall, and reminding all those he speaks to that Jewish history in Moroccan played a foundational role in the development of Moroccan culture.

In the beginning, it was difficult for the Mimouna Club to gain approval from the school administration, which saw the creation of such an organization as a "threat to national identity," as well as from other students.¹⁶⁵ Over the years, however, Mr. El-Mehdi notes that he has seen small changes in attitudes from students in Al-Akhawayan University and on other campuses. While this is in large part due to Mimouna's persistence and engagement with the campus community, it is also due to the efforts of prominent leaders in Moroccan society—such as Simon Levy and André Azoulay—who acted as bridges between Mimouna and the Jewish and Muslim communities in Ifrane and other cities.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with El-Mehdi Boudra, Rabat. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 1 December 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Boudra, 1 December 2015.

Mimouna members, as well, have achieved a constant presence in student government offices, thereby convincing administration officials that their views do, in fact, coincide with those of a significant portion of the student body.¹⁶⁶ The organization's activities have been successful in bringing awareness of Jewish history to university campuses—in 2008, Al Akhawayan's campus became "Jewish for a day." In 2011, Mimouna organized the Arab world's first conference commemorating Jewish victims of the Holocaust and honoring Sultan Muhammad V's protection of his Jewish subjects during World War II. Last year, in 2014, a Caravan of Moroccan Jewish heritage left from Ifrane, making stops in Ifrane, Fez, Casablanca, Tangier, Rabat, Essaouira, and New York. The organization's activities continue and have received relatively little harsh criticism from outside sources. However, Mr. El-Mehdi notes that Mimouna is but one of several movements in Morocco that seek to either promote Jewish cultural heritage or encourage cooperation between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. These small bridges are each beneficial, but will collapse quickly on their own. He encourages cooperation not only between cultural communities, but also between initiatives advocating for this cooperation.

Several of the people in both the Jewish and Muslim communities that I spoke to emphasized the importance of educating today's youth in cultural pluralism. Jewish schools in Casablanca, which were originally under the Alliance Israélite Universelle, such as École Maïmonide, are secular full-day Jewish cultural schools that are attended in the greatest part by Muslim Moroccan students. Thus, such schools are naturally bridges between the Jewish and Muslim communities in Morocco and students are

¹⁶⁶ Boudra, 1 December 2015.

made aware of other cultures within their society. However, schools like Maïmonide are an exception, as “Jewish history is not presented in school history books.”

The subject of Judaism in Morocco remains, in some communities, taboo.¹⁶⁷ By including information about Morocco’s full cultural history in textbooks and curriculum, schools can help break the culture of silence that surrounds such issues in contemporary Moroccan society.

¹⁶⁷ Kubes, “Moroccan Students Visit Arab World’s Only Jewish Museum,” 2011.

Conclusion

The recent tensions between Jews and Muslims in Morocco, that result periodically in protests and small-scale violence, can be easily attributed to tensions in Israel and Palestine. However, historical material shows that government policies have sought to construct relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco since the Middle Ages, as a way of dividing the Moroccan population and exerting control over it. Despite the external construction of their relations, however, Jews and Muslims in Morocco have displayed resilience in their willingness to cooperate, and, particularly as emigration from Morocco has increased, Muslims and Jews alike have displayed motivation to make Morocco's diverse religious history known once more. From the movements and efforts I have highlighted in the above sections, it is evident that, despite the tensions that are manifested from time to time between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, the underlying willingness to cooperate as the communities did in the past has not gone away. However, the landscape of this cooperation has changed. No longer do Muslims and Jews cross paths multiple times per day as they did seventy years ago. Instead, the plurality of Morocco's cultural history is becoming less apparent as more Jews leave Morocco. With fewer interactions between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, the word "Jew" is often automatically associated with "war" and "Israel." Therefore, multiple movements in Morocco seek to correct this automatic association by reminding youth that Morocco itself has a colorful history of Jewish culture, and that a Jew in Morocco is just as Moroccan as his Muslim neighbor.

The Moroccan case lends insight into minority-majority relations in other contexts as well. Morocco's history, and the interplay between policy and reality show the close correlation between government ideology and societal attitude. In Morocco, when governments harshly enforced laws that would separate Jews from the rest of Moroccan society, Jews experienced greater harm and harassment from other Moroccans, who did not see them as one of their own. However, in the present-day, when civil-society movements have the support of Morocco's rewritten constitution and the country's leaders, these movements have been able to gain slightly more traction that they would have been able to in the past. The history and the present-day reality of Jewish-Muslim relations in Morocco lends insight into the impact government policy has, long-term, on minority relations with a majority population, the dynamics that come with separation and segregation of populations, and the effects of assimilation nationalism on minority groups.

In Morocco today, though efforts to revitalize, on a larger scale, cooperation between Muslims and Jews sometimes entail negative or ambivalent reactions from either community, after such movements have carried out their activities for some time, the negative reactions are subdued, as an awareness of Moroccan Jewish culture increases. Furthermore, as efforts to facilitate cooperation are choreographed on stages that have, in recent years, become known as hosts to conflict—agriculture, for instance—Morocco's capacity to facilitate peace has increased. For future generations, it is only through an understanding of the mutual dependence and tolerance between Jews and Muslims that existed in Morocco for centuries – though there have been periods of discontentment and tension throughout—can youth appreciate the values they share with

those they perceive as the “other.” Along with movements and initiatives like those described above, “peace-building” must first begin with education and awareness. It is only when “children are first educated in respect—they must first learn how to respect differences between individuals—that a community be able to work towards peace.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

Déclaration de consentement

L'objectif d'étude

D'apprendre des activités, mouvements, et organisations au Maroc qui dirige les efforts de faciliter le dialogue, la coopération, et la paix entre les juifs et les musulmans, en particulier dans la vie quotidienne.

La durée et les éléments d'étude

Cette étude sera dirigée pendant une période de trois semaines. L'étude inclura les observations et les interventions des participants en incluant leur travail sur terrain.

Les risques

L'étude n'a aucun risque prévisible pour les participants. Cependant, si vous ne vous sentez pas confortable avec le procédé d'observation ou d'interview, vous êtes libre de terminer votre participation.

Compensation

La participation à cette étude ne sera pas compensée, financièrement ou autrement. Cependant, votre aide est considérablement appréciée par notre équipe de recherche.

Confidentialité

Tout effort de maintenir votre information personnelle confidentielle sera fait dans ce projet. Vos noms et toute autre information d'identification seront changés dans la description finale, et seulement connue à l'équipe de recherche.

Participation

Je soussigné,, confirme avoir lu les rapports ci-dessus et compris que ma participation à cette étude est volontaire tout en ayant la liberté de retirer mon consentement à tout moment sans pénalité.

Signature

Date

J'ai pris conscience que cette étude puisse comporter les entrevues et/ou les observations qui peuvent être enregistrées et transcrites.

Signature

Date

Team de recherche

Les chercheurs peuvent être contactés par E-mail ou téléphone pour n'importe quelle raison :
E-mail : namratha@uoregon.edu Téléphone : 06 39 17 30 07/ +212 6 39 17 30 07

SIT Study Abroad

a program of World Learning



CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to learn about the activities and results of movements and institutions in Morocco that facilitate dialogue, cooperation, and peace-building efforts between Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Muslims.

2. Rights Notice

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

Participant's name printed

Participant's signature and date

Interviewer's name printed

Interviewer's signature and date

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