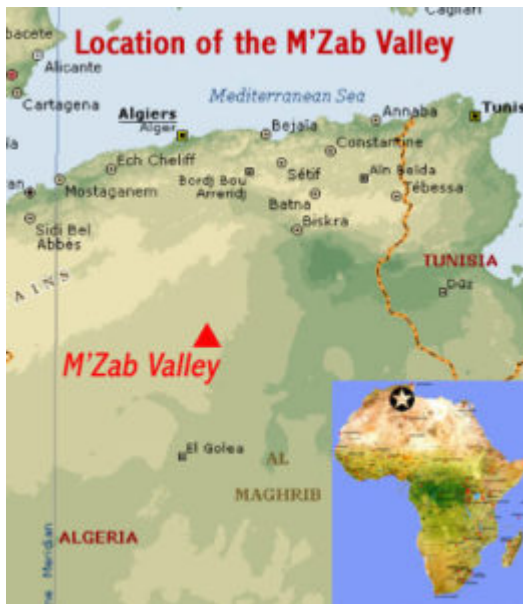


# Rebecca A. Wall ~ The Jews Of The Desert: Colonialism, Zionism, And The Jews Of The Algerian M'zab, 1882-1962



*University of Michigan, 2014.* This dissertation studies the Jewish community of the Algerian M'zab during the French colonization of the Sahara from 1882 until 1962. French officials refused to extend the 1870 Crémieux Decree that emancipated Algerian Jews to the M'zab after its 1882 annexation. French administrators saw the M'zabi Jews as insurmountably different and consequently excluded them from emancipation. Despite petitions from the community and French and Algerian Jewish advocacy for extending

emancipation to the south, successive French colonial and metropolitan governments declined to extend the Crémieux Decree to the M'zab. French officials justified this decision by invoking the insurmountable difference of M'zabi Jews, who were both too Jewish and too similar to Algerian Muslims to be “regenerated” as French citizens.

Within the colonial legal system, M'zabi Jews were classified as “indigènes,” or natives, alongside Algerian Muslims. M'zabi Jews faced the restrictions that bounded the lives of Muslims in French Algeria and settler antisemitism that culminated in the Vichy abrogation of the Crémieux Decree in 1940. When Free French forces reinstated the Crémieux Decree in 1943, the French again excluded the M'zabi Jews. Following this, a number of individuals and families from the community left Algeria to join the growing Jewish community in British mandatory Palestine.

M'zabi Jews were the only organized Jewish community who left Algeria for Israel. Their history challenges historiography that claims Zionism was unsuccessful in

Algeria. M'zabi Jews were not ardent Zionists, but they did take advantage of the opportunities for emigration made possible by international Zionist organizations including the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency. In contrast to the larger history of Algerian Jews, the history of the M'zabi Jewish immigration from Algeria to Israel is part of the larger history of Jewish migrations from the Arab world to Israel after 1945. M'zabi Jews won full French citizenship in late 1961, but most still opted to make their way to Israel rather than France.

The complete thesis

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