

1st interview	1st team and Prof. Samir El Azhar
Interviewee	Transcription and Translation :
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G1: Would you mind telling us something about your origins, native place ?

HL: I'm from *Mediouna* (a small town near Casablanca).

G1: What is your origin? Where did you come the first time to *Mediouna*?

HL: I am from Mediouna. My father's origins are from Ouled Said near Oulad Ziane. My grandfather is from Oulad Said, too. During the Siba period, the Caid El Ayachi wanted to take the land of my grand-father. Fearing for his life, the latter escaped to Mediouna where he found shelter with his father's friends. They told him if he went back to Oulad Said, the Caid El Ayachi and his men would imprison him and put him in a "matmoura," a hole dug underground. This was a common practice at that time.

G1: Would you like[mind?] telling something about your native place, Mediouna? How did people live? How were human relationships at that time? What kind of crops did they grow? What were the reasons that made you leave Mediouna for Casablanca.

HL: As I have already told you my father is from Oulad Said and my mother was Medkouria.. My father, may he rest in peace, did not go back to Oulad Said to ask for the land he had inherited from his family. My father was an illiterate man who did not know his rights. After some years in Mediouna, we moved to Casablanca. We first lived in the shanty houses of Ezzarhouni. My father used to sell wheat and I did several jobs.

G1: How did your father treat you?

HL: My father was kind and illiterate person which means he had never studied and he did not know anything, if you told him that this is permitted, he would only say that is useable. People of that time you know, I would not say that he was educated or had reached a Quran school. He doesn't lie and never takes others' properties; he was afraid of taking peoples properties. That was the problem. It's not like nowadays people who are educated are who steals others' money. People of that time were illiterate, but they don't take others' money, he was kind. Actually we tried to deal with our parents

and also our brothers until they grow up and each one of them thank God got married and had his own house. Now we do that with our children, if any one of them grow up enough and become able to manage his life I allow him to do whatever he wants...

When we come to the Ezerhoni shanty town, we lived there two years or three and then we took a land there You see the Cochlea (place for military training of "Bernazil" a neighborhood in Ben M'sik next to the traditional market "khayria" we were possessing it for about two or three years, we use to cultivate it, it's space was 11 hectares.

G1: So that land wasn't used at all?

HL: It belonged to the farmers. They used to grow in it corn, mint , watermelon. We used to take it in a vehicle and we take it to the *Chtaybasouk* to sell what we cultivate there and so we helped each other, till once a *Sheikh* there was only *sheikh* and *Khalifa* a man of authority lower than *sheikh* and *Mkadmin* plural of *Mkadem*, another man of authority even lower than *Lkhalifa*. Anyway that *Sheikh* came and requested to be a partner with us in business and we got a land in *Lalla Meryem*, a neighborhood in Ben M'sik that did not exist at that time yet, we cultivated for a year, and we got also land in the cemetery of *Sbata* a neighborhood in Ben M'sik.

G1: There wasn't a cemetery?

HL: No, the *Salmia* neighborhood wasn't there. Also from the junk-yard *Salmia* we cultivated 6 hectares in that place, and we cultivated the previous one too.

G1: You used to cultivate only corn?)

HL: No we used to do also grain and wheat , and we cultivated another piece of land also near *Titmelil* an area close to Casablanca, but the partnership didn't work out.

G1: Why was it a bad year?

HL: No everything was good but something wasn't right with us, the money that we invested in the land wasn't the same we're getting back.

G1: Was there a drought that year?

HL: No, everything was good, but I think the Sheikh's money wasn't his, because dirty money never gives a good result and after that the owner of the land next to *Kachla* came to demand his land so that he can live in it because he was living in *Okacha*, a block in Ben M'sik.

G1: Where was Okacha?

HL: Okacha was next to the train road in *Hay Mohemmadi* block in Ben M'sik near the big police station. There is a bridge in it and it was full of shanties. He used to own a house there that belonged to his parents; he's the one I told you he owns 105 hectares in Casablanca. We used to rent a part from his sister's husband; he used to own cavaliers to bring him from there. So we evacuated from there and moved into Casablanca, specifically into *Mabroka*.

G1: In which year you moved into Casablanca?

HL: We rented a house for 75 dh (dirham), that house consisted of four rooms

G1: But back in those days 75 dh had a great value

HL: Yes of course

G1: Because when we hear 75dh to rent a house we think that it was cheap

HL: We wanted to move to the city, because my brothers and sons began to be more active and I use to work in the port so we needed to move to the city. But when we got to the city we split up, and each one of them built his own family and that was mean [??] to us. Thank God. When money comes between the social relationship that's what happens.

Every one of us got his own place to live.

G1: You've told me earlier that your father was an honorable man how did he use to treat as his sons. I mean did he use to beat you or something like that?

HL: I was the older son between my brothers, so when my father advanced in age, I was the one who helped him to keep the food on the table because he was an ignorant in many things in life.

G1: Were you were the one who ran the house?

HL: There was time when I use to take him with me to work and he would find it really strange(he found it odd) he thought that Marrakech was a far country (oh, poor man). He used to say, "does the king travel to Marrakech?" Because back in those days people use to know nothing, I'm not going to tell you like that he was a cultivated man or something like that.

G1: Didn't they use to travel?

HL: No, no, no they stayed in one place, if they changed their place where they lived they'd lose

G1: Like the case here, he was born in Madiona and he moved to Ben M'sik, the closest place.

HL: Yes, if he goes to a place then that's it. I mean he was an ignorant and there was no education, there were few who used to study.

G1: But even now sir that education is everywhere there was something then that you can't find now, I mean people use to help each other.

HL: Yes, they use toback in those days even that there was no education, people who used to work in fields used to sit down and count how much *SABA* they had.

G1: What's that sir?

HL: Wheat, they used to collect it and bring a man who used to count how much there was of it, and this man would have 9 units (*àbra*) of wheat and put it in a good bag and it would go to charity and this bag has to be in a good condition with no holes in it. But now who would give something to charity ?

People used to be very generous; they would collect 100 or 200 bags and give it to people who need it, but who would do that now? People used to till their lands by the help of animals only there was no machines then, and they would leave corn until it is fully grown and they would beat it with sticks until the grains are separated. The world used to be a better place and even now it's good but people have to give to charity that God told us to give for, and that's because people say the money that I would give to charity goes to taxes and that's the problem. If people gave money to charity poor people wouldn't exist at all. Back in those days people used to give wheat and grains to charity and others would sell it to others and it goes like that, so that would bless and help them in their lands, but now you find people investing in very good business but they say I don't have enough money to give to charity.

G1: And that's why God does not bless their business.

HL: Now farmers always tell the government to help them and give them supplies, but how is the government able to contribute in that? Back in those days there were no supplies or anything like that and everything was good. People used to work on the land and have very fruitful results at the end of the season, and you would just sit and look at that wheat and everybody used to know his limits, not like now. Everybody is saying: I have nothing why don't you give me?

G1: And what about your mother, God put mercy on her soul, how did she use to deal with you, because people back in those days are different from now?

HL: Yes, I didn't want to leave them too.

G1: Did they moved to live with you when you came to *Mabroka* or they have been with you before that ?

HL: No, they've been with me from the beginning. My father died in 1983 while I was gone for work, my brother came to me and told me that my father is not feeling well. So, when I arrived I found my mother and my uncle's wife who were intending to take him to the temple of Mr. Ahmed to visit him....

G1: Oh, to visit the temple...

HL: ...but I didn't use to believe in that temples thing but it would sound rude if I refused to take my father, so I took him in the truck that I use to own back then to a place called *Tlat Ben Icho*. (

G1: Where is it located?

HL: It's just here in the road 17 and you can find people doing all kind of things. And after that when people in my hometown heard that my father was sick they came in the truck of my cousin to visit him.

G1: How many people came?

HL: About 20 people.

G1: They came to you in *Mabroka*?

HL: Yes, they wanted to take him somewhere near Bensliman they call it Mr. Omar Elkadmiri, so I wondered where they're taking him, and they said they're taking him to that temple, but I said that's my father and I'll take him to that temple.

G1: When you came from work you found out that they were taking him?

HL: Yes, so I didn't rely on anybody, I took him, my mother and a cousin of mine with me.

G1: In the truck you used to drive?

HL: Yes, and my cousin had another truck where he took all the people who were left because his truck was bigger than mine. We drove all the way to Bensliman and found the temple in an empty land. I will never forget that place. People who are guarding the temple are using people. Everything costs money, if you want something you have to pay for it, you have to pay even for water. If you want to get into the temple you have to pay at each door..... I have never seen anything like that, but I didn't argue about anything until we finished there. We spent the night there and we came back in the early morning.

G1: You spent only one day in the temple?

HL: Yes, the day after that we came back.

G1: And did your father feel better?

HL: Just a little while after that my uncles took him to a place where there is some water that is believed to have some healing power. But when we took him to the doctor he said that he's still sick and he gave him some meditation, and the situation stayed like that for 5 years.

G1: This happened in 1978, right?

HL: Yes around that. Once my sister came to visit us and she was wearing some white clothes and when my father came home, he told her that these clothes are for a person who wants to go to the pilgrimage. So she said I hope that I will go one day.

So she said what's your opinion?

He said if you go here's the money. They used to give 120000 Ryal so they can go. He told her to come, she brought her daughter with her and she went to Rabat and got her papers very quickly. She applied for the passport Tuesday and travelled on the plane on Thursday. She was pregnant so she went to pilgrimage and in the day that she was supposed to come, when my father heard the news he couldn't wait to see her. So my mother went to wait for them and bring home, because my father was ill, but he took a donkey and went to see them too. So my mother told him why have you come? Because it was very far and he had to race to the taxi's [??] office which was in Sidi Othman (a neighborhood in Ben M'sik). He said, "I want to see Elhaja." So she told him at least come in a car or something more comfortable. But Elhaja wasn't coming that day so he said if we couldn't see her at least we're going to see her son, because old people always have a good will. He waited until she arrived at night and then he came back home. So at night my son Khalid went to him, and I went to him too. When [Khalid] saw him, he asked him to straighten his head and he started crying. He said, "I became a weak man. He wanted to lift his hand but he couldn't so we called for

Lfokha (people that read El-Quran in public events) and they read for him for a while. One of them said, "The man is dying," so my brother proposed to take him to the hospital. Then they took him and did some medical tests but [doctors] said, "he's suffering from nothing." When they took him the next day to a private [doctor?] but he died and that's destiny.

My mother stayed with me, and she went to pilgrimage too. But then she got sick. I used to take her to see a doctor in Haymohammadi (A neighborhood in Ben M'sik). He used to give her shots and medication so that she'll get better but after a while she got sick again. She was suffering of high cholesterol. Once on the feast of Aid Adha (the feast of sacrifice)...and we had a brother in France...there was still about 15 to 20 days for the feast. So I came home one day and I found my mother sitting next to the phone. So I asked her what are you sitting next to the phone for? She answered I'm hoping that your brother in France will call so I can ask him for some money. I told her that she's not obliged to ask him for money, we got everything covered here. And for the sheep of the feast we will buy it for you just don't worry. And then I took her upstairs and I sat with her for a while; before that my son took her for a walk. So when we had lunch she asked about another brother of mine, but I told her he might be working, and that's when she said, "he won't come to see me until my funeral, doesn't he have a car?" So later that day he came to see her and asked about her and he knew how upset she was, because he knew that she was sick.... But after that my son, his wife, and my sister he kept coming for about 10 days regularly, and he used to bring diapers with him so that she won't have to get up at night and risk a fall or something while we're sleeping. He used to buy them for her for 600 DH. When my sister wanted to go she wanted to take her brother with her to Hay lala Miriam (a neighborhood in Ben M'sik), but my mother told her that we got everything covered. Anyway, when she slept at midnight she entered a coma. I brought her a doctor, but he said, "she's fine it's just her blood pressure that that dropped down." But they brought another that said, "we have to take her to do some medical tests." They took her in an ambulance, so after that they said she will stay the night in Clinique Zirawi in Polo (a neighborhood in Ben M'sik). We did all what we could do but she passed away, that was God's will.

Where have you been professor (Mr. Samir El Azhar)? You left me here with this guy and he made me tell him a lot, I just hope that it's not something bad. We're talking now about my parents

SA: Anything you said and you didn't like we can omit it.

HL: He was asking me about the way that my parents use to live, so I said they lived with me until they passed away. So thank God.

SA: That's the point of this program, to see how old people use to live, and give an example to this young generation, you see.

HL: Now the children call us father and mother even call their mother by her name my children are like friends with me, thank God so.

SA: Mr. Elhaj we don't want to exhaust you, let's take it step by step, today we tired you a little you're been with us since 10 a.m..

HL: That's my pleasure.

SA: We're really very glad to meet you and that you come here to help us, anyway Mr. G1: will visit you later to finish with you.

HL: Yes, oh, he knows my house

SA: Yes, so we better take it step-by-step. As I said in Casablanc , we're going to see you Wednesday, by God's will.

HL: I'm available any time you want me to I wish even if I could come to learn here.

SA: Mr. Elhaj , I've been to university in summer and I found people aged of seventy and more who haven't been to school at all in their life, they want to learn and they study different methods, unfortunately we don't have what it takes to do it in our faculty, though nothing. We're going now to make you a deal, you're going to visit us every day to tell us and talk to us, and come to talk it out. And we're sorry again to trouble you, we're very happy about this and can see that Morocco really has changed from the past until now and people have become more civilized in other places and the same now is happening in Ben M'sik. The route was rough and there was no bus to get to the faculty we had to walk on our feet and there was just few faculties and a lot of other things have changed too and that's what we want to tell the new generation here how the situation was, and this how it become like that.