

Rural Moroccan Jews and the Colonial Postcard: A Review Essay

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Abstract: By the late nineteenth century, the camera eclipsed the Orientalist painting in terms of the visual ethnographic production of North Africa and its Indigenous communities. The colonial photograph, poster and postcard emerged as central modes of colonial representation and portrayal of North Africa's racial "types." Colonial French "ethnological" photographers photographed without permission what they conceived as "prototype" images of "the authentic" Indigenous "black/slave," "Jew," "Berber," and "Moor." In this context, the idea of a Moroccan Jew is partly constructed through postcards and photographs by French photographers during the 19th century and the first part of 20th century. In describing Moroccan Jews and rural communities in particular, the French colonial postcard aesthetically uses rural Jewish men and women as a contrasting measurement to the "natural" enlightened European Jew. By allowing the camera to exhibit rural Jews as captives of "uncivilized" social, political and economic environments, France colonial photographers tried to present an image of a Moroccan society where Jews were captives. In this paper I revisit these colonial visual ethnographies by re-reading them against the photographs of Indigenous Moroccan Jews captured by the cameras of two native Moroccan Jewish photographers Joseph Bouhsira and Elias Harrus between the 1920s and 1950s.

Keywords: Postcard, Racial Types, Jews, Southern Morocco, Elias Harrus, Joseph Bouhsira.

In this contribution, I revisit some of the colonial postcards¹ of Morocco through the framework of ethnographic ethics and representation of North African communities and themes, especially Jews of the rural communities (Jews of the *bled*). Given the historiographical and anthropological readings and assessments of colonial writings, I see an intellectual urgency to analyze historical postcards and visual ethnography of North Africa.² In addition to

1. David Prochaska, "Thinking Postcards," *Visual Resources* 17, 4 (2001): 383-99; Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); David Prochaska, "The Archive of Algérie Imaginaire," *History and Anthropology* 4, 2 (1990): 373-420.

2. For works on the relationships between anthropology, photography and history, see Elizabeth Edwards, "Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs," *Visual Studies* 12 (2001): 67-75; Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); David Green, "Classified Subjects: Photography and Anthropology: The Technology of Power," *Ten-8* 14 (1984): 30-37; Margaret Mead, "Visual Ethnography in a discipline of words," in *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. P. Hockings (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 3-10; Everard Im Thurn, "Anthropological Uses of the Camera," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 22 (1896): 184-203.

Alloula's work on postcards of "harem" and belly dancers, some scholars have attempted to discuss and interpret different colonial events and themes through postcards and oriental paintings.³ I draw on the postcard collections of Paul Dahan, the founder of the Centre de la Culture Judéo-Marocaine in Brussels. Dahan's photo library is one of the most important historical archives on Moroccan Jews today.⁴ Unlike the essentializing and orientalist postcard of French photographers, I contend that a number of Moroccan Jewish photographic collections between 1920s and 1950s provide nuanced insider-views and social frames for the complex nature of Jewish-Muslim relations as well as Jewish life in rural and urban communities. Equally important, I argue that from a historical perspective, the postcard is a colonial photographic document that reinforces the ethnographic themes of the colonial travel narrative of the late nineteenth century and the French scientific imperialism of the early twentieth-century. The colonial postcard visually reproduces many historiographical and ethnological textual conventions of colonial and orientalist discourse about Jews, Berbers, and Arabs. From colonial photographers' perspectives, the *mellāh* (Jewish neighborhood) epitomized Arab and Islamic forms of Jewish oppression by local Muslim communities. Jews are depicted in the majority of postcards mostly inside walled homes or/and within the *mellāh* as captives. The viewer sees little interaction between Jews and Muslims in the frames of these postcards; and therefore, the postcard becomes an undeniable testimony of the miserable experience of Jews in the "Islamic ghetto." I read these colonial images against the photographs taken and printed by local Indigenous Jews. During the colonial period Moroccan

3. Susan Slyomovics, "Visual ethnography, stereotypes and photographing Algeria," in *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, ed. Ricard Netton (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 128-49; Bernard Rosenberger, "Que peuvent dire des cartes postales dur la conquête du maroc," in *Pratiquer les sciences sociales au Maghreb: Textes pour Driss Mansouri avec un choix de ses articles*, Mohamed Almoubaker and François Pouillon, eds. 307-31 (Casablanca: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2014); Shaw Smith, "New Perspectives on the Voyage of Eugène Delacroix to North Africa: Jews and Arabs Together," in *Pratiquer les sciences sociales au Maghreb: Textes pour Driss Mansouri avec un choix de ses articles*, Mohamed Almoubaker and François Pouillon, eds. 267-92 (Casablanca: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2014).

4. I am also indebted to Susan Slyomovics visual anthropological analysis of Hyman images of post-colonial Sefrou. I acknowledge that my article is inspired by visual anthropological readings by Susan Slyomovics of Paul Hyman's images and his photography of Sefrou. See Susan Slyomovics, "Perceptions, not illustrations, of Sefrou, Morocco: Paul Hyman's images and the work of ethnographic photography," *The Journal of North African Studies* 14, 3-4 (2009): 445-65. Also Paul Hyman, "A (fashion) photographer's reflections on fieldwork," *The Journal of North African Studies* 14, 3-4 (2009): 431-43; Paul Rabinow, "Chicken or glass: in the Vicinity of Clifford Geertz and Paul Hyman," *The Journal of North African Studies* 14, 3-4 (2009): 467-77; Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and Lawrence Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis. With a photographic Essay by Paul Hyman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Jewish photographers Elias Harrus and Joseph Bouhsira produced Indigenous photographic perspectives as counter visual representations of Jewish Morocco challenging the “verities” of the colonial vulgate⁵ that the colonial camera highlights in the postcard of Marcelin Flandrin and others.

During the post-independence period, many nationalist historians and sociologists called for discarding colonial writings as biased representations of Moroccan society. Using a historical and anthropological approach, and as I have argued elsewhere, I contend that we can carry out ethnographies of photographs and postcards by situating them through the ethnographic eyes of Muslim and Jewish informants who lived with Jews or Indigenous Moroccan Jews such as Elias Harrus.⁶ I argue for a new understanding of social (dis)connections generally ignored by European photographers such as Flandrin, Lévy, Maillet and Grebert. By interrogating the silences and erasures of the postcard and its frame, I contend that despite the photographer’s editing, framing and cropping, postcards provide a colonial narrative of Jewish-Muslim relations in North Africa. From this vantage point and despite their prejudices, colonial postcards convey historical information about a variety of themes relating to Jews of Moroccan villages and cities. Accordingly, and despite their biases and cropping of geographic and social contexts, they are incomplete historical indicators of social and cultural issues. Commercial photographs and postcards of Moroccan Jews capture thin slices of the evolving colonial image of Morocco during different stages of French colonial North Africa. Still, their value is ethnological and historical. Reading these visual works in the context of local manuscripts and oral histories collected among older generation of Jews and Muslims, we broaden the frames of their social, economic, and ritual descriptions of Jewish life in southern Morocco even when they are staged production.

Tourism and the Reproducing Colonial Postcards

In the summer of 2019, while walking through a maze of narrow streets in the old medina of Marrakesh, struggling to dodge crowds of tourists and locals, I was appalled and overwhelmed by the number of displayed and

5. Edmund Burke III, “The Image of Morocco in French Colonial Scholarship,” in *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud, eds. (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1972), 175-99.

6. For a discussion of the representation of Jews in colonial travel narratives, see Aomar Boum, “Southern Moroccan Jewry between the Colonial Manufacture of Knowledge and the Postcolonial Historiographical Silence,” in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, Emily Gottreich and Daniel Schroeter, eds. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 73-92.

reproduced pictures, postcards, posters, and paintings of colonial Morocco. These visual commercial presentations showcased a mixture of black and white photographs of Jean Besancenot,⁷ Marcelin Flandrin,⁸ Felix Studio Photo and Joseph Bouhsira,⁹ Elias Harrus¹⁰ and others.¹¹ It was obvious that the displayed occasionally framed photographs and posters were for an increasing population of foreign tourists.

Over the last decade, Marrakesh has been the center of a growing foreign and Indigenous-exotification of Moroccan culture and history. Cultural artifacts and historical knowledge have been appropriated over the years by tourism developers and brands, native and foreign; material culture has been commodified, packaged in the native image and sold in local shops or Western cities. Local shopkeepers have been compelled to become agents and intermediaries in this business model that professes to support Indigenous knowledge and especially through the empowerment of women. “Old postcards sell and sell quickly. They are easy to reproduce,” a pillow merchant noted after I described the history of the photographs copied in his merchandise, “I care less about what negative image they circulate about ancient Morocco. I need to feed three kids and provide medical care to an ailing father.”¹²

The conscious and unconscious appropriation of these images continues to reinforce many orientalist ideas of “exotic” Islamic cities such as Marrakesh especially as the city continues to attract the growing number of international tourists. The Jewish story of Marrakesh and other traditional Islamic urban centers and rural communities has been vital to the global Moroccan tourism industry. In the context of the decreasing local Jewish population of Marrakesh, the government has paid considerable attention to

7. Jean Besancenot, *Costumes du Maroc* (Casablanca: La Croisée des Chemins, 2000). Also see, Jean Besancenot, *Bijoux arabes et berbères du Maroc* (Casablanca: Éditions de la Cigogne, 1953); Jean Besancenot, *Types et costumes du Maroc* (Paris: Horizons de France, 1942).

8. Patricia Goldsworthy, “Images, ideologies, and commodities: the French colonial postcard industry in Morocco,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8, 2 (2010): 147-67. Also see Patricia Goldsworthy, “Colonial Negatives: The Prohibition and Commodification of Photography in Sharifian and French Morocco,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2009).

9. Goldsworthy, “Colonial Negatives”.

10. Aomar Boum, “Schooling in the Bled: Jewish Education and the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Southern Rural Morocco, 1830-1962,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 3 (1): 1-24, (2010): DOI: 10.1353/jji.0.0071. Also see Elias Harrus and Sarah Harel-Hoshen, *Juifs parmi les Berbères: Photographes d'Elias Harrus* (Paris: Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, 1999); Elias Harrus, *L'Alliance en action: les écoles de l'Alliance israélite universelle dans l'Empire du Maroc (1862-1912)* (Paris: Nadir, 2001).

11. Gérard Lévy, “La carte postale: Florilège des stéréotypes,” in *Les Juifs du Maroc: Images et textes*, André Goldberg (Paris: Éditions du Scribe, 1992), 239-41.

12. Personal communication, Marrakesh, July 2019.

the renovation of Jewish heritage, neighborhoods, cemeteries and synagogues within Marrakesh making Jewish heritage a key dimension of selling the city to an increasing tourist population.¹³ Old memorabilia and pictures of Jewish Morocco are everywhere in the old markets and bazars of the city as part of this heritage. Berber/Amazigh and Jewish symbols, images, jewelry and dress were transformed into one of the most important products of this neo-colonial and orientalist appropriation. For the government, the foregrounding of Jewish heritage is meant to highlight the historical relations between Jews and Muslims and the culture of interfaith dialogue that characterized these relationships over centuries of Jewish presence in Morocco despite moments of communal conflict and violence.¹⁴



Fig. 1: Image on the left: Pillow cushions with postcard images of women, Marrakesh 2019. Image on the right: postcard *Femme juive de Debdou* reproduced in one of the cushions in the image on the left, (Author's collection).

13. Aomar Boum, ““Curating the Mellah”: Cultural Conservation, Jewish Heritage Tourism and Normalization Debates in Morocco and Tunisia, 1960s-Present,” in *Social Currents in North Africa: Culture and Governance after the Arab Spring*, Osama Abi-Mershed, ed., (London: Hurst C & Company Publishers, 2017), 187-203.

14. Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Aomar Boum, “Branding Convivencia: Jewish Museums and the Reinvention of a Moroccan Andalus in Essaouira,” in *Exhibiting Minority Narratives: Cultural Representation in Museums in the Middle East and North Africa*, Virginie Rey, ed., (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2020), 205-23.

Founded by the French designer Sylvie Pissard, *Sissi Morocco* reproduced colonial images of Berber/Amazigh and Jewish women on the covers of wallets, bags, t-shirts and cushions.¹⁵ *Sissi Morocco* professes to “contribute to the preservation of the local arts and crafts and creates jobs” through the employment of Indigenous women. Irrespective of its claim to economic contribution to local impoverished communities and women empowerment, *Sissi Morocco* revives and reproduces traditional stereotypes about Berber/Amazigh women in the same ways that the colonial studio like Marcelin Flandrin and Felix Studio Photo profited from Indigenous faces and created exotic images of North African societies in Europe through the circulation of photographs.

Sissi Morocco's website presented a set of products in the same way colonial photographers created Indigenous types. Each product bears an “Orientalized” female Indigenous. You can get wallets branded “Sana,” “Jamila,” “Nejma,” “Zoubida,” “Hanane,” or “Rachida” for twenty euros and you are assured, as *Sissi Morocco* promises its customer, the choice of wallets “from the smallest to the largest... [with] covers that reproduce the old-fashioned charm of postcards from Morocco of yesteryear.” In other product descriptions, *Sissi Morocco* stresses an advertising approach of underscoring the oriental theme. For example, in its advertisement of a black and white wall hangings branded “Rachida” which reproduces the images of women from a variety of colonial postcards, its classified ad reads: “[h]anging on the wall, this hanging asserts itself and certainly opens onto another place (...). The reproduction of the orientalist postcards gives your interior a warm and original presence.” These reproductions are no different from the poster, postcard and photograph that pictured women of North Africa through Orientalist fantasies.¹⁶

Many copyrighted pictures, postcard and posters are of women and men photographed during the first half of the twentieth century in villages throughout southern Morocco. They were part of a colonial production of the *mellāḥ* (Jewish neighborhood) a “ghetto” where Maghribi Jews need to be saved from “despotic Islamic societies.”¹⁷ As colonial photographers produced a series of postcards that came to represent a set of clichés about

15. For more information on Sissi Morocco, see <https://sissimorocco.com/en/>.

16. Sana' Makhoul, “Unveiling North African Women, Revisited: An Arab feminist Critique of Orientalist Mentality in Visual Art and Ethnography,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 9, 4 (1997): 39-48. See also, Assia Djebar, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1992); Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 186-1950* (London: Quartet Books, 1988); Lynne Thornton, *The Orientalists: painter-Travelers, 1828-1908* (Paris: ACR Edition, 1983).

17. Daniel Schroeter, “Orientalism and the Jews of the Mediterranean,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 4, 2 (1994): 183-96.

Jews and Jewish women in particular. Influenced by colonial discourse of ghettoized North African Jews, the cameras of Marcelin Flandrin and Lévy Frères constructed Jewish/Hebraic types and specimens expanding the Orientalist European idea of Jewish captives of *mellāh-s* throughout Morocco.



Fig. 2: Image on the left: Postcard of Jewish women, Talaint. Image on the right: Postcard of an Old Moorish Jew, (Credit Paul Dahan).

“Captives” and/or Mobiles

A monumental colonial enterprise of travel exploration and scientific reconnaissance involving travel accounts, ethnological studies, sociological reports, cartography,¹⁸ mapping, tribal histories and statistical data preceded the French military conquest of Morocco.¹⁹ Even European painters played a key role in the generation of a pre-colonial narrative and image of exotic yet untamed Morocco, therefore justifying France self-declared *mission civilisatrice*.²⁰ Eugène Delacroix (1799-1863) provided one of the first orientalist images of Morocco through paintings depicting mainly members

18. Donald Vernon McKay, “Colonialism and the French Geographical Movement 1871-1881,” *Geographic Review* 33, 2 (1943): 214-32;

19. Edmund Burke III, “The Creation of the Moroccan Colonial Archive, 1880-1930,” *History and Anthropology* 18, 1 (2007): 1-9.

20. Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

of the Jewish communities of Tangiers, Meknès and Mogador. Eugène Delacroix, Benjamin Constant (1845-1902), Alfred Dehodencq (1822-1882) and other European painters were able to bypass the social restrictions against photography in Moroccan society by using Jewish models mostly from local elite families. For instance, Delacroix was able to get the permission of members of Jewish families that hosted him such as Benchimol to pose as models for his paintings.²¹ Delacroix's picturesque works of art about the Jewish communities of Tangiers did not correspond to the descriptions of European travelers of Jewish neighborhoods, known as *mellāḥ*, in Morocco's urban centers and rural villages. He acknowledged that his paintings did not reflect issues of slavery and "human rights abuse."²² Nevertheless, paintings such as "*La noce juive au Maroc*" and "*Les musiciens juifs de Mogador*" reflected what Delacroix witnessed as a guest of Jewish communities in Morocco.

The colonial postcard is framed through a preconceived colonial view of Moroccan Jews, and reflects a colonial memory and representation of Moroccan Jewish society. Like the travel narrative, the postcard reproduces the systematic colonial categories of race, identity and religion. At the same time, the postcard captures the exotic other. This colonial gaze of French photographers is not only intrusive but it also legitimizes itself not as a "colonizing camera"²³ that "produced stereotypical illustrations of 'tribe' and 'race' (...) gratified colonial desire with soft pornographic postcards of named African women,"²⁴ but as humanistic project to show to the naked eye how Jews:

"were in a position of semi-serfdom, compelled to huddle together in filthy stys, known as *Mellāḥ-s*, subjected to the most degrading restrictions, liable to be murdered and tortured with impunity, their wives and daughters the legitimate prey of lustful passions of their oppressors – that theirs, in short, was the life of the pariah dog, glad to escape with no worse than curses, kicks, and blows, and thankful if allowed unmolested to pick up such scraps and offal as might be gleaned from the garbage of the Moorish dunghills."²⁵

21. Timothy Wilson-Smith, *Delacroix: a Life* (London: Constable, 1992).

22. Maurice Amara, *Le Maroc de Delacroix* (Paris: Les Éditions de Jaguar, 1987), 162.

23. Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Sylvester and Patricia Hayes, eds. *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998).

24. Terence Ranger, "Review: Colonialism, Consciousness and the Camera," *Past and Present Society* 171 (2001): 203.

25. Thomson, *Travels in the Atlas and Southern Morocco*, 414.

As Susan Slyomovics discusses in her work on Algerian postcards especially in the context of “caption” of *Scènes et Types* postcards, I would argue that description of Jewish life in French and European narratives (like the one quoted above) serve as complementary captions for colonial readers. “Captions,” Slyomovics argues, “provide a specific kind of legitimacy and authority to an image that itself stands in for generalities and operates synecdochically (...). Consequently, both caption and image work together to reinforce interpretive extremes – at one end of a spectrum concerned with the visual expression of generalities, which is what we view in *Scènes et Types* postcards, and alternatively, a focus on physical details and physiognomic typologies to the detriment of the human content of an image.”²⁶

Before the introduction of photography to Morocco, European travelers made claims of risking death to take a picture of natives (*indigènes*), as they ventured into the interior of Morocco. Early European travel narratives rarely included drawings or photographs of individuals or sceneries. A few travelers however broke the taboos and almost lost their lives for it. Joseph Thomson a member of the Royal Geographical Society rarely respected the privacy of people he encountered even though he was aware of the restrictions against images in the *Cherifian* Empire of Morocco. During his visit to Marrakesh in [date], he described in detail one of his encounters with local population he secretly tried to photograph:

“It was different in the streets and market-places. There we got photos with the utmost difficulty. No matter how empty either might be, a minute after our arrival at a selected spot crowds were swarming round us, more or less troublesome and obstructive. On more than one occasion these crowds became threatening, and we had to fly precipitately to escape being mobbed, or at least having our instruments ruined. At these times we missed the services of the Kaid’s soldiers, for without them we dared not drive back the reviling crowds, who would have promptly resented any attempt of ours to lay infidel hands upon their sacred persons.”²⁷

The postcard is the material historical document of the colonial ethnographic presence that Roland Barthes calls “having-been-there.”²⁸ The colonial postcard could be viewed as the “certificate” of a Jewish reality in

26. Susan Slyomovics, “Visual ethnography, stereotypes and photographing Algeria,” in *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, ed. Ricard Netton (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 131.

27. Thomson, *Travels in the Atlas and Southern Morocco*, 356-7.

28. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, 1981).

pre-colonial Morocco. The postcard records not only time but also social experience. For Barthes, the postcard gives credibility to the textual narrative voice and therefore, unlike paintings and discourse, “in photography [we] can never deny that the thing has been there, there is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past.”²⁹ According to European travelogues, Moorish and Jewish life in the *medina* and *mellāh* epitomized all the social, legal and political restrictions that the Muslim society imposed on Jews as *dhimmi*s. The postcard perpetuated this narrative by framing Jews as prisoners of the *mellāh*, merchants of inside the markets and barely showing any Muslims with them. For instance, in his 1831 travel narrative, Capell De Brooke noted:

“The Jews of Tetouan, live as they do in most of the other towns of Morocco, separate from the Moors, the Jewish town being divided from the Moorish by gates which are closed at a certain hour at night, and all communication between one and the other prevented.”³⁰

The postcards of Jewish quarters constantly promoted this central idea that we encounter throughout European travel narratives. Therefore, the postcard arrived to Morocco to “serve” the French Empire as a means of propaganda. As visual propaganda, the postcard constituted what Mackenzie dubbed the “self-generating ethos reinforcement, a constant repetition of the central ideas and concerns of the age.”³¹

According to Burke, French colonial ethnological writing focused mostly on what it described as “the intolerance and fanaticism of Islam” and therefore ignored the nuances of social categories and cultural connections. Equally important, Daniel Schroeter notes that the newly emancipated European Jews played a major role in the “orientalization” of North African Jews during late 19th and early 20th centuries and portrayed them as inferior and not only in relation to Europe but also to Western Jews themselves. This colonial fixation on captivity inside the *mellāh* was discussed in legal terms. At the start of the colonial project in Morocco, French administrators promised the Jewish minority that they would introduce and implement drastic legal and social changes to the *dhimmi* status; this promise culminated in the legal shift of Jewish status from *dhimmi* to “*indigène de droit commun*.” This judicial transformation of Jewish status began in 1913 following the legalization of

29. *Ibid.*, 76.

30. Arthur Capell De Brooke, *Sketches in Spain and Morocco*. Vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 246.

31. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 3.

the freedom of worship through the *dahir* of July 4. The law gave Jews the freedom to worship freely, teach their children in synagogues in accordance with their religious beliefs and manage their religious endowments. The *dahirs* also regulated Jews' freedom of movement outside the "ghetto of the *mellāh*" and their rights to obtain passports. The *dahirs* of 1914 and 1917 added more "rights" which included the freedom to build places of worship, associations, and to establish newspapers. These legal changes postulated that Moroccan Jews, rural and urban, had been "enslaved" by the Cherifian Islamic law and its practitioners.

In the postcard, the strategy of depicting the place of Jews in Moroccan society follows this logic of captivity and enslavement by focusing on framed poses with little context. Colonial travelers and photographers framed the *mellāh* as a closed Jewish space. Instead of looking at internal dynamics and spatial encounters between diverse groups, French colonial administrators focused on mythical binary polarities. Many studies interrogated the colonial paradigms of ethnic identities and relations in North Africa. Emily Gottreich argues that the *mellāh* was a space of encounters between Jews and Muslims within the Islamic city of Marrakesh.³² Gottreich states:

"The *mellāh* was anything but isolated. Its porousness lay at the heart of intercommunal relations. On a daily basis (with the exception of the Jewish Sabbath), Jews exited the *mellāh* through its main gate to pursue a wide variety of activities in the medina or Kasbah. On their way, they passed Muslims entering the *mellāh* for many of the same reasons, and also for reasons particular to Jewish space. Activities having little to do with Islam as a religion and even in direct contradiction to its teachings – drinking alcohol, gambling, smoking, engaging prostitutes, encountering Europeans – were not merely a function of reputation but the result of the *mellāh* having the potential structurally to harbor activities proscribed by Islamic law while remaining very much an integral, organic part of the city as a whole."³³

Following this same logic of Jewish mobility in the urban center of Marrakesh, Jewish communities maintained a social presence among Muslim communities through a process of intraregional mobility throughout their

32. Emily Gottreich, "Rethinking the "Islamic City" from the Perspective of Jewish Space," *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (1): (2004): 118-46.

33. *Ibid.* 139.

history in southern Morocco.³⁴ This process of historical mobility between the regions of Draa, Ziz, Tafilalt, and Dades allowed Jewish families in different hamlets to relocate in times of risk. Accordingly, mobility became an adaptive strategy to manage political, economic and environmental risk in an arid region usually affected by drought, epidemics and tribal feuds. This created social resilience across the region among Jewish communities forcing them to support displaced Jews and cohabit by sharing limited space and resources.

As the social and familial networks expanded, the economic opportunities for rural Jews and peddlers grew over time. This allowed many Jewish families to settle in new Arab and Berber villages either as one family, two or a group of families. The larger the economic opportunities the bigger the community became. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the population within *mellāḥ-s* throughout the southern region increased as reported by many European travelers. Jewish peddlers and artisans strengthened these social connections, benefiting from the welcome of the local Muslim population, which was in dire need for workers in these occupations.

Colonial and Native Photographers: Two Narratives

Born in Bône, French Algeria, Marcelin Flandrin relocated to Casablanca at the beginning of the Protectorate where he created his own studios and launched Mars Édition. He became known for his close association with Resident General General Lyautey Lyautey, the colonial authorities. He also became the official photographer of the sultan. As a photographer of Casablanca,³⁵ Flandrin was also part of a generation of photographers such as Neurdein Frères and Lévy Frères whose brand focused on “exotic and ageless scenes” of Morocco and the Maghrib. At the same time Flandrin invested his resources and energy in creating a brand of photography with strong commercial ties to the colonial tourism industry including sex tourism. For example, Flandrin produced the largest collections of postcards about Bousbir and advertised them to customers in Arabic, French, English.³⁶

34. Aomar Boum, “Réseaux de survie des communautés juives du sud,” in *Histoire et sociétés du Maroc saharien. Communautés juives au sud de l’Anti-Atlas* (Casablanca: La Croisée des Chemins, 2015), 171-92.

35. Marcelin Flandrin and Joseph Goulven, *Casablanca: de 1889 à nos jours: Album de Photographies rétrospectives et modernes montrant le développement de la ville* (Casablanca: Éditions Mars, 1928); also see, Marcelin Flandrin and Joseph Goulven, *Casablanca Retro* (Casablanca: Éditions Serar, 1988).

36. Jean-François Staszak, “Colonial Tourism and Prostitution: The Visit to Bousbir in Casablanca (1924-1955),” *Via. Tourisme Review* 8 (2015): <https://journals.openedition.org/viatourism/424>.



Fig. 3: Marcelin Flandrin in 1930, (Author's collection).

On 28 May 1918, Resident General General Lyautey ordered his administrators to start the development of a tourism industry. Lyautey capitalized on French tourist organizations and used the service of Edith Wharton to market a Morocco as a new destination for French tourists.³⁷ He saw the importance of literary magazines as a venue for advertisement. The French colonial poster became central to this mission of marketing an exotic traditional and modern Morocco. Shipping company posters dominated the field of advertisement. Nicolas Paquet was a pioneer in colonial Moroccan tourism. As early as 1861, Paquet chartered the “Languedoc,” a small steamer, to connect Marseille to Safi and Mogador (Essaouira). After numerous successful exploration he bought Languedoc and maintained regular sailings along the Moroccan Atlantic. In 1863, Paquet and his Moroccan partners, David Corcos, Mesoud Lasry, Abdelkader El Attar, Mokhtar Ben Azouz, Mohamed Tafehaz and Yves Bergel, bought anew vessel christened “Le Maroc.” These vessels allowed commercial business between Marseille and Morocco exporting and importing soap, sugar, wool, olive oil and tea. By the early 1900, *Companie Paquet* expanded its fleet which includes many vessels such “Cadiz,” “Saouerah,” and “Vérité.” The

37. F. Robert Hunter, “Manufacturing Exotica: Edith Wharton and Tourism in French Colonial Morocco, 1917-20,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, 1 (2010): 59-77.

Paquet poster became central to the commercial mission of the company as well as the development of tourism in Morocco after 1918.



Fig. 4: Two Paquet Posters highlighting tradition and modernity, (Author's collection).

Since the early stages of the French colonial project in North Africa, military administrators recruited generations of photographers turning their cameras into visual tools to capture different aspects of the colony and its population. The colonial photographic invention of Morocco and other African colonies was primarily done through a combination of orientalist paintings, photographs, travel narratives, and later postcards. In addition to colonial travelogues and travel narratives, photography was used to document and define spaces, races and ethnic groups into “types” and “scenes.”³⁸ “*Type Indigène*” and “*Maroc Typique*” became two brands of commercial postcards that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century; they depicted mostly exotic poses of Jews, slaves, and Berbers throughout French colonial North Africa.³⁹ *In Morocco*, Edith Wharton highlighted some of these issues. In her attempt

38. Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*; Prochaska, “The Archive of Algérie Imaginaire.”

39. I would like to note that many of these historical photographs and postcards are also housed in the headquarter of the *Fondation Banque Populaire pour l'éducation et la Culture* as part of different collections. I would like to thank Paul Dahan and the Centre de la Culture Judéo-Marocaine (CCJM) in Brussels, Belgium for giving me access to his museum's collections of colonial postcards and photographs. For these collections see, <https://www.judaisme-marocain.org/phototheque>.

to write a guide-book on Morocco recommended by General Lyautey, she notes that her Moroccan journey “corroborates the close observation of the early travelers, whether painters or narrators.”⁴⁰ Wharton maintained in the opening passages of her narrative that she had consulted works on Morocco by Pierre Loti and others. She writes:

“Authoritative utterances on Morocco are not wanting for those who can read them in French; but they are to be found mainly in large and often inaccessible books, like M. Doutté’s “*En Tribu*,” the Marquis de Segonzac’s remarkable *Explorations in the Atlas*, or Foucauld’s [Charles de Foucauld] classic (but unobtainable) “*Reconnaissance au Maroc*”; and few, if any, have been translated into English.”⁴¹

It is worth noting how Wharton laments the unavailability in English of *Reconnaissance au Maroc*. She underscores here the importance of this narrative in the colonial project. In addition to its rich historical and ethnographic and description of the region and its tribes, Charles de Foucauld did not include as many photographs or pictures as de Segonzac and other European travelers in their works. Instead de Foucauld opted for the use of personal sketches of rivers, valleys, hills and plateaus while providing thick and detailed descriptive narratives about communities he encountered during his trip. Unlike many travelers who used the camera as central part of their data collection, Charles de Foucauld’s kit included a barometer, sextant, paper, and map. Given the risk of carrying a camera, Charles de Foucauld relied on other means of visual reporting in his travel narrative such as “sketching, drawing (...), which were still acknowledged for their scientific reliability.”⁴² De Foucauld used only four photogravures and over one hundred sketches from his original notebook. There were no drawings or photographs of people. The sketches were intended to provide a clear idea of the geographic landscapes that he travelled.

The absence of photographs in this classic travelogue published by the Geographic Society of Paris highlights the danger associated with the camera in those days. In fact, most of the photographs taken in Morocco by Europeans were done clandestinely and covertly. European travelers have discussed and highlighted the challenges they faced in taking photos and pictures. Many managed to steal snapshots of private individuals in the streets, homes, markets and even secured palaces. Others underlined the challenged they encountered.

40. Edith Wharton, *In Morocco* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1920), 78.

41. *Ibid.*, x.

42. Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth Century British Travel Accounts* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 37.

For example, in *The Barbarians of Morocco*, Graf Adalbert Sternberg describes the challenges of photographing individuals he encountered during his trip to Morocco before 1912. In his account, Sternberg provides some of the few vignettes in European travel narratives about Moroccan popular attitudes toward photography. He notes:

“Our constant guide, Hedj, during the morning had been instructed by Mr. Fox-Pitt how to take a photograph, and now, somewhat apart from us, he sat on his horse, the camera in the saddle. The Arabs had not the least suspicion of his intentions, and did not seem to perceive the camera, and he photographed the whole scene just as the Sultan entered the Msalla.”⁴³

In another section of his narrative, Sternberg adds:

“Our dragoman had been four years in the palace, and still had relatives there; so we sent him to take photographs of the interior, but unfortunately they all turned out badly. He gave us, however, a very detailed description of the interior.”⁴⁴

During his visit to Marrakesh, Joseph Thomson, a member of the Royal Geographical Society (London), described in detail one of his encounters with the local population he secretly sought to photograph:

“In one corner we saw a private doorway with its surrounding decoration of tiles. Our attempts to photograph some of these gateways and doors gave rise to various amusing and exciting incidents. It was of no use to ask permission. That would only have resulted in a blank refusal and steps being taken to stop us. Our only plan was to make up our mind beforehand what we should photograph, and then take the palace servants and guards by surprise. The courts being open to the public and used as thoroughfares, we trotted quickly up to the place chosen, dismounted, and proceeded with all possible dispatch to focus the camera and take the negative. It seemed always to take some time before the guards and others clearly understood what was about to happen. The moment they did so, they rushed to stop us, shouting and waving their hands in the fashion of people who try to frighten back animals venturing into tabooed enclosures. Of course we paid no heed to such demonstrations, and usually completed our work before the excited people reached us, when, our object achieved, we were able to receive them smilingly as we leisurely put up our apparatus.”⁴⁵

43. Graf Adalbert Sternberg, *The Barbarians of Morocco* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1909), 62.

44. *Ibid.*, 125.

45. Joseph Thomson, *Travels in the Atlas and Southern Morocco: A Narrative of Exploration* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), 356-7.

As an invasion of the privacy of Indigenous population, the colonial postcard is at its core a historical document produced through “unethical means.” It was usually taken without local communities’ or individuals’ permission or through coercion and many times staging. The European photographer had in mind the commercial dimension of the pose, and the postcard’s framing was based on the desires of his metropolitan audience. Therefore, the colonial gaze of European photographers reproduced generic images of natives: the Muslims and Jews that Europeans described in travelogues were re-inscribed and re-circulated in the colonial postcard and the orientalist poster.⁴⁶

In addition to the early generation of colonial photographers, Jean Besancenot represented a different generation of colonial photography. Besancenot arrived to Morocco in 1934 after the French military “pacification” of the south. James Bynon prefaces *Costumes of Morocco* describing Besancenot’s visual work as salvage “visual” ethnography:

“When, in 1934, the last dissident tribesmen on the fringes of the Sahara were finally brought under the control of the [French army] few could have foreseen the speed with which a society, which scarcely a generation before was still almost isolated in its traditional way of life, was to be precipitated headlong into a world dominated by the values of twentieth century western technology...

Of course many of the ancient institutions which were to be swept away in this process were long outmoded and in genuine need of replacement. The passing of these was inevitable. But there was also much very real value in the “old Morocco” whose disappearance is to be regretted, facets of traditional life which charmed by their simple beauty, by their dignity and by their humanity, but which were unable to withstand the onslaught of imported cultural values. It should not of course be supposed that the demise of Morocco’s traditional culture was the result of any deliberate plot on the part of authority, it was rather the simple victim of circumstances...

But happily not entirely unnoticed, for there were some who witnessed these final stages of a disappearing world and who realized the value of what they saw. One such person was Jean Besancenot. Arriving in Morocco at a moment when, for the first time in its turbulent history every corner of this still imperfectly known country was fully accessible

46. Abderrahman Slaoui, *The Orientalist Poster: A Century of Advertising* (Casablanca: Malika Editions, 2010).

to the traveler, he set about recording in a series of dazzling beautiful yet thoroughly accurate images one of the more vulnerable aspects of the Moroccan traditional culture. In the costumes which he has so faithfully recorded, as in the faces of their wearers, we are made acutely aware of that blending."⁴⁷

Besancenot was largely known for his collection of Jewish photographs of southern Morocco. While he has managed to produce one of the most important visual ethnographic collections on southern Moroccan Jews, he is guilty of “ethical malpractices” of early colonial photographers. French photographer Hannah Assouline discovered in 1985 that her father was one of his photographic subjects. Despite her father’s discomfort at being photographed barefoot, she builds a personal relationship with Besancenot who struggled at the end of his life. Assouline describes Besancenot photos as “sensitive,” noting that he maintained close relationships with the subjects as “he came often to Morocco to see the people. It was not a one – time shoot – he came day after day to talk with everyone and then he took the pictures. The exhibition is set between 1934 and 1937, but he always came back to Morocco.”⁴⁸



Fig. 5: Jewish merchant in Ksar Souk (Errachidia, southeastern Morocco), Joseph Bouhsira, (Credit Paul Dahan).

47. Jean Besancenot, *Costumes du Maroc* (Casablanca: La Croisée des Chemins, 2000), preface.

48. Rawaa Talass, “Paris exhibition sheds light on the now-departed Jews of Morocco,” *Arab News*, September 25, (2020): Available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1739841/lifestyle>.

As photography became socially accepted and its restrictions relaxed, more studios opened their doors in the interior of the country. Jews emerged not only as the early subjects of the photograph but later some of the local engineers and developers of the industry.⁴⁹ In Fez, Joseph Bouhsira opened his first studio in 1918 after learning the trade of taking and printing photographs. After introducing members of his families to the industry he launched one of the most important photographic projects in on the Jewish community of Fez becoming the photographer of the *mellāḥ*. As the French military continued its conquest of the interior, Bouhsira followed the French soldiers to southern Morocco providing a visual record of their campaign. In 1928, he opened a studio in his home region Ksar Souk, not far from Erfoud, the native home of the Bouhsira Jewish saint. Between his studios in Fez, Ksar Souk and Ouezzane, Bouhsira targeted largely a Jewish and European clientele. In September 1943, Joseph Bouhsira died after he created one of the largest and most successful Moroccan Jewish family photography businesses during the colonial and postcolonial period. Goldsworthy captures the impact of Bouhsira's photography noting that:

“Boushira's images reflect different aspects of Jewish society in Morocco and are a testament to the diversity of the Jewish community there. In addition to his postcard productions, Bouhsira's studio captured events in the local Jewish community, such as fetes and ceremonies, portraits of rabbis, as well as visits by French officials. Unlike earlier photographs of the Jewish population, which relied upon models, costumes, and backdrops to create an “authentic” look, Bouhsira utilized people in their natural states as subjects in his images. Whereas the photographers in Tangiers staged primarily women of a certain socio-economic background as their models, this was not the case in Bouhsira's work. By photographing workers, students, rabbis, and people on the street, Bouhsira managed to demonstrate portions of Jewish society that had previously been glossed over in favor of a monolithic portrayal of the Moroccan Jewish community.”⁵⁰

Guedj highlights the importance of Bouhsira's photography in its ability to capture the diverse ethnographic dimensions of Moroccan Jewish society. By moving away from the model and backdrop photography of Flandrin, Lévy, Maillet and Grebert, Bouhsira documented Jewish life inside and outside the *mellāḥ* photographing streets, homes, synagogues, rabbis and Jewish

49. Goldsworthy, *Colonial Negatives*, 156.

50. *Ibid.*, 166.

rituals and social activities.⁵¹ By the end of the 1920s, and the emergence of indigenous Moroccan Jewish newspapers in French and Judeo-Arabic, Bouhsira's photos began to feature in these publications and especially *L'Avenir Illustré*. The latter provided a platform for Bouhsira to publish his photos usually accompanied by news and articles the Jewish community social, religious, and economic affairs.

Like Bouhsira, Harrus emerged as another indigenous Jew to capture Jewish life outside of the colonial oriental studio. However, unlike Bouhsira, Harrus became largely known as the photographer of southern Moroccan Jewish communities. His photographs are historical and ethnographic visual documents of what and how Jewish Morocco looked in the 1940s-1950s. As a prominent figure in the Alliance Israélite networks in Morocco, Elias Harrus (1919-2008) was born on September 19, 1919 in Beni Mellal, a major Jewish settlement located in the Middle Atlas Mountains. He attended the French primary school, which opened in Beni Mellal around 1919 before the AIU opened its own school in his hometown. Harrus pursued his education in Casablanca in the AIU school. This was made possible through a scholarship that paid for his living expenses with a Jewish family. His success in school earned him another scholarship to the *École Normale Israélite Orientale* (ENIO) in Paris where he trained as a teacher. Harrus was also introduced to the techniques of pedagogy. In 1939, Harrus finished his instruction and returned to Beni Mellal for a short visit. The outbreak of World War II forced him to begin his career as a teacher in primary school in Marrakesh. After World War II, Harrus became the director of the AIU's *École Professionnelle Agricole* (Professional Agricultural School). After World War II, the AIU expanded its schools in the rural regions south of Marrakesh. As a representative of the AIU in Marrakesh, Harrus devoted many years of his life to developing a system of schools in the Atlas Mountains and remote southern villages. He emerged as one of the leading figures of expanding the Alliance's educational mission into rural communities in Southern Morocco.

51. David Guedj, "Portraits, the Land of Israel, and the Moroccan Jewish Communities: The Photographic Message in the Moroccan Jewish Newspaper *L'Avenir Illustré*," *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry*, 150-152 (2018): 22-51 (Hebrew).



Fig. 6: Jewish celebration in southern Morocco, (Elias Harrus, Credit Alliance Israelite Universelle Collection).

In 1942, he became the director of the AIU school in Demnat, one of the largest Jewish communities east of Marrakesh. This was also when he began photographing rural villagers, with no intention other than the pleasure of recording a special moment, with no thoughts whatever of documentation, or that this was a way of life that would disappear just around the corner. Rather, due to his own Atlas origins, he photographed Jewish villagers as if they were members of his own family. In his study of the Jewish communities of the south, Pierre Flamand relied not only on the reports of Elias Harrus but also his photographs of these communities.⁵²



Fig. 7: Jew and Muslims in southern Morocco (Elias Harrus, Credit Alliance Israelite, Universelle Collection).

⁵² Pierre Flamand, *Diaspora en terre d'islam: Les communautés israélites du sud marocain* (Rabat: Dar al Aman, (reprint) 2016).

The colonial discussion of Jewish-Muslim relations in southern Morocco ignores on many levels the ambivalence of social contacts. This ambivalence, Bilu and Levy write, “was nurtured by the dialectics of social intimacy; imposed by physical proximity, economic interdependence, and ethno cultural and moral-religious distinctions; sharpened in the context of political inequality.”⁵³ Throughout the *mellāh-s* of southern Morocco, Jewish-Muslim relations entailed an interconnected network cemented by social relations guaranteed by economic and religious principles (see Fig. 6). Many Jewish peddlers travelled across southern villages of the Anti-Atlas. In their tours, they visited Muslims’ houses, bartered with Muslim women, and even observed the Shabbat with Muslim friends. The tribal economy allowed Jews to be part of social tribal closures (see Fig. 7). Villagers throughout southern Morocco wanted Jews to live inside their villages to sustain their economy and farming needs. Overtime this economic bond became personal, developing into lifelong partnerships, sometimes for generations. In many photographs of Elias Harrus, farming is a context where we can see the development of social relations between Jews and Muslims contrary to the silences of European travel narratives and accounts. Throughout the south many Jews were indirectly participating in agricultural activities. Landownership and water rights are one of the one most valuable resource in southern Moroccan oases. Despite their regulations by tribal and inheritance laws, Jews were able to buy lands and water rights from members of the village. Harrus was able to capture these relations not only through his reports to the AIU but also the images he took of Jews interacting with Muslims.

During the Paris Universal Expositions of 1867 and 1889, the orient was exhibited to European viewers as an exotic place and a future tourism destination.⁵⁴ Algerian and other North African Amazigh/Berber and Arab cultures featured among the different oriental themes of the expositions. In the last decades, the photography of Harrus has been the subject of many international exhibitions. These exhibitions highlight the afterlife of Harrus’ photography and its present meanings. Housed mostly in Beit Hatfutsot Photo Archive and the Alliance Israélite Universelle Bibliothèque, Harrus’ photographic collection has been the subject of many exhibitions since the 1990s. In January 1993, with the help of exhibition designers Sarah Levin and

53. Yoram Bilu, and André Levy, “Nostalgia and Ambivalence: The Reconstruction of Jewish-Muslim Relations in Oulad Mansour,” in *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, ed. Harvey E. Goldberg, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 288-311.

54. Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-century World’s Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Roger Benjamin, *Oriental Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

David Gal, Sara Hoshen-Harel curated at the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot one of the first exhibitions about Harrus's photographs titled "In the Heart of the Atlas: Jews of Rural Morocco- Elias Harrus, Photographs 1940-1960." Between June and October 1999, the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley exhibited the photography of Harrus under the title "Roots and Memory: Moroccan Jews (Photographs by Elias Harrus)." During the same year, the Moroccan Ministry of Cultural Affairs sponsored an exhibition titled "Roots and Memory" showcasing the photographs of Harrus what it calls a "Portrait of Moroccan Jews from the Moroccan Atlas ad Sahara." Between April 24 and September 18, 2009, the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam hosted an exhibition titled "Morocco: Photos of Elias Harrus and Pauline Prior." The same exhibition featured at the Jewish Museum in London in March 2011. Harrus's photographs narrate a different a relational story between Jews and Muslims in southern Morocco. It is a different narrative from the colonial postcard that featured Jews and Muslim through a dehumanizing unethical voyeuristic lens.



Fig. 8: Members of Jewish and Muslim southern Moroccan community pose with Elias Harrus crew, (Elias Harrus, Credit Alliance Israelite Universelle Collection).

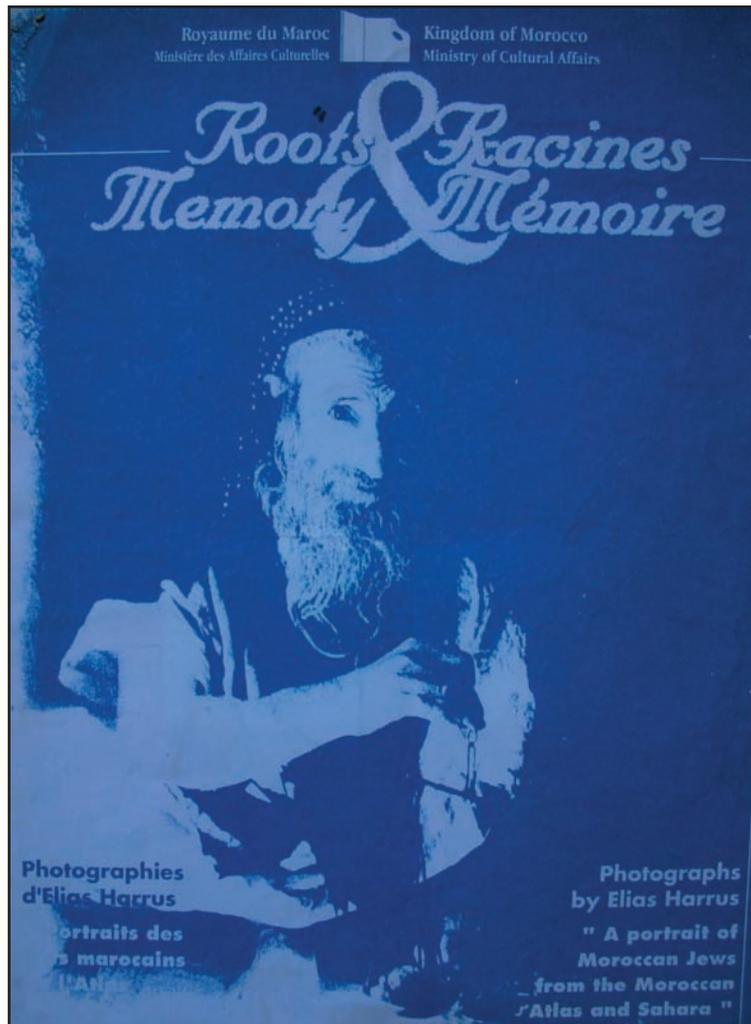


Fig. 9: Flyer of the Moroccan Ministry of Cultural Affairs exhibition titled: “Roots and Memory,” (Author’s collection).

To conclude, unlike the images of colonial postcards, the photography of Elias Harrus and Joseph Bouhsira highlights more social contacts and economic encounters between Jews and Muslims. The photographic framing was not limited to economic encounters as most of the postcards show. The visual work of Harrus demonstrates that Jews had access to the social spaces of Muslims. French colonial studies have focused on the solidaristic closure of Jews and their presumed ghettoization. The works of Harrus and Bouhsira defy and challenge colonial images because they open the possibility for expanding the frame of the photograph in comparison to the colonial cropping of the social and spatial background.

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يهود البوادي المغاربة والبطاقة البريدية الاستعمارية: نظرة تصحيحية

ملخص: بحلول أواخر القرن التاسع عشر، طغت آلات التصوير على اللوحة الاستشرافية من حيث الإنتاج الإثنوغرافي البصري لبلدان شمال إفريقيا ومجتمعاتها الأصلية. وهكذا ظهرت الصورة الاستعمارية ومعها الملصقات والبطاقة البريدية كأنماط مركزية للمتمثلات الاستعمارية وتصوير "الأصناف" العرقية في بلدان شمال إفريقيا. وفي هذا الصدد، انكب المصورون الفرنسيون "الإثنولوجيون" الاستعماريون، دون الحصول على إذن يرخص لهم القيام بذلك، في نقل وترويج ما اعتبروه في رأيهم أنه تعبير عن صور "نموذجية" للسكان الأصليين بمن فيهم "الأسود/العبد" و"اليهودي" و"البربري" و"العربي أو الموري". وفي هذا السياق، صُممت فكرة اليهودي المغربي جزئياً من خلال البطاقات البريدية والصور الفوتوغرافية التي التقطها المصورون الفرنسيون بكاميراتهم خلال القرن التاسع عشر وسنوات الجزء الأول من القرن العشرين. وفي وصفها لليهود المغاربة والمجتمعات القروية على وجه الخصوص، تستخدم البطاقة البريدية الاستعمارية الفرنسية على المستوى الجمالي الرجال والنساء اليهود المستقرين بالبوادي المغربية كمقياس متعارض مع صورة اليهودي الأوروبي المستنير "الطبيعي". ومن خلال السماح للكاميرا بعرض صور تمثل يهود البوادي المغربية كأسرى محبوسين في بيئات اجتماعية وسياسية واقتصادية "غير متحضرة"، حاول المصورون الاستعماريون الفرنسيون تقديم صورة لمجتمع مغربي يعيش اليهود فوق أراضيهم وكأنهم في حالة أسر. وقد حاولت في هذه الورقة، إعادة النظر في خصوصيات هذه الإثنوغرافيا البصرية الاستعمارية، وذلك بتقديم قراءة جديدة في مقارنة مع صور اليهود المغاربة المحليين التي التقطتها كاميرات المصورين اليهود المغاربة المحليين أيضاً، وأقصد بها جوزيف بوحصيرة وإلياس حاروس بين عشرينيات وخمسينيات القرن الماضي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بطاقة بريدية، أنواع عرقية، يهود، جنوب المغرب، إلياس حاروس، جوزيف بوحصيرة.

Les Juifs marocains ruraux et la carte postale coloniale: Essai de synthèse

Résumé: À la fin du XIX^e siècle, la caméra éclipsa la peinture orientaliste en termes de production ethnographique visuelle de l'Afrique du Nord et de ses communautés autochtones. La photographie, l'affiche et la carte postale coloniales sont apparues comme des modes centraux de représentation coloniale et de représentation des "types" raciaux d'Afrique du Nord. Les photographes "ethnologiques" français coloniaux ont photographié sans permission ce qu'ils ont conçu comme des images "prototypes" de "l'authentique" indigène "noir/esclave," "juif," "berbère" et "maure." Dans ce contexte, l'idée d'un juif marocain est en partie construite à travers des cartes postales et des photographies de photographes français au XIX^e siècle et dans la première partie du XX^e siècle. Pour décrire les juifs marocains et les communautés rurales en particulier, la carte postale coloniale française utilise esthétiquement les hommes et les femmes juifs ruraux comme une mesure opposée au juif européen éclairé "naturel." En permettant à la caméra d'exposer des juifs ruraux captifs d'environnements sociaux, politiques et économiques "non civilisés," les photographes coloniaux français ont tenté de présenter l'image d'une société marocaine où les juifs étaient captifs. Dans cet article, je revisite ces ethnographies visuelles coloniales en les relisant par rapport aux photographies de juifs autochtones marocains capturées par les caméras de deux photographes juifs marocains natifs Joseph Bouhsira et Elias Harrus entre les années 1920 et 1950.

Mots-clés: Carte postale, types raciaux, Juifs, sud du Maroc, Elias Harrus, Joseph Bouhsira.