‘Once Upon a Time Our Home Was in Spain’; Comparing Diaspora Discourses among Morisco Descendants and Sephardim Today

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Abstract

This paper develops a comparative perspective between two contemporary diaspora movements that claim being descendants from Jews and Muslims expelled from the Iberian Peninsula by the end of the Middle Ages. In particular, the research considers a group of Tunisian descendant of Moriscos and another of Israeli Sephardim. Instances of Moroccan Moriscos as well as of Tunisian Sephardim have occasionally been used to widen the picture. The article critically discusses the ways in which these groups look at the past, and how they articulate their diaspora invocations. By doing, so it perceives diaspora discourses as being crucially embedded in the social and political milieus that produces them. In that, the article is an illustrative account of modern perceptions of the ‘other’ within Muslim-Jewish relations today, vis-à-vis mythologized constructions of Spain and more generally of Western Europe. Overall, it attempt to scrutinize Morisco and Sephardim diaspora claims in light to their relationship to Spain, the past and to their religious others.

Keywords

Morisco, Sephardim, Al-Andalus, Diaspora, Spanish citizenship, Muslim-Jewish Relations, Mediterranean Studies.

Introduction

This article is an attempt at assaying an atypical diaspora, or rather two parallel yet divergent diasporic phenomena, both of which relate to the Iberian Peninsula. The first is that of the Sephardim. The term *Sepharad* was used by Sephardic Jews in the Middle Ages to identify the Iberian Peninsula. The Sephardim are the descendants of Jews who left the Peninsula mainly in two episodes of expulsion, the first in the seventh century and the second by the end of the fifteenth century. The Visigoth king

Sisebuth (d. 620) took the initiative, reproduced centuries later by the Catholic Kings (Prados García, 2011), of expelling *"once and for all from their homes the descendants of Judah, from the entirety of the Visigoth Empire"* (Amador de los Rios, 1875, 89). The only way to stay was to convert to Christianity. The final expulsion of the Jews took place in 1492, during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand (d. 1516) and Isabella (d. 1504). On the 31st of March of that year, Ferdinand and Isabella signed the edict ordering the expulsion of the Jews who lived within the domains of their kingdom. This edict stated that Jews had to leave before the end of July 1492 or face the confiscation of their property and the death penalty. The Maghreb, France, Portugal, Italy, and the central and eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire—today's Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans—became their final destinations. Between one hundred thousand (Bel Bravo, 1997: 282) and two hundred thousand (Estrugo , 2002, 14) Jews were exiled. The descendants of these exiles make up the first of the two diasporic groups that this research addresses. In June 2014,[1] the Spanish government passed a law that enabled Sephardic Jews to obtain Spanish citizenship. To understand this population, I interviewed a group of Sephardic Israeli Jews that are considering applying or have already applied to obtain that passport.

The second group that this article considers is often referred to as the 'Moriscos,' descendants of Muslims that lived in the Iberian Peninsula up to the seventeenth century. In many parts of North Africa, the Moriscos are also referred to either by the Arabic term, *Muriskiyun*, or by the French *Maure*; sometimes the more generic word *Andalou* (Andalusian) is used.[2] In 1482, Ferdinand and Isabella ended Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula by launching a war against the Emirate of Granada; this war ended with Granada's surrender in 1492. Muslims in what by then was Castile had formerly numbered approximately half a million, but by 1492 their numbers were reduced to around two hundred thousand. Another hundred thousand is estimated to have died or been enslaved, and two hundred thousand had already emigrated

[1] The official announcement of the Law's approval can be found at http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Embajadas/BELGRADO/es/Noticias/Paginas/Articulos/20140611.aspx (in Spanish), last accessed on the 7th November 2014.

[2] In this article I prioritise the use of the term *Morisco*, the most popular one. I tend not to use the term *Maure* because this word has been used to refer not only to Muslims from Medieval Andalusia and their successors, but also to the Amazigh population of West Africa prior to the seventh century; *Maure* is therefore misleading. The term *Andalusian* and its French version *Andalou* often include anyone that lived in *al-Andalus* as well as their descendants, irrespective of religion. I have used this term, therefore, only when sources or respondents explicitly referred to themselves this way.

(Kamen, 2011, 34). The remainder of Granada's Muslim elite, including former Emir Muhammad XII, found the new conditions unbearable and moved to North Africa. In 1492 the Alhambra Decree forced the remaining Muslims to convert or be expelled when Isabella declared conversion compulsory within the Kingdom of Castile in 1502. The same measures were instilled in the Kingdom of Aragon in 1526. The term 'Morisco' came to designate the descendants of those who opted to convert rather than leave, and today also describes those who left in previous periods. In 1609 and 1610, these converts were also expelled, following a major Morisco revolt in 1568; exiles numbered between 270,000 (Lapeyre, 1959) and 300,000 (Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent, 1993; Kamen, 2011). Their destination was principally the Maghreb and the central and eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire, including today's Turkey and Egypt (Bernabé Pons, 2009). The second group of interviewees considered in this study live in Tunisia and are descendants of the Moriscos.[3]

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The two groups of respondents in this study considered, referred as Sephardim and Moriscos hereafter, can be in historical light considered part of one single diaspora. Even if the two major episodes of expulsion occurred within more than a hundred years of difference they respond to the dynamics of one single historical frame, and cannot be understood one without the other. Besides, when looking at them today, both groups recur to similar foundational myths to imagine both homeland and history. Both consider Andalusian society a milieu of cultural splendour, and tend to attribute such civilizational grandeur to the deeds left by their own ancestors. For the Sephardim interviewed, it was Jews who were responsible for the flourishing of the arts and sciences in medieval Iberia, for the Morisco respondents, it was mainly a Muslim phenomenon. Additionally, 'religious others' have largely been obliterated from both narratives, as if they were not part of the story; Jews rarely mention Muslims or Christians, Muslims, infrequently speak about Jews or Christians. Whereas Diasporas have commonly been viewed as quests for nonexclusive practices of community, politics and cultural difference (Clifford, 1994) the opposite may well be the case. Whereas they may sometimes subvert assimilationist policies by

[3] For an introductory article on the historical detour of those Moriscos that settled in Tunisia, see Villanueva Zubizarreta (2014).

remaining purely infranational (Tölölyan, 1991) in the countries that host them, they can also articulate themselves claims of exclusivity that purportedly take away from the other its historical prominence. In the cases here scrutinised this has to be seen in light of the troubled state of affairs in the relational dynamics between Muslims and Jews in today's world.

This research is part of a larger project comparing Sephardic and Morisco Diaspora claims.[4] If Diasporas are to be defined by their globality, the phenomenon here observed would be a truly diasporic one, a geographical dispersion that did not stop by the seventeenth century, and that today affects peoples living in places as distant as Turkey and Morocco, with others such as the US, Brazil and Argentina.[5] The election of Israel and Tunisia, on the first place as loci relevant for the first stages of this study, is legitimised on a numerical basis, constituting, with the exception of Morocco, the locales where the most sizeable communities of descendants are located. The data collected thus is mainly derived from interviews conducted in these two countries.[6] The article offers a view of the findings obtained in this first round of data gathering and thence, provides an initial insight into some of the most salient features derived from comparatively analysing these two sets of diasporic discourses. Although there is a vast production of historical studies on these Diasporas,[7] their modern developments have been largely overlooked, with the scarce number of studies existing, concentrating more on historiographical aspects than on the perceptions developed by the communities themselves.[8]

The paper analyses Morisco and Sephardic diaspora discourses by using a comparative perspective. First, it looks at a common feature between the two

[4] The project is a collaborative endeavour with Tunis' University of la Manouba, and in particular with Morisco historian Dr Houssem Eddine Chachia. I would like to thank him and Chen Haklai, Tel Aviv University, for their collaboration and feedback on this article.

[5] For an introductory study of the American dimension of the Sephardic diaspora, see Shohat (2013).

[6] The research is mainly based on data obtained in these twenty interviews. These findings have additionally been compared and contrasted with semi-informal talks conducted among Moriscos from Morocco, France and Tunisia and with written materials on paper and digital formats. The research has been conducted in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. Chen Haklai has helped me with the Hebrew translations.

[7] The list of relevant works is endless, but a good first approximation for the Morisco's side is provided by Cardaillac (2009).

[8] For an array of discussions on historiographical issues see for instance the collection edited by Marín (2009). Some of the few works that have been done on modern revisitings of the past by Sephardim or Moriscos can be found in a volume edited by Beckwith (2000). On the traditions of today's descendants in Tunisia see Turki (1979, 1989).

diasporic movements, namely, the vast temporal distance between the experience of displacement and that of being a descendant today. The paper discusses the implications referring to a distant past have for the Sephardic and Morisco diasporic claims. Second, the article assesses the efforts exerted by Moriscos and Sephardim in their tracing back of 'roots'. Third, the degree of geographical dispersal of these communities is also considered in order to better understand the variegated nature of both diasporas. Fourth, the study addresses processes by which diasporic claims marginalise and replace various experiences in favour of others, and it suggests that by doing so, they create new identities in which individuals feel more comfortable with. These reformulations are, at a times, used to articulate precise political claims which are also discussed in this piece. Finally, some of the salient elements (e.g dress, food) that are part of the habitus by which Moriscos and Sephardim see themselves as part of a 'cultural community' are presented; and the paradigm shift by which some voices have turned being a 'given by birth' Morisco/Sephardic identity into a 'choice' are discussed. Overall, I attempt to scrutinise Morisco and Sephardim discourses in light to their relationship to Spain,[9] the past and to their religious others and by doing so, I shed light into political ambivalences, the anxieties and aspirations of these groups as they become part of dislocated worlds.

Once upon a time a displacement

When compared to other contemporary diasporas, one of the singularities of the cases this article discusses is the time spam existing between today and the the displacement. Because the episodes of exile to which both narratives develop diasporic claims are placed on a distant past, of more than four hundred years of antiquity. Therefore, our interviewees' claims are dissimilar to those of others belonging to other diaspora groups such as, North-Africans, Chinese, South-Asians and so forth, are groups whose displacement depended upon the vicissitudes of modern processes of colonial dispossession, and postcolonial dispersal. Diasporas, however are nothing new; the world has been a jumble of long-distanced mobility for

[9] Although the exile also includes people who left their homes in what is today Portugal (either because they originally lived there or because they re-located there after being expelled from the territories of today's Spain and finally expelled from Portugal few years later) it is very interesting to notice that none of the diaspora invocations as elaborated by the respondents here considered had ever referred to Portugal or to Portuguese culture, an obliteration in itself worth analysing that would deserve further academic scrutiny.

many centuries, and the case of the Sephardim and Moriscos attests that. What has changed, nonetheless, is the nature of these movements, since people used to face far more restrictions of movement and communication, pre-modern diasporas, Appadurai writes, imply

> *cultural transactions between social groups […] generally restricted […] by the facts of geography and ecology […] Given the problem of time, distance and limited technologies for the command of resources across vast spaces, cultural dealings between socially and spatially separated groups have, until the past few centuries been bridged at great cost and sustained over time only with great effort* (2011 [1990], 282).

One of the consequences of it, one which stands in contrast with modern equivalent cases, is that over the centuries, these connections from the past that that had been so costly maintained had finally naturally dissolved, because "*the forces of cultural gravity seemed always to pull away from the formation of large-scale ecumenes […] toward smaller scale accretions of intimacy and interest*" (Appadurai, 2011 [1990], 282). Interviewees clearly evidence this disconnect, both in Tunisia and in Israel; none of them have kept regular contact with people in and/or from Spain and their relationship to Iberian culture is insignificant. Among the Sephardim, some have declared having visited the country; Tunisians, possibly due to the lower economic status of our interviewees, did expressed an interest in visiting Spain but none of them did up to the time when the study was conducted in 2014. Visa permits, one Tunisian respondent further argues, are difficult to obtain for North-Africans, an impediment less acute among Israelis. In either case, the connections of these groups with the so-called 'motherland' are either minimal or inexistent, and in this they widely differ from other cases (mainly centred on modern experiences of displacement) that have forged the idea that *"diasporas are predicated on transnational social relations"* (Dahlman, 2004, 486) when this is in here, at least in relation to the original *locus*, not necessarily the case.

What we see is that Moriscos and Sephardim's accounts of displacement are not 'personal' stories of loss and dispossession, but rather remote accounts of a distant past, efforts to gather disparate data and bring it together, narratives with scarce

personal imprint and mostly merely factual data. These are tales without the faces and even the names of those who once may have been starred in them. Respondents name, at most, places of origin and destination, but have provided little or no details of daily life before, during or after the expulsion. Most of these stories actually do not recall exactly when and how their ancestors arrived where they live today they are most often not passed down through generations, on the contrary, most of what descendants know is recounted through the works of historians.

The surnames *furore*

Interviewees connect themselves to these historical narratives of exile and relocation mainly through genealogical connections. It is by surname they know they are descendants of those who were expelled. One of the shared features between the two sets of respondents is this (if yet relatively recent) burgeoning interest in tracing back one's family roots. Sephardic Jews have been helped in this regard by a network of associations that have been working hard to draw back the line of lineages and reconstruct, to the extent to which this is possible, the movement of the Sephardim through the various episodes of their diasporic journey. Others have contacted scholars interested in the field; a male respondent said

> *two lists [of Sephardic surnames] have been published online, I know one of them for a long time, since I did a research on my family's roots more than ten years ago. The list I know is the one made by the researcher Jeffrey S. Malka*[10] *with whom I was in contact whilst doing the research on my family's genealogy.*

Members of some of the Sephardic interviewees have even checked their ancestry through Y-DNA tests, a booming business in Israel, and among Jews apparently,

[10] Jeffrey S. Malka is author of some of the most visited websites on Sephardic genealogy – e.g. http://www.sephardicgen.com/genealogy.htm, last accessed on the 15th November 2014, and of a book on Sephardic genealogy, see Malka (2002).

worldwide.[11] One of the respondents that used recurred to these genetic tests says the exam demonstrated that his *"genetic origin is from the Iberian Peninsula."*

The renewed attention given to the 'list' of Sephardic surnames is associated with the issue of Spanish citizenship acquisition, because one of the requisites for an application being considered is to appear in an official list of names the Spanish government has published. The wide circulation of these lists and of its scam versions, evidences the appeal the call for citizenship has had among Jews and many others, worldwide; large cues of people interested in applying formed earlier this year in Spanish embassies across the globe, from Mexico City to Tel Aviv. Famously, a scam engrossed list has been circulating across the internet that included around 5220 names, with surnames as common as López, Martínez or Sánchez appearing in there that in reality have no Sephardic connection. The confusion was, for example, explained by Mr Ronen Waisser,[12] who through his office in Mexico City, work as an advisor for Mexicans who want to obtain a European citizenship; like him, most of his customers had traditionally been Mexican Jews, but this temporarily changed at the beginning of this year, he jokes, *"what a paradox since this thing [of the Spanish passport] everybody wants to be a Jew!"* The Spanish government had to re-issue an official list of Sephardic surnames, much shorter, after Consulates had been flooded with applications that will never get through.

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Nevertheless, the sample considered in this study suggests, the interest for revealing one's genealogical roots predates these recent events and is not exclusively connected to the issue of the passports, although through the citizenship call, it has experienced a significant revival. The appeal to find out one's 'roots' has had and continues to have a centrality for Jews difficult to match by other groups; it is not only connected to a religious teleology, nor to the implications such perceived finalities had since the rise

[11] I was told so by a group of interviewees; see for example the website of one of the most successful companies providing genetic tests, https://www.familytreedna.com/, last accessed on the 4th November 2014.

[12] Extense information on the case appears in the website of the Jewish community in Mexico, http://www.enlacejudio.com/2014/02/13/nacionalidad-espanola-para-sefardies-cuidado-con-las-listas/, accessed on the 6th November 2014. The US edition of the newspaper *20 minutos* (in Spanish) also echoes the news, see Marín (2014).

of Zionism, and it is pivotal in understanding Jewish ontologies worldwide. Although equally interested on who were those who left Spain and how and when they reached Tunisia, Moriscos seem to have put fewer resources on tracing back their genealogies, and are certainly, as a community more loosely organised in that endeavour, with no established groups helping individuals to trace back its ancestries. Yet the interest is also there. A female interviewee talks about this (even if more informal) burgeoning trend within her town

> *My maternal grandparents are Morisco […] their descent was confirmed with the family tree. In Kelaat El Andaluus[13] there are people who keep documents and are devoted to track ancestries and to figure out the different branches of all the Andalusian families.*

Among Tunisians interest in family trees is not exclusive of *aficionados*, people concerned with knowing more about their Morisco roots have also contacted intellectuals from Tunisia and Spain interested in the subject. A male respondent tells *"I know that my father's family is of Andalusian descent because I have confirmed so with Professor of History Dr Abdul Sattar Amamou."* Similarly, a female interviewee told me

> *[we have been in touch with] Prof. Abdelhakim Slama Gafsi [writer]. He has done extensive work on the history of our family. My brother and I have also consulted several other references, including Spanish authors on the Moors.*

It is through a combination of scholarly exploration, based on archival material and personal items kept at people's homes that most descendants revisit their ancestry and 'make sense' of their families' past.[14]

However, this interest is both, among the Sephardim and the Moriscos, relatively recent – particularly when considering the temporal breath of more than four hundred years of this diasporic experience. The will of tracing back one's roots has only

[13] A town whose name literally means 'the citadel of the Andalusians', is a village in Tunisia founded by Moriscos where the respondent is from.
[14] An example of this kind of research based on archival material and local sources is Gafsi-Slama (2011)

occurred in the last two decades in all the cases here studied. A once trending curiosity, however, it seems to be nowadays loosing appeal. All the interviewees that refer to knowing their genealogical ancestry by the study of surnames, were within an age range between 17 and 54 years old; those younger than forty say it was their parents or grandparents who have been the ones looking for and researching on those connections, only the older generations were themselves interested in this exercise of genealogical inquiry.

Locality and re-diasporisation

The degree of geographical scattering among the exiled also seems to contrast in the Morisco in relation to the Sephardim case. According to Morisco respondents, the degree of dispersal after settling in Tunisia has been minimal. Many still live in areas and towns that are predominantly Morisco (e.g. Testour, Tebourba, Soliman, Raf-Raf, Ras Jebel, Menzel Jamil, Kelaat el-Andalous). Some of these villages, like Testour, are places located in rural areas, away from the more ever-changing communities of the Mediterranean coast. By contrast, Morisco towns in coastal areas, like Kelaat el-Andalous, had been subjected to much more mixing after the establishment of the Morisco community. Populations in rural areas, with a less vibrant economy, have grown little in size since their foundation. On the contrary, they have, particularly since the twentieth century, been losing population due to a younger generation's migration to the coastal areas in search of employment. The lack of new arrivals means that places like Testour are perceived by its inhabitants almost as *Morisco enclaves*, where newcomers rarely settle down, and, according to one interviewee, with large proportions of intra-marriages and little comingling with the rest of Tunisian society. As a result, some respondents living in these places simply 'know' about their Morisco belonging for being inhabitants of these villages. The veracity of these claims, however, would need to be tested with more reliable data on kin groups in the region - since we do not really know the extent of which this is an impression perpetuated that reassures intra-communal bonding whilst resulting in developing a certain sense of distinctiveness in relation to the rest of Tunisian society. What seems clear, nonetheless, is that in places like Testour, virtually everybody claims

Andalusian ancestry – and these emic definitions of identity seem to have had a certain degree of influence in what the rest of the country seems to think about them.

The somehow reduced dispersal of the Tunisian Morisco case strikes in sharp contrast with the case of our Israeli Sephardic respondents. Among Moriscos, mobility is concealed to the migration of younger generations from village to city, or even in areas with more relocations, this occurs mainly within the same country; we cannot, at least in modern times,[15] really speak about successive chapters of re-diasporisation. Tunisians by and large have stayed in the relatively close proximity or in the actual place where their ascendants arrived,

> *I am Andalusian from my mother's side, my mother has always lived in a beautiful authentic Andalusian house built by their Andalusian ancestors. My family lived there generation after generation.*

This contrasts with the high mobility of the Sephardic respondents, *"my mother is from Morocco, my father from Turkey, both families came from Spain"* or

> *My mother was from Madrid and my father from Malaga […] the history of the family is unknown but [after being away from Spain] their ancestors returned to Spain where both of my parents were born [afterwards they moved to Israel]*

or *"my parents came to Israel from Lybia".*

The data obtained in this research illuminates the scope of geographical dispersal of both Morisco and Sephardic communities. In the case of the Sephardim, the sample includes peoples that, a) left Andalusia in the Middle Ages, relocated in Turkey and in Greece and moved to Israel with the creation of the state after 1948; b) others that never left Spain or relocated to Spain after being somewhere else after the expulsion, in that case we do not know the details of when and how this happened, and moved to

[15] For previous historical epochs we know little, but there is evidence of relocation of few cases, such as that of Ahmad ibn Qāsim Al-Hajarī (d. 1640) who is known to have arrived to Tunis after living and working in Morocco (Hillgarth, 2000).

Israel after 1948; and c) a third group is constituted by those who after being expelled in Medieval times from Iberia settled down in North Africa (in the case of the respondents in Libya and Morocco, but we know they were also communities in other parts of North-Africa, including Tunisia)[16] and from there they moved to Israel, also after the creation of the state. This third group constitutes the majority of respondents and among them those who once lived in Morocco are also the most numerous. Just by considering Sephardic respondents one may crucially identify that such variances determine important differences in the diasporic discourses they develop, particularly in relation to Tunisian Moriscos. This is a fundamental difference between the two groups, whereas the story of Tunisian Moriscos is one with a beginning and an end, leaving Iberia, settling in a particular region of North-Africa, in the case of the Israel Sephardim, the reference to the expulsion from Medieval Iberia is just one episode in a concatenated chain of settling and resettling, in what Boyarin once defined, when speaking more generically about the Jewish experience as *"multiple experiences of re-diasporization"* (Boyarin, 1992).

The Homeland

Notions of 'homeland' are also different among the interviewed Moriscos and Sephardim. Whereas Tunisians rarely speak about the Iberian Peninsula as their 'homeland', there are, on the contrary, some among the Israeli interviewees, whose parents migrated to Israel, either from Spain or from Northern Morocco - and thus, in some cases, their families had lived under Spanish colonial rule (1912-1956). These interviewees have referred to Spanish culture and not only Sephardism as part of their background, *"my parents were Spanish, they only spoke Spanish [before coming to Israel], not Ladino"*[17]. It is those with an actual connection with the country that present their interest in acquiring the Spanish citizenship based on their 'Spaniardness.' This appeal to national identity can obviously be real or, by large, imagined. In some of the cases, Israeli respondents who originate in Morocco, had

[16] More information on the relations between Moriscos and Sephardis in Tunisia can be found in Dr. Eddine Chachia's doctoral thesis, particularly on the second half of the 18th century: Houssem Eddine Chachia, *Sephardic and Moriscos: The journey of expulsion and installation in the Maghreb (1492-1756), different stories and itineraries* [Doctoral Thesis], (University of Tunis, 2014), vol. I, 459-460

[17] also called Judeo-Spanish is a Romance language derived from Old Spanish. It was originally spoken in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire and in parts of Europe. Today it is spoken mainly by Sephardic Jews, primarily, but not only, in Israel, Turkey and France.

been keener to emphasize their families' Spanish character, to the expense of a Berber and/or Arab identity. This is an interesting case of how diaspora enunciations are proofs of utopian/dystopian tensions of larger scale, evidencing in this case a mostly renunciation to Arab influences in Sephardic identity. Thence, the past is commonly reassessed, and we see how in this case turns into an imaginary, a constructed landscape of aspirations (Appadurai, 2011 [1990]), in which pre-eminence is intendedly given to particular aspects, in tune with an identity with which the interviewee feels more confortable.

For example, a respondent, whose mother was from the northern Moroccan city of Tétouan (former part of Spain's colonies in North Africa), asserts that her mother did not speak any Arabic (what seems rather unlikely); instead he says *"[she] really spoke only Spanish"* references to the marked influence Arabo-Berber culture has had in the Jewish communities of Northern Morocco is largely obliterated, yet instead he declares *"when I was a child my mother would prepare for me kosher paella [a typical Spanish, not Moroccan, dish]."* The respondent kept speaking about his mother and her ancestors as 'Spanish' and not as 'Moroccan' in an, even if perhaps unconscious, attempt to erase from his own identity elements that could be disquieting for what it means to be a Jewish Israeli today, echoing the somehow complex *emboîtement* of Sephardism into the Zionist project. One shall, therefore, wonder what is at stake socially and politically in today's invocations of diaspora. *"How do diaspora discourses represent experiences of displacement […]? What experiences do they reject, replace, or marginalize?"* (Clifford, 1994, 302).

The account of another respondent, is an even more acute case of the selective revisiting of the past here discussed: his parents being from Fes and Casablanca respectively, none of these cities having never being part of the Spanish Protectorate, yet the Arab-Berber elements of his identity are tuned down in favour of European (here meaning, French and Spanish) ones:

> *My mother speaks French. My father speaks mostly Hebrew and only a little bit of Arabic. Both of them come from Morocco, my mother is from Casablanca and my father is from Fes. Fes was known as a city with a community of Jews expelled from Spain. Both families spoke mostly Spanish*

as it is spoken in Spain. It is because the area they had lived in, in Northern Morocco.

Two appreciations are in this respect to be made: first, although the presence of Spanish speakers in the territories of former Spanish colonies in Northern Morocco is today high, due to the geographical proximity, cultural and economic influences, media broadcasting and colonial past, the actual role of Spanish outside of these territories is demonstrated to have been minimal; more importantly perhaps, Spanish is of no significance outside the areas formerly colonised by Spaniards. In Fes and Casablanca, the number of Spanish speakers is and has always been small.[18]

Whether imagined or not, the accounts I have gathered in this section constitute the only instances in which Spain appears as a reference. For the majority of Moriscos and Sephardim, by contrast, Spain is a far-flung reference, remote and often exotic. Most of them neither know Spain in much detail or speak Spanish. Not part of the initial sample of interviews that considers this paper, there is, nevertheless, a group that shall be pictured out in the accounting of this diaspora, a group for which their relationship with Spain is not one of distance but of close proximity. We are referring to those Moriscos who settled in Northern Morocco after the expulsion and kept continuously being Andalusia's neighbours. Possibly because of that, Moroccan Moriscos tend to be much more vocal in claiming their right to be considered Andalusian. In some cases they believe they shall have the right of acquiring Spanish citizenship, and have cooperated with Spanish political parties in that direction. In October 2006, in fact, the Andalusian Parliament asked the three groups which formed the parliamentary majority to support an amendment that would ease the way for descendants of Moriscos to gain Spanish citizenship. This measure—which could affect as many as five million Moroccans as well as other people in neighbouring countries—is pending approval at the General Court and has not yet been made law. This seems unlikely to occur in the near future.[19] More recently, Dr Antonio Manuel, Professor of Law at the University of Cordoba and member of the *Partido*

[18] There are very few studies on the use of Spanish in Northern Morocco, one of them is Sayahi (2005).
[19] See the event in the news at: n.a. 'Un encuentro internacional sobre "Alianza de Civilizaciones" pide la nacionalidad española para los descendientes de los moriscos,' available online at: www .libertaddigital.com/sociedad/un-encuentro-internacional-sobre-alianza-de-civilizaciones-pidela-nacionalidad-espanola-para-los-descendientes-de-los-moriscos-1276292025/, accessed 26 December 2012.

Andalucista[20] has re-opened the debate by strongly arguing in favour of the acquiring of citizenship by Moriscos' descendants (see, Manuel, 2010).

In some other cases, Moroccan Moriscos go further to suggest that Andalusia shall be an independent nation-state, neither part of Morocco nor of Spain. In fact some of them work together with the separatist section of *Andalucismo,* a group that calls for the independence of the Spain's Southern region of Andalusia, territories of the historical al-Andalus, from the rest of Spain, based on the idea Andalusia is culturally different from the rest of the country, due to its unique (read here, Muslim) past. These cases in which claims of 'return' are articulated need to be understood also within the utopian/dystopian dyad we had mentioned before. As it happened with the Sephardim in Israel, the case here presented have to be understood within the larger often problematic frame of Hispano-Moroccan relations, in all its variegated dimensions, as they occur today. Not all Moroccan Moriscos are as vocal; in other cases, Morisco descendants from Northern Morocco do not seem have a well-defined political view on the matter.

Amongst the most vocal people defending their right of return are those who live in closer proximity to the Border or to the Northern Morocco's coastline. They live in regular contact with the people on the other side. Moroccan author from Tangier and Morisco activist, Niama Moumen, writes

> *I am one of the hundreds of thousands of Moroccan men and women descendants of Morisco families expelled from their Andalusian lands in the sixteenth century […] the expulsion of my ancestors was not the end of our relationship with al-Andalus, but the beginning of long and longing journey to go back to our homes in Córdoba, Hornachos, Granada...*[21]

[20] Not all *Andalucistas* are separatists. In fact separatist ones, are only a small fraction of *Andalucismo* today, an otherwise very popular political trend, with wide political representation both in local governments, as well as at the regional and national parliaments. Its most important formation is the *Partido Andalucista* (PA) although there are also smaller political organisations that identify with Andalusian nationalism. Separatist nationalists have never had parliamentary representation.

[21] Her writings have been made more famous since the Foro Ben Humeya, an organisation o f separatist Andalucistas converts to Islam has echoed her claims in their website, see http://foroabenhumeya.blogcindario.com/2011/12/00330-el-sueno-de-mi-abuelo-andalusi.html, last accessed on the 3rd November 2014. On conversion to Islam and Andalusian nationalism, see my article (Dominguez Diaz, 2013).

The issue of the Spanish citizenship has been a heated issue both among Israeli and Tunisian respondents when conducting interviews. What it is perhaps more interesting is that claims for having the right to acquire the nationality are differently utilised to make sense of larger ideological battles being fought today between Jews and Muslims and about how they see themselves vis-à-vis the so-called 'West'. Tunisian interviewees have in at least half of the cases mentioned the fact that Sephardic Jews have the right to apply for the citizenship, and use this instance to denounce its discriminatory nature, pointing this is a right, by contrast, that has been denied to them. In most cases they think it is positive Jews have access to the Spanish citizenship, and see it as one interviewee put it *"a restoration of historical errors"*. Moroccans tend to be more politically vocal and denounce the difference in treatment by the Spanish government as one more case in its prejudiced dealings with its Southern neighbours. The more organised nature of the community in Morocco, when compared to the Morisco community in Tunisia, may well also contribute to make those claims more public than in the Tunisian case. Muslims in many cases have spoken about Islamophobia, connecting Spain's refusal to grant them a passport to larger international geopolitical issues. Jews on their side, consider that the Spanish government has taken too long to react, and they see the delay as part of a wider European trend of anti-Semitism.

Besides, worth noticing also is that most North-African interviewees assume Jews are being given the citizenship, whereas in reality, the obstacles they have faced to acquire it are multiple, the actual number of passports being granted on this basis is unknown but it seems, for what respondents suggest, is extremely small. However, whether from Tunisia or Morocco, Moriscos know very little about the impediments the Spanish government is putting to actually grant those passports, an attitude of welcoming and acceptance that has been widely publicised but, at least until now, has had extremely limited echo in reality – and curiously enough most Israeli interviewees say that if they would once obtain the passport, they will use it to move to other EU countries, most to the UK, but not to settle in Spain.[22]

[22] A similar phenomenon was observed by Harpaz (2013) who analysed the interest in obtaining a "European Union Passport" among Israeli applicants to citizenship in Central and Eastern European countries, despite holding no plans to "return" to there.

A Diaspora, Being or becoming?

One may speak of diaspora communities as minorities, groups that develop a sense of distinctiveness within the host societies where they live and are identified by that society as such. An Israeli respondent, accordingly, defines it in this way:

> *The Olim Hadashim (a term to define the Jews that migrated to Israel) do not replace their culture, they will tell you they are Zionists and Jews, but each group, Russians, Ethiopians, Turks, whatever, maintain their own traditions and keep being connected to their homeland.*

Indeed, this connection to the 'homeland' more than an actual contact is often manifested in what in Bourdieuan terms is called a 'habitus' - an inferred universe of reproductive practices and dispositions. In the case of the Tunisian and the Israeli respondents, we are referring to the cultural habits that make them *being* Moriscos or Sephardim, respectively, practices that are apprehended and reproduced over generations. Tunisian interviewees from the inner lands, for example, exemplify the Morisco *habitus* by speaking of elderly females wearing a distinctively Morisco attire, the *farashia*, a version of the more widely used North African *safsari* - a kind of white chador-like *manteaux*, worn regularly in the Tunisian and Moroccan countryside. Similarly, Israeli interviewees equally speak about a plethora of dress practices, but few know their exact names and those are mainly worn only for celebratory and liturgical purposes.

Characteristic also of the *habitus* of Diasporas is food. A Sephardic interviewee shares few recipes with the interviewer and speaks about eating at home a dish called *Lahma sofrito* ('Lahm', in Arabic meaning meat, following the word 'sofrito' the Spanish term used to refer to the base sauce used to make a stew). In other cases the Iberian connotation is less clear, the Sephardim have developed particular culinary tastes that merge with those of host national cultures, giving emergence to different Sephardic culinary subcultures (Moroccan couscous, Turkish fasulye, Egyptian fishballs and so on). In Israel, some of these culinary cultures have mixed up creating a more 'unified' Sephardic gastronomic tradition, once again. In Morocco and in

Tunisia, by contrast, some of the 'typically Morisco' dishes have remained closely linked to specific 'Morisco towns'. For example, an interviewee speaks of a recipe of goose called goose *al-manzhia* and of a typical type of sweets known to be characteristic of Kelaat el-Andalous. In Morocco, are seen as Morisco, the almond pastries and the Muscocho, both from Tétouan. As in the case of the Sephardic recipes, most of these recipes have lost their Spanish names, albeit some conserve at least partially a reference to the Spanish nomenclature. The Muscocho is an example of this: commonly referred to as *al-Muscocho Atataouni*: *Atataouni* meaning 'from Tetouan'; the word Muscocho (inexistent in other Arabic dialects) largely resembles the Spanish word for this type of cake (*bizcocho*).

In the case of Moriscos, interviewees speak both of dishes eaten only in specific occasions and by members of the community, and others that have become part of both Tunisian and Moroccan national cuisines. The *Pastilla*, takes its name from a Spanish word meaning 'pill,' used in reference to the rounded shape of this originally 'Andalusian' pastry made of pigeon meat, and popular in all parts of Morocco. The appropriation of what used to be 'Andalusian' into the 'national culture' can be read as evidence of a tension between national identity and minority 'deceptions', one that creates plenty of ambivalences.[23] In Morocco, for example, descendants of Moriscos have often denounced mistreatment by the state. Last February, for example, members of Morocco's Society for Andalusian Memory denounced that the tomb of Boabdil, last king of Granada, in Fes, was in decay and covered in garbage, a forgotten mausoleum next to the walls of the famous Moroccan city, known as having received large sums for the maintenance of its historical sites. Yet Morocco's Andalusian heritage is celebrated by official discourse in not few occasions; for example, a speech given by the Monarch back in 2001, celebrates (together with other elements) the Andalusian character of national identity, *"who helped refine and enrich our identity through openness to different cultures and civilizations and the interaction with them"* [24]. Similarly, the 2011 Constitution acknowledges the Andalusian heritage as part of the richness that determines national identity, *"the*

[23] Saaf (2014) has analysed how Andalusian heritage had become mythologise in comtemporary Moroccan political discourse in an interesting article, *Pour Une Prospection Du Mythe De l'Andalou Dans Le Discours Politique Marocain Actuel.*
[24] Extracted from Boukouss (2013).

Kingdom of Morocco [has] one and indivisible national identity. Its unity [is] further nourished by its African, Andalusian, Jewish and Mediterranean components."[25]

In Tunisia, Morisco is a 'culture' often perceived as having once existed in the cities of the coast with important architectural remains but today alive mostly in the countryside, the prototype of the rural (understand here, culturally backward) is, as a result, often associated to the Morisco as well. Sufi, traditional and the remains of 'a culture from the past' with no place in the reconfigurations of a modern, rapidly changing (whether secularist or Islamist) Tunisia, the label of Andalusian, on the other hand, has become a synonym of sophistication. This is demonstrated, for instance, in the architectural finesse of Andalusian buildings and in the cuisine. Andalusian is thus increasingly becoming synonym of gastronomically 'chic' - particular among liberal sectors of society – and perceived as a proof of the cultural richness and multicultural identity they would like to identify with their county.

A hallmark of this hybridism is public image acquired by the chef Jacob Lellouche, who considers himself Tunisian, Arab-Andalusian and Jew. Defining himself that way is according to a reviewer of Lellouche's restaurant, a political statement, when speaking of the chef's declared *multiculturalité* the writer says *"in these times of tension claiming a hybrid and nomadic identity is an eminently political act"* (Brésillon, 2012). Both chef and writer play with the idea that the restaurant, is a re-enactment of the *convivencia* aspirations, a historicised myth often attributed to the society of *al-Andalus.* The idea of *convivencia* defines Andalusian society as a state of presumed cultural *mélange* characterised by religious tolerance and the flourishing of the arts and sciences, a situation in which the coexistence of Muslims, Jews and Christians implies cultural splendour and mutual respect by virtue of living together in political entities that did not persecute them. Implicitly contrasted to the obscurantism and intolerance associated with subsequent periods of Iberian history, mutual interreligious appreciation would have logically occurred and naturally resulted in a period of artistic and scientific glory.[26] Mamie Lily [Lellouche's restaurant name] is in this manner seen as, *"an institution in a neighbourhood that*

[25] The Constitution is accessible online at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_127076.pdf, last consulted on the 4th November 2014.

[26] On the *Convivencia* myth see also Dominguez Diaz (2013).

once had fourteen synagogues, besides a mosque and a church […] the menu at Mamie Lily is a veritable manifesto of identity enabling and cultural openness" (Brésillon, 2012).

Lellouche represents a contrast with the 'given for granted' Morisco identity of the Tunisian townsmen, one embodied in the reproductive practices of *habitus.* Lellouche's case represents a paradigm shift, one in which the perpetuation of tradition that makes one *being* Andalusian is replaced by the *choice* of *belonging* to this diasporic identity; the shift in paradigm coincides with a moment in which culture becomes commoditized and celebrated in a new light, and thus, those belonging to that culture are not any more Andalusians 'by birth' but *choose* to become Andalusians. In that, one can identify Lellouche's case with a phenomena of commodification of culture by which,

> *"As group's pasts become increasingly parts of […] national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called habitus […] and more an arena for conscious choice, justification and representation[…] the latter often [is addressed] to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences"* (Appadurai, 1990, 292)

This largely coincides with the case here scrutinised, the transnational trajectory of the chef, and him being portrayed as a bastion of cosmopolitanism due to an interreligious engagement derived from the idea of 'nomadism' is portrayed as a determinant of his diasporic character

> *"the circumstances have led me to take a Spanish restaurant in Paris, [he once lived in France], through Spain, I became aware of my Arab-Andalusian identity, since then crossing the Mediterranean has been a permanent coming and going between the two shores."* (in Brésillon, 2012).

Lellouche thus, a citizen of the 'global village', is a telling illustration of the 'spatially dislocated' and 'diasporic by choice', individual that sharply contrasts with the 'highly localised' and 'diasporic by habitus' inhabitant of rural Morisco towns such as Testour.

Concluding Remarks

Diaspora stories are often highly personal narratives of displacement and dispossession. The Sephardic/Morisco case is atypical in that, since exile from Iberia occurred long ago, the more intimate and painful memories have been replaced by historical accounts that people does not see as 'theirs' anymore, they do have the more impersonal imprint resulting by mostly 'academic' data. The remoteness of the past is shared by the accounts of Moriscos and Sephardim. Both diaspora discourses are informative of the state of Muslim-Jewish relations today. Socially and politically, they evince attitudes of either minimal interest in the other, when not otherness' neglect or even negative opinions. In both cases, they also highlight wider dynamics of discrimination and prejudice, as well as their 'victimhood counter-discourses.' These tensions the article shows are too current and well alive. Antisemitism and Islamophobia can be seen here as vehicles people use to channel and make sense of their discontent towards Europe.

The Morisco and Sephardic diasporas differ in the more or less circumscribed character of the place(s) of destination; whereas the Sephardim have witnessed various episodes of re-diasporisation since the Middle Ages, the Moriscos, in most cases, seemed to have left Iberia to settle where they live today, showing a much more limited mobility. Additionally, the paradigm shift between diasporic identities 'based on habitus' and those' based on choice' evidence how the Spehardic/Morisco diaspora with its re-imaginations of the past in also entering the 'Global Village', though processes of identity commodification that masterly illustrate people's anxieties and aspirations.

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