

# Crossing the Spanish-Moroccan Border with Migrants, New Islamists, and Riff-Raff

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Practices of movement between Morocco and Spain have for centuries been a common economic, social and political livelihood strategy for thousands of individuals and families inhabiting the border area of Tetuán/Yebala, Morocco. However, only few studies have approached the border as object for anthropological inquiry. This essay analyses the Spanish-Moroccan border from the perspective of three male crossers, as well as from the perspective of Spanish and Moroccan ethno-landscaping in Tetuán. I argue that the common Tetuáni ambivalence towards Spain as well as towards the Spanish Protectorate era must be understood within the wider context of the impress of the Moroccan state on Northern Moroccan identities.

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In a 1998 article, Henk Driessen points to the celebration of 1992 – including the celebration of the European integration process, the commemoration of the 1492 discovery of America, and the remembrance of the 1492 fall of the Muslim kingdom of Granada – to highlight the irony of the fact that 1992 became the year in which North African clandestine migration to Europe broke all records (Driessen 1998). Since 1992, however, much effort has been put into controlling Europe's southern sea-border and border towns on the southern shore. In 1993, the European Union decided to build an 8 kilometres long defensive wall around Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in northern Morocco, consisting of two parallel wire fences, 2.5 metres high, 5 metres apart, and with a line of sensors between the wires. Although this defence line is no more than a term in the same game that sets clandestine migrants against wealthy countries further North... that has to be reached and surmounted (Harding 2000), it has become exceedingly difficult and expensive for North Africans to cross the border to Europe. Those who manage to beat European border controls find themselves in steadily deteriorating working and living conditions in Europe. At the same

time a growing number of persons who had hoped for better lives elsewhere find themselves stuck in Morocco.

In this essay I wish to analyse the Spanish-Moroccan border as seen from Tetuán, a northern Moroccan city. I will use the narratives of three male border crossers to reflect upon past and recent changes in this particular borderland. Together with the large majority of Tetuán inhabitants, these young men share a critical view on Spain and Spaniards, simultaneously as their symbolic resistance towards the Moroccan state and the former King Hassan II is expressed by reference to Spanish ethno- and urban landscaping (terms I advance to refer to traditions and architecture), especially to the former Plaza España, which in 1988 was reconstructed and re-named Plaza Hassan II by the King. I will argue that the common Tetuáni ambivalence towards Spain as well as towards the Spanish Protectorate era (1912–56) must be understood within the wider context of the impress of the Moroccan state on Northern Moroccan identities. My argument is based on the assumption that public discourse and whispered narratives about the Plaza and the surrounding social space are expressions of vari-

ous power struggles over spatial and social control.

I have chosen to examine the everyday effects of the Spanish-Moroccan border in terms of the tensions between state power and mobile livelihood practices. In doing so, I focus on the agency of migratory subjects and attempts by the states in question to regulate their activities and identities. My larger goal, however, is to redirect the study of contemporary migratory processes beyond the geo-political frontier separating Europe from Africa or Spain from Morocco. Inside Moroccan territory other boundaries prevail.

The analysis that follows is divided into four parts. Part 1 provides a broad historical overview of the region. This overview makes apparent that the Spanish-Moroccan border has varied in terms of permeability over time. In Part 2, I describe the foundation of the city of Tetuán, its inhabitants, historical as well as contemporary movement in and out of the city, and finally the recent changes in the urban space. In Part 3, I present the narratives provided by the three male border crossers in extracted form. Their migratory experiences are distinct, both because of their different socio-economic backgrounds and their different forms of encounters with the border. The final part of the essay offers a theoretical discussion of the relationship between the seemingly nostalgic imagery of the urban landscape of the past, the current ambivalence towards Spain and the persistent critique of the Moroccan regime, prior to the death of King Hassan II and the subsequent democratic openings in 1999. This discussion gives rise to my suggestion that we need to be more precise as to which kinds of borders we are talking and writing about, as well as to what kind of global processes we refer to. It is often assumed that territorial state and cultural borders are coterminous. But as my analysis of the northern Moroccan borderlands will show, it is possible for borders to be erased in terms of culture without being erased in terms of state effects.

## The Mediterranean: Bridge or Frontier?

The Mediterranean region is marked by a continuous movement of people from both sides of the sea border. Historically, the area now known as Morocco was populated by various groups of pastoralists, who were later to be known as Berbers. Their local forms of mobility were bound up with the search for pasture. Together with the rest of the Maghreb region, their various territories were at different times invaded by foreign intruders (e.g. Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Iberians, and so forth), of which the Arabs perhaps made the strongest impact with the establishment of the Western Islamic Empire (consolidated in 710). I shall not dwell long on these historical movements or early global processes, but point to some of the links of importance for present-day identity politics in northern Morocco and for the identifications that the inhabitants of Tetuán often employ.

After 710, the Western Islamic Empire expanded into the Iberian Peninsula and subsequently consolidated Muslim power in Andalusia (Al Andaluz). This movement was later countered by the Spanish expulsion of the Moors and Sephardic Jews<sup>1</sup> (in 1492 and 1609), followed by the movement of European colonials to Northern Africa. In the Moroccan case, Ceuta was incorporated into the Iberian Kingdom in 1415, Melilla in 1497, and the two islands Peñon de Vélez de la Gómera in 1508 and Peñon de Alhucemas in 1673. Spain took effective control over Western Sahara in 1900. In 1912, the European states met at the Algeciras Conference and shared out Africa between them. Morocco was divided between France and Spain, the South to France, the North to Spain. In 1913 Spain occupied Tetuán and made the city its colonial capital (Miège et al. 1996, Ruiz Manzanero 1997). French and Spanish protectorates over Morocco lasted until Moroccan independence in 1956. Ceuta, Melilla and the Peñons still remain Spanish enclaves or EU territory in Africa.

From the beginning of the 20th century, these movements were once again reversed. During the First World War, thousands of Moroccans fought for the French or worked as

replacement labour in the French industry and agriculture. During the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), Franco recruited 60,000 Moroccans (primarily from the northern Rif region) to fight in Spain for the nationalist cause (Collinson 1996). At the same time thousands of oppositional Spaniards fleeing Franco's oppression found a safe refuge in Morocco.

From the early 1960s, Moroccan movements towards Europe began to be conceptualised as labour migration. Until 1965, the number of Moroccans in Europe was still very modest, estimated at some 70–80,000 persons. The overall majority of these 'guest workers' or migrants were young men from rural areas, generally married, who left their families behind and remitted large parts of their European salaries back home. Although the EEC countries restricted entrance in the early 1970s, family reunification programmes made it possible for Moroccans to continue travelling to various European countries. Deteriorating economic and political conditions in Morocco as well as established family networks in various European countries made migration to Europe both attractive, conceivable and feasible. According to official estimates, 1.1 million Moroccans entered Europe between 1971 and 1982 (ib.).

In comparison with pre-1970 Moroccan movements to Europe, these migratory movements were characterized by a progressive incorporation of new sending regions, especially the Atlantic Coast and the interior. People from larger urban areas such as Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Meknés, Kenitra, Marrakesh, Agadir, Tangier and Tetuán also began to add their numbers – and experiences – to what was formerly understood as a rural labour migration (Colectivo Ioé 1994). At the same time economic adjustments and a restrictive university reform produced a massive abandonment of advanced Moroccan students. Many of them chose to migrate to Europe, often to new destinations such as Spain, other Maghreb countries and the Persian Gulf, which became added to the traditional EEC countries.<sup>2</sup> Others were forced into exile by their oppositional political beliefs and conduct.

As hopefully stands to reason after this short-cut summary of more than 1 200 years of back and forth population movements, the Mediter-

ranean has at various points of time shifted from serving as a bridge, defined by inclusion; a boundary, defined as a symbolic divide between groups; and a frontier, defined as a political and legal divide adjacent nation states. According to Henk Driessen (1996, 1998), the Mediterranean Sea never acted as a barrier between Europe and North Africa. It was rather a river that united more than it divided by making a single world out of North and South. It was not until the beginning of the 16th century, and the final expulsion of Moors from the Iberian Peninsula, that the Strait of Gibraltar became a political frontier; and only by Spain's incorporation into the European Union in 1986 that the southern border of Spain was transformed into a frontier of major concern for Western Europe. This frontier is not only a political and economic divide, but also an ideological and moral frontier, increasingly perceived by Europeans as a barrier between democracy and secularism on the one hand, and totalitarian and religious fanaticism on the other (Driessen 1998:100).

For many Moroccans, the Strait of Gibraltar has lately converted into a Wall, which they can only pass legally with a visa in their pocket. If Europe was once seen as a continent of opportunities, it is now increasingly seen as a force that will employ all means to keep Moroccans from entering. Still, Moroccan perceptions of Europe, although ambiguous, tend to be more nuanced than European perceptions of the North African migration threat, neatly summarized below: "In the North you find democracy, prosperity and freedom from tradition. Also individualism, violence and fear. In the South authoritarianism, the hard struggle for the Dirham and a separation of the sexes. But also solidarity, the sweet life and patience" (Valenzuela & Masegosa, 1996:27).

When we direct our attention to the former centre of Spain's colonial administration in Morocco, Tetuán, the perceptions become even more complex. Paraphrasing Anne Michaels we could say that the search for facts, for places, names, influential events, important conversations [...and] political circumstances account to nothing if you can't find the assumption your subjects live by (Michaels 1997:222). Borderlanders tend to live by complex and ambiguous

assumptions. Recent changes in European conceptions of the southern border, *la ultima frontera* (the ultimate frontier) to the African continent, have not made assumptions less ambiguous.

## Tetuán: City on the Border of Things

The city of Tetuán<sup>3</sup> is located in the north-western part of Morocco – some 42 kilometres south of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, 54 kilometres south-east of Tangier. For more than 40 years, Tetuán was the capital of the Spanish Protectorate, but the city's Andalusian heritage has a much longer history. Around 710 and the following centuries, a small village was founded between the natural barriers of two mountain chains, Djebel Dersa and Djebel Ghorghiz. These mountains still supply Tetuán with gentle summer breezes and chilling winter winds. In the years 961–962 (at the time of the Caliphate of Córdoba), the village gained status as a city. This city was destroyed somewhere between 1399 and 1437, but with the expulsion of the Moors in 1492 it rose again to a thriving city, *hijueta de Granada*, *soeur nonchalante* (little daughter of Granada in Spanish, nonchalant sister in French) (Ruiz Manzanero 1997). You may ask any contemporary gold or silk salesman in the Medina about the trades history and soon the sighs of the Moorish past resonate between old and damp walls.

The first Andalusians arrived around 1483–84. For years they fought over the rights to the city with the inhabitants of the Kabila de Beni Hozmar, a dispute that was not settled before the Sultan of Fez sold the area in and around Tetuán to the Grenadianians for the sum of 40,000 mizkales. Grenadian Jews arrived together with the Andalusians, and their presence influenced the economic, commercial and cultural development of the city profoundly (ib.).

The local Berbers, Andalusians, Moors and Jews were governed by the Grenadian Captain, Sidi Al Mandari. When he died in 1511, first his son and later the son's wife, Sit al Horra, continued to govern Tetuán independently from the Sultan of Fez. The second half of the 16th century was characterized by a series of civil fights over power. From the mid-16th century to

1688, the al-Naqsis family – descendants of the Beni Ider tribe – won power over the city and managed to keep the city free and independent from outside domination for more than 40 years. From 1688 and until the war between Morocco and Spain was declared in 1860, various families (the Rifis, the Ash-ashes) held power over the city. The entire period, however, was dominated by a strong Andalusian influence. An influence characterized by ambiguous relations to Europe, by at the same time hostility and persistent nostalgia toward the places left behind (Miège et al. 1996, Ruiz Manzanero 1997).

Tetuán received more than 40,000 Moors in the primary phases of expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. Their numbers increased considerably during the successive centuries. By the end of the 19th century, however, some of their descendants had moved on to other and more important urban centres in Morocco. Still, both their numbers and their cultural influence remained profound. The Muslims exiled from the Granada, the indigenous Berbers, the Hebrews, and the Christian Spaniards have all contributed to a local form of speech, a special Tetuáni dialect. Today, Spanish is perhaps the strongest influence. A bag is called a *borsa* (bolsa in Spanish), a kitchen is a *kuchiniia* (cocina in Spanish), a cracker is a *bexquittu* (bizcocho in Spanish), and so on. But when I was invited to participate in an upper-middle class wedding in August 1997, I was given an Arab-style party-dress by one of my male informant's sister to wear during the night fiesta. By good fortune I decided to wear my own European dress. Luckily, because the rest of the party guests were all dressed up in Al Andaluz party-wear.

In 1912, prior to the Spanish protectorate era, circa 20–25,000 Muslims, 7–8,000 Jews, and 1,000 Europeans lived in Tetuán. In the rest of the 20th century, Tetuán experienced a considerable demographic growth. In 1940, the city had approximately 70,000 inhabitants, in 1950 80,000, and in 1960 101,000. In 1971 the number of inhabitants had grown to 139,000, in 1981 to 213,000, and in 1991 to more than 300,000. 12,228 Riff-migrants of rural origin (from the provinces of Alhucemas, Chauen, and Nador) moved to Tetuán between 1975 and 1982. In the same time-span, Tetuán received

11,648 migrants of urban origin, of whom 25 per cent originated in the urban centres of Alhucemas and Nador (calculated from Ruiz Manzanero 1997 and the Tetuáni local government statistics 1997). From the early 1980s, poor and landless peasants from all over the country moved into the city, a mass influx that several of the old families of Tetuán conceive of as a ruralization of the city. At the same time, the majority of the state servants in the city are Arabic speaking southerners from the Atlantic plains, installed by King Hassan II after years of public unrest culminating with the riots in 1984.<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1990s, Tetuán had grown to a city with over 300,000 registered inhabitants. The city centre, Place Hassan II, links the old Medina to the new city added by the Spaniards, where even now you can buy a *bocadillo*, where expatriate Spaniards flock to the Cathedral on Place Moulay el-Mehdi on Sundays, and where local people speak Spanish more than any other foreign language – a fact referring as much to the city's colonial heritage as to the local populations dissociation from southern Moroccan authorities who do not have Spanish but French as their second language. Local food and goods are sold in markets in the Medina and the great Bazaar just outside the old city walls. European and other foreign products – including everything from soap to towels, plastic sandals to kitchen utensils, synthetic sexy underwear and radio cassettes – are smuggled in from Ceuta and sold on almost every street corner and side walk without much notice from the authorities. And discarded goods collected from the garbage cans in Ceuta are sold or bartered among the poorest of the poor in the narrow and dark passages in the very heart of the old Medina.

It is also to the heart of the Medina, long the place for transactions of the greatest diversity, that would be migrants, who lack the means to buy forged papers and a flight ticket across the Strait of Gibraltar, will turn. The bodies of hundreds of Moroccans who during the last ten years have washed up on Spanish and Moroccan shores reflect how much some are willing to risk crossing el Estrecho, the Strait. Outside the Medina, in the fancier coffee and tea houses around Place Hassan II and Place Moulay el-

Mehdi, middle-class business men complain that even they now need a visa to go on a business trip to Europe. Quite a few have experienced to have their visa application turned down. How in Allah's name can you run a business under these conditions?

Until the recent death of King Hassan II, July 23, 1999, and the new democratic measures promised by his son and contemporary ruler, King Mohammed VI, Morocco has been essentially an absolute monarchy, a fact that among other things could be read by King Hassan II's omnipresent image in all public places, including bazaars and cafés. During my fieldwork I found the King depicted with a receiver in his hand in phone offices, in post offices with a letter or a pen, and in the cafés he gazed down from the walls sipping a steaming gilt-edged glass of mint tea. It was in the cafés around Place Hassan II that I first noticed that a photostat of an old Spanish Plaza more often than not was hanging next to, or right below, the King's picture. On inquiry I learned that the plaza depicted was the old Plaza de España constructed during the Spanish protectorate but razed to the ground in the mid-1980s in order to give space for the construction of a new palace for the King and a new Islamic architecture Place in front of the Palace.

I shall return to this and the ways in which Tetuánis express resistance through wall decoration in a short while. Before venturing into the public discourses and whispered narratives about the Plaza and its social surroundings, let me introduce the three male border crossers from Tetuán. Their experiences and narratives are of course individually specific. However, like de Certeau I consider individual narratives the locus of a plurality of social relations (De Certeau 1984:xi). Seen in this perspective, individual narratives may serve to make the common visible through the specific.

## Crossing the Border with an Old Yellowed Picture and Conflicting Travel Stories

During the summer of 1997, I spent quite some time together with three young men, whom I in the following shall refer to as Maruf, Haddú,

and Mohammad.<sup>5</sup> I knew Mohammad from an earlier visit in Spain, Maruf and Haddú were new acquaintances.

Informal gathering with Maruf and Haddú usually took place in cafés or during late afternoon city and Medina walks (not curtailed by café-walls with cars). As confidence grew, our conversations began to move into the house of Maruf's parents, a tiny two-room inner-city apartment, housing not only Maruf's old father, mother and himself, but also his younger brother – a taxi driver – and his newly divorced sister and her one-year old son. I was never invited into the home of Haddú, who temporarily lived in the apartment of his grandparents – a, seen from the outside, gloomy apartment in the inner city. Mohammad several times invited me to his family's duplex city house located in the new suburban housing sectors of Tetuán. I was also invited to either of the family's two beach houses outside Tetuán a couple of times. When our conversations took place in public spaces, Mohammad made sure that other persons were present. He attached great importance to not ruining my – and his own – reputation. Haddú had lived in Denmark in the early 1990s. Our relationship was to a large extent a consequence of my citizenship (Danish) and the potentiality of discussing Danish immigration policy as well as using my expertise to sort out the papers and letters related to Haddú's deportation, Haddú's Danish visa re-applications, and the refusals given by the Danish Consulate in Rabat. Maruf was a friend of Haddú. He remained slightly reserved and uncomfortable with my research.

All their differences notwithstanding, conversations with Maruf, Haddú and Mohammad often slipped into the genre of border-talk, a discursive form based on comparisons between lives lived in different places; in Morocco, behind the border to Ceuta, in Spain and the rest of the continental Europe. A genre Schade Poulsen defines by its capacity to identify and mirror socio-moral concerns about the kind of life a citizen ought to live (Schade Poulsen 1997:167). Such concerns have to do with absence as well as presence, future-oriented activities and expectations as well as accomplished ones.<sup>6</sup> Border talk is comparative in nature. It

centres around the good and the bad in different places. It is to some extent based on stereotypes, but to the extent that the narrator has been to the places talked about, it is also based on experience. When experience from abroad is used to criticize local forms of practice, border conversations often take the form of counter narratives.

When our conversations took place, Maruf was 36 years old. He is of Berber and migrant origin. Both his parents moved to Tetuán before he was born. He grew up in Tetuán, was trained as an electrician in Malaga, Spain, but returned to Morocco shortly after his apprenticeship was served. Through family networks he got himself to France, where he worked illegally as an electrician for six months, before he decided to go back and make himself a life in Morocco. Back in Tetuán he found a job at a factory, but was laid off because of problems between his family and the family of the factory owner. According to Maruf, the factory owner – a newcomer from Casablanca – wanted all the factory positions for his own family and friends. Local workers of Berber descent were gradually fired, always on the grounds that they were troublemakers. Maruf admitted that he at times did kick up a row, for example when he refused to take part in friendly turns and bribery arrangements. After a few months of unemployment he once again went to Spain. He entered on a tourist visa and worked any odd job for two years before he heard about better luck in northern Europe. Why not?, he thought, and entered Denmark illegally in 1990, married a Danish woman and was subsequently granted a residence and work permit. The marriage turned out to be more troublesome than anticipated. The Danish wife appeared to be a drug addict and when the domestic disputes passed beyond reasonable limits, Maruf moved to a friend's apartment. His wife still asked him for drug money, but when he one day refused to give her any, she reported him to the foreign police (on the grounds that they no longer lived together and that Maruf's residence permit was no longer grounded on marriage). Unfortunately the wife was killed in a car accident before the case was solved. Five days after her death, the foreign police presented him with an order of

deportation. They told him, that if he left voluntarily, he could apply for a new visa in Morocco without any trouble. This was of course a lie. By the time I met Maruf, he was desperately trying to get a new visa for any European country after having his Danish visa application turned down.

Haddú was 35 years old, of Berber origin and in the summer of 1997 he had been unemployed for nearly a year. He is the fortunate holder of a Spanish passport, a valuable document he has obtained through family contacts working in the Spanish consulate. His grown-up life has been spent circulating between mainland Spain, Ceuta and Tetuán. During his time in Spain, he has typically been employed in the agricultural sector, lately as well in the service sector. His latest job in Spain was in a restaurant in the winter resort of Sierra Nevada, a real good job he had to quit because he couldn't take the cold weather. To Haddú, work and employment is associated with being outside of Morocco. He could, if he wanted to, find employment in Tetuán, yes, but the wages are too low compared with the earnings you can have on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar. In addition to differences in wage levels, finding a job in Tetuán has nothing to do with qualifications but everything to do with connections. If you do not have access to such connections, forget it ... you might as well go to Europe right away. To cope with these conditions Haddú has developed a strategy based on 2–3 months of work in Spain, 2–3 months of rest in Morocco, and, while in Morocco, occasional trips to Ceuta to buy products for distribution among the street vendors in Tetuán. An activity which in legal terms is to be termed smuggling but which in Haddú's and most other Tetuani small-scale businesspersons' perception is doing business. During my time in Tetuán, Haddú was time and again moving around Tangier, Ceuta and Tetuán. His explanation for these short trips (2–3 days) was always that he was going to find out if he could get himself a working contract in Spain. As time went by, he got more and more nervous and less communicative as to what his business trips were all about. I got the picture, however, when he one day told me – in his awkward and typical Tetuani way – that too many Moroccans are drowning on their way to Spain these days. The

boat business is low.<sup>7</sup>

At the age of 28, Mohammad was slightly younger than the other two. After the recent death of his father, Mohammad, being the eldest brother, has taken over as the male head of his mother's household. In reality, he is only given this role in the dispute about the succession to property with his father's family. Inside the nuclear family, his mother is taking the decisions. Her side of the family is among the better off families in the region. They run a wholesale business with offices in Ceuta as well as in Tetuán. His father's side of the family has several smaller businesses in Tetuán, but the father himself was an intellectual who never made any big money. Both parents studied in Spain, a family tradition Mohammad has taken over. Neither he nor his family consider his stay abroad migration. He will return as soon as he has obtained his PhD-degree. Local bribery and the system of having to know the right people are among several reasons for getting his PhD abroad. According to Mohammad, you will never get a scholarship at the local university unless you bribe the university authorities. One of Mohammad's younger brothers failed his university exams in 1996. He passed during my stay in 1997, most probably because the family presented his professor with a brand new moped. Mohammad's family has both Berber and Arab ancestors. They are serious religious practitioners of Islam, and Mohammad has joined an Islamic student organisation in Spain. While in Spain, Mohammad prays the prescribed five times a day and makes sure to go to the mosque every Friday. In Tetuán, his religious practice is more relaxed. After all, he is on vacation. During the summer of 1997, Mohammad was travelling back and forth between Tetuán and Barcelona. In Barcelona he made the final preparations for his thesis while at the same time buying equipment for a sandwich bar he and his family were planning to establish next to the beach house. Each time he came back to Morocco, the family went to Ceuta to pick up not only him but also loads of kitchen hardware for the sandwich bar. Such things are indisputably cheaper in Spain but, as the family reluctantly admitted, they are also of a better quality than similar Moroccan products ... and young Moroc-

can costumers attach higher symbolic value to European style restaurants.

The above descriptions of the local circumstances in which these three border crossers found themselves are by no means complete. I do hope, however, that they may give some context to the following analysis of narratives and discourse.

Café talk in Tetuán is often border talk. Sitting in a café with Maruf, Haddú or Mohammad, conversation would often start with the café wall decoration, just below King Hassan II, right in the middle of the old yellowed picture of Plaza España. Oh, wasn't it a beautiful Plaza, they would sigh, and addressing me they would continue: "Look at the small gardens with high palm trees giving shade to the burning sun, notice the pavilion in the middle ... many a concert was given there." Mohammad, who beside his admiration for the Plaza also has an academic interest in the Spanish Protectorate era would go into detail: "Notice the elaborate mosaics covering the entire Plaza, all the small coloured stones forming the complicated pat-

terns of ancient carpets ... a work of real art. The Spaniards may have thought of this as Spanish handicraft, but we know that they learned it all from the Al Andaluzes." What a shame, what a pity (Haddú), what a provocation (Mohammad), what an act of terror (Maruf) to demolish it.

Praise would often be followed by severe criticism of the new Place Hassan II, constructed after a French architect's designs in 1988. Vocal tones would change from soft nostalgia to something in between the harsh and painful; from audible voices to barely perceptible whispers. One day, while crossing the Place with Maruf, he said: "The King had all the trees cut down, and yes, I know, to be able to control that nothing hides from his gaze." Another day Mohammad took me to the end of the Place. "Look at the Palace, one can neither enter nor cross its premises. And this is so although the King never comes to stay in Tetuán. He did once, in the late 1980s, but somebody threatened him and he never came back after that. He probably never will. He is not welcome here." Yet another day Mohammad told me, that large parts of



The colonial Plaza España.



Tetuán's University were moved out of the city after the 1984–85 riots – a move intended to prevent the students from demonstrating in the city. On various occasions they would all point to the enormous amount of money used to construct the Palace and the new Place, often comparing the sum to how many workplaces could have been established instead. Haddú and Maruf both saw a close relation between the region's links to wider spaces in Morocco as well as to Spain. "The King doesn't care about the North of Morocco ... all the revenue is transferred to the South ... there is no development here, no future ... no wonder everybody attempts to get to Europe."

From Plaza-talk conversation would inescapably slip into travel stories. Manuf would tell about his hardships in Europe, encounters with the police, racism, and so forth, but also about the sweet life he lived with European women (in Spain and in Denmark), women who did not demand gold jewellery, clothes and expensive gifts from their male partners, but simply based relationships on love and bodily

desire. Outside the wedding palaces of the old Medina, both Manuf and Haddú would comment on the enormous amount of money Moroccans spend on weddings. "Lots of gold, all these women want is gold. After the wedding (and all of the money invested in the celebration of the wedding) many marriages turn into divorce. – Women demand and demand. They do not understand that a man needs to be left alone once in a while, to have some peace and quiet. Upon divorce, all your money is lost."

One of the reasons why Haddú and Manuf are still unmarried is – according to themselves – that they cannot afford a wedding. But on top of that they would also prefer a mutual love relation with a Europeanish woman. A decent one, not a prostitute, Haddú would often make clear to me. "Oh yes, I had my experiences with prostitutes in Barcelona. They too want your money." In the same breath Haddú and Maruf would sometimes comment on the young Tetuáni women who cross the border to Ceuta or mainly Spain: "Most certainly prostitutes, at least the great majority."<sup>8</sup>



The new Place Hassan II.

Maruf would also tell stories about the Moroccan police, of how they beat up decent local Tetuánis on no solid grounds. Haddú, who on several occasions has been charged with illegal (but widespread) street wending of kif (hashish) lost four of his teeth in a beating in which it turned out that he did not possess any kif in his pocket. "You know the ordinary police officers by their uniform ... but who knows if the secret police is involved with the contraband mafia (basically controlling the trade in tobacco and alcohol) to trap people. What you do know is that the great majority of the police officers are not local. They are brought up by the central authorities to control us, the northern rebels. Local policemen are different. I know of several cases in which a Tetuáni police officer has covered up for a hometown boy. As long as you get incarcerated in Tetuán ... they may treat you all right. If you are transferred to Rabat or Casa, forget it. You won't be able to walk out of there, not after the torture they put you through."

Mohammad's narratives, although of a different kind, would also be very ambiguous. They would occasionally concern the beach rubbish, which he would claim to be dumped in the sea in Spain and Ceuta (no matter how many Arabic consumer labels on the driftage I would be able to point to). On baddish days he would tell the story about how his youngest brother was killed in Spain by incompetent doctors who deliberately did not give him the proper treatment for a harmless diarrhoea. How his father after that experience had chosen to get medical treatment in Morocco, no matter his means to cover the expenses in a European hospital. About Europeans who trust any Moroccan to be a fundamentalist terrorist when many – though not many enough – are just pious practitioners of Islam. But also narratives about the King's failed policy in northern Morocco. About the regime's transfer of development funds from the Yebala region to dubious projects in the south, not least in Sahara. During the 1997 local government elections he would tell me why he wouldn't make a fool of himself by voting. "Al Adl Wal Ihsan (the semi clandestine Islamist movement) is banded by the King. The movement's leader, Abdesalam Yasin, has been in house arrest in Salé since 1989. Other polit-

ical parties of the opposition will probably get more votes than the King's supporters. But your vote doesn't matter, the King will win anyway. That's the only thing you can be sure of in Morocco."

The socialists actually won the local elections in Tetuán. The Islamists, who were not allowed to put up candidates, marched the streets as soon as the election result was publicly known. They were spread with truncheons by the more than 1,000 extra police officers stationed in Tetuán during the elections.

### The Moor's Last Sigh or a Silent Cry of Resistance?

"Translation is a kind of transubstantiation; one poem becomes another. You can choose your philosophy of translation just as you choose how to live; the free adaptation that sacrifices meaning to exactitude. The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications" (Michaels 1997: 109).

According to James Clifford, thinking historically is a process of locating oneself in space and time. Such analytical processes of location should be seen as initiaries rather than bounded sites – as series of encounters and translations in which the use of comparative concepts or translation terms work as approximations. Given the historical contingency of translations, there is no single location from which a full comparative account can be produced (Clifford 1997:11). Seen in this perspective, café conversations around the old Plaza España in Tetuán can be seen as a privileged site for border-talk among inhabitants of Tetuán. In such conversations people translate feelings of old empires lost, ambiguous feelings of belonging to more than one nation state, as well as feelings of not belonging to the nation state in which they hold at least nominal citizenship.

On another level, Plaza-conversations become the condensed site from which other sites for socio-moral concerns of the good and the bad life can be constructed. The divide between

Berber and Arab ethnic groups in Morocco, and the Berber's feeling of exclusion from national politics could be one example; aversion against local bribery practices as well as ingrained patterns of friendly turns and merchant-like social relations could be another; and conceptions of femininity, masculinity and gender relations on both sides of the border could be yet other examples.

Border crossing subjects from Tetuán – whether travelling in thought (through imagining and critically debating their own and other worlds), or in space (from one location to another) – expose their capacity of imagining lives transnationally but maybe less a capacity of forging and sustaining simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement than predicted by Basch and Glick Schiller (1995:48). In this process they engage in dialectics of belonging, opposition and resistance to the hegemonic logic of their own nation-state as well as to the nation states in which they occasionally live their lives. Their practices may not be self-consciously resistant toward their state of citizenship (although they often are), nor even loosely political in character understood as leading to collective organization against oppression) (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). They are, however, counter narratives to a state from which they are excluded on ethnic, regional, economic, political, religious, or gender grounds. It is in this sense that the public discourses and whispered narratives about Plaza España and the surrounding social space can be understood. Understood as expressions of resistance to the regime's spatial and political control. The very act of hanging up the picture of Plaza España below the obligatory picture of the King in public places is a direct challenge to state control. The state may decree the display of the King in public places, yes, but it cannot control what is put up right next to him, nor can it control the meaning attached to the additional wall décor. At the same time the discourses and narratives are expressions of a divided nation, speech acts through which a boundary to state power is defined. While the public discourses and private narratives can be read as simultaneous ambivalent feelings toward both Spain

and Morocco south of Yebala – as experiences of real frontiers that not only divide adjacent nation states but also nations within states – they do at the same time function to establish a bridge over the river that once united North and South in Al Andaluz.

Mobility and fixity in place are aspects of border societies which have a bearing on the people who live there, for example by helping to define the strengths and weaknesses of communities, nations and states at their juncture on the borders. As such, the anthropology of borders is simultaneously one nation's history and of one or more states frontiers (Wilson & Donnan 1998). Among the borderlanders in northern Morocco, the Strait of Gibraltar has at times been less an important border than the various boundaries established towards southern sultans and kings or the Spanish/European frontier around Ceuta. Representations of the former Plaza España and the present Place Hassan II are part and parcels of this. But as Chris Hann states (quoted in Wilson and Donnan 1998), "... local experiences of the state and resistance to it cannot be limited to the imaginative consequences of the actions of states for local populations" (Hann 1995:136).

Concrete material consequences are (un-)fortunately easy to deduce from the border talks I had with Maruf, Haddú, Mohammad and other persons in Tetuán in 1996 and 1997. Lack of development and development funds, the government's transfer of resources from Yebala to the south and the transfer of state servants from the south to Yebala, fraud, bribery practices, and close-knit networks of personal relations, are integrated in the discursive framework in which Tetuánis articulate their opposition to national identity politics. Experiences of vulnerable labour market conditions in Spain and other European countries, of increasingly closed borders to Fortress Europe, of being met not only with xenophobic reactions but also accusations of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism if you actually manage to beat the border, with apprehension and repatriation and subsequent family setbacks in Morocco, if you are caught in clandestine attempts at landing on European shores, feed into yet other feelings of abandonment.

## Epilogue

On January 31, 2000, my phone rings. The call is from Morocco, from Tetuán. It is my friend, the scribe, who has spent good parts of his grown-up life in imprisonment charged of anti-state political activities. His addiction to sports and health food cannot conceal the result of prison treatment. His eyes are forever out of focus, his row of teeth only the faintest memory of his childhood smile, his fit body disfigured by marks of torture. Through the lisping I cannot fail to notice the joy in his voice. "So what's up, Abdallah?", I ask, "What can I do for you." – "Nothing", he answers, "absolutely nothing. That's the reason for my call." Silence, then laughter. "You heard about the death of Hassan II, right? I just call to say that you do not have to do your research in Morocco anymore. Democracy has finally reached Tetuán. Why would people want to leave, then? "

## Notes

1. Sefarad means Spain in Hebrew.
2. Migration researchers often point to a diversification of demographic characteristics in the Moroccan migration process, in which single men began to migrate toward the new destination countries, whereas women and children continued to travel toward the EEC countries (through family reunification).
3. A note on spelling: The city is called Titauin in Berber, Tétouan in French, and Tetuán in Spanish. I stick to the Spanish naming and way of spelling, since this was what most local people used when I conducted field work in and around Tetuán in the summers of 1996 and 1997. This local spelling practice is of course significant for the argument I attempt to make.
4. Analyses of the 1984 riots in Morocco tend to emphasize immediate price increases as the most important catalyst of the riots and to neglect the more complex causes specific to a region or a city, like Tetuán. Of direct relevance for the Tetuán case, but based on findings in and around Melilla, Mc Murray argues that the little noticed IMF-inspired anti-smuggling measures taken in Morocco in August 1983 were more inflammatory than the price rises that followed. For while prices ate into all Moroccan household economies, the anti-smuggling border tax destroyed the incomes of the mass of lumpen smugglers outright (Mc Murray 1992:158).
5. In accordance with 'Maruf', 'Haddú', and 'Mohammad', I have changed their real names for pseudo-

nyms and slightly blurred their identity.

6. Schade Poulsen's study is concerned with the departure culture among young men in the Oujda region who have not yet managed to "beat the border". He therefore talks about absence rather than presence, future-oriented activities rather than accomplished ones.
7. Ferrying people across the Strait to Spain for money has been a lucrative trafficking business in northern Morocco. According to Harding, this business has in the later years been substituted with drug trafficking, an incomparable better business. 15 passengers on a fishing smack, paying around \$1,300 each, cannot match the earnings of a drug run (Harding 2000:22).
8. During my work among Moroccan migrants in Spain I have found the percentage of Moroccan women in prostitution to be very low, compared to other migrant groups. Most Moroccan women – be they single, married or divorced – work in the domestic sector.

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