

Moroccan Jews and The American Historical Imaginary: A Survey Across Time

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Trouble on the high seas provided the setting for the first contacts between the young United States and the Maghreb, known to Americans as the Barbary States. In 1783, when the Peace of Paris ended the War of the American Revolution, the former American colonies were released from British control; as a result, American seamen lost the protection of Britain's treaties with the Barbary States. Over the next ten years, more than seven hundred American sailors were captured and enslaved in North Africa in varying conditions of hardship. In the face of governmental indifference, groups of ordinary citizens in the new Republic organized to intervene in rescuing them from their bondage. Campaigns to raise funds for their ransom, the writing and production of plays and stories about their miserable life in captivity, and indignation at the humiliation of having to pay tribute in cash and arms to foreign powers seized the minds of Americans. Published accounts of life in captivity in the *bagnios* of the Barbary Coast became a wildly popular literary genre, opening the first page of American scholarship on Morocco. A permanent feature of these "captive accounts" were reports on Moroccan Jews: their manner of living, customs, folkways, religious practices, relations with Muslims, and their interactions with Americans, setting the stage for the creation of an important category of scholarly inquiry that has achieved impressive intellectual value over time.

Disentangling American scholarship on Moroccan Jews from the rest of the large body of inquiry about the Maghreb is no easy task, given the international nature of scholarship today, the disappearance of national borders at scholarly conferences, the transnational aspects of research, the sharing of sources via the internet, and the general interlacing webs of knowledge and information. That said, there are distinct trends in American scholarship on Morocco and on the Moroccan Jews past and present, marking it as a separate entity with its own internal logic. A survey of the relevant literature from the early nineteenth century to the present day reveals that American scholarship on Moroccan Jews has moved in tandem with larger currents in American political, social, and intellectual thought. Though small and highly focused, this body of writing reveals intellectual trends on diverse matters such as race relations, religious freedom, national identity, and writing practices in

the social sciences. It is not by chance that early accounts of Jews are found in more “literary” and imaginative genres—the captive tale and the travel account—where chance and invention governed the encounter. It was only later, in the twentieth century, that Jews became an object of concentrated study by professional researchers immersed in contemporary epistemes and practices. By tracing mutations in scholarly treatment of this “niche” category in Moroccan history, we can draw conclusions about the ways in which American intellectuals have crossed borders and appropriated “alien” discourses, absorbing, nativizing, and reinterpreting them to fit American sensibilities, while at the same time re-exporting them abroad in order to globalize values and methodologies that began as distinctly their own.

A good place to begin our analysis is with the captive literature already mentioned; indeed, these popular accounts were the only information available on Morocco and Moroccan Jewry to Americans in the late eighteenth century. From there we will move through various stages of development—from the early Republic into the nineteenth century and the era of the “grand tour,” to the modern (and machine) age, World War II and its impact on American views of others, post-war realignments and imaginaries, and up to the present day—linking at every stage changing American sensibilities with motifs that arise from a close reading of accounts pertaining to Moroccan Jews as their study became institutionalized in the American academy.

1. Captive Literature and the Discourse of Religious Tolerance

How and why did Jews appear in the early captive literature about Morocco and the Maghreb, and why were they treated—often extensively—in these accounts? Let us take, for example, the story of the capture and ransoming of American Captain James Riley from Middletown, Connecticut, whose vessel was shipwrecked off the coast of southern Morocco in 1815. The crew landed safely on shore, but soon ran out of food and water. Passing nomads rescued them but turned out to be harsh taskmasters, working them nearly to death. Riley retold a tortuous odyssey that finally ended in the coastal town of Essaouira, where the Americans were ransomed and freed thanks to a friendly British trader, William Willtshire, ending their torment.

First published in New York in 1817,¹ Riley’s account was wildly popular for decades. British and French Editions appeared in 1818, followed by a German version in 1819. *An Authentic Narrative* was reprinted no fewer

1. We have used the third edition of James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce: Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa in the Month of August 1815: With an Account of the Sufferings of Her Surviving Officers and Crew, Who Were Enslaved by the Wandering Arabs, on the Great African Desert, or Zahahrah*. 3rd ed. (New York: J. & E. Sanderson, 1818).

than eighteen times by 1860, its sales reaching over one million copies. Riley's heart-rending description of his sufferings resonated strongly with American audiences who were acutely aware of the injustices being meted out to African slaves in their own country. Abraham Lincoln mentions it in his 1860 campaign biography—along with *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Bible*—as one of the major works that shaped his worldview and informed his views on slavery.

Riley's comments about Moroccans, both Jewish and Muslim, constituted a portrait of people little known to outsiders. Yet he made a distinction between the two groups, because his impressions of each were founded on different understandings. For the most part, Americans in that era knew very little about Muslims or Islam, while Jews were more familiar. Comprising about one percent of the American population in 1775, colonial Jews were mainly Sephardim from Spain and Portugal via the Low Countries, who, at least on the surface, seemed Westernized and acculturated to American life. Moroccan Jews were another story. Riley's encounter with them pointed to the sharp differences in his mind between "our Jews" and the Jews of Barbary, who were "completely under the control of the Moors, as if they were slaves."² In conversation with a rabbi from Jerusalem, Riley makes the contrast explicit: "[I] informed him we had many Jews in America, where they enjoyed every kind of privilege in common with people of other religions; that they could hold landed estates, &c. and that many of them were very rich... I informed him that our Jews were not so superstitious, nor in such bad repute as those in Africa or Europe, where they were looked upon as a set of sharpers or villains..."³

Riley regards the Barbary Jew as a figure of moral ambivalence, hovering somewhere between Biblical righteousness and Moorish laxity. On the one hand, he shows grudging admiration for their business acumen: "One day they will sway the sceptre of universal domination." But on the other, he is repelled by their dubious moral behavior.⁴ He reports that they are hardly steadfast in their faith, and convert with alacrity to Islam if put under the least pressure; moreover, they readily offer up their wives and daughters to "lusty Moors, for no Barbary Jew thinks it a disgrace to wear antlers, provided they are gilded."⁵ Patently untrue, these observations arise from the confused notion of race that permeates his account: Riley thinks that Jews—no matter where they come from—belong to one stock, that of the

2. Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 308.

3. *Ibid.*, 307-308.

4. *Ibid.*, 303.

5. *Ibid.*, 300, 310.

“old Jewish patriarchs,” making them nearly indistinguishable from Arabs.⁶ Money grubbing, morally compromised, and far too cozy with Muslims, the Barbary Jew stood on an ill-defined middle ground, somewhere between white and non-white, challenging the strict taxonomies of this Connecticut Yankee.

Riley’s low opinion of Barbary Jews was bound to rub off on his American readers. Touting America’s religious freedom in contrast to Moorish fanaticism required that he depict the Barbary Jew as both victim and accomplice, ground down by Muslim savagery and intolerance. The many and competing faces of Barbary Jews—rich merchants, crafty traders, craven apostates, easily cuckolded husbands—inevitably reflected back on their co-religionists “at home,” reinforcing hidden strains in Christian attitudes toward the non-conforming (i.e., unconverted) American Jew. Interwoven among the lurid details of the captive experience, these portraits of unresolved ambiguity helped to tip the balance toward a Jewish “otherness,” despite a home-grown rhetoric framed in terms of brotherhood and equality. The complex image of the Jew limned in Riley’s account, as well as in other, less compelling, examples of the genre, offer a deep and insightful perspective into the problem of Jewish marginality in the new Republic. While superficially discoursing about Muslim barbarity, captive accounts are in fact statements about the American value of freedom of religion, joining other foundational texts that Americans draw upon to tell themselves who they are and why they differ from others. Examined broadly, they are forerunners and contributors to an ongoing national debate regarding the separation of church and state, and the extent to which the principle of religious equality ought to be considered fundamental to the American creed. Riley’s account is not alone in its attention to Jews; there are other examples of the genre, but of lesser insight, where Jews are made to disappear altogether into the tapestry of Moorish life. Riley’s journal brings them to light, but as the eternal other. His account declaims principles of tolerance at the same time that it subverts those very same principles by employing a discourse of difference, thus establishing a pattern in American literature that persisted for generations.

2. Mark Twain, Moroccan Jews and the Grand Tour

The catastrophic American Civil War (1861-1865) was a cosmic rent in American life. Once it was over, travel abroad came into fashion, partly as an antidote to a widespread sense of national drift that came in the war’s aftermath. Gazing at the foreign “other” was a popular remedy for restoring pride and faith in America’s wholeness, and Americans seized upon it with enthusiasm.

6. *Ibid.*, 336.

Helping to water the thirst for foreign travel were advances in transportation such as the trans-Atlantic steamship. Pre-war, the voyage to Europe by sail made by well-born emissaries such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Quincy Adams took at least three weeks, depending on wind and tide; now it became a comfortable, safe, and inexpensive crossing of less than two. Ships departed daily from East coast ports carrying thousands of American tourists to the Old World—latter-day pilgrims eager to drink from the fountains of Western civilization and to visit “the accumulated treasures of the age.”⁷ Innocent in the sense that they were inexperienced in foreign ways and deeply impressionable, these “pilgrims” were nevertheless unselfconsciously and enthusiastically American, convinced of their own cultural superiority. The more adventurous among them sometimes wandered off the beaten track and reached exotic destinations such as Morocco. One of these meanderers was Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, the most famous American writer of the day. His chance encounter with Moroccans in Tangier—Jews among them—represents a fleeting moment when time collapsed and the mimetic qualities of human experience invaded his literary imagination.

Arriving in the “dominions of the Emperor of Morocco” in 1867, Mark Twain and his companions were looking for something “thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign—foreign from top to bottom—...And lo! In Tangier we have found it.”⁸ The place looked like a page right out the *Arabian Nights*, “no white men visible, yet swarms of humanity ... all about us.”⁹ “Packed and jammed” and indescribably ancient, the streets were narrow and “oriental,” and the people—a wild mix of human types not to be found elsewhere: “stalwart Bedouins of the desert,” “stately Moors,” “Jews,” “swarthy Riffians,” and “original, genuine negroes, as black as Moses,” as well as “hundreds of breeds of Arabs...all curious to look upon.” Yet for all its strangeness and originality, Tangier is also familiar and recognizable, a storehouse of “hoary relics” and reminders of past glory, its streets “thronged with the phantoms of past ages.”¹⁰

What could be a more fitting setting for Jews, that most ancient of peoples? Indeed, in Tangier Mark Twain found a community of five thousand, looking very much like their ancestors who inhabited the town for “bewildering centuries.” Close inspection revealed characters right out of the

7. Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, (Gent. NY: T.Y. Crowell, n.d), 6. quoted in Jeffrey Steinbrink, “Why the Innocents Went Abroad: Mark Twain and American Tourism in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 16 (2) (1983): 279.

8. Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or, the New Pilgrims' Progress; Being Some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land; with Descriptions of Countries, Nations, Incidents and Adventures, as They Appeared to the Author* (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 2003), 49.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 50.

Old Testament: “Their feet and ankles are bare. Their noses are all hooked, and hooked alike. They all resemble each other so much that one could almost believe they were of one family.”¹¹ Their main occupation was money-changing: sitting in their “dens” all day long and “counting their bronze coins and transferring them from one bushel basket to another.”¹² Jewish business acumen was universal, it seems, and if money is to be made, there you will find them, counting their wealth and besting their less-talented competitors.

Hooked noses and money-changing aside, Mark Twain was fascinated by Jewish life in Tangier and treated it with sympathy; of all the inhabitants of Tangier, he found the Jews the least offensive. A philo-Semite at heart, he admired their devoutness and observance of the Sabbath, when the Jew shut his shop, refused to touch money, attended the synagogue religiously, would not cook with fire, and “religiously refrain [ed] from embarking on any enterprise.”¹³ These latter-day patriarchs in their blue gabardines, wearing sashes around their waists, slippers on their feet, and little black skullcaps on their heads, represented a permanence that stood in sharp contrast with flighty American brashness, love of novelty, thirst for invention, and adaptation to change—qualities on which Americans prided themselves as the defining mark of their own superiority. These Jewish ghosts represented a deep and enduring tie to a “venerable antiquity” that reminded a heathen like Mark Twain of his own lapsed Christianity. Ironically, it was the Moroccan Jew, far more than the Moroccan Muslim, who awoke in him this longing and connection—if only a transient one—to a remote and buried past. If the late-nineteenth-century American tourist to Morocco learned one thing, it was this—as Mark Twain’s reflections on Tangier tell us—just over the horizon on Europe’s edge lay vestiges of ancient, long-forgotten worlds waiting to be rediscovered.

3. Edith Wharton Visits the *Mellah* of Sefrou

A generation later, in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair in France and political turmoil in Central Europe, anti-Semitism reared its ugly head in America as well. The American political scene was too ethnically divided to allow questions of “race” to govern post-Civil War politics; nevertheless, racist diatribes against Jews began to enter into public speech and behavior, leading to multiple acts of social exclusion—restrictions on residence, memberships, hotels, college admissions, and so on.¹⁴ The rising tide of mass immigration from Eastern Europe after 1870, the appearance of Jews in the higher echelons of society, their prominence in banking and finance, their

11. *Ibid.*, 50-1.

12. *Ibid.*, 52.

13. *Ibid.*, 56.

14. Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 169.

occasional appointment to high office, created anxiety that Jews were “taking over” America and destroying its “Christian” way of life. Anti-Semitic discourses functioned both domestically and within a transnational context, carried abroad by literary expatriates such as Henry James (1843-1916) and Edith Wharton (1862-1937), who were more at home in Europe than in a “mongrelizing” America. Wharton, in particular, created Jewish characters in her popular fiction who were vehicles of vulgarity and bad taste.¹⁵ It is not surprising that when this most popular American woman author turned to travel writing, her disapproving and satirical tone persisted in her depictions of encounters with Jews abroad.

In 1917, Wharton was “invited” by French Resident General Louis-Hubert Lyautey to visit Morocco. A savvy journalist who knew a good story when it was offered, Wharton seized the opportunity to write a travel guide to Morocco, in her words, “before civilization invaded it.”¹⁶ The journey took place in the fall of 1917 and the resulting book, *In Morocco*, went through several Éditions, making it a cultural milestone in Americans’ exposure to Morocco. *In Morocco* is a classic of Orientalist prose, praising the French “mission” in Morocco and Lyautey’s guiding hand behind it. The dedication to Lyautey recognizes him for having made possible “the journey I had so long dreamed of [that] surpassed what I had dreamed.” Engorged with the rhetoric of French civilizational superiority that colored so much of early twentieth-century writing about Morocco, Wharton’s book reaches unprecedented heights of verbal ecstasy when describing “the visual and the picturesque” she discovered during her month-long visit. Inspired by the knowledge that all would be swept away as soon as the country is “thrown open [to] all the banalities and promiscuities of modern travel,” she records what she saw—and she saw a great deal—in rapturous detail.¹⁷ Very little escapes her discerning eye, including the bewildering variety of human “types” who populate the landscape. Among them are Moroccan Jews, trapped in a medieval paralysis, untouched by the “benefits” of colonial rule, and stuck at the very lowest rungs of the social ladder.

Wharton’s description of a foray into the *mellah* (Jewish quarter) of Sefrou led by the local *contrôleur civil* (French commissioner) resonates with stereotypes derived from other times and contexts. North African Jews, she reports, “are still compelled to live in ghettos” and are “locked in at night, as in France and Germany in the Middle Ages;” they live “in conditions of such

15. For a close examination of this topic in Wharton’s *House of Mirth*, see Irene Goldman, “The ‘Perfect’ Jew and the ‘House of Mirth’: A Study in Point of View,” *Modern Language Studies* 23 (2) (1993): 25-36.

16. Hermione Lee, *Edith Wharton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 513.

17. Edith Wharton, *In Morocco* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), viii.

demoralizing promiscuity” that “even the wealthy Jews (who are numerous) have sunk to the habits and appearance of the poorest.”¹⁸ The young women are dressed in “dirty muslin over tawdry brocaded caftans, while little girls wear “scraps of old finery.” The boys in “tattered caftans” have “wily smiles,” while their grandmothers are “huge lumps of tallowy flesh.” Dirt, poverty, and moral stagnation are the leitmotifs of Jewish life in Sefrou, filling out an image of timeless decay. Nowhere is the light of Western civilization visible in this dolorous scene. Wharton has heard that in cities like Fez and Marrakesh “the Hebrew quarter conceals flowery patios ... with the heavy European furniture that Jews delight in,” but not in dark little Sefrou, where “babies....are nursed on date-brandy, and their elders doze away to death under its consoling spell.”¹⁹ In this milestone work of American writing on Morocco, native Jews are depicted as the lowest of the low, practically beyond rescue or relief. It is not surprising that Wharton’s book set off ripples of alarm throughout American Jewry, driven, perhaps, by a sense of guilt at having completely neglected this vast depository of co-religionists.²⁰

4. Nahum Slouschz, an Ashkenai Jew in North Africa

The success of Wharton’s Moroccan book in the Anglophone world and its widening circles of influence may have been the reason that led the foremost American Jewish publishing house, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) of Philadelphia, to publish its own account of Jewish life in North Africa a few years later. Founded in 1888, the JPS was the flagship publisher of Jewish scholarly works in America, counting among its triumphs an English-language edition of the Hebrew Bible, as well as classical works such as Heinrich Graetz’s *History of the Jews*. According to historian Jonathan Sarna, its publication history traces the story of “the development and shaping of American Jewish culture.”²¹ Why the JPS decided to include in its list of publications a travel account to North Africa by an obscure Eastern European Semitics scholar is somewhat of a mystery, unless we read it within the context of the dark portrait of Jewish life penned by Wharton and others.

Travels in North Africa by Nahum Slouschz appeared in 1927. It was part of a menu of “lighter fare” of novels, short stories, and travel accounts offered to JPS subscribers “that would capture the imagination of its members through

18. *Ibid.*, 114.

19. *Ibid.*, 115-116.

20. In all fairness, Jewish sources offered little improvement over Wharton’s account. For example, the authoritative *Jewish Encyclopedia* (published 1906), described rural Moroccan Jews as “cringing, cowardly creatures, never daring to answer back, and seldom even standing erect—a people demanding the utmost pity.” s.v. art. “Morocco.” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11020-morocco>, accessed December 11, 2015.

21. Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888-1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), ix.

richly evocative tales of Jewish life around the world.”²² However, there was nothing “light” about Slouschz’s account of Jewish life in North Africa, with its tedious ethnographic detail, historical inaccuracies, and romantic fantasies of a different but no less pungent flavor than those of Wharton. Nonetheless, Slouschz must be seen as a transitional figure, bringing a scholarly lens to a subject that had previously been a topic of entertainment from popular writers like Twain and Wharton, constituting an important evolutionary step in the development of Moroccan Jewish studies. The work of Slouschz announces a paradigm shift along several fronts; firstly, he begins to map out a space for Moroccan Jewish studies in the academy, and second, he represents a movement from an earlier European-centered, philological/Orientalist approach to Jewish Studies—in his case greatly influenced by Zionist currents in Europe—to an American school of specifically *Moroccan* Jewish studies conceived in the context of the modern study of the Middle East.

Nahum Slouschz was an unlikely candidate for the task of setting the record straight about Moroccan Jewry. Born near Vilna, Lithuania in 1871, Slouschz moved to Odessa with his family a few years later, where he joined a circle of modernist Hebrew-speaking literati that included H.N. Bialik and S. Tchernichowsky. Slouschz began publishing articles in Hebrew literary journals while still in his late teens, pulling together pieces on eclectic topics based on his reading in French, Russian, English, and Yiddish. In 1898 he began his formal academic training in Semitic languages, studying first in Geneva and then moving to Paris and the Sorbonne, where in 1902 he defended a thesis entitled *La Renaissance de la Littérature Hébraïque*. According to Slouschz, Hebrew literature was “a collective echo of our people [...] in which past and presence embrace, in which feelings of religious fervor and the uniqueness of an ancient people come together...”²³ His passion to discover the origins of this ancient tongue as the starting point for a Jewish cultural revival eventually led him to North Africa, where he believed he would find the roots of an ancient Mediterranean Hebrew civilization pre-dating rabbinic Judaism that would serve as a source for a new Hebrew identity. Indeed, at the site of ancient Carthage, he found Phoenician inscriptions that he claimed were very close to pre-rabbinical Hebrew, supporting his controversial idea of a Maghreb-based Hebrew culture that fitted seamlessly into the mainstream of Western civilization alongside the ancient Greeks and Romans. These discoveries led to other writings by Slouschz on North Africa; in fact, he began to produce a series

22. *Ibid.*, 168.

23. Jörg Schulte, “Nahum Slouschz (1971-1966) and His Contribution to the Hebrew Renaissance.” In *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917-1939*, eds. Jörg Schulte, Olga Tabachnikova, and Peter Wagstaff. (Boston: Brill, 2012), 115.

of books and articles on both historical and contemporary topics that vastly expanded the library of contemporary works on Maghrebi Jews.²⁴

Slouschz was not simply an armchair scholar, but an academic entrepreneur who donned his “khaki uniform” and his “colonial helmet” to seek out the most obscure settings to support his radical civilizational theories.²⁵ In 1912, he arrived in Morocco and found his way to the highest echelons of the newly established French Residency, associating for a time with General Lyautey and serving as his informal adviser on Jewish affairs. But Slouschz’s ideas for the “emancipation” of Morocco’s Jews were not in accord with Lyautey’s, and the relationship soon ended. Lyautey did not appreciate Slouschz’s Zionism or his ties with wealthy American Jew such as financier Jacob Schiff.²⁶ Though the alliance was a brief one, in Slouschz’s view, it was not without consequence. With his customary lack of modesty, he wrote: “I was able to be of assistance in the first step toward the emancipation of the Jews of Morocco. In fact, it was really in my name that the government issued the first decree in their favor.”²⁷

His ties to the Residency and French academe gave Slouschz the opportunity to visit Morocco repeatedly. These trips provided the substance for the JPS publication of 1927, which took on the character of a “compendium” of knowledge about Moroccan Jewry stitched together from various experiences, anecdotes, folktales, practices, and scraps of history collected by the author over the years. Slouschz himself recognized the book’s uneven quality, declaring that it was “not intended as a speculative work [...] nor as a schematic historical manual, but as a popular work containing documentary evidence, facts of historical and social interest, observations on the social and religious life among various Jewish groups of Africa and [...] the wide difference between their manner of life and that of the modern world.”²⁸

Slouschz’s observations of Moroccan Jews across a broad expanse of space and time fall into three main categories: ethnography, history, and folklore. His account of the Berber village of Demnat east of Marrakesh is a prime example of his ethnographic writing. Welcomed as an honorary

24. *Ibid.*, 116-117.

25. Harvey Goldberg, “The Oriental and the Orientalist: The Meeting of Mordechai Ha-Cohen and Nahum Slouschz,” *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (3) (2004): 1-30. Slouschz’s first trip to the Maghreb took place in 1905; he returned numerous times, sponsored by such scholarly entities as the Mission scientifique du Maroc, the Académie des Belles Lettres-Paris, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

26. Goldberg, “Oriental,” 19; Mohammed Kenbib, *Juifs et musulmans au Maroc, 1859-1948*, Contribution à l’histoire des relations inter-communautaires en terre d’Islam, Série Thèses et Mémoires, 21 (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines 1994), 411-412.

27. Nahum Slouschz, *Travels in North Africa* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927), viii. The decree he refers to is the dahir of 1918 that granted official recognition to the Jewish communal organizations of Morocco.

28. *Ibid.*, ix.

“consul” in this remote Berber enclave, Slouschz was showered with gifts of food by the local *qa'id* (chief) and then led on a tour of the *mellah*. Speaking neither Arabic nor Berber, Slouschz’s impressions were filtered through his informant, a Berber Jew named Yamin, who quickly became the butt of Slouschz’s blunt and callous humor: “My own name for him was *Yamin-u-Semol*, [Heb., right or left] on account of his obstinacy and mental clumsiness.”²⁹ Impressed by the resilience and staying power of Jewish culture amidst such overwhelming poverty, Slouschz is simultaneously attracted and repelled. His tone is racially biased and patronizing, causing anthropologist Harvey Goldberg, who studied his writings closely in the Libyan context, to remark on his “classic evolutionist, meta-historical perspective, in which societies [...] are placed on a conceptual ladder, one more advanced than the other.”³⁰ Indeed, Slouschz’s ethnographic writing offers a classic example of Jewish Orientalism: filled with pride at the Jewish capacity for survival against all odds, empathizing with local Jews as his blood brothers, yet also seeing them as existing on a plane vastly inferior to his own.

Slouschz’s use of historical material is problematic and tendentious at best. His narrative is directed primarily at demonstrating how “the Jewish race” played a key role in the unfolding of Morocco’s past, from prehistoric times to the (then) present day, by contributing dynamism and intellectual substance to the wider Muslim society. His unnamed sources appear to be the fruit of colonial historiography (the book has sparse footnotes, so as not to confuse the “general” reader). The past he evokes is a preamble to a coming stage, a new chapter for Moroccan Jews poised at the brink of a transformation brought on by French rule.³¹ As far as oral sources are concerned, he makes liberal use of stories and anecdotes calculated to titillate his readers with their exotic weirdness. Like Edith Wharton, he knew how to entertain at the expense of his subjects. In a chapter entitled “The Customs of the Jews of Morocco,” Slouschz reproduces an account of some of the more bizarre and transgressive rituals practiced by Moroccan Jews, including their penchant for sorcery, Kabbalah, magic, and saint veneration that he labels as “survivors of paganism.”³²

Deliberately distancing himself from his subjects, Slouschz offered his American readers a skewed understanding of Moroccan Jews, based on a parody of their complex, rich, and deeply layered tradition. His characters were caricatures, his settings were props, and his histories were concocted out of motley sources. His writing, as he himself admitted, was hardly scholarship;

29. *Ibid.*, 461.

30. Goldberg, “Oriental,” 9.

31. Slouschz, *Travels*, 377.

32. *Ibid.*, 438.

rather, it was entertainment and propaganda, demonstrating Slouschz's role as "emancipator" of people whose existence, in his view, would have otherwise been lost to the "civilized" Jewish world. His silence on the nuances and changes within Moroccan Jewish society, its modernizing tendencies, its burgeoning intellectual life, its poets and writers, is not easily excused. Had he been interested in giving a full picture, personalities such as Moïse Nahon, Rahma Toledano, Alberto Pimienta and other Tangier intellectuals whom Slouschz undoubtedly met during his stays in northern Morocco would have found a place in his *Travels*. Instead, he preferred to emphasize the exotic, the powerless, the primitive and the unreal, embellishing his vision of Moroccan Jewry arising from primordial darkness into the sun of European enlightenment, led by foreign savants like himself.

Slouschz's *Travels* comprised the definitive voice on North African Jewry for Americans for an entire generation. The 1927 edition of *Travels* was republished with little revision in 1944, following the 1942 American landings in North Africa that initiated the Allied liberation of Nazi-dominated Europe. In response to the clamor for information about the region and its Jewish population, the JPS reissued the now obsolete account. Wartime conditions, the evolution of Moroccan Jewish youth, new modes of organization within the Jewish community, the influx of foreign aid workers and foreign armies, upheaval within the French colonial administration, and news trickling out of Europe about the Holocaust, fundamentally changed the outlook of Moroccan Jews. But scholarship had not yet caught up, and Slouschz's account was by default the best available source on them. It would take another decade for a new generation of scholars and the adoption of new methodologies to produce scholarship that was more in keeping with the temper of the times.

5. The Post-War Period

The change came with a bang in the post-war period, as Orientalist models increasingly gave way to evidence-based social-science methods; correspondingly, popular forms of knowledge such as captive accounts and travelogues were put on the shelf, replaced by scholarly studies. The rise of area studies in the 1950s represented a critical shift in the American academy. At that point, the history of Moroccan Jewish studies began to be bound up with the developing field of Middle Eastern Studies. The transition was embodied by figures like Arabists Gustave von Grunebaum and Sir Hamilton Gibb, European scholars of Islam who immigrated to the United States during and after the war, who helped to lay the foundations for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard and UCLA respectively. Before his tenure at UCLA, von Grunebaum spent time at the University of Chicago, where he served as mentor to the American scholar Marshall Hodgson. Hodgson would eventually lobby for

an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the study of Islamic civilizations, which he termed “Islamicate,” that advocated for the inclusion of Jews and other non-Muslim minorities in histories of the Muslim world.

These scholars were at work in the United States when the U.S. Government in 1958 launched the National Defense Education Act in response to the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik I. This Act, which came to be known as the Title VI program of the Department of Education, provided a significant boost to the study of foreign languages and area studies considered to be of strategic importance for the United States. As a site of proxy wars during the height of the Cold War, the Middle East and North Africa now figured prominently in U.S. foreign policy thinking. American universities were quick to leverage government interest in expanding already existing programs of scholarship on the Near and Middle East by garnering money for graduate fellowships and by establishing government-funded National Resource Centers for the study of the region. This was also the heyday of the foundations—themselves closely aligned with national interests—and institutions like the Ford Foundation and the Social Science Research Council were equally munificent. In 1966, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) was created as an umbrella organization for the various programs springing up around the country; it has continued to serve in that capacity until the present day.

With newfound institutional support, American students began learning Arabic as a living language. No longer satisfied to explain contemporary phenomena through the study of ancient texts, they started traveling to the Middle East and North Africa to gain firsthand knowledge and experience. Cultural anthropologists were among the first to be drawn to Morocco as a site for fieldwork, both because of its social diversity and because it was already familiar to young Americans who had served in the U.S. Peace Corps, established in 1961. Strongly influenced by the European cultural critic Ernst Gellner and the *piéd noir* sociologist Jacques Berque, American scholars increasingly turned their attention to the Moroccan *bled*.³³ Clifford Geertz (d. 2006) was a leader in this effort, though his theories about Moroccan and Muslim societies, based on “thick description” and local knowledge, were revised by later anthropologists, many of whom were his students.³⁴

33. Geertz’s early work focused on Indonesia, which served as a point of comparison for his observations about Morocco, where he turned his attention in the early 1960s. For a discussion of the full sweep of anthropological work in Morocco, see David Crawford and Rachel Newcomb, eds. *Encountering Morocco: Fieldwork and Cultural Understanding* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) and especially the afterword by Kevin Dwyer, “Anthropologists among Moroccans.” In *Encountering Morocco: Fieldwork and Cultural Understanding*, eds. David Crawford and Rachel Newcomb, 213-256, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

34. This cohort included Kenneth Brown, Vincent Crapanzano, Daisy Dwyer, Kevin Dwyer, Dale Eickelman, Hildred Geertz, David Hart, Paul Rabinow, and Lawrence Rosen, among others.

The collective body of work these scholars produced about Morocco not only helped place cultural anthropology on the map in the American academy, but also influenced how Americans viewed Morocco and the Arab world as a whole.³⁵ Concepts like “segmentary society” and “symbolic systems” were mobilized by a new generation of scholars—many of them students of Gellner and Geertz—to make sense of societies previously understood simply as reflections of the chaotic and irrational “Orient”. At the same time, the anthropological study of Morocco was complemented, and occasionally taken to task, by an emerging cadre of American historians immersed in post-colonial studies who sought a broader contextualization for contemporary social phenomena. Figures such as Edmund Burke III, L. Carl Brown, and Wilfred Rollman emphasized the need to consider change and continuity over time in Moroccan and Maghrebi historical studies.

American observers of Morocco of the 1960s-1980s, whether working in the archives or in the field, inevitably stumbled onto the story of Moroccan Jews. Although their numbers had been diminishing since Moroccan independence in 1956, Jews were still an unmistakable presence in Moroccan society. These scholars never claimed to “work on Jews” *per se*, yet they took care not to ignore or efface them either.³⁶ For example, as a social historian who studied urban change, Kenneth Brown revealed how closely Jews were intertwined with Muslims in the urban setting. His highly original 1976 work, *The People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City*,³⁷ served as a powerful example of how social science methodologies could be adapted to the study of Moroccan Jews more generally, by merging and integrating ethnographic, historical, and urban studies approaches in one continuous narrative. Along similar lines, Lawrence Rosen’s seminal work on the Middle Atlas village of Sefrou made use of the Moroccan Jewish experience as a means for better understanding complex articulations of how the broader Muslim society functioned.³⁸ As he explains:

35. Brian Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakesh Express* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 268-269.

36. Moroccan nationalist historians working during the same period did not always take such care when it came to including Jews in the national narrative, then being forged along relatively rigid pan-Arab and pan-Islamic lines. See for example Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), in which the author makes fleeting reference to Jews but never considers them as an organic part of the Moroccan nation. Even his discussion of the mythic Berber warrior known as “the Kahina” makes no mention of the erroneous, yet nonetheless widely-held, belief that she was Jewish.

37. Kenneth Brown, *The People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City* (Manchester, UK: University of Manchester Press, 1976).

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

“I was struck, in my work with both urban and rural, Berber and Arab informants by their frequent and well-disposed remarks about their Jewish neighbors and trading partners. Thus for me the Jews were a test case, a bounding instance of Muslim relationships and cultural concepts, a way of using these interreligious relations to understand what was central to Moroccan Muslim social and cultural life. Once the 1967 Middle East war broke out and I saw many of these relationships under stress, I was all the more taken with how the ways in which the two communities interacted could serve as an indicator of internal Muslim culture and society.”³⁹

Indeed the cultural embeddedness of Jews in Moroccan society has remained a lifelong interest of Rosen, as evidenced by his latest book, *Two Arabs, a Berber, and a Jew*.⁴⁰

Prompted in part by this emerging body of scholarship on Morocco, including the work geographers⁴¹ and literary scholars, Moroccan Jewish studies slowly began to cohere as a field of inquiry within the American academy. It came to this position from the margins of two fields—Middle Eastern Studies and Jewish Studies—both of which had evolved out of older philological traditions in the second half of the twentieth century to become distinct interdisciplinary categories in their own right.

Despite support from the United States Department of Education and private foundations, the development of Middle Eastern Studies in the United States was hardly smooth. Intellectual and ideological conflicts over the role of area studies in the university curriculum arose in tandem with episodes of actual conflict in the Middle East. In this tense environment—in which Israel and its neighbors clashed at least once a decade—Jewish topics became marginalized and/or heavily politicized within Middle Eastern Studies. At the very least, vicious and sometimes *ad hominem* debates damaged the chances for any easy integration of the two fields, with the tone set by fierce and often vitriolic encounters between Columbia professor of comparative literature Edward Said and the Princeton Orientalist scholar Bernard Lewis that endured until the former’s death in 2003. Despite the distance that American scholarship on the Middle East and North Africa had traveled since the days of the Barbary pirates, a “discourse of difference” still loomed on the horizon.

39. Personal correspondence with the authors, November 13, 2015.

40. Lawrence Rosen, *Two Arabs, a Berber, and a Jew: Entangled Lives in Morocco* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

41. See especially the study of Sijilmasa by Ronald Messier and James Miller, based on excavations that took place between 1988-1998. Prior to its demise, Sijilmasa had a significant Jewish community engaged in trans-Saharan trade. Ronald Messier and James Miller, *The Last Civilized Place: Sijilmasa and its Saharan Destiny* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

The highly Euro-centric field of Jewish studies, meanwhile, had long since relegated Moroccan themes to the ancillary category of “Sephardic studies,” despite the fact that many, if not most, Moroccan Jews are not actually of Spanish descent. Jewish studies became engaged with Moroccan Jewry mainly in the context of the “Golden Age” of Spain’s medieval *convivencia* and its offshoots, whereby iconic medieval philosophers like Maimonides, who had lived in Fez during a formative period of his life, were deemed worthy of scholarly attention. Topics situated in later periods in Moroccan history that might have required local knowledge to identify, decipher, and deconstruct, were relegated to the sidelines or simply ignored.⁴² Proof that Jewish and Middle Eastern Studies could be intellectually integrated came with the publication of *A Mediterranean Society* by German/Israeli scholar Shlomo Dov Goitein, a magisterial treatment of the 300,000 Jewish manuscript fragments dating from the Middle Ages discovered in the Ben Ezra synagogue of Cairo, known as the *genizah* documents.⁴³ Goitein’s multi-volume study introduced a new paradigm of “symbiosis” that stressed the mutual imbrication of Jews and Muslims in the economic, social, and even political life of the southern Mediterranean in the XIth and XIIth centuries. Above all, the *genizah* documents showed how Islamicate Jews in all their variety (Karaites, Rabbinic, rich, poor, etc.) enjoyed a “cultural at-homeness”⁴⁴ that European Jewry did not share.

Among Goitein’s students, Mark Cohen and Norman Stillman deftly applied this logic to the broader contexts of Muslim-Jewish relations, the latter turning to Morocco specifically with the help of his Fez-born spouse, Yedida Stillman, a specialist on North African costume history. But overall, the post-Goitein generation was a transitional one. Some of its members remained committed to Orientalist philology and firmly grounded in Jewish Studies, approaching Moroccan Jews primarily as part of a larger, relatively unified Jewish diaspora.⁴⁵ Others, like the Middle East historians Daniel Schroeter and Susan Gilson Miller, gravitated toward interdisciplinary area studies paradigms and cultivated expertise in Arabic and Islam as prerequisites to

42. An important place of engagement was scholarship emanating from post-independence Israel, where Moroccan Jewish immigrants were important in the construction of the idea of the “*mizrahim*.” See the article by Daniel Schroeter in this volume.

43. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999-1967).

44. The term was used by Ismar Schorsch to describe the image conveyed by the Orientalist scholar Moritz Steinschneider of Jews in the era of Islam’s ascendancy, Ismar Schorsch, “Converging Cognates: The Intersection of Jewish and Islamic Studies in Nineteenth Century Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 55 (2010), 16.

45. See for example, Jane Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez, 1450-1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980).

presenting Jews as a regular feature of larger Muslim societies, albeit with unique features. They were profoundly influenced by the work of French post-modernists and Saidian post-Orientalism, which served as a model for breaking with their Orientalist forebears. Their reassessment of past work included special attention to the relationship between Jews and Orientalism, including the Orientalists' particular brand of anti-Semitism, leading to new insights about Jews' unique position in the colonial paradigm, both as colonizer and colonized, to borrow a concept from Tunisian Jewish writer Albert Memmi. Few if any scholars of Moroccan Jews henceforth failed to make a trip to the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose records elucidated this fraught relationship with great poignancy. The search for new sources also led scholars to join the so-called Islamic city debates, where they made use of local documentation (maps, censuses, oral histories, etc.) and new methodologies to help restore Jews to their rightful place in the history of Moroccan cities. Daniel Schroeter recalls the scholarly trajectory that led him to write *The Merchants of Essaouira*,⁴⁶ one of the first works to inscribe Jews fully into the social topography of the Morocco:

I came to Morocco to conduct doctoral research with the intention of studying the history of Essaouira, inspired by Miège's study *Le Maroc et l'Europe*. At the same time, I wanted to shift the focus [to] the internal dynamics of Moroccan society interacting with Europe. I was interested in studying Jews and their interactions with Muslims, but did not see it as a Jewish history project, per se. [...] There were a small group of Moroccan historians and researchers working in the archives on the nineteenth century at the same time. The focus of many, if not most historians in Rabat at the time was on social history of different regions (Ahmad Tawfiq and others). I learned a lot from this group. Many were also writing about Jews in the context of Moroccan history, which is what I was interested in doing. However, missing in these studies by the Moroccan historians was the "Jewish voice" which I attempted to include, based on Jewish texts and documents in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic.⁴⁷

46. Daniel Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

47. Personal correspondence with the authors, November 19, 2015.

Schroeter's work inspired similarly holistic studies of other Moroccan cities, including Fez,⁴⁸ Tangier,⁴⁹ and Marrakech.⁵⁰

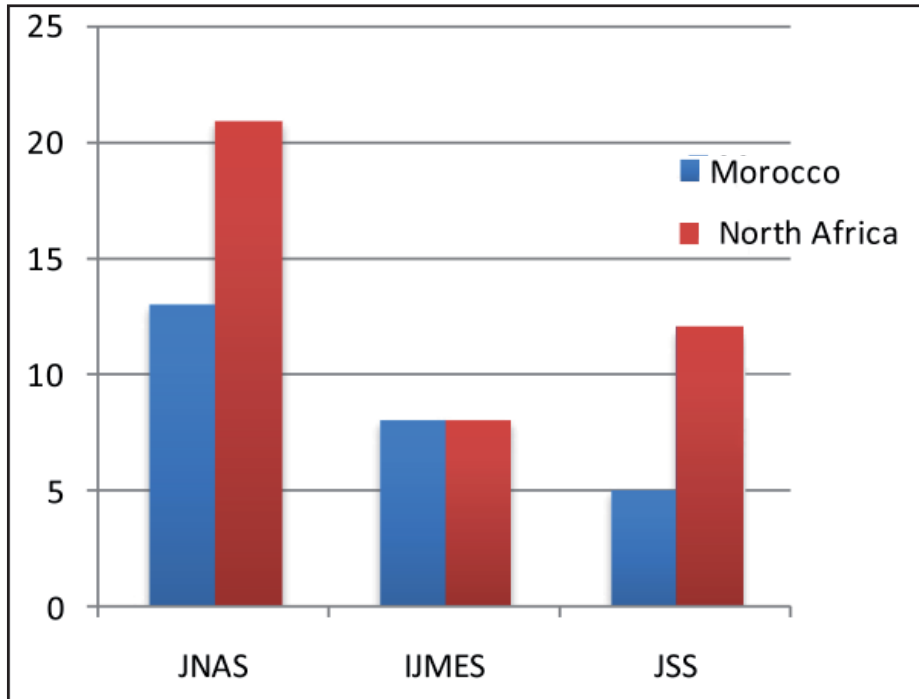


Fig. 1: Publications on in 3 scholarly journals on North African Jewish topics, 1996-2015

Scholarship on Moroccan Jews received a definitive boost from the development of Maghreb Studies as a subfield of Middle Eastern Studies in the 1980s. For decades, Americans had largely ceded the study of North Africa to the French (given the latter's strong historical ties to the region), staking their scholarly claims instead in the Levant, where institutions like the American Universities of Cairo and Beirut served as platforms for regional studies. In 1984, the American Institute for Maghreb Studies (AIMS) was created under the auspices of the Council of American Overseas Research

48. See Susan Gilson Miller, "The Mellah of Fez: Reflections on the Spatial Turn in Moroccan Jewish History," in *Jewish Topographies; Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, eds. A. Nocke, J. Brauch, and A. Lipphardt, (London, Ashgate, 2008), and also Susan Gilson Miller Attilio Petruccioli and Mauro Bertagnin, "The Mallah: The Third City of Fez," in *The Architecture and Memory of the Minority Quarter of the Muslim Mediterranean City*, eds. Susan Gilson Miller and Mauro Bertagnin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

49. Susan Gilson Miller, "Making Tangier Modern: Ethnicity and Urban Development." In *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, eds. Emily R. Gottreich and Daniel Schroeter (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011).

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

Centers to support research and teaching on and in North Africa. From its inception, this organization promoted research on North African Jewish communities through grants and via its publication, *The Journal of North African Studies* (JNAS). Since its debut in 1996, the JNAS has published articles on the topic of North African Jews more than any other scholarly journal: twenty-one times, and on Moroccan Jews specifically thirteen times, a record that far exceeds that of either the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* or *Jewish Social Studies* the principal journals of Middle Eastern Studies and Jewish Studies respectively. [see chart].

(Not a single article on the topic of Moroccan Jews has been published in the *American Historical Review* since its inception in 1895.) AIMS also sponsored the first scholarly conference held in Morocco explicitly focused on Jews: “Rethinking Jewish Culture and Society in the Maghreb,” convened in Tangier in 2004, highlighted the participation of scholars from across the Maghreb.⁵¹

The prominence of highly trained and prominent Moroccan scholars is one of the unique and defining features of Moroccan Jewish studies. The influence of Moroccan scholars such as Ahmed Tawfiq, Mohammed Kenbib, Jamaa Baida, Germain Ayache, Simon Lévy, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Shahbar, Aomar Boum, and Mohammed Hatimi on American scholarship cannot be overestimated. A valuable US-Morocco dialogue has emerged on Jewish topics that is unmatched in any other Middle Eastern or North African context.

Conclusion: Moroccan Jewish Studies in the New Millennium

As Moroccan Jewish studies in the US moves into the new millennium, several key trends are apparent. The current generation of practitioners is largely comprised of graduates of Middle Eastern Studies programs, trained in the constituent disciplines (history, anthropology, sociology, political science, etc.) during the heyday of federal funding for area studies in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Through the Title VI program, students of North African Jewry are encouraged to study Arabic to the highest levels, particularly modern and colloquial versions, and to gain a firm grounding in the study of Islam in its Maghrebi context, that is, with attention to Maliki and Ibadi traditions and to popular practices and rituals. Alongside their regular Middle Eastern studies program, they also learn Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic and/or Berber languages. The focus of research has shifted, with post-modern sensibilities now coloring much of the scholarship. The study of Moroccan

51. Conferences on the topic of Maghrebi Jews had been held previously, in Israel, the US, Europe, and in Tunis, but this was the first of its kind held in Morocco. The 2004 AIMS conference resulted in the publication, *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* (2011), eds. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel Schroeter.

Jewish identity, for example, a topic first pioneered by Daniel Schroeter,⁵² has been transformed through the use of concepts such as hybridity, alterity, and the subaltern. Contemporary scholars are discovering new ways to approach the relationship between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, and the ramifications of that relationship, including through filmic representations,⁵³ intertextual encounters,⁵⁴ and memory.⁵⁵

To the extent that American scholarship on Moroccan Jews is a reflection of specifically American concerns—the “historical imaginary” claimed here—it is important to note that generally speaking, American scholars are free of the “excess baggage” of colonialism or Zionism that has often burdened their French or Israeli counterparts. This is not to say that political changes have been unimportant in setting the tone for Moroccan Jewish studies in the United States; rather, they are mediated by specifically American concerns—such as Twain’s post-Civil War anxieties—that have the benefit of distance from specifically Moroccan issues. (Thus the discipline of anthropology itself has been accused of the very American sin of an “incestuous relationship with power.”)⁵⁶ Topics once considered out of range in Morocco have come into the foreground on the American research agenda, as new sources become available to everyone in an internationalization of research methodologies. For example, interest in the topic of *histoire contemporaine* (read: post-independence histories) among Moroccan scholars has been matched by a similar concern in the US, as archives in Morocco, France, and the USA achieve new levels of organization and availability. As a result, we are beginning to register important and often surprising research findings on once occulted topics such as inter-war political conflicts, the period of Vichy rule,⁵⁷ the role of Jews in the nationalist movement, political activism and Communist affiliation among Jews, and the post-war exodus. This new research agenda has been abetted not only by the increasing accessibility of archival materials,

52. Daniel J. Schroeter, “The Shifting boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (1) (2008): 145-164.

53. Oren Kosansky and Aomar Boum, “The ‘Jewish Question’ in Postcolonial Moroccan Cinema,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (3) (2012):421-442.

54. See for example Oren Kosansky, “The Real Morocco Itself: Judeo-Muslim Pilgrimage, Hybridity and the Idea of the Moroccan Nation.” In *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, eds. Emily Gottreich and Daniel Schroeter, 341-360. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011).

55. See, for example, Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

56. Susan Slyomovics, “State of the State of the Art Studies: An Introduction to the Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa.” In *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, 3-22 (Bloomington, IND: Indiana University Press, 2013), 14.

57. See, for example, S.G. Miller, “Filling in a historical parenthesis: An introduction,” *Journal of North African Studies*, Special issue, “Morocco from World War II to Independence,” v. 19, no. 4 (September 2014): 461-474.

but also by willingness to reopen closed dossiers and to examine them in a new, more searching light.

The study of Moroccan Jews by Americans is characterized by an interesting paradox: while it was their “otherness” that informed the first attraction, it was this very same exoticism that won them a permanent place in the American imaginary. It provided the magnetism that drew further inquiry, in a conscious effort to locate and position them in the Moroccan reality. As we have seen, profound shifts in American approaches to Muslim and Middle Eastern/North African scholarship created new forms of exclusion that thankfully, have been overcome in recent years. Today, mapping out its own small yet significant space in the American academy, the field of Moroccan Jewish studies is characterized by vigorous debate, a new generation of scholars, and the promise that it will remain an integral part of Moroccan, Maghrebi, and Jewish history writ large.

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ملخص: اليهود المغاربة والمتخيل التاريخي الأمريكي دراسة استقصائية عبر الزمن

لا يمكن فصل الاهتمامات العلمية الأمريكية بتاريخ اليهود المغاربة بسهولة عن حقل الأبحاث الأمريكية الواسع المتعلق بالبلدان المغاربية. ويعالج هذا المقال تأثير برامج البحوث حول اليهود المغاربة في الولايات المتحدة بانشغالات وهموم البحث السائدة في حقل العلوم الاجتماعية الأمريكية، مثل مواضيع العلاقات العرقية، والهوية الدينية والوطنية، وتطور الحداثة والأدب واللغة والثقافة، والحقائق السياسية الناشئة. والدليل على ذلك، الانشغال الباكر وعبر الزمن بأحوال اليهود المغاربة، انطلاقاً من الكتابات المتعلقة بالأسرى في القرن التاسع عشر، ومروراً بكتابات الرحالة والمستكشفين الباكرة، ثم وصولاً إلى اتجاهات البحث لفترة ما بعد الحرب في حقل الأنثروبولوجيا الثقافية، ومعالجة أسئلة ما بعد الحداثة حول مكانة الأقليات العرقية والدينية في المجتمع المدني المغربي سريع التغير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مارك توين، طنجة، سلا، إديث وارتون، التأريخ، الملاح، ناحوم سلوش، فرنسا، الاستعمار الفرنسي، الحماية الفرنسية، الأنثروبولوجيا، برنامج الفصل السادس من وزارة التربية والتعليم، دراسات الشرق الأوسط، الدراسات اليهودية، اليهود المغاربة.

**Résumé: Les juifs marocains et l'imaginaire historique américain:
Une enquête à travers le temps**

Les études américaines sur les Juifs marocains ne sont pas aisément séparées de l'ensemble des recherches américaines sur le Maghreb. Cet article soutient que les agendas de recherche ont été façonnés par des préoccupations plus importantes dans les sciences sociales américaines, en mettant l'accent sur des sujets comme les relations raciales, l'identité religieuse et nationale, l'évolution des modernités, la langue et la culture et les réalités politiques émergentes. Pour démontrer ce point, l'engagement de la recherche aux États-Unis sur le judaïsme marocain est tracé dans le temps, à partir des récits de captifs du XIX^{ème} siècle, de l'écriture des voyages, aux tendances de recherche d'après-guerre en anthropologie culturelle et plus récemment aux enquêtes post-modernes sur la place de minorités ethniques et religieuses dans la société marocaine.

Mots clés: Mark Twain, Tanger, Salé, Edith Wharton, Historiographie, Mellah, Nahum Slouschz, France, colonialisme français, Protectorat français, Anthropologie, programme VI du Département de l'éducation, études du Moyen-Orient, études juives, Juifs marocains.

**Abstract: Moroccan Jews and the American Historical Imaginary:
A Survey Across Time**

American scholarship on Moroccan Jews is not easily separated from the larger body of American research on the Maghreb. This article argues that research agendas have been shaped by larger concerns in American social science, emphasizing topics like race relations, religious and national identity, evolving modernities, language and culture, and emerging political realities. To demonstrate this point, the engagement of American scholarship with Moroccan Jewry is traced over time, beginning with nineteenth-century captive accounts, to travel writing, to post-war trends in cultural anthropology, and more recently, to post-modern inquiries into the place of ethnic and religious minorities in Moroccan society.

Key words: Mark Twain, Tangier, Salé, Edith Wharton, Historiography, Mellah, Nahum Slouschz, France, French colonialism, French Protectorate, Anthropology, Title VI program of the Department of Education, Middle Eastern Studies, Jewish Studies, Moroccan Jews.

Resumen: Los judíos marroquíes y el imaginario histórico Americano: Una encuesta a través del tiempo

La erudición norteamericana sobre los judíos marroquíes no se separa fácilmente del cuerpo más grande de la investigación americana sobre el Magreb. Este artículo argumenta que las agendas de investigación han sido moldeadas por preocupaciones más amplias en las ciencias sociales estadounidenses, enfatizando temas como las relaciones raciales, la identidad religiosa y nacional, la evolución de las modernidades, el lenguaje y la cultura y las emergentes realidades políticas. Para demostrar este punto, el compromiso de la erudición estadounidense con los judíos marroquíes se remonta con el tiempo, comenzando con los relatos cautivos del siglo XIX, los viajes de escritura, las tendencias de la posguerra en la antropología cultural y, más recientemente, Lugar de minorías étnicas y religiosas en la sociedad marroquí.

Palabras clave: Mark Twain, Tánger, Salé, Edith Wharton, Historiografía, Mellah, Nahum Slouschz, Francia, colonialismo francés, protectorado francés, antropología, programa Título VI del Departamento de Educación, Estudios de Oriente Medio, Judíos, judíos marroquíes.