



TINGHIR - JERUSALEM

A film by Kamal Hachkar
An Icarus Films Release

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SYNOPSIS

In *Tinghir-Jerusalem*, filmmaker and historian Kamal Hachkar goes in search of a community that has vanished—and confronts fundamental questions of his own identity in the process.

A Berber Muslim born in Tinghir, Morocco and raised in France, Hachkar says, "the only thing that I was sure of is that I came from elsewhere." While he would return to Tinghir every summer with his family, it would be years before he discovered that the town once had a thriving Jewish community. By the mid-1960s though, they, along with the other 250,000 Jews of Morocco, had left for Israel.

They were not driven out by rising Islamism or even political enmity over the Arab-Israeli wars that followed the founding of the state of Israel. Instead, they were the targets of a successful Zionist campaign that extolled the virtues of life in Israel and encouraged emigration. Fifty years later, their history has been largely forgotten in their homeland.

Hachkar sets off in search of that history. He travels to Israel, seeking out those who emigrated from Tinghir and their descendants—some of whom identify as Israeli, while others still firmly see themselves as Moroccan. The fluidity of identity is captured through language, as participants in the film seamlessly shift back and forth between languages—speaking Arabic, Berber and French.

What he discovers in conversations over old family photos and while listening to the stories of the Jews who left Tinghir—and the Muslims who remain—is a history of close co-operation between communities. They shared a common identity as Berbers, and lived in a town where "the muezzin's call would mingle with that of the morning Jewish prayer." In encounter after encounter, his interlocutors speak wistfully of the past—Muslims expressing sadness over the departure of their neighbors, and Jews wondering if that departure was worthwhile.

The Jews who left Tinghir did so willingly. Most saw themselves as fulfilling the Biblical teachings to return to the Holy Land. But in going to Israel was their period of exile ending... or was a new one beginning?

SELECTED **FILM FESTIVALS AND AWARDS**

Official Selection, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2012, USA

Official Selection, Traces de Vie Festival 2012, France

Ahmed Attia Award for the Dialogue of Cultures, 2012, Spain

Best Film, Rabat International Film Festival for Human Rights, 2012 Morocco

Best Documentary, Jewish Eye Festival 2012, Israel

Best First Film, Tanger National Film Festival 2013, Morocco

Best Documentary, International Berber Film Festival 2013, France

Best Documentary, Common Memory Cinema Festival, 2013 Morocco

Eden Award for Best Documentary, Lumieres D'Afrique Festival 2013, France

Support Mention, International Oriental Film Festival in Geneva 2013,
Switzerland

Official Selection, Filmfest Hamburg 2013, Germany

Official Selection, Seminci Valladolid 2013, Spain

Official Selection, Boston Jewish Film Festival 2013, USA

Official Selection, Washington DC Jewish Film Festival 2014



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Kamal Hachkar was born in Tinghir, Morocco, in 1977. His parents, of Muslim and Beber origin, immigrated to France when he was six months old. The son of a workman, Hachkar frequently travelled with his father across France and abroad. From all of these trips, he developed a particular sympathy for those in exile. After studying History at the Sorbonne, he became a professor. Interested in Morocco's Judeo heritage, Kamal has learned Hebrew and organized cultural events introducing esteemed Jewish and Arabic poets, including Amichai, Bialik, Darwish to French audiences. *Tinghir-Jerusalem* is his debut film.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

In France, I grew up under the impression that all Berbers were Muslims. However, in my hometown of Tinghir, Morocco speaking with my grandparents made me realize that some Berbers were, in fact, Jewish. In many villages, Muslims and Jews had traditionally lived together for generations. At the beginning of the sixties, however, after two thousand years of common history, all those Jews left the region.

Wishing to know more about this lost Jewish presence, I talked to members from older generations. That brought me to Israel, where I met families originally from Tinghir.

In both Tinghir and Jerusalem, members of the older generations opened up about their past lives. How had these two communities lived together? How and why did they separate so suddenly and, seemingly, forever? Why has this fact been forgotten? These were the questions I was trying to answer.

On meeting my Jewish counterparts, Israelis and Frenchmen of my generation who were also originally from Tinghir, I realized I was not alone on my quest. Indeed, we all shared the same desire to delve into our shared heritage. By resurrecting this buried part of our identities, will my generation be able to acknowledge the bonds broken by history?

Together with these young people in Israel, Morocco and France, I hope that *Tinghir Jerusalem* will bring back to life the songs, voices and stories of this dual identity shared by Jews and Muslims alike.

—Kamal Hachkar

Documentary Rediscovered Morocco's Judeo/Islamic Berber Culture

By Farah Montasser, March 10, 2013

French-Moroccan filmmaker Kamal Hachkar speaks to Ahram Online on his award winning film, Tinghir-Jerusalem, and his passion for rediscovering the heritage of Atlas Mountain Berbers

Right before Egyptian filmmaker Amir Ramses made headlines with his Jews of Egypt documentary currently showing in Egyptian theatres, on the other end of Africa, in Tinghir in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, another young director, Kamal Hachkar delves into Berber origins that blends in both Jews and Muslims alike.

Tinghir-Jerusalem is set to breathe life back into the richness and diversity of a Berber culture which had, for a time, been a Judeo-Islamic melting pot," Hachkar comments on his film, which debuted at Tangier Film Festival in Morocco last month and won Best Work by a New Director.

Hachkar tells Ahram Online: "My film carries a message of peace. It is a hymn to diverse cultures that create an identity like that of the Mediterranean, which gave birth to great civilisations.

"It is extraordinary that we, young filmmakers, revisit our plural heritage. One cannot simply erase 3000 years of Jewish history in Morocco," he argues. He believes his film will document history for the new generations to come.

From infancy and throughout his childhood, Hachkar resided in France with his parents, spending their summer holidays in their Moroccan hometown Tinghir. His fascination with the Berber heritage grew when his grandparents told stories of the old Berber community of Tinghir that included Jews. "As a child, it never occurred to me that the Berbers of Tinghir had any Jewish background," Hachkar recalls.

Four years in the making, Hachkar dove deeper into the topic that has become a passion that grew with every visit to Tinghir. He cast his net wider and wider, meeting Jews of Berber origin in France and Tel Aviv.

The *Tinghir-Jerusalem* documentary goes back into the memory of older generations in Mellah, what was a Jewish district in Tinghir. Hachkar accompanies current Tinghir residents through the narrow alleys to a block of

flats that once was the synagogue. He listens to stories, music and folkloric songs that one day represented the Berber of Tinghir, despite their different religion.

"Everyone still remembers the pessah bread or chtoto in Berber, which Jews would offer Muslims during Passover," Hachkar declares.

Then on, Hachkar flies to Israel in search of Berber immigrants. "I filmed some Tinghir Jews in Israel... They still speak Arabic and Berber... They still sing songs of Tinghir... and hope to return home, especially the youth," he says.

"I found that after fifty years in Israel, these Jewish Berbers have not forgotten their language, their culture. They define themselves as Moroccan and devote to their homeland a love without fault," he discovers.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict grew so large that Morocco, once home to over 300,000 Jews, according to the Associated Press, is currently left with a fraction. "In Morocco, we still have a Jewish community; certainly small but very active and many return in pilgrimages," Hachkar claims.

"And unlike in Egypt, Moroccan Jews were never evicted by the regime," Hachkar asserts. Gamal Abdel Nasser, in line with his ideas of Arab nationalism in Egypt, to Hachkar was, "a great Zionism ally. Nasser expelled the Jews to Israel."

Amazingly, during his visit to Israel, Hachkar met with Egyptian Jews, "who have nothing left but their memories of Egypt and the music of Om Kalthoum," he says.

At the film screening in Tel Aviv he says "an Egyptian Jew came to see my film and [told me] he dreams of returning to Egypt," he recalls.

But Hachkar, dreadfully considers that whether Morocco or Egypt, "both countries, instead of protecting their Jewish minorities, drove them away."

Now that the Moroccan constitution has recognized the plurality of identities, including Jews, Hachkar reckons, "We must move forward and implement such notions in schools so as to prevent the growth of a mindless generation."

Despite the constitutional amendment left wing political groups and Islamists protested against *Tinghir-Jerusalem* on February 26 at the Tangier Film Festival. Protesters claimed that director Hachkar was promoting normalization of relations with the Jewish state.

To this Hachkar says to *Ahram Online*, "Those protestors object without watching the film. I kindly ask them to watch it first then judge, and I thank the Moroccan Cinematographic Centre (CCM) for supporting my work."

He doesn't always have full support, however. "The communications minister boycotted the ceremony because of my film's presence in the festival," he reveals.

"I am glad that my film opened this debate in Moroccan society," he concludes in his interview with *Ahram Online*.

Tinghir-Jerusalem is Hachkar's first film and was well received, according to the Young director, in New York, Tel Aviv and Morocco. "Thanks Reda Benjalloun who co-produced the film has managed to get it broadcasted on Moroccan television channel as well," Hachkar says.

The film will participate in the Oriental Film Festival in Geneva next month, to be followed by a number of screenings in Marseille, Brussels, Los Angeles and Morocco. Hachkar is currently writing a sequel for *Tinghir-Jerusalem*, where he follows the return of some Jewish families from Israel to Tinghir.



FILM CREDITS

Film Title: *Tinghir-Jerusalem*
Writer/director: Kamal Hachkar
Country: France/Morocco Running time: 86 minutes
Year of production: 2011
Year of release: 2014
Image: Color
Director of photography: Philippe Bellaïche
Editor: Yaël Bitton
Original music: Shlomo Bar
Sound engineers: Morgann Martin and Tully Chen
Sound editing and mix: Clément Chauvelle
Color correction: Pierre Agoutin
Artistic consultant: Dominique Welinski
Translation: Yael Lerer, Joël Baron, Karim Djermoune, Daniel Berger, Hassan Belkassem, Hassan Doramane, Rachid Agrour, Raphaël Garcia
Archival material: Elias Harrus, the Harrus Family, Alliance Israelite Universelle, The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archives, Jean-Claude Huisman
Language: In Hebrew, Arabic, Berbere, English, and French with English Subtitles

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