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# Seeds of Peace: Visible Cooperation Between Jews and Muslims in Morocco

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SEEDS OF PEACE:

VISIBLE COOPERATION BETWEEN JEWS AND MUSLIMS IN MOROCCO

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International Studies: Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution

Middle East/North Africa

SIT: Migration and Transnational Identity: Rabat, Morocco

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**Abstract**

A *carrefour* in various contexts, Morocco stands in a unique position between the Arab world and Israel for several reasons. The country is unique due to the historical presence of Judaism in the region that, over the years, became a Muslim-majority Islamic kingdom. The members of Morocco's Muslim and Jewish communities coexisted for centuries, albeit with minor hurdles, as did the Muslims and Jews of Palestine. However, political events around the world in the twentieth century led to the rapid departure of Jews from their Moroccan homeland. Today, with so few remaining in Morocco, "Jew" often becomes synonymous with "Israel," and as a result, relations between Moroccans—mainly Moroccan Muslims—supporting Palestine and their Jewish compatriots become tense.

Despite this unfortunate reality, there are still many Muslims and Jews in Morocco who hope for peaceful relations to once again become more widespread. However, during a time when such efforts bring with them the risk of political categorization, stigmatization and silence, how do these movements seek to successfully counter the tensions caused in Morocco by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? This paper will examine some of the current efforts to encourage mutual understanding between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. By conducting interviews with leaders of peace-building movements, listening to past interviews with and speaking to members of the Jewish community that remains in Morocco, and reading literature discussing Morocco's past involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, I was able to connect these present-day efforts to Morocco's historical role in peace-building between Israel and Palestine. I hope that this paper will begin to bring to light the potential for creative efforts to encourage widespread cooperation between two of Morocco's most long-standing cultural communities.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank Professor Souad Eddouada for her steady guidance throughout this process. Thank you for the time, effort, and care you took to provide us with such a detailed and multidimensional context about migration and transnational identity in Moroccan society, and for helping me learn about this diverse, beautiful country through the focus of my research project.

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Thank you to my professors at the University of Oregon for their mentorship. In regards to this project, I would like to specifically extend my thanks

To Professor Diane Baxter, for teaching the class that deepened my interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process;

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To the members of my wonderful host family in Morocco: thank you for welcoming me into your family, and for always making me feel at home. I truly cherish the moments we spent together, and am unbelievably lucky to have been able to get to know you over the past three months— you will always be my Moroccan family.

Olivia, Carina, Naomi, Anashua, Isabelle, Audrey, Marisa, and Cecilia: thank you for making our home this past month the dynamic, fun-filled, and (figuratively) warm place it was. Thank you to all of my classmates for your support, and for sharing this unique experience with me.

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Lastly, thank you to all of those who were willing to share their experiences with me, and for allowing me to learn about the various ways in which the history of cooperation between Jews and Muslims in Morocco is being preserved today. This project would by no means have been possible without you, and I thank you for sharing with me your insight on the realities that shape this aspect of Moroccan society today.

## Introduction

A *carrefour* in various contexts, Morocco stands in a unique position between the Arab world and Israel for several reasons. The country is unique due to the historical presence of Judaism in the region that, over the years, became a Muslim-majority Islamic kingdom. The members of Morocco's Muslim and Jewish communities coexisted for centuries, albeit with minor hurdles, as did the Muslims and Jews of Palestine. However, political events around the world in the twentieth century led to the rapid departure of Jews from their Moroccan homeland. Today, with so few remaining in Morocco, "Jew" often becomes synonymous with "Israel," and as a result, relations between Moroccans—mainly Moroccan Muslims—supporting Palestine and their Jewish compatriots become tense.

Despite this unfortunate reality, there are still many Muslims and Jews in Morocco who hope for peaceful relations to once again become more widespread. However, during a time when such efforts bring with them the risk of political categorization, stigmatization and silence, how do these movements seek to successfully counter the tensions caused in Morocco by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? This paper will examine some of the current efforts to encourage mutual understanding between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. By conducting interviews with leaders of peace-building movements, listening to past interviews with and speaking to members of the Jewish community that remains in Morocco, and reading literature discussing Morocco's past involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, I was able to connect these present-day efforts to Morocco's historical role in peace-building between Israel and Palestine. I hope that this paper will begin to bring to light the potential for creative efforts to encourage broader cooperation between two of Morocco's most long-standing cultural communities.

## Methodology

Over a period of four weeks, I collected evidence 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. I looked for most of my written sources through academic journals, news sources, and published government documents. KHOYA: *les archives sonores du Maroc juif* in Casablanca generously allowed me access to an array of oral primary sources to use in my research, and the interviews I conducted independently mainly took place during the latter three weeks of the research period in Casablanca, Rabat, and the Al Haouz province of Morocco. Particularly, the interviews in the Al Haouz province took place in Marrakech and Tameslouht. By synthesizing historical and contemporary sources, I was able to draw connections between Jewish history in Morocco, the reasons behind the emigration of Moroccan Jews from Morocco, and the objectives behind movements to preserve Jewish culture and re-establish understanding between Muslims and Jews. The written literature and primary documents I used were instrumental in allowing me to gain context, background, and factual evidence as I started answering my research question. Complementing the written sources, the oral recordings I listened to and the interviews I conducted provided me with personal accounts that were essential in helping me understand experiences and nuances that are difficult to convey and grasp through a written account.

I chose a qualitative method in addressing 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

different directions, and these angles allowed me to better define the terms and concepts I hope to shed some light upon through my paper. When I began this project, for instance, 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. 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 Jewish identity in Moroccan society, both in the past and present.

In order to document the information shared during each interview, I handwrote notes, and sometimes asked the participant if he or she 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. While recorded interviews allowed me to refer to quotes and context later on, I heard from one participant in particular that, subconsciously, the information shared in a recorded interview may not be as detailed or freely-shared as it could be during an interview not being recorded. The situation differed for each participant depending on the subject, and depending on the method both the interviewee and I preferred in each instance. In addition, my academic institution in Morocco provided consent forms for participants. Mainly using the French versions of these forms, I obtained the consent of each interviewee before including his or her thoughts in my paper.

While each of my interviewees had a unique perspective on an angle of my research question, I am dividing 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. Each interviewee either

- 1) elaborated on 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, by alluding to academic texts and personal experiences
- 2) shared their thoughts on methods by which relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco can be ameliorated, and provided examples of efforts to do so
- 3) discussed the activities and intent of organizations in which they are involved that facilitate dialogue, cooperation and intercultural understanding between Muslims and Jews in Morocco.

The majority of this research took place between the beginning of November and the first week of December, 2015. Due to this short amount of time, I confined my interviews to Rabat, Casablanca, and the Al Haouz province (Marrakech and Tameslouht), despite the fact that there are efforts facilitating dialogue in various 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 vital 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 participant, particularly as I am pursuing a topic that is sensitive to many people.

When I began my research, I was unaware of how multi-faceted and complex my original question was. My question originally encompassed a much broader scope than would have been possible to discuss effectively with evidence gathered during a four-week period. As I discovered, through speaking to people who have done previous research relating to my topic, and through reading past literature, how many dimensions my original question would have to cover, I was able to narrow it down significantly. Although the smaller question I eventually decided to pursue is composed of multiple dimensions as well, the specific focus I eventually found enabled me to better build a foundation for further research. With this in mind as I conducted research over the past four weeks, I followed the method explained above to begin determining how movements and organizations in Morocco seek to effectively counter the tensions caused in Morocco by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Relevance to the Studies of Peace and Conflict Resolution**

I approached this project with a deep interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the effects it has on Moroccan society, peace-building efforts, and cooperation across socially and politically constructed boundaries. For these reasons, I decided to focus on the peripheral effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Morocco—that is, the tensions that have been caused, and that continue to manifest themselves from time to time, and for various reasons, between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Morocco. In doing so, I have discovered various efforts across Morocco to make visible, through intercultural movements, the mutual cooperation that exists—and that has existed for centuries—here between Muslims and Jews. This study exposed me to the

various, creative ways in which “peace-building” is pursued directly and indirectly in civil society. Simultaneously, I was made aware of the broad and often ambiguous definition the term “peace-building” entails. Within the context of my research question, “peace-building” signifies the various efforts to bring about, in different ways, a renewed awareness of Morocco’s full cultural history. Specifically, this cultural history refers to the significant presence and coexistence of both Muslims and Jews in a country that has seen the rapid departure of the latter during the past century, and as a result, a decreased awareness of the history between the communities. Lastly, this paper discusses some of the many movements to encourage continued co-existence between Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews. These efforts put together, while they may have but a small influence on the conflict in Israel-Palestine itself, help ameliorate the consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on affected societies.

### **Relevance to the Theme of Migration and Transnational Identity**

Particularly after the World War II, the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, and Morocco’s independence in 1956, 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. 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 not met a Moroccan Jew before due to the diminishing numbers of this population 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.<sup>1</sup> With this young generation, the word “Jew” is sometimes automatically dissociated from Moroccan identity. It becomes synonymous with the word “Israel,” and in turn, “Israel” is associated with conflict. This reality demonstrates the significant consequences Jewish emigration from Morocco—caused by political events in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—has on Morocco as a whole. In order to counter these consequences, it is essential to bring about a renewed awareness, particularly among Moroccan youth, regarding the history of Judaism in Morocco, the preservation of Jewish culture in Morocco and the ability of Jews in Morocco to be just as Moroccan as their Muslim neighbors.

### **Literature Review**

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. Other sources focus on Muslim-Jewish dialogue in different settings, such as Israel-Palestine and Europe. 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. The context I gained from this literature allows me to better understand how my findings relate to broader dynamics, and, during the process, helped me frame my research question within the brackets of available historical and secondary literature.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

André Levy's piece, titled *Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach* does not concern "peace-building" through acknowledgment of a barrier or through direct dialogue. Rather, he speaks to the "isolationist tendencies" of Moroccan Jews as a minority group, highlighting the emergence of cultural enclaves as emigration continues. 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."<sup>2</sup> He presents an issue relevant to many 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 that of the Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Moroccan groups who sought to "protect the integrity of [their] group towards the next generation." He addresses the question of how one can accept the surrounding culture, and embrace it, and at the same time not meld with it.<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> André Levy, *Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach*, (Israel: Ben Gurion Univeristy: 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

<sup>4</sup> André Levy, *Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach*, (Israel: Ben Gurion Univeristy: 1999).

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

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 to diminish stereotypes. In these card games, for example, 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.”<sup>6</sup> This paper is useful to me in that it provides important historical context, helps me define “peace-building” in the sense most relevant to my paper, and also reminds me to look at and consider efforts towards peace beyond the surface. 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 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. For instance, there are activities organized through team sports, music, and dialogue. 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 simple logistics, such projects also remain

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<sup>6</sup> André Levy, *Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games Between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach*, (Israel: Ben Gurion Univeristy: 1999).

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.”<sup>7</sup> Activists in Morocco share this notion as well. Throughout the research period, I have spoken to leaders of various intercultural movements in Morocco, and know that I have but scratched the surface in trying to uncover these initiatives. Friedman’s notion was somewhat confirmed during an interview during my last week of research, when I was told that despite the efforts of multiple small organizations building 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.”<sup>8</sup>

Friedman’s article is significant to my research in two main ways. First, although the events the article describes are abroad and do not directly engage with Moroccan Jews and therefore do not address mutual understanding from this side, they do engage Muslim Moroccans living abroad. This international effect is important particularly in small-scale projects such as those Friedman discusses, because the connections that Moroccans abroad have to their homeland can mean that eventually, such efforts to maintain mutual understanding can be added to those already back home.

Additionally, the abundance of peripherally related literature on the Israeli community of Moroccan origin was extremely beneficial in helping me begin to answer my research question—regarding cooperation between Muslim and Jewish Moroccans—because it exposed me to various nuances regarding the relations between Moroccan Jews and the majority of Israeli society, and

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Friedman, *Mapping Dialogue Between Jewish and Muslim Communities in Europe*, (USA: Berghahn Books: 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with El-Mehdi Boudra, Rabat. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 1 December 2015.

the connections many Moroccan Jews maintain with Morocco, that may not otherwise be apparent to me while pursuing a research question that is so multifaceted and far from the conflict. The context I gain from these articles of various disciplines—particularly the one I describe below—will also allow me to examine multiple constructions of identities within my community of focus.

Noa Hazan, in her 2013 article *The Elasticity of the Color Line*, compares Israeli national press photographs taken during the 1967 war to those taken by the same entity during the Black Panther protests that took place between 1971 and 1973 in Israel. She argues, “that the visual coverage of the protest in the Israeli popular press strictly excluded the demonstrators from the Israeli public using racial signifiers” and in doing so, portrayed the group leading the protests as a threat to the existing Israeli social order<sup>9</sup>. In fact, the protestors were attempting to change just that—a stringent socio-economic ladder in which Mizrahi Jews, or Jews descended from local Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa, were institutionally discriminated against and met with lesser economic opportunity and political agency.

The Black Panther movement in Israel used its very name to connect its agenda to a broader social movement—one also against institutionalized discrimination that resulted in economic and political disenfranchisement—that had taken place in the United States. While the Israeli Black Panther movement was not the first Mizrahi social movement to take place, it was the first in which the protestors were part of a generation born in Israel and not born in predominantly Arab countries.<sup>10</sup> The many interactions between the Israeli Black Panthers and

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<sup>9</sup> Noa Hazan, *The Elasticity of the Color Line* (Israel: Sage, 2013), 49-73.

<sup>10</sup> Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 163-4.



the Israeli government—for instance, with former Prime Minister Golda Meir—only allowed the Israeli government to further delegitimize the significance of the Black Panther’s movement.<sup>11</sup>

Hazan discusses the various photographs and portrayals of the Black Panther protests by the Israeli press, and mentions the fact that the movement was portrayed as a threat to Israeli society, even to other Mizrahim. One example she provides, regarding the way in which the Israeli press communicated the public’s “power” over the protestors, is the way in which the press photographed only the backs of the police officers present at the protests—thereby leaving the race of the policemen ambiguous, regardless of the fact that most of the police officers present at the protests were themselves Mizrahim.<sup>12</sup> The hidden reality of these “racial” markers oversimplifies perceptions of identity and creation of community, by pitting White against Black, and portraying White as constantly having possession of the “upper hand.” According to Hazan, “it appears that the Black Panther protest photographs published in the press also acted as an institutional showcase of racial cleansing and control, through which the Zionist establishment wished to re-separate itself from its Black (Panther) citizens.”<sup>13</sup>

This article is important in helping me understand the background information I need to pursue my research question, and especially helpful in gaining background in understanding the diverse constructions of identity among Moroccan Jews in Morocco and abroad. It helps in analyzing the evidence I will further gather, because it places emphasis on the role of the press in “shaping the collective identity” in the Israeli public sphere “and setting its external and internal outlines.”<sup>14</sup> The evidence Hazan found to support her arguments also helped me understand the

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<sup>11</sup> Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 163-4.

<sup>12</sup> Noa Hazan, *The Elasticity of the Color Line* (Israel: Sage, 2013), 49-73.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

results of the Black Panther movement on relations between Mizrahi Jews and the rest of the Israeli public. Citing Lev and Shenhav (2010), Hazan notes that “the ideological position of newspaper editors and other media in those years played a central role in strengthening public delegitimization of the protests and the protesters, as well as increasing social panic and fear of them.”<sup>15</sup> Her argument not only highlights facts that will be useful in my research, but also brings to the surface various contradictions and nuances that I must keep in mind in order to fully understand perceptions of Mizrahi identity in Israel—of which Moroccans are a large part—and the subsequent or consequential creations of community among Moroccans in Israel and other Israelis of Middle Eastern origins.

Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the Black Panther movement in Israel will allow me to gain peripheral insight into my main research question, regarding the participation of Moroccan Jews in peace-building efforts in between Muslims and Jews—according to Professor Sami Chetrit (2004), whom Hazan cites in her article, “the Black Panther movement provided a good model to those involved in the Mizrahi resistance since they were the first to join the universal struggle. This group...also included in the agenda of their protest resistance to the Palestinian occupation.”<sup>16</sup> Not only does this article provide interesting background on the historical dynamics between Mizrahim in Israel—of which Moroccans constitute a large part—in the period right after Moroccans began emigrating in the largest numbers to Israel, but it also sparks questions for future research that I will mention in the conclusion of this paper.

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”

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<sup>15</sup> Noa Hazan, *The Elasticity of the Color Line* (Israel: Sage, 2013), 49-73.

<sup>16</sup> Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 163-4.

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 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.

Because language and culture are so deeply connected, I became interested, particularly after reading the following article, in the role of language education in increasing cultural awareness between Jewish and Muslim youth in Moroccan schools. Though the specific issue of language is only briefly touched upon in the findings of this paper, the article offers, 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.”<sup>17</sup> This goal and the structure of the schools simply exemplify the capacity for there to be both mutual understanding and cultural retention among communities between which broader political tensions may exist.

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<sup>17</sup> Maureen Rajuan & Zvi Bekerman, *Teachers' 'inside' reports on language instruction in the Palestinian-Jewish Schools in Israel*, (Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 2011), 465-479.

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-connectedness to almost every aspect of school life” through an analysis of teachers’ final reports for an in-service.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> In both Israeli and Moroccan societies, an equal emphasis placed on both Arabic and Hebrew among children in such intercultural schools would likely have a beneficial impact. While children tend to be the most unaware of a conflict’s particularities, they also are usually the most lacking in cultural awareness: in Morocco, this is due to the fact that 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 naturally on a daily

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<sup>18</sup> Maureen Rajuan & Zvi Bekerman, *Teachers’ ‘inside’ reports on language instruction in the Palestinian–Jewish Schools in Israel*, (Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 2011), 465-479.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Shimon Cohen, École Maïmonide, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 25 November 2015.

basis.<sup>20</sup> 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 cultural understanding—often a predecessor to peace-building— through a unique lens.<sup>21</sup>

The research question that I have pursued concentrates on current movements to facilitate cultural awareness, dialogue, and mutual understanding between Jews and Muslims in Morocco. Periodically, it takes into account aspects of the role of language in forming such conditions, but does not focus specifically on language. There is relatively little literature available on the subject of Hebrew language-education alongside Arabic education in Morocco and other Arab countries, even though such programs do exist at universities and are taken by students, albeit a small number of them. In this way, Rajuan and Bekerman’s article not only allows me to better understand facets of my research, but also poses an interesting set of questions for further research.

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. In addition to being written in a more reflective style than the other sources described above, this report is the most directly relevant source to my research within the chosen set of secondary literature. 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

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Maureen Rajuan & Zvi Bekerman, *Teachers' 'inside' reports on language instruction in the Palestinian–Jewish Schools in Israel*, (Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 2011), 465-479.

methodologies by which interfaith work may be conducted, and inform each other about ongoing projects and campaigns.”<sup>22</sup> 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.”<sup>23</sup> 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 Sweden. When relevant, she considered her and participants’ experiences in the Marrakech conference within the context of such a conference in Sweden.

The information she presents in her report was useful for me as I began to learn, during this research process, about interfaith and intercultural movements between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. The points Elmahi makes reminded me to include narratives from multiple angles before interpreting my research findings, particularly as my question itself seeks to uncover balanced movements that make intercultural cooperation more visible in Moroccan society. Keeping in mind the information and analysis coming from these various sources, I was able to better decipher my findings and conceptualize them within a broader framework.

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<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

### Historical Overview: Jews and Muslims in Morocco

#### *Dhimma Law and the Emergence of the Mellah*

Jewish communities have existed in North Africa since—and perhaps before—the times of the Second Temple.<sup>24</sup> In fact, some 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 Phœnician merchant ships.”<sup>25</sup>

Centuries later, under Islamic rule in Morocco, Jews were given *dhimmi* or “protected” status. The Islamic principle of *dhimma*, or security and tolerance for non-Muslims, is exemplified in various historical primary sources, including the Constitution of Medina, which is an agreement that was established between Muhammad and Jews who fought in the Battle of Khaybar in the year 628, when Khaybar was attacked before being brought under Islamic rule. Therefore, 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 paying a *jizya* tax.<sup>26</sup> Of course, since *dhimmi* status rendered them unequal to Muslim subjects of the Islamic dynasties, many Jews and other non-Muslims despised the *dhimma* laws. Paradoxically, however, the protection they received under this law became essential for the survival of Jews in Morocco and

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<sup>24</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89-106.

<sup>25</sup> Regina Keil-Sagawe, *A Moroccan Jew with Arabo-Berber Roots*, (Germany: Qantara de, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89-106.

other French protectorates during the period in which anti-Jewish decrees were issued under the Vichy government.<sup>27</sup>

In the fifteenth century, Morocco's first *mellah*, an enclosed quarter of the city in which Jews were required to live by local authorities, was established in Fez. The pattern of *mellahization* that first emerged in Fez was imitated by multiple Moroccan cities in which there were significant Jewish populations over the next few centuries. Usually, the explanation given for the concept of the *mellah* is 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 access to their taxes and services."<sup>28</sup> While this is true of the origins of *mellahs* in many present-day Moroccan cities, it is important to note that the formation of a *mellah* in each city at a specific time was due to multiple factors dependent on regional political conditions. Usually, it was a combination of these factors that led to the formation of a Jewish *mellah*. For instance, the year before the formation of the *mellah* in Fez, the intact corpse of Idriss II, "who founded Fez in 810 in the footsteps of his father, the first Muslim Moroccan ruler," was found in the center of the city. Thus, "a holy shrine was built on the site of his grave...rendering Fez a sacred Muslim city."<sup>29</sup> In 1438, this first *mellah* was established by the Marinid dynasty, immediately following an attack on Jewish residents of Fez.<sup>30</sup> This occurrence likely acted as that catalyst that justified the dynasty's decision to remove Jews from the center of town.

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<sup>27</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 97.

<sup>28</sup> Emily Gottreich, *On the Origins of the Mellah of Marrakesh*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 299.

<sup>29</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 92.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Schroeter, *The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155.



In Marrakech as well, a multitude of factors led to the creation of the *mellah* between 1557 and 1563. The causes, as analyzed by historian Emily Gottreich (2003), include the population influx the city saw during the early- and mid- 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Sa'adi dynasty's quest to make Marrakech look legitimate in comparison to Fez.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Moroccan Jews in the Twentieth Century*

The pattern of *mellahization* continued and became well-established over the next few centuries. As European countries became increasingly involved in Moroccan affairs, however, they brought with them the echoes of European ideas—mainly Christian and Jewish—advocating for the rights of religious minorities.<sup>33</sup> Between the period of 1830 and 1912, Jews in Morocco and other North African countries were made more aware of the ideas being exchanged between European citizens, and, due to the unequal treatment they received in their homeland, hoped that Morocco would adopt such ideas as well.<sup>34</sup> Due to a fear that the Jewish inhabitants of Tetouan were collaborating with the Spanish forces who occupied Tetouan soon after, tensions began to emerge between Moroccan Muslims and Jews in the city. With the presence of an outside ruler, *dhimmi* status started becoming less apparent, even though *dhimma* law effectively continued until the beginning of the French Protectorate in 1912.

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<sup>31</sup> Emily Gottreich, *On the Origins of the Mellah of Marrakesh*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 299.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Schroeter, *The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155.

<sup>33</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 93.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

At around the same time, complications arose in French society regarding the position of French Jews. Discussions about this topic carried over into Morocco as France established its presence there, becoming much more complex along the way due to the “triangular” and hierarchical “relationship between colonized Jews, the colonizing power, and French Jewish citizens.”<sup>35</sup> At this time, there were more Jews present in Morocco than in any other entity in the Middle East in North Africa region. This remained true up until World War II, and was reflected through the actions of the French powers, concerning Moroccan Jews, in pre-colonial Morocco. The first Alliance Israélite Universelle school was founded in Tetouan in 1862, and the Alliance was supported over the following decades by the French consulate in Essaouira.<sup>36</sup> In 1864, Sir Moses Montefiore, who came to Morocco from Britain between 1863 and 1864, convinced the sultan in power to legally ensure that “Israelites” under his empire would be treated with “utmost benevolence.”<sup>37</sup> Over the next few decades, up until the Protectorate, Jewish and Muslim members of the upper classes were considered “protégés” of the European powers and therefore exempt from administrative and religious taxes. The resulting friction, between members of different socio-economic classes culminated in a series of attacks against Jews and Muslims of the upper classes, and, “on the eve of the Protectorate, these attacks began to specifically target the *mellahs* and the Jewish businesses.”<sup>38</sup>

Due partly to the influences from its citizens back home, and partly to its own colonial goals, the French government sought primarily to control the Jewish communities in Morocco.

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<sup>35</sup> Daniel Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco* (USA: Indiana, 2006), 174.

<sup>36</sup> Although schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle still exist in Morocco, they are now Moroccan institutions.

<sup>37</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89-106.

<sup>38</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 89-106.

At times, this was of benefit to members within these communities, but at other times, it was a disadvantage, and sometimes elicited unfavorable reactions from other cultural groups in Morocco.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, although the establishment of a semi-permeable *mellah* society over the five centuries preceding French presence in Morocco somewhat isolated the Jewish community from the *medina*, the *mellah* also brought with it a degree of internal autonomy within the Jewish communities, autonomy that vanished as the French government consolidated its power. After the first six years of the Protectorate the sultan of Morocco issued a *dahir* recognizing the Moroccan Jewish communities, of which the purpose was to promote “modernization” among the recognized groups.<sup>40</sup> This goal of modernization characterized much of France’s engagement with the Jews of Morocco during the Protectorate years, particularly in the period preceding World War II.

Despite the tensions that undoubtedly emerged during the period of European influence and French colonial rule in Morocco between Muslims, Jews, and the colonial body, it is important to note that Jewish practices in Morocco remained an integral and accepted part of Morocco’s culturally diverse character. Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman (2010) note that many Moroccan Jewish communities of this time lived in close proximity and had generally good relations with Amazigh populations—speaking “Judaeo-Berber” and maintaining a shared culture. For such groups, “certain prayers, such as the benedictions of the Torah, were said in *Tamazight*...and there are even fragments of a Haggadah in *Tamazight*, transcribed in Hebrew characters.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, “prior to French penetration, Jews were largely protected by local Berber leaders...This form of protection became hereditary. The children of the protectors

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco* (USA: Indiana, 2006), 170.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, *Jews in Colonial Morocco* (USA: Indiana, 2006), 170.

<sup>41</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 96.

inherited the role of protecting the Jews' children."<sup>42</sup> These are but a few examples of the coexistence—across cultures and religions—that continued to characterize Moroccan society through periods of political chaos, and that continues to do so today.

Particularly after the beginning of the twentieth century, the question of Moroccan identity started to permeate the society. The beginnings of Zionist ideas also entered the Jewish communities of Morocco, and were appealing as, in various circles, Moroccan “identity” was largely associated with the Arab and Islamic worlds. 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.<sup>43</sup> 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 overseas French colonial entities like Morocco. However, he 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.<sup>44</sup> 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

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<sup>42</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco*, (USA: Suny Press, 1983).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 97.

in Morocco.<sup>45</sup> 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, viewing them as Zionists first and Moroccans second.”<sup>46</sup> Additionally, during the Moroccan movement towards independence, Moroccan Jews—as well as Moroccan Muslims who worked under French rule in certain ways—were targeted for their affiliations with the French and their European ways of life.

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. The French tolerated this pattern of rapid emigration until Morocco’s independence in 1956, when the new Moroccan government restricted it.<sup>47</sup> In the beginning, the emigration was a clandestine activity and facilitated by the Israeli entity Mossad le’aliyah, which found the largest Middle Eastern Jewish populations in Moroccan and Yemen.<sup>48</sup> 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.”<sup>49</sup> However, clandestine immigration returned in the years immediately following Morocco’s independence,

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Professor Mohammed Hatmi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 98.

<sup>47</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel, 1949-56*, (UK: Taylor and Francis, Ltd., 1989). 323-362.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Jewish Emigration from Morocco to Israel, 1949-56*, (UK: Taylor and Francis, Ltd., 1989). 326.

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.<sup>50</sup> The Six-Day war was the turning point when he and other Moroccan Jews in his generation began to 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.”<sup>51</sup> 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

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<sup>50</sup> 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.

<sup>51</sup> 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.

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.<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup>

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 facilitating the Arab-Israeli peace process, from the mid-1970s until his death in 1999."<sup>54</sup> 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."<sup>55</sup>

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

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<sup>52</sup> 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.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Samir Ben-Layashi and Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann, *Myth, History and Realpolitik: Morocco and Its Jewish Community*, (UK: Routledge, 2010), 100.

<sup>55</sup> Morocco 2011 Constitution.

were before, 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 Morocco.<sup>56</sup> Even in Morocco, cooperation between the Jewish and Muslim communities continues to exist, and relations are not solely characterized by the penetration of tensions from the Middle East. Cooperation exists and does not need to be re-created from the beginning. However, it 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.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Historical Overview: The Moroccan Government’s Role in Peace-building Efforts**

Perhaps because of Morocco’s unique position between Israel, the Arab world, and the West, the Moroccan government has been able to historically play a relatively significant role in helping further the peace process between Israel and Palestine. Despite this historical role, and despite the history of both Islam and Judaism in the region, tensions do continue to manifest themselves from time to time between Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews. However, understanding the Moroccan government’s role in the peace process is vital in allowing civil society peace-building activism to expand upon the work the government has taken on in the past. Using different creative methods that work to build understanding from the ground level, community-based movements in Morocco and those undertaken by the Moroccan government can complement, rather than negate, each other’s efforts both in promoting acknowledgment of

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<sup>56</sup> KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif with Mr. André Azoulay. Conducted by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, 26 May 2009. Accessed 17 November 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.



Morocco's cultural plurality and influencing similar movements for cultural understanding in the area directly engaged in conflict. As illustrated, the potential for a continued "tone of tolerance for the nation's Jewish minority begins," to a certain extent, "with the king."<sup>58</sup>

Morocco's King Hassan II, who reigned from 1961 to 1999, was known for his role in advancing peace talks between Israel and Palestine, as well as for his overt acknowledgment of Jewish ties to Morocco.<sup>59</sup> His belief in these ties is exemplified through his famous statement in which he addressed the emigration of Jews from Morocco, saying that "Morocco never loses a Jewish citizen," but instead gains "an ambassador."<sup>60</sup>

The Moroccan government under his reign, however, also took concrete steps towards peace-building, and its role was acknowledged globally. As early as 1977, the Moroccan government proposed an urgent meeting between Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin in Morocco, which was rejected by the Egyptian president.<sup>61</sup> The following year, as preparations were being made for the Camp David Conference, organizers strongly considered holding the conference in Morocco. Although it was, in the end, held in Camp David, Morocco continued to surface in discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, particularly because "Morocco has a 'special position,'" which is perhaps in part due to the ties Moroccan emigrants tend to maintain with their homeland, "both in Israel and in Jewish circles throughout the world."<sup>62</sup>

Simultaneously, following the 1984 meeting in Rabat of the Conference of the Moroccan Jewish

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<sup>58</sup> Serge Berdugo, "Morocco: A Model of Muslim-Jewish Ties," (Morocco: Christian Science Monitor, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Zhou Rehil, Musée du Judaïsme Marocaine. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 17 September 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Serge Berdugo, "Morocco: A Model of Muslim-Jewish Ties," (Morocco: Christian Science Monitor, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> Abd al-Karim Abu-Nasr, *Morocco and the Middle East Conflict*, (USA: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>62</sup> Abd al-Karim Abu-Nasr, *Morocco and the Middle East Conflict*, (USA: University of California Press, 1984).

Community, King Hassan's "basic role at the level of peace" was recognized, and a prominent attendee of the conference remarked that "our presence in Rabat is the first step toward the achievement of peace in the Middle East, by encouraging direct dialogue between Arabs and Jews."<sup>63</sup> This historical cooperation between the Moroccan Jewish diaspora and the Moroccan government is an indication of the potential for continued cooperation between the Moroccan Jewish community and the government in facilitating peace.

True to the positive notions expressed at the conference, King Hassan II and Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel met in Ifrane in 1986, without Morocco ever officially acknowledging Peres's presence in the country.<sup>64</sup> As a result of the perceived camaraderie between Israel and Morocco—still considered an Arab state—"hard-line Arab nations denounced the visit" and "Syria announced...that it was severing all diplomatic ties with Morocco to present Mr. Peres's presence."<sup>65</sup> Regardless, King Hassan II continued to play a role in facilitating peace talks between Israel and the Arab world. In 1995, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres issued a statement in which they both acknowledged King Hassan II's role in helping rebuild peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine through his leadership in economic summits. The statement acknowledges the role of the economic conference held in Casablanca in 1994 in creating new opportunities for Israeli-Palestinian peace

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<sup>63</sup> Abd al-Karim Abu-Nasr, *Morocco and the Middle East Conflict*, (USA: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>64</sup> Judith Miller, "Peres and Hassan in Talks; Syria Breaks Moroccan Ties," (USA: New York Times, 23 July 1986).

<sup>65</sup> Judith Miller, "Peres and Hassan in Talks; Syria Breaks Moroccan Ties," (USA: New York Times, 23 July 1986).

talks, and says that the conference “marks the opening of a new and promising economic era for the peoples of the region, and for the Palestinians in particular.”<sup>66</sup>

King Hassan II’s commitment to peaceful relations between Israel and Palestine set the precedent for Morocco’s continued involvement in helping create settings for cooperation. Although this paper focuses on peace-building activism on the part of Moroccan constituents, it is necessary to note the government’s historical role in promoting peace, in order to begin illustrating the potential for such movements to continue and expand in the future.

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### *Agriculture as a Weapon of Conflict and a Creative 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. Particularly after the arrival of the French, and the “modernization” programs under l’Alliance Israélite Universelle that followed, Moroccan Jews were given training in agricultural work so that they would be able to “cultivate the land like their Muslim counterparts.”<sup>67</sup> The first Alliance Israélite Universelle 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

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<sup>66</sup> “Joint Statement Following Meeting Between King Hassan II of Morocco, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.” (Morocco: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 28 1995).

<sup>67</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco*, (USA: Suny Press, 1983).

from the local primary school.<sup>68</sup> Advocated by the French as 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.<sup>69</sup>

One of the main issues at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and more broadly, at the impasse between Muslims and Jews who identify with the region—is the issue of land. In religious history, trees and plant-life play an important role in the lives of both Jews and Muslims. The pine and olive trees have in the last century have become politically “crucial...in Zionist and Palestinian national schemes.”<sup>70</sup> Ironically, these significant forms of life are used as weapons to acquire land for one side or the other in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They serve as an effective boundary to prevent land gain by the other side, and receive legal protection under the Ottoman Land Codes that remain influential today.<sup>71</sup>

After the Six-Day war of 1967, growth in and around Jerusalem increased at a higher rate than it had before, and continued to do so during the latter thirty years of the twentieth century.<sup>72</sup> Over the years this use of planting has led to the growth of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, primarily at the expense of the Palestinians. To this day, the planting of forests and fruit groves, and the declaration of national parks are used not only as system of environmental conservation, but also as tactics in the conflict. Due to the power implied by the planting of trees in

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<sup>68</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco*, (USA: Suny Press, 1983).

<sup>69</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco*, (USA: Suny Press, 1983).

<sup>70</sup> Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel-Palestine* (Digest of Middle East Studies, 2010), 342-344.

<sup>71</sup> Article 78, Ottoman Land Code.

<sup>72</sup> Shaul Ephraim Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

controversial land, both Israeli and Palestinian agriculture has been targeted and destroyed through arson and deliberate uprooting. This illustrates how deeply the political roots of many trees that have been deliberately planted in and around Jerusalem are embedded, and thus exemplifies how “the tactic of controlling land through planting” in Israel-Palestine “draws direct attack from those in competition.”<sup>73</sup>

The use of trees and planting in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict connects well and provides interesting context to understanding the potential impacts of measures taken in Morocco that encourage land-based cooperation between Moroccan Muslim farmers and regional Moroccan Jewish communities. 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.”<sup>75</sup>

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

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<sup>73</sup> Shaul Ephraim Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, (Morocco: High Atlas Foundation, 2015), 1.

<sup>75</sup> Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, (Morocco: High Atlas Foundation, 2015), 1.

of Life” is one of many traditional terms used to refer to Jewish cemeteries, and the term was fittingly employed by Governor Bathaoui to do so during a ceremony in 2015.<sup>76</sup>

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 land on which these trees are planted stands in direct contrast to parts of the land disputed in the Israeli-Palestinian area of conflict. For instance, it is on the very same contested “open areas” on which the green belt was planted by Israeli organizations that “the Palestinians have been resisting Israeli expansion and attempting to put the land into use.”<sup>77</sup>

The significance of this land use was noted, particularly in the media, upon the death of Moroccan 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.<sup>78</sup> 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

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>77</sup> Shaul Ephraim Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>78</sup> “Hommage à Edmond Amran El Maleh” (Morocco: Institut Français à Tanger, 2011), 1.

enclose the Hebrew inscriptions and mysterious symbols.”<sup>79</sup> His burial was the first time in 40 years that the land in the cemetery had been used.<sup>80</sup>

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.’<sup>81</sup> In this way, and in multiple other interpretations, the House of Life project allows the plant nurseries to serve as stages for cooperation, not conflict, between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, rather than “trying to say where the boundary should lie between Arab and Jewish land.”<sup>82</sup>

Of course, land in Morocco is not a point of contention between Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews to the devastating degree to which it is in Israel-Palestine. However, cooperation on the basis of land use in Morocco, such as that occurring under the House of Life project, has important and symbolic implications due to the emotional and sometimes personal connections members of each group have with events occurring in Israel and Palestine. 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 caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seep every so often through the threads of an intricately woven social fabric. Thus, “the model...created [by House of Life]

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<sup>79</sup> Regina Keil-Sagawe, *A Moroccan Jew with Arabo-Berber Roots*, (Germany: Qantara de, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Moulay Youssef, Tameslouht, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 28 November 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>82</sup> 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.

could be replicated throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.”<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> The goal in Marrakech’s surrounding provinces is to plant one million organic fruit seeds at Jewish sacred sites.<sup>85</sup>

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. 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup>

The House of Life efforts are an innovative and positive example of efforts to facilitate and make visible—through the physical presence of the project’s results, as well as the way in which the project mirrors the use of trees and land in Israel and Palestine—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

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<sup>83</sup> Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, (Morocco: High Atlas Foundation, 2015), 1.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Kati Roumani, *House of Life*, (Morocco: High Atlas Foundation, 2015), 1.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Kati Roumani, Lazama Synagogue Marrakech. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 29 November 2015.

<sup>87</sup> “Morocco Touts Efforts to Preserve Jewish Cemeteries,” (JTA, *The Forward*, February 6, 2015).



framework of the participants, in terms of both the significance of the trees, and the meaning of land and the practices relating to it.”<sup>88</sup>

*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, founded by Simon Levy and now curated by Zhour Rehihil, 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 illustrates aspects of Moroccan Jewish culture through materials such 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 for visits from tour groups and Moroccan schools that seek to expose their students to Morocco’s diverse cultural makeup.

In addition to increasing Moroccan Muslims’ awareness of Moroccan Jewish culture, and offering “an alternative view of Jews, it also offers an alternative view of Muslims.”<sup>89</sup> Another objective of the museum is to “end this pejorative image of Muslims...who are not tolerant,” and thereby bring to light the capacity—and reality—of cooperation between the Moroccan Jewish and Muslim communities.

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<sup>88</sup> Shaul Ephraim Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>89</sup> Danielle Kubes, “Moroccan Students Visit Arab World’s Only Jewish Museum,” 11 February 2011. Accessed Online.

Working towards 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—in Morocco. To avoid a flat portrayal of this profound history, the archive stores information collected from individuals over the years, many of whom share thoughts that connect in some way to the stories of another individual whose words are preserved in the archive. 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 explored, over the past decade, the thematic unity of oral and written thought in preserving traditions. She said to me that “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 situation through different lenses.<sup>90</sup>

As do many others involved in these efforts, she notes that, although there has not been a “break” in history in regards to cooperation between Moroccan Muslims and Jews, there is such a break developing in the younger generation. Through KHOYA, hidden voices can become accessible to young Moroccans who have never exchanged words with a Jew in their life, living in a place in which the Jewish population that remains is minuscule, and that continues to grow

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: *les archives sonores du Maroc juif*, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

smaller each year.<sup>91</sup> 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 humanity and...shared experiences.”<sup>92</sup> 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. Boudra 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. 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, which together comprise the umbrella Association.<sup>93</sup> 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 awareness of Jewish culture, specifically because Jewish culture, like Muslim culture,

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, office of KHOYA: les archives sonores du Maroc juif, Casablanca, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 2 December 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Association Mimouna, last modified 2014. <http://www.associationmimouna.org/#!about/cjg9>.

has historically been an integral part of Moroccans' social experiences in general. 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. Boudra's grandmother, like most Moroccan Muslims living in her area, participated each year in Mimouna festivities. True to his family and national heritage, Mr. Boudra is "proud to be a Muslim by religion, Arab and Amazigh by ethnicity, and also Jewish by culture."<sup>94</sup>

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.<sup>95</sup> Over the years, however, Mr. Boudra 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.

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.<sup>96</sup> 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

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with El-Mehdi Boudra, Rabat. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 1 December 2015.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

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 successfully and have received relatively little harsh criticism from outside sources. However, Mr. Boudra acknowledges 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, including Mr. Boudra, 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 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 made aware of other cultures within their society. However, schools like Maïmonide are an exception, as generally, "Jewish history is not presented in school history books." The subject of Judaism in Morocco remains, in some communities, a discussion worthy of being tabooed.<sup>97</sup> 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. It is only through an understanding of the mutual dependence between Jews and Muslims that existed in Morocco for centuries—and that, to a lesser extent, continues to exist despite various barriers—can youth

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<sup>97</sup> Danielle Kubes, "Moroccan Students Visit Arab World's Only Jewish Museum," 11 February 2011. Accessed Online.

appreciate the values they share with those they perceive as the “other.” In Morocco, as in many societies, home and school tend to be two primary places in which formative values are instilled in a child. It is only when these shared values are perpetuated and when “children are first educated in respect...that a community will be able to work towards peace.”<sup>98</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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, mainly in reaction to the events in Israel and Palestine, 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.

Though efforts to revitalize, on a larger scale, cooperation between Muslims and Jews in Morocco 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

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Jacky Kadoch, Synagogue Beth-El, Marrakech, Morocco. Conducted by Namratha Somayajula, 27 November 2015.

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.

The research question I begin answering in this paper is multifaceted and fills only a small corner of a much broader field of study. At various points over the past month, I was confronted with questions that warrant further research. For instance–what factors contribute to the shaping of Moroccan Jewish identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How do power dynamics in language classes shape the experiences of the minority group in multilingual schools in Morocco–and furthermore, what are some of the reasons for which Muslim Moroccan university students choose to study the Hebrew language? Lastly, in regards to my limitations, I wonder what the effect of peace-building movements such as those described above have on the participants in these movements. The pursuit of such questions can help provide, to some extent, a slightly fuller picture of the experiences of Moroccan Jews within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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