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“Yours or Ours?” Muslims Performing Selfhood in Moroccan Jewish Cemeteries

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Abstract

“Yours or Ours?” Muslims Performing Selfhood in Moroccan Jewish Cemeteries

By Cory Thomas Pechan Driver

My dissertation asks how Moroccan Muslims use performance of affiliation with the former Moroccan Jewish community to create their social identities and develop their idealized moral selfhood. The subjects of my research are the men and women who serve as guides and guards to and at, respectively, Jewish cemeteries and synagogues.

My ethnographic research took place primarily in cemeteries because they offer a material space where performers can mediate issues of loss, nostalgia, friendship, ritual responsibility, authority, authenticity and cosmopolitanism, along with negotiating financial, moral and spiritual capital. Performers and performances of selfhood creation by Muslim Moroccans depend heavily on the residual material presence of Jews in Morocco for the effectiveness of their acts.

My research argues that the guards and guides use performances of ritual and caring acts purposefully to create moral selves that separate them from other members of their now homogenously Muslim community. As a means of claiming an authentic alternative self that is profoundly Moroccan, but simultaneously undermines notions of a mono-ethnically Arab and mono-religiously Muslim Morocco, Imazighen stress their close ties with Jews. Amazigh respondents perform Jewish rituals, like praying for deceased Jews, cleaning tombs and celebrating Passover, to preserve ties that connected ethno-religious communities for hundreds of years, but have ceased since the Jewish mass-emigration from Morocco.

Other people with whom I work use their ties with Jewish sites to harness power and prestige in their communities. For women particularly, running a Jewish site that is frequented by tourists who bring economic capital to rural areas can be a valuable source of social capital as well. Guarding a Jewish site is an avenue for accumulating a position of authority that she may not have another means of accessing in a small village.

Lastly, and most importantly, many of the Muslim Moroccans take care of graves, and seek to preserve Moroccan Jewish traditions, because they had a close Jewish friend or adoptive family.

This dissertation is situated at the intersection of Jewish Studies, the Academic Study of Religion and Middle East and North African Studies.

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Introduction

How to Pray

Toward the end of my research for this dissertation, I was asked by a colleague at a Moroccan university to give her students a lecture and tour of Jewish sites in Meknes, the smallest of the former imperial cities of Morocco. Because I had concluded my work in Meknes over a year earlier in the Spring of 2015, and I had only visited a few of the sites, I traveled a day before I was to give the tour to make sure that I could easily lead a group of students and professors to the two cemeteries, synagogue and Talmud Torah without getting lost. I also wanted to verify that the sites were open to visitors in the wake of the acts of terrorism in Egypt, Lebanon, France and Israel in the preceding weeks and months.

As I entered the “New Cemetery” of Meknes, inside the only *mellah*, or Jewish quarter, built after the French colonial period, I was met at the gate by the Muslim cemetery keeper, Leila.¹ We greeted each other, and she was curious to know who I was and what my intentions were. I told her that I would be escorting a group of students to the cemetery the next day, if it was permissible. She noticeably relaxed, and asked me to wait at the entrance. She came back seconds later from a small building which serves as her house as well as a tea shack, carrying with her a large book of graph paper. She told me, “I am the best cemetery keeper in all of Morocco. See how I have numbered all the graves and written down all the names, so that when Jews visit, I can show them exactly where their

¹ I have changed the names and some of the identifying details of almost all people represented in this dissertation to give them some measure of privacy, except when they requested that I use their real names.

relatives' graves are?" Indeed, she had indexed the graves both alphabetically by name, as well as by location. She went on, "I learned Hebrew while I worked [as a domestic helper] in the home of a Jewish couple. When they were about to leave for Israel [to emigrate], they asked me to come take care of the graves. I've been here for sixteen years now." I thanked her for her service, and, curious, I asked if I could take a quick tour of the cemetery to see what she knew about the residents of the cemetery. She was delighted to have the opportunity to demonstrate her knowledge and mastery of Hebrew.

As we were underway, she asked if I needed her to teach me how Jews pray for their dead. As she was asking, I was pulling my kippah out of my back pocket that I keep there for just such occasions. As she saw my head covering, she said, "*Baqi 'arifiti*/[oh], you already (or still) know." I asked her to tell me what she knew anyway, and asked if she would be willing to tell my students tomorrow as well. She thought for a moment and asked if the students were *ajnib*/foreigners like me, or if they were Moroccans. I told her it would be a mixed class. She responded that tomorrow would be a big day/*nhar kbir* because she would be able to show both Moroccans and foreigners that not only do a few Moroccan Muslims take care of Jewish graves, they also know how to pray.

Performance Studies, Practice Theory, Shaping Identity & Creation of the Self

This dissertation explores the creative power of practices conducted by Muslim guards and guides at Jewish cemeteries in Morocco. The driving question I ask is how Muslims use performances of Jewish ritual and memories of Jewish friends to create and develop their own moral selves and identities. I chose to

conduct my research primarily in cemeteries because they offer a material space where performers can mediate issues of loss, nostalgia, friendship, ritual responsibility, authority, authenticity and cosmopolitanism, along with negotiating financial, moral and spiritual capital. Although my ethnography describes Pesach seders, synagogue tours and locations of potent displays of Jewish magic, all conducted outside of cemeteries, performers and performances of selfhood creation by Muslim Moroccans depend heavily on the residual material presence of Jews in Morocco for the effectiveness of their acts. In other words, while the performative acts and performers are my central concern, the physical setting constitutes a vitally important piece of the performance, which in many ways enables and elicits Muslim performance of Jewish acts in the first place.

The demonstration of “expertise” described above is inextricably linked to the process of purposeful re-creation of identity that is the focus of the people with whom I worked. When I use the term “identity” I am not talking about a bureaucratic notion of a single adjective, such as Jewish, Muslim, Arab or Amazigh² defining a person for the purpose of easy identification. Rather, I use identity to mean both a social sense of who someone is in her community and a personal moral imaginary of the self.³ In both of these cases, the personal and the communal, identity is shaped by a set of realized, or realizable potentialities. In short, the Muslims doing Jewish things in and around Jewish cemeteries

² For many of the people with whom I worked, “Berber” is an offensive term. I choose to use the indigenous terms “Amazigh” and “Imazighen” for singular and plural, respectively. The term is usually understood to mean “the free people” or “the noble people.”

³ See Seeman, Don. 2015. “Coffee and the Moral Order: Ethiopian Jews and Pentecostals against Culture” in *American Ethnologist*. 42(4): 734-48.

understand themselves and are understood by their communities in terms of what they do, what they can do and what they strive to do. The Muslim subjects of this study differentiate themselves from their community and seek to cultivate their moral selves by means of their performances of Jewish languages, Jewish prayers, recitations of Muslim-Jewish-Moroccan history and explanations of their own memories of Jewish life-ways before the mass emigration. They undertake these performances to entertain, educate and economically benefit from tourists and pilgrims, Jewish and otherwise. But they are also performing for themselves, to (re)enact a longed-for time before Jewish mass migration and ethno-religious strife when the Muslim raconteurs made sense of themselves and their communities by relationships between themselves and Jews.

Accordingly, this dissertation is about the creation of moral selves by Moroccan Muslim experts in Judaism by means of their actions in and around places with a connection to Moroccan Jewish history. In this creative work, the guides and guards also shape the identities of their communities, and the visitors who are alternately their guests, patrons, students, beneficiaries of their wisdom and victims of their ineptitude or deceitfulness. The ability, or inability, of Muslims to use Jewish words and actions to create new understandings of themselves *for* themselves *and for* others has broad implications for Jewish Studies, Middle Eastern and North African Studies and the Academic Study of Religion.⁴

Performance theory has been instrumental in helping clarify and buttress indigenous understandings of the creative power of performances of expertise by

⁴ See the “Contributions” section below for a discussion of contributions to scholarly conversations.

the Muslims who inhabit, guard and explain Jewish holy places. Performances, such as critiquing and eventually taking over the performance of a Passover seder (as in chapter 3) or Muslims explaining Jewish history to Jewish pilgrims and tour groups (in chapters 4-8) create new social realities.⁵ Whether or not he has actual scholarly or experiential knowledge, by virtue of his lecturing, the tour guide becomes a sort of “expert,” at least for his tour groups. By being paid to offer care for graves in a religious idiom not her own, the cemetery keeper creates a new status for herself, a new set of practices and, indeed, a new problem with which others may negotiate, support or oppose. While one could use performance studies to focus on the goals of these performances according to the people paying for them – fulfillment of filial piety in honoring father and mother – or how the performance creates new knowledge and possibilities for the tourists, I am most interested in 1) the professional identities created by the performers for themselves, 2) the change in the moral self of the performer, and 3) the ways in which the practices themselves change to accommodate the new practitioners.

Performances such as these do not happen in a vacuum. The other activities that the Muslims involved do, and do not do, are also crucially important for shaping the parameters of what is possible in performance. Charles Briggs argues that understanding the repertoire of actions and performances of the people involved is necessary to understand their individual performances.⁶ For instance, Muslims and other non-Jews may enter Jewish graveyards in Morocco, and they

⁵ Bell, Catherine. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Briggs, Charles L. 1988. *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

do for a variety of reasons, including appreciation of history, desire for a quiet place to relax, need for a toilet and craving for a place beyond supervising eyes where young couples can be intimate. But it is illegal for non-Muslims to enter Moroccan Muslim grave yards. Accordingly, the repertoire of activities that occur in Muslim cemeteries is much more constrained than those that occur in Jewish cemeteries.

A wider knowledge of the ethnopoetry - or the cultural patterns that determine what and how a performance is expected to be acted out in a particular context - and further, how or whether the ethnopoetic rules can be creatively manipulated by a talented or resourceful performer needs to always be in view.⁷ If every, or even most, Muslim man and woman in rural areas in Morocco is potentially able to switch between ethnolects/religiolects⁸ and can perform practices that are normatively Jewish, then the performance of these acts by a few cemetery keepers and guides is rather less interesting, and they would not be noteworthy “experts” any longer. But if the cemetery keepers are able to reference already present social understandings of how and when one is able to transcend religious boundaries, and are able to stretch these understandings in order to earn some money or take care of the grave of an old friend who happened to be from another community, then the social performative repertoire is expanded in interesting ways that deserve study and analysis.

⁷ Hymes, Dell. 1986. *“In Vain I Tried to Tell You”*: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁸ An Ethnolect is the language variety of a particular people that sets them apart from their neighbors. Correspondingly, a religiolect is the language variety of a particular religious group or religion.

Hary, Benjamin. 1992. *Multiglossia in Judeo-Arabic: With an Edition, Translation, and Grammatical Study of the Cairene Purim Scroll*. Leiden: Brill.

This creation of authority and broadening of social repertoire through performance allows not only the performers to modify their ethno-religious identities, but also allows their audiences (both immediate and as part of a wider community) to do the same. Wynne Maggi demonstrated in her study of the Kalasha people that ritual reflecting and creating an indigenous sense of women's freedom creates and marks ethnic identity not only for women, but for all Kalasha.⁹ Kalasha men who stand to lose control relative to their wives nevertheless support the women's performance of acts that mark their "freedom" in order to strengthen the community's internal and external identities as people whose "women are free." The phenomenon of how community identity can be shaped by the performance of individuals brings up two closely related questions that I will explore: 1) How are the Muslim experts in Judaism received, understood and supported by *their* community in their efforts to define themselves – and by extension their community – as people who "can do Judaism," and 2) Are the performances in question creating among tourists a reputation for all Moroccans as people who are accepting of Judaism?

In addition to performances' ability to create identities for people, Joyce Flueckiger argues that virtuosic performance can create a space – a crossroads – where identities shift or change in relative importance – people who identify as Muslim, Hindu or Christian all share an identity as patients of a Muslim woman healer.¹⁰ In Flueckiger's research, religious affiliations of individuals became less

⁹ Maggi, Wynne. 2001. *Our Women Are Free: Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukush*. Ann Arbor. University of Michigan Press.

¹⁰ Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. 2006. *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

important than their identity as people who were suffering and in need of help in the presence of a woman whose performance of healing acts transcended their context of vernacular Islam to treat all who sought help. In the same way, I have witnessed Muslim tour guides as well as their Jewish or Christian clients enchanted by discussions on and performances of Moroccan Judaism by one of the expert cemetery keepers. All become, at least briefly, students of Moroccan Judaism, who learn from a Muslim authority figure.

Within the broader field of performance studies, there are interesting and important sub-fields that help us specifically analyze what is created by Muslim and Jewish performance. For example, the notion that “performance creates” is not an abstract anthropological theory foreign to Islam, but intrinsic to the very practice of the religion. Anna Gade and Talal Asad, among others, argue that performances of religious practices in Islam are designed to create piety and/or enhance moral selves.¹¹ Saba Mahmood furthers this idea by describing how participants engaged in sanctioned practices of weeping while praying and veiling are shaping themselves into virtuous selves and ethical subjects.¹² Whether the Muslim cemetery keepers view their care for Jewish graves as part of a cultivation of their ethical selves, or whether they are merely transactional activities, a feeling of piety is created among the paying Jewish audience. The cemetery keepers, by virtue of their skills in language and protection of the graveyards, are seen as

¹¹ Gade, Anna. 2004. *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur’ān in Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

And Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*. Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

¹² Mahmood, Saba. 2011. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

“righteous enough” to be able to offer effective prayers on behalf of the deceased and their relatives. But do the cemetery keepers understand themselves to be made more pious by these practices? This will be among the questions addressed in chapter 4.

This dissertation will also investigate how issues of context and audience play into the understandings of Jewish practices and their effects on Muslim piety. For instance, would the answer to the preceding question of cemetery keepers' piety be expressed differently if it were asked by a family member rather than an American graduate student? It is just good business, to some extent, to feign a sort of Jewish piety for the clients, while internally the cemetery keepers may be merely renting their skills. On the other hand, I am also curious to know if the Jewish clients of the Muslim caretakers of graveyards are concerned at all about increased piety in the cemetery keepers or if virtue is accreted by saying the prayers – if the words of the prayers themselves are sufficient for the prayers to be effective – irrespective of the religion or intentionality of the person praying, contrary to Mahmood.

It may very well be that the prayers spoken by the cemetery keepers may – aside from whatever spiritual work they do on behalf of the deceased – have an effect on pray-er unbeknownst to them, or even in spite of their intentions. As Charles Hirshkind notes during his research in Cairo, by listening to, or even just hearing cassette sermons, Muslim actors are cultivated as ethical subjects who are more sensitive to the power of the recited Qur'an, as well as more aware of their

responsibility for pious living.¹³ For many of his subjects, it seemed that the cassette sermons shaped moods as well as character for the hearer. Learning, repeating and hearing oneself pray prayers for deceased Jews certainly causes a change in the pray-er, if not of piety, than at least in reputation and horizon of new potential practices.¹⁴ This study will show how potentially unpopular piety – such as that gained by Muslims caring for Jewish graves and performing Jewish religious practices – is understood and discussed by the actor, and by wider Muslim community.

The power of performance and religious practices are also recognized by scholars as well as religious practitioners in Judaism, perhaps more overtly than many other religions. Yoram Bilu, for instance, in his work studying Israeli devotees of Jewish Moroccan saints, describes the coping and healing power of performance of devotional activities to the saints.¹⁵ The devotees uniformly speak of a radical change in their lives and temperaments after a visitation by a Moroccan Jewish saint and their subsequent acts of devotion to that saint. The saint, from Bilu's perspective, triggers a psychocultural shift in the impresario's coping with life crises, most notably relations with family members. As the saints' shrines are established by the devotees, the saints give revelations about how to deal with family members who have become a source of consternation to the devotee.

¹³ Hirshkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁴ Jauss, Hans Robert. 1982. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Translated by Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁵ Bilu, Yoram. 2009. *The Saints' Impresarios: Dreamers, Healers, and Holy Men in Israel's Urban Periphery*. Boston: Academic Studies Press.

Perhaps even more clearly, Samuel Heilman, in his work on Talmud study practices, argues that ritualized study with *haverim* “necessarily generates increased reciprocal sentiments and increased mutual concern.”¹⁶ He goes on to point out that Avot 6:6 teaches that by 48 virtues Torah is acquired, among which is “learning in order to practice.” One learns Torah to intentionally acquire virtues to be put into practice, which in turn, enables further learning.

According to Wolfgang Iser’s work on reader response theory, whenever one reads, a feedback loop of expanded horizons of potentiality is created by the reader enabling continuous further expanded horizons.¹⁷ Similarly, in the case of Heilman above, the practice of learning creates additional ability to practice righteousness. The acting out of righteousness then enables one to learn further. But do rabbinic sensibilities and reader response theory apply to Muslims who learn a few words of a Jewish prayer in order to recite them for hire? Does the learning of Jewish prayers or stories by Muslims in order to perform them automatically enable further learning for make possible sensitivities to further Jewish learning? Accordingly, my research will also address the learning careers of the cemetery keepers and guides. Do they continue to learn and study what they can, or is a functional baseline knowledge all that is required, and all that is desired?

Prayers and recitations are not the only performances that I witnessed in my research. Narratives of how the Muslim guides came to be who they are and do what they do are another crucial set of performances. The ritual experts performed

¹⁶ Heilman, Samuel C. 2001. *People of the Book: Drama, Fellowship and Religion*. Piscataway: Transaction Publishers. p. 203.

¹⁷ Iser, Wolfgang. 1980. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

their own narratives and I was their audience. Accordingly, harnessing narrative theory is also important for my work.

Lila Abu-Lughod and Myrna Goldenberg, among others, have argued that narrative performance is a vehicle for self-definition, especially self-definition that is contrary to societies' evaluation of individuals.¹⁸ Abu-Lughod describes how for Bedouin women in rural Egypt, stories represent a sanctioned path for creating alternative moral imaginaries of the self in which the narrators realize their agency above and over others, and through which they can resist social norms. Narratives are an important locus for understanding how the raconteur experiences - or would wish to experience - her or his own life.

The desire for self-definition extends to remembered-selves as well as those in the present. Goldenberg analyzes the narratives of Jewish women who performed stories of their lives featuring assertive and nurturing versions of themselves in contrast to the brutal context of the Nazi death camps in which they were not able to be as assertive or nurturing as they wished.¹⁹ For themselves, their fellow prisoners and for posterity, the women used stories to undermine felt reality and create idealized selves as a memorial to who they might have been. Similarly, the first generation of cemetery keepers who are the center of this dissertation, by narrating their lives vis-a-vis their Jewish former neighbors and now the occupants of the graves they guard, may be engaging in just such a practice of constructing

¹⁸ Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2008. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldenberg, Myrna. 1995. "Testimony, Narrative, and Nightmare: The Experiences of Jewish Women in the Holocaust," in Maurie Sacks (ed.) *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture*. Campaign: University of Illinois Press.

¹⁹ Goldenberg, Myrna. 1995.

the stories of their lives in such a way as to be remembered as compassionate, even when there are no living members of that population in the area to remember them well. The story of Raqiya and Hamou in chapter two will illustrate this point.

Scholars point out, however, that how one remembers, and who is remembered by whom, is bound by conditions and cultural rules. Dwight Reynolds, in his classic study of Arabic poetry recitations, treats living epic poets and fictional heroes they describe as participants in an ongoing dialogue with audiences about issues such as ethnicity, religious orientation and social hierarchies.²⁰ Reynolds looks at the performance of historic epics as a location where ethnopoetry as well as social structures are at times reaffirmed and at times stretched or flaunted. Poets can and do change even well-known and beloved parts of stories, depending on the audience, and the poets' goals and desires.

While recounting their lives as cemetery keepers, Moroccan Muslims often describe themselves as heroes helping a beleaguered people. This conversation only takes place with foreigners, however. In town itself, the cemetery keepers tend to be regarded as outsiders. It may be that they have not succeeded in Reynolds' dialogue with their local audience, and their version of the dialogue on ethnicity, religious orientation and social hierarchies is roundly rejected. Although they are appreciated by tourist and pilgrims, they are often, but not always, rejected by the local audience. The cemetery keeper may have changed a too-popular part of the story in which instead of the Imazighen as victims of the Arabs, or the Arabs as the victims of the French, the Jews become the victims of the Muslims.

²⁰ Reynolds, Dwight. 1995. *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

As Sabra Webber helpfully observes, the performance of folklore can enable a performer, with the collaboration of an audience, to selectively appropriate ideas or practices from other groups in a manner that is both aesthetically and practically agreeable to her own community.²¹ Webber's work among the people of Kelibia, Tunisia demonstrates that this appropriation can result either in the wholesale sympathetic absorption of the borrowed material, or an appropriation with an intent to malign or subvert the "original message," of the outsiders. Several Moroccans use the sad stories of Jews that they have known to suffer in order to describe how Muslims' lives also did not turn out the way that they had intended. These performed narratives are especially useful in understanding how authority is acquired by Muslims to talk about Jewish history when it concerns persecution by Muslims. The narrators absorb the tales of Jews losing their land or becoming refugees in order to identify more directly with their foreign audience. But this sharing of experiences does not come without a cost. The ideas and narratives that they appropriate for themselves may be agreeable to the pilgrim and tourist audience, but is definitely not as palatable to many locals.

Webber goes further in pointing out that when narratives are told to multiple audiences, the effect of the narrative will always be strongest on the audience most closely related to the speaker and the context being described. Locally-produced stories are just that: *local* to specific times, places and people. They are thus semiprivate, being directed toward and most meaningful to a particular audience, and when taken out of context, they lose both their truth and

²¹ Webber, Sabra Jean. 1991. *Romancing the Real: Folklore and Ethnographic Representation in North Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

their romance and merely become something like false history. When local stories are told to a foreign audience, or repeated by a foreign ethnographer, the local understanding is simply absent. We can record faithfully what is told to us, to be sure, but people often are understandably suspicious of a person who makes a living performing local narratives for “outsiders”--pilgrims and tourists. My dissertation takes seriously the potentially marginal position that the people who reside in graveyards occupy in their society, and how they use narrative to define, and possibly defend, their lives.

Finally, one must remember that commemoration projects, whether cemetery preservation or sharing a narrative of history, are commemorating a memory, and as such, may imaginatively construct and reconstruct this history.²² This reconstruction process, especially when it concerns narratives, is communal. Even when one stands in the place being remembered, the stories told depend on the social realities of the teller and the hearer.

Identity Interdependence

Even with my raconteurs’ desire to focus on their own past experiences of Jewish Morocco, the past is not theirs alone. One of the key practices of the Muslim guides and guards whom I have worked with is telling stories about the Jewish community, and especially telling stories about how they came to work in or around Jewish cemeteries. These stories center on presenting the presence of “the other” to the audience. Jean Luc Nancy, in his seminal work *Being Singular Plural*,

²² Slyomovics, Susan. 1998. *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

points out that, “Existence *is with*: otherwise nothing exists.”²³ This existence with, and the presentation of how things used to exist in this certain area in the mountains of Morocco, will also be a prime area of theoretical exploration in this dissertation.

When one of two separated communities – the Muslims and Jews of Morocco – reflects back on their shared histories, how does the absence of the other shape the story being told?²⁴ I will show that even though the actual historical events in the memories of my raconteurs do not change, the storytellers themselves speak of their lives changing over time. Further, the change over time is shaped by the continued connection, or lack thereof, with “the other.” However, this is to be expected, as Nancy points out:

Everything, then, passes *between us*. This “between,” as its name implies, has neither a consistency nor a continuity of its own. It does not lead from one to the other; it constitutes no connective tissue, not cement, no bridge. Perhaps it is not even fair to speak of a “connection” to its subject; it is neither connected nor unconnected; it falls short of both; even better, it is that which is at the heart of a connection, the interlacing [l’entrecroisement] of strands whose [lengths] remain separate even at the very center of the knot.²⁵

Indeed, everything passes between the subjects of my interviews and their relationships to the community perceived as “the other,” and not just in the stories reported: as the relationships among Jews, Arabs and Imazighen changed over time, so too did the memories of shared histories. Their very thoughts and

²³ Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 4.

²⁴ For more on memory among Moroccan Jews and Muslims, see Driver, Cory. 2010. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis., 3-4, 6, 9., from which this section on Identity Interdependence developed.

²⁵ Nancy, 5.

memories are interlaced with the other, yet even when they are tied tightly into a Gordian knot that defies all attempts to separate them and their histories, the Imazighen and Jews I interviewed still represent different strands which are not to be confused or blended.

This, then, is an opportunity to define this dissertation by what it is not.

As André Levy points out, much ethnographic work on Morocco, and even on Moroccan Judaism, ignores the Jews who still live in Morocco. He notes:

Those researchers who have studied contemporary Jewish-Muslim relations have tended either to ignore Jewish perspectives (see, for example, Rosen 1968, 1972, 1984), or to describe Jews as passive subjects in the face of great historical and political forces (see, for example, Tessler 1978, 1981; Tessler and Hawkins 1980; Tessler et al. 1979). Both perspectives disempower Jews and disregard their status as active social agents.²⁶

Levy frequently observes the twin faults of either ignoring Jewish perspectives entirely or casting Jews as largely passive in the face of Muslim and colonial history-makers. This would be a tremendous mistake for me to make, as well, if this were a dissertation on Moroccan Jewry. But happily, I cannot possibly ignore the small, but active Jewish community in Morocco, because at every hillulah, and at some graveyards, they are there. Some relatives live too far away to make the yearly visits. But, especially in Rabat, Fes and Essaouira, the daily tasks of the Muslim cemetery keepers are overseen by members of the Jewish community. That said, however, this dissertation is not another work about Moroccan Jewry or

²⁶ Levy, André. 2003. "Notes on Jewish-Muslim Relationships: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community." *Cultural Anthropology*, 18(3): 365-97. p366. And Levy, André, 2000. "Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach." *American Ethnologist*. 26(3):632-653. p633.

Moroccan Jewish history. The focus is on contemporary Moroccan Muslim guides and guards who work in and around Jewish cemeteries.

Also, this work is not chiefly concerned with the memory of Moroccan Jews in the minds of ordinary Muslims. This work has already been done by Aomar Boum in his excellent book.²⁷ Rather, I am interested in how contemporary practices are shaped by, and in turn, continue to shape Muslims who are professionals deeply embedded in and among the Jewish religious infrastructure left behind after millennia of residence in Morocco.

The notion that it is the other who makes us who we are is tremendously important for not only this dissertation, but for the self-identities of my interlocutors. Miroslav Volf, speaking in an interview on religion and violence, makes a vital point on how communities shape each other – even in times of what he calls exclusion:

Identity in the context of enmity.... What one witnessed in the former Yugoslavia was certain purification of identity. Serbian identity, Croatian identity had to be pure. All extraneous elements had to be pushed out. The soil had to be pure, blood had to be pure, language had to be pure. You can see different groups associated with these phrases. And this “logical” purity, that wants to drive out of *self*-perception of that particular group. And yet it is very clear from the start, and sometimes I am teasing my fellow Croatians and saying, “You can rant about it, and you can be furious about it, but it is a fact that you would not be a Croatian if you did not have Serbian neighbors. It is only that fact that you had Serbian neighbors for I-don’t-know-how-many centuries that you can be defined as Croatian. It’s who you are.” So you can push that out as much as you want. It still remains part and parcel of your identity. And therefore then when you talk about embrace, it really in a sense, is recognition that we have been, from the start, shaped by another, especially a person with whom we are in conflict. And so you have a much more complex identity. Then possibly you may come to the point where you would

²⁷ Boum, Aomar. 2013. *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

open yourself for the other and you would say, “Well the fact that the other is part and parcel of who I am: that’s good, that’s who I am.” Right? So I can invite the other to be present while at the same time maintaining the boundary.²⁸

This notion that one is constituted by, and then continually shaped by her interaction with the other is reinforced by Nancy, who states:

A single being is a contradiction in terms. Such a being, which would be its own foundation, origin and intimacy, would be incapable of *Being*, in every sense that this expression can have here. “Being: is neither a state nor a quality, but rather the action according to which what Kant calls “the [mere] positing of a thing” takes place (“is”). The very simplicity of “position” implies no more, although no less, than its being discrete, in the mathematical sense, or its distinction *from*, in the sense of *with*, other (at least possible) positions. In other words, every position is also a dis-position.²⁹

Thus, every opinion, every understanding is shaped by, with, and over-and-against some other understanding. The interviewees who share their stories in the next chapters are reacting to a question of mine, a perceived position of an audience of tourists, or performing an action that they were paid to do. No raconteur simply tells tales, but rather each raconteur is making a point and has an agenda in telling the tales.³⁰ Indeed, collected folklore and ritual is a powerful tool for taking a position on the communities discussed, and for the authors reflecting on themselves.³¹ It is my understanding that the subjects of this work use the stories and selected rituals of the Jewish community to recall a time when their society

²⁸ Volf, Miroslav. 2005. "Religion and Violence." *Speaking of Faith*. NPR: WBEZ, Chicago, 04 Aug 2005. Radio. 22 Mar 2015. <http://download.publicradio.org/podcast/speakingoffaith/20050804_volf.mp3?_kip_ipx=55193333-1306938311>.

²⁹ Nancy, 12.

³⁰ Webber, Sabra Jean. 1991. *Romancing the Real: Folklore and Ethnographic Representation in North Africa*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press). p 17.

³¹ Webber, 16.

felt more diverse and open, and to perform that openness and diversity into reality. The cemetery keepers and guides are at the forefront of a national phenomenon, as Daniel Schroeter points out:

An inverse relationship exists between the growing interest in retrieving from the usable past the cultural synthesis and harmony between Muslims and Jews and the near-disappearance of Jews in Morocco. The romantic view of Morocco as the true heir to the Andalusian “golden age” of Muslim-Jewish harmony also contrasts with the contemporary disharmony and fragmentation caused by the mass emigration of Moroccan Jewry, the result of a complex process of political change in the twentieth century. In Moroccan national discourse, Jews are a vital and integral component of the Moroccan nation, in contrast with their real absence and dwindling presence from the landscape of the county. More than mere window dressing, the fashioning of a Moroccan-style *convivencia* from the myth of a Judeo-Muslim cultural harmony, constituting a civil society of different faiths, is a preferable model to the Islamist current, with its anti-Semitism, that became increasingly dominant in the late twentieth century.³²

While a civil society of different faiths may be a myth in Schroeter’s opinion, the people with whom I spoke argue vociferously that, real tensions and conflicts notwithstanding, there were and are times and places in which the relationships worked, with Jewish cemeteries being cared for by Muslims as the most readily observable example. Whatever else, Morocco would not be the country that it is without its Jewish history. More to my point, Hamou and Moha, who figure prominently in this dissertation, are only able to be who they understand themselves to be because of their relationships with the now departed Jewish community, in fulfillment of Nancy’s notion of *being-with*.

³² Schroeter, Daniel, J. 2008. "The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan-Jewish Identities." *Jewish Social Studies, New Series*. 15.1: 145-64. 146.

I feel bound to note that, as much as I can be certain, I believe that the people with whom I work have understood my project and know that I am writing a dissertation about them. They self-consciously worked with me so that I could record their words and actions and share them with you. My raconteurs are taking a stand for their versions of the past, the present and themselves. They know that this work may be published and that their lives will be laid open to readers whom they will never meet. They are, in fact, already public people who meet and speak with tourists daily, and perform their identities as people conversant in Judaism. Indeed, as Roger Renwick reminds us, “folklore of any sort [ritual, performance, tale-telling]... requires skill and effort to compose, learn, remember, and perform, and... consequently it would make little sense to expend such effort if the product were simply a verbal equivalent of the referent itself.”³³ The guides’ and cemetery keepers’ performances of daily life among Jewish places and foreign tourists are, then, a negotiation with their audiences. In the case of Moha, for instance, who feels particularly closely affiliated with the Jewish community, in order to be comfortable with himself, his actions must connect his Jewish friends, his person and an audience. For him, I think, being singular-plural is not only the inevitable result of being human in the world, but necessary for his emotional health, the quote Nancy, again:

Being singular plural means the essence of Being is only as coessence... Coessentiality signifies the essential sharing of essentiality, sharing in the guise of assembling, as it were. This could also be put in the following way: if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the “with” that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition. ... Therefore, it is not the case that the “with” is

³³ Renwick, Roger. 1980. *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 13.

an addition to some prior Being; instead, the “with” is at the heart of Being.³⁴

For all of the Moroccans whom I chose to re-present in this dissertation, their *being with* Jews, often conceived of in terms of geographical intimacy to physical remains is at the very core of their self-understanding, social identity, and livelihood. As such, their *being-with* is, in very practical ways, at the heart of their moral imaginary of themselves.

Situating Work on Muslim Performance of Jewish Affinity in Morocco

Scholars have been writing on Muslims and Jews in Morocco for well over a century.³⁵ From ethnologues to colonial anthropological efforts during the French occupation, hundreds of scholars have examined Muslim and Jewish life in Morocco, and occasionally they have looked at the intersection between them.³⁶ Yet, for all this focus of anthropological work among Morocco’s two largest religious groups, there is very little focus on the roles in which contacts with individual Jews *as members of a Jewish community* had in shaping Muslim subjects.³⁷

³⁴ Nancy, 19.

³⁵ Chouraqui, André. 1968. *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*. Michael M. Bernet, trans. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.

³⁶ Kosansky, Oren. 2011. “The Real Morocco Itself: Jewish Saint Pilgrimage, Hybridity, and the Idea of a Moroccan Nation,” in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 341-60.

³⁷ Eickelman, Dale. 1984. “New Directions in Interpreting North African Society.” in *Connaissances du Maghreb: Sciences sociales et colonisation*. Jean-Claude Vatin, Jackues Fremeaux, Laurence Michalak, David Prochaska, Francois Pouillon, Daniel Rivet, and Gianni Albergoni, eds. pp. 279-89. Paris: Editions du CNRS. as referenced in Levy, André. 2003. “Notes on Jewish-Muslim Relations: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community.” *Cultural Anthropology*. Vol 18 (3). pp. 365-97.

As André Levy points out, writers have tended to underemphasize the importance of Jewish thought and influence on how Muslims understood their interactions. Levy goes on to list authors such as Dwyer, Munson, Hammoudi and Rosen who all, in his opinion, write about the interaction of Muslims with Jews as a generic class of people without considering structural constraints upon individual actions or choices.³⁸ Levy singles out Rosen for tending to collapse interpretative differences between Muslims and Jews.³⁹ Levy's final accusation is that, notably except for Stillman, one would hardly know from reading the anthropological accounts of the latter half of the twentieth century in Morocco that a massive emigration was occurring that would reduce the Jewish community by approximately 98.4 percent. How can one talk about the Muslim-Jewish interactions in a country if one does not mention the fact that the Jewish community is leaving?

Levy's solution to the glaring lacuna is to observe and document both the lives of the dwindling number of Jews who remain in Morocco and study Jewish pilgrims and heritage tourists who return, or "return" for the first time, to Morocco. Other scholars, such as Aomar Boum, try to reconstruct how attitudes toward Jews change across four generations that have successively less interactions with individual Jews and more exposure to Israeli-Palestinian struggles in international

³⁸ Dwyer, Kevin. 1982. *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Munson, Henry, Jr. 1984. *The House of Si Abd Allah: The Oral History of a Moroccan Family*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hammoudi, Abdellah. 1993. *The Victim and Its Masks: An Essay on Sacrifice and Masquerade in the Maghreb*. Paula Wissing, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rosen, Lawrence. 1984. *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³⁹ Levy, 2003. 366-67.

satellite television.⁴⁰ His book is the best example of a work on how Moroccan Muslims remember Moroccan Jews.

The Muslim Moroccans in Boum's book are residents of an area that used to have many Jews, all of whom left around the same time. The Muslim men that he interviews were not at all atypical for their region in having especially close contacts with Jews. But they are not professionals in performing acts of spiritual importance for the Jewish community, such as the subjects I have worked with for this dissertation; and Boum's subjects do not have ongoing contacts with Jews.

Still other works focus on describing Jewish community life across the millennia that Jews have lived in Morocco. Haim Zafrani's inimitable work, *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco* is the classic work describing Jewish life from before the fall of the First Temple until the modern era. One of his major themes, shared by several other authors, is the dual nature of the North African Jewish community as essentially self-regulating and "eminently autonomous"⁴¹ on

⁴⁰ Boum, Aomar. 2013. *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁴¹ Zafrani, Haim. 2005. *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco*. New York: Sephardic House. 6.

the one hand, and closely interwoven economically⁴² linguistically,⁴³ materially,⁴⁴ spiritually⁴⁵ and at times even romantically⁴⁶ with their Arab, and more often Amazigh neighbors.

⁴² Geertz, Clifford. 1979. "Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou." Geertz, Hildred, Clifford Geertz and Lawrence Rosen, eds. *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 123-310.

Benet, Francisco. 1957. "Explosive Markets: The Berber Highlands." Karl Polanyi et al. eds. *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*. Glencoe: Free Press. 188-217.

Holden, Stacy. 2011. "Muslim and Jewish Interaction in Moroccan Meat Markets, 1873-1912." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 150-67.

⁴³ Williams, J. J. 1930. *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From the Nile to Niger with the Jews*. New York: Dial Press.

Bar-Asher, M. 1998. *Linguistic Traditions of North African Jews*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press. [Hebrew].

Stillman, Norman. 1988. *The Language and Culture of the Jews of Sefrou, Morocco: An Ethnolinguistic Study*. Louvin: University of Manchester Press.

Stillman, Norman. 1991. "Language Patterns in Islamic and Judaic Societies."

Wasserstrom, S. ed. *Islam and Judaism: 1400 Years of Shared Values*. Portland: The Institute for Judaic Studies in the Pacific Northwest. 41-55.

Hary, Benjamin. 1995. "Judeo-Arabic in Its Sociolinguistic Setting." *Israel Oriental Studies* 15: 129-55.

⁴⁴ Bahloul, Joëlle. 1996. *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937-1962*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Susan Gilson. 2011. "Making Tangier Modern." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 128-49.

Miliani, Hadj. 2011. "Crosscurrents: Trajectories of Algerian Jewish Artists and Men of Culture since the End of the Nineteenth Century." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 177-87.

⁴⁵ Ben-Ami, Issachar. 1998. *Saint Veneration Among the Jews of Morocco*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Barbé, Philippe. 2011. "Jewish-Muslim Syncretism and Intercommunity Cohabitation in the Writings of Albert Memmi: The Partage of Tunis." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 107-27.

Ensel, Remco. 1999. *Saints and Servants in Southern Morocco*. Leiden: Brill.

Kosansky, Oren. 2011. "The Real Morocco Itself: Jewish Saint Pilgrimage, Hybridity, and the Idea of the Moroccan Nation." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 341-60.

⁴⁶ Vance, Sharon. 2011. *The Martyrdom of a Moroccan Jewish Saint*. Boston: Brill.

Historical intimacy gave way to a rending of ties in the twentieth century after the disentanglement of Muslims and Jews across North Africa, the Balkans and Asia and their re-entanglement in the Levant. Boum, Zafrani and others have addressed the mass emigration of Jews and Morocco without Jews.⁴⁷

This dissertation is the first work that explores performance of guards and guides whose livelihood is based on not just conjuring memories, but on working to preserve a physical Jewish presence in Morocco and the moral experience of friendship with Jews. Unsurprisingly, then, I am one of the first to write about performance-based identity creation by Muslims doing Jewish acts.

My fieldwork was conducted in a special time in Moroccan history. The last fifty years is the first time in millennia that there has been an absence of a large Jewish community in Morocco that necessitated Muslims caring for Jewish places. It has only been in the last twenty years that the twin factors of Jewish heritage tourism to Morocco and investment in preserving and expanding the cemeteries have combined to reinforce one another and massively expand the attractiveness and feasibility of being a Muslim guide to Jewish holy sites. For the first time in the history of these cemeteries, massive building projects are creating dwellings for pilgrims to stay during their week's venerations at the saints' tombs. The money that pays for rehabilitation of the cemeteries, that then attracts more visitors, that in turn leads to more money being spent on the rehabilitation of more cemeteries

⁴⁷ Boum, Aomar. 2010. "From 'Little Jerusalems' to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism and Rural Jewish Emigration." *Journal of North African Studies* 15(1):51–69.

Zafrani. 2005.

Baïda, Jamaâ. 2011. "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948-1956." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 321-33.

has only been happening on a large scale in the last ten years. So far as I know, I am the only scholar researching the guards and guides during this seismic shift in the lives and purviews of Muslim guards of Jewish cemeteries.

Theoretical Issues

An important theoretical problem that this research will address is the problem of authenticity. Muslims are doing acts that are other-than-Islamic, strictly speaking. Non-Jews are doing Jewish actions in Jewish places. This arrangement works well in practice. The Muslim cemetery keepers go to mosque and eat couscous on Fridays and the Jews who pay for prayers to be said at the ancestors' graves are willing to stake their money and their filial piety that the prayers performed by non-Jews are efficacious. Performance tends to be an activity that allows one to do things that one cannot confess: namely say Jewish prayers while at the same time adhering to creedal Islam.

In theory, though, Muslims tending Jewish graves raises vexing questions for the study of religion. What makes a practice Jewish? Can Muslims be truly Muslim if they use Jewish languages to carve tombstones or even pray Jewish prayers? More specifically, are Moroccan Islam and Moroccan Judaism asymptotic in their relationship or is there permeability that would allow a Muslim to recite Jewish prayers while not violating their creedal adherence to the notably praxis-centric Maliki Islam, which is dominant in Morocco? The answers to this question shape my dissertation. Are these ritual practices performed by Muslims best understood as imitations of Jewish practice or as acts of continuity with it?

If the Muslim practitioners of these prayers have a purely instrumental view of the performance of this work as a source of income no different than sweeping the street or working at a bank, rather than as conducting an action that accomplishes some spiritual work on behalf of the deceased, then one could regard this devotion to graves and their occupants as mere simulacra, an inferior image without the quality or intentionality of the original.

Is it possible, though, that the practice is more of a continuation or shadow of a Jewish practice than an imitation? A shadow is not the thing that casts it, clearly, but it is inseparably attached to the actual thing, and moves and grows (or shrinks) with it. One must remember that there is a loss of depth and color when comparing the shadow to the object casting it. Certainly there would be very few non-Jewish keepers of Jewish cemeteries if there were no financial incentives. These performances of care of Jewish graves are rarely practiced for free. But there would also be no Muslims saying Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew prayers, for instance, if members of the Jewish community had not consciously taken time to hand-select specific Muslims, spent time teaching them to read Hebrew characters and important words, entrusted them with the care of the emigrating Jewish communities' most sacred places, and then paid to retain their valuable services. For the Muslim cemetery keepers who were trained by the Jewish community directly, there remains an authentic connection to the practice of Jewish prayers stemming from the pre-history of the phenomenon.

Again, Muslims taking care of Jewish graves, by virtue of using words and practices outside their religious idiom, engage in a different practice from Jews taking care of Jewish graves. It may be that some Muslims are simply using a skill

they received to say words and do actions that they attach no special import to other than as a means to make money. This is probably the case for at least a few individuals, especially as these skills are passed down to younger generations with no personal contact with the historic Moroccan Jewish community. This is probably also the case for many guides to Jewish sites who happily act as *bricoleurs* to cobble together a bit of Jewish history, a bit of Islamic knowledge, some imagination, and whatever the tourists seem to enjoy hearing as pass their creation off as authentic Jewish history.⁴⁸

In my preliminary research, however, I met at least a few individuals who led me to believe that there was also something else going on in Morocco's Jewish graveyards. Their prayers, at least on initial months' investigations, did not seem to be simulacra at all. Rather, I came to understand these prayers as a Muslim shadow of Jewish practice that is not the deeply traditional act of a Jew traveling to pray in a Jewish language at the grave of his own family member, but is nevertheless animated by and inseparable from historic and contemporary Jewish practice.⁴⁹ The most recent links in the chain of tradition of teaching, learning and reciting Jewish prayers just happen to be Muslim, rather than Jewish.

The question of the importance of intentionality, or *kavanah*, remains. From traditional Jewish perspective, mitzvot require the intention of the person doing the action to fulfill the associated commandment. The eleventh century sage,

⁴⁸ Lehrer, Erica T. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Has similar discussions of non-Jews cobbling together a "Jewish presentation" in Jewish sites without Jews.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of Jewish languages, and what makes a language religious, see, Hary, Benjamin. 2009. *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt*. Boston: Brill.

Bahya Ibn Pakudah famously said that prayer without intention/*kavanah* is like a body without a soul. But to be always intentional is beyond most praying humans. In the situation where Hebrew is not the vernacular language of the pray-er, intentionality in reciting the words can be even more difficult. It is for this reason that Maimonides recommends ongoing training:

The first thing you must do is this: Turn your thoughts away from everything while you read the Shema or during the Prayer [the Amidah], and do not content yourself with being devout when you read the first verse of the Shema or the first paragraph of the Prayer. When you have successfully practiced this for many years, try in reading the Torah or listening to it, to have all your heart and all your thought occupied with understanding what you read or hear. After some time when you have mastered this, accustom yourself to have your mind free from all other thoughts when you read any portion of the other books of the prophets, or when you say any blessing, and to have your attention directed exclusively to the perception and the understanding of what you utter.⁵⁰

Intentionality is the ideal, to be sure. But as Maimonides hints at, many pray-ers practice special *kavanah* during the recitation of the Shema and the Amidah and focus is understood to lapse a bit during the rest of the daily prayers. If there are understood and even expected lapses in attention to mindfulness during prayers for Jews, what can be expected for Muslims praying Jewish prayers? Are Muslims expected to intend to fulfill commandments that are not a part of their religion? Does it matter? Is *kavanah* only important for the Jews when they pay Muslim cemetery keepers to do their duties as agents of fulfilling mitzvot? For rabbinic answers to these questions, one will have to look elsewhere. The questions are answered by both the Jewish patrons and the Muslim practitioners in their

⁵⁰ Freidlander, M. 2000. *Guide for the Perplexed by Moses Maimonides*. New York: Dover Publications. [3:51].

continuing practice. Jews who pay for Muslims to preserve and protect the final resting places of their ancestors believe that the rituals and preservations done by Muslims fulfill filial piety, even if the Muslims' intention is to simply be paid.

Interesting follow up research to be undertaken some years from now when the practice of Muslims saying Jewish prayers (and perhaps my book?) are more widely known could focus on asking how Islam and Judaism adapt to non-adherents performing rituals apart from the community for their own sakes. The ritual works for those involved. But for the religious continuities involved, crossing fairly clearly marked boundaries is not done without problems. I would be very grateful for the opportunity to study how other centers of Judaism and Islam respond to these phenomena.

Parasitism

To trouble the Nancy's rosy notion that all being is being-with, I draw on the work of Michel Serres, particularly looking at his theory of all human interaction as implicitly parasitical.⁵¹ Serres pessimistically posits that each person interacts with self-gain (religious, economic, etc.) as the key motive, and accordingly all human exchange is inherently based on a desire for exploitation. In fact, prior to any exchange, is a desire to abuse, an "abuse value," which is "complete, irrevocable consummation, precedes use- and exchange-value. Quite simply, it is the arrow with only one direction."⁵² The parasitical relationship,

⁵¹ Serres, Michel. 2007. *The Parasite*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁵² Serres. 2007. 80.

unlike the symbiotic, is characterized by a flow of nutrients from the host to the parasite that is not reciprocated. I have observed relationships resembling this pattern in Jewish cemeteries in Morocco.

I have heard cynical comments made in Arabic and Tamazight many times about fleecing tourists with made-up stories. A few guards and guides did not remember or did not care that I could understand what they said, and were just pleased to take advantage of foreigners' sentimentality to line their own pockets without having to do any task harder than thinking quickly, analyzing their audience, and telling a good story. Not only were they able to make money by repeating fabrications, but they were able to have fun exploiting tourists' naiveté, which provided ample opportunities for mockery in the following hours.

Many difficult choices are made in the writing of dissertations on what to include and what to exclude. Excluding the guides who exhibited this kind of behavior has been a relatively easy choice for me to make, but it does need to be justified. Insofar as the main performance that I want to study is Jewish ritual performed by Muslims, these guides, who were happy to brag how they did not know anything about Jews or Judaism other than how to get Jewish tourists to pay them are, by their own admission, not doing Jewish ritual at all. They were very careful not to ever try to say anything in Hebrew or even Judeo-Arabic, fearing discovery as fakes, preferring to simply tell tales of "friendships" lost over the tumultuous decades.

The stories that arise in these cases, to amuse the tellers and humiliate/entertain the tourists represent the creative result of the "abuse value." In revising the terms of the agreement to favor the parasite ("payment for

recitation of history” to “payment for recitation of false history”), new stories, as well as new meanings – invented Moroccan Jewish history as a cause of inspiration to tourists and mirth to fake “experts” – provide some value, however uneven, to both parties. The “abuse value” of a complete one-way flow of resources is seldom realized in my research, and this is intentional on the part of the fake “experts.”

Building off Mauss' theory of gift-giving and reciprocity, the less-than-full reciprocity of parasites necessitates a continued relationship. The host is not depleted of resources, but neither is the host able to shake loose the parasite which has not adequately remunerated the host for what it has contributed. In this instance, the parasitic guide does not wish to let the tourist/host know that he has stolen honor as well as taken payment for the service, so all laughing at the tourists is reserved until after the bus has departed. The guides are an indispensable part of the tour for the tourists, and even though they have been paid to inform and guide, they occasionally mislead instead. This range of phenomena of guides intentionally deceiving clients is interesting, but it is not what I have chosen for my focus.

The vagaries of the French language provide for the two parasitic theories that are less important to Serres, but more useful for thinking about how Muslims I write about participate in Jewish practice in Morocco. The first is that the French word *hôte* may be understood as both “host” and “guest.” While the relationship between a parasite and a host is a rather clearly defined one, the beneficiary of a host, even if a parasite, may be considered, according to Serres, a guest. If a host and guest can both be represented by the same word/concept, then for Serres, there may be a bit of slippage in the identity of the two. This paradox brings to

mind the Derridean notion of hospitality and the gift, which call into question issues of subjectivity.

Serres introduces the term “quasi-object” to describe the referent that shapes the identity of subjects. As a gift is the object that gives rise to the subjectivity of both the giver and the recipient, so a ball is the object that subjectifies the player. But when the ball is passed to another player, the object instantly becomes a quasi-object for the previous ball-handler, who is still a player – a designation he shares with all who are part of the game, regardless of their proximity to the ball – but who now lacks the object that conferred upon him subject-ness.

Quasi-objects abound as Jewish graves, which are tended by Muslim guards, are visited by Jewish tourists who are guests of Muslim guards, who live in cemeteries built and inhabited by Jews who are themselves in a Muslim country. The whole cemetery becomes a sort of “para-site” in which religious, cultural, economic, linguistic and social boundaries are approached and transgressed and referents, subjectivity and authority all shift during performances.⁵³ Again, the material of the graveyards creates a space where performers and audiences can construct moral selfhoods and create new or reinforce existing identities by means of creative power of parasitical relationships in the para-site filled with quasi-objects.

Finally, Serres points out for his readers that in French the word parasite can also mean random noise that is an addition to a meaningful signal, much as

⁵³ Serres. 225.

the words “static” or “interference” are used in English. In communication, in addition to communicants, there will always be an element of interference, a sort of noise piggybacking on the signal. This noise is to be understood as productive, however, as the mutation that allows for evolution of meaning.⁵⁴ These unintentional bits of extra, or even contradictory, meaning (or nonsense) over time have the power to give birth to whole “new systems” of understanding.⁵⁵ As will be made clear in the following chapters, offhanded comments and lack of clear translations frequently give rise to interpretations of events that were completely unanticipated by the speakers. Miscommunication and misunderstandings between and among guards, guides, tourists and pay-for-prayer clients has shaped Moroccan Jewish-Muslim interactions and Moroccan Judaism in ways that are not always apparent to the people involved. It is in this sense, that the notion of the parasite is most important to the dissertation. Muslim men and women, through their simple actions in Jewish places, create “noise” and “interference” that multiply and obfuscate notions of what is possible/permissible/desirable.

Serres wisely points out that, “an observer seated within a system... overvalues the message and undervalues the noise... in order to send or receive communications better and to make them circulate in a distinct and workable fashion.”⁵⁶ It will be my job to value not just the signal or intended message that people are trying to convey, but also the noise, confusion and uncertainty – that are ever present and creative parts of interethnic, interreligious, international, bi-

⁵⁴ Serres. 184.

⁵⁵ Serres. 52.

⁵⁶ Serres. 68.

and trilingual conversations.

Dissertation's Contributions to Scholarship

This dissertation represents an entry into a small, but growing body of literature in Jewish Studies about Jewish “Heritage Tours” during which Jews return to ancestral places outside of the Land of Israel and find that their traditions and places have been preserved, but also appropriated and adapted by their former neighbors. I have depicted a model of how non-Jews play a vital role in guarding, maintaining and embellishing Jewish sacred sites to which Jewish pilgrims are increasingly returning. This work provides a new way to think about custodianship of Jewish sites by non-Jews. The Muslim keepers are not passive preservationists, but actively use and cultivate the cemeteries in their care to cultivate their selves and create reputations of authority that they then use to shape the practices of visiting Jews. The impact of non-Jewish authorities in Jewish places after emigration is a fertile ground for the future of Jewish Studies. It is my hope that this dissertation presents a useful stepping stone in that direction.

My work also touches on the question: what are Judaism, Jewish ritual and Jewish sacred spaces without Jews? For most of the year, and for most locations in Morocco, Jewish tourists and pilgrims are not present at Jewish cemeteries, but the Muslim guards are. Much great work has already been done on the implications for Jewish sacred places of the collapse of worldwide Jewish life into the two poles of Israel and the United States.⁵⁷ A lacunae in the writing so far is the continuation

⁵⁷ Again, see the brilliant work: Lehrer, Erica T. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

of Jewish practices by non-Jews, not as kitsch, re-enactments or museum theatre, but as a sort of best-as-we-can continuation of vital mitzvot such as ensuring filial piety and ancestor care by non-Jewish agents of Jews. I hope that this dissertation raises questions for others about the possibilities and limitations for the meaningful continuation of aspects of Judaism in places that have no more Jews.

The findings of this work directly address one of the central concerns of ritual studies, namely, do ritual and practice have agency of their own, or does the efficacy of the ritual rely on the intention of the practitioner? It would seem that the Jews paying for Muslims to care for family graves would answer in the affirmative, that the ritual's efficacy is internal to the act, rather than being provided by the practitioner. As I discuss in the next chapter, the goals of the causative agent (Jewish patrons) and the practicing agent (Muslim practitioners) are often quite different. Do these performances create different outcomes for differently interested parties? In short, yes. For Jews, the performance creates the opportunity for fulfillment of filial piety. For the Muslims involved, their performance creates, or rather sustains, their sense of Moroccan history and their moral selves.

This dissertation introduces a new topic of study for Middle East & North African Studies. The experience of minority groups in "Arab" states is, thankfully, a topic widely discussed. As noted earlier, however, writing about how the mass-emigration of Jews from North Africa affected those countries that they left is surprisingly rare. Still rarer is the domain of this work: how North African Muslims deal with, appropriate and utilize not only the memory of their former Jewish neighbors, but also the material remnants of thousands of years of Jewish presence

to negotiate issues of nostalgia, ethnicity and belonging. My goal is that this dissertation serves as a call to scholars to consider not just inter-group dynamics, but the ways in which even a bodily absent minority group's material culture can serve as potent fodder for remaining groups' struggles for defining and cultivating self and group identities.

One of the most important contributions that this work makes to wider scholarship is in the academic study of religion. I side-step issues of orthopraxy and heresy to address the practice – for the benefit of the self and others – of acts outside one's own religion. On the one hand, this dissertation opens up new avenues for those interested in scholarly conversations about usefulness and efficacy of serious and sober practices of religious rituals not shared by the performer of the actions. Might a corollary to Muslims caring for Jewish graves for Jewish patrons be found in Christian seminaries setting up Muslim prayer spaces and playing recorded calls to prayer to encourage Muslim Friday prayers on campus, as is the case at Emory University? The comparison is imperfect, but certainly issues of fidelity and righteousness accrued in a religion that is not one's own are raised.

On the other hand, for many of the people with whom I worked, certain religious acts were performed with an other-than-religious goal. Muslims use Jewish acts to construct Muslim moral selves. As with Moha, this process may result in a social blurring of categories, but no one with whom I worked is interested in converting. They simply exercise expertise in Jewish history to cultivate themselves and remember their friends. I hope to have raised questions

for other scholars about the afterlife of practices that are deracinated from their former religious context and adopted by other religious groups.

I also want to expand the conversations around inter-religious cooperation and studies of the so-called “interfaith” movement. The situations that I raise are not inter-religious cooperation such as in the situation described in *In Amma’s Healing Room*, in which people of different faiths in south India find healing and power through the same rituals.⁵⁸ The Jews, whose rituals and holy places have been adopted by Muslims, are not there to cooperate, though they do benefit from afar. I am not describing a client seeking help from a master practicing her own religion that differs from the client’s, but a client seeking help from a practitioner of another religion to practice acts from the client’s religion. I offer up a different kind of religious cooperation in which Muslims do religious acts in order to fulfill Jewish religious obligations for Jews, but also to fulfill deeply felt personal, other-than-strictly-religious needs for themselves. Above all, then, this dissertation contributes to the study of how religious identity and the moral self are shaped within and across religious boundaries.

Ethnography, Reflexivity & Humanity

As a student and practitioner of ethnography in the twenty-first century, reflexivity has been a central concern of my observation, thinking and writing.⁵⁹ I

⁵⁸ Fleuckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. 2006. *In Amma’s Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁵⁹ Writing and thinking on the role of reflexivity in the work of the ethnographer has flourished after the reflexive turn of the 1970’s. Important works include: Asad, Talal. 1986. “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology”, in Clifford, J., and G.E. Marcus, (eds), “Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of

have thought at length about the ways in which my presence and role is shaping the behavior that I am observing and then transforming it again as I write about it for my audience,. I also have had to be conscious of the ways that the people with whom I work have been reflecting on their own selves, identities and histories by means of their actions. Elaine Lawless, in particular, has given me an important caution on the deliberateness with which the subjects of ethnographic research can portray themselves, knowing that their reputation and representation to the world is at stake.⁶⁰

No ethnographer is able to perfectly understand the motivations and feelings of friends and subjects. No academic writer is able to hold up a perfectly reproduced image and model of what she has observed without losing fidelity to observed events in translating them to English words. Reproducing what I have observed is, accordingly, already fraught from the beginning. As I will try to make clear in the following pages, my ethnographic fieldwork was emotional and deeply human work for me. It hurts me to be kept out of Jewish places. I feel deep friendship and, in fact, love for a few of the people represented in these pages. This

Ethnography”, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Aull Davies, Charlotte. 1999. *Reflexive Anthropology: A Guide to Researching Self and Others*. New York: Routledge.

Burawoy, Michael. 2003. “Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography”, *American Sociological Review*. 68 (5).

Clifford, James. 1986. “On Ethnographic Allegory”, in Clifford, James, and G.E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marcus, G.E., 1999. *Critical Anthropology Now: Unexpected Contexts, Shifting Constituencies, Changing Agendas*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. 2013. “The Reflexive Turn: The Rise of First-Person Ethnography”, *The Sociological Quarterly*. 54: 3–8.

⁶⁰ Lawless, Elaine. 1992. “I was Afraid Someone like You.... An Outsider... would Misunderstand”: Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 105 (417).

informs my judgment on occasion, and I am sure it distorts part of the picture even as it allows the possibility of seeing the lives and struggles of the people with whom I work more clearly.

I am certainly not the only one in this project with feelings that interfere with the project. At least a few of the people with whom I worked confessed later in our friendships that they were trying to impress me, or trying to present themselves in a better light than they deserved, given their complicity in negative treatment of the other. Muslims taking care of Jewish cemeteries in the absence of Jews, many of whom left out of fear, is an emotionally fraught situation, and fertile ground for many distortions, purposeful and otherwise.

I want to have the humility to note that purposeful distortions are not the only ones liable to be believed and recorded. I have made my home here among these folks for several years. But just as I sometimes look at my wife and have no idea what she is thinking or why she just did something, and any explanation is just groping for answers to an act neither of us can explain, I simply do not always understand why the people with whom I work do what they do. Sometimes I do not even understand *what it is that they are doing*. I want to be clear about the ethnographic opaque.⁶¹ I, no less than the people with whom I work, engage in an interpretive task in making sense of the world in which we find ourselves. We are not passive inhabitants, however. We shape that same world, and especially by engaging in religiously hybridized acts, create new possibilities. Muslims are interpreting Jewish acts, and I am trying to interpret their performances.

⁶¹ Willen, Sarah and Don Seeman. 2012. "Introduction: Experience and Inquiétude." *Ethos* 40: 1–23.

Finally, I am not Moroccan or Muslim. I am not Hamou or Moha⁶² or any of the other people with whom I worked. I will miss things, and misinterpret them. After talking with those with whom I worked for hundreds of hours, what follows is the closest I believe that I can get to faithfully understanding and presenting what they do and who they are.

In order to maintain this humility with regard to the parts of lives and inner motivations that I simply cannot see or understand with certainty, I will use phrases and words such as “I think,” “it seems” and “apparently” throughout. This is the most honest and straight-forward way of indicating where I am taking a leap and going beyond what I have been told by the people with whom I work, or in rare instances, contradicting what they have told me. I have striven to present the people I observed as they presented themselves, but occasionally I have had doubts as to whether they were being honest or fully disclosing. Accordingly, I have tried to represent the clarity, and lack thereof, with moderating language throughout.

I have changed the names of everyone depicted in this dissertation, except the few individuals who requested that I not do so. The place names, however, are an unavoidable and important part of the context. I have not changed this information, despite knowing that the privacy of the people who talked to me about very personal experiences could be jeopardized. I was very clear that I was doing research that would be published, but all ethnographers who spend more than a couple weeks in a site know that humanity will always supersede social science,

⁶² See chapters 3, 5 and 7.

and in most instances my subjects were also my friends. I want very much to preserve their privacy.

Finally, I am terrified that I will help destroy the thing I love by contributing to a tourist industry that ensures the rise of charlatans who damage the sites by bringing more people than the appointed guards and guides can serve.⁶³ But my work is done with humans, and for humans. It is not my job to attempt to regulate the tourist industry in Morocco. But I hope to shape it by pointing out what is authentic, and what particular people are doing to preserve, protect and honor these Jewish sacred sites.

Sites

Morocco is a deeply bifurcated country in which language, history, socio-economic standing, and ethnicity differ on either side of mountain ranges. Although there are several notable exceptions, generally, Arabic-speaking urban dwellers live on the plains and along the Atlantic coast, and rural Tamazight-(and Tarifit and Tashelhit) speakers live in the mountains, in the Sahara and along the Mediterranean coast. The experiences of Jews on either side of this divide were quite different. How does the Muslim experience of Jews in rural areas contrast with those in the city? This work will seek to understand urban separations extending to rural areas based on research conducted on both sides of this line.⁶⁴

⁶³ For another treatment of tourism, and especially concerns about how research on tourism shapes peoples' lives, see: Lehrer, Erica T. 2013.

⁶⁴ Levy, 2003. 368.

I have chosen a mix of Amazigh sites (Timzerit, Midelt, Rich, Sefrou and arguably Meknes) and Arab sites (Rabat, Fes, and arguably Essaouira). I want to address some of the particularities that I have observed in the ethnopoetic freedoms that those in the rural/Amazigh areas have in performing rituals and recalling narratives that those in the cities may not include as part of their repertoires. As noted in chapter two, the degree of intimacy between Jews and Imazighen in rural areas was often greater than that between Jews and Arabs in the cities, including regular intermarriage. Consequently, the Amazigh raconteurs seem to be quicker to tell stories about their close interactions with Jews and implicate themselves in interreligious interactions, rather than using third-person narrative. I understand this phenomenon to stem from the ethnopoetic tendencies of Imazighen to include firsthand intimacy with Jews in their stories, jokes and recalled memories.

Rabat, Fes and Meknes are all large cities that were centers of Jewish life in Morocco. These cities, like all cities, tend to attract immigration from the countryside. Meknes, because of this immigration, has a pronounced Amazigh culture, both in language and in imagery (the “dancing man” symbol that is the last letter of the Tifinagh alphabet and the symbol of Amazigh identity/pride/autonomy movements is readily visible) that is less present in Rabat and hardly evidenced in Fes.

Midelt, Rich and Sefrou are medium-sized cities that all bore the honorary title “Jerusalem of Morocco” at one time. All three were boomtowns during the colonial period and had significant industry, which is no longer present. They feel like cities in decline. They, like the larger cities above, have pronounced formerly

Jewish neighborhoods (*mellah*) with no remaining historic wall, boundary or other enclosure to separate Jews from the other residents. It is in these towns that the Muslim cemetery keepers are the most animated in their stories about the Jewish community, and have been the most open to my questions in my research.

At the time of the establishment of the French Protectorate in the final days of 1912, the hinterland was economically, socially and culturally quite distant from the coastal and urban regions. However, French representatives of the protectorate soon streamed into the interior of the country. Between the Middle and High Atlas ranges, between Fes and Errachidia, French soldiers formed a garrison on a hill in the middle of four villages and named it Midelt after a local mesa where the area *souq* was held.⁶⁵ The invading Europeans at first provided a common enemy and then later a pacifying force and eventually initiated a renewed time of peace among the small surrounding villages. The French forcibly transferred several Jewish families out of the village of Othman OuMosa and into a newly constructed neighborhood just down the hill from their garrison in Midelt. These Jews were compelled to serve as clerks and other administrative positions for the garrison. Amazigh villagers moved to Midelt to cater to the needs of a French garrison and started constructing their own houses surrounding the soldiers' and the Jewish neighborhood. A miniature *mellah* was formed as the Jewish neighborhood was encircled. Original residents of the villages and the Izdeg and Merghad tribes mingled and further built up Midelt when vast lead deposits were discovered

⁶⁵ This section is an updated and expanded version of the description of Midelt in Driver, Cory. 2010. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis., 32-6.

nearby. In order to provide power for the French lead mining operation, in 1927 the French forces began construction on a hydroelectric dam just south of Tattiouine. The construction temporarily enraged the locals who had no water for their orchards or farms until the water filled the reservoir and was then allowed to return to its regular flow. Midelt was the second electrified city in Morocco after Casablanca and enjoyed much prosperity until the French left in 1956. Then the majority of the lead mines were closed and the town no longer had a stable income from the soldiers or from the mines and started to fracture. Most townspeople returned to agriculture, if not their ancestral villages. After 1967, Jews in large numbers started to leave Midelt. They mostly headed to Israel, with not insignificant numbers heading to France, with many stopping for as long as a decade in Fes, Meknes or Casablanca.

Midelt has stayed a center of relative importance in the High Atlas region. According to gossip around town in 2009, plans were underway to give Midelt its own *wilaya* – or provincial status – under Khenifa's supervision. Instead, in 2012, Midelt became the site of the *amaliya*, or governorship. In 2004, the hydroelectric dam burst, sending a massive flood into town and ruining several fields, orchards and homes. All my raconteurs were quick to reassure me that there was no loss of life. When I started my research in 2005, Midelt had around forty thousand inhabitants. Now it is home to over one hundred thousand residents and is a bustling little city on the north-south main road in eastern Morocco.

Essaouira and Agoim are both special cases. Essaouira, which is a small port city on the Atlantic coast, had possibly the largest Jewish population by percentage of any town I studied, aside from Sefrou. The *mellah* is in the almost-completed

process of being demolished and turned into seaside apartments. The Jewish cemeteries currently remain, but they have also been threatened with destruction from time to time. Just in the last several years though, new notoriety has come to the Essaouira Jewish cemeteries after being featured on the nightly news several times. Many Muslim locals still go to beseech the holiest of the Jews buried there for assistance. Research in this site will be primarily focused on tour guides who explain the *mellah*, while taking groups through the ruins as they are demolished by jackhammer and hydraulic buckets.

Sefrou, the original home of several of the raconteurs, is roughly 100 miles north of Midelt and about 30 miles south of Fes. It is an ancient city which gets its name from Ahl-Sefrou, a tribe of Imazighen that converted to Judaism before the Arab invasion of North Africa.⁶⁶ The town, known as “Little Jerusalem” is built around a series of streams and miniature canals, the largest of which is called Oued Yehoodi, or simply the Jewish River. Sefrou was known as a Jewish village and a center for trade as far back as the eleventh century.⁶⁷ The village has always been known as a sort of haven for Jews fleeing from persecutions in the surrounding areas. Especially when times were difficult in Fes, which hosts arguably the oldest Islamic university in the world and has been known to be a focal point for religious tension, nearby Sefrou represented a welcome refuge. Thus the relations between Muslims and Jews were almost always quite good due to the fact that as a

⁶⁶ Stillman, Norman. 1973. "The Sefrou Remnant." *Jewish Social Studies*. 35.3 (1973): 255-63. p 256.

⁶⁷ al-Bakri, Abi 'Ubayd. 1857. "al-Mughribfi Dhikr Bildd Ifriqiya wa 'l-Maghrib" *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, ed. M. de Slane (Algiers), p 147 – as cited in Stillman 1973, p 256.

somewhat peripheral town, it was not a scholastic or religious center in the Muslim tradition, and since Jews constituted such a large part of the population, the town was mostly quite tolerant.⁶⁸

Most important to note about Sefrou is that it was a center for learning for Jewish scholars in Morocco, particularly Kabbalists. Three particularly wise rabbis, Rabbi 'Amram Ben Diwan, Rabbi Raphael Moshe El-Baz and Rabbi Moshe Ben El-Hammo are associated with the famous cave in the hill outside of Sefrou, which is a pilgrimage destination and a very important site for veneration of *Marabouyat/saints*.⁶⁹ The Jews of the area know the cave simply as *al-kahf dyal al zhibil al-kbir* /the cave of the big mountain, or *kahf al-Mu'minin/* cave of believers.

Timzerit is the site of the *hillulah* to one of the most important Jewish saints in Morocco, who also has a large following in Israel. In this most remote site in which I conducted research, the Muslim family who guards it has constructed a large hotel near the saint's tomb. I attended the ten-day *hillulah* in order to observe the roles played by the Muslim family of guards and cemetery attendants for the thousands of pilgrims who descend upon the town of only a few hundred residents. I journeyed there several days before the pilgrimage festival in order to observe and participate in the preparation, as well as to make sure that I had a place to stay in the small town. I also remained in the area a few days after the festival to observe

⁶⁸ Stillman. 1973. p 257.

⁶⁹ I heard this neologism of French "marabout" with Arabic suffix used for groups of male and/or female saints. There are numerous other terms as well, but marabout was what I heard most often and so have reproduced here.

what happened when all the pilgrims leave and the site returns to the normality of a scattered few pilgrims attending every week.

The care of Jewish cemeteries and Jewish sites in these different regions serves as a microcosm of changes in Moroccan urban and rural societies. As will be shown, while for the most part positive, the interactions between Jews and Muslims in and around holy Jewish sites is neither that of a Golden Age of tolerance nor that of permanent enmity.⁷⁰ Instead, a few Jews and many Muslims simply find ways to coexist peacefully and work together for a time despite larger, destructive, global forces.

Chapter Discussion

Looking ahead, this dissertation will pivot from the theoretical and discussions of big pictures to analyzing what is created by/for individual actors. Chapter One will focus primarily on me as a human ethnographer and include the obligatory “getting there” story. As part of this reflexive discussion, I will talk about early failures in fieldwork that helped illuminate what was at stake for me in many of the interactions with the people with whom I work. I will then take up the larger questions about what is at stake in the performances that I observed and what is at stake in this ethnography. I will begin my discussion on the motivations for caring for cemeteries. I will also address briefly why confessional concerns about the Halakhic appropriateness of Muslims caring for Jewish graves is not a central concern for my research.

⁷⁰ Mark Cohen, 1996. “Islam and the Jews: Myth, Counter-Myth, History,” *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, ed Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner. New York: New York University Press.

In Chapter Two, I step back and discuss Moroccan history with an eye toward understanding the changing natures of Jewish-Muslim interactions in Morocco. The first section will focus on Moroccan Jews and Judaism, considering contacts and boundaries among Jews, Imazighen, Muslims, Arabs, Christians and colonial actors. I will then examine early epigraphic and oral history indicators of an ancient Jewish community. Next I consider the rise of saint veneration in Morocco among both Jews and Muslims, and the cross fertilization of this practice both in terms of what are shared activities and words as well as what saints are being shared. Inherent in this discussion are the increasing controversies over saint veneration as an acceptable Islamic practice, especially in contexts in which Muslims venerate Jewish saints.

Chapter Two continues with an analysis of colonialism and differentiation. When French efforts to create native agent classes in occupied territories promoted Jews to French citizenship, what tensions did this produce with saint veneration and amulet production? Did the sudden claim of France on the Jewish community and the subsequent adoption of French secular culture by many Jews create a void for Jewish ritual experts who Muslims had previously relied upon for shared veneration practices? The seismic shift in the social position of Jews in Morocco led quickly to an exodus and social contraction. As incidents of urban violence spiked around the time of the creation of the State of Israel, Jews increasingly left Morocco and headed for France, Israel and elsewhere. Synagogues were suddenly empty and cemeteries were no longer collecting new residents. In the last days of hundreds of Jewish communities, remaining residents saw to it that their sacred places would not be left untended, or unguarded. How and why were particular

Muslim men and women chosen to inherit responsibility for Jewish places and rituals? And in the places that were abandoned or sold without responsibility being passed on, how was authority established by Muslims over Jewish spaces?

The second chapter continues the discussion of Moroccan Jewish history with a look at return of some Moroccan Jews. As tourism to Morocco increased, especially through “Jewish Heritage” tours, I discuss how sites and authorities were chosen by the tourist industries. I will consider what changes occur when the audience for prayers is no longer God or the dead, but tourists who may not be Moroccan, Jewish, or religious. The chapter will conclude with consideration of Moroccan exceptionality in the face of other ethnographic work that I have done.

Chapter Three consists of two stories of Passover from my first years in Morocco, before I started the dissertation work. Indeed, Hamou and Moha were the men who inspired the project, and Moha is the subject of Chapter Five. This chapter is useful for positioning myself, and the Muslim experts in Judaism who do not work full-time in cemeteries, in our respective social contexts. The chapter contains a discussion of the sculpting of moral selves that older Muslim Moroccans are able to do through of their performances of Jewish ritual. I conclude this section by addressing how in seder meals that are observed jointly by the people with whom I worked and me, subjectivity and coherence of messages shifts throughout the course of the evenings.

Chapter Four focuses on cemetery keepers who work in a place of contradictions. One of the most important aspects of the performances of these graveyard guards is their “being there.” For the Jewish clients paying Muslims to say prayers of the graves of their ancestors, positionality is apparently more

important than identity, religion or language proficiency, though these matter to differing degrees. What does the simple reality of being where the graves are or where amulets are produced create?

In addition to their work in the cemeteries, the guards are humans who interact with other humans and have a whole repertoire of behaviors and performances. Pursuant to the questions above, I ask where and how else these people are performing. Are the cemetery keepers' performances unique to the cemeteries? Do they go to mosques and how are they received? Are they religious experts to anyone besides tourists? Are they performers for their families or with friends? Does one set of performances inhibit or reinforce others?

As already discussed briefly above in the parasitism section, I will address how to distinguish between the ritual experts and the "experts"? Who are the people who has been entrusted by the Jewish community and trained to be able to preserve, defend and pray, and who are the bricoleurs who piece together stories that tourists like to hear?

Finally, I conclude the chapter with a consideration of what is the heart of the ritual interaction between Muslims and Jews. Is the grave tending the performance or is the financial deal the performance? In the case of people who pray for money, is the ability to make the business exchange with people living far away the act that cements their authority? Is this similar to printouts of emails simply being inserted into the Western Wall without being read, or is there some sort of particular skill/ability/identity that the Muslim practitioners of Jewish rites have that other people who could sound out the prayers at the gravesite do not have? Is the attachment to the Jewish community in the past part of what is

important?

Chapter Five considers the tasks of Moroccan Muslim guides as they build national, regional, municipal and individual identities for others and authority for themselves. I begin with an examination of context and ethnopoetics and ask what is allowable in different contexts, especially in rural Morocco where the tradition of saint veneration is arguably stronger than in the urban areas and where heterodox practices have traditionally been more acceptable. Are Muslims saying Jewish words really remarkable out here, or is it just another example of pragmatically doing what works, religiously? Are Muslims doing/describing Jewish rituals merely one facet of a larger phenomenon, or are they truly expanding boundaries? I use Moha, Toudert and Rebha's father, as a case study to consider the phenomenology of what is going on with the experience of the Muslim participant in Jewish acts. I analyze what he is thinking/feeling/experiencing as he explains his world.

I then expand the focus on people in cemeteries to the economic implications of Muslims experts in Judaism in Chapter Six, by studying various tourism companies. I am chiefly interested to know how tourism operatives construct narratives that lure tourists to various sites. I address how stories told about how and why Muslims are in the Jewish cemeteries, or maintain amulets, differ by place and by audiences. Is there a version for the tourists and a version for the locals? Are there multiple local versions for those who are sympathetic to the tourism project and those who are not?

I also address why individuals are drawn to this particular business. Are the profits the draw, or is there something else at stake? Is this just income or does it

touch and shape their lives? What is the opportunity cost of working in a Jewish graveyard or maintaining Jewish amulets? Do people do this work when the money does not come? Do the cemetery keepers know the names and stories of the interred because it establishes them as professionals, or because the stories mean something to them or to their family?

I again consider performance implications and ask what changes occur when the audience for prayers is no longer God or the dead, but tourists who may not be Moroccan, Jewish, or religious. In places that were abandoned or sold without responsibility being passed on, how was authority established by Muslims over Jewish spaces?

Chapter Seven is a discussion of what the visitors to Jewish sites are hearing and experiencing from/with their Muslim guides. Obviously tourist groups and pilgrims are a large part of the reason for the phenomena I describe existing. What are they hearing, observing and feeling based on their trips? What is the afterlife of the performance as the tourists and pilgrims describe their experiences? It is important to remember that not all the visitors to the cemeteries are foreigners. What do Moroccan Jews who live in the cities experience when they visit rural areas and see Muslims in charge of Jewish sacred places? How do they understand the phenomenon?

The dissertation concludes in Chapter Eight with a consideration of this project's place in the lives of the people with whom I work and in scholarship more generally. I then return to a consideration of the importance of this work to the people with whom I worked. Even Moroccans who are not ritual experts often use Jewish history as a cypher for their own lives and experiences in confronting the

changing world around them. Muslims who felt unpopular or had anti-authoritarian tendencies continually describe themselves to me in terms of how their lives were connected to Jewish lives. The final chapter ends with recommendations for future research and a description of the ongoing changes in Moroccan Jewish sacred spaces.

Chapter 1: Orientation: Arrival and Framing the Work of Ethnography: Getting There

In the disciplines of ethnography and anthropology, the “getting there” story serves two main purposes. The first is to locate, and often exoticize, the research site. Gone are the days for most field researchers of weeks on a ship, days overland and then hours on a canoe to reach a remote people. I took three flights, an intercity train and a taxi to my research site. My total journey from my packed-up apartment in Ohio to my new home lasted less than 24 hours.

The second purpose of the getting there story is to introduce readers to the ethnographer and implicitly, I think, to show how adventurous and dedicated to groundbreaking research she or he is. My goal, however, is to humanize myself and disclose some of the banal and unflattering aspects of my fieldwork. I had lived in Morocco for over a tenth of my life at the beginning of my fieldwork, having served in the Peace Corps for two years and spent another year in language study and site selection. It no longer feels adventurous or new, but just like another home that frequently happens to be easier than life in the States. Speaking Moroccan Arabic in public feels more comfortable than English at this point, and if a Moroccan with whom I am conversing speaks English fluently, we usually still revert back to Arabic, because it is easier.

The getting there story is important for me to tell, though, because this ethnography will seek to be a human one in which the reader will understand not only what is at stake for Muslims who guard Jewish cemeteries and why they do what they do, but also what is at stake for this researcher and why I do what I do.

As part of his signature in my copy of his book on Ethiopian Jews and Feres Mura, Don Seeman wrote, “The promise of ethnography – liberating self reflections and expanding the boundary of the human: soon by you.” It is my hope that by letting myself be visible in this work and by recording not just the abstract analysis of the behavior of others, but also the critical reflexivity and soul searching on my part that was necessary to provide the former, I will, at least in part, fulfill his words.

Doing Ethnography as a *Nus-Nus*.

A necessary part of reflexivity will be considering the ways in which I am perceived by many of the people with whom I work. I will disclose more in subsequent chapters, but for now I will say that some of my ethnic heritage is shrouded in confusion. Whatever else may be the case, a recent DNA test kit given as a gift by my in-laws revealed that I have very little genetic overlap with Moroccans who have been already been tested.¹ Nonetheless, I am often considered a “halfie” by many of my interviewees.² This perceived affiliation always perplexed me until a trip to the American Consulate in Casablanca to renew my passport.

I entered the fenced off area immediately in front of the consulate and wondered if I should stand in line or enter the building, because I saw people doing both. I ask the Moroccan guard what I should do, using Moroccan Arabic. He asked

¹ I do, however, share some genetic similarity with people who are labeled on the test results as “Middle Eastern” and “Iberian non-European” – which I understand to be Sephardic Jews because “North African/Arab” is a separate category.

² For an excellent discussion on being a partial native, see Abu-Lughud, Lila. 2006. “Writing Against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology*. Richard Fox, ed. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. 137-62.

me, also in Arabic, if I had an American passport, and when I replied in the affirmative he looked me over before responding that I should wait in line. As I waited, many fairer skinned people with blue passports went straight into the building. As I waited, I noticed that everyone in line with me held a green Moroccan passport. When I finally got to the front of the line, another guard ushered me in to the building's security room. Upon seeing my blue passport, the interior guard asked why I had been waiting in line. I replied that I had been told to do so by the guard outside. The guard was called in and asked why he made me wait in line, because Americans typically do not wait outside. The guard replied that I obviously was not an *Amriki haqiqi*/authentic American. Feeling more than a little insulted, I asked the guard what I was if not a real American. He laughed and said that I was a *nus-nus*. The rest of the security staff started laughing and several asked if I was part Moroccan.

About an hour earlier, while I was waiting for my appointment time, I had stopped in a café across the street and ordered a *nus-nus*, which means “half-half” and is a particularly milky latte in which the coffee and milk do not mix until you stir them. I was thinking of that delicious coffee and wondering how angry to feel about the guard's ethnic joke, when my backpack was searched. When the guard opened the pockets to remove my electronics, my kippah fell out. The first guard picked it up from the ground and held it up for the female guard, who had questioned his decision to tell me to wait in the outside line, to see. He exclaimed, “I knew it! He is half American and half Moroccan Jew. That's why he speaks Arabic!”

I have been told, in playful jest most of the time, that after I carry on a conversation for more than a few minutes in Moroccan Arabic, “Ah, you are Moroccan!” Something about me does seem to make it a bit easier for many of the people with whom I work to forget that they are talking to a foreigner and a stranger. Kirin Narayan, in her work on “Native Anthropologists,” also speaks of those who earn native status, and her work is worth quoting at length:

And what about non-“native” anthropologists who have dedicated themselves to long-term fieldwork, returning year after year to sustain ties in a particular community? Should we not grant them some recognition for the different texture this brings to their work?... Regular returns to a field site... can nourish the growth of responsive human ties and the subsuming of cultural difference within the fellowship of a “We-relation”(Schutz 1973:16-17)...[L]ong-term fieldwork leads to the stripping away of formal self-presentations and the granting of access to cultural domains generally reserved for insiders, thus making better scholarship. Returns to the field allow for a better understanding of how individuals creatively shape themselves and their societies through time. Finally, repeated returns to the field force an anthropologist to reconsider herself and her work not just from the perspective of the academy but also from that of the people she purports to represent... Like all long-term relationships [anthropologists’] encounters in the field have exhilarating ups and cataclysmic downs, yet persevering has brought the reward of greater insight. Do not anthropologists who engage sensitively in long-term fieldwork also deserve respect from their professional colleagues as partial insiders who have through time become bicultural (cf. Tedlock 1991)? Need a “native” anthropologist be so very different?³

I have spent over a third of my life studying and writing about Morocco, the Moroccan Jewish community and memory in Morocco. Frequently, because of my

³ Narayan, Kirin. 1993. “How Native Is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist?”. *American Anthropologist*, New Series. 95, (3). pp671-686. 677-78.

See also Schutz, Alfred. 1973. *Collected Papers, Volume 1: The Problem of Social Reality*. The Hague: Mouton.

And, Tedlock, Barbara. 1991. “From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography”. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47:69-94.

years living in the countryside, I can understand more of Tamazight conversations than many urban Moroccans. I have been told by more than a few taxi drivers, after comparing notes on what parts of Morocco we have visited and which tribes we know, that I am more Moroccan than most Moroccans. The truth remains that I am not Moroccan, but I am a partial insider and partly bicultural. In fact, the times when I am not an insider, but I expect to be treated as one, often lead to emotional struggles for me. What is crucial to note is that many of my Moroccan counterparts and friends consider me a sort of “halfie.” This occasionally affects our interactions, as when I am taken into confidence and other foreign long-time residents or even other Moroccans are excluded.

In the same way, I speak Arabic every day, and use “God-language” that is an integral part of the rural Moroccan Arabic that I used for my first several years in Morocco, but is not as common in Rabat. Accordingly, I am often mistaken for a particularly zealous convert to Islam, though I am not. I have devoted my professional life to Jewish studies and attend synagogue services occasionally, but I did not grow up in a Jewish household and have not formally converted. I attend a church in Rabat with my wife, but I have been forbidden from teaching (even though with an impending Ph.D. in the academic study of religion, I would normally be a treasured guest speaker) because I am not comfortable with the doctrine of the trinity and I am not settled on the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Hamou, one of the subjects of Chapter Three, has repeatedly told me that I need to, “stop being a Jew who knows about the Christian book, but talks like a convert [to Islam]. You need to be a Jew. Or a Muslim. But being a little of this and a little of that is not good.” Where my *nus-nus* identity as slightly Moroccan is almost

universally appreciated in my research field, my bifurcated religious commitments, when they are known, are regularly condemned. However, I believe that these commitments do make me more sensitive to individuals performing actions across religious boundaries.

Therefore, insofar as the goal of ethnography is an accurate *writing of the people*, after the reflexive turn, my task as an ethnographer is to wrestle with and be clear about my role in the study, namely my attraction to the subject. The individuals with whom I have worked, however, have spent quite some time thinking about who they are and how they fit into their worlds. My task is still to analyze what is said, of course, but it is my responsibility to faithfully reproduce indigenous terms and ideas like “drinking the milk of trust.”⁴ My *nus-nus* status certainly helps shape my interests and what I pursue. But the effect of my identity on the struggle that Muslim guards and guides at Jewish places and others have in defining themselves is minimal. They were guarding, preserving and telling stories of close-knit relationships with Jews long before I moved to Morocco. In other words, I will allow that who I am partially determines where I look and what I see, but the people with whom I work are subjects with agency, who have purposefully undertaken the profoundly human task of representing who they are to me, as I have done the same with them.

Immediate Failures

⁴ See chapters 5 and 7 for a discussion of drinking the milk of trust.

My *nus-nus* status notwithstanding, my research experiences in Morocco never seem to start off especially well. As I arrived for my latest round of research in the fall of 2014, my bags were all lost due to the twin factors of a union strike and a quick layover at Charles De Gaulle. I was told that they would be at the Rabat airport, and I am an avid walker so I made the journey from downtown Rabat to the airport on foot 14 kilometers in the hot October sun. Upon arriving, I was told that a mistake had been made and that I had been “accidentally” told that my bags had arrived. They had not. I should only come back when I was called again. I had not brought the 200 dirhams necessary to hire a grand taxi back to the city, and the airport bus was due to depart only four hours later. So I walked back along a major road and quickly became acquainted with the rapidly increasing traffic levels since my previous visits, and the attendant increase in pollution.

That adventure was sufficient to earn me sun poisoning and a bronchial infection. Also, the only shirt and pair of pants that I owned until my luggage arrived were now covered in sweat, dust and car exhaust. I would get still dirtier the next day, which was Eid al Adha. Moroccans who slaughter a sheep on that day typically take the head and forelegs of the animal to one of hundreds of improvised fires set up along streets for the day. Typically a fire, fueled by mixed wood and garbage, is kindled directly on the asphalt of a road, and a mattress spring-set, or some other metal grating is stacked on cinderblocks at the corners so that the contraption can serve as a giant grill. The heads and forelegs are then carefully stacked on this grill and roasted until the hair is burnt off and the skin cracks and shrivels. The sheep heads are said to smile as the skin pulls back revealing the sheep’s teeth. This process of cooking the meat gives rise to one of my favorite

Moroccan idioms, and words that would become very useful for my research: *kayban farhan b'hal ras t'hargat* “he looks happy like a burnt head.” This linguistic pearl is used when someone is struggling to put on a happy face despite unpleasant circumstances, or anytime that emotions war within someone who is trying not to reveal the tumult beneath the surface. Purposeful obscuring of suffering and a dedication to presenting a rosy picture in spite of pain have been a frequently present feature of the interviews on Moroccan Jewry that I have conducted with Moroccan Muslims during the last 11 years.

Another crucial aspect of the vast majority of my interactions with Moroccans has been humor. As I walked around on Eid al Adha, adding the smell of burnt hair and skin to my already impressive olfactory bouquet, I stopped a few times to ask if I could take pictures of some of the more impressive piles of burning heads roasting on box springs over trash fires. The young men running the enterprises were exceedingly pleased to be recognized for their work and industriousness, and heartily agreed to pictures. Uniformly, they asked if their friend could take my camera and get a picture with their arms around me in front of the fire. Despite my being leery of losing my camera this way, I agreed, because after all, if I am going to take pictures of them, they should be able to take pictures of me. I doubted whether I would be able to give them a printed picture, but the power to be behind the camera with me in the view finder seemed to be what they were most interested in experiencing.

During the autumn of 2014, news was streaming in of DAESH/ISIS beheadings of foreigners in North Africa and the Middle East. One could not avoid thinking about this as men with long knives and cleavers walked around the street

throwing heads (of sheep) around. So every time I was embraced by a head-griller while his friend took a photo, I was asked if I wanted a photo with him holding his knife to my throat to send back to America. As I type this, the event seems rather less funny than it did at the time, as there have been several knife and cleaver attacks on Jews in particular in Israel, France, and elsewhere since then. That day, however, it was all in good fun, and although I declined each chance to have a picture with a knife to my neck, I did capture a few of Moroccan friends doing the same pose with each other. Although at the end of the day I did not have a “terrorist photo,” I did have blood and gristle on my only shirt where I had been embraced by various grillmasters.

All that is to say, when I finally made it to the Jewish cemetery in Rabat a few days later, I was looking – and smelling – much worse for the wear, but feeling thoroughly and literally steeped in Morocco and Moroccan culture. Again, I had walked out to the cemetery rather than use public transit. My hesitancy arose because I did not yet have a good sense about how hopping in a taxi and asking it to take me to the Jewish cemetery would be received by the taxi driver. I did not yet have a working knowledge of other forms of public transportation. By the time I arrived outside the cemetery, I was again sweaty and disgusting.

My ordeal up to this point was a crucial reintroduction to my Moroccan life. Over the years, I had had a few successes in business meetings and academic conferences in Morocco, and I had begun to feel quite confident. This rough return to Morocco after only 16 months of absence thoroughly shook my confidence in my ability to do life well. I knew I could still do the research, but doubts crept in about the quality of life I would lead during the next few years. Would I be sick and gross

all the time? Would I be running around, exhausting myself, only to show up somewhere, like the airport, where the goal of the day's journey would be unattainable? Frequently, the answer would be "yes," as it turned out. These concerns about whether I was suited to life in Morocco set the stage for my first interview. I did a quick mental inventory before walking up to the gate. My Arabic was still good. I had reviewed words outside of my normal vocabulary that might show up. I still knew my way around. But I was physically exhausted, sick, filthy and emotionally shaken.

Outside the Gate

I rang the bell outside the huge iron gate twice with no answer. Finally a woman walked over from behind the corner of the wall where she could see me, but I



had not noticed her. She seemed very suspicious of me immediately, and asked what I wanted. I told her that I was here to visit the graveyard and asked if she could please let me in. Without another word, she walked out of sight. I stood there dumbfounded. At the end of a two-hour walk, I was refused entrance to this

cemetery that I had visited at least a few times in the previous decade. Just as my ever-present fear of not completing my dissertation was swelling, the main cemetery keeper – the woman’s husband, I would find out later – came to the gate. I was immensely relieved, as I had talked with this man 18 months earlier and he had been especially helpful then; I expected him to be again. He arrived at the gate, looked me over as slowly and thoroughly as I had ever been perused outside of a bar in Chicago’s Boystown, and told me that the cemetery was closed. Our conversation turned out to be especially important in helping to frame my research.

I was standing, hot, tired and sweaty, in the sun just outside of the iron gate. I had been wearing my clothes for almost a week, and they were covered with salt marks from sweat, as well as blood and smoke from getting too close to head burning. I was coughing from the pollution and I still had a headache from too much time in the sun. The cemetery keeper stood on the inside of the gate, with his arms through the bars and his fingers interlocked on my side. He was wearing a kappa tracksuit with the two ladies reclining against each other in a stripe all down his pant legs. He was as tall as I am – almost two meters – but much fitter and stronger. I gained the distinct impression that I had woken him up from a nap. He had all the power in the situation and I had none.

I asked why the cemetery was closed, and he countered by asking if I was Jewish, and if so, why didn’t I know. This hit a very sensitive part of me. In a conversation with my advisor a week before I left to come to Morocco, I confided that although I was working on my Ph.D. in Jewish religious cultures, I had a MA that focused on Judeo-Arabic language and culture, and I had taught at the campus

Hillel during my undergrad, I was much more involved in churches than in synagogues as I grew up. I did not and still do not feel sufficiently Jewish to do much of the work that I do. When a cemetery keeper questions my Jewish affiliation or knowledge, it strikes a very deep insecurity in me. One of the things that led me to the study of Muslim keepers of Jewish cemeteries in Morocco in the first place was my curiosity at how someone who was not Jewish could cultivate a public identity that reinforced his or her position of such authority and importance in Jewish life, Jewish death and Jewish space. I wanted that for myself. I will discuss this more later, but I have always found myself between religious traditions, never fully being able to ascribe to one to the exclusion of others. I have ached for recognition that although my hybridized identity made me an outsider to a particular religious community, I also have an important role to play within it. It seemed to me that the Muslim keepers of Jewish holy places occupied a position that I wanted for myself: maintaining an authoritative identity on the basis of knowledge and position rather than birth. I want to know how authority to explain and guard Jewish sites in Morocco is created, wielded and grown by non-Jews.

As I was standing there, a literal outsider to the remains of the Jewish community and the Muslim Moroccan cemetery keeper was clean, at ease, at home with his position as an insider, I lost my cool. I started crying a bit. I shed only a couple tears, but it was enough to turn me from an object of disgust to an object of pity in the cemetery keeper's eyes. I asked, "Why won't you let me in?" He told me that if it was up to him, he would, but that he couldn't, "on account of the Jews' laws." I told him that Jews would let me in, and he replied rather firmly that they

would not. Again, I asked why and he said that the next day was a holiday and that it was therefore forbidden.

I knew that the festival of Sukkot started the evening of the next day, and that was why, even though I was still sick and disgusting, I wanted to visit the cemetery to at least get one visit in before the holidays when it is customary to not visit graveyards. I explained to the cemetery keeper that it was actually fine, that visiting was allowed essentially two days before. He said that it was not allowed for me, because since I was Jewish, I would not be able to celebrate Sukkot properly having visited a cemetery only two days before. He told me that I would need at least a full day to rid myself of the dirtiness *musukh* that going into the cemetery would inflict upon me. He explained that he was really just looking out for me and trying to make sure that I could have a nice holiday. His behavior had fully switched from that of judgmental guardian to consoling authority figure by this point. I was able to finally pull myself together and, indeed I rallied. I told him that being *naqi*/pure was not really a concern of mine because I was not religious in that way “*ana mashi deeni bhal dakshi.*” In my understanding of rabbinic Judaism, when the temple does not stand, ritual impurity from visiting graveyards is not a concern.

The cemetery keeper’s face altered at my dismissal of his concern for my state of ritual purity and leaned back from the gate, crossing his hands over his chest, and said forcefully that he did not care how religious I was or was not. He was the guardian, he was responsible for the site, and he would make the decisions about what was allowed and what was not. He was still kind and did not leave or cut off the conversation, but I wondered if he had started smiling like an Eid al

Adha burnt head, outwardly smiling, but inwardly already tired of our exchange. Questioning his authority and explanations, I would learn over the next several months, was guaranteed to lead to disengagement from conversation at best and at worst, an invitation for me to leave the cemetery.

Don Seeman, following Alfred Schutz, notes that the social scientist is merely someone who is especially well trained at and devoted to analyzing and interpreting materials that all humans analyze and interpret every day.⁵ My strength in analyzing and interpreting comes after much thought and reflection as well as follow up discussions. I am relatively weak at instant summations and understanding of the interior life and experience of others. What intuition I have for predicting how my words will affect other people seems to work well with Moroccan women over the age of 60, and very poorly with men, especially, under that age. I thought, perhaps, that mentioning a concern for my ritual purity where such a concern does not exist for me, and then a show of being affronted when I tried to explain the matter was possibly a pretext for asking for some payment. I had not paid for my visits to this cemetery previously, but many keepers do appreciate and/or demand some gratuity, so I offered to pay the guardian. After showing up looking so disgusting, offering a bribe to gain access to the cemetery was another major mistake on my part.

The guardian looked at the 50 dirham note that I held out to him through the bars with contempt. He explained through clenched teeth that I could give him

⁵ Seeman, Don. 2009. *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*. New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press.

Schutz, Alfred. 1967. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Chicago. Northwestern University Press.

50 dirhams, 50 euros or 50 gold bricks and I would still not be allowed in the cemetery. At last, he told me to go away or he would call the police. Seeing my main possibility for research in the city that I had just moved to disappear in front of my eyes, I apologized for offending him, and asked if there was a time that I could come back. He explained that there are intermediate days of the festival (and he used the Hebrew *chol ha'moed*) during which I would be allowed to come back. I gained the distinct impression that he was very happy to explain things to me if only I would listen and not question him. It was my understanding that visiting cemeteries on these days was frowned upon, but this time I remained silent as he continued to explain that I could come back in two days, but not the third day because there would be a special event at the cemetery for just the Jewish community of Rabat, of which I was obviously not a part. I thanked him for his help and for teaching me, apologized once again for insulting him with money, and then said I would be back after the holiday.

Lessons from an Unpleasant First Visit:

The issues I faced in my first interview outside the Jewish cemetery of Rabat would surface again and again in my next year of research. Most glaring to me is the struggle that I face with Muslim keepers of Jewish cemeteries in Morocco about who is an insider and who is an outsider. They, of course, live in the cemetery and are charged with guarding it, and accordingly they are the literal insiders. They are Moroccans, guarding a bit of Morocco. The Rabat cemetery keeper was actually born in the cemetery and he is the fourth generation for his family to be a guard in a Jewish cemetery. He has a nice home in the corner in which he and his family

sleep, eat and watch television. It seems obvious that the cemetery is his place and he is entitled to it.

On the other hand, I feel like a Jewish cemetery should be for me. Should not I be at least the honored guest and not reduced to begging for access at the gate or, as in the case of other cemeteries, asked to pay exorbitant “gifts”? The Moroccan Jews that visit the Rabat cemetery – there is still a community in Rabat and the synagogue is two blocks from my apartment – do not speak to the cemetery keeper. They drive directly up to the gates, honk or flash their lights and the door is opened for them. They walk quickly to one of the couple hundred graves, the farthest one of which is no more than 100 meters from the gate. They light their candles and say their prayers and then leave without a word to anyone. The cemetery keeper watches them and when they are ready to go, he meets them at the gate, opens it for them and locks it behind them. They are the owners of this place and he serves them. So then, they are also the true insiders.

I am not an insider. And why would I be? I have no family buried here – but I do have a fictive aunt to be discussed below. I am not very Moroccan at all, despite the praises of taxi drivers when they turn on the light for me to pay and see that they have been talking to a foreigner for the last twenty minutes and did not notice that I was not Moroccan. Still, I am the one who has to have his entry into the cemeteries approved. I am the one who has to pay admission on the spot and not as part of a congregational support plan. And that ever-present knowledge that I am not an insider, when I feel like I should be, will always be part of my experience and research, even when I do not note it explicitly.

Another major factor in all my interviews and cemetery visits is the ongoing creation of authority. For every new visitor, and continually for the Jewish community that pays him, the cemetery keeper has to perform authority. His suitability to guard the graveyard and the sufficiency of his knowledge to be able to help with care for the plots of dead relatives are always in question among visitors. The cemetery keeper explained his thinking to me this way: Why is the care for this cemetery entrusted to a non-Jew? Because a well-known Muslim man has the community standing and social identity sufficient to discourage other Muslim men and boys from breaking into and defacing the cemetery. Why should this particular Muslim man be paid when there are lots of others who could do the job? Because this particular keeper knows the people buried here, he knows where their relatives are living and he knows enough about Judaism for the proper care of the graves.

Possessing the proper knowledge of Judaism necessary for the proper care of Jewish graves seems to be a malleable distinction though. Someone with less self-doubt than I have would be able to confidently point out that ritual purity for holiday celebration is not a concern in Rabbinic Judaism. After I shared my understanding of Jewish ritual cleanliness issues and the cemetery keeper argued with me, I left that day wondering if he was right and I was wrong. It took at least four emails from rabbis who unanimously concurred that this was indeed strange behavior before I felt even the smallest bit of confidence in my Jewish ritual knowledge.

Many of the tourists who visit Jewish cemeteries in other towns have no way of knowing what aspects of the performance they witness from the guards are

based in Judaism, what comes from Islam, and what is a Serres-ian parasitic noise or interference. The guards are often very gifted bricoleurs, cobbling together actual Jewish knowledge, folk tales, stories that tourists seem to have enjoyed from previous performances and bits of local Islamic practices, and producing simulacra that is usually good enough to convince a busload of Israeli tourists.

I have observed on more than one occasion Israeli tourists walk away from the Fes cemetery talking about *Maroko ha-autenti* (authentic Morocco) even after hearing the story of the famous Jewish martyr Sol Hatchuel⁶ from the Muslim perspective and not knowing the difference. This represents a successful performance for the cemetery keeper as a knowledgeable expert in Moroccan Judaism. He told the tourists a story that they enjoyed and they trusted that what he told them was true, or at least true enough. They followed his instructions on how to light candles and what words to say, because they believed that his instructions were in keeping with traditional Moroccan Judaism. Because of this and his admittedly fine work in keeping up the grounds and preventing vandals from defacing the graves, he was perceived as wonderful at his job. The corresponding financial tips are usually very good. The ability to please tourists certainly trumps the option to simply say, “I don’t know,” which is disappointing to tourists and ethnographers and terrifying to guards/guides. An “I don’t know” undermines the crucial, daily construction and reinforcement of the identity of Moroccan Muslim keepers of Jewish cemeteries as authoritative instructors and practitioners of Jewish acts.

⁶ Sol Hatchuel, and the various Muslim, Jewish and Christian explanations of her life and martyrdom are a focus of Chapter Six.

The Stakes

Theodore Herzl famously posited that the Jewish cemeteries of Europe were dangerous for Zionism, because Jews were loath to leave the resting places of their relatives uncared for.⁷ The concern about maintaining proximity to the final resting place of Jewish relatives is not unique to Europe, however, and Moroccan Jews, both descendants of Sephardim and the more ancient community, seek to fulfill the mitzvah of visiting and caring for the graves of their loved ones yearly.⁸ By installing trusted Muslim women and men to care for the graves left behind by the Moroccan Jewish émigrés, at least some of that concern is mitigated. The graves in most instances still receive a good standard of care.

Additionally, the guides and guards performances increasingly fulfill Jewish tourists' and pilgrims' needs to find and feel roots and a sense of belonging. Like many non-Ashkenazi immigrants to the State of Israel, most Moroccan Jewish immigrants found themselves shunted off to development towns outside the main cities of the new state.⁹ Even in France, Canada and the United States, the newly arrived Moroccan Jews have had difficulty fitting in with their European-descended co-religionists. (Re)visiting Morocco offers a chance for many Moroccan Jews and their descendants to explore another homeland. As noted in

⁷ Seeman, Don. 2009. *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p19.

⁸ Stillman, Norman. 2011. *Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity*. New York: Routledge.

⁹ Bilu, Yoram and Eyal Ben-Ari. 1987. "Saints' Sanctuaries in Israeli Development Towns: On a Mechanism of Urban Transformation". *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 16 (2). The Institute, Inc.: 243–72.

the Introduction, this exploration of one's heritage is often fraught because of unrealized expectations and surprising power dynamics. The Muslim guards and guides at Jewish places frequently offer the returnees their best chance at connecting with their former home.

The desire to have relatives' graves cared for are central to the Jews who endow and chiefly benefit from the services of the Muslim cemetery keepers. But what is at stake for the Muslim keepers of the cemeteries? Certainly they also care a great deal about the preservation of Jewish graves. The most obvious reason for this was raised above: a well-tended cemetery points to a skilled and dutiful guard who is worth his wages. A guard who is able to pronounce some Hebrew language greetings and prayers is particularly important and liable to be rewarded. It is in this type of grave tending and guarding where the interests of the clients and the service providers are most closely aligned.

At a similar purpose to the professional concern for maintaining a well-preserved graveyard as a sort of résumé, but from the opposite end of the human spectrum, a few cemetery keepers showed me graves that they take care of for free, or reduced cost. Instead of self-interest, the motivation in this instance is a doing a *hesed shel emet*/true act of kindness for the deceased that cannot be repaid. Certainly a uniformly cared for cemetery does not hurt their prestige. Even one overgrown gravesite can mar the appearance of a cemetery and put the professionalism of a cemetery keeper in doubt. But in the cases of several of the older cemetery keepers, they knew their charges, and in a few cases, they were friends with the people whose graves they now guard. One cemetery keeper had

tears in his eyes while reminiscing about his friend, whose grave we stood next to, with whom he would chase girls and drink locally produced spirits.

Many of cemetery keepers and tour guides, at points in their lives, have felt exclusion or marginalization from their larger communities, either as a result of or as a driving force behind their embrace of the Jewish community. Some cemetery guards and guides to Jewish places, such as Moha, (who will be discussed in Chapter Five) make sense of their lives by focusing on their relationships with the Jewish community. Accordingly, Muslim cemetery keepers and guides occasionally take time to clean a grave or even more dramatically commission a portrait of a Jewish friend and decorate his house with artifacts of that friendship. The relationship between cemetery keepers and the inhabitants of the cemetery is often quite close, and in some cases the defining relationship of the Muslim guides' and guards' lives. Marking and preserving the friendship, especially if it is a multigenerational family friendship, is immensely important for retaining a coherent sense of self for several Muslims who are professionally and personally thought of as *sahib al-yehood*/"friends to the Jews." For the people with whom I worked, this is the central and most important reason that they do what they do: so that they can negotiate the construction of their moral selves through performances of devotion to their Jewish friends and clients.

The increasing prominence of the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the rise of Salafi movement have also raised the stakes for Moroccans affiliated with Jewish places. At a time when political and religious thinking in Morocco is increasing turning against those who would be friends with Jews and assist with their ritual activities, performers and performances demonstrating *authentic* Moroccan-ness

and *traditional* Islam through fulfilling commitments and friendships with Jews are increasingly outside the norm. The cemetery keepers and guides are, through their actions, staking a powerful counterclaim to the proclamations on satellite television and YouTube of what makes an authentic Muslim.

Aside from the individual cemetery keepers and guides, the Moroccan state in general is very interested in promoting Jewish tourism. Gravesites constitute a key attraction for tourists, especially in areas where the local synagogue has been re-purposed into a family home or has simply been destroyed. The cemeteries are easy sites for the local tourism officials to point to and declare that, “We too had a Jewish community!” The discovery or “discovery” of the existence of a Jewish site increasingly prompts locals to draft flurries of requests to various Moroccan governmental structures and foreign embassies to send money to remodel, rehabilitate and excavate Jewish cemeteries so that villages can merit stops from tourists charging from one heritage site to another.

Upon my visit to one rural cemetery in Agdz, a young man from Rabat who was visiting his family in the area correctly guessed that I was American and made sure to email me his project proposal to restore the cemetery. He already had emailed the U.S. embassy a request to fund the project. Wanting to make sure that he covered all his bases, he sent me a rather urgently worded email that requested that I talk to my ambassador on his behalf. I told him that I had no diplomatic standing, but I would do my best to help him. When I emailed the embassy to ask what sort of projects they might know about with Jewish cemeteries, I was happy to find out that they were already considering funding his restoration project. Not only will the cemetery probably be restored, but also it will also carry the weight of

having been restored by the American Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Projects supported, and even better, *funded* by embassies are big news in the rural areas, especially if they can bring in some tourist money. Jewish cemeteries have held the key to economic revitalization for villages and towns and are accordingly often hugely important to their Muslim neighbors.

Delimiting the Ethnographic Task

The confluence of all these motivations in the persons of the cemetery keepers and guides is one of the major foci of this ethnography. How do the guards themselves conceive of their responsibilities and how does that shape how they view themselves? Why are some of them still in the same place doing the same work after four generations, despite having different interests? The keeper of the Rabat cemetery was on the national bicycling team for Morocco. His son has been to the Olympics for the sport. They both have jobs, or at least periodically take work outside of the cemetery. But they stay there, and the son of the current keeper plans to take over from his father, making him the fifth generation to care for the graves. He, like his father, grew up with the Jewish community. He knows few of the people buried just outside of his home. But he regularly sees members of the exceedingly small Jewish community of Rabat come to pay their respects to their deceased. He knows them by name and sight, and the reciprocal is true as well. What does this familiarity do for him? Will the bond between the Jewish community and his family remain strong enough to keep him at the cemetery for another generation, such that his children are also born there? There are plenty of

economic, nationalistic, and personal factors that pull him into his father's trade. But to care for cemeteries is a lonely task, especially caring for cemeteries of an only slightly present minority group. Discussing the effects of each of these motivations on the cemetery keepers, as well as on the cemeteries and those who enter it will constitute this the bulk of chapters 4 - 7.

However, it is important to first give a broader historical framework for these activities and internal struggles. In the next chapter I will discuss why Jewish graves are found all over Morocco; why some Jewish communities still exist and why most have moved elsewhere; and why there are Muslim keepers who are not simply guards like those at the Jewish cemeteries in Poland, Germany, Oman, Uzbekistan and Cape Verde that I visited as necessary comparative research. After the historic and comparative pieces, I turn to confessional issues.

I am less interested in notions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As I have discussed my research with religious scholars, rabbis and imams, many have told me that the intimacy of ritual and behavior that I have observed should not be happening. Some have gone so far as to suggest that maybe I am misunderstanding what is happening. One of the real strengths of ethnography and participant observation is to be able to spend years being with the people being described. The flipside of my feelings of being insufficiently Jewish that stem from not really growing up in the community is my openness to experiences which are somewhat outside of normative Judaism. Following Talal Asad, I have understood Judaism and Islam to be discursive traditions shaped by the people who identify as Jews and Muslims who constitute the religions by the performance of words and

actions.¹⁰ On the other hand, following Samuli Schielke, I take caution that the ethnography of Islam – or indeed, of Muslims doing Jewish things – tends to focus too heavily on religion as a, “perfectionist ethical project of self-discipline,” and can overlook the various moral and immoral aims of adherents that are other-than-religious.¹¹ I began my field research before my formal training, and my wonder and fascination with the people and practices began before my suspicion of heteropraxis. In other words, I am willing to believe Muslims when they tell me that they are doing “Jewish stuff” – which are very much religious actions – merely as a job. And I am willing to believe Muslims when they tell me that their actions in Jewish places make them who they are as Muslims.

My task as a social scientist is to observe, interrogate and analyze. I have done and will continue to do all these things, but I feel as if an explanation is in order to those reading this dissertation from a confessional background. This research concerns the performance of certain aspects and rituals of Judaism by Muslims. I will not disqualify performers of Jewish acts from consideration based on their identity. Indeed, that is the whole reason why I do this research. Muslims are using Jewish sites and Jewish knowledge and rituals to negotiate their moral selves and create identities as people who can do Jewish things. The moral act of remembering Jewish friends through performances of grave-care and explaining past intimacy between Jews and Muslims does not make the people with whom I

¹⁰ Asad, Talal. 2009. "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam." *Qui Parle* 17, no. 12: 1-30.

¹¹ Schielke, Samuli. 2010. "Second thoughts about the anthropology of Islam, or how to make sense of grand schemes in everyday life." *Working Papers*, no 2: 1-16. p2.

work with less Muslim, at least not in their eyes. It does make them profoundly Moroccan, and heirs to a long history of Muslim-Jewish history in North Africa.

Chapter 2: Moroccan Muslims Locating Moroccan Jews in Time and Space

In all of my interviews, the question eventually comes up. Sometimes it is because I want to know how much Moroccan history the cemetery keeper feels comfortable discussing. Occasionally a guide brings it up himself. But the question is always the same: when did the Jews come here? Beyond a mere historical point of interest, there are claims of authority and authenticity at stake in the answer that are inextricably tied to what it means to be Moroccan.

Morocco both is and is not an Arab country. Estimates vary widely about the portion of the population that is Arab, because defining Arab-ness in Morocco is particularly contentious. Whether or not someone is Arab frequently depends on who is asking. For much of North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in all diplomatic communications, Morocco is Arab. Being associated with the larger Arab world carries considerable prestige and power. The famous 1947 Tangier Speech of Muhammad V addressed the country's inherent Arabness as a reason why the Cherifian Sultan, and not the French, was the divinely appointed ruler of Morocco.

But I have heard whispers from students and from those sitting with me on long bus rides that over eighty percent of Moroccans use Tamazight as their first language. The *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe Maroc* (IRCAM) estimates the percentage of native Tamazight speakers to be closer to thirty, though this

figure is regarded with much skepticism, even in publications of the institute.¹ The true number is probably somewhere in between the two figures above, but I would be very surprised if it were less than half of the population. That Morocco is not an Arab-majority country is a point of pride for many Tamazight speakers.

That Arabs are probably not a majority in Morocco is felt as culturally dangerous to many urban dwellers, however. On a return trip from the pilgrimage to Rabbi Abu Hatsera's grave in Gourama, I overheard a conversation between a woman with a noticeably Fessi accent and a young man from Taza. The woman was taking care of her elderly mother who kept grabbing my leg and trying to kiss my cheek. The woman from Fes asked the man from Taza if he were *Shula* (Amazigh). When he replied in the negative, she exclaimed *mezianne* (good).

A quick look around our compartment revealed two East Asian women and me in addition to her mother and the man from Taza. She then proceeded for the next forty-five minute or so to talk about how her mother was old and going senile. She kept mentioning how she even touched the *gauri* (a not very nice term for a foreigner).² The woman mourned that her mother was among the last of the "pure Fessis" to speak "pure Arabic" and that all the Arabic of Morocco was being mixed with Tamazight.

The man from Taza listened until the woman had talked herself out. Then he replied that although he was not Amazigh himself, he, as well as everyone else, knew that Morocco was a majority Amazigh country, and that if she did not like it,

¹ Boukous, Ahmed. 2011. *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges and Strategies*. Rabat: Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe. 28-29.

² *Gauri*, used across North Africa and the Balkans, is derived from the old Ottoman Turkish term for "infidel."

she should move to Saudi Arabia. He went on to point out that the Saudis would find her mother's "pure Arabic" very puzzling, indeed. Finally, before standing up and leaving our compartment, he said that before the Arabs came "with their noses in the air," the Amazigh kingdoms lived with the Jewish kingdoms in peace. He told her that the "pure Arabic" of Fes is a mixture of Tamazight, Judeo-Arabic, the language of the Idrisids, and the language of the Muslims, Jews, and Jewish converts to Islam who fled to Fes from Spain at the conclusion of the Reconquista. The woman was flabbergasted and started crying. When her stop came, she collected her mother and apologized to me in French for her mother's roaming hands. For fun, I replied in Tamazight, "*Nk Amazigh. Orseng Fransawi*/I am Amazigh. I don't know French." She looked confused for a moment, and then said, "I'm sorry, I don't understand English," in English and walked away. Apparently she did not recognize the majority language of her country.

This conversation is but one of many in which the Arabness of Morocco is called into question by Amazigh history and culture, which has often been linked in conversations to the pre-Arab presence of Jews in Morocco. Using Jewish history to offend the sensibilities of Arab urban dwellers seems to be a favorite past time for many of the Amazigh guides who I have hired or worked with so far. The presence of Jews in ancient Morocco works as a safe, non-Amazigh, cypher for pro-Amazigh-independence thought. The claim that Imazighen always maintained friendly relationships with Jews is historically fraught, but it serves as an important counter-narrative to both the military and cultural attempts to subdue and Arabize the Moroccan periphery. The logic of the claim is that since Imazighen

left the Jews in peace, and free to do their rituals and speak their language, but always available for trade, why will the Arabs not do the same for Imazighen?

For the purpose of this ethnography, I am less interested in historical truths about Amazigh/Jewish/Arab interaction than I am in how and why the people with whom I interact perform narratives of Jewish history. To that end, careful examination of the historical record is useful for showing how the presence of Jews in Morocco has nearly always been used by one group against another.

My contention is that Muslim Moroccans use Jewish history not only for interethnic one-upsmanship, but as a way to understand the self. As Nancy argues, the existence of the intimate other is necessary for the understanding and existence of the self.³ For there to be a *me*, there needs to be a *you*. And in order for a *them* to exist, there needs to be an *us*. For much of Moroccan history, Jews have served as a *you* and part of *us* for the Muslim population, and only rarely as a *them* in the triangle of interethnic relations with Jews, Imazighen and Arabs, and then later in even more complicated interactions during the colonial period.

Pre-Islamic Morocco

The oldest pieces of epigraphic evidence for Jews in Morocco are two carvings found near the Roman ruins of Volubilis. Relatively small fragments of a carving in Greek from a synagogue in the second century CE, and a Hebrew inscription from the third century CE anchor legends of a Jewish presence much

³ Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Anne O'Bryne and Robert Richardson, Trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

earlier. Aside from these works, scholars have collected oral history of Jewish Morocco that predates the Common Era.

John Davidson was one of the more notable of many nineteenth century amateur historians who traveled to Morocco and found folk tales of historic Jewish kingdoms.⁴ He set out to make geographic notes on the route from Tangier to Timbuktu in the 1830s. Along



Figure 2 Hebrew inscription near Volubilis

part of his journey, he met a rabbi from central Morocco, who told Davidson about the Jews of the region. There were between three and four thousand Jews present in his town, and they were “absolutely free.” They worked in handicrafts and business and had quarries, mines, orchards and vineyards. Most importantly, the rabbi assured Davidson that the Jews in the area controlled the government of their town and had had their own kingdom since the time of King Solomon.⁵ To substantiate this claim, the rabbi boasted that his community had the seal of the biblical figure Joab, who apparently visited the area to collect taxes during the time of Solomon. The rabbi also mentioned two tombstones in Anti-Atlas Ifrane, which pre-date the Common Era and were said to belong to members of the tribe of Ephraim who settled there before the destruction of the *First Temple*.⁶ Even

⁴ This section is greatly expanded from a brief synopsis of Moroccan history in Driver, Cory. 2010. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis., 12-22.

⁵ Davidson, John. 1839. *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*. London: Cox and Sons. 192-3.

⁶ See also Monteil, Vincent. 1948. *Hesperis*, xxxv, 151-62.

though these physical proofs were never produced, the seriousness with which Davidson took this story can be deduced from his further writings on reaching the High Atlas Mountains. He pointed out that he came to hundreds of Jewish towns, including Taourit, Ait Attab, Tisgin, Tidilli and Amizmiz - where he found more Jews who lived among Imazighen than in Arab cities.⁷

Jews did flock to Moroccan cities in large numbers during the late 5th and early 6th centuries CE as a result of Vandal and Visigoth conquests of the Roman province of Hispania. Many Jews fled south to escape aggressive Christianizing not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but also across North Africa.⁸ By the time of Moulay Idris I's consolidation of power in Morocco and founding of Fes in 789 CE, there were tens of thousands of Jews of both Amazigh and Iberian extraction who were invited to settle in the new capital.

Arab Invasion and Islamic Morocco:

We know of no Arabic language source discussing the Jewish inhabitants of North Africa before the tenth century, and that absence seems odd in light of the considerable ink spilled over the pre-Islamic Jewish presence in southern and central Arabia as well as the issue of the Khazar kingdom. However, from the eleventh century on, a profusion of writers weighed in on the issue of Jewish

And, Hirschberg, Haim Zeev. 1957. *Inside Maghreb: The Jews of North Africa*.

Jerusalem: Youth and Hehaluz Department of the Jewish Agency. (Hebrew). p168-70.

⁷ Hirshberg, Haim Zeev. 1963. *The Problem of Judaized Berbers* "The Journal of African History" Vol 4, No 3. 334.

⁸ Constable, Olivia Remie [ed.]. 1997. *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 21.

Gerber, Jane S. 1992. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. New York: The Free Press.

kingdoms in North Africa.⁹ Al-Idrisi, who wrote in the twelfth century after the consolidation of the Almohads, made notes on two Jewish communities that had apparently resided in North Africa for centuries before they were expelled. First, Al-Idrisi described the community in Lamlam, which was situated close to modern Ghana:

South of Barisa is the country of Lamlam; and [the distance] between them is approximately ten days. The people of Barisa, Silla, Takrur and Ghana would raid the country of Lamlam, capture its inhabitants, lead them to their country and sell them to traders who came to them. These traders would take them away to the other regions. In the whole country of Lamlam, there are only two towns; small as villages. The name of one is Mallal, and the name of the other is Daw; [the distance] between these two small towns is four days. Their inhabitants – as the people of that district point out – are Jews, among whom there is much ignorance and unbelief. All the people of the country of Lamlam, when reaching maturity, burn tattoo marks on their faces and temples, and these serve as signs to them. Their country and places of residence are on a wadi which extends as far as the Nile. Nothing is known of settlements south of the country of Lamlam.¹⁰

Idrisi also points out that another country in what is now Mauritania was also described in much the same way:

However, as regards the country of Qamnuriya which we have mentioned, there were in it well-known towns and famous cities of negroes. But the Banu Zaghawa and Banu Lamtuna of the desert, who live on both sides of that country made invasions into it, that is to say, into the country of Qamnuriya, until they had destroyed most of its inhabitants, exterminated them and dispersed their ranks throughout the country. As traders report, the people of Qamnuriya allege that they are Jews. Their beliefs are confused; they have no settled, agreed beliefs. They have no king and no kingship over them. They are persecuted by all the communities neighboring upon them and countries adjacent to them. In bygone days, the people of

⁹ Hirshberg. 1963. p 313-14.

¹⁰ Dozy, R. and M. J. de Goeje, 1866. *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne par Edrisi*. Brill. p 4 (as quoted in Hirshberg).

But see also Ibn Khaldun 1284. "Al Muqaddima," *Kitab al'Ibar* (Bulaq) also quoted in Hirshberg, in which he does not name the community as Jewish.

Qamnuriya had two inhabited towns; the name of the one was Qamnuri and the name of the other Nighira. These towns contained tribesmen of the Qamnuriya and many others. They had headmen and elders, who directed their affairs and judged them in criminal matters and litigations.

These were in time destroyed, and disputes and raids from all sides increased, until they were subjugated in their country, and fled from it. They sought refuge in the mountains and dispersed in the desert, accepting the patronage of their neighbors – scattered in the desert and near the coast. They subsist on milk and fish and are wretched because of the difficulty of making a living and the distressful conditions. Up till now, they roam those countries with the agreement of their neighbors and spend their days in peace.

Between the country of Qamnuriya, Silla and Takrur there are roads there are roads the marks of which are not known, and the users of the paths are few.¹¹

From where do these stories emanate? Al-Bakri, who wrote about the same cities over a century before Idrisi, did not make any note about Jewish residents. Ibn Khaldun, writing over two centuries after Idrisi, used Idrisi as a reference, but left out any mention of the Jewish residents.¹² Where, then do the notions of the places described above by Idrisi having Jewish residents come from? It seems that Idrisi was writing during a period which saw many Jewish merchants moving out of Morocco, especially southern Morocco, and taking their families to live farther south or east among darker-skinned Saharan Africans who were seen as less threatening than Berbers or Arabs who were participating in the Almoravid and then Almohad movements.¹³ Leo Africanus noted that as many Jewish travelers

¹¹ Dozy and de Goeje, 1866. p 29-30, as quoted in Hirshberg.

¹² Hirshberg. 1963. p 315.

¹³ al-Barceloni, Jehuda. *Sepher* 1903. *Ha-Ittim* [Hebrew], p46.

Barges, J. J. L.. 1853. "Memoire sur les relations commerciales de Tlemcen avec le Soudan", *Revue de l'Orient de l'Algerie et des Colonies*, June, 5-7.

Terrasse, Henri. 1949. *Histoire du Maroc*, I. Casablanca: Editions Atlantides 1949-1950, 212.

Peers, H. 1937. "Rélations entre le Tafilalet et le Soudan à travers le Sahara, du XIIe au XIVe siecle", in Gautier, E. F., *Mélange de géographie et d'orientalisme offerts à E.F. Gauthier*. Paris.409-15.

made the trip from southern Morocco, and especially from the Ziz, Dara and Sus valleys in the shadow of the Atlas Mountains to Sudan, they were taxed by certain armed encampments on their way.¹⁴

Hirshberg hypothesizes that it could be through these Jewish families who escaped persecution in and around Morocco and sought places of refuge in the desert and in mountains that certain customs spread to communities already living in the areas. These communities, possibly known as Lamlam and Qamnuriya, would then be persecuted for their lack of adherence to strict Almoravid or Almohad versions of Islam due to their practices of some Jewish rituals.¹⁵

Indeed, the notion that Jewish belief and practices or even Judaism itself might be appropriated by non-Jewish North Africans finds support in several places. One example is Ibn Khaldun's story of Kahina:

It is also possible that some of these Berbers adhered to the Jewish religion, which they had adopted from the Children of Israel at the time of the expansion of their kingdom to the vicinity of Syria and their rule over it. This may have been the case with the Jarawa, the people of the Aures Mountains, the tribe of the Kahina, who was killed by the Arabs at the beginning of the conquest. This may have also been the case with the Nafusa, of the Berbers of Africa, and with the Fandalawa, the Madyuna, the Bahlula, the Ghayata and the Banu Fazaz, until Idris the Great, who shone in the Maghrib, of the Banu Hasan Ibn Hasan wiped out the remnants of religions and communities that were in his region.¹⁶

Alternatively known as Dahya or Kahina, the Queen of the Aures Mountains became a powerful leader in North Africa and was able to repulse the Muslim

¹⁴ Hirshberg, 1963. 329.

¹⁵ Hirshberg. 1963. 321-322.

¹⁶ Ibn Khaldun, 1852. *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, Baron de Shane trans. Algiers. p 208-9. As quoted in Zafarni, Haim. 2002. *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco*. Hoboken: Ktav. Ibn Khaldun's statement that the Berber kingdom extended to Syria comes from his belief that Berbers are descendants of Canaan.

armies coming across North Africa for a time.¹⁷ Ibn Khaldun further points out that Kahina had two or three natural sons according to various legends, and she also suckled a prisoner of war to grant him status as another son.¹⁸ Her territory extended from Tripolitania to the Atlantic and was only conquered after 27 years. Several legends tell of her subjects and even her own natural sons joining the enemy because of how ruthless she was.¹⁹ There were no mentions in Ibn Khaldun's recounting of what rituals or practices Kahina may have done, or whether she attended synagogue, celebrated holidays or kept the Sabbath. That she may have been Jewish is the first thing Ibn Khaldun noted about her, and only afterward is her resistance against the Muslim wave rolling across North Africa discussed.

Legends of a North African Jewish Kingdom

What arguably provides the best evidence of the perception among Moroccan Muslims of the strength of numbers and longevity of the Jewish community in Morocco and North Africa are tales of the fabulously rich, powerful and numerous residents of a Jewish kingdom in the sands. The geographical location of such a kingdom was always to be found just beyond the borders of what was known. During my early years in Morocco, when I began amassing folktales of Jews from the Moroccan Muslims who would tell me these stories as part of daily

¹⁷ Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce. 2005. "Jews and Berbers." *The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies*. Accessed February 18, 2015. <http://www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter/articles/JewsandBerbers.pdf>.

¹⁸ See notes on milk-kinship in Chapter 5

¹⁹ Or in other versions, Kahina told them to convert to save their lives.

conversations, they would often mention that long ago there had been a Jewish kingdom not far south of modern Morocco. Different stories exist to explain why it had not been found. Some said that the Jews converted to Islam but retained legendary poetic skills, referring to the residents of Mauritania to the south, who are quite envied for their talents with verse. Others said that they, like Moroccan Jews in the twentieth century, sailed to the Holy Land or elsewhere in the Levant. For my purpose, noting that the idea existed and continues to exist that a large Jewish kingdom was/is located somewhere in North Africa, is enough to warrant exploration of early versions and possible sources of this legend.

A festival that I have observed in Fes sheds light on an alternative version of the history of Jewish kingship in Morocco. The festival celebrates the climax of a Moroccan retelling of a popular Arab folktale about a Jewish king who gains control over Muslim subjects and then demands a virgin to be provided to him periodically.²⁰ According to *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, the first version of this story had two Arab tribes in the region of Medina subject to a Jewish king who was, in turn, a viceroy for the Persians in the early seventh century. This Jewish king was named Fityuan, and demanded the right of *primae noctis* among his Arab subjects. He was overthrown and killed by Malik bin al-Adjlan to save his sister from the rapacious king. In much the same way, the folktale I heard in Fes centered on Ibn Mash'al, who was a rich Jew from Taza.²¹ He came to power by tricking local Muslim leaders and levied incredibly high taxes and demanded many virgins for

²⁰ Arnold, Sir Thomas et al. 1987. *E.J Brill's First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913-1936*, Vol 2. New York: Brill. 84.

²¹ Cf. *Cenival*, Pierre de. 1925. "La legende du juif Ibn Mech'al et la fete du sultan des tolba a Fes," *Hesperis* 5: 137-218.

his harem. He was overthrown and killed by Al-Rashid, who started the Alawite Dynasty in Morocco in 1666, which is still in power today. On the day of the festival, which is called *Eid al-Tulab* (the feast of students), children receive pens and paper for the school year so that they can study well in order to not be taken advantage of, presumably, by Jews.

A more positive, and certainly more famous folktale, is that which was sparked by David Reubeni's visit to Europe. Reubeni is sufficiently well known that I will not write much about him other than to say he appeared to the Pope and several monarchs around Europe and promised that with financial support from European Christians, he would bring the armies of his brother Joseph, who was king of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, to war against Muslim powers which threatened Christian interests.²² Pope Clement VIII wrote a letter of recommendation for him to several monarchs.²³ It was during one of his interviews with European monarchs, from whom he hoped to collect gold and weapons, that he received a letter from a king in Morocco. The king pointed out that in his country Jews lived on the great mountain and they were poor, but strong. And some of these Jews were apparently members of a marauding kingdom of considerable might that the king wrote to Reubeni about:

Behold, I have heard of thee that thou hast come to the King of Portugal from the tribes. Hast thou knowledge of the people that have gone out into the desert which is between me and the black ones? For they have taken captive all the Arabs that dwell in the desert, them and their wives and their cattle and their children and everything that is theirs. And not one of them hath returned of those that they took, and we know not whether they have killed them or

²² For a much fuller treatment, see: Aescoly, Aaron Zeev. 1993. *The Story of David Hareuveni*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute. [Hebrew]

²³ Hirshberg. 1963. 330.

what they have done to them... And there came before me one of them, a member of the priestly class, whose heart is like a lion's – he is not one of the Jews under the Ismaelite rule... And a fugitive from among them who fled unto me hath told me this. And I sent Jews that they might go and see, and they have not returned. And we are amazed at that people, and I have written to thee all this.²⁴

The letter was in essence a plea for Reubeni to intervene with a strong Jewish tribe on behalf of the king, because Reubeni represented several strong Jewish tribes himself. Reubeni points out that his influence lies in the east, and therefore he had little influence with the Jews who were the source of the king's problem.

The story of several of the lost ten tribes appearing did not stop with Reubeni, but rather proliferated on account of him. At the time that Reubeni was still looking for economic backing in Portugal, Yahuda ben Zamero wrote a letter from the Portuguese palace to his mother and brothers in Morocco, saying:

A caravan recently arrived in this town from Skura had transmitted a report from Marrakesh of the arrival there of two horsemen – messengers of Muhammad ben Ahmad, the Sherif's caid in the Saharan region of Ghurara, to the Sherif – who, having lost their way on their journey across the desert, had come upon a large tribe of proud, warlike and fabulously wealthy Jews. These Jews had no contact with the Muslim world. Their sultan, who lived in a silk tent marked with a red flag, was told by the messengers of the downtrodden condition of the Jews in Arab lands, with the tribesmen present bursting into tears at this sad story. The messengers spent the night in the Jewish camp. The next day, their hosts would not let them depart until they had given them an example of their military prowess by encircling and capturing a town. They then dismissed them, providing them with a supply of two loaves of bread, which miraculously proved more than sufficient to sustain them all the way to Marrakesh. They also gave them a message to the Sherif, which the latter concealed after having it translated from Hebrew into Arabic by Ben-Qabisa, a learned Jew of his city.

²⁴ Neubauer, Ad. 1895. "Diary of David Reubeni" in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, Vol 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 133.

The desert Jews told their guests, among other things, that their water supply came from a hundred wells that moved and stopped with them on their wanderings.²⁵

Zamero wrote to his family in Morocco to let them know that messages had come with, in this case, third-hand stories of a powerful Jewish tribe out in the desert which did not have much contact with the outside world, and were quite sad to hear about the conditions of their coreligionists who were not as militarily successful as they were. From there, the legend spread back into North Africa and continues to this day.

Frequently during my interviews, Moroccans swear earnestly that there is a Jewish kingdom somewhere in the desert. During the 2006 Israel/Lebanon war, I was accused of “supporting the enemy” by several young men, most of whom I did not know well.²⁶ After one Friday sermon at the mosque at the end of my street, a crowd of men descended on my apartment to demonstrate their anger against the war. With a youthful stupidity that shocks me as I recall the story almost ten years later, I descended the stairs and opened the door to the thirty or so men chanting “*moot, moot l’isra’el*/death, death to Israel.”

I asked them why they came to my house. I was, after all, just a poor volunteer who had lived in the community for just under a year at that point. I knew a few of these men by name and had certainly greeted all of them in the last

²⁵ Colin, Georges, 1945. *Melanges d’etudes luso-marocaines, dedies a la memoire de David Lopes et Pierre de Cenival* (Lisbon). 62-6.

For more on the Ben Zamero family, as well as a discussion of trade in light of the Reconquista, please see: Cornell, Vincent. 1990. “Socioeconomic Dimensions of Reconquista and Jihad in Morocco: Portuguese Dukkala and the Sa‘did Sus, 1450-1557.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 22:379-418.

²⁶ Cf. Rosen, Lawrence. 1968. “A Moroccan Jewish Community during the Middle East Crisis.” *The American Scholar*. 37(3): 435-51.

week. I explained that they knew me and had seen me walking around to various artisans' houses and the local office of the minister of handicrafts and social economy. I was American, not Israeli, and I had never even touched a gun. I explained that "*l'hrab mashi souqi*/war is not my business." Several people spoke at once, but the man who was closest to me physically told me that they were protesting me fighting for the Zionists. I had a laugh, and again with much more youthful stupidity than sense, I decided to play along and asked how they had noticed me – hoping to point out how ridiculous the charge against me was. I had seen humor defuse a number of situations among these same men, and decided to put my observations into practice.

I told them that I had always been careful to only sneak out to the airport that I created by myself in the desert at night. I flew my warplane quietly until I was over the Mediterranean, and was back before sunrise each day. My plan to show the ludicrousness of the accusation backfired, as the police and gendarmes arrived to drive the crowd away from my home, but not before the rumor spread through the crowd that there was a Jewish military airport just outside of town. I was called by some of the older men of the local mosque two days later to explain how and why I had rendezvoused with the Jewish army that they were certain lived out in the Sahara. I explained that I was not serious and that of course I was a non-combatant and not involved in a war 4000 kilometers away. I was just trying to joke with the men who were shouting outside my door. They accepted this, with even a few smiles. They warned me that I was not as funny as I thought I was, and that in any case, I should not to try to seek out the Jewish army in the desert.

Exiles

Aside from legendary desert camps, Moroccan cities and the countryside were home to many Jews, and the number would only increase. The watershed year of 1492 changed the shape of the Moroccan Jewish community suddenly and forever. At the end of centuries of attempts at Christian *Reconquista* of Spain, *Los Reyes Católicos*, Ferdinand and Isabella, exiled all Jews from their lands. Sephardim fled across Europe, to the Ottoman Empire and across the Strait of Gibraltar to Morocco.

The path to and through Morocco during times of persecution was well-worn by the time of this expulsion. Maimonides, over three centuries earlier, moved to Fes with his family to escape Almohad persecution in the Iberian Peninsula. Jews, and Muslims, had long fled to the Maghreb as a place of safety. Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century CE fled from Andalusia to Tunisia and then to Fes, before returning to the Nasrid court of Granada and then returning to North Africa to escape courtly intrigue. In the eighth century CE, Abd al-Rahman I, the last surviving Umayyad prince, fled to Morocco, and from there to the Iberia Peninsula to escape the Abbasids. The close of the fifteenth century brought mostly Jewish exiles to Morocco, however, as Muslims would be allowed openly practice Islam until 1497 in Portugal, 1502 in Castile and 1526 in Aragon.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, like Maimonides, so many of the *megorashim*/exiles moved to Fes that new quarters had to be built and the walls were expanded to encompass the vastly enlarged city.²⁷ Population growth in

²⁷ Gerber, Jane. 1980. *Jewish Society in Fez 1450-1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life*. Leiden: Brill.

Morocco during the time was stagnant, and the Sephardim helped increase the size of the Wattasid capital, as well as adding an influx of skilled craftspeople and experienced merchants to Morocco during a period of decline. Further east, Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II issued a formal invitation to exiled Spanish Jews and dispatched Ottoman naval vessels to bring them to Salonika. The Sultan is said to have remarked “You call Ferdinand a wise king who makes his land poor and ours rich?”²⁸

The reception of Spanish Jews was not always warm, however. Tensions ran high in the communities along the Mediterranean coast as Jewish émigrés from Spain were targeted for harassment, theft and worse by the population when they landed. The situation inland was not always better, and Jews in Fes and elsewhere were frequently the targets of abuse.²⁹

Still, the Sephardim had a powerful impact on Jewish life in Morocco. They broadened communication with the rest of the Jewish world, especially as Sephardim reestablished connections with their former neighbors, now flung across the Mediterranean world. The “Castilian rite” gained ascendancy in Morocco, as it did across the lands where the Spanish exiles landed due, in large part, to the perception that the Spanish Jews represented the fruit of a Golden Age of scholarship.³⁰ The first, but short-lived, Hebrew language printing press in Africa was established in Fes by the Iberian exiles. Unsurprisingly, Judeo-Amazigh

²⁸ Gerber, Jane. 1992. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. New York: The Free Press.

²⁹ Meyers, Allan R. 1996. “Patronage and Protection: The Status of Jews in Precolonial Morocco.” Shlomo Deshen and Walter Zenner. eds. *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*. New York: New York University Press.

³⁰ Gerber. 1992. But see also, Schorsch, Ismar. 1989. “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy.” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*. 34: 47–66.

traditions, rites and language fell out of favor in the face of exiles bringing with them the Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish literary treasures of their former home.³¹ Still, some traditions of the Moroccan Jewish community not only withstood the coming of the exiles, but became popular with the new arrivals.

Saint Veneration

For most scholars involved with contemporary Jewish studies, the mention of Morocco will evoke images of saint veneration. Certainly there is a long history of scholarship on the issue, but two recent works stand out.³² First, Issachar Ben-Ami, in his pioneering work, interviewed Moroccan-Israelis about the saints they continued to venerate, and those whose tombs they made pilgrimage to before emigrating from Morocco.³³ Second, Yoram Bilu studied the Moroccan saints who manifested themselves to their Israeli devotees in dreams and visions in the urban periphery.³⁴ These studies were both conducted in Israel among sometimes very recently nationalized Moroccan-Israelis, albeit with an eye back toward Morocco.

Moroccan Jews who demonstrated control over nature, and especially over illnesses had the potential to become recognized as saints, though usually only after their death. Each year, on the anniversary of a saint's death, a *hillulah*

³¹ Stillman, Norman. 1973. "The Sefrou Remnant." *Jewish Social Studies*. 35.3 (1973): 255-63.

³² For two earlier works, see: Hirschberg, Haim Zeev. Z. 1969. "The Oriental Jewish Communities," in *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, vol. I, A. J. Arberry, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 175-176. And Bar-Asher, S. 1981. "The Jews in North Africa and Egypt," in *History of the Jews in the Islamic Countries*, vol. I, S. Ettinger, ed., Jerusalem: Shazar Center. 188.

³³ Ben-Ami, Issachar. 1998. *Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

³⁴ Bilu, Yoram. 2010. *The Saints' Impresarios: Dreamers, Healers, and Holy Men in Israel's Urban Periphery*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press.

pilgrimage to his or her (Ben-Ami identifies twenty-five women saints, though there are many more) grave is celebrated. The saint can be asked to intervene with God on behalf of a devotee all year, but the *hillulah* is the most auspicious time to ask to help. It is at this time that the spiritual potency accrued as a result of righteousness is most apparent to God and requests carried to God by that saint are most likely to be granted to the petitioner.

Not all saints were recognized only after their death, however. Many living saints were recognized due to their miraculous power of protecting the Jewish community from raids or pogroms. Most *mellahs* in Morocco had a patron saint and a story of when and how he or she had saved the Jewish quarter from destruction by turning back a hostile Muslim crowd or by curing a disease plaguing the community.

Muslims were not always the foil against which Jewish saints demonstrated their powers though. Disease and natural death were also frequently the target of Jewish power. Ben-Ami identified at least one hundred twenty-six Jewish saints who were venerated by Muslims as well as Jews, because of the saints' healing powers. I suspect the number is somewhat higher, as I have yet to visit a Moroccan Jewish saint's tomb that Muslims do not continue to venerate. In Morocco, efficacy tends to be more important than confessional lines. If saints happen to have been non-Muslims, it is little concern for most supplicants as long as the saints are able to distribute blessings. To my knowledge, the present-day manifestation of this borrowing only works one way, however. Muslims may entreat Jewish saints for help, but the small remaining Moroccan Jewish community would never think of asking a Muslim saint for blessings.

Muslim practice has physically shaped the tombs of Jewish saints, especially after the emigration of the Jewish community. Ben-Ami's interlocutors described to him the humble tombs of Jewish saints in comparison to the large, ornate tombs of their Muslim saintly counterparts. This distinction is less visible today as heritage trips and pilgrimages back to Morocco necessitate the building of larger facilities to host more pilgrims at the time of the *hillulah*. These large crowds stand in stark contrast to pre-emigration patterns of a few people journeying from surrounding villages more sporadically during the year. In addition to building temporary hotels, Moroccan caretakers also frequently enlarge the house of the saint's remains. A caretaker explained to me she wanted those pilgrims who travel a long distance to have something wonderful to see when they arrive, so that they will come back again and bring more pilgrims.³⁵ Consequently, a structure had been built around the tomb of the saint in her charge, protecting it from the elements, and a place for prayer had been built next door, complete with ark, *bimah*, embroidered velvet and stained glass.

Additionally, Ben-Ami notes that while Muslims use colored candles at the *moussems* pilgrimages to their saints, Jewish saints always receive white candles. On a recent trip to the grave of Rabbi Abu Hatsera, I noticed that both white and colored candles were being sold to largely Israeli crowd. While white candles were better sellers (they were larger and nicer-looking), there were a few small, striped, colorful, birthday-cake candles burning in front of the saint's tomb as well.

It should not be surprising that practices involved in saint veneration

³⁵ The caretaker is one of the subjects of chapter 4.

overlap among Muslim and Jewish Moroccans. Similar trends helped to establish the modern Moroccan saint in both traditions. At the same time that Sufi saints were continuing to spread *usul*-based law from the East back to Morocco, sixteenth century rabbis traveled from Safed to collect funds and spread Kabbalah.³⁶ Many of the Muslim and Jewish sojourners from the East demonstrated miraculous powers and upon their untimely deaths during their sojourns in Morocco were declared saints. Apart from their miracles, their internationalizing tendencies helped link up religious thought and practice in Morocco with centers farther east. In addition to their religious instruction, the appreciation of their miracles caused them to be regarded as the recipients of veneration. This veneration continued from the rise of the Alaouite dynasty through the colonial period until today.

Colonialism and Differentiation

As foreign powers came to exert their influences through trade and occupation in Morocco in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, life for Jews changed drastically. Jews were selected by both Moroccan and foreign governments to be representatives to the ruling powers. For example, Judah Benoliel became a representative of Morocco [and Austria!] to Gibraltar, while Victor Darmon was Spain's representative in Mazagan.³⁷

³⁶ Cornell, Vincent. 2000. *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*.

Goldberg, Harvey. 2000. "The Zohar in Southern Morocco: A Study in the Ethnography of Texts." *History of Religions* 29, no. 3: 233-58.

³⁷ Corcos, David. 2007. "Benoliel." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd Edition. Vol. 5. Farmington Hills, MI: Keter Publishing House. 371.

Corcos, David. 2007. "Darmon." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd Edition. Vol. 3. Farmington Hills, MI: Keter Publishing House. 435-36.

These representatives often had tremendous influence. Benoliel was able to intercept a Sardinian fleet bound for a siege of Tangier and produce a peace settlement. Darmon's summary execution after a hastily arranged trial was one of the causes of the 1860 Tetouan War between Morocco and Spain. Clearly these Jewish envoys, representatives and ambassadors had an important role. Consequently, they were highly valued by their respective backers. The Moroccan Sultan granted Benoliel his request to have all the synagogues of the North of Morocco rebuilt or repaired. European representatives in Morocco were almost entirely Jewish families of North African origin, and they benefited financially from overseeing trade in both directions in and out of Morocco. The colonial powers found the protection of their Jewish representatives in Morocco to be a convenient impetus to increase their power and presence at the cost of local sovereignty.

Beginning in earnest with the establishment of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* schools in Tetouan in 1862, Tangier in 1865, Essaouira in 1867 and continuing elsewhere, the French sought to create a class of native agents who would feel attached to French culture and language, but be able to aid the colonial project in conducting business of various kinds with other Moroccans. Unlike in Algeria with the 1870 Crémieux Decree, or in Tunisia with the 1923 Morinaud Law, Moroccan Jews were never offered the chance to become French citizens en masse.³⁸ They still remained under the legal authority of the Sultan, but frequently appealed to the French colonial government for relief from local pogroms and

³⁸ Saadoun, Haim. 2015. "Morinaud Law (Loi Morinaud -1923, Tunisia)." *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Stillman, Norman, ed. Brill Online.

riots. Having two alternatives for protectors proved to be an advantageous arrangement, especially during the Vichy government's promulgation of anti-Jewish laws that applied to Algerian and Tunisian French-Jewish citizens, but not to Moroccan Jews.

The lack of formal French citizenship notwithstanding, Moroccan Jews, including tens of thousands who urbanized as a result of the 1900 plague and resulting famine, turned toward the French culture as an avenue toward equality. Many recently urbanized Moroccan Jews forwent traditional training in religious studies as well as neglecting to learn Judeo-Arabic, or the local forms of Arabic and Tamazight that had allowed their ancestors to be such important intermediaries and successful traders while traveling through different regions.³⁹ Their lack of language skills with which to speak to fellow Moroccans led to a swift decline in their usefulness as translators and brokers for colonial powers. Jews who remained in the countryside, however, had little contact with Europeans, and thus little chance to learn French language or culture, and accordingly had few chances to participate in European-based commercial activities.

Along with their reduced indispensability to long distance trade, many Moroccan Jews without the religious training that they might have had in earlier generations sensed an important departure from traditional life. The pull of French language and culture, in addition to the lack of traditional education, created a

³⁹ Chetrit, Joseph. 2002. "Judeo-Arabic." *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*. Reeva S. Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, Sara Reguer, eds. New York: Columbia University Press. 133.

Hary, Benjamin. 1992. *Multiglossia in Judeo-Arabic: With and Edition, Translation and Grammatical Study of the Cairene Purim Scroll*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

dearth of religious experts in Morocco to whom the community could appeal for guidance and ritual expertise, even before the waves of emigration from Morocco for either France or Israel. It was during this period of rushed urbanization and almost instantaneous cultural change that rural Jewish cemeteries began to be handed over to the care of Muslim guards and keepers. This trend would, of course, accelerate during the period of emigration after the Second World War.

Exodus/Contraction

As the incidents of urban violence spiked around the time of the creation of the State of Israel, Jews increasingly left Morocco. Synagogues were suddenly empty and cemeteries were no longer collecting new residents.

Although immediately after World War II, the number of Jews in Morocco increased briefly, the mass emigration would start in earnest in the mid-fifties. A 1943 survey of Jews within French Morocco details the presence of only 194,554 people, which is much lower than the post-war number of around 240,000 in 1952.⁴⁰ Indeed, Midelt, the town where I did my first research, saw its Jewish community rise from 832 in 1936 to 1,700 in 1951.⁴¹ Many Jews were just starting to leave at this time to go to Israel. A major cause of this exodus was the massacre in Oujda and Djérada of 7 June, 1948 in which 47 Jews were killed.⁴² Similar violent riots were seen other cities as well. The fear felt by Moroccan Jews was

⁴⁰ Laskier, Michael. 1994. *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria*. New York: New York University Press. 67.

Laskier, Michael, 1983. *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish communities of Morocco 1862 – 1962*. Albany: SUNY Press. 321.

⁴¹ Laskier, 1994. 90.

⁴² *Ibid* 84.

surely a motivating factor for the huge rise in emigration in 1954-56 as Moroccan independence from France loomed.⁴³ Official French statistics on the number of Jews leaving Morocco for Israel put the numbers at 9,077 in 1954; 26,554 in 1955; and 12,880 for the first four months of 1956.⁴⁴ Fear of violence did what Zionist outreach efforts had not been able to do in the preceding several decades: begin moving Moroccan Jews to Israel en masse.

In the last days of hundreds of Jewish communities, remaining residents saw to it that their sacred places would not be left untended, or unguarded. The following story of how one Muslim began guarding Jewish sites will be instructive.

On the western side of Ait Gharit's hill, one of the foothills of the High Atlas, is a small Jewish cemetery, hosting several unmarked stones, as well as those of the famous Pinto and Macnin families.⁴⁵ The cemetery served as a final resting place of Jews from all around the area, but most especially from Othman OuMusa, a Jewish *qsar*/castle about a kilometer away, which was later rehabilitated with UNESCO and Canadian money in 2008. In order to gain access to the enclosed cemetery, one must go through the house of the Amazigh family who are charged with guarding the cemetery. A woman named Raqiya and her father, Hammou live there to protect the cemetery from, "crazy kids" who would vandalize it, given the opportunity. I asked if I could walk around and take some pictures. Raqiya asked to see my passport, and then asked about my family background. When she was

⁴³ Baïda, Jamaâ. 2011. "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948-1956." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 324.

⁴⁴ *Ibid* 126.

⁴⁵ See Schroeter, Daniel. 2002. *The Sultan's Jew: Morocco and the Sephardi World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

satisfied that I bore the deceased no ill will, she let me walk around, but kept a watchful eye on me.

After walking around for twenty minutes, I went back to her house to ask Raqiya a few questions, and we talked for more than four hours. What follows is part of the transcript of our conversation.

Cory: Why do you live here? How did you come here?

Raqiya: My father worked for the Jews in Fes. When several of them moved here, they brought him with them.

C: What does your father do?

R: My father was very strong, and tough (qsha bzaf oo wire). The Rabbi (*al rabbi*) hired him to help him, and if anyone would do something bad to a Jew that the rabbi was responsible for, my father would rough him up.

C: How did your father get the job?

R: I told you, he was very strong and tough.

C: Can you tell me more about your father, or his Jewish friends?

R: Ask him (her father approached)

Hammou was wearing a filthy blue djellaba. His eyes were opaque white, and he was obviously blind. I guessed he was in his late sixties or early seventies in 2008. He sat down slowly on a sheep skin rug on the floor. He started talking to his daughter right away.

Hammou: (to Raqiya) Who is this? What is he doing here?

R: He came to ask us about the history of the Jews around here. He's from America.

H: Does he speak French?

R: No, Arabic. (*Oohoo, Tarabt.*) [spoken in Tamazight]

H: Okay.

C: Thank you for letting me sit with you and ask you questions

H: No problem

C: How did it happen that you were friends with the rabbi from Fes, and how did you come here?

H: When I was little, I lived very close to Jews. All our neighbors were Jews. We grew up together. I have no problem with them. When I was still a young man, I was very strong and tough. The Jews in Fes, they were frightened. Someone would kill one, someone would beat up one, someone would rob one; it was not good. The rabbi asked me if I could help them. I said yes. If someone stole from them, I beat him up. If someone beat them up, I beat them up. If someone killed one of them, I beat them up, and then took him to the police. I was like a lion. People called me the Lion of the Jews.

C: Were you not scared that someone would beat you up?

H: No! No, no, no. (*Oohoo, la, la, la.*) I was very strong and very tough.

C: No one ever did something bad to you because of your relationship with the Jews?

H: Truly, I am blind because of someone hit me in the head.

C: Is it possible to tell me that story?

H: Yes, but I need some tea first. (Raqiya went to make tea) I do not tell story around my daughter. It makes her sad.

C: I understand.

H: The Jews built their big house...

C: The place where they prayed?

H: Yes. They built their big house in Othman OuMusa, and every Friday I would go unlock the door in the afternoon and wait outside while they prayed. I watched while all of them went out. Then I went into the big house and extinguished all the fires and locked the door.

C: You had the key to the big house?

H: Yes, of course, they trust me very much. I drank the milk of trust, and so did they. Not like these others. They drink the poison from their bad mothers, and when they grow they are bad.

C: So how did you become blind?

H: One day, (*Yon wes*) I shut the door after everyone left the big house. Someone hit me from behind. I fell down, but I could still see and think, because I was very strong and tough. But I could not see who was there because it was dark. He came and hit me in my eyes. (Hammou made a thrusting gesture with his thumb several times) After that, I could not see.

C: Why did they do that?

H: Because I am a great friend of the Jews.

C: So what do you do now?

H: I don't have anything to do. The Jews took care of my head/self (*rasi*). They made me this house that I live in, and they sent mandats (postal checks) to me from Fes. They still do. It's not very much, but I am old. And Raqiya has everything she needs.

C: Wow. Thank you for telling me.

H: No problem.⁴⁶

At the time I was observing conversation and recording stories in Midelt, there was much talk about “the milk of trust.” It seems that a distinction was made by those men in the village who spoke for Amazigh autonomy in Morocco between those who had Amazigh mothers and those who had Arab mothers. Those who had nursed from Amazigh mothers were said to drink the milk of trust, and thus they could be counted on to behave in an honorable or at least predictable manner, whereas those who had Arab mothers, drank bad milk and grew up to be bad. Thus, when Hammou told me he drank the milk of trust, he was letting me know that even though he grew up in Fes and was primarily Arabic speaking, he still considered himself Berber [he prefers the term Berber over Amazigh], and made a distinction between himself and Arabs. Even more interestingly, he said that his Jewish friends also drank the milk of trust. I did not ask, though I wish I did, if he meant that in purely ethnic terms and he considered the Jews he lived and worked with as Imazighen as well, or if he meant it as an indication that they were trustworthy, like himself. It was that distinction, according to him, that made him a good helper for the Jews he protected in their life and he still guarded after their death.

Hammou certainly defined himself by his relationship with the Jewish community. His memories, though possibly stylized in the retelling, make clear the

⁴⁶ For full Arabic/Tamazight transliteration of this interview, see Driver, Cory. 2010. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis. 69-74.

degree in which the performance of stories recounting the relationship to Jews is powerfully necessary for constructing his individual identity, as well as Amazigh ethnic identity.

Many Moroccans are not able to tell of a time in which they sacrificed for the Jewish community, or did anything to defend them. Frequently, older Moroccans will mourn the disappearing of the Jewish community and wish that someone, even if not necessarily himself or herself, would have done something to encourage them to stay. In his fascinating work, Aomar Boum points out that at least a few of his Muslim interviewees believed that in addition to Zionist prodding and a deeply felt historical connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, many Jews left because of the failure of the authorities to incorporate them into the nascent state:

Aomar: Why do you think the Jews of Akka left southern Morocco for Israel?

Ibrahim: They left for many reasons, economic, political, personal, and religious. But many left because we failed as nationalists to incorporate them even though we claim the contrary. It is true that struggles over power between the king and other political leaders had probably forced the government to strike a deal which facilitated Moroccan Jewish migration in return for economic and military incentives.

Aomar: So do you blame nationalist forces for this departure?

Ibrahim: No! I do not blame anybody! I just think that we, as a nation, lost a very dynamic social group, which could have contributed to our young nation state.

Aomar: But as a Moroccan, I was definitely accustomed to hearing that Jews left because the opportunity of return has been presented to them.

Ibrahim: That is not always true. I as a soldier in the Southern Army of Liberation worked with many Jews from the south. They never thought about leaving for Israel despite the fact that they viewed the land of Palestine as a sacred place, which they have dreamt of visiting.

Many of them saw Morocco as their country. When we were fighting the French around Akka, they provided their trucks, which they themselves drove to the battlefield. They made sandals, trousers and even shaved the heads of soldiers! Did we acknowledge that after

Independence? No! I had to fight to get them recognized from the Ministry in charge of the affairs of ancient resistance fighters for their contribution. We did a poor job in enlisting them in post-Independence national building. The Zionist succeeded where we failed.⁴⁷

Whatever the cause, whether feelings of being left out of the newly independent Morocco, fear of violence, or longing for Israel or France, over the next several decades the number of Jews in Morocco dropped precipitously. By 1971 there were only 35,000 Jews left in Morocco and the number continues to dwindle to only a couple thousand today.⁴⁸

Return

As tourism increased to Morocco in the late twentieth century, and Jewish “heritage tours” gained popularity, many Jews returned to find that their former homeland had changed drastically. Many first-time visitors encounter a country that does indeed have crumbling synagogues and nearly abandoned cemeteries on the edge of the Sahara, but for most visitors Morocco in the 2010’s is more aptly characterized by urban youth wearing tight clothing, riding tram lines and talking on their iPhones. Many tourists described being disappointed at how un-exotic Morocco is.

⁴⁷ Boum, Aomar. 2010. “From ‘Little Jerusalems’ to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism, and Rural Jewish Emigration,” *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol 15, No 1. 56-7.

⁴⁸ Laskier 1994. 249.

For an interesting look at “contracting” Jewish life in Morocco, see Levy, André. 2015. *Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslims and an Israeli Anthropologist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

One place seemingly “stuck in time,” however, is the Jewish cemetery. While some unused synagogues are actively being remodeled, as in the case of Fes and Essaouira, or demolished, as is the sad case of other synagogues, the cemeteries largely are left to the slow ravages of entropy. Despite cemetery keepers’ efforts to clean and maintain graves; rain, sand and pollution efface the markers of the resting places of the Jewish community. It is in the cemeteries that tourists often remarked to me that they were at last seeing “authentic” Morocco, as if somehow modern city and village scenes were inauthentic. The contrast between the street and the cemetery produces internal conflicts between the imagined version and experienced reality of the object of pilgrimage back to Morocco.

André Levy has described pilgrimage as a search for identity in a place that is both geographically and culturally (“temporally”) distant.⁴⁹ For the Moroccan-Israeli pilgrims that he observed, the journey to Morocco was part pilgrimage and part tourism. Many travelers discovered that the trip provided several paradoxes.

While the pilgrims formerly thought of themselves as Moroccan-Israelis, with the Moroccan part being of particular importance, when they visited the land of their birth, they found that the Israeli portion of their identity became primary for them. They were not able to return to their previous “selves” or experience closeness with Muslims or Jews living in Morocco. The paradoxes continued for them when the Moroccan-Israelis took a subordinate position to their Muslim guide as well as to images of the King Muhammed VI in the Jewish cemetery, but

⁴⁹ Levy, André. 1997. “To Morocco and Back: Tourism and Pilgrimage among Moroccan-Born Israelis” in Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu (eds.) *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

even the king's power to protect all under his gaze was subordinate to the spiritual potency of the Jewish saints buried there. However, in the market place, because of their relative wealth, the Moroccan-Israelis found that rather than finding themselves as the junior-partners in the economy that they remembered themselves to be, they were being sought after for their business, as they had once sought after Muslim clients. Pilgrimage tours, especially those understood as journeys of “return,” are often fraught with inversions of old roles and current identities.

The way this paradox is felt, however, differs by generations. The first generations to immigrate have distinctly different experiences upon returning than subsequent generations who are “going,” rather than “returning.” Burgeoning heritage tourism industries often render a place “inauthentic” or just unpleasant to first-generation emigrants, but just slightly familiar to those with less intimate attachments.⁵⁰ Cultural tourism and heritage discourse tend to reveal more about the host society's attitudes toward the expatriate community than actual historic realities. This can drive the casual traveler or the later-generation emigrant to seek the “backwards” or “authentic,” but what they-who-return are usually trying to find is something that is simultaneously both more and less familiar. Most returnees feel the twin desire to *remember* that which has not changed while at the same time hoping to *discover* some sort of unknown aspect of the past that justifies their choices in leaving and in coming back.

⁵⁰ Cashman, Kevin. 2008. *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border: Characters and Community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

One experience that many Jewish tourists discover when they visit Morocco is the wide propagation [which is almost as widely believed] of the view that all Muslim Moroccans are doing everything they can to preserve Jewish history and welcome Jews “back” to Morocco. When an article about how Morocco’s preservation of Jewish cemeteries should be a model for the world was syndicated on Moroccan World News’ site from its original publication in Tunisian news, many Moroccans could not spread the word quickly enough.⁵¹ I heard from five friends and informants about the article within an hour of it being published in Morocco World News, even though two of my Moroccan friends were in the States. I asked one of the Moroccans living on the West Coast how he had heard the news so fast. He told me that he had a google alert set for news items with “Morocco,” “Jew,” and “Jewish” because he wants to start a heritage tourism company himself.

Several of the people with whom I work were similarly abuzz when Al Jazeera’s website featured a video about Moroccan-Israelis who are choosing to return (or “return” for the first time) to Morocco. They were all too happy to explain that, of course Moroccan Jews would want to return to Morocco, because all Moroccans; Arabs, Imazighen and Jews, look out for each other and treat each other as brothers. This same pronouncement was issued from everyone who talked to me about this film, almost verbatim. Moroccan tourist agencies want tourists to know that all Moroccans love[d] the Jewish community and would be very happy for them to return. In the meantime, Moroccan Muslims have been guarding and

⁵¹ Bouazzaoui, Chaimae. 2015. *Is Morocco a Model in the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries?*

<<http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2015/02/152569/is-morocco-a-model-in-the-preservation-of-jewish-cemeteries/>>

maintaining their Jewish sacred sites. While the statement of universal love is manifestly untrue, the ferocity of its propagation and defense cannot be overstated.

It is not just Muslim Moroccans who want to point out how crucial Jews and Judaism were/are to Moroccan identity. In my first six months back in Morocco researching for this dissertation, two separate educational groups hosting American university students in Morocco, as well as the U.S. State Department, approached me, asking if I could give visiting Americans tours of Moroccan Jewish cemeteries. I declined. It feels wrong to me to take business away from the people with whom I work. Additionally, as interested as I am in cemetery tourism, the idea of leading a tour myself feels quite unseemly to me because I have had little interaction with the people interred. The requests from educational groups continue, however, because cultural affairs officers and curriculum designers, no less than many ordinary Moroccans, seek to instruct their charges in the importance of Moroccan Jewish history.

Comparative Research: Cape Verde

Cape Verde is a very useful site for comparison with my work in Morocco, because the two communities are and were often linked. During times of distress, Moroccan Jews fled to Cape Verde and vice versa. Especially after Portugal abolished the Inquisition in 1821 and as the formerly amicable relationships between Jews and Muslims deteriorated in Morocco, many Moroccan Jewish families migrated to Cape Verde. The Moroccan and Cape Verdean Jewish families were able kept properties in both countries to serve as a refuge during political instability. Andre Azoulay, a counselor to King Mohammed VI of Morocco, had

family ties to Cape Verde and is currently the head of the advisory committee of the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project, which is partially funding the restoration efforts.

There are several important factors that are different from the case of Morocco, however. Because there was a much higher degree of intermarriage in Cape Verde than in Morocco, the community largely assimilated rather than left. Interest in the symbols of the Jewish community waned in a way that it did not for Moroccan Jews who left relatively suddenly. Because Cape Verde is a less popular destination for Israeli and other Jewish tourists, the cemetery restorations are conducted by an international N.G.O. without the attendant local grassroots preservation efforts or pilgrimages of descendants of the community.

I journeyed to Praia, Cape Verde, from February 14 to February 23 of 2014. I was able to visit the Varsea cemetery which has recently been restored by a collaboration between the Cape Verdean government, the Moroccan government, and a non-governmental organization called The Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project. Initially, I was quite disappointed. The Jewish cemetery, contrary to the indications by the Cape Verdean Jewish Heritage



Figure 3 The Jewish section of the Praia Cemetery

Project's press information, is really only a section of a few graves within a much

larger Christian cemetery. Also, as I was told repeatedly during the week, Cape Verdeans think that it is bad luck to discuss graveyards or cemeteries, and several potential interviewees were quite reluctant or simply refused to talk to me about the subject.

That being said, the silences that I met in several instances spoke volumes. One my first of several trips to the graveyard, I spoke to one of the cemetery keepers who was carting around rubble – possibly broken gravestones – and asked him in Spanish and then Portuguese where the Jewish section of the graveyard was. He responded by pointing his arm and speaking in French that it was up the hill and on the other side of the graveyard. I would later find out that when I asked him the question, we were in fact standing less than 20 feet away from the Jewish section. I assume that he simply had no idea, despite working there.

After becoming lost following the instructions of the first worker, I met a young man who also spoke in French. When I asked where the Jewish cemetery was, he switched to broken English and asked me if I were American. He said that everyone who came looking for the Jewish section was American, and that many American visitors come, but just once or twice a year. They had been coming for 12 years. He walked directly to where the Jewish section was, but said that he did not know anything about it other than where it was, and left. Finally, the head cemetery keeper, who had actually worked with the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project, came to talk to me, in Portuguese. He wanted to show me the other sections of the cemetery, and kept telling me about the other graves' histories. I told him that I had come to see the Jewish section and then he gave me a thumbs up and then wished me a good day.

When I spoke to tourism professionals and the staff of the ethnographic museum in town, I was greeted by a sense of surprise - “There's a Jewish section of the cemetery?” - or disinterest - “You're in Cape Verde. Why don't you study something about Cape Verde, like birds?” or “You should study the cemetery in Fogo. There's no Jews there, but it has a famous 'Whites-only' graveyard that only the colonial VIPs were buried in.”

I thought it was very interesting that in the minds of the respondents that not only was the centuries-old Jewish presence in Cape Verde not regarded as “something about Cape Verde,” but that Jews also were not understood as white or members of the colonial hierarchy. I contacted the Cape Verdean Jewish Heritage Project to discuss some of my findings with them, as well as to learn whether they have plans for any other restoration projects in the future. They said that they were planning ongoing educational work, but had no further cemetery restorations in mind.

Comparative Research: Oman

As a comparison to my work in Morocco, I also traveled to Oman, which is the site of ancient Jewish burial grounds guarded by Muslims. Many of the historical figures said to be buried in Salalah, especially, are also known in both Judaism and Islam, such as Job/Ayyub. I was interested in comparing the situation in Oman where Muslims tend graveyards occupied by Jews who died many hundreds, if not thousands of years ago, with the more recently used cemeteries of Morocco. In both cases, Muslim cemetery keepers are guarding and acting as guides in Jewish cemeteries that exist in the absence of a local Jewish community.

However, unlike Morocco, the historic Jewish community has been absent from the area for much longer than living memory, and so the guards cannot have any personal connection to any of the people interred. I was curious to observe how the practice of curating and guarding Jewish graves by Muslims differs in cases that with and without personal contact between the keepers and their charges.



Figure 4 Changing Orientation at Job's Tomb

As expected, the Muslims who took visitors into the historical areas had no personal connections to Jewish history of the area, and indeed, many did not even know that there was a Jewish presence in the places that they were describing. When a tour

guide took me to the tomb of Job, for instance, the original prayer niche, the orientation of the building, and the surrounding graves were toward Jerusalem, but prayer rugs had been laid out in the direction of a Qibla sticker on another wall. While the direction of Muslim prayer was Jerusalem from 610 to 624 CE, the guard was emphatic that the tomb of the prophet Job/Ayyub was built long before Muhammad was born. I asked if he had any idea who would have built a tomb for the prophet who is in both the Bible and Qur'an long before Islam arrived in the area. He shrugged his shoulders and suggested, "*Rubama Yehudim?*/Maybe Jews?"

Inside the tomb complex there were several posters in English explaining how Islam venerates the same prophets in whom Christians, Jews and Sabians

believe. The posters seemed aimed at attracting potential converts, who obviously were devoted enough to saints to come to a rural hillside in extremely southern Oman, but they did not interest our tour guide at all. He explained nothing, but answered my questions. Finally, he said, in English:

Look, I don't know much about this site. Tourists want to see it. My grandfather says it is old. Most tours come by, look at it, take a picture and then leave for something fun, like the desert or the market. I don't like it. None of the guides do. It's boring.

Indeed, all of the subsequent guides that I spoke to during my research said that the grave was thousands of years old, but that they did not know anything about it. This tomb was that of a pre-Islamic holy person who was locally venerated, but the guides, even the guides who grew up within sight of it, simply do not identify with the grave or the community that created it.

What was even more unexpected than the lack of attachment felt by the guides were the ways in which this site of mixed Jewish and Muslim heritage has been incorporated into the religious lives and practices of the large Indian community that has come to live and work in the Gulf. Even though signs are posted prohibiting these practices, Hindus often leave money on the tomb or sprinkle it with juices, milk or even alcohol (according to one guide) in order to curry favor with the holy deceased. My guide was disgusted when we walked into the tomb, and saw the green silk that covers an incredibly tall coffin stained with different color fluids and covered with Omani Rials. He brushed off the grave with the back of his hand, and said under his breath in English, "damn Indians." Accordingly, signs have been posted in English for visitors from the subcontinent about the people who are buried in the tombs, as well as the decorum expected by

the Muslim caretakers at the sites. These signs are constantly ignored by devotees of the saints, who, although they are not Jewish or Muslim, seem to be the only ones really interested in the tombs.

Comparative Research: Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has been a center of Jewish life for thousands of years. Jewish communities tended to arrive in Uzbekistan as they fled other areas. The first massive influx of Jews came after the resettlement of many exiles created by the Babylonian conquest of Judah. Over 1200 years later, Jews fleeing the recently Islamized Persian Empire settled in Bukhara and Samarkand along the Silk Road. Even as late as the mid-twentieth century, Jews trying to escape the ravages of Europe and unable to immigrate to the United States or British Mandatory Palestine found shelter in Uzbekistan. Even later than the emigrations from Morocco, Jews were unable to leave Uzbekistan in large numbers until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁵²

The behavior of my guides in Uzbekistan could not have been more different from both the casual distance of the other comparative cases, or the personal identification that I document in Morocco. One guide took me to the tomb of the prophet Daniel in Samarkand. When Timur was attempting to conquer Persia in the 14th century CE, Susa was a holdout to his domination. When his spies informed him that the holiness of a prophet buried in Susa kept the town safe from

⁵² For an excellent treatment Bukharan Jewish history, see: Cooper, Alanna. 2012. *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

invaders, Timur ordered his spies to return to the town, dig up at least a part of the holy man, and rebury him in Timur's capital, Samarkand. Accordingly, Daniel's arm was brought to be buried in Samarkand.

My guide pointed out that Daniel is not in the Qur'an, but Muslim Uzbeks know that he is holy because Jews told them and because a spring of water gushes forth from under his tomb. I told my guide that Daniel is mentioned in several early Muslim writings and possibly hadith, but she simply shrugged her shoulders and

later confessed that she did not know what a hadith was, even though she paused to pray at the appropriate times during our tours. She explained that, "the Jews have given us blessings from their dead." She told me that the real source of the spring under

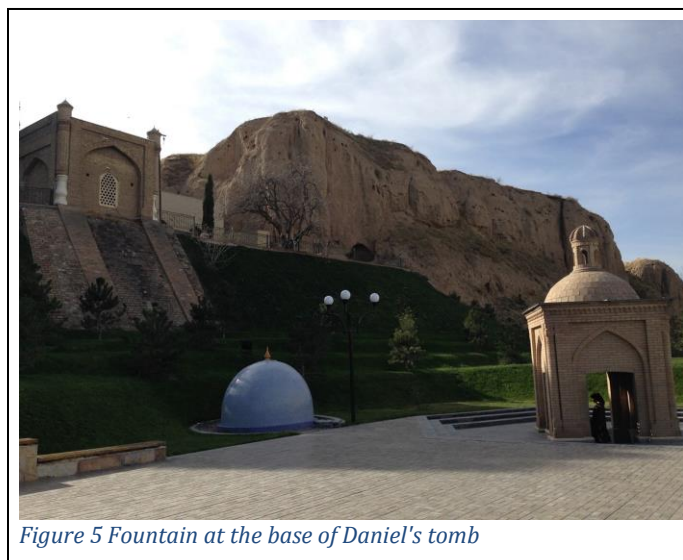


Figure 5 Fountain at the base of Daniel's tomb

Daniel's tomb was a fountain, complete with water storage and pump, which had recently been replaced when the park was renovated the previous year. Nevertheless, she waited in line, took a drink, and said a silent prayer as she covered her face with her hands in a way that accompanies the saying of "amen" in Uzbek culture.

Saints' graves are not the only place where Uzbeks both treasure and exoticize Jewish spaces. On another occasion, I visited with a guide the Samarkand Gumbaz synagogue. This guide was a woman my age who had previously

bemoaned her unmarried state. When we went in to the synagogue, I was surprised to note that Rebbe Schneerson's picture had made it all the way out to central Uzbekistan. The rabbi at the synagogue explained to my guide in Uzbek the importance of the Rebbe. She asked the present rabbi if Rebbe Schneerson was very holy, and looked down to her un-ringed finger. The Samarkand rabbi, discerning her question exclaimed to her, "Oh yes, if he were alive and you were to meet him, you would be married in six seconds!" My guide, who travels frequently, resolved that the holiness of the Jews is greater than that of the Muslims, and on her next trip to New York she would go to his home to see if some of his blessing would enter her.

In all the cases of saints' tombs and the episode in the synagogue, the Uzbek interaction with Jewish blessing is one of near-passive consumption. Although my Muslim guides did not say Jewish prayers or do Jewish things, they drank water that had been blessed, or looked forward to traveling to a site of spiritual potency so that it could enter her. Jews are seen as a mystically powerful other, not to be identified with, and not to be ignored. Like Morocco, the power of the Jewish "other" is present and able to be felt, if not necessarily harnessed, by Muslims. The main difference is the degree of separation that Uzbek Muslims seem to feel from Jews. It could be that the departure of the Jewish community is more recent from Uzbekistan than it is from Morocco, and generations' worth of longing have not had time to accrue. My suspicion, however, is that Jewish Uzbekistan and Muslim Uzbekistan did not come together with the same intimacy and with the same relative safety as Jewish and Muslim Morocco. The millennia-old and relatively harmonious close interaction between Jews and Muslims in Morocco that was

sustained into the late twentieth century is what makes Morocco a distinctive case. I am by no means an expert on Central Asia, and it may be that Jewish-Muslim dyads like Shlomo and Mubarark (from chapter five) were relatively common there. Even if that were the case, Jews, Jewishness and Judaism are not a part of the conversation with foreigners in Uzbekistan with anything close to the same frequency that they are in Morocco, even in and around Jewish places.⁵³

According to my limited comparative work, Morocco is a special case. Muslims in Morocco *want* to talk about Moroccan Jews with foreigners, and even among themselves. The history of Morocco is not understandable without remarking that “Jews lived here, and we were friends!” as I have heard so many taxi drivers assert. This focus on now absent Jews as a crucial part of history and culture simply was not the case anywhere else I researched.

Moroccan Muslims and Jews who support and define themselves according to their relationships with the other are an excellent example of Jean-Luc Nancy’s description of the interdependence of being. In order to grasp the current reality of Muslims using Jewish places and Jewish history to construct their moral selves, it is imperative to remember how Muslims came to guard and guide in Jewish holy places in the first place. This historical review has focused on folklore and legend of the Jewish community in Moroccan history, as well as practices stemming from

⁵³ For a much fuller treatment of Bukharan Jewish history, and support for my suspicion that the Bukharan Jewish community was not as personally emmeshed with their neighbors, especially under the Tsarist period, see the first two chapters of: Baldauf, Ingeborg; Gammer, Moshe; and Loy, Thomas; eds. 2008. *Bukharan Jews in the 20th Century: History, Experience and Narration*. Verlag: Reichert.

beliefs about the importance and possible danger of Jewish presence, real and imagined, in Morocco.

Jews are a constitutive part of national Moroccan self-understanding. The millennia of Jewish presence in Morocco physically shape the country in terms of the Jewish quarters in all the major cities, Jewish saints' tombs scattered across the country and the graveyards that are the focus of this work. The absent Jewish community is frequently deployed as a useful third group in the symbolic relations between Arabs and Imazighen.⁵⁴ Scores of Moroccan proverbs, such as “a market without Jews is like bread without salt,”⁵⁵ point to the difficulty Muslim Moroccans have in grappling with the present reality of their country without Jews, who have been not only a vital part of Moroccan history, but also paramount to the self-understanding of individual Moroccans who populate the following chapters.

⁵⁴ Rosen, Lawrence. 1984. *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁵⁵ Boum, Aomar. 2013. *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Cover.

Chapter 3: Passover Professionals

וכי־יגור אתך גר ועשה פסח ליהוה המול לו כל־זכר ואז יקרב לעשתו והיה כאזרח הארץ וכל־ערל לא־יאכל בו

Exodus 12:48

This chapter's fundamental importance is to link the historical memory of Jewish presence in Morocco with the experiences of mostly older Muslim Moroccans with whom I conducted my research. Both Hamou and Moha experienced Passover rituals with their Jewish neighbors when they were children in the 1930s and '40s; and 1950s, respectively. After the mass-emigration of Jews from Morocco, both of these men felt cut off from an important part of their own childhood. As I met them and our friendships increased to the point that we were sharing holidays with each other, my enactment of Passover provided an opportunity for both of them to demonstrate expertise in Jewish ritual. Their ritual knowledge – or false-confidence of ritual knowledge on the part of Moha's daughters – was an important tool allowing the two men not only to remember their youths fondly, but also to fulfill felt debts to their former Jewish friends and neighbors. Their performances below, then, act as an opportunity for defining themselves and for opening up opportunities to remember and repay the Jewish communities that played an important part in both of their lives.

Matzah Expertise:

During my preparations for Passover in 2006, I was looking for a suitable oven. Because that year was my first experience of Passover in rural Morocco, I was distant from any place that sold kosher-for-Passover matzah, and I did not have an

oven in my house, I needed to find somewhere to bake my own. I wanted to find an oven that I could put some bricks in, as I had just learned that baking matzah on bricks or stone in an oven was the preferred way to prepare unleavened bread. I did not trust, or particularly like, the *butagaz*-powered metal boxes in which my Moroccan neighbors baked. Also, I was terrible at using the clay *ferran*, which is essentially a clay half-dome covering a wood fire. The *ferran* is less hot but also less smoky than a *tannur* or *taboun* with which I had had some cooking experience in Israel. Ordinarily any dough that I tried to slap onto the side of the *ferran* to bake would fall off into the fire and be ruined. With the matzah dough, which would obviously contain no starter dough or yeast, I was sure that there was no way that I could manage to stick it to the side of the clay oven. My search for an oven unlike either the modern gas oven or the traditional clay oven was a long and largely fruitless one.

Finally, one day I visited the home of a man working with Doctors Without Borders and he owned a European oven and range which was not a tiny metal box with flames only on the top, but was a conventional modern oven with no exposed flames and even heating. I asked him if I could use his oven, and because he did not do much cooking for himself, he agreed. I turned the dials to “self-clean” for an hour in a half-hearted attempt to kosher the oven, and then I placed the bricks in the oven. I had borrowed the bricks from the construction of my apartment that was still being completed a month after I moved in. Once they were warm, I mixed a test batch of flour and water in the prescribed less than 18 minutes and placed it in the oven to bake. What came out was soft, thick, round and unlike any matzah that I have ever seen. Still, I was pleased with my industriousness. I set off for

home knowing that when Passover came one week later, I would be able to make kosher-ish matzah.

I was eating the matzah on the way home, and I stopped by the house of Hamou, a man with whom I lived for my first several months when I was posted to town with the Peace Corps. Over the course of my years in Morocco, he had told me thousands of hours of stories of local history. When I had a problem or misunderstanding, both which occurred frequently in those days, Hamou was my first destination to ask for help. I was anxious to show Hamou the unleavened bread that I had made and to tell him something about Passover. I assumed that as an Amazigh Muslim that he knew nothing about the spring holiday, but I was mistaken.

When I showed him the matzah that I had made, he said that it looked like thin bread that his Jewish neighbors used to make and let him eat during their holiday. I asked him what holiday it was, and he said that it was *Eid djaj oo khubz rqiq*/Feast of chicken and thin bread. He recalled from his childhood that his Jewish neighbors had a festival in the spring and that they would all eat chicken, really thin bread and vegetables that did not taste good. He had eaten at many seders over the years before the Jewish population of the High Atlas region emigrated, and since then he had not participated in a seder for over forty years. Hamou asked if I was going to do all the things that his Jewish friends had done years before. I naively said that yes, I would be doing everything the same way, being perhaps overconfident of the continuity of Passover ritual across time and space. I invited Hamou to come to my little seder, and he happily agreed, but not without a warning that I was not off to a great start. Hamou told me that my bread

should be flatter, brittle and baked more thoroughly than my chewy, soft matzah. The critiques continued through the ceremony the next week.

During the first two Passovers that I spent in Morocco in 2006 and 2007, three Muslim Moroccan guests attended my relatively un-lavish seders. Even though they had not celebrated in the last forty years, or ever, memories of the practice of Jews and Muslims eating a seder meal together were so prevalent in the community that my guests acted as experts at a local tradition which was outside their religious identity. They already possessed the memories, or had heard about the stories of seders past, but had never had the chance to act out a directing, authoritative role. Because of my presence and willingness to be told that I was “doing it wrong,” Hamou, Toudert and Rebha (discussed below) were able to seize an opportunity to create new identities for themselves as people who knew how to conduct a seder in the local, traditional way.

As we worked together to produce a seder that would be honoring to local customs as well as meaningful to all present [including me], we were not all working toward the same goal. While I was trying to duplicate seder meals in which I had participated in the United States, I was also trying to be a good host. As mentioned below, I did not serve alcohol to my Muslim friends, though drinking at least four glasses of wine is a very important part of the seder. For me, not transgressing the religious sensibilities of my guests was more important than drinking wine. Hamou was much more interested in honoring the way that his friend ‘Azar had conducted the seder than he was in linking our Passover celebration to ancient Jewish tradition or Judaism at all. Indeed, the ghost of ‘Azar was very present as Hamou told me again and again that I was not doing things the

way that 'Azar had done them. For Toudert and her sister Rebha, the chief concern of Passover was to have as much fun as their father told them that he had had when he joined his Jewish friends in celebrating the custom. Thus in the same practice, vastly different goals were in view, and consequently, the actions of the various participants were not all in alignment. It became clear that sharing the practice of eating a ritualized meal achieved various goals including refinement of moral selves and identity modification. Hamou, Toudert and Rebha were able to perform authority in Jewish rituals.

Passover with Hamou:

Heating and regularly cleaning my apartment during my first winter in the mountain town that I inhabited proved to be beyond me. Accordingly Hamou invited me to make the seder food at my cold, dirty apartment, and then bring it to his house, which was only about fifty meters away, to eat with him and his family. Hamou told me that he knew that family was important to the practice of eating a Passover meal, and that I had left all my family back in America.

Behind Hamou's knowledge of the importance of family was his lived experience of previous Passover celebrations. When Hamou was still very young, his father died, leaving Hamou to care for his younger brothers. Hamou was too young to work the family farm by himself, so he and his brothers were taken in by an older Jewish couple named 'Azar and Yehudah. In was in the context of growing up in 'Azar's house, side-by-side with 'Azar's children, that Hamou experienced Passover. Although 'Azar also died when Hamou was still young, the years spent in 'Azar's house endowed Hamou with lived experience of some aspects of Jewish life

in Morocco and a desire to pass on to others [especially me] what he had absorbed. I think that it was for this reason, in addition to his house simply being more comfortable than mine, that he invited me to conduct Passover at his home.

When I arrived at Hamou's house, where I previously had lived for two months and was a regular and expected guest, I quickly hurried up to the second floor to spread the food out in the kitchen. Ymina and Na'ima, Hamou's



Figure 6 "Hamou"[on the right] on the day I brought the matzah over. Haj Fidel, my landlord at the time, is on the left, and Na'ima, Hamou's niece, is on the far left.

wife and niece, respectively, were anxiously waiting to see what I had brought. Na'ima had grown up in another part of the country in which there was a much smaller Jewish presence, and she was born in the 1960's, which marked the beginning of the last stage of Jewish emigration from Morocco. Consequently, she had never been to, or even heard of a seder. Ymina represents an interesting case. I was told by everyone that she often speaks gibberish, and truthfully, most of the time I could not understand her. She also had grown up in a different part of the country, and I did not speak her native dialect, so her "gibberish" could have easily been perfectly intelligible, and I simply did not understand it. Daily intelligibility aside, Ymina was very lucid and present that night. She did not speak often, but

nodded frequently. I was never able to follow up with her, despite many attempts, but I hold the distinct impression that there was something about celebrating Passover that was familiar to her. Hamou, however, knew exactly what to expect, and let me know when what I was doing did not meet his expectations. He remembered the discussion of the ritual elements of the seder, including the matzah, the bone, the egg, the parsley, the charoset, and the green onions. And he remembered that we should have children asking questions, but he did not know why or about what.

By this time (April 2006) I had lived in Morocco for seven months and was pretty good at speaking in the local hybrid of Arabic and Tamazight with notable Judeo-Arabic and Romance influences. But I was not anywhere near competent enough to conduct a seder. Hamou sensed this and, perhaps seeking to demonstrate his knowledge, or possibly overcome by curiosity, he decided to ask about every aspect of what I was doing, what we were eating, and what he saw as deviations from correct practice. Because Hamou had spent a large part of his younger years living in very close proximity with Jewish families, he was able shift dialects between Tamazight-inflected Darija and Moroccan Judeo-Arabic quite comfortably. Hamou pointed out multiple times that I did not speak like a Jew, because I was using Hebrew and my still stilted Moroccan Arabic, and he was able to discuss the ritual elements using Moroccan Judeo-Arabic pronunciations.

But for Hamou, the most noticeable differences were in the food. He was at a loss to understand why I had not prepared any chicken. I told him many times while I was living with him, and after, that I am allergic to chicken and so I do not eat it. He reminded me that to him, the name of the holiday was not Pesach [as I

was calling it] but Eid djaj/Holiday of Chicken, and that eating the chicken was his favorite part as a child. I told him that I had acquired [at much greater cost than chicken] some beef and had made beef stew, which I knew that he loved. His frustration dissipated somewhat at that news, but he was still flummoxed as to how one could celebrate Chicken Day without chicken. I pointed out that in the telling of the story, sheep are actually much more central to Passover than chicken are, but try as I might, I could not convince him that chicken was not a crucial part of the holiday. Hamou also was not very impressed with the way my matzah turned out. He was right not to be impressed: the matzah that I made that year was certainly the worst that I have ever eaten. But in my defense, I did not have a rolling pin to flatten it, and the temperature of my treasured modern oven did not get as hot as the smaller metal or clay ovens that I had shunned. Lastly, I went to great lengths to procure some horseradish sauce to round out the seder plate. Hamou smelled it, and would not eat any, pronouncing it a foreign custom, which of course, is correct.¹ He went to his kitchen and brought back some parsley to use instead.

After my multitude of divergences and failures, but with graciousness and a desire to see this meal that I had worked very hard on succeed, Hamou eventually took over. He discussed the exodus from Egypt and then told stories of what he had observed at Passover meals years before. Crucially, he pointed out that ‘Azar used to talk of the mixed multitude [the *erev rav* of Exodus 12:38] that came out of Egypt with the Israelites. This was quite meaningful for Hamou, who had

¹ Horseradish in seder meals follows the Ashkenazi tradition.

participated with his Jewish neighbors in the Passover. Hamou also talked about singing songs, though he did not remember the words, and about hiding a piece of matzah, though he had no children to go and find it. He spoke about how his friends would get really drunk, but that they would never “do bad things,” unlike the young Muslim men he observed, whose drunkenness usually led to violent behaviors. He made it clear that although he never drank, Jews were commanded to drink, so they should. Hamou had observed ‘Azar drinking mahia (a sort of fig/date/cherry brandy) often, but also respected how he never displayed intemperate behavior while drinking. Still, I did not bring any wine into his house, in order to respect his position in the community as the key-keeper for the neighborhood mosque. We drank grape juice instead, though we all agreed that it was not very good. Wine, though forbidden to Hamou and his family, would have made the evening much more like the experiences of Hamou’s childhood.

Due to his practice of years of celebrating Passover, and the opportunity granted by me providing the ritual elements and initiating the celebration, Hamou was able to demonstrate his expertise in celebrating Passover as he remembered ‘Azar doing it. Hamou not only became a practitioner of a Passover meal for the first time in his adult life, but he also self-reflectively boasted that he had joined ‘Azar in passing down Passover traditions across religious boundaries. He was quite proud of teaching me how to celebrate Passover and noted that he felt like he was finally paying back ‘Azar’s generosity.

Passover with Toudert and Rebha:

The next year at Passover, Hamou was away visiting his brother, and I had made some new friends through my work in the Peace Corps. Toudert and her younger sister Rebha operated a series of carpet shops in the Middle and High Atlas Mountains. Their father, Moha, owned the various shops because of a gift from his father's Jewish business partner, Shlomo.² As Shlomo was leaving for Israel, he gave his carpet stores and all his merchandise to Mubarak, Toudert's grandfather, making them promise that they would keep the shops in their family. Toudert and Rebha were born long after the emigration of most Moroccan Jews from the area, and they had never known Shlomo. Their father, however, had told them stories of Passover celebrations and many other nights that he spent as a young boy at Shlomo's house. Toudert's father and grandfather were less observant of the ban on drinking, and had indulged in mahia and wine quite a bit as children. Consequently, the stories that Toudert heard of Passover were mostly about singing songs late into the night, well after the four glasses of wine were consumed.

Toudert knew that there were ritual foods, but had no idea what they would be. She knew that there was some connection of the holiday to the downfall of Pharaoh, but was unclear on the details. But when she and her sister came to my house, immediately they took the cushions off of their frames, threw them on the floor, and started laughing about "reclining like queens." I did not know of any connection between laying on the left side and royalty either at Passover or more

² Moha is the main subject of chapter 4.

broadly in Moroccan society. Toudert and Rebha were both adamant that their father “laid like a king” and that they were going to lie like queens.

This is one occasion in which the experiential knowledge of Judaism of my Moroccan Muslim interlocutors exceeded my own. All of my past experiences of seder meals have loosely followed the traditional seder order. While I have read an English Haggadah many times over the years, my family and friends have never been too concerned about fulfilling individual mitzvot opportunities occasioned by the Pesach seder. Thus while we have asked and answered questions about reclining, we ourselves never did so. On further reading in Maimonides’ commentary on *Pesachim*, the fulfillment of the mitzvot of the seder may be invalidated if one does not recline at least while consuming the wine and matzah. In Sephardic communities this is usually restricted to adult men, but according to Ashkenazi custom many women recline as well. The celebration of Passover assumes an authoritative tradition that will be discussed and argued over. I, along with many Jews of my generation, have felt free to pick and choose from this tradition, rather than debate and engage. In so doing, I lost, or more accurately, never absorbed in the first place, the muscle memory and practice of fulfilling a central physical requirement of the seder.³

Knowing the positions in which to recline was just one of several facts and “facts” that the young women knew. Once again, my beef stew disappointed my guests, because their father had regaled them with stories of the spicy and tender chicken that they would eat. However, he had told them nothing about matzah, so

³ See Connerton, Paul. 2012. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 46-66 for a discussion on Passover’s embodied remembering.

Toudert and Rebha were a bit perplexed by my flat bread, which came out much better than the year before with Hamou. Still, they offered to run home and get some better bread from their mother because mine had “not come out right.” Due to their lack of experience eating matzah, I was able to transition fairly naturally into my improvised Moroccan Arabic haggadah. They were enthralled by the stories of the flight from Egypt and the plagues. Toudert had recently become more religious and started going to mosque fairly often. Because she had heard more Qur’an than her little sister, Toudert followed along with the Exodus story quite well. Rebha listened to my narration, but asked her sister questions in a dialect of Tamazight that I did not understand. Toudert would either answer directly or stop me and ask the question. Because of my assumptions for what Toudert and Rebha would be interested in hearing, and what they would not like to hear, I skipped most rabbinic insertions such as the description of Hillel’s sandwich and the discussion among Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva of the multiplications of the plagues by the hands and fingers of God.

During the meal, Toudert and Rebha’s left arms started to hurt from holding them up, and they asked if they could sit rather than recline. I told them that not only was it permitted, but it was what I had been doing the whole evening. They were aghast to realize that I had not been lying like a king, but had been sitting the whole time. That was the start of a disillusionment from which they never recovered, I think. They were polite for the rest of the evening, but most of the previous enthusiasm was gone and they stopped asking questions. My cooking was not really to their taste. Beef stew and flat bread when they had been promised the best chicken of their lives was a serious letdown for them.

Still, the young women stayed to the last glass of grape juice, although Rebha had switched to water after the first glass because she did not like the taste. I walked them home that night. The next morning, their father came to the carpet shop where I was working and had several questions for me. Toudert and Rebha had spent most of the night on the phone, regaling their father who was driving back from the other side of Morocco, with stories of my seder, and he wanted to know why it differed from the ones in his memory. He did explain to me, and to his daughters, that sitting like royalty was something that he felt, rather than an overt goal that his Jewish friends told him that he should try to achieve. He had added his own interpretation before he transmitted stories of the practice of eating a Passover meal to his daughters. That said, his feeling of eating like royalty, and the importance that he placed on it for his children, helped retain and reinforce a central concern of Halakhah that the religious but non-Orthodox seders that I had experienced and was trying to reproduce neglected. Moha, through Toudert and Rebha, introduced me to an important expectation of the ritual of the Passover meal that they and the rabbis felt necessary, but that I had never even considered fulfilling, despite talking about it every year.

Seders as Performative Acts:

For Hamou, as well as for Toudert's and Rebha's father, Moha, talking about and remembering their Jewish neighbors and friends is a vital activity for constructing coherent self-identities in the context in which they both are and are not part of their communities. Indeed, Moha who later acted as a guide for me on several occasions, spoke frequently about how he became who he is due to his close

interaction with the Jewish community. Their performances and understandings of Passover, and more generally Jewish life in Morocco, are self-constituting acts that allow these men to shape not just their moral selves, but also their identities in their community.

Inasmuch as the Moroccans who shared their Passover experiences with me were acting out their memories of a time when they lived with Jews as friends, they were also acting out a time when their lives more easily fit with their worldviews. Jewish-Amazigh friendships in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco were a historical reality, due in large part to convenience. By cooperating, merchants, traders and farmers from different religio-ethnic groups could essentially double their potential suppliers and customers. Thus for centuries small farmers like Hamou, and sedentary merchants like Moha, would have Jewish business partners. The Muslim and Jewish business partners would often observe each other's festivals and holidays, and mark the family events such as weddings, births and deaths of the other. These Jewish-Amazigh business partners were passed down from father to children, such that intergeneration family partnerships became the norm in southeastern Morocco.⁴

This chain of families typically would last for several generations. But with the coming of the invading French armies, the dissolution of the North African trade routes due to colonialism, and the close integration of the Atlas hinterlands

⁴ Schroeter, Daniel. 1989. "Trade as a Mediator in Muslim-Jewish Relations: Southwestern Morocco in the Nineteenth Century," *Jews Among Arabs: Contacts and Boundaries*. Cohen, Mark and Abraham L. Udovitch. Princeton: Darwin Press. 113. And, Shokeid, Moshe. 1996. "Jewish Existence in a Berber Environment," *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, ed Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner. New York: New York University Press. 112.

into the modern state of Morocco with its capital in Rabat, the centuries' old practice of intertwining Muslim-Amazigh and Jewish families ceased to be necessary. All that remained of centuries-old formal relationships were friends and neighbors. As I heard many times, it was essential to be able to remember the "way it had always been."

But as wars between Arab countries and the State of Israel multiplied, Moroccan Jews were encouraged by Israeli organizations to leave Morocco for their own safety. And this not without reason: there were certainly anti-Jewish riots in Morocco. But many Jews who emigrated have since expressed dissatisfaction with their new lives and a desire to return to the peaceful ways and interactions of Morocco, if not to the country itself.⁵ With the emigration of their Jewish friends, neighbors and business partners, the Imazighen were bereft of their shared history. As Hamou told me, it became difficult to remember his childhood without 'Azar and his family to help him, because Hamou's sense of self, and social understanding of his life were inextricably bound with 'Azar. As Abu-Lughod and Goldenberg argued in the introduction, narrative performances are often means of creation of idealized selves – especially if a contemporary performance allows the performer to present an idealized version of himself from the past. Accordingly, remembering and acting out commemorations of holidays that they celebrated with their Jewish friends when they were younger helped Hamou and Moha purposefully recreate a bit of the life that they and their ancestors had taken part in, which they had not wished to end. In subsequent talks,

⁵ See Yoram Bilu, 2009. *The Saints' Impresarios*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press.

Moha, especially, repeatedly told the story of passing on Passover to his daughters and, as if demonstrating Reynolds' argument, painted himself as almost singlehandedly recuperating the devastating loss of Jewish culture from the area. In so doing, Moha constructed his identity as an expert preservationist of Jewish history and culture.

Accordingly, because they acutely felt the burden of history and the knowledge of Amazigh-Jewish intimacy dying out with them, Hamou and Moha were especially careful to enact their version of the seder which meant so much to them. They were, quite frankly, not interested in trying to understand what the seder meant to me.

In those two evenings, I did not feel that the primary goal of the two men was trying to instruct me in the ways that they had observed Passover being done, but rather to recreate it for themselves. Prior to my presence, they had not concerned themselves with meticulously passing on Jewish traditions. Hamou did not have any younger relatives to teach. Moha had only told Toudert and Rebha about the fun parts and had left out everything else. I think that they were unconcerned with transmission, because the practice was not theirs to pass on. They wanted to remember for themselves a world in which Muslims and Jews celebrated each other's holidays, because that was the world into which they were born. My presence enabled their partial resurrection of such a world. Jewish holidays, and more generally expressions of Jewish life, act as a cipher for memory for the two men.⁶ As Connerton and Kleinman and Kleinman all point out memory

⁶ Connerton, Paul. 2012. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

frequently is tied up in social and physical acts. In the absence of Jewish life ways, part of their own past was indecipherable, even to themselves. Acting out a hybridized Passover, a holiday specifically designed, instituted and celebrated in Judaism as a memory device, was the key to reinvigorating and re-experiencing their own memories. After this, Moha would go on to guide both Moroccans and foreigners in experiencing bits of the still-extant Moroccan-Jewish culture for themselves.

I, too, was trying to reconstruct past seders, but from only the previous year, rather than from a generation earlier. Unlike Moha and Hamou, though, my practice is ongoing. My post-college years and then early adulthood have been a time of sorting out what I want and need from my connection to Judaism as a practiced religion. The first two seders that I hosted were full of disappointed non-Jews who had experienced older forms of the seder than I had to that point. This shaped all my future practices of the ritual meal. I continue to invite guests who have little or no experience of the meal, but I adhere much more closely to traditional texts, even going so far as to try to find haggadot, or at least important sections, in the native languages of my guests. I am much more aware, and quick to explain to my guests that the meal that I serve and recitation which we perform comes out of my particular and peculiar upbringing and represents my experience. Just as the wine stains on my haggadah accumulate year after year and affect the readability and performance of the seder, so too does my memory of my first two

Kleinman, Auther, and Joan Kleinman. 1994. "How Bodies Remember: Social Memory and Bodily Experience of Criticism, Resistance, and Delegation following China's Cultural Revolution." *New Literary History*. 25 (3): 707-23.

seders on my own, away from the place of my upbringing and in rural Morocco. Moha, Toudert, Rebha and Hamou shaped all my subsequent seders as it was with them that I learned to cook, recite and recline.

Passover – A Performative Case Study:

Catherine Bell, in her chapter on “Performance” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, points out that “performance... constructs people’s perceptions and interpretations.”⁷ During my first two Passover seders in Morocco, there were at least three different performances, all creating their own perceptions and interpretations. Hamou was trying to relive his childhood with ‘Azar. Toudert and Rebha were trying to have all the fun that their father told them was possible during a seder. And I was trying to celebrate my favorite holiday in a way that was faithful to tradition as I had received it while at the same time being hospitable and respectful of the sensibilities of my guests. My performance assuredly created things [beyond just disappointment] and shaped the early parts of the two evenings in question. Largely, however, mine was a performance that was not able to live up to expectations, and was such a failure that both audiences were sure that I had failed to observe the holiday properly. Because of my perceived failure, the absence of ritual knowledge of how Jewish rituals had been conducted in Morocco became excruciating to Hamou. He leapt into action, taking over the evening. My lack of familiarity with Moroccan seders viscerally changed his perception of the

⁷ Bell, Catherine. *Performance. Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Edited by Mark Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 208.

sad, but unalterable, reality of Jewish culture disappearing from his world to a situation that he had the power to correct.

Along the same lines, Hamou not only changed his interpretation of what was possible for Jewish ritual in his life, but he, and his family also, began to understand him[self] differently. As Anna Gade points out in *Perfection Makes Practice*, performance creates changes in the performer, and for the audience.⁸ By showing me how Passover dinners have been done in the past, Hamou created himself as an authority on Passover that he had not been until that moment. Previously, he had had lived experience of Passover festivities, but until he corrected me, he had always been a part of the audience, rather than a performer. Hamou's performance also changed him in the eyes of his family. None of them knew that the head of their household had such knowledge, or had lived so closely with Jewish families that he knew their rituals. Hamou changed me as well. Because of his performance of authority in "correcting" me, I have become less settled and less confident in my ways. I think this evening was the start of my insecurity that is an important part of this dissertation, especially chapter one. As Hamou gained certainty and authority, I felt like I lost mine.

For Toudert and Rebha, their performance of lounging like queens did not make them queens, but it did help them to embody a ritual that they had never seen other than through the eyes of their father. As they would tell many of the customers at their carpet shop, they became practitioners of Jewish rituals as well

⁸ Gade, M. *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'an in Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004. 49.

as Muslim rituals. They became “interfaith people” first in their own consciousness, and then in the consciousnesses of all to whom they told the story.

I believe that of all my friends and acquaintances in my first years of research, Hamou, Toudert and Rebha came to be the ones with whom I celebrated Passover because they had a special obligation to perform the seder borne of their knowledge of the shared Amazigh-Jewish history. Charles Briggs holds that performance will most often come from those who have a special responsibility to perform, because, “all members of social groups do not have equal access to particular traditions.”⁹ Because Hamou had years of experience of Passover in his close relationship with ‘Azar, he was the perfect person to assume control over the seder. Any of his family could have told me the exodus story went differently in the Qur’an, or could have told me the ways that they liked to cook and eat food. But Hamou with his embodied knowledge of how to tell tales and how to eat Passover food was the one who showed his family and me how to observe the Passover like ‘Azar had.

Not only did Hamou have lived experience of the Passover, but he was also a captivating speaker who could easily control a room with his voice. Communicative competence is often showcased in a heightened ability to engage audiences, specifically by knowing, “how to greet, tell a story, pray or promise.”¹⁰ Hamou, in acting out the haggadah that evening, greeted me in his home, told the

⁹ Briggs, Charles L. *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988. 8-9.

¹⁰ Bauman, Richard. *Performance. Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments, A Communications-Centered Handbook*. Edited by Richard Bauman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. 43.

story of the Exodus, and said prayers he had learned from ‘Azar. Although he did not promise “next year in Jerusalem,” he said that he finally felt like he had fulfilled a promise to ‘Azar and to himself to remember his friend, and the way he celebrated his holiday.

The case of Toudert and Rebha is a bit different. Although they, too, had particular access to traditions not shared by other young people their age, they came by it second-hand. Still, at the mention of *eid djaj*, they were very anxious to participate, and to act out reclining like queens. They knew that Passover was supposed to be fun, and they were curious and excited to act out that fun.

Because Passover occurs only once a year, and it commemorates an event that happened only once, it is a special occasion. The gifted performer, such as Hamou, can use the nature of an infrequently occurring occasion to heighten the effect of his performance. Richard Bauman points out that in many cases of the heightened communication of a performance, the actions and words of the performer will occur within a scheduled and temporally bound time/place.¹¹ Hamou took what was already a special evening of the Passover when he celebrated it as a boy and imbued it with even more meaning because he had not celebrated since ‘Azar died and the Jewish community left Morocco. He took what was a special ritual in any circumstance, and made it absolutely unique.

It was not just that evening that was unique. Everyone at the two seders had a different inherited religious idiom and personal experiences in place that they

¹¹ Bauman, 43.

brought to the seder, and thus experienced it their own way. Robert Orsi points out:

If appropriated and inherited religious idioms [like Passover] do not reflect or mirror the world but make it, then a historiography is required that does not look for religious windows onto wider social or cultural realities and does not treat religious creations as icons of history, but instead seeks to understand religious idioms dynamically, in place.¹²

In order to understand the usage of the idiom of Passover dynamically and in place, we must consider once more what it has meant to Hamou and the sisters and how a shared practice can have divergent implications for the practitioners. Orsi champions a focus on religious studies that turns away from traditions and denominations and toward, “particular people, in particular places and times, live in, with, through, and against the religious idioms available to them in their culture – *all* the idioms, including (often enough) those not explicitly their ‘own.’”¹³ Hamou and the sisters exemplify living in and with religious idioms not explicitly their own. But because of their possibilities of experiencing life with Jews who practice Passover, they were able to find a place for that practice in their lives. But Hamou’s life had ‘Azar’s long shadow cast over it. The evening for him was only possible because of his life experience of “lived-religion” alongside ‘Azar. Consequently, the entire meaning and experience of the evening was shaped by ‘Azar.

¹² Orsi, Robert. 1997. "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Hall, David, ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 10.

¹³ Orsi, 7.

For Rebha and Toudert, the possibility of participating Passover was opened for them by their father. I might have been able to expand the sisters' concept of possible meanings of Passover. But after it became clear that my version of the seder would be much less fun than the one that they were anticipating, they were unable or unwilling to continue the enterprise. As Orsi points out, one cannot transgress, "...the range of idiomatic possibility and limitation in a culture – the limits of what can be desired, fantasized, imagined, and felt."¹⁴ The girls and Hamou either could not, or did not desire to, imagine a Passover practice connecting all world Jewry. Rather they felt the connection to their own intimate, local past. In the following chapters, all of the Moroccan actors will focus not on grand ideas of what it means to be a practitioner of Judaism or Jewish ritual, but rather on earning a living and remembering some of their friends in their local contexts.

Quasi-Objects, Subjectivity and Noise:

The Passover celebration at Hamou's house provides an opportunity for considering quasi-objects and the slippage between different kinds of subjectivity. Above, the fluffy matzah and absent wine are the sorts of quasi objects which Hamou and I used differently to define our subjectivity. I used the bread to link Passover with my previous celebrations. I used the opportunity to forego wine to show respect to my hosts. Hamou used the failed matzah and lack of wine as signs that I was insufficiently able to conduct a seder and thus he took over. His goal,

¹⁴ Orsi, 7.

again, seemed to be remembering his friend well, rather than fulfilling a commandment to the descendants of those who left Egypt to tell the story. Hamou and I each celebrated according to our own memories, and our separate wishes to memorialize 'Azar and the Israelites, respectively.

Again, although I made food and initiated the ritual telling during Passover, Hamou invited me to his house and took charge when I did not conduct the seder as he wanted. Michel Serres' observation about the systematic ambiguity between hôte-as-host and hôte-as-guest is a useful reminder about the paradoxes of positionality and subjectivity in performance specifically and human interaction more generally. Who was the guest at my seder at Hamou's house? Was I the host or was Hamou? Especially after the ceremony was commandeered by Hamou, the roles of performer and audience were juxtaposed, and a feedback loop of meaning-creation-interpretation-obfuscation formed. We were all performing, interpreting, critiquing, seeking to meet goals, and then evaluating our progress and reorienting simultaneously. During this process, we cease to be able to understand others' messages clearly.

This cycle of altered messages becoming their own signal raises another of Serres' arguments: that the parasite is not just one who takes advantage or a place for the slippage of subjectivity, but also the noise on the signal, or interference. Again, referring back to the Passover example, the confusion over reclining like queens because of a miscommunication from Moha to his daughters shaped the rest of a dispirited evening for Toudert and Rebha. Because of additional talk of royal reclining that was tagged onto the description of Moha's experiences of Passover as a youth, his daughters came to experience the Jewish holiday with

none of their father's delight, but as a disappointment that has caused them to decline subsequent invitations to religious events at my house.

Nonetheless, what I initially regarded as a failed holiday celebration of my first time attempting to prepare Passover by myself became rich grounds for the rest of my research. Seeing Hamou's and Moha's interest in preserving and restoring the place of Jewish history in Morocco – *as a means to help further their own memory retrieval and construction of their moral selves* – was the crucial first observation I made that led to the research in the following chapters. Knowledge of Jewish practices and positions of authority in Jewish places is not always used to reconnect to a vanished past or realized an idealized self, as it was for Hamou and Moha. Muslim guards and guides at Jewish cemeteries use their performances in order to realize a variety of goals: social, economic, familial, moral and spiritual. But as in the examples of Passover above, purposeful crafting of the self and painstaking creation of a social identity are frequently the twin goals of Moroccan Muslims performing Jewish acts.

Chapter 4: Guards – Building Muslim Authority in Jewish Cemeteries

Increasingly, the cemetery guards are the sole point of access into Jewish cemeteries in Morocco. When I started this research just over a decade ago, it was still possible to simply enter the graveyards and walk around. Occasionally a guard would come out of his or her house in or near the entrance of the site to stare at me, but after a friendly wave from me, he would settle back to whatever he had been doing before, only to reemerge when I was leaving to ask for a tip. Because of acts of vandalism, as well as fear of such acts, cemetery walls have been (re)built and gates have been shut. As in the example from the first chapter, the guard positions himself just inside this gate, often holding the tool that gives the guard his authority: the club/*al-‘asa*.

There is an assumption, I have found, in any place that regularly pays a guard – not a uniformed security guard in the city, but a plain-clothes guard who carries an *‘asa* – that part of the guard’s job will include actual defense of the site and occasionally physical violence. This is as true of the guards at most of the Jewish cemeteries that I have visited as it is of the guards at building sites, public schools and apartment buildings. When my apartment was broken into, the police who came to write the report kept asking our building’s guard why he had not fought the thief. The guard’s insistence that he had been asleep did not seem to register with the police as they questioned our guard into the wee hours of the morning. In Morocco it is assumed that guards will fight people who make unauthorized entry.

The experience of my apartment break-in carried another important corollary for the guards at the Jewish cemeteries. For months we had had a problem with graffiti. Every time I had been able to clean off our wall or our door, shortly thereafter “*al-mellah*/the Jewish Quarter” is written anew by a shaky hand and an ink pen at the entrance to our

apartment. I brought this up with the police when they came to investigate our break in. I asked if they thought that maybe the constant graffiti was a way of signaling which place would be good to rob. The *many* police officers – a foreigner getting robbed was apparently quite exciting and during the course of the conversation and dusting for prints, the number of police in my apartment swelled from three initially to thirteen before a senior officer came and told everyone that there was nothing more to investigate – talked among themselves and it was decided that the graffiti was probably not an issue, but I should clean it up. I still disagree with them, even a year later. Our landlord, neighbors and the guard were shocked about the break in, and could not remember a robbery at least as far back as forty years ago when the longest-term resident moved in. Time and again, I was told that I was the victim of a break in because I was an “*ajnabi*/foreigner,” though the graffiti was more about an ethno-religious designation [Jew] than which passport I hold [American].

Tired and exasperated at 2am after coming back from a research trip to find that my apartment had been broken into, I lashed out at the poor guard, who was still being interrogated by the police. I asked if our guard could not keep my apartment safe, at least he could keep people from defacing my door. All the police officers then took great pains to explain that while the guard had failed at his job to keep my apartment safe, it was definitely not his job to keep my apartment graffiti free. That responsibility fell to me. They suggested that I would be safer if I took my responsibility seriously.

This rule apparently holds at many Jewish cemeteries. The Rabat Jewish cemetery is attached to the Rabat Christian cemetery as well. Both of their white exterior walls are frequently decorated with swastikas hastily drawn using black spray paint. Frequent efforts by the foreign, mostly French, Christian community living in Rabat to paint over these defacements are rewarded only with a fresh round of swastikas. The guards of both the Jewish and Christian cemeteries refuse to bother to clean the outside of the walls. I

asked about this once, and they told that me not only was it not their job, but it was also hopeless because as soon as they provided a clean white canvas, there would be new swastikas the next day. Consequently, I have a time lapse series of photos of a particular corner of the wall on which swastikas are chased around by fresh white paint, but always seem to be a step ahead. The guards are responsible only for what happens inside their realm, which they must defend with physical force when necessary. The labels on the outside, whether sprayed in paint on walls or spoken about in whispers by people with whom they live, shop and attend mosque, are usually none of their concern.

In this chapter I introduce four guards, two men and two women. I use the guards' stories to illustrate how they use their performances of protecting, renovating and conducting religious activities inside the cemeteries to construct social projections of themselves for their Jewish clients and Muslim neighbors alike. Additionally, and more importantly for most of the cemetery keepers that I have spoken with, they use their authority and actions in the cemetery to create a hybridized self-image that allows them to be simultaneously devoutly Muslim Moroccans, talented performers of Jewish rituals and faithful friends to deceased Jewish friends and the Jewish community, more generally.

Places of Contradiction

Even inside the cemeteries, there are many layers of concern and focus, most of which stem from how objects and people are labeled. The cemetery, the graves, the land and the guards, are all locations of competing definitions and explanations. The guards as well as the graves are frequently the physical embodiment of contradictions. The guards have inscribed on their bodies the identifying marks of Islam: circumcision, a callous on the forehead from repeated prostration, as well as diabetes, which in Morocco at least, is frequently tied to the Ramadan fasting and bingeing cycle as well as the heavy

consumption of sugary tea that the guards brew to get themselves through long periods of boredom. But they also have trained their mouths to pronounce Judeo-Arabic and occasionally Hebrew. In the case discussed immediately below, the cemetery guard has callouses on his hands not just from the frequent use of hammer and chisel to re-carve tombstones, but also on his elbow, from reclining upon a concrete slab in the Jewish prayer-place which he uses as his daily quarters during the long hot summer. His hands are also marked with paint from his work on the tombstones. His is a Muslim body, but with marks of an affiliation with Judaism, or at least dedication to fulfilling others' commitments to filial piety demanded by Moroccan Judaism. If his body is a site of contradictions, so too is his identity in the larger social world of his town. His identity, both as constructed, evaluated and shaped by others; as well as his inner sense and experience of self, is largely defined by his position in and between two communities.

The graves, too, are a physical contradiction and an excellent example of Michel Serres' concept of quasi-object. The markers of the resting place of the remains of Jewish bodies, they have been carved, or at least re-carved and painted by a Muslim. They are touched by the hands of Muslims and are surrounded (this was explicitly stated to me several times) by Muslim land. The body in the grave and the language, both of the tombstone and prayers, are Jewish, but the land, the stone and the guard are Muslim. As time goes on, of course, the idea of a possible distinction between Jewish body and Muslim land becomes less and less tenable.

In this place of contradictions, the most important aspect of the guards' performances of Jewish ritual in these graveyards is their "being there." For the Jewish clients who pay Muslims to say prayers at the graves of their ancestors, positionality is more important than identity, whether religious or linguistic. The cemetery guards say prayers or carve words that are not their own in places that are Jewish and Muslim at the same time. Surprisingly, however, this works. Their performance accomplishes what the

patrons need to fulfill their feelings of responsibility to their ancestors. That the guards continue to be paid is the best evidence of this. The guards are able to perform their occupations in the cemetery, but are also able to go into town, talk with other Muslims and pray at the mosque. This was all made clear to me on the very first day that I met with Hamid.

Sefrou

On a sunny day in June 2012, I met Yassine, a recently-made friend who will be the focus of chapter 5, to visit the Jewish cemetery of Sefrou together. This town outside of Fes holds a special place in the hearts of anthropologists. Clifford Geertz, Paul Rabinow, Lawrence Rosen and many others chose this town in the hills as an ideal and interesting place for their studies.¹ As Susan Slyomovics points out, not just researchers, but, “beatniks and hippies, youthful draft dodgers and Peace Corps workers, hashish imbibers and drug entrepreneurs, [and] tourists,” all found Sefrou to be an attractive destination.² Still, Sefrou is most famous as a haven for anthropologists, as Hildred and Clifford Geertz described it in 1979:

Bled Sefrou is really a social space – a network of relationships mediated by markets, public institutions, local identities, and densely interwoven bonds of kinship and alliance. No less importantly, it is a conceptual domain – a perceived set of populations, territories, pathways, and meeting places that are intimately, if not always harmoniously, linked to the nurturance and identity of those who live there. As an indigenous conceptual

¹ Geertz, Clifford. 1968. *Islam Observed, Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rabinow, Paul. 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rosen, Lawrence. 1989. *The Anthropology of Justice: Law as Culture in Islamic Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Slyomovics, Susan. 2009. “Introduction to Clifford Geertz in Morocco: ‘Why Sefrou? Why Anthropology? Why me?’.” *The Journal of North African Studies*, 14:3-4, 317-325.

category, *bled Sefrou* underlines the interdependency, as well as the interaction, of its component parts. It stresses the conceptualisation [sic] of the region as an arena within which social life is played out through institutions that crosscut internal divisions of geography and society, even as the substance and course of social life are deeply influenced by the contexts in which its various manifestations are found. So conceived, *bled Sefrou* also presents itself as an appropriate unit for analysis.³

Cognizant of the decades of research work that has been conducted in Ifrane, I searched for someone to go with me to the Jewish cemetery – mostly because I like to have local escorts for my first few visits in order to help ease my introduction to cemetery keepers. Also I continue to have the distinct impression that Sefrou has been the focus of anthropological research more frequently than several people in the town appreciated. As Paul Hymen's image of a man angrily motioning that he did not want his picture to be taken for the cover of Rabinow's book makes clear, anthropologists of Sefrou have not always taken locals' wishes very seriously. In contrast to my research in other places, I found many doors, and mouths, quickly shutting when my presence was noticed. During 2014-15 especially, gates that had once been open were shut, and I was no longer able to simply walk unannounced into Jewish graveyards, instead I had to make an appointment, or at least wait on the outside of the gate until I could be let in by a guard.

³ Geertz, C., Geertz, H., and Rosen, L., 1979. *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 8.

One telling episode occurred while I was walking around the *mellah* of Sefrou, and saw an elderly woman prying a carving off of the lintel above her door. The intricately carved piece of wood featured two stars of David with an ornate border



Figure 7 The carving that I almost saved

around them, all fitted together without nails. I asked her what she was doing, and she told me that she was getting rid of “old, Jewish things.” I asked her if I could take over the removal process [she was just hacking away at the carving] and if I could take it if she did not want it. Without turning around to see me, she agreed quickly, seizing the opportunity to have someone complete her task for her and remove the offending material. At that moment, one of her neighbors approached and scolded the old woman. Assuming that I could not speak Darija, the neighbor said, “This is one of those foreigners who comes to write about us, and you are going to *give* him that wood? You should charge him a lot of money!” The old woman turned and looked at me, noticing for the first time that I was a foreigner. She said that I could have the piece for 20,000 ryals. She quoted the price in a formerly used, now fictive currency, popular among rural residents, that is 1/20 of a Moroccan dirham. I did not have the equivalent of \$130 that it would have taken to buy the piece, so I watched sadly as she continued hacking it to pieces rather than let a foreign anthropologist do the removal for free.

With all the confidence that comes from not being alone, I walked with my



Figure 8 The tomb of Abba Elbaz

friend Yassine into the cemetery, and I headed straight for the tomb of Abba Elbaz. My master's thesis was in large part a study of the lives of two brothers, one living in Israel and one living in America, who were descended from Abba Elbaz.

I compared their memories of growing up in Sefrou and Casablanca with memories of selected Muslim Moroccans who grew up in the same settings. Because my raconteurs had spoken of Abba Elbaz frequently but had never returned to the Sefrou cemetery since leaving Morocco over fifty years ago, I was delighted to finally be at his gravesite. I felt genuinely happy to be able to pay respects to their ancestor on their behalf, since they had asked me to do so if I ever returned to Sefrou.

Just as I was approaching the grave to say a few words, a voice boomed out: "*Ash kat-dir hena*/What are you (singular) doing here?" It was then that I first met Hamid, the cemetery keeper in Sefrou. He is a big, older man who spoke gruffly and eyed me with suspicion. He is bald under his *tagiyah*, and had on dirty clothes that smelled like a mix of sweat and cigarette smoke. His demeanor brightened a little, but only a little, when I mentioned to him that I was researching ways in which Muslim Moroccans remember

Jewish communities.⁴ He invited Yassine and me into the main building of the cemetery, which acts as a center for prayer for Jewish visitors in addition to being the place where Hamid takes his naps and drinks tea. In the middle of the hot summer, and Sefrou being a bit off the main tourist routes, Hamid spent his days and nights in the prayer-place except for when he worked on the grounds or chased away potential vandals. As I observed him, his most frequent task was calling out to embarrass people who slipped through a hole in the wall to use the cemetery as a latrine. Many ignored his shouts and went about their business anyway.

Yassine and I were then treated to an interesting, though not perfectly accurate, history of the Jewish community in Sefrou. Hamid said that the refugees from the Spanish expulsion arrived in Sefrou around 1800 CE. At this point I interrupted to ask if he was sure that the Spanish exiles arrived only two hundred years prior. He gave a non-committal shrug and suggested that there may have been some Jews present before, due to the sugar trade. Without stopping to take a breath, he then discussed some Sabbath practices, such as not smoking, and he spoke about the importance of washing hands after leaving the cemetery. He was particularly keen to note with a wink that *mahia* drinking was important to the Jews of Sefrou, as well as many of the Muslims who were close to them.

It may have been a numerical reversal, possibly a simple inversion, but he also pointed out that in the mid 1960's, on the eve of the Six-Day War, there were fifteen thousand Jews in Sefrou and two thousand *Moroccans*. Those numbers seem not only wrong, but inverted from what Stillman reports.⁵ I was also careful to note how Hamid spoke of Jews and Moroccans, instead of Jews and Muslims in Morocco.

⁴ I am careful never to mention performance or practices immediately.

⁵ Stillman, Norman. 1988. *The Language and Culture of the Jews of Sefrou, Morocco: An Ethnolinguistic Study*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.

Up to this point, I was rather unimpressed. I was about to firmly place Hamid into my quickly expanding category of fakes and faux guides. He was terrible with history, seemingly making up numbers and not really caring to argue when challenged, as most other guards and guides do in similar situations. He was, it seemed to me, not very concerned with defending his authority and integrity. In that moment, this appeared to be that he had given up on me. I detected a fairly heavy scent of alcohol, and it may have been that Hamid had indulged in it a bit to pass time on a really warm afternoon. In his defense, I should say that he was also working on a painting project, and I may have smelled the mineral spirits that he was using to clean his brushes. I began to wonder if he was anxious to return to drinking, painting, or both. I was wrong.

Immediately after detailing the demographics of “historic” Sefrou, Hamid decided to take us on a tour of the cemetery. He told us that the graves go down three meters, and that there are several levels of bodies. The oldest marker that he had found was from 1018 CE (He



Figure 9 Jewish cemetery of Sefrou

said *Miladi*/years since the birth of Christ). With such old graves, the inscriptions wear away, Hamid shared. He said that he was slowly re-carving and repainting the grave markers in Hebrew. To repaint a gravestone that has only lost some color is one thing, but to re-carve Hebrew requires a knowledge of the language that I had not witnessed previously among Muslim Moroccans outside of the academy. The skills that Hamid demonstrated for the next half hour significant for the genesis of this dissertation.

Hamid quickly showed me my ignorance in presuming that he was merely a guard when he started to read lengthy grave inscriptions in Hebrew. He told us that he frequently reads the grave inscriptions, in addition to any other Hebrew writings that he can find around town, just to maintain his reading skills. I asked when he had acquired this ability, and he said that he had worked for a Jewish family – the Tobarys – at a gas station and that they had taught him when he was not pumping gas. When several of the last Jewish families were about to leave Sefrou, he told me that he was asked to guard the cemetery because he could read Hebrew. He would thus know who was buried where, and he would be able to say *kaddish* over the graves. This last statement, quite frankly, stunned me. For a small amount of money, Hamid was willing to say prayers in Hebrew over the graves of deceased Moroccan Jews, even though he himself is Muslim. I was dumbfounded and proceeded to interrogate Hamid about how and why what he had said was even possible. From a Jewish perspective, a Muslim reciting *kaddish* brings up all sorts of questions about the ritual efficacy of words and prayers.

In terms of standard understandings of Jewish law (*halakha*), everything is wrong with this picture. Hamid is not Jewish. Hamid prays the prayers by himself without a *minyan*. The *kaddish* blesses God in a time of suffering and asks for life and peace for all Israel. This prayer is one of the main features of Jewish liturgy if a *minyan* is present, but in my experience, it is connected most often with rituals of death, burial and mourning.⁶ Hearing Hamid read this sheet was deeply weird for me. His pronunciation was very Moroccan, and he did not understand all of what he was saying, but he knew that he was saying a Jewish prayer. When I asked him about it, he said that he was praying a prayer that blessed God in order to accrue blessing to help the soul of the Jews in the graves

⁶ For an excellent meditation on the origins, development and usage of *kaddish*, as well as a deeply personal experience of reciting the prayer, see Wieseltier, Leon. 2000. *Kaddish*. New York: Vintage Books.

because their descendants could not do it themselves. For Hamid this was not a part of a ritual or liturgy, nor, for the most part, was it something that he did of his own accord. He said to me, on the first occasion that we talked, that he prayed the *kaddish* often. On subsequent visits, he mentioned that he only prays it a few times a year. The last time I spoke with him, he confessed that he almost never says it. The reduced frequency notwithstanding, Hamid still has said *kaddish* for money.

Economic incentive is not always at the forefront of Hamid's motivation for the performance of the prayer. Now and again, Hamid will say prayers that he has learned (or cobbled together as a sort of spiritual bricolage) over certain graves because he feels sadness at their neglect or the inability of their occupants' descendants to visit or provide for upkeep. Does this purity of heart or intentionality make these prayers more effective than those that are offered as a service for which money is exchanged? This is one of the few points where most rabbis advocating normative *halakhah* and the clients who pay Hamid to recite prayers may agree: purity of heart is not a factor in the effectiveness of Muslims saying *kaddish* over Jewish graves. For the *halakhicly* minded, neither intentionality nor anything else makes a Muslim saying Jewish prayers legally meaningful. However, reciting, or even meditating on the *kaddish* outside of the strictures of halakha has long proven to be a spiritually and emotionally effective act. From Allen Ginsberg's beat poem on the death of his mother to Leon Wieseltier's combination of personal memoir and academic study occasioned by his father's death, the *kaddish* is a cultural touchstone for how Jews express care for the dead, even when it is not an observation of normative *halakha*.

Hamid's clients, few though they may be, rely on a strained pronunciation of *kaddish* to fulfill their felt obligation to cause prayers to be said at the graves of their family members, which include ancestors as well as spouses and even children. Hamid's acts place him, at least according to his clients, in the well-established role of the *shaliach*, or

the agent for doing a righteous act. Many *mitzvot* in Judaism can be performed by a *shaliach*, even an agent who is not Jewish. Indeed, the first *shaliach* mentioned in the Bible is Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's servant, who is sent to find a wife for Isaac. A *shaliach*, however, may not be credited with fulfilling a *mitzvah* for the patron if in so doing, *halakhic* injunctions are transgressed. Thus, the notion of a lone non-Jew saying a prayer that requires a *minyan* at the grave of a Jew to whom he is not related would not be efficacious in fulfilling the demands for filial piety. The unavoidable reality, however, is that while Yassine and I watched, Hamid performed a prayer in mixed Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, *for* a deceased Jew that he called his friend.

Hamid's case may be unique, however. Other Muslim caretakers might offer prayers for the dead only for money, if in fact they say the prayers at all. It would be easy to imagine their taking money, and assuring their clients that prayers were being recited, while doing nothing more than drinking mint tea. No one would ever know the difference. Or it might have been the case that Hamid's prayers were an elaborate ruse to fool naïve tourists and a graduate student into thinking that a strange and wonderful manifestation of Jewish heritage is still alive and well in areas that Jews have vanished from a generation ago. These objections are well noted, and need to be considered. Indeed, I have anguished over them since one of my mentors challenged me for naively assuming good will and compliance on behalf of the performer.

I must return to what I have observed. Hamid demonstrated his ability to read Hebrew. During subsequent walks through town with Hamid, he showed me the gas station where he worked as a young boy, learning Hebrew from Mr. Tobary. It could be that Hamid was bored and simply wanted someone with whom to talk, but it seemed to me during our conversations that he really cared about the people whose mortal remains he guarded. He repeatedly told me stories about some of them as we walked around the cemetery, often using his finger to trace their names as he read them from an inscription

that he had re-carved. He frequently rested his hand on the grave with what looked like genuine affection as he told of what the person buried there had been like as a young woman, or how the person buried to his left had argued with his brothers, or how another cemetery resident had been such a cranky old lady. Finally, it is impossible for me to dismiss the printed *kaddish* that he had encased in a plastic sheath and showed me after he prayed from it. While his recitation was not perfect, the piece of paper did prove at least that someone sent it to him to recite. This prayer came from somewhere. I cannot imagine him finding it on his own on the internet and printing it out. Someone else leaving it behind seems equally unlikely. The prayer was written on an 8.5"x11" sheet of paper, and was not part of a prayer book. It existed by itself, deracinated from its context, but was perfectly suited as a guide for a stand-alone act of Jewish piety. Like the prayer isolated from a prayer book, Hamid's act of praying was detached from its liturgical context and was conducted by a Muslim who offered prayers over his deceased charges. The context of his prayers remains profoundly Jewish and communal, however. As Hamid fulfills a spiritual service for the deceased on behalf of their relatives, as well as an emotional service for himself as he acts out his affection for his friends in *his* Jewish holy site, he stands at the center, literally, of Jewish life, death, history, culture and traditions in Morocco.

I have heard Hamid say *kaddish* only twice over a period of 3 years. The first time he said it was at the grave of Abba El Baz, the former chief Rabbi of Sefrou, while he was showing Yassine and me around the cemetery on our first tour. I had just met him only about a half hour before. Undoubtedly, the prayer was occasioned by us visiting the cemetery. As I was trying to come to grips with Hamid telling me he could pray in Hebrew, we came to the grave of his friend and he simply started praying. The term "friend" has to be understood fairly loosely, as Abba El Baz died in 1938, so Hamid, who is not older than his mid-70s, would never have met him. This grave is the closest to where Hamid takes his

naps, and I have, on occasion, heard Hamid talking to the grave. The physical intimacy between their resting places, rather than any actual lived friendship, I think is the cause of Hamid describing Abba El Baz as his friend.

Yassine, who had never seen or even heard of *kaddish*, was impressed by the guard's use of Hebrew, but not unduly so. He had no idea what he was seeing. I, on the other hand, was visibly awed. When Hamid started praying, it took me a few seconds to sort through the juxtapositions. I personally have never said *kaddish* in a graveyard. I have lived in Israel on a few occasions, so hearing Muslim and Christian Arabs use Hebrew was nothing new, but to hear it spoken both poorly and reverentially at the same time was jolting. I checked to see that my kippah was still on my head. Then I thought through what I should do. I decided to just stand silently, rather than say, Amen. When Hamid finished, I must have looked dumbfounded, because he smiled and said, "Surprised?/*mufaja'a*." During his recitation he had simply been reading his sheet that he held up for me to see afterwards. He already wore his *tagiyah*, so he made no move to cover his head. He folded up his piece of paper, put it back in the pocket of the multi-pocket vest, ubiquitous in many parts of Morocco, from where he had taken it out and continued on with the tour, showing us more graves and pointing out the notable ones. To Hamid, "notable" meant either famous rabbis, or people whom he had known personally and about whom he had an anecdote, complimentary or negative, to share.

Hamid's praying was a performance for us to see that first day. But on subsequent trips, I have seen him pause during his clean-up work to take a sheet out of his fishing vest to silently mouth a few words that are presumably a prayer. The sheets of paper have changed over the years. The writing used to be in Hebrew. I have seen the *kaddish* transliterated into Arabic as well as a prayer transliterated into Latin characters that I did not recognize and have not been able to find subsequently. Again, these are the sheets of paper that he openly shows me when I ask, although he does not always have papers to

show me. I would not feel comfortable in our relationship going through his papers. He is very firmly in charge of our interactions. I am able to ask questions, of course, but he tells the stories that he wants to tell, even if they do not relate to what we were talking about. Hamid shapes his performances for me when I am by his side. But when I have been far off, I feel that he speaks freely, unconscious of my listening.

Performance is not just created by the performer and the audience. There is a reciprocal effect in which the participants are shaped by the performance in which they participate. Guarding the gravesites and offering prayers involve repeating disciplines that cultivated Hamid in being who he is. Let me be clear: the cynic could easily say that being an *'asas*/guardian is a job like any other. He is paid to guard a place. As long as the gravestones are not vandalized beyond recognition, he can collect his check, buy his food, pay his rent and go about his life. I am naturally sympathetic to this view. I was certainly not expecting to see the level of dedication that I witnessed. But Hamid has also learned how to carve and recite Hebrew. Through his performances, he is able to transcend the boundaries of his Muslim identity without transgressing them, at least in his own mind. He is also able to recite words that he does not fully understand in order to bless the residents of the graves that he is charged with protecting.

That Hamid does not understand what he says is tremendously important to him. The indeterminacy of exactly what he is saying allows him to view these acts as spiritually beneficial to the people for whom he is responsible without necessitating him to confess or believe something that he, as an avowed Muslim, cannot do. Praying Jewish prayers does not change his religious identity. He draws a clear line between himself and his Jewish friends. His social identity, though, is thoroughly intertwined with his work in taking care of Jewish graves, and the Jewish remains that reside in them. Hamid has defined his life by doing quasi-Jewish acts for Jews. As I will discuss in the next section, the performance of Jewish prayers in the relative isolation of the graveyards creates a

reputation for the caretaker not just in the cemetery, but also creates social realities for caters like Hamid when they return to town.

Repertoire

In addition to their work in the cemeteries, the guards also interact with the fellow residents of their towns. The guards have an entirely different repertoire of behaviors and performances outside of the synagogues and graveyards where they work. I have found, as in the case below with the guardian of a synagogue in Essaouira, that their performances, authority and created identities either carry over to the town setting and make them a kind of local leading figure, or they are somewhat despised and shunned, as was usually the case of Hamid when he ventured into Sefrou. He received very few greetings, and was welcomed coolly when he went to stores or cafes. In the graveyard Hamid displayed a commanding presence, constructed an image of expertise and was able to discuss the moral experience of caring for his “friends.” But outside of Jewish space, Hamid was simply a Muslim who was too closely connected with Jews and foreigners in a town that I feel is growing increasingly hostile to both.

The exact opposite was the case with Naima, a guardian in Essaouira. When I accompanied her on short walks around Essaouira’s medina, and especially around the former *mellah*, I felt like I was walking with a local celebrity who was greeted at every chance possible. In fact, many people were anxious to serve her and do her bidding when she gave crisp and loud orders to unlock a door or go and fetch something.

I never saw Naima or Hamid go to mosque, but the last guard discussed later on in this chapter did. I never went into mosque with him, despite invitations and assurances that it would be acceptable for me to do so. He was greeted warmly outside the mosque upon arrival, and was not quick to exit afterward. My suspicions that he was chatting with

friends were confirmed when he exited in the midst of a laughing and hand-holding gaggle of worshippers.

Authority over Jewish history is not the only kind of influence that the guards wield. In the cases discussed below, they also give lectures on some of the finer points of Islam to the Muslim Moroccan workers contracted to do repairs that are beyond the guard's abilities. This stems, I think, from a desire to show to the uninitiated laborers who may be finding themselves in a Jewish graveyard for the first time that the guards acting as their overseers are well and truly Muslim, and can demonstrate this with knowledge and expertise. Itto, mentioned below, made this explicit to me after she overheard criticisms. Again, Hamid is the outlier. I never heard him talk to anyone about Islam other than to tell me that he is Muslim and tries not to smoke during Ramadan.

For Naima, the guardian of the Haim Pinto Synagogue in Essaouira, and a sort of supervisor of other guards of Jewish places in the city, her performances in the Jewish holy sites seemed to reinforce and provide potentialities for cultivating her image of power and authority around town. Her case below stands in stark contrast to that of Hamid, who seemed to be a pitiful sight outside of the graveyard, shuffling around Sefrou by himself.

Essaouira

Essaouira, a jewel of a town along Morocco's southwestern coast, remains one of the key pilgrimage sites for visiting Israeli and Jewish tourists. So much so that Naima, a female guard at the Haim Pinto Synagogue, was able to speak Hebrew, instead of just uttering a few words or reciting a prayer or two. Naima was my main informant for all my time in Essaouira. From the first day I met her, she took me around and made introductions to the keepers of the other sites. She kept telling people that I spoke "our Arabic" (Moroccan dialect) and was very impressed with me. Her assistance proved essential, as I was able to gain access to the old Talmud Torah (religious school) and the

cemeteries, both of which I had been unable to enter during my previous trips in the last eight years.

Naima was quiet and did not seem to want to talk when I initially made my way into the synagogue that she was guarding. In fact, when I walked in, I poked around for a couple of minutes before asking if there was anyone guarding the place. I have surprised guards before, and the blame for them not noticing me is usually attributed to me sneaking around like a thief rather than their not being the most alert guards. Accordingly, I was a little surprised when immediately after I called out, a voice answered from above that, yes, there was someone there, and that she had been watching me since I entered the synagogue. I asked if it was okay if I came upstairs, and she replied “*bien sur/of course.*” When she greeted me, I was unsure how to categorize this woman. She was short and had on thick glasses and a brown overcoat that seemed out of season to me, but many people wear winter clothing in summer in Essaouira to avoid the wind and sun. However, her headscarf was confusing. I had very rarely, if ever, seen a Muslim woman in Morocco tie it similarly to how my grandmother does when she wears one: folded in half to make a large triangle, with the long edge flat across the top of the head, coming down over the ears and then tied under the chin, with the opposite point straight down the back with hair showing from the front and top of her head. I associate this kind of tie with nice older Jewish ladies from Europe, and so I immediately wondered if my Moroccan Arabic conversation so far had been a faux pas and I should have been using French, Spanish or Hebrew.

I then started the process that is usually the most fruitful part of my initial interactions with guards, but is also the most uncomfortable for me: this consists of discovering and sharing roots while trying to build up trust for subsequent conversations and relationship development. It can be deeply unsettling for guards who regard themselves as experts providing tourists and pilgrims with information about the site to be of more interest to the visitor (me) than the site itself, which they feel should be the

focus of my attention. Guards tend to be, at this fraught moment, very suspicious of me. I have ruined relationships before they began on a number of occasions by being too quick to ask too many questions (which is why the guard of the Jewish cemetery in Oujda is not represented in this chapter). But as I asked Naima how long she had been here, (with “here” left purposefully vague and meaning either Essaouira or the synagogue itself), she put me at ease and said that her family had been guarding the synagogue and other sites of the Jews of Essaouira for four generations. When I mentioned that she tied her scarf like my grandma did when she wore one, we became fast friends and she even held my hand on a few occasions after that.

Naima then took me around the small synagogue that she was guarding, which was interesting, but not overly so. She took me back downstairs to the study of Rabbi Pinto, and it became clear that Israelis had started coming here. In addition to photoshopped posters of Rabbi Pinto with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, there were glass plaques denoting donations by various benefactors. Also I noticed two *nerot neshama* (memorial candles) lit on top of a bookshelf. When Naima saw me regarding the candles, she told me that I had just missed a gentleman who had come twenty minutes before who had lit a candle for his wife. I asked who had lit the other candle, because it was morning, and neither candle had been burning for very long. She said that she had lit it herself for her father, whom she was really missing that morning. After asking God to be gracious to her deceased father in Arabic, which she repeated, I asked how she came by the candle. The candle that she had lit had the Yiddish “*yahrzeit*” emblazoned on the outside of its metal container, as opposed to the other candle lit for the man’s wife, which was contained in unlabeled glass. She told me, “Oh, you know, the Israelis leave these things behind.”

Sensing that I was possibly a bit dumbfounded, Naima explained that she knew so much about Judaism because she was, after all, the *shomerit*/guardian (feminine). During

all our conversations, she never referred to herself as an *'assasa*, but always as the *shomerit*, preferring the Hebrew term for guard over the Arabic. She said that it was only natural that she should light candles and say prayers for her own father using Jewish religious idioms because, after all, he had, no less than she, grown up in the synagogue, guarding the place, providing kosher meals in the kosher kitchen downstairs [!!!] and generally taking care of the members of the Jewish community when their numbers dwindled to the point that they could not take care of themselves. Naima could not possibly think of doing a memorial ritual for her Muslim father without considering lighting a candle that was specifically made for a Jewish ritual and left by Israelis for that purpose. For multiple generations, her family has helped Jews conduct such rituals when they come to Essaouira. It was therefore unsurprising that when she wished to perform an act to assuage her sadness over her departed father, she performed a Jewish act in a Jewish place in which they had both lived and worked. For Naima, the ritual of lighting a memorial candle fulfilled an emotional need for her and a spiritual need of blessing her father. This was possible specifically because of the spiritual training that she learned from her father, which was reinforced by watching Jewish visitors perform rituals for the decades that she had been responsible for this site. Years of assisting Jews in mourning and remembering their deceased loved ones created the potential for Naima, a Muslim woman, to express her moral experience of longing and nostalgia by means of a Jewish ritual in a Jewish place.

At the conclusion of our tour and talk, Naima offered to exchange phone numbers so that I could call her in the future if I needed help talking my way into any of the other Jewish sites in town. During this process she showed me that she had several people in her phone with Moroccan Jewish last names like Pinto, Macnin and Botbol. She said that when Israeli or other Jewish tour groups came to Essaouira and wanted to pray in the synagogue, but did not have a *minyán*, she would call several of the few members of the

Jewish community still in Essaouira or its surroundings area, in order to have a full, kosher prayer service. I marveled at this and exclaimed, “Wow, you have a lot of responsibility/ *‘andik mosoolia bzaf!*” To which Naima responded, “I am the boss of the Jews here/*Ana al-mosoolia dyal yahoodim heniya.*” Not at all embarrassed to proclaim this role, on the contrary, Naima was keen to display the authority that the Jewish community had invested in her.

As I began to exit the synagogue after talking with Naima for an hour or so, she asked if I would like to see the Talmud Torah just up the street. The word “street” is a bit of a misnomer. The



Figure 10 Recent demolition in Essaouira's mellah

mellah of Essaouira has, over the past four years, been in the process of “redevelopment.” In practical terms, this means that all the buildings that are not currently inhabited by deed holders or are not national historic places are being demolished and even the foundations are being scraped clean. So where once there was a street after emerging from the alley that leads to the Haim Pinto Synagogue, now there is a big open area where several blocks of buildings once stood that is slowly filling with garbage and detritus of Muslim neighbors who do not much care what they throw on the ground in the wreckage of the former *mellah*.

Naima held my hand as we walked up the street to the building she indicated, but we found the doors locked. Several young men hurried up to explain to Naima that the door was locked. She exclaimed a little testily that that much was already clear to her, and



Figure 11 The rubble of a partially-demolished house in Essaouira

that they should find the guard. They eagerly spread out looking for him, but did not have to look far. He was squatting in the shade on the other side of what had once been a block of houses, but was now just leveled debris. When one of the youths jogged up to him, they

exchanged some words that I could not hear from that distance, and he immediately hurried over. Naima told him to give me a good tour and show me whatever I wanted to see and then left me after an embrace and some cheek kisses.

The guard of the Talmud Torah took me around for twenty minutes or so. The Talmud Torah had been turned into an Alzheimer's clinic as well as a nursery school for Muslim kids. The guard hauled out an old Hebrew language plaque that had proclaimed the purpose of the building and the date of the foundation as well as the school's opening. The plaque had been taken off the wall and put in a back room during the remodeling, which spared this building from being torn down like most of the other buildings. The guard was incredibly anxious to give me a good show and took me to every room of the building, including the kitchen where they still have a few of the old report cards from the Jewish students in the 1960's. He then took me to the roof and showed me what would have formerly been a beautiful view of the rooftops of the entire *mellah*, but was currently

just an overview of the destruction of the *mellah* and left me feeling quite somber. Seeing my change in expression, the guard became quickly apologetic and asked if he had done something wrong. I told him no, it was just sad to see the *mellah* disappear. He tried to cheer me up, saying that the buildings would all be rebuilt into nice apartments. But nice, new apartments sounded even worse to me than the rubble and I became really quiet. At this point, he switched tactics and told me that he had done his best to give me a good tour, and that I should tell Naima that he did a good job and not that he had made me angry. I told him that I was not angry at all, just sad, but that of course I would give a good report about him to Naima.

At this point, the respect and maybe even fear which men held for Naima was starting to make a real impression on me. Even at the *haunt*/local shop, Naima is in total control and is waited on like a government official, which she is not. It was on another occasion when I wanted to visit one of Essaouira's two Jewish cemeteries that I saw just how far Naima's influence extended. I went out to the cemetery by myself in late morning in order to be sure to meet the keeper before praying, lunch, naps or errands interfered. Despite my careful planning, I encountered a large blue door set in a high stone and cement wall. The door was shut and locked, but creaked occasionally in the strong winds



Figure 12 A Jewish cemetery in Essaouira set against the Atlantic Ocean

coming off the ocean. After knocking on the door as hard as I dared, not wanting to have my actions be misinterpreted as trying to knock it down, I started to look around so as not to have to have made a wasted trip to Essaouira. There

were instructions posted high overhead to knock on the door and wait for the keeper, which I had done. If that did not work, the visitor was instructed to call the posted number. I called, and Naima answered. She was not inclined to help someone she did not know enter the cemetery and started to say goodbye. She eventually remembered me from our previous meeting when I identified myself as the foreigner who spoke Arabic. She said that she would take care of me and make sure that I was able to go wherever I wanted to go. Ten minutes later, a muscle-bound young man approached where I was waiting outside the Jewish cemetery. Initially I was a bit scared as the man came to me directly at a fast walk, did not respond to any of my greetings, and was in much better physical shape than I was. Happily, though, at the last minute he turned from a collision course with me and made for the door lock. He held the door open for me and with a slight bow of his head, he whispered, "*asif/sorry*." I was surprised at this, and thanked him effusively for coming to open the door for me while reassuring him that he had nothing to be sorry for. I had only waited a few minutes, and in any case I was successfully being let into the cemetery. The man smiled at this and told me that I should come over to him if I needed anything. He then disappeared into one of the rooms in the structure at the side of the cemetery that serves as temporary living quarters for the guards as well as pilgrims during the hillulah of Rabbi Pinto, who was buried in the cemetery.

The cemetery itself was at least as interesting as the greeting. The keeper who let me in is the third generation of cemetery keepers in his family. He knows much less about the cemetery than his father and reads almost no Hebrew at all. Guiding people around the site has been largely taken over by Israelis since tourism to the area has increased, due to Essaouira's new airport with direct flights from several European cities. Consequently, the Moroccan guards who used to explain the cemetery to tourists and tend graves for families who are absent are now relegated to the status of mere key-holders by the Israeli pilgrims who are starting to take care of their families' graves in person. With the upswing

in tourism, Israeli guides often accompany Israeli tour groups. Moroccan guides whose Hebrew is less-than-perfect are no longer useful to the pilgrims.

I explored the cemetery for a while, including the mausoleum of Rabbi Pinto, which, like his synagogue, bears the conspicuous evidence of Orthodox Israeli tourism: plaques marking donations, images of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and a newly installed gender segregation curtain which can section off the small space, but has been open every time I visited. Another interesting aspect of the cemetery is the carving on the graves. During the nadir of Jewish knowledge among the local cemetery keepers, without the ability to re-carve the Hebrew inscriptions accurately, and not knowing the prohibitions of carving human figures, male or female human outlines were carved on top of the gravestones. The only distinguishing feature of the carvings is the length of the hair on the figure, with figures of women having longer hair than men. Graves where the gender is not known have intermediate length hair on their carvings.

After saying a prayer, I moved to leave the cemetery. The keeper came out of his little room, made speedily for the door so that I did not even have to turn the knob, and then interposed himself between me and the opening. He thanked me for coming and asked if I could tell Naima that he was sorry and that he had come quickly to help me. I assured him that I would and then he let me leave.

Naima is obviously respected by many people in her immediate surroundings. Unlike Hamid, in Sefrou, her authority carries over to the rest of her social world. There are several reasons for this. The first is the continuity of the spaces where she works – the synagogue – and where she lives – the *mellah*. Unlike Hamid, whose cemetery is outside of town and whose home is on the other side of the old *mellah* of Sefrou, Naima lives where she works, and the people with whom she lives can see her telling foreigners what to do and receiving foreign delegations. Her work is more visible than someone who simply works at a remote cemetery in a place where most other Muslims do not go.

Another reason for Naima's authority comes from her position in the community. She is in charge of the one building in the *mellah* that has never been threatened with destruction. She is thus seen to wield an enormous amount of power in determining what other places are significant, and thus safe from destruction, although this is not really the case. She has no authority over what is destroyed or not. But civic planners do come talk to her about the ongoing "redevelopment" of the *mellah* and about how these plans will affect her site, whereas most other people who live and work in the area are not consulted at all.

Third, Naima has established herself as a sort of overseer of all the Jewish sites in Essaouira. As the Jewish community shrank, and as foreigners started to come back to Morocco in larger numbers, it became expedient for visiting and local Jews to have a single point of contact in the Muslim community to meet their needs. The multitude of relationships that existed when a large Jewish community lived side by side with a Muslim community were no longer in place. Instead, visitors now find it easier and more pleasant to have one phone number to call to have all issues resolved. Naima is that one contact and so money and instructions flow from her to the guards of the other sites. Authority and respect flow in the opposite direction on a path from the various guards and guides to her.

Lastly, and I think most importantly, Naima is seen as being able to tell foreigners – Israelis, Jews and/or others – how to act, when to come to prayers, when the synagogue will be open, and what is for (kosher) dinner. This is significant power for a local woman to wield. When wealthy, well-dressed foreigners, who often descend on Essaouira in packs of large SUVs, are directed in what to do and where to go by a Moroccan woman, Muslim residents of the *mellah* take notice. I heard from many people, not just Naima, that she is perceived as the boss of the Jews. This authoritative identity is easily translated into social power in the streets of the Essaouira medina.

Authentic “Experts”

Guards like Hamid and Naima are not the only people who are attached to Jewish cemeteries. A host of other people, such as taxi drivers, unofficial guides and guards who have taken personal responsibility for a Jewish cemetery that have been abandoned, but really know nothing about it, also try to define themselves as experts who will “explain” the site to tourists, usually for a nominal fee. But how is one to distinguish between the actual ritual experts and the self-styled “experts”? The veracity of the stories they tell and authenticity of their performances to Moroccan Jewish tradition differ, but both types of guards are certainly acting performatively. For many tourists, as long as they hear a good story that touches their hearts and for which they do not have to pay too much money, they are happy. In fact, I have been told a couple of times that I “ruined” a vacation by asking follow-up questions to tourists who were saddened to learn that the story that they had come to cherish since they heard it was completely different from the version that the guard had told to a tour group of Moroccan nationals just an hour earlier. They told me that they wished they had never talked to me, and wished they could have just enjoyed the heartwarming story of uncomplicated peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Jews.⁷

But what about the descendants of those whose remains are entombed in the cemetery, and the pilgrims who come to venerate Morocco’s many Jewish saints? These visitors presumably are after more than just simulacra and would be very disappointed to find the care of their ancestors’ graves to be in the hands of a parasitic opportunist. I use “parasite” here in two of Michel Serres’ senses of the term: one who benefits from another without returning any benefit, and a source of noise or conflicting information apart from

⁷ This reaction is most common after I ask what version of the story of Sol Hatchuel they had heard in their trip to the Fes Jewish cemetery. For a very complete treatment of several of the versions of this sad story, see Vance, Sharon. 2011. *The Martyrdom of a Moroccan Jewish Saint*. Leiden: Brill.

the intended information – as “static” on a “signal.”⁸ Visitors pay money to guards like Hamid to make sure that he says the correct prayer at their parents’ graves. The pilgrims do not want to travel thousands of kilometers to arrive at a grave that is indistinguishable from the many others surrounding it. They expect the graves to be well-carved, well-preserved, and set apart from all of the others with one of the new mini-mausoleums that seem to be growing over every grave with the name Pinto on it all over the country. I have seen the results of untrained cemetery keepers who destroy graves in order to build a fancy new mini-mausoleum on their own initiative. In the process they often drip concrete and paint all over the grave they were trying to protect. The point of these actions is trying to attract tourists and pilgrims to some minor saint’s tomb over which they have appointed themselves guardians. But then there are also guards who work with the High Atlas Foundation and the Jewish Community Council in Casablanca to carefully preserve graves while at the same time building infrastructure that will meet the expectations of the expanding pilgrimage market. Itto, who guards the tomb of David ouMoshe and the surrounding cemetery, is one such authentic guard.

Timzerit

Returning to Timzerit feels to me like coming home. Of all the sites that have I visited on these long research tours, Timzerit feels most similar to the kinds of villages I lived and worked in when I spent my first couple of years in Morocco. It is small, and is just one of a collection of villages strung along a series of interconnecting steep-sided river valleys in the otherwise dry south of Morocco. South-central Tamazight is the language most often heard there, but the village is close enough to the main highway between Marrakech and Ouarzazate that Moroccan Arabic is also understood by most men and

⁸ Serres. 2007.

some women. This fact has been incredibly important to me because the guard of the local Jewish cemetery is an Amazigh woman named Itto, who, despite her quintessentially Amazigh facial tattoos and name, is perfectly comfortable in Moroccan Arabic, as well as in French. She can also carry on simple conversations in Hebrew. One cannot journey to meet her in Timzerit directly, however, unless one owns a car. By bus, the journey from all directions leads to Agoïm, and from there to a dead-end road to Timzerit.

Seconds after getting off of a bus from Marrakech to Ouarzazate at the little town of Agoïm, I found myself whisked into a waiting taxi, riding by myself in what was in fact the largest taxi in the area on my way out to Timzerit, home of the famous shrine of David ou-Moshe. It was very telling that the one grand taxi going to Timzerit was a 1982 Peugeot 505 10-seater, while the rest of the cars at the taxi stand were Mercedes 240D or 190D 6-seaters. The route with the most patrons required the largest and fanciest car. The driver for this route, who I will call Badr, was a tremendous source of information, even though my spoken Tamazight is not great and is a different dialect than what is spoken around Agoïm. Badr is the first point of contact for larger groups of pilgrims and tourists in the area. Because motor coaches cannot navigate the hilly and potholed rural dirt track that leads out to Timzerit, they disgorge their passengers at Agoïm to be ferried the few kilometers out to the Jewish cemetery by Badr and his 10-seat Peugeot. During the short ride, Badr tries to use his French to explain a bit of local history to the pilgrims, emphasizing the rosier aspects and shying away from the episodes that might explain why the Jewish communities abandoned this area of Morocco relatively quickly.

On my first or second trip out to the cemetery, I asked Badr who went to visit David ou-Moshe: whether they were just foreigners, or if Moroccans went too. He answered that Moroccans went also, and when I asked if it was just Jews who visited, he said that Muslims visited, too. I wanted to know what he thought of Muslims going to venerate Jewish saints, so I asked why they go there. He said, in Arabic “*bash itlubu min Allah shi haja*/in order to request something from God.” Every time I have asked Badr if he ever asked God for anything



Figure 13 Timzerit Jewish cemetery

at David ouMoshe’s tomb, he just laughs and changes the subject. Curiously, when I asked Badr's brother Muhammed the same set of questions as he was driving the taxi back to Agoïm, he said that only foreign Jews went to the cemetery. When I asked why Muslims do not visit, his conversation-ending response was, “*wesh sma ‘ti min jehennam*/have you heard [of] hell?” Badr, contrary to his brother, has established a little niche for himself in conducting the parade of tourists and pilgrims out to Timzerit and shares his “expertise” with anyone who will listen. Most of the time when I have ridden out with him, he wants to come along with me as I go through the graveyard and enter into the David ouMoshe mausoleum and synagogue complex that has been built in the last several years. He is exceedingly careful not to try to answer any questions that I have in the graveyard

complex, which has grown to include “houses” for the hundreds of Jewish pilgrims who come to visit on David ouMoushe’s hillulah. Badr is out of his depth in the cemetery, and he knows it. Instead of making up answers, he just says, “Wait for Itto.”

The reception I received at David ouMoshe's complex has always been both warm and impressive. There I usually meet a woman named Itto, who has overseen the construction of a massive new complex for the hillulah to David ou-Moshe's gravesite. Although she was initially shy around me, she quickly warmed up and spoke in a mix of Darija, Southern Tamazight and Hebrew to me. She is a small woman, partially bent over from carrying heavy loads, but still able to straighten up and issue commands to the scores of workmen whom she directs each year as they continually improve the site.

The first time that I met Itto, she was demonstrating her characteristic energy and authority. No one was supervising the pouring of concrete for the various houses that pilgrims inhabit for their yearly pilgrimage. The workers were just settling down for an after-lunch (and after-tea) nap. Itto walked out of her house to investigate who had just arrived in the grand taxi, and she saw the workers lying down. Perceiving that they were being watched with displeasure, about a third of the workers hurriedly busied themselves with their tasks. I would find out later that those who got back to work were regular



Figure 14 The inside of the prayer place in the Timzerit cemetery over which Itto supervised the construction

laborers at the David ouMoshe complex and had had prior interactions with Itto. The rest of the workers looked up, saw an old, bent-over woman, and started to mock their co-workers for being scared of her. Itto raised herself to her full height, and recited *Sura al Najm*, verse 39: “There is not for man except

that for which he strives.” And then added in Moroccan Arabic in a quiet but very stern voice, “There is blessing in movement/*Fi al-haraka, baraka*. You can work, or you can leave. What do you want to do?” The workmen were puzzled at being addressed with such authority and in Arabic by a woman (in a heavily Amazigh area). In my travels in and around the area, usually the women who are beyond grade-school age have limited Moroccan Arabic and use mostly a Southern Tamazight dialect. The still-resting laborers looked to their companions, who were now hard at work, as if to question how seriously they should take the old woman. I saw one of the local workers who had been busily stacking the concrete forms and but tried to seem as if he were ignoring the conversation nod his head barely perceptibly. I was not the only one to see that nod, indicating that Itto did in fact have the power to dismiss the workers if they did not resume their tasks, because all the men shortly returned to their work. By the time I left after my first visit a few hours later, the entire first floor of one of the buildings had its hollow ceramic brick walls completed. Such a task usually takes about a week in Rabat. Itto was able to marshal Qur’anic verses, Moroccan proverbs and her authority in the Jewish cemetery to cause her will to be done, even as an old woman exercising authority over young men.

The intervening years since those first meetings have lowered Itto’s usual stance even further, but still have not prevented her from being able to return to full height when she feels the need to do so. She reminds me frequently that she and her husband have been guards at this cemetery since 1999. I asked Itto why she came to Timzerit and why her family members were guards at this pilgrimage site. She said, “Not forgetting the Moroccan Jews and helping them is important for us as Moroccans. We were friends. I am here because this is important to Morocco.” Like Moha and Hamid from Chapter Three, Itto’s sense of what is proper in Morocco and her sense of her ideal moral self necessitate her seeing Jews and Muslims being together and protecting each other, or at least each other’s graves. She seemed very comfortable with me after a re-introduction from Badr,

and even made the first move to shake my hand and called me, “*wil’dy*/my son.” This is not exceedingly unusual, but it is infrequent enough that I always appreciate it.

Not only Itto’s willingness to shake my hand distinguished her from other women that I met in the area, but also her mouthfull of gold teeth. Most other women of her age and younger just had empty sockets where they had lost their teeth. Clearly the combination of supervising workers, meeting and interacting with foreigners like me, in addition to overseeing the chaos that is the yearly *hillulah*, demonstrated that Itto was a powerful woman in her context, and that she was well compensated for her work. As in the case of Naima, her power initially stemmed from her ability to be seen by the local public as participating in important conversations with foreigners and giving out instructions to them. But this power would be short-lived in a popular pilgrimage site like this if Itto were not able to perform her tasks with skill and expertise in the religious requirements that the many pilgrims demand from her.

Unlike other guardians, who might desecrate a cemetery in an attempt to encourage tourism, Itto was able to raise the massive, and in my opinion tasteful, prayer space and mausoleum to David ouMoshe without destroying any of the other graves, or even disturbing the grounds outside of the mausoleum. The numbers of pilgrims to the site grow every year because Itto, almost singlehandedly, has been able to direct the construction of safe and comfortable lodgings for the weary travelers as well as ensuring the provision of kosher wine and food that is both sourced locally and brought in from Casablanca and Marrakech. She ensures that not just the celebrity graves, but also all the graves scattered over the hillside are maintained in good condition and that the names engraved on them continue to be legible.

Most importantly, Itto’s expertise is recognized by the pilgrims. The various groups that come to the *hillulahs* in Morocco have chosen what I have come to recognize as “house leaders.” The Moroccan-Israelis, the international Chabadniks, the Casablancans and the

Marrakechis, all seem to keep to themselves somewhat during the days before the services. When someone needs something, especially the foreigners, they look for a local contact to provide them with ibuprofen, to hem a skirt, or even to steam women's wigs that have become disheveled after travel. Because wig wearing is not a common practice among Orthodox Moroccan Jews, the need for this service took me by surprise. The Moroccan sage Baba Sali, Rabbi Israel Abu Hatsera, felt so strongly that wigs were against the Halakha that he told a group of women, "Listen, when you arrive in the world to come, they will burn you. They will start burning from the wig, and then they will burn you."⁹ I can only point to wig wearing as a marker of the rise of non-Moroccan Jewish influence at these sacred sites. Itto did not seem surprised at all by this additional demand for her attention.

Itto for years has been the person that these visitors have turned to for help. Because of her years of experience in providing kosher wine in addition to freshly steamed and styled wigs, as well as the proficiency in Hebrew she has acquired over time, her reputation as a local expert who is able to quickly and halakhically provide for the needs of the pilgrims is reinforced and extended to new pilgrims every year. Itto does not seem to promote her identity as an authority figure as openly as Naima. However, she is extremely careful to cultivate the image of herself as a capable and punctilious local expert in providing all that visiting Jewish tourists and pilgrims might need. Badr, on the other hand, with his broken French and obvious trepidation at the holy site, would probably never rise to the same level of expertise as Itto, even with his charming stories and his monopoly of transportation for pilgrims in and out of Timzerit.

⁹ Galahar, Ari. 2010. "Rabbi Yosef Comes out against Wig-wearing." Ynetnews. June 09, 2010. Accessed August 11, 2016. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3949586,00.html>.

The Heart of Performance: Recitation of Relationships

In addition to displays of authority and competence at the Jewish graveyards, Muslim guards have attained notoriety for themselves with Jews who do not make regular returns to the area. However, when Jews who live outside of Morocco pay Muslims to say prayers and take care of the graves of their ancestors, several performance-related questions need to be considered. What actions are at the heart of these interaction between Muslims and Jews? I believe that the performance of instilling confidence during the initial contact, which, if successful, leads to a formal contract for payment for grave-tending, is just as important as the performance of the actual ritual service for which the guard is paid.

For the people who are deputized to take care of Jewish cemeteries, the ability to facilitate a business exchange with people living far away is the act that establishes their authority. The entire process, from the initial contact to performance of the required acts starts with an initial demonstration of competence and knowledge of Jewish tradition. An initial economic act of competence and trustworthiness is demonstrated to the client. Afterward, the guard performs the actual upkeep of the graves, including both spiritual and physical work done at the graveside, which the absent client trusts will be completed, but cannot verify because of distance.

During one visit to Morocco, I commissioned some work to be done at an extremely distantly related aunt's grave in one of the Jewish cemeteries of Rabat, which was to be completed while I was conducting research in other sites. In the last section of this chapter, I analyze the performance of authority that was meant to instill confidence in me to pay for both specific acts and long-term care for the grave. The guard in question took great pains to convince me that his services were more valuable than "sticking prayers in a wall." He argued that his identity, skill, and accreted relationships with Jews made him effective in acting out Jewish rites that were worth my money and would be beneficial

to my great-aunt. He stressed that his attachment to both the Jewish community and the Jewish graveyard were what made him a particularly effective caretaker. His argument was, at its heart, an indigenous claim of the importance of performance in creating a moral self, even if the performance also carries the potential of an economic benefit to him. This performance-before-the-performance of identity – “I live with the [dead] Jews,” was, for me, the most exciting part of my interaction with the cemetery guards. For the guards themselves, this pre-performance is the part of the interaction with the greatest economic ramifications.

Rabat

I had a difficult time locating the Jewish Cemetery outside of Rabat,¹⁰ partly because I did not know that it was located next to a Christian cemetery, and partly because even 300 meters away, no one seemed to know what I was talking about. Even the attendant at the neighboring Christian cemetery, which shares a wall with the Jewish cemetery, was not sure where it was. When I finally entered, in the years before the gate was permanently shut, I was quickly confronted by the ‘*asas*, who said that the place was prohibited to Muslims. I am always tickled when people have a hard time guessing where I am from or who I might be, but I decided to leave that for another time. I told the ‘*asas*, who was much less interested in speaking to me than Hamid from Sefrou had been, that I had friends buried there. He looked me over, and asked, “*fin tagiyah dyalk*/where is your cap (kippah)?” I told him that I was not religious in that way. After looking me over again, he must have decided that I was not a threat and asked me who my friends were.

¹⁰ There is another Jewish cemetery in Rabat, immediately outside Bab al Hadd downtown, that I visited, but did not study.

It is useful to pause and deconstruct the exchange at this point. When the 'asas saw my face from approximately 15 meters away, he assumed that I must have been Muslim, though possibly not Moroccan, I cannot be sure. Upon coming closer and hearing my accented Darija, he knew that I was not a native Arabic speaker. However, I did not conform to his schema of what Jews looked like because I was not wearing a kippah. Indeed, there was another Jewish couple sitting on a bench placed next to what looked like an oft-visited grave. The older gentleman was wearing a *tagiyah*, as most of the visitors surely did. He was also wearing nicer clothes than a poor graduate student and conformed more readily to the image that the 'asas must have been expecting.

To answer the question of who my friends were, I simply gave the guard the name Pinto. This must have been acceptable, because he quickly took me directly to the grave of Esther Pinto. He explained that he memorized where all the graves were and told me that Esther's descendants had moved to America. Clearly, he correctly guessed where I was from. The 'asas was not interested in talking anymore and left me at the graveside to pray, but continued to look over at me suspiciously while I prayed. After I prayed, I cleaned some moss and snails, as well as bird droppings off of Esther's grave. At this, the 'asas came back over, with a rock in his hand, and offered it to me, to put on Esther's grave, which I gladly did. I was moved and thanked him for his good work in keeping the place safe and well-tended.

To my surprise, he thanked me in return. He said that it always makes him very sad to see graves go untended and unvisited. "It's not good when people stop [Caring? Visiting? Sending money?]. You can see the graves that people visit, but these others are broken and look bad." He looked over at Esther's grave and shook his head, saying that her family used to come and visit, but they do not come anymore. He talked about how his

father had guarded the cemetery, and how he learned the stories of the occupants from him, and would talk with people who visited to learn where they were from and whom they were visiting. Here was another cemetery guard who could read the gravestones and clearly was emotionally invested in the lives and stories of the Jewish bodies and graves for which he was responsible.

In the case of the *'asas* of Rabat – who I will not name at his request – whether describing his shared past with the local Jewish community, helping modern visitors find graves, or taking care of the graves in the absence of visitors, it seems clear to me that he was performing an emotional service for himself at the same time as he was discharging his duties in the cemetery. After observing him for some years, I believe that he needs to take care of the graves in order to feel at ease with himself, as if he derives peace and happiness from active work on the graves rather than passive guarding. When he cleans the graves or works around the cemetery, he seems very pleased, and often smiles while he works. At other times, such as while resting, or when he is prevented from carrying out his duties by visitors (the *'asas* refrains from working while people visit or pray by the graves) he becomes sullen and downcast. During the hours we spent together, I learned that asking questions of the *'asas* when he is away from the graves results only in curt answers. When he tends to graves, or even just walks around inspecting them, he is much happier, and speaks much more expansively.

After my first visit years ago, and after renewing contact with the *'asas* as described in Chapter One, I began to visit the tomb of my “great aunt” Esther about three times a month.¹¹ I had not intended to do major research in Rabat, preferring instead to travel to other sites away from where I lived. However, I was able to cross the city more easily and frequently than I was able to cross the country, so I visited the Rabat cemetery often. Also,

¹¹ The *assas* assigned this family relation to me. I think there is a *very* distant relation, and some investigation has born this out. But the relationship is not direct or close.

I feel indebted and attached to “Aunt Esther.” I never knew her and I do not know her children. It is possible that I have the old stories confused and that we are not even related at all. But hers was the first grave that I came to identify with, and she was my first real connection to the cemeteries that I was visiting. I felt personally responsible for her, as well as feeling like I needed to do something for the Moroccan Jewish community more generally. I have paid countless dirhams to guards and guides over the years, but I wanted to fund the upkeep of Esther’s tomb, especially because her immediate family was not interested or able to do it themselves.

The *‘asas* of Rabat has always been more standoffish to me than any other cemetery guard with whom I have been able to work. This has continued to be the case despite my years of visiting and the tips that I pay him each time I leave. He knows me, and despite not being able to remember my name, he now swings open the iron gate with a nod of recognition. Then he escorts me to Esther’s grave. He answers any questions I have during the 30-second walk, and then leaves me alone until I leave. It is during these very brief talks that we have been able to exchange some information about ourselves. As mentioned in Chapter One, he told me about his son’s bicycling career and about his family’s tradition of guarding the graves. He also told me that my hairline and the shape of my head reminds him of Esther. That seemed oddly specific to me, so I kept trying to ask him what he meant when we arrived at the grave, but he departed from me silently. I think he likes doing that, raising an issue, and then quickly returning to his house in the corner of the cemetery, or going to the other side of the cemetery to work. He never remains close to me or to any of the other visitors at the graves. He either disappears into his house, or if there are people on both sides of the cemetery, he will “run an errand,” which mostly involves him sitting immediately outside of the cemetery until one of us leaves. He then returns to the cemetery and shuts and locks the gate behind him. When I first walk up to the cemetery, if there is no one else present, the keeper is either visible,

working among the tombstones, or he is somewhere off to the right of the gate, in his house. It is clear that he enjoys his work, but again, he refuses to do it while there are visitors inside the graveyard.

One day, however, I was able to strike up a conversation with the *'asas* on my way out. I asked how long the side of Esther's grave had been damaged. The graves are above-ground containers for the bodies in Rabat, and the white marble side of the grave had fallen off. There was some interior cement and mortar, but I could see into the dark interior of the box when I passed by the right side to scrape off some moss and snails. The sudden permeability of the grave made me feel sad – I have often seen the effects of animals on incompletely sealed graves in Morocco. To tell the truth, it also felt quite spooky to visit an open grave. The *'asas* told me that the heavy winter rains and very cold temperatures of early 2015 had caused a lot of damage around the cemetery. The excessive moisture had caused a whole marble slab on the side of the grave to become detached. When it fell off of the grave to the cement surface below, it broke into several pieces.

The grave itself, unlike many others, was fairly plain with no engravings on the side of the tomb. The top had an inscription in Hebrew and French, and at one time there had been a raised carving of a book with a small picture of Esther or some kind of seal attached to it. Many of the graves still feature a small tableau depicting the occupant. The book carving had long ago broken, and whatever seal or picture had been attached to it had long ago disappeared. Half of the carving was on the ground next to the grave, and one of the supports for the carving stuck out from the top of the grave. Most of the marble from the supporting part of the grave carving was still there, so that it was obvious what it had looked like. But a significant chunk of the marble book was missing, so it was unfixable.

Repairing the side of the grave would be a relatively easy task, especially compared with fixing the top of the grave or the small book sculpture. On my way out of the cemetery, I asked the *'asas* if he knew someone who would be able to do the work. He stared at me

for a second, and I felt sure that I would again be dismissed in silence and that I would have to wait until I was escorted to Esther's grave the next time I visited to get an answer. He answered rather gruffly that I should know that, of course, he could do the repair. Uncharacteristically, he took me by the hand and led me around the cemetery, showing me bits and pieces of graves that were whiter and cleaner than the rest and told me how he had been paid to replace and repair parts of graves that were falling apart. In addition to the display of his masonry expertise, which he did not comment on other than pointing to the fixed parts of the graves, he told me about knowing who was buried in those graves, where their families were, how often they visited, and what they had commissioned him to do. This demonstration of his usefulness to the families that populated graveyard took over twenty minutes. Most of the graves had not had any kind of major reconstructive work done to them, but many showed the telltale lighter marble that marked a recent improvement. That he could take me on a tour of the graves that he had repaired and discuss the details of the descendants of the graves was obviously intended to impress me and convince me of his suitability for the task.

I made the mistake of asking him how good he was at masonry. I am an anthropologist, but also a poor graduate student. He had quoted me a price for repairing the grave that was more than my monthly stipend when I first lived in Morocco. I wanted to make sure that I would not be paying the same price again after the rains of the next winter if his work was not of high quality and the grave crumbled again. I was very happy to pay what he was asking, and honestly, I was happy to have the opportunity to sacrifice a bit for Esther. I felt a sort of reciprocal obligation that comes with kinship, even of the fictive kind. She and so many other deceased Jews whose graves I visited, had given me the research topic that has been the focus of the latest decade of my life, as well as given me a sense of belonging. I had done very little for her or any of the other residents of the graves I visited aside from the occasional prayers and visits. If for no other reason, I was

glad for the chance to pay for grave repairs to prove to myself that I was not just another parasite, preying on the Jewish cemeteries for my livelihood without giving anything back.

When I asked the 'asas about his technical skills, he screwed up his face as if I had just made a derogatory remark about him. He asked if I had not heard him talk about all the people that he had served and who trusted him. He insisted that through his work, he had already demonstrated that he had been a "friend to the Jews." To the cemetery keeper's way of thinking, the only necessary qualification for doing all the important repair work in the cemetery was to know the Jewish community and to be trusted by them, not formal training in masonry. The keeper told me that this recitation of relationship had sufficed for the many Jews over the years who had a much closer relationship with, and had spent much more time and money on, the graves of the deceased Jews who surrounded us than I did. Taking my cue that the 'asas was offering me an oral resume that I did not initially understand the value of, I paid him a deposit and left for the day.

I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of what I missed in misjudging his rehearsal of all the graves and families he has helped repair and maintain. The Rabat cemetery keeper performed his personal narrative of repeated care for Jewish graves, and in so doing, caring for living Jews who love the residents of those graves as a means of reaffirming his idealized moral self as a trusted and *trustworthy* partner in caring for Jews. I heard his demonstration of his life's work, by which he defines his character, in the same way that I had listened to my friend, Mounir, the furniture maker, describe the different couches that he makes. They are not the same. Both men take enormous pride in their work, but the cemetery keeper thinks of himself as *the Jewish cemetery keeper*, whereas for Mounir, it is just his job. The 'asas understands himself, and performs his identity for me and others, as the practitioner of his moral obligation and commitment to Jews in his care. In other words, he is what he does, and what he does is faithfully take care of Jewish graves.

When I returned to the cemetery about a week later, the *'asas* was waiting for me and he was excited to tell me about his progress as he escorted me to Esther's grave. He had located the marble to repair the grave and it was to be delivered the next day. I thanked him for his diligence and then we parted as usual when I arrived at the grave. Not knowing what to do at a grave that I had come to visit so often, and still frankly horrified by the opening in the grave, I made a hasty retreat to the exit after ensuring that there were no snails or moss on the grave. I fished the balance of the payment out of my pocket and gave it to the *'asas*. He accepted it quite happily and bade me farewell, possibly for the first time.

The next time I came back to the cemetery, about a month later because of travel and research at other sites, I was disappointed to find that not only was the *'asas* absent – I was let into the cemetery by his son, who admitted me without comment after recognizing my face – but also that Esther's grave had not been repaired yet. I walked to the grave myself and quickly turned to leave, thinking to give a piece of my mind to the *'asas*' son who was being trained to take over the family business. I wanted to say that If you charge poor American graduate students a lot of money to repair a grave and you do not do it in a month after confirming that you had all the supplies, then you are liable to be portrayed very negatively in a dissertation, and maybe also on tripadvisor.com. I do not have much contact with Rabati Moroccan Jews across the world whom I could warn that they were spending their money on a deceitful cemetery keeper. But I have a network of Moroccan Jewish friends, colleagues and acquaintances, and I intended to raise hell after being defrauded.

Just as my anger was cresting, the *'asas* saw me and jogged over from the other side of the cemetery. I had not seen him and assumed when his son let me in that he was absent. The *'asas* took my hand when he arrived and steered me away from Aunt Esther's tomb to another area of the cemetery that I had not been to since I first completed a tour

several years before. This area was all overgrown, with weeds and bushes consuming several graves. Just as I was starting to feel alarmed and wondering if I was being taken over to this part of the cemetery that could not be seen from the entry gate for some nefarious purpose, the guard stopped. He pointed to a very pretty piece of white marble. He apologized for the delay, and said that the unseasonably late rains had kept him from finishing the repairs of Esther's grave. Perhaps seeing my red face for the first time, he asked if I was angry with him. Feeling quite sheepish, I told him that I was not angry after all.

He replied happily that when his son met me at the gate, he had been telling a gentleman that he was talking with on the other side of the cemetery that Esther's grave was being taken care of by her distant descendant from America whose head looked like hers. I laughed and thanked him, and he told me that he would bring a grinder and scrape off the moss and detritus from the top of the grave and then re-carve it at no additional cost because he was so happy to have Esther's grave provided for again.

Now I belong to the catalogue of people who have trusted the 'asas of the Jewish cemetery of Rabat to preserve and repair the graves of [in my case *very* distant] relatives. This web and historical memory of relationships, not just with the deceased, but also with the living, is a key component of the performance of authority for cemetery keepers. Far from being a parasite who preys on the community trying to realize an *abuse value* and give nothing in return, the Rabat 'asas cultivates his identity through *servicing* as not just the keeper of material Jewish history, but also as the prime intermediary between Jewish places and bodies in Morocco and Jewish patrons around the world. Thus, the desire of the cemetery keeper to take me on a tour as a means to perform the litany of his friendships and, accordingly, his duties, couples with the desires of absent Jews that their relations' graves be cared for to create a situation in which the Muslim and Jew *being-with* is not only possible, but necessary to realize their separate goals through a common set of

actions: care for Jewish graves. The relationships that the cemetery keeper can attest to as a result of his long partnership with the Jewish community, rather than his skills at cutting grass, repairing graves or even keeping vandals out, are the most essential marker of his usefulness to the Jewish community and his personal conception of himself as a friend of Jews.

Building an identity that carries authority both inside and outside of the cemetery is an important focus of the guards' performances. Certain guards, like Hamid and Itto, are more successful in one aspect than another. Hamid is the ultimate authority in the Jewish cemetery of Sefrou as he is able to say prayers and to physically shape the graveyard as he re-carves and repaints the graves. When he leaves the Jewish cemetery, however, he is not received warmly by his fellow Muslim residents of Sefrou. Itto, by contrast, is seen by her neighbors as a powerful woman who is able to wield considerable influence over the people who work for her. However, when the *hillulah* is performed, her role essentially is that of a trusted servant.

Naima, on the opposite end of the spectrum, is somewhat of a celebrity and power-broker around the *mellah* as well as being an authority in Jewish spaces. She influences the Shabbat services by calling up local Jewish members and informing them where there will be a *minyan* in much the same way that she influences the diets of the remaining Jewish community of Essaouira by providing kosher meals. Her notion of herself as a *shomerit* is acted out and reinforced not just by her enabling local and visiting Jews to perform their rituals, but by her appropriation of their rituals in her private practices, such as lighting a memorial candle for her dead father, not on the anniversary of his death as in a *hillulah*, but simply because she miss him. This adaptation of ritual – which not only connects Naima's family to the Jewish community, but is an intergenerational bond that

links together the members of Naima's family – is one of the better examples of how performance can create inter-religious possibilities for ritual that at the same time do not, at least for the practitioners, transgress confessional boundaries.

In the case of the keeper of the Rabat cemetery, I have presented a case of the construction of an idealized moral self by means of the recitation of relationships between a Muslim man and the Jewish graves that he tends. It is “idealized” in that he demonstrates only successes of his work taking care of the Jewish site, without mentioning failures or difficulties. I say that he creates a “moral” self, because again, the task of cemetery care, for the *‘asas*, transcends economically beneficial employment, and becomes an opportunity for him to demonstrate “friendship” to the other in ways that the deceased other or descendants will never be able to pay him back. This is in line with the work of Charles Taylor in his *Sources of the Self*.¹² Taylor points out that this use of creative imagination in the *‘asas* describing himself and detailing his past service to the Jewish community is a way for the *‘asas* to concretize the substantive goods of ordinary life. For the *‘asas* to understand himself, he needs to be a service to his Jewish clients, as Taylor points out, “to know who you are is to be oriented in moral space.”¹³ The *‘asas* orients his life, physically, economically, geographically and morally, around serving the demands of Jewish ritual care for the dead.

The caretaker's claim to authority and suitability for his job is not merely the past performance of his job, but also that other Jews have trusted him to take care of their ancestors. His professional resume is composed of relationships, rather than skills. In the same way, his authority in the graveyard is maintained by his service to the few remaining Jews of Rabat. He greets them silently at the gate, watches over their ministrations to the

¹² Taylor, Charles. 1992. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹³ Taylor. 1992. 24.

resting place of their ancestors from afar, and then escorts them out of the cemetery, only bothering to talk if one of the visitors has a request for him to pay particular attention to a grave. His silence belies the enormous amount of information that he knows, both about not only each person interred in his cemetery and also the observations he makes about the visitors who come to pay their respects. It is this information that he alone, of all the non-Jews in the city, possesses that he uses to construct his professional identity.

The cemetery keeper holds the key, and correspondingly, the power of admission or denial to the cemetery, as I have experienced. There is a tremendous amount of trust and power that comes with policing the control of boundaries of a sacred place that is not one's own. The guard is not afraid to wield that power. However when I asked how I could trust him to do a good job with the restoration of great-aunt Esther's grave, his response was not a display of keys or even a display of craftsmanship, but a recitation of names and associated narratives. Competence and the construction of the moral self are performed by means of relationships in the Rabat cemetery. For all of the guards I interviewed, authority is constructed by means of a long, and in most cases multi-generational, relationship between the guard and the Jewish community.

Although guards are the only people living in the cemeteries full-time, they are not the only Muslims on an intimate basis with both Jewish spaces and Jewish memories in Morocco. The next chapter takes a sustained look at one Muslim guide who, although he is not connected to the material reminders of Jewish Morocco on a daily basis, nonetheless uses his experience of intimacy with a Jewish family to inform his guidance, and more importantly, to perform his idealized moral (and weird) self.

Chapter 5: Using the Audience to Create the Self: Moroccan Muslim Guide's Performance of Authenticity

Every week, it seems that my wife, one of a multitude of foreigners living in the capital, or even one of my Moroccan friends who pay attention to the English-language press, will send me an article about how Morocco is such a welcoming place for Jewish tourists and anyone interested in Moroccan Jewish history. Though the articles tend to focus on how utterly amazed the visiting authors are that Jewish sites have been preserved in a Muslim country, the guides of these authors usually merit a note or two.¹ The guides – and not the guards or the custodians of the sites – who take authors to visit the sites are essential cultural translators through which the authors come to understand – or not – Moroccan Jewish issues before they write their stories for popular audiences. Guides, much more so than guards, act as intermediaries between the Muslim custodians of Jewish sites in Morocco and *foreign* guests.

The writers of major articles, guide books, blog posts and entries on travel websites like “Lonely Planet” and “TripAdvisor” are usually foreign and almost always employ a guide to mediate Morocco for them. Most reviews of Jewish sites in Morocco on TripAdvisor, for example, show that guides to Jewish areas are uniformly well-liked and trusted. In 2015, as alarming news of terrorist attacks in Tunisia and Egypt grabbed global headlines, tourists who would traditionally

¹ Frank, Michael. 2015. “In Morocco, Exploring Remnants of Jewish History.” *New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/31/travel/in-morocco-exploring-remnants-of-jewish-history.html?_r=0

travel to these countries ended up looking further west to Morocco for their vacation destinations. And it is the guides who are mainly responsible for the reputation of Morocco as a safe place that is so tolerant that they *even* preserve the Jewish sites.

In addition to building a national reputation of Morocco as a tolerant country, many guides compete to build a regional and especially personal reputation for being lovers of Jews. Much of this, as discussed above, is self-serving. Tourists' dirhams will flow to the guide who performs his love for Jews the best, irrespective if the love is feigned or real. This certainly raises the possibility of parasitism. But a few of the tour guides with whom I have spoken cannot tell me about themselves without telling about the important Jews in their lives. Much more telling than that, however, is their reputation in their towns for being "like a Jew/*bhal Yehoodi*." When every time a certain person comes up in conversation, people refer to his close relationships with Jews and Israelis, I know that I have found an important subject for studying how Jews and Judaism are important for the construction of moral selves of Muslims.

Moha, the father of Toudert and Rebha, is one such man. He travels across the country, and Europe, seeking to expand his small apple-growing empire. During his travels he frequently meets foreigners or even urban Moroccans who notice his interest in Moroccan Judaism and take him up on his offers to show them parts of High Atlas Jewish history. This was the cause of my first of several interactions with Moha, though now we are old friends. I have been fortunate enough to travel with him on several of his business trips, as well as joining tours that he has given to historic Jewish villages and rural sites. More important than

that, however, I have also had years of experience sitting with him in his home, with his children, and in his other houses and apartments that he maintains for his business travel. Talking about Jewish Morocco is a part of his everyday repertoire irrespective of whether foreigners are included in the conversation or not. Consequently, Moha offers a unique opportunity to understand one Moroccan's experience of being a Muslim who identifies strongly with the Jewish community. In fact, Moha relies heavily on Moroccan Jews and Judaism in order to explain himself and his world.

Defining “Self” through the Other

Essential to understanding Moha and his daughters in their own words are the descriptions of the life of the family patron – Mubarak, Moha's father. Mubarak lived during the transformative early Twentieth Century. He was part of the first generation in the High Atlas Mountains to interact with the invading French, even as his father – Moha's grandfather – was one of the *mujahideen* riding down from the mountains against the French with long, single-shot muskets.

Moha uses his stories of Mubarak to situate himself among, between and often against, groups such as Arabs, Imazighen, Jews, colonialists, terrorists and the military. Indeed, much of Moha's routine that he performs for new acquaintances consists of telling the story of his father, and using that story to point out all the kinds of people that he does not like. The tales of Mubarak are a key component of Moha's repertoire that he uses not just with strangers and first time acquaintances, but also with old friends and with his children. I have heard Moha perform tales of Mubarak while eating a meal with his family, to the great

delight of his children, but also in the middle of business meetings, to the dismay of his coworkers, who have no doubt memorized the stories as well as I have. Mubarak's name is trotted out most often when Moha wishes to convey his disapproval of either bullying that he has witnessed in person, or some news that Moha understands as an instance of the strong preying on the weak or the violent preying on the peaceful.

The central goal of every telling, though, is to point out that Moha's family, as well as himself, cannot be understood without grasping the close connection with individual Jews. Jean-Luc Nancy's work on *being-with* and *singular-plural* is a useful companion to Moha's own understanding of his life, and the narrative of that life, as inseparable from the Jews who play an outsized role in his stories of himself. His *being* is only *with* his Jewish interlocutors.

I would be remiss – and Moha would be disappointed – if this chapter continued any longer without his father's story, albeit with some of my notes attached. What follows, then, is a sort of chronologically-organized presentation of Mubarak stories. Each of these vignettes is usually broken down into smaller bits. Several months of work went into consulting with Moha in order for me to be able to paste these stories together in what he felt was the correct order. I have tried, at the end of each sub-section, to discuss some of the goals that Moha had in telling a particular portion of Mubarak's story and how the performance of that portion helps Moha to define and understand himself.

Farming & Integrity

Moha's story differs from many narratives that are told about Jewish-Muslim interactions in Morocco. His father, Mubarak, was employed by a Jewish man.² Shlomo was a relatively wealthy rural land owner who employed at least four men in the village of Ait Ayach to work on his orchard and farm. Although this is not often mentioned, Jews in Morocco are known to have been farmers on either their own land or working the land of others. Haim Zafrani quotes H. Hirschberg as saying, "The Jews of the Maghreb farm small rural properties by the sweat of their brow ... earning their living by working the land and raising cattle... pursuing agricultural occupations..."³

Mubarak was a foreman of sorts and was favored above the other farm hands because of his honesty. In order to demonstrate family integrity, Moha tells a story in which unseasonable rains in the High Atlas caused the Moulouya River to flood just as potatoes were being harvested. Ait Ayach is at the base of the mountain range and the flood came quickly and without warning. Happily, the village was situated higher than the fields, and only crops, rather than lives, were lost.

Shlomo's land was divided into six parcels, one each for his three Arab hired hands, one for Mubarak and two for Shlomo to tend personally. The river flooded all six parcels while Shlomo was away at Beni Ouarain (see below). After the flood

² For another, briefer, treatment of Moha's memories of Mubarak, please see Driver, Cory. 2010. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis., 41-2, 46, 48-9, 53-4, 58-60, 78., from which Moha's older stories have been developed.

³ Zafrani, Haim. 2005. *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco*. New York: Sephardic House. 155.

had receded, the three men and Mubarak headed for Shlomo's field to see if there were any potatoes to be salvaged. After digging up all the potatoes, the three other men took the few unspoiled potatoes to their houses and left the spoiled tubers in the field. Mubarak, on the other hand, brought the good potatoes from his and his boss' sections of the field to Shlomo's house and left the bad potatoes in the field. Upon his return, Shlomo was told of the flood and that he, as well as everyone else in the village had lost his entire potato crop. When he got to his home, however, he saw the potatoes that Mubarak had brought him from his own and Shlomo's plot. Instead of castigating the other workers for their theft (which was truly small potatoes), Shlomo instead told Mubarak to take the vegetables he had brought him to his own family.

This incident ingratiated Mubarak to Shlomo and led to further contact between the pair's families. This introduction to the narrative of Mubarak and Sholmo accomplishes much work as a performance in underlining Moha's social views. First, of course, he wants to demonstrate his family's integrity and worthiness of leadership. Even before the flood Mubarak was a trusted foreman and was responsible for his employer's share in Shlomo's absence.

Second, Moha points to the trust and close relations between Mubarak and Shlomo. Not only did Mubarak harvest the crops faithfully, but he put them in Shlomo's house, which he had access to while his boss was traveling. This trust demonstrated by access to his house, and in interacting with Shlomo's family who stayed in the house in his absence, cannot be understated. In a time when society is much more open and gender roles and relationships are changing rapidly, it has still taken me several years to progress to the point where I am allowed to stay in

homes with women while the men are away in Ait Ayach or the surrounding villages.

Third, it is important to note all through this narrative, that Moha cannot understand Mubarak's life, or his own station in life without recourse to discussing Jews as subjects and actors. In many ways, Mubarak is depicted as responding to decisions and actions that Shlomo makes. Moha is certainly a man of action who advocates forcefully for himself when he feels slighted, especially by the electric and water agency during his bid to construct a massive refrigeration plant so that the local farmers could sell apples out of season themselves, instead of having to sell their produce and buy some of it back at a loss. That said, he sees himself, generally, as responding to outside forces and others' actions rather than as a primary agent of action. As theorized in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy on the single-plural, he cannot image himself without others who shape his choices and create both opportunities and obstacles.⁴ Moha's conception of himself necessarily takes into account the motivations and choices of others, and thus his conception of himself as an individual contains multiple wills and actions, not all of which are his.

Fourth, Moha would never miss an opportunity to depict what he firmly believes is the devious character of most Arabs, and by contrast the innate honesty of most Imazighen. I will talk more about this below in the section on the "milk of trust," but it cannot be pointed out too often that core to Moha's understanding of the world is the hierarchy of integrity in the High Atlas with Jews on the top,

⁴ Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Bryne, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Imazighen immediately underneath, Frenchmen and foreigners as a somewhat distant third and then Arabs at the bottom of the scale. Certainly there is room in his schema for individuals of notable character to depart from their inherent ethnic classification either positively or negatively. Additionally, Moha would certainly agree with Michel Serres' theoretical observation about parasitical nature of human activity, as he tends to be quite cynical. Moha understands most people try to maximize abuse-value in all interactions. Moha is not upset by this, but merely on-guard against abuse. In his understanding, at least in the case of some Imazighen and most Jews, their character innately shuns maximizing "abuse-value." Non-Arab foreigners, in Moha's schema, are mostly indifferent to their abuse of others, and Moroccan Arabs (who Moha also considers foreigners, because they settled in the area in only the last several hundred years) actively seek out ways to harm others.

This racist sentiment is somewhat common in Morocco, even outside Amazigh heartlands. An Arab taxi driver in Rabat, who frequently takes my wife home from work, likes to tell a parable that if the French discovered water on another planet, they would build a giant rocket, fly to the new planet, enjoy it and leave everyone else behind. If Imazighen discovered water on another planet, they would build a giant rocket to bring the water back to earth, but the rocket would malfunction and explode, killing the people silly enough to share their good intentions. If Arabs discovered water on another planet, they would build a giant rocket, and use it to bomb the other planet so that no one could have the water.⁵

⁵ An advisor adds: "And if Soussis found water, they would build a shop on the planet to sell the water [back to earth]."

Trading & Formalizing Ties

Due to the burgeoning size of the city of Midelt in the early twentieth century and thanks to the French military presence, many of the locals, Jewish, Arab and Amazigh alike, left their farms and moved into trading or retail. Shlomo joined the high proportion of Jews around North Africa engaged in trade and craft work.⁶ Moha's father initially stayed out on his farm, but he and his family did not lose touch with their Jewish friends. Rather they strengthened their economic ties. This was a common phenomenon. Daniel Schroeter points out that in Morocco and across North Africa, "It was the marketplace above all where Jews and Muslims interacted."⁷ There is no shortage of tales of distrust, dishonesty and discord, in these encounters but as Moshe Shokeid recalls from interviews with Atlas Mountain Jews, "Others are tales of mutual dependence, based on genuine mutual respect, which stress fair play and personal friendship between the Jewish trader or craftsman and his Muslim client, partner or patron."⁸ This is certainly the case with Mubarak and Shlomo.

Shlomo decided to take a slightly different route from most locals, who moved from the countryside and ended up in the city serving the new colonial occupiers. Midelt, less than thirty kilometers from Ait Ayach, had risen in

⁶ Lewis, Bernard. 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 28.

⁷ Schroeter, Daniel . "Trade as a Mediator in Muslim-Jewish Relations: Southwestern Morocco in the Nineteenth Century," *Jews Among Arabs: Contacts and Boundaries*, ed Mark R. Cohen and Abraham L. Udovitch. Princeton: Darwin Press. 113.

⁸ Shokeid, Moshe. 1996. "Jewish Existence in a Berber Environment" in Shlomo Deshen and Walter Zenner. (eds.) *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*. New York: New York University Press. 112.

importance greatly during the French Protectorate. The iron, manganese and lead mines surrounding the area became tremendously important for the French during both world wars as well as the time of rebuilding after the wars. Midelt was the second city in Morocco to be electrified, after Casablanca, and it was the terminus of a narrow-gauge railroad that brought in colonial soldiers and shipped raw materials to Atlantic and Mediterranean ports.

Noticing that several of the newly arrived French officers and miners had a taste for local crafts when furnishing their homes, Shlomo opened a carpet store in the newly constructed souq, just down the hill from the French Quarter. He bought products made by local Amazigh women in their homes and sold them to the French and Moroccan Arabs, who were brought in large numbers from Casablanca, Fes and Meknes to act as interpreters and guides in the Amazigh hinterland. Knowing, however, that wool in the area was of poor quality and fearing to leave his store unattended for long periods of time as he journeyed to find better raw materials, Shlomo realized that he needed a partner to purchase wool from a better source.

Because Mubarak had acted honorably in the potato incident and because he had family near the town of Beni Ouarain, Shlomo selected him and a Jewish man named 'Illo to work with him. 'Illo, who would be Shlomo's partner, was originally from the large Jewish community in Beni Ouarain, but had moved south to Midelt to participate in the mining boom. However, he disliked the conditions in the mine and so joined Shlomo in the carpet business. He wrote letters to his contacts in Beni Ouarain who herded sheep with much higher quality wool than the local variety.

Three times each spring, Mubarak would take the letters from ‘Illo north to Beni Ouarain and come back weeks later with wagons full of wool, which he had purchased from ‘Illo’s Jewish friends. Mubarak would then be paid a fee and return to working on Shlomo’s lands in Ait Ayach. The local women used the wool to make carpets, pillows and blankets that were noticeably higher in quality than the other woolen items being produced in the area. Soon Shlomo, ‘Illo and Mubarak, as well as the women artisans who were fortunate enough to be included in the business venture and received higher quality wool to spin and weave, were doing quite well. It should be noted that even as some Jews prospered more than their Muslim counterparts, the previous social ties remained very much intact. Even economic class differences did not isolate people that religious and ethnic differences had failed to separate. Shlomo Dshen, paraphrasing Lawrence Rosen, observes, “...[R]elations between individuals in traditional Morocco were governed to a considerable degree by the particular person-to-person ties, and to a lesser degree by abstract social categories in which a person fitted.” Rosen points out that business, and indeed friendship, were conducted in two-person Muslim-Jewish dyads that would form a relationship that often lasted through multiple generations.⁹

The economic advancement of Shlomo and Mubarak necessitated cementing their informal working relationship into something firmer and more binding. During the colonial period, traveling with sums of money sufficient to buy

⁹ Dshen, Shlomo. 1989. *The Mellah Society Jewish Community Life in Sherifian Morocco*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 123.

Rosen, Lawrence. 1972. “Muslim-Jewish Relations in a Moroccan City,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 4. 435 – 449.

large amounts of high quality wool became dangerous. Those who resisted the French presence lived outside of the cities in the areas through which rural traders would pass. The small rural resistance groups needed funds to buy ammunition and other supplies, and so trading became a dangerous business on routes not patrolled by the French. The French had a great interest in making sure that the people traveling on the newly constructed roads were up to legitimate business and were not transporting money or supplies that would later be used against them. Consequently, Mubarak needed to have papers that showed exactly what he was doing, where he was going, and for what purpose. The gendarmes that are a visible part of the French legacy in Morocco today regularly ask me similar questions when I travel to sensitive areas of the country, such as Figuig or Dakhla.

Mubarak, Shlomo and 'Illo all went to the *muhami*/lawyer to have their business venture formalized and made official. They then took their business agreement to the French authorities, who noted that although it was indeed strange to them to have a Muslim-Jewish co-owned business, they did not see any reason why it would be illegal. Every time Mubarak would leave from the Midelt area to go up to Beni Ouarain, he would first go to the office of the French authorities to present the details of when he was leaving, how much money he was taking with him, and when he would be returning with the wool. The authorities then approved his trip and cleared him to go. Returning to Midelt from Beni Ouarain with such a quantity of fine wool that could be used for blankets for resistance as easily as it could for French uniforms necessitated the same procedure of having the trip approved. Because of the need to have the voyages

approved, Mubarak, Shlomo and ‘Illo committed their trust of each other to paper and formalized their relationship.

While Mubarak was on the six hundred kilometer round trip journey to the source of the wool with his donkey-drawn carts, the plot of Shlomo’s land for which he was responsible, as well as his own holdings and household, had to be overseen by someone else. Mubarak, like Moha and Toudert, was quite shrewd in looking for novel ways to make a profit, but also was interested in spreading his wealth around and helping other Imazighen join the monetary economy. Seeing that hiring laborers to do his agricultural work while he was on his trading routes met both of these goals, he engaged laborers to take care of his responsibilities. He soon found that his plots of land were large enough that he could pay laborers to do all the work in his fields, and still have a sufficient surplus left over after crops were sold. Using the profits that he made from his trading journeys, Mubarak soon bought up other fields around Ait Ayach, near the river that had been the cause of the flood and his special relationship with Shlomo. Mubarak became a medium-scale local landowner and an important figure in his village.

Many of the villagers, however, were quite jealous that Mubarak, and not they, were chosen to partner in a profitable trading venture. It was at this time that Mubarak started being called “*sahib al-yahood*/friend of the Jews.” Although this was meant as an insult, Mubarak, and later Moha would wear the title proudly, and refer to themselves publicly this way. Moha, no less than Mubarak, is quite clear that he owes his position in life to his own integrity and being a trustworthy partner to Jewish friends and neighbors.

Moha most often brings out these sections of the narratives when chiding people for taking shortcuts or doing things “the unofficial way.” He argues that it was Mubarak’s formalization of his business relationship with Shlomo and ‘Illo that allowed him to travel on the safer French roads, and also introduced him to many of Shlomo’s French clients, who appreciated that his shop was searching for the best quality wool rather than using local products that were plainly inferior. Moha frequently points out that at any moment, Mubarak could have taken Shlomo and ‘Illo’s money and run off to some other village. Doing so, however, would have been stupid because Mubarak stood to gain much more by continuing his profitable partnership than from absconding with the money.

Moha is also quick to point out that he came by his love of traveling to Jewish areas through his father, who took him along on his trips when he was a little boy. Moha sat by Mubarak’s side as he drove the carts up to Beni Ouarain and then returned. He became used to eating Jewish foods and hearing the particular Judeo-Tamazight and Judeo-Arabic ethnolects that were spoken in Beni Ouarain, and he can still imitate their accents well. As he traveled with Mubarak, Moha became curious about synagogues and cemeteries that they did not have the time or reason to enter on the business trips. He frequently fulfills his boyhood curiosity today by visiting such sites with curious guests.

The relationships between all these men became closely interdependent. Mubarak was a friend to the Jews, just as Shlomo was occasionally chided by Jews for being a man who worked too closely with his Muslim partner. When Moha speaks of Mubarak’s early life, he cannot tell a story which does not include some

mention of Shlomo. For Moha, quite simply, there is no memory of his father without Shlomo. This is perfectly in line with Jean-Luc Nancy's claim:

If Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the “with” that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition. ... Therefore, it is not the case that the “with” is an addition to some prior Being; instead, the “with” is at the heart of Being.¹⁰

If all being is being-with, there is no “being” for Mubarak in Moha's memory apart from Mubarak “being-with” Shlomo. Put simply, Moha cannot remember or discuss his own father without remembering and discussing Shlomo.

Prosperity & Trust

Mubarak was not the only person to benefit from the formalized trading agreement with his Jewish partners. Shlomo was also able to make a comfortable living by way of his carpet store. After Moroccan independence in 1956, 'Illo paid for a trip to France, from which he never returned, finding that his trading profits bought him a very comfortable life there. This left Shlomo without a full partner. He then asked Mubarak to become a partner instead of merely asking him to the trip to Beni Ouarain (which he continued to do even after being made a partner).

Even after the departure of his French customers after independence, Shlomo did such brisk business with locals that he needed to buy three other stalls at the souq in which to house his goods, which were in high demand. The additional storefronts were bought at a bargain price because they had previously been abandoned by people who were concerned about Midelt's post-protectorate decline. Because Shlomo had no children, he put Mubarak plus a very young Moha

¹⁰ Nancy. 2000. 19.

and Hussein, Moha's elder brother, in charge of the other three stores. They each were allowed to keep all of what they sold, but had to pay Shlomo rent for the stores. Shlomo was old enough and prosperous enough that he was no longer interested in making a large profit. He simply wanted a stable income that the rent on the stores provided for him.

Mubarak honored the terms of Shlomo's agreement, and let his sons keep what they earned from selling carpets in their two stalls. However they had to reinvest their profits into either their own businesses or their education, or, conversely, they were allowed to give some money away to the families of the women, and a few men, who made the carpets that they sold. Mubarak did very brisk business supplying higher quality rugs to the new Moroccan government officials, police, gendarmes, judges and mine owners, who moved to the area at the order of the King. Because he was rather shy as a young man, Moha was not so fortunate in business initially, but he observed his more outgoing father and took notes on how he could become influential and skilled with words. Moha also bought up rare carpets that his father was unsure would sell. Moha, always keen on knowing origins and ethnicities, learned where most of the new officials were coming from, and bought carpets from women who knew the patterns from the areas. Consequently, he occasionally outsold his father when a discerning bureaucrat noticed a pattern from around Fes or Meknes in a rug for sale in this mountain outpost. Moha's brother, Hussein, never had much interest in buying or selling, or in competition. He would not compete with Mubarak or Moha to purchase the best rugs from the weavers. Accordingly, his stock was made of high quality wool, but was woven rather poorly. However well the shops did, they all

paid rent to Shlomo each week. Moha's family thus prospered with, and because of, Shlomo.

Selling carpets and renting stores were not the only businesses in which Shlomo prospered. He also set up his own bank of sorts. He took and held money for the semi-nomadic people of Tattiouine so that they did not have to worry about keeping their wealth with them in the mountains as they moved from site to site. When they came into town - which was the only place money was useful - Shlomo was there to give them what they had deposited. For this service he charged no fee, and he did not collect or pay any interest, but he did accept "gifts" of produce after his depositors returned from the souq and entrusted their money to him again.

Shlomo thus treated his Muslim depositors as he would his fellow Jews, and as his depositors would expect to be treated by fellow Muslims. He did not participate in interest banking with either *ribbet* (Hebrew) or *riba* (Arabic), but rather by accepting "gifts" for his services. While it was certainly in his power to collect a fee based on the amount deposited, Shlomo saw his depositors not as an economic "other," but rather as people who, although they were not Jews, were "singular-plural" enough that the Biblical prohibition against charging interest to "your brother" meant that Shlomo would not charge it to his Muslim, Amazigh neighbors.

When Moha was very young, he remembered standing at the feet of his father in Shlomo's house. He saw Shlomo take the logs and ashes out of his fireplace, open a trap door and take a small bag from a chest hidden in the floor because a man had stopped by and was asking for his money. While the man waited in the entry room, Moha was trusted to be inside the hearth room to see where the

money was deposited. He remembers Shlomo leaning down and winking to him and asking if his secret was in the well or in the mouth of the *muezzin*/caller to prayer. Moha shyly replied that the secret was in the well, to which both Mubarak and Shlomo laughed before going to present the money to the nomad.¹¹ Shlomo was presented with a few eggs for his service. Shlomo in turn gave the eggs to Mubarak for his Ramadan breakfast. Moha is not sure, but it could have been that Shlomo was paying Mubarak for guarding the money for his sake, or paying surety on behalf of Shlomo for the sake of the nomad. Either way, in carpet retail and banking, Shlomo was doing quite well, but the prosperity would not last long.

Moha performs this part of his narrative frequently for his daughters and nephew, who have now taken over the carpet shops. Shlomo trusted Mubarak and Moha with not only the secret of where the money was kept, but also to make sufficient money that they would be able to pay their monthly rents. All the while, Mubarak still made the journeys to Beni Ouarain and back to keep the profitable enterprise going. Moha's intention in telling these stories is so his daughters would only trust people that they are able to trust absolutely.

Further, Moha uses Shlomo's example to argue against what he views as the unfair distribution of infrastructure projects and profits to the hinterland. Moha reasons that if Shlomo can forego fees from Muslims when he is entitled to them and thus treat Muslims and Jews the same, why does the Moroccan government start so many development projects in the Arab coast and south of the country and ignore the Amazigh interior? This complaint has grown quieter, but not

¹¹ "*Sirk fi bir*/your secret is in the well" is a common assurance of privacy.

disappeared, in recent years as King Mohammed VI, whose mother is Amazigh and was born in nearby Khenifra, has expanded his development projects into the Midelt region.

Lastly, Moha tends to tell the story of Shlomo preferring the rent from the stores to profit sharing in instances when he feels that people are being greedy or dreaming of too large of a return on their investment. Even though he personally ran a store, and used his insight into regional and ethnic differences to turn a tidy profit, he stresses that incremental progress should be sought over quick windfalls. That said, one of the ways he trains his daughters for steady economic return is to learn their customers' preferences and be sure to have exactly what they want waiting for them when they come to the stores.

Persecution

After successive wars fought between the State of Israel and neighboring Muslim countries, the position of Jews in Morocco grew more tenuous. According to Stillman, "Street youths frequently harass Jewish children, so that now [1973] young children only leave the house in the company of an adult or an older brother or sister. Garbage is sometimes thrown into the doorways of Jewish homes, and now and then a slogan is chalked on the door."¹² I personally have been on the receiving end of these kinds of harassment in every place that I have lived in Morocco, even in the capital, Rabat.

¹² Stillman 1973. 257.

Closer to home for Shlomo, the frequency of acts of violence against traveling Jewish merchants around Midelt and around the country increased markedly in the 1960s.¹³ Even after fully integrating financially into the economy of the Moroccan state, their lives were becoming increasingly imperiled.¹⁴ Additionally, as Morocco became more economically regulated and more easily traversed, the tolerance for the once indispensable Jewish traveling merchants decreased.¹⁵

On one evening, Mubarak overheard some men plotting to attack Shlomo as he traveled between Ait Ayach and Othman OuMosa the next day. The plotters planned to steal his money and kidnap him to be held for ransom by the Jewish Agency or “whoever would pay for an old Jew.” One of the men reasoned that since Shlomo did not have any family (his wife had died years earlier) they could not expect any ransom. Therefore, it would be better to simply kill him. Mubarak, fulfilling the role of a dyadic partner, told Shlomo of the plot, but Shlomo insisted on going anyway.¹⁶ Shlomo explained that it was probably just a matter of young men talking, and there would not be any serious actions or consequences. He explained with a twinkle in his eye that [Muslim] Imazighen are more practiced, but not as good at drinking as Jews are. Insinuating that the young men were simply letting alcohol speak for them, Shlomo insisted that when they sobered up, they would refrain from any rash action.

¹³ Deshen. 40.

¹⁴ Cohen. 55.

¹⁵ Lewis. 57 - 58.

¹⁶ See note on Lawrence Rosen’s 1972 work about Jewish-Muslim dyadic partnerships on page 209.

The next day, not trusting that the threat was as innocuous as Shlomo thought, Mubarak – acting as Shlomo’s guarantor, or kinsmen-redeemer – went with him and brought his rifle and his two teenage sons.¹⁷ As they were traveling, the plotters ran up and yelled for Mubarak and his sons to leave so that they would not be implicated in what was about to happen to Shlomo. Mubarak would not listen to them and instead spoke of what a great shame it was to mistreat *dhimmis*, or people protected under Islam. Moha always winces when he comes to this part of the story and says that it hurt Mubarak to have to call his business partner and friend by that hierarchical term, but that it was the only word that the ersatz murderers would understand. The plotters finally relented and went away, but from that day on, recalls Moha, Shlomo was a broken man. He had never truly believed that he would be attacked or threatened simply because he was Jewish. Shlomo came of age in a wild area where the rich were often targets of brigandage. On that day Mubarak was also a rich man, but the plotters were not interested in stealing from or killing him, only Shlomo.

Pushed by these incidents and others, and pulled to Israel, France, Canada or America, Shlomo and most of the remaining Jewish community soon left Midelt, its environs and Morocco forever. As a final act of friendship on his way out of the country, Shlomo deeded all of his property to Mubarak and insisted that he never sell the carpet stores or the land but keep them in his family forever.

¹⁷ “In times of danger... each Jewish family had a Muslim guarantor to whom it would turn; this person was supposed to protect them from injury and to avenge them if they were harmed.”

Meyers, Allan R. 1996. “Patronage and Protection: The Status of Jews in Precolonial Morocco,” *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, ed Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner. New York: New York University Press. 84.

This is not a story that Moha shares widely. Despite the heroic role his father and he had played in saving Shlomo, he feels embarrassed about his homeland and his people. I asked him if the plotters were Arabs or from some other part of the country. He confessed sadly that, no, they were from Ait Ayach, and that I had even met one of them, unknowingly. He told me this story on the occasion of his brother's betrayal, which is described in the next subsection. He explained that you never really know what people are capable of doing, even family members. When I asked him if I could include this story in my writings, he initially refused. After another couple of months and another betrayal, when Moha told the story again, he changed his mind. Moha said that it was important that people know why the Jews left, that it was not completely about how wonderful Israel and France were, but that many of his friends and family who ought to have known better listened to "evil voices" and chased away their neighbors. Moha channels the emotions of loss, regret and shame that stem from past moral failures to help him process and incorporate contemporary feelings of betrayal into his presentation of his narrative.

Contacts and Boundaries

Even though Mubarak died shortly after Shlomo left Morocco for Israel, Moha is still connected to their shared past in meaningful ways. When Shlomo finally arrived in Israel, he sent, with the help of a woman named Miriam, a letter to Moha. In the letter was an Israeli Shekel, which Moha still carries in his wallet to this day. The letter has long since crumbled from being carried for too long in Moha's wallet, but he still has several scraps. Moha tries to keep in contact with

Miriam by writing letters and emails every year or so. The responses stopped coming about six years ago. I helped write one successful series of emails from Moha to Miriam when cyber cafes first started coming to Midelt ten years ago. The content was mostly greetings and questions about health, but the exchange was warm.

After Shlomo left and Mubarak died, the brothers split the carpet shops with Moha taking the original shop and the one Mubarak had run. Hussein acquired the one Moha had run, in addition to his own. Hussein disregarded his family's promises to Shlomo and Moha's advice and sought to sell his two shops. Moha was able to raise the money to buy one and all the merchandise, but Hussein defied Shlomo's wishes and sold his only remaining carpet shop to a stranger. Moha eventually turned over responsibility for his three carpet shops to his three children. Two of the children have moved on to other jobs and now Rebha, Moha's youngest daughter, runs all three shops.

In Shlomo's old shop is a very small carpet that was woven half by Shlomo's wife and half by an Amazigh woman out of Beni Ouarain wool. Rebha proudly keeps it as a metaphor of the interconnectedness of Mubarak's and Shlomo's families. One half of the carpet is covered in Magen Davids and the other with Ait Ayach patterns. When visitors from Israel or who are interested in Jewish history come to the store and Moha is present, he will always run to the back of the store where they hide it and use it as an occasion to explain the singular-plural nature of Mubarak and Shlomo, who cannot be spoken, or even conceived of individually without the other.

A Strange Dinner – Weirdness as a Defining Personality Trait

The first time my wife joined me for an evening out at Moha's main house in Ait Ayach, Moha motioned to three prominently hung portraits with a flourish when he escorted us into the dining room. The first two paintings were of Mubarak and Shlomo. When Sarah asked about them, many of the stories above were recounted in order for her to understand who Moha was and where he came from. About ninety minutes later, when the stories were finished, Sarah enquired who was depicted in the third photo. Moha said it was his Austrian doctor friend, who comes every year for tours around Jewish sites. Moha told us that Franz likes to visit because he thinks that Moha is weird/*pas normal*. He is. The process of traveling out to Ait Ayach for the dinner will elucidate this claim sufficiently.

When Sarah and I arrived in Midelt about five hours earlier to see old friends and check up on the cemeteries and guards who live there, our first stop was Rebha's carpet shop. It is just across the street from the bus station, has a bathroom and there is always a lively crowd sitting around who make me feel like a returning hometown celebrity. It is the perfect place to go after a long journey. The carpet shop is comfortable and an excellent place to take a nap or sit and talk. Every surface is covered with carpets, and there are many stacks of carpets against which to lean. There is a small table where at least four times a day an assortment of people gathers for a small meal. The shop itself is largely a male space. Old, retired or unemployed men come to argue politics and religion with each other. They are what I would consider countryside intelligentsia, who wear old and tattered djellabas and prefer to discuss Moroccan and international news and the implications of such news in Tamazight and French. If called upon, they can easily

read or discuss Arabic language newspapers and Qur'an, but they generally prefer not to do so. There is a prevalent prejudice among older folks in the area against most things "Arab."

The younger men who frequent the carpet shop usually wear capri pants and cast-off European T-shirts in the summer and leather jackets in the winter. They come not to discuss politics, but to flirt with Rebha, and they do so in Arabic. She runs the shop and has the power to tell men of all ages when it is time to leave or to be quiet so she can rest or complete a sale. However as a young woman still in high school, she is rarely successful in changing the direction of the conversation or having her opinion on politics or religious issues taken seriously without a protracted argument. The lively discussions never last too long, however, and the general malaise of watching and waiting for potential clients quickly returns.

I was very happy to return to this world and to introduce my wife to it. After tea and what is probably the best meal in Morocco from Sandwich Atlas, Rebha suddenly exclaimed, "Moha does not know you are here yet. We have to call him!" It had been over almost two years since I had last seen Moha, so she dialed his number and excitedly told him that I had come back. While talking on the phone, Rebha and Toudert have a secret language that they use with their father. It is based on Ait Ayach regional Tamazight, but they often switch vowels and overemphasize the /f/, /z/ and /n/ sounds. Moha loves this game of making the already particular language variety of Ayachi High Atlas Tamazight more peculiar by switching phonemes. That is to say, it is very difficult for me to follow the conversation between Moha and his daughters if they are using their special language. When Rebha hung up the phone, she announced that Moha would come

to the carpet shop in an hour and was going to take us to Ait Ayach to spend the night with him. We were not presented with this as an option, but were expected to come along with Moha's plan, as most people in the area do.



Figure 15 Moha in his "uniform."

When Moha arrived, the atmosphere of the carpet shop completely changed. The young men who had previously been trying to flirt with Rebha all fled

around the corner and out of the souq. The first mention of Moha's name when a shop owner calls out a greeting to him, even before he enters the square, is sufficient to scatter them. The old men, who had previously been lounging on the floor of the carpet shop, all rose in expectation of Moha's appearance. When he finally rounded the corner, he was, as is his custom, wearing an immaculate suit jacket and shirt with muddy dress shoes and suit pant legs. While many rural men wear blazers that are probably older than Rebha, Moha is the only man outside of the highest echelon of government workers whom I have ever seen wear a suit and tie in Midelt. He wears his uniform every day, even while he is working in the farms and the orchards; hence the muddy trousers and shoes.

Moha bypassed all the men waiting expectantly for their greetings and came straight to Sarah, whom he kissed on both cheeks, several times in the style of Moroccans. After eleven kisses – I was counting because I am always interested to know how the amount of kisses are determined – and exhausting Sarah's supply of Tamazight and French greetings, he came over to me and did only two cheek kisses. He clapped me on the shoulder and congratulated me for finally getting married, and to such a beautiful woman. Even in the relative darkness of the carpet shop, he kept on his gold rimmed aviator sunglasses. He smelled very deeply of the sweet scent of rotting apples and the bitterness of the awful cigarettes that he frequently smokes. I actually prefer not to stand directly in front of chain smokers because of my childhood asthma issues, so I was relieved when Moha took my hand and brought me over to the line of elderly men who waited in turn for each of their greetings, which Moha delivered in the dialect of each person. He could not have stood out more from his assembled court. They, with heavily-worn but clean djellabas and unwieldy facial hair, contrasted sharply with his beautiful but muddy suit and recently shaven face and head. Rebha, last of all, came forward to kiss Moha's right hand, then kiss his shoulder and finally gave him a high-five in a mix of traditional and irreverent greetings that I had come to expect out of this family.

No sooner had Rebha greeted her father than Moha grabbed both Sarah's and my hands and whisked us into his waiting Mercedes Sprinter van. The white vehicle was larger and newer than most vehicles in Midelt, which still had a few sporadic donkey carts, despite years of efforts and subsidies to encourage people to trade in their donkeys for motorcycle carts. We jumped into the van for the short ride out to Ait Ayach. Moha drummed on the steering wheel along with Kenney

Rogers and the First Edition, and tapped his bobbling hula dancer on the dashboard in between songs to keep her dancing all the way out to his home.

When we arrived at his home, Moha ducked his head into the house to yell to his housekeeper to have dinner ready in an hour and dropped off supplies that he had purchased in Midelt before he met us. He then whistled and two huge Rottweilers ran over. I am terrified of dogs from a couple traumatic experiences as a child as well as from the frequent warnings of my Moroccan friends to watch out for packs of wild dogs while walking out to the rural *douars* that surrounded Midelt. Indeed, I usually carried a sling and a pocket full of rocks just in case any dogs got too close. I was cursing myself for not picking up some rocks earlier as the massive dogs charged. But instead of coming for me or Sarah, they ran straight to Moha and jumped up on him nearly knocking him over. He brought out a bag of chicken feet and entrails that he had picked up in Midelt and threw them to the dogs, who happily devoured them. Turning and seeing my pale and shocked face, Moha asked if I was afraid of dogs. Without waiting for an answer, he laughingly slapped me on the back and said it was time for a tour of the orchard. The orchard tour itself was uneventful. Moha gave Sarah and me each a bag and generously told us to fill it with as many apples as we could take home. As we walked through the recently watered orchard, it became clear why Moha could never keep a pair of pants clean, and soon we too were quite messy.

Toting overflowing bags of apples back to the house, Moha welcomed us into the dining room and motioned to the three portraits of which he was obviously very proud. After retelling his stories about Mubarak and Shlomo to Sarah, he began to tell about his friend Franz. Moha had taken Franz on a number of tours

around Morocco looking for Jewish and Christian history. Franz had been a Catholic priest, but left the priesthood to start several business ventures, including building refrigeration plants and importing rugs. Moha, with his twin interests in preserving his apple crop in order to be able to sell it out of season, and in developing new markets for his carpets, became fast friends with Franz. When they are not talking about business ventures, Moha travels around the country when Franz visits to take him to rural Jewish sites outside of the major cities. After several years of these tours, Franz returned the favor and invited Moha to Austria. The high point of this visit for Moha was entering the church over which Franz used to preside.

At this point in the story, we were sitting around a Moroccan dessert tray of apples, oranges and bananas. Moha hurriedly got up and went into the other room without explanation. When he returned, he plunged a large crucifix into the mound of fruit similarly to how I imagine explorers planting flags in newly claimed land. The crucifix was about ten inches tall with a cross of wood and a bronze Jesus affixed to it. Moha proudly explained that Franz had wanted to give him a memento of his visit and Moha asked for a crucifix. Franz had demurred, arguing that it was almost certainly illegal for a Muslim Moroccan to possess such a thing. Moha said that is why he wanted it: to have something that was forbidden, that no one else he knew would ever have or understand him having. Ever curious, I asked him what he thought about the crucifix. He replied that it was idolatrous. He paused for a moment, and then said with a wink, “idolatrous and important/*Shirk oo Mohiim.*”

Being able to see a crucifix as both idolatrous and important perfectly summarizes Moha. He is a Muslim, Amazigh Moroccan, and he is proud of each of

those facets of his identity. But he also takes great pains, I think, to publish his eccentricities and mark himself as peculiar in every way he can. Through his clothes, language use, greetings, taste in music, taste in pets and proclivity for valuing unpopular and in some cases banned, religious items and traditions, Moha distinguishes himself from his peers. He likes, and in fact *needs* to be strange. His entire notion of self is as one who is different from others.

The strangeness that Moha cultivates so vehemently is a crucial part of what makes Moha such an effective guide and performer for the foreigners like Franz and me that he guides around the area. To borrow from Charles Briggs, Moha has both the special standing of one who is easily distinguished over and above the rest of the community, and the particular access to a repertoire of performances of otherness that allow him to present Jewish Morocco in a way that Muslims living more ordinary lives would not be able to do.¹⁸ Franz is certainly not the only foreigner who appreciates how the weirdness of Moha makes him a better guide. He is merely the first to put it so succinctly.¹⁹

To Aghbalou! – Rural Power, Repertoire and Ethnopoetics

One of my favorite destinations that I have traveled to with Moha is a very small town called Aghbalou. It is on a little spur of the neglected “highway” between Midelt and Khenifra. Shortly after one of my trips there, regional governmental officials were arrested because funding which came from the

¹⁸ Briggs, Charles L. 1988. *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

¹⁹ Moha’s oddness was one of the first topics of conversation when I met Franz.

national budget to improve the highway – which was little more than a dirt track in several sections – was instead syphoned off to personal bank accounts, and the work was not completed. In short order, the road washed out due to regular and predictable winter flooding. The stranded villagers of the area were interviewed on the national news, leading to a scandal, but there were no actual improvements in their situation, in my understanding. Aghbalou, along with the surrounding area, remains ignored, underdeveloped, fiercely independent and deeply suspicious of regional and national governments.²⁰ This is the milieu in which Moha lives, works and guides, and it is singularly important for allowing him to be who he is.

The rural context of Aghbalou and the surrounding areas in which Moha works leads to a specific and unique set of ethnopoetic rules and possibilities. This framework helps to provide a scaffolding for understanding qualities of performances including not just what is said, but also how it is heard and why.²¹ Further, though, when Moha lives a deeply non-standard life in which his being-in-the-world is a performance of disassociation from many of the mores of those around him, his whole life, rather than just his guiding, needs to be considered as he bends and extends cultural patterns of acceptable behavior and flaunts or

²⁰ It should be said that, like almost everyone with whom I speak, these citizens of Morocco absolutely love the King even while they criticize parliament and regional government officials.

²¹ See: Hymes, Dell. 1986. *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Rothenberg, Jerome and Dennis Tedlock. 1970. "A Declaration of Intention," *Alcheringa* 1.

Slyomovics, Susan. 1988. *The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tedlock, Dennis. 1983. *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

breaks others. In Aghbalou, Moha is not the only one whose life and practices push the limits between moderate and subversive behavior.

During the summer of 2012, when I was in Morocco for research, Moha came to me and asked if I would like to go to a surprise destination to meet someone “truly incredible/*vraiment incroyable*.” I agreed, of course, and Moha told me to meet him at the house where his daughters live in Midelt that evening. When Moha drove up a couple hours after he said he would arrive, he was behind the wheel of an old, smoking and sputtering Renault 4. After explaining that the car had died several times on the way over, but that it was probably now fine for a long drive into the desert because it had warmed up, he told me to jump in. With a little bit of fear about what might happen if we were to be stranded in the Sahara in the summer, I nevertheless climbed into the cramped passenger seat. The car, whose name was “Christina,” shuddered down the road, but never quit, even when Moha decided to go off road through some stands of bamboo and across a small tributary of the Moulouya river. As we arrived in Aghbalou close to sundown, Moha confided in me that he had borrowed the small car just so he could watch me squirm. He concluded his confession with uproarious laughter, but I was rather less amused. I smelled like burnt motor oil for days afterward.

When we arrived, Moha took me to a hanut, said something to the owner in a variety of Tamazight that I had never heard before and promptly left without a word to me. The owner gestured for me to step behind the counter and join him for some harira that he had just prepared.²² I asked the shop owner in Arabic if he

²² Harira is a Moroccan soup that is most famous for its role in helping to break the fast during Ramadan, but it is consumed at other times of the year, albeit less regularly.

had any idea why Moha brought me. He replied that he did not, and asked me what I was doing in Morocco. I told him that I was studying Jewish history, and his eyes lit up at once. He told me that Moha had brought me to the right place.

The shop owner, Raduan, told me to stand up and walk outside with him. Standing up, I spilled the bowl of soup all over my pants, and I would bear the stain for the three days that Moha and I stayed in Aghbalou before we returned to Midelt. Raduan stood immediately still, and, staring at my pants, asked me who had told me. I was not sure what he was talking about and told him so. He stared at me to determine if I was lying to him, and then handed me a rag to clean my pants before exiting his shop. I followed, and when I joined him outside, he motioned up to the roof. It was an old corrugated tin roof that was in rather bad repair and looked quite old. It had bits of mud covering some sections, and was rusted through in other places. Most of the other roofs in town were tile, cement or mud on top of tarps and wood. Raduan explained that the roof of his store was left over from the 1940s, when it was installed by the former Jewish owner of what was now his store. The Jewish proprietor had been known to be the most successful businessman in town, and even though no one intentionally went out of their way to buy from him when there were many other dry goods stores around, everyone in town seemed to find their way to his store. However, the roof of the store was always leaky. When it rained, water would find its way down through the mud plastered over the network of sticks and logs that composed the roof, and eventually the muddy water dropped down on him. The drops stained the shoulders of his shirt and his pant legs as he sat and waited in vain for customers on rainy days. The store owner, despite financial success from having the most popular business in town, only

owned three pairs of pants: one for Shabbat, and two others that he wore through the week. Both of the other pants were always stained with mud in the lap, which was the same place that I had spilled my soup. I was rather less impressed with the coincidence than Raduan was, and I asked him why the harira on my pants was so important. He said that he had been asking the spirit of the former owner of the store to give him a sign whether he should tell me his secret or not. My stained pants were the sign that he had asked for.

Raduan then told me that as long as he owned the store, he would not repair the aging roof because it was the secret to his success. He had installed a tarp on the underside of the roof to prevent rain from damaging his goods or staining his clothes, but otherwise he had left the roof alone. He told me that on the roof there was an amulet carved in the tin, written in “Jewish” that ensured that all the residents of the town would come to that particular store.²³ When he bought or, I suspect, took over the store from the former Jewish owner when he left about fifty years ago, he wanted to replace the roof. As he climbed up to see what kind of work it involved, to determine if he could do it himself, he noticed some strange letters carved in the roof and immediately came to the conclusion that it was a powerful amulet that caused his fellow citizens of Aghbalou to frequent the hanut over all the others. Not wanting other villagers to discover the cause of their manipulation, but also not wanting to undo the secret of the apparently still effective amulet, he

²³ I was never able to figure out the particulars of the amulet, if it was carved in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic or was just mystical symbols. Raduan maintained that instruction was “Jewish,” but I do not think he could make further characterizations accurately.

simply covered over that section of the roof with mud and decided to never replace the roof.

The Jewish magic that the amulet contained and channeled is a severely limited resource in rural Morocco. Even during the hundreds of years when Muslims and Jews lived together in the hinterland, Jewish spiritual potency was decidedly “other” to Moroccan Muslims – (but see the next chapter for Muslim fortune tellers using Hebrew to increase their effectiveness). Now that the Jewish community has left Aghbalou, and there is no major Jewish saint close enough to bring pilgrims to the town, as the material presence of Jewish settlement in the area crumbles, the magical residue of the once-present Jews fades as well.

The shop keeper is not in any sense Jewish. He does not speak any Jewish language, and he does not know any rituals. He simply declined to remove a supposed source of economic benefit that worked by means of harnessing the power of Jewish magic. His participation, if any, in maintaining the amulet on his roof is entirely passive. What is more interesting to me is his supplication to the spirit of his deceased predecessor that he be given a sign, and his willingness to believe that my clumsiness was the answer to his request. Making requests of dead Jews is a firmly established Muslim practice in Morocco.²⁴ The spirit to whom Raduan appealed was not a saint, however, but simply an ordinary Jewish shop owner who was thought to have wielded sufficient magical power to produce an effective amulet. Raduan was, accordingly, a bit outside the mainstream in

²⁴ Kosansky, Oren. 2011. “The Real Morocco Itself: Jewish Saint Pilgrimage, Hybridity, and the Idea of the Moroccan Nation.” *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 341-60.

appealing to a private spirit away from the deceased's grave. But his concern was not that I would be shocked at his heterodox religiosity, but rather that I would reveal his secret manipulation of his peers.

As if on cue, Moha appeared to collect me just as Raduan finished speaking. He noticed the soup-stain on my pants and asked about it. Raduan leaned forward and conspiratorially held his index finger to his lips and then drew it across his throat, indicating that his secret was now mine and that I should protect it.²⁵ Moha nodded and has never asked me what Raduan told me. He told me later that he knew that Raduan would tell me an important story, but he did not know which one.

In an area where powers of Jewish amulets are taken so seriously that one suffers a holey roof on the chance that it is also a holy roof, Moha's fascination with and dedication to sharing stories of the Jewish community makes sense. In the cities and larger tourist areas, synagogues and cemeteries are an important source of tourist revenues. But in rural areas, tombs of Jewish saints and Jewish amulets are held by many Muslim Moroccans to be artifacts and locations of great power. Accordingly, Moha is certainly not alone in his view that Jews, Judaism and Jewish relics are important for shaping the area, even if he understands the personal shaping power of Jews more intimately than most. His concept of himself as a friend of the Jews, who carries a shekel in his pocket and frequently touts Jewish models of integrity and fidelity over and above his fellow Muslims can be

²⁵ Raduan has since moved away from Aghbalou and his hanut has been torn down. His children all live overseas and did not visit him often in any case. I feel at liberty to share this tale knowing that there are no real negative implications for Raduan or his descendants.

understood as a less egregious departure from social norms in the context of rural Morocco. Outside of the cities the tradition of saint veneration is arguably stronger and heterodox practices such as relying on an amulet on a roof or a shekel in one's pocket for success in business have traditionally been more acceptable.

In this rural, Amazigh, anti-external-authority context, the fact that Moha uses the few Hebrew words he knows from his exchanges with Shlomo and Miriam is less remarkable than similar actions would be in cities. Often I hear “*Shalom, Mah Nishma?*” from tourist touts incorrectly guessing my nationality in Essaouira, Marrakech and Fes. But Moha speaks about his *Nifs* and *Nefesh* [“soul” in Arabic and Hebrew, respectively] equally. I have come to think that Muslims saying Jewish words is not really remarkable out here in the *bled/countryside*, but rather it is just another example of local pragmatism. For Moha, describing Jewish rituals that he observed, traveling to Jewish sites, and defining himself by his family's interaction with Jews is his particular way of being different in an area that already tolerates difference fairly well. Moha expands boundaries with how closely he identifies with the Jewish community, but he does so in a context in which recognizing the benefits of aligning oneself with Jewish spiritual power is already commonplace.

Arab Idol Interruption – Why do You Care So Much?

Many Muslims living in the rural High Atlas recognize that they have a unique relationship with Jewish history in the region, if not with Jews themselves. When outsiders, be they Arabs from the cities or graduate students from America, come to the region to ask questions about the traces of the former Jewish

community, local guides feel an intense amount of pride at being experts worthy of attention from travelers who have come from great distances. But as the questions become more focused and more personal, often suspicion develops of a stranger who is perceived as too interested in how Muslims and Jews got along. Even when I have known people for several years, I, too, have aroused suspicion about my motives.

In June 2012, I had just arrived back in Midelt after having arrived in Casablanca earlier that day. Mercifully, Moha offered his house to me, and said that I could relax after not only a long flight from America, but also from a long trip across the country. Normally, I would have been requested to join him or his daughters in at least a walk around town. More likely, in the evening, we would have gone for a drive to a remote Jewish site that Moha had just heard about, or that he had been wanting to take me to for some time. This evening though, after thirty-seven hours of travel, I was allowed to relax in front of the television while Toudert and Rebha cooked dinner. I was too tired to even help.

Toudert and Rebha have always been very interested in pop songs and singing, as singing along with the radio is one of the best ways to pass the time in the carpet shop while they wait for their next customers. Singing along with the radio is also a useful way to interdict conversations among the old or young men that are unpleasant to them. The girls are not able to change the subject by arguing, but they can stop the men from talking by belting out a popular tune.

In order to gain practice singing popular songs, and to measure their melodic skills against those of others, they regularly watch Arab Idol, or one of the many other shows of that unpleasant ilk in which singers perform and then are

critiqued by a few judges. There are few things that I hate more than this kind of show. Normally, my position in Moha's house is sufficient that I would have a say in what shows we watch, but I certainly do not automatically get my way. On any other evening, I at least would be able to advocate for changing the channel on the giant flat screen that is fixed to a crumbling cement wall. But I was just too tired, so I suffered through bad performances and mean judges in silence. Moha sat with me in the salon of his daughters' house. He is also not a fan of Arab Idol, but mostly because he does not like to hear Arabic in his home. We drank tea and ate little cookies as we waited for dinner, both trying to ignore the television.

Either immediately after or breaking into the broadcast – we were not paying very close attention – a news person came on the screen and began describing how fighters from the Sinai had attacked Israelis who were working on securing the border between Egypt and Israel. Immediately aroused from my addled and exhausted state, I began to pay very close attention to the news. The previous year, I had been conducting research on Moroccan Jews who settled in development towns in the Negev, and I knew the area in which the attack took place quite well. I was transfixed by the news, and remembered the fear I felt, as a young man from the American Midwest who previously had only worried about guns in school, when I slept close to borders and wondered if there would be a raid in the night. That fear came back to me as I sat on the couch and watched the news with Moha, who was also very interested in what was being said.

Just then, Toudert and Rebha brought in the tajine that they had made for dinner. At the same time, the news story finished and the viewing audience was returned to Arab Idol. Toudert and Rebha settled into the couch, happy to be rid

of the boring news and returned to their favorite program. The next contestant happened to be an Egyptian, and came on the stage wearing an Egyptian flag. I do not remember if it was a live show that evening, or if Arab Idol had been previously recorded. Egypt was going through its revolution at the time, and it had been announced on the radio earlier that the Muslim Brotherhood had won the election after Hosni Mubarak's ouster. There were a multitude of reasons why a young Egyptian man would have come on to the stage with the Egyptian flag as a scarf aside from the just announced attack on an Israeli Arab. But for me, it was too closely related and I must have scoffed or snorted. I remember not saying any words, but I made a sound loud enough that Moha asked if he could talk to me outside. I followed, not knowing what we were going to discuss, but sure that it was something important, because I had never been asked to have a private conversation with Moha.

When we exited his house, Moha immediately told me, "I'm not angry, I just know that with my daughters watching that stupid show, we couldn't talk inside." He then told me that I seemed pretty angry and he wanted to know why. I told him that I had been in Israel, in several of the towns along the border with Egypt the previous year, and that cross-border attacks reminded me of how afraid I had felt for my own safety. I was angry, too, that a man working to build a wall that would prevent such cross-border attacks was himself the victim of violence that he was trying to prevent. Moha listened carefully, and then asked me if I were Israeli. I answered honestly, saying that although I had thought about trying to acquire citizenship in years past, my recent stay, and especially a nasty incident at Ben Gurion airport had helped me make up my mind that I did not want to be Israeli

any time soon. He then said to me in a tone of someone who was trying to understand, rather than someone who was trying to convince or accuse:

You're not Israeli, and you're not Egyptian. This man who was killed, you didn't know him. Why do you care so much? You ask me all these questions about Jews I used to know. *I knew them*. They fed me; they took care of me when I was sick. When my mother died, I was even nursed by a Jewess. I saw my neighbors driven away by evil men. I saw my country after they left. I miss my friends. You don't know anyone. You just collect stories. I knew people who suffered because they were Jews. Why do you care if a man on the television wears the flag of people who killed other people? You don't know any of them.

My tired mind did not have an answer for him other than to sputter out a lame response that even though I did not know the people directly involved, I feel a closeness with people among whom I have lived. I could tell that Moha was not impressed or convinced, but being the outstanding host that he is, he submitted his curiosity to my obvious exhaustion. We returned inside to Arab Idol. Without saying a word to his daughters, I ate hurriedly and with several quick "good night"s, I excused myself to the other room in which I would be sleeping. I wrote down as much as I could of the conversation and then fell fast asleep.

This exchange is a useful reminder of the reciprocal task of ethnography. Just as I am learning about and coming to understand Moha, he also is trying to understand this foreigner who has been in his life for over a decade. Moha is one of the subjects of my research, but he is also, and even more so, my friend with whom I enjoy spending time, and whom I do not wish to confuse or upset. Moha has told me explicitly that we are friends, and even if he had not done so, his smiles and embraces are enough to confirm that fact. Moha accordingly tries to avoid challenging me with difficult questions about myself. Still, he has confided to me on numerous occasions that he, purposefully odd as he is, finds it deeply strange

that I would move from America, from my family and better employment prospects to an economically depressed area in rural Morocco to live among virtual strangers, not just once, but multiple times. Accordingly, when Moha talked to me outside of his daughters' house in a quiet side street of central Midelt, he was not accusing me of straying from my personal business, or trying to impress on me how much more than me he deserves to care about international affairs. He was simply confused as to why I felt something so personally. In his mind, I had frequently demonstrated not being capable of feeling close to others by forfeiting ties with family and friends that I left behind in the States, and not staying long enough in Morocco to get married here and settle down.

The fact is that I do have very close relationships in both the States and Morocco. Moha asks fewer questions of me than I do of him, but it is frightening for me to think that he could misunderstand me and my ability to form personal attachments on such a fundamental level in the same amount of time that I hope I have come to understand him so well. Being together-with people is, for Moha, the single most important aspect of a relationship. When Moha was trying to come to grips with why I was upset about something that happened to someone that I did not know in a place that was not my home, he kept pointing out how he personally knew Jews who suffered. His grieving for a vanished community made sense because he was friends with those who suffered and he had eaten with, touched and been nursed by the people who helped him define himself. He is *singular-plural* with the Jews of the area. Their sufferings are legitimately his because he cannot separate his story from theirs. His affirmation of his relationship with

Moroccan Jews was the reason that he could not understand my suffering for someone that I did not know.

Additionally, Moha's confusion at my suffering is an important commentary on the perceived authenticity of my performance of frustration and anger. I legitimately felt disgust at yet another raid, but Moha did not find my anger sufficiently legitimate in its own right to explain its existence because he does not understand my deep sympathy for people I do not know. This is not a lack of imagination on Moha's part. The key to Moha's prowess in guiding and explaining local Jewish history, as well as explaining himself using local Jewish history is that he is embedded in the story. His social structure is defined most deeply by interpersonal relationships rather than imagined political or ideological communities. Accordingly, Moha never questions me when I tell him about the States or seeing Americans on the television produces a reaction in me. But my performances of emotion or expertise concerning other areas that I have lived and feel strongly about, but are not a formative part of my experience in his eyes, are judged to be inauthentic, or at least not sufficiently compelling to be legitimate. Authenticity is something that must stem from birth, origins and lifelong interpersonal relationships. A few years, or even a decade, is insufficient in Moha's eyes to form the self in such meaningful ways.

Drinking the Milk of Trust

As mentioned in the introduction, *drinking the milk of trust* is an important signifier of how virtue is biologically and interpersonally passed down and then refined rather than inculcated by ideology. Moha frequently talks about the importance of knowing who drinks the milk of trust when forming friendships,

doing business and selecting guides. My introduction to the term was fraught with meaning, and discomfort.

When a Peace Corps program manager came to Midelt in early 2006 to evaluate how well I was integrating in the community after four months in the site, I was anxious to show off my relationship with Toudert and Rebha, who were my counterparts for starting a weaving cooperative. I brought Abdelhakim, the Peace Corps representative sent to evaluate me, to the carpet shop to talk to him, and for him to be able to talk with my local counterparts to evaluate my work. When Abdelhakim and I arrived, I was delighted to find that Moha had dropped by. He only came to the store once a week or so in those days. Although we had only spent a few hours in each other's presence, I found him to be funny and open to talk, and I hoped that he would be able to say some nice things about me.

Abdelhakim had traveled from Rabat to visit three other volunteers already that day and Midelt was his last stop. When he arrived after driving more than five hundred kilometers on crumbling rural lane-and-a-half roads (rather than the national highway), he was quite tired and enjoyed the chance to be able to lounge in the carpet shop, smoke and drink some tea. While reclining, Abdelhakim noticed a particularly nice *burnous*, or hooded cloak that was for sale. Noting his interest, I felt a bit jealous, because I had long been interested in the garment myself. Thinking to myself that my time in Morocco was limited and my potential for wearing it was even more limited, and wanting to make a good impression on the man sent to evaluate me, I decided to rehearse the features of the burnous, which had been told to me several times. I explained that it was all camel hair, woven

locally, and of highest quality. Abdelhakim, though, was interested in the garment, but not what I had to say about it.

Abdelhakim bypassed not just me, but also Toudert and Rebha, to ask Moha about the garment and its price. Moha politely replied that he was just sitting, relaxing in the store, and if the man wanted to buy anything, he should talk to Toudert who was in charge. Abdelhakim turned to Toudert in bemusement, and she told him what I had told him, almost verbatim. When she finished her pitch, Abdelhakim grabbed the garment and tried to stretch it out and pull away fibers. He turned back to Moha, ignoring Toudert once again, and said that he was impressed with the garment, but that it was obviously not camel hair and the quality was not as high as he said. Moha rightly saw these words for what they were: an attempt to drive down the price. Moha then launched into an exchange that I was sure would end my time in the Peace Corps.

Moha began by asking Abdelhakim where his family was from. Abdelhakim replied that he was “pure Fessi,” going back several generations. Moha replied that he had assumed as much. Abdelhakim was confused and asked how Moha had known. Moha replied that Abdelhakim had obviously never even smelled, much less tasted the milk of trust. He had been welcomed by Moha, Toudert, Rebha and me into the carpet shop, and he was given tea to drink and a place to rest after his journey. Instead of being impressed with my language skills and integration in the community, he had been rude to me. Instead of being grateful to his hosts, he had called Toudert and me liars when he insisted that the obviously high quality camel hair burnous was something other than what we had said.

At that point, I would have been very happy to be called a liar or worse if it would lead to me receiving a positive evaluation on Abdelhakim's site visit. I tried to lower the tension by insisting that Abdelhakim was tired from a long journey, and that he had a strange sense of humor. Abdelhakim seemed game to let it go as well, saying that of course the burnous was as we had described it. Anyone could see that it was of the highest quality. He was just trying to lower the price by offering a mild insult, but that of course he did not really mean it. Moha, who has sold carpets, apples and real estate for decades, was incredibly familiar with the technique of trying to lower the price by finding faults, real or imagined, with the merchandise on offer. The immediacy of the shift in Abdelhakim from receiving hospitality to aggressive bargaining infuriated Moha, though, and he would not let go of the offence.

Moha argued that no Amazigh and no Jew would ever be as rude as Abdelhakim had been. He asked how he could be trusted not to poison tea given to strangers, but not be trusted to tell the difference between sheep's wool and camel hair. He insisted that if he were trustworthy in matters of life and death, he should be trustworthy when it came to sheep and camels. Even at this point, Moha was speaking relatively quietly, but his tone, his eyes, and the vein on his forehead all broadcast the message that he felt deeply insulted.

Moha at last came to his point and said that the poison that he had not put in the tea had already been drunk by Abdelhakim at his mother's breast. Imazighen and Jews drank the milk of trust from their mothers. Even if they were separated from their parents, their early nourishment in the milk of trust would make them generous, trusting and trustworthy for the rest of their lives. Moha finished by

saying that Arabs drank the poison of distrust in their mothers' milk, and they would never be trusting, even of their close friends. At that, Moha stomped off, leaving us in stunned and uncomfortable silence.

In the hour that it took for Moha to come back to the souq and start pacing in front of the carpet shop – because even then he was too agitated to sit – Abdelhakim apologized several times, bought the burnous without further bargaining, and told me that I had done an excellent job of integrating. He added in English that I might want to be careful who I integrate with in the future. With that, he asked me to escort him back to his car. After saying a quick goodbye, he drove off to the next site, even though he had planned to spend the night in Midelt, and I never saw him again.

When I returned to the souq, Moha had calmed down quite a bit, but still had not managed to sit down. He apologized to me profusely for ruining my evaluation. I told him that he had probably helped me by making it seem like I was really cared for by my community. He laughed at that, but then was immediately angry again at the insult against his daughter and me. Trying to calm him down again, I asked him how much of the milk of trust one needed to drink to be as trustworthy and trusting as he is. Seeing an opportunity to explain himself and demonstrate his intimacy with the Jewish community, he launched into a tale.

Moha said that when he was quite young, his mother had died from pneumonia. Because she was sick, he had been unable to nurse. Mubarak found a Jewish neighbor who had recently given birth and asked if she would take care of Moha, both nursing him and removing the child from the “bad air” around his mother. After checking with Shlomo to make sure that Mubarak was trustworthy,

the woman agreed to take care of Moha. She watched Moha until after his mother died, and took care of him when Mubarak made his journeys up to Beni Ouarain. Moha feels that he owes his trustworthiness to drinking the milk of trust from both his Amazigh mother and his Jewish nurse. In his mind, the mingling of breastmilks inside of him is the factor that contributed most to his personality. By physically imbibing “Jewish milk” and “Amazigh milk,” Moha gained not just proteins and lipids, but a doubly virtuous character that would have been impossible for him to achieve without the additional suckling opportunity.

The belief in transmission of virtues by means of nursing is well-attested to in Morocco by previous scholarship. Edward Westermarck observed that in Mauritania and Morocco the breastmilk of the first three days of an infant’s life is frequently discarded or is submitted to a spiritual cleansing before being consumed, and during this time, the milk of a close family member is substituted for the mother’s if she is morally respectable because nursing transmits the character of the woman nursing.²⁶ Josep Dieste concurs, saying, “... The milk absorbed by the breast-feeding child is thought to determine its subsequent character. Mother’s milk is considered a means of transmitting moral values.”²⁷

Hussein, Moha’s brother, did not receive the transmission of those moral values. He had drunk from his biological mother, and was also watched by their Jewish caretaker. But he did not drink from her milk and was, accordingly, not imbued with a Jewish set of virtues. Moha is certain that this is why Hussein was

²⁶ Westermarck, Edward. 1968. *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, 2 vols. New York: New Hyde. II, 400.

²⁷ Dieste, Josep Lluís Mateo. 2013. *Health and Ritual in Morocco: Conceptions of the Body and Healing Practices*. Martin Beagles, trans. Boston: Brill. 322.

able to break the family promise to Shlomo and sell his shop to a stranger. It is not that Hussein failed to grasp lessons that they were both being taught by their Jewish caretaker while she cared for them, but that the trust-laced-calcium never entered his body. In this sense, he is not to blame for disappointing the family and selling Shlomo's gift to a stranger. He merely did not have sufficient virtue suffused into his body at a young age like Moha did.²⁸

It is important here, to note that Moha never discussed with me the Islamic notion of milk-kinship. As noted in the Qur'an,²⁹ and hadith,³⁰ suckling from a woman makes one legally and literally family, such that the biological daughters of the nursing woman are impermissible for marriage to the one who suckled, because they are considered to be his siblings. Moha never brought up Islamic legal thought on milk-kinship, and I did not want to introduce the topic if it was not part of his theory of the milk of trust. Moha knows Qur'an well, and he frequently will

²⁸ For more on milk-kinship, see:

Ensel, Remco. 2002. "Colactation and Fictive Kinship as Rites of Incorporation and Reversal in Morocco." *Journal of North African Studies* 7 (4): 83-96.

Parkes, Peter. 2005. "Milk Kinship in Islam: Substance, Structure, History." *Social Anthropology* 13 (3): 307-29.

²⁹ "Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers and your daughters, your sisters, and your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who have nursed you, your sisters through nursing..." Qur'an 33:5, Sahih International.

³⁰ For example: "Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Sahla bint Suhail came to Allah's Apostle (May peace be upon him) and said: Messenger of Allah, I see on the face of Abu Hudhaifa (signs of disgust) on entering of Salim (who is an ally) into (our house), whereupon Allah's Apostle (May peace be upon him) said: Suckle him. She said: How can I suckle him as he is a grown-up man? Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) smiled and said: I already know that he is a young man 'Amr has made this addition in his narration that he participated in the Battle of Badr and in the narration of Ibn 'Umar (the words are): Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) laughed." The Hadith (Sahih Muslim, Book 8, Hadith Number 3424).

<<http://hadithcollection.com/sahihmuslim/136-Sahih%20Muslim%20Book%2008.%20Marriage/11248-sahih-muslim-book-008-hadith-number-3424.html>>

interrupt someone else's recitation to finish the verse himself more quickly. I am sure that he was not unaware of Islamic jurisprudential thought on milk-kinship, but rather he simply did not reference it when telling me his thoughts on the milk of trust.

In any case, the biochemical imbibing of the virtue of trust seems to be a different mechanism than legal family constitution through breastmilk consumption. According to the already cited hadith, suckling can uncomplicate a close relationship between an unmarried man and woman by making them kin, even to the point that they would not desire each other. But what Moha is talking about is a transmission of virtue from nurser to nurse, not a creation of family relationship, and that nuance should not be overlooked.

I cannot overstate the genealogical and chemical nature of Moha's understanding of virtue transmission. We have talked about the milk of trust several times in the ensuing years, and he has remarked that he is very happy that Toudert and Rebha will be able to pass down both Jewish and Amazigh "flavors" of the milk of trust to their children, because they inherited some of it from Moha. Of course, the nurturance and intimacy of time spent at his caretaker's breast was important to Moha. Toudert and Rebha never knew her, and yet they will derive some of the benefit. This sense of other-than-blood biological carrying of Jewishness is at the heart of why I think Moha is an outstanding case and why I chose him over others to be the core of this chapter. His painstakingly maintained image of being a weird friend of the Jews is ultimately reinforced by his embodiment of Jewish virtue through milk. Again, he does not claim to be Jewish

or have any Jewish blood.³¹ Sharing stories, amulets, stores and most importantly, milk, however, qualifies him as *Jewish-ish* enough to be an outstanding guide.

Moha's Friend: Mimi

Moha is unique in my experience for the degree to which he identifies with the Jewish communities of the High Atlas. But he is in good company of individuals who guide tourists to Jewish sites. One of the other guides is a good friend of Moha's who stops by his shop every day. Although her given name is Amina, tourists call her Mimi and the name has stuck. When Hamou, with whom I celebrated Passover in the Introduction, introduced Mimi to me for the first time, he called her Mina, and she insisted that he call her Mimi instead. Mimi is quite attached to the Jewish community as well, and is able to demonstrate that attachment because of the context from which she emerged.

As pointed out above, the Midelt area was a prime target for French exploitation of material resources during the protectorate period. Hundreds of soldiers, administrators, miners and adventurers poured into the area from Europe. In addition to those interested in Midelt's material resources, the area became a home for nuns who built a convent outside Midelt in a village called Ta'akeat. These nuns have been allowed to stay by the Moroccan government, on the condition that they do not proselytize the women and girls who inhabit the orphanage and the handicrafts training center under their auspices. Generations of women in Midelt have grown up in the care of these elderly nuns. Almost all of

³¹ Blood and milk are distinguished *by Moha* as permanent and temporary fluids in his body, relatively.

the women find local husbands as soon as they are interested in getting married, because the embroidery skills that the women learn from the nuns are a major source of income for families. Rightly or wrongly, many men in the area believe that the women who have been raised in the convent are more submissive and better trained in domestic duties than other local women. In any case, the women raised by the nuns are universally respected. When I conducted meetings with potential members of the weaving cooperatives, I quickly learned that such women are accustomed to receiving deference from their peers.

Although she was raised in the convent, Mimi is anything but submissive and domestic. Despite being in her early sixties, she has never been married and is not interested in doing so. She told me once that she wants to be like a nun, living among sisters and helping women, but she has always been appalled by the religious imagery of the Catholics and the notion that God could have a son. Mimi tells people that she has taken a vow of poverty, and that may be the case. Many people in the town suspect that she has some sort of mental illness that prevents her from steady employment and having a regular place to live. I am not qualified to evaluate that claim, but it seems to me that for those who would dismiss her, thinking Mimi is a bit crazy/*habeela shwiya* is more convenient than accurate. She is very odd in her mannerisms and behavior, however, and like Moha, she expresses disdain for large segments of the population.

One of the clearest ways that she separates herself from others is through her language. She refuses to speak Arabic at all, and will only speak a couple words of Tamazight before returning to French. French is more than just the language with which she was raised, however. She told me, and tells anyone else who will

listen, that she refuses to speak the language of the “*Musulmans*,” and will only use French, the language of “civilization.” Mimi speedily walks through town, from store to store asking for small change from shop owners who speak less and less French as the memory of the colonial period fades.

I first had a sustained interaction with Mimi when she came to Moha’s daughters’ carpet shops. When she saw Moha, she kissed his hand in deep reverence, a move that I have never seen her repeat with anyone else. Seeing me, Mimi immediately assumed that I was a French-speaking customer of rugs and assured me that Moha was “*un homme très gentil*.” Mimi then returned to talking with Moha. She was a fixture at the carpet store and would regularly sit with the old men who chatted away the day in the shade. She never stayed long though, and rushed off on another errand after only a few minutes of conversation. On this occasion, she said that she needed money to buy food for her dog, which she was leading around on a string. The keeping of pets for any purpose other than guarding property is unfathomable for most Mideltis. Children on the street regularly try and throw rocks at or kick Mimi’s pets. If the children are close enough for her to be able to return the rocks or kicks, she will do so, but otherwise Mimi curses the children, their parents and “*vos mœurs musulmanes*.” Mimi is a tiny woman, and I fear for her safety when she responds in this manner to the street children. Indeed, on a number of occasions, when I have met Mimi as she makes her hurried rounds, she will have a black eye or some gash on her face from an encounter with violent youths. On this occasion at Moha’s shop, however, Mimi was quite healthy and victorious, having just thrown rocks at a trio of young boys who were tormenting her dog as they entered the souq.

The next time I met Mimi she was getting into a car with some tourists in one of the more remote doours surrounding Midelt. She had guided the tourists out on the sixteen-kilometer dirt track that I had just walked. She remembered me and jumped out of the car to greet me. She made introductions for me to the tourists and invited me into a rammed earth home to relax. I asked her how she had gotten all the way out there and she told me that she works for two carpet shops in the area. If tourists come into Midelt and are looking for carpets, the owners mention that they run tours out to the convent in Ta'akeet and an outpost for the nuns who travel with the nomads. If the clients seem interested, the carpet store owners call Mimi and have her guide the tours. She receives a miserably small portion of the price of the tour, but she is happy for the chance to speak with "civilized" foreigners. She explained that the building that she had escorted me into was the outpost for the semi-nomadic nuns, but that they were up in the mountains. The tour group that she brought out there had visited the remnants of an old Jewish camp that served as a bank and trading post for the nomads, much like Shlomo's house. I seized upon this and asked if she would have time to talk with me about what she knew of the Jewish history of the area. She heartily agreed. She told me that I could rest in the nun's house as long as I wanted, but that she had to return to town with the tourists.

Mimi and I tried to meet many times over the next few years, but she was always in a hurry to go somewhere. She said that we would talk soon, but nothing ever came of it, and I began to lose hope. At the end of one of my research trips, about six years after I originally met her, I was sitting in a café next to the Midelt bus station, waiting for my bus to Meknes, where I would catch my train to the

airport. I was working on my notes and making outlines for potential articles when I heard a voice yelling my name. Mimi had seen me from across the street, and was hurrying through a busy roundabout to come over and talk with me. There are five cafes that face this roundabout in the center of town and all eyes were on Mimi, who was yelling and waving frantically. Mimi was, as always, dressed completely in black except for her white headscarf, which she wrapped around her head in the manner of the men who make a turban in the desert, rather than any style of hijab that I have ever seen. She chooses this black and white color scheme to consciously imitate the nuns who raised her, but she customizes it to suit her non-cloistered lifestyle of running around Midelt. The eyes that followed Mimi soon came to settle on me as she came over and sat at my table.

Mimi excitedly told me that she had a very good story for me about Jewish history in Midelt. I was amazed that she remembered my request from so many years earlier. It had been about three years since I had last seen her. Still, she was anxious to tell her story. After telling her that I would be happy to pay for her coffee, and after securing a saucer of milk for her newest pet cat from an extremely unimpressed waiter, Mimi pointed across the street to one of the other cafes. It was still full of eyes pointed toward us. Mimi told me that the owner of that café was a very bad man, and regularly throws water on homeless people as they pass by the café in order to amuse his patrons. Mimi had been on the receiving end of such cruel entertainment a number of times herself.

Mimi said that only a few months earlier, in the bitterly cold evening of late winter, the owner had thrown water on a homeless man that we both knew by sight, but not by name. He regularly roams about town, muttering to himself in various

stages of dress or undress. After being soaked with water that evening, instead of cowering or putting on a show of his craziness, as the patrons were no doubt hoping for, the man stopped where he was standing, straightened up and then walked into the center of the roundabout. At this point he could be seen by everyone in all the surrounding cafes. He yelled loudly, according to Mimi, "I curse you by the power of the Jews." At that moment, a butagaz canister of butane used for cooking exploded in the rear of the café, sending patrons and the owner scrambling for cover. The still-wet homeless man then ran off before the patrons of the other cafes could catch him.

Mimi went on to say that about a month after that, a group of Israeli tourists came to town, and everyone, including the carpet shop owners for whom she worked, were afraid to even speak to them, for fear of "the power of the Jews," that had been displayed so spectacularly. Mimi gamely introduced herself and happily showed them around town and the surrounding area. Since that time, Mimi had not been bothered by the people of town, or even the children in the streets. She told me that she believed that the miracle had occurred in order for God to protect her by the power of the Jews.

After Mimi finished her story, I was awestruck, but also incredulous. In the past, I have seen Mimi abused and refused entry by some café owners. But here we were, sitting in a café in the center of town, with her cat at our feet drinking milk out of a saucer. I do not think that I have enough clout as a foreigner for a waiter to serve a mostly-homeless woman, clad in dark rags, and give milk to her cat. I may be wrong, but I think that Mimi was indeed able to sit where she wanted because of her connection with this display of power, which had occurred a few

months earlier directly in front of where we were sitting. I still wanted to investigate the story in what little time I had left in Midelt. Mimi understood. After I paid for our coffees – but not the cat’s milk, which was on the house – we walked across the street to see the damage on the back and side of the other café. There were indeed signs of a fire, with scorch marks and recently replaced concrete blocks. After a very quick investigation, I thanked Mimi for the story and hurried across the street to catch my bus as it was leaving. When I was on the train from Meknes to Casablanca, I called Moha to try and validate the story. I slipped into the bathroom, because I did not want people to overhear my conversation about an explosion in Morocco caused by Jews. Moha told me that he had been traveling most of the winter and spring, but that he had heard of an explosion. He said that he was very careful not to get involved in accidents that did not concern him, but his friend Mimi did seem to be experiencing a new degree of respect that she had not enjoyed previously.

Mimi’s success in reducing her persecution stemmed mostly from her association with Jews. Mimi often recounts publicly the unleashing of mystical powers by the aggrieved homeless man, even years after the event. Her telling of the performance of power is essential to the ongoing association between magic acts and her relationship to the perceived source of power. Mimi was already the type of marginal, even trickster, figure from whom magical power might be expected.³² Her upbringing with cloistered foreigners, close association with

³² Hynes, William J. 1993. "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide," in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*. Hynes, William J and William G. Doty, eds. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press.

animals, use of another language, antipathy toward children and dressing across gender lines are classic descriptors of the performers of the trickster role.³³ The butagaz exploding in the name of the Jews and the subsequent visit of Israeli tourists were a perfect co-incidence of events that allowed her to transform her image. Instead of being merely a strange figure on the margin of the community, she is now a strange figure on the margins of the community who should not be trifled with, thanks to her association with Jewish tourists, and an earlier performance of Jewish magic.

Mimi and Moha are just two of the hundreds of Muslim Moroccans who have come to guide foreign tourists to Jewish sites in the mostly Amazigh countryside. I have used their lives as a sort of shorthand for describing the ways in which guides frequently demonstrate not just their expertise but also their experiences with the Jewish community in order to explain and defend their strangeness to themselves and their communities. Association and friendship with Jews, and certainly suckling with and channeling magic from Jews does much more than provide a good story for people in the business of entertaining guests. The performances of the stories and memories help create and reaffirm the identities of these guides as friends of Jews and inheritors of their integrity and mystical power. These identities are maintained for the local community even in the often long stretches between the visits of tourists.

³³ Hyde, Lewis. 1998. *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

The stories, memories, and displays of power constitute a major source of good for Moha and Mimi, who are able to use them to not only provide for themselves, but also to create their selves. The blessings of Jewish Morocco reach far beyond the guides and guards, however, and are harnessed by many others whose actions in and around cemeteries and synagogues are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Blessings and the Business of Cemetery Tourism

Jewish cemeteries are not merely sites for the articulation of memory and generational friendships between some Muslims and Jews. They are also, as I have shown throughout, important tourist destinations and sites for the articulation of economic, social and spiritual capital. In this chapter I pivot from focusing on the cemetery keepers to tourism professionals and NGOs, who promote and exploit these sites in various ways. The commodified nature of the interactions discussed in this chapter do not stand in opposition to, so much as they are a direct continuation of traditional ways of thinking about burial places as sites for the conveyance of blessing/*Baraka* on those who visit and care for them. In all of the following cases, the Jewish cemeteries are material sources of tremendous capital – economic, cultural and spiritual – which is harnessed by various actors for blessing their ancestors, their communities, and themselves. The potential blessings are an integral part of the reservoir of creativity that Jewish places offer to Muslim performers that enable them to define and recreate themselves and their communities.

In the first section, I am chiefly interested in addressing how tourism operatives construct narratives that entice tourists to visit their sites. This activity is conducted not just in the cemeteries, but in pamphlets and on websites that are read around the world, in many cases by people who will never come to Morocco. How do tourism operators make decisions about what will be most enticing to a potential audience? What is being written on the websites that brings tourists from

the well-traveled tourist epicenters of Fes and Marrakech out into the hinterland to look at graves and shrines?

Once the tourists make plans with a company, they will be transported out to the site by Moroccan drivers. The Jewish cemeteries may only be one part of a larger tour with a private guide. This guided tour is, for many package- and weekend-tourists from Europe, their sole experience outside of the major cities in Morocco. Their conception of rural Morocco is profoundly shaped by the interactions with only one or two guides, who will have different proficiencies in language. Accordingly, I will address how stories told about how and why Muslims are in the Jewish cemeteries differ by place and by audience. Is there a version for the tourists and a version for the locals? Are French- and Arabic-speaking tourists provided with a different experience from English-, German- and Hebrew-speaking tourists? Are there multiple local versions for those who are sympathetic to the tourism project and those who are not?

I also address why people choose to work in and around Jewish cemeteries. Is profit primary the motivation for starting a tourism business that caters to Jewish sites, or is there another draw? I will try to get at the intentions of the entrepreneurs to understand if their companies are merely about income or if the businesses touch their lives somehow. What is the social opportunity cost of working in a Jewish graveyard for tourism professionals who do not reside there permanently like the guards, but nonetheless are known for their excursions? I consider the business peoples' performances and consider what is at stake when the audience is not God or the dead, but potential tourists who may not be Moroccan, Jewish, or religious.

In the second half of this chapter I address the work of the High Atlas Foundation (HAF), an NGO that has spent tremendous time, effort and money over the past several years to restore and promote Jewish cemeteries. With all the social needs of Morocco, why do Jewish cemeteries and interfaith issues between Moroccan Muslims and Jews merit the attention and money of NGOs and their funders?

I outline the history of HAF's cemetery restoration projects as a means to describe how the wider Moroccan community, which may not have any particular connection to the Jewish cemeteries, benefits materially from the cemeteries and becomes involved in their upkeep. HAF's projects also provide a very useful insight into international donor thinking on the importance of Jewish cemeteries, and the donors' views on Muslims' proper roles in relation to Moroccan Jewish cemeteries.

[Attractive Narratives: Prying Tourists out of Major Cities](#)

Unless tourists are specifically interested in visiting rural areas or participating in heritage tours, they will probably only visit Marrakech or Fes, with a few tourists choosing to travel to Chefchaouen, Essaouira or Merzouga, for the marijuana, beach or desert, respectively. Proprietors of tourism companies that service rural areas where the majority of Jewish cemeteries are located face a difficult challenge in creating an effective means to lure tourists away from the well-trod paths of most visitors to Morocco. The rise of Jewish heritage tourism apps, such as "rabbimap," which allows the user to find the locations of hundreds of saints' tombs without outside help, have further cut into tourism professionals'

profits.¹ Most successful tourism companies that are able to bring clients to rural areas have a threefold strategy. First, they run short tours out of the major cities. In order to bring a group of tourists to see Jewish sites in Sefrou, for example, a tourism company will try to attract tourists already in Fes by pointing out that they can see an entirely different side of Morocco for the relatively small investment of time of only six hours. The opportunity cost of a morning in Fes is portrayed as quite low when the tourist can be back in the city all afternoon and evening.

Second, the travel companies try to engage potential clients by promising them a unique/special/one-of-a-kind experience that is beyond comparison with their friends' and fellow travelers' experiences in the cities that "every tourist visits." In the age of Instagram and Facebook, tourism companies know that it is important for clients to have pictures of themselves in front of well-known landmarks. But it is also important for many well-heeled tourists to be able to upload photos of themselves in conversation-starting and awe-producing places. I have heard sales-focused conversations on the streets of Fes and Marrakech begin, "Can you imagine your friends seeing you in a synagogue in the mountains?" or "Won't your friends be jealous that you went off the beaten path and got to see real life in Morocco, where Jews and Muslims are friends?" This last question is an explicit manifestation of the third strategy for attracting tourists outside of the main cities.

Tour operators and tourists alike have told me that the most important factor for choosing to take a rural Jewish heritage tour is the claim of authenticity.

¹ <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.goodbarber.kevari&hl=en>

Time and again, the tourists with whom I speak tell me that they “want to see the real Morocco.” This is understandable after a few days in Marrakech or Fes, which feel very tourist-focused, and people at shops and restaurants can easily speak to clients in five or six languages. The snake charmers and belly dancers in Marrakech are more than sufficiently exotic for many tourists. But my friends who work as guides and many of the tourists with whom I spoke pointed out to me that visitors to Morocco want to speak [through a translator] with someone who does not speak their language in a setting that is less packed with tourists and less [obviously] dedicated to the visiting foreigner. Frequently, this quest for the authentic is expressed in ethnic terms as well. “Berber tents,” “Berber villages” and even “Berber breakfasts” are all coded as authentically Moroccan and desirable experiences. “Arab” is simply not used as a selling point in the same way in Morocco.

In order to include more “authenticity,” many tourism packages – whether they are dedicated to sports such as mountain biking or hiking, cultural tourism to Jewish or Muslim sites, or focused on artisanal craft production of the items that are for sale in the larger cities – are now starting to include homestays of various lengths. I have known this instinctually for some years as visits to Jewish cemeteries often conclude with a short, rehearsed speech from the guard to the visitors. Visitors are frequently invited to have some tea and bread with olive oil in the home of the guard as the guard describes Jewish life in her/his town. Tourism entrepreneurs tell me that this sitting and eating with “ordinary Moroccans,” who are probably considered a bit odd in their village are, in fact, not that “ordinary” at all, is the most important part of the tour for most visitors. For tourism companies

with websites and entries on TripAdvisor, the reviews by clients who discuss their sitting and talking with Moroccans about Jewish history is particularly useful in attracting new clients who are hungry for similar experiences. The chance for foreigners to interact with Moroccans in a way that allows for the client/guide relationships to fade into the background and the imagining of cross-cultural friendship and equal exchange to come to the fore is the goal of both the tourists and the tourism professionals.

My friend Yassine, who accompanied me on my first trip to the Sefrou cemetery, is now the executive director of his own tourism company. He told me that specializing in cultural tourism is his main focus to attract visitors. His company operates a variety of tours, including short-term education trips for students, desert tours that focus on the old trading routes, and tours marketed to LGBT travelers. One of their most popular tours, though, is the Jewish heritage tour from Fes to Sefrou. All the tours, no matter what their focus, include activities such as staying with a local family, experiencing public transportation and participating in community development projects. Yassine's understanding is that through these types of activities, his company helps to create cross-cultural friendships that both Moroccans and visitors appreciate. He relies on this felt intimacy to maintain his niche in a crowded tourism market. His company's website is full of stories of satisfied customers who were pleased, specifically because they were able to talk with Moroccans about history, culture and daily life in Morocco.

The Jewish heritage tours that Yassine runs center on several opportunities for the tourists to speak with the local Moroccan guides and guards. Instead of

merely being delivered to a site to take photos, or being led along by a guide who recites facts that will quickly be forgotten or misremembered, Yassine's guides, and increasingly other tourism companies' guides as well, include time for sit-down conversations. These conversations provide a time in which tourists can ask whatever questions they want. In addition, the guide may ask the visitors questions about what they expected to see or whether they were surprised by the degree of happy coexistence between Jews and Muslims. Yassine's tour to Sefrou includes visits to the old *mellah*, the Ibn Habanim orphanage and school, the synagogue of Sefrou, and the Jewish cemetery. Usually at either the synagogue or the cemetery, the tour group will pause for some tea and conversation with the guard. In the afternoon, Yassine's guides invite visitors to engage in conversations with "an expert in the history of Jewish [sic] in Morocco."²

Many tourism companies use these local experts to highlight Jewish cultural trips. The expert is occasionally a professor from the nearby Al-Akhawayn University, or the founder of the High Atlas Fountain, who is discussed more below. When last I took the tour, and I suspect frequently on other tours, an older Muslim resident of Sefrou, who plausibly remembers living intimately with the Jewish community, talked about how Jews and Muslims were friends and equals. As Geertz and Stillman have recorded, this was not always the case in Sefrou.³ However most tourists want stories of peaceful coexistence, and they are usually

² Because of a convention of translation into English from Arabic and French, Yassine's website and guides use "Jewish" as an adjective and noun.

³ See, among others, Geertz, Clifford. 1979. "Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou" Rosen, Lawrence et al., eds., *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. and Stillman, Norman. 1973. "The Sefrou Remnant." *Jewish Social Studies* 35, no. 3/4: 255-63.

told what they want to hear. Yassine wanted me to mention in these pages that frequently, tourists do ask questions about the practice of Judaism in a Muslim society, the roles of the Jewish population in politics and economy in Morocco, and the reasons most Jews of Morocco left the country. The Moroccan expert with whom I spoke gave an answer to the last question that had more to do with the shadowy machinations of the Jewish Agency than anti-Jewish violence in Morocco. The Al Akhawayn staff and the founder of the High Atlas Foundation present more nuanced views, and the local “experts” are very open to being corrected if one of the tourists knows more about twentieth century North African Jewish history than he does. I have never witnessed the local experts’ lectures being amended to include these corrections, however. I have also observed the tour facilitator occasionally massage the translations to produce an agreeable response when he knows that things are going a bit awry, for instance if the local “expert” uses an unflattering term. The tour facilitators promise to ensure that conversation occurs within a safe and respectful environment, and I have never heard of a complaint.

[It’s all About the Guide: Shaping the Experience](#)

The tourism company guide who transports the guests from their hotels out into the countryside and frames the interaction with the guards at the sacred sites by means of introduction and translation wields enormous power in shaping tourists’ experiences at Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Morocco. I went on a series of tours in and around Marrakech to try to understand the effects of this framing power. While visiting the Bahia Palace and the surrounding *mellah*, one

guide described the process of *mellahization* of Jews in Marrakech in accordance with the narrative accepted by most historians. This involved coercion, force and promises of protection that were at times unmet. The tour group then asked several surprisingly sophisticated questions when they arrived at various sites about how relationships between Jews and Muslims changed over time, and how the relationships were reflected and shaped by the sites they were seeing.

In another case, a guide from another tourism company, in describing the formation of the *mellah*, portrayed the Jews of Marrakech as feeling happy and honored to be chosen to live in such a prime location so close to the sultan. On this tour through the same sites as before, the tourists were meant to understand that Jews were quite happy to be confined to the *mellah*, and that relationships between Muslims and Jews in Morocco were static and uniformly good. Questions about why the *mellah* was empty of Jews after many years of occupation by a vibrant Jewish community simply never materialized, because the framing of the guide precluded such a topic from arising.

The only dissention from this understanding came from two young American Jewish women in a study abroad program in Morocco who were visiting Marrakech for the weekend. After the introduction from the guide on the way to the *mellah*, they kept asking me to take their pictures while they grasped iron bars covering windows as if the bars were part of a prison. They told me to make sure that I captured their large smiles, which conveyed just how “happy and honored” they were to be confined in the *mellah*. When we returned to the bus that was to take us to a different part of the city, the two young women sarcastically asked the company guide if he was sure that they could leave, and that they would be “happy

and honored” to remain in the *mellah* if they needed to stay. He, somewhat confusedly answered that they could go wherever they wanted. After a moment, and feeling more comfortable, the oblivious guide added with a smile, “It is not as if you’re Jews, anyway!” The young women’s eyes widened, and they climbed the bus and took their seats in silence.

The skill and accuracy of many of the touristic guides vary widely. Many guides travel to multiple cities and sites, on multiple types of tours, and may not have any attachment to the areas to which they take tourists. It is rather unsurprising that these guides may have a very shallow grasp of the historical complexities that shaped the sometimes intimate, sometimes inimical relationships between Jews and Muslims. Yet, they wield tremendous power in shaping tourists’ understanding of Jewish life and Jewish places in Morocco. As a means to ensure quality tour facilitation, Yassine requires all of his Moroccan guides to have bachelor’s degrees, and to pass an exam meant to demonstrate both intercultural sensitivity and extensive knowledge of Morocco and its culture. Because Yassine’s company offers Jewish heritage tours in addition to providing LGBT friendly tours, the guides are usually open-minded and young. They have to sign a form that declares that they will not discriminate on the basis of religion, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age or citizenship in their programs and activities. In this, Yassine’s company is relatively unique. In many of the other tourism companies that I have observed, anti-gay jokes, as well as concerns that some participants in a tour of Jewish sites might actually *be Jewish* are frequently expressed, albeit in Moroccan Arabic for the benefit of other Moroccans who are presumed not to be offended by such talk.

Why Start a Grave Tourism Company?

Yassine's tourism business came fairly late to the game. Tourism to Fes has exploded in recent years, even earning the "Destination Traveler's Choice Award" from TripAdvisor, which signified it as one of the most popular destinations in the world in 2014 and 2015. Tourism and tourism companies tend to grow at the same time in the same places. By 2011, when Yassine's company was founded, Fes was already quite full of tourism companies willing to take tourists around the city, or on longer, multi-day excursions down to the desert or up to Chefchaouen. Yassine, among a few others, saw the economic potential in regions surrounding Fes that might only require an hour or two to drive to, and were not known to tourists or serviced by other tourism operators.

Now, years later, many tour groups, irrespective of their main destination, will stop in Azrou on their way south from Fes to see the Barbary Apes, and will stop in Midelt for lunch at what is almost certainly the best sandwich restaurant in Morocco. But Yassine is one of what is still only a small, but growing number of tourism providers for whom these places are not just way-points, but destinations.

If one is not interested in Jewish Morocco, there is little to see at these sites that are viewed by most tourism companies as only a convenient place for a break. Saudi money has paid for some large but uninteresting mosques. King Hassan II built a beautiful mosque in Azrou to thank the town for its massive deforestation, which supported the construction of the immense Hassan II mosque in Casablanca. However, non-Muslims are not allowed to tour these mosques. However, Jewish cemeteries and sites are scattered all around the Middle and High

Atlas Mountains, and provide a niche for Yassine and other tourism companies to exploit in attracting tourists to under-visited regions.

Yassine, like the other tourism operators who ply these routes, is a businessman and runs these trips to make money. He and the others talk about the importance of Moroccan history that is shared by Muslims and Jews, just as one would expect a tourism manager to do. For me, this sort of talk is usually unconvincing, especially when I hear of the importance of Morocco's Jewish past from guides who later worry about if they have any Jews on this trip, or if too many Jews might come back to Morocco. Making money from tourism to Jewish places while simultaneously dreading the presence of living Jews is parasitism of the first order.

What sets Yassine apart from these others are two factors. The first is that he has built his whole tourism business on welcoming people that many Moroccans feel ambivalent about: Jews and LGBTQ folks. Moroccan "news" magazines regularly confirm the presence of both secret Jews and secret homosexuals in Morocco. Current laws are very harsh to the latter group, and the larger society regards both groups with deep suspicion. Yassine says that he cannot do anything about the laws, but he can warmly welcome and guide people whom others view with suspicion. He proudly states that most of the visitors who go with his company on the Jewish heritage tour in Sefrou and the LGBT tours are, "individuals and professionals such as professors, students and artists," who represent the target groups.

The second important factor that leads me to believe that Yassine is sincere in his desire to promote and protect Jewish culture in Morocco is that he knows

both information and people. When we have gone to Sefrou, he knows some of the people buried in the Jewish cemetery because they were friends of his grandmother. He knows about the difficult treks that people were willing to undertake as they moved away from Sefrou and can rehearse some of the routes they took eastward to Algeria and then up to France. He describes to his tourist groups with apparent embarrassment the reasons that Jews left Sefrou, including not only the pull of Israel and France, but also the violence and hostility that drove them away from their ancestral homes. Yassine is not rehearsing mere simulacra, but is able to build on family experiences of intimacy with the Jewish community to more fully describe and promote Jewish Morocco. The imagined community that his tours conjure up for his clients springs from the hospitality of his remembered community. He is one of the many Muslim Moroccans whose work is closely aligned with their moral formation as people for whom living closely with the Jewish community is an important part of their heritage.

Thus, Yassine is another example of Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of being singular-plural.⁴ He is a son of Sefrou, a place famously known as a home to both Muslims and Jews. Just as the town itself is a singular entity that was shaped by people of two faiths, so Yassine was also shaped, by family lore and the physical place of his birth and raising, by the same mix of Muslims and Jews.

⁴ Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Bryne, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Authenticity and Authority

The performances by the Muslim guides and guards are unavoidably central to the experience of tourists visiting Moroccan Jewish cemeteries. Tourists and the descendants of those buried in the cemeteries come to see the graves themselves, but their experiences are mediated through the words, silence, actions and inactions of the guides in the sacred places. In my own experiences, guards who become overly friendly during our first meeting when they realize that I speak Darija and then want to talk to me about American sports teams or politics ruin the solemnity of my visits to synagogues and cemeteries. I can appreciate that a cemetery keeper who works and lives in a Jewish cemetery would occasionally want to talk about topics other than deceased Jews. A few of these talkative cemetery keepers later helped me with my research project. But I have never been able to be contemplative in cemeteries in which my initial and then subsequent interactions with the keeper were jovial or political. Happily, my main purpose in the cemeteries was not to contemplate the lives of the deceased or the world to come, but rather to understand the ways in which performance shapes the living visitors and residents of the graveyards. I am an atypical case, however, and visitors to the cemetery have vastly different experiences, based largely on their interactions with the cemetery keepers.

The guard of the Fes cemetery was one such jovial character who greeted me at the gate to the cemetery. This gate is covered in writing in many languages, which announces not only what is behind the giant black metal door, but also the phone number to call for tourist visits if the gate is shut. Upon finding me less than fluent in French, the guard correctly surmised that I was American, and then

proceeded to talk with me in very fluent English. He asked me where I was from, and when I said Chicago, he proceeded to say the two words that frequently follow the revelation of my hometown: “mafia” and “Bulls.” Unlike scores of cab drivers who stop there, however, the cemetery keeper then held an imaginary gun in his hands and made an impression of “Al” Capone shooting a Thompson submachine gun, or as the cemetery keeper called it in heavily accented English, a “Chicago typewriter.” After that display, he then moved on to discussing the glory days of Chicago basketball in the 1990’s, including frequent references to not just the main stars, but also Tony Kukoč and Steve Kerr. It quickly became clear to both of us that he knew more about basketball and sports in general than I did. I mentioned that I wanted to go to see the graves, and he shuffled off through an open door to return to his little sitting area just inside the gate. Seeking to maintain the conversation but move on to another topic, I asked him if he would not mind showing me the grave of Sol Hatchuel, the famous Jewish martyr who chose death rather than forced marriage and conversion to Islam. Rather than coming along or guiding me, he just pointed toward the center of the graveyard, and said it was where all the candles were. I found it strange that any guard would avoid the opportunity to lead a mini-tour that might result in an increased gratuity. The guard was not interested though, and I explored the Fes cemetery – which I actually knew quite well from previous visits – by myself.

After my tour of the graveyard, including short conversations with laborers who were whitewashing many of the graves, somewhat haphazardly, I returned to the entrance to see if I could talk to the cemetery keeper about anything other than sports. A large tour group of Israelis had entered the cemetery. Their leader was a

tall, light-skinned man wearing a black djellaba that was quite short for him and showed off his bare legs and hiking sandals. The rest of the group was similarly attired in shorts, impressive sandals and various shirts. The leader had spoken to the cemetery keeper in Levantine Arabic, paid a fee without bargaining, and then walked into the cemetery without asking questions. It seemed clear to me that the guide for the Israeli group had given many tours in this cemetery, was not too friendly with the keeper, and wore the djellaba only for effect. After asking if any of the Israeli tourists would be interested in talking with me about their experiences, and being rebuffed by the leader, I went to pay the keeper and leave. As the cemetery keeper was haggling with me for more money than I was interested in paying him, a group of six young Moroccan men and women came into the cemetery. They each paid only five dirhams apiece, which was considerably less than the Israelis or I had paid. They were well dressed in collared shirts and smart slacks for the men and women. As they were paying, the guard turned from me to tell them in Moroccan Arabic that there were poorly dressed Jews already in the cemetery and that they should go to a place where they could not be seen if they wanted to play around.⁵ The cemetery keeper then said, “Jews can afford to fly around the world wherever they want, but they can’t afford pants!” He meant this as a joke, but the young Moroccans did not seem to find this very funny. In fact, they seemed a little bit uncomfortable as they noticed that I was standing there. Two of them, in fact, caught my eye and shook their heads, which I took to indicate that they did not find the cemetery keeper’s words appropriate, despite their

⁵ *Al-basālāt* (pronounced *Libsalet*) usually means something like games that are not social acceptable, and in this case, signifies sexual play.

intentions to use the cemetery as a place for a mixed-gender rendezvous that would have been frowned upon in other parts of the city.

I paid and left, and waited with a cup of coffee to see if any of the Israeli tourists might have had second thoughts about being interviewed about their experiences in the cemetery. Their guide, upon seeing me lurking at a cafe near their bus when they emerged from the cemetery, came over and asked what I was doing. I told him for a second time about my research. Sensing that I was maybe more of an annoyance than a threat, he told me that he only had business interactions with the cemetery keeper, and that the man did a capable job in guarding the place and maintaining the graves. Because he guided his own tours, no participants of the Israeli tour groups that he guided ever interacted with the Moroccan cemetery keeper other than to see his face as they passed by. The guide asked me if that was sufficient information to ensure that I would never talk to him or his tours again, and I assured him that it was.

Three different kinds of tourists walked into the Fes cemetery in a space of a few hours. Because I could speak English, the guard was very pleased to conduct a recitation of sports facts that were calculated to show me how much this man who spends the majority of his waking hours in a cemetery knows about the outside world, including my hometown. However, he was not interested in accompanying me on a tour, even though it would probably mean increased income. The guard's interaction with the Israeli tour group was diametrically opposed to his interaction with me. He hardly spoke, he did not bargain over the cost of the cemetery visit, and he was not jovial at all. The Israeli tourists did not interact with him in the slightest, not even a wave or a welcome, which the guard has offered to other,

smaller, Jewish and Israeli groups on other occasions. This difference, I think, was primarily due to the no-nonsense guide. Lastly, the guard welcomed the young Moroccans, even though they paid him a pittance of the other fees, and were using his graveyard as a place to be intimate outside of the watchful gaze of their parents and other people who disapproved of such actions. He was again jovial, but the topic of his jokes was not Chicago gangsters, but the Jews that he assumed could not understand his mockery of their attire. The distinctions he made based on language and presumptions about heritage shaped both his behavior and the manner in which different groups experienced the cemetery.

In a similar manner, language often determines which aspects of performance are available to tourists or pilgrims. On a tour of the Sefrou synagogue led by a tour guide from one of the tourism companies that I observed, the guide was explaining the history of the synagogue and translating many of the comments of the woman who guards the site. When the tour group arrived at the library, one of the participants in the tour, an American, asked why some of the glass covers of the bookshelves were broken. The guide, without waiting for the woman who is the caretaker of the site to answer, was quick to explain in English that the synagogue is very old, and occasionally people accidentally slam the bookshelf doors too hard. The woman who guards the site said in Moroccan Arabic that, on the contrary, the damage was not accidental, but that people come by and take books and she does not know what they do with them. She added that if any of the tour participants were interested in taking a book for themselves from the synagogue's historic library, they would be welcome to do so. I was stunned, and asked her why she would allow the site that she was guarding to be pillaged. She explained that she

appreciated the money that the tourists and pilgrims bring to Sefrou, but she does not care about “Jewish things.” The non-Arabic speaking tourists never understood that exchange, and our guide did not translate it. The guide frequently mentioned in the English presentation during the tour that Jewish history was very important to all the Muslim residents of Sefrou. For speakers of Moroccan Arabic who understood the words of the woman charged with keeping the Jewish site safe and intact and who did not mind selling or even giving away artifacts, a more authentic range of Sefriwi opinions on maintenance of Jewish history was clear.

Similarly, on several “Jewish tours” of Marrakech, guides described “Jewish” practices that had little basis in fact or history, but because of their authority as guides, their clients perceived Jewish influence where there was none. I joined a tour that explored Jma el Fna and then journeyed over to the *mellah*. We were told by the tour guides that most of the women telling fortunes in the square were the daughters of mixed Jewish-Muslim unions. According to the guide, the mixing of religious potencies gave them their powers to tell the future, but their mixed parentage ensured that they could never marry a Muslim or a Jew. This claim, despite being false, was nonetheless effective in exoticizing the women in the eyes of my fellow tourists.

To allege mixed-religious parentage is a serious claim, and an interesting one to make. After the other tourists left, I asked the guide, in Arabic, whether it was actually true that most of the women fortune tellers were half-Jewish. He shrugged his shoulders and said, “*Lo a lam*/[only] God knows,”⁶ rather than

⁶ Moroccan informal pronunciation of *Allahu a lam*

defend his claim. I suspect that the claim is made for English-only tourists, and not that often. Visitors who speak Arabic or French could too easily ask one of the fortune tellers and undermine the guide's assertion and thereby his authority. As direct flights from England and Germany become increasingly common, English is increasingly becoming the language of choice for fortune tellers, musicians and restaurateurs trying to converse with tourists in Marrakech. English-language claims about mixed-parentage and un-marriageability are more dangerous to make in instances where the subject of the claims can refute them.

Alternately, however, I have heard this same claim from some of the women fortune tellers themselves, although others vehemently deny it. Among the women who claim this distinctive identity, they also adhere to the related claim that their spiritual power for seeing the future is double that of the other fortune tellers who can channel only "Muslim *baraka*." I spoke to a fortune teller immediately after completing a harrowing journey from Nouakchott, Mauritania, back to Marrakech. I had just resolved on the twenty-seven-hour bus ride from Dakhla to Marrakech to propose to my girlfriend, who is now my wife, shortly after I returned to the States. Life changing decisions aside, I was still on a research trip, and I wanted to talk with people who claimed Jewish influence or who were able to speak Hebrew. I spotted a woman with whom I had spoken previously, who was willing to speak to me in Arabic. I have assiduously avoided fortune tellers and soliciting the services of magicians in the past because of Biblical injunctions against using their services, but I had research to do.⁷ I have observed fortune tellers from a distance,

⁷ Lev 19:31, Lev 20:6 and Deut 18:10-12, among other places prohibit consulting spiritualists.

but I chose to patronize a few for the sake of research and ask them to demonstrate how they practice their craft, but not to make any predictions for me. Few times in my fieldwork have I actually had to make compromises between my personal convictions and my research, but this is one of them. Following Nahmanides, the Spanish-Jewish exegete, Jewish objections to magic stem not from a suspicion that it does not work, but that its power is impermissible for humans to wield without permission.⁸ On the other hand, Maimonides, who also was born in Spain, but fled to Fes, regarded these practices as false and ineffectual.⁹ I knew that I would lose something of the effect by employing someone to tell me about how she would practice her craft, rather than paying her to actually practice her craft. However, I have to live with myself after this fieldwork is over. I am by no means Orthodox in any stream of religion, but soothsaying feels like a practice that I do not want to be involved in. I was a bit curious, however, to see if speaking with a fortune teller at such a momentous time in my life would reveal anything.

I was bedraggled from the two grand taxi journeys and the long bus ride, but also feeling triumphant because I had just talked to Sarah, my soon-to-be-fiancee. My condition was immediately visible to Malika, the fortune teller, who did not need to employ her powers to see that I was jubilant.¹⁰ She exclaimed, “You have good news, but it makes you very tired.” I played along and asked what else she would be able to tell me if she were to tell my fortune. She told me that I should

⁸ Halbertal, Moshe and Margalit, Avishai. 1994. *Idolatry*. Goldblum, Naomi, Trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 191.

⁹ Halbertal and Margalit. 238.

¹⁰ For more on fortune telling and Jma el Fna more generally, please see: Beardslee, Tom. 2014. *Folkways and Sorcery in Marrakesh*. Unpublished dissertation.

sit with her on a stool while she started her work. She immediately began, “*Bismillah oo Bismil-hashem, bghina nshoofoo al-mustaqaba*/In the name of ‘Allah’ and in the name of ‘HaShem,’ [literally “the Name” which is a circumlocution for the Tetragrammaton in Judaism] we want to see the future.” I told her that, in fact, I did not want to see the future, but I was very curious why she used the invocation that she did. She replied that she was relieved because she would not have to say more of the future because she was tired. She relaxed, pulled down her veil and smiled at me. She said that she was only going to tell me what she was about to tell me because I was a foreigner, a non-Muslim and an Arabic speaker. Malika said that her Muslim paternal uncle married her aunt who was Jewish, and that she said prayers to “Hashem” (said as a first name, similar to the popular name Hisham). Malika always liked her aunt, and when she started telling fortunes, she seemed to be paid better when she invoked Hashem along with Allah. I asked her who Hashem was. She looked surprised at my question, but told me quickly that Hashem was the angel that took Jewish prayers directly and speedily (*dee-rect oo nishan oo bzerba*) to God (*Allah*).

Malika said that she did not use the formula while other fortune tellers were close by, because she did not want them to use her words and reduce her comparative advantage in earning money by telling the future. Malika has closely guarded her secret, because I have never heard her formulation used by any other fortune tellers. Even other fortune tellers who claim to be Jewish are only able to say “Shalom.” Malika uses a bit of religious Hebrew, without full knowledge of what the term represents, in order to profit financially, but does not seek to publicize the secret of her success.

In addition to fortune tellers, guides on “Jewish tours” have also made exaggerated claims about the knowledge and ability of cemetery keepers. While passing the large Marrakech cemetery, a tour group was casually told that the cemetery keeper there speaks perfect Hebrew and says prayers for his charges frequently. The assertion resounds powerfully with the tourists with whom I have spoken because it undermines a popular narrative of constant enmity between Jews and Muslims. Many tourists are very pleased to learn that in the largest Jewish cemetery in Morocco, the Muslim keeper is able to say Jewish prayers. As will be made clear below, however, this is in fact not the case. The keeper is able to hold a polite conversation, but he emphatically does not say prayers over the graves, unlike Hamid in chapter three. Praying Hebrew language prayers in this cemetery is solely the job of the Jewish community, which is still present but diminishing in Marrakech. The care of the cemeteries that they leave behind is a central concern not only for the Muslim keeper and Marrakechi Jews, but also international NGOs.

NGOs, Cemeteries and Tourism

The High Atlas Foundation is spoken of with reverence by many cemetery keepers in Morocco. They have brought money and notoriety, and with these, tourists, to several Jewish cemeteries. In addition to refurbishing popularly visited Muslim, Christian and Jewish cemeteries in Essaouira, they have marshalled donor money to finance pilot projects for restoring Jewish cemeteries in the countryside that have fallen into neglect and abuse.

The NGO itself is based in New York, where it is registered as a 501c3 non-profit. All the activities of the High Atlas Foundation are conducted in Morocco, however. The activities are many and they are varied. The stated mission of the organization is to catalyze grassroots development in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in Morocco. In order to do this, they focus mainly on agricultural training, especially among women in rural areas. In all three interviews that I have conducted with members of the organization, they have talked about the goal of ending subsistence agriculture through more profitable farming techniques and crops. Accordingly, they focus on organic spices and medicinal herbs, as well as growing plants for biomass fuel. All of this has seemingly very little to do with cemeteries, however.

The founder of the organization, Dr. Yossef Ben-Meir, started as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1993 and became interested in sustainable development. He also noticed that there were hundreds of Jewish graveyards that were decaying and becoming the victims of vandals. When he founded the High Atlas Foundation, he wanted to make sure that he joined his concern for Jewish cemetery care with his main focus of sustainable development. In many ways, Dr. Ben-Meir and I were on opposite paths. I joined the Peace Corps in order to start a career in development. But when I encountered hundreds of Jewish cemeteries during my service, I knew that my main focus in my professional life would be academic Jewish studies into which I have incorporated a small amount of volunteering for development projects during my research.

Under Dr. Ben-Meir's leadership, the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) has undertaken projects that seek to promote interfaith contacts and appreciation. The

two projects that interest me the most are the cemetery restorations in Essaouira, and the cemetery developments in Akrish, Ouarzazate and Azilal. HAF staff take students and cultural tourism groups on tours of the Essaouira cemeteries that they helped to restore, in addition to speaking at conferences and numerous venues (including TEDxMarrakech) about the importance of Morocco's cultural heritage as represented by cemeteries, especially cemeteries of minority groups, namely Jews and Christians.

After responding shockingly quickly to my email, the interim director, Jacqueline, invited me to come to Marrakech to meet with the staff of the High Atlas Foundation and talk with them about their cemetery restoration projects. She stressed to me the importance of the participatory approach to their community projects, especially in areas where they were working on and in a Jewish cemetery, but where no Jews had lived for two or more generations. The High Atlas Foundation, in an attempt to make sure that no one feels slighted or left out, seeks to include in their processes representatives of the Moroccan Jewish community, usually the community president of Marrakech, Jacky Kadoch; governmental representatives, usually the governor of the El Haouz province along with people from the Ministry of Water and Forests; and local representatives, usually the caid and sheikh if there is one, and some local women. These factions all are brought together to discuss what is to be done with the Jewish cemeteries. The local representatives often seek the removal of the graves and repurposing of the land, but can be enticed to not desecrate the gravesites by the promise of tourism money flowing into their community. The governmental representatives often do not care much about the happenings in rural villages, but are very happy to give a speech

and talk about the Moroccan tradition of caring for Jews. They also hope to encourage tourism and demonstrate what great projects they oversee. Finally, the Jewish community is usually the happiest to have the involvement of HAF, because Jewish cemeteries are restored, usually with internationally donated money that the small community could not hope to raise on its own. Jacqueline spent several hours describing the community partnerships that HAF fosters, but eventually she suggested that I go out to speak with some of the community partners themselves in order to hear firsthand about the relationships between Muslims and Jews at the cemeteries that they funded.

The Blessings of Jewish Graves

After I left my first interview at the offices of the High Atlas Foundation in Marrakech, and after trading several phone calls, I walked over to the El Azama synagogue, just around the corner from the Bahia palace. There I met Kati, who was tasked by HAF to explain more of the reason why Moroccan Muslims and Jews would collaborate on a cemetery project. Kati had received several emails and phone calls that came to her from HAF in the ninety minutes that it took for me to check into my hotel and walk over to the synagogue. She is the resident historian at El Azama, and described her role to me as connecting people who need to meet and providing information that people need to know.

When I arrived, Kati was expecting me, and had even purchased bottles of water for me. She planned to take me to the large cemetery herself, and the temperature was fifty-one degrees Celsius that afternoon. The care and motherliness that she displayed in making sure that I was hydrated continued

throughout the rest of the day as she suggested that I should wear a hat in the open and exposed graveyard, and made sure that I had had plenty of salt in addition to the water. She wanted to make sure that I was healthy during and after my visit with her, fundamentally because she is a nice person. Also, as she repeated frequently, visiting Jewish graves in Morocco is a blessing, and should carry blessings, not hardships.

In order to prove her point, Kati told me two stories that were meant to demonstrate the powerful blessings that come from visiting Jewish graves in Morocco. Also inherent in her stories were assertions about the exceedingly close degree of intimacy between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. Kati wanted to be quite clear that as a descendant of the Sephardi community of London, who traced her roots back through Amsterdam, she was extremely rational and did not go in for all the spiritual power that is associated with Moroccan Jewish saints. Since moving to Morocco almost a decade ago, she has seen the results of too much magic and witnessed too many healings to deny that Morocco is a “heavily spiritual world.” She told me that she embraces the Maimonidean convention that if you do not believe in something, you are not bound by it. By this, she meant that she exempts herself from the power of *baraka*, or positive spiritual power, but she recognizes how powerful Jewish saints can be, especially for Muslim devotees.

A close acquaintance of Kati’s was the son of Rabbi Yakov, who was the head of the Jewish community in the small village of Ait Hakim, about eighty kilometers east of Marrakech. Rabbi Yakov and his two sons, who had moved to Marrakech and then Casablanca decades earlier, wanted to return to Ait Hakim to place some tombstones over unmarked Jewish burial plots. The task was somewhat urgent, as

the Rabbi was quite old, and he would not necessarily remember where all the graves were. The small band was counting on help from Muslim villagers to remember where the deceased were interred.

Kati related that when they arrived on the outskirts of Ait Hakim, they were greeted by boys who quickly ran to tell the sheikh and the rest of the village that “Rabbi Yakov has returned!” The boys were of such a young age that they could not possibly ever have met Rabbi Yakov, but had apparently heard enough descriptions of him that when a man wearing a large hat and driving a somewhat fancy car drove into town, it could only have been him and his sons. As the group stepped out of their car in front of the sheikh’s house, the sheikh hobbled out to greet them. The old sheikh had been friends with Rabbi Yakov before he left the village, and the sheikh was already quite old at that time, some forty years earlier. Kati got a bit emotional as she told me that the sheikh embraced Rabbi Yakov and greeted him with the Hebrew recitation of Genesis 46:30, which he remembered from their shared studies years earlier: “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are alive.”

The men spent some time catching up and exchanging news, but soon the sheikh was exhausted. The rabbi and his sons turned to the task of locating the graves, so that they could mark them and order gravestones for them from Marrakech. They spent the rest of the day wandering around the hills outside of Ait Hakim, guided by Rabbi Yakov’s memory, and a few young boys who were dispatched by the sheikh to help the honored guests in their righteous task. The Jewish graves had not been tended for some time, but they were respected, so the villagers knew where they were, and had not moved them, covered them or planted

over them. After a long afternoon, the three men stayed the night in the rabbi's old house, as the guest of the current occupants.

During the night, they woke up to wailing. Rabbi Yakov, who was alarmed at first, soon smiled in such a way that his sons were quite curious about what he was thinking. Rabbi Yakov told his sons that the sheikh had just died, just as he said he would. The village crier came by the door of the house to confirm Rabbi Yakov's suspicion. The next day, the men watched the funeral procession of the sheikh. Their return to place Jewish gravestones on Jewish graves was a source of such great joy for the old sheikh that he felt content to pass away. Kati ended the story by pointing out matter-of-factly that the sheikh was one hundred and twenty-one years old, and that he had all his teeth when he died. This dental fact alone, in a place of copious sweet tea drinking and few dentists, confirmed the sheikh's *baraka* for most observers.

I often hear stories like this of powerful Muslim-Jewish friendships from Moroccan Muslims, even those not involved in tourism or taking care of Jewish sites. In my interviews with Moroccan Jews and Moroccan-Israelis, I have heard many times of how village sheikhs respected Jewish rabbis, and even solicited their opinions when solving difficult issues. However, to hear Kati's story of such singular-plurality, that the return of the village rabbi would give the village sheikh such peace that he could finally die was beyond my experience. The sheikh was able to summon the wherewithal to pass away because his friend, who played a constitutive role in his life, had returned to geographic intimacy. After a long life of living together, and then living apart, the sheikh needed his friend's strength to die. As Jean-Luc Nancy argues, "A single being is a contradiction in terms. Such a

being, which would be its own foundation, origin and intimacy, would be incapable of *Being*, in every sense that this expression can have here.”¹¹ The sheikh required the foundation and intimacy of his friendship with Rabbi Yakov to marshal his strength to complete his life.

Usually the goal of a performance of a story in this genre is to point out how some of the more religious Muslim Moroccans were kind to the Moroccan Jews, while the ordinary people persecuted them. Kati, however, wanted to illustrate how Jewish graves could be a blessing for Moroccan Muslims. She was not finished making her point, either.

She told me that after Rabbi Yakov died, his two sons made another trip out to Ait Hakim to finish the process that they had started with their father of identifying, marking and preserving the Jewish graves on the hillsides. Because of the great respect and friendship that the deceased sheikh had shown for their now-deceased father, the villagers were very pleased to help them, and they were able to make more rapid progress than they were anticipating. Finishing early, they decided to return home to Marrakech. On their way back, the elder son received a call on his cell phone that he should come quickly to the house of a family friend who was extremely ill. This person had been sick for some time, but had taken a sudden and substantial turn for the worse. When the elder son, Eli, arrived, he was told that a cleaning woman had found a cursing-amulet in the bed linens of the sick man as she changed them, and that it was certainly the cause of the illness. The

¹¹ Nancy. 2000. 12.

discovery of the amulet, like a spiritual self-destruct sequence, had been the cause of the rapid decline in the man's health.

Eli asked to see the amulet, and it was handed to him. By virtue of the *baraka* with which he was still infused from proximity to all the sacred Jewish graves, as well as the additional *baraka* that he had accrued from tending the graves, he knew exactly what to do. Since the cursing-amulet was written in Judeo-Arabic by one Jew against another Jew, only the application of something completely unclean, such as the menstrual blood of a Muslim virgin, would cancel its power. Kati was quite embarrassed by this last detail. Nonetheless, she told me that a menstruating Muslim girl was found, who was not too embarrassed to provide some blood, for a small fee of course, which was applied to the amulet. The man recovered fully in three days.

Kati hastily added that Eli was a normal person. He owns a business, he has smartphones, and he has lived internationally. The spiritual potency that comes from being among the Jewish graves in Morocco, and which serves as a conduit for blessing could not be easily discounted, even by the very rational. After telling me these stories, Kati maintained that she did not believe in the power that Moroccans attributed to saints and graves. But, as she pointed out, Moroccan Muslims and the few Moroccan Jews left do believe, and they are frequently the recipients of blessings because of it. In any case, she said that visiting Jewish graves should be for a blessing, and she filled up my cup with water that she had bought me as she ushered me to the nearby cemetery.

The Miaara Jewish cemetery in Marrakech is the largest in the country. It stretches over eight hectares. The surrounding *mellah* is the site of many Muslim-

Jewish and Moroccan-foreign interactions, but inside the *mellah*, one Muslim man works and lives alone among the hundreds of visitors and thousands of graves.¹² Kati was instrumental in helping me conduct my first interview with Khalid, the keeper of the Miaara cemetery. On at least three occasions he had rebuffed my efforts to talk with him, but Kati escorted me to the cemetery, told Khalid that we worked together to help publicize Jewish cemeteries in Morocco, and then asked if Khalid would be willing to help with my research. He agreed, and Kati left me with him.

Khalid suggested that if I was interested in seeing what he did in the graveyard, that I should take a tour around and see all the restoration work that he had overseen, or in some cases done himself. Indeed, among the thousands of graves, there is ample evidence of much restoration work, and much left to do. It seems that certain segments of the cemetery receive different kinds of attention

¹² For more on the shared space of the *mellah* in Marrakech, see Gottreich, Emily. 2006. *The Mellah of Marrakech: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

than other segments. One area of older, crumbling graves has no weeds growing around it, and all the trash that either blows into the cemetery or is purposefully thrown there has been removed.



Figure 16 Lack of care in "Restoring" a grave in Marrakech

In another section, the graves have a fresh coat of gleaming white plaster applied to them, but they are covered with weeds and garbage. In other areas, the inscriptions have been re-carved and re-painted, though with little of the skill that I saw in places like Rabat and Sefrou. Instead, blue and black paint has been applied by someone who did not seem to care where the carvings were, and it has dripped and sloshed all over the graves so that the Hebrew carving underneath the painted Latin characters are hardly legible.

Other graves, however, show evidence of obviously meticulous work. Broken marble pieces have been set back together with expertly applied concrete. Near Khalid's small house at the front wall of the graveyard, about half of the carved letters on one grave have been re-painted expertly. Khalid noticed me staring at that particular grave and came out to join me after having left me alone for about an hour. He said that he was personally repainting this grave, but it was taking him a long time. I asked him about some of the poorly rehabilitated graves.

He sighed before repeating that he did not do all the work himself, and sometimes the men he hired to do the work did not care very much about quality. Khalid said that in many cases, the young men and even the old laborers had been born too late, or moved from somewhere else to Marrakech. Thus, they did not know the Jews, and so they did not care about their graves.

This seemed like a perfect opportunity to ask him how long he had been working as the cemetery guard. He laughed and said that he was born in the cemetery, and pointed over to a shed alongside his house that was evidently one of the many tool and equipment storage areas scattered around the cemetery. He said that he had been born in in that house. His father had been the cemetery guard for seventy years before he died. I asked what had set his father apart from other Muslim men, such that he was chosen to guard the cemetery. Khalid laughed and told me that nothing set his father apart. He was just one of the many men who bought relatively inexpensive property in the *mellah* as the Jews moved away. He was willing to guard the cemetery because they paid him to do it, and his house would be included. I was a bit shocked at this response, as most of the other guards take great pains to explain their families' special relationship with the local Jewish community. Curious to know if there was really no uniqueness to Khalid's father, I asked if he spoke Hebrew or Judeo-Arabic. Again Khalid laughed and said no. All the Jews in Khalid's father's day spoke Marrakechi Arabic or French, so there was no reason to learn other languages. Working at the cemetery did not require extra skills, just yelling at kids who tried to break in, and locking the door at sundown and for Shabbat. The job along with the house and the income it provided were a blessing for Khalid's father, and for his whole family.

Khalid went on to say that he, unlike his father, has had to learn Hebrew because of all the tourists coming from America and Israel. He was very emphatic that although he has been asked to do so, he does not say prayers for the deceased. Khalid told me that he knows of many other graveyards in which Muslims say prayers for Jews, but there are still enough members of the Jewish community in Marrakech, along with frequent Jewish visitors, to pray the prayers themselves. He told me that he did not like telling me about this.

I felt as if Khalid were a bit uncomfortable discussing the subject of Muslims praying Jewish prayers. I had the distinct impression from our talks and his manner that he is very happy to forego the extra payments that he would receive for offering prayers because he is much happier to take care of the physical graves than to try to do spiritual work on behalf of the graves' occupants in "his" cemetery.

Another time, I asked Khalid if there was another Jewish cemetery in Marrakech and he said that there was, and it is newer. He said that he was afraid of the new cemetery because the last burial in his cemetery had been about seven months earlier. He did not know, but he feared that more Jewish graves were being dug and occupied in the new cemetery. Khalid said that his livelihood depended on tourists coming to visit graves to see their ancestors, as well as paying for the upkeep of the graves. I asked what the local Jewish community paid him, and he pursed his lips and exhaled dismissively. He said that the local community was too poor and weak to be able to pay to maintain this cemetery. "They do not have anything" was Khalid's final analysis. He reiterated that tourists' donations and foreign descendants of Moroccan Jews paying for the repair of their ancestors' graves were the only real sources of income for him and for the cemetery. He

turned and surveyed the cemetery and wondered out loud, “When people stop being buried here, will people stop visiting here?” He then turned back to me and said that he and his family had received much *baraka* from living among the Jewish graves for three generations, including his children. He was worried, however that the blessings had run out. With that, he wished me shalom and said *l’hitraot*, and told me to wash my hands at the fountain before I left.

The Essaouira Project

The core of the High Atlas Foundation’s work in cemetery restoration is to try and allay Khalid’s fears that Jewish cemeteries will be abandoned and Moroccan Muslims who have depended on them for their livelihood, will stop receiving the financial blessings that have come as a result of their work. The cemetery preservation project in Essaouira started as an idea pitched to HAF by the Mogador Foundation. The Mogador Foundation, a small Essaouira-based NGO, sought to rehabilitate historic sites that showcased Essaouira’s colonial past as a Portuguese and French port city. The High Atlas Foundation suggested restoring and preserving the Christian, Jewish and Muslim cemeteries as a way to protect a bit of colonial history, while at the same time demonstrating Essaouira’s and Morocco’s diversity. HAF also wanted to add an educational component and sought to host Moroccan and international students for visits to all three cemeteries to present lectures about Morocco’s past and present diversity issues.

The two organizations agreed to the project, but did not have enough money on their own to execute their plans. HAF submitted a successful grant to the U.S. Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation. With U.S. State Department money,

the High Atlas Foundation hired staff to administer the grant, coordinate volunteers and create a curriculum. Local volunteers did most of the work of weeding, cleaning off graves, making new tile paths and securing outer doors. A Jewish artist and writer from Essaouira, Asher Knafo, oversaw the project, which was finished in 2012. As happens frequently in development work, the size of the High Atlas Foundation and Mogador Foundation swelled with the increasing budget, but became unsustainable when the grant ran out. HAF stopped the student tours, and the Mogador Foundation shut its doors.

Still, the results of their work are long lasting. Naima and the guards that she supervises do not have to worry about their cemeteries being destroyed, unlike in the rest of the Essaouira *mellah*. I have visited the Haim Pinto cemetery, which was the focus of the restoration work, before and after the work was completed. Not surprisingly, several of the volunteers were a little too enthusiastic in scraping the headstones. Many of the inscriptions are now much more difficult to read than before. But all the broken glass has been removed, and all the graves are clearly marked and no longer hidden among tall weeds or piles of garbage. At least twice in the last year, 2M Moroccan national news used the restored Essaouira Jewish cemetery as a site to report on the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Muslims in Morocco as a counterpoint to poor relations between Jews and Muslims in other parts of the world.

Rehabilitating the “House[s] of Life”

Essaouira is not the only place where the High Atlas Foundation has sought to preserve Jewish cemeteries. All over Morocco, and well beyond most tourists’

paths, Jewish cemeteries and the land that they occupy are being eyed hungrily by residents of villages that have less memory of the Jewish community that once lived among them with the passing of each generation. As a member of the High Atlas Foundation told me, “If something positive isn’t done, something negative will definitely be done.” To that end, HAF has sought to devise a solution to the problem of Jewish cemeteries, whereby the graves are preserved and the local Muslim community derives sufficient benefit from the land in and surrounding the cemetery that they have an incentive to work for its preservation. Dr. Ben-Meir came up with the idea of using land owned by the Jewish community in and around the graveyards, but not occupied by graves, for orchards and nurseries for medicinal plants. Even in the absence of veneration for Jewish graves or continued contact with living Jews, Jewish places could provide economic *baraka* for Muslim villagers.

Dr. Ben-Meir met with Jacky Kadoch, who was able to grant approval for the project from the Jewish community in Marrakech for work in the El Haouz province. Fundamental in convincing the Jewish community members to allow parts of their sacred spaces to be worked by farmers were the promise of preservation of the gravesites, and the hope for increasing amounts of goodwill that would come from villagers as they began to reap the produce of donated trees planted on donated lands. Explicitly stated in the agreement, the Muslims agreed not to work the orchards on Shabbat or on Jewish fast days. Also (amazingly to me) Muslims agreed to follow the rules of *orlah* that prohibit the consumption or use of the fruit of the trees for the first three years, even though these laws only apply in the Holy Land. The orchard workers at the cemeteries seem to take these

prohibitions seriously, for the most part. When asked why they do not work on Saturdays, they told me that “*khadma f nhar sibt did qanoon al yahood*/working on Saturday is against the law of the Jew[s].” Even without Jewish supervision Muslims have agreed to take on certain parts of halakhah in order to be allowed to reap benefit from Jewish land. This situation is unlike the moshavs in southern Israel that I labored on that do not have their Muslim or Christian workers work on holidays because the fruit of labor that is done by non-Jews on behalf of Jews during Sabbath and holidays is problematic. The sole concern in this case is not about keeping the food kosher, but about honoring promises made to the Jewish community to respect religious laws.

The rural Muslims who respect Jewish conventions as they farm in the cemeteries do receive quite a few benefits. The herbs that they grow are certified organic and sold internationally, bringing much needed currency to rural villagers who have previously lived by subsistence farming. The project designers at HAF also hope that the orchards will be a small part of a national movement to reverse deforestation and desertification. Already the High Atlas Foundation has met their first goal of planting one million trees, and has just received the blessing of the Ministry of Water and Forests to try to plant one billion plants and trees. As someone who asked for trees to be planted in Israel by the Jewish National Fund in honor of my marriage in lieu of wedding gifts, I cannot help but see the similarity between these campaigns.¹³

¹³ Sadly, only my sister and sister-in-law funded tree planting. But ten trees are better than none.

Frequently, the attempts of the Ministry to replant depleted forests of cedar and other trees are thwarted by Moroccans who harvest the saplings by the thousands for easy kindling, or even for “Bonne Année” trees, a local sort of portmanteau of Christmas, New Year and general winter feasts. Historically, the olive, pomegranate, fig, and almond trees that HAF plants in the Jewish cemeteries have been immune to this arboreal culling because of their yearly dividends.

The newly planted orchards and herb gardens have brought quite a lot of attention to the rural villages that serve as hosts to this interfaith agricultural project. The governor of the El Haouz province, Younes al-Bathaoui, gave a speech at the opening of the first of these cemetery orchards near the grave of Rabbi Raphael HaCohen in Akrich. The theme of his speech was the ongoing blessings provided by the Jewish cemetery to the surrounding residents. He stated that, true to the Hebrew term for cemeteries, *Beit haChai'im*, Jewish graveyards in Morocco continued to be “houses of life,” providing not just spiritual blessings, but also economic and nutritional blessings for Muslims. It was the theme of his speech that provided the title for the then-unnamed project of the High Atlas Foundation.

As a result of the mutual benefits of the early phases of the cemetery restoration and planting project, the High Atlas Foundation has been able to solicit more international funds. They have just secured a rather sizable amount of support (they were unwilling to disclose the exact amount) from the Clinton Global Initiative to continue their “interfaith agricultural rural sustainability project.” HAF also continues to receive donations from the U.S. State Department for the project. This international support is unsurprising. If a single project is able to bring together Jews and Muslims to fight desertification in Africa, and at the same

time benefit rural women, I would be very surprised if any grant review committee would decline to fund it. In talks with some of the embassy employees in Rabat, I was told repeatedly that the HAF narrative is incredibly “sexy” for American officials who hear, through interpreters, from Muslim women who raised themselves from poverty thanks to the generosity of Jews, some of whose religious laws the Muslim women happily obey.

Seeing the success and notoriety that accompanied the first “House of Life” project, the governors of the Azilal and Ouarzazate provinces have requested that HAF begin projects in under-served and under-utilized Jewish graveyards in their territories. To date, HAF has completed two graveyards, started another and has approval for seven more. In villages that have historic, but unrestored Jewish cemeteries all across southern Morocco, people have started asking me if I have heard of the House of Life projects. If I answer in the affirmative, they ask if I have any connections that would help them take advantage of the willingness of the Jewish community to lend land and the international community to donate trees and plants for their benefit. Many Moroccan Muslims are anxious to practice bits of Jewish law if they stand to gain access to freely provided orchards and herb gardens, and the financial and dietary blessings that Jewish cemeteries have started to provide.

Jewish spaces in Morocco tend to be places with powerful reputations. Tourism operators offer narratives of cemeteries as places off the beaten track that encapsulate the authentic Morocco. This is true, to some extent. But there are also limits to this authenticity. Tourist guides, like local guides, have tremendous power over shaping the experience of visitors, and this power is sometimes used to

provide a satisfying and emotional, if not altogether true, story about Jews and Muslims. Occasionally, traveling guides even purposely distort the words of locals to make Morocco appear more proud of its Jewish past, as in the case of the guard of the Sefrou synagogue who was very happy to be rid of Jewish artifacts. These narratives of cooperation, pride and spiritual power are powerful forces in attracting tourists to the Jewish cemeteries. More than this, the consciously cultivated identity of Morocco as a place that is welcoming to Jewish tourists and is proud of its Jewish past continues to be important for attracting tourists and helping Morocco to distinguish itself from its less-friendly North African neighbors.

In the case of NGOs seeking foreign investments for their development work, portraying Morocco and Moroccans as being the grateful recipients of ongoing blessings that stem from Jewish graveyards is quite useful. That many Muslim Moroccans venerate Jewish saints and seek to benefit from the spiritual potency of deceased Jews is a fact well-established by generations of anthropologists in Morocco.¹⁴ Also, it seems quite clear that the money that Jewish cemeteries bring to their community in the form of donations and wages paid to those who work in and around the cemeteries constitutes a very real financial blessing that Muslim Moroccans appreciate immensely. In addition to being useful

¹⁴ See notes in the Introduction as well as chapters 2 and 4 for discussions of Muslims patronizing Jewish saints, as well as, Geertz, C., Geertz, H., and Rosen, L., 1979. *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ben-Ami, Issachar. 1998. *Saint Veneration Among the Jews of Morocco*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Bilu, Yoram. 2010. *The Saints' Impresarios: Dreamers, Healers, and Holy Men in Israel's Urban Periphery*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press.

Gellner, Ernst. 1969. *Saints of the Atlas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

for courting development funds, the spiritual reputation Jewish graves have for blessing Muslims is recognized as an economic reality.

In both the cases of the tourism professionals and NGO employees, Jewish places – and the reputations of Jewish places – are an important means of acquiring foreign funds. As the tourism professionals and surrounding communities increasingly perceive Jewish cemeteries as not just a source of *baraka*, but also a source of income, they ultimately reinforce the identity of the cemeteries as a place of continued blessing. This strengthening of the relationship between Muslim Moroccans and Jewish cemeteries, in turn, allows interested NGOs to make a stronger case for the importance of preservation. As more cemeteries are preserved, the virtuous cycle continues, and Morocco's identity as a place that protects and preserves Jewish history becomes increasingly deserved.

Chapter 7: Expectations and Feedback: What do the Tourists Say

This chapter centers on a discussion of what visitors to Jewish sites hear and experience from/with Muslim guides. Tourist groups and pilgrims provide the financial incentive and the audience that constitute the two most important reasons for the existence of phenomena of Muslims enacting expertise and in the process creation of self. What are they hearing, observing and feeling based on their trips? My conversations with tourists who have visited Jewish cemeteries in Morocco attempt to understand what the performances accomplish. In two of the cases below, I had the opportunity to talk with tourists after they return to their home countries. Their comments represent insights into the afterlife of the performances as the tourists and pilgrims describe their experiences to others who did not make the trip.

While my focus has primarily been on international tourists, it is important to remember that Morocco is not a foreign land to all the visitors to the cemeteries. I will discuss what a descendent of Moroccan Jews who lives abroad experiences when she visits and sees Muslims in charge of Jewish sacred places. Finally, when Moroccan Muslims visit Jewish cemeteries, how do they understand the work of the cemetery keepers?

Inward and Outward

I was fortunate to meet a couple at the end of their third trip to Morocco. The Australian man and Ecuadorian woman have made several trips, including

their honeymoon, to Morocco from London, where they live. They told me that they are not especially religious people, but they are very interested in history and culture. They are particularly interested in examples of “interactive participation in development,” as they both have worked for development-focused NGOs in the past. They told me that they saw many examples of this interactive participation while touring Jewish sites in Morocco.

The couple, who I will call Albert and Julia,¹ participated in several tours in Marrakech, Fes and Casablanca. They recalled that their first impression on their honeymoon in Marrakech was surprise that Muslims acted as guides to Jewish sites, such as the cemetery and the *mellah*. When they asked why there were not Jews to give them tours, especially if there were still working synagogues, they were told that the Jews were too busy with their businesses, which took them all over Morocco and the world to stay confined in the old *mellah* and give tours to visitors.

On their return trip to Morocco that took them to Fes, Julia told me that she particularly enjoyed the *mellah*. She said that it was her favorite part of the older sections of the city because of the architecture. She said that a guide that they had hired pointed out how the Jewish homes with their balconies, large windows and porches were so strikingly different from the Muslim habitations in the rest of the old city, with the absence of windows, or only very small windows in solid walls without balconies. The guide explained to Julia that the architecture was emblematic of the differences between the two peoples, who lived side by side, but were deeply divided. She recalled her guide saying very emphatically that the Jews

¹ I have changed the names and a few identifying details of the people in this chapter at their request.

of Morocco were an outward facing people, looking for opportunities to study, meet new people and conduct business. The guide went on to say that for the Jews of Morocco, even though their families had lived in Morocco at least three hundred years after the exiles from Spain had arrived, were also drawn to other homelands, such as their beloved Golden-age Andalusia and their longed-for Zion. The accusation that Jews have divided loyalties is nothing new. However, the guide was using this banal trope to point at a flaw not in Jews, but in Moroccan Muslims. The guide went on to tell Julia that he was jealous of the Jews, because even when the world fought against them, they were able to make a home for themselves in each new place that they went. He said that his brother had much trouble trying to integrate into life in New York and that he himself was anxious to leave Morocco, but he did not know how or when he would be able to move on.

For this guide, Jewish architecture represented the physical manifestation of a fundamental character strength: the ability to look beyond one's present circumstances into what else might be out in the world. In the same way, Muslim architecture in the old city symbolized for him a cut-off, insular culture that made it difficult for the guide and his friend to move to and adapt to other countries as easily as the Jews – whose holy sites he was explaining to earn his living – had done repeatedly through their history. The reality that many Moroccan Muslims have been quite successful in moving to Europe and North America is of little comfort to the millions who would still like to make the journey but find themselves unable to do so. According to the guide, hundreds of thousands of Jewish Moroccans who left “by choice,” in order to settle in a place with more promise of

a future serve as a powerful reminder of the mobility that the guide felt unable to affect.

Julia said that the guide had been explaining all this as he escorted her and Albert from the Bab as-Semmarine through the *mellah* on the way to the Jewish cemetery. When they arrived, the guide pointed out the large painted letters on the cemetery gate that advertised the cemetery itself, as well as the phone number to call if the gate was closed and tourists wished to gain admission. The guide pointed out to Julia and Albert that this was another sign of the outward thinking and openness of the Jews. Non-Muslims are not allowed in Muslim cemeteries in Morocco. During the few occasions that I have entered Muslim cemeteries to conduct research with approval from a local authority, but without the knowledge of the *assas*, I have been ignored, or passed for a Muslim. Much more frequently, however, I have been barred entrance, or have been shouted at to leave immediately upon my presence being detected. Julia and Albert had a similar experience when they tried to visit a Muslim cemetery on their own in Fes, but were not allowed to enter.

They were pleasantly surprised when the keeper of the Fes Jewish cemetery not only did not bar their entry, but welcomed them in capable English and Spanish. When they asked their guide if all Jewish cemeteries in Morocco were open, he told them that of course they were, because Jews are an open people who want to interact and do business with the world. The trope of Jewish cosmopolitanism is well known, and the cemetery keeper seemed surprised that the couple did not already know this about all Jews. Julia and Albert then asked why they had not been permitted to enter the Muslim cemetery earlier. The guide

laughingly told them that if they had been with him, he would have been able to sneak them into the graveyard. But then he added that Muslims consider cemetery ground sacred and would not want anyone who is not Muslim to bring in uncleanness. Julia told me that she had studied some religion classes in college, and she was curious why there was not a similar concern for the Jewish cemeteries as she expected there would be. She said the guard shrugged his shoulders and said that they should be more concerned with telling their story of their time in Morocco than in religious rules, incorrectly assuming that Moroccan Muslims and Jews have similar prohibitions on outsiders visiting their holy sites.

When I asked Albert and Julia about what struck them the most from their guided tours of Jewish sites in Morocco, they told me that they were really taken with the notion of Moroccan Jews as such an outward-facing people, even though they inhabited the same city and same culture as Muslims, who were apparently very inward-focused. They told me that their guides always seemed to repeat some version of the same line: Jews are outward-focused.

Again, the cosmopolitan Jew is an old trope, but in colonial-era Morocco, there is some basis for this line of thinking. Unlike most Muslim Moroccans, many Moroccan Jews had relatives or at least contacts in other parts of the world and could conceivably have recourse to these contacts if they were to leave their homes for any reason. Second, many Jews seized the opportunity or were compelled to participate in colonial educational projects as a means to improve their situation in life. In any case, in the past two centuries, the notion that Jews are in some way more attached to the rest of the world outside of their home city, region and country took hold in Morocco, as it did in many other places as well.

On some level, the Muslim guides also have to be a bit outward-focused in order to identify the same trait in Jews. If there really was a strict worldview bifurcation of a city's culture along religious lines, then Muslim touristic guides would not only have difficulty recognizing the instances of Jewish outward-focus. They would also not claim to be jealous of Jews' success in international mobility, especially as it compared to their own perceived inability to be equally mobile. I think that the tourist guides were foisting their aspirations and values onto a vanished Jewish community that was, at least for most tourists, a blank slate ready for the guides to paint whatever picture best suited them. This investing of the Jewish community with the dreams of the guides works especially well if the tourists can be pointed to alleged confirmations of the guides' claims, such as differences in architecture and cemetery admission policies.

I asked Julia and Albert if any of their guides had been Jewish. They said that they did not think so because the language that the guides employed always spoke of Jews as others. I then asked if they felt that their guides had been open and outward-facing, like the Jews that they were describing. Albert replied that some were, but some guides seemed very focused on presenting the sites and then finishing the tours without asking much about their clients or talking about anything other than the sites at hand. I was fascinated by this and asked if he thought that there was any pattern in which tour guides seemed more open and interested in them. Julia immediately blurted out that the guides at the Jewish sites seemed more talkative, and seemed to have better command of different languages than the guides who were in the city and gave them tours around the Qarawiyyin University and the tanneries.

The Qarawiyyin and the Fes tanneries are famous sites that are at the top of the activities that every guidebook recommends for visiting tourists. Scores of licensed and faux guides compete for tourists' money to take them to these sites, and many young men who grow up in the old city of Fes learn the foreign words and phrases necessary to give these tours from fathers, uncles or older brothers. Tour guides, in my experience, rush through tours in order to collect their fee and then acquire yet another round of tourists from the ever-present supply. The Jewish sites of Fes are becoming increasingly popular, but relatively few tourists leave the center of the old city to find the *mellah* by themselves. No popular guidebooks in English or French cover the Jewish quarter with nearly the same amount of details, maps or words that they expend on the other attractions in the old city of Fes. Consequently, when tourists arrange to have a guide take them around the Jewish sites in Fes, the guide is reasonably sure that he will need to provide a much more meaningful and interactive tour in order to receive from the single guided tour of the day a commission commensurate with the profits of his colleagues, who are able to give two or three tours in the crowded main section of the medina in the time it takes to give one walking tour to the relatively distant *mellah*. This has been my experience after participating in and observing nearly fifty tours in Fes over ten years.

After only one long weekend of tours in Fes, however, Julia and Albert understood that guides at Jewish sites were more open and outward-focused than guides at Muslim sites, largely *because* of their association with Jewish sites. One might suggest that their Muslim guides exhibited the qualities they had ascribed to Jews precisely because the guides were *ascribing their own values to Jews*.

Whether worldly guides were attracted to work at the sites of a people that they also perceived as worldly, or whether the outward-focus of the guides was developed by means of their proximity to the physical remains of Jewish Morocco is unclear. My experience suggests the latter. Albert and Julia noticed a difference in the demeanor of their guides that corresponded to the religious identity of the site to which they were being guided. The easiest explanation for these tourists is that something of the much-discussed “Jewish outlook” that was residually present in the sites had rubbed off on their Muslim guide, rather than the influence flowing in the other direction. In fact, there is no religious prohibition in Judaism of non-Jews visiting a Jewish cemetery.

For Julia and Albert, Morocco, to which they plan to return again soon, is a land of contrasts across religious boundaries. For many Muslims, Jews have come to stand for the outside world and cosmopolitanism. It bears repeating that this phenomenon did not just start after the relatively recent emigration. Many Jews throughout North Africa learned French and identified with the French cosmopolitan world because it represented a way out of economic marginalization and discrimination based on religion. Outward-focused Jews have influenced a few of the inward-focused Muslims to be like them and follow in their quest to do business and travel overseas. Albert and Julia understand that this influence of Jews on Muslims has led to collaborative partnerships between the two groups to restore the cemetery in Marrakech and the Ibn Danan synagogue in Fes. In their view, the Muslim acquisition of a Jewish worldview, in which the foreign and far away are attractive and potentially beneficial, is not only possible, but is the chief

contributor to the increasing interest in promotion of Jewish history in Morocco, and in the openness of guides exhibiting Jewish sites.

Moroccans Love to Say How Much They Love Jews

Some tourists are rather more skeptical of the perceived openness of tour guides in Morocco, and Moroccans in general, as they speak about the subject of Jews and Judaism. My friend Bren is one such tourist. Bren lives in Germany and frequently visits Morocco. We first met in 2006 when he was working on a project to increase rural access to medical care in one of the areas in which I was conducting research. We met again in the summer of 2008 when I returned on another research trip and Bren was leading an educational tour for university students interested in North African politics. In the years since then, Bren has accepted a position at a think tank teaching contemporary political thought in Germany and does not travel to Morocco as much as he did earlier. He still visits every two or three years, however he says that he is utterly enchanted by Morocco for many reasons, not the least of which is that he met his partner here.

Bren is a complicated figure. He is a very religious Christian and he reads frequently on the subject of Christian-Jewish relations and Jewish history. I accompanied him recently on a trip to a synagogue, and he was able to read some of the Hebrew language inscriptions. As with earlier German Biblical scholars and theologians, his studies of Hebrew, Jewish history and Judaism are primarily focused on supporting his Christian convictions, and on undermining rabbinic

thought and the modern state of Israel.² Nonetheless, we are friendly every time we meet each other, which is almost always at historical Jewish sites, strangely.

Bren and I have been on several tours of Jewish Marrakech and Fes together, and he has always displayed deep skepticism of tourism projects that involve Jewish sites but no Jews. The first target of his scorn is usually the Moroccan government, along with funding agencies that pay for the restoration and “touristification” of historic Jewish sites. Bren frequently tells me that he feels concerned that Jewish sites, especially synagogues and cemeteries, are being transformed from what they used to be: sacred sites for Jews only to do religious and spiritual work (and the distinction between “religious” and “spiritual” is important for him). When signs are placed on synagogue doors indicating visiting hours in multiple languages, when posts and velvet ropes cordon off areas for tourists, and when the synagogue is filled with voices of non-Jews remarking in strange languages on the features of the synagogue itself rather than saying prayers and praises to God, Bren suggests that the synagogue has become something other than what it once was. And he is right on some level. The performance creates meaning for the space, which in turn influences future performances. If the performance of prayers and ritual washing are replaced in the Ibn Danan synagogue with the taking of selfies and the herding of tour groups, then the building itself is no longer a house of prayer, but a tourist attraction. Similarly, for

² For an excellent discussion of differing motives in German biblical scholarship, see Gerdmar, Anders, 2010. “Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann”. *Studies in Jewish History and Culture*. Vol. 20. Tirosh-Samuels, Hava and Giuseppe Veltri, eds. Boston: Brill.

the Jewish cemeteries, as they cease to be a place of grieving and remembrance of loved ones, and become instead the destination of tourists and pilgrims who are more interested in Jewish history and Jewish spiritual power than in the remembrance of individual Jews, the very nature of the place has changed. The emotions of the visitors have changed from personal love and devotion to awe, fascination and occasionally boredom.

Bren argues that these changes are being forced in order to wrest some residual usefulness out of these spaces that ought to be left alone to be taken care of by the community that created them, or to slowly fall into disrepair and oblivion without having their sacred character forcibly changed by exterior concerns. The Moroccan government is interested in paying to preserve these places as examples of cultural heritage. But, as Bren points out, cultural heritage projects are undertaken most frequently in areas that already have a large number of tourists, who have plenty of money to spend and cameras to take pictures to show their friends. The hope of the funders, according to Bren, is that the tourists will return home, talk with their friends about what a magnificent job Morocco is doing in preserving heritage sites, display their photos from the sites, and induce other tourists to come to Morocco and contribute to local economies.

It is difficult to argue with Bren on these points because, although his cynicism grates on me, he is right about tourism changing holy places into photo opportunities. Of course, at least a part of the aim of the governmental and NGO spending on preserving Jewish sites is in the hope of increasing tourism revenue. I do not wish to contradict Bren's point that the changing performances in Jewish sacred sites changes the identity of the site, just as the performances can change

the identity of the performer. I pointed out to Bren that some governmental money is also spent on preserving places where few tourists go. He countered by telling me that I have become an “agent of the state” by advertising Morocco’s good deeds to tourists like him, who will not go to the distant sites themselves, but will learn about the work through those who are impressed by it. Bren is nearly perfectly, although unknowingly, reciting the position of Michel Serres that not only does altruism not exist such that outside funding of the preservation of Jewish sites in Morocco is necessarily self-interested, but also that the converting of Jewish sacred sites to tourism sites is actively and purposefully doing harm. This aligns with Serres’ thinking that calculated abuse always comes before exchange:

That is why the relation of exchange is always dangerous, why the gift is always a forfeit, and why the relation can attain catastrophic levels. It always takes place on a mine field. The exchanged things [synagogue preservation for synagogue touristification] travel in a channel that is already parasite. The balance of exchange is always weighed and measured, calculated, taking into account a relation without exchange, an abusive relation. The term *abusive* is a term of usage. Abuse doesn’t prevent use. The *abusive value*, complete, irrevocable consummation, precedes use- and exchange-value. Quite simply, it is the arrow with only one direction.³

Thus funding of “touristification” is parasitical in that the beneficiary simultaneously benefits from the host and harms the host, in Bren’s view, fatally, contrary to Serres’ view that the parasite desires to keep the host alive.⁴ A

³ Serres, Michel. 2007. *The Parasite*. Lawrence Schrer, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 400.

⁴ For similar, but more nuanced view on non-Jews benefitting from formerly Jewish places, while at the same time irreparably changing their character, see “Chapter 5: Traveling Tschotchkes and ‘Post-Jewish’ Culture” in Lehrer, Erica T. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Lehrer discusses the case of Jozef, who makes wooden figures of Jews. This tradition evolved from “baneful” images of Judas and money-holding Jews that were playthings for pre-war Polish children during Easter, to “melancholy” and “resigned” figures in the early 2000s. The figures continued to grow “tamer” with time.

synagogue that is a tourist site and not a place for religious assemblies ceases, in a very meaningful way, to be a synagogue.

The changing of actions in sacred spaces from religious practices to tourism plays into Serres' other understandings of the work of the parasite as well. As I pointed out above, the tour guides are, in many cases, free to say whatever they want about the Jewish history of Morocco, whether or not it has any basis in truth or historical research, for example that Moroccan Jews were a more cosmopolitan people than Moroccan Muslims are. This "noise," of fictional stories is added to the "signal" of credible works of research and guidebooks that rely on them, and becomes the parasite, or interference/static that changes the message over time as it did for Albert and Julia.

Also, instead of a person who grew up immersed in a place and traditions, guides who have only recently come to learn about a place explain it to people who are only marginally less acquainted with the Jewish places and subject matter than the guides are. The Muslim "guest" in a Jewish sacred space in turn becomes the host for groups of (often Jewish) tourists. The parasite, according to both Bren and Serres, invites other parasites, and becomes a quasi-object of both host and guest in a place that is and is not his own. The quasi-object is the thing that instead of being an object, conversely objectifies those who seek to objectify it.⁵ It is the synagogue that allows the Muslim guide to have a cite to guide tourists, but it is the guide who defines and creates the synagogue in the minds and memories of the

Just as Polish artists change actual image of Jewish figurines over time to suit the tourist trade, so to do Polish guides change the character of the synagogues, cemeteries and death camps.

⁵ Serres. 2007. 225.

tourists, as well as transforming the tourists from individual travelers to consumers of [in]authentic tradition.

In addition to concerns about the identity of persons working in Jewish sacred spaces, Bren is skeptical of non-Jewish Moroccans who address Moroccan Jewish history. Bren did not mince words when I told him about my chapter on how Moha's performances of his love and respect for Shlomo and the Jewish community create an identity for him as someone who is such a friend of Jews that he has his own category between Moroccan Muslim and Jew. He told me that my thinking was garbage, and that I should not believe what Muslim Moroccans say about Jews. He told me:

Moroccans love to say how much they love Jews. They tell tourists all the time, "We love Jews. We miss Jews." But why are there no Jews here? Israel and the development towns are terrible. France is full of anti-Semites. Canada is boring and freezing. Jews didn't leave Morocco because they were attracted to someplace else. They left because Moroccans drove them out.

Bren drastically underestimates the pull of both France and Israel for Moroccan Jews, including two subjects of my master's research on Moroccan Jews in Israel, who left precisely because of their desire to "return" to Israel.⁶ His point about hostilities playing a large role in driving Jews out of Morocco after hundreds of years of continuous Jewish settlement, however, is borne out by most scholars:

[T]he events in the Oujda region [anti-Jewish riots of June 1948] stimulated the Jewish migration. From 1948 on, a deep unease and climate of suspicion dominated relations between the two communities. The idea of *Aliyah* no longer needed the encouragement of zealous Zionist propagandists to make headway

⁶ Both of my subjects used the language of return, though they had never been themselves. Driver, Cory. *Settings of Silver: Moroccan Jewish and Muslim Intergenerational Friendships*. Unpublished Master Thesis.

for members of the Jewish community, among whom a certain sense of panic was growing.⁷

Bren has not spent much time talking with the Moroccan guards and guides themselves, but he is well-read on the Middle East conflict in general. He readily admits that it is as difficult for him to conceive of anything but enmity between Jews and Muslims as it is for him to think of anything but spiritual enmity between Jews and Muslims on one side and Christians on another. Since many Muslim Moroccans, including taxi drivers, hotel clerks, bartenders and shop owners persistently advocate for how welcoming and safe Morocco has always been for Jews, but there are fewer than five thousand Jews living in Morocco today, Bren's theory of surface-level warmth and secret hatred may make sense. My work is not about a monolithic Moroccan opinion toward Jews as a whole, if such a thing were even describable. The few guards and guides that I represent in these pages do, however, go to great lengths to separate themselves from other Muslim Moroccans in portraying how their affinity for Jews is authentic and personal for them, rather than a feigned tradition. That they feel the need to distinguish themselves from other Moroccans supports Bren's assertions, at least in part.

The last targets of Bren's skepticism as we toured Jewish sites in Fes were his fellow tourists. Bren alleges that they, no less than he, are destroying what they

⁷ Baïda, Jamaâ. 2011. "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews, 1948-1956." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 321-33. 324

See also Laskier, Michael. 1994. *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*. New York: New York University Press.

Stillman, Norman. 2003. *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Mandel, Maud. 2014. *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vance, Sharon. 2011. *The Martyrdom of a Moroccan Jewish Saint*. Leiden: Brill.

claim to care in Morocco about by providing incentive for the transformation of Jewish sacred sites into touristic kitsch. Bren is quick to decry his role in the process that he fumes against.

I am not a Jew. What business do I have visiting these places? I find them interesting, and I am allowed to go, so I go. But when I go, I rob the places of their Jewish authenticity. And for that, I feel terrible. But not so terrible that I don't go.

He pointed to a large group of Asian tourists taking pictures of themselves at various places in the synagogue and said, "They are not Jews. Why are they here? To take pictures and tell about how nice Morocco is in preserving these places." Feeling a bit combative, I told him that there are East Asian Jews, and that he could not be sure that none of the tourists were Jews. Bren was unimpressed and said, "So what if they are Jews? They're not Moroccan Jews. They cannot feel a connection to this place as anything other than a good background for a selfie." Again, Bren completely discounted personal connections to sacred spaces that transcend nationality or ethnicity. That particular group of tourists did not seem especially reverent, but other tourists we watched did seem to be more interested in the synagogue as a synagogue. A few men pulled up hoods or put on hats as they entered. One of them closed his eyes and mouthed some words, presumably praying. The man was older, and if he was Jewish, he was of European descent with his very pink skin. He was not just a tourist, but someone whose performance of prayer briefly (re)turned the synagogue from a tourist attraction to a house of prayer. This, I think, is an example of Serres' quasi-object. The performance of the prayer as well as the selfie-taking identifies the space as a tourist object and a place of worship. But the space also shifts the identity of the participants, from a tourist,

to an interloper on a religious action; and from a simple pray-er to a revitalizer/approver of synagogue transformation/hostile witness to synagogue transformation, depending on the view taken. The pray-er is certainly not the only foreigner to feel a deep connection to Moroccan Judaism, despite Bren's skepticism. Religious tourism and devout pilgrimage are not always distinct categories.

Last Jew of the Atlas

In late 2012, one of the premiere living attractions in rural Moroccan Jewish history, a man named Hananiyah Al-Fessi, died. He was known in tourism circles as “the last Jew of the Atlas,” and many people who came to Morocco made a special trip to the Ourika valley to see Hananiyah and the grave of Rabbi Lahsen ben Hensch that Hananiyah guarded. One such tourist who went to meet Hananiyah was Laura, an American Jewish tourist who visited Morocco for her first time with a Jewish Heritage Tourism group. Laura works at a Jewish Studies center at a large public university in America, but she told me that she had had little previous exposure to the history of Jews from Muslim countries.

I met Laura at the end of her trip. She told me that she was struggling to keep everything straight in her head because her group had seen so many places and done so many things in the week that she spent in Morocco. What stood out to her was how sad “the last Jew” had seemed. Laura recounted the famous tale that Hananiyah and his wife Yamna told to all the visitors who came to see them. As the three hundred Jewish families who lived in and around Ourika began to emigrate in the 1950's and early 1960's, Yamna, Hananiyah and his mother Saada began to

prepare to leave as well. Saada was especially sad to leave the grave of the sainted *tsadik* Rabbi Lahsen ben Hensch, which she had guarded and tended since the responsibility had been passed to her while she was still quite young.⁸ As the family was about to leave for Marrakech to start their long journey to another land, Hananiyah and Yamna both had the same dream that a large snake was coiled at the front of their door. In their separate dreams, they were both determined to go and decided to step over the snake. But just as they were about to step over the serpent, the snake straightened out and turned into a staff that blocked the door and their way. Hananiyah and Yamna woke and told each other about their dreams. In an inverted echo of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, the snake turned into a staff as a sign that they should not leave to go to the promised land, but should instead stay and guard the remains of Rabbi ben Hensch.

Accordingly Hananiyah guarded the grave of Rabbi ben Hensch after the death of his mother, and continued to live by himself in the Ourika valley after the death of Yamna in 2000. He was determined to not leave the grave of the *tsadik* and those of his family alone. Over the years, he seemed to grow increasingly desperate and depressed as no obvious replacement for him came forward. Laura met him in 2010, only a few years before his death, and by that time he talked mostly about the now unavoidable disappearance of Amazigh Jewry. The experience of talking with Hananiyah stood out for Laura because, unlike at all the other synagogues and cemeteries that her group went to, the active, responsible person with whom they interacted in Ourika was Jewish. Hananiyah was quite old,

⁸ “Ben Hensch” functions both as family name and a title declaring the craftiness of the Rabbi. It means “Son of the Snake.”

and he had no children. André Levy's reports of other rural Jewish holdouts notwithstanding, Hananiyah was the last Moroccan Amazigh Jew to live anywhere within a few hundred miles.⁹ And he knew that his death would ring the knell for the end of lived Judeo-Amazigh culture in a large swathe of Morocco. What really upset Hananiyah, and what he spoke about repeatedly to his visitors, was not the end of Jewish settlement in the area, nor the passing of the last native speaker of Judeo-Tamazight, but the thought that Rabbi ben Hensch's grave, even more than those of his wife, mother and himself, would go untended and unguarded.

When Laura told me this, her eyes began to water. It was quite clear to me that Laura shared some of Hananiyah's pain at what his imminent passing would mean for the protection of graves in the area. Contemplating the end of an ethno-religious culture and language is profoundly heartbreaking. An old man living alone while knowing that his end is near is possibly even sadder, because the human scale is more readily felt and understood. Laura deeply felt this sorrow and as she continued to talk about it, she started to cry quite openly.

The case of Hananiyah is, in many ways, the anti-narrative to this dissertation. I have brought a multitude of examples of Jewish places that have been entrusted successfully to Muslims for care, tending and guarding. In the preceding chapter, the High Atlas Foundation, sponsored by the Clinton Global Initiative, was able to work with local Muslims to create shared value for Muslims and Jews in protecting Jewish cemeteries. At the same time, HAF conducts

⁹ Levy, André. 2003. "Notes on Jewish-Muslim Relationships: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community." *Cultural Anthropology*, 18(3): 365-97. Levy discusses the forcible movement and institutionalization by the Moroccan Jewish Community Council in Casablanca of a Jewish man living alone in Beni Mellal.

educational outreach to Moroccans and foreigners to make sure that the inter-religious history of Morocco is broadly understood. This sort of collaboration seemed out of the question for Hananiyah.

Even though for decades Muslim tour guides had brought Jewish and non-Jewish tourists to see him and the graves he guards, Hananiyah was terrified that his passing would mean that no one would be able to remember and take care of the final resting place of Rabbi ben Hensch. Hananiyah was not so isolated that he did not know about the cemeteries in Marrakech and even nearby Timzerit that have Muslim caretakers and are visited by thousands of tourists and pilgrims each year. Daily, in the busy tourist seasons, Muslim tour guides brought groups from Marrakech. These Muslim guides explain and frame the experience of visiting “the last Jew of the Atlas” before the tourists even meet Hananiyah. The Muslim guides interpreted Hananiyah’s Judeo-Tamazight and Moroccan Arabic speech for visitors. Then the Muslim guides attempted to answer any lingering questions that the visitors had during the long journey back to Marrakech. Despite all this, Hananiyah was convinced, and I have heard him say this personally, that without him, “everything will fall/*kulshi ghadi ytah.*”

For Hananiyah, not only was it imperative that a Jew be present to tell the story of Jewish history in the region, but that it be him, because of the communication from Rabbi ben Hensch through his dream. Unless Rabbi ben Hensch would mystically speak to a Muslim and pass on the responsibility for guarding the tombs, simply knowing the stories by heart after having heard them hundreds of times is not enough. Even though Muslims would be technically proficient to recite the bits of prayers that Hananiyah recited for the tourists,

supervise the lighting of candles at the grave, and ensure the good order of the funerary complex, this knowledge was insufficient for performing the tasks. The real competence in performance stemmed from the saintly designation of being selected to continue the work. Without it, all the hours of observation and even feelings of identifying with the region's history of Jewish life that Muslim guides possess are inadequate for providing proper care.

This understanding that caring and learning are not enough, but that in order to be a proper caretaker for a Jewish site, one must not only be Jewish, but also receive a special sign of approval from the Jewish saints for whom the potential guard will be responsible, is the antithesis of claims of most of the Muslim guards and guides with whom I have spoken. More than that, if Hananiyah was correct, the functional and convenient system by which urbanized and expatriate Jews pay local Muslims to guard and tend the rural graves of their ancestors is called into serious question.

Some Muslims, like Moha and Mimi, can claim to have witnessed miracles that affirm their identity as being powerfully attached to the Jewish community and being worthy explicators of Morocco's Jewish past. In the heavily spiritual world of Morocco, such magical events may be sufficient to satisfy many critics of Muslim guides explaining Jewish places.

But the guards' claim to their identity and indispensability as the daily performers of not just stories of Jewish Morocco, but also the guarding of the bodily remains of Moroccan Jews has not, in my experience, been based on mystical signs or communications from another realm. Instead, their performances of care for Jewish bodies and Jewish spaces are combined with the

performances of the generations before them who carried out similar tasks to accrete to the guards the identity of a capable Muslim friend of Moroccan Jews. The counter-narrative of supernatural approval for a Jew guarding Jewish graves is important here, because it shows the limits of the power of my main narrative of identity creation by means of effective performance of care and being-with by Muslims. For the guards with whom I have spoken, and certainly for their clients, their identity as protector, guardian, caretaker, and friend is beyond question. But for Hananiyah, and for many of the tourists who heard him speak, the cemetery guards are mere simulacra and parasites, because they confuse and confound the tradition of Jewish Baraka legitimizing Jewish guards for Jewish graves. Muslim guards and guides creating identities for themselves by means of guarding Jewish sacred sites is confusing, and it is a more complicated story for tourists to process. However, Hananiyah's commissioning by Rabbi ben Hensch through his dream does not undermine, for example, the four generations of performance of Muslim fidelity to Jews and Jewish graves in the Rabat cemetery.

A Land of Friendship

I met Haley at the Fes cemetery as she was leaving Sol Hatchuel's gravesite. She was crying and I did not want to disturb her, but she saw me staring and

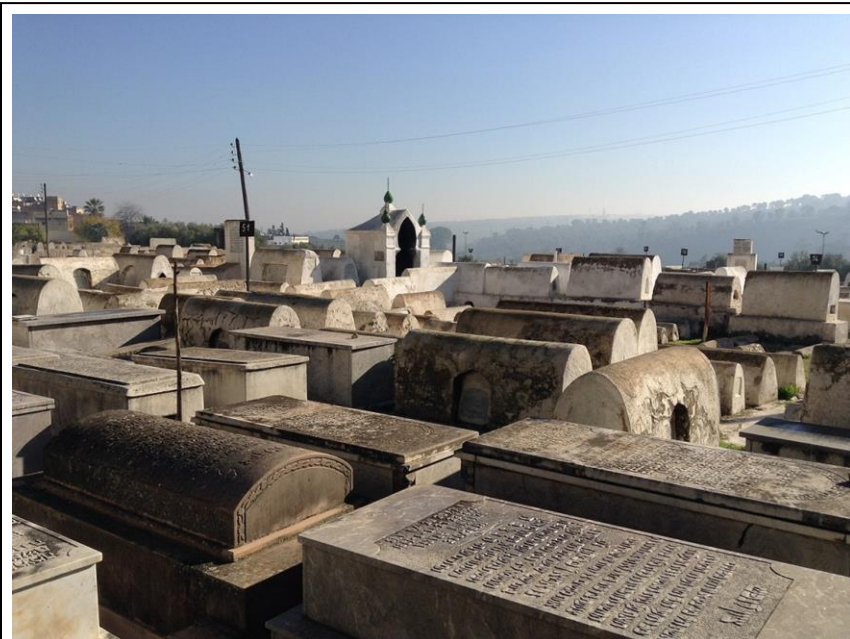


Figure 17 Sol's shrine stands above the rest of the graves at the Fes cemetery

asked if I spoke English. She then proceeded to ask me if I knew the story of Sol Hatchuel. I had written a paper on the competing Jewish, Muslim and Christian versions of the story of Sol Hatchuel for a hagiography class three months earlier, in fact.¹⁰ Sol, or Suleika, was a young Jewish woman, born in Tangier in 1817, who caught the eye of a local Muslim young man. He convinced a Muslim girl who was a friend of Sol's try to entice her to convert to Islam, and though she refused, the

¹⁰ For a much fuller treatment, see Vance. 2011.

Azaguay, Yaëlle. 2011. "Sol Hatchuel in the Collective Memory and Folktales of Moroccan Jews." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 191-200.

Vance, Sharon. 2011. "Sol Hatchuel, 'Heroine of the Nineteenth Century': Gender, the Jewish Question, and Colonial Discourse." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 201-25.

Setton, Ruth Knafo. 2011. "Searching for Suleika: A Writer's Journey." Gottreich, Emily and Daniel Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 226-35.

girl spread the rumor that Sol had, in fact converted to Islam. When Sol protested that she had not converted, the pasha imprisoned her for apostasy, since many Muslim witnesses said that she had converted to Islam, but was trying to rescind her conversion. Ultimately, her case came before the Sultan in Fes, and he had her beheaded after her continued refusal to confess publicly to be Muslim. When I told Haley the short version of the story, she said that that was what she was afraid of. She asked me if I had some free time to talk, and after I agreed, we walked over to the café where I had waited on another occasion for the Israeli group to finish their tour before I approached them.

Haley was a young Moroccan-Canadian Jewish woman who had moved to Fes three months earlier with her Moroccan Muslim boyfriend. They had met in Canada at college and fallen in love. Against her parents' advice, she moved with him to Morocco after they graduated. Her parents, who had been born in Morocco, but left when they were children with Haley's grandparents, were extremely unhappy to see her moving back to Morocco to be with a Muslim boyfriend. But after extracting promises that she would be safe and make good decisions, they decided to let her go. She had visited Morocco once with her parents while she was growing up, but did not remember much of it. After three months of living with her boyfriend in his parents' home, she had broken up with him. It was too difficult for her to pretend to be a nominal Muslim for his parents and his friends. She was scared of showing any interest in any of the Jewish sites of Fes for fear that her potentially-future-in-laws would piece together why she did not know or use any Moroccan Arabic theocentric language. She was not at all religious, but having to hide her Jewishness for the first time in her life made her uncomfortable. When

her boyfriend began suggesting that she convert, they began to fight. Her discomfort and isolation from her friends and family finally proved too much. She broke things off with her boyfriend, moved into a cheap hotel, and bought a ticket for a flight back to Canada, leaving a week later.

During that week she came to the cemetery every day to sit at the grave of Sol Hatchuel and ponder her life, and it was there that I met her. She had wasted three months and had her heart broken, but other than that, she was doing well, she told me. She was headed back to Canada to her family, who would welcome her. She kept thinking that if it had been two hundred years earlier and a Muslim boy had fallen in love with her, she could have ended up like Sol Hatchuel. At this point in her life, Haley was deeply suspicious of the possibility of Jews and Muslims getting along, as religious complications had just ended her relationship.

I asked her what she thought of the Muslim keepers of the Jewish cemetery, if they had ever tried to talk to her in her coming and going to the cemetery the past three days. She said that after the first day when the guard tried to talk to her about hockey, she had not had any contact with the guards other than to pay them a few dirhams when she left. She said that it did feel bizarre to her that Muslim guards would laugh and carry on in a Jewish cemetery. She could not understand their Arabic, but it felt invasive to her to hear laughter as she was contemplating her failed relationship at the shrine of a woman who died as a martyr because of another failed relationship.

After thinking for a couple of minutes, Haley said that she also felt perplexed by the care and devotion that the keepers of the Fes cemetery displayed when cleaning the graves. As she sat among the tombstones, she watched graves being

scraped free of debris and then whitewashed. At the end of one day, the keepers cleaned out the candles from Sol's shrine. She said the guard was silent and moved slowly and reverently, as he removed the candles and scraped up the spilled wax. When he finished, he bowed slightly toward Sol's tomb before walking back to the guardhouse, where he tossed the used-up candles and spilt wax into the garbage without any of the solemnity that he displayed at Sol's grave. Haley said that she had been touched by that for a few moments, before returning to thinking about her summer and her recently-ended relationship.

Haley said that her time in Morocco had not been a total waste. She returned to see the area of Fes where her grandparents had lived, and she felt like her Moroccan identity was much stronger than it had ever been. She told me that when she walked around Fes, she looked like all the local girls, and the local boys cat-called her as if she were a local. In a follow-up email several months later, she told me that she had made some good friends while she lived in Fes for that summer. She did not talk to her ex-boyfriend, but she exchanged emails with some of the young women she met, as well as some of her boyfriend's male friends. She told me that seeing the cemetery keeper, who was boisterous and a bit annoying at the gate, take time to reverently take care of Sol's grave before returning to his post made her think that even though there had been terrible moments in the past for her personally and for Moroccan Jews more generally, Morocco could still be a land of friendship. For Haley, the cemetery guard's respectful performance of his duties redeemed Morocco, and especially the small area in front of Sol Hatchuel's grave.

One of Yours, or One of Ours?

In probably the most important case in this chapter, which also provides the title for my dissertation, I interviewed two Muslim Moroccan tourists who joined a tour guide named Zakaria on one of his tours to see Jewish sites along with other rural sites of religious significance. Their questions of Zakaria toward the end of the trip point to the social understanding of the completeness of the identification of Zakaria and other guides and guards with the absent Jews of Morocco.

The two tourists with whom I spoke were two sisters in their early twenties.¹¹ They had been born in a rural area of the Middle Atlas Mountains, but had moved to a large city when they were quite young. Though they proudly identify as Imazighen, like the descendants of many Moroccans who recently urbanized, they are only able to understand some spoken Tamazight, and have difficulty expressing themselves in their parents' native language. The young women are both shopkeepers with relatively large textile stores. They were wearing very fashionable, and tight, clothes with short sleeves and no veils, although the older sister stopped the tour to pray and the younger sister kept using religious language like *subhanallah* when amazed, *masha'allah* when impressed, or when she was praised and *alhamdulillah* at what felt to me like random points in the tour. In other words, these two women seemed to me like very normal middle class Moroccans, who maybe used a little more religious language than most, but chose not to wear

¹¹ These sisters ask that I not give out *any* personally identifying information about them. I have not used the real names of anyone in this chapter. In describing them, however, I have chosen to only describe their social-economic background, ethnicity and age-range, as I think that these details are important for understanding their interactions with Zakaria. But I have not included their names, specific age, or places of birth or residence in order to preserve their anonymity.

hijab or dress conservatively. Their interest in Zakaria's tour sprang from the referral of a friend who had enjoyed seeing rural Morocco, but who had not told them about Zakaria's interest in Jews and Judaism. Accordingly, as the tour went on, they seemed less and less inclined to act interested in Zakaria's depictions of Jewish life and convivence between Muslims and Jews. They were, however, quite interested and energetic in asking about the tombs of Muslim saints that they passed. If Zakaria told them that one of the saints was especially known for granting success in finding a partner for marriage, the older sister slipped a couple coins into a slot in the shrine. While she was doing this on a few occasions, I happened to catch the younger sister rolling her eyes impatiently. Whether she was impatient with her older sister's quest for a romantic partner, or with giving money to the saints became clear at the last shrine that they visited.

Zakaria had already taken them to Aghabalou and Ait Ayach, where he placed a decreasing amount of emphasis on Jewish sites as it became clear that the women were not interested in Jewish history. But he had started off with so much information about Jews that the women jokingly ask if he was Jewish. This one instance is the only time that I can recall of Zakaria not filling with indignation at such an impertinent, mocking question, or seizing an opportunity to point out that if one went far enough back, most people in the area, including the village where the women had been born, probably had Jewish roots. Zakaria simply sighed and told them flatly that he was "one hundred percent Muslim/*Ana Muslim mia f l'mia.*" The women continued on the tour as if nothing had happened, but Zakaria looked to be deflated as he walked back to his van to drive us all to the next site.

We arrived at the last shrine on a hill overlooking a village. What was once a lone monument that I had hiked out to years before is now directly accessible by road, and there is a quite large parking lot. I was told later by people from the village that the parking lot and park next to it are often used by young people in the area for romantic encounters away from the eyes of authority. Just past the parking lot, beside the park, is a tomb with “Lalla Meryem” painted on the grave in Latin characters with large, sloppy brushstrokes. Her grave was a victim of “restoration” efforts that sought to repair the stone grave whose inscription had worn away over the years. Instead of a careful re-carving and subsequent painting of the grave and inscription, like many of the graves in the Marrakech Jewish cemetery, Meryem’s grave had been covered in whitewash and then the saint’s name was hastily painted on the outside. This paint effectively covered over the inscriptions and obscured any details of her life that might have been legible before.

When the two women approached Lalla Meryem’s grave, and before Zakaria could say anything, the elder sister asked, “*Wesh hadi dyalkum ola dyalna*/Is this one of yours (plural), or one of ours?” Zakaria understood this question as the girls had meant for him to do: is this saint a Muslim or a Jew? While Zakaria explained that Lalla Meryem was Muslim and a patroness of women’s success, the need to focus my dissertation on how performances of Muslim guards and guides at Jewish sacred places allow for the development of moral selves crystalized.

Zakaria has spoken to me at length about he, like Moha in Chapter 5, understands himself as weird and an “other” because of his close relationship with Jews. This relationship profoundly shapes his self-identity. The guards at the

cemeteries are professionally identified with their charges, and they are frequently treated with respect or derision for their work, but they are never identified, even mockingly, as Jews. The tourism companies and restoration agencies exert tremendous efforts to create a national identity for Morocco as a place that was, is and will be friendly to Jews, even if very few of them actually live there. But the older sister's question to Zakaria showed how powerfully and completely the identity of a Muslim who cares very much about Jewish Morocco can merge with the object of his caring in the popular Moroccan imaginary.

Zakaria had already explained to the young women that he was Muslim, and in any case their question about whether he has Jewish was asked in jest. In the twenty-first century, Jews cannot live in this part of the world without everyone knowing that they are Jewish, and being minor celebrities, or targets of abuse – and often both – because of their ethno-religious distinctiveness. So when the older sister asked if Lalla Meryem was “one of yours” or “one of ours,” she was making a firm distinction between “ours”/Muslim and “yours”/Jewish, and understood Zakaria to be the latter.

Further, and more importantly, she was not speaking to Zakaria as an individual, but as a representative of the heuristic category of “Jews.” The importance of the plural *dyalkom* in this instance is not to be missed. The older sister could have just been referring to Zakaria's obvious interest in Jews and asked, “*Wesh hadi dyalk*/Is this one yours?” This would have been sufficient to insinuate that Zakaria was closer to Jews than to Muslims. But that the questioner drew a firm distinction between “us” and “you all” shows that, from the perspective of at least these women, the meaningful social differences between Zakaria and

Jews have ceased to exist. Zakaria had been excluded from “us,” which Zakaria and the young women understood to be Moroccan Muslims, despite affirming his dedication to Islam less than an hour earlier.

After the tour, I asked the older sister exactly what she had meant, and she reinforced my understanding by pointing out that Zakaria was “*bhal yahoodi*/like a Jew.” Going further, she added that, “*Hoowa kayban yahoodi aktar min maghribi*/ He seems more Jewish than Moroccan.” Once again, Moroccan-ness was linked to being a Muslim and Jews were seen as others. By his performances of expertise of Jewish Morocco, Zakaria inadvertently moved himself out of the young woman’s understanding of who is “Moroccan,” and went over to her Jewish category. I do not think that she thought that Zakaria was some sort of crypto-Jew, but that for her, he had cut his ties to Moroccan-ness by affirming his ties to Judaism, such that the difference between being a Jew and being associated with Jews was inconsequential for how she referred to him.

Zakaria has said repeatedly that he only understands himself through his and his father’s interactions with the Jewish community. But this is a self-identity and moral experience that preserves the distinctiveness of the categories of “Jewish” and “Muslim.” Zakaria does not call himself a Jew, although he counts it an honor to have been trusted by, and raised with, Jews. Because of this upbringing, he is able to display sufficient knowledge about the Jewish history of the Middle Atlas and High Atlas Mountains, with sufficient passion that his vocal affirmation that he is Muslim does not deter at least some people from defining him socially with Jews.

Conclusion

The response of tourists to Muslim guards and guides in Jewish sacred spaces is certainly varied. For most visitors, the Muslim intermediaries who describe the cemetery or synagogue and their importance to Moroccan history, are the sole source of information about Jewish Morocco. Accordingly, they have tremendous power for shaping the experiences of the tourists, as they shape their own identities and selves. While it seems clear to me that Jews are used as a cipher for Moroccan cosmopolitan potential, Albert and Julia have come to understand that there is a fundamental difference between the thinking and orientation of Jews and Muslims in Morocco. Their guide built on the differences in architecture in the *mellah* and Muslim areas of the old city of Fes in order to describe the Jews as outward-focused. By contrast, he described Muslim Moroccans, a category in which the guide himself would normally have been included, as insular. Because the guide's performance of describing in glowing terms the worldly focus of Jews, Albert and Julia attributed the same outward-focus to him. Further, they understood that being in Jewish places and having sustained engagement with Jewish history conformed the guide's character to align closely with the character of the Jews that he was describing. Although, again, I find it more likely that the opposite is happening, namely that the guide is using his desires to shape his presentation of Jewish worldviews, Julia and Albert told me that they thought that their guide's character was shaped by his performance venues' powerful, residual Jewish identity.

Bren, on the other hand, is chiefly interested, and worried, by the power of Muslim performances of Jewish history for tourists to affect the venues and their

character. Despite my disagreement with him about his cynicism, I am sympathetic to his overall point. A synagogue that does not host worship, prayer, and sacred activity is simply not a synagogue in the same way that an active house of worship is. Further, a synagogue in which non-Jews live, and which has become a destination for tourists from all over the world, is no longer just an inactive synagogue, but a tourist site. Similarly, when graveyards host non-Jews who visit in order to see Jewish history, rather than hosting Jews coming to visit the resting place of their family or friends, the nature of the site has changed. Bren strongly argues that the performances of guards and guides are powerful for creating and recreating space, but mostly in negative ways. Essentially this is the opposite claim of Julia and Albert. Instead of the Jewish site changing the character of the Muslim visitor, Bren argues that the Muslim guest/host is more successful in changing the character of the Jewish place. It seems clear that both phenomena are happening at the same time, but that Bren, Albert and Julia are observing only part of how Jewish spaces act as a medium for negotiating issues of nostalgia, narrative, memory, identity and authenticity.

Laura, and Hananiyah through her, tended to view Muslim performances of protection and preservation as strictly ineffectual. Laura's sadness for Hananiyah was not just that which naturally occurs for an old man who is alone at the end of his life. Rather she, like most other visitors, felt Hananiyah's pain when he spoke of the imminent end of his mission: to protect Rabbi ben Hensch's tomb as only a Jew, and specifically only a Jew who has received miraculous authority, can do. Though throughout Morocco Muslims guard, preserve, and even repair sacred Jewish sites, without approval from Rabbi ben Hensch, such inter-religious

cooperation was out of the question for Hananiyah. Today, of course, there is a Muslim caretaker for all the graves in Ourika, including Hananiyah's. The complex is clean and well cared-for. But Hananiyah's and Laura's sadness indicated quite clearly that proficiency in protecting and preserving graves by Muslims is insufficient to satisfy a deceased Jewish saint, as well as several tourists.

Haley is more ambivalent about the effects of Muslims' authority in Jewish places. The banal conversations and laughter of the guard annoyed her while she was trying to reflect on her time in Morocco and the relationship that she had just exited. She felt strongly that a Jewish cemetery was not a place for sports conversations and joking by Muslims. On the other hand, the care that the same guard displayed for the woman at whose grave Haley sought solace and guidance touched her deeply. It was the change in the guard's demeanor while he was performing the simple act of cleaning up the niche for candles that impressed her and led her to start to think of Morocco as a place where Muslim-Jewish friendships were possible after all.

Finally, the case of the two sisters and Zakaria provides confirming evidence of the power of authoritative performances' power to create a hybrid, or in-between, identity for Muslim Moroccans with deep connections to the former Jewish community. The two sisters' label of "*bhal yahoodi*/like a Jew" is an important distinction for Zakaria. He prays only in the Muslim fashion and does not claim to be a Jew or a convert. He passionately insists, however, that he, like so many others, drank the milk of trust, which for him separates him from wider society and bestows upon him a felt moral kinship with Jews.

His insistence that he drank the milk of trust – literally – as he grew up alongside Jews who shaped the fortunes of his family makes him an even more particular case. He understands himself to physically carry a marker of Jewishness. The sisters' use of *dyalkom* is a pointed attestation that his expertise in and passion for Moroccan Jewish history endow his performances as a guide with the power to create an identity which is other-than-Moroccan-Muslim, and like, but not quite, Jewish.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Changing Flavor of the Milk of Trust

With each passing generation, the Jewish milk of trust in Moha, Rebha and Toudert's family grows thinner. They certainly will continue to be trustworthy Imazighen, and accordingly, using their own idiom, future generations of their family will continue to drink the milk of trust from their mothers, rather than the poison of mistrust. But the time with Jewish adoptive mothers and Amazigh children shared trust-laden milk, and with it adoptive family ties and moral experiences of lived Judaism, is past.

In Morocco, the Jewish community has dwindled to less than one percent of its size seventy years ago. Muslims and Jews simply do not live in the intimacy that they once did. New ideas about Jews continue to flow into Morocco from the embattled Middle East and Gulf countries in which daily close interactions with Jews is unthinkable. Moha, Hamou, Hamid, Naima, Itto, Mimi and Yassin, among others, find the casting of Jews as necessarily enemies deeply strange, and deeply un-Moroccan. They are performing their worldview, of reciprocal responsibilities with Moroccan Jews as a necessary component for living Moroccan Muslim lives. They are among the last of their kind, however.

Jewish tourism to Morocco is increasing, and non-Jewish tourists are becoming increasingly aware and intrigued by Morocco's Jewish history. But guides and guards with lived experience of intimacy with Jews are growing older and passing away. My research takes place at a unique moment in history in which

the stories and performances of the Moroccan Muslims acting out the *being-with*¹ Moroccan Jews is at its most prominent, just before its logical demographically-driven conclusion. Future generations of Moroccans involved in the tourism business will no doubt become increasingly disposed to discuss the Jewish past for commercial reasons, but it will be, for them, a dead past, beyond memory and experience.

Jewish Ties as a Mechanism to Create the Self and “Otherness”

Ethnographers and anthropologists have, for several decades, addressed the ways in which individuals’ and societies’ actions can be self-referential in ways that attempt to reify or change cultural order.² The core claim of chapters 3 – 5 is that many of the Muslim people with whom I worked employed various means of identifying with the Jewish community in order to solidify their own social identities and moral selves.

In the chapter on cemetery guards, the female caretakers of the cemeteries in Essaouira and Timzerit benefit from the prestige that working closely with Jewish sites, and the donors interested in them, affords. While the level of notoriety and power is not unheard of for women who do not hold political office in southern Morocco, it is definitely the exception rather than the rule. The women

¹ For a review of Jean Nancy’s notion of the singular-plural and how humans need others to constitute themselves, please see the Introduction.

² For a short list, see the work of Clifford Geertz, for example. Geertz, Clifford. 1957. "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example", *American Anthropologist*, 59(1). Geertz, Clifford. 1959. "Form and Variation in Balinese Village Structure", *American Anthropologist*, 61(6).

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

who coordinate visits of dignitaries to the Jewish sites in their care are able to marshal respect reserved for those who successfully interact with rich outsiders to define a powerful position for themselves in their society that they would otherwise have a difficult time obtaining.

In Sefrou and Rabat, little of the power or prestige seen in the south seems to be conferred upon the guards, who do not seem to be as revered outside of their cemeteries. Instead, their foci seem to be on demonstrating to Jewish visitors how they have unique knowledge and a special identity that have accreted over the years from their continued interactions with Jews. This special knowledge allows them to be trusted to perform tasks that ordinary Moroccans, even other guards, would be unable to accomplish.

For Moha and Mimi, identifying with Jews has been the principle means by which they have constructed a narrative of themselves while their context changes around them. To understand shifts from the colonial period to independence, and from rural, Amazigh majority to an Arabized and Islamized consciousness, many guides of tourists repeatedly assert the deeply personal significance of sustained contacts between Muslims and Jews as a means to make sense of their selves. Just as Jewish magic is still a potent, but decreasingly present, force in rural Morocco, so is the performance of memory of Jewish history a potent force for the shaping of identities. As Mimi's case points out so clearly, "the power of the Jews" not only helps a person to define herself over and against wider society, but also can be a useful marker to signify that a particular person, even a faithful Muslim like Moha, is also, at least partially, "other." He speaks, acts and enacts life in many, but not all, ways as a Jew, but he is not Jewish. Moha's practice-centric means of being

someone *apart from his community and a part of the Judeo-Amazigh past* of his home is but one instance of the identity-creating, and category-bridging power of performance.

Performing Alternative Histories

For Moha, Hamou – with whom I celebrated Passover in Chapter Three – as well as many others throughout these chapters, reciting, recreating and re-performing acts of affinity with Jews offers a chance to simultaneously reaffirm and negate powerful ideas swirling around their milieu. On the one hand, they perform Nancy’s notion of singular-plurality by using their knowledge and moral experience of Jewish Morocco to reaffirm the necessity of Jews, Jewishness and Judaism in understanding what it means to be Moroccan. They simply cannot be Moroccan Muslims without recourse to Moroccan Jews to explain who they are.

On the other hand, they use their performances of affinity with the former Jewish community of Morocco to undermine foreign notions of eternal animosity between Muslims and Jews. As the account of Mubarak demonstrates³, internecine violence did occur. But it was, according to the people with whom I worked, rare enough to be both surprising and deeply upsetting. By their performances, the Muslim guides and guards who remember life with Jews stake a powerful claim to an authentic, mostly harmonious past that is all but forgotten, or purposefully ignored, by many young Moroccans who are caught up in the news of the day. For Moha and Hamou, however, life without Jewish friends just does not make sense.

³ Chapter 5.

The Material of Jewish Sacred Spaces

Chapter Six presents several arguments that Jewish places, even without living Jews, act as physical repositories for memory and power that allow negotiation of nostalgia and meaning-making, as well as economic, moral and spiritual capital. Tourist businesses are certainly most interested in the Jewish spaces as a source of financial blessing. For the Muslim residents of the towns in which the High Atlas Foundation operates, Jewish cemeteries represent a source of economic and agricultural blessings as well.

For the others, however, Jewish places are a powerful source of magical/spiritual capital. For the old sheikh and the sick man of Kati's stories, the graveyards themselves act as a physical source and causative agent for the dispensing of *baraka*. The sheikh's nostalgia and longing for his Jewish friends were assuaged by means of the pull of the lost graves on Rabbi Yakov. Simply having been in the cemetery, among the Jewish graves, gave Eli the spiritual insight to know how to undermine a cursing amulet. The experience of physical contact with the graves and presence in the cemetery is the key for the unleashing of *baraka* and the negotiating of memory, authority and capital.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because I am one of the first to do research on implications of performances of Muslims working in and around Jewish holy sites in Morocco, there are many opportunities for follow-up research. If done quickly enough, future research may be able to be undertaken with some of the same people with whom I was able to

work. They represent a special group that were the last to live in a period in which the Moroccan-Jewish community was still numerous and far-flung. Research after this generation dies will occur in a fundamentally different context.

One direction for further research with individuals and communities with whom I have worked would be to change the basic research design. I conducted a multi-site, multi-focused examination of different people and agencies whose shared quality is that they are Muslims working in and around Jewish cemeteries. Fascinating research could be done by simply choosing to conduct more in-depth research with one person or organization named above. The impact of demographic factors like gender, age, ethnicity, and the motivation of economics could be isolated and examined in more depth by focusing the scope of analysis to one person or just a few individuals. I have focused on a variety of performances, and so I have necessarily focused on a larger group of performers. If one were to focus on a particular person, the scope and repertoire of all her performances would provide a fuller context for discussions of her work in the cemetery, as well as her life outside the cemetery at places such as mosques, home and Muslim festivals.

Further, because my main goal was to study and describe a set of performances and their ability to create moral selves and social roles for the performer, I had a secondary focus on the spiritual and economic goals of the performance. I have certainly discussed both of these factors, but personal identity construction has always been central to the people with whom I worked. Another researcher, however, with more interest in the economic or spiritual implications

of the work of the Muslim keepers of Jewish cemeteries would have a fertile research field from which to enjoy a bountiful harvest of data.

Morocco is just one example of the effects of the contraction of Jewish places of residence. Internationally, as centers of Jewish life shrink from all the corners of the globe to just a few major countries, non-Jews increasingly find themselves preserving Jewish sites and Jewish memory in historically Jewish districts and cities. In other words, my work on Muslims who do Jewish things in Morocco is part of a larger story that deserves to be told by someone with a much more macro focus.

Significance of this Project

As discussed in the introduction, this study contributes to several fields of study. For Jewish Studies, the question of what of Jewishness, Judaica and Judaism remains after Jews have left ancestral homelands in the latter half of the twentieth century continues to be pressing. Relatedly, for the academic study of religion, my dissertation raises potent examples of inter-religious friendship and inter-religious practices which beg for further study as well as contrasting examples.

For ritual studies, my research, as well as the people with whom I work, argue that rituals have agency of their own, quite aside from those of the practitioners. Jewish needs for fulfillment of filial piety are met by Muslim performers, even as Muslims frequently use the same performances to create their moral selves, or even simply to earn money.

My research represents a serious contribution to Middle East and North African Studies. Although it was not my main focus, my dissertation suggests some ways in which Muslim Moroccans, especially those from the Amazigh community, use their performances of devotion to Jews and Jewish graves to undermine region-wide narratives of Arabism, Salafi-Islam and ongoing conflict with all Jews. The actions of the cemetery keepers, guides, tourism professional and NGO workers all point to the role of Jewish places and [absent] Jews in shaping the nature of modern Moroccan identity. The reasons why and means by which Moroccans preserve alternative histories should be of interest to many area studies scholars, even those who are not otherwise interested in performance-based study of religion.

My ethnographic work also highlights the varying roles of Jews in the Moroccan moral imaginary. The members of the largely vanished Jewish community are Moha's and Hamou's friends, fictive soldiers in the fictive desert army, the creators of magic amulets for economic blessings and physical curses, the donors of cemetery lands to NGOs and the patrons of cemetery keepers. I have shown that even without a continuing, physical presence in most of the places in which I conducted my work, Jews are power forces for good, ill, preservation and transformation in Muslim Morocco.

Another fruit of this work is the insight into the intertwining of tourist commodification with traditional notions of *Baraka* and magic. Saints' graves have for centuries been a place for the requesting of spiritual intercession. As Jews left Morocco, however, their graveyards have become places of economic opportunity for Muslims who guard, build and farm in them. My research demonstrates that

those blessings of Moroccan Muslims continue, in addition to the emerging of cemeteries' status as sites for tourism and the reemergence of Moroccan pilgrimage sites for Jews.

Lastly, this dissertation demonstrates the existential force of trans-generational friendships. Simply put, without Shlomo, the core of who Moha believes himself to be would not exist. And without Shlomo's wife who gave him the milk of trust, Moha would not exist at all. Without Mubarak, Shlomo would have been killed by brigands, but prior to that he would have been robbed and cheated and never accumulated wealth sufficient to buy the carpet shops that are the physical center of Moha's life and the work of this dissertation.

What's Next?

I invited Rebha and Toudert to celebrate Passover with me in 2015, eight years after we first celebrated together. They declined. The sisters were gracious, of course, and the primary stated reason why they did not come was the distance between where they still live in Midelt and my home in Rabat. On public transportation it would take a full day of travel to make the trip one-way. Another part of the reason why they did not come, however, was very obvious in their voices as I reminded them of our shared celebration: they were still disappointed to not have been as enchanted as their father Moha was by Passovers in his youth. So, here are two young Moroccan Muslim women who have lived memory of a Passover seder, but are just not too excited about it. I failed to live up to the stories of their father. Accordingly, the majestic tradition of intimate holidays between

Muslims and Jews ends in this case with a, “No, thanks,” and then progressive forgetting across the generations.⁴

In the cemeteries, I am seeing more and more of the situation in Essaouira and Fes, in which a guard is strictly a guard. As more Israelis and Jews return or visit the cemeteries, and reclaim authority there, the cost is the decreasing role of the Muslim cemetery keeper. There will probably always be work for Muslims to guard Jewish cemeteries in Morocco, and do menial cleaning. But increasingly, Jews are doing the restoration and cataloging of graves, as well as inhabiting and decorating the prayer-places that Muslims construct and rehabilitate between *hillulahs*. Rabbi Schneerson’s picture acts as a planted flag as Israelis and Moroccan-Israelis assert more control over graveyards across Morocco. This change is decades in the making and Chabad has had a presence for years, but has been largely confined to the major cities until recent years. Small cemeteries in the hinterland without major saints, and cemeteries in Rabat and Casablanca that are still interring members of the dwindling communities thus far have retained their Moroccan character and their Muslim Moroccan guards. But as Moha and Hamou age, and as Morocco remains one of the safest and most often-visited places in North Africa, Moroccan Muslim authoritative guides and guards in Jewish places are vanishing. This dissertation has sought to witness and understand the way that they have made sense of themselves and their rapidly changing world.

⁴ Though, see Aomar Boum, 2013, for his discussion of the *Mimouna* club at al-Akhawayn University, in which Muslim students seek to learn about Jewish Moroccan *history*.

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