CHAPTER THREE

FROM SYNAGOGUE TO MOSQUE: MY GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE IN THE OLD MELLAH OF MEKNÈS

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Emanuela Trevisan Semi is the inspiration for this presentation. She was the one who encouraged me to visit my grandfather's house in Meknès, came with me for this very emotional return in my family's birthplace, kept the pictures we took there and sent them back to me when I lost them and finally pushed me to realise this project, which formed the background for this presentation within a larger project. The (nostalgic) emotion and several not-so-accidental encounters at a colloquium in Meknès, organized by Noureddine Harrami, were all related to Emanuela's seminal anthropological works in Meknès.[1]

Noureddine and I decided to analyse my grandfather's legacy from a dual perspective for this paper: taking the historical research on the house of my grandfather as its starting point, we will reflect on several ethnological aspects of Jewish life in the *mellah* of Meknès. The period covered by the inquiry starts in 1930, when my grandfather bought the

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[1] Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Hanane Sekkat Hatimi, *Mémoire et representations des Juifs au Maroc: les voisins absents de Meknès* (Paris: Publisud, 2015).

house in the height of the French protectorate. Sold by my uncle in 1969, the synagogue housed in the house (*slat* [in Judeo-Arabic, lit. "synagogue"] *Rabbi Smea't ya*) is transformed into a small mosque, the only one in the ancient *mellah* at the time. Then the commemoration of the house situated in the old *mellah*, and of its Jewish inhabitants, became the object of the fieldwork conducted recently by Noureddine in Meknès.

Noureddine conducted interviews with witnesses to the process of transformation of the synagogue into a mosque and documented the memories of this house of prayer, which was transferred from Jews to Muslims, as well as its significance in the contemporary space. My contribution was to verify several elements of family history and its transmission in the present, in an attempt to compose a historical, albeit subjective, narrative. Thus, with our two voices, we seek to explore the informal system of communication between Jews and Muslims, past and present, "between the two river banks of colonization,"[2] which are at the heart of this story, as well as the conflicts over the suppression of memory that it evokes.

The role of this house provides a case study which sheds light on the dynamics of exchange among Jews and Muslims at two moments in their shared history, during and after colonisation. The *mellahs* are separate spaces in certain cities, in which the Jewish populations of Morocco lived, but were also, as Daniel Schroeter and Emily Gottreich noted, places of interaction between Jews and Muslims.[3] They were an integral part of the urban fabric and constituted liminal spaces,[4] from which Jews could leave (to work in the *suq*), while Muslims could enter to carry out their various activities, both economic and religious (such as visiting pilgrimage sites), as well as for entertainment, by drinking alcohol.

The term used to designate such Jewish quarters varied from place to place: they were called *mellahs* in Morocco and *harat* ("quarters") in Tunisia and in Egypt. In Morocco, the first *mellah* was created in Fès in 1438, whereas the *mellah* of Meknès was established in 1675, following the designation of the city as capital under Sultan Moulay Isma'il. The Jewish community of Meknès, which was of great importance, had significant influence in the religious domain, and was even called 'Little Jerusalem.' In response to the poor conditions of life in the *mellah*, a new

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[2] Joëlle Balhoul, *Le culte de la table dressée, rites et traditions de la table juive algérienne* (Paris: Métailié, 1983).

[3] Daniel Schroeter and Emily Gottreich, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

[4] Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

mellah was built beginning in 1924. The first houses of the new *mellah* were erected alongside the old *mellah*, and the first synagogue was founded in 1926.

Colonisation as well as urban development of the early twentieth century engendered changes in Jewish residential patterns. This was the case in Tangiers, as studied by Susan Gilson Miller who demonstrated that, notwithstanding the concentration of synagogues in the Beni Ider quarter, the area was not defined as a Jewish quarter. The transformation of the city of Tangiers, in the early twentieth century, was linked to the influx of capital and the development of new construction, including the construction of new quarters for the elite.[5] Moreover, the development of new cities made the traditional structure of the *mellah* obsolete. It resulted in the exodus of the wealthier Jews to the new Europeanised cities, and, consequently, a deterioration of the Jewish quarters along with an influx of non-Jewish populations to those areas. Through our study of the house of Eliezer Berdugo and the changes in the names of sites in Meknès, we seek to investigate the mechanisms of appropriation of Jewish Moroccan urban space and the suppression of the Jewish memory of those quarters.

The grandfather: Eliezer Berdugo, a traditional local personage

I know nothing of him, or almost nothing. His photo dominated my mother's room, and after many changes of residence, it wound up in my house in Montréal. I had to explain to my children that the austere gaze of this proud-looking man in the picture was that of my maternal grandfather. My mother carried this photo with her wherever she lived, and I kept it in memory of her. I still have it, because I throw nothing out; it has its place in my room, until I decide what to do with it. I have had this photo for over forty years, this photo which I do not like, because there is no other memory attached to it, except perhaps the sadness of my mother when she spoke of her father, who died prematurely, on the eve of her wedding in 1948.

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[5] Susan Gilson Miller, "Making Tangier Modern: Ethnicity and Urban Development, 1880-1930," in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, eds. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 128-49. There (130), Miller also argues that: "A more balanced picture sees in Tangier a high degree of cooperation across communal lines among moneyed interests, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for the purpose of profit and status, as the sources will indicate."

Eliezer Berdugo was a notable in the Jewish community of Meknès, who served as judge of the rabbinical court and also mediated inter-communal disputes. Owner of a soap factory in Berrima (a neighbourhood located between the old *mellah* and Sakkakine in the Old City), he also received income from properties he owned in the region of Meknès, and was, among other things, in charge of selling wheat and other grains brought to him by farmers or other agriculturalists. The papers documenting the sale of the house indicate that he was the owner of seven shops, which abutted his house in the old *mellah*. He was the kind of notable described so well by Susan Miller, who wrote of merchants active in Tangiers at the turn of the twentieth century, but unlike the bazaar salesmen of the *mellah* of Sefrou described by Lawrence Rosen.[6]

Thus, he was a well-to-do owner of both agricultural lands and several shops. In 1930, he acquired a large aristocratic residence in the old *mellah*, purchased, according to family history, from another Jew, named Benabou, who lived in Rabat and wanted to sell off his second house. Along with him, came a small group of around fifteen families who had lived in the old *mellah* for several generations – the families Ohana, Toledano, Boussidan, Hassine, and others, who had 'made it' in the wholesale business of basic commodities like grain, oil, sugar, and – in his case – *beldi* ("local") soap. They distinguished themselves by their clothes (traditional *djellaba* and *tarboosh* at home and European suit at work and in public), their aristocratic houses, and their status as community leaders. Living in the old *mellah*, they were both at a distance from non-Jews, separated by walls of religious difference while maintaining relations with all, both outside the walls of the *mellah* and during their working hours. Their status as notables was expressed in numerous ways, both symbolic and real. In the *mellah* their prominence was recognised through their family names, a lineage of well-known families of *hakhamim* (rabbis, religious scholars, lit.: "wise men"), which often entitled them to become community leaders. Members of these families also built or moved to bigger houses in this period, lending a new significance to housing as a status symbol under the French regime. For my grandfather too, moving into this patrician house was certainly a sign of wanting to acquire this cultural capital. Keeping his family in the old *mellah*, while other Jews had already moved to the new *mellah* or even the *Ville Nouvelle*, signaled on the other hand his attachment to the traditional view of being a notable,

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[6] Miller, "Making Tangier"; Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations In a Muslim Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

supported by an uncontested paternalism and an accepted hierarchy of class and gender.

The cooperation among ethno-religious elites within different cultural communities was commonplace, and is affirmed in numerous studies. In the particular case of my grandfather, however, it remained beyond the influence of the French. Thus, he did not become, as many Jews at the time did, a Westerner or Europeanised.[7] He was neither an *évolué* nor a *protégé*.[8] Like the Moroccan subjects of the French protectorate, he spoke only Arabic and wrote only in Judeo-Arabic. Judeo-Arabic, as a written and spoken language, was reduced to the status of a dialect by French linguists in 1930, even though it was the lingua franca of the Jews of the Maghreb.[9] Thus, my grandfather was attached to an ancient tradition, one that had been totally transformed by French modernity. By 'choosing' to remain in the old *mellah*, he rooted himself in a place that was undergoing complete transformation. For him, this space remained a place of commerce and inter-religious exchange. Having his family and businesses alongside the artisans and traders who lived in these very narrow alleys and these houses all crowded together, he was an integral part of this ancient Jewish community with its many synagogues. The purchase of the house in 1930 marked his involvement and the engagement of this small group of notables in relation to their surroundings–both separate and symbiotic. Much research has characterised these spaces as ghettos–paradoxical or ambiguous spaces enclosing the Jews, yet open to commerce. In the case of the old *mellah* of Meknès, we witness intense convivial inter-personal relationships between Jews and Muslims in daily life, alongside a respect for strict rules of separation in the spaces they lived in, as regulated by the laws of *dhimma* (restricting their rights while authorizing their cult).

But what occurred to these relations in post-colonial Morocco? Some answers may be found in the sale documents of the house and the built-up areas, while others are provided by analysing the transformations of the quarter and its street names.

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[7] Yaron Tsur, *The Jews of Casablanca: A Study of Modernization in a Colonial Jewish Society* (Tel Aviv: The Open University Press, 1995).

[8] Mohammed Kenbib, *Les protégés. Contribution à l'histoire contemporaine du Maroc* (Casablanca: Publication de la Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines de l'Université Mohammed V, 1996).

[9] Oren Kosansky, "When Jews speak Arabic: Dialectology and difference in Colonial Morocco," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 58/1 (2016): 5-39.

The Berdugo house: from synagogue to mosque

The house is located at 25, Derb al Ghoufrane. At the time, the street was called Salouat-s, as is attested in the old bill of sale. The buyer was Moulay Hachem ben El Mahdi ben Mohamad El Alaoui Slimani. According to his son Ahmed, the house was purchased in 1965, although the bill of sale is dated October 8, 1969. The sale was not done hastily and under pressure, as was the case with many Jewish properties both in the *mellah* and elsewhere, when, in the years of mass migration to Israel, Jewish properties were sold at much reduced prices. This explains the price of 27,500 dirhams, or 5,400 dollars, which was considered as high by the standards of the period. The house has four stories. The ground floor housed a synagogue (called a *masjid*, a place of prayer, in the bill of sale) and seven shops. The apartment on the second floor is today the residence of Ahmed, the son of Moulay Hachem. With respect to the circumstances surrounding the purchase, Ahmed told us that his father learned from a merchant in the quarter that "Ouled (the son of) Berdugo was looking to sell". Ahmed added that his grandfather knew Eliezer Berdugo, further evidence of cross-cultural exchange.

The seventeen synagogues of the *mellah* experienced a variety of destinies. Some fell into ruin, while others were transformed into residences. *S'lat Berdugo*, as it was called by many residents, was open all the time during the lifetime of my grandfather's. It is also known by its other name *slat Rabbi Semahya* which was, according to residents of the quarter, the largest synagogue of the *Mellah Al Bali*, and today serves as a mosque for the Friday prayer. At present, the mosque remains the only place of Muslim prayer in the old *mellah*. An *imam* conducts the daily prayer in the mosque, while a *khatib*, assigned by the Ministry of Endowments, conducts the Friday prayer service.

The transition

Residents cite the years of 1965 and 1968 as the time of the foundation of the mosque. An *addendum* on the obverse of the bill of sale details the transfer of the *masjid* and of the commercial establishments on the ground floor to a *waqf* ("[Islamic] religious endowment") on 17 November 1969, less than a month after the conclusion of the legal sale. All those we asked linked the establishment of the mosque to the transfer of the ground floor properties to the *waqf* of Moulay Hachem, buyer of the Berdugo house. The mosque can accommodate a hundred worshippers. An *imam* and a *mouzen* (*muezzin*) officiated at the dedication; the mosque has no minaret,

but four loudspeakers on the top floor of the house broadcast the call to prayer.

The transfer of the site of prayer from Judaism to Islam resulted in other important changes. Two ruined houses next to the synagogue were purchased and annexed in order to enlarge the prayer hall and provide space for a hall of ablutions. This period–the expansion of the space of the synagogue–has been forgotten by residents of the quarter, who assume that the mosque takes up the total space of the synagogue. Thus, they assert that *S'lat Berdugo* was the largest synagogue of the quarter, although actually the synagogue took up no more than a quarter of the space of the current mosque. Once the construction was done, a *sadaqa* (a ceremony consisting of the hosting of a meal and the recitation of the Koran) was held inside the mosque. Did the *sadaqa* mark the conversion of the site or was it simply a ritual meal marking the opening of the mosque? It is hard to tell. The current *imam*, who was head of a Quranic school in the old *mellah* at the time, asserted categorically that no conversion ritual was performed:

> We simply cleaned and dusted the place, as it had not been in use for quite a while, and we arranged the room in order to lay down the prayer rugs.

Apparently, the *imam* was unaware of the major renovations that took place. He briefly reported that Islam only requires ordinary rules of cleanliness in order to pray at a site belonged to the People of the Book.

Conversion

Thus, we find a variety of discourses concerning the conditions of the transformation of the synagogue into a mosque. Some informers declare that a particular ritual needed to be performed; they use the term *tahroura*, which refers to the 'circumcision' of the synagogue. Thus, a local shoemaker said,

> It was a *jamaa* (place of prayer) of the Jews which became a *jama'a* of the Muslims… It's like when you marry a Jewess and you convert her to Islam.

For the *imam* of the mosque, this transformation was a completely valid act within Islam. He based his judgment on the Jews' and Muslims' shared belief in the same divinity.

> We can pray in a place where Jews pray. It is not a problem. We are the same, the Jews and us. They love God and we do the same thing. The difference is in the messengers.

Thus, for the *imam*, according to Islamic law Muslims have the right to appropriate a Jewish place of prayer if Jews have left it, but the opposite may not be done.

> We have the right of succession (to inherit their places of prayer), whereas they do not have the right. A Jew may not be heir to a Muslim.

The theologians we spoke to agree that the confessional identity of places of prayer in Islam is unimportant. In their point of view, it is legal to pray in a place of prayer of Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and alike. What counts is that the place that comes in contact with the body of the worshipper, should not be dirtied by ritually impure substances such as blood, alcohol, urine, etc. Apparently, not all the informants knew the exact steps of the transformation of the synagogue into mosque, whereas the memory of the existence of the Jewish place of prayer does form part of the collective memory of the quarter. It does not evoke any particular attitude or negative reaction, as exists in the case of other synagogues transformed into mosques, for example in Oran.[10]

Transformation of a place of prayer: migration and the re-appropriation of space

The point of view most widely accepted in the quarter today emphasises the departure of the Jews and the absence of a place of prayer for the Muslims. The inhabitants know that the mosque was opened in a place that served as a synagogue. The ground floor's transfer to the *waqf* by the buyer of the Berdugo house is also known. The informers estimate that from 1965 to 1968, the years mentioned as the foundation time of the mosque of Salouat-s street, there were no more than a dozen Jews left in the quarter, most of them artisans (*snayyiya-s*) and small tradesmen of the same socio-economic class as their Muslim neighbours. The synagogue was closed for several years preceding the opening of the mosque. "The Jews (of the old *mellah*) prayed in the new *mellah* or in a *jamaa* ("mosque") opposite the fountain (in the old *mellah*)," said a veteran of the

[10] Dalila Senhadji Khiat, "Les mosquées en Algérie ou l'espace reconquis: l'exemple d'Oran," *L'Année du Maghreb*, 6 (2010), available at: http://anneemaghreb.revues.org/907 (last accessed 11 April 2017).

quarter. At that time, there was no place of prayer for Muslims in the old *mellah*.

According to some informers, the transformation of the mosque into a synagogue was the result of the collective action of the Muslim residents, now the majority, to acquire a mosque. Given the absence of a place of Muslim prayer in the quarter, the inhabitants formed a committee to present the problem to the religious authorities of the town (the delegation of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs). Given the lack of an empty plot of land on which they could erect a mosque, the representatives of the Ministry asked the residents to find a place that could serve as a place of prayer. Representatives of the neighbourhood, led by a local delegate who lived opposite the Berdugo House, found the *S'lat Berdugo*. Thus, in coordination with the owner, they proposed the purchase of the two ruined houses in order to annex them to the former synagogue and transform the entire property into a mosque.

Differing memories of the Jewish quarter

This episode offers an interesting standpoint for analysing the transformation of Jewish quarters in Morocco in the period subsequent to independence. Thus, we witness two types of re-appropriation of space in those quarters: on the one hand, there is a shared memory of conviviality which we still can see through the architecture of the *mellah* (old and new); on the other hand, the suppression of Jewish names in the streets bears witness to erasing that presence altogether.

A shared memory

The Jewish past of the two quarters (the old and the new *mellahs*) continues to speak through the architecture of the buildings: the shape of the balconies in the new *mellah*, which were built only by certain masons who lived during the period of Jewish presence, the Stars of David, which may be seen here and there on the facades, the interior passages between one house and another–particular to the old *mellah*–as well as communal and religious institutions (synagogues, schools, dispensaries, etc.), the imposing cemetery of the old *mellah*, with its tombs abutting the walls of Moulay Ismail, the new cemetery. This past is still present in memories, mainly nostalgic, of the generations who lived during the Jewish period, as well as in the stories told by younger people to whom the stories were transmitted in their families. The informants mention vague memories of

Jewish holidays, as well as Jewish sites such as the school, the synagogues (*Slat Laazimi*, *Slat Boussidan*, *Slat Berdugo*) and other communal institutions.

The suppression of traces of Jewish life

In the late 1970s the old *mellah* underwent a project of conversion of its streets (*derb-s*). Three streets with Jewish religious significance were given Islamic names. Thus the Salaouat-s Street, where the Berdugo house was located, which referred to the place of prayer of the Jews of the quarter, was rebaptised *Al-Ghufranei,* forgiveness, as if to signify the divine deliverance from the 'error' represented by the Jewish religion. According to Ahmed, it was his father, the buyer of the Berdugo house who initiated the change of the street name.

Hakham Street now bears the name of an imam, *Imam Al-Boussari*, a religious official and poet who lived in Egypt in the thirteenth century. Derb Laazimi (Laazimi Street), which adjoined the synagogue of the same name, *S'lat Laazimi*, is now Ibn Hani Street, named after an Andalusian poet of the tenth century. Only names with no religious significance remain unchanged: *derb Al-Ghandour, derb al* Kayiss (allegedly a Jewish figure of the *mellah*)*, derb Lamtamar* (lit.: "granary"), *derb el-kharrazines* (the shoemakers' street). The changing of the names of the streets of the old *mellah* was gradual. It resulted from the complaints of several residents and Muslim notables who saw their residence in streets with Jewish names as an insult to their standing as good Muslims.

Politics and religion: the erasure of Jewish spaces

The most surprising change would take place later, at the time of the changing of the names of the new *mellah* in the early 1980s. The name of the quarter itself was changed from *Mellah al Bali* (old *mellah*) to *Al-Fath.* This was hardly an unintentional change. *Al-Fath* in Arabic derives from the root *fth*, signifying opening, conquering, winning, placing on the right path, etc. In the Muslim lexicography, *fath* signifies Muslim conquests and the Islamisation of the conquered. Thus, the conquest is emptied of its violent and war-related significance. The Islamisation of the conquered peoples becomes an act of divine benevolence, which enables the errant to regain the Way of Salvation. Thus, the choice of the name Al-Fath for the old *mellah* follows the same logic of dejudaisation and Islamisation that we witnessed in the renaming of the streets of the *mellah*. Thus the *Mellah Al-Bali* becomes the object of an action of *fath*, a new religious marking of its space.

The initiator of the *Fath* ("conquest") of the old *mellah* was the socialist municipal council, which ruled the city from 1983 to 1992. Only the name of the quarter was changed by them, whereas the street names were spared. It was in the new *mellah*, that a widespread project of dejudaisation took place, among all the streets of the quarter. The new *mellah* was renamed *Hay Riyad*, the name of the place prior to its birth as a Jewish quarter in the 1920s. All the street names of the new *mellah* were changed, except for Palestine Avenue (the commercial and leisure center in the quarter previously, the Boulevard of the Jews, as it was called) and Market Street. According to one municipal official, the archives recording this action are lost. We find new names such as Deir Yassin (that refers to the massacre of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, in 1948), Al-Ourdun (Jordan), Sinai, Al-Aqaba, Hottayne (referring to the battle of Karnei Hittin, between Saladin and the Christian armies in 1187, which brought on the end of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem), Al-Khalil (Hebron), Mahmoud Hamchari (former representative of the PLO in France, assassinated in 1973), Hassan Al Ansari (one of the companions of the Prophet), Ammar ben Yasser (another companion of the Prophet), Shahid ("martyr") Abderrahmane Amazghar (a Moroccan member of the Arab Liberation Front, killed during a military operation in the north of Israel in 1975), etc.

Petahia Berdugo Street (or Raphael Berdugo, according to another informant) was renamed Salah Eddine El Ayoubi-Saladin. Ibn Maimoune (Maimonides) Street was renamed after an unknown figure, according to an informant, by the name of Abdelsalem Mezgueldi. Israelite Cemetery Street, which borders the new cemetery, became Ibn Zidoun street, named after an Andalusian poet of the eleventh century. David Street became Ammar ben Yasser, Al-Madrasi Al-Israila Street (Jewish Schools Street) became Maarif (lit.: "knowledge"). The name Jerusalem Street was Arabised to become Al-Quds.

The new names manifest a logic other than that which guided the renaming of certain streets of the old *mellah*. In the old *mellah*, only the street names with Jewish religious significance were gradually modified, in response to the requests of notables and residents of the quarter, who wanted to guard their reputations as good Muslims. In the new *mellah*, it was an action initiated by the Municipal Council, in which all the names were changed at once. While the new names reflect a wide variety of registers (religious, political, historical and artistic), the majority refers to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By referring directly to the conflict, a new modality was introduced into the relation with Moroccan Judaism.

This renaming of sites is currently the focus of mobilisation in both *mellahs*, especially among the younger generation. In the old *mellah*, the repeated visits of descendants of Jewish families alerted the population as to the value of their site. Signs with the new name of the old *mellah*, *Hay Al-Fath*, have been removed. The younger generation reclaims the Jewish past of the quarter. The *shmisha* ("little sun"), which decorates the old fountain at the center of the old *mellah* has become the symbol of that past. Some denounce the dejudaisation of the quarter, calling it a racist, criminal, catastrophic or idiotic act. "Why only the Jewish names and not all the others?", one young tradesman of the old *mellah* asked. These people believe that Jewish heritage is a means of development of their residential space. They are strongly opposed to the local authorities and the Medina Association, which specialises in the protection of the heritage of the old city, judging their actions to be selective and partial.

Conclusion

As a result of this research, my grandfather now appears in a different light than his brothers who moved to the *Ville Nouvelle* in the 1930s. The affirmation of a Judeo-Arab identity, including a language of its own (Judeo-Arabic), a self-definition which ignored French colonisation, social practices determined by daily Jewish-Muslim relations–these were the determinant aspects of his life, even if they are absent from Jewish and Arab collective memory. The history of his house reflects the divergent paths of re-appropriation of space. The built heritage still bears traces of Jewish presence, but Judeo-Arabic is no longer spoken or written, and this modest synagogue has been transformed into a mosque in a quarter that had none. The streets have been renamed in order to erase all Jewish presence in the old and new *mellahs*. Notwithstanding the reconstruction of some synagogues, mainly by the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca, most Jewish sites of prayer have undergone an unenviable evolution.[11] In Meknès, we witness two ways of renaming the sites: political and/or religious. This case raises the issue of the memory of the Jewish population and the heritagisation of its traces in the urban space.

More globally, the problematic nature of the memory of Moroccan Judaism may be witnessed in the conflict between politics and religion, a conflict that the past intimacies of living together cannot diminish. The traditional religious register, which–by attributing the status of *dhimma* to Jews–inspired my grandfather's confidence, no longer exists. In the modern

[11] Miller, "Making Tangier."

political register, this shared memory is denied or effaced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The transition in the treatment of this memory is marked by the passage from a traditional religious register which regulated the relations between a Jewish minority and a Muslim majority, as expressed through the Islamisation of some of the street names of the old *mellah*–and a modern political register which denies that memory based on outside factors–the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the base of the new names given to the sites of the new *mellah*.

If in 2011, the new constitution lists the recognition of Judaism as an integral part of Moroccan identity, we wonder if it means a desire to insert Morocco in contemporary modernity, distancing it from ideological control of politics. By erasing the Jewish presence and then by having 'second thoughts' about the process of erasure, we can see this process as an attempt to maintain a balance between religious pluralism–which, more than ever before, is the mark of contemporary democratic diversity–and religious hegemony.

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