

The Changing Landscape of Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Modern Middle East and North Africa

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Mr. Hatchwell, or Si Hatweel as he was also known to the local residents, was one of the few remaining Jews who inhabited the elite casbah quarter in the Moroccan town of Essaouira (or Mogador as it was formerly called by Europeans) in 1981. In thinking about how changing patterns of public space in the nineteenth century Middle East and North Africa (MENA) affected and transformed Muslim-Jewish relations, I am reminded of my conversations with him that year. I recall one day strolling with him in Essaouira, where he proudly showed me the places of importance to him—*lieux de mémoire*—a nail on the wall where the Paquet steamship line of Marseilles once posted their schedules, the former foreign consulates that were located in the casbah quarter, the sign commemorating the visit in 1884 of the intrepid Father Charles de Foucauld, whose account of his travels in Morocco disguised as a native rabbi remain the most celebrated of the pre-colonial period.¹ He bumped into an elderly Muslim similar in age, precipitating a warm embrace and a few dance steps, almost like a reunion between two octogenarians, Muslim and Jew, both respected members of the *Chambre de Commerce*.

Jacob Hatchwell came from a family that moved from Marrakesh to Essaouira in the late nineteenth century, joined the elite Jewish merchants who lived in the casbah, and engaged in an import-export trade with Manchester, London, and Hamburg, the latter after the expansion of German commercial interests on the southern Atlantic coast of Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.² Essaouira was already in decline as an international

1 Not only is Charles de Foucauld an iconic figure in French colonial literature, but stories about him, and his guide Mardocheé Aby Serour, are remembered by Muslims in the south of Morocco where they traveled. See Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 18–28.

2 On German expansion in Morocco, see Pierre Guillen, *L'Allemagne et le Maroc de 1870 à 1905* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967). With the exponential growth of German ships

port of trade when members of the family emigrated from Morocco, opening up stores or import-export firms in various locales: London, Brighton, Alexandria, and Cairo, or set up business in more prosperous locations in Morocco, especially Casablanca and Safi. Several Hatchwells ventured to South America following in the wake of the rubber boom, and settled in Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon. Jacob's brother David was among the few remaining Jews in Iquitos; many left with the declining rubber economy or had intermarried and assimilated into the Amazonian Indian population. The family stayed connected through visits to Essaouira and a correspondence back and forth between three continents in Judeo-Arabic, French, English, and Spanish.³

At the time of my encounter, Mr. Hatchwell was the owner of the rather modest Hotel Beau Rivage, formerly managed by his late wife, above the popular Café de France located in the large Place du Chayla (now named Place Moulay Hassan), which is accessed from the port.⁴ At the time I lived in Essaouira in 1981, Mr. Hatchwell's main occupation seemed to have been acting as the agent for the Pullman coach company, the "deluxe" sleeper coach line of buses that traveled overnight between Agadir and Casablanca, making a stop in Essaouira at about 11 pm. Four places were reserved for Essaouira, and to obtain a ticket one was required to pay a visit to Mr. Hatchwell in his house in the casbah, where he received customers in his "European salon," which boasted an upright piano and a portrait of Queen Victoria hanging on the wall.⁵ On one occasion, I met his elderly sister there, who babbled in the incoherent though fluent English that she had learned at the English girls' school (long since closed) attended by Essaouira's Jewish elite.

calling at the port of Essaouira, the Deutsche Seewar Company of Hamburg was authorized to build and operate a meteorological observatory in the harbor of Essaouira. *Le Guido—le magazine d'Essaouira*, no. 32 (2011), 5–7.

- 3 Archives of the Hatchwell family of Essaouira are found in the library of the Centre de la Culture Judéo-Marocaine (Brussels) (<http://www.judaisme-marocain.org/>); it contains both personal and business correspondence and documents. On Moroccan Jewish emigration to the Amazon, see Susan Gilson Miller, "Kippur on the Amazon: Jewish Emigration from Northern Morocco in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Harvey E. Goldberg (ed.), *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries, History and Culture in the Modern Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 190–209. On Jews of Iquitos, see Ariel Segal, *Jews of the Amazon: Self-Exile in Earthly Paradise* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999).
- 4 See the description in the memoir by David Bensoussan, *Le fils de Mogador* (Montreal: Les Éditions Du Lys, 2002), 77–79.
- 5 See Daniel J. Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58–59.