

The Position of the Moroccan Jewish community within the Anglo-Moroccan Diplomatic Relations from 1480 to 1886

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The Kingdom of Morocco has always considered its Jewish community as an integral part of its social, cultural, economic and political fabric. The Moroccan Constitution of 17 June 2011 states in its Preamble the following: "*[The Kingdom of Morocco's] unity is forged by the convergence of its Arab-Islamic, Berber and Saharan-Hassanic components, nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, **Hebraic** and Mediterranean influences.*"

Both at home and abroad, this community has enjoyed the trust, protection and support from the Kingdom's sovereigns. The Jews have in return contributed in the making of a multicultural and religiously diversified Moroccan society. Their craftsmanship, intellectual skills and international trading networks have helped boost the Moroccan economy. Therefore, Moroccan rulers have, throughout history, kept appointing prominent Moroccan Jews to high government positions such as political advisors, ministers, ambassadors, envoys, official trade representatives, or customs-duty and tax collectors.

We choose to review this historical reality and examine it from the specific angle of the Anglo-Moroccan diplomatic relations going 800 years back in time. Such a long history permits us to make a deeper appraisal of the Moroccan Jews' position within these relations. Furthermore, our historical investigations are faced with no dearth of source-material, even when looking for data from as far back as the Sixteenth Century, when a continuous diplomatic relationship began between Morocco and England.⁽¹⁾

We will try to appraise this positioning by analysing a set of events and cases depicting Moroccan Jews during four centuries of Anglo-Moroccan relations, from 1480 to 1886. We will then discuss the involvement of English merchants in the slave-trade of Moroccans, whether they be Muslims or Jews (between 1480 and the 1540s), as well as their reluctance if not resentment when dealing with Moroccan Jews who happened to dominate Moroccan international commerce during the *Saadian* Dynasty's rule (1554-1659). We will present the circumstances surrounding the appointment of five Moroccan Jews to positions of ambassadors and envoys to the Court of Saint James's in London, spanning from 1691 to 1827. We will also analyse the respective cases of two Moroccan Jewish communities residing in Amsterdam and Gibraltar. The one in Amsterdam was instrumental in the legal re-admission of all Jews into the British Isles (in 1656) after having been banned since the Middle-Ages. The Jewish community of Gibraltar was made

persona non grata in 1713. Its members were allowed to return to the Rock following a diplomatic intervention ordered by the Moroccan Sultan. We will present the 1864 intervention of Sir Moses Montefiore, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, in which he advocated equal rights of justice for Moroccan Jews, a diplomatic plea made at the occasion of a formal audience with Sultan Mohammed IV. Lastly, we will present Britain's policies towards Morocco during the Nineteenth Century, especially under the stewardship of Consul General Sir John Drummond Hay (1845-1886). We will discuss how tactical approaches aimed at weakening the Moroccan government's authority such as the abusive granting of British Consular protection to a wider part of the Jewish community as well as to a targeted Muslim elite alienated their centuries-old allegiance to Morocco's sovereigns, thus precipitating the process of the country's loss of its independence in 1912.

As stated above, Moroccan-British diplomatic relations date as far back as 1213. That year, the Moroccan Almohad sovereign Mohammed En-Nassir (reign: 1199-1213) gave an audience to the diplomatic Envoys of King John Lackland (reign:1199-1216), in Marrakech.

By the end of the century, another event, the *Edict of Expulsion*, implemented in 1290 under King Edward I (reign: 1272-1307), prohibited Jews from residing in England and in the Duchy of Normandy, (then both under the rule of the same king). The banned Jews would normally have sought refuge either in less hostile European-Christian lands or in the closest territories of the Muslim world such as Andalusia and Morocco, where interfaith cohabitation flourished. Jews were legally allowed to resettle in the British Isles, (in 1656), after a very long exile of 366 years.

As a result, Englishmen's contacts with Moroccan Jews could only occur outside the British Isles. During the 15th. Century up until the middle of the 16th. Century, these contacts mostly happened in commercial ports located at the borders of the Christian and Muslim worlds (either within Portuguese-occupied Moroccan ports or in Andalusian ones such as Valencia, Cadiz or Seville). English trade within these cities was the natural extension of an already established commercial activity conducted by the English chartered "*Andalusian Company in Spain and the Levant*".(2) Moroccan Jews and Englishmen could otherwise connect at then major European trading cities such as Venice, Genoa or later, Amsterdam.

The Portuguese invasion and long-lasting occupation of several important Moroccan port-cities, starting in 1415 with Sebta (Ceuta) and continuing during the 15th. Century, provided Portugal with a *de facto* monopoly over Morocco's international trade. One of Portugal's most lucrative activities in Morocco was the slave-trade which also became open to English merchants from 1480 and lasted for several decades. A large majority of these merchants specialised in the slave-trade of both Muslims and Jews, a sad reality often occulted by British historians. The consequence of this massive trade was so devastating that it handicapped Morocco's development by causing a deep demographic gap at the beginning of the 16th. Century.(3) Only recent well documented studies have started to relate this historical fact.(4)

As a result of the *Saadian Sharifs'* leadership in the liberation struggle that succeeded by 1541 in freeing the first Moroccan ports from Portuguese occupation, Morocco witnessed

(in 1554) the advent of a new dynasty bearing their name. Its rulers abolished the slave-trade of Moroccans of all faiths, including the one conducted by English merchants. But it was not before 1638 that this abolition got formalised by a Peace and Friendship Treaty, ratified by King Charles I and Sultan Mohammed Esh-Sheikh, stating that "*Neither monarch was to make slaves or captives of the Subjects of the others, and that if any persons were held, they were to be freed without payment of ransom*".

The Moroccan victory over the Portuguese at the Battle of the Three Kings in August 1578, led the new *Saadian* dynasty to reorganise Moroccan ports and prioritise the development of its international trade with Europe. This initiative was also motivated by Morocco's struggle to preserve its status as Africa's trading hub and to shield it from the negative consequences of Portugal's newly mastered oceanic navigation, (passed on to Spain and later to England). In order to implement their new economic vision the *Saadians* appointed Andalusian Muslim and Jewish refugees to positions in high public office because of their modern military skills, know-how of international trade, innovating craftsmanship, and mastering of foreign languages.

The *Saadians* were acutely aware of the fact that the unifying process of their reshaped society, generated by their military, economic, and religious struggle against the domination of Portugal (and later of Spain), would be jeopardised unless they drew from the experience and collaboration of the Andalusian Muslim and Jewish communities. The two refugee communities' integration into the nascent Moroccan state was therefore necessary and became instrumental in achieving political independence. It spurred a redefined sense of Moroccan national identity (definitely cut-off from the Iberian Peninsula). As a result, the *Saadian*-led unifying process of Moroccan society was instrumental in stopping the above mentioned 1578 major Portuguese military invasion of Morocco. It also led to the 1591 successful Moroccan conquest of the West-African Songhai empire, and facilitated the creation of an Atlantic strategic alliance with Elizabethan England against hegemonic Spain, lasting from 1588 to 1603.

Moroccan Jews were granted a *de facto* monopoly of international trade, including the management of commercial seaports and collection of customs-duty and tax levy. As a result, the Jews became indispensable trade officials and intermediaries that all foreign merchants needed to deal with. Furthermore, English merchants and their agents dispatched to Morocco were often required, according to *Saadian* protocol, to lodge within the Jewish quarters (*Mellahs*) of the cities in which they were conducting their trade. These quarters were not comparable to the European ghettos. According to chroniclers, for example the *Mellah* of Marrakech was transformed into "*a showpiece of urban development which the Saadian rulers took pride in showing off to the European visitors*".⁽⁵⁾

English traders were unaccustomed to the multicultural and religiously diversified nature of the Moroccan society where Jews dominated international trade. Since they had become commercially unavoidable, these merchants developed a reluctance in dealing with the Jews, which gradually turned into open resentment at a time (1585) when English trade with Morocco had become the sole monopoly of the City of London's chartered *Barbary Company*. The situation developed into an inevitable clash of monopolies.⁽⁶⁾

Concerning the *Barbary Company*, its business therefore became prone to commercial conflicts and cultural frictions. As a result, trade between Morocco and England became heavily handicapped. The causes of this situation was summarised by historian Gustav Engerer as follows:

"The Barbary Company's factors trading with Morocco under the Saadian Sharifs found themselves transplanted in a country which was a part of the permeable bi-continental space as it had been fashioned by the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb. They had to learn how to adjust to a multicultural society which carried on the tradition of religious co-habitation, confessional pluralism, freedom of worship, and racial tolerance as it had evolved in medieval Spain and in North Africa and had abruptly been cut short in 1492 by the national policy of the Catholic Kings in their attempt to put an end to the intercontinental hybridity and to subject reconsidered Spain to rigid cultural conformity."(7)

Partly as a result of the above mentioned clash, Sultan Moulay Ahmed Al-Mansur came in defence of his Jewish community and in 1597 decided to put an end to the trade monopoly earlier bestowed upon the English *Barbary Company*. It had originally been established for a period of 12 years through a 1585 patent granted by Queen Elizabeth I to the Earl of Leicester and his brother the Earl of Warwick, as well as to forty other partners.(8)

In 1603, the death of the two sovereigns put an end to their strategic alliance as well. Trade-flows between the two nations continued but through more informal channels, marked by corruption and mismanagement. However, trade in defence and military equipment flourished.

The 1585 establishment of the *Barbary Company* only partly explains why Sultan Moulay Ahmed Al Mansur decided, in March 1588, to issue a *Dahir* (Royal Decree) in favour of English merchants in order to facilitate their commercial activities and to diminish competition from Moroccan Jews within the key sugar trade, and then to appoint the first fully-fledged Moroccan Ambassador to the Court of Saint James's, Admiral [Raiss] Marzouk (also known as Ahmed Ben Kacem).(9) In fact it is England's victory over the Spanish Armada, in August 1588, that emboldened Sultan Moulay Ahmed to send Raiss Merzouk to London, three months later, (in November of the same year).

The Sultan made an unprecedented diplomatic move when he forged a strong strategic alliance with the Christian-Anglican Elizabethan England. The aim was to enable both kingdoms to tackle their common enemy, Spain of Philip II, then recognised as the biggest world power. England and Morocco were setting up an Atlantic alliance with Portugal as well, so its heir Dom Antonio could regain his throne in Lisbon from Philip II.

This strategic alliance had a corollary, i.e. the parallel development of an important trading component. Morocco was through this permitted to purchase English heavy weaponry, gunpowder, military hardware and maritime navigation equipment, and England to acquire Moroccan strategic items such as war horses and saltpetre (a component used for preparing gunpowder). The *Barbary Company's* role was considered of a strategic importance since it was at first conceived as the implementation tool of a larger Anglo-Moroccan military and geopolitical strategy jointly directed against Spain.

That is the reason why the *Company* was granted full monopoly of Anglo-Moroccan trade by a Royal patent and with the Sultan's tacit agreement. In its original text, the Queen emphasised the value of Morocco's "*divers Merchandise....for use and defence*" of England.(10)

From the English point of view, the full monopoly of England's trade with Morocco bestowed upon the *Barbary Company* was meant to be a national security measure. It would guarantee a successful implementation of the above mentioned joint military and geopolitical strategy. From a Moroccan point of view, the Sultan's granting of a *de facto*

foreign trade monopoly (including the one with England) to the Moroccan Jews was also a way of guaranteeing a successful joint strategy.

It is worth underlining that Moroccan Sultans also deployed their diplomatic efforts in promoting and protecting the presence abroad of members of their Jewish community, who often served as traders, translators or intermediaries on behalf of the *Makhzen*, (i.e. the Moroccan government administrative apparatus). In the case of the United Kingdom, there was the example of the problematic issue of Moroccan Jews residing and trading in Gibraltar, (a strategic territory controlling the main access to the Mediterranean sea, falling under English domination in 1703). The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht sealed the transfer of Spain's sovereignty over Gibraltar to England. It included an article which was initially introduced at the insistence of Spain, prohibiting Jews from residing and/or trading in Gibraltar even under British rule. This unfair discrimination was opposed by Sultan Moulay Ismail who in 1725 appointed Ambassador Mohammed Benali Abghali to the Court of King George I, entrusting him with the specific mission of demanding just treatment for the Moroccan Jews who used to live and trade in Gibraltar.⁽¹¹⁾ The Ambassador's defence of Moroccan Jews was facilitated by the existence of the Anglo-Moroccan Treaty of Peace and Commerce, signed in Fez on 23 January 1721.⁽¹²⁾

London's "modern" Jewish community was re-admitted to the British Isles thanks to the famous 1656 Petition known as "*The Humble Addresses to the Lord Protector*", presented to Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) (who beheaded King Charles I and took the title of "The First Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland"). The Petition was presented to Cromwell by its author and advocate, Menasseh Ben Israel (1604-1657), Rabbi of the newly established Moroccan Sephardi *Neveh Shalom* congregation of Amsterdam. Manasseh was of Moroccan descent, born in Madeira and brought up under Isaac Uzziel of Fez, then Rabbi of the same Amsterdam congregation, and to whom he succeeded in 1620. Thanks to Menasseh's initiative as well as to the active involvement of his congregation of Moroccan Sephardi Jews, their brothers in faith of all horizons were, for the first time since their 1290 expulsion, permitted to live and worship openly in England.

As a result, the re-admission of all Jews to the British Isles as well as the appointment of Moroccan Jews as ambassadors and envoys to England became diplomatically acceptable to the Court of Saint James's (although still with some problems underlined below), and politically feasible also from a Moroccan point of view. As a result, five Moroccan Jewish ambassadors and envoys were appointed to London by Moroccan Sultans between 1691 and 1827, all made by the same 'Alaouite dynasty. The names of these ambassadors and envoys were: Haim Toledano (1691); Yosef Diaz (circa 1700); Yacob Ben Idder (1772); Massa'ud de la Mar (1781); and Meir Ben Maqnin (1827).⁽¹³⁾

Haim Toledano became the first Moroccan Ambassador of Jewish faith to England, in 1691. He was the son of Joseph Toledano, Moroccan Ambassador to Holland. The content of Haim Toledano's Letter of Credence, issued by Sultan Moulay Ismail (1634-1727) and jointly submitted to King William III and Queen Mary II, is the best proof of the full integration of Jews within the political and economic power apparatus of Morocco. Moulay Ismail was fully aware of the still frail position of the Jewish community in Britain since it had only been re-admitted to the country three decades before Toledano's

appointment. The Sultan even insisted on repeating three times over, in the Letter of Credence of this ambassador, the following sentence: "*have confidence in him*".

This Letter of Credence reads as follows (*full translation*):

" *This Letter of ours (may God elevate him and make mighty his affairs) is in the hands of its bearer the Dhimmi [i.e. a Jew] of our House made lofty by God, Haim Toledano, so that he who becomes aware of it may know that we have appointed him to speak with them concerning such of our and their interests as are permitted by our religion to be dealt with them, so have confidence in him, have confidence in him, have confidence in him. Those aims of ours which he discusses with you we shall carry out for him if God wills, for we have appointed him with full and absolute powers in the matter. Those who become aware of it shall act upon it without fail. Peace.*

To this effect it was written on the 26th of Jumada II in the year 1102 " [27 March 1691].(14)

During his tenure in London, Ambassador Toledano had the chance to witness the early stages of this new Jewish community's re-settlement, such as its first quickly set up synagogue (in a rented house in Creechurch Lane within the City of London), and the establishment of the first Jewish burial-ground (leased in Mile End, Stepney). He was also contemporary to the planning of the construction of London's Bevis Marks synagogue, built at the initiative of the Moroccan Sephardi Jewish congregation of Amsterdam. This grand synagogue, completed in 1701, remains till today the oldest in Europe, with a non-interrupted service since its foundation. Its design was patterned after another great Amsterdam synagogue built by the same congregation, in 1675.

By 1702, Bevis Marks' Rabbi was David Ben Pinchas Nieto (1654-1728), also of Moroccan origin (born in Venice, studied medicine at Padua university). He first practiced as a physician, studied astronomy, and became a *Dayyan* (religious judge). In 1704, he published his landmark theological treatise: "*Della Divina Providencia, o sea Naturalizza Universal, o Natura Naturante*", in London. His Jewish community revolted against this publication as well as its modernising ideas. Nieto was also accused of "Spinozism" but Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi of Amsterdam ruled in his favour. His work was at a later stage highly praised by another Jerusalem-born Rabbi of Moroccan descent, the *Chida* Haim Yosef David Azoulay Ben Isaac Zerachia (1724-1806), who came to his intellectual and theological rescue.(15)

Joseph Diaz, a Moroccan Jew appointed by Sultan Moulay Ismail around 1700 as Ambassador to King William III (1689-1702), was equally designated by the Sultan as Ambassador to Lisbon where he signed the Lisbon Agreement with the King of Portugal on behalf of Morocco. It is noteworthy to underline that this ambassador was later disapproved by Moulay Ismail for alleged misbehaviour during his tenures both in London and Lisbon.

Yacob Ben Idder, a Moroccan Jew based as trader in Gibraltar, was appointed Ambassador of Sultan Mohammed III (1710-1790) to the Court of Saint James's. He reached London in August 1772, and was accommodated in Suffolk Street, off Pall Mall. His Letter of Credence was however refused by King George III (1760-1820) who considered him as one of his own Subjects because of his link to Gibraltar. In fact, Ben Idder had also previously served for some time as British Vice-Consul in Mogador. He

however was assured by the British authorities that he would be granted the same facilities, subsistence allowances and diplomatic immunities normally granted to duly-accredited ambassadors.

Ben Idder was the bearer of a Royal Moroccan letter addressed to King George explaining that, because of his great friendship with Britain, the Sultan had, in 1770, refused to receive a very large sum of money from Spain. This amount of money (200,000 Spanish Dollars) was meant to stop Morocco's trade with England altogether and refrain the country from supplying provisions to Gibraltar. In the letter, the Sultan underlined that the reason for Ben Idder's appointment as ambassador to London was that he had been a witness to the above mentioned offer made by Spain.

One of the missions the Sultan gave to Ben Idder was of military nature. It included the purchase of forty cannons, two thousand cannon-balls, four mortars, and five hundred mortar-bombs to be used by Morocco to liberate Ceuta from Spanish occupation. He was also mandated to acquire an Earth globe, an astrolabe and a telescope.⁽¹⁶⁾

Massa'ud de la Mar was a Moroccan Jew trading in Amsterdam. Appointed in 1782 diplomatic Envoy to London, he delivered a letter from Sultan Mohammed III to King George III concerning Morocco's official decision to expel the British Consul-General, Charles Logie from Tangier. In his letter, the Sultan stated that he *"had expelled Logie because the Consul-General was a cheat, and because he, the Sultan, had had bad reports about him."* ⁽¹⁷⁾

The political explanation of why Logie was expelled is that Morocco made an agreement with England's traditional enemy, Spain, to let this country's fleet have exclusive use of both the ports of Tangier and Larache, during one single year (1781). As a compensation, Spain would return 100 Moroccan captives and pay a given amount of money. Because Consul-General Logie would counter this agreement, he and twenty other British Subjects were forced to leave Tangier for Gibraltar, on 28 December 1780.

Once the one-year deal with Spain had expired, the Sultan instructed his Envoy, de la Mar, to forward a message to King George, inviting him to replace Logie by appointing a new Consul-General.

Meir Ben Maqnin was a Moroccan Jewish merchant operating in Mogador (*Es-Saouira*), a unique city in the Islamic World since up to 40% of its inhabitants were Jews by the will and invitation of Sultan Mohammed III (1756-1780) who in fact planned and entirely built it in 1765. From the 1770s through the 1880s, Es-Saouira was the most active seaport of Morocco and from which nearly all the trade with Britain was conducted ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Meir Ben Maqnin was born in Marrakech probably in the late 1760s. His full Hebrew name was Meir Ben Abraham Cohen. But Meir's father was known as "Maqnin" because of his beautiful voice. The Moroccan Arabic word "Maqnin" means "goldfinch", a bird known in North Africa for its melodious song. This name was passed down to his children as "*Awlad Maqnin*" (the children of Maqnin). After having lived in London for a while, he became known simply by his anglicised name, Meir Macnin, or sometimes as Meir Cohen Macnin. These informations are drawn from the University of California at Irvin's Professor Daniel J. Schroeter who wrote, in 2002, a book on Meir Ben Maqnin and his family, titled *The Sultan's Jew*. He further described him as follows:

"Meir Macnin was frequently the most important intermediary between the Moroccan state and the European powers during the first three decades of the Nineteenth Century, above all under the rule of Sultan Moulay Slimane. He began a long residence in London in 1800

at the time of the great bucolic plague in Morocco. For over a decade prior to his departure, he had been closely associated with the governor of Es-Saouira, and was referred to by the Europeans as the "Governor's Jew". During his residence in London, Macnin was periodically commissioned to perform certain tasks as agent of the Sultan. He would present his credentials as the Moroccan diplomatic representative, and in Moulay Slimane's correspondence with the foreign powers, he was referred to as "our Jew".

During the first two decades of the Nineteenth Century, Meir Macnin traded both for his own account and for the account of Sultan Moulay Slimane. Among European merchants with dealings in Morocco, Macnin had the reputation of a disreputable scoundrel who, through his brother and the close-knit coterie of Sephardi merchants in Es-Saouira, accumulated major debts in the financial centres of Europe. During the Napoleonic Wars, London boomed as a financial centre, and commercial speculation was rife. Despite Macnin's notoriety in Europe, he was still able to make deals with merchants who considered him an indispensable gatekeeper to the centres of power in Morocco.

With his quasi-monopoly in trade, Macnin was the essential intermediary between Morocco and Britain. Sometimes acting as the Sultan's agent in London, he secured ships, arms, and munitions for Morocco. He endeavoured to keep a high profile at the Court of Saint James, presenting exotic gifts, such as Moroccan lions, to the King of England from the Sultan.

Upon the death of Sultan Moulay Slimane in 1822, Macnin returned to Morocco. he acquired [from the new Sultan Moulay Abderrahmane] monopolies on exports of various items, and was granted the financial control of most of Morocco's seaports. He became the chief intermediary between the Moroccan court and the consular representatives in Tangier."

Meir Maqnin was appointed in 1827 by Sultan Moulay Abderrahman (1822-1859) as Ambassador at large to Europe and also as Ambassador to the Court of Saint James's. His Letter of Credence was nevertheless refused by King George IV (1762-1830). This decision was supposedly motivated by a negative report made on Ben Maqnin by the British Consul-General in Tangier, James Sholto Douglas (who had a Moroccan Jew named Isaac Abensur as his Vice-Consul).

Douglas informed his Government that Ben Maqnin had become heavily indebted to the English merchants with whom he previously has been in business in Mogador,

However, King George's letter of refusal reached the Sultan after Ben Maqnin had departed by boat for England (which he reached in April 1827). Upon his arrival, the British authorities informed him that he was entering Britain with a status as private individual, and therefore could not claim to be a Moroccan diplomatic official. He was also warned of potential prosecution due to the debts related to his business-dealings with English merchants while in Mogador. Despite these warnings Ben Maqnin remained in London for five years, renting a house in Sackville Street, Piccadilly. He returned to Morocco in 1832 without ever reimbursing his debts. He died in Marrakech in 1835. (19)

As a retaliation from the Sultan, Consul-General Douglas was prohibited from returning to Tangier when on leave to England, in June 1827. As a result, the state of Anglo-Moroccan relations had reached a very low point. It took the highly praised diplomatic skills of his successors, the Drummond Hays, (Edward and his son, Sir John), to restore British influence in Morocco and to bring it to its pinnacle.

No painting or engraving of these five Moroccan Jewish diplomats seem to exist anymore.(20)

As the 19th. Century progressed, the position of the Jews in England steadily improved, and various restrictions on them were removed. This situation encouraged the British Jews to advocate better living conditions for Jewish communities abroad, among them the Moroccan one that in the 1860s numbered 500,000 individuals (seemingly being the largest in the Muslim World).(21) In parallel, British foreign policy favoured a rapprochement with the Moroccan Jewish community with the purpose of gaining its full support in favour of British trade with Morocco. This community was actually the gatekeeper of the *Sherifian Empire's* seaports as well as of its *Makhzen* (government). This pro-Moroccan Jewish community policy began in 1848 when British Consul General Drummond Hay interfered in Moroccan Jewish affairs by insisting that the *Makhzen* should dismiss the Governor of Casablanca following complaints made by a Moroccan Jew under British Consular protection, Haim Al-Maleh. Historian Khalid Ben-Srhir explains that "*In reality, Drummond Hay was not just interested in defending Al-Maleh, but also in using the incident to pressure and influence the Makhzen so that it would agree to enter into negotiations on the signing of a new trade treaty with Britain.*" (22) In 1856 such a treaty was finally signed despite the fact that it was designed by Britain to be a stepping stone in the process of undermining Moroccan sovereignty over its own foreign trade, seaports and customs. It indirectly facilitated the implementation of a "divide and rule" British policy through the granting of Consular protection to a select category of the Sultan's own Subjects from both the Jewish and Muslim communities. It resulted in promoting a deep sense of injustice, resentments, social hatred as well as inter-religious clashes. This policy inaugurated a new type of diplomatic relations tainted by the unequal balance of power between Britain and Morocco, a situation that deteriorated further with time because of the *Makhzen's* own archaic administrative organisation and the lack of a permanent Moroccan embassy in London that could have defended and preserved Morocco's vital interests. Britain used its position as the most favoured nation to gain concessions, to outmanoeuvre its opponents, and to whittle away at Moroccan sovereignty. For example, Britain used the 1860 Spanish War waged against Morocco to position itself as an arbiter between the *Makhzen* and Tetuan's large Jewish community, accused of taking the Spanish invaders' side *versus* Moroccan interests. Furthermore, Britain bailed Morocco out of its debts with a loan to pay for the indemnities exacted from *Sherifian Empire* following this Spanish War. This bail out kept Morocco's finances at the mercy of Britain.

It is within this newly engineered climate of Anglo-Moroccan relations that, in 1861, the British Foreign Office supported the request made by Sir Moses Montefiore, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, to intervene in defence of equal rights of justice for Moroccan Jews by presenting a diplomatic plea to Sultan Mohammed IV.

One of the most prominent Sephardis of the 19th. Century, Sir Moses was also President of the already mentioned 1701 Bevis Marks synagogue. In addition, he had family ties with Morocco through his sister Sarah who in 1822 married Solomon Sebag, a prominent Moroccan Jewish merchant from Mogador (Es-Saouira). Their son, Joseph Sebag (1822-1903), was the closest associate of Sir Moses in his last years. After Sir Moses' death, Joseph Sebag added the name of Montefiore to his own by Royal license, in 1885.

After receiving a request for help from a group of Moroccan Jews imprisoned in 1863 (in Safi) on suspicion of having killed a Spaniard, Montefiore travelled to Morocco with the support of the British Government. On the 5 February 1864, he was granted an audience by Sultan Mohammed IV, in Marrakech, to whom he delivered a letter requesting the

following: *"To give the most positive orders that Jews and Christians, dwelling in all parts of Your Majesty's dominions, should be perfectly protected, and that no person shall molest them in any matter whatsoever in anything which concerns their safety and tranquility; and that they may be placed in the enjoyment of the same advantages as all other subjects of your Majesty".*(23) Montefiore's request resulted in the release of the prisoners, and on 15 February 1864, the Sultan published an edict granting equal rights of justice to the Jews.(24) This edict was confirmed by Sultan Moulay Hassan I, son and successor to Mohammed IV, on his accession to the throne in 1873 and again on 18 September 1880, after the Conference of Madrid (initially set up between Morocco and the European powers, including Britain, in order to find a solution to the damaging Consular protection issue).

In conclusion, the appraisal of the positioning of Moroccan Jews within the framework of Anglo-Moroccan relations from 1480 to 1886 can be summed up as follows:

The impact of Moroccan Jews on these relations were threefold: In nourishing and enriching Morocco's one and indivisible sense of national identity (25); in the re-admitting of Jews back into England; and lastly in sometimes influencing the course of events within these two nations' bilateral relations, notably concerning Anglo-Moroccan trade and the granting of Consular protection.

Following the 1492 loss of Andalusia and consequently of Morocco's permeable bi-continental space that had lasted for 800 years, the Moroccan nation's sense of identity had to be remodelled accordingly. Morocco drew from both its intrinsic Arab-Berber roots and values as well as from its Andalusian intellectual, cultural, religious and human heritage. The latter was personified by the presence of both Muslim and Jewish communities which had permanently re-settled in Morocco after their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula. These communities' influence prevented *Saadian* Morocco from opting for an isolationist policy towards European-Christian powers. The Sephardi Jewish community was perhaps among the main players, mainly through piloting Morocco's international trade and linking it with a network of Jews in major European cities. Mogador (Es-Saouira) became its pivotal point with regards to trade with England, supplanted in the 1880s by Gibraltar. Jewish traders were therefore one of the many indirect causes as to why Morocco kept its longstanding traditional position as a major trading hub between Europe and Africa.

Together with their fellow Muslims, the Jews had preserved Andalusian values in Morocco; namely the ones of a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. In short, values that made Andalusian civilisation and culture unique and universally recognised as such.

In parallel, England expelled its Jews during more than three centuries and a half and legally re-admitted them only thanks to the advocacy of the Moroccan Sephardi community based in Amsterdam. Since this community was also impregnated by civilisational Andalusian values, it seemed natural that they would be the ones to take the initiative of presenting a petition to Cromwell requesting him to legally re-admit the Jews to Britain. This had of course more far-reaching consequences, i.e. to tie Britain commercially to the more open and liberal parts of the European continent as well as to the wealth and geopolitical power that the new oceanic trade was already generating from the New World, Africa and the Far-East.

Moroccan Sultans sensed that a religiously open and commercially liberal Britain would greatly facilitate an eventual political and military alliance with Muslim Morocco. They therefore encouraged it by regularly appointing ambassadors and envoys to London and among them also Jewish diplomats. The latter's ambassadorial appointments were staged by the Sultans as specific political statements and show-offs towards an England still in a phase of apprenticeship with regard to integrating its newly resettled Jewish community. But this move had a mitigated success.

Elsewhere in Europe, Moroccan rulers continuously protected their expatriate Jewish communities from abuse and injustice, in fact they generally stood up for them. Within Morocco itself the Sultans defended the Jews against reluctance and resentment from English merchants, just as they had done earlier when combatting Portuguese and Spanish practices of slave-trade.

By the mid-Nineteenth Century, British Jews had become well established and better organised. They started to intervene internationally in defence of their fellow brothers in faith, including in Morocco. The initial aim was to correct legal injustices allegedly perpetrated against Moroccan Jews, who two hundred years earlier had helped Jews at large resettle in England.

The United Kingdom's intervention in Morocco's Jewish affairs was in fact a tactical move, part of a wider British government's diplomatic guideline all along the Nineteenth Century and until the 1904 *Entente Cordiale* with France. This diplomatic guideline consisted of paving the way for Morocco's loss of independence, especially under the 41-year Tangier embassy of Sir John Drummond Hay (1845-1886). Historians Pr. Khalid Ben Srhir (Mohammed V University, Rabat) and Pr. Daniel J. Schroeter (University of California, Irvin), jointly summed up this British diplomatic guideline as follows:

"[The British government's policy of paving the way for Morocco's loss of independence] was achieved by opening Morocco to commercial penetration that it could not control, by instigating often costly and unneeded reforms that eventually drained the Makhzen's treasury, and by undermining the political and financial independence of the [Moroccan] State well before the military occupation of the country began. Britain exacerbated the problem by cynically using its special influence in the [Sultan's] Palace to gain concessions unfavourable to Morocco. Nowhere was this so apparent as in the case of Moroccan Jews, for whom Britain posed as their prime champion. With their growing ties with Europe, the Moroccan Jewish mercantile elite began taking advantage of their connections to European powers and international Jewish organisations [such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle that opened its first ever school abroad in Tetuan, in 1862], and the Consular protection that an increasing number of privileged Jews enjoyed, to escape the traditional 'Dhimmi' offered by the Muslim ruler. By the rejection of some Jews of the [Moroccan] State, replaced by aggressive intervention of the foreign powers, Moroccan Jews became more vulnerable and subject to mounting hostility among the Muslim population."(26)
In fine, the Consular protection tactic caused a radical shift of allegiance from the Moroccan Sultan to the British Crown.

This paper was written by Mohammed Belmahi, in Rabat (Morocco), on the 10th. May, 2015.

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Notes:

1. See the preface of P.G. Rogers' book, *A History of Anglo-Moroccan Relations to 1900*, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, 1978, pages V and VI.
2. Gustav Ungerer, "*Portia and the Moroccan Prince*", in *Shakespeare Studies*, volume XXXI, p.93; and Cawston, George *et.al.*, *The Early Chartered Companies (A.D. 1296-1858)*, The Law Book Exchange, Ltd., 2001.
3. Ungerer, Gustav, *op.cit.*, citing Robert Picard, "*Les Places Portuaires et le Commerce d'Andalousie*", *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales 4* -(1938), pp.128-53; Andrej Dziubiuski, "*L'Armée et la flotte de guerre marocaines à l'époque des sultans de la dynastie Saadienne*", *Hesperis Tamuda 13* (1972),pp.61-94; Aurelia Martín, *La Esclavitud en la Granada del Siglo XVI, Genero, Raza y Religión*, Universidad de Granada, 2000.
4. Ungerer, Gustav, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, (Editorial Verbum, London 2010).Ungerer underlines in his book the fact that British historians, for a long time, occulted this subject of slave trade. He also provides proof of the existence of such trade through the following authors: Alfonso Franco Silva, "*La esclavitud en Andalucía, 1450-1550*", Universidad de Granada,1992; Consuelo Varela, "*Ingleses en España y Portugal, 1480-1515*", Lisbon, Ediciones Colibrí,1998; C.M. Saunders, "*A Social History of Black Slaves and Freeman in Portugal,1441-1555*", Cambridge University Press, 1982 ; T.S. Willan, "*Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade*", Manchester University Press,1959; Jacques Caillé, "*Le Commerce Anglais avec le Maroc Pendant la Seconde Moitié du 16eme Siècle*", in *Revue Africaine 84*, (1940).
5. Ungerer, "*Portia and the Moroccan Prince*", *op.cit.*, p.95.
6. The reluctance of English merchants in dealing with Jews outside the British Isles seems to have inspired William Shakespeare in depicting the character of *Shylock* as a villain and an extremely cruel Venetian Jewish merchant, in his 1600 play "*The Merchant of Venice*".
7. Undeger, *op.cit.*, p.94.
8. See Mohammed Belmahi, "Elizabeth I d'Angleterre et Moulay Ahmed Ad-Dahbi, une Alliance en Or", an unpublished paper of 10 pages, Østrås-Norway, August 2013. See also Robert Picard, "*Les Places Portuaires et le Commerce d'Andalousie*", *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales 4* -(1938), 128-53; Andrej Dziubiuski, "*L'Armée et la flotte de guerre marocaines à l'époque des sultans de la dynastie Saadienne*", *Hesperis Tamuda 13* (1972),61-94; Aurelia Martín, *La Esclavitud en la Granada del Siglo XVI, Genero, Raza y Religión*, Universidad de Granada, 2000.
9. Since 1588 and until 2015, some 47 Moroccan ambassadors and diplomatic envoys were successively appointed to the Court of Saint James's. For the full list of Moroccan Ambassadors to London, see Mohammed Belmahi, "An Annotated Chronological List of Ambassadors and Envoys of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Kingdom, from 1588 to 2000", London, December 2000, (a research paper of 23 pages, presented for the first time as a lecture to an assembly of mainly history professors and students at Oxford University, in 2001). For additional analysis of Anglo-Moroccan diplomatic relations and their impact on these two countries' respective identity, see Mohammed Belmahi, "The Other in the Making of National Identity: The Case of Britain and Morocco", (a research paper of 37 pages, presented as the First Annual Lecture of the British Moroccan Society, held at the occasion of this Society's 30th. anniversary, at the Travellers Club, Pall Mall, London, on 24 January 2006).

10. Orgel, Stephen, *Shakespeare: The Critical Complex*", page 293. See also George Cawston *et.al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 226.
11. Rogers, P.G., *op.cit.*, p. 87. Rogers indicates that Ambassador Abghali was also instructed to emphasise the Moroccan Sultan's desire that another envoy should be sent to him from England to maintain the friendly relationship which had been established. Abghali seems to have also been entrusted with the purchase of gunpowder for Moulay Ismail.
12. Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 86: The said Treaty of 23 January 1721 comprised fifteen articles, and conceded to the English the same privileges which they had enjoyed under previous agreements. This Treaty was negotiated by Charles Stewart, the British envoy to the Court of Sultan Moulay Ismail. This 1721 Treaty was later followed by the 15 December 1734 Anglo-Moroccan Treaty signed between Sultan Moulay Abdallah and George II.
13. Mohammed Belmahi, "An Annotated Chronological List...", *op.cit.*; it is worth mentioning the names of other Moroccan Jews that were also appointed as ambassadors and envoys for example to the Netherlands such as Shmuel Palach in 1608, Shmuel Al-Farrashi in 1610, as well as Joseph Toledano who concluded peace with Holland. On Palach, see Mercedes Garcia-Arenal's book: *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*", JHU Press, 2003.
14. The Letter of Credence of Ambassador Haim Toledano is translated by J.F.P. Hopkins; see his book *Letters from Barbary, 1576-1774*, Oxford University Press, 1982, letter number 29, pp. 34-35.
15. See <http://www.geni.com/people/David-Nieto/600000001> , (posted by Edna Kalka Grossman).
16. Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 110.
17. Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 114.
18. Mogador (Es-Saouira) was indeed the prime seaport for Anglo-Moroccan trade in the 19th. Century, for more information refer to Schroeter, Daniel J., *Merchants of Essaouira, Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844-1886*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1988. As an architectural illustration of this situation is the construction in 1882 of Rabbi Simon Attias' synagogue (also known as Bet Ha-Knesset or Shaarei T'filah), built at the request of British Jewish merchants from Manchester who offered its interior woodworks, carved in London using designs inspired by the wood panels of the 1701 Bevis Marks' synagogue. For a description of these woodworks see Zack, Joel, *The Synagogues of Morocco: An Architectural and Preservation Survey* , Jewish Heritage Council and World Monuments Fund, New York, August 1993, pp. 25 ff.
19. Rogers, *op.cit.*, pp. 137-139.
20. About a dozen of known portraits were made by British artists depicting Moroccan ambassadors. The most representative portrait of a Moroccan ambassador who served in London is the one of Abdelwahed Ben Masa'ud 'Announe, originally from Fez, painted by an unknown English artist, in 1600. This portrait is considered as being the first representation of a Muslim character in the history of English painting. 'Announe was appointed by the Saadian Sultan Moulay Ahmed Al-Mansur Ad-Dahbi to Queen Elizabeth I. He got to meet William Shakespeare on the 17th. of November 1600, at the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's Accession Day Tilt, in London. This encounter inspired Shakespeare's Moorish character of *Othello* in the 1603 play bearing the same name. The original portrait is today in permanent display at the Shakespeare Institute of Birmingham University. In 2013, the same portrait was presented as part of a major exhibition on the subject of "English Theatre during the Early Modern Period", at the British Museum, in London. For more details refer to Mohammed Belmahi, "The Other in the Making of National Identity...", *op.cit.*
21. The figure of 500,000 Moroccan Jews is drawn from Rogers' book, *op.cit.*, p.175. Other estimates of the Moroccan Jewish population during the Nineteenth Century are presented in Jisoo Kim, "*Morocco as Portrayed in the 19th. Century Encyclopaedias*", Korean Minjok Leadership Academy, International Program, October 2008. According to this paper, there were in Morocco 600,000 Jews in 1837 (ref. The Brockhaus Conversations Lexicon); 200,000 Jews in 1885 (ref. The Meyers Conversations Lexicon); and 150,000 Jews in 1883 (ref. The Jewish Encyclopedia). These three sources mention a general population of Morocco, during the same century, from 3 to 10 million individuals.
22. Ben-Srhir, Khalid, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886*, Routledge Curzon, London and New York, 2005, p. 159.
23. "*Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*", ii, p. 145, London, 1890.
24. See the account of Montefiore's journey to Morocco by Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, the physician who accompanied him, entitled *Narrative of a Journey to Morocco*, London, 1866. See also Green, Abigail, *Moses Montefiore*, Harvard University Press.

25. As already stated in the first paragraph of this paper, the Moroccan Constitution of 17 June 2011 states in its Preamble the following: "*[The Kingdom of Morocco's] unity is forged by the convergence of its Arab-Islamic, Berber and Saharan-Hassanic components, nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, **HEBRAIC** and Mediterranean influences.*"
26. In Ben-Srhir, Khalid, Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886, *op.cit.*; (this book's preface was written by Daniel J. Schroeter). See also the article of Tudor Parfitt " *Dhimma versus Protection in 19th. Century Morocco*", in the book he edited in 2000: Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations, London, Curzon-SOAS Near and Middle East Publications, pp. 142-166; F.R. Flournoy's PhD thesis: "*British Policy Towards Morocco in the Age of Palmerston, 1830-1865*", London, 1935; Cruickshank, Earl Fee, Morocco at the Parting of the Ways : The Story of Native Protection to 1885, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press - H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1935; and Miège, J.L., Le Maroc et l'Europe (1830-1894), PUF, Paris, 1961-1963, four volumes.