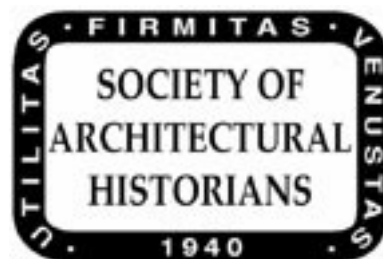




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Author(s): Susan Gilson Miller, Attilio Petruccioli and Mauro Bertagnin

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Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City

The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438–1912)

SUSAN GILSON MILLER
Harvard University

ATTILIO PETRUCCIOLI
Polytechnic of Bari

MAURO BERTAGNIN
University of Udine

The *Mellab* in its Urban Setting

The view of Fez from afar, with its emerald roofs emerging from the shimmering mist, can induce a state of poetic exuberance in even the most jaded traveler. But how many visitors to Fez are aware that it is actually a series of cities, strung together from east to west? Old Fez, or Fez al-Bali, the original place of settlement built in the ninth century, is the site of the countless mosques, oratories, and colleges that make the city renown for its building arts. The fecundity of this architectural heritage earned Old Fez the designation of UNESCO World Monument in 1980, together with its neighbor, Fez al-Jadid or “New” Fez, the second city of Fez. But New Fez itself is hardly new. It was built in the thirteenth century to house the sultan and his court in serene and sumptuous surroundings far from the hurly-burly of Old Fez. The powerful complementarity of these two cities—one of the palace and the other of the bazaar—created the image of Fez as Morocco’s preeminent city, the source of its government, commerce, religiosity, and intellectual life.

Yet a third city of Fez is the *mellab*, or Jewish quarter, home to the Jews of Fez for more than 500 years. Settled in the fifteenth century, the *mellab* was built in the shadow of the royal compound of Fez al-Jadid. Here the Jews lived within their own separate walled quarter, surrounded by the services needed to sustain ritual and communal life, such as synagogues, schools, ovens, and bathhouses (Figure 1). Covering more than eleven acres, the *mellab* of Fez survives today

as a distinct quarter, although it is no longer the home of Moroccan Jews. They abandoned it in stages, initially for apartments in the French-built *ville nouvelle*, and later for permanent exile in Israel, France, and North America following Moroccan independence in 1956. Today, the quarter that once housed 7,000 Arabic-speaking Jews is inhabited by migrants newly arrived from the countryside. Many of the great houses where the art of living in the Moroccan Jewish manner was practiced to perfection have been subdivided into apartments and have fallen into disrepair.

Documenting the domestic architecture of the *mellab* in its urban context was the objective of our interdisciplinary research project. Moving from the house to the street, from the street to the quarter, and finally to the urban fabric as a whole, we looked for continuities and ruptures that would shed light on the history of the *mellab*. As the architects recorded the physical features, historians searched for written materials and oral testimony that would explain how the quarter evolved, how its space was organized, and how the use of space differed from or replicated practices in the Muslim quarters.

Another aim of the study was to try to understand the *mellab* as an integral part of the larger city. The study of the North African city as it developed in the hands of colonial urbanists at the beginning of the twentieth century was based on the idea that the Islamic religion, with its complex rules and practices, rendered the city legible.¹ The study of minority space was generally excluded from discourses of

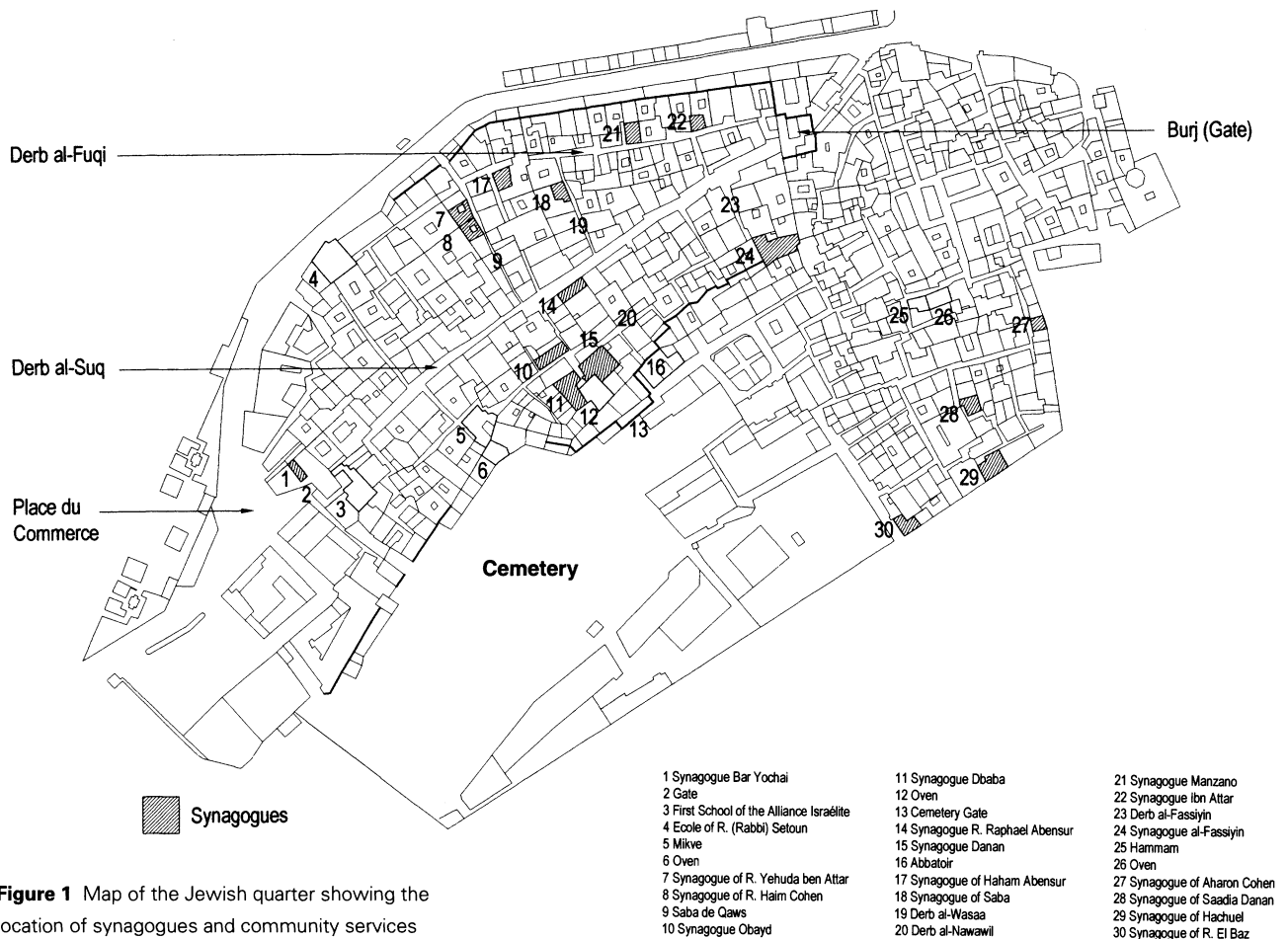


Figure 1 Map of the Jewish quarter showing the location of synagogues and community services

urbanism and left to specialists of minority cultures. The fragmentation of urban space into various unconnected parts left out the ebb and flow of human interactions across real and imagined boundaries that lent the city its vitality. In this research, we tried to counter this approach by reinserting the minority perspective back into our reading of the Mediterranean Islamic city. In our view, the city is as a composition of multiple elements evolving over time, shaped by needs and contingencies arising from all its inhabitants, including the subaltern groups who were an integral part of the cityscape.

In Morocco, Jewish quarters exist in cities on the coast and in the interior and vary in size from major agglomerations such as Fez to smaller areas within the walled villages (*ksour*) of the pre-Sahara. While the Jewish quarter as an urban form can be identified by certain common features, each individual quarter evolved along its own path in response to the influences of demography, ecology, and political change. Sometimes the quarter is contained within the larger city and forms a microcosm of it, such as the Jewish quarter of Tétuán; at other times, it is removed from the

molecular city and attached to the royal enclave, as in Fez. The siting of the quarter invites speculation about its origins and the relationship between the Jewish minority and the Muslim majority. Was the purpose of the quarter to isolate its inhabitants, to safeguard them, or both? In Fez, the proximity of the *mellah* to the royal palace is often read as a sign of dependency of the Jews on the power and protection of the ruling sovereign. The historical documentation bears this out, for it was at moments when authority broke down and rebellion erupted over the question of succession that the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter suffered most.²

Inaccurate comparisons have been made between the Jewish quarter and the ghettos of Europe, based on the notion that separation was a sign of ostracism in both cases. However, this conclusion ignores the profound distinction between the Middle Eastern Jewish experience and the European one. Islamic culture as a whole differed radically from Christendom in its treatment of the Jewish minority. Jews had a protected (if subordinate) status under Islamic law, based on legal rights and obligations that permitted a greater degree of interchange with the majority than was

possible in Christian society. In Morocco, Jews were the only non-Muslim minority, filling important niches in the economy and integrating themselves fully into local and regional systems of production and exchange. One of their critical roles was to serve as middlemen between producers and consumers, which allowed them to move about freely, transforming their seemingly closed quarter into a porous envelope open to the Muslim city and the surrounding countryside. In our reading of the *mellah*, it can be imagined as the epicenter of a series of concentric circles linking its inhabitants to the city, the territory, and the greater region. Jews entered the Muslim city for purposes of livelihood, then retreated into their own enclave, which offered them sanctuary and a sense of well-being.

The Jewish Community of Fez

Origins

Medieval Fez sat astride the intersection of several important overland trade routes, including the main north-south route from the Sahara to the Mediterranean port of Tangier, and the east-west route from the coast to the central Maghrib. At its founding in A.D. 808, the new city attracted a diverse population from the Islamic East and Muslim Spain. Among the newcomers were Jews, welcomed for their commercial capabilities and far-flung family networks.³ They settled in the medina of Fez and formed a dynamic and prosperous element in the larger community.⁴ The Maliki rite of Islam practiced in North Africa was critical to this coexistence, for it upheld the Islamic statute of *dhimma* (protection) that permitted Jews to live peacefully in exchange for the payment of an annual tax (*jizya*). After meeting their fiscal obligations, Jews generally were left alone to govern their own affairs, deferring to their rabbis in cases of conflict and rarely looking outside the community. In the economic sphere, both men and women were skilled artisans, producing luxury goods for local consumption as well as for the caravan trade. Jewish peddlers traveled the countryside and served as a vital link in a complex chain of production and distribution of goods that made Fez an important regional trading center. From the outside, the community may have appeared monolithic, but internally, Jews created their own social pyramid layered by occupation, family affiliation, and place of origin. A small elite with the capital and skills to conduct long-distance trade rose from the mass by dint of their wealth and connections, facilitating the movement of goods between the hinterland and the markets of Fez, and between Fez and the coastal ports. In the medieval period, Fez and its Jews were a key element

in a complex network of exchange that stretched from the desert to the coast, across the Mediterranean to northern Europe, and beyond.

Jewish philologists, jurists, alchemists, and commentators on the Torah flourished in Fez, contributing to the intellectual vitality that gave the city its reputation as a center of learning. As early as the ninth century, Fassi Jewish scholars were corresponding with rabbis in Babylon, seeking their advice on finer points of the law. The distinguished Algerian-born Talmudist Isaac Alfasi (d. 1103) taught in Fez for many years, although he eventually left Morocco and died in Spain. His legal opinions written in Arabic for Arabic-speaking scholars were famous throughout the medieval Jewish world.⁵ The most famous Jewish scholar of Fez was Moses Ibn Maimon, known as Maimonides, who fled to North Africa from Córdoba in 1159 and lived in the medina of Fez for five years.

The preferential status of the Jews of Fez evaporated in the twelfth century under the rule of the Al-Muwahhids, a militant dynasty bent on eliminating all “heresies” from the broad swath of territory that fell under their rule. After annulling the validity of the *dhimma* contract, they left standing “neither church nor synagogue” in the whole of the Maghrib, forcing non-Muslims to convert and driving into exile those who refused.⁶ Jews who stayed behind became Marranos, practicing their faith in secret and nurturing a double identity in order to survive. These hard-core resisters eventually became the nucleus of a revived community in the thirteenth century, experiencing one of several rebirths that Fassi Jews underwent over the centuries.

The Founding of the *Mellah*

At the end of thirteenth century, the more tolerant dynasty of the Banu Marin became the masters of Fez, and Sultan Abu Yusuf began an ambitious project to build a new royal city of Fez al-Jadid. Designed as an elaborate fortified camp, it contained a palace, several mosques, extensive gardens, a market, and a garrison for the royal guard. Just south of the palace was a marshy ground known as the *mellah*, or “salty place,” where a contingent of Syrian archers had their barracks.⁷ The toponym came to signify the dwelling place of the Jews, and, thereafter, each new Jewish quarter built in Morocco was called the *mellah*.⁸

The course of events leading up to the transfer of Jews from the Fez medina to the *mellah* in the mid fifteenth century can be traced through the Jewish sources. At that time, the power of the Banu Marin was eclipsed by that of a collateral dynasty called the Banu Wattas, who controlled much of the country. Even in Fez itself, the ruling dynasty had

become one among several rival factions competing for control. Caught in the middle of these violent crosscurrents were Fassi Jews, whose numbers had grown considerably over the years but whose loyalty was still suspect.⁹ The seemingly “miraculous” rediscovery in 1437 of the tomb of the sainted founder of Fez, Sultan Idris II, set events in motion. The medina was declared holy ground and off limits to unbelievers, forcing Jews to leave the Old City and to abandon their houses, shops, and places of work to Muslims.

How did Fassi Jews regard the move to the *mellab*? A Jewish text, *Ne’r Hama’arav*, gives some of the flavor of the event:

In the year 5198, Jews who had been living in the Fez medina since the foundation of the city were expelled from it with a fierce brutality. Some Jews were killed, while others embraced Islam. A few families left the medina and built the *mellah*. This event was provoked by the fact that Muslims found a bottle of wine in their mosque and wrongly accused the Jews of having placed it there.¹⁰

The story of the wine in the mosque is a recurrent motif that often appears in Muslim texts as the preamble to an anti-Jewish attack. Its appearance in a Jewish text underscores the irrationality of events as they unfolded from the Jewish point of view. For Muslim Fassis, on the other hand, the expulsion was eminently logical. It eliminated Jewish competition from the crowded markets, it cleansed the sacred precincts around the tomb of the saint of an “impure” element, and it inscribed in space a separation that had become blurred over the centuries by “dubious” conversions.¹¹

The new quarter gradually became home to the Jews as it filled out with houses, workshops, and the other elements of urban life—a town within itself, separate from the rest of Fez, yet attached to it through filaments of economic, social, and political dependency. In 1540, a Belgian Catholic priest, Nicholas Clenardus, took up residence in the *mellab* for a year, and his correspondence offers a glimpse into life there in that period. He studied Arabic with Jewish scholars and estimated the population at 4,000, as compared with the 50,000 people in Old Fez.¹² The small group of original settlers had grown considerably in the hundred intervening years, augmented by Jews exiled from Spain in 1492, who carried with them the rich legacy of Sephardic culture in the form of the special customs, language, and jurisprudence.¹³ Another well-informed visitor was the Spaniard Luis de Mármol, who wrote in the 1540s that the quarter had a “grand plaza with many shops, synagogues, and well-built houses.” Many Jews were gold-

smiths who worked in Fez al-Jadid, and others had reached powerful positions in the palace. No noble household, he wrote, was complete without a Jewish “majordomo” in charge of day-to-day affairs.¹⁴

The *Mellab* Transformed

As a consequence of the influx of Spanish Jews, the Fassi community became divided along “ethnic” lines. On the one hand were the worldly exiles, the *megorashim*, immensely proud of their Spanish heritage; on the other were the Arabic-speaking *toshavim*, or local Jews, deeply immersed in the Moroccan Arabo-Berber tradition. Each group worshipped in its own synagogue, revered its own rabbis, followed its own distinctive traditions in prayer, married among each other, and were even buried in their own separate cemetery. It was not until the 1700s that the two communities finally melded together, with Arabic becoming the common language, while the Spanish *minbag*, or ritual, prevailed in religious practice.¹⁵

The next two centuries were marked by extended periods of political and social turmoil. The size of the community fluctuated wildly in this period, as years of relative peace and prosperity were followed by calamities in the form of epidemic, famine, or war.¹⁶ In 1723, an extended drought turned the *mellab* into a ghost town, as Jews fled Fez for safer places: “The houses of the rich are empty, their inhabitants have disappeared, the gates of the courtyards are closed, weeds grow up and robbers enter, stealing the doors and the beds. Many houses have been demolished, their stones and rafters taken away. . . . Most of the streets of the *mellab* are deserted.”¹⁷ During this period, hunger killed more than 2,000 people, according to the register of the communal burial society, and a thousand more apostatized.

Another calamity deeply incised in popular memory was the two-year exile of the Jews from the *mellab* in 1790–1792, during the brief and infamous reign of Sultan Mawlay Yazid. The community as a whole was forced to move to the Qasba Sharda on the other side of Fez, abandoning the *mellab* to tribal contingents allied with the sultan. The dismantling of the Jewish presence in the *mellab* during this time was more or less complete. A mosque was built on the site of the main synagogue, using tombstones from the Jewish cemetery, and the cemetery itself was moved to Bab Gissa at the entrance to the Muslim quarter. The sources recount how the bones of the saintly rabbis were transported to the new cemetery in clay vessels. The exile lasted almost two years, until the death of Yazid, when the *qadi* (chief judge) of Fez ordered the mosque to be torn down and the Jews returned to their quarter.¹⁸

Conversion was an ever-present option in extreme cases of suffering, and according to Jewish sources, many adopted that course. Yet, as a group, Jews continued to form a strong solidarity under the leadership of their rabbis, who served not only as spiritual guides but also as representatives vis-à-vis the central power. The rabbis managed community affairs, counseling restraint, moderation, and public humility as the most effective means of collective self-preservation. In moments of distress, they organized prayers and fasting, and in times of famine, they supervised the stockpiling of food for community-wide distribution. When the sultan was angry with the Jews, it was the rabbi who was detained by the authorities or ransomed as a punishment.¹⁹ The calling of rabbi stayed in certain families for generations through the right of *serara*, or patrilineal inheritance, lending great prestige (Heb. *yahas*) to their name.²⁰ The community as a whole acquired status through the good reputation of its rabbis, by paying the obligatory taxes on time, by offering gifts to the ruling power on special occasions, and through the good offices provided by those among them who directly served the sultan. Through these mechanisms, the Jewish community maintained a niche in the body politic, even if it was sometimes a precarious one.²¹

In the mid nineteenth century, the fortunes of the Jews of Fez took a dramatic turn for the better. The “opening” of Morocco to Europe placed a handful of Jewish merchants having international connections at the center of a revitalized network of overseas trade, and led them to cautiously abandon their habitual submissiveness for a more Europeanized manner. Tastes evolved, stimulated by contact with Europeans, with the more urbane Jewish communities of the coast, and with their Muslim counterparts, whose expansive lifestyle represented the standard of good taste.²² Rich Jews built splendid residences inside the *mellah*, taking as their point of reference the elaborate palaces of the Muslim *nouveaux riches* going up on the outskirts of the medina at the same time.²³ They patronized the same skilled artisans, and the results are visible in the lavish interior décor of the homes of the High Street (Derb al-Fuqi) of the *mellah*.

The Houses of the Mellah

The *mellah* house (*dar*) is an organism made up of both collaborating and hierarchical elements. It cannot be described by simply dissecting its components, but must be understood as a whole with its complex structure of relations. From the exterior, the house is blind, its external walls showing only minimal openings. Very few of the windows are covered with the openwork wooden screen (*mashrabbiyya*). (The practice of opening windows on the street side

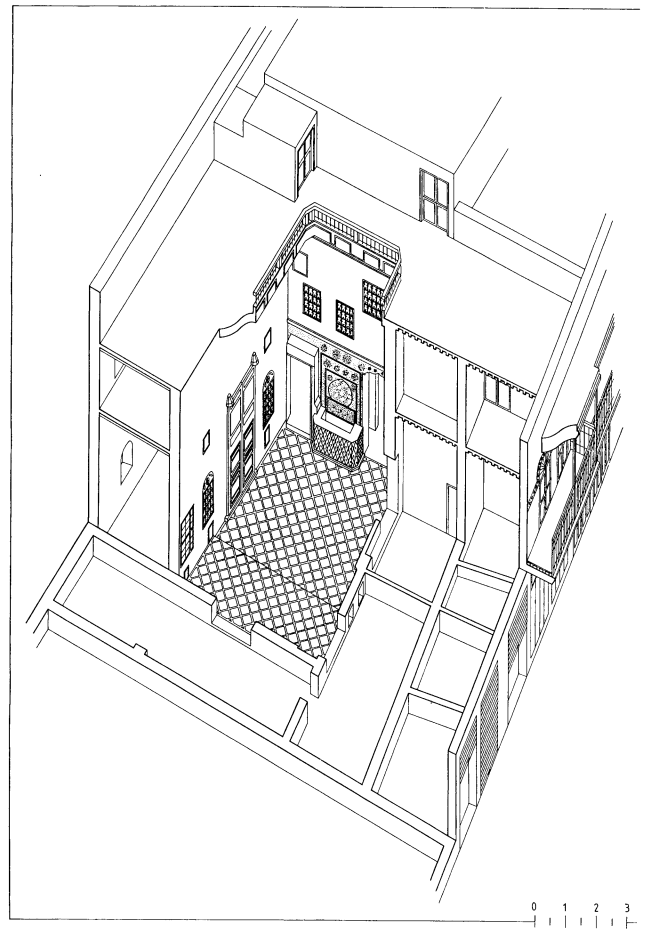


Figure 2 Axonometric view of a house on Derb al-Fuqi showing the interior courtyard with fountain

is a relatively recent one, adopted under the influence of Western building styles.) Access to the house is usually through a room or a corridor (*sqifa*) that mediates between the street and the interior, protecting the privacy of the courtyard. In the houses of the medina the entryway takes the shape of a dogleg, while in the houses of the *mellah* it is usually a straight corridor with a door at each end. This passage leads directly into the courtyard/patio, which is the symbolic and functional core of the house (Figure 2). The rigorous orthogonal geometry, the intricate woodwork, and the structural wooden beams that support the balconies above accentuate the regularity.

The life of the family revolves around the courtyard, and the surrounding rooms receive light and air from this central space. The elementary cell of the Moroccan house is the *bayt*, a room measuring about 2.5×7 meters. The *bayts* aggregate around the circumference of the house in a parquet-like pattern (Figure 3). In the Moroccan house, the

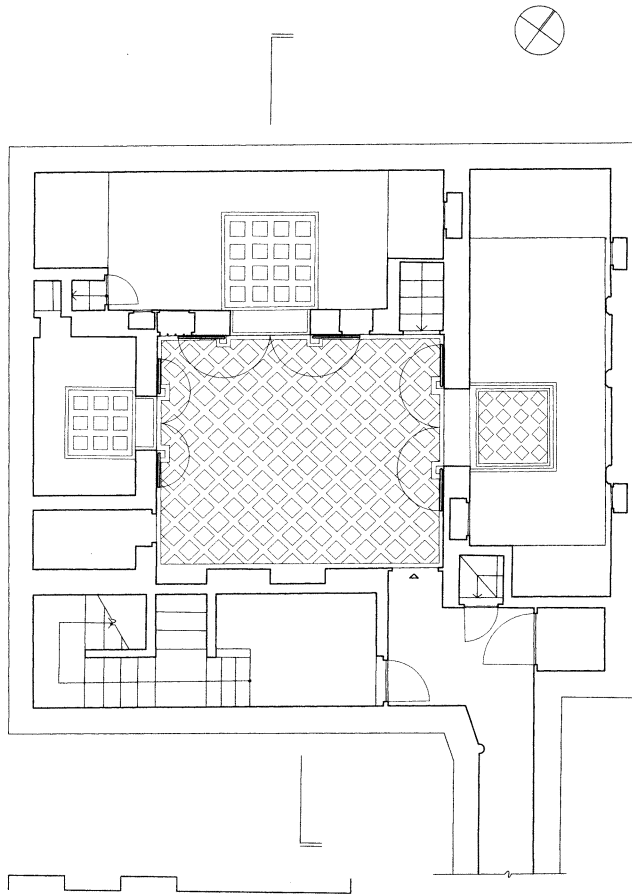


Figure 3 Plan of Dar Ben Simhoun on Derb al-Fuqi

bayt is formally secondary to the courtyard, unlike the European house, where the room takes precedence over other elements. As a result, the *bayt* is often deformed under the pressure of the irregularities of the external urban morphology, and the orthogonality of the room is often more perceptual than real. One side of the courtyard is made up of small functional rooms and the stair leading to the upper floors in the corner. Most houses have at least two floors, the upper one being identical in plan to the lower, although many of the houses on Derb al-Fuqi have three or more stories (Figure 4).

The roof terrace played an important social and functional role in the life of the house. During the day, it was a workshop of domestic activity, used for preparing food or drying laundry, while on the warmest nights the family used it for socializing and sleeping. Writing in 1902, Aubin called it “the chief pleasure-ground” of the *mellah*, where on feast days the “gilded Jewish youth disports itself in silk kaftans of the most alluring shades, and *djellabas* in which the imagination has been given full scope.”²⁴ At the feast of Sukkoth,²⁵ the family

would erect a small booth of reeds on the roof, decorate it with wall hangings and symbols of the harvest season, and dine in this rustic enclosure. After the holiday, the booth was disassembled and the material lowered to the street to provide fuel for the local bread oven.²⁶ Another use of the roof was less convivial. When the street below became dangerous, it was the sole means of communication between the houses, and in 1703, when disorderly troops pillaged the *mellah*, the Jews fled their quarter by means of the rooftops.²⁷ Another feature of the *mellah* house was the cellar, frequently divided into rooms and storage areas, and in some cases, having a door

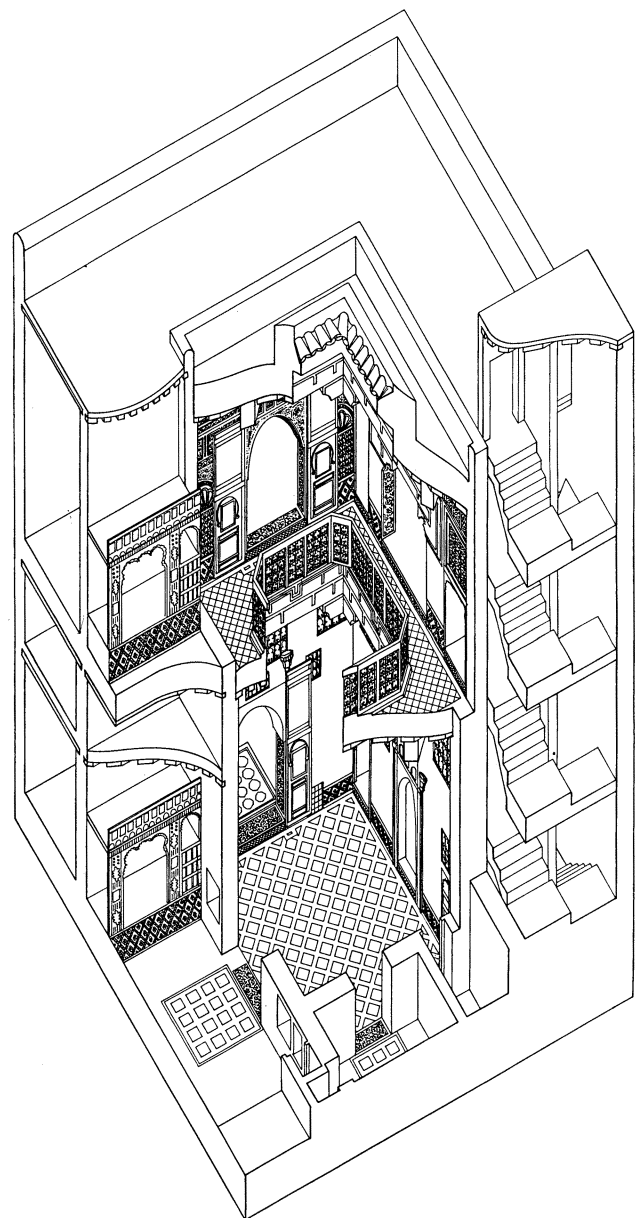


Figure 4 Axonometric view of Dar Ben Simhoun, Derb al-Fuqi

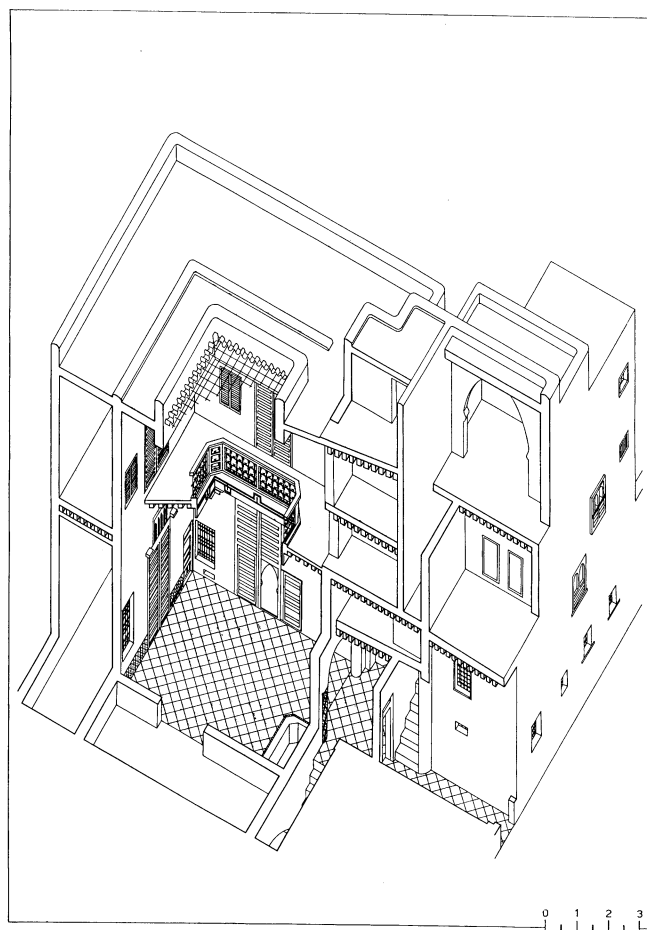


Figure 5 Axonometric view of house no. 220, Derb al-Fuqi

that gave access to the street via a hidden stair. One can only conjecture about the use of these underground spaces: to stock foodstuffs, to give shelter in times of trouble, to provide an escape route.

In reality, no one house in the *mellah* corresponds to this simple model. Processes of transformation such as the acquisition or loss of one or more *bayts* and their subdivision have in some cases reduced the courtyard to an airshaft. In other cases, the spaces around the courtyard have been transformed into labyrinths of small rooms leading to half levels and hidden stairways to the upper floors. Access to these “secret” spaces was often hidden in a cupboard, making it difficult to tell without close inspection that the stairway in fact existed (Figures 5, 6). The angles of the courtyard beneath the stair housed the toilet facilities, equipped with running water from Fez’s abundant subterranean supply.²⁸ Although the dimensions of the rooms and the courtyard may differ slightly from house to house, the use of the elementary cell means that the total width of each

house is between 11 and 12 meters, giving the fabric as a whole a certain regularity (Figures 7, 8).

From a formal perspective, Jewish houses of the *mellah* differ little from their Muslim counterparts in the medina. Both were constructed according to similar methods and prototypes.²⁹ Muslim *muallams* (masters) supervised building projects in the *mellah*, and Muslim craftsmen executed the finer decorative handiwork. “Carpenters and construction workers” appears on a list of Jewish occupations in a census of the *mellah* made in 1879, while “tilemakers” was specifically signaled as a non-Jewish profession, indicating that Muslims carried out the finer decorative work (Figures 9, 10).³⁰ Perhaps with the exception of Yemen, where Jewish houses were readily identifiable because they were kept lower than Muslim structures, the tendency to integrate Jewish with Muslim building traditions seems to have been pervasive throughout in the Islamic world.

The furnishings of the household were very simple before the twentieth century, even in the houses of the wealthy. When the Jews were exiled from the *mellah* in 1790, they took with them as many of their possessions as

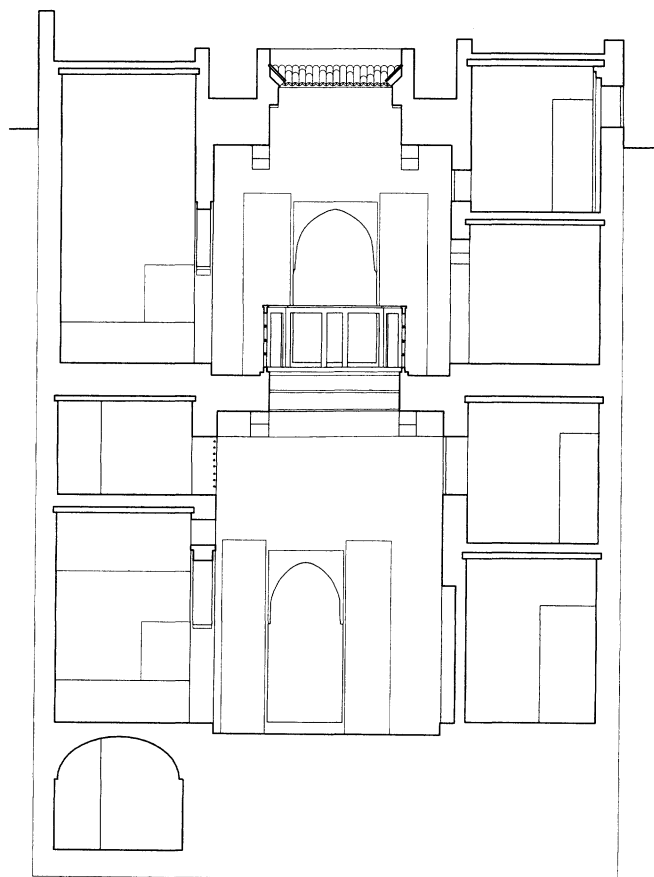


Figure 6 Section of Dar Ben Simhoun, Derb al-Fuqi



Figure 7 Plan of the fabric of the *mellah*. Older sections are represented by the ground floor plan and more recent sections by the cadastral plan.

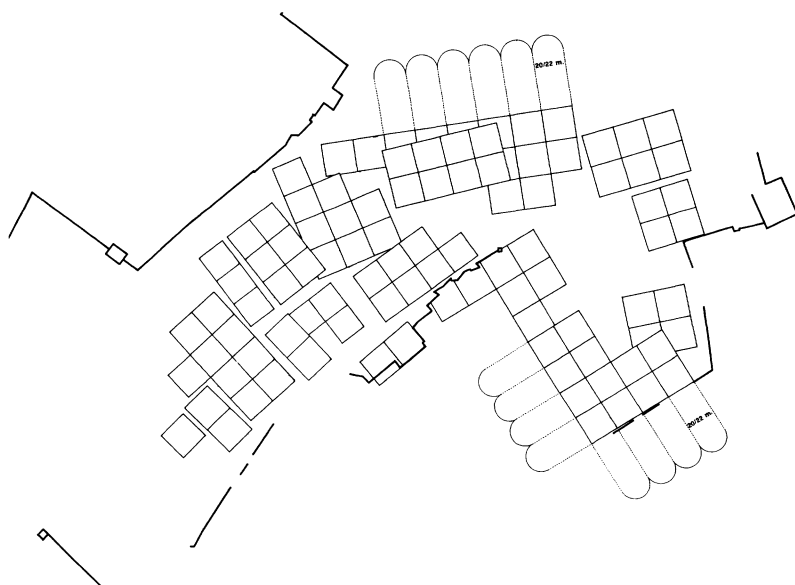


Figure 8 Diagram showing regularity of subdivision within the *mellah*

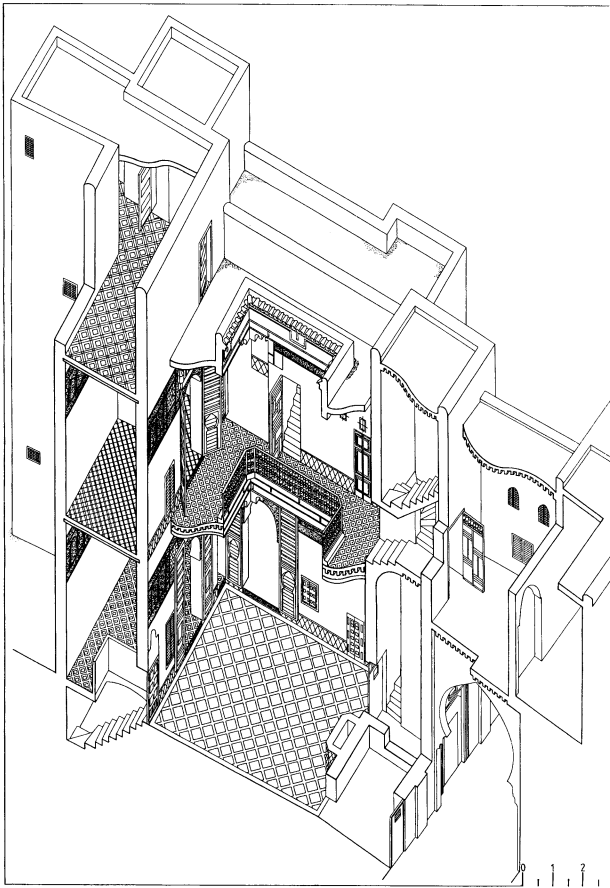


Figure 9 Axonometric view of house no. 255, Derb al-Fuqi

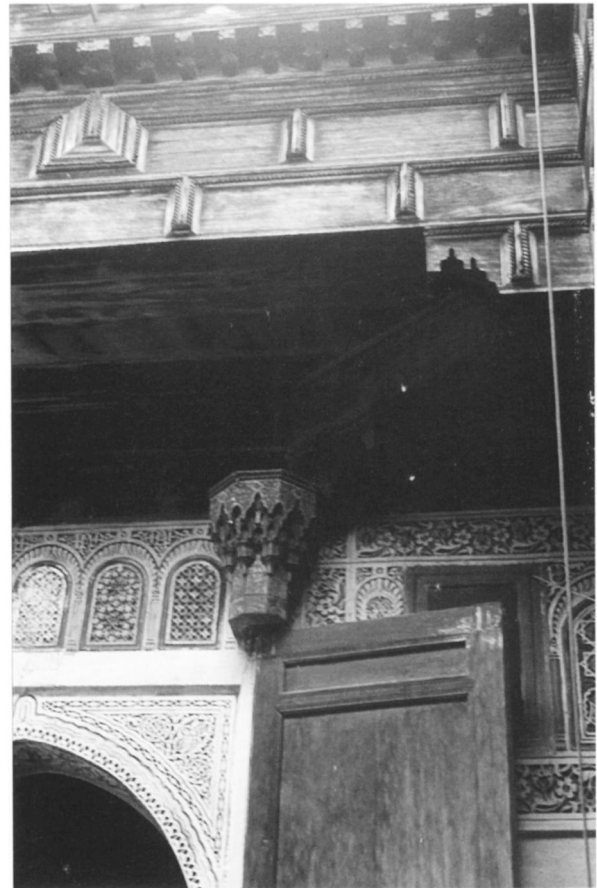


Figure 10 Interior decoration of Dar Ben Simhoun

they could, including “armoires, tables, large and small cooking vessels, dishes, and special plates, pots and pans for Passover.”³¹ Among the furnishings of the *bayt* was an elaborate matrimonial bed made of carved wood, as well as small wooden cabinets built in the wall for storing objects. In terms of basic accoutrements, there was little to distinguish a Jewish house from a Muslim one of the same class. It seems, however, that Western-style furnishings were introduced into the *mellab* earlier than into the medina, and one European traveler speaks of “a considerable number of European comforts” in the richest Jewish houses.³²

There were topical reminders that this was Jewish space. Hebrew phrases of benediction were often used as elements of decoration at the entry to a room (Figure 11), and the amulets known as *mezuzot* were ritually required to be placed on the right side of the outside front door on the street. The small rectangle niche carved into the doorpost that once held the *mezuzah* can still be seen on some houses. The outside window frames of Jewish houses were painted in vivid colors—blue, yellow, rose, and bright red—con-

trasting sharply with the sober exteriors of the medina.³³ The only real typological deviation from the Muslim model is the entryway, straight as opposed to dogleg, suggesting that Jews were less sensitive than Muslims about maintaining the strict privacy of the interior.

In the Mediterranean region, the most important indicator distinguishing the fabric of the Jewish quarter from its non-Jewish counterpart is its greater density. Limitations on building space meant that transformations, subdivisions, and vertical additions often reached pathological levels in places such as Venice, where the houses are built one on top of the other. But in Fez this difference was less apparent.³⁴ Historic densities in the *mellab* are hard to determine, but some generalizations are possible. The documentation indicates that periodic famine and disease killed off large percentages of the population of both the *mellab* and the medina with chilling frequency, relieving pressure on living space. As late as 1901, an epidemic of malaria reduced the population of the *mellab* by a third.³⁵ The entire city, *mellab* and medina, was invested by a flood of migrants from

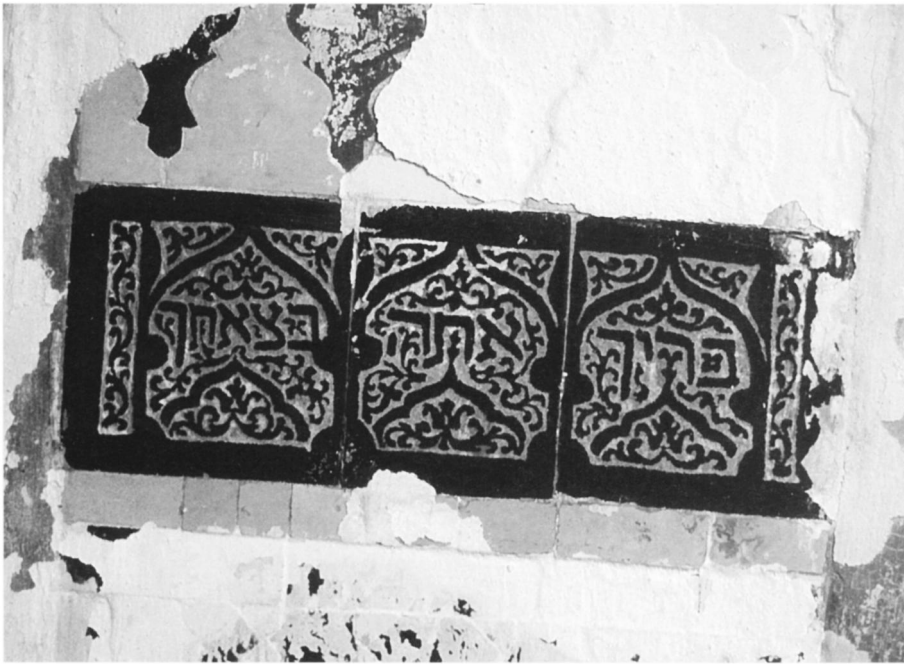


Figure 11 Hebrew inscription in tile: "Blessings upon you on your departure"

the countryside from the mid nineteenth century onward, raising densities everywhere and giving rise to a large "floating population" of indeterminate size. René-Leclerc remarked in 1904 that "the *mellah* is as dirty and as badly maintained as is the rest of Fez," suggesting that densities and health conditions there may not have been any worse than those of the *medina*.³⁶

Derb al-Fuqi (The High Street)

This long, straight street commences at the monumental *burj*,³⁷ or main gate of the *mellah*, marking the separation between the Jewish quarter and the rest of the Muslim city (Figure 12). From there it makes a gentle turn to conform to the shape of the Royal Palace in Fez al-Jadid and the adjoining gardens of Lalla Mina, before it ends in a blind wall. Practically speaking, the street (*derb*) is a segment between two blind walls. It forms the backbone of the neighborhood unit. From the High Street several perpendicular streets branch out leading to the market (*suq*) at the center of the *mellah*. The hierarchy of the street pattern is simple and based on two elements: (1) the *derb* itself, acting as the matrix onto which the doors of the most important houses open, and (2) the side streets running perpendicular to the *derb*, which provide the structure for a secondary settlement of lesser houses. Many streets, including the Derb al-Fuqi, end in a tunnel darkened overhead by an extension covering the street (*sabat*). The tradition of the *sabat* is deeply rooted in Arab urban culture. If a homeowner

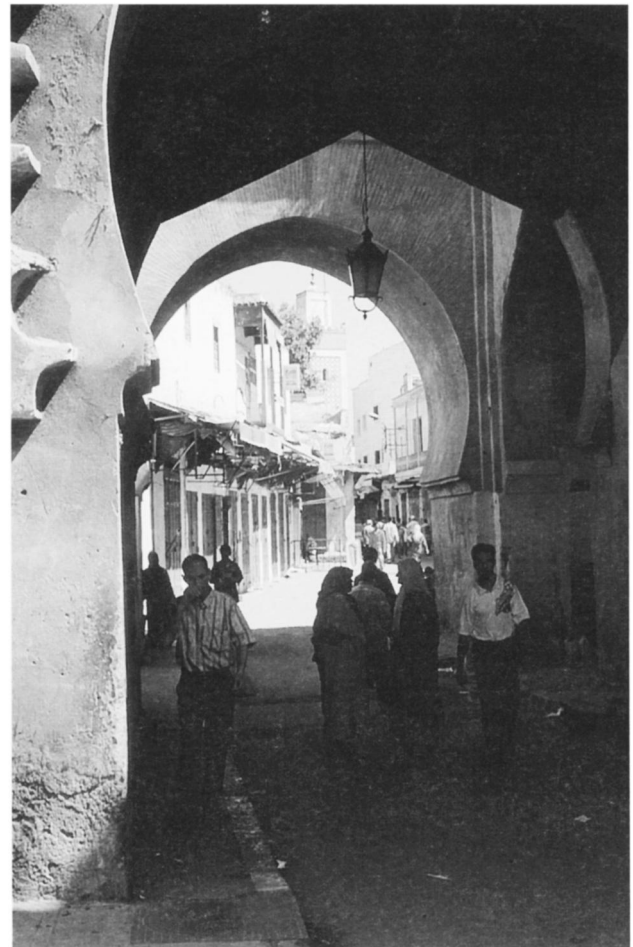


Figure 12 The gate of the *mellah*

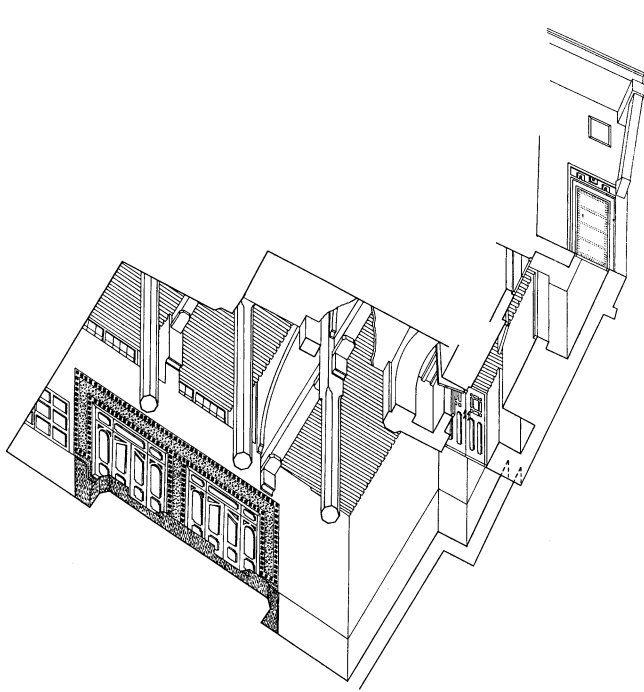


Figure 13 Axonometric view of the Ibn Danan synagogue as seen from below

wanted to add a room above the street level of his house by using the opposite wall as support, he only had to get the consent of his neighbor. Urban growth was the result of private negotiation between the parties and was not controlled by the rules and regulations of the municipality.³⁸

The building fabric varies in depth and quality depending on its location. Most interesting is the block between the Derb al-Fuqi and the exterior wall of the *mellab* on the northern side shielding the elaborate houses that are the real jewels of the *mellab* (see Figure 1). The great houses appear to be aligned to the outer wall, and the uniformity of their basic dimensions indicates that they were probably planned at the same time. Indeed, it appears that this block is a series of old mansions, originally built at the rear of the plot and attached to the thick outer wall of the *mellab* overlooking the palace gardens, giving them access to both light and air. Each house has progressively encroached on the front edge of its plot by adding on rooms that are dependencies of it, so that the public space of the *derb* eventually became invaded. The original street was no doubt much wider, but it lost area over time to the homeowners along the street. These encroachments explain the long, dark internal corridor the visitor must traverse before reaching the courtyard of the house.

It is important to note that Derb al-Fuqi is mainly a residential street with few amenities, the most important being

the local bread oven. Traditionally, the bakers in the *mellab* were Muslim, one of the few categories of employment not filled by Jews, the reason being that the bread oven had to function on the Sabbath.³⁹ Nowadays, business in the street is confined to a few small-scale entrepreneurs who display their wares on outdoor tables in a tentative effort at commercialization. The inhabitants of the *derb* usually walk the short distance to the main *suq* for their shopping.

The Gozlan and the Mansano synagogues face each other midway along Derb al-Fuqi, constituting an urban node. The Gozlan synagogue is nothing more than an annex to the house next door, but the Mansano synagogue projects an important influence that goes beyond the limits of the *derb*. At the end of the nineteenth century, according to the “Yahas Fas,” there were fifteen synagogues in the *mellab* scattered around the quarter (see Figure 1). Residents were at the most just a few steps away from a place of prayer. Most of these houses of worship were built in preexisting rooms within private houses and were furnished very simply. However, several were richly ornamented with stucco and mosaic tile and used Islamic architectural motifs such as arches, painted wooden ceilings, and carved wooden screens to clarify the functions of their various parts (Figure 13).⁴⁰ The smaller synagogues belonged to individuals and were supported by donations from members, while the larger ones were the property of the community. The “Yahas Fas” notes that the only synagogue supported out of public funds in 1879 was the Slat al-Fajr (Synagogue of the Dawn) where the early risers prayed. The text points out that all the synagogues of Fez were relatively recent, because the ancient ones were destroyed “in bad times” and were “forgotten,” an apparent reference to the pillages of 1646 and 1790. The claim by Fassi Jews that certain synagogues (such as the recently renovated Ibn Danan) date back to the seventeenth century can be explained by the fact that although a synagogue may have been severely damaged, Jews continued to pray in its ruins, rebuilding it as soon as possible. Thus it may make more sense to speak of a continuity of sites rather than one of actual structures.⁴¹

Another feature of the street is the presence of workshops at the lower level of the house, two or three steps below street level. The *mellab* of Fez in the nineteenth century was a beehive of activity, with many small ateliers devoted to the production of fine handicrafts, and especially to the working of precious metals, which was a Jewish specialty. The “Yahas Fas” tells us that the most important single craft practiced in the *mellab* was the production of *sqalli*, a metallic thread used for decorating cloth and other objects. Over 300 men and women of the *mellab* were employed at this trade in 1879, making it the most impor-

tant single Jewish occupation in terms of both the number of craftspeople and the value of the goods produced.⁴² It was closely associated with a variety of other luxury crafts, such as the manufacture of wall hangings, handbags, saddles, harnesses, belts, and slippers. The work of twisting the metal and silk together to form a braid was the responsibility of women and took place in the home, allowing them to rotate this work with other domestic chores.⁴³ Other trades practiced in the *mellah* in 1879 included: tailoring, especially of military uniforms and of fine imported fabrics for the palace household; the manufacture of harnesses for the royal cavalry; and the working of copper, silver, and gold into a variety of objects ranging from simple hardware to exquisite bracelets, earrings, and heavy gold belts.⁴⁴

Much commercial activity took place in the street, without benefit of a permanent shelter. Tribesmen from the surrounding Middle Atlas Mountains brought in chickens and eggs, while fruits and vegetables were supplied by the Jews of Sefrou, an important nearby agricultural community. The Sefriouis would arrive in the *mellah* on Thursday afternoon, spend the night under the arches of the main gate, and sell their merchandise at the busy Friday morning market, returning home before the start of the Sabbath. They would carry with them manufactured goods to be resold at other rural markets, thus recirculating Fassi products throughout the hinterland.⁴⁵

The Lower Streets

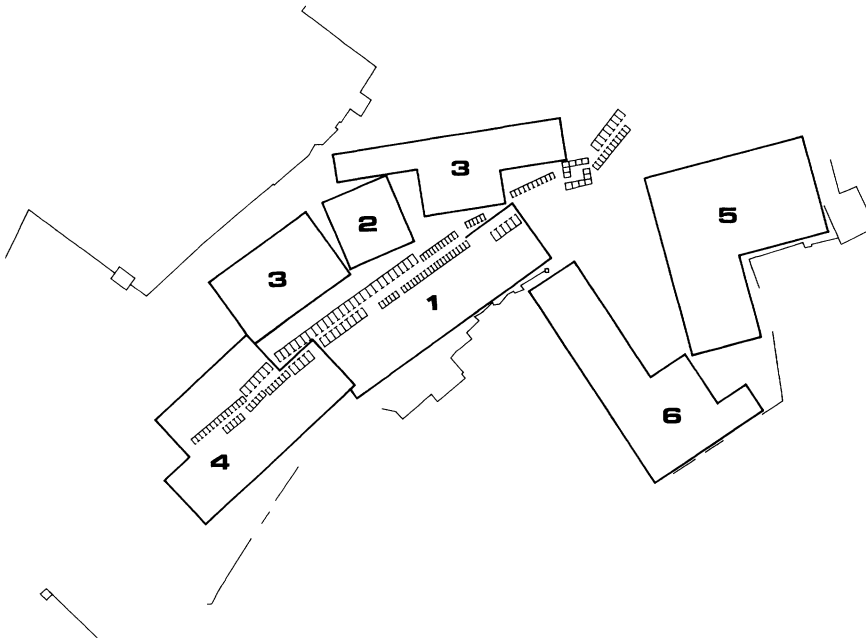
Derb al-Fuqi, which contains the most beautiful houses, covers only a small portion of the *mellah*. The fabric changes as we move into other parts of the quarter. The neighborhood south of the *suq* is far older and offers a more interesting layout consisting of two streets running parallel to the *suq* and a series of shorter perpendicular streets in the north-south direction. The original alignment of the central lane of this neighborhood has been lost over the course of time, and the street changes direction often. We can reconstruct the original path by paying attention to the marks left by the walls in the fabric. The blocks were quadrangles of 25 to 30 meters on a side, but today they are completely transformed due to a process of subdivision, subtraction, and addition. This phenomenon also tends to convert homes having a single courtyard into multifamily dwellings by reducing the house to a few rooms stacked one on top of the other. Frequently, one cell of the house is converted into a shop due to the commercial influence radiating from the nearby *suq*. Streets that are completely occluded in the fabric can still be traced in the plan, while others that are in the process of disappearing are visible as impasses.

The impasse or cul-de-sac (*driba*) is a common feature in both medina and *mellah*, consisting of a dead-end street closed off by a door giving access onto a microneighborhood of a few houses or a single large house inhabited by one extended family.⁴⁶ It is a version of the courtyard fabric inscribed on the street pattern, and it gives access to houses that are in the deepest part of the block. Impasses are present most often in fragmented blocks where the number of units and dwellings has multiplied. The function of the impasse is to increase the security of the group and its sense of mutual identity while mediating the transition from public to private space. It is a sort of entryway at the urban level. The maturity of this lower neighborhood is underscored by the presence of a number of synagogues in close association. Here are found the recently restored Ibn Danan synagogue and the Slat al-Fassiyyin, reportedly the oldest synagogue in Fez, laid out on a basilica plan (see Figure 1).⁴⁷

The few open spaces in the *mellah* consist of the formalization of leftover areas. These spaces were not plazas or squares left open for the purpose of staging public events, but rather are simple widenings in the street that became the setting for public manifestations. For example, on the day of his bar mitzvah, the young man was marched through the streets of the *mellah* led by his rabbi-teacher and his relatives. After the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, he was carried back through the streets on a chair, like a bride.⁴⁸ In moments of distress such as a famine or a drought, the rabbis would organize public prayers in which the Scrolls of Law would be carried through the streets accompanied by the lamentations of the worshippers.⁴⁹ This appropriation of the street reinforced the sense of the *mellah* as specifically Jewish space, where little distinction was drawn between “private” and “public” in terms of ceremonial life.

Unlike the other major *mellahs* of Morocco, such as Tetuán, Rabat, and even Marrakesh, the *mellah* of Fez has a complex morphology that reveals its incremental growth over time. This is confirmed by the position of the main gate, which is oriented on a north-south axis. Its orientation is incongruent with the main street, which must turn slightly in order to enter into it. We conjecture that the two sections of the *mellah* that are the oldest were probably laid out concurrently: first, the triangle of Derb al-Fuqi, and second, the area south of the *suq* that appears on the map as three blocks of regular size divided by an impasse (Figure 14). The greater age of the area close to the main gate is confirmed by the presence of the Slat al-Fassiyyin, the most ancient and important of the communal synagogues (see Figure 1).⁵⁰

Figure 14 Diagram showing the sequential growth of the *mellah* based on typological evidence (compare with Figure 7, plan of the fabric of the *mellah*)



Originally, the market area located along the main street (Derb al-Suq) must have been a large, irregular, and open space, because the plan shows traces of commercial encroachment on both sides of the street. It is not difficult to imagine how the original temporary wooden shop fronts eventually became fixed in space. Charles René-Leclerc, writing at the turn of the century, called this area “a *qaysariyya* in miniature,” filled with the shops of grocers and sellers of products of European manufacture unavailable in the medina, such as shoe polish, cooking pots, colanders, and knives.⁵¹ Some of these shops also sold wine and fig brandy (*mahiya*), a specialty product of the Jews, forbidden for sale in the Muslim quarters.⁵² The shops and markets of the *mellah*, according to Le Tourneau, were supervised by the *muhtasib* of Fez al-Jadid, an official of the municipality who inspected weights and measures and generally enforced standards of cleanliness and honesty in the conduct of commercial affairs.⁵³

Moving down the main street toward the Place du Commerce, the fabric changes to one that is more recent. The Nawawil quarter to the south of the *mellah* probably dates from the end of the nineteenth century, although it aligns with the original tissue around the Synagogue of the Fassiyin (see Figure 14). The toponym of this quarter refers to a type of structure—the straw huts (*nawawil*) erected by country people as a temporary shelter. The name suggests that migrants from the rural areas around Fez originally inhabited the quarter.

Unlike the rest of Fez, the *mellah* contains few important landmarks other than the *burj* and the cemetery. The *burj* itself was a kind of cemetery, serving as the crypt for martyrs

who died in a riot in the *mellah* in 1465. The cemetery outside the *mellah* migrated several times over the centuries. The site of the present cemetery is relatively new, dating from the early part of the nineteenth century. As one of the few open spaces in the environs of the *mellah*, the cemetery was used for a variety of outdoor activities, not all of them licit. It was also the scene of the night-long vigils held at the tombs of venerated rabbis considered to have miraculous properties of healing and intercession (Figure 15).

The Mellah and the City

The *mellah* extends over a plateau overlooking the Wadi Zaytun that gently slopes down to the Jewish cemetery. In order to understand the morphology of the site, it must be seen in relation to Fez al-Jadid, whose plan is very clear and serial. It is a sequence of separate nodes in the form of: (1) gates reinforced by a mosque, as seen at Bab Dkaken and its mosque, al-Jam’a al-Kabir; (2) huge monumental esplanades (*mashwars*) encircled by high walls; and (3) three rectilinear *suqs*, each of which is the backbone of a settlement. Each settlement is enclosed by walls and communicates with the exterior through the single monumental gate. The palace overshadows and protects the ensemble; it is a quarter unto itself, having a single main entrance at Bab Dkaken, which is the real pole of Fez al-Jadid. Routes to it can be controlled by opening and closing the gates, making the spaces in between similar to the watertight compartments of a submarine. In case of an insurrection, it was possible to isolate the palace or any one part of Fez al-Jadid. In the nineteenth



Figure 15 The cemetery of the *mellah*

century, the Jews of the *mellah* had three possibilities when emerging from their quarter. They could head south toward the river valley, passing through a gate near the Bab Semmarin that is now demolished; they could go out the west, exiting via the present Place du Commerce; or they could go to Old Fez, traversing Fez al-Jadid via the main axis of its *souq*. If they chose this last route, they first had to cross an area between the *mellah* and Fez al-Jadid that was called the Sekkakin. This was a transitional area where Jewish and Muslim shops were intermingled and space was shared.⁵⁴

Outside the *mellah*, Muslims easily recognized Jews because of their distinctive dress. A handful of Jews had their shops in the medina, and others were required to go there on a daily basis to conduct their affairs. Adherence to a strict code of behavior usually allowed the Jew to pass unmolested, but it was a passage fraught with tension. Muslims, for their part, entered the *mellah* at will. When a Muslim became sick in the pre-Protectorate era, he went to the *mellah* to seek treatment, advice, and medicine. If he needed a letter written in a foreign language, or wanted to read a foreign newspaper, he had to consult a Jew.⁵⁵ If he wished to engage in activities not permitted in the medina, such as drinking alcohol or gambling, he would have to repair to the *mellah*. But on the whole, actual mixing between the two groups was kept to a minimum.

Although the two groups kept apart physically, they shared a distinctive set of common values.⁵⁶ Whether Jew or Muslim, Fassis were known for their acute moral sensibility, their respect for the models of the past, a serene awareness of

their aristocratic antecedents. A precarious balance between similarity and difference characterized intercommunal relations in premodern Fez, lending special importance to the barriers that kept the two groups separate. The walls surrounding the mellah constituted a metaphorical as well as physical divide, separating two communities who agreed to cohabit but not to assimilate. This understanding was undergirded by an array of complex emotions that included mutual wariness as well as acceptance, attraction as well as repulsion, tolerance as well as ill will. These emotions formed the substratum of an unwritten social contract that allowed Jews to flourish in a Moroccan milieu that thoroughly shaped their self-image and molded their identity.

The coming of the French Protectorate in 1912 was the watershed event that marked the beginning of the end of the *mellah* as a Jewish quarter. The French occupation of Fez in April 1912 was accompanied by an artillery attack that caused great damage to the physical structure of the *mellah*. It was followed by a pillage that lasted several days.⁵⁷ The Jewish population fled the quarter for the relative safety of the palace grounds and took shelter in the empty lion cages of the sultan's menagerie. The rebuilding of the *mellah* was a slow and painful process that took several years. The fronts of many buildings were altered to accommodate more modern building styles, windows and balconies were added, and the face of the *mellah* changed radically. Shortly thereafter, wealthy Jews began abandoning its confined spaces for villas in the new town, leaving the poorer Jews behind. Eventually they too left, part of the massive exodus

surrounding the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Today the houses of the quarter have found a new life as the dwelling places of Muslims. Only a few signs of the former Jewish presence are still in evidence, such as the restored Ibn Danan synagogue and the whitewashed tombs of the carefully tended cemetery (see Figure 15).

In Conclusion

To sum up the 500-year architectural heritage of the *mellab* of Fez on the basis of a single study is hardly possible. However, certain points emerge that may help us to understand the evolution of the Jewish quarter in Morocco and in the Islamic Mediterranean city more generally.

First, an adherence to past models was as important to Fassi Jews as it was to Fassi Muslims, and the continuity of building types such as the courtyard house within the quarter reflects a conservatism that prevailed in other spheres of cultural production as well. Unfortunately, we do not have the benefit of archeological studies to confirm the general impression that much of the standing architecture of the *mellab* does not predate the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the existing structures conform to typologies having roots deep in the Mediterranean past. The repeated destruction of the Jewish quarter documented in the chronicles supports a scenario of continuous rebuilding on old foundations, especially in the case of the synagogues, which suffered most from the periodic devastation.⁵⁸ We must look to buildings constructed in the Protectorate period to find any significant deviation from the types described above.

The ability of Jewish architecture to absorb influences from its surroundings through a process of creative mimesis is not particular to Fez. It exists at every time and place of Jewish habitation in the Diaspora. It is not surprising that the fabric and feeling of the *mellab* replicates that of the medina, although on a smaller scale: the impasse, the *sabat*, the *sqifa* are only a few examples of appropriated building forms. Nor are the sensations when walking through the *mellab* dissimilar from those felt when walking through the medina: the echo of voices behind closed doors, the shouting of the children at play in the narrow streets, the deep silences of the night. Other aspects of the urban form joined the *mellab* with the rest of the city: for example, the underground water system of the *mellab* was part of the canalization that fed Fez al-Jadid.⁵⁹ The *mellab* was tied to the larger city through many dependencies, both seen and unseen.

Finally, it should be noted that unlike the Jewish quarters of Rabat, Tetuán, and Marrakesh, planned and settled at one time, the *mellab* of Fez grew slowly, expanding from

a small central core of settlement to one that was larger and more differentiated. The irregularity of the street plan and the variety of building types found within the walls of the quarter support the notion of a slow process of organic growth (see Figure 14). Evidence from the physical data explains why two different dates are often given for the founding of the *mellab*, one corresponding with the founding of Fez al-Jadid in 1276, and the other coinciding with the expulsion of the Jews from Old Fez in 1438. Both dates mark moments in the historical process of the *mellab*'s expansion. It is possible to imagine a small Jewish settlement outside the walls of Fez al-Jadid at the end of the thirteenth century, coinciding with the founding of Fez al-Jadid and providing a home to Jews associated with the palace service. Another spurt of growth came in the fifteenth century, when the Jewish population was expelled from Old Fez en masse. This relocation of the entire community, including its rabbis, established the long-term viability of the quarter. The *mellab* became the spiritual as well as physical center of Jewish Fez. Yet another jump occurred sixty years later in 1492, with the arrival of the exiles from Spain, who helped crystallize already existing social groupings. In other words, the *mellab* was an organic structure, expanding and contracting at various stages of its life cycle, usually as a result of events taking place far beyond its walls.

Moroccan Jews in the Diaspora and Israel continue to maintain a strong connection to their roots, reenacting special ceremonies tied to their place of origin, returning periodically to visit their former homes, and surrounding themselves with symbols that act as reminders of the past.⁶⁰ Outsiders often wonder how Moroccan Jews in Israel, Canada, France, or Venezuela manage to hold fast to their former identity, appending to it other identities with an alacrity that defies explanation. Central to this attachment is a warm and positive recollection of life in the *mellab*. Mystical, paradoxical, and elusive, this attachment becomes clearer if we recall the historical reality it represents: a physical separation that permitted a convergence of mentalities, making Jewish and Muslim Moroccans into mirror images of each other.

AUTHORS' NOTE: This article is the result of intensive collaboration among historians, architectural historians, and architects, each contributing particular skills to develop the corpus of material. The goal of this collaboration was to produce a seamless narrative enriched by the participation of various proficiencies and disciplinary perspectives. Miller worked with the historical resources that shed light on the quarter as "lived-in" space; Petruccioli provided analytical and typological readings of the built environment, and Petruccioli and Bertagnin organized the architectural renderings. The authors wish to thank especially Sahar Bazzaz and Zachary Hinchliffe, who made important contributions to the preparation of the article, Bazzaz in researching sources for the historical portions, and Hinch-

liffe in drawing some of the plans and in organizing the visual materials. Ety Terem helped with translating the Hebrew sources.

Many others contributed to this study, among them the Harvard and MIT students who took part in the workshop conducted in 100-degree heat in Fez in the summer of 1998. Students made drawings of a number of dwellings in the *mellah* inhabited by working-class Moroccans, and completed a radiographic survey of the entire quarter. The graciousness of their reception will long be remembered. This work would not have been possible without the cooperation of Moroccan authorities. The authors wish to thank the Jewish community of Fez, Dr. A. Guigui, President; M. Fillali-Baba, president of the Communauté Urbaine de Fès; Engineer Sefrioui of the municipality of Fez; M. Hajami, former director of the Agency for the Development of Fez (ADER), and Hassan Radouine, architect; Prof. Abdelatif Bencherifa, vice-president of al-Akhawayn University; Said Mouline, Director of Architecture in the Ministry of Urbanism and Habitat and constant supporter of this work; Prof. Driss Mansouri, philosopher, diplomat, and friend; Abdeslam Bekrate of the Wilaya of Fez; Mohammed Fassi Fehri, governor of Fès Medina; Prof. Mina El-Mghari-Baïda of Mohammed V University; and Prof. Mohammed Naciri, dean of Moroccan geographers. The workshop was cosponsored by the Moroccan Studies Program at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, and the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Udine, Italy. Additional funding was provided by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation of New York City and the Maurice Amado Foundation of Los Angeles. The authors are grateful to all the contributors for their support.

A word on translation and transliteration: foreign words in parentheses are Arabic unless otherwise indicated. Most are in the classical form with a few exceptions that are rendered in the dialect: for example, *derb* rather than *darb*, *sqifa* rather than *saqifa*. *Mellah* is used instead of the classical *mal-lah* for the sake of consistency with the rest of the literature on the Jewish quarter in Morocco, which is mainly in French.

Notes

1. On colonial urbanism in Morocco, see Henri Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le Protectorat du Maroc de 1914 à 1923," in J. Royer, ed., *L'urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux; communications et rapports du Congrès International de l'Urbanisme aux Colonies et dans les Pays de Latitude Intertropicale*, 2 vols. (La Charité-sur-Loire, 1932), 1: 59–80.
2. For example, see Georges Vajda, "Un recueil de textes historiques judéo-marocains," *Hespéris* 35 (1948): 321.
3. On Jewish traders in the Mediterranean in the medieval period, see S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–1988), especially 1: 180–183.
4. Roger Le Tourneau, *Fès avant le Protectorat*, 2nd ed. (Rabat, 1987). Le Tourneau says that even in this early period, the Jews contributed handsomely to the royal treasury in the amount of 30,000 dinars of gold in taxes each year (p. 44).
5. H. Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1974), 1: 346–347.
6. Simon Levy, "Fès et ses synagogues: Une restauration pour le souvenir et l'avenir," unpublished text. Levy cites Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, *Mu'jib fi talkhis akhbar al-Maghrib* (The admirable in the summary of information about Maghrib) (Casablanca, 1978), 434–435, as the source of the quotation.
7. Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 66.

8. Among the major cities of Morocco, the *mellah* of Marrakesh was built in the sixteenth century under the Sa'di dynasty; the *mellah* of Meknes was built in the seventeenth century under the Alawi Sultan Isma'il, and the *mellahs* of Rabat, Salé, and Tétouán were built early in the nineteenth century.
9. Simon Levy, "Hara et Mellah: Les mots, l'histoire et l'institution," in Abdelahad Sebt, ed., *Histoire et linguistique* (Rabat, 1992), 46; Mercedes García-Arenal, "The Revolution of Fas in 869/1465 and the Death of Sultan 'Abd al-Haqq al-Marini," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41, part 1 (1978): 44–45.
10. Quoted in Louis Brunot and Élie Malka, *Textes judéo-arabes de Fès: Textes, transcription, traduction annotée* (Rabat, 1939), 197.
11. Mercedes García-Arenal, "Jewish Converts to Islam in the Muslim West," in Uri Rubin and David Wasserstein, eds., *Dhimmi and Others: Jews and Christians and the World of Classical Islam* (Winona Lake, Ind., 1997), 243.
12. Roger Le Tourneau, "Notes sur les lettres latines de Nicolas Clénard relatant son séjour dans le royaume de Fès (1540–41)," *Hespéris* 19 (1934): 51–53; see also Jane Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life* (Leiden, 1980), 47–48.
13. On the legacy of Sephardic culture in the Middle East, see the collection edited by Harvey Goldberg, *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era* (Bloomington, Ind., 1996).
14. *Descripción general de África* (Málaga, 1599), quoted in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *Entre el Islam y Occidente: Vida de Samuel Pallache, judío de Fez*, (Madrid, 1999), 40–41.
15. See Simón Levy, "Arabófonos e hispanófonos (bildiyin y 'azmiyin) en la judería de Fez, dos siglos después de la expulsión," in Mohammed Salhi, ed., *El siglo XVII Hispanomarroquí* (Rabat, 1997), 333–351.
16. Norman Cigar, "Société et vie politique à Fès sous les premiers 'Alaouites (c. 1660/1830)," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 18 (1978–1979): 99. The two most important historical sources used in this study are "Dibre ha-Yamim," a manuscript in Hebrew and Judeo-arabic found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Hebrew MS #1425), partially translated in Georges Vajda, "Un recueil de textes historiques judéo-marocains," *Hespéris* 35 (1948): 311–358, and 36 (1949): 139–188, and in the "Yahas Fas" (The lineage of Fez), an unpaginated manuscript in Hebrew and Judeo-arabic found at the Library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in Paris, MS #84. The "Yahas" was written in 1879 in response to a series of questions sent to the rabbis of Fez by the directorship of the AIU regarding the status of their community. Our thanks to Jean-Claude Kuperminc, conservator of the AIU archives, who gave us permission to photocopy this document. See also Y. D. Semach, "Une chronique juive de Fès: Le 'Yahas Fès' de Ribbi Abner Hassarfaty," *Hespéris* 19 (1934): 79–94, for a summary of the text.
17. Vajda, "Recueil," 36 (1949): 161–162.
18. Ibid., 36 (1949): 170–181.
19. Ibid., 35 (1948): 333, 337–338, 344; 36 (1949): 144, 146–147.
20. Shlomo Doshen, *The Mellah Society: Jewish Communal Life in Sherifian Morocco* (Chicago, 1989) 71–72.
21. In addition to the *jizya*, or poll tax, Jews were subject to other special taxes imposed when the sultan was in need of ready cash. The coming to power of a new sultan was also time for a payment of the *hadiyya*, or a "gift," handed over by various social groups including the Jews; see Vajda, "Recueil," 35 (1948): 318, 321, 331. Also Rahma Bourqia, "Don et théatralité: Réflexion sur le rituel du don (*hadiyya*) offert au Sultan au XIX^e siècle," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 31 (1993): 61–75.
22. Finding lodgings in the medina was "nearly impossible" for foreigners in the nineteenth century, so most stayed in the *mellah* in the houses of the wealthy; Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 173. Contemporary travel accounts give colorful first-hand glimpses into *mellah* life. Charles de Foucauld, who traveled in Jewish disguise, was lodged in the house of the Samuel Ben Simhoun on

Derb al-Fuqi in 1883, where he received “le meilleur accueil”; *Reconnaissance au Maroc: Journal de route* (Paris, 1939), 78.

23. Jean-Louis Miège, *Le Maroc et L'Europe (1830–1894)*, 4 vols. (Rabat, 1989), 2: 560–573. The “Yahas Fas” (1879) says “the definition of someone who is rich in our town is someone who has ten to twenty thousand *duros* [equivalent to (U.S.) \$2,000 to \$4,000 in 1900] and engages in commerce overseas. They are only ten in number. They have to go every day to the part of the city where the gentiles live, which takes at least half an hour, and they must go barelegged and barefoot in days of extreme heat and cold. Nevertheless, they are rich, and the majority of them are moneylenders.”

24. Eugène Aubin, *Morocco of Today* (London, 1906), 299.

25. This feast commences on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Tishri, corresponding to late September.

26. Brunot and Malka, *Textes*, 282–283 and 284 n. 1.

27. Vajda, “Recueil,” 36 (1949): 150, 157.

28. This space could also enclose a small private bath. See Ali Amahan and Catherine Cambazard-Amahan, *Arrêts sur site: Le patrimoine culturel marocain* (Casablanca, 1999), 106.

29. The most important study of domestic architecture in Fez is Jacques Revault et al., *Palais et demeures de Fès*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1985–1992). See also Amahan and Cambazard-Amahan, *Arrêts*, 99–130.

30. “Yahas Fas,” n.p. Brunot and Malka assert there were no Jewish builders in the Fez *mellab* (without reference to date), but there were “a few Jewish masons” who could make simple repairs; *Textes*, 205 n. 25.

31. Vajda, “Recueil,” 36 (1949): 170.

32. Aubin, *Morocco*, 288.

33. *Ibid.*, 299.

34. In response to the question of how many Jews lived in Fez in 1879, the author of the “Yahas Fas” explains that the *mellab* has 235 “courtyards” (*batzerim*), or apartment buildings, each having rooms (*bayts*) inhabited by individual households. The total number of Jewish households, according to the “Yahas,” was 1,461, an average of 6 households per building. If we multiply the number of households by 4 (members), we reach a total Jewish population of 5,844, an average density of 24 people per building. There are no comparable data for the medina at that time, although de Foucauld writing in 1883 says that the Muslim population was 70,000, with 3,000 Jews; *Reconnaissance*, 80. For purposes of comparison, officials at ADER, the Agency for the Development of Fez, record the population of the “old *mellab*” in 1998 (not including the adjacent quarter of Nawawil, which did not exist in the late nineteenth century) as 5,485, consisting of 1,219 households distributed among 322 buildings, or an average of 3.7 households per building, with an average density of 17 people per building.

35. M. Nahon, “Les Israélites du Maroc,” *Revue des études ethnographiques et sociologiques* (1909): 258–279. For more on epidemics, see Vajda, “Recueil,” 35 (1948): 319, 326; 36 (1949): 161–162, 188.

36. Charles René-Leclerc, *Le Maroc septentrional: Souvenirs et impressions (été 1904)* (Algiers, 1905), 149.

37. The *burj* is one of the few structures in the *mellab* having pretensions to monumentality. More than a gate, it is also a shrine and burial place of martyrs who died in an attack on the *mellab* in 1465. Gravestones marking the burial places were visible in the walls of the rooms inside the bastion, according to Brunot and Malka, *Textes*, 202 n. 8.

38. Leonor Fernandes, “Habitat et prescriptions légales,” in *L'habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée: Rencontre d'Aix-en-Provence, (6–8 juin 1984)*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1984): 2, 419–426. General principles influencing Islamic urban form are the following: (1) it is forbidden to invade the privacy of others or to look into their homes, which affects the height of buildings and the location of entrances; (2) neighbors and their relatives have the right to buy adjacent property; (3) vertical extension is

permitted, even if it blocks light and air, so long as it does not invade privacy; and (4) the *finā*, or frontage, belongs to the house but does not entail the right to build.

39. Brunot and Malka, *Textes*, 203. The traditional Sabbath midday meal included the *skhina*, a hearty dish similar to a cassoulet. It baked in the community oven all Friday night and was conveyed to the Jewish household Saturday at midday.

40. Some of the synagogues of Fez are described in Joel Zack, *The Synagogues of Morocco: An Architectural and Preservation Survey*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1995).

41. See Vajda, “Recueil,” 36 (1949): 144.

42. “Yahas Fas,” n.p.

43. On the production of *sqalli*, see two articles by Roger Le Tourneau and M. Vicaire: “La fabrication du fil d’or à Fès,” *Hespéris* 2, no. 1/2 (1937): 67–88, and “L’industrie du fil d’or au *mellab* de Fès,” *Bulletin économique et social du Maroc* 3, no. 13 (1936): 185–190. They describe how the 700 workers engaged in this craft in 1930 were suddenly thrown out of work by the introduction of machinery imported from France. The *sqalli* workers organized public prayers, made appeals at the tombs of venerated saints, and protested to the pasha, all to no avail; Le Tourneau and Vicaire, “L’industrie,” 188.

44. On the commerce of the *mellab*, see Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 350–352.

45. *Ibid.*, 390, 423. For a stimulating discussion of the Jews of Sefrou and their relations with Muslims, see Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community* (Chicago, 1984), 148–164.

46. The impasse is not a feature produced by Islamic culture per se but is the logical conclusion of a process of growth when the urban fabric is made up of courtyard houses. We see this feature in Palermo, Italy (where it may be an Arab import), as well as in the ancient Sumerian city of Ur.

47. The synagogue of Shlomo Ibn Danan, also known as the Synagogue Boussidan, was constructed at the end of the seventeenth century, according to Simon Levy, “La synagogue Danan restaurée” (Casablanca, Fondation du Patrimoine Culturel Judéo-marocain, n.d.). It served as the synagogue of the Danan family of rabbis from 1812 until its closure in the 1960s. Members of this family were the authors of the manuscript “Dibre ha-Yamim” (see n. 16). The synagogue was named after Rabbi Shlomo Danan (1848–1928), who officiated there at the beginning of the twentieth century. The building is attached to the ancient wall of the *mellab* on its east side. Another interesting aspect of its construction uncovered during the recent restoration was a sealed door leading to a subterranean ritual bath (*mikveh*).

48. Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 576.

49. Vajda, “Recueil,” 36 (1949): 330.

50. The Slat al-Fassiyyin, or synagogue of the Fassis, is the synagogue of the *toshavim*, the original inhabitants of the *mellab*. The ritual followed in this synagogue until its closing in 1970 included prayers that were not part of the regular Sephardic liturgy, suggesting that its founding predated the arrival of the Spanish exiles in 1492. Today it serves as a boxing club for the *mellab* youth.

51. Charles René-Leclerc, “Le commerce et l’industrie à Fès,” *Renseignements coloniaux* (1905): 319. The *qaysariyya* was the principal *suq* of the Fez medina adjacent to the Qarawiyyin mosque.

52. The availability of such products enhanced Muslim perceptions of the Jewish quarter as a place of transgression, and the idea of the *mellab* as liminal space was deeply rooted in the Muslim imaginary. Jewish sources hint at prostitution in the *mellab*, as well as the presence of “tavernas” that were frequented by Muslims; Vajda, “Recueil,” 35 (1948): 344, 350; Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 579. Another popular vice was gambling, which took place in the Jewish cemetery; Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 580.

53. Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 266. The administration of the *mellah* in the nineteenth century (as it is today) was centered in Fez al-Jadid. When the *mellah* was the home to Fassi Jews, many civic functions were run autonomously and according to Jewish law under the direction of a locally appointed community council (*ma'amad*). Jewish law courts had jurisdiction in civil matters between two Jews. When Muslims were involved, the case usually was referred to the Muslim courts. See Brunot and Malka, *Textes*, 222–228; Paul Marty, *Les institutions israélites au Maroc: Extrait de la Revue des études islamiques* (Paris, 1930).

54. Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 101. Jewish moneylenders plied their trade in shops that fronted on a Muslim market where oil, soap, and candles were sold.

55. Nahon, “Les Israélites,” 268.

56. *Ibid.*, 261.

57. For an account of the event from a woman’s perspective, see Brunot and Malka, *Textes*, 206–209. Also Hubert-Jacques, *Les journées sanglantes de Fez, 17–18–19 avril 1912: Les massacres, récits militaires, responsabilités* (Paris, 1913), 67–73.

58. The author of the “Dibre ha-Yamim” tells us that the Jews returned to the *mellah* after the exile of 1792 to find their quarter totally devastated.

Pillagers not only carried off the contents of the houses but also removed “the doors, the rafters, the coffers, in short, anything that could be called wood”; Vajda, “Recueil,” 36 (1949): 180.

59. The *mellah*’s water supply, according to Le Tourneau, came from a source first introduced into Fez al-Jadid in the Marinid period called Ayn Bu Amir; Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 267, 270. Many of the *mellah* houses also had their own wells; *ibid.*, 270.

60. On the phenomenon of return, see André Levy, “To Morocco and Back: Tourism and Pilgrimage among Moroccan-Born Israelis,” in E. Ben-Ari and Y. Bilu, eds., *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience* (Albany, N.Y., 1997), 25–46.

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