

An Insight into the Course of European-oriented Modernization among Oriental Jewries – the Minute Book of the Junta of Tangier¹

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“Having had the affairs of this community, may God protect it, neglected and [since we are] desiring to adopt and imitate the good conditions of the communities of our brethren of Europe, the notables and majority of this community have been invited to attend a general Junta [assembly]”²

This study is based on an interpretive reading of the “Minute Book of the Governing Junta of the Hebrew Community of Tangier”, which was written during a momentarily historical time, between 1860 and 1875, in the city of Tangier.³ The Minute Book provides a novel insight into what is commonly identified as the process of European-oriented Modernization among Eastern societies through the viewpoint of a few of its local agents in one of its most central locations during the nineteenth century.

- 1 This article is based on my MA thesis conducted under the guidance of Prof. Tamar Alexander and Prof. Dror Ze’evi during 2008. A full and renewed, Hebrew version of the MA thesis was published earlier this year, as the first volume of a new series by the Ben-Zvi Institute named “Pe’amim Supplement” (see: Aviad Moreno, *Europe from Morocco: the Minutes of the Leadership of Tangier’s Jewish Community (the Junta), 1860-1864*, Pe’amim Supplement, vol. 1, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2015 [Hebrew]).
- 2 Retrieved from the initial protocol in the Minute Book [hereinafter in the notes MB] depicting the Junta’s inauguration; MB 1.1 (22.10.1860).
- 3 I cite here the transcribed MB edition published in 2010: *Libro de actas de la Junta selecta de la comunidad hebrea de Tanger 1860-1975* transcripcion por Gladys Pimienta y Sidney Salomon Pimienta, JEM, Paris-Jerusalem 2010. I kindly thank the siblings Gladys and Sidney Pimienta for allowing me access to this valuable material previous to its publication.

This single manuscript, which is in fact restricted in its scope and description of the broader and complex historical events, proposes a new theoretical and methodological approach for reconstructing the history of the imperative period of time of European expansion.

At first glance, the local leaders of the Junta, who started the Minute Book with a public declaration of their desire to “adopt and imitate” Europe’s Jewish communal organizational norms, demonstrate a supposed internalization of this positivist Eurocentric narrative. This narrative depicted the adoption of ‘ready-made’ European organizational models as fundamental when modernizing the ‘backwards’ Oriental societies. Further examination of the motivations for composing the Minute Book while employing a pro-European discourse, reveal some deeper implications embedded in the Junta’s declaration.

Through the perspective of the Minute Book and the circumstances of its writing and subsequent publishing, I propose looking at the historical process of European-oriented modernization as the result of changing ontology and epistemology among local power elites who benefited from promoting the process. In this study, I specifically point to the internal discourse reflecting and sustaining the evolving self-perceptions among the Junta, the local newly established governing committee of the Jewish community of Tangier. I confine myself to the first four years of the Junta’s activity and their documentation through the Minute Book, mainly around 1863. This was a crucial period of time with the 1864 founding of the first European school of the Alliance Israélite Univeselle (AIU) in the city, which consisted of its second branch in the entire world and would become a symbol of European-oriented modernity and westernization among Oriental Jewries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Historiographical Framework

My historiographical approach correlates with neither conservative positivist historiography nor with its common revisionist critics. Rather, I change the focal viewpoint from the relationship between the large binary categories ‘West’ and ‘East’, to the smaller resolutions of the historical process generating the categories and their conceptions through the evolving encounter between people and ideas across the world. In the following section, I shall elaborate on this historiographical contribution.

The transition taking place throughout the Middle East and North Africa in the context of growing European influence during the nineteenth century gave birth to two

central, opposing schools of thought. The first approach, which dominated academic discourse until the 1970s, generally depicted a positive process of benevolent European intervention that was essential for breaking the traditional cachets of local societies through the adoption of the models of enlightened Europe. The second school of thought, gaining greater influence since the 1970s under the banner of postcolonial revision, highlighted the dark side of the uneven power relations between east and west embedded in the colonial process and its antecedent manifestations in European imperialism. According to scholars associated with this often Marxist-oriented school of thought, European models modernized local societies while positioning them as inferior in the set economic and power dogmas dominated by Europe.⁴ This perception was highly supported by the intellectual revolution led by Edward Said who identified the cynical practices through which the colonial west placed a dichotomy between itself and the east as a discursive tool for the management of the colonial project.⁵

This critique paralleled, in many aspects, the vigorous discussion among scholars who focused on the modernization of Oriental Jewries. With regard to Moroccan Jewries as an example, the classic approach towards the modernization of this group highlights the eminent role of European intervention on behalf of Moroccan Jews for their salvation from the traditionally oppressive Islamic regimes. The adoption of European modernity was fundamental for breaking the status of pariah *Dhimma* (covenant) and leading the local Jews towards European-oriented emancipation and enlightenment. This notion was most typically expressed in the concept of *mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission of non-Western society) originally embedded in the narrative of the AIU.⁶

Toward the 1980s, scholars who were probably influenced by Said and subscribed to the conceptual revolution of the postcolonialist school of thought suggested revising

4 Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East", *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19 (2004), pp. 67-85.

5 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York 1978.

6 The relevant studies are too many to enumerate, a few examples being Michael M. Laskier, "Aspects of the Activities of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in the Jewish Communities of the Middle-East and North Africa: 1860-1918", *Modern Judaism* 3, no. 2 (1983), pp. 147-171 and S. Leibovici, *Chronique des juifs de Tetouan: 1860-1896*, G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris 1983. For other references, see Daniel J. Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, "The Transformation of the Jewish Community of Essaouria (Mogador)", in Harvey E. Goldberg (ed.), *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, pp. 100-101.

the conservative narrative by focusing on the European intervention itself as the cause for turmoil in the relatively stable and sound relationship maintained between Jews and Muslims in Morocco.⁷ Nevertheless, the historiographical query on modernity's roots is still left unsettled.

A new stage in the efforts to create alternative paradigms for the conceptualization of local modernity has emerged as a new critique regarding the generalized postcolonial approach. Said developed a counter-narrative that reduced complex local histories no less than the colonial-oriented Eurocentric narrative he had so severely criticized.⁸ In this context, and yet not necessarily in direct correspondence, other voices of critique were expressed. Schroeter and Chetrit criticized the general tendency to depict the modernization process of Moroccan Jewries as equated with westernization through a determinist dichotomy between "tradition" and "modern". They alternatively identified aspects of "orientalization" embedded within local responses to exogenous influence.⁹ In the course of turning Moroccans from historical objects into active subjects, this study and others reflect an attempt to reduce the historical position of

7 The Moroccan historian Jirman 'Ayyash argued that while comparing their situation to European Jewries, some historians presented a twisted image of Moroccan Jewries. See Jirman 'Ayyash, "*al-Aqaliyya al-yahudiyya fi maghib ma qabl al-isti'mar*", *Majalt Dar al-Niaba* 12 kharif (1986), pp. 6-23. For other studies pointing at stable relations between Jews and Muslim on the eve of colonialism, see, for example, Yehoshua Frenkel ("Jewish-Muslim Relations in Fez at the turn of the 19th Century in Light of Juridical Documents", *The Maghreb Review* 29 [2004], pp. 70-77); Daniel J. Schroeter, "Royal Power and the Economy in Precolonial Morocco: Jews and the Legitimation of Foreign Trade", in *In the Shadow of the Sultan: Culture, power and Politics in Morocco*, Rahma Bourqia and Susan Gilson Miller (eds.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1999, pp. 74-102; Susan Gilson-Miller, "Apportioning Sacred Space in a Moroccan City: The Case of Tangier, 1860-1912", *City & Society* 13, no.1 (2001), p. 64.

8 For more on the broader historiographical problématique embedded in the postcolonial concept of modernization among oriental Jewries, see Yaron Tsur, "The Israeli Historiography and the Ethnic Problem", in Benny Morris (ed.), *Making Israel*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 159.

9 Schroeter and Chetrit, "Transformation of the Jewish Community" (Note 6), pp. 100-101. For another study by these two scholars that supports this notion regarding the colonial era, see Daniel J. Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, "Emancipation and Its Discontent: Jews at the Formative Period of Colonial Rule in Morocco", *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 13, no.1 (2006), pp. 170-206.

European influence on local modernization, rather than enhance its pro-active role in an ongoing global transformation.

Within this context of dispute over the roots of modernity in the region, Ze'evi suggests a third option. Rather than grasping the 'west' as the source of change and the 'east' as the receptacle for modernity, or on the other hand, rather than undermining the historical influence of European models on local modernity, he focused on the emerging encounter between what we identify as 'west' and 'east' as a historical phenomenon *per se*. According to this approach, modernity and colonialism are inseparable, and yet they are not created in the west and brought to the east but rather take shape throughout a set of conceptual, technological, and organizational changes taking place across the world being effected by and affecting Europe's expansion.¹⁰

It seems that Ze'evi's concept of modernity would benefit from further socio-political examination once cross-read *vis-à-vis* Foucauldian discourse analysis. According to Foucault, the way we view reality is shaped by and confined to our language, which is *per se* the result of the dynamics of power relations in our society. Inspired by these two general notions, I propose that significant aspects of what we have been identifying as European-oriented modernity is constantly shaped by the discourses generated by power elites across the world that gradually learn about the political advantages of the overall process. Thus, this study is not simply an insight into local manifestations of global change, but an insight into one of the numerous fragments shaping the broader process taking place in the world intensively since the nineteenth century. In this study, I focus on the roots of the process using the case of the power elite of the Junta and the way it was choosing to represent realities, playing their small and yet imperative part in promoting and feeding the broader project of European-style modernity gradually taking shape.

Thus, similar to Said's notion, I suggest that European modernity is indeed embedded in new sets of power relations and their representations during the period of European expansion. Yet differently, I highlight the foundation of the process across the world and among a variety of local power relations coming about in the light of colonialism.

10 Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon?" (Note 4), pp. 73-94.

An Outlook onto Changing Power Relations

The nineteenth century marked the beginning of a new peak in the transformation of power relations between Morocco and its European neighbors. The process's roots may be traced back to the Spanish Reconquista. In the course of reaction to growing European power, since the seventeenth century, the Moroccan sultans were defined as *Sharifs*, a term not only associating them genealogically with the Prophet Muhammad, but moreover granting them the status of *Baraka*, innate holiness. The Moroccan sultans promoted the concept that the state existed to wage the jihad as the principal sign of their right to rule. Under the growing impact of European imperialism, especially from the French invasion of Algeria in 1830 and onward, jihad dialectics gained further significance.¹¹

Yet, a series of Moroccan military defeats fed the emerging notion among the local intellectual and governing elite of Moroccan inferiority and the disadvantages of launching a direct holy war.¹² The climax of this process came after a Moroccan defeat to the declining European power of Spain that occurred during the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1859-1860. This war ended with a Moroccan indemnity to Spain which subsequently drained Morocco of its gold and silver reserves.¹³ The *makhzan* (a nickname for the central government) and the governing elite sought to deal with the changing circumstances through a set of military, economic, and political reforms, which tremendously impacted greater society.¹⁴

The growing penetration of European elements, which within the context of perceivably and objectively changing power relations had begun to grasp themselves as superior, brought about a series of economic treaties. In 1856, a most-favored nation treaty was signed with Great Britain and served as a model for subsequent similar arrangements with other European powers. The treaties became a subject of abuse by the European community in Morocco. In this context, European merchants

11 Amira K. Bennison, *Jihad and Its Interpretations in Pre-Colonial Morocco*, Taylor & Francis, London, 2002, pp. 9-11.

12 Kenneth L. Brown, *People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City 1830-1930*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1976, p. 81.

13 Edmund Burke, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Pre-Colonial Protest and Resistance, 1860-1912*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1976, pp. 19-21.

14 Ibid., pp. 31-33.

facilitated commerce by working with local Moroccan assistants and granting them protection by European governments. These locals were known as protégés, and they soon developed into a new powerful class of a semi-independent, quasi-Europeanized notable bourgeoisie affecting the change of old local socio-economic and socio-political values.¹⁵

Parallel to some extent to the events that transpired under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the social strata that was most heavily affected during the aforementioned social dislocation was the ethno-religious minorities of *ahl al-dhimmah* (people of covenant); namely Jews in the Moroccan context. Over the course of several generations there was a tendency to employ Jews in professions that were generally despised in Muslim culture and society, such as cleaning cesspits or hanging the individuals who had been condemned to death. Religious minorities also were appointed to professions that required contact with ‘infidels’ such as banking, diplomacy, and foreign trade. Under the new circumstances, however, the Jewish minority’s traditional role was reshaped. The sultans’ trade with Christian Europe was justified for the purpose of furthering the kingdom’s readiness for jihad and was supported by the religious elite. Correspondingly, in adhering to religious norms, the sultans initially fostered a group of religious minorities, comprising mainly Jews, to handle global commerce.¹⁶ Towards the end of the century, this process further evolved with the establishment of the AIU French-Jewish schooling system which joined large parts of the local Jewish population with European interests.¹⁷

In the context of the evolving economy, urbanization rapidly increased, mainly in Morocco’s coastal towns. New opportunities in such port cities, which acted as the gateways for European infiltration, attracted large numbers of rural migrants and a new workforce from the country’s interior wishing to try their luck in the new export-oriented economy. An extraordinary case in Morocco was the city of Tangier. This process began as early as the last part of the eighteenth century as the Moroccan Sultan transferred the diplomatic corps from the city of Tetuan, further inside Morocco’s interior, to Tangier, at the northwest corner of the kingdom. “The city of the consuls” situated just few miles away from European shores became one of the

15 Ibid., p. 44.

16 This elite was called *tujjar al-sultan* (the Sultan’s merchants). Daniel J. Schroeter, “Royal Power” (Note 7), pp. 85-94.

17 Burke, *Prelude to Protectorate In Morocco* (note 13), p. 37.

main centers of the European expansion. Towards and during the nineteenth century Tangier's port became among the most important centers of commerce in the region. As a result, it served as a gateway for European missionaries, merchants, diplomats, and adventurers.¹⁸ Tangier enabled its newcomers to integrate quickly into the newly transformed city. At the same time, Tangier became a safe haven for Jewish minorities seeking European protection.¹⁹

Tangier's subsequent development generated a large wave of internal migration from surrounding Riff towns, which were some of the poorest in the entire sultanate, as well as from other towns in the inland region.²⁰ As a result, Tangier's population increased sharply in just a few decades.²¹ Simultaneously, a wave of Jewish immigration to the city began with notable families from Tetuan, Meknes, and Salé arriving in Tangier. The Jewish community, including the newcomers, constituted more than a third of the population, 5,000 out of a total of 14,000.²² At the top of the Jewish population's social pyramid, a few neo-aristocratic oligarchic families engaged in banking, diplomacy, and foreign trade.²³ This also had a tremendous impact on the local socio-political fabric.

Similar to the general events in the course of Morocco's developing relations with Europe, the start of the 1860s was a turning point in the history of the Jews of Morocco, and in particular the Jews of Tangier. Following the Spanish-Moroccan War (1859-1860), during which many locals from Tangier sought refuge in the

18 Susan Gilson-Miller, "Kippur on the Amazon: Jewish Emigration from Northern Morocco in the late Nineteenth Century", in Harvey E. Goldberg (ed.), *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, p. 109. Khalid Bin al-Saghir, "*Al-Kharaka al-Tijariyya bi-Marsa Tanja fi-al-Nisf al-Thani min al-Qarn al-Tis'a 'Ashar*", in *Tanja fi al-tarikh al-mu'asir: 1800-1956*, Jamiat Muchammad al-Khamis. Kuliyat al-Adab wa-al-Ulum al-Insaniya and Jamiat Abd al-Malik al-Sadi Madrasat al-Malik Fahd al-Ulya lil-Tarjama (eds.), al-Nashr al-^cArabi al-Ifriqi, Cairo 1991, p. 91.

19 Graham H. Stuart, *The International City of Tangier*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1955, p. 16.

20 C. R. Pennell, "Review: The Discovery of Morocco's Northern Coast", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 2 (1993), p. 227.

21 Burke, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco* (Note 13), pp. 24-25.

22 Joseph Bengio and J. L. Miege, "La Communauté Juive de Tangier dans les années 1860, 'Les Actas'", *Maroc Europe* 6 (1994), pp. 152-54, 157.

proximate British-dominated enclave of Gibraltar, European elements developed a growing interest in subventioning them. The phenomenon of Jews seeking European protection dramatically increased. One symbolic event was a circular sent by Sir Moses Montefiore to the wardens of vestry of the British synagogues in which he noted that “an event so unforeseen and so appealing as this calls for the most liberal demonstrations of our sympathy”. As a result more than £40,000 was raised. During the same year, a Moroccan Relief Fund was founded and the Board of Deputies of British Jews sent Moses H. Picciotto as a commissioner to report the conditions of Moroccan Jews.²⁴ In Paris, the AIU was established. A few years later, the AIU opened its first two world branches; the first in the proximate northern Moroccan city of Tetuan (1862) and the second in the city of Tangier (1864).²⁵ It was in this context of change that the new communal committee of the Junta was founded during October 1860.

Promoting European power

The process brought about and was fed by the broad mutual conceptual change in the way both parties learned to perceive each other. Historical developments in Europe during the nineteenth century, which indirectly were affected by European expansion, changed, similarly to the Moroccan events, the destiny of many local Jews. For the first time in many centuries, they attained influential positions in their countries of dwelling. The newly developed class of European Jewish bourgeoisies adopted a paternalistic approach towards their ‘backwards brethren’ in the east believing that their own efforts for emancipation should be implemented also on them. The local Jewish press, which fulfilled the demands of Jewish *intellegentsia* in Europe, fed this notion constantly while contributing to the discourse on the poor conditions of ‘Jewries in distress’. The Minute Book implies that such developments were not

23 Susan Gilson-Miller, “Apportioning Sacred Space” (Note 7), p. 64.

24 Tudor Parfitt, “Dhimma Versus Protection in Nineteenth Century Morocco”, in Tudor Parfitt (ed.), *Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations*, Curzon, Richmond 2000, pp. 142-43.

25 Eliezer Bashan, *Yahadut Maroko: ‘Avarah ve-Tarbutah*, Hakibbutz Hameuhad, Tel Aviv 2000, pp. 43-47.

one-sided and occurred simultaneously among the leaderships of these 'Jewries in distress' as a result of the evolving dialogue between the parties.

One of the first missions the Junta had taken upon itself was disseminating information concerning its founding, particularly to the emerging philanthropic bodies in Europe developing in light of the events of 1859-1860. One dispatch was sent to Sir Moses Montefiore and the second was directed to Albert Cohen, chair of the AIU. Interestingly, the decision came about only two months after the Junta's founding.²⁶ The two-month deliberation period comprised a series of internal discussions regarding the conditions of hardship following the Spanish Moroccan war. The Junta was also preoccupied with collecting the *Jizya* (poll tax), which had not been paid to the authorities during the war, presenting the local leader with a precious gift, dealing with mounting kosher meat prices as well as financially supporting the local rabbi.²⁷ In this context, it is no wonder that the newly emerged elite that gained status in the context of growing European hegemony over Tangier pinned their hope on the emerging philanthropic organization in the north. This hope was embodied in the initial idea of forming the Junta following the post-war crisis.

As soon as Montefiore's response arrived, the Junta expressed great satisfaction with their ability to forge ties, mentioning it clearly in the protocol.²⁸ It appears that the Junta realized they had a partner for their ambitious plan to reorganize the communal framework. The reaction and support of European elements became essential in sustaining their sense of mutual interests.

The influence of communication with the European parties soon became apparent. For example, it was a fundamental element in one of the key projects of European intervention. During its very first weeks of operation, the Junta set sight on reforming the field of communal education.²⁹ Several years before the inauguration of the local branch of AIU, and parallel to the emerging call for an AIU branch in Paris, the Junta raised funds within the community and beyond for promoting a European-imported educational framework. Following the Junta's initial activity in this realm until the school's official opening and beyond, the Junta hosted a series of correspondences for the sake of promoting the idea of a new European-supported school.³⁰

26 MB 6.2 (1/11/1860); Ibid 9.5 (18/12/1860).

27 Ibid., 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 (29/10/1860); 5.2 (1/11/1860); 6.1 (1/11/1860).

28 MB 20.1 (13/3/1861).

29 Ibid., 29 (8/10/1861); *ibid.*, 34 (25/10/1861); *ibid.*, 54(29/8/1862).

30 See, for instance, the initial discussions: *ibid.*, 14.5 (31/12/1860); *ibid.*, 16.2 (15/1/1861); *ibid.*, 18.2 (15–21/2/1861; *ibid.* 22.4 (26/4/1861).

The Junta learned about the potential benefits of such institutions during its correspondence. Imperative to this effort was a dispatch from the proximate Junta of Tetuan with which it shared common cultural background and maintained a tightly knit network. Tetuan was the location where the initial branch of the AIU was launched in 1862. In August 1863 the Junta read and discussed the content of the dispatch summarizing its impression in the following words: “Our colleagues ... present us with the benefits resulting from the [activity of the] society of the “*Alianza Isrealit Universal*” established in Paris ...”.

The content left a very good impression on the Junta that sought to improve the deteriorating local education system. The protocol of the assembly describes how the Junta nominated two of its members to present the idea to those among the public who would be capable of paying the tuition of the “respectable society”.³¹ The Junta also discussed the need to conduct outreach to the lower strata of the community. The Junta corresponded with the Morocco Relief Fund in London for assistance on the matter and in November, the Junta received the MRF’s positive response, expressing agreeing to help fund the school. The communication also contained the agreement of the MRF to the Junta’s suggestion to include the school and its staff under British diplomatic protection. The Junta expressed in its Minute Book great satisfaction with this success story, writing: “this Junta left extremely satisfied with and thankful to this consideration of the council [MRF] as one hopes that this honorable venture would have good results and will prosper for many happy years”.³²

The Junta then contacted the management of the AIU, with the mediation of the Junta of Tetuan, and began searching for a qualified teacher. During the following month, the Junta received a response which demonstrated, as the Minute Book notes, his high qualification. According to the Minute Book, the Junta wanted to find out further information. During the same meeting, Junta member Moses Pariente took the initiative to contact the community of Gibraltar searching for a female teacher to serve at the girls’ school they were interested in founding as well.³³

Another critical element contributing to the discourse surrounding philanthropic Europe’s local involvement was the “Safi Affair”. A Spanish *recadador* had been

31 Ibid., 82.1 (24/8/1863). This dispatch was preceded by another one, dated December 16, 1862, in which the Junta was informed of the news of the inauguration of the first branch of the AIU in Tetuan (see *ibid.*, 66.1 (26/1/1863)).

32 Ibid., 97.1 (8/12/1863).

33 MB, 102, 1; 102.2 (28/1/1864).

found dead in the city of Safi and the Spanish Minister accused his Jewish servant in connection with the murder, demanding that the local authorities execute him. The Jewish servant was indeed publicly executed by order of the Sultan. During his investigation the poor Jewish servant, who was only 14 years of age, gave the name of another Jew who was allegedly involved, and he in turn contributed to the arrest of two other Jewish men. One of the suspects was transferred to Tangier and was subsequently publicly executed.³⁴ The Junta was outraged by this local incident which had been taking place in their city of operation, especially due to the fact that the other two Jewish people were awaiting a similar sentence. Their solution, documented in the Minute Book was as follows: "The Junta decided not to allow this outrage to pass in silence and agreed to address our brethren in Europe".³⁵ The aforementioned "brethren" were, namely, Sir Montefiore and Albert Cohen.

Three weeks later, the Junta published the reaction of Sir Montefiore in which he declared he was adamantly working for the release of the two imprisoned Jews. The same minute also describes the reaction of Albert Cohen and the activity of Mayer Alphonse James Rothschild from Paris, with regards to the matter. The relevant article in the Minute Book ends with an exclamation mark illustrating the great influence of this reaction to the Junta's request upon its members.³⁶ Montefiore was on his way to Tangier from where he planned to travel to Marrakesh to meet the Sultan, as a result of the efforts of the Junta, at least as it is reflected in the Minute Book.

In anticipation of Montefiore's arrival, the Junta discussed at length in the same protocol the appropriate way to greet their honored guest. Moshe Nahon, one of the wealthiest among the Junta's members volunteered to prepare a house and a personal chef who would adhere to the demands of Montefiore. The Junta expressed their admiration for the willingness of Nahon to undertake this important mission on behalf of Moroccan Jewries with a round of applause.³⁷ The members of the Junta agreed to meet at the port at the appropriate dock where Montefiore's ship was due to anchor.³⁸ The Minute Book does not spare details about this contact with Montefiore,

34 M. Mitchell Serels, *A history of the Jews of Tangier in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Sepher-Hermon Press, New York 1991, pp. 28-29; Bashan, *Yahadut Maroko* (Note 25), pp. 45-47.

35 MB, 87.1 (18/9/1863).

36 Ibid., 90.2(8/10/1863) .

37 Ibid., 95.1 (23/11/1863).

38 Ibid., 94 (9/11/1863).

illustrating the great impact of this event on the developing pro-European discourse. The Safi affair further invoked the Junta's discourse on the significant role European intervention played in the emancipation of local Jews, or in the words of the Minute Book: "the terrible *galut* (literally exile) that our brethren in inland Morocco suffer".³⁹

Simultaneously, other diplomats strengthened their ties with the Junta. This was obviously a result of the diplomats' own evolving aspiration to gain influence through contact with other local agencies such as the Junta. Yet the Junta's book presents these developments rather differently. For instance, the Minute Book describes how the British Minister in Tangier, Sir John Drummond Hay, summoned the president and vice-president of the Junta following two dispatches he had received from the governments of Netherland and Austria concerning their strong recommendation to grant Moroccan Jews their consular protection. The Minute Book emphasized the importance of this development adding, "So that they [the Jews of Morocco] would not be inflicted with injustices in the future".⁴⁰

The next protocol boasted the results of the mission of Montefiore; a *Dhahir* (Royal Decree) that awarded equality to the religious minorities in Morocco. The Junta mentioned in its Minute Book that Montefiore wrote to the Junta, "Since there is no doubt regarding this decree's influential power, the Junta shall do good if it would make it public allowing the improvement of the situation of our brethren in Morocco". The letter's content, as reflected from the Junta's correspondence with Sir Hay, most typically expressed the discourse. It gave the impression that the persecution of local Jews was entirely a result of their status as subjects to the jurisdiction of Moroccan authorities and that the salvation of the "civilized powers" was the only solution to their miserable conditions.⁴¹

While this decree was nothing more than a fine-sounding statement of the *status quo*, it had a tremendous effect on the self-perceptions of those investing in its attainment.⁴² The Minute Book entry discussing the need for benevolent European intervention on behalf of the well-being of Moroccan Jewry, which was associated by many scholars with colonial representations, appears here as rooted in the evolving discourse of the local Junta leadership. Throughout their ongoing contact with Europe, the Junta

39 Ibid., 98.1 (13/1/1864).

40 Ibid., 102.1 (28/1/1864).

41 Parfitt, "Dhimma Versus Protection" (Note 24), p. 150.

42 Ibid., p. 151.

developed and maintained a discourse on the benefits of European intervention, which was constantly translated into pro-active attempts to forge further ties and promote advanced European-oriented modernization.

Reading the Junta

The internal political system of Jewish communities in the Maghreb had never been tightly bound by a set of defined rules. It used to be a common practice, however, for the wealthy upper class notables, called in Hebrew *Yehide Qehila* (the notables of the community), or *Anshe ha-Ma'amad* (the men of status), to provide for the community's necessities. By looking after the poor, the notables earned the right to govern the various communal affairs. The system was based on the religious obligation to give charity to the poor, but soon turned the community into an oligarchic political system in which the affluent systematically gained control over communal institutions.⁴³

At the same time, the official commissioner of the community before the local authorities was the *Nagid* (or the sheikh), who in addition to other community services, was charged with collecting the *Jizya*. The *Nagid* was appointed based on the nature of his set of connections with the local authorities. Most often the *Nagid* had the blessing of local notables but there were incidences where he was nominated against the will of the wealthy communal leaders.⁴⁴

In October 1860, following the Spanish-Moroccan War, the new body of communal leadership, the Junta, was established. The Junta's name itself implied its innate aims to conduct a broad reorganization in the old apparatus. The Junta's members came from the most honorable families in town and the vast majority of them (nine out of ten) were active employees of the diplomatic corps.⁴⁵ Aharon Abensur, the first secretary of the Junta, served for example, as the interpreter of the British Consul in town, and later on was employed as Denmark's consul. A portion of the Junta's members were among the outstanding merchants in Morocco. For example, Moshe

43 Bashan, *Yahadut Maroqo* (Note 25), pp. 76-78.

44 Shlomo Deshen, *Tsibbur ve-Yehidim: Sidre Hevra bi-Qehillot Yehude Maroqo ba-Me'a ha-18-19*. Misrad ha-Bitahon, Tel Aviv 1983, pp. 77-78.

45 Joseph Toledano, *La saga des familles: les juifs du Maroc et leurs noms*, Editions Stavit, Tel Aviv, 1983, pp. 14, 184, 265, 328.

Pariante, the Junta's vice president was famous for founding the first bank in Morocco in 1840.⁴⁶

Furthermore, in traditional Jewish Moroccan communities, being the owner of a synagogue was a sign of wealth and also a source of political power in a society based on patron-client relations. The privilege of owning a synagogue was reserved to the very wealthy, thereby creating a highly oligarchic society, in which the rich prevailed.⁴⁷ Many among the Junta's members owned such synagogues.⁴⁸ Likewise, many members of the Junta, being the richest in town, demonstrated their superior status by heading *Hevrot* (social welfare organizations), which for generations were considered to be exclusive and imbued their members with great honor.⁴⁹ Those involved with the "*Hevra de Biquur Holim*" (Society for Visitation of the Sick), headed by Yosef Eshriki, and the "*Hevra de Gemilut Hasadim*" (burial society), headed by Yaacob Toledano, came from the most respected and notable families in the city. In addition, they were some of the outstanding members of diplomatic personnel in the city.⁵⁰

In this context, the nomination of the Junta's member did not lack political tension. The new leadership body of the Junta, which was controlled by the oligarchic Jewish bourgeoisie of Tangier, caused anxiety on the part of the *Nagid*; the time-honored representative of the community. The tension evolved not only around official recognition by the authorities, but also around the control over the communal financial resources. For instance, the *Nagid*'s responsibility to levy taxes on kosher meat was disputed, as this was a central resource for the livelihood of the *Nagid* himself. This dispute ended up with the intervention of the local authorities that sided with the Junta, ultimately subjugating the *Nagid* to the Junta's control, simultaneously strengthening the newly established Junta's mandate and self-esteem.⁵¹

46 Ibid., 158.

47 Shalom Bar-Asher, "*Bate Keneset Peraṭiyyim ve-Horashat Tafqidim Datiyyim be-Maroko*", *Zion* 51, no.3 (1986), pp. 2-3.

48 Bashan, *Yahadut Maroko* (Note 25); Gilson-Miller, "Apportioning Sacred Space" (Note 23).

49 Bashan, *Yahadut Maroko* (Note 25), pp. 99-100.

50 MB, 2.3, 6 (22/10/1860).

51 MB, 77.1 (4/8/1863); *ibid.* 78.1 (9/8/1863); the *Nagid* continued to play a symbolic role while the Junta took advantage of this position. For instance, the Junta employed him in the crucial task of collecting the *Jizya* following the war years' crisis (see MB, 14.2 (31/12/1860)).

This growing self-confidence was embodied in the Junta's initiatives to amend wrongdoings and promote a general well-being in the community under its leadership. For instance, during the first weeks of activity to improve the public order, the Junta addressed the unjustified increase in the price of kosher meat in town. The Junta reorganized the price structure by classifying meat according to its quality and supervising its pricing, imposing penalties on disobedient butchers.⁵² In another case, when a member of the elite approached the Junta with a request to raise funds for a poor girl wishing to marry, perhaps a relative of one of his acquaintances and under his patronage, the Junta refused claiming that no young woman deserves more than another five others in the community waiting in line to receive funds for the same purpose.⁵³

Despite their ambitious aspirations for political absolutism, the motivation for the Junta's initiative and activity were mainly rooted in the perceived elitist commitment of its notable members to promote welfare and equality among the lower classes of the community. The Junta was perceived by its members as a leadership body that had been granted political power by the broad elite of the community based on their appreciation of the Junta's capability to manage communal affairs to their best overall interest.

In this context, from the beginning of their activity the Junta members decided that every *Rosh Hodesh* (the first day of the month in Jewish tradition) two commissioners would visit the sick at the local hospital and observe the management of the *parnas*, the person in charge. Subsequently, the Junta decided to send two members each week to collect the *tamid*, or the charity traditionally collected on the eve of Sabbath.⁵⁴

The Junta members provided vital services to the community with funding for their activity from their own pocket. The Junta members donated bedding to the local hospital, publishing each contribution in their Minute Book.⁵⁵ Once when a shortage occurred, the Junta members individually distributed personal funds to charity for the holiday of Sukkot, listing their contributions in the Minute Book.⁵⁶ They also personally underwrote the organization's expenses, including the stenographer and

52 Ibid., 4.2 (29/10/1860).

53 Ibid., 9.4 (18/12/1860).

54 Ibid., 9.3 (18/12/1860); ibid., 59.4 (27/10/1862); 63.4 (9/12/1862).

55 Ibid., 27.2 (27/8/1861).

56 Ibid., 28.2 (23/9/1861).

other associated services.⁵⁷ In March 1864, the unrevealed criticism and gap between their actual willingness and self-representation was exposed only to further support their entries on their aspiration to promote public commonwealth. The Minute Book mentioned that members of the Junta who tended to be absent from meetings with no good reason would be fined, stating:

[T]his neglect caused major parts of the affairs of the Junta to be delayed ... one cannot see any other remedy than to create those regulations that would [allow] the affairs to be conducted well ... as is required from Juntas that bear responsibility similar to ours; not only to take care of the public affairs of our city, but rather the responsibility of [maintaining] a continuous and vivid correspondence with all the communities of Morocco and all the respectable Juntas of Europe.⁵⁸

While reading the Junta's initiatives displaying their concern for the common man's well-being, it is important to take into account the Junta's perception of the Minute Book in which such entries were documented. The Junta's charter outlined the need for a Minute Book in the following way:

The Junta shall be required to maintain a book for documenting all the minutes that were agreed on in the [meetings of the] Junta ... for the sake of our affairs and decisions being conducted in order and by authority.⁵⁹

The Junta sought to define and reinforce its control over the community through circulars distributed throughout the local synagogues; they comprised recent announcements, decisions and rules.⁶⁰ Its officially published communiqués were perceived as influential tools of communication. One clear example is the very first announcement regarding its founding, stating, "for the sake of reinforcing our authority, all the above-written had been declared and published throughout all the synagogues and became acceptable with no resistance".⁶¹ This was also one of the unique cases in which an entry was recorded in official Hebrew, aimed at enforcing their authority with religious-based command. Overall, the book was composed in a formally condensed outline and in

57 Ibid., 33.3 ((24/10/1861).

58 Ibid., 110.2 (20/3/1864).

59 Ibid., 2.11 (22/10/1860).

60 Ibid., 38.1 (3/1/1862); 52.2 (31/7/1862); 83.2 (2/9/1863); 109.4 (15.3.1864).

61 Ibid., 1.3 (22.10.1860).

high language promoting an aura of official authority among its readers.⁶² The Junta did not hide its aspiration for formality, forbidding its members to publicly discuss the affairs of the Junta outside of its official forums.⁶³

The available historical manuscript was composed by an employee of the Junta who had copied a summarized sequence of events narrating the Junta's final decisions, most often in third person past tense. While the narrative is documented in the form of recollections, the book reflects observations made within days of each of the Junta's meetings. In this context, the Junta omitted from the summarized narrative elements that were seen as inappropriate for documentation and emphasized others that were deemed worthy and beneficial for promoting its goals, while many aspects remained open for further discussion.⁶⁴

Due to its narrative quality, the manuscript might be grasped by some as historiographically frail and incomplete. Yet, in fact, it may provide unique and productive insights for interpretative research on the viewpoints and priorities shaping the common discourse within power elites such as the Junta at this critical time and place during expanding European influence in the region. That being the case, I propose analyzing the Minute Book while bearing in mind its subjective quality embedded not merely in its literal content but also encompassing its changing graphics, its editing styles—including many deviations along the way—as well as the terminology and the circumstances of its writing per se. All of these elements serve as testimony to the evolving discourse among the Junta which reflected and sustained its members' collective notions.⁶⁵

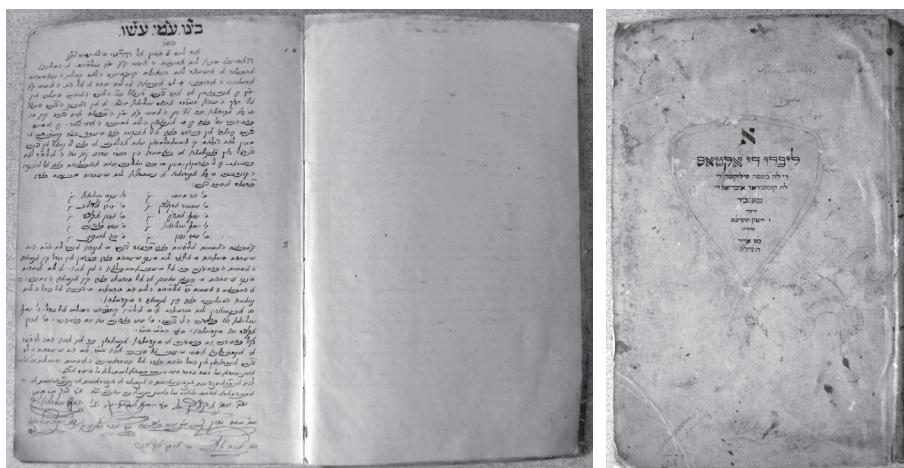
One may conclude that the Minute Book itself was part of the Junta's aspiration for control, and it served simultaneously as a tool for actualizing this goal. Throughout the Minute Book, the Junta presented, and at the same time reflected, its evolving orientations and discourse on the essentialness of its broad reorganization. The Minute Book thus provided a unique insight into the broad course of its changing mindset, which gave birth to what we identify as modernity during the age of European hegemony.

62 Moreno, *Europe from Morocco* (Note 1), pp. 68-74.

63 MB, 2.10 (22/10/1860).

64 Moreno, *Europe from Morocco* (Note 62).

65 Iris Agmon, *Family & Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 2007.

Photograph by Philip Abensur⁶⁶

The Motivations behind the Pro-European Orientation

During the era of growing European intervention in Morocco and the acquisition of additional rights by local groups (i.e., the transformation from *Dhimmis* to protégés), an unprecedented change had occurred in the concept of patron-client relations. In a society where many would fall under the political custody of a local notable (who under pre-colonial circumstances was mainly a Muslim), the power elite of protégé Jews was seen as the ultimate patron.⁶⁷

The unique location of the Junta, in the city of consuls and a port of global commerce, shaped the esteem awarded it in the eyes of its members as well as in the eyes of others. Community leaders in inland Morocco addressed the notables of the Junta from the very first months of their operation. For instance, in the protocol summarizing the assembly on April 12, 1861, the Junta dealt with two major issues, the first of which was a letter sent by the Board of Deputies in London, in which the

⁶⁶ The Minute Book measures 25.5 cm x 38.5 cm. The binding is hard cardboard and the book contains 251 pages out of which 235 contain the records of the Protocols and 16 are an index.

⁶⁷ Daniel J. Schroeter, "Trade as a Mediator in Muslim-Jewish Relations: Southwestern Morocco in the Nineteenth Century", in Mark R. Cohen and Abraham L. Udovitch (eds.), *Jews Among Arabs: Contacts and Boundaries*, Darwin Press, Princeton, NJ 1989, pp. 122-127.

Board offered the MRF partial annual support for financing a local physician and medical supplies for the community of Tangier. The Junta decided to refuse stating that since the money was raised by the MRF during the Spanish Moroccan war for the Jews of Tangier, they have the right to decide what to do with the money.

The second issue was a dispatch sent by two residents of Rabat for the Junta to discuss, concerning the “unjust” extradition of one Jew to the local Muslim authorities by a British protégé Jew named Benatar. The Junta decided to take action, approaching the local consul who was the figure in charge of Benatar. The Minute Book mentioned that its president and vice-president kindly accepted their duty to pass this message to the British Minister.⁶⁸

This protocol illustrates the political benefits the Junta gained by initially taking upon itself the task of mediating between the “benevolent” European figures and the “suffering” Jews of Morocco as the Minute Book’s pro-European orientation consistently depicts. In this context, addressing powerful European figures on behalf of the well-being of Moroccan Jewries was obviously calculated against the potential cost and benefits for the Junta’s well-being. The Junta approached European figures with “injustices”, constantly bearing in mind its own reputation.

The edited Minute Book apparently did not refer to such requests, which were considered incongruous, yet reading between the lines of several protocols may reveal the Junta’s concealed intentions. For instance, soon after its founding, the Junta was addressed by the community of Tetuan to help them relieve the harsh living conditions under the newly established Spanish regime. The Junta avoided intervening in that matter, clearly justifying its decision that they were not equipped to address the authorities on such matters.⁶⁹

It seems that the Junta understood that stirring the inter-European empirical pot by addressing one European element in a request to intervene in the matters of another would be politically unproductive, and potentially politically damaging. This attitude would change dramatically during the following few years. As its self-confidence as a powerful mediating body grew, and obviously along with Europe’s constructively positive reactions, the Junta gained further courage to address freely the representatives of various European powers. Positive results further sustained the organization’s ability to represent itself as a crucial mediator in bringing welfare to the underprivileged among Moroccan Jewry.

68 MB, 21.1, 21.2 (12/4/1861).

69 Ibid., 28.1 (23/9/1861).

Perhaps the most influential event in supporting the Junta's standing at the time was the above-mentioned "Safi Affair". The visit of Montefiore not only impacted the perception of European power as beneficial for the well-being of Moroccan Jewries but more importantly had reinforced the Junta's ability to represent itself as an ultimate mediating factor.

Even though the meeting with the Junta of Tangier was a minor event in Montefiore's schedule, the members of the Junta referred to his visit to Morocco as their own success story. The series of correspondence with Jewish communities in inland Morocco leading up to and following Montefiore's visit were crucial in supporting and sustaining this notion. In this context, it is no wonder that the European-oriented terminology, which would be grasped as Eurocentric positivism, appears again in all its glory. For instance, the Junta described in great detail the reasons the Jewish community of Fez originally contacted them for assistance, stating:

[The Fez Community] had known about the arrival of the venerable gentleman Sir Moshe Montefiore to this [town of Tangier], and they presented succinctly the lamentable situation of that community and the horrible *galut* (exile) that our brethren suffer in the interior of the *Ma'arav* (Morocco) and they earnestly beg this Junta to turn to the gentleman and provide the necessary explanations so that he would lobby [for achieving] some relief to the yoke of the *galut* under which they suffer today.⁷⁰

During its meeting in August 1863, the Junta discussed the chain of responses that it had received from philanthropic Jewish bodies in Europe in reply to its own requests regarding the Safi Affair. It was at this specific meeting that the Junta referred for the first time in its Minute Book to the possibility of approaching the local diplomatic corps in Tangier so as to obtain their intervention on behalf of the well-being of Moroccan Jewry as a whole. Following a letter from the representatives in Mazagan regarding the imprisonment of two local Jews, the Junta decided to approach the local British consul in Tangier. The Junta phrased its intentions as follows: "[T]hat this gentleman would favor us writing his honorable words to the British vice consul in Mazagan for the sake of obtaining the liberty of the two boys in prison...".

The important message of that protocol exceeds the simple idea of facilitating benevolent European intervention. The protocol clearly states that three respectable

70 Ibid., 96.1 (8.12.1863).

members of the Junta suggested taking care of this obligation by addressing this figure, once again marking their crucial role in the endeavor for European intervention.

The next item in the same entry further reveals the Junta's growing role as a powerful body. The issue concerns a rebellious member of the Junta who had established an independent welfare society (strictly prohibited by the Junta during its formative stages). Since that member was a French protégé, the French consul sided with him in this internal quarrel, writing to the Junta on his behalf. The Junta decided to write back to the consul in confrontation with this senior member.

The next and last item described the Junta's intention to write to the community of Tetuan informing it about the "good news aforementioned", referring to its ability to recruit Montefiore and Albert Cohen for intervening in the Safi Affair.⁷¹ It seems that Junta's changing self-perception as crucial mediator following the Safi Affair altered to some extent its accessibility to and relationship with leading European figures.

During its handling of the Safi affair the Junta strengthened its relationship with these global bodies in an unprecedented way. The direct result of this conceptual shift is reflected throughout its activities. Beginning with the first letter sent to Montefiore in September 1863 and continuing with correspondence through the end of 1864, an unprecedented preoccupation with external affairs involving direct contacts with Europe is documented in the Minute Book, comprising almost half of all matters documented. The shift is even marked in an administrative remark. During May 1864, the Junta's clerk had demanded a raise in his salary owing to the increase in correspondence and the Junta subsequently agreed.⁷²

Even before it had become clear that Montefiore had notably succeeded in his mission to acquire equality of non-Muslims in Morocco, the Junta foresaw a great advantage in thanking all the world Jewish bodies involved in finding a solution to the affair.⁷³ The unfolding events obviously inflated the Junta's self-perception, supporting the self-esteem and self-representing narrative found in the Minute Book. As their success stories accumulated, the Junta gained additional prestige which further sustained its discourse.

The Junta's contact with the local consular representatives in Tangier concerning the well-being of Moroccan Jews also reached its peak during the period. The notable

71 MB, 90.3, 90.5, 90.6 (22/10/1863).

72 Ibid., 120.3 (17/5/1864).

73 Ibid., 99.4 (19/1/1864).

members of the Junta reported their successful meetings with the Portuguese and Italian representatives, stating that the latter had promised to lobby for the well-being of Moroccan Jewry. The Junta members then felt confident to lobby the Italian consul to promote a policy of granting local Jews Italian protection. The Junta reported the response in which the consul promised to take the required actions.⁷⁴

During this period, the Junta was somewhat apprehensive to disturb the delicate balance maintained in local power relations. A week after their report on the successful meeting with the European consuls, the Junta members dealt with a letter received from Tetuan discussing violations of the Sultan's decree granted to Montefiore under the open eye of the local *Basha*. The Junta addressed the British Consul in Tangier asking him to contact his representative in Tetuan and command him to warn the *Basha*. The Junta dealt subsequently with the response of the Tetuan community's depiction of the *Basha*'s apology and promise to guarantee their safety.⁷⁵

The Junta clearly displayed its ability to manipulate the local authorities by addressing the European elements in Tangier. The unfolding events were all described in the same protocol through hindsight, illustrating the narrative quality of this description, which further fed the discourse on the need for benevolent European intervention and most importantly the Junta's imperative role within the process.

Following this event, the Junta recorded a series of other successful meetings of its members with local consuls. For instance, a week after the Junta wrote about the positive results obtained from addressing the local British Consul on the Tetuan affair, the Junta reported about its successful meetings with the Spanish and American representatives, during which the latter promised to have its other representatives along the coastal towns of Morocco lobby for the well-being of local Jews as well. The Junta proved both to itself and to the readers of the book that this promise indeed came through. Moshe Pariente, a Junta member and an interpreter at the American Consulate of Tangier, reported that indeed such a request had been sent and that "one cannot expect better results".⁷⁶

It was in this context and at this point that the Junta decided to reinforce its contacts with the community under its leadership and make its documented achievements more accessible. At the peak of its attained political success as a worthy communal

74 Ibid., 109.2, 109.3 (15/3/1864).

75 Ibid., 111.2, 111.4 ((25/3/1864.

76 Ibid., 113.1–3 (1/4/1864).

leadership in this time of European hegemony, and after reinforcing its ties with such elements, the Junta recruited two additional members and published in the local synagogues their names along with the entire list of names of the Junta members. In addition, it publicized its records, allowing the public to address the Junta with suggestions for discussions in upcoming Junta meetings.⁷⁷

Considering the ensuing political crisis, perhaps the Junta exaggerated its self-confidence while proposing this reform. Yet, this decision can only reflect the impact of the evolving communication with Europe on its self-perception and simultaneously on the hopes it had for its self-representation as a powerful and critical entity serving as mediator during this specific time of geopolitical evolution.

Conclusion

An initial reading of the Minute Book, which opens with the Junta's ambition to "imitate and adopt" the superior values of European communities, challenges the common revision regarding the essence of European-oriented modernization and simultaneously embraces Eurocentric positivist perception. It strongly suggests that importing ready-made European models or the need for European intervention for the sake of amending Oriental societies was internalized by the local leadership group.

Going a step further, the course of European-style modernization appears to be rather complex and grants the local agents with a proactive role in the course of change, not merely locally but rather globally. On the one hand, not merely had the process of European intervention and its sustaining discourse been crucial in generating modernity among eastern societies, but moreover, some of the most influential local community members proactively promoted it, insisting to forge ties with Europe and strengthening its perceived standing as an almighty empire. The Junta, a local leadership apparatus, generated and sustained the essence of the 'positivist Eurocentric' discourse on the value of the benevolent intervention of Europe on behalf of the underprivileged Oriental Jewish pariah, as repeatedly stated in its Minute Book.

On the other hand, one should not perceive the Junta's aspirations for European intervention as an internalization of an imported colonial discourse generated in the west and absorbed by the eastern societies, nor should the essence of the process be

⁷⁷ Ibid., 109. 4-5 (15/3/1864).

understood as an arousing encounter between two opposing cultural structures. An in-depth reading of the Minute Book reveals that the ongoing pro-European discourse as well as its maintenance was no less a creation and an aspiration of power elements among the 'receptive' east. This aspiration and its evolution reflected the new interests taking shape during the age of European hegemony among those who most benefited from the process around the world, thus further sustaining it.

As it appears, the Junta promoted a discourse depicting the benevolent European intervention through which it granted itself unprecedented opportunities to represent itself as a crucial mediating body. As successes stories mounted throughout the various encounters with Montefiore, the AIU, local diplomats, and Jewish Philanthropic bodies, it constantly fed this notion, affecting in return the Junta's discourse as well as their overall orientation. (Other cases of perceived failure were often employed for other political aspirations, which exceed the scope of this essay).

The inherited by-product discourses of these changing epistemologies and ontologies were embodied in a variety of sources that serve as our historiographical basis for retracing the related course of change. As historians, we ought to carefully read them and perceive their underlying motivations to better understand what they may entail below the surface.

While the Minute Book provides an incomplete picture of historical developments, it does allow an in-depth insight into microscopic and yet essential historical fragments not only depicting but generating the broad historical change during this period. The Junta's declaration regarding its aspiration to imitate and adopt the customs and stature of European communities in October 1860 was one component in the lengthy and reciprocal process of evolutionary epistemological and ontological change that laid the foundations of European intervention in the context of changing interests and reality as understood by the powerful elite. As the encounter evolved, it altered the way influential elements, such as the Junta, thought and wrote about reality, further sustaining the encounter, and so forth.

The case of the Junta of Tangier is an exemplar, yet it constitutes one of the most imperative cases, particularly for the study of the modernization of Oriental Jewries. It implies that the very first branches of the AIU as well as the notion of "civilizing mission" or European philanthropy, the symbols of European-oriented modernization across these societies, were not a ready-made French idea that was granted to the east or imposed on it at certain time. The Minute Book, while solely providing a gaze into the daily operations of the Junta, offers an insight into an evolving inspiration that took shape, ultimately corresponding with the constructed notion of "west" versus

“east” as the encounter developed. Cases of discontent among the local society were part of this multifaceted evolution of European-oriented modernity and require further research that exceeds the scope of Junta’s epistemology and ontology as described here.