



The Moroccan British Society, co-sponsor of
“Sacred”



Royal Message for the “Sacred” exhibition



Praise be to God

Peace and blessings be upon His
Prophets and Messengers

I am delighted that the United Kingdom is hosting an exhibition of the Sacred Books of the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I readily supported the idea and gave it my blessing. In this respect, I should like to commend the Moroccan British Society's initiative and to express my appreciation to the British Library for endorsing the idea as both relevant and useful. Cultural, artistic, spiritual events, such as this one, are indeed very much needed today.

This exhibition is a clear example of what we can do to foster interaction and constructive dialogue. There has never been a greater need for the three revealed religions to join efforts and build on culture, art and the spiritual legacy we have in common to promote a spirit of tolerance, mutual understanding and coexistence.

Throughout their history, the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Kingdom have provided telling examples of mutual esteem and good cooperation. By drawing inspiration from that past, we will certainly contribute to shaping a better world, where peace and understanding prevail.

Mohammed VI
King of Morocco

The Royal Palace, Casablanca
30 October, 2006.

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللّهِ
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نَفَرَقَ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ -
(سورة البقرة، الآية 285)

The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord,
as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah,
His angels, His Books, and His Messengers. We make no distinction
(they say) between one and another of His Messengers.
(The Cow 2:285)

Foreword



Aiming to foster inter-religious dialogue in these times of prevalent political and religious tensions internationally, the MBS approached the British Library with the idea of an exhibition that would acquaint the general public with the shared values of the three Religions of The Book. This undertaking was guided by the mutual respect between our Respective Monarchs and by the centuries' old dialogue between our Nations. It was further inspired by the religious status of Her Majesty The Queen of England as Head of the Anglican Church and of His Majesty The King of Morocco as Commander of the Faithful.

“Sacred” is a shared vision, a reminder and proof that coexistence amongst religious communities and faiths is natural and what unites People of the Book is far greater than what would divide them.

The Royal Patronage of “Sacred” seeks to foster unity, mutual respect and understanding. The Moroccan British Society, in contributing to this event, seeks to underline the Moroccan example, where interfaith respect is the norm. Islam in Morocco has always opposed extremism and enable people to live in peace, harmony and good intelligence with all faiths and religious communities.

Lalla Joumala

H.H. Princess Lalla Joumala
President of the Moroccan British Society

1 - Hassan II Mosque - Casablanca
2 - Beth El Synagogue - Casablanca
3 - Notre Dame de Lourdes
Church - Casablanca
4 - Manuscript displayed at the
exhibition



Morocco, A Country Of Believers





Morocco's religious mosaic is the result of successive migration waves and conversions. The three monotheistic faiths coexist harmoniously and mutually enrich each other through cultural cross-fertilization fostered by an atmosphere of mutual respect and harmony.

Judaism was the first of the three monotheistic religions to take root in Morocco over two thousand years ago and was strengthened by successive Diasporas.

Christianity emerged in Morocco - as in the rest of North Africa, in the Third Century AD, while part of the region was under Roman rule.

Islam was the last monotheistic religion to take root in Morocco in the 8th Century AD. It was strengthened by a long process of conversions and of cultural adaptation, and was eventually embraced by a large majority of the population to become the country's State religion.

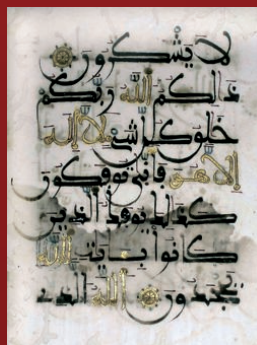
Inter-faith dialogue has always been fostered in Morocco. Leaders of the three religious communities meet regularly to promote mutual understanding.

Although other religions enjoy freedom of practice, Morocco is primarily a land of Islam.

- 1 - Sultan Moulay Abdelaaziz
(1878 - 1943)
- 2 - Al Beia (allegiance ceremony)
- 3 - Manuscript displayed at the exhibition



Islam in Morocco





Islam is practised by the overwhelming majority of Moroccans and enjoys the status of “State religion”, as defined in Article 6 of the Constitution. This established position is the fruit of a long history and is the impetus behind the productive dynamics of the country: spiritual, economic, social and cultural.

The history of Islam in Morocco is closely linked to the specificity of the Kingdom, based on the legitimacy of the monarchy which rests on several foundations, including the descentance of the Monarch from the prophet Sidna Muhamad (Peace be upon Him) and the role of the Royal Family in building and protecting the nation and safeguarding of its territorial integrity.

AMIR AL MUMINEEN (COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL)

Article 6 of the Constitution defines that Islam is Morocco’s “State Religion” and guarantees freedom worship for all. The great majority of Moroccans are Muslims.

The country is organized around its Sovereign, who is both its spiritual and temporal leader. Islam is the source of the King’s legitimacy, the theoretical foundation of His power and the supreme reference of a legitimate structure that allows the Sovereign to proclaim His preeminence. As stated in article 19 of the Constitution the King, “Amir Al Mumineen” (Commander of the Faithful) shall be the Supreme Representative of the Nation and the Symbol of the unity thereof. He shall be the Defender of the Faith and the Protector of the rights and liberties of the citizens, social groups and organisations.

The reigning Alawite Dynasty has ruled the country since 1640; King Mohammed VI is a direct descendent of the Prophet Sidna Muhamad (Peace be upon Him). A contractual element - The Beia - legally binds the King and the community; the latter pledges allegiance to the Sovereign, while He - the “Commander of the Faithful” - acts as the Defender of the Unity of the State and of Religion, according to the Achaari Doctrine and the Malikite Rite. Islamic Law validates this ritual as a foundation of the powers of the Amir.

A MODERNIZING ISLAM

Morocco practices an open, tolerant and modernising Islam. Its Monarch, H.M King Mohammed VI has inspired the reform of The Moroccan Family Code (Mudawana) later approved by Parliament at the recommendation of a committee of experts. It enhances and protects the rights of Moroccan women and of the family. This is a notable example of a modernizing Monarchy.

- 1 - Koutoubia Minaret - Marrakech
- 2 - Giralda Minaret - Sevilla
- 3 - Luth
- 4 - Manuscript displayed at the exhibition

الله أكبر





The title of Amir Al Mumineen, "Commander of the Faithful," has been reaffirmed by the Moroccan Constitution; it relates to the religious role of the Sovereign and distinguishes Morocco from other Muslim nations.

The Beia is an act of allegiance whereby the companions of the Prophet owed him faithfulness. In Morocco, the Beia is a confidence pact and mutual commitment whereby, in the name of people, the Ulemas (scholars) recognize the new Sovereign and grant Him the power to rule, protect and impose the respect of the precepts of Islam, to see to the security of the peoples and to the unity of the State

Islam as practiced in Morocco is better understood as a continuation of the Andalusian Golden Age that witnessed the peaceful coexistence and intellectually fruitful cooperation of the three monotheistic religions. This cross-fertilization has generated a unique brand of Moroccan Islam and has influenced all aspects of the country's, civilization and culture.



AL QUARAWIYYIN, A JEWEL OF A UNIVERSITY

Founded in the IX Century AD, Al Quaraawiyyin is among the oldest universities in the world. It is an emblematic Mosque, noteworthy for its monumental architecture and for being an internationally renowned institution of religious and scientific learning. Its alumni and professors have their place among the great intellectuals of the world. Pope Sylvester II of the Catholic Church (who introduced Arab numerals and the concept of Zero to Europe) and the Jewish philosopher and theologian Maimonides (1135 - 1204) are both alumni of this University.

1 - H.M. King Mohammed VI receiving
British Jewish community leaders in
Morocco

2 - H.M. King Hassan II receiving Messas
father and son, Rabbis of Jerusalem and
Paris.

3 - Kituba (wedding contract)



Moroccan Judaism





The presence of the Jewish community in Morocco dates back many centuries. An early presence was later strengthened by the arrival of successive Diasporas, following the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 584 BC.

Successive migration, especially from nearby Spain, coupled with local conversions, helped existing communities grow. Thus in the fifth Century, Morocco saw the influx of Jewish migrants fleeing from an Iberian Peninsula dominated by the Visigoths, and later, in the XV Century, the expelled and self-exiled from the Spanish Inquisition.

At the beginning of the XX Century, the Jewish community in Morocco numbered hundreds of thousands, before a large number decided to emigrate in the second half of the century.

COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Jewish-Moroccan community has developed a specific Judaism with a rich heritage, featuring local influences. For instance, the medium for religious sermons and discussions is the colloquial and the Pentateuque was translated word for word from Hebrew into Arabic.

Moroccan Judaism was the force behind artistic and cultural practices that have considerably enriched the Moroccan national heritage. Many of the art work and handicrafts in the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca are testimony to a particular know-how

and unique culture. In terms of architecture the many synagogues in the country, who benefit from renovation programs, are also proof of unique dexterity and creative abilities. The Jewish community has also enriched Moroccan literature and music, through the composition of popular songs recounting historical legends.



KING MOHAMMED V, PROTECTOR OF HIS SUBJECTS OF JEWISH FAITH

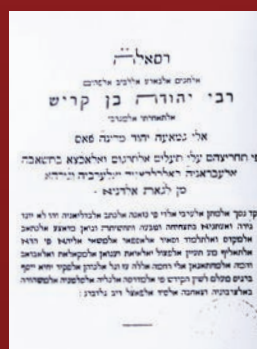
During the Second World War, Morocco was under French Mandate. The Vichy Government tried to enforce its anti-Jewish laws in Morocco, but was stymied by the Sultan Mohammed V. His position was forcefully stated:

"I do not approve of the new anti-Jewish laws and I refuse to be part of a measure of which I disapprove. Let it be known that as in the past, Jewish Moroccans will remain under My protection; and I refuse that any distinction be made among My Subjects."

1 - Beth El Synagogue - Casablanca
2 - Jewish Wedding in Rabat - Ca 1910
3 - Rabbi Ibn Kuraish's letter in Arabic
inscribed in Hebrew script



Common Cultural Heritage





FREEDOM OF WORSHIP AND EQUALITY

Though very numerous at the beginning of the XX Century, the Jewish community is at present only a few thousand strong, and is mostly settled in Casablanca. A multi-secular tradition of respect of its Faith prevails, and its members are an integral part of the Moroccan identity. The Constitution guarantees them freedom of worship and equal civic rights. Inter-faith relations are open, harmonious and respectful

JUDAISM, A COMMITMENT TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOROCCO

The Jewish community has always had a special role in Moroccan society. Its members had made some professions their specialty, such as that of goldsmith's, coin minting and gold-wire embroidery. The handicrafts of the Mellahs (the old Jewish neighbourhoods), were particularly famous and a source of respect and pride. To this day, the Jewish-Moroccan community and its Diaspora are committed to the development of Morocco. Many success stories are noteworthy and vividly illustrate that excellence and talent allow unhindered access to the highest echelons of government and of the professions, irrelevant of religious belief.

THE CULT OF SAINTS, A SHARED BELIEF

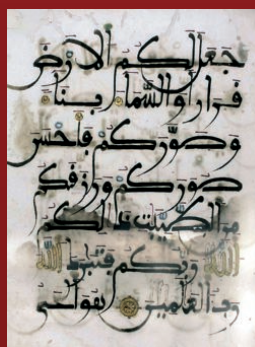
Among the numerous common traditions of Moroccans of Jewish and Muslim faith in Morocco, the worship of Saints is probably the most emblematic. Throughout Morocco countless shrines dedicated to venerable saints are visited by followers of both religions. Up to this day, every year, many Jewish-Moroccan of the Diaspora come back to Morocco to pay their respect to Saints' tombs such as the ones in Ouazzane, Essaouira, Taroudant, Azemmour and Settat.



1 - H.M. King Mohammed VI with Pope
John Paul II - 2000
2 - H.M. King Mohammed VI with a
dignitary of orthodox church
3 - Manuscript displayed at the exhibition

Allah

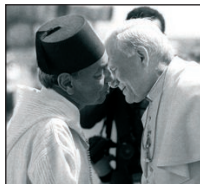
Christianity, Dialogue and Mutual Enrichment





Morocco witnessed the arrival of Christianity in the beginning of the 3rd Century AD, which expanded rapidly across the whole Maghreb, as demonstrated by the regular nomination of Bishops across the region in the following centuries.

After the VII Century, Christianity gradually yielded ground to Islam in Morocco. It was in the middle of the XIX Century, with the arrival of European farmers and others that Christianity expanded again in the country.



A COMMUNITY THAT ENGAGES IN DIALOGUE

The Christian community in Morocco is essentially constituted of descendants of European settlers or recent immigrants, such as those from Asia. The majority of Christians are established in the large cities, which usually have several churches. Casablanca has two cathedrals: A recent and modern one, Notre Dame de Lourdes, and an older cathedral, l'Eglise du Sacré Coeur. We can also find religious schools well known for their excellence that attract a multi-faith student body. The Christians of Morocco live their faith in total freedom.

A VISIONARY SUMMIT TO FOSTER DIALOGUE

His Majesty the late King Hassan II, Amir Al Mumineen (Commander of the Faithful), visited the Holy See in April 1980, in an effort to encourage inter-faith dialogue and to relay the desire of Muslims worldwide for a just solution to the question of Jerusalem.

His Holiness Pope Jean-Paul II welcomed these efforts and prayed for their success. Regarding Muslim-Catholic relations His Holiness stated: *"Morocco is a People of Believers. Your Majesty wants to guide it in the respect of The Almighty [...] Your responsibilities lead You to protect the religious aspirations of Your Subjects and to bestow Your benevolence on those among them who are not of Muslim faith. I welcome the spirit of dialogue that leads You to establish contacts with the Holy See, as a sign of esteem for the Catholic Church which endeavors in the Kingdom (of Morocco) to make a loyal contribution to the edification of progress and peace."*

RECOGNITION OF MOROCCO'S COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE

The 1980 visit to the Holy See was followed by others and on August 19th, 1985, His Holiness Pope John Paul II paid a return visit at the invitation of His Majesty the late King Hassan II, the first such visit to a Muslim State. This visit was made in recognition of Morocco's commitment to dialogue between the two religions. On this occasion, His Holiness declared to an audience of 60 000 youths: *"I think that we, Christians and Muslims should recognize with joy the religious values we share and be grateful to God for this [...] It is our duty to respect each other and encourage each other in performing good deeds in the Divine path."*



The Moroccan British Society

FOSTERING INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

Since its inception in 2003, The Moroccan British society (MBS), presided over by H.H. Princess Lalla Joumala, has had for mission:

(...) to provide means of all kinds likely to allow the Moroccan and the British peoples to acquire a better mutual understanding of their civilizations, cultures, and political, academic, scientific, economic, financial, and commercial institutions so as to promote and foster their friendly relations and their cooperative ties in every domain. (Article 2, MBS Statutes)

Within this framework, MBS cooperates with various institutions and official entities of both countries to foster a climate of increased cooperation. It endeavours to initiate joint projects, support student exchange programs, promote the teaching of English and Arabic, and contribute to improved inter-cultural dialogue and understanding, through the organization of conferences and seminars.

In October 2004, MBS endowed “The Mohammed VI Fellowship in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies” St. Antony’s College, Oxford University.

The Moroccan British Society was glad to sponsor Faisability Study for "**Sacred**" and to be co-sponsor of the exhibition, with the generous support of



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