

Los mellahs sin judíos: ¿una memoria perdida !

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Resumen:

Abandonado por sus antiguos habitantes, que salieron principalmente para ir a poblar el Estado de Israel creado en 1948 y han sido reemplazados por las poblaciones locales, el «Mellah» (Antiguamente, barriojudío de las ciudades marroquíes) se registra como un hecho antropológico que merece ser estudiado. Los habitantes cambian, pero los «Mellahs» recuerdan una convivencia secular, casi aceptable, entre musulmanes y judíos. Hoy en día, los «Mellahs» sin judíos siguen siendo considerados como lugares de culto, sinagogas, cementerios, etcétera. El patrimonio arquitectónico sigue siendo prácticamente el mismo y la toponimia es un testimonio que no puede ser borrado por trastornos recientes. A través de algunos ejemplos, este artículo intentará analizar el futuro de un patrimonio cuyo contenido social ha cambiado completamente. Sin embargo, la ruptura con la tierra de los antepasados parece disminuir por un regreso episódico al país nativo para rendir homenaje a las generaciones pasadas, lo que se refiere al nacimiento del turismo de raíces.

Palabras Clave: Mellahs - cohabitación - Judíos de marruecos - Turismo de raices.

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The mellahs without Jews: a lost memory!

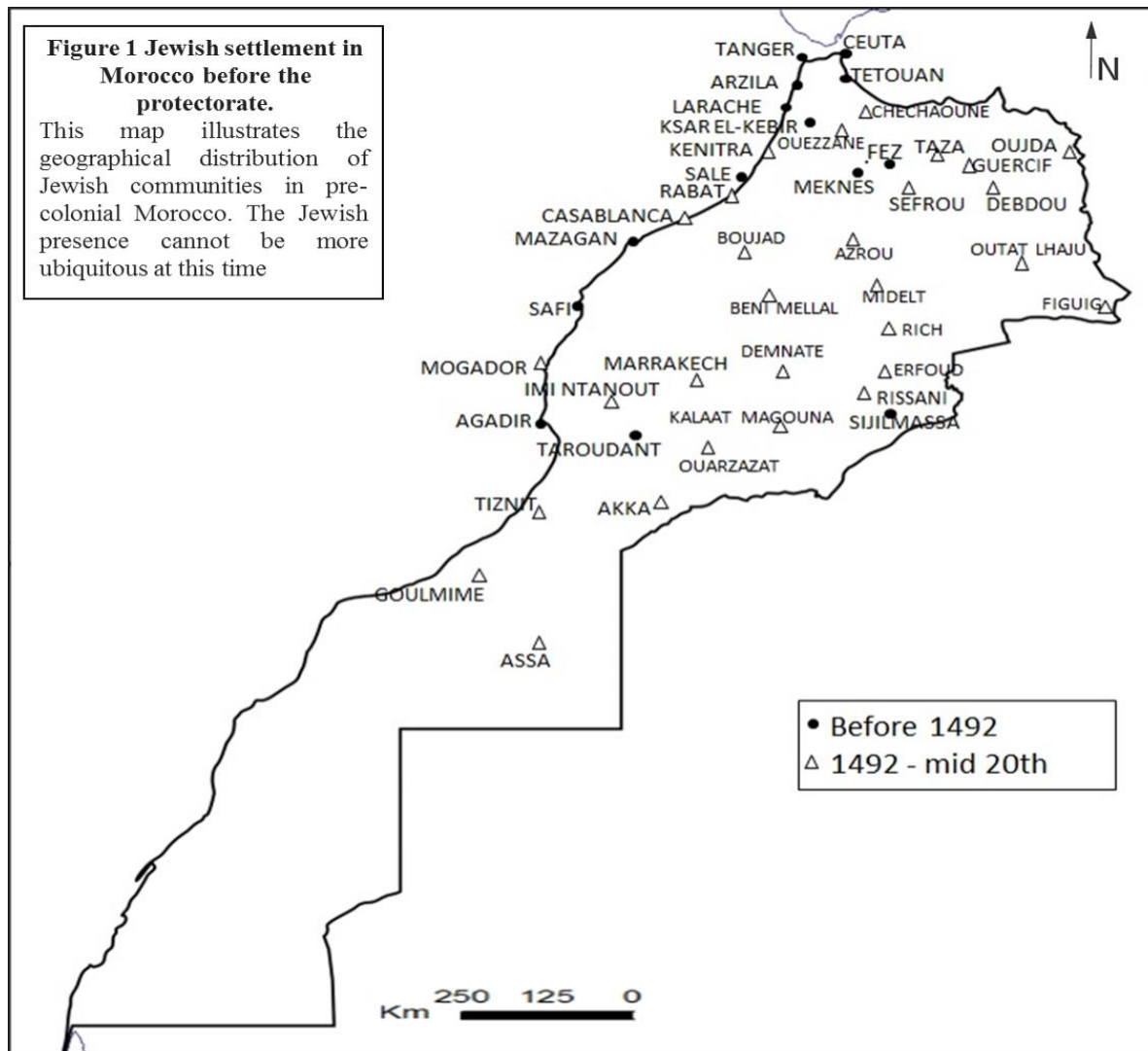
Abstract:

Abandoned by its former inhabitants who left mainly to populate the State of Israel created in 1948 and replaced by the local populations, the "Mellah" (Formerly, Jewish quarter of Moroccan cities) registers as an anthropological fact that deserves to be studied. The inhabitants change, but the "Mellahs" recall a secular coexistence, almost acceptable, between Muslims and Jews. Today, "Mellahs" without Jews is still invested with places of worship, synagogues, cemeteries, etc. The architectural heritage remains virtually the same and the toponymy is a testimony that cannot be erased in recent upheavals. Through some examples, this article attempts to analyze the future of a heritage whose social content has completely changed. However, the break with the land of the ancestors seems to diminish by an episodic return to the native country to pay tribute to past generations, indicating the birth of roots tourism.

Keywords: Mellahs - cohabitation - Jews of Morocco - Roots tourism.

INTRODUCTION

This article could start with the famous expression of fairy tales: "Once upon a time" Muslims and Jews cohabited in an almost perfect harmony in Morocco, but nowadays nobody seems to care. Indeed Morocco had a strong Jewish community, probably the largest in the Arab world, with a presence dating back to antiquity. Jewish populations were spread throughout Morocco; so even in southern Morocco, there was hardly a Kasbah or a city that did not have a mellah. This millennial cohabitation suffered the backlash of the creation of the "Hebrew state".



Since the advent of the French and Spanish protectorate, the mellah no longer interested Jews who were only thinking of evacuating. It represented only the image of a past that must be destroyed and a world that is now anachronistic. Overcrowding and insalubrity were frightening and its obsolete nature meant nothing to younger generations.

A hygienist discourse put the problem of the Jewish habitat, in this case the mellah, at the heart of the claims of the Jewish inhabitants. Abolishing the mellah became the only way for the salvation of the Moroccan Jewish people and evacuating it was symbolically the end of a bygone past.

Almost all the Jews have left and none of them will return to the mellahs which are now inhabited by a Muslim population. Young people seem to ignore the 2500 years of common history that could definitely end with the departure of the last members of the Jewish Moroccan community. But if the mellahs have been emptied of their Jewish component, they remain a testimony with a rich heritage rooted in the landscape of Morocco. They nonetheless constitute significant architectural evidence of a bygone era. Indeed, the Judeo-Moroccan heritage is protean. In both the countryside and in the cities, there are as well scattered tombs of saints, which also served as synagogues, were once diligently visited. They are so numerous; some of them are in good condition, some are less; so they are restored punctually, and like all places where spirituality unfolds, they exude a strong charm.

What must be done to safeguard this historical patrimony? Who is in charge of the task of remedying this loss of heritage? Everything seems to indicate that we are in front of the vestiges of a heritage in suspension! Academic research on Moroccan Judaism began only in the mid-1970 (Baida, 2016) and mellah rehabilitation operations are still in their beginnings. Moroccan Jews in the diaspora seem to have a nostalgia for their country of origin. All over the world, they remain committed to their identity, culture and age-old traditions. Every year, they gather around tombs of saints located in Ouezzane, Essaouira or Taroudant to celebrate the hiloula, a Jewish custom and great moment of reunion.

Is this kind of heritage tourism sufficient to facilitate the "reunion" with Morocco? Will future generations be able to continue this pilgrimage to relax? The journey back to the roots for revitalization through pilgrimage seems to be insufficient and risks to disappear in one or two generations. Are Moroccan Jews in search of homesickness? Can they reconstruct their history and remake a memory now that it is coming to an end? In this research, we have tried to see how the mellahs have evolved since the colonial period and what changes they underwent as they became neighbours with Muslims. At the present time, there is no Jewish inhabitant in the mellahs. Are they disappearing? Now that the entire Jewish population has left almost permanently, it is adorned with colors of nostalgia and affection. The time of the mellah no longer sounds like an insult, but rather as an invitation to a world gone and already regretted.

For a long time, the Jews thought only to abandon the mellah and to leave it once and for all. At the same time, they rejected its symbols and privileges and became a trace of a past that must be destroyed and a world that is now an anachronism; most importantly, it does not deserve to be mentioned for younger generations. Does this mean that the mellah is no longer a subject of sociological analysis?

CONCEPTUAL LANDMARKS

The simplistic approach of recognizing that the majority of Muslims and the minority of Jews have lived side by side in harmony is unfair². In fact, the Moroccan Muslim community

²Let's remember at first that the experience of Jews in Morocco has had great moments of symbiosis certainly, but also great moments of distress, noting that "For young generations of Moroccans, the image of the Jew is reduced to that of the arrogant, unjust and brutal Israeli soldier. And yet, for centuries, things were different. For the Muslim Moroccan, the Jew was not a stranger, a caricatured or fantasized image. He was the neighbor, the friend, the doctor, the goldsmith, the merchant of the sultan, the inhabitant of the neighboring mellah. The Moroccan Jew had a face and a physical presence... a millennial presence to evoke the different facets of Moroccan Judaism and its place in the national culture, with its dark episodes and moments of glory". See: Abdelahad Sebti "Maroc, terre juive" In *Zamane* no. 30, (May 2013.) On the other hand, it seems that the mellahs of big cities were under more pressure than Jewish settlements in rural areas. Without idealizing the Jewish past in Morocco, it is undeniable that the status of this minority, even if it was recorded in the mellah,

was founded according to a hierarchy of honor, which ruled that certain categories were higher grades and others were less valuable; Jews were at the bottom of the pyramid because they were non-national; indeed they were subjects to the *dhimmi* status³.

The status of the dhimmis that has been seen by some observers as a kind of segregation was, from the Moroccan point of view, only a form of political measure of difference, or an opportunity of autonomy in the management of the Jewish wealth, inheritance and personal status.

The socio-spatial mutations of the mellahs in Morocco are due to the historical separation between Jewish and Muslim populations: the monarchy had always affirmed its desire to protect the mellahs, and the Jews themselves constantly expressed their desire to live in a closed community. If this double will imposed the separation of communities, it also constituted obstacles in the Judeo-Muslim dialogue.

Unlike a ghetto, Jews could easily frequent other parts of the city by day. Therefore, we must reject the exceeded image⁴ of them living trapped behind the walls of their neighborhood "mellah". Surrounded by high walls guarded by doors, the Mellahs were closed the night delimiting and thus distinguishing the Islamic and Jewish populations (Rguig, 2016).

While the Mellahs allowed Moroccan Jews to preserve their Jewish identities⁵ without assimilating them to the rest of the population (and vice versa), they also constituted obstacles in the Judeo-Muslim dialogue.

This is in fact a thorny issue; I would like here to present very modestly my point of view in this question; my work focuses more specifically on the changes that have occurred in the Moroccan mellahs which are inhabited today by the migrants who newly arrived from the countryside and tries to discover the reasons for the departure of the Jews of Morocco. Since the second half of the 20th century, the urban population explosion particularly affected the old medinas including mellahs, because their growth has led to overpopulation and insalubrity.

The arrival of Europeans in Morocco towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century gave the Jews new economic and social possibilities⁶, this is because they were able to settle outside their ancient reserved area. The presence France made a decisive contribution to improving the condition of Moroccan Jews, who had previously been reduced to the protected or "dhimmi" status. They were engaged in trade with Europeans and were protected by the newly established courts and regulations. The Moroccan Jews were eventually able to advance outside the mellah towards a more promising economic life.

was, with rare exceptions, more acceptable than that of the Jews in Europe (Warsaw Ghetto, Iberian Inquisition, etc.).

³The dhimma is a pact of allegiance, submission and protection which allowed Jews and Christians to retain their original faith in the Muslim countries.

⁴On the Jews' housing before the appearance of the mellah, see for example Mohammed Lahya who argues that their concentration in private neighborhoods is a traditional phenomenon, evidenced by the fact that they lived during the Middle Ages in the form of groups separate from the rest of the Muslim populations in the closed quarters or roads, and that living in neighborhoods separate from Muslims responds to self-interest.

⁵Responding to the desire of the Jews to secure their religious and social independence is a valid indication of the depth of tolerance and coexistence with Muslims in Morocco.

⁶Moroccan Jewish history in the 20th century is also marked by the development of "the Alliance Israelite Universelle" which allows a growing proportion of Moroccan Jewish children to access a quality French education.

Coexistence doomed to break

Why did Jews leave Morocco after more than two millennia of coexistence with the Muslims?⁷ Admittedly, economic motivations for Jewish emigration have been and remain at the origin of departures. The original idea sprang up naturally in the minds, but security was also a major reason, together with the impact of the growing demographic density and the deterioration of the conditions of life. The mellah of Casablanca had become, for example, an unhealthy space.

But in reality their departure had been germinating for a long time; they had been planning to return to Israel, their departure was predestined! Exodus of the Jews of the mellahs of Morocco can be explained by two main factors that have overcome this millennial coexistence: on the one hand, Moroccan nationalism is accused of being the primary cause of the Jewish exodus to Israel, and on the other hand, the role of Jewish messianism which is not emphasized as an essential vector of their departure from Morocco. The departures of the Jews must be interpreted above all as messianic aspirations; the latter were part of the religious and cultural traditions of Judaism. Zionist organizations had used them and had benefited opportunely. Messianic promises accompanied by other secular promises: better housing, education and work on arrival in the "Promised Land". It was written in the holy book of the Jews that they had to go back to the East; their departure had been so hoped and desired, so that they had been planning to leave since biblical times.

The alignment of Moroccan nationalism with the political rhetoric of the Palestinians and the Arab League meant that the Jews understood that they no longer welcome in Morocco. How to understand the position of the Moroccan parties against the Israeli side? Logically, it can not be otherwise, and this position seems to be one of the causes of disagreement.

The second factor is the Jewish dream of the promised land; the departure is rather motivated by religious reasons as Youssef Chérit, historian from Taroudant, argues in response to the question whether the Jews considered themselves a foreign body in Morocco: "We were not a foreign body; we were a body provisionally established in Morocco because the Messianic faith ⁷ says that life in exile is a temporary life; that is what messianism means and that the return to Zion would terminate this exile and would bring back normalcy to the people and communities; three times a day, in all daily practices even when praying on bread or food, it is said that our deepest hope is to return to the land of ancestral Israel."⁸ Once the Holy Land recovered, the rupture is almost total with Morocco, as if the Jews were just waiting to leave, and the Jews living in the Diaspora can join Israel! They predicted the return to Israel and prayed each year at the end of Passover and Yom Kippur: "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

The messianic contribution is not negligible, nevertheless, the aspiration to live better was decisive; otherwise, how can we explain the choice of other destinations than Israel made by wealthy people, executives or intellectuals. Needless to mention the unanimous decision to

⁷On the factors of the exodus to Israel, some historians argue that the pogrom of Fez (April 18 and 19, 1912 which claimed the lives of about sixty Jews) has deeply marked the collective memory of Moroccan Judaism and is one of the major factors that led to the mass exodus of Moroccan Jews in the wake of the independence of their ancestral country in 1948 "; this argument however is controversial.

⁸This messianic anchorage continues with the proclamation of Israel a religious state, only Jewish so to speak: Israel proclaims "the nation-state of the Jewish people", discriminating against 1.5 million Israeli Arabs, representing more than 17% of the population. The parliamentary opposition is opposed to it mainly for not recalling the terms of the declaration of independence mentioning the equality between all its inhabitants without distinction of religion, race or sex. Is not it true that the fundamental principle of the Zionist movement, the one on which it was created, lies in the idea of the return of the people of Israel to their land. Even worse, this is part of the expansionist project of Greater Israel!

leave definitely the mellah which has become an execrable space. Indeed, several factors may explain the reasons for the near disappearance of the Jewish community in Morocco as shown in the following diagram:



Figure 2 Exodus of Moroccan Jews: causes and socio-political context

Thus, under the impetus of the religious factor, Zionist involvement, economic difficulties and social tensions (departure of large companies after the independence of Morocco), unrest (fear and deterioration of the social climate, six-day war, Yom Kippur War, etc), education received in the schools of the Alliance, influence of French culture, and the desire to improve the living conditions are all reasons that prompted the disappearance of the mellah as a residence space reserved for the Jews of Morocco.

The deep reasons for leaving

Morocco's Jewish community of nearly 300 000 to 400 000 members⁹ is currently reduced to a few hundred families, and Jews of Moroccan origin represent more than one million people worldwide. We are witnessing irreversible changes: for example the beginning of the departure of small Jewish communities from the Atlas at the turn of the twentieth century, which leave their towns and fill little by little the mellahs of big cities. As a result of massive emigration, synagogues were sold, converted into living quarters or workshops; beautiful ancestral homes have been degraded and have been rented and subleased well below their value. In short, the mellahs decay and the qsours, like any adobe construction, collapsed.

In the midst of the transformations defined by the Moroccan urban area, it is possible to distinguish between different types of neighborhoods of the mellah; some of them became commercial markets, such as in Fez and Marrakech, others were extinct and turned into ruins, as in Essaouira and Sefrou, and others began to disappear over time as is the case in all the rural areas. Like those of the Medinas, the houses of the mellahs have often suffered

⁹According to other estimations, the kingdom had nearly 300 000 citizens of Jewish faith. But successive Israeli-Arab conflicts, calls for emigration to Israel and numerous departures to France and Canada in particular have reduced this presence to less than 5,000 souls. Moroccan Jews, however, remain the largest Jewish community in North Africa.

irreparable damage and like so many adobe rushes, depopulated rural mellahs have melted under bad weather.

Neighborhoods of the mellah are different in different cities; there are closed neighborhoods and there are neighborhoods in other cities that were open to the old city. In Casablanca, for example, there is no real mellah, but there is a neighborhood that has a large number of Jews compared to Muslims. This is very natural because the Jews have food and slavery duties, for example, which obliged them to be together.

In Fez and Meknes, for example, the mellah is closed, and this does not mean that there is discrimination between Muslims and Jews. In fact, the Jews themselves chose to live together in their own neighborhood that hosted their own slaughterhouses, butchers, diet system and temples.

From the middle of the 19th century, the social and economic reality of Morocco was witnessing major transformations. The European presence will destabilize Morocco; the latter's economy was increasingly moving outward towards the ports. We will witness the departure of dozens of Jews from small villages in the interior of Morocco to the coast, to large cities like Casablanca and Essaouira. So there is already a departure, but it is not a migration; it is in fact a break with the traditional Moroccan society, both Jewish and Muslim. Why did they leave? There are many causes, religious, ideological, and economic. There were also many of Jews of the mellah who suffered from miserable conditions.

But among the factors that have never been mentioned is the presence of religious or hard-line Jews, noting that Morocco was a very traditional society. When the Jews were told that the state of Israel was born, they are actually told that the messiah was there, that he is resurrected from his ashes. Ideal messiah, in itself very profound, have lovely left for Israel and not out of scaring. In fact, this massive exodus meets the dream of more than two thousand years; the Jews were always ready.

The modern education that Jewish populations have enjoyed since 1860 has improved their social conditions. It was not until the Protectorate for Moroccan Muslims could also benefit, half a century later.

The Muslim population, unlike the Jewish population, did not have any extra-Moroccan institutions to care for them. The Jews were able to take advantage from the Israelite Agency but also from other institutions, including diplomatic ones. The main asset of the Israelite Agency was to work towards the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the Jewish entity. The key to getting out of misery is school, it is education. The Moroccan Jewish community, over the decades will break away from the tradition, learn a foreign language, and emancipate gently westernized.

In the early 1960s, Morocco decreed Arabization. Jews see it as an exclusive nationalism, claiming that they do not speak or write Arabic, they are French speaking!¹⁰ It is strange, they have been in Morocco for more than 2500 years and they do not speak the language of the country! Their mother tongue was Arabic and when Jewish children learned the Torah at Hebrew schools they learned it in Arabic. Does this mean a superior view of Arabic or a random excuse? The German Jew, for example, speaks and works in German and the Russian does the same. It goes without saying that religion, which is a private practice, is done in the chosen language of everyone.

¹⁰ The observations in this paragraph refer to the statements of a number of researchers such as Michel Abitbol, Simon Levy, Georges Bensoussan, Mohamed Hatimi et al. See Youness Laghrari : Pourquoi les Juifs ont quitté le Maroc ?

Anyway, they allude to Arab nationalism, which refers to a nation based on ethnicity, lineage, and blood to qualify it, so to speak, as exclusive nationalism. This is strangely reminiscent of the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People. Is Israel committing the same exclusion error?

MELLAHS AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Mellah that began as a privileged residence turned into a real prison over the centuries; the dwellings were very cramped, the living conditions were very harsh, and as the Jewish population grew, the Mellah became overcrowded. Apart from a few traders who were getting rich, the majority of the population remained poor. The mellah of Casablanca known for its "inhuman housing conditions" had become the image -to be eradicated- of the miserable life that the Jews were undergoing in the mellahs of Moroccan cities. Indeed, social housing remained the main theme that Jewish representatives used to speak about openly, and the Moroccan mellah has become an expression of disgust until it is finally demolished, as emphasize the newspapers of the time (N O A R, 1949).

For a long time, the mellah did not interest Jews who thought only of evacuating it. They have rejected the mellah in its entirety, and it is no more than a past that has to be destroyed, a world that was now anachronistic, and no longer means anything for generations to come. The deterioration of the living conditions in the Casablanca mellah has given way to the hygienist discourse. The insalubrity and inability to cope with the problems it generates prompted a radical discourse stressing "the inevitable need to destroy a notoriously unhealthy neighborhood": the mellah of Casablanca.¹¹

The mellahs are no more than objects of analysis for sociologists, and at best a sort of nostalgia for the country of origin of the Moroccan Jew who would like to reconstitute his/her history and recollect memories. Even the idea of creating new mellahs in the 1930's and 1940's to remedy the consequences of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions was opposed by municipal committees and broad categories of enlightened Jews who preferred to move to the European neighbors of the cities.

In light of the hygienist discourse during the Protectorate period, highlighted by the Zionist press, the issue of habitat was considered a calamity that affected all other problems. Tens of thousands of Jews, plus half of the population, reside in the mellahs and live in infected slums, a nightmare so to speak; slums where families of six to eight members lived in a room of 6m². In cities like Fez or Meknes, where the streets are dark and airless, leprous houses, cellars without light, without air, and without water, where entire families live in a deplorable state, and because of terrible health conditions, a large number of people are suffering from diseases such as trachoma and tuberculosis. The diseases were endemic and the misery unfathomable. The Moroccan Jews held a sense of shame of their past that was represented by the mellah. The latter became synonymous with misery, filth, disease, insalubrity and backwardness. This insult was so unbearable that it was necessary to finish and forget forever the mellah!

¹¹On the sanitary conditions of mellahs, see : N O A R Journal d'Information Juive au Maroc. February 16th, 1952. Nouvelle Série N°46, which reminds us that "Housing is the main problem that is at the root of all the evils. Human beings are obliged in the mellahs to live in conditions that maintain and propagate all the diseases of misery, overcrowding, lack of water, sun, air. The abandonment of questions of hygiene, sanitary installations, roads, etc. makes the mellah a veritable broth for microbes and a purulent pustule in the heart of the city".

Let's go back to the origins of the overcrowded conditions of the Mellah. Given that the walls of the mellah were not elastic, and as the Jewish population grew, either by birth or by the arrival of new families, the free space shrunk. In most mellahs, this led to a pile-up that pushed the population to tighten more and especially to build the only side that remained free, towards the sky where the construction of semi-housing from four to five floors consisting of only one room per dwelling: the moment that father had one of his children married, he added one more floor to his own house. In the course of time, the overcrowding and overpopulation of the mellah had become so excessive that it ended up being unbearably disastrous, because the absence of space leads to the absence of any measure of hygiene in the houses, in roads as in the streets and squares. This explains the ravages that the least epidemic was doing in the Jewish quarters and the distress that finally settled there.

During the Protectorate, the Mellah remained the main theme that Jewish representatives and the press used to speak openly about in order to denounce the abject situation of the Moroccan Jew as a subject deprived of all rights, a being inferior to the other subjects of the Sharifian Empire. In other words, the Moroccan mullahs are synonymous with sinking in disgust; therefore it is imperative to demolish them permanently in order to remove the Jews from the clutches of their monstrous life, that is to say from inferiority in the "Islamic civilization" to the outskirts of the "Western Club" (Mohamed Hatimi, 2007)

Fez: the first and oldest mellah of Morocco

Built in 1438, the mellah of Fez is the oldest and most important neighborhoods reserved for Jewish residents. The surface of the current mellah of Fez, the imperial city of Morocco, is about five hectares; it has undergone several changes since its establishment, especially after the French occupation of Morocco¹². During that period, the rich Jews have preferred to live in the European city; they refused to build a new Mellah for fear that one day it would become a target too visible for Moroccan attacks.

¹²On changes in the mellah of Fez, see Susan Gilson Miller et al. ["Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (September 2001)] who summed up: "The coming of the French Protectorate in 1912 was the watershed event that marked the beginning of the end of the mellah as a Jewish quarter. The French occupation of Fez (...) was accompanied by an artillery attack that caused great damage to the physical structure of the mellah (...). The face of the mellah changed radically (...). Shortly thereafter, wealthy Jews began abandoning its confined spaces for villas in the new town, leaving the poorer Jews behind. Eventually they too left, part of the massive exodus surrounding the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Today the houses of the quarter have found a new life as the dwellings places of Muslims. Only a few signs of the former Jewish presence are still in evidence, such as the restored Ibn Danan synagogue and the white-washed tombs of the carefully tended cemetery".



Figure 3 Mellah of Fez. The oldest one in Morocco, 1438. This map shows that the mellah was built in the shadow of the Royal Palace in Fez Jdid or "New Fez", in a neighborhood surrounded by walls to safeguard the Jews

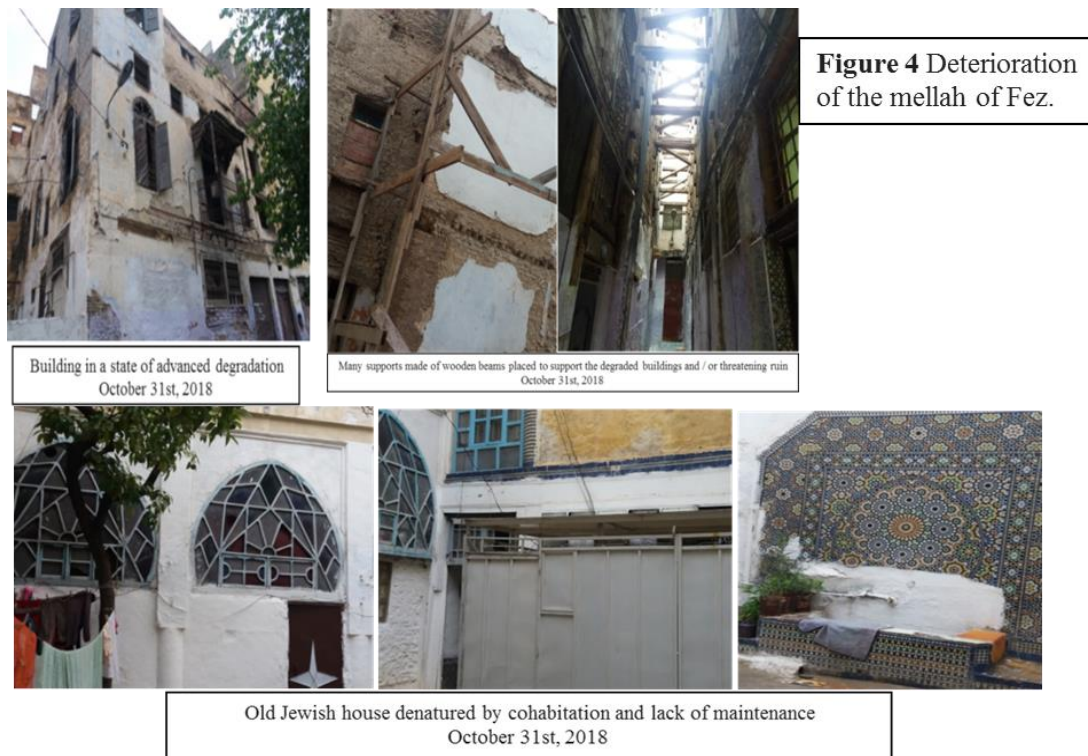
In Fez, the mellah was the most teeming, the most alive; it was overcrowded like most other mellahs in the big cities. It has virtually lost all of its Jewish landmarks and is threatened by various dangers, especially the extreme poverty and the subdivision of dilapidated houses where many families pile up. The houses systematically include a business on the ground floor and large balconies on the upper floors, in a way that is typical of Jewish buildings that are open to the public street. Muslim families now live in the mellah. The degradation of the traditional fabric is caused by over-exploitation, poor restoration, inappropriate occupation of the premises. In addition, the narrow streets of the Mellah do not let the sun in.

Rehabilitation faces financial difficulties and tenure patterns; the majority of the inhabitants of the mellah are renters/sub-tenants, and the low standard of living of the new residents affects it. The field survey shows a grim picture, poverty, cohabitation, degradation and even ruin emerge. The only living element in this impoverished space, I am tempted to say, is the well-kept cemetery¹³. Almost everywhere, it seems that the rest of the Jewish city is the cemetery, where the death of the last generation exceeds the number of neighborhoods. It is true that almost everywhere in Morocco, it seems that the Jewish city is the cemetery, where the dead of the last generation outnumber few remaining living souls.

Unlike the moribund residential space, the main shopping streets are experiencing a certain dynamism thanks to the souk of jewelers and dry fruit merchants, Ready- to- Wear and household appliances. The Souq of Jewellery is located at the beginning of Al Mariniyn street, which, after a line of jewelry shops, turns slightly to the right to hosiery, and finally opens onto the Place of Alaouiyn in front of the Royal Palace. Moulay Ismail Street, the second

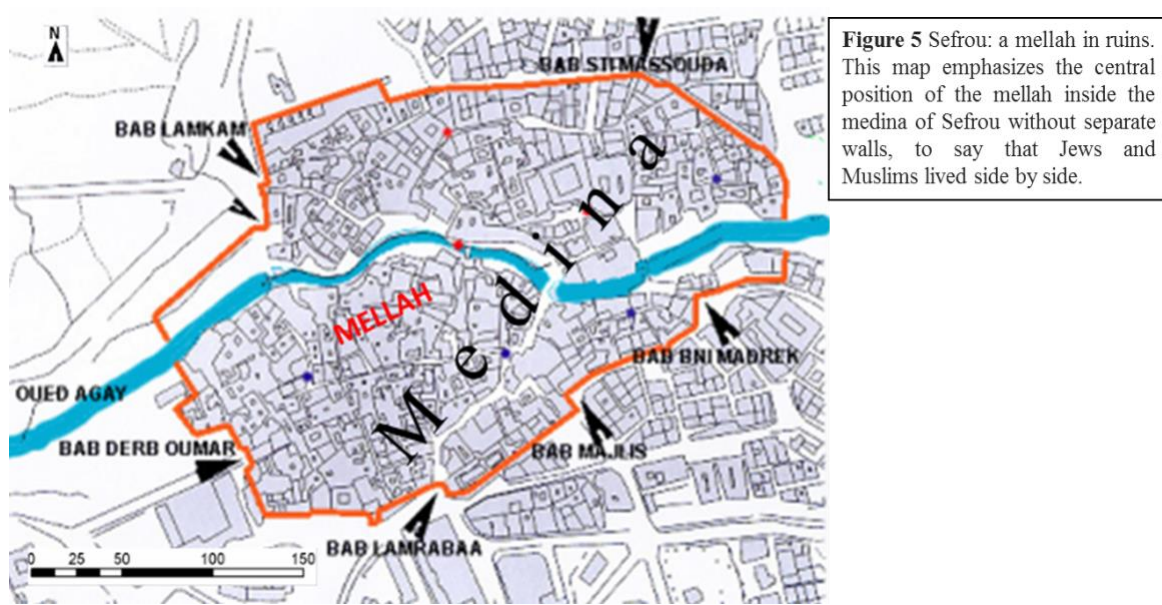
¹³Since 1976, Edmond Mimoun Gabay is the restorer and director of the Jewish cemetery; he is among the very few Jews who remained in Fez. He devoted his life to the maintenance of the cemetery; it took him 8 years to record more than 12 000 tombs. See: Video Youtube March 28, 2018. On the other hand, remember that the Council of Jewish Communities created the Judeo-Moroccan Cultural Heritage Foundation to maintain synagogues and cemeteries.

commercial area, is parallel to the Souq of Jewellery; from Bab Jiaf it runs along Bab Semmarine which was redesigned at the beginning of the 20th century to facilitate traffic, and after well-stocked displays of dried fruits and grocery stores, it has joined the Royal Palace. The traders of these two busy streets do not live of course in the mellah; most of them live in the modern part of the city. The Jews of Fez, specialists in goldsmithery have also all emigrated.



Sefrou: a mellah in ruins

The Jews in Sefrou are considered one of the most important Jewish communities that settled in Morocco, and this small urban center was even described as a city with a normal appearance, predominantly Jewish. Sefrou hosts one of the best organized mellahs and at the same time the environment where the Jewish traditions were the simplest and the purest of all Morocco. Sefrou has been a safe haven for the Jewish community over several centuries, a refuge for many of the Jewish immigrants fleeing unrest in some areas and cities in Morocco. A number of researchers confirm that Sefrou was so tolerant that Jews and Muslims generally live in complete harmony; some of them consider that the Jews of this small city, in addition



to the Jews of Damnate, were the happiest in Morocco. (Jalila Afif, 2013)

Sefrou was built on an area of 1 hectare and 181 m² which consisted of a network of long and narrow alleys; it is considered the most overcrowded and was characterized by a high unemployment rate and poverty. This situation got even worse in the late 1930s as the number of Jewish residents rose so that the mellah became a very narrow residential community, with so high a density that many families lived in one small house.

The problem of overcrowding prompted --since the repair of the mellah was impossible as it required the demolition of a large number of its homes -- some Jewish families to leave in the direction of other modern Muslim and European neighborhoods. Perhaps the problem of overcrowding is a fundamental factor that explains the germ of the Jews' abandonment of the mellah.

Indeed, the occupation of Morocco led to the the beginning of the end of the mellah as a Jewish quarter; middle-class families moved to the Islamic neighborhoods and the richer to the new European city. This is the beginning of emancipation that coincides with the beginning of emigration! Thus this exit heralds the solution of the problem of overcrowding of the mellah, noting that the Jewish communities demanded the abandonment of the projects to create a new Jewish quarter and that living in different neighborhoods is the solution to solve the problem of Jewish housing. (Ibid.).

The mellah of Sefrou has disappeared; what remains there is as one can read on a tourist board: "The Mellah of Sefrou included seven synagogues of various sizes. Only a family synagogue, founded in the late eighteenth century, survives, but is in a state of ruin. It is also worth noting that there still exists a school that belongs to the "Alliance Israélite Universelle", created by this organization in the nineteenth century, and is still in good shape". Jews stayed in Sefrou until 1967, when they mostly moved to Israel.



Figure 6 Mellah of Sefrou buried under the rubble.

The mellah of Sefrou is nothing but ruins
September 30, 2018

Meknes: a city with two mellahs

Meknes is a remarkable exception: in the 1930s, in order to offer Jews a better life than the one in the old unhealthy mellah, officials built a "new mellah," a little out of the old one . A small Jewish bourgeoisie still lives around the two "big" synagogues. The community spirit is very lively; the neighborhood with the Muslims seems, like everywhere else, without problems.¹⁴The old mellah could not cope with the demographic explosion of the twentieth

¹⁴Morocco is one of the few Arab countries that respect the religious heritage of its Jews and it is the only Arab country where there is a museum on Judaism. The new Moroccan constitution has consecrated Hebrew culture as

century, so the new mellah was built. The streets were wider, the houses less crowded, more spacious and more modern (Goldenberg, 1992). The new Mellah is a modern Jewish city. Rich Jews will not live in the European city; they prefer to stay among the Jews. The streets of the new mellah are spacious and are well lit at night. Like the Muslim medina, the Jews closed the door of the old Mellah at night to keep a welded community, separated from the other inhabitants of the city (Mohammed Lahya, 2016).

So Meknes is the only city in Morocco where there were two mellahs: an old and a new mellah; the latter was built in the 1920s and there were also two cemeteries. Jews were free to practice their religion without hindrance or problem. Judaism was alive and well in Meknes and many residents were only waiting for the conditions of international law to transplant their service and Torah to Israel.

a component of the cultural and plural identity of Morocco with its Amazigh, Arab and Jewish components, recognizing the Hebrew tributary of Moroccan identity. The Moroccan monarch also granted the possibility of the return of Moroccan Jews from Israel to their motherland whenever they wished and to restore Moroccan citizenship and not to drop it to those who immigrated to Israel. Much more, unlike most other Arab states, Morocco established diplomatic links with Israel in the early 1990s following the signing of the Oslo Accords. In 1994 Israel opened a Liaison Office in Rabat although diplomatic relations were severed following the start of the Al Aqsa Intifada in 2000. Nevertheless, commercial relations and tourism have not been cut off and Israelis travel regularly to Morocco.

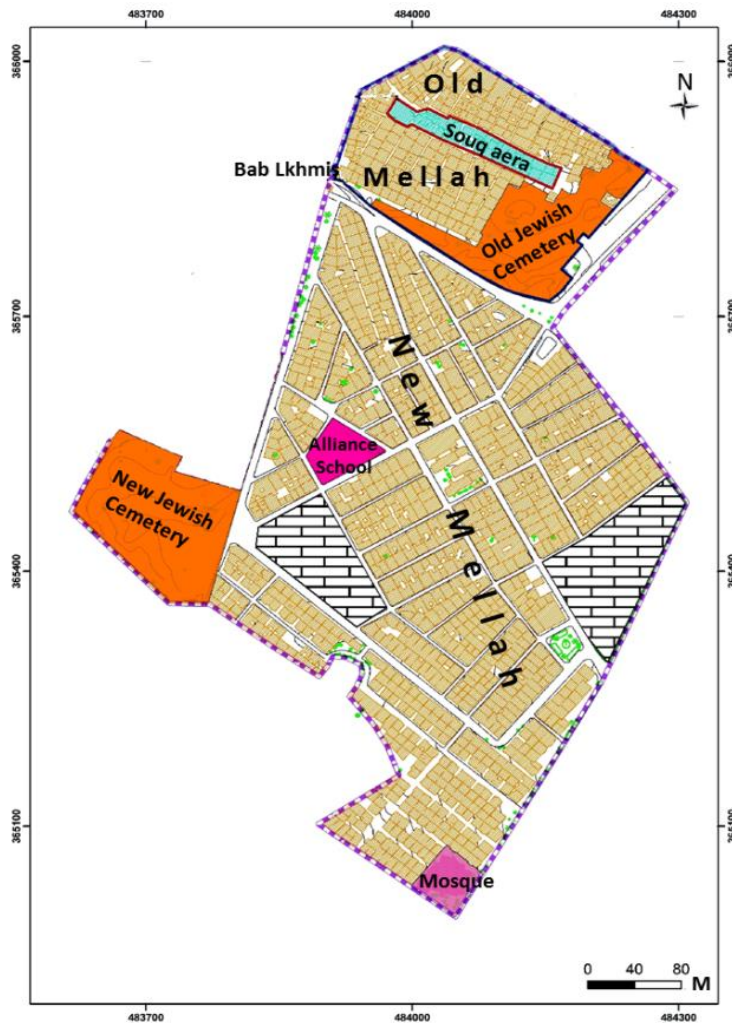


Figure 7 Meknès: a two-headed mellah. The map shows two mellahs, an old mellah and a new mellah, the latter built in the 20s of the last century, and two cemeteries, attesting to an ancient strong Jewish presence in Meknes.

It is likely that the big demographic changes and the feeling of anxiety, especially in small towns where daily life became unpleasant, precipitated the departure of the Jews especially after the war of 1967: according to rumors circulating in the mellah of Meknes, two young Jews were killed for no reason (Sekkat, 2016).

55 Jews are still in Meknes, after more there lived in it more than 20 000. In an article published in *Al-Alam* newspaper (July 15, 2013), Haim Toledano, a representative of the Jewish community in Meknes, said that the mellah, which was for a long time part of the heritage and memory, has nothing of left except the name¹⁵, which is in turn changed. The old mellah was renamed Al-Fath quarter and the new mellah became Riyadh. In accordance with the

¹⁵ "... as was the case when the streets of this or that mellah were renamed contrary to common sense, any historical sense or simple taste". See: Simon Lévy (2001), which states in an explanatory note: "This is the case in Marrakesh and Fez, names of alleys, coming from popular usage with all their flavor as Derb al Ferran at-Tehti (Street of the Lower Oven) or 'aqba from ulad Abensur (Ascent of the Abensur clan) have been replaced by the blandness of village names ... Needless to say, the current inhabitants of the Mellah have preserved and prolonged the life of these popular ancestral names. "

2011 constitution that highlighted the plural identity of Morocco, a royal initiative has decreed that all mellahs should be identified by their original Jewish name.

Figure 8 Moroccan press praises intercultural dialogue between Jews and Muslims



Al Alam Newspaper July 15, 2013

Figure 9 The old Hebrew School of Meknes



October 16, 2018

Tiznit: Jewish communities of the Atlas

Tiznit is a town in the southern Moroccan region of Souss-Massa; it is located 80 km away from Agadir. Rather quiet, it is known for its interesting medina and mellah, all protected by a vast ochre-colored enclosure of more than 5 km. The settlement of the Jews in Tiznit consisted of the meeting between two neighborhoods: the mellah of Al Ifarani and the mellah of the Al Ouazzani. The first was associated with the district of Aït Mohammed, and the second, created in the French colonization and attached spatially with the administrative district (Kufa square); it located near the military administrations at the time. Both are not separated from the Muslim dwellings, and they included, at the beginning of the 20th century a Jewish population of 200. The Jewish communities of Tiznit remained heterogeneous following their different tribal origins.

Table 1
The origins of the Jews of Tiznit until 1934

Origin	Number of households
Wijan	35
Asaka	06
Aït Ilokan	07
Ifrane	04
Tamanart	04
Tazerwalte	03
Atari	02
Essaouira	08
Taroudant	04
Marrakech	01

Table 2
The Evolution of the Jewish Community in Tiznit (1918-1950)

Year	Number
1918	200
1926	219
1931	262
1938	357
1947	426
1950	461

Figure 10 Origins and evolution of Jewish population in Tiznit.

Source: الذاكرة الجماعية: تيزنيت بلدية تيزنيت 2009 المطبعة الرئيسية أكادير

Even though both groups took the name of the mellah - the shapes of their dwellings were not different from Muslim houses and their modes of organization were similar—they did not confer on these place conventional names. The old Jewish district of Tiznit is well maintained and inhabited; its streets end most of the time in a "*cul de sac*". This urbanism gives us an insight into the structure of the city of the past.

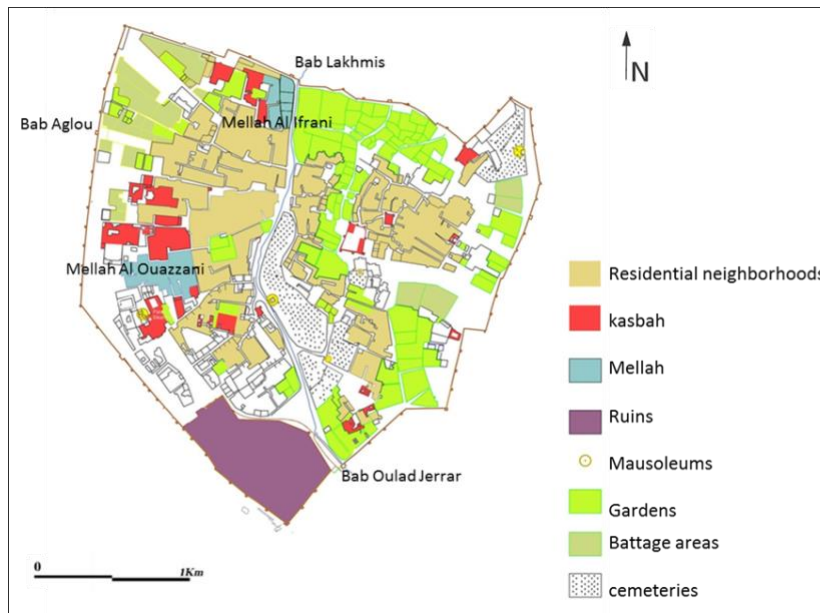


Figure 11 Tiznit: a rural mellah. Jewish neighborhoods 1918.

The Jews used to move among the tribes; they were excellent trade intermediaries in Essaouira and they specialized in marketing some of the materials so much so that they monopolized them. Jewish silversmiths moved into Tiznit and established its reputation as the center of silverwork and silver handicraft in Morocco. They excelled in the field of scaffolding and jewelry, and thanks to their business skills and regional communications, they played an important role in regional development.

Despite its small size, Tiznit saw, in 1936 and 1939, special fundraising visits for charities and Jewish organizations calling for the acceptance of Zionist ideas and the collection of aid for settlements in Israel. (The Municipality of Tiznit, 2009).

Like the emigration of its small Jewish communities from the mellahs of the Atlas, followed closely by those of the average cities of the Kingdom, even if Agadir became in the mid-1950s the starting point for immigration to Israel, the first migrations from Tiznit headed towards the northern cities and from there to the Promised Land. Thus, the Jewish presence in Tiznit continued up, albeit at a low rate, to the end of the 1980s in the form of individuals with limited numbers. The danger, then, was that "the Jews of Morocco were anxious to safeguard first and foremost what was the pivot of their existence: religion and erudition, without paying too much attention to keeping the material testimonies of a life nourished by millennial traditions. Like so many adobe *qsours*, depopulated rural or urban mellahs have melted under the effect of severe weather.

Essaouira: the mellah merchant's king

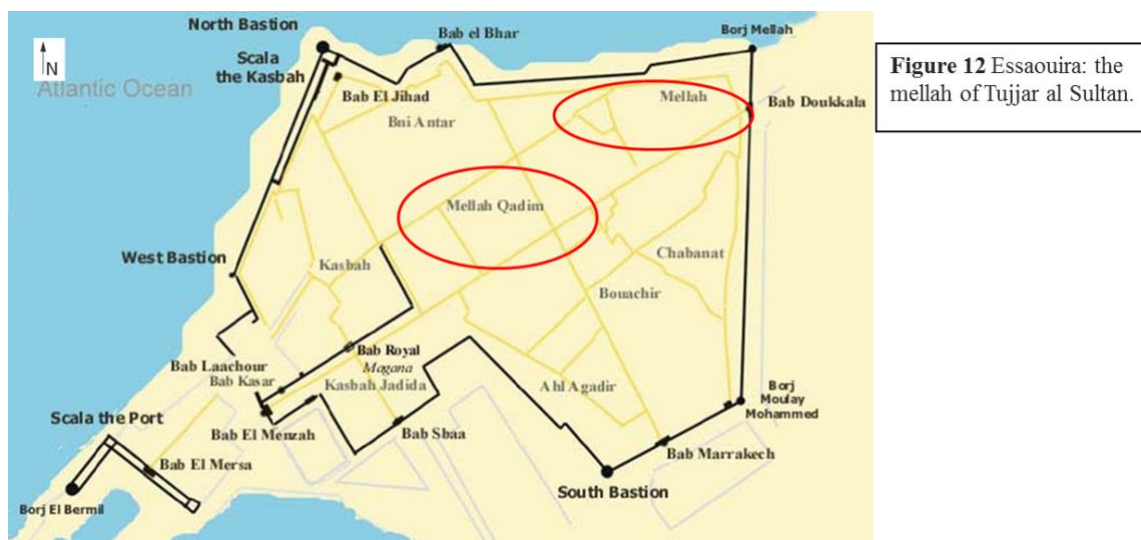
In 1760 sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abedallah (1757-1790) decided to create a port and a modern city in Essaouira (formerly known as Mogador). The new establishment, easier to control than Agadir, will have the monopoly of the foreign trade of the kingdom. It will have

the mission of draining the entire trade of southern Morocco, including the Sahara. Essaouira is an ex-nihilo creation emanating from a geopolitical decision whose purpose was to thwart the rebellion of the Souss region. Simultaneously, the mellah was built and the Sultan incited Jewish trade elites to settle there in order to activate its commercial port. Thus began the rise of Essaouira thanks to *Tujjar al Sultan* (literally the merchants of the Sultan) of Jewish confession).

A flashback could help to shed light on the situation of marginality of this historic district. This first Jewish quarter in the northern part of the old city which took the name of *mellah laqdim* (ancient mellah) developed very quickly. However, the population growth, household poverty and lack of hygiene conditions gave rise to complaints and led, in 1865, to the creation in a close location, of the mellah jdid (the new mellah) with the aim of de-densifying the old one (Messous, 2013). Both spaces constituted the district devolved to the Jews of the city.

Despite this evolution, Essaouira became the economic capital of Morocco and continued to play this role until the beginning of the French Protectorate which assigned this function to Casablanca. For identity considerations based on religious faith, the mellah of Essaouira (less than 2 hectares) isolated itself and consolidated community belonging; the marginalization of Essaouira was attested by two decisive events: the new economic organization established by the administration of the Protectorate and the advent of the Jewish State which sealed the economic fate of the city of Essaouira, and deprived of its main sources of income (fishing, canned fish) and greatly depopulated because of departures to Israel, the mellah survived only for its religious belief.

By and large, the end of caravaning trade, the foundation of Israel and resulting wars with Arab states, and the independence of Morocco culminated in the departure of the Jews from the country. As of 2017, Essaouira had only three Jewish inhabitants.



The departure of Moroccan Jews began gradually in the last century, as a result of their new status during the period of the French Protectorate; the pace of immigration increased significantly after the years 1948 and 1967. Many of the Jews of Essaouira sold their homes to the Muslims. Like those of the Medina, the houses of the mellah have often suffered irreparable damage.

Most of them have emigrated for religious reasons, especially to Israel. With the social transformations of Morocco and the high rate of rural migration, some of the mellahs' houses have turned into hotels to make room for the workers coming from nearby villages.

The houses of *Tujjar Al Sultan* were crowded with workers' families, and gradually began to lose their ornament and mosaic walls and decorations. Their walls and structures began to fade because of misuse and lack of maintenance.

It has become a social disaster, requiring the re-housing of an important part of its inhabitants and the demolition of a number of its alleys, before the re-discovery of the mellah by the investors who turned their homes in the hands of its inhabitants into treasures of an invaluable historical character.



Figure 13 Old Jewish quarter in Essaouira. Degradation of an historic district of the city. Today, the Mellah is in "phase of disappearance": The quasi totality of constructions threaten ruin.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essaouira#/media/File:Old_Jewish_quarters_in_Essaouira.jpg 2017

If Essaouira, and in particular the old medina, witnessed an unprecedented development over the past few years, the Mellah, the historic Jewish quarter of Essaouira, unfortunately did not follow suit. Completely in ruins, the mellah of Essaouira offers a spectacle of dilapidation: collapsed walls, disemboweled facades, chipped walls. Lately, the natural disasters such as the floods of 1996 and 1998 and the ocean's proximity precipitated the process of degradation of the constructions and the rate of the collapses.

It has undergone some renovation of facades. However, these efforts have been insufficient to restore its period of charm.. The restoration and rehabilitation works carried out by the Al Omrane group, the leading operator of urban planning and housing in Morocco, which should resume in 2019, are still far from over.

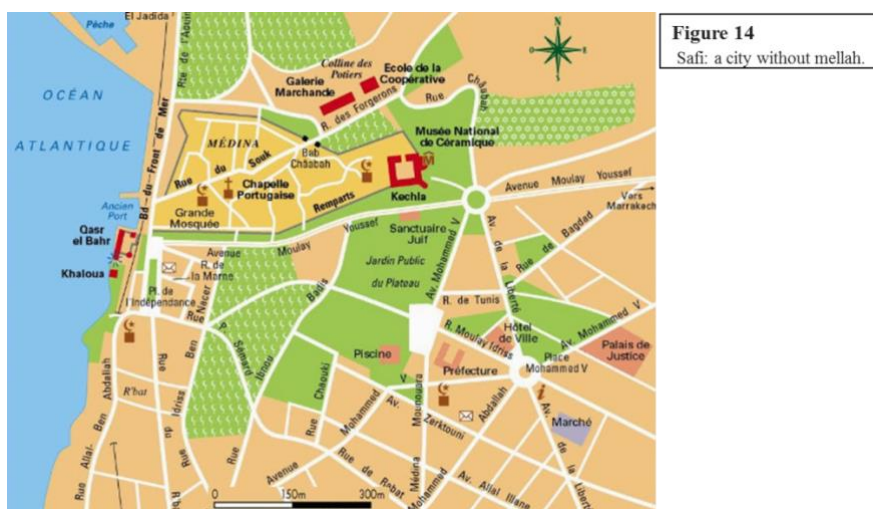
Safi: A city without mellah

Located in western Morocco on the Atlantic Ocean, Safi benefited from the presence of three categories of inhabitants: first, the Iberians who came from Spain and Portugal after 1492 carrying the Andalusian culinary, literary, musical, clothing, and scientific heritage; second, the toshavim or "resident" Jews of Safi, the native Jews who came ever since the pre-Islamic period of Morocco. They were the Jews who underwent social and cultural fusion with the Amazigh; the third category includes a mixture of "toshavim" (native Jews from pre-Islamic conquest) and "expulsed" or m'gorashim (Jews of Andalusian origin) who migrated to settle in Safi from different Moroccan cities for social and economic reasons.

In Safi, Jewish houses were adjacent ¹⁶ to Muslim homes. Safi does not have a mellah as in other Moroccan cities; moreover some Jews and Muslims shared the same houses, without embarrassment or discomfort, and like all the Jews of Morocco, they considered living in the mellah "humiliating rather than protecting." (Ouda, 2014).

¹⁶Like other cities such as Tangier and Larache, Safi had no mellah but had a predominantly Jewish population.

Safi had a special judge to settle disputes between the inhabitants, and an officer attached to the synagogue in charge of religious affairs. With the exception of Tangier and Larache, all the major cities of Morocco have their mellahs, that is to say the neighborhood that was for centuries reserved for Jews. Indeed, Jews and Muslims lived side by side in the city of Safi until the State of Israel emerged and departures began. Research on the Jewish presence in Safi requires a special methodology as it is exceptional in every way regarding the history and memory of its inhabitants, in view of the fact that Safi was the only Moroccan city that did not have the so-called "Jewish mellah" as a physical, social and political infrastructure. Thus, in accordance with its own model of interfaith coexistence, it does not assess differences and does not establish exceptions to life and housing together.



Lately, the Jewish cemetery of Safi has been “destroyed”. In order to prevent other cemeteries from being exposed to the same acts of plunder, a "Petition Against Vandalism of Safi’s Jewish Cemetery" is launched to recall that the dead must be able to rest in peace (Hachkar, 2009). In the same way, restoring Safi's Jewish cemetery without delay will contribute to the preservation of the Moroccan Judeo heritage, which is an integral part of Morocco's national identity and collective memory.

A royal initiative ordered that all the Jewish cemeteries of Morocco should be preserved in their totality. The initiative is to erect protective walls all around the cemeteries in the Moroccan cities. We must not neglect the cemeteries located in some small towns in Morocco, especially those that are geographically remote from large urban centers, as well as all those we do not even know about today, as Jewish communities were ubiquitous throughout the Moroccan territory.

PROJECTS TO SAVE JEWISH HERITAGE IN MOROCCO

The task of the Jewish community in Morocco, which is nearly 5000 inhabitants, is not easy at all: hundreds of synagogues, cemeteries, sanctuaries and community institutions must be identified and restored.

Many mellahs often preserved thanks to the deliberate policy of the Moroccan government aimed at preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of the Jewish communities of the past.

Since 1997, Casablanca housed the Museum of Moroccan Judaism with its annex the 'Mellah Museum' that was inaugurated in 2016; the museum is dedicated to the Jewish component of Moroccan culture¹⁷. On January 3, 2017, King Mohammed VI gave instructions to rename the district of Marrakech, Essalam, based on its original Jewish name; the same applies to mellahs, the alleys, and squares of this district which regained their original names¹⁸. As such, all the mellahs retrieved their original Jewish toponyms.

Mohammed VI called for the restoration of all the Jewish temples in different cities of the kingdom. The Council of the Israelite Communities of Morocco and the Judeo-Moroccan Cultural Heritage Foundation have undertaken the restoration of synagogues and cemeteries,¹⁹ but there is still a lot to be done; rehabilitation is so expensive and takes time.

The official discourse considers Judeo-Moroccan cultural heritage as a pedagogical tool to sensitize young generations to the values of sharing, coexistence and living together. The rehabilitation of Jewish cemeteries is a clear proof of the Jewish community's roots in the history and geography of Morocco.²⁰ The rehabilitation of Moroccan Jewish funerary heritage is certainly an example of the positive and dutiful perspective to history. At the same time, it is a most eloquent testimony of the numerical importance and the spatial extent of the Jewish communities in the history of Morocco. By the way, the Muslim cemeteries themselves are not in a better condition; many of these places across the country suffer from insecurity and insalubrity, some take the form of open dumps, and are often the scene of many incivilities and assaults of any kind. Administrative and political leaders do not show any overall or

¹⁷See for instance the project "*Khoya: The Sound Archives of Jewish Morocco*" which was chosen to reflect this heritage that is common to all Moroccans. "Khoya" has a double meaning, "my brother" in Arabic dialect and "jewel" in Spanish. Vanessa Paloma Elbazis gathered the Moroccan Jewish memory through music: <https://www.facebook.com/khoyaarchivesmarocjuif/about>.

See also: Essaouira rehabilitates the Hebrew legacy of its history by initiating, for example, the project, called *Bayt Al Dakira*, "the house of memory", carried by the Association Essaouira-Mogador, founded by André Azoulay, Jewish native of the city of tradewinds. Anaïs Lefébure, Essaouira fait renaître son patrimoine juif oublié (REPORTAGE). <https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/>

¹⁸Since the restoration of the mellah of Marrakesh, which has abandoned its miserable character and has become better and more attractive than it was before, tourists flock to visit the neighborhood where the alleys have restored their ancient Jewish names, a visit that represents a return to the roots for visitors.

¹⁹Thus, the following synagogues were restored: Ibn-Danan and Al Fassiyin in Fez, Barukh Toledano in Meknes, Moshe Nahon in Tangier, Ishaq Ben-Walid in Tetouan, the Oufrane Synagogue of the Anti-Atlas, that of Ighiln'ogho in the region of Taroudant-Ouarzazate, that of Khmiss Arazan near Taroudant and the great Synagogue of Errachidia.

²⁰See Projet ALADIN. Le pont de la connaissance entre Juifs et Musulmans. WWW.projetaladin.org

partial vision for the rehabilitation of funeral sites. The Muslim dead can always wait! But also claim more respect!²¹ The safeguarding of patrimony should concern equally all the religious and community actors of Morocco! It should be a global and egalitarian work.

However, in the case of the Judeo-Moroccan heritage left in disuse, it can be pointed out, on the one hand, that following the emigration and the massive nature of departures since in less than thirty years (1948-1975), some of the Jewish communities have totally disappeared (villages of Dra, Atlas, Debdou, Sefrou ...), others have abandoned their mellahs to live elsewhere, and that on the other hand, we are witnessing the emergence of a journey back to the sources, on a pilgrimage to reconnect with their Jewish origins in Morocco. Having made trips to an unknown land, in this case Israel, these Moroccan Jews suffered a loss of identity. Therefore, today, Moroccan Jews decide to return, often accompanied by their children, to the land of their ancestors to find their identity. These displacements in the opposite direction²² of migratory flows towards their ancestors, gave birth to the roots tourism (Lepape, 2015). Since it is not a question of mass tourism but rather of individual or family tourism, organized around a quest for identity, can roots tourism play a role in the preservation of Judeo-Moroccan heritage?

The development of roots tourism seems to be able to allow the human and social sciences to understand the practices related to this kind of travel, how Moroccan Jews associate tourism and quest for identity, the reasons for this emigration (a question I tried to address in this article) and its relation to tourism today. Roots tourism is a project for the future and is articulated around affinity, religious, genealogical and memory tourism; it is imperative to identify the tourist's expectations and to involve the public in the development and success of this nascent tourism.

CONCLUSION

At first sight, the Jews had no existential reasons to leave Morocco and their lives were not in "a situation of crisis"; they were subjected to the logic of change according to geographical regions, historical stages, the economic situation and the relations of the political forces. But the reality was different! They left to "the land where milk and honey flow" and nobody of them will ever gain live in the mellahs of Morocco.

Several main remarks can summarize the central ideas of this paper:

*The rejection of the mellah as an unhealthy and banished space symbolizing a status of inferiority imposed by the Muslim authority, that of dhimmis (protected). This status of inferiority devolved to Jews will gradually disappear starting from the late nineteenth century. Thus began a period of emancipation, followed by an exile that depopulated the mellah of its Jews.

The dwellings were cramped and the living conditions were harsh, and as the Jewish population grew, the mellah became overcrowded. Nevertheless, these neighborhoods, formerly devolved to the Jews, are not to be confused with the closed ghettos of Europe. Insalubrity mellahs served as a battle horse to denounce the living conditions of the Jewish populations used as a pretext to precipitate their departure. Through the deteriorated mellahs, the denunciation of the legal and social status of the degraded Moroccan Jew to the rank of "protected" (dhimmi), or even degradingly subjected, is decried by resuming the same words.

²¹For more details, see : *Entre ruines et dépotoirs, les cimetières marocains en piteux état.*

²²Remember that for political reasons, large-scale Palestinian roots tourism does not exist, due to the impossibility of most Palestinians to gain access into Israel. The Palestinian villages are largely ignored or marginalized in the information given to the public. Many of the Palestinian villages and heritage sites were destroyed by Israel in 1948 and onwards, or were gradually dilapidated due to lack of official care.

**Religious motivation was probably more decisive than adherence to European political Zionism that was foreign to the experience of Moroccan Jews. The latter, being devout believers and attached to their faith, obeyed what was for them a messianic call to return to the "Promised Land" . Of course, the other factors mentioned above should not be neglected (messianic contribution, Zionism, events, etc.), but the campaign that controlled everything, among other things, and orchestrated against the deplorable living conditions in the mellahs was certainly the most decisive event at the beginning of the departures. It created a feeling of disgust and a rejection of the place that had become the mellah. Over time, the streets of these narrow neighborhoods became crowded, full of people, and became dirty. All in all, an execrable cesspool that arouses horror, that one must curse and leave permanently. A shameful past to forget, a legacy gone, it is time that it came to an end. But as the Moroccan proverb says: "if beauty goes away (with age), its features remain".

*** Due to age and past neglect, the infrastructure networks in the mellahs show an urgent need for maintenance and renovation. These physical challenges refer as much to the decay of buildings as to the renovation of buildings threatening ruin, in short to the development strategies of historic cities in Morocco. Deserted progressively by the Jews after the establishment of the French Protectorate, first the rich moved to the new city and then the massive exodus of the poorest responding to the creation of the State of Israel, the mellahs are currently occupied by Moroccan poor populations. They were reinvested by Muslims or unfortunately abandoned. So their urban fabric has changed and only a few signs of the ancient Jewish presence remain, including restored synagogues and well-kept cemeteries.

**** The Jewish quarter in Morocco, the mellah is endangered. It nevertheless constitutes significant architectural evidence of a bygone era. The history of Moroccan Jews is everywhere, inscribed forever in the landscape. A wide variety of cultural projects to support Jewish heritage has emerged in Morocco over the past few years. The work done is commendable, but the task of preserving the places of memory of the Jewish heritage is immense.²¹The task of the Jewish community in Morocco, which is nearly 5000 inhabitants, is particularly heavy: hundreds of synagogues, cemeteries, sanctuaries and community institutions must be identified and restored. Many mellahs are often preserved thanks to the deliberate policy of the Moroccan government aimed at preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of the Jewish communities of the past. It seems that the Jews do not seek to ensure the preservation of the existing heritage in its totality; their interest is focused precisely on the rehabilitation of cemeteries. Almost everywhere it seems that the Jewish city is the cemetery, where the dead of the last generation outnumber the living. It's a testimony of past strength...Is it a post-mortem reunion, or perhaps the reviving of stones, the cemetery, "Beth Ha Hayim" or "House of Life", which symbolizes the "return to the country"? Mortuary is this building site of the future! Isn't it unrealistic?

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